

Wearing the hijab:

An argument for moderate selective acculturation of newly immigrated Arab-American women

Janet M. Roberts

Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, USA

Abstract

The goal of this research is to examine how Arab women newly emigrated to the United States struggle to decide how to blend with or into the fabric of this country while still retaining their culture, language and religion in a manner that is comfortable and acceptable to them. All the interviewees were Arab/Muslim women from the countries of Iraq and Lebanon. The research also examines the conflict among Muslim women over the decision as to whether or not to wear the *hijab* or veil covering their heads.

This research is important in creating an understanding of the needs and differences, as well as the desires and similarities, of Arab/Muslim women and American women. It is also important for differentiating between assimilation, multiculturalism and selective acculturation. Any research and analysis that works to emphasize common values and acceptance of differences also works toward the building of a peaceful community.

Keywords: acculturation, dissonant/consonant/selective moderate acculturation, assimilation, multiculturalism, Arab/Muslim women, individualist culture, collectivist culture, cultural brokers.

1. Arab Women: New Immigrants in the U.S. Seek Ways to Communicate and Adapt

Despite the rich history of the United States (U.S.) as an immigrant country and "melting pot" culture, there has been and continues to be an ongoing argument as to whether new waves of immigrants should assimilate into the current culture, acculturate, or whether a policy of multiculturalism should prevail. The newest wave of immigrants from countries in the Middle East region bring with them cultures and a religion that is distinct from mainstream American practices. In a post-9/11 world these immigrants struggle to decide how to blend into the fabric of the U.S. while still retaining their culture, language and religion in a manner that is comfortable and acceptable to them. The goal of this thesis is to examine how Arab/Muslim women, newly immigrated to the U.S., struggle to decide how to blend with or into the fabric of this country while still retaining their culture, language and religion in a manner that is comfortable and acceptable to them. Of particular interest in that process is the conflict these women bring with them from their country of origin over their interpretation of whether the Qu'ran mandates the wearing of the *hijab* or veil, or makes it a personal choice for each woman. This study will question both assimilation and multiculturalism as appropriate methods to be adopted by Arab/Muslim immigrants from the Middle East, advocating instead that the U.S. accept and encourage these new immigrants to follow a path of moderate selective acculturation. Almost nothing has been written post September 11, 2001, (9/11) regarding this subject, making this work an important first step toward establishing a frame of reference for both cultures that will help them to work toward a peaceful coexistence.

1.1 Assimilation vs. Multiculturalism vs. Acculturation

European migrations to the U.S. in the 1800's and early 1900's met an American culture that expected the new immigrants to fully assimilate and, to a great extent, they did. Assimilation took place, in part, because these immigrants were 'white' Europeans, that is, 'racially similar' to the dominant American society (Nagel, 264). Immigrants who chose multiculturalism as the method of settling in the U.S. found themselves pocketed in sections of cities - such as Chinatown in San Francisco or East Dearborn,

Michigan - where many Chinese or Arab immigrants settled and retained the full language and customs of their home country but struggled outside those communities to succeed in mainstream America. Those who dispersed throughout the U.S. but maintained a staunch multicultural pattern, like the Mexican-Americans, were consistently slotted into low paying menial jobs and experienced difficulties realizing upward mobility in the U.S.

Assimilation has taken place through an active construction of racial similarity, enacted, in turn, through a re-shuffling of racial categories and political-economic hierarchies. Immigrants did not assimilate because they were white; their assimilation reflected that they had become white. At the same time, it reflected that the nature of 'whiteness' as a social/ideological category was fundamentally unstable (Nagel, 264). According to social researcher F.M. Modhaddam, minority-group members may adopt one of two strategies to adjust to the majority society: 1) assimilate into the host society or, 2) become more multiculturally oriented. Assimilation implies abandonment of the heritage, culture and language, whereas multiculturalism involves maintenance of the original culture and language. The results of numerous recent studies indicate the multicultural approach, adopted by immigrants in North America, is the only healthy way for minorities to survive in the host society (Abu-Rabia, 541).

The official number of Arab-Americans in the United States is just over 715,000 (Bureau of the Census, 1998). Because Arab Americans are officially considered Caucasian or White by the U.S. government, they are represented as a distinct group on the census through the optional ancestry question. The number 715,000, therefore, is an underestimation. Other estimates based on community tallies suggest that there are approximately 2 to 2.5 million Arab-Americans in the United States (Zogby, 1990). Lebanon is the number one nation of origin for Arab immigrants, followed by Iraq and Egypt (Ajrouch, 451). Census data shows 82% of Arab-Americans are U.S. citizens with 63% born in the U.S.; 54% of the totals are men. The population is young with many in their child-bearing years (El-Badry, 1). Before 1960, as many as 90% of Arab immigrants to the U.S. were Christians, but recent immigrants are mostly Muslim and settle near established Arab-American communities, like Detroit (El-Badry, 2-3).

Government officials who have classified Arabs and their descendants according to multiple and conflicting categories have, in part, externally structured the social and historical invisibility of Arab-Americans. Most Arabs who immigrate to the U.S. are Muslim, yet the Arabs who immigrated to the U.S. during the first period (1880-1945) were predominantly Christians of the Eastern right sects of Greater Syria (Naber, 38). By mid-century, Arab-Americans were one of the best acculturated ethnic groups in America. The second wave of immigrants brought a larger number of Muslims, primarily women. The importance of retaining the cultural and religious traditions of their homeland further alienated the new immigrants from their American-born co-ethnics (40). The shift from predominantly Christian to predominantly Muslim immigrants is one of the many factors that contribute to the irresolution of the historical problem of whether Arab-Americans should be considered white/Caucasian or a non-white minority. Muslims tend to be perceived as outsiders to the white American mainstream (42). Arab-ness represents a set of values, traditions and attitudes that are common to people in the Arab world and that have been passed down over generations. In articulating Arab-ness and Arab values, for instance, Arabs often present an interesting twist on common public discourses in Britain which has linked immigrants to family pathology and deviance, suggesting that 'English culture' has high rates of divorce and single parenthood. While they are eager to pass on 'Arab values' to their children and to support Arab organizations, they are equally keen to temper or qualify their assertions of difference and to dissociate Arabness from fanaticism, backwardness or foreignness. Conscious of the negative imagery of Arabs that abounds in various media, these individuals explicitly attempt to accommodate dominant social mores and to show that they can be both 'Western' and 'Arab' by adhering to middle-class English sensibilities (271-272).

