

**“Arab Americans and Segmented Assimilation:
Looking Beyond the Theory to the Reality in the
Detroit Metro Area.”**

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“Assimilation to me means that my fellow Americans have accepted me as I am. Not tolerated me, but accepted that I am as American as the next person even though I may have a different faith, different customs, language capabilities, skin color, facial features...”(Ron, Arab American, Detroit.)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Can Segmented Assimilation Theory adequately explain the experiences of Arab Americans in the Detroit Metro area? This study attempts to answer this question. Segmented assimilation theory was developed by a group of sociologists, led by Rubén Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes, and accounts for the several possible modes of assimilation of second generation immigrants to the United States after 1965.¹ Their theory received its “definitive codification,” according to Stephan R. Warner, in the 2001 book *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*.²

The focus area of this study is Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County, Michigan. These three counties were chosen for two reasons: First, because that’s where the majority of Michigan’s Arab Americans live. Second, to be able to compare city dwellers to those that live in the suburbs. Dearborn (in Wayne County) is the most concentrated Arab American enclave in the country. Dearborn is roughly a third Arab American. Looking at the difference between those living in the enclave and those living in the suburbs makes this study more interesting. In addition, these are the same three counties surveyed in the Detroit Arab American Study (see more below), and so all the information from that study is relevant to the topic. The remainder of the City of Detroit is interesting as a contrast, since it is over 80% African American, but will not otherwise be dealt with specifically. When relevant, the Detroit Metro Arabs will be compared to Arab Americans in other parts of the country.

This thesis does not have a specific time frame. However, the focus is on second-generation immigrants in the present time. The respondents to the interviews for this study are mainly children of immigrants arriving after the Immigrant and Nationality Act of 1965, which is the same as the focus of segmented assimilation theory. Two of the respondents are older second-generation immigrants, and their parents arrived in the 1940s. The variation in age among the respondents is beneficial to this study, in that the perspectives of teenagers, adults, and retirees is represented.

1.1 Structure

Within the larger topic, there will be a closer look at two variables: race and ethnicity, and religion. These variables will be studied separately and dealt with in separate chapters, but there is also an interest in the intersections between them. These variables are certainly not the only subjects that would be relevant or interesting to look closer at in a study like this, other areas of interest could be country of origin, gender, class, or length of stay in America. However, these two were chosen for a reason. Race and ethnicity are essential to the

understanding of assimilation because they are both part of a person's *visible* and unchangeable baggage, and are part of a person's deepest sense of self. Since assimilation is dependant upon the society the immigrant is met by, and not just the immigrant himself, it seems obvious that how a person perceives your race or ethnicity will affect how they interact with you.

Religion was chosen as a variable for a few reasons. First, Muslims are the focus of a lot of attention today, and it is important to clarify some assumptions and misconceptions that are out there, as well as to see how the fear of Islam affects assimilation. Second, religion is an essential part of many Americans' identity, and the same is true for Arab Americans. Third, since Arab Americans are primarily Christian, it will be interesting to see how Christians of European heritage receive the Arab Christians. These three subjects are of course interrelated, how can one look at ethnicity without looking at religion, for example? These variables will be studied in relation to segmented assimilation, and to how they affect a person's assimilation-trajectory. The chapter about race and ethnicity is much longer than the chapter about religion. This is not a reflection of the importance of the topics; rather it is to avoid overlap. Many of the topics that concern both race and ethnicity, and religion, are introduced in chapter two, and do not need to be repeated in chapter three.

In any academic work about Arab Americans written after 2001, lies the implicit or explicit question: What about 9-11? Experiences of acceptance and assimilation must be colored by this momentous event, both in public opinion and in government policy. Because of that it will be an underlying theme in this work, though it will not be dealt with in its own chapter.

1.2 Method and Sources

Census material is of special interest to this study and will be used as a primary source. The Census 2000 Special Report: "We the People of Arab Ancestry in the United States" and the Census 2000 Brief: "The Arab Population: 2000" are especially helpful. The first is part of "the Census 2000 Special Reports series that presents several demographic, social, and economic characteristics collected from Census 2000."³ It was done in part because the Arab population lacks consensus about how to define their group, and do not have their own category to mark off on the census. There was a need for further research on this group, and so this report and the Census Brief were written. Research for the Brief and the Report were both conducted in collaboration with experts from the Arab community.⁴

An invaluable primary source is The Detroit Arab American Study, a population study financed by the Russell Sage Foundation, (part of the annual Detroit Area Study).⁵ The DAAS is based on over a thousand face-to-face interviews of Arab Americans, people chosen from a sample, who self-identified as Arab or Chaldean. The study is particularly interesting because of the 508 interviews with the general population of the same geographic area, chosen as a representative sample. Carried out in 2003, this study provides statistical information on everything from demographics to identity to feelings about 9-11. All references to the DAAS in this paper are relating to the Arab and Chaldean populations of Wayne, Macomb and Oakland Counties, unless stated otherwise.

Another study also used as a primary source is “A Portrait of Detroit’s Mosques: Muslim Views on Policy, Politics and Religion” by Dr. Ihsan Bagby. (Hereafter known as ‘the Detroit mosque study,’) Dr. Bagby is the Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Kentucky, and a Fellow at the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding in Michigan. The study was published in 2004, and is part of a larger project, The Detroit Mosque Project at the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding. Farid Senzai, the ISPU’s Director of Research, explains that the project is a result of a post 9/11 climate, where there was plenty of information about Muslims in the media, yet “[d]espite the claims of these ‘experts,’ very little is actually known about mosques in the U.S. and far less about the activities and views of the participants.”⁶ The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) is an “independent nonprofit research organization committed to studying US domestic and foreign policy.”⁷ The Detroit Mosque study is a survey of both mosques and their participants. The study surveyed *all* the leaders of *all* the mosques in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, as well as 1298 participants in 12 mosques. These mosques were chosen in order to reflect the ethnic varieties of Detroit’s Muslims: 3 Arab, 3 South Asian, 3 African American, and 3 ethnically mixed mosques. The mosque study is very useful for this thesis for several reasons. First, it is surveying the same three counties, Wayne, Oakland and Macomb. Second, it speaks to both participants and leaders (mainly imams) of the mosques. The census materials, the DAAS, and the Detroit Mosque study provide statistical information that give a largely unbiased view, and make some quantitative analysis possible.

