

## Arab Americans: Stereotypes, Conflict, History, Cultural Identity and Post 9/11

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**Abstract:** This paper provides a comprehensive literature review of published scholarly and academic research on Arab Americans. It groups the research into four main categories based on the focus and provides background information about the methodology. It also looks into the circumstances and history that made this diaspora group visible in the United States. Supplying the groundwork for future research on this ethnic group, this paper attempts to provide scholars and researchers who are interested in Arab Americans an overview of previous research and to accent the need for more work about this understudied minority group. The paper also suggests certain directions and areas of interest for future research of Arab American identity and factors that influence them.

**Keywords:** Arab, Arab American, Arab Diaspora, minorities in the US, stereotyping Arab Americans

### 1. Introduction

This paper provides a comprehensive review of the scholarly research about the Arab diaspora in the United States. While research about Arab Americans can be traced back to 1923, scholars increased their attention to this minority during the last half of the past century with a steady flow to the present. The research can be grouped into four main categories: the first widely studied topic is their stereotyped image in the Western media. The second topic area concerns the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The third category is the history and cultural identity of Arab Americans, and the fourth section examines some major surveys and other studies that focus on the implications of the 9/11/01 attacks against the United States. While these four categories are not mutually exclusive, they do correspond to the major trends in the research. A final concluding section will identify some of the most recent developments and project some prospects for future study.

### 2. The Stereotyped Image

Much of the research about Arab Americans has examined the stereotyped image of Arabs in the American and Western media. Shaheen (1983) presented how the American media's ugly and negative stereotypes of Arabs accompany a child from his early years to graduating from college. Through "editorial cartoons, television shows, comic strips, comic books, college and school textbooks, novels, magazines, newspapers and in novelty merchandise" (p. 328), Arabs were dehumanized and presented as the "bad guys."

Focusing on this stereotyped image of Arabs in American media, Suleiman (1988) addressed different aspects of this stereotyping and presented a longitudinal study of American press coverage of the 1956, 1967, and 1973 Arab Israeli conflicts and showed how the negatively stereotyped Arab was used as a weapon in the American media in favor of Israel. Zaharana (1995) examined the portrayal of the Palestinians in *Time* newsmagazine from 1948 to 1993; this research showed that the Palestinian image went through total transformation from invisibility to high visibility after the signing of the Israeli-PLO Accord in 1993. Hashem (1995) did a content analysis of news articles published in *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines between January 1990 and December 1993. Hashem's analysis showed that most of the time Arabs were portrayed as lacking democracy, unity, and modernity in addition to having a heritage of defeat and fundamentalism. However, he found some coverage to reflect certain realities and fewer stereotypes when portraying Arabs.

Mousa (2000) recapitulated a few studies that dealt with the Arab image in the West and outlined a "spill over" of the stereotyped image of Arabs and Muslims from the pre-1948 European press to the American press and media. Kamalipour (2000) mentioned the speed with which American authorities and media accused Arabs and Middle Easterners of responsibility for attacks against American targets. For example, he mentioned the accusation of Arabs in the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the crash of a TWA Boeing 747 in 1996, and the 1996 bombing at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. Arabs had no connection to any of these events, but the media did not bother to report the lack of connection nor tried to undo the harm they had already done to the image of Arabs in the American citizens' minds.

In addition to the above research of the verbal aspect of print media, Wilkins (1995) did a qualitative and quantitative analysis of photographs published in the *New York Times* between July 1991 and June 1993. The author concluded that the images of Middle Eastern women during the period under study, constructed these women as passive, distant and impersonal.

Scholars have also studied this stereotyped image in editorial cartoons and comic strips. Lendenman (1983) presented how the political cartoons in *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Star*, *The Louisville Courier Journal*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Miami News*, *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and *The Syracuse Herald-Journal* have depicted Arabs in a negative way, even portraying the *Palestinian Liberation Organization* (PLO) as "rodents, cockroaches and other detestable animals" (p. 353). Palmer (1995) produced a comprehensive review of the political cartoons published in the *Washington Post* during and following the 1956, 1967, and 1973 wars and following the 1988 Palestinian 'Intifada' in addition to the period prior to the first Gulf War. All the political cartoons he studied depicted Arabs negatively.