Although there has always been some level of immigration from the Middle East to the U.S. each year, the problems between the Israelis and Palestinians coupled with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have increased the number of refugees and others trying to come to the U.S. In a post 9/11 world where terrorism is associated with Arab/Muslims from this region of the world, it is more important than ever that both cultures – U.S. and Middle Eastern – understand one another and work toward a compromise that will alleviate conflict and allow the two religions and cultures to live side-by-side in America. Little has been written about selective acculturation and even less about the problems of newly immigrated Arabs to the U.S.

For many Arab Americans, the Arab-Israeli War signified the beginning of their societal, political and cultural marginalization. Not only did the war signify the U.S. confirmed alliance with Israel, but it gave Arab-Americans their first taste of exclusion from a role in the political process. After the Arab-Israeli war, many Americans of Arab descent who previously identified themselves according to their country of origin, their religious affiliation or as 'American', united under the label 'Arab-American' and established numerous pan-ethnic organizations, such as the Arab-American University Graduates, the National Association of Arab Americans, the American Anti-Discrimination Committee, and the Arab American Institute (41).

Robert Young states "The dilemma of the global age is that, while we have finally discovered that we are one people who must share one precarious world, we are profoundly divided by race, culture and belief and we have yet to find a tongue in which we can speak our humanity to each other." Young leans toward moderation. He believes we must "make a wager – we will be able to find common ground while preserving genuine difference and diversity. If we do not succeed in this we will fail as a species. We will wager that success in finding a common tongue but preserving difference is possible. It is possible and desirable for all cultures to change, but not to change by blending with one another or being submerged by a single culture. Each culture must change to the extent necessary for it to recognize differences, to acknowledge the *prima facie* validity of other cultures, to incorporate some degree of tolerance of cultural diversity, and to discover some common ground in the new intercultural space thus created; ground upon which a conversation about intercultural understanding and cooperation can be built" (Young, 2-3).

William B. Gudykunst, in discussing individualist and collectivistic cultures, points out that members of individualistic cultures tend to be universalistic and apply the same value standards to everyone while members of collectivistic cultures, in contrast, tend to be particularistic and apply different value standards for members of their in-groups and members of out-groups (Gudykunst 9-10). In collectivistic cultures, where he states Bedouin Arab and Moroccan cultures fall, there is a coexistence facet in which they separate the public self from the private self (10). In individualistic societies, the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Conversely, in collectivist societies, people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which, throughout their lifetime, protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Individualism has been blamed for alienation, loneliness and materialism. The extreme individualism in the U.S. makes it difficult for its citizens to interact with those from less individualistic cultures (77). A *monocultural* perspective denies the differences of other cultures (Pearce & Kang 21). The monocultural perspective characterizes the "common sense" of persons who have lived all their lives within a single culture, or who have accepted some creed that claims to be universal. Either way, the "margins" of their own culture function as boundaries rather than as limits (22).

Assimilation is a process by which members of subordinated groups modify their behavior, beliefs, or appearances to fit dominant modes of being and knowing. Assimilation requires increasing degrees of conformity, and conformity is a form of symbolic violence because it arbitrarily values one way of being while it devalues others (Schubert, 1097). The chance to come to America and start a new life has always demanded full assimilation (Portes and Hao, 890). It requires that all other cultures conform to the dominant language and customs in a uniform manner, showing no tolerance for cultural diversity and opening no space for a common ground between diverse cultures. Despite rapidly growing immigration, the U.S. Census reports that close to 90% of the American population speaks exclusively in English and that the rest is formed mainly by recently-arrived immigrants. The much touted advantages of the assimilation process for cultural unity and national solidarity hide its significant underside. Linguists and psychologists have repeatedly noted the association of fluent bilingualism with better cognitive performance in comparison with monolinguals in any language (Portes and Hao, 890).

Abu-Rabia, in quoting Braddock and McPartland, points out their argument that total assimilation might occur because minority members believe that the other way, cultural maintenance, invites minority visibility, which arouses resentment and discrimination in the host society (Abu-Rabia, 541). One need only look at many second, third and even fourth generation Americans whose ancestors assimilated fully, yet who now spend hours tracing their genealogy, learning about the culture of origin of their family tree prior to immigration and trying to incorporate elements of that culture into their very American lives.

The general thrust of assimilation research since the 1960s has been to determine the degree to which immigrants achieve different dimensions of engagement with the host society. While varied in content and empirical themes, this research maintains an understanding of immigrant-host society relations as a self-sustaining dynamic through which an ethnic subgroup, over successive generations, experiences the rupturing of primary social bonds and absorption into dominant or 'mainstream' society. Ideological efforts to promote and to enforce assimilation in the context of mass post-colonial migration were largely eclipsed by multiculturalist policies and theories in the 1970s. Multiculturalism, in turn, came under fire by more radical theoretical approaches. Hegemony and ideology analyses became increasingly concerned with the discursive construction of racial categories and the manner in which such categories come to be viewed as 'natural' and normal. The main concerns that united these approaches are the construction of marginality and inequality and the political actions and identities with which subordinated groups contest and resist "otherness" (Nagel, 260-261).

Assimilation models have been largely discredited in the study of British minorities, whose experiences instead have been interpreted in terms of exclusion, racialization and difference. In recent years, some scholars have reinterpreted the pluralism debate in the light of new waves of immigrants. They suggest that assimilation trajectories have become *segmented*: some immigrant groups merge into the white middle class, others attain middle-class status but adhere to traditional cultures, and still others (particularly those with low skill levels and 'racial' markers) experience downward assimilation into the 'black underclass' (262). Assimilation has its own built-in causality, the logical conclusion of which is the shedding of ethnic distinctions. The assimilation paradigm, as many critics have noted, subsumes questions of power, identity and the social construction of group categories. The construction and preservation of group identity requires a sense of homogeneity or essence enforced through collective memory and notions of kinship and destiny (263).

The definition of multiculturalism implies the existence of a culturally pluralistic society (Gould, 199). A multicultural framework eschews the basic assumption that cultural identity has to be uni-dimensional – that becoming more of something else automatically means becoming less of the original (202). Proponents of multiculturalism in the U.S. and elsewhere have much to gain by conceptualizing their defense of multiculturalism in terms of symbolic violence experienced by those harmed by exclusion, whether that exclusion is a function of abolished affirmative action programs at the state or national level, whether it takes the form of the exclusion of alternative types of representation and alternative storytellers, or whether it is a more subtle form of exclusion effected by the communication of an unwantedness to some (Schubert, 1088-1089). One of the primary ways that multiculturalists have traditionally conceptualized the opposition is in terms of cultural hegemony. What the concept of hegemony does not miss is the role of dominant groups and classes in subordinating or silencing competing understandings of reality. It tends to attribute a monolithic and overwhelming quality to those in power. What the idea of hegemony does miss is the strategizing practices of members not only of dominant groups but of those subordinated groups as well (1090-1091). A focus and shift from hegemony to symbolic violence shows the way in which our daily practices and structures of discourse produce and foster the embodiment of domination within others and ourselves. This shift moves our historical focus from the dominant cultural practices of elites to their effects on those who are dominated (1094-1095). Multiculturalism has shown that the story of history and the rise of reason have been based on exclusion. Multiculturalists want more than merely assimilation. The goal is not to welcome members of different categories of people into the dominant way of being in the world but to multiply and legitimize alternative ways of being and thinking. The multiculturalist movement is not about assimilation, although a number of efforts to ease the assimilation process have occurred (1096).