A final source of primary material is the interviews done for this study. Interviews with members of the Detroit Metro area give this study the subjective views of the group that is the focus of this study, and will give the paper depth and personality. Being an outsider to the Arab American community, I feel that the personal perspectives are especially important. The interviews will be of a qualitative sort, with participants recruited through snowball

sampling. Amir Marvasti says that snowball sampling is “considered especially useful when dealing with a sensitive topic that can best be understood from an insider’s perspective,” for instance with studies of race or ethnicity.⁸ The participants have all self-identified as Arab Americans, and the interviews have been conducted by email following the guidelines of oral history projects.⁹ The interview respondents range in age from 16 to 68, live both in the city and in suburbs, and are all second-generation Arab Americans. A closer look at the demographic characteristics of the respondents can be found in Appendix Table 1.

A final interview was conducted for the religion chapter, an email interview with Fr. George H. Shalhoub, of St. Mary’s Antiochian Orthodox Church in Livonia, Michigan. Fr. Shalhoub was contacted after a tip from one of the other interview respondents that he would be a “wealth of information.”¹⁰ Fr. Shalhoub is originally from Syria, but has been serving the parish since 1972, and is one of the founders of the church. In addition to serving as pastor, he has a Doctor of Ministry Degree in Pastoral Counseling, is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Philosophy at Madonna University, and was “appointed by Governor Engler of Michigan to serve on the Mental Health Advisory Board and by Governor Granholm to the commission on Arab and Chaldean American Affairs.”¹¹ As part of the interview recruitment was sent the same email to several mosques in the area, with no response. Perhaps this is a reflection of the Muslim community’s suspicion and reluctance to speak to outsiders. Or perhaps it is just a coincidence.

Academic articles and scholarly literature dealing with assimilation theory and with Arab Americans are used as secondary source material. Immigration-and ethnicity studies stretches into several disciplines, for example Sociology, Anthropology, History, and American Studies, so there will be a variety of perspectives, something that will benefit this analysis. Regarding Arab Americans, the books *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit After 9/11*,¹² by the Detroit Study Team, and *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11*,¹³ edited by Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, are particularly of interest since they both use analysis based on the DAAS-findings, and are both quite recent, from 2009 and 2008 respectively. *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream*,¹⁴ edited by Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock is a wide ranging and extensive portrait of the community, published right before 9/11. In addition to these books, a variety of other books and articles about Arabs in America, race scholarship, religious sociology- and history, and immigrant incorporation- and assimilation have been read, and are referenced when it is fitting.

Regarding segmented assimilation theory, Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut’s *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*¹⁵ is the main reference point. The

book provides the findings of their Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), and gives empirical evidence of their segmented assimilation model. The study was conducted over 10 years, in three phases, and consisted of interviews with over 5,000 second-generation youth, and their parents who came from 77 different countries. The interviewed families lived in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and San Diego, resulting in a sample that is primarily Hispanic, Caribbean and Asian.¹⁶ A variety of articles about segmented assimilation theory have also been read for this thesis, and will be referenced when appropriate.

1.3 Context: Arab Detroit

This paper will focus on Arab Americans in the Detroit Metro area, specifically Wayne County, Oakland County and Macomb County (see map I in Appendix). Arabs have been arriving here since the end of the nineteenth century, and continue to come today. The city of Dearborn houses one of America's few Arab enclaves, complete with Arabic shop signs, mosques and ethnic grocery stores. The surrounding suburbs have sizable Arab populations as well (see map II in Appendix), many of them moved as part of the suburbanization process of the 1960s. The Arabs in the suburbs are a majority Christian population, but Dearborn itself is primarily Muslim, and houses more of the recent immigrants. Three quarters of the Detroit Arab-American population is foreign born, yet at the same time nearly eighty percent are American citizens.¹⁷ Lebanese is still the main ancestry of Arab Americans in Metro Detroit, however, there are also sizable Yemeni, Iraqi, Palestinian and Jordanian populations. The suburban population is (not surprisingly) more established and wealthy than the city (Dearborn) population.

Detroit's Arab community started arriving primarily to work in Ford factories, often settling near the plant in Highland Park. When the company moved to Dearborn in the 1920s, many of the Arab workers followed, though a number of Lebanese Christians moved to the suburbs instead.¹⁸ Many Arab Americans, eager to show allegiance to America, served in World War I, Randa A. Kayyali reports that 15,000 Syrians served as infantrymen.¹⁹ Likewise, at least 30,000 Arab Americans served during World War II.²⁰ The 1950s saw a number of educated Levantine Muslims arriving in the United States, leading to more permanent settlements in Detroit. In the 1960s and 70s Dearborn and Detroit experienced "white flight," leading to a more dominant Arab presence in Dearborn, which was still attracting new immigrants, now including many refugees.²¹ The 1980s and 90s see a large influx of new immigrants fleeing conflicts in the Middle East, many of these immigrants are less educated and come from rural areas. Attempts to implement bilingual programs in