On the same topic, Stockton (1994) studied Arab images presented in hundreds of cartoons from editorial pages and comic strips. All the cartoons Stockton studied presented a dehumanizing image of Arabs. Before introducing a sample of such cartoons and the different ways in which Western media and writers participated in creating this false image of Arabs, Stockton drew on the similar traits of archetype stereotyping that was previously employed to create a false image of African American, Jews, and Japanese. Furthermore, he discussed how these images were used to justify maltreatment of these groups. He also mentioned that the negative image of Arabs in the U.S. intensified after the Arab Israeli war in 1967. Similarly, Artz and Pollock (1995) did a rhetorical analysis of editorial cartoons published in the *Chicago*

*Sun-Times*, the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Los Angeles Times* during the last five months of 1990. They stated that the media successfully employed culturally accepted anti-Arab images to promote the American offensive in the first Persian Gulf War.

The image of Arabs in American entertainment media such as radio, television, and movies was also studied. Nasir (1979) studied the portrayal of Arabs in American movies in the first half of the 20th century. In her study of movies exhibited in the U.S. between 1894 and 1960, Nasir found that an Arab male's most frequent occupation, as portrayed in the sample she studied, was a criminal. Terry (1983) addressed how contemporary American fiction presented Arabs and Muslims as "backward, greedy, lustful, evil, or inhumane" (p. 316). Terry added that this group makes "convenient scapegoats in almost all contemporary fiction that deals with Middle East themes" (p. 316).

Jack Shaheen is probably the best known scholar addressing the Arab stereotyped image in the entertainment industry and movies. In his book, *The TV Arabs*, Shaheen (1984) summarized his findings after examining about 300 programs and documentary episodes aired during the 1975-1976 and 1983-1984 TV seasons. From cartoons such as *Woody Woodpecker*, *Bugs Bunny* and other comedy shows such as *Laurel and Hardy*, *Mork and Mindy*, and *Happy Days*, to detective and police programs, Shaheen found the image of TV Arabs to be that of "baddies, billionaires, bombers, and belly dancers" (p. 4). He stated that all the different shows and episodes he examined perpetuated "four basic myths about Arabs: they are all fabulously wealthy; they are barbaric and uncultured; they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery; they revel in acts of terrorism" (p. 4).

Shaheen (2001) reported his study of more than 900 Hollywood movies released between 1896 and 2001. In *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, Shaheen exposed how the entertainment industry manufactured a prejudiced image of Arabs, condensing more than 300 million persons spread across 22 countries into a few dehumanizing portrayals. Out of the 900 films Shaheen analyzed which contain Arab characters or images of Arabs, only 63 did not present Arabs with a negative stereotyped image.

In harmony with Shaheen, Kamalipour (2000) mentioned the negative portrayal of Arabs in radio, television, and movies. Additionally, he named 50 movies that were released between 1974 and 1998 that showed Arabs or Arabic speaking individuals committing attacks against Americans. Quoting from Semati, Kamalipour (2000) said that it is a mistaken belief that, "terrorism is essentially a Middle East problem, and most victims of terrorism are American" (Kamalipour, 2000, p. 67).

The stereotyped image of Arabs in scholarly work and academic textbooks was also studied. Said (1975) in *Orientalism and the October war: The shattered myths*, presented, in a critical approach, the myths about Arabs in the discourse of Orientalism. He showed how this discourse has compressed, reduced, and stereotyped the image of Arabs. In addition, Said showed how the institutions sustained Orientalism by presenting myths as facts protected by a so-called "scientific" analysis. Ayish (1994) conducted a comprehensive content analysis of published relevant scholarly works from 1954 to 1994. Ayish concluded that all the published and unpublished academic works agree that Western media portrayed the Arab world in a negative way (Ayish, 1994, cited in Hamada, 2002). Al-Qazzaz (1975) also discussed how social science textbooks in elementary school, junior high, or high school, contributed to, carried on,

repeated, and perpetuated negative stereotyped images and myths about Arabs. Additionally, Al-Qazzaz (1983) presented an update to his 1975 analysis of how social science textbooks negatively stereotyped Arabs.

