Social and Cultural Integration Process Among Syrian Refugees in the United States

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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES
AMONG SYRIAN REFUGEES IN THE UNITED STATES

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
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in
Interdisciplinary Studies:
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by
Sheren Iskandar Shihadeh
December 2016
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the cultural and social integration process among Syrian refugees in the United States, and to what extent the direct and indirect challenges have played a role in the process of their social and cultural integration. The challenges include, but are not limited to, cultural conflicts, religious values, stereotypes, and English language proficiency. In order to investigate my research questions, interviews as a research methodology were used as a theoretical framework for this project to collect and analyze data. I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten Syrian refugees who currently live in the United States. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in full in both Arabic and English by me. My data analysis investigated what the interviewees indicated about their processes of social and cultural integration in the United States' society as refugees. Specific extracts were chosen because they served as rich materials to analyze and provide answers to questions in this paper.

Findings indicated that Syrian refugees needed to overcome significant personal, social, linguistic, and psychological barriers and challenges in order to integrate socially and culturally in the United States' society. Results showed that participants in this study adopted various "acculturation strategies". Only three out of ten were socially and culturally integrated. However, acculturation strategies adopted by participants are dynamic and changeable overtime, so
further longitudinal study is needed to examine their integration processes over a longer time.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

In 2011, the Syrian civil war started. The continuum of this ugly war, during the past five years, has caused the worst refugee crisis in our modern history, in which millions of innocent civilians fled the country, crossing oceans and borders to find safer places. The United States is one of the countries that has helped, and is still helping, a number of Syrian refugees to resettle, despite the delay in the process. Investigating Syrian refugees as a special case of immigrants in the United States has become a necessity because they are a part of our diverse society. Unfortunately, they were victims of violence and terrorist groups in Syria and currently struggle with discrimination and negative stereotypes in the United States. The rise of terrorist groups in Syria has made the word “Syrian” become associated with terrorism in the American society. As a result, Syrian refugees could face more challenges to integrate than other groups of immigrants. Therefore, we need to take a look, through closer lenses, at their experiences living in the United States. However, while a number of studies focus on Syrian refugees in relation to terrorism, immigration process, and political speeches, there were few studies about their challenges and barriers to socially and culturally integrate in the United States. As a Syrian American, I propose to interview Syrian refugees because I have prior knowledge of their
culture, language and its uniqueness and complexity, which makes it harder, from my observations, for them to integrate in this society due to direct and indirect challenges. Therefore, I wanted to investigate the cultural and social integration process among Syrian refugees in the United States to highlight their challenges according to their unique personal life experiences.

**Background of the Study**

When people move to a foreign country, they face many challenges because of linguistic and cultural differences. To cope with these challenges, newcomers need to acculturate within the new society. Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) explained one of the classical definitions of the term acculturation as, “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p.149). While this definition offers a general understanding of the term, acculturation goes well beyond changes within two different groups because it involves complicated contributing factors to include other direct and indirect psychological, personal, social, and cultural factors. These factors could be combined together to determine to what extent a newcomer copes with challenges in a new society, and which “acculturation strategies” to adopt. Since one of these strategies is the main concern of my research, it is important to briefly clarify the differences among acculturation strategies as Berry (1997) explained them. The first acculturation strategy is “marginalization” where immigrants have some interest
in involvement with cultural groups other than theirs, but it is fairly low. In contrast, “assimilation” will take place when immigrants become totally involved in other cultural groups leaving their main groups’ identities aside. “Separation” is also a choice when immigrants actively isolate themselves to remain only within their main groups and avoid interaction with other cultural groups, so in this case there is absolutely no interest in interaction with other groups. The last strategy is “integration,” a social process which occurs “when there is an interest in both maintaining one’s original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups” (Berry, 1997, p. 9). Integration, as a social and cultural strategy among Syrian refugees in the United States will be the theoretical framework for this project.

Marascuilo and Dagenais (1974), defined of the term “integration” as, “the realization of equal opportunity by deliberate cooperation and without regard to racial or other social barriers” (p. 180). Furthermore, a study by El Kacimi (2008) clearly defined “social integration” as “a term utilized by sociologists, social psychologists and educators to refer to the process of learning one’s culture and how to live within it. For the individual, it provides the resources necessary for acting and participating within their society” (p. 12). So cultural and social integration in the host country could be a burden for newcomers, especially if they did not have any prior knowledge of the language or the culture. Therefore, integration of Syrian refugees among the United States’ society would allow them to participate and access sources offered by their communities. If integration was to be attained, benefits would extend broader from any group of integrated
immigrants and refugees to their families, communities, and society as a whole, where these groups could be active participants and not a burden.

There has to be a public realization of the fact that immigrants are different from refugees; therefore, the process of integration could be different due to the specialty of these groups. Togo (2006) distinguished between refugees and immigrants, arguing that immigrants take the migration decision voluntarily, without being forced to migrate like refugees, whose forcible causes pushed them to migrate, such as wars and conflicts in their original counties. Additionally, he indicated that refugees face more psychological challenges in their new host country because they usually need to heal from trauma that has been caused by bad experiences back home and during migration (p.7). Furthermore, according to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) (2016 a), “a refugee is a person forced to flee his or her home because of war or political upheaval and seek safety in another country. They have well-founded reasons to fear persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in social group or their political opinion. Refugee status is determined by the United Nations” (Determine refugee status’ section, para. 1). Therefore, refugees were forced to migrate carrying a heavier weight of physiological and social challenges than regular immigrants. More studies are needed to investigate Syrian refugees as a special case of immigrants for deeper understanding of their challenges and needs in order to be able to assist them, as both government and society, to smooth their process of social and cultural integration in the United States' society.
Overview of the Syrian Conflict and Refugee Crisis

For a better understanding of Syrian refugees’ situation, I would like to offer a brief background about the Syrian conflict and the Syrian refugee crisis. Many of us have heard about the Syrian civil war from the media, social networks, and even friends and people in our surroundings. However, the fact is that, in the United States, many Americans do not know anything about the Syrian conflict. According to Poll (2014), a study conducted online and involving two thousand U. S. citizens concluded that, “one in five Americans (21 percent) admit to being not at all familiar with the conflict” (para.2). I would like to give a brief explanation about the Syrian refugee crisis and the Syrian conflict, as well as the reason I have chosen to investigate Syrian refugees’ social and cultural integration processes in the United States. I want to note that this research was not done with the intention of having anyone stand with or against any specific party or group and was done totally aside from political views or reasons. It was done for linguistic and social purposes with respect to the participants’ backgrounds of beliefs, values, gender, religion, and political views.

Many in the United States hold the political view that the Syrian conflict would end if the Syrian regime stepped down; but the conflict, unfortunately, is not about who is ruling the country anymore. According to Schmitt and Mazzetti (2013), “a senior American intelligence official on Saturday warned that the Syrian conflict could last “‘many, many months to multiple years”, and described a situation that would most likely worsen regardless of whether the Syrian leader,
President Bashar al-Assad, fell” (para.1). In fact, the Syrian conflict started as an extension to the “Arab Spring” movement that began in Tunisia in 2010 and crossed many Arabic countries, such as Egypt and Libya, to reach Syria in 2011.

After the match of revolt was first lit in Tunisia in December 2010, flames moved rapidly across North Africa to the Gulf states and onward into West Asia. Urban centers and rural enclaves of Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, and Syria filled with everyday people who were willing to sacrifice their lives for a new dispensation. (Amar and Prashad, 2013. p. viii).

However, the civil war in Syria did not arise overnight because the initial conflict started between the Syrian rebels (the anti-Syrian government) and the regime supporters.

De Juan and Bank (2015) explained that:

The initial protests in Syria were triggered in the southern city of Dar’a in mid-March 2011, when a group of teenagers were arrested and tortured for writing the motto of the Arab Spring (‘the people want the downfall of the regime’) on house walls (p. 93).

From Dar’a, protests spread among other Syrian cities; but violence started to take place from town to town, and city to city, allowing many new groups to arise and join the fight. The conflict turned into a bloody civil war among groups of rebels themselves and the army and the regime supporters. The same article indicated that, “from March 2011 to the fall of 2012, Syria’s uprising transformed from a semi-urban, peaceful uprising to a professionalized,
very violent rebellion that has become a brutal civil-war stalemate” (De Juan & Bank. 2015, p.94). Despite all efforts, the United Nations did not succeed in ending this war because it became more complicated day after day.

Millions of Syrians started to flee the country to neighboring countries, such as Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey, for their safety, leaving behind everything. Nguyen (2014) as pointed out that, “since anti-government protests in 2011 spiraled into civil war, more than 3.2 million Syrians have registered as refugees in the region, with neighbors such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey bearing the brunt of the emergency” (para.3). So registered refugees reached 3.2 million in 2013, which is only two years after the beginning of the civil war. In the same article, the author explained how the number of refugees was expected to dramatically increase over a short period of time at the end of 2013. According to Bramham (2013), “Syrians represent one of the largest refugee populations in the world. By year’s end, the UN estimates that number will swell to more than three million if the war continues” (para. 5) In fact, refugees who stayed in these countries could not go back home, especially that terror groups like the Islamic State expanded their territory from Iraq to control parts of Syria spreading horror among civilians. Jordan and De Avila (2015) stated that, “the terror group has become a bigger force in Syria since the early days of the nation's civil war” (para.6). With the existence of many terror groups on the ground, life became impossible in Syria. The ugly civil war has resulted in the worst humanitarian disaster in our century. Nguyen (2014) has quoted Antonio Guterres who stated
that “we all know that the conflict in Syria has triggered the most dramatic humanitarian crisis the world has faced for a long time,” (para.2). If we took a look at the number of registered Syrian refugees in the region in 2016, we would notice a huge increase. According to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (2016), number of regional registered Syrian refugees in 2016 was 4,837,134. The number was divided among countries in the region as the following, “2.1 million Syrians registered by UNHCR in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon; 2.7 million Syrians registered by the Government of Turkey; as well as more than 29,000 Syrian refugees registered in North Africa” (UNHCR, Registered Syrian Refugees section, para. 1).

The Syrian refugee crisis has affected the regional countries, where their existence became financial and security burdens despite the financial support from the United Nations and other regional and international humanitarian organizations. The continuous floating of thousands of Syrian refugees, who have illegally crossed borders of countries around the world, and hundreds died in such attempts, including children and women. According to Hanley (2015), “as hundreds of refugees drowned crossing the Mediterranean or Aegean seas in flimsy and overcrowded boats, or suffocated trapped in locked vans, Americans directed their outrage at human smugglers” (Self Report section, para. 4).

The United Nations needed to take immediate action to decrease the regional countries’ heavy burden; so countries around the world were called to resettle Syrian refugees Nguyen (2014) stated, “the UN and the high
commissioner want to resettle 130,000 Syrians outside the region by the end of 2016 and are nearly half way to reaching its goal” (para.7). As a result, many countries around the world have accepted Syrian refugees by an agreement with United Nation.

The United States and the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Compared to other parts of the world, such as some European countries, the United States has agreed to accept only a small number of Syrian refugees. As Bramham (2013) stated, “since 2013, Germany has pledged to take in 30,000 Syrians, Australia 5,600, Sweden 1,200 and Norway 1,000” (n. a). Germany pledged to accept the highest number of Syrian refugees among all countries other than the regional ones. On the other hand, according to the White House (2015), “president Barack Obama has directed his administration to prepare to take in at least 10,000 Syrian refugees over the next year, the White House said on September 10” (para.1). So in 2015, the United States decided to accept only 10,000 Syrian refugees over a period of one year. However, this number is far from having been met during the entire length of the conflict: Out of this number, only 2,234 Syrian refugees have come to resettle in the United States since 2010, which was the beginning of the Syrian conflict (Bauder, 2016, para. 7-8).

Recently, according to David Miliband, the President of the International Rescue Committee, “IRC encourages the White House to consider this 10,000 milestone ‘a floor and not a ceiling.’ Resettling refugees is right, practical and smart. The achievement of the 10,000 target proves what is possible” (International Rescue
Committee, 2016 a, para. 2). The arrival of 10,000 Syrian refugees to San Diego last August was a great achievement compared to the combined number of arrival refugees during the past five years. Additionally, the IRC called on the United States’ administration to “provide solutions for 200,000 refugees in FY17 through resettlement and alternative admissions pathways to the United States—at least 140,000 of which should be admitted through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program” (International Rescue Committee, 2016 b, para. 4). Even if the U.S would succeed in resettling 140,000 Syrian refugees in 2017, the number is very small because there are millions of Syrians refugees waiting to be resettled. Therefore, the U.S needs to increase the number of Syrian refugees to make a real difference.

Meanwhile, the resettlement organization agencies in the United States have offered good support for newcomers of Syrian refugees to help their settlement. Hanley (2015) explained that, “these organizations will meet refugees at the airport, provide orientation, help them get medical exams, register for English classes, apply for jobs and Social Security cards, then relocate them to sites around the country” (para.14). Although the United States did not accept a large number of Syrian refugees, it helped by aiding them financially, pledging an additional $10 million to UNHCR to strengthen its efforts to identify and refer vulnerable refugees, including Syrians, for resettlement (United States, 2016 a, para. 1). Over the years, the United States has contributed financially to assisting Syrian refugees around the world. In fact, the U.S. contributed $10 million to
UNHCR’s relief efforts in 2016. Furthermore, the same article pointed out that, “the United States has created a program to allow U.S. citizens and permanent residents to file refugee applications for their Syrian family members” (United States, 2016 b, para.1). Giving weight to the fact of the existence of terror and extremist groups on Syrian soil, along with terrorist attacks around the world, particularly the recent attacks in Paris and the United States, the Syrian refugee crisis became a debatable issue among both decision makers and people of the United States.

According to Jordan and De Avila (2015), since the Islamic State terror group claimed responsibility for this month’s Paris terror attacks and disclosure that an attacker posed as a Syrian refugee to enter Europe, many U.S. governors and lawmakers have called for a pause in admitting Syrian refugees until authorities re-assess whether the background screening is tough enough. (p.1).

Americans who oppose admitting Syrian refugees into the United States claim that the security background screening is not enough to prevent terrorists from entering the country. In contrast, Americans who believe that the United States should admit more Syrian refugees argue that background security check is enough, and terrorists will find their way into the country in many other ways. United States (2015) made it clear that:

All refugees of all nationalities considered for admission to the United States undergo a rigorous security screening involving multiple federal
intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, such as the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Departments of Homeland Security, State and Defense, in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our country. (para. 8).

Although my research does not investigate political views, opposing views among Americans regarding Syrian refugees have indirectly affected the findings. In other words, positive or negative stereotypes towards Syrian refugees were associated with common conflict perspectives about Syrian refugees that groups of Americans have adopted.

Goals / Aims of the Study

The goal of this study is to highlight challenges and barriers that Syrian refugees face to socially and culturally integrate in the United States, through what they report about their experiences, and their perspective on these experiences. In addition, I want to emphasize the need for further studies regarding this particular group of immigrants, focusing on social aspects of their lives in the U.S. Future studies should examine these experiences over longer term in order to discern how these experiences vary and change over different phases of their lives. The overall goal of my research is to offer some understanding of the experiences of Syrian refugees that our American society fears and perceives as the unknown others. Further, similar studies could find a middle ground to share knowledge about each other, as two different cultures.
Brief Overview of the Study

This study was conducted in order to examine the cultural and social integration process among Syrian refugees in the United States, including what challenges and barriers their interviews revealed that contributed to the process of their social and cultural integration. In particular, challenges pertaining to cultural and religious values, stereotypes and discrimination, and English skills were examined. For this purpose, interviews were used for this project in order to collect, represent, and investigate data. Semi-structured interviews in Syrian dialect with ten Syrian refugee participants who had resettled in the United States during the past five years. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, in full, in both Syrian dialect and English, by the researcher. The data analysis has investigated what the interviewees indicated about their processes of social and cultural integration in the United States’ society as refugees. Data were coded for themes pertaining to refugees’ challenges and opportunities to social and cultural integration in the United States. Specific extracts were chosen as examples to be presented in the report because they served as rich materials to illustrate answers to the study’s research questions and because they are representative of wider and various themes, which arose among participants, as well as the variety of experiences pertaining to a particular theme.