Dearborn schools at this time, was met with heavy opposition.²² Industrial lay-offs leave many immigrant families in economic difficulties, resulting in a number of Yemeni going back to Yemen.²³ However, despite the problems of the auto industry, the Detroit Arab community continued to attract new immigrants and refugees, and grew rapidly in the 1990s. September 11, 2001 marks the beginning of a new era for Arab Detroit, as immigration authorities start to restrict visa applicants from the Middle East and North Africa, leading to a reduction in the number of new immigrants.²⁴

In comparison to Arab Americans nationally, Detroit Arab Americans differ in some significant ways. The Detroit Arab Americans are much more likely to be bilingual and speak a language other than English in the home than the average for other Arab Americans.²⁵ The Metro-area Arab Americans have less education than Arab Americans elsewhere.²⁶ A full third of Dearborn's population is Arab American, which is significant considering Arab Americans constitute 1-3% (depending on who you ask) of the United States population as a whole. Due to difficulties regarding the counting of Arab Americans (discussed further in chapter two of this thesis), there is disagreement of their actual numbers. Kristine J. Ajrouch and Amaney Jamal say that "Census data suggest that there are 151,493 Arab Americans in Michigan; however, community-based estimates suggest that the number is closer to 490,000."²⁷ The Detroit Arab American Study Team suggests that a "sober calculation" of Arab Detroit is a population of 200,000 by 2010.²⁸

Arab-American religious affiliations are hard to document too, and therefore these numbers are merely projections. A common assumption is that Arab Christians constitute two-thirds of all Arab Americans.²⁹ As pointed out by the Detroit Arab American Study Team, Arab groups in America represent "odd inversions of the demographics of their home countries."³⁰ For instance, while Arab Christians only constitute five percent of the Arab world, they are over half of the Arab community in Detroit. Arab Christians consist of a number of Christian sects: Melkite-, Maronite-, and Chaldean Catholics, Orthodox, and Copts. Egyptian Copts and Iraqi Catholic Chaldeans are later arrivals on the American scene, while the Melkites, Maronites and Orthodox have been present since the earliest waves of Arab immigration.³¹ Sally Howell and Amaney Jamal say that although the earliest Christian immigrants in Detroit joined pre-existing churches, most Arabic-speaking Christians quickly built their own houses of worship. Today they count more than a dozen churches with "Arabic or Aramaic-speaking congregations" in Metro Detroit.³²

Many of Detroit's Arab Christians have settled in the suburbs, yet often in different areas depending on national or religious affiliation.³³ Some wealthy Arab Americans live in

Grosse Point, which is an upper-class area by the lake (See map II in Appendix). Northern suburbs like Troy and Warren have been a draw to Arab American engineers, many of them Palestinians. Livonia, a western suburb, has a sizable Palestinian Christian population.³⁴ Iraqi Catholic Chaldeans have established an urban enclave along Seven Mile Road, many of them running grocery, liquor and convenience stores. The Chaldeans' position as store owners in a predominantly African American neighborhood has caused conflict and violence, since these two groups "compete for scarce resources."³⁵ Because of urban blight and these conflicts, many of these Chaldeans move to the suburbs when they can afford it;³⁶ often joining the more affluent Chaldean communities in Southfield, Bloomfield Hills and Farmington Hills.

Arab Muslims have been present in America since the before the Civil War. However the largest boom in numbers came after 1965, particularly in the 1990s, with immigrants fleeing various wars and crises in the Middle East. Arab Muslims constitute between 25 and 35 percent of the total U.S. Muslim population. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of Arab Americans are not Muslim, and the majority of American Muslims are not Arab. Yet, in Dearborn, their numbers are large enough that we can speak of a distinctly Arab-Muslim community.³⁷ Howell and Jamal found that 79% of Arab Muslims in Metropolitan Detroit live in Dearborn or Detroit, rather than in the suburbs.³⁸ A majority of Dearborn's Arabs are Muslims (only five percent of Arab Christians live in the city³⁹), who historically have been working-class, and chose to settle near the automobile plants where they often worked.⁴⁰ Some of the more recent immigrants have come from war and poverty, and also tend to settle in the city, rather than the suburbs.⁴¹ East Dearborn is separated from West Dearborn by the Southfield Freeway (see Map III in Appendix), and they function in many ways as two distinct cities. West Dearborn is almost exclusively non-Arab,⁴² and houses one of Dearborn's most visited attractions, the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, as well as the University of Michigan-Dearborn, the Dearborn Country Club and the large River Rouge Park. Historically, East Dearborn was inhabited by Italian and Eastern European immigrant families and factory workers, but they have fled to the suburbs, leaving the area predominantly Arab.⁴³ East Dearborn's neighborhoods are described by Rossina J. Hassoun as "lower- to middle class."⁴⁴ The national groups include Lebanese, Yemenis, Iraqis and Palestinians.⁴⁵ Lebanese Shi'a Muslims arriving in the late 1980s, settled in East Dearborn and established businesses and restaurants along Warren Avenue, contributing to a rebirth and an economic boom.⁴⁶ Yet, the rapid increase of new immigrants has created financial strain on the city's schools and public services.⁴⁷

The Southend of Dearborn is isolated in an industrial area by the Ford Rouge Plant and other auto-related industries, and is cut off from East Dearborn by the Detroit Industrial Expressway and the Rouge River (see Map III in Appendix). Like East Dearborn it was historically a multi-ethnic working class area, but today it is almost exclusively Arab American.⁴⁸ The majority of Arab Americans in the Southend are Yemeni and Iraqi Muslims, although there are some Lebanese and Palestinian families as well. Many of the Iraqis are recent immigrants, often refugees, and are Shi'a Muslims. Hassoun writes that many of these Iraqi refugees were "incarcerated in concentration camp-like conditions in Saudi Arabia" prior to their arrival.⁴⁹ The Yemenis are predominantly Sunni Muslims, many from rural areas of Yemen, and often have a more traditional outlook than other Dearborn Muslims.⁵⁰ Hassoun writes that the Southend community suffered particular hardships because of plant-layoffs in the 1980s, and has struggled to recover from this. These difficulties are exacerbated by a continuing flow of new immigrants, whose status as recent arrivals requires more resources.⁵¹ The main commercial area along Dix and Vernor Avenues has not succeeded in becoming a bustling "Arab town" in the same way that Warren and Michigan Avenues in East Dearborn have.⁵² The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), has its headquarters in the Southend, and tries to help the community in with a variety of issues, such as health- and language-related problems. In addition to the city of Dearborn, there is a small enclave of Yemeni Muslims in Hamtramck, a working-class municipality surrounded by the city of Detroit, many of them working at the Dodge Plant.⁵³