Parallel to the images perpetuated in academic schoolbooks is one presented in the Protestant Sunday school textbooks that Abu-Laban (1975) studied. The books she analyzed were “creating, as an educational by-product, black sheep [Arabs] in the family of God.” In these books, “Arabs are the most excluded of the deity’s descendants” (p. 166).

This negative image was presented even in games. Shaheen (1983) mentioned one example of a teens’ game called “Oil Sheik” in which, like in *Monopoly*, players attempt to acquire real estate and the players are encouraged to gain control over the oil producing nations. Moreover, the game instructs the players to create a more “life like” game by wrapping pillowcases around their heads or if the player is ugly to cover his/her head with the pillowcase. Shaheen quoted from one of the game card instructions that said, “impress Arabs with your patriotism by dating a camel” (p. 330).

Ignorance is often a building block of negative stereotypes. Suleiman (1994) presented the results of a survey of high school teachers of world history in California, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, New York, and Pennsylvania. The author’s survey indicated the teachers’ ignorance about and prejudice against Arabs and Muslims. In a survey of students’ perceptions, Kamalipour (2000) described American high school students’ perceptions of Arabs and the Middle East as “overwhelmingly negative” (Kamalipour, 2000, p. 58).

Stockton (1994) recognized that the inferiority of the “other” the stereotyped image presents, not only promotes the superiority of the stereotyper and his/her group, but also provides immunity for transgressing against the stereotyped group. In addition, he said that such stereotyping can justify key policy decisions taken by the political power in addition to justifying injustices committed by individuals or nations against the stereotyped “other.” In summarizing, Suleiman (1999) addressed the impact of the negative stereotyping of Arabs on Arab Americans, asserting that the Arab American community “has suffered and continues to suffer in many ways” (p. 1) as the negative stereotyped image of Arabs was internalized in the mind of America.

### 3. The Arab Israeli Conflict and the Palestinian Issue

The Arab Israeli conflict provided a fertile field for research. Many researchers were interested in the U.S. media coverage of the wars that erupted between Israel and different Arab nations.

Terry (1975) conducted a content analysis of three U.S and two European newspapers before, during, and after the 1973 Israeli Arab war. Among her findings, Terry noted that there was a slight increase in neutral coverage of the war in comparison to that of 1967, however, the “editorial coverage of the war and its aftermath tended to favor the Israeli position” (p. 8) but “there were some pro-Arab editorials” (p. 8). In addition, one of her notable findings was the tripling of the number of editorials on oil following the war and the oil embargo.

In harmony with Terry’s finding, Suleiman (1975) compared media reports about the Middle East in the 1973 war to those of 1967 and concluded that there was a shift toward a more neutral reporting in 1973. However, he mentioned that criticizing Israel remained a taboo

and that “the media themselves ...have been a principal agent for propagating myths about the Middle East” (p. 37). Similarly, McClure (1975) addressed the slight shift towards an American awakening regarding Arabs and their images. Touching on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the oil issue, and the U.S. economic situation in 1974, he asserted the need for the American people to better understand the nature of the Arab Israeli conflict, and he stated his belief that the “American awakening” is a reality despite the “misrepresentations [of Arabs], particularly, within the news media” (p. 239).

Along the same line, Samo (1975) presented a case study of the coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict by the Kalb brothers. He exposed the reporters’ pro-Israeli and anti-Arab bias. Similarly, Farsoun, Farsoun, and Jay (1975) conducted a content analysis of the publications of “self-defined leftist” (p. 54) organizations in the U.S. and concluded that these organizations view the conflict in the Middle East as an outcome of the imperialist penetration to the area and Zionism as a product of capitalism and imperialism.

In 1983, McDavid published a study about the American press coverage of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and stated that it did not accurately show the Israeli aggression. McDavid saw the images the U.S. press presented of the Israelis as humanitarians while covering up the Palestinian and Lebanese civilian casualties. He stated that the Canadian and French media coverage offered more realistic pictures of the invasion and Israeli practices against civilians.