The Arab community in East Dearborn, Michigan, is an example of multiculturalism at work. The first Arab Muslim immigrants came from Lebanon, arriving at the turn of the 20th century. As is characteristic of immigrants in general, most entered the U.S. with the goal of earning large sums of money and then returning to their homeland. The next wave of immigration from Lebanon to the metropolitan Detroit area commenced with the Immigration Act of 1965. The most recent wave of Lebanese immigration commenced in the mid-1970's due to the civil war in Lebanon and increased again 1982 with the Israeli invasion. Males in this community are urged to realize the American dream of financial success, the cultural meaning of an Arab ethnic identity is increasingly located in the behavior of the females. Overall males are experiencing a loosening of cultural constraints from their family and community, whereas females experience perhaps even more restrictions on their behavior. This gendered division of

expectations leads the community to rely on females for the maintenance of tradition and the perpetuation of an Arab identity. The male, on the other hand, more easily acculturates because he faces less cultural pressure to maintain traditional behavior (Ajrouch, 452-453). Immigrant parents are struggling to retain traditional aspects of their culture. The ethnic community of Arab-Americans produces a network of social relations that attempts to enforce control over its members (Ajrouch, 460).

Strong or mosaic multiculturalism is very often mired in futile attempts to single out one master narrative as more significant than others in the constitution of personal identities. Interactive universalism accepts that all moral beings capable of sentience, speech and action are potential moral conversation partners. Because cultural narratives (which comprise linguistic, ethnic, religious, as well as territorial and regional accounts) are crucial to the narrative constitution of individual self-identities, such processes of interactive universalism are crucial in multicultural societies (Benhabib, 14).

Portes and Rumbaut, in discussing acculturation as an option for immigrants, describe two less-adaptive ways of adjusting than that of selective acculturation. Dissonant acculturation takes place when a child's learning of the English language and American ways and simultaneous loss of the immigrant culture outstrip their parents'. This situation leads to role reversal. Consonant acculturation is the opposite situation, where the learning process and gradual abandonment of the home language and culture occur at roughly the same pace across generations. This situation is most common when immigrant parents possess enough human capital to accompany the cultural evolution of their children and monitor it (Portes and Rumbaut, 53-54). Losing a language is also losing part of one's self that is linked to one's identity and cultural heritage. When children move decisively in this direction while parents remain steeped in their own language and culture, the conditions for dissonant acculturation are set (144).

For youths who have advanced further in the language adaptation process to become entirely monolingual in English the cultural world of their immigrant families and communities becomes increasingly irrelevant and the social directives emanating from it unworthy of attention. Loss of the parental language entails growing estrangement from the cultural ways of the first generation and often a condescending or disrespectful attitude towards them. Accordingly, lesser family solidarity and greater conflict with parents may be expected. If parents are fluent in English, the positive effect of second-generation bilingualism disappears, indicating that it is a spurious result of the ability to maintain channels of communication open across generations (Portes and Hao, 892). These findings contradict the notion that the key factor in immigrant children's relationships with their families and their own personality development is the ability to communicate with parents, regardless of the language in which this communication takes place. Instead, it is the ability of second-generation youths to preserve knowledge of their language of origin, together with acquisition of English that leads to more desirable outcomes. Selective acculturation involving a mix of the old and the new, rather than complete acculturation, yields the most desirable results in the areas covered in this analysis (Portes and Hao, 906).

Arab countries, as with many other important and distinguished nations, can be described as having more traditional cultures than those considered as typical within the U.S. Two objective measures of such traditionalism are educational attainment which can be expected to moderate traditional values (at least those in the extreme), and religion, in particular affiliation with the religion of Islam, which is a major force for maintaining traditionalism within Arabic cultures. Differences between Muslims and Christians, even among immigrants from Arabic countries, may represent a major cultural divide, rather than merely a religious difference (185).

Mary Pipher, in *The Middle of Everywhere*, advocates for Americans to become cultural brokers for immigrants, teaching them to make intentional decisions about what to accept and what to reject in America. Cultural brokers help ease people into each other's cultures. Foucault wrote that "information is power." Cultural brokers give newcomers information that directly translates into power (Pipher, 89).

From the moment of arrival [in the U.S.], families face dilemmas: Do they let their children drink Coke and watch cartoons? Do they try to speak English or do they stick with their native language? What kind of clothes do they wear? Do they shake hands with strangers? Do they encourage family members to be individuals or to maintain a family-based identity? Families arrive here intensely unified; they have survived great crises and stayed together. All have focused on the dream of reaching a safe, good place. But once here, people develop individual dreams. These conflicting dreams create tension and sometimes

break up families that have risked their lives to be together. Internal culture wars often ravage families (223-224). Longer residence, younger age at immigration, having not recently visited one's homeland, and being of a Christian religious persuasion are associated with greater acculturation to U.S. society and greater satisfaction with life in the U.S., but with reduced family satisfaction. Although acculturation appears to be associated positively with satisfaction with life in the U.S., it also appears to be associated negatively with family satisfaction (Fargallah, Schrumm and Webb, 197).

Both Americans and new immigrants from the Middle East have been living in cultures where the margins are often boundaries; more so immigrants from totalitarian countries under dictatorial regimes. Although processes of acculturation have been studied for many immigrant groups, very little research has been conducted on factors related to acculturation among immigrants from Arabic speaking countries. Some evidence suggests that many Arabs may find acculturation to be more difficult than have other immigrants, especially those affiliated with Islam which is a minority religion in the U.S. (Fargallah, Schumm and Webb, 182). There has been increased negative media attention toward Arabs, attention that very well might make Arabs feel unwelcome and make their acculturation more difficult or less desired (197).

Ethnic identity is, in part, a way of answering the question, "Where do I come from?" (Portes and Rumbaut, 161). An *ethnic identity* may be defined as a social identity. The negotiation of ethnic identity arises as individuals take characteristics from various cultural "tool kits" and create evolving definitions through their interactions with others. Among immigrants, the parameters and meaning of an ethnic identity begin with the culture, traditions, and practices that are maintained from the homeland. The children of immigrants – the second generation – become the carriers through which the homeland ways are either transmitted or lost. Issues of identity, language, economic mobility, ethnic community and intermarriage become fundamental areas of adaptation for the second generation. The decisions they make and opportunities available to them will have an impact on whether future generations are successful in the U.S. (Ajrouch, 449-450). These distinct patterns of social relationships hint at the process of acculturation through the formation of an ethnic identity (464).