The Detroit mosque study counts nearly 65,000 Muslims associated with the mosques, and says that "using the projection that 'mosqued' Muslims constitute one-third of all Muslims, a reasonable estimate of the total Muslim population in Metropolitan Detroit is 125,000 - 200,000."⁵⁴ The study does not specify how many of these are Arab, but says that over half of the participants seen attending Friday prayers are Arab.⁵⁵ The study identifies 33 mosques in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties, 10 of these are Arab majority mosques, though Arab attendees can be found in over eighty percent of Detroit's mosques.⁵⁶ Muslims can be separated into two major sects, the Shi'a and the Sunni. The Shi'a are estimated to be one-fifth of the U.S. Muslim population.⁵⁷ In Detroit, Lebanese Shi'a "greatly outnumber" the Lebanese Sunnis, this is the opposite of their demographics in Lebanon.⁵⁸ Howell and Jamal list over half of the Detroit Arab Muslims as Shi'a, where in the Arab world, they are less than 15%.⁵⁹ The recently arrived Iraqi refugees also adhere to the Shi'a sect of Islam.

1.4 Assimilation Theory

The terms assimilation, integration, acculturation and incorporation are often used interchangeably, and need closer defining. “Assimilation” may to modern ears sound out-dated, and in some ways, perhaps it is. Defining it as something close to “Americanization” – it has overtones of force, and of complete abandonment of one’s ethnicity. During the Nativist period of the 1920s, there was a strong degree of force involved in immigrant incorporation, leaving little room for immigrant families’ retention of ethnic behavior. The term assimilation is however so ingrained in both public and academic debate that it may still be used in a meaningful way. The *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* describes assimilation as “the processes that lead to greater homogeneity in society.”⁶⁰ We can differ it from “acculturation” since acculturation refers to simply obtaining cultural patterns and behavior. The Subcommittee on Acculturation defines it as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups.”⁶¹ Assimilation goes further into the immigrant’s life, meaning that he/she obtains not only culture, but also incorporates mainstream structure into his life, for example by joining non-ethnic organizations. Milton Gordon differentiates between primary- and secondary relationships, saying that primary relationships are “personal, intimate, emotionally affective, and (...) bring into play the whole personality.” In contrast secondary relationships are “impersonal, formal, and segmentalized, and tend not to come very close to the core of the personality.”⁶² It is first when you incorporate the mainstream into your primary relationships that you have structurally assimilated.⁶³ Herbert Gans points out that “ethnics can acculturate on their own, but they cannot assimilate unless they are given permission to enter the ‘American’ group or institution” leading to the “inevitable lag of assimilation behind acculturation.”⁶⁴ The term “integration” is largely absent from American immigration scholarship, and seems to be used more in Europe. Whether this is a reflection of actual value-and ideological difference, or if it is just a matter of tradition is uncertain. The term implies meeting half way. In this regard it can be seen as more accurate of what actually happens when the immigrant is adjusting to the host society. There *is* a blending, and there *is* a need for action by the host society as well as by the immigrant. However, even though this term may be more accurate, since this paper is written in an American context, and because the focus is on segmented *assimilation*, the term assimilation will be used. Finally, the term “incorporation” will in this paper be used as a neutral term, referring simply to the acts of immigrants entering and adjusting to American society.

The working definition of assimilation in this thesis is that assimilation occurs when the immigrant goes from being an “other” to being “one of us.” By using this definition, the pitfalls and negative connotations of cultural abandonment are avoided. Instead the focus is on the immigrant’s ability to be an American, which is, again, dependent upon both the immigrant and the host society. The ability to become “one of us” depends on the host society’s degree of acceptance, which will differ from place to place. Therefore an immigrant wearing, for instance, a hijab (head scarf) can be “one of us” in some environments, but not in others. The degree of cultural and behavioral adjustment needed is therefore relative to the environment the immigrant is in. As this paper will show, there are certain elements of the Detroit Arab community which are “othered” by their coethnics. At the same time, in Arab Detroit the context allows for immigrants who otherwise would be considered “forever foreign” or unassimilable, to be “one of us.”

Segmented assimilation theory is the focus of this work, but one should never ignore the impact of the preceding theories in the field. Barbara Schmitter Heisler calls the earliest theories for the “Classical Period”, and refers to both what is commonly called the Chicago School and to Milton Gordon.⁶⁵ This paradigm focuses on the immigrants that arrived in the first half of the twentieth century. In this research there is great optimism about migration, and about the possibility to – and ability to – assimilate. There was an assumption that all immigrants will assimilate, if you just give them enough time (or a few generations). Ethnic traits are seen as disadvantageous in this view, even among scholars who recognize the benefits of more pluralism (like for example Gordon).⁶⁶ Josh DeWind and Philip Kasinitz point out that many of these early social scientific descriptions suffered from being “too often closely allied with political prescription.”⁶⁷

There is much current debate as to whether or not we can use the past experiences of immigrant assimilation as a model for what will happen to today’s immigrants. Many scholars argue that the circumstances are so different now, that what happened in the past is less relevant. They speak of differences in sending countries, differences in government policy and programs, differences in the American economy and work force, differences in the outlook of Americans on how they feel about foreigners and other major changes in society.⁶⁸ Other scholars argue that there are lessons to be learned from the past, that there are enough similarities to make comparisons.⁶⁹ Richard Alba and Victor Nee say that the goal of their influential 2003 book, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*, is to demonstrate that assimilation – as experienced by earlier immigrants - has continued relevance.⁷⁰ Alba and Nee are optimistic about the future of the second generation,

and it is here that they disagree with segmented assimilation scholars who see downward assimilation as a possibility for some immigrant groups.⁷¹ Criticism of segmented assimilation theory will be discussed further below.