Findings indicated that Syrian refugees needed to overcome personal, social, linguistic, and other indirect challenges in order to integrate socially and
culturally in the United States’ society. However, participants’ adaptation to integration as a strategy of acculturation, according to Berry’s (1997, p. 9) definition was limited to few participants. As a result, further longitudinal study is needed to examine their changing and dynamic integration processes over a longer-term residency period in the U.S.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter one consists of many sections to introduce the study. I offered a brief explanation of the background of the study, the problem, goals, overview of the Syrian conflict, and the rise of the Syrian refugees’ crisis. Chapter two provides a review of previous literature on integration and acculturation of immigrants, in general, and refugees in particular, and Arab Americans’ experiences in the U.S. There are very few studies examining the acculturation and integration of Syrian refugees among the studies that I have examined, and most of these studies focused on political views, discrimination and terrorism. I concluded that there is a gap in the research regarding Syrian refugees compared to other refugees in the U.S.

Chapter three, Methodology, describes research methods in detail and reasons for choosing them, the research questions, and my involvement in this type of research. I explained how participants were recruited and gave a brief demographic description about each one and limitations to the study. In the data collection section, I included procedures on how data was collected, and how
much data was collected. Also, I describe the process of coding for themes, which themes were found in relation to each research question.

Chapter four, Findings, has four sections, and each section addresses a specific research question along with the themes that had arisen in relation to that question. Section one, Interactions with Other Groups, examines the interaction with groups other than Syrians and Arabs. Section two, The Role of English Proficiency, examines the role of English language proficiency on participants' integration. Section three, Discrimination and Negative Stereotypes, examines the effects of negative stereotypes and discrimination on interactions and integration. Section four, Cultural and Religious Values, discusses the participants' cultural and religious values and how they affected their acceptance or rejection to the American values. In chapter five, Discussion and Conclusions, the findings are discussed in terms of what the interviewers revealed about their experiences pertaining to my research questions. I concluded that acculturation strategies adopted by participants are dynamic and changeable over time, so further longitudinal study is needed to examine the integration process over a longer time.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will present various definitions of acculturation, assimilation, and integration, similarities as well as differences, elements, challenges, and variables that affect them. This will consist of a literature review of previous studies, research, and articles on assimilation, acculturation and integration of refugees in the U.S., Arab Americans, Syrian refugees around the world and in the U.S. It is important to present various definitions, elements and challenges of these terms to understand how these social and cultural dynamic processes take place and continue to affect immigrants and refugees' life experiences and challenges overtime in the host country. Also, because all these terms are related to the study of immigrants and refugees, they could be sometimes perceived the same way in the readers’ minds. Acculturation is the broader framework for this study where immigrants and refugees need to acculturate in the new society adopting one or more of its strategies (assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration) (Berry, 1997, p. 9).

In general, there are very few studies examining the acculturation and integration of Syrian refugees around the world, and only a handful articles about Syrian refugees in the U.S., and most of them focused on political views, discrimination and terrorism. On the other hand, other groups of refugees
dominated studies of refugees in the U.S. such as Vietnamese, Cambodians, Nicaraguans, Soviet Jewish, Iraqis and others. I concluded that there is a gap in the research regarding Syrian refugees compared to other refugees in the U.S.

Assimilation, Acculturation and Integration

Integration

There are many definitions of the term “integration”, and Marascuilo and Dagenais (1974) offered a general definition of integration as “the realization of equal opportunity by deliberate cooperation and without regard to racial or other social barriers” (p. 180). Other researchers valued integration in terms of economic participation in the host country, such as Banki (2004) who explained, “integration in the intermediate term refers to the ability of the refugee to participate with relative freedom in the economic and communal life of the host region” (p.2). Economic aspects of integration were also a part of Crisp’s (2004) research of “local integration” as a process of legal, economic and social processes. (p.1).

A social view of integration was addressed among different studies. A study by El Kacimi (2008) clearly defined “social integration” as, “a term utilized by sociologists, social psychologists and educators to refer to the process of learning one’s culture and how to live within it. For the individual, it provides the resources necessary for acting and participating within their society” (p. 12). Furthermore, Crisp (2004) viewed social Integration as a process of “enabling
refugees to live amongst or alongside the host population, without fear of systematic discrimination, intimidation or exploitation by the authorities or people of the asylum country” (p. 1-2). Berry (1997) also referred to integration as a social strategy of acculturation:

When there is an interest in both maintaining one’s original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups, Integration is the option; here, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. (p. 9)

Blau (1960) offered a general explanation of the theory of social integration. The degree of social integration of individuals in a group depends on how they attract the members of this dominant group, and how they approach defensive tactics that may arise, due to competition between both host group and immigrants, to block their integration processes. However, the services provided by immigrants will result in allowing exchange of acceptance of cultural and social differences where social integration emerges and continues over time. A similar view of integration was provided by Berry (1997), who pointed out that for integration to attained acceptance of both dominant and non-dominant social and cultural differences is required (p. 10).

Factors that affect integration of refugees, according to Banki’s (2004) study are social, such as labor experiences in that community throughout history, and the degree of similarity of immigrants’ language, religious affiliation and
ethnicity with members of the host society (p. 5). However, this research concludes that:

The ability to alter the direction, destination, and treatment of refugee populations has no one single factor. As durable conflicts defer the need for durable solutions, it is critical that we understand the reasons behind, and the causes of, intermediate refugee integration. (p. 17)

**Acculturation**

The term acculturation was defined by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, (1936) as, “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (p.150). This study outlined the phases of acculturation, so the process should include the following steps, “selection of traits under acculturation”, “determination of traits presented and selected in acculturation situations” and “integration of traits into the patterns of the accepting culture” (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936, p.151).

A shift that has occurred in studying the acculturation of immigrants has been to examine the effects of psychological stress on immigrants who try to acculturate in the host country. Berry (1997) explained that:

The concept of acculturation is employed to refer to the cultural changes resulting from these group encounters, while the concepts of psychological acculturation and adaptation are employed to refer to the
psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation. (p. 6)

According to Berry (1997) study of acculturation as a process, immigrants in the host country face physiological effects which arise throughout the process to cope with the stress of new cultural settings depending on many variables, including both prior and post migration life experiences, personal characteristics, education, gender, and other social and cultural variables. He explained in detail the differences among types of acculturation strategies that immigrants might adopt to cope with the new life’s stress in the host country. These “acculturation strategies” include assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization, and he pointed to negative and positive aspects of each one. Berry (1997), “marginalization” occurs where immigrants have some interest in involvement with cultural groups other than theirs, but it is fairly low. “Assimilation” on the other hand will take place when immigrants become totally involved in other cultural groups leaving their main groups’ identities aside. Also, “Separation” occurs when immigrants actively isolate themselves to remain only within their main groups and avoid interaction with other cultural groups, and there is no interest in interaction with other groups. The last strategy of acculturation is “integration”, where immigrants maintain their culture and interact with groups other than their origin group at the same time (Berry, 1997, p. 9). This study was the theoretical framework that offered a foundation to my research on social and cultural integration processes to distinguish and relate findings to the four main
acculturation strategies as defined by the author. Finding of my study indicated that three participants were marginalized because little or zero interest in involvement with cultural groups other than theirs. While the one who married ousted his ethnic group tend to be assimilated where he became totally involved in other cultural groups leaving his main group’s identities aside. Additionally, “Separation” was adopted by three of my participants who remain within their Arabic or Syrian groups to avoid interaction with other groups. Three of them integrated because they were interested in maintaining the Syrian culture and daily interactions with other groups to access larger social networks at the same time. However, their degree of integration varied (Berry, 1997. p.9). Teske and Nelson (1974) highlighted the elements of acculturation in their study explaining that acculturation is a dynamic process through direct contacts for both individuals and groups, and cannot be a result of a process. It is not a one-way process because a relation between two recipients occurs. Also, acculturation doesn’t require the existence of a dominant- non-dominant group’s relation, so acceptance of a dominant group to non-dominant group is not important, and changes of values are not necessary (p.358).

Berry (1997) also explained challenges and factors that play roles in acculturation for both pre-acculturation and during-acculturation phases. Variables and factors that positively affect acculturation prior to the process include younger age at migration, being a male, and higher level of education. Significant contributing factors are reason for migration, motivations,
expectations and personal factors such as self-efficiency. In addition, factors that affect immigrants’ acculturation during acculturation include combined experiences associated with it, and problems they encounter over time in the host country (p.21-24).

Assimilation

Various definitions of assimilation were offered among studies. Even though these definitions might seem similar, they vary in the meanings they accord to different social and cultural needs that arose during that specific era of history. The process of assimilation was presented first during colonial era in the U.S in the theory of “the straight-line” by Herbert Gans as where assimilation unfolded as a dynamic process for each generation of immigrants. There is an attempt for each generation to adjust to the new society taking a step away from the previous generation, so by the third-generation assimilation could be attained (Alba & Nee, 2003, p. 27). Another previous definition of assimilation in the U.S was produced by the Chicago School of Sociology at the end of the eighteenth century, due to a heavy migration from Europe to the U.S. and racial migration such as the African American migration to urban cities. The concept was recognized based on ethnicity where groups of immigrants (minorities) from diverse ethnic backgrounds were expected to assimilate or totally “Americanized” to fit in the mainstream American life (Alba & Nee, 2003):

Robert Park and E. W. Burgess provided a widely known early definition of assimilation—‘a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons
and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life’. (p.18)

However, old definitions of assimilation were meant to totally ease the immigrants’ cultural identities to adopt the dominant powerful group’s identity. Alba and Nee explain that the Chicago School’s definition of assimilation, for example, was defined based on race and ethnicity, focusing on how the cultures of diverse groups became partially merged in ways that promoted their co-existence within a national context (p. 10).

More recently, the meaning of assimilation changed along with the change of migration. A contemporary definition of assimilation has been offered by many researchers. Berry (1997) emphasizes assimilation as a strategy, rather than a situation resulting from a process, in which “individuals don’t wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures” (p. 9). In other words, Berry viewed assimilation as a strategy that individuals or groups adapt to interact and confront one another. Alba and Nee (2003), found a new meaning of assimilation that could fit more in the current migration era along with social issues. They define it as:

The decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences. ‘Decline’ means in this context that a distinction attenuates in salience, that the occurrences for which it is relevant diminish in number and contract to fewer and fewer domains of social life. (p. 11)
In their article, they showed that the historical shift of assimilation definitions was toward treating race and ethnicity as less significant factors for assimilation. Furthermore, while assimilation is now viewed as a strategy of acculturation by (Berry 1997), some others view it as a separate process itself. For example, Teske and Nelson (1974) state, “Assimilation is not, as some have suggested or implied, a phase or end-product of acculturation; rather, it is a separate and distinct process” (p. 364). These authors also examined elements of assimilation as a one way dynamic process that requires changing of values of the group of immigrants and acceptance of the dominant group to the non-dominant group. Additionally, the assimilation process, just like acculturation, requires direct contact and involvement of individuals and groups (Teske & Nelson, 1974, p.365).

Assimilation, Acculturation and Integration of Arab American

Little research was found about Arab Americans that investigated acculturation and integration directly, instead acculturations of these groups were a variable to measure the effects of other factors like discrimination, psychological and health issues. For instance, Jaber, Brown, Hammad Zhu and Herman (2003) studied the relation between the lack of acculturation among Arab Americans and diabetes. Al-Omari and Scheibmeir (2009) examined the effects of Arab Americans’ acculturation on tobacco smoking. Other researchers investigated the effect of acculturation on discrimination, such as Faragallah, Schumm and Webb (1997) who found that acculturation of Arab Americans is a
problematic process, in particular to Muslims. Historical events that helped in promoting negative stereotypes of Arabs decreased their desire to acculturate and to show less satisfaction of their life in the U.S. Variables that affected acculturation were, country of origin, age, religious affiliation and sectors, and maintenance of Arabic traditions (p.198). Younger age, being a Christian, and longer years of residency in the U.S. led to more acculturation and life satisfaction (p. 197). Awad and Zárate (2010) studied impact of ethnicity, religion, and acculturation on the perceptions of negative stereotypes and discrimination of Arab Americans and people of middle eastern origin in the U.S. Results showed that a high percentage of American respondents viewed them as violent based on ethnicity. Acculturation was measured in terms of two elements, ethnic society immersion and dominant society immersion (p. 59). “Levels of acculturation can manifest itself in two fundamental ways, immersion in or adoption of the dominant society and retention or immersion in the ethnic society” (Awad & Zárate, 2010, p. 60). Findings showed that Muslims were exposed to discrimination and reported lower dominant society immersion while Christians were less exposed to discrimination and reported a higher dominant society immersion. Similar to Awad and Zarate’s (2010), findings in which they found that Muslims, in particular, were exposed to discrimination and stereotypes, and therefore were less likely to integrate into US society; our findings showed that some participants of both Muslims and Christians refugees were exposed to discrimination. However, Christians faced negative stereotypes and
discrimination due to Americans’ assumption that they were Muslims because of their Arabic/Syrian identity, and they positively coped with discrimination unlike Muslims who sometimes isolated themselves.

Specific generation or age categories were examined in terms of acculturation of Arab Americans. Amer and Hovey (2007) studied examining “sociodemographic” variations in the acculturation process of first and second generation of Arab Americans. Factors that affected acculturation process were gender, marital status, and religion. Females and married participants were less likely to acculturate. Integration of Muslims was related to less depression and not better mental health and mental health of Christians harmonious with acculturation process. Ineffective demographic variables were age, sex, education, and learning. (p. 335). Overall, the studies of Arab-Americans focused primarily on psychological as opposed to social issues.

Refugees in the United States

Numerous studies that examined acculturation of a wide network of refugees in the U.S. Among these studies, acculturation was examined and viewed more as psychological and sociological process and was related to different topics regarding various aspects of these groups’ challenges in the U.S., the host country. However, studies that directly examined refugees’ social integration or acculturation in the U.S. were rare.

Both Smither and Rodriguez-Giegling (1982) and Vinokurov (2000) found that demographic factors are more important than other factors for refugees to
acculturate. Smither and Rodriguez-Giegling (1982) studied acculturation of the Vietnamese and Nicaraguan refugees in the U.S and, unlike previous studies of acculturation, did not focus on demographic factors, instead they focused on psychological factors such as to what extent refugees were willing to acculturate (affected by trauma of migration). Findings showed that personal factors were the most important factors for these groups' willingness to acculturate in the U.S while demographic factors like age, education, years of residency were less effective (p.19-24). On the other hand, Vinokurov (2000) found that some demographic factors were associated with more acculturation of Soviet Jewish refugees such as higher level of education, English language skills which led to employment, earning more money, and overall life satisfaction (p.554).