1.2 To Veil or Not to Veil: Is it a Choice or a Mandate?

Even in the predominantly Arab/Muslim populated countries of the Middle East there is disagreement among women and men as to whether the Qu'ran requires Muslim women to wear the *hijab* (veil or head scarf) or the *abaya* (long black coat covering all but the feet and hands). For Arab immigrants to America, the choice of whether to cover or not by Arab-American women becomes even more profound in a country where women pride themselves on feminism and independence, often viewing the Islamic way of covering as oppressive. Women who cover or veil in America know they will stand out in a way they will not in the Middle East.

Mohammad, the founder of Islam, was among the world's greatest reformers on behalf of women (Goodwin, 30). Islam, in fact, may be the only religion that formally specified women's rights and sought ways to protect them. Today's Islamic spokesmen frequently extol the Prophet's revolutionary innovations, but usually fail to note that they are rarely honored in reality. It is not the Qu'ran that compels Islamic women to be enshrouded from head to toe or confined to their homes while men feel free to pester women who do venture out. Mohammad's directives on this issue were addressed to both sexes and could not be clearer:

*Say to the believing men that they should
lower their gaze and guard their modesty...
And say to believing women that they should
lower their gaze and guard their modesty...*

As quoted by Jan Goodwin in [The Price of Honor](#), Islamic scholar Dr. Zaki Adawi says, "This section of the Qu'ran also states that women should not show 'their adornment except what normally appears.' This means it is left to custom. There has never been an Islamic obligation for women to cover at any time. In fact, veiling the face is an innovation that has no foundation whatsoever in Islam. Even in Saudi Arabia the covering of women from head to toe is recent; it was not required before the discovery of oil. The *hijab* is also not obligatory." Dr. Adawi believes that, in Europe, the *hijab* should be prohibited because it creates a lot of problems for women. The veil originated as a Persian elitist fashion to distinguish

aristocracy from the common masses, and has moved in and out of fashion ever since (Goodwin, 30). As Islamic radicalism arose at the beginning of the last decade, the pendulum for Muslim women swung the other way again. Once more they were to be hidden behind veils, a development that now seems to legitimize and institutionalize inequality for women (31).

The practice of veiling among Muslim women is a complex institution that exhibits great variety across many Muslim countries. The terms *chador*, *hijab*, *niqab*, and *foulard* refer to distinct items of clothing worn by women from different Muslim communities: for example, the *chador* is essentially Iranian and refers to the long black robe and head scarf worn in a rectangular manner around the face; the *niqab* is a veil that covers the eyes and the mouth and leaves only the nose exposed; it may or may not be worn in conjunction with the *chador*. Most Muslim women from Turkey are likely to wear either long overcoats and a *foulard* (a head scarf) or a *carsaf* (a black garment that most resembles the *chador*). These items of clothing have a symbolic function within the Muslim community itself: women from different countries signal to one another their ethnic and national origins through their clothing, as well as their distance or proximity to tradition. The brighter the colors of their overcoats and scarves - bright blue, green, beige, lilac, as opposed to brown, gray, navy, and, of course, black - and the more fashionable their cuts and material by Western standards, the more we can assume the distance from Islamic orthodoxy of the women who wear them. Seen from the outside, however, this complex semiotic of dress codes is reduced to one or two items of clothing that then assume the function of crucial symbols of complex negotiations between Muslim religious and cultural identities and Western cultures (Benhabib, 94-95).

In Iran, the modern day Persia, where the custom of veiling began as a fashion statement, cab drivers, restaurant owners and shopkeepers are forbidden to serve women unless they are wearing a *hijab* and streets signs stating "Bad *hijab* is prostitution" are common (Goodwin, 101). Iranian women, like Zahra Rahnavard, a playwright and president of Al-Zahra University, insist women in the West have been enslaved by fashion and makeup, turned into objects of sexual attention. "The veil frees women from the shackles of fashion, and enables them to become human beings in their own right," says Rahnavard. "Once people ceased to be distracted by women's physical appearance, they can begin to hear their views and recognize the inner person" (Goodwin, 109). The veil may be a symbol of oppression to the Western eye, but, to many who wear it, it is freedom - not just from the tyranny of Western culture but also from unwanted sexual advances. In Cairo veils have become so popular that fashion shows are occasionally staged to show off new styles (Beyer, L., Dowell, W., 37).

The last three decades have seen a tremendous increase in the number of Egyptians receiving an education. Many of these young people are fresh from villages where the traditional marriage system is still strong. These grown children have parents, uncles, brothers, and sisters who sacrificed to make them into professionals. By veiling, they are fulfilling their end of the bargain; they are promising not to destroy - by a shameful affair or by marriage to a stranger - the honor or prosperity of their families. Women all over the world know very well how important power fantasies are to one's self-empowerment. The secret of Islam's sweeping resurgence today is that it gives men at birth an inherited right to claim world hegemony as a horizon and a guiding dream (Mernissi, x). Islam today is expanding without missionaries. But the religion is in a situation where fundamentalist men and non-fundamentalist women have a conflict of interest. Fundamentalist and unveiled women are the two groups that have emerged with definite disturbing claims and aspirations in the postcolonial era. Both have the same age range - youth - and the same educational privilege - a recent access to formalized institutions of knowledge. But while the men seeking power through religion and its revivification are mostly from newly urbanized middle- and lower- middle-class backgrounds, unveiled women on the contrary are predominantly of the urban upper and middle class (xi). The main thing to remember is that women's education disturbs the traditional sexual identity reference points and sex roles in Muslim countries, which are obsessed with virginity and childbearing (xxvi). A woman's advanced education and earning of a salary have been pointed to by many Moroccan judges as factors creating dissent within the couple and raising risks of confrontation. The conservative wave against women in the Muslim world, far from being a regressive trend, is on the contrary a dense mechanism against profound changes in both sex roles and the touchy subject of sexual identity (xxvii).

From the height of the Palestinian intifadah, or uprising against Israeli rule that began in 1987, to the upsurge in Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt, the veil has become a socially obligatory part of the dress code for many who hadn't worn it before. Women in Gaza and in other moderate Arab countries say they

feel an increased pressure to veil for both political and social reasons. But proponents argue that the veil is a central part of God's protection against the mistreatment of women – and that gender relations will only improve when more women obey the call to cover themselves. Today, reasons for veiling are as varied as the types of covering women wear, from the long robes and colorful scarves in the North African countries to the black-on-black garb of the conservative Gulf States. The motivation to cover, analysts say, is multifaceted, often meaning very different things in different countries. In some places, it is social insurance; in others, quiet political protest. Rima Fakhry, the director of Hisbullah's women's association, says "A woman who accepts Islam but not *hijab* is not really accepting Islam" (Prusher, 8).