Additionally, Shain (1996) echoed what others said regarding the invisibility of Arab Americans before the 1967 Arab Israeli war, which provided an ideological core and a national political agenda for Arab Americans. Moreover, the author asserts that the Palestinian cause provided a unifying terrain for the differently oriented Arab Americans and so did the other events that took place in the Middle East such as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. However, Shain considered that the Palestinian Israeli agreements of the 1990s in addition to other political events that took place within the Arab countries, or between Israel and some Arab countries, have pulled the common rug from under these differently oriented groups and created a new challenge for Arab Americans in redefining their identity and agenda.

Banks (2003) mentioned how the political events that took place by the end of the Twentieth Century in the Middle East and the years of unjust American foreign policy toward Arab countries have led to a rising activism by Arab Americans and to more expressions of pride in their cultural heritage. Finally, Ibrahim (2009) did a chronological trace of the research focusing on the American Media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As this collected literature suggests, the Arab Israeli conflict which started in 1948 with what became known as the Palestinian Cause, provided a terrain to unite Arabs on one cause and to revive the national identity of Arab Americans, thus affecting their experience (Friedhelm, 1986; Naff, 1985; Shain, 1996; Suleiman, 1975). Taking into account the recent and current developments in the Arab world including the ongoing “Arab Spring” in addition to the stand-still Palestinian Israeli negotiation, future research may question the extent to which Arab Americans are still concerned about the ‘Palestinian Cause’ and the other events taking place in the Arab countries.

#### 4. Historical Overview and Cultural Identity

The historical perspective and cultural identity of Arab Americans were interwoven topics for researchers. As early as 1923, about 50 years after the first documented Arab immigrant came to the United States, Hitti (1923) provided the estimated number of Syrian immigrants and their offspring to be about 200,000, most of whom were Christians. Hitti also provided a historical overview of the social, economic, and geographical characteristics of Syria and Syrians, as Arab Americans were referred to at that time. He stated that individuals are more inclined toward a “local mind” than “social one” and lean toward a patriotism that takes the form of love for family, sect, and geography of homeland. He also talked about leadership, education, culture, religion, and language. Then, he addressed the background and causes of the early Syrian immigration to the United States, which, as Hitti reasoned, seem to be a mixture of economic, political, and social factors.

As for their organizations, the author noted that Syrians were almost absent from the political scene, except for one attempt of a Syrian who ran for a senatorial position as a Republican in New York but was defeated. However, Hitti brings out the ignorance of the American public about this group of immigrants and the public’s undue bigotry toward them. He asserted, “even at present [in 1923] the colossal ignorance and prejudice, on the part of some, is amazing and constitutes the chief obstacle in the way of better understanding”.

Hitti (1923) mentioned that the American mainstream, refusing to accept the contributions of the ‘Syrian’ into this weaving process, was not ready to accept their assimilation. He added that the host culture disregarded the services these immigrants provided to the country and public especially during the years of World War I. During that war, about 7% of the Syrian community served in the U.S. army. Hitti also focused on the religious status of the immigrant community saying that the majority of the immigrants were Christians who, just as the Muslims and Druze among them, retained their faith.

Elkholy (1966) researched, in 1959, the Muslim communities in Toledo, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan. Although Elkholy’s focus was on Arab American Muslims, his participants included Muslims from non-Arab countries such as India and Pakistan among others. The author focused his research on whether Islam was hindering the assimilation of Muslim Arab immigrants into the host culture where the dominant religion is different from that of his participants’ religion. Elkholy found that although both the Toledo and Detroit communities shared the same characteristics regarding their origin of immigration and time spent in the host culture, the Toledo community showed more assimilation and was more religious as well. Elkholy also said that the main factor influencing the assimilation of his participants was their occupation more than anything else. He also mentioned that the third generation of Muslims in Toledo were more religious than those of Detroit who were more nationalistic.