Acculturation was significant to studies related to the health of refugees (physical and psychological well-being) such as the study by Palinkas and Pickwell (1995) that examined the Cambodian acculturation process towards a common behavior of the U.S.'s society as a factor for risk, therapy, and clinic of chronic disease. Acculturation was measured as both process and structure of negotiations between individuals and groups of dominant and non-dominant sides. Applications of this study could help Cambodian refugees in accessing good health behaviors in the U.S that are not available at their mother country (p.1643).

Some studies of refugees in the U.S examined the level of post-traumatic stress disorder such as Carlson and Rosser-Hogan’s (1991) study of Cambodian
refugees. Also, Jamil, Nassar-McMillan and Lambert’s (2004) study of PTSD among Iraqi Gulf War veteran refugees in relation to depression, anxiety, and panic (p. 304-305). The higher PTSD level the more depression panic and anxiety they experienced. The main factors contributing to this were cultural rejection because Americans lack knowledge about the Gulf War and facing cultural shock in the host country combined with other post trauma experiences. (p.295)

Birman and Birman (2006), looked at the effects of “acculturation gaps” (P.568), in conflicts among adolescents and their parents of Soviet Jewish refugees in the U.S. Gaps that influenced conflicts are related to American identity and behavior (children were more identified and behaved as Americans which lead to disagreements with parents) and the Russian language (P.583-585). Other studied English language acculturation among refugees, such as Tran’s (1988) study of Vietnamese refugees in the U.S, older than forty years. The author concluded that older women of participants had more problems in English language acculturation than men (p. 747). This difference was due to inherited disadvantages and factors regarding women from Vietnamese culture, such as lack of education in their first language, staying home busy with family, not able to attend ESL classes in the U.S, also “at the same time, they are also suffering from various physical, social, and psychological problems of old age” (p.757).
Conclusion

Reviewing literature of assimilation, acculturation and integration studies, research about integration and acculturation of immigrants in general, and refugees explained the differences among these terms. However, despite the various definitions of integration, most studies offered common elements and aspects of social integration. Studies about Arab-Americans in the United States were examined in terms of acculturation challenges, such as language and discrimination, psychological issues, but limited studies were found to examine other challenges and barriers. Also, most studies about Arab-Americans focused on groups of Arabs and ignored subcultural differences among Arabs of different backgrounds and ages. In general, studies that examined refugees in the United States ignored acculturation, assimilation, and integration of Syrian refugees in the United States. Social and cultural integration of Syrian refugees weren't exist among the studies that I have examined, where most studies focused on political views and discrimination, and terrorism. As a result, there is a gap in the research regarding Syrian refugees that needs to be filled to include all social and linguistics aspects that this minority group deal with and experience in the United States.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The purpose of this study is to examine the cultural and social integration process among Syrian refugees in the United States. To what extent direct and indirect challenges have played a role in their process of social and cultural integration; challenges include but not limited to cultural conflicts, religious values, stereotypes, and English language proficiency.

Research Questions

What does the collected data from interviews of the Syrian refugees’ participants reveal about the Syrian refugees’ population social and cultural integration in the U.S regarding the following contributing factors:

1- How does involvement with other groups, or remaining among their group play a role in their integration?

2 - What are the effects of English proficiency on interactions and social and cultural integration?

3 - What is the role of discrimination and negative stereotypes of Arabs in general and Syrian refugees in involvement in larger social networks and integration?
4 - How do religious and cultural values affect accepting and adapting or rejecting the new society’s cultural and social values, norms and the Syrian refugees’ integration?

**Research Methodology**

Interviews were used as the preferred methodology to explore the research questions for this project. Ten Syrian refugees in the United States were chosen to participate in my study upon meeting specific requirements, and were interviewed in person. Rowley (2012) explained the meaning of interviews as:

Face-to-face verbal exchanges in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to acquire information from and gain an understanding of another person, the interviewee. The interviewee may be invited to talk about their own attitudes, beliefs, behaviors or experiences, as a citizen, user, consumer or employee. (p.260)

I found interviews to be a very useful method to investigate the process of social and cultural integration of Syrian refugees in the U.S because:

The research objectives center on understanding experiences, opinions, attitudes, values, and processes. There is insufficient known about the subject to be able to draft a questionnaire. The potential interviewees might be more receptive to an interview than other data gathering approaches. (Rowley, 2012, p.262)
Furthermore, benefits of interviewing outweigh benefits of other research methods when we want to learn about people’s experiences. By interviewing, according to Weiss (1994):

We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affected their thoughts and feelings. We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition. (p. 1)

I conducted semi-structured interviews (Rowley, 2012, p.262) allowing flexibility according to the different responses that participants gave. I did not engage in structured interviews because:

They ask the same questions in the same order of every respondent, they do not obtain full reports. Instead, the information they obtain from any one person is fragmentary, made up of bits and pieces of attitudes and observations and appraisals. (Weiss, 1994, p. 2)

Therefore, the semi-structured interview was the best methodology to gain more insight into the participants’ experiences and challenges. In other words, to obtain more knowledge and to gather more data to answer my research questions, a structured set of questions for interviews was not used to conduct interviews, instead I used semi-structured qualitative interviews. Weiss (1994) also clarified the meaning of qualitative interviews as, “interviews that sacrifice
uniformity of questioning to achieve fuller development of information are properly” (p. 3). In order to develop a deeper and more complex understanding of participants’ experiences, semi-structured interview was used to collect data. According to Whiting (2008) semi-structured interviews are “in-depth interviews (which) should be personal and intimate encounters in which ‘open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories” (p. 36). However, the uniformity nature of semi-structured qualitative interviews doesn’t mean it is an ordinary conversation. Weiss (1994) explained the difference as:

In an ordinary conversation, each participant voices observations, thoughts, feelings. Either participant can set a new topic, either can ask questions. In the qualitative interview the respondent provides information while the interviewer, as a representative of the study, is responsible for directing the respondent to the topics that matter to the study. (p. 8)

Additionally, Weiss (1994) described in detail the possible research aims to use qualitative interviews, and I found the following related aims to my research.

1 - “Integrating multiple perspectives”. Each interviewee would have different experiences and observations regarding the same event.

2 - “Describing processes”. “what are the processes by which an event occurs”
3 - “Learning how events are interpreted”. “Qualitative interviews enable us to learn about perceptions and reactions known only to those to whom they occurred”

4 - “Bridging intersubjectivities”. It makes it possible for readers to grasp a situation from the inside. “Qualitative interview studies can approach the “you are there” vividness of a documentary” (p. 9-10).

On the other hand, the interview “as a research instrument” by (Talmy, 2011, p.27) is related to my research regarding some shared elements. “As a research instrument, interviews tend to be theorized (often tacitly) as a tool for investigating truths, facts, experience, beliefs, attitudes, and/or feelings of respondents” (Talmy, 2011, p. 26). Data analysis should include “a discussion of themes, usually that ‘emerged’ from the data; some kind of quotational display, frequently represented as stand-alone statements; an optional summary of the content of the quotes; and nominal description of procedures used in producing the thematic analysis” (Talmy, 2011, p.29). Nonetheless for this study I am exploring the experiences of a non-representative sample of Syrian refugees and examining the dialogic construction of these experiences is beyond the scope of the current analysis. Also, my own positionality as a researcher (a power holder) have impacted the interview situation and could affect the data and the findings. Talmy (2011) explained this issue as:

The interview is constituted by complex relations of power, which can be differentially realized in many ways: who chooses what—and what not—to
discuss, who asks what questions, when, and how, who is ratified to answer and who is not, who determines when to terminate a line of questioning, and so on. (p. 31)

In this study, a differentiation of powers has arisen somehow due to complex factors related to past and present experiences at home and in the U.S. This sometimes has caused mistrust because participants feared reporting their responses to the immigration or the Syrian government. Therefore, interviews “as research instrument “is beyond the current scope of the study.

Research Participants

Recruitment of Participants

In order to recruit participants for the study, the refugee center provided me with a list that contains names, email addresses and phone numbers of refugees. I contacted the Syrian refugees via email, explaining to them the purpose of my study. After they agreed to participate in the study, I met with participants and provided the consent form in both Arabic and English. Meetings were held in the refugee center’s building, at a time that was convenient for each participant. According to Weiss (1994):

If we wanted to study the experiences or behaviors of people who have some common characteristic, people who are, in this respect, in the same boat…. For these studies what we need is a sample of people who together can represent the population of concern. (p.17)
All participants met the following criteria: They were all eighteen years old and older, showed proof of a Syrian refugee status from a legal U.S. institute, and they also came to the U.S post 2011. However, the educational, marital, sex, religious statuses were varied. They were also informed about the project’s purpose and had ensured voluntary participation; afterwards they signed the written consent form after fully understanding it. The sample participants in this study, ten Syrian refugees, do not serve as representative members of a population (all Syrian refugees in the U.S) - “people who, taken together, display what happens within a population affected by a situation or event” (Weiss, 1994, p. 17). Instead this is a convenience sampling of participants associated with the refugee center.

**Description of Participants**

The study included ten participants of three females and seven males. There were no Muslim women, so all females were Christians. Males were three Christians and four Muslims. Participants’ ages ranged between nineteen and fifty-six. Participants had different levels of education where the highest level of education was divided as, three participants with bachelor degrees, two with some college, three with high school diploma, and one with some elementary school’s learning. Years of residency in the United States varied from eight months to five years. Three participants were unemployed, and seven were employed with different occupations such as cashiers, fast food restaurants’
workers, and business owners. Most participants were married, and three of them were single and never been married before, and one was divorced.

**Research Data**

I conducted ten interviews from ten participants and personally audio-recorded them onto my secured computer. The participants’ real names and identities were not audio-recorded or transcribed. Each participant was identified by the use of a unique code; (participant 1, participant 2…), and any of the transcripts only included pseudonyms.

**Table 1. The Length of Each Interview:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants by Codes</th>
<th>Length of the Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>34:67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>42:46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>44:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>33:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>33:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>41:04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>37:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>32:33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>45:07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only forms that contained any information on the participants were the consent forms, which were kept in a locked cabinet separate from the study data and will be shredded when the project is done. Any audio-recorded interview will be also destroyed after the project is done.
Data Collection

I recruited voluntary participants who were interviewed in person one by one after setting up a convenient meeting time. Semi-structured Interviews were conducted in Syrian dialect of Levantine. Rowley (2012) explained how semi-structured interviews are used to interview participants:

Semi-structured interviews take on a variety of different forms, with varying numbers of questions, and varying degrees of adaptation of questions and question order to accommodate the interviewee. Each question may have two to four sub-questions or prompts, which are used by the interviewer if they are necessary to ensure that the interviewee explores the main question sufficiently. (p. 262)

Each interview had a duration time of about 30 to 45 minutes. Each interviewee was directly audio-recorded onto my computer using Microsoft Voice Recorder, Windows 10 Software. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed in full in both Arabic (Syrian dialect) and English using Microsoft Word 2016 / Document and Word Processing Software, and only specific extracts were chosen where specific arisen themes were related to the research questions.

Data Analysis

My data analysis investigated what the interviewees indicated about their processes of social and cultural integration in the United States’ society as refugees. Therefore, choosing specific extracts to provide answers to questions in my research was used. To analyze the data, I used the transcribed data in
both Syrian dialect and English to create a detailed log of each interview, and this log was coded using a recursive process of thematic coding in which codes and categories emerge through multiple passes through the data. Rowley (2012):

If you have conducted semi-structured interviews, then the interview questions may be a good basis for key themes. These themes or categories are the main areas in which insights have been generated, and will eventually become the basis of the narrative in the findings chapter. Try to keep the number of “main” themes to six to eight; you may then wish to develop sub-themes within each theme. Themes will need names, or codes. (p. 268-269)

Additionally, the use of coding by Weiss (1994) is explained as, “how we code it depends on our theoretical assumptions and the research interests we bring to the project” (p.155). I formed codes as marginal notes, then I formed the arisen themes and sub- themes and chose the extracts with arisen themes that were related to my research questions. I went back to check my codes’ categories to see if they matched the themes I have developed along reading the extracts. I used sorting to divide the data and rearrange extracts and themes into new files relating each file to a specific research question, for example, what all ten participants said about interaction with other groups (Weiss, 1994, p.155). However, a detailed table of arisen themes would be available at the beginning of each chapter (for each research question).

Rowley (2012) also explained the process of coding as:
Code the text using the codes, so that text covering similar themes in different interviews, or in different parts of the same interview can be drawn together and compared, and appropriate understandings of the things that the interviewees have said about a theme (or sub-theme) can emerge, and quotes can be identified to support such insights. (p. 269)

Findings were analyzed in terms of the challenges and practices involved in Syrian refugees' processes of social and cultural integration in the United States. A quantitative analysis was performed in order to produce meaningful, accurate, and informative results. In addition, findings drawback to be discussed in relation to Berry’s (1997) acculturation strategies as a theoretical framework of this study. Simply a “Local Integration” by Weiss (1994) was the best to explain how the findings were reported as, "local integration is simply to summarize the excerpt file and its coding: here is what is said in this area, and this is what I believe to mean" (p. 158). So the method of “a theory makes sense of the material is preferable to a descriptive summary of main lines and variations” (Weiss, 1994, p. 159).

Section 1. Interactions with Other Groups:

Table 2. Themes for Section 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Syrian refugees' negative perception of other groups like Jews caused conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Available Syrian Community make interactions less to occur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 3 | Participant 3 | Fear of the Unknown affects interaction
Theme 5 | Participant 9 | Positive personal characters are the main and most important variable for interaction

Section 2. The Role of English proficiency:

Table 3. Themes for Section 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Usefulness English classes in Syria, public versus private schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Economic advantage lead to more years of English learning in Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Using prior learning of the British accent in Syrian schools to their advantage in the U. S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Years of residency in the U.S affects English proficiency especially speaking skills through interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5</td>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>The lack of English communication skills causes low self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7</td>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Literacy in Arabic makes acquiring English harder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 8</td>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>High socioeconomic statues helped to access specific needs despite weak English skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3. Discrimination and Negative Stereotypes:
Table 4. Themes for Section 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Syrian identify is associated with terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Participant 6, Participant 2</td>
<td>Generalization of all Arabs and Syrians as Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Islamophobia in the U. S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Positive personal characters and education help to cope with discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5</td>
<td>Participant 5, Participant 2</td>
<td>Little interaction causes less exposure to discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6</td>
<td>Participant 7, Participant 10</td>
<td>there is a blurry Vision of dissimilation due to the Islamic religion affiliation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 4. Cultural and Religious Values:

Table 5. Themes for Section 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Family tries are stronger among Arabs but doesn’t prevent acceptance to American values instead it leads to negative perception of Americans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Marriage outside one’s ethical and religious group makes it easier to accept the values in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>The degree of following religious rules affect the acceptance of the U.S society’s values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Older newcomers of refugees find it harder to accept the U. S’s values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations

Although the participants had voluntarily answered my questions, many of them asked me to stop the recording for specific questions to make sure that I would not report their responses to the immigration here or to the Syrian government. In other words, even though I ensured the data security, there was still a bit of mistrust that could affect the findings. Additionally, for the role of religion chapter, recruiting Muslim participants was harder than recruiting Christians due to the “Islamophobia” among Americans, so Muslims were worried and many refused to participate. Furthermore, the study didn’t include female Muslim Syrian refugees. Some of them wanted to participate in this study but their husbands or families didn’t encourage them. Therefore, findings for discrimination based on Muslim religion were limited to men of Syrian refugees. It is important to note that sample participants of this study were recruited and limited to Syrian refugees who resettled in Southern California. Further study is needed to include participants from all the states where Syrian refugees have resettled in order to get a broader understanding of the Syrian refugees’ challenges of social and cultural integration. However, if such information were attainable, it would help due to the varied cultural and ethnical groups among the states that affect and influence discrimination and there would also be interaction with other variables available.