Arab women immigrating to the U.S. in the wake of the fall of the Taliban, the present war in Iraq, and ongoing unrest in Palestine, are bringing this argument over how to interpret the Qu'ran and Islamic Shari'a laws (divine laws) as they pertain to the *hijab* and *abaya* to the U.S., as they have in previous years to Europe. On March 14, 2004, President Jacques Chirac signed into law Article 141-5-1 of Law No. 2004-228 of the National Code d'Éducation forbidding the wearing of symbols or clothes displaying religious affiliation in the public schools (Kramer, 3). A Frenchman, and this means also a Muslim Frenchman, is expected to accept that at home the values of France, and certainly its secular imperatives, are not up for negotiation. The veil is considered "the siege of a politics of Islamization" and has no place in a French public classroom (4). Chirac sees "France" as an idea of citizenship, an identity forged in the neutral space of its public schools and sees no place for religious expression or exception in those public schools. The five to six million Muslims in the country – nearly one tenth of the population – are demanding just such expression and exception. Muslims today are part of the biggest labor migration in Europe since the great migrations of the Roman Empire and some analysts at the European Union say that in fifteen years they could account for 20% of the its population (1). In France the veil involves much broader politics than French politics. It has to do with the Middle East, the war in Iraq and the Palestinian intifada (8).

Similar problems have arisen in Germany where the Islamic veil and headscarf have recently gained a special place in the national imagination, understood as a symbol of the Muslim immigrant woman's otherness, her oppression, and her cultural difference, implicitly revealing a growing fear about the place of Islam in Germany (Weber, 33). Fereshta Ludin, an Afghani-born German citizen was denied placement in Baden-Württemberg's public school system due to her choice to wear a headscarf, despite fighting the decision through the German court system (34). Since reunification in German, more attention has been given to Muslim practices by people now understood to be German residents. Especially since 1985, women belonging to minority populations that are primarily Muslim have been struggling for recognition as active subjects in German society. Women wearing headscarves in Frankfurt and Essen are seen as part of a re-islamization process and their sense of moral self is intersecting with a desire for class mobility (40).

In England, one woman, Zeba Arif, a nurse, reports being berated verbally by many female Muslim patients for not covering her head. Despite explaining that she believes Islam is a religion of tolerance and choice in this matter, the patients usually become angry with her, quoting passages from the Qu'ran, most out of context. In the end, patients would tell her that she was a good nurse, but not a good Muslim. Arif grew up in an orthodox Muslim family in Pakistan to parents who were well traveled, educated and liberal. She was taught by foreign-educated nuns and was encouraged to be bold and articulate. She and her sisters looked with pity on the students in government schools with their covered heads and meek attitudes. Most of the patients who consider her less than a pure Muslim for her refusal to wear the *hijab* are lesser educated as well. (Arif, 23)

Female members of Arab and Muslim society in London when interviewed about the misconceptions pertaining to their group, target the use of the headscarf (*hijab*) and the treatment of women. They contend that veiled females are marked by appearance as Muslim, but the *hijab* was not meant to set them (or Muslims in general) apart from mainstream society. While the *hijab* is a visible symbol of Islam, they insist, it represents a private act of faith intended to deflect attention and is not a political statement (Nagel, 275-276).

2. The Interview Process: Conversations with Immigrants

In determining whether the subjects studied in this research would benefit and adapt to their new host culture best through assimilation, multiculturalism or selective acculturation, an informal ethnographic approach was taken with interviews conducted in a relaxed familiar setting. This qualitative approach was chosen to help the interviewees feel at ease and comfortable, thereby facilitating more in-depth and thickly descriptive answers on their part. Conversations were spontaneous and the interviewer allowed the women to move the conversation in the directions most comfortable to them, whether that conversation deviated from the prepared questions or not.

2.1 Creation of sample population

Using a qualitative, ethnographic approach, three interviews were conducted with five participants identifying themselves as Arab/Muslim women, between the ages of 25 and 35, from the Middle Eastern countries of Iraq and Lebanon. Creating a sample population of women posed some problems as each of the Arab/Muslim women approached either individually through a translator or through the International Institute in Erie, PA., was required to seek the permission of their husbands to participate in an interview. In addition to seeking only Arab/Muslim women, preferably newly immigrated, who originated from the Middle Eastern North African (MENA) nations of either Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, an effort was made to interview as equally as possible a sampling of women who wear the *hijab* as those who do not. The resulting population interviewed for this study consists of four women from Iraq and one from Lebanon, three women who wear the *hijab* and two who do not, and three who are able to speak English and two who are not. All but one participant immigrated to this country in the last four years. No random sampling was conducted in the selection of the subjects because the validity of this thesis is tested through thematic analysis, not through generalized results. The sample population was selected for their ability to be interviewed, the richness of the stories and struggles as the women work to make the U.S. their new home coupled with their willingness in the face of cultural restrictions to meet with the interviewer and answer questions, and their ability to show facets of the conflict within their religion over the wearing of the *hijab*. This is not a study of Arab-American women in general; rather it is a focus on the lived experiences of these five women. Interviews focused on how the women learned to communicate in America, how they will continue to communicate their culture and language to their children, and how several women handle interpersonal conflict created by the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab* or veil.

2.2 Protocol Development

The interview questions presented to this sample population were developed by the interviewer in connection with an advisor, Dr. Andrew Smith, a respected communications scholar whose research and published writings center on issues in Morocco and the MENA region of the world. cursory research on the culture of the MENA region and the wearing of the *hijab* contributed to the interviewee's development of questions.

The first section of interview questions focused on background questions regarding each woman's country of origin, marital status, number of children, education level, level of ability to communicate in English, and difficulties faced in learning to communicate in the U.S. and to adjust to U.S. culture in general. The questions were developed to create a background on each woman and to put the women at ease by asking simple questions that allowed them to speak about themselves, to share and to relax.

The second set of questions focused on conflict management or handling of conflict by the women. The questions began by determining what each woman thought were the issues that caused conflict in her home country and how those conflicts were managed. The interview then moved to questions regarding what, if any, conflicts they had experienced in the U.S., whether the conflicts were caused by cultural differences or miscommunications, and what was done to resolve the conflict effectively. The women were asked to reflect on whether they felt that U.S. citizens were open to learning about their culture and cultural customs brought with them from their country of origin. These questions were posed with the hope of showing the deep conflict created over the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab*, the relation of the wearing or not wearing of the *hijab* to the women's level of education, and the means to resolution of a conflict in a collectivistic versus individualistic society.