Among the trends that Elkholy (1966) considered as trends of Americanization, was the role of women in the family. The roles women played were not only equal to those of men, but sometimes dominated the family. Moreover, women took a greater role in helping their husbands in the family’s business ventures. However, Elkholy’s remark about the role of women was not necessarily an indication of Americanization. Within the families in the areas where these immigrants came from, it was customary for women to take charge of the family



matters when the husband was away from home, and it was, and still is, customary for them to play a role in economic and public life

Naff's (1985) book became a landmark in the history of Arab Americans. In it, through a collection of different primary sources, she traced back the history and early experiences of the pioneer Arab immigrants, particularly from the Levant, or what she calls greater Syria. Naff presented a historical overview of the Arabs' immigration to the U.S., which started in the 19th century. She mentioned that the early immigrants came with the goal to better their economic status and return within two or three years to their country with wealth and prestige, whereas the later immigrants came with the idea of making America their home without cutting off their cultural roots. Naff mentioned how between 1909 and 1920 many Arabs were refused citizenship because they were classified as "yellow" race. Such discrimination forced those immigrants to prove their "Whiteness" to become eligible for naturalization.

Naff (1985) said that settling in the "new world" has altered some of the native habits of the Syrian-Arab American immigrants. Factors that affected this alteration process were the "family's economic status, the number of Syrians in its community, and the strength of its attachment to the cultural heritage" (p. 280). Although families, as Naff said, remained the cornerstone for this group of immigrants, the conservatism of these families was altered and the traditional patriarchal extended family notion disintegrated and gave way to a similar notion but within a smaller unit.

Friedhelm (1985) also addressed the history of the Arab immigrants to the United States, which he traced back to the 1880s. He pointed out that the social and religious organizations in addition to the ethnic press have played a major role in their social integration in the host country. Pursuing the organizational angle, Haddad and Lummis (1987) researched five Islamic centers in the United States. Four of these mosques had an Arab American Muslim majority and had been founded by the 1930s: Toledo, Ohio; Dearborn, Michigan; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Quincy, Massachusetts; and Rochester, New York.

Haddad and Lummis's (1987) study was conducted in what they considered liberal and moderate Muslim communities because they could not have access to the conservative sites. In addition to interviews, they collected a total of 338 surveys in three of the five sites. They concluded that there is at least a nucleus of an American Islam which, although it adheres to the fundamentals of Islamic beliefs, allows individuals to decide what it means to be a Muslim and American. However, the researchers pointed out that the data they collected indicated "some Muslims are feeling at home and welcome assimilation into American life, while others are genuinely concerned that it [assimilation] will jeopardize the maintenance of Islamic values" (p. 171). Consistent with this trend, Haddad and Lummis reported a transformation in the traditional roles of Imams (the Muslim religious leader or clergy) from that of a leader in prayer to that of a minister who provides counseling, tutoring in the faith, and represents the community to the general public. In addition, their study reported different attitudes and degrees of strictness in adhering to traditional Muslim beliefs. These attitudes varied from one mosque to another and so did the acceptance of the liberty of dress and grooming of women attending religious prayers at these mosques. Among other findings, this study revealed the major role women in the Dearborn area played in establishing mosques as places for worship and for community social activities.

Naff (1994) asserted that it was not until after World War II that Arab Americans began to develop an Arab identity to counter the ignorance about the history of Arabs. Suleiman (1994) asserted that being sick of “the outsiders” image, Arab Americans started to assimilate more into the American way of life during and after World War I when they started joining the army and fighting on behalf of the United States. In addition, following the war and realizing that America was their permanent home, those immigrants started to develop an Arab-American community through being more united and less factionalized. In addition, they started to engage in campaigns to better inform the American citizens and others about their Arab heritage.

According to Suleiman (1994), after World War II, the Arab American communities nearly assimilated fully and almost lost their Arab identity, but this identity loss was reversed because of the Palestinian cause and the post World War II Arab immigration wave of highly educated and politicized individuals and professionals. Those immigrants were looking for a better life for themselves and for their home countries as well. Thus, they started working in the political arena in their newfound home. In addition to this, the identity awakening of the third generation of the early Arab immigrants and the 1967 Arab Israeli war, Suleiman asserted, contributed to the emergence of an Arab identity rather than just a national one and led to the formation of some Arab American activist organizations.