Positionality of the Researcher

I became involved with this research for personal reasons. I am an Arab
American woman who was at some point a newcomer to the United States. In addition, I am an internationalized U.S. citizen from Syria. As both a Syrian and American woman, the Syrian civil war has affected me and my closest family members and friends who have lost a loved one, or fled Syria for their safety resulting in them having lost everything, leaving behind only terrifying stories. When I migrated to the United States, almost nine years ago, interaction with the natives was a complicated task for me because my prior knowledge of English was limited to some grammar rules and vocabulary, and I never had a real English conversation with any native English speaker. Like most immigrants, I thought that I had enough knowledge about the social and cultural life in the United States from common international views and perspectives. In the U.S., I realized that reality was totally different from what I had imagined the American society would be. However, I am a person who is able to accept and respect cultural differences between Americans and Arabs, so with my personality and that mindset, I was able to adjust within the new society over time.

Despite the lack of language skill, being surrounded by my original ethnic group of Arabs were the main factors that marginalized me from integrating for almost two years, until I was able to integrate socially and culturally to become an active member of the new community. For that, I understand the struggle of Syrian refugees even though my path of integration might not have been exactly like theirs. I became interested in how the Syrian refugees experience social and linguistics aspects. Additionally, I chose to interview them because I have a prior
knowledge of their culture, language, and the uniqueness and complexity, which makes it even harder. My observational focus is of Syrians in general and Syrian refugees in the U.S., integrating in this society. This is the main question that I want to examine and investigate in this paper.

**Summary**

Chapter Three, Methods, began with outlining the purpose of this study and the research questions. Then, I discussed in detail the research methodology of qualitative semi-structured interview and the reason of choosing it for this project. I also described how participants were recruited and offered a brief demographic description of each one. I explained the research data, the data collection and analysis processes providing a table of the arisen themes. Also, I included an explanation of my involvement with research questions in the positionality of researcher’s section and concluded with a summary of the chapter. In Chapter Four, Interactions with Other Groups, I will highlight the main challenges of interactions with other groups by examining extracts from participants to indicate various levels of interaction.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the data to find answers to my four research questions: How does involvement with other groups, or remaining among their group play a role in their integration?; What are the effects of English proficiency on interactions and social and cultural integration?; What is the role of discrimination and negative stereotypes of, Arabs in general and Syrian refugees in involvement in larger social networks and integration?; How do religious and cultural values affect accepting and adapting or rejecting the new society's cultural and social values, norms and the Syrian refugees' integration? The chapter will be divided into four main sections where each section covers one research question. Each section will include an introduction and a conclusion and specific presented extracts where themes that were related to each research question arose from the data to represent various experiences. Also, a detailed informative table of arisen themes will be provided for each section, and I will provide a summary of the overall findings for all sections at the end of this chapter.
Interactions with Other Groups

In this section I will examine the data to find answers to the first research question: How does involvement with other groups, or remaining among their group play a role in the Syrian refugees’ social and cultural integration in the U.S? I investigated the participants reported interaction with Americans for a short time period depending on their years of residency in the U.S (varied from six months to five years). According to Martinovic, Tubergen and Maas (2009), “interaction between immigrants and natives tends to change over time, which is why it is important to study the process of social integration and not only the level of integration at a certain moment” (p. 871). Because interaction could change overtime, a longitudinal study is needed to observe their integration process over longer periods of time. The date reported here can indicate how they understand their experiences of interacting with others up until the interview was conducted.

Examining themes that arose from data for all participants in response to that question showed that most of the interviewees remained within their original Syrian group and had some interaction with Arabs other than Syrians. For this chapter, I chose four specific extracts because they provided answers to my first research question about the Syrian refugees’ interaction with other groups in the U.S. In other words, specific themes are represented in these extracts which were related to the participants’ interactions and presented varied levels of interactions with groups other than their original group in the U.S.
Table 6. Themes for Interaction with Other Groups’ Section:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1, Syrian refugees' negative perception of other groups like Jews caused conflict.</td>
<td>Participant 2, “Yesterday a group of Jewish came to the store, honestly, they liked me, but you know. In our country, they teach us that they are Zionists yeah, our enemy, hmm and I know that they have nothing to do with politics and what is happening, but yeah, my reaction surprised me. Yeah. I was rude.”</td>
<td>Line 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2, Available Syrian community makes interaction with other groups less likely to occur</td>
<td>Participant 3, “I feel that I’m still over there nothing has changed at all.” “I’m only around Syrians most of the time because they were here and still around, so I don’t need to meet new people.”</td>
<td>Line 10, Line 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3, Fear of the unknown affects interaction</td>
<td>Participant 3, “I’m afraid, I don’t know them, let me deal with people I already know, it is better”</td>
<td>Line 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4, Cultural identity and values affect interaction</td>
<td>Participant 6, “My parents won’t let me hang out with them” “I cannot stand the way they think; they’re not like us” “Because they think that they will ruin me. You know. boyfriends and girlfriends”.</td>
<td>Line 4, Line 2, Line 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5, Positive personal characteristics are the main and most important variable for interaction</td>
<td>Participant 9, “Yeah, Jewish friends and Americans more than Mexican friends and I have. Hmm, Koreans and Vietnamese, I like to meet new people from everywhere. I don’t know. It’s me, and they like me too”</td>
<td>Line 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6, Cultural variables that affect their interaction like family background. Only in this case, it affects it in a positive way.</td>
<td>“You will benefit from their culture; yeah they teach you the culture” “There is more respect not like country”</td>
<td>Line 4, Line 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syrian Refugees’ Perceptions of Other Groups

One of the factors that can impact Syrian refugees’ interactions with other groups was their stereotypes and negative or positive perceptions of those groups. Participant 2 pointed to something that is culturally and politically considered to be a taboo for Syrians, which is interaction with Jewish people. He was raised in Syria where both society and government promoted ideas against Jews and prohibit any interaction with them due to the Syrian-Israeli long history of conflict. From my experience of being born and raised in Syria, despite that, most Syrians were raised to think that all Jews are their enemy due to the common ideology that generalized Jews as Israelis (the Syrian enemy), and it even appears in school textbooks and other government communications. In Extract 1, the conflict that participant 2 had experienced was due to negative perceptions of Jews and positive experiences through his direct interaction with them.

Extract 1. Negative Perceptions of Others:

1. Me: Do you interact with people other than Arabs here?
2. Him: Yes, ahh, yesterday a group of Jews came to the store, honestly, they liked me, but you know. In our country, they teach us that they are Zionists yeah, our enemy, hmm and I know that they have nothing to do with politics and what is happening, but yeah, my reaction surprised me. Yeah. I was rude.
3. Me: Aww okay, where in Syria did you learn that about Jews?

4. Him: Everywhere, hahah, schools, streets, homes, hmm news too, yeah even from our parent’s stories, hmm we know that some Jews used to live in Syria before, but they moved to Israel so...

5. Me: Ahh, what was their reaction we you told them that you’re Syrian?

6. Him: Yes, they liked me and we are friends now hahah.

According to participant 2, the ideology about Jews was prompted in Syria such as in line 2, “because in our country they teach us that they are Zionists, yeah, our enemy.” Syria as a society and government promoted this for a long time through the educational system, media, stories from war and ideas across generations. Landis (2003) has explained that:
Although some Syrians are careful to draw a distinction between Zionism and Jews, this is not a distinction made in Syria’s school texts. Israel is not a danger only because it is a powerful and expansionist state in the Islamic heartland, but because it is inhabited by Jews, who are a wicked and treasonous people. (p.107).

So this participant was one person among the many Syrians who couldn’t distinguish between Zionism and Jews. He thought that he had no problem dealing with anyone, still his cultural values tried to hold him back from interaction for a moment. There was a conflict between values and ideas he was raised to respect and believe, and what he had experienced dealing with friendly people. He stated in line 2, “my reaction surprised me.” However, he noticed that they seemed to be nice people, as in line 6, “they liked me and we are friends now,” so he was able to put his hate aside and recognize for the first time that not all Jews are bad and enemies. Goxe (2011) explained that this is a conflict between an “initial” and a "domestic" perception characterized by a number of prejudices likely to be conveyed by the press, media and echoing with personal, characteristics, education and international experience (or lack of it); and an "international" perception emerging when confronted with reality and "real" individuals' foreigners” (p.14). As a result, his cultural background is not controlling his interaction with groups other than Arabs. In fact, his personal characteristics and exposure to new life experiences in the U.S through interaction helped him to break out of his small social and cultural circle. In this
case the Jews’ positive attitude towards him as a Syrian, encouraged interaction, but such an interaction might not be possible if they had acted negatively. Therefore, interaction of Syrian refugees depends on both interactional participants’ perceptions of one another and their personal characteristics. Let us not forget that when there is a long political conflict between two countries, usually both sides of the conflict promote a certain ideology against the enemy. According to the collected data, besides participant 2, no other participant had experienced such a conflict by interaction with American Jews. Participant 9 mentioned having American Jewish friends besides Americans more than others. He responded to my question regarding interaction with other groups stating that he had, “Jewish friends and Americans more than Mexican friends.” However, I found Extract 1 to be the significant data to show the effects of negative perceptions of other groups on the Syrian refugees’ interaction due to my knowledge, as a Syrian, of the sensitivity of this issue in particular.

On the other hand, other factors can positively impact refugees’ interactions with those outside of their group such as positive personal characteristics and positive perceptions. Participant 9, was not like participant 6; he was open to interacting with all groups besides Arabs because he liked how respectful they were to him. He valued interaction as an important variable to learn about the new host country’s culture and norms. Besides, his high socioeconomic status could it be an explanation when it comes to his ability to form relationships with different groups, and his personal characteristics as a
sociable and likable man who used to be around people as a part of his job. As a result, these factors attracted people to be around him despite his poor English skills and made interaction easier for him as we will see in extract 2 below.

Extract 2. Positive Perceptions of Others:

1. Me: Do you have friends other than Syrians?
2. Him: Yeah, Jewish friends and Americans more than Mexican friends and I have Hmm, Koreans and Vietnamese, I like to meet new people from everywhere. I don’t know. It’s me, and they like me too
3. Me: What is some advantage and disadvantage of interacting with Americans here?
4. Him: You will benefit from their culture, yeah they teach you the culture,
5. Me: Can you give an example:
6. Him: Hmm, there is more respect. This is what we don’t have in our country. You learn about the country and strengthen your language a little bit. ahh, you understand their system what do they like and what do they hate. Yeah and I will stay away from things they don’t like and do whatever they like.

أنا: في عنك رفقات مو سوريين
هو: رفقة يهود وأميركان أكتر من الرفقة المكسيك ان وعادي مم م كوريين، فيتناميين. بحب أتعرف على ناس جداد من كل محل. ما يعرف. هيك أنا، وهني بحبوني كمان.
أنا: شو بفيد أو ما بفيد بالتعامل مع الأمرikan هو؟
It seems that interaction for participant 9 was an easy task where he told me that he had friends from many ethnic groups other than Arabs, as in line 2. Also, in line 4 he stated, "you will benefit from their culture, yeah they teach you the culture." He realized that interaction with non-Arabs is the key to understanding the culture of the United States’ society. In addition, he explained in line 6 that he liked interaction with them because they are respectful in general, "there is more respect not like our country." Furthermore, interaction with non-Arabs was necessarily him to understand the system and gain some language skills. Interaction with Americans supported his integration process in this society by gaining language and cultural knowledge to access wider services and communities other than his original ethnical group. According to Goxe (2011), “supportive insiders would help newcomers feel accepted in their new environment, develop their “understanding of the host culture for international experiential knowledge development” (p.13). Therefore, his personal characteristics helped in interaction with supportive Americans whom affected his process of social and cultural integration by sharing both language and cultural knowledge of this society directly and indirectly.
Backgrounds, Available Syrian Community, and Fear of the Unknown

Another factor that can negatively impact refugees’ interactions with those outside of their group is fear of the unknown society and people in the host country. Refugees, like participant 3, who lack knowledge about the new social and cultural surroundings, fear interaction with other groups, instead they rather to stay in their comfort zone around people of their origin group. Participant 3 is a young woman who came as a refugee to the U.S in 2014. She has English knowledge from Syria, but she knows how to write more than speak. Despite her knowledge of English, she had little or zero interaction with groups other than Syrians. She did not even interact with Arabs, so being within her original groups of Syrians isolated her from interaction and integration culturally and socially in this society, as demonstrated in extract 3,

Extract 3. Remaining Within One’s Comfort Zone:

1. Me: Do you interact with groups other than Syrians or Arabs here?
2. Her: Hmm, no no, I don’t talk with Americans. Yeah, I’m only around Syrians most of the time because they were here and still around, so I don’t need to meet new people you know.
3. Me: Why you don’t try to talk with your neighbors at least?
4. Her: Hmm, I’m afraid, I don’t know them, let me deal with people I already know it is better, you know this country is not safe like Syria. hahah I mean the old Syria.
5. Me: Okay, but why do you feel that way?

6. Her: My husband tells me that to be careful they might hurt our children or kidnap them, hmm and even people in Syria talk about that. You know they have here gangs, drugs, murders, yeah

7. Me: Okay, but that’s everywhere, don’t we have that in Syria too?

8. Her: No, no, before the war it was the safest country in the world, and you know that right? I mean we have things like that yeah, but here hmm too much.

9. Me: So you still surrounded by the same Syrians just like you were in Syria?

10. Her: Yes, hahah, I feel that I’m still over there nothing has changed at all.
This refugee woman stayed home raising her two children for the past two years in the U.S and never had to work, so the absence of social environment to speak and meet people other than Syrians made her feel that she had never moved out of Syria as she stated in line 10, “I feel that I’m still over there nothing has changed at all.” Even in her apartment complex, she chose not to speak with her neighbors because she wanted to stay in her comfort zone. Also, her perception about the United States’ society that is not safe, and her fear of other groups legitimized her isolating herself to maintain interactions within a small group of Syrians. Nevertheless, negative perceptions of others led to fear, as she stated in line 8, “I’m afraid. I don’t know them. Let me deal with people I already know. It is better”, so she expressed how her fear of the unknown society marginalized her interaction. Maduro (2014) valued fear as important when observing knowledge about the host country, he explained that, “fear plays a major role in our practical ethical decisions concerning our knowledge of the surrounding world” (p.42). Additionally, she pointed to the availability of Syrian community around her since she had moved to the U.S, as she stated in line 8, “I’m only around Syrians most of the time because they were here and still
around, so I don’t need to meet new people.” Her statement makes me wonder if she would interact with other groups in case there were an absence of Syrians in her environment despite other variables like fear and negative perceptions of others. Note that there are several interrelated things going on here, fear, lack of necessity, spouse’s advice, perceived danger based on preconceptions. The last one is important because it shows that she has limited experience of American society, so her preconceptions, rather than experience based on reality are driving her fear.

**Cultural Identity and Values**

Additional factor that can negatively impact refugees’ interactions with those outside of their group is cultural identity and values. Participant 6, is a twenty-year-old single woman, and she is a current student who came to the United States in 2011 at the beginning of the Syrian civil war and learned English in Syria for a long time. Also, she is a fulltime employee. Although she has been living in this country for five years, interaction with groups other than Arabs was limited to environments such as work and school. Extract 4 will show how she never allowed any type of friendship with non-Arabs because their values and norms were different from the ways she was raised. Also, extract 3 represents the effects of her parents on limiting interaction with non-Arabs because they fear the American peers’ influence on her Arabic values.