Milton Gordon is a major name in the field of assimilation studies with his landmark *Assimilation in American Life*⁷² from 1964. In this book, Gordon wishes to focus on “the nature of group life itself”⁷³ He uses the term “Ethclass” to describe the intersection of ethnicity and social class, claiming that social participation in primary relations happen within the ethclass.⁷⁴ Gordon created a seven stage model of assimilation used to describe what was before seen as a more uncomplicated and linear process. The seven stages are: Cultural or Behavioral assimilation, Structural assimilation, Marital assimilation, Identificational assimilation, Attitude receptional assimilation, Behavior receptional assimilation and Civic assimilation.⁷⁵ Gordon claims that “[n]ot only is the assimilation process mainly a matter of degree, but, obviously, each of the stages or subprocesses distinguished above may take place in varying degrees.”⁷⁶

Along with the Civil Rights Era comes a new paradigm in assimilation studies, (called the “Modern Period” by Heisler,⁷⁷ and “New Social History” by others.⁷⁸) with the recognition that immigrants do not just arrive to an empty slate, but rather to a society filled with economic and political limitations.⁷⁹ In other words, there is a new focus on structure. Using Marxism in the background, theorists and researchers now have a more pessimistic view of the immigrants’ opportunities, seeing limitations like institutional racism, labor exploitation and inequality. There is fear (and recognition) that the loss of industrial and other “middle of the ladder” jobs creates a problem for immigrants who are unable to climb above low-level jobs. In addition there is emphasis on migration as part of a larger world capitalist system that exploits people through migration.⁸⁰ The Civil Rights movement put the spotlight on just how much race means in America, and with the new immigrants mainly being non-white, there is worry that this will also hinder their opportunities to climb the mobility ladder. There is recognition of the fact that some immigrant communities and/or individuals are barred from assimilating into the mainstream for reasons beyond their own agency. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s *Beyond the Melting Pot*⁸¹ is an extensive survey of ethnic groups in New York, in which the conclusion was that they did not “melt.” They say that “[p]erhaps the meaning of ethnic labels will yet be erased in America. But it has not yet worked out this way in New York.”⁸² As of 2010, this is still the case in America. The authors say that studies of ethnic groups commonly speak in terms of praise or blame.⁸³ This paper will try to avoid both praise and blame, though it points out that retention of ethnic labels can be beneficial to

an immigrant community, (in line with segmented assimilation theory), at least in the case of Arab Detroit.

In the 1960s and 70s the idea of a multicultural society gains popularity, both as ideology and as social policy.⁸⁴ In this perspective the immigrant has more agency than in the Structuralist view where the immigrant is mainly a victim. There is still recognition of the problems involved in immigrant incorporation, but the desire is not to assimilate, but rather to achieve equality and equal rights.⁸⁵ Part of the new debate is whether or not there *is* a “middle America”, unified core or homogenous mainstream for the immigrant to become part of. There is a desire to place the excluded in the center, and to see ethnic traits as positive and in constant interaction with the rest of society.⁸⁶ Glazer and Moynihan say that when they wrote their book (early 1960s), most of the major works about ethnic history and sociology were old. They missed scholarship that paid attention to the persistence of ethnicity, and so set out to do it themselves.⁸⁷

Kazal sees a renewed interest in assimilation starting in the 1980s. He says that since the Anglo-conformist assumption has been abandoned, historians have shown interest in assimilation. He points to what he calls “scholars of ethnicity,” “labor historians,” and “scholars of racial identity,” who have all “explored Americanization, examin[ed] how newcomers have come to define themselves as ‘American.’ Here something resembling an American ‘core’ ideology has reemerged – but an ideology subject to change and contestation.”⁸⁸ He names scholars such as Kathleen Neils Conzen, John Higham, Philip Gleason, Gary Gerstle and David Roediger as part of this development.⁸⁹ Josh DeWind and Philip Kasinitz say that in the late 1990s, the role of immigrants is more debated than at any time since the Progressive Era, and point to the “assimilation anxiety” of such works as Peter Brimelow’s *Alien Nation* and Peter Salins’ *Assimilation American Style*.⁹⁰ One could add Samuel Huntington’s *Who Are We?*⁹¹ to that list. He proposes that the way for the nation to find its national purpose and identity is to “recommit to America as a deeply religious and primarily Christian country, encompassing several religious minorities, adhering to Anglo-Protestant values, speaking English, maintaining its European cultural heritage, and committed to the principles of the Creed.”⁹² Huntington, Salins and Brimelow revive Anglo-conformity or the Melting Pot models of assimilation,⁹³ and are, not surprisingly, met with considerable criticism.