The women were then asked what their view of the U.S. was prior to emigrating here and whether that view had changed. This question was posed to allow them to move the conversation in any direction

comfortable to them with the hope that it would generate excellent examples of their struggles to retain portions of their own culture and to fit into U.S. culture through story telling, comparison of the two countries, and the exposing of their deeper reflections and fears.

The data for these interviews was obtained through audio recordings of the interviews with the sample population and the interviewee's ethnographic notes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, although the name of each interviewee was changed to protect their privacy and respect their right to confidentiality in sharing the thoughts and stories of their immigrant experience.

This research is important in creating an understanding of the needs and differences, as well as the desires and similarities, of Arab/Muslim women and American women. It is also important for differentiating between assimilation, multiculturalism and selective acculturation. Any research and analysis that works to emphasize common values and acceptance of differences also works toward the building of a peaceful community. The interviews were analyzed by looking at whether moderate selective acculturation is being used by the participants or not and which women seem to be adjusting in an easier manner to life in the U.S.

3. Mutual Understanding Fosters Peaceful Coexistence

Introduction

3.1 Iman and Ali

Iman tells of coming to the U.S. with her husband, Ali, a Kuwaiti aerospace engineer, and his trouble finding employment in the post 9/11 U.S. airline industry as an Arab male. As a Lebanese citizen married to a Kuwaiti man whose mother is an Iraqi, Iman and Ali had a complex and difficult time living in Kuwait. Often when troubles erupted between Kuwait and Iraq, Ali would be questioned by the police or jailed for short, intermittent periods of time. They often tried to hide the fact that they were married. Once they began having children, the children were considered Lebanese by the Kuwaiti government and Iman was forced to take their two daughters to Lebanon to live with her mother. Iman, an airline hostess, would then travel to see them. Until the children joined their parents in the U.S. they only knew Ali through pictures and stories Iman told them. Iman and Ali were finally able to come to the U.S. with the sole goal of living together in one home as a family and without persecution from the authorities, something they had never experienced. Ali obtained a job as an engineer with an American corporation with many government contracts. The couple rented a house, put their daughters in school and were expecting the birth of their son, Sam, when the 9/11 terrorist tragedy occurred. Ali, not yet an American citizen, was fired and walked out of his job. The couple found themselves on welfare, unable to find work in the wave of anti-Arab sentiment sweeping the U.S. during the aftermath of 9/11. Iman and Ali would like to keep many of their cultural values, morals, religion and tenets from their culture of origin, but wish to have American friends and adapt into their host culture. Iman sees herself as a modern Arab woman. She wears Western clothing and does not cover her head with the *hijab*. She smokes, drinks alcohol and is educated, as is her husband. As Ali fails to find work and it becomes increasingly difficult to selectively acculturate, even in a moderate way, they are increasingly leaning toward assimilation, staying away from the mosque and potential Arab friends, looking for American friends, and trying to speak more English at home (Iman, personal interview, September 2004).

3.2 Raina and Samara

Samara came to the U.S. as the wife of an American citizen. She had been in the country about three years at the time of her interview. She and her co-worker, Jamila, not only wear the *hijab* but are fully covered in a black *abaya*. Samara speaks little English and Raina, who Samara had never met prior to the interview, accompanied the interviewer to act as a translator. Samara and Jamila worked in the day care at the International Institute in Erie, PA., at the time of the interview. Immediately, following Raina's introduction of herself as translator and of the interviewer, Samara began an intense, harsh questioning of Raina in Arabic. Jamila, although more relaxed, joined in. Raina indicated they questioned her as to why she did not wear the *hijab* and, although Raina had been clear prior to the interview that she does not cover her head by choice, she told Samara and Jamila she did not cover because her husband would not permit her to. Samara seemed unhappy, but somewhat mollified.

Samara emigrated from Basra, Iraq, where she completed what would be the equivalent of the third grade in the U.S. Jamila came to the U.S. as a child and completed high school only. Raina is from a family of university professors and is college educated. Samara is trying to learn English from television and from her husband and often uses body language and pointing gestures to make Americans understand her. Jamila indicated she had chosen to wear the *hijab* at age 8 and would not force her daughters to do so. She speaks Arabic at home to her children but, because she emigrated at such a young age, thinks her children should be allowed to select the portions of their American culture that they wish to incorporate into their lives and the same for portions of their Muslim/Arabic heritage. Samara disagrees and says her daughters will cover, speak Arabic and adhere to the strictest traditions of Islam. Although everything in the U.S. is different from what Samara expected and is difficult for her to adjust to she firmly believes the man should be the leader in the home and she will keep that part of her culture rather than choose an American style relationship. Samara is shocked that Americans go to the police and courts for everything and says in her village of Basra when two persons have a conflict they choose a wise, older person as a mediator and rely on the mediator's wisdom and decision.

3.3 Raina and Aliya

Raina is from Baghdad's Monsour district, and her friend, Aliya, is from Kirkuk. Raina does not wear the *hijab* and Aliya does. They credit their ability to be friends with the area of Iraq that they come from and their level of education. Both Raina and Aliya say that people from Baghdad are more educated, and people from the north of Iraq – Baghdad, Kirkuk and Kurdistan – are more open-minded and flexible. They agree that they did not mix with a wide variety of Iraqis while living in that country and rarely, if ever, met uneducated, rural Iraqis; however, in the U.S. they are all lumped together as Arabs despite the huge differences in thinking (Raina and Aliya, personal interview, July 2005). Raina has a degree in accounting from the University of Baghdad and is working on a community college degree at Erie Business Center in Erie, PA. Her husband, Fawdi, was an orthopedic surgeon in Iraq. None of the women in either Raina's or Fawdi's family, all of whom are highly educated, have ever covered their heads. Fawdi's sisters are all doctors or dentists and Raina's mother was an English language teacher, while her father was an American educated professor of Ancient Studies and Religions. "He was famous in Iraq and traveled all over Europe and the Middle East lecturing," says Raina (Raina, personal communication, July 30, 2005).