**Extract 4. Maintenance of Arabic Values:**
1. Me: Do you interact with people other than Syrians and Arabs?

2. Her: No only at the university.

3. Me: Why?

4. Her: Because I feel that my maximum is dealing with Arab Americans only, hahaha, no seriously I cannot stand the way they think yeah not like us, and my parents don’t like me to hang out with Americans anyway.

5. Me: And why is that?

6. Her: Because they think that they will ruin me. You know. Boyfriend and girlfriend, hmm and yeah. I have to stay the same way they have raised me. They want me to be an Arabic girl even here.

Participant 6 was raised in a house where she had to respect and follow her parents’ rules as in line 4, “my parents won’t let me hang out with them,” and
for the role of a well-behaved Arabic girl she was expected to listen to her parents even though she is twenty years old. The way she was raised has caused her to limit her interaction with non-Arabs to certain environments and purposes, such as the university she was attending. According to her, “I cannot stand the way they think, they’re not like us” (line 2). She was not open to accept others who don’t think and act according to her set of Arabic rules and standards. In addition, she pointed indirectly to Arabs’ negative perceptions of people who were raised in the U.S ‘s society that they could be affecting Arabs to make them forget about their Arabic values and traditions to be more Americanized. In line 6, “because they (her parents) think that they will ruin me. You know boyfriends and girlfriends.” Even though she lives in the United States, she is not allowed to have a boyfriend. In fact, both Christian and Muslim Arabic women considered to be the most important member in the family due to the fact that they could bring shame to the whole family if they ever misbehaved, such as involving with any type of sexual conduct outside their marriages. Such cultural mores could be a contributing factor, and that she indirectly references sexual behavior in the boyfriend/girlfriend comment. Her statement indicates that she desires to maintain an identity that is in keeping with her cultural heritage, and that she resists identifying with those who change their behavior in response to the American values surrounding them. Her Syrian/Arabic identity is understood in opposition to American identity that maintaining her Syrian identity involves not becoming Americanized. Barakat (2005) notes that:
The sexual misbehavior girl, for example, reflects not just upon herself but upon her father, her brother, her family as a whole. Thus, the crime of honor, which sometimes still occurs in tightly knit communities, is an attempt to restore the family’s honor and place in the community. (p. 146)

So, maintaining Arabic family values was the main reason for participant 6 to keep her close interaction within Arabs who understand, respect, and share the same sensitive social and cultural aspects that groups other than Arabs do not accept. While this is a likely factor in her desire to be a well-behaved Arabic girl, but I cannot definitively attribute intentions underlying what she has reported, so such cultural mores could be a contributing factor. Her statement indicates that she desires to maintain an identity that is in keeping with her cultural heritage, and that she resists those who change their behavior in response to the American values surrounding them. So, her Syrian/Arabic identity is understood in opposition to American identity.

Discussion

Positive personal characteristics are the main and most important variable for interaction because they are the key to accessing environments around to be able to socially and culturally integrate gaining benefits that make integration process easier such as language and values of the host country. Other factors that affected the participants’ interaction with other groups are, background perceptions about groups and society of the host country, fear of the unknown, and the availability of their ethnic group.
Maintaining cultural values affected social integration of some participants. As a result, negative background perceptions and fear, strict maintenance of the Syrian values and traditions including parents’ pressure, and negative personal characteristics were the main challenges for the process of social and cultural integration of Syrian refugees’ in the U.S.

The Role of English Proficiency

In this section I will discuss the role of English proficiency in the integration process of Syrian refugees in the U.S. In particular, the analysis examines the participants’ responses to my second research question; “What are the effects of English proficiency on interactions and social and cultural integration?” Because language plays an important role in the process of integration, learning the societal language becomes a mandatory task. As Fennelly and Palasz, (2003) note, “because of its centrality to economic, social, and educational advancement, acquisition of the language of the new country is a key indicator of integration” (p.94). English proficiency was a burden for most of my interviewees that sometimes kept them away from accessing basic needs in their communities. However, factors such as the English learning experience in Syria, years of residency and interactions with English native speakers contributed to which level they could acquire English in the U.S. Furthermore, factors such as personal characteristics, family, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds have indirectly affected their social integration process in addition to their English
skills. Examining the data indicated varied levels of English speaking and writing skills among participants, but most of them had more advanced speaking skills comparing to their lower proficiency in writing skills. In contrast, two of the participants write better than they speak, and both learned English in the Syrian's schools for the longest time period. In addition, English proficiency was examined for both English writing and speaking skills upon the interviewee’s self-English proficiency’s perceptions and evaluations.

Prior English learning and level of education were varied among participants. One interviewee attended only elementary school in Syria where he learned English for two years, and another participant had never learned English before. Three of them earned bachelor degrees, and they learned English for the longest time among all participants, which is twelve years or more. The rest graduated from high school or attended some college in Syria and learned English for eight or ten years. According to all participants, English learning was mandatory in the Syrian’s schools where they started to learn English from the fifth grade. I chose specific extracts from data of three participants because themes that arose from these specific extracts represented varied levels of English proficiency and years of learning English in Syria. I will compare three cases along the following factors: English acquisition in Syria; English use and acquisition in the US (varying levels of proficiency, interaction with native speakers, literacy in both languages), and motivation to learn English.
Table 7. English Acquisition of the Participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant by Code</th>
<th>Years of Residency in the U.S</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Years of English Acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2 Years College</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>0 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant 1: The Positive Effect of Access to Prior English Education in Syria

Prior background in English education was an important factor for English proficiency. Another important indirect factor is socioeconomic status. For participant 1, her socioeconomic status (as a Syrian who was able to afford a higher-quality education) had an important impact on her English proficiency as compared to other refugees who may not have had that advantage of both private school education and college education. This participant also compares how English education in Syria did not adequately prepare other Syrians for their English needs. Participants were various perceived deficiencies in this English education.

Participant 1 is a young woman who holds a bachelor degree from Damascus University. She came, as a refugee, to the U.S with her husband in
2014, so she had resided in the U.S for two years prior to the interview. She learned English in Syria for fourteen years, and currently holds a stable employed position. All participants had learned English in Syria except participant 5., but participant 1 had learned English for the longest time among participants. Extract #5, in particular, shows her experiences learning English in the Syrian educational system, including the rules and curricula in both private and public Syrian schools. Information in extract 5 gives an idea about the participant’s prior English learning in Syria such as the mandatory of English classes, curriculum used for these classes, using the British accent, and focusing on coding and grammar away from communicative approach in classrooms.

Extract 5. Prior English Acquisition Experiences:

1 - Me: When and where did you learn English?
2 - Her: I learned in Syria, at schools and the university. I used to translate lectures into Arabic making extra effort to make them easier for my friends to study... hmm and at the school because English was mandatory to learn.
3 - Me: Did you start at the first grade?
4 - Her: Yes, because I attended a private school, while my friends in public schools started to learn English at the 5th grade, but their teachers were very bad.
5 - Me: How do you evaluate your English proficiency in writing and speaking?

6 - Her: When I first came here, I was speaking the British accent because this is what we learn in Syria. Hmmm, but when I started to interact with people here my language became better day after day, but since there are a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand, you can say ahh, I'm very good.

7 - Me: Do you have any difficulties in writing?

8 - Her: No, no, I know how to write and read even better than speaking because we learn English there, writing and reading, and we don't use the language. ahh, here you will learn better because you use it.

9 - Me: Can you keep up speaking with Americans?

10 - Her: Yeah, I don't have any problem. I can talk with them and understand them too. Hmm, I found my job because I know how to ask people and search for jobs online. Yeah I'm getting better day after day, I mean in speaking.
In line 2, this woman explains that she learned English "at the school because English was mandatory to learn," so the Syrian government included English classes in the Syrian educational system, but the benefits of these classes were questionable. She continued in line 4, "but their teachers were very bad," voicing the perception that English teachers at private schools were more proficient compared to public schools. Also, in line 4, she explained that private schools in Syria teach English at the first grade, but public school did not start until the fifth grade, so she learned English for an extra four years compared to a person who attended a public school. So this woman’s socioeconomic status in Syria (and perhaps here in the US) had an important impact on her English
proficiency through high-quality opportunities to acquire English prior to arriving in the US.

Additionally, she learned English in the British accent as in line 6, “I was speaking the British accent because this is what we learned in Syria.” However, her British English accent did not stop her from interaction with Americans, instead she was trying to pick up new pronunciations used by people around. Therefore, direct interaction with American speakers of English helped her to improve her speaking skills and put her prior background learning knowledge into application as she stated in line 8, “here you will learn better because you use it.” She is an advanced English writer because learning English in Syria was formal and focused more on writing not speaking (line, 8). Language is a power for which the benefits of acquiring it exceeds communication to a wider network of benefits including finding jobs.

Participant 1 has been in the United States for only two years, and she perceived her years of residency as an important factor helped her to improve her speaking skills as she stated in line 10, “I’m getting better day after day, I mean in speaking.” However, short time of residency in the U.S may not be that important to gain such good speaking skills without her prior gained English skills. She was able to put that knowledge into application through interaction with other groups over a short time of residency in the U.S, and that also helped her to access available benefits in her community like jobs as in line 10, “I found my job because I know how to ask people and search for jobs online”.

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Participant 9: Motivation to Use and Acquire English in the United States

Differences in motivation and socioeconomic status among participants were factors that affected English proficiency. Participant 9 was not motivated to learn English in Syria because there did not seem to be any need. However, once entering this United States, this individual was highly motivated to integrate with US society, interact with English speakers, and place effort into acquiring English. Participant 9 had no prior English knowledge from Syrian, yet he learned speaking from direct interactions with Americans in a short time. He came, as a refugee, to the United States in 2014. Participant 9, had personal characteristics such as a sense of humor and a likeable personality that helped him to interact with people from outside his group. Extract 6 will show how participant 9 believes he was able to develop good English speaking skills over only two years of residency, through interaction with non-Arabs, even though he had never learned English before.

Extract 6. Interaction Improves Speaking Skills:

1 - Me: Did you learn English in Syria?
2 - Him: Hahah no. You know how in Syria English is not important to learn like other countries, and yahh I learned it in elementary school for two years, but I can’t distinguish the letters haha.
3 - Me: Okay and here?
4 - Him: No, I learned how to speak from people here.
5 - Me: So you can’t read and write in English?

6 - Him: You’re funny haha. I even write my personal checks backwards.

7 - Me: Okay, can you easily communicate in English with people here?

8 - Him: Believe or not speaking is really easy to learn especially if you have American friends. Yeah, I can speak with everyone and understand them too, but not everything sometimes there are new words that I have to learn.

This participant points out (lines 2, 4) that he had little prior English experiences here nor in Syria, and that speaking English was learned from people around him. Also, as in line 6, he claims that, while he doesn’t know how to write English at all, he did not have a problem communicating with people.
even though he can’t understand every word (line 8). This man explains that, for him, English was not important to learn in Syria (line 2), explaining why he cared less about learning it before coming to the United States. Espenshade and Fu (1997) explained that, “for immigrants who originate in countries in which English is not so prevalent, much depends on their post-immigration experiences” (p. 301). Participant 9 had to rely on daily interactions with Americans as the main source to learn speaking, so his English learning experiences post migration to the U.S were the foundation to acquiring English and access services and needs. The years of residency combined with high degree of interactions were important variables for participant 9 to gain necessary English speaking skills to socially integrate in the U.S. building a wide social network with Americans.

He had the socioeconomic status in Syria that would have allowed him to access English Education, he was not motivated to do so. His extract included in this section seems to indicate that he did not place any importance on English learning, and did not place any effort into it. He was not motivated to learn English in Syria because there did not seem to be any need. However, once entering this United States, this particular individual was highly motivated to integrate with US society, interact with English speakers, and place effort into acquiring English.

Participant 5: Literacy, Self-Esteem and Socioeconomic Status

My third case to study for this section is participant 5, who came to
the U.S in 2013, and he was the oldest participant. In addition, he had never learned English in Syria, nor does he possess literacy skills in Arabic. This participant’s experiences demonstrate how literacy in one’s first language facilitates the acquisition of English. Another aspect of refugees’ experiences with the acquisition of English demonstrated by this interview, is the connection between a lack of speaking skills and low self-esteem. However, despite this refugee’s lack of proficiency in English, he was able to compensate by drawing on his economic advantages to engage in successful business communications in the U.S.

Extract 7. Economic Advantages:

1 - Me: did you learn English in Syria?
2 - Him: No
3 - Me: Okay and here?
4 - Him: No. I don’t know how to write or read even in Arabic hahah. I didn’t need to learn anything I used to hire people to get work done.
5 - Me: How do you communicate with American people then?
6 - Him: Aww, yes language is causing problems for me. It bothers me sometimes, but I depend on my son and for work I hired a translator the other day,
7 - Me: But you don’t understand people at all?
8 - Him: I understand a little bit, but I cannot respond. I think they will make fun of me.

 أنا: إتعلمت إنكلزيز بسورية؟
 هو: لأ
 أنا: طيب وهو؟
 هو: لأ. أنا ما يعرف أقرأ وأكتب حتى بالعربي ها ها ها. ما احتجت أتعلم شيء اتعودت وظف ناس ليشتغلولي.

 أنا: طيب كيف بنتفاهم مع الناس هون؟
 هو: أوه. أي اللغة عاملي مشاكل. بتضابق احيانا، بس بعثد ع إبني وللشعل عينت مترجم هداك اليوم.

 أنا: بس ما بتفهم ع الناس بنوب؟
 هو: بفهم شوي زغيرة بس ما فيه رده. بفكر إنهون رح يضحكو عليي.

The fact that he doesn’t have literacy in his original language made it harder for him to acquire a second language. He stated in line 4, “no. I don’t know how to write or read even in Arabic.” In this case, although he had not learned English in Syria, his socioeconomic status as a wealthy man made it possible for him to hire a translator and to rely on his son to engage in business communication. On the other hand, this strategy indicates that he is not motivated to make efforts to acquire English from interaction with American speakers. Therefore, his three years of residency in the U.S did not lead to his acquisition of English. Instead, his socioeconomic status allowed him to apply compensatory strategies that contributed to economic activities that contributed
positively to the local economy. As pointed out in a study by Nawyn, Gjokaj, Agbenyiga and Grace (2012), it is not unusual for employed refugees to have little exposure to English on the job: “most employed refugee participants had no exposure to English on their jobs” (p. 265-266).

In this participant’s case, he could not access important things other than work to survive on his own even though he hired a translator for his job, and he explained that English caused a problem for him in line 6, “yes language is causing problems for me. It bothers me sometimes.” Nawyn, Gjokaj, Agbenyiga, and Grace (2012) also explained that, “even if speaking English would not improve their employment opportunities, it would allow them to access information that is important for their survival” (p.275). However, he is a successful business person who is contributing to our local economy despite lack of English skills. Also, he explained that his poor communication skills affected his self-esteem and stopped him from responding to people even though he understood some words as he said in line 8, “I understand a little bit but I cannot respond. I think they will make fun of me.” Furthermore, demographic variables might have affected indirectly his English learning and integration such as his older age comparing to other participants. However, data didn’t directly show the effects of age on English learning among participants.