Just as the new immigration legislation of 1965 changed the theories of assimilation, so did the emergence of the new second generation. The Multiculturalist approach did not seem to explain what was happening to them, nor did the Structural perspective deal with the

realities on an individual level.⁹⁴ There is a growing desire to see if they are incorporated in the same fashion as their predecessors. At the same time there is still recognition that immigrant incorporation is the responsibility of both the immigrant and the host society. The ways in which an immigrant and his kids are received will affect the way in which he adapts to American society. Jeffery G. Reitz points out four features of host societies that will have an impact on immigrant incorporation: pre-existing racial and ethnic relations, labor markets, government policies and programs, and finally, globalization and changing international boundaries.⁹⁵ This parallels some of the factors that decide assimilation according to segmented assimilation theory: race, a challenging labor market, inner-city countercultures, governmental policy and host society reception.⁹⁶ What much of the more current research seems to show, and what Rumbaut and Portes are claiming as well, is that there is a variety of new patterns. Though the earlier immigrants' children moved up the mobility ladder, the new second generation since 1965 have sometimes moved down. In addition there seem to be differences in whether they in fact assimilate, who they assimilate towards, and whether assimilation is always a benefit.

Herbert Gans used the term "second-generation decline" to argue against what he calls straight line theory,⁹⁷ in other words against the more classical approach. He says that maybe the second-generation will go in the opposite direction, towards downward mobility. Gans mainly blames the economy, claiming that the lack of middle-rung jobs can lead to this decline. He also acknowledges the fact that this generation may be assimilated enough to reject the lower-rung jobs, and that this in turn can lead to unemployment, drug use and crime. He sees this scenario as especially likely for young men.⁹⁸

1.5 Segmented Assimilation Theory

Assimilation theory has historically been dominated by some assumptions, the first being that assimilating is a path to betterment for the immigrant, since ethnic traits and behavior as seen as disadvantageous.⁹⁹ Second, that with time (or successive generations) the immigrant and his family will assimilate.¹⁰⁰ Third, the influence of societal reception is of minimal importance.¹⁰¹ Growing recognition that not all these assumptions are true, has led to an expanding body of research describing the new and more complex picture. Many of the new studies focus on the second generation, in other words, the "native-born children of foreign parents or foreign-born children who were brought to the United States before adolescence."¹⁰² Portes and Rumbaut point out the relevance of studying the second generation in saying that "in the long term it was not the sights and sounds of the first

generation but the settlement process of their children that determined the long-term consequences of the immigrant flow for the nation. First-generation immigrants have always been a restless bunch, here one day and gone the next: *in* the society, but not yet *of* it.”¹⁰³ Alba and Nee make the same point, saying that assimilation is a “multigenerational process,” with outcomes that are not possible to assess without studying the second generation.¹⁰⁴ The face of the immigrant has changed over time, and this makes a difference in their success or failure in American society. The story of the second generation allows us to predict the future, as well as teaching us lessons about the past, and about American society as a whole.

One of the new theories in this vein is segmented assimilation theory. Segmented assimilation theory builds on earlier assimilation theory, but goes further to explain how some immigrants’ children actually experience downward mobility. It also explains how retaining ethnic ties and culture can be a way to experience upward mobility, something the earlier theories did not address. Segmented assimilation scholars propose three possible paths for the second generation to take. The first is the classic path of acculturation followed by upward mobility. The second path is one of upward mobility *by way of* retaining ethnic ties and characteristics. The third path involves acculturation, but instead of moving towards the white majority, the acculturation is a move towards the underclass (often African American). This path often leads to downward mobility.¹⁰⁵

The imminent question then becomes: What decides which path each immigrant group follows?¹⁰⁶ Segmented assimilation scholars claim that it is a matter of context (for example relations between the U.S. and their home country, and the size and structure of existing coethnic communities in the U.S.) and of modes of incorporation (for example prejudices of Americans and American social programs).¹⁰⁷ These scholars claim that the main features that leave the immigrant vulnerable to downward assimilation are: color, location of settlement and absence of mobility ladders.¹⁰⁸ There are also individual level differences that help decide the destiny of a group. One of these is the educational level of the parental generation, along with their attitude towards education. Another difference is English language abilities. A third is place of birth and age of arrival. A fourth is the family’s socioeconomic background or class. A final difference that can be important is place of residence.¹⁰⁹ Interplaying with these individual differences are the contextual differences mentioned above. If there is a strong coethnic community available it can help in overcoming structural disadvantages. The same is true for families that have what Min Zhou calls “generational consonance.”¹¹⁰ This refers to the degree of generational conflict or agreement. These scholars emphasize the continued effects of racism, claiming that it isn’t simply a historical disadvantage, but also a

contemporary characteristic of American society.¹¹¹ However, they also point to factors that can contribute to “mobility success”: government programs, public sympathy and resources in the ethnic community.¹¹²

Segmented assimilation theory is a new theory, but it is of course influenced by old ideas. Harold J. Abramson (in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*), for instance, points out that the question is what the immigrant assimilates to, giving three alternatives: to the dominant Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethnicity, to another ethnic collectivity, or to a mixed subculture, meaning a true melting pot.¹¹³ Speaking of racial passing, Abramson explains that it does not just involve minority members becoming part of the more dominant group, it can also be the reverse phenomenon, exemplified by the “white who becomes a cultural black, the Frenchman who goes native in the South Seas, and the Anglo-Saxon who joins the Indians on the frontier.”¹¹⁴ This is not exactly the same as what segmented assimilation calls downward assimilation, but there are similarities in the acknowledgement that assimilation can lead to assuming the characteristics of populations other than the mainstream. Kasinitz points to the fact that there is “nothing new about the complaint that the children of immigrants were becoming the ‘wrong kind’ of Americans.”¹¹⁵

DeWind and Kasinitz point out that segmented assimilation theory has been “extraordinarily influential” in recent times. Yet, they say, it raises several unanswered questions. First, does preservation of home country ways actually improve the life chances of the second generation? Second, will parental pressure to “stay ethnic” cause resentment among the second generation? They say that there are fictional accounts that imply conflict between the generations over ethnic retention.¹¹⁶ Third, is community preservation a long-term phenomenon?¹¹⁷ The second of these questions will be dealt with in this thesis’ chapter about religion, asking whether religious customs such as gender roles can cause what segmented assimilation theorists call “dissonant acculturation.”¹¹⁸