Haddad (1994) sketched the religious composition and affiliation of the Arab American immigrants. She did not ignore the role of the 1967 war in reawakening the Arab identity among the various religious groups and gaining more power over the national identity (e.g., Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian ...). In addition, Haddad provided a view of the different religious sects making up the Arab American community: Christians, Muslims, and Druze. Then, she examined the history of establishing their roots in the United States. She also focused on Islam in the US and the different nature it is taking as Arab American Muslims are assimilating and integrating into the American society. However, Haddad acknowledged that “the Arab American community is changing and will continue to change “in constituency and in its forms of self-identification in the years to come” (p. 84). In addition, she pointed out that the new immigrants with their ideologies and commitments is an additional factor to the U.S. tolerance or intolerance of the aspirations of this community and will have a great impact on how this identity will be shaped.

Shain (1996) presented his opinion about the challenges facing different Arab American groups in the United States. He focused on the rhetoric and actions of some Arab American leftist activists in the United States as well as on that of some Islamic groups. He echoed what others said regarding the invisibility of Arab Americans before the 1967 Arab Israeli war, which provided an ideological core and a national political agenda for Arab Americans. Shain categorized Arab Americans into two groups, the isolationists and the integrationists. The isolationists tend to resist what he calls a “powerful assimilation vision found in America” (p. 22), whereas the integrationists resist total assimilation into the dominant White culture of the U.S. and call for cultural and political recognition. The integrationists identify themselves as Americans and supporters of American values and of a vision of pluralist democracy. The author concluded that a determining factor of how Arab Americans will face these diasporic challenges will depend on the different political events within the U.S. and in the countries of origin.



Using interviews in the Detroit area, Seikaly (1999) focused on themes that relate to Palestinian community identity. The author found that, on the social dimension, the attachment to cultural ethnicity is a “defining feature of the Palestinian group” (p. 30). On the political dimension, the Palestinian community was divided between those who feel desperation and no hope based on the history they have had with the political promises and the Palestinian Cause, and others who try through their life to create bridges that connect them to the past. Whatever the case is, Seikaly stated that the Palestinians’ community identity is in crisis due to the political events and conditions in the Middle East.

Similarly, Ajrouch (1999) used Muslim-Arab focus groups from the Dearborn area over a period exceeding a year during which she focused on the participants’ perceptions of the meaning of being Arab or American and which identity the participants took for themselves. In her findings, Ajrouch states that religion, Islam in this case, played a major role in the formation of the Arab identity. In addition, she said that although “there is no blatant assertion that ethnicity tends to be a gendered process among Arab Americans” (p. 138), gender still plays a major role in the degree of assimilation to the dominant culture where women bear the weight of maintaining the Arab identity of the family and community.

Additionally, Joseph (1999) argued that the representations of the “non-free” hyphenated Arab (Arab-) through a variety of popular and scholarly discourse served as basis for creating the designation of difference of the Arab from the American. Joseph argued that the conflation of all Arabs as one set and the conflation of those representations with the hyphenated Arab in America served to erase the difference between Arabs themselves in order to create a difference “between the free, white, male American citizen and this constructed Arab” (p. 260). The author added that the tool for creating this difference was through the representations of the religious, political, and social orders in the Arab, Middle Eastern, and Islamic world. Joseph argued that discrimination and hate against Arabs in the U.S. during and after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war created the need for organized hyphenated Arab politicized organizations to defend them. However, the author feared that the representations of this non-free hyphenated Arab through the media, academic scholarship, and political discourse, in contrast with the “free American” have created what might be the emerging “other” after the collapse of the hated communist “other.”

Caniker (1999) summarized the social and economic conditions of the Arab community in southeast Chicago. That community was facing significant discrimination and stereotyping. Caniker mentioned that because of the economic changes the city witnessed, there was deterioration in the safety net within the Arab community in that area. The author found that some of the problems facing the Arab community in southeast Chicago were due to the interweave of political, economic and social factors including stereotyping and discrimination against this community.