As a result, it is important to emphasize how this participant is contributing positively to the local economy, despite the language barrier. This participant’s experiences point to the fact that socioeconomic advantages can overcome even
the most direct obstacles to literacy or language proficiency. This gentleman engages in a compensatory strategy of hiring cultural workers (literacy services and translation services) to engage in successful business communications. Here, the lack of social integration processes is more complex to be related to his lack of English skills, because he is contributing economically to our society (a form of social integration), but he still feels as though there are barriers across language boundaries which limit his interpersonal relationships with non-Syrians. A big theme here is his lack of motivation (need or desire) to learn English, as compared with the other two participant cases.

Discussion

Despite the differences in English teaching proficiencies among Syria public and private schools, most participants learned formal English focusing on vocabulary and grammar and some writing, but listening and speaking were not a part of the Syrian English teaching curriculum. Therefore, all participants even the ones who studied English for a long time found it hard to communicate with native American English speakers. In other words, they never had an actual conversation in English prior arriving the U.S. even in the British accent they have learned. An article by Zghyer (2014) found that, “the reasons for Arabs students to learn to use English still remain within the schools and the workplaces, not within the home and other informal environments” (p.10).

High socioeconomic statuses helped to access specific needs such as gaining financial benefits from work hiring proficient English speakers, but they
were totally isolated and not able to access basic daily needs for the lack of direct interaction. Also, English was harder to learn despite years of residency in the U.S if a person lacked literacy in his mother language and had developed low self-esteem that affected his interactions with native speakers. In general, participants who interacted with American speakers developed good communication skills over time despite their prior English learning experiences and period of learning. Overall, English proficiency was an advantage that helped some participants, and the more they were proficient the broader the integration process would be. On the other hand, the lack of English proficiency prevented some participants from social and cultural integration despite years of residency in the U.S. In fact, English proficiency was valuable to obtain as a contributing variable in the process of social and cultural integration of Syrian refugees in the U.S. However, English proficiency cannot be an independent factor, instead it should be combined with other factors to determine to what extent the overall process of Syrian refugees’ integration would be affected.

Discrimination and Stereotypes

This section will examine data from the participants’ responses to my third research question; “What is the role of discrimination and negative stereotypes of Arabs and Syrian refugees in involvement with larger social networks and integration in the U.S?” Some participants experienced discrimination acts that affected their interaction with non-Arabs. However, among participants, some
coped with negative stereotypes and discrimination to overcome challenges and continue to interact. Furthermore, other participants faced discrimination or negative stereotypes regardless to their religion. Data indicated that discrimination and stereotypes, if existed, were due to the Americans’ negative perceptions of the Syrian refugees’ identity, Arabic ethnicity and Islamic religion among both Muslims and Christians. Themes that arose were included discrimination and negative stereotypes, how participants cope with them, and other factors that affected the exposure to such experiences. Additionally, the data chosen for this chapter demonstrates the participants’ various experiences and levels of exposure to discrimination and negative stereotypes in the U.S’ society.

Table 8. Themes for the Discrimination and Negative Stereotypes’ Section:

| Theme 1, Syrians associated by others with terrorism | Participant 2, “Customers tell me that you are terrorism your country terrorism”. Participant 7, “When I say I’m from Syria haha they tell me right the way you’re from ISIS” | Line 2 |
| Line 2 |
| Line 6 |
| Theme 2, Generalization of all Arabs and Syrians as Muslims | Participant 2, “When I first started working they used to think that I’m Muslim”. Participant 6, “If I tell them I’m Arabic they ask about my headscarf” Participant 7, “When I said from the Middle East, they walked away right the way”. | Line 2 |
| Theme 3, Islamophobia in the U. S | Participant 2, “I was surprised because the word “Muslim” scares them, so I had to explain that I’m not”. | Line 6 |
| Theme 4, Little interaction, (from chapter 2) leads to little or zero exposure to discrimination and negative stereotypes. | Participant 5, “Americans always used to help me whenever I used to ask for help. They never hesitate to help me even with language” | Line 2 |
| Theme 5, Some Americans don’t care about religion affiliation, instead they are concerned about Arabic identity. | Participant 10, “No, no, never. This is why I love this country. People don’t care about your religion” | Line 2 |
| Theme 6, Some Americans show sympathy towards Syrian refugees | Participant 6, “When I say I’m Syrian they just ask about the war and how did I flee the country” | Line 2 |
Experiences with Discrimination

One main factor that played a role in Syrian refugees’ social and cultural integration is discrimination. Pager and Shepherd (2008) stated that “according to its most simple definition, racial discrimination refers to unequal treatment of persons or groups on the basis of their racial or ethnicity” (p.182). They continued to explain the differences between discrimination and other terms as “a key feature of any definition of discrimination is its focus on behavior. Discrimination is distinct from racial prejudice (attitudes), racial stereotypes (beliefs), and racism (ideologies)” (p.182). Many participants in this study faced discrimination based on their ethnical backgrounds as Arabs. However, some couldn’t cope with discrimination and isolated themselves while others overcome the challenges.
Participant 2 is a Christian man who offers customer service at work, so he directly interacts with groups from different backgrounds and ethnicities including Arabs. Extract 8 will show experiences of discrimination and negative stereotypes that he has to face every day at work because of his Syrian and Arabic identities. Also, this extract will show the Americans’ islamophobia and generalization of all Arabs as Muslims and terrorists. However, participant 2 claims that his high self-esteem helped him to cope with daily acts of discrimination, and he continued to interact with Americans.

Extract 8. Personal Characteristics:

1. Me: Have ever faced any kind of discrimination?
2. Him: Ahh, honestly, yes this happens every day. Customers tell me that you have terrorism, your country has terrorism. But, because I became their friend, they understood the story. When I first started to work, they used to think that I’m Muslim.
3. Me: Okay, but you’re Christian?
4. Him: Yes
5. Me: And do you think they looked at you in a different way after knowing that?
6. Him: Honestly I was surprised because the word “Muslim” scares them, so I had to explain that I’m not.
7. Me: How did that affect your interaction with Americans?
8. Him: Honestly, no, not at all, because I ignore them. I don’t let them affect my high self-esteem.

أنا: تعرضت شي مرة لأي نوع من التمييز العنصري؟
هو: آه بصراحة، هالشي بصير كل يوم. الزباين بقولولي إنك إرهاب وبلدك إرهاب، بس لأنني صرت رفاقهم فهمو القصة لما بلشت إشتغل كانو يفكرونني مسلم.
أنا: طيب بس إنت مسيحي؟
هو: إي
أنا: ونتفكك إنتطلع عليك بطريقة غير بعد ما عرفو هالشي؟
هو: بصراحة كنت متفاجئ لأن كلمت مسلم بتخوفهن فاضطريت إشرحلون إنو لأ.
أنا: كيف هالشي أثر على تعاملك مع الأميركان.
هو: لأ أبدا لأن أنا بتجاهل ما بخيلهن يأثرو ع ثقتي العالية بحالي.

Terrorism was associated with his Syrian identity. In line 2, he pointed to discrimination regarding his Syrian identity where customers called him a terrorist, “customers tell me that you are terrorism your country terrorism, but because I became their friend, they understood the story.” In addition, he explained that there was a misunderstanding because customers didn’t understand “the story” of the Syrian conflict and terrorism.

Previous researchers have noted this common misconception among Americans that all Arabs are Muslims. Suleiman, (1999), for example, noted that:

While Islam is at times presented as a religion of fatalism and inaction, at others it is a religion driving its people to fanaticism, bigotry, mayhem and
world terrorism. At all times, however, Americans rarely distinguish between Muslims and Arabs, and view both groups as alien to themselves as well as to Western heritage. (p.33).

Participant 2 added, “when I first started working they used to think that I’m Muslim” (line 2). In fact, this participant as a Christian Syrian, so knowing his country of origin or his ethnicity as an Arab made Americans assume that he was a Muslim. Baker, (2007) pointed to the same issue after 9/11 terrorist attack, “the Arab Christians also described suddenly becoming the subject of mainstream interest and curiosity following 9/11 because of their Middle Eastern background, and also because they were assumed to be Muslims” (n. a.). Unfortunately, the word “Muslim” itself refers to negative and ugly picture about Islam in most of the Americans’ minds where they automatically classify all Arabs, as both Muslims and terrorists. In other words, Americans fear Islam and Muslims. As participant 2 stated in line 6, “I was surprised because the world “Muslim” scares them, so I had to explain that I’m not.” According to Al-Qaradawi (1999). “people in the west have a very distorted and ugly picture of Islam” (p.1). Meanwhile, he had to explain that he was not a Muslim in order to be a friend with them.

Despite negative stereotypes he faced during interaction with Americans, he was not affected as in line 8, “I ignore them. I don’t let them affect my high self-esteem”. Personal characteristics played a role too, and might be that daily exposure to stereotypes made them ineffective after a while.
On the other hand, participant 5 as a Syrian and Christian man had never experienced any type of discrimination or negative stereotypes. Extract 9 will show that he had positive interaction experiences with other groups where people used to help him all the time. However, this participant had little exposure to interactions and didn’t speak English well, so we should take into consideration the degree of interaction with other groups when we examine discrimination and negative stereotypes.

Extract 9. Degree of Interaction’s Effects:

1. Me: did you face any discrimination as Syrian or Christian:

2. Him: No, no, no. Americans always used to help me whenever I used to ask for help. They never hesitate to help me even with language.

In line 2, he explained that Americans had always been supporting and helped him whenever he needed help. If we go back to chapter 2 about interaction where both participants 2 and 5 indicated the exact opposite experience of interaction with groups other than Arabs, we would notice that interaction is the key. Although this data is limited to only two research participants and cannot be taken as a representative sample, it may be the case
that the more Syrian refugees interact with non-Arab groups, such as participant 2’s interactions with customers at work, the more exposure they have to acts of discrimination and negative stereotypes. In contrast, participant 5 didn’t interact with Americans and didn’t even have an actual conversation with them directly outside his work frame using an interpreter for this purpose. As a result, he was not directly exposed to the American culture in and therefore, did not experience any discrimination directly himself.

**Coping with Discrimination**

There is lack of recognition of Arab Christians in the U.S. even though they are the largest group among Arab Americans. Coffman and Coffman, (2004) explained, “yet 70% of Arab immigrants to the United States are Christians even those of us who have heard this statistic once, twice, or 10 times struggle to comprehended” (p.39). The same author pointed to another statistic in 2000 about Arab Americans religious affiliation in the U.S that, “recent estimate range from 2 to 3 million, of whom 1.4 to 2.1 million to be Christians” (p.39). Participant 6 was an interesting case to examine how Syrians cope with discrimination. She is an educated girl who understands how Americans perceive her Arabic and Syrian identity, and she also understands why such discrimination exists. Extract 10 shows how her knowledge allowed her to encounter any discrimination situation and turn it into a positive experience by explaining her point of view to Americans.
Extract 10. Generalization of all Arabs as Muslims:

1. Me: Did you face any type of discrimination as Syrian or Arabic?
2. Her: Aww if I tell them I’m Arabic they ask about my headscarf, and when I say I’m Syrian they just ask about the war and how did I flee the country.
3. Me: Okay, do they think that all Arabs are Muslims?
4. Her: Yeah, I explain to them that we are not.
5. Me: But do you consider that discrimination?
6. Her: No at all. There is just misunderstanding. People here never really bothered me.

Americans generalized all Arabs to be Muslims, so her Arabic ethnic background led to her being labeled as a Muslim by Americans. Even though she was Christian and didn’t wear a hijab to indicate affiliation with Islam, her Arabic background put her into suspicion. Hijab was a sign to identify Muslim women who were discriminated against in the U.S. According to Wrobel, Farrag and Hymes (2009), “among Muslim immigrants, women appear to be readily targeted
in terms of discriminatory acts (Hassouneh and Kulwicki 2007) and may be somewhat more identifiable as a target than Muslim men due to distinctions in dress, such as the wearing of a hijab” (p.276). Here, the outward sign of wearing the hijab was not the problem, instead it was her Arabic background. However, her Syrian identity wasn’t a factor to face discrimination, instead She recalls that Americans have primarily showed sympathy and asked her about the war in Syria and how she fled the country. She said, “when I say I’m Syrian they just ask about the war and how did I flee the country” (line 2). In a previous chapter about interaction this participant showed little interaction with Americans that was limited to the university she attended. It is possible, then that the surrounding environment where interaction with Americans usually takes place could lead to her lack of experience with discrimination due to interacting primarily educated college students who might be aware of the Syrian conflict. In this excerpt, she articulates her understanding of this situation as a “misunderstanding” (line 6) rather than a form of discrimination or negative stereotype. She was educated and aware of how Americans perceive Arabs and Syrians, and she could communicate to offer new knowledge that led them to change their negative views of Arabs.

I chose two Muslim male participants who were both following their Islamic rules in their lives in the U.S. However, surprising conflict findings indicated a bad experience with discrimination for both Arabic and Syrians identities besides Muslim religion while the other participants never experienced discrimination nor
stereotypes. The difference of years of residency between participant 7 (18 months), and participant 10 (3 years) wasn’t a contributing factor here. The degree of involvement and interaction with other groups might affected the results somehow.

Another way of dealing with discrimination is to avoid interactions with non-Arabs. Participant 7 is a Muslim man, and currently a college student. Extract 11 shows that this participant has reacted to situations in which Americans associate Syrian refugees with ISIS and discriminate against people from the middle east regardless of their religion by isolating himself, and staying away from Americans to avoid such bad experiences again.

Extract 11. Discrimination leads to Isolation:

1. Me: Have you ever faced discrimination as an Arabic and a Syrian?

2. Him: I went to parties more than once. hmm and they asked me, where are you from? And when I said I was from the middle east, they walked away right away. Not all of them of course.

3. Me: Has anybody ever asked you about your religion?

4. Him: No, they don’t care about religion here. They care more about the region.

5. Me: Okay, when people knew that you’re Muslim. Did they treat you differently?
6. Him: Not because I’m a Muslim, no. But when I say I’m from Syria haha they tell me right away, you’re in ISIS. It means they have no idea. They don’t know the story. Is Syria really ISIS??

7. Me: Okay, they generalize things?

8. Him: Yeah they generalize a lot.

9. Me: Really? Did you fell this affected you?

10. Him: Of course yes. I try to stay away from them because when I try to explain to them they don’t want to listen.
In this excerpt, participant 7 explains how Americans perceive middle eastern people negatively. He stated in line 2, “when I said I was from the Middle East, they walked away right the way” On the other hand, his Islamic religion wasn’t a problem where he pointed to that in line 6 that people never treated him differently as a Muslim, instead his Syrian identity was the main cause for discrimination where Americans associated him with Isis the terrorist group. Negative stereotypes and discrimination affected his interaction with non- Arabs. He stated in line 10, “I try to stay away from them because when I try to explain to them they don’t want to listen.” He gave up trying to defend himself against their accusations because no matter what he said, they don’t want to hear the truth. As a result, he decided to isolate himself from groups other than Syrians to avoid stress. It seems that discrimination had a great impact to legitimize participant 7 from cultural and social integration in the United States’ society.

Another way in which the participants described their means of coping with anti-Arab discrimination and stereotypes in the US was to draw on the protections and rights provided by laws in this country. Participant 10, for example, is a Muslim, educated man with a little interaction with groups other than Arabs. We will see in extract 12 that, although he himself had not directly experienced discrimination, knowledge of the anti-discrimination laws and civil rights in the U.S helped him to feel protected by the law against discrimination.
Extract 12. Awareness of Individual’s Rights in the U.S:

1. Me: During this time have you ever experienced discrimination because you’re a Muslim or a Syrian?

2. Him: No, no, never. This is why I love this country. People don’t care about your religion, and they don’t even ask. Yeah, you just have to be a nice person and follow the laws.