David Manuel Hernandez and Evelyn Nakano Glenn review Portes and Rumbaut’s two books: *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, and *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*, (the latter edited by these authors). They call these books “touchstones” for researchers and students, as well as a convincing demonstration of the inadequacy of dominant assimilation theories.¹¹⁹ They do have some criticism as well, for instance they criticize *Legacies’* lack of attention to gender and to undocumented status.¹²⁰ They say the neglect of undocumented status is “particularly glaring” as it is so important in California (where the CILS takes some of its sources from), and because “studies have shown undocumented status to have enormous and permanent intergenerational impacts.”¹²¹ They

conclude that the greatest contribution of these two works is the suggestion of a “third way” to assimilate, rather than simply complete assimilation or marginalization, namely “selective acculturation,” what this thesis refers to as the second trajectory. They say – optimistically – that “Portes and Rumbaut’s vision of selective acculturation creates the possibility for a more diverse and unified nation.”¹²² Reviewing the same two books, Emily Skop calls them “brilliant” and “two useful works of scholarship.”¹²³ She has very little criticism of the books, but asks for more focus on the “spatial perspective,” the critical role of place in the process of adaptation.¹²⁴

In *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit After 9/11*, Shryock and Ann Chih Lin point out that segmented assimilation theorists have forgotten the importance of time spent in America, saying that “it is still widely assumed among Arabs in Detroit, and among scholars who study them, that time spent in America and being born in the United States have crucial effects on a person’s identity and opportunities.”¹²⁵ In this regard, the respondents that were interviewed for this thesis are well-suited, since they represent a variety of age groups, with corresponding differing time spent in America.

Kasinitz joins Alba and Nee in saying that segmented assimilation theory is overly pessimistic.¹²⁶ He says that the portrayal of black culture as “utterly corrosive to one’s ability to perform in American society” is unfair and underestimates the contributions of black culture.¹²⁷ He concludes by saying that those who “see acculturation as detrimental to upward mobility (...) are expressing a general lack of faith in the economic ability of the contemporary United States to provide upward mobility on the scale that it did for earlier immigrants.”¹²⁸ Likewise, Alba and Nee say that a “pattern of second-generation decline or stagnation does not appear to be widespread.”¹²⁹

Despite some criticism, segmented assimilation remains an influential model within the study of assimilation. Due to the fact that Arab Americans are such a diverse group, and because there is very little academic work written about Arab Americans and segmented assimilation, this thesis finds it to be a worthwhile combination. The Arab American population is generally well-educated and well-off. However, the Detroit area Arab Americans have a lower family income than the general Arab American public,¹³⁰ and are disproportionately represented among the area’s wealthiest and poorest households.¹³¹ How does this population then fit into the segmented assimilation model? Does this discredit Portes and Rumbaut’s theory that strong ethnic ties and a co-ethnic community are helpful to upward mobility? Is this community experiencing downward mobility? The investigation in this thesis

will lead to a better understanding of these questions, and to a conclusion on how applicable segmented assimilation theory is to this particular group.

1.6 Arab-American Scholarship

Descriptions of Arab Americans have been written since the beginning of the twentieth century, when they were present in large enough numbers to be noticed. Especially the history of the Syrian enclave in New York City and of early Lebanese peddlers have been described. Theodore Pulcini has identified three distinct eras of Arab-American scholarship,¹³² one ending after World War II, one in the 1960s, and one in the 1970s and 80s. The articles and books written before the second World War fall into the category of contribution history, and are accounts describing the community and their “integrity and ability to make a positive contribution to America.”¹³³ Pulcini names Philip Hitti’s *The Syrians in America*, from 1924 as the first systematic and scholarly study of Syrian immigration to the United States,¹³⁴ marking a period of academic work intended to describe the Syrian communities and their assimilation. He says the pre-war studies had an “apologetic tone,” and differ from later scholarship. Works that describe Arab Muslims were virtually non-existent in these first decades, only starting to emerge in the 1950s when more Muslims arrived in America.

The 1960s are a start of a new era in research. A. E. Elkholy’s “landmark work” *The Arab Moslems in the United States* (1966) examined Muslims in Dearborn and Toledo in detail, and concluded that Islam was not a barrier to assimilation, rather Muslim religiosity was a benefit for these immigrant communities.¹³⁵ The 1960s focus on Muslim religion was paralleled by a focus on Arab Christian religion. The Christians who earlier had submitted to a “Latinization” of their faith, now showed an increase in awareness and affirmation of their religious distinctness.¹³⁶ An example of this trend is Mary C. Sengstock’s study of Chaldeans in Detroit.¹³⁷ There was also more scholarship showing pride in Arab-American literature (with Kahlil Gibran at the forefront).¹³⁸ The 1960s was marked by political turmoil in the Middle East, and Arab-American scholarship of this decade show a “tradition of markedly political works defending the Arab world against what was perceived as an entrenched American bias against it.”¹³⁹ This tradition in Arab-American scholarship has continued into the present day, and has perhaps become even more present after 9/11.