Aliya has a middle school education and is a stay-at-home mother in Erie, PA. All the women in Aliya's family have always covered their heads. Aliya's husband, was imprisoned by Sadaam Hussein in Abu Ghraib for 11 years, and is strict with her. She must scramble to put on a *hijab* and *abaya* when people approach the door or enter the house. Both women believe that the Qu'ran says a woman should cover her head but not her face and that total covering is not in line with Islamic law. However, the Qu'ran and their culture also state that they must obey the man in the marriage. Fawdi, like Raina's father before him, forbids her to cover her head. Aliya's husband insists that she cover her head and wear an *abaya* in front of strangers and men. Both Raina and Aliya adamantly believe that people from southern Iraq are rural, illiterate or with only a primary school education and are rigid fundamentalists who do not believe it is a choice for a woman to cover her head. While living in Baghdad, Raina rarely interacted with people from southern Iraq. The same holds true for Aliya while she lived in Kirkuk. Raina, in particular, was slotted into a higher social class. Therefore, upon coming here, both women are often thrown in with fundamentalists who do not have an education and Raina has endured terrible treatment from Iraqis immigrants from these rural areas of Iraq for not covering her head (Raina translating for Aliya, personal communication, July 30, 2005). Aliya, on the other hand, receives no persecution from rural Iraqis although she believes that Raina is doing the right thing by obeying her husband. Additionally, Aliya was required by her husband and religion to stay as covered as possible while giving birth to her first child, Mustafa. Aliya has a tougher time assimilating into American culture than Raina. Raina has been in this country for three years and is grateful for Aliya's friendship. Until Aliya arrived, Raina was mercilessly targeted by rural Iraqis who had emigrated to the U.S. for not covering her head. On one occasion, an Arab-American woman from southern Iraq reported Raina to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), claiming Raina came to her house and destroyed her social security cards and green cards. Raina then endured many conversations with the FBI to explain the meaning of the *hijab*, why Raina did not cover her head and why the women were persecuting her. The FBI ran an investigation and put the women harassing Raina on a watch list, reprimanding them. This surprised the women, according to Raina, because reporting someone in Iraq under Sadaam did not result in a fair investigation but rather in

interrogation and jailing. On another occasion, the same Iraqi women reported Raina to Children's Services in Erie, claiming she put alcohol in her baby's bottle. Children's Services ran an investigation, as well, clearing Raina of all charges and reporting the women for false allegations. These experiences have been very traumatic for Raina and her family. It was both frightening and demoralizing to her and to her husband. When Raina was pregnant with her youngest child, she was working in a day care center and attending Erie Business Center. One day her husband arrived at the day care center yelling at her angrily. The same women had told Fawdi that Raina was having affairs with other men at Erie Business Center and that if she were covering her head this would not happen. Raina's supervisor at the day care center calmed Fawdi down and told him that this was not true, that Raina was not behaving this way. Eventually, Fawdi, an intelligent, open-minded Arab man, realized what had happened.

3.4 Analysis

If Iman and Ali experienced more inclusion and acceptance from their host culture, rather than fear, they might feel confident about choosing to moderately selectively acculturate. But the signals they have received as Ali lost his job and was unable to work either in his field as an aerospace engineer or in any professional position are that they do not fit in or meet the norms of the host culture. To survive, without support from the new host culture for the idea of retaining portions of their culture of origin, they are trying to move as quickly as possible away from other immigrants from the MENA. They are choosing to assimilate and seem more "American" than to selectively acculturate and keep portions of their culture alive in their daily outward lives. They are hoping this will result in gainful employment and a normal life.

Raina's and Aliya's beliefs about the attitudes of rural Iraqi women are somewhat born out in Samara's immediate reaction and questioning of Raina about why she was not wearing a veil and her later revelation that she has only a primary school education that stops at our equivalent of the third grade (Raina translating for Samara, personal communication, July, 2004). If the women do not cover their heads they may not be able to receive help with translation and support from the mosque because they "lose points", according to Raina for not wearing the *hijab* (Raina, personal communication, July 30, 2005). Raina expresses gratitude that the American system investigates allegations, but is saddened and resigned to the fact that, as she says, "It is hard to make them [U.S. authorities and citizens] understand. I got their help but they help me without understanding why or the problem."

Arab-American women present a cultural conflict as their religious laws and the worldview of their societal upbringing collide with American laws and Judeo-Christian culture. But another cross-cultural conflict is occurring between Arab women regarding wearing of the veil, interpretation of Islamic law, and ability to assimilate into U.S. society which will, ultimately, fall to the American judicial, criminal and social work system to investigate and adjudicate before it explodes into something unmanageable.

Rachel Hunter, in quoting J.D. Hunter, points out that merely educating people about the differences that underlie culturally determined beliefs is not enough; one must first confront competing ideals of truth. Hunter describes cultural conflicts as events that occur when there is polarization between two groups and the differences are intensified by the way they are perceived. The struggles are centered on the control of the symbols of culture (Spector, 75). In Raina's case the *hijab* or veil is the symbol of female Islamic culture and its use is interpreted in different ways. Fundamentalist Islamic women perceive the wearing of the veil as a method of controlling and maintaining the symbol of their faith and culture, causing a conflict within her own faith and culture for Raina. However, in post 9/11 American culture the veil and extreme forms of Islamic dress evoke fears of terrorism causing Raina to look more "American" or assimilated and therefore safer and more understandable. In American culture, Raina has less conflict and more help and understanding than she would if she were wearing the *hijab*.

A 2003 study of Arab-American women found high levels of Arab ethnic and religious identity coexisted with fairly progressive feminist beliefs. There was considerable consensus on the continued need for a strong women's movement in the U.S. with a level of support for feminism comparable to that found among the adult U.S. female population (Marshall, S., Read, J., 882). The study found that it was not Muslim doctrine per se but religious practice and conservative beliefs more generally that quash gender consciousness, consistent with findings on U.S. Christians and Jews as well as other ethnic minorities. Conservative religious beliefs and consistent religious practice over the lifecycle are associated with

lower support for feminism (Marshall, S., Read, J., 887). Today in war-torn Iraq, ideas of religious conservatism and the pressure to Islamify are waging a fierce battle against the influx of western cultural currency. In April (2004) a troupe of clerics came to speak to students at the al-Houda secondary school for girls in Baghdad about morals, chastity and the need to wear headscarves for security. Even in progressive neighborhoods few women dare to leave the house without concealing their form-fitting T-shirts and neon-colored pedal pushers underneath baggy robes and head scarves. More than just a fad or symbol of fashion, the *hijab*, along with the long-sleeve shirts and loose skirts, has become a means of security, providing young women the shapeless anonymity that will let them blend into the crowd and out of the eyes of would-be assailants. There is social pressure to conform, not just from the troublesome clerics but also from other women (Ozernoy, 32).

In the U.S. no research has been done as to the effect, especially post-9/11, of wearing a veil on employment opportunities. Muslim women in the U.S. are permitted to cover their heads and attend public schools or work in public places. However, mixing so many Arab women together with their varying levels of education and opinions on the interpretation of the Qu'ran regarding the subject of veiling has, in the case of the five women interviewed for this study, created a culture of discrimination and oppressive treatment. As evidenced by Raina, some Arab-American women who choose not to veil are viewed harshly by those who believe a woman who doesn't cover her head is not a good Muslim.