3. Him: I’m proud to be a Syrian, and thanks God no one ever bothered me, hmm but even if they would do that there is a law to protect me here from discrimination

This excerpt shows that knowledge of anti-discrimination laws empowered this refugee to worry less about possibly facing discrimination in the U.S. He had knowledge about the American society and awareness of his rights and duties as a member of his community and he had never faced any discrimination during his three years of residency in the U.S despite his Islamic faith and Syrian identity. In line 2, he expressed appreciation for the secular system in the United States where religion doesn't matter, and all citizens are equally treated under the laws.
In his view, equal treatment by the law and protection against any type of discrimination based on religion had helped him to adjust and integrate in this society. “People don’t care about your religion, and they don’t even ask. Yeah, you just have to be a nice person and follow the laws” (line 2). The diversity of the United States made minorities appreciate the equality under the law that might not be found in their homeland. In line 3, his knowledge of the discrimination laws empowered him as a Muslim instead of being isolated. So education and awareness of the host country’s values and legal system prepared him to overcome discrimination acts that could happen in the future.

Discussion

Participants in this study showed different experiences with discrimination and negative stereotypes from groups other than Arabs in the U.S. The most important cause for these acts was associated with the Syrian identity more than the Arabic ethnicity. In general, being a Syrian categorized them as Arabs, Muslims, and terrorists. During the few past years, Syrian refugees, in particular, were a source of fear for American because of the arise of Isis, the Islamic terrorist group. As a result, Syrian refugees were associated directly to be accused of belonging to Isis that was responsible for the latest terrorist attacks around the world including France and the U.S. It seems that not all Americans perceive the Syrian identity in a negative way where education of Americans and environment of interaction play a role in understanding the conflict and showed some sympathy towards Syrian refugees. However, this wasn’t the case for
some participants who claimed that they had never experienced discrimination. The participants in this study reported vastly different experiences with anti-Arab discrimination in the United States. This may have been related to the degree of interaction that distinct individuals regularly engage in with Americans, however, this type of study cannot make a definitive conclusion. Further studies examining the relationship between degree of interaction with non-Arabs and the degree of discrimination experienced are needed. Also, participants who experienced discrimination coped with it in different ways. Some isolated themselves from Americans while others had found ways to attempt to break these stereotypes by explaining the Syrian situation and continue their interaction with Americans. Christian Syrian refugees who were exposed to discrimination and stereotypes reported being identified as Muslims and terrorist due to Arabic ethnicity. Suleiman (1999) wrote how Americans perceive Arabs that:

These factors and the picture Americans have of them are: strategic region, desert, oil, Third World, dictatorship (i.e. no democracy), enemies of Israel, anti-Jewish, violent and terroristic, fatalistic and backward, immoral, liars, cheats, unreliable, indolent, licentious, sex fiends, exploiters and victimizers of women and a threat to the West, to Christianity as well as to the Western civilization” (p.44).
Cultural and Religious Values

In this section, I will examine the participants’ responses to my last research question: “How do religious and cultural values affect accepting and adapting or rejecting the new society’s cultural and social values, norms, and the effects of that on Syrian refugees’ integration process in the U.S?” Maduro (2014) explained that, “migrants’ religions are their portable homelands. Their array of icons, texts, beliefs, rites, songs, stories, relations, and orientations give them security, refuge, sanctuary, self-worth, hope, and stamina even when all surrounding signs are omens of destruction and terror” (p.44). Therefore, religion should be examined in order to understand the social and cultural integration process. Additionally, Syria as an Arab country shares some common secular Arabic traditions and values with the rest of the Arab countries because of the effects of the Islam on the Arabic traditions and values since it is the most dominant ruling religion across the Arab world. A study by Haddad (1994) examined the effects of Christianity and Islam on the lives of Arab immigrants in the U.S as, “all people living in the area were seen to share a common bond which did not distinguish between Christian and Muslim, Druze or Sunni, Mutawalli (Shiite) or Alawi, Orthodox, or catholic” (p. 64). In other words, even when Arabs migrate, they share cultural values and traditions regardless of their distinct religious beliefs and affiliations. The following table shows the themes that arose about the role of religious and cultural values on Syrian refugees’ integration in the U.S.
Table 9. Themes for the Cultural and Religious Values’ Section:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1, Being a Christian immigrant in the U.S makes accepting its culture, norms, and values easier</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>“I am, Christian like most people in this country so I think we can accept one another”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2, Despite the differences between Arabic and American cultures, Syrians could accept American values but not necessarily adopt them.</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>“But the society here is way different than ours but I accept it”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3, Family ties are stronger among Arabs</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>“People here don’t care about family like us. I mean that we have more family ties than them”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2, Marriage outside one’s ethnic and religious group makes it easier to accept the values in the U.S.</td>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>“Absolutely 100%, hmm I even married someone from here “I’m Christian and my wife is Buddhist, so I really don’t care”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3, The degree of following Islamic religious rules affect the acceptance of the U.S society’s values.</td>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>“No I’m a Muslim. I drink for example. yeah in Damascus I used to own three bars. For me, God just in my heart. I have two daughters in Syria and they have boyfriends. yeah it is normal. I don’t care”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4, Older newcomers of refugees find it harder to accept the American values</td>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>“It is hard to accept them”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant 6 is a 24-year-old Christian female who still lives in her parents’ house even though she works and attends a college. I chose extract 13 because it will show that accepting the Americans’ values and norms doesn’t necessary lead to adopt them, and she valued her Christianity as a factor that makes accepting the U.S society easier for Christian immigrants. Also, extract 13 highlighted how Syrians negatively perceive the American family.

Extract 13. Integration of a Christian Refugee:

1. Me: Can you tell me about values and traditions that you can’t accept as Syrian and Christian here?
2. Her: No, but the society here is way different than ours but I accept it.
3. Me: Tell me about things you don’t like here.
4. Her: People here don’t care about family like us. I mean that we have more family ties than them. Also, I am Christian like most people in this country so I think we can accept one another

أنا: بتقدري تقولي شو العادات والتقاليد إللي ما بتقبلها كسورية ومسيحية هون؟
هي: لا بس المجتمع هون كثير يفرق عن مجتمعنا بس يتقبلو.
أنا: خبريني عن شغلات ما بتحبيها هون؟
هي: الناس هون ما بيهتمو بالعائلة مثلنا. بقصد في عنا روابط عائلية أكثر منون. كمان أنا مسيحية مثل أغلب الناس بهالبلد لهيك بطن إن فينا نتقبل بعضنا.
Despite differences between Syrian and American cultures, there are some common shared Christian values between most Americans and Christian Syrian refugees. In line 2, she explained that even though the American society is not like the Syrian society, she accepts it. She also added in line 4 that her Christian beliefs contributed somehow to her acceptance to the United States’ society. She said, “I am, Christian like most people in this country, so I think we can accept one another”, so she already shares Christians values with most Americans. However, in line 4, she pointed to the lack of family ties comparing to her Syrian standard of the family concept. Syrians have common negative perception about family ties in the U.S compared to their experiences and a set of Arabic traditions and values. In fact, as a woman who grow up in Syria, myself, I understand the strong family ties among all Arabs where they value the unity of a family over its individuals’ independency and freedom. Barakat (2005) stated that, “family is the basic unit of social organization in traditional and contemporary Arab society” (p.145). This could explain participant 6 living with her family until this age. As a result, Christians values could have been a mediating factor which made it easier for this interviewee to accept values in the American society despite differences of family ties and other Syrian traditions and values. However, acceptance of the American’ values and traditions doesn’t necessarily lead to adopting of these values, as in this participant’s case.

Participant 4 is a Christian married man who accepts the American values similar to participant 6. Extract 14 will merely show that he does not perceive
religious difference as an insurmountable cultural boundary, evidenced by the fact that he married outside of his religion, and that he explicitly states that he does not care about religious differences.

Extract 14. Marriage and Integration:

1. Me: Do you accept the values and traditions of this country?
2. Him: Absolutely 100%, hmm I even married someone from here.
3. Me: What about your religious beliefs?
4. Him: Haha I’m Christian and my wife is Buddhist, so I really don’t care.

I chose data from his interview because the participant was the only interviewee who was married to someone outside his ethnic and religious group. He was married to a Buddhist Asian nurse who was born and raised in the U.S. Therefore, it seems like this marriage helped him to gain access to a wider network of social and cultural values and traditions in a short time. Martinovic, Tubergen and Maas (2009) stated that, “marriage represents the strongest possible tie between members of two ethnic groups, and is therefore, seen as an indicator of successful integration” (p. 870). However, data didn’t provide enough information about the effect of marriage outside one’s ethnic group for this
participant is blurry, and it is possible that his integration led him to be able to marry outside his group.

Participant 9, was a Muslim man, but he never lived by his strict Islamic religious rule despite his faith in God. Behaving like a secular person who fits and easily adjusts to the American values and culture helped him in his social and cultural integration process. Extract 15 will show that being a Muslim doesn’t prevent a Syrian refugee from accepting or adopting traditions, values, and norms in the U.S, instead the degree of following strict Islamic rules is the factor that could affect social and cultural integration.

Extract 15. Islam and Integration:

1. Me: Does your religion or Syrian values prevent you from accepting values here?

2. Him: No I’m a Muslim. I drink for example. yeah in Damascus I used to own three bars. For me God just in my heart. I have two daughters in Syria and they have boyfriends. yeah it is normal. I don’t care

As in line 2 “I drink for example”, although he is a Muslim, he never followed the Islamic rules such as the prohibiting of alcohol consumption, which
is forbidden by the Islamic religion. Additionally, he did not make changes to his religious beliefs, Syrian and Arabic traditions and values to fit within this society. Instead he brought the same ideology with him and acted the same way, carrying his own perceptions of God and Arabic traditions to the U.S. First, he used to own bars in Damascus and second, he allowed his daughters who still live in a strict Syrian society to be in relationships with guys they chose as in line 2, "yeah, it is normal, I don’t care." Al-Qaradawi (1999) wrote that

From another perspective, the halal and haram are part of the total legal system of Islam, it’s Shari’ah, a system whose primary objective is the good of mankind. The Islamic Shari’ah removes from human being harmful, burdensome customs and superstitions, aiming to simplify and ease the business of day-to-day living. (p.6).

He takes a more spiritual and humanistic approach to his religion “God is in my heart” (line 2). This excerpt exemplifies this in how he claims to be flexible about some basic tenets of Shariah’s law.

Participant 5 is a 59-year-old Christian man who came to the U.S. in 2013. He was the only participant that showed denial and rejection of the American values and traditions. Also, he refused to answer my questions about specifying values and traditions that he cannot accept and why. Because the extract, from participant’s 5 interview, was not very informative regarding contributing factors that affected his acceptance or rejection of the American, I will summarize what I learned about him. His interview showed that older Syrian refugees, like him, find
it harder than younger refugees to accept the American’s traditions and values where longer years of exposure to Arabic and Syrian traditions and values back home plays more important role in their life in the U.S. He directly responded to my research question for this section indicating his rejection to the American values as” no, it is hard to accept them” (the American values). When I asked him to give examples, he smiled and refused to answer. Also, he didn’t value his religious beliefs as an important factor in his social and cultural integration, instead he told me that Americans don’t even care about his religion, and he doesn’t care either.

Discussion

According to some participants, being a Christian in the U.S made accepting this society’s values and traditions easier due to shared Christian values with most Americans. However, Muslim Syrian refugees who had positive personal characteristics and didn’t strictly follow Islamic rules were also able to accept the American values and even adopt them. Syrian refugees who arrived to the United States at older age, accepting the American values and traditions was harder for them. Additionally, marriage outside one’s ethnicity and religious groups could have positive influence on social and cultural integration of Syrian refugees. However, I don’t see this as a warranted claim. The participant who was married outside of his group because religious difference was not a deal-breaker for him. Therefore, I cannot claim that this is the reason why he
integrated more effectively. In other words, it seems like his integration led him to be able to marry outside his group.

Summary

Most of the participants remained within their original Syrian group and had some interaction with Arabs other than Syrians, and some participants decided not to interact unless they had to access necessary services or benefits. Dominant positive personal characteristics, good socioeconomic status, motivation for interaction, positive perceptions of the American society, unavailability of Syrian community, less maintenance of Arabic traditions and values encouraged interaction with other groups. Other indirect factors led to limited interaction with non-Arabs, such as gender and age where women and older age of participants were less to interact.

Lack of English proficiency alone did not prevent most interviewees from integrating, and other socioeconomic and personal characteristics affected to what extent they could socially and culturally integrate in the United States. Prior English learning was affected by socioeconomic status that enabled some participants to attend private schools to learn English for longer time comparing to whom attended public schools. Some participants used their prior English learning in Syria and put it into application to improve through interaction with Americans here. Also, Years of residency increase English proficiency due to more interaction with other groups overtime. Language as a burden if no prior
learning and no literacy in his original language caused difficulties to learn English, and led to low self-esteem. However, this did not prevent economic integration due to high socioeconomic status that helped regardless to one’s English skills.

Some participants experienced discrimination. However, discrimination was based on a common American assumption that associated Arabs in general with Islam and terrorism. Shift in discrimination was noticed where the Syrian identity was directly connected with terrorism, especially with the formation of Isis (a terrorist group in Syria). However, some participants reported Americans’ sympathy towards them as Syrians due to the Syrian civil war. Religion was not a direct factor where Christian participants also faced discrimination due to the American generalization to all Syrians as Muslims and terrorists. Some participants coped positively with discrimination while others isolated themselves. Factors that affected participants coping with discrimination were positive or negative personal characteristics, education, knowledge of society and legal system, and the degree of interaction with other groups.

For some participants, being a Christian immigrant in the U.S makes accepting its culture, norms, and values easier due to common shared values between Christian refugees and most Americans. Syrian refugees could accept the Americans values and traditions, but, but not necessarily adopt them, so this depends on the degree of maintenance of Arabic traditions. Marriage outside one’s ethnic and religious group could makes accepting the Americans; traditions
and values easier. However, it is not clear whether integration led to marriage outside their group and religion or marriage helped in their social integration process.

The degree of following Islamic religious rules affect the acceptance of the U.S society’s values. The degree of following Islamic rules might not determine general acceptance of Americans values, but it had effects on the adoption of these values. Finally, findings showed that older newcomers of refugees find it harder to accept the American values.
This study aimed to analyze the Syrian refugees’ process of social and cultural integration in terms of challenges in the United States’ society.

The level of interaction with other groups varied among participant due to many factors such as negative or positive perceptions of other groups. For example, participant 2’s cultural values served to hold him back from interaction with American Jews where he experienced conflict through interaction with group he perceived negatively. Positive personal characteristics and positive perceptions helped to foster interaction. Mohamed (1991) studied interaction of Arab students in the U.S with Americans and found that “the amount of interaction with American hosts, combined with the degree of satisfaction, had a positive influence on the views and attitudes of Arab students toward Americans and on the assimilation of certain aspects of American culture” (p. 48). Fear of the unknown society and people in the host country was a challenge for interaction. According to De la Cruz, Brittingham (2003) who examined the U.S. Census Bureau’s statistic about the Arab population in the U.S. for 2000 to find that, “the largest groups with Syrian ancestry were in California, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey” (p.8). The Syrian communities are available for participant 3 since she lives in California. Maintenance of Arabic family values could affect interaction too such as participant 6 who desires to maintain an
identity that is in keeping with her cultural heritage, and that she resists those who change their behavior in response to the American values surrounding them. However, other hidden factors could have led to limited interaction with others, such as gender, where Arab girls were expected to follow traditional values more than boys. Rotich, (2011) revealed in his study that; "immigrant youth regularly reject the traditions of their parents and try to adopt the practices of their new American peers" (p.3). Therefore, participant 6 could possibly integrate more if she had moved to the U.S at an earlier age.