## **5. Post 9/11 Implications**

After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, a few studies addressed Arab American’s life and experiences following the attacks. In October 2001, Zogby presented the results of a poll of Arab Americans conducted between October 8 and 10, 2001. The poll

commissioned by the Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF) had a margin of error of +4.5% and showed that 60% of the 508 surveyed were worried about the “longterm effects of discrimination” (p.2) against them because of the September 11 attacks. In addition, it showed that only 20% of those surveyed said that they had personally experienced discrimination because of their Arab American background, but 45% said that they personally knew someone who suffered discrimination since the attacks because of his/her Arab American cultural background. However, almost half of the young Arab Americans reported that they had experienced discrimination since September 11.

The poll’s result also showed that 69% believe that profiling of Arab Americans had increased since the attacks. However, 54% of those polled, although they disagreed with politicized profiling, reported that they think it is justified. Finally, the poll’s result indicated that 84% of those polled said that their ethnic background is important in defining their identity and 88% were proud of their ethnic heritage and 83% considered securing the rights of the Palestinians personally important to them.

In May 2002, Zogby International conducted a second poll for the AAIF. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed were born in the United States; this poll (Arab American Institute, 2002) yielded similar findings to that of 2001 and had a margin of error of + 4.5%. However, the results of this 2002 poll indicated an increase of 10% in those reporting personal experience of discrimination because of their ethnic background after September 11 (30% compared to 20% in the 2001 poll). On the other hand, the percentage of those surveyed who said that they personally knew someone who suffered discrimination since the attacks because of his/her Arab American ethnic background was 45% in the 2001 survey and 40% in May 2002. In addition, this survey results showed that perceived discrimination toward Arab American students decreased at schools to 21% from a reported 49% in 2001. However, perceived discrimination remained the same among neighbors and friends (25%).

The percentage of those surveyed who believe that profiling of Arab Americans had increased since the attacks increased by 9% in the 2002 poll from the 69% reported in 2001. In addition, the poll’s results indicated that 59% of Arab Americans surveyed reported that their public display of their heritage was not affected by the consequences of September 11, 70% of those who reported an effect were 18-24 years old and 79% of students reported an effect on their public display of their ethnicity.

The percentage of those surveyed who said that their ethnic pride has not changed after the September 11 attacks remained 73%, 15% reported an increased pride and 8% reported less pride in their ethnic background. However, the percentage of those surveyed who are proud of their ethnic heritage was almost 90% in both 2001 and 2002. In addition, 73% reported having strong emotional ties with their family’s countries of origin (42% reported very strong ties and 31% reported somewhat strong emotional ties).

Muneer (2002) addressed the change within the American citizenship display of African Americans and Latinas/os as those belonging to these ethnic groups felt the need to express their Americanism by approving the profiling and sharing in the hate violence. Quoting from an article published in the *New York Times* in September 23, 2001, Muneer said that African Americans and Latinos/as Americans have given in to racial profiling after having been its victims for years. Muneer (2002) also mentioned how the discrimination, attacks, and hate-

crimes forced Arab Americans, Muslims, and South Asian communities to accommodate and strategically adapt to embrace their American identity by displaying and waving flags in order to prove their belonging. He also said that the post September attacks against Arab American and South Asian communities created awareness among individuals belonging to these groups that they cannot debase race by way of class belonging because they all came to realize that no matter what class they belonged to, they were still not White.

Like Muneer, Shryock (2002) noted how the attacks forced Detroit's Arab Americans to exaggerate their American identity. Shryock (2002) said that this was a strategy to avoid the consequences of not belonging. Howell and Shryock (2003) concluded that what once was believed to be true about Arabs of metropolitan Detroit entering the cultural mainstream is "likely to be dismissed today as wishful thinking" adding "the image of Arab Detroit changed within hours of the 9/11 attacks." As evidence, they pointed out that Dearborn, due to its high Arab concentration, was the first U.S. city to have its own office of Homeland Security and that the number of FBI staff in Detroit's office doubled during 2002. They also asserted that "the mass mediated structures of public opinion...have performed well as a conduit for anti-Arab" (p. 451) sentiments.

This change in the attitudes toward and fears from Arab Americans would raise many questions about its effect on their cultural identity formation or expression. Realizing this, Banks (2003) mentioned how the political events that took place by the end of the Twentieth Century in the Middle East and the years of unjust American foreign policy toward Arab countries have led to a rising activism by Arab Americans and to more expressions of pride in their cultural heritage.