Even the vaunted merits of the American way of life can become crimes and sins in the Islamic way of thinking. The liberation of women means debauchery and the commercial use of women as "consumer products." Free elections mean that the American people freely chose their rulers and must therefore be held accountable and punishable for those rulers' misdeeds – that is there are no "innocent civilians." Worst of all is the separation of church and state. Muslims view America as a nation who, rather than ruling by the Shari'a of Allah in its Constitution and laws, chooses to invent its own laws as to its wills and desires. Religion is separate from policy and contradicts the pure nature which affirms absolute authority to the Lord and Creator as ordered by the Qu'ran (Lewis, 159). Encouraging U.S. citizens to accept a policy of moderate selective acculturation and to become "cultural brokers" as Pipher advocates (Pipher, 88) will do a lot to diffuse these interpretations of American culture and to foster the development of acceptance and flexibility in both U.S. citizens and immigrants. In such a scenario, cultural brokers would serve the dual role of educating American citizens about Arab/Muslim cultural to reduce instances of stereotyping and prejudicial beliefs born of ignorance. At the same time, the cultural brokers would help women like Samara to learn the language from somewhere other than television and to accept that adopting portions of American culture does not mean they must lose the important cultural tenets of their own religion and country of origin. This suggestion in no way intimates that cultural brokers or new immigrants will or should espouse the selection of any portions of either the host culture or culture of the country of origin that would be considering illegal or unethical in the U.S.

Neither cultural dominance (assimilation) nor isolationism (multiculturalism) offer solid tools for stimulating dialogues that may lead to a strong, peaceful culture. Only moderate selective acculturation, accepted by the host culture and incorporated one new immigrant at a time will work effectively (Pipher, 223-224).

The hope of this research is the creation a model for moderate selective acculturation with the potential to create healthy, peaceful communities in the U.S. and avoid the problems isolation and extreme multicultural approaches have created in France through rigid assimilation expectations or in Great Britain through exceptional allowance of multiculturalism. Both countries have recently seen a rise in extremist views and terroristic actions. It is important for all cultures to engage in self-examination and self-critique to grow and mature in a way that fosters understanding. A model of moderate selective acculturation stretches beyond the U.S. and allows American women as well as women in other countries to learn from Arab women and to teach them about their new host culture in return, thereby growing the ideas of cultural development, religious and moral similarities, ideas of feminism, and needs involved in raising children, obtaining education and developing career goals with a broad, positive impact on society.

Through observing these women and analyzing their stories this research shows why moderate selective acculturation is the best method for a more peaceful, societal transition for Arab/Muslim women in the post 9/11 world of the U.S., and, if accepted globally has the potential to effect world peace.

4. Conclusion

I believe the embracing of Arab-Americans will come with many difficulties and clashes of culture because the differences are enormous. The Arab-American women interviewed here could not assimilate fully without violating their religion in many ways. Some of the Arab-American women interviewed could not make an appointment to speak with anyone, such as a doctor or social worker, alone without the permission of her husband. Often Arab men, even those who are flexible and open-minded like Fawdi, will not allow their wives to drive so scheduling an appointment takes time. None of the women interviewed have husbands who permit them to drive.

The Portes and Rumbaut research makes it clear that for newcomers the first few years in America are a critical period. [Immigrants] have an initial optimism and energy that enables them to work hard and in some cases achieve enormous gains. They will either move into the middle class in a generation or two or they will languish at the bottom of our socioeconomic hierarchy. "Helping our newcomers with living wages, decent housing, education, and health care will be expensive and require commitment and compassion. But community does not mean 'free of conflict.' It's inevitable and even healthy to have great differences. Diversity in community is as healthy as diversity in any ecosystem. Without diversity in age, ethnicity, and ideas, we don't have communities; we have lifestyle enclaves. Even conflict can lead to closeness" (Pipher, 347-348). The need for a connection to the roots of one's family culture and heritage is not erased with assimilation; rather it emerges again and again in people sadly seeking what they could have easily had with a balanced system of moderate selective acculturation. Multiculturalism is a poor alternative, allowing for complete retention of culture and heritage but limited adaptation and upward mobility in the immigrant's new host culture. Moderate selective acculturation, in general, allows for an individualist streak and can also result in people who are great innovators, entrepreneurs and creative thinkers; who effect great change in society and in the world. I agree with Young that we must find common ground and accept difference and diversity; that common ground is honoring and respecting the right to moderate selective acculturation and encouragement by U.S. society for new immigrants to take this route. "Our way or the highway" will not work for either U.S. citizens or for new immigrants.

Any form of selective acculturation will be tough to develop among conservative, religious fundamentalists of both the U.S. Christian population and the new Muslim immigrants. Post-9/11 discrimination toward, and fear of, Arabs coupled with anti-Western sentiments cultivated in the immigrants' home country present serious stumbling blocks. An acceptance of moderate selective acculturation by both the host culture and the new immigrant culture can create a middle ground, diminishing conflicts between the host and immigrant cultures as well as within the immigrant's own culture. Immigrants and U.S. citizens who moderately selectively acculturate tolerate some discomfort and confusion while slowly making intentional choices about what to accept and reject in the U.S. culture. U.S. citizens should honor immigrant selections (within reason and law) as well as encourage the many facets of the Arab-American community to accept a variety of intercultural choices by its citizens to lower internal conflicts.

The most personal is the most universal. The deeper we go into our souls, the more they look like everyone else's soul. At heart, we all want the same things – happy families, good health, close friends, and useful work. We want freedom and respect (Pipher, 348). To preserve and grow our U.S. society and our world in a positive direction it is more important than ever that both sides agree to adapt by allowing moderate selective acculturation and rejecting full assimilation or full multiculturalism. Moderate selective acculturation helps both U.S. citizens and immigrants to work together to focus on what we have in common rather than our differences, and to accept the differences between us and learn from them. It is the healthiest approach possible for immigrants, for the U.S. and for the world.

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About the author:

Janet Roberts is the manager of communications for The Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit (B•A•W•B) located at Case Western Reserve University. For over 20 years, she has worked as a journalist, freelance writer and litigation paralegal - at times in concert and at other times separately. Janet is responsible for developing a "voice" for the Center, articulating B•A•W•B's action research, outreach, and teaching agendas for partners inside and outside the university, including those internationally. She serves as the managing editor for B•A•W•B's many publishing ventures and as lead writer and editor on a range of writing and media production projects. Janet holds a B.A. in Communications/Journalism from Temple University, an A.D. in Paralegal Studies, and completed an M.A. in Communications at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania in December 2005. This article is condensed from her masters thesis.

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