Overall, most participants showed acceptance of American values. Despite years of residency in the U.S, shared Christian values with most the American population could help to accept the Americans’ values. Moving to the U.S at older age made integration harder. For instance, if we go back to examine participant’s 5 extracts from the sections about integration and language proficiency, we would find that his lack of English skills and interaction with Americans also might be due older age. A study that was done by Salari (2002), examined challenges of Arab American elderlies to accept the American life showed that, "older men had difficulty adopting the provider role and many perceived American life to be too fast paced" (p.585). Thus, migration at older age could make it harder for Syrian refugees to accept values of the host country and even harder to change values, traditions, even habits that they absorbed during long living period in their homeland. The effects of marriage outside the ethnic and religious groups was not clear enough. Also, perceptions of cultural
and religious values of Syrians could be a factor that contributed to the degree of acceptance. The effects of Islamic religious rules on social integration were also not clear because Muslim Syrian refugees' women didn’t participate in this study even though Muslim men of participants showed acceptance of the American values.

Data that examined the role of English proficiency on Syrian refugees' social integration showed that the lack of English proficiency alone did not prevent most interviewees from integrating, and other socioeconomic and personal characteristics were contributing factors. For instance, participant 1’s socioeconomic status was a privilege to attend private schools in Syria and learn English for a longer time unlike participants who attended public schools. Years of residency mattered for them to gain speaking skills if they interacted with American speakers to access basic needs while accessing better services was not examined. Fennelly and Palasz’ (2003) study indicated that:

Increases in English language proficiency (occur) as their time in the United States increases. Differences in rates of acquisition and ultimate levels of proficiency depend upon the timing of their migration, the skills and personal characteristics that they bring with them to the United States, and the available opportunities once they are in the country. (p.120)

Interaction with other groups and positive personal characteristics seemed to be the main contributing factors to acquiring English. However, for some
participants’ socioeconomic status helped in economic integration despite a lack of English skills.

Discrimination and negative stereotypes were the main challenges for Syrian refugees to socially and culturally integrate in the U.S. In fact, some participants like participant 5 had never experienced any type of discrimination due to less interaction with other groups, and his Christian religion might have been indirect factor that the data did not show. Some participants faced discrimination because of their Syrian identity where Americans assumed that all Syrians were Muslims and therefore terrorists. According to Suleiman (1999), “the frontier between the West and the Orient (i.e. Muslims/Arabs) has been only an imaginary one, shifting to include or exclude specific groups, as necessitated by the circumstances of the moment” (p.44). Syrians, as a specific group of Arabs, recently became the center of national attention in the war against terrorism around the globe, including the United States. Adding Syrians to the terrorist category has become more popular since the beginning of the Syrian civil war and the existence of extremist Islamic groups on the Syrian ground like ISIS. Hasan (2015) stated that:

The rise of Isis in Iraq and Syria has been a disaster for the public image of Islam and a boon for the Islamophobia industry. After all, it is a group that calls itself Islamic State; that claims the support of Islamic texts to justify its medieval punishments (p. 27).
In fact, the rise of Isis harmed the Syrian, especially that Isis extended her terror outside the region to attack and kill innocent people elsewhere. For example, the recent terrorist attack in Paris was somehow connected to a Syrian refugee who was believed to be a member of Isis because they found a Syrian passport in the sense. Even though a later investigation showed that it was a fake password, but people were not convinced and continued to believe it. Beck (2015) explained, “the terrorist was apparently posing as a refugee, using a fake passport, and entered Europe through light security via the Aegean island of Leros” (para. 12). Again, there was not enough evidence to prove that a Syrian refugee was the terrorist.

Some participants indicated sympathy towards them, such as participant 6, and the surrounding educated environment influenced such experience where educated college students might be more aware of the Syrian conflict. Participant 7 was a Muslim refugee who isolated himself because Americans called him a terrorist and did not want to interact with him due to his Syrian identity. In addition, knowledge of law, and education could help him to positively cope with discrimination. For example, participant 10’s knowledge of anti-discrimination laws empowered him to positively face discrimination in the U.S. The participants’ perceptions of discrimination and stereotypes seemed to be stronger for refugees who had higher degree of interaction with non-Arabs, while those who were unemployed and rarely interacted with other groups experienced little
or zero discrimination. As a result, discrimination and negative stereotypes were barriers to social and cultural integration.

Overall most participants felt a sense of belonging to the United States depending on the way they perceive advantages and disadvantages of life here. These advantages were sought upon the participants’ unique personal and social experiences during their years of residency in the U.S. the data of all ten participants in this study adapted various "acculturation strategies" according to (Berry, 1997. p.9) definitions. Three participants were marginalized because they showed little or zero interest in involvement with cultural groups other than theirs. While the one who married ousted his ethnic group tended to be assimilated where he became totally involved in other cultural groups leaving his main group’s identities aside. Additionally, “Separation” was adopted by three of my participants who remain within their Arabic or Syrian groups to avoid interaction with other groups. Three of them integrated because they were interested in maintaining the Syrian culture and daily interactions with other groups to access larger social networks at the same time. However, their degree of integration varied (Berry, 1997. p.9). As a result, Syrian refugees need to overcome significant challenges and difficulties in the U.S. society in order to integrate socially in culturally in the United States’ society. To what extent their process of interaction could move forward depends on personal, social, psychological barriers that we need as a society and government to assist with. It is important to note that the participants have been living in the United States for a short time.
because the Syrian refugee’s crisis only began in 2011. Therefore, acculturation strategies adapted by participants are dynamical and change overtime, so further longitudinal study is needed to examine the integration process over a longer time.

The assumption that Syrian refugees are dangerous was widely promoted after the Paris last terror attack due to the believe that a Syrian refugee was behind it. Although investigations proved that the Syrian passport found at the scene was a fake passport, Syrian refugees remained suspects of all terrorist incidents, and serious consequences followed to impact their lives in a negative way. Stockton (2016) wrote about how this incident affected the U.S laws and policies regarding Syrian refugees:

French authorities announced that a passport belonging to a Syrian refugee was next to the remains of one of the suicide bombers who attacked Paris last week. Fingerprints match, but it might be a forgery. Either way, the American response was swift. As I type, 25 US governors have closed their borders to Syrian refugees. (para. 1).

Sadly, Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Eastern in the U.S were subjects to more negative stereotypes post 9/11. According to Salari, (2002). “to some extent, negative attention and stereotypes in society have assigned collective guilt to entire Arab American, Muslim, and Middle Eastern immigrant communities living in the United States” (p. 580).
The Syrian refugees’ population deserves our attention to research due to the recent global negative stereotypes that pointed to a perceived association between the “Syrian refugee” and “terrorist”. Unlike other refugees their unique experiences include an ugly civil war where Islamic terrorist groups are killing them from the inside and the rest of the world is fighting them from the outside. These people have suffered and are still suffering, in Syria, Jourdan, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Europe and all around the world. Therefore, studies to understand this group of people are needed socially, linguistically, culturally, physiologically and even economically in order highlight their challenges and help them to integrate within their host counties. We cannot ignore the Syrian refugees’ crisis as human beings and as the greatest nation in the world who call for democracy and human rights around the world.

We cannot turn tables overnight to challenge their main barrier of negative stereotypes and discrimination. However, we can start somewhere by finding a middle ground of understanding between here and there to ease misconceptions from both sides. Mr. Shammas who translated American books into Arabic pointed to this issue “you do us injustice through your lack of knowledge about us, but we also do you injustice through our lack of knowledge about America. You are not all cowboys, and we are not all terrorists.” (Zoepf, 2005, Damascus Spring section, para. 3).
APPENDIX A

THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD’S APPROVAL LETTER
June 17, 2016

Ms. Sheren Shihadeh,
c/o: Prof. Kathryn Howard
Department of Teacher Education and Foundations
Prof. Caroline Vickers
Department of English
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Shihadeh:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Cultural and Social Integration Process Among Syrian Refugees in the United States" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. Your application is approved for one year from June 17, 2016 through June 16, 2017. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. See additional requirements (Items 1 – 4) of your approval below.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,
2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
3) To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Judy Sylva
Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

JS/MG
c/o: Prof. Kathryn Howard, Department of Teacher Education and Foundations
Prof. Caroline Vickers, Department of English
5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2393
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH
INFORMED CONSENT

The Cultural and Social Integration Process Among Syrian Refugees in the United States.

The research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino

conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Kathryn Howard, Department of Teacher Education and Foundations, and Dr. Caroline Vickers, Department of English, California State University, San Bernardino.

Email address: 064820123@coyote.csusb.edu.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research is to examine the cultural and social integration process among Syrian refugees in the United States.

DESCRIPTION: The study consists of one interview conducted by me, which will be audio-recorded and transcribed in full. My data analysis will investigate your experiences of the processes of social and cultural integration in the United States’ society as a refugee.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY: This study will maintain your confidentiality. I will directly audio-record the interview onto my secured personal computer. Your real name and identity will not be audio-recorded or transcribed. You will be identified using a unique code (participant 1, participant 2...), and also any transcripts will include only pseudonyms. However, only the consent form will include identifying information and will be kept in a locked cabinet separate from the study data and shredded when the project is done. Any audio-recorded interview will be stored on my secured personal laptop, and will also be destroyed after the project is done.

I understand this interview will be audio-recorded.

INITIALS: 

DURATION: Your expected interview duration time is between 30-45 minutes, and it will be conducted at a time that is convenient for you. Meeting will be held at an office inside the Human Assistance & Development International organization building, and I will drive to meet you there.

RISKS / BENEFITS: Risks associated with this project are minimal and might include some discomfort in being audio recording about your refugee experience. I will audio record interviews directly onto my encrypted personal computer, and they will be heard only by me, Kathryn Howard, and Caroline Vickers, and data (audio recorded and transcribed) won't include any identifying information. You will be referred to by a personal identification number and a pseudonym. There are no direct benefits to participating in my study, but it may include benefits.
to the discipline of Second Language Acquisition for further research in understanding the Syrian refugees’ experiences in the U.S.

CONTACT:
If you have any questions about the study or your participation in the study, please contact:

Kathryn M. Howard, Ph.D.
Associate Professor at California State University, San Bernardino
Teacher Education and Foundations Department
Email: khoward@csusb.edu, Phone: 909-537-7626
Or
Caroline Vickers, Ph.D.
Associate Professor at California State University, San Bernardino
English Composition Department
Email: cvickers@csusb.edu, Phone: 909-537-5824

RESULTS: Study results can be obtained after the study is completed and the results have been published in Ms. Shihadeh’s Master’s Thesis.
Teacher Education and Foundations Department
California State University, San Bernardino
Office: College of Education, room 261

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:
I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: __________
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM IN ARABIC
استمارة موافقة مسبقة

عملية التكامل الثقافي والاجتماعي بين اللاجئين السوريين في الولايات المتحدة

تمت الموافقة على البحث من قبل مجلس المراجعة المؤسسات من جامعة ولاية كاليفورنيا، سن بيرنردينو. اسمي: شيرين شاكان، طالبة الماجستير في جامعة ولاية كاليفورنيا، سن بيرنردينو. اجري هذه الدراسة تحت إشراف الدكتور كارولين فيكرز، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة ولاية كاليفورنيا، سن بيرنردينو.

العنوان البريدي الإلكتروني: coyote.csusb.edu

الغرض: إن الخسارات من هذا البحث هو دراسة عملية التكامل الثقافي والاجتماعي بين اللاجئين السوريين في الولايات المتحدة.

المؤلف: تتكون هذه الدراسة من مقابلة أجبرها ناكلي، والتي ستكون صوتية مسجلة ونسخة بائقة كاملة تحليلية خاصة للبيانات يحقق تجارب في عمليات الاندماج الاجتماعي والثقافي في المجتمع والولايات المتحدة ككل.

المشاركة: إن المشاركة موحدة تماما، وست مضطربة للرد على أي أسئلة قد لا ترغب في الإجابة عليها.

يمكنك اختيار أو عدم الإجابة عن أي أسئلة، ويمكنك الإسقاط، وحول المشاركة في أي وقت.

المقدمة: ستحل يرجى هذه الدراسة على السيرة الخاصة بك سيسأل المقابلة مباشرة تسجيل صوتي، على هامبورج الشخصي المعني، لتم تسجيل إشكال حقيقي بالصور أو تسجيلها. وسيتم تسجيلها بإستخدام رمز رأب (مشارك 1/2 مشاركة...).

ومع ذلك، فقط سوف تتم استمارة دوامات معلومات تحدد وละ التأكيدات في حالة مختلفة تفصل عن بيانات الدراسة إذا نظرت إليها، وسيتم تخزين أي مقالة صوتية تسجيل على جهاز الكاميرا المحمول الخاص بك أو المعلم، كما سيتم تخزينها بعد الانتهاء من المشروع.

أما أن هذا البحث سيكون صوتي مسجل، الأحرف الأولى من الأسماء

العدد: الامتحان المحتوم للمؤلف كم من 30-45 دقيقة، وسيجري ذلك في الوقت الذي يمارسه، سيتم عند الاجتماع

في مكتب/نادي المنظمة الدولية للمساعدة والتنمية البشرية، وسوف أثناء المشاهدات. سوف المواقع المختلفة المختبرة هذه المشروع هي الأخرى. وقد تتضمن بعض الأفكار كونها تسجيل صوتي، وتتجه بشكل مباشر للسجوعية المقابلة مباشرة تسجيل صوتي على حسابي الشخصي المعني.

المشرف: وسوف الاستماع فقط من قبل. كارولين فيكرز، وسوف لا تتم بيات (تسجيل الصوت ونسخة) أي معلومات تعريفية

909.537.5824

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407 2393

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سوف يتم الإشارة إلى هذا عن طريق رقم تعريف شخصي واسم مستعار. لا يوجد فوائد مباشرة للمشاركة.

في هذا البحث، لكنها قد تشمل فوائد اكتساب لغة ثانية لأفراد مزيد من الباحث لهم تجارب اللاجئين.

الإتصال: إذا كنت تود أن تكون جزءًا من الدراسة أو تشاركك في الدراسة، يرجى الإتصال ب:

كارلین مايكل هوارد، دكتوراه
أستاذ مساعد في جامعة ولاية كاليفورنيا، سان بيرناردينو
قسم إعداد وتعليم المعلمين
هاتف: 762-537-9009
البريد الإلكتروني: khoward@csusb.edu
أو
كارلین فايرس، دكتوراه
أستاذ مساعد في جامعة ولاية كاليفورنيا، سان بيرناردينو
هاتف: 582-537-9009
البريد الإلكتروني: cfickers.csusb.edu

النتائج: يمكن الحصول على نتائج الدراسة بعد الانتهاء منها. كما سيتم نشر النتائج في:

رسالة الماجستير للدكتوراه، 261 كليات التربية، جامعة ولاية كاليفورنيا، سان بيرناردينو. المكتب.

بيان تأكيد: أنتم يجب أن تكون معًا 18 سنة من العمر أو أكثر للمشاركة في الدراسة. قد قرأت وفهمت وثيقة الموافقة وأوافق على المشاركة في الدراسة.

التوقيع: 
التاريخ: 

California State University, San Bernardino
Institutional Review Board Committee
APPROVED | VOID AFTER 1/6/17
IRB # 5825-S | CHAIR: Judy S. Palma
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