In addition, Witteborn (2004) examined the effect of 9/11 on the "communal identity enactment of 5 Arab women" (p. 83). Witteborn was lucky to have conducted part of her research before the attacks and thus was able to follow up after the attacks with the same participants, five Arab women, and find a change in the labels they used to express their identity after the attacks. In her research, Witteborn found that national identity (such as Egyptian, Lebanese, or Palestinian) was emphasized after 9/11 as a means to raise the public awareness of the diversity within the Arab world and to counteract ascribed monoethnic identities. However, the participants less frequently used the identity labels "Arab" and "Arab American" after 9/11. In addition, she found that her participants' usage of the label "Arab" after 9/11 was extended to meanings of "social relationships within a community organization" (p. 94). She found that instead of using the label "Arab American" more often after the attacks, her participants did not use this "panethnic" identity.

Distinctly from Witteborn's (2004) findings, Haddad (2004) asserted that "Tempered by prevalent hatred and 'othering' many are re-identifying themselves as Arab-American or Muslim – American" (p. 51). Haddad said that there are many questions that Arab immigrants in the United States need to answer regarding what identity they want, an American identity or a hyphenated one, and what impact their religious affiliation plays in forming this identity.

Salaita (2005) emphasized how notions of patriotism after the September 11 attacks have distorted the life of American and Arab American citizens. In addition, Salaita highlighted the intricate interaction between Americans of Arab ancestry and other ethnic groups and the role xenophobia, racism, and stereotyping plays in this regard. Salaita argued that rather than altering

American attitudes toward Arab Americans, the September 11 attacks reinforced the positive and negative pre-existing attitudes. The attacks offered racists with a rhetorical justification for their attitudes and offered multiculturalists a rationale to fight exclusionary ideals and promote inclusionary ones.

## 6. Conclusions and Projections

This paper provides guidance for researchers and scholars with insight into what has been published and studied about the Arab American diaspora. It reflects the whole variety of scholars and disciplines that studied this minority group. This could facilitate future interdisciplinary approaches to studying Arab Americans. In addition, the bibliographical information and review can be used in future research, as it provides some insight into the evolution of researching Arab Americans and the circumstances surrounding the scholarly interest in this particular group.

Three of the most recent studies indicate the current interest and directions of research: Abu-Absi (2010) edited a book about Arab Americans in Toledo. The book's three sections, heritage, profiles and interviews document the area specific experiences of Arab Americans. In one chapter of the book, Semaan (2010) states that, based on data from his empirical research of the Toledo community, Arab Americans there identify themselves with either their national ethnic labels or their ethnic-American label more than those in Allentown, PA or Dearborn, MI. Awad (2010) studied the impact of acculturation and religious affiliation of Arabs and Middle Eastern Americans on perceived discrimination. She reported that Muslims in her study reported more perceived discrimination than Christians. Semaan (2013) presented a detailed historical perspective on the immigration waves of Arab Americans stating the particulars of the previous three waves and identifying a fourth immigration wave that started after the beginning of the so called "Arab Spring" in 2010.

Moreover, the historical review of literature in this paper showed that many studies presented empirical evidence documenting the stereotyped image of Arabs in the U.S. media. However, the assumptions made in the available published works about the acculturation of Arab Americans were either based on studying the Muslim communities, many times including non-Arab Muslims (e.g. Ajrouch, 1999; Elkholy, 1966; Haddad & Lummis, 1987; Haddad, 2004) or were based on adopting the four types of Berry's (1980) model of acculturation without supporting research (e.g. Haddad, 2004; Shain, 1996; Suleiman, 1994, 1999). Future research addressing the acculturation of Arab Americans should attempt to establish valid and reliable measurements and should draw upon the wealth of research available on other minority groups, particularly African Americans and Latino/Latina studies, benefiting from both the methodology and theory that could inform future research of Arab Americans. In addition, future research should focus on the newest, fourth wave of immigration that started in 2011 following the beginning of the "Arab Spring".

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