The bias against Arabs led to research devoted to examining the images of Arabs in the media, beginning the last era of research described by Pulcini.¹⁴⁰ The 1970s and 80s are more defensive in tone than the works of previous eras, while they also show a sense of pride in Arab heritage. Works by for instance Jack Shaheen and Michael Suleiman set out to

challenge myths, and point out the bias in American media against Arab Americans.¹⁴¹ The 1970s and 80s saw a “number of studies analyzing the situation of Arab Americans specifically from a minority-rights perspective,” says Pulcini.¹⁴² This trend parallels the research and academic work of other ethnic minorities in America, born out of the Civil Rights movements and ethnic “revolution” in America. The increased willingness to openly display frustration went hand in hand with self-affirmation and pride, symbolized according to Pulcini by *The American Arabic-Speaking Community Almanac*.¹⁴³ He says that the “*Almanac* was obviously compiled to project an image of an ethnic group that was united and mobilized, inveterate internal divisions and political handicaps notwithstanding.”¹⁴⁴ A number of analytic works were published in the 1980s, some in the form of anthologies. Many of the articles in these anthologies had Michigan’s Arabs as the center of attention, for instance *Arabs in the New World*.¹⁴⁵ Pulcini names Yvonne Haddad an authority on Islam in America, and her “1987 opus,” coauthored with A. T. Lummis, did what Elkholy did in the 1960s,¹⁴⁶ and was followed by numerous studies on Arab Muslims in the United States.

Pulcini’s account ends with the late 1980s. Since then, more turmoil in the Middle East has brought continued focus on Arab American discrimination in the United States, and more focus on the continuing influx of Muslim immigration, and its effects on assimilation. A number of scholars investigate the effects of the growth of Islam in America, and the coinciding Islamophobia, for instance John Esposito, Linda Walbridge, Jane I. Smith, and Louise Cainkar.¹⁴⁷ Jen’nan Ghazal Read, and Nadine Naber have studied Arab women, and the effect of religion on their gender identities and behavior, both finding that women’s roles are more of a cultural trait among Arabs, than an effect of Christian or Muslim religions.¹⁴⁸ Fadwa El Guindi names Barbara Aswad “the single most prolific anthropologist specializing on Arab America,” with a “mentorship that has produced generations of anthropologists” specializing in Arab America, and especially Dearborn; Linda Walbridge being one of them.¹⁴⁹ Alixa Naff, Eric Hoogland, and Akram Khater write historical accounts of the early immigration, and transnational identities.¹⁵⁰ A number of anthologies with contributors from a multitude of disciplines have been published in the 1990s,¹⁵¹ writing about Arab Christians and Muslims in many geographic locations, but nearly all of them contain research from Arab Detroit. Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock’s *Arab Detroit* (described earlier in this chapter) explicitly sets out to paint a portrait of Dearborn and its surroundings. This suggests that if one is doing research about Arab Americans, Arab Detroit is likely to become a focal point.

Since 9/11, the reality of discrimination and unease in the Arab Muslim community have brought about a large number of scholarly work describing the impact of 9/11 on the communities, exemplified by the aforementioned *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*, as well as a number of studies and polls focusing on the same themes.¹⁵² Many of these works describe the move from invisible to visible minority, and the nature of Arab-American minority- and racial status (described further in chapter two).¹⁵³ It seems that academic work still has the same defensive tone, accompanied by pride found in the 1970s and 1980s, but with a renewed sense of urgency.

Fadwa El Guindi, writing in 2003, notes that even though the Middle East is “directly related to the United States’ most volatile area of foreign policy,” there are no study centers or programs devoted to the research on Arab and Muslim Americans.¹⁵⁴ At the same time Arab Americans are not recruited to teach Islamic and Middle East studies, rather those positions are filled by Jews, “without scrutiny for possible bias against Arabs and Muslims,” she says.¹⁵⁵ Since then, the Center for Arab American Studies has been established at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, aiming to focus on Arab Americans, and especially the Dearborn community.¹⁵⁶ This has presumably led to an increase in scholarship and research of and about Arab Americans. In a similar fashion, Andrew Shryock’s article “Teaching (and Learning) about Arab America: a Survey of Materials” sets out to prove that there are plenty of sources of academic work about Arab Americans, and encourages teachers to use these in “arts, humanities, and social science courses.” He continues by lamenting the invisibility of Arab immigrants in textbooks about ethnicity and immigration, and suggests teaching courses that focus solely on Arabs in America.¹⁵⁷ Like El Guindi, he points to the fact that America is waging war in the Middle East, and therefore the inclusion of Arab American topics is especially relevant in academic settings.¹⁵⁸

Segmented assimilation in relation to Arab Americans has only been analyzed in a few select cases, for instance Kristine J. Ajrouch and Amaney Jamal’s article “Assimilating to a White Identity: The Case of Arab Americans.”¹⁵⁹ This thesis is a small contribution to this tradition.

1.7 Race- and Ethnicity Theories

There is extensive scholarship on the history and development of race and ethnicity in America. This writing has been located in many fields, for instance, in Sociology, Immigration History, Psychology, Culture Studies, Anthropology and Labor History. Starting

with race, this section will review some of the most central works and paradigms in the realm of race- and ethnic scholarship.

Early scholarship on race can easily be seen as outdated, laughable or malicious today. The pseudo-scientific work of Eugenicists and Social Darwinists is thankfully discredited today, though it had major repercussions for racial minorities in Europe and America, as well as in colonized countries, and is neither laughable nor should it be underestimated. Peggy Pascoe describes the impact it had on miscegenation laws, where in its extreme, a person of mixed race would not legally be allowed to marry anyone of any race.¹⁶⁰ Karen Brodtkin points to the forced sterilization of anyone seen as unfit - often meaning women of color - a system that survived into the 1970s.¹⁶¹ The biological nature of race began to be questioned in the 1920s, but as pointed out by Thomas F. Gossett, it had remarkable staying power. He explains that eventually the “shift of the scientists and social scientists with regard to race did not occur because of any dramatic or sudden discovery. Racism had developed into such a contradictory mass of the unprovable and the emotional that the serious students eventually recognized that as a source of explanation for mental and temperamental traits of a people it was worthless.”¹⁶² Thomas F. Gossett’s book, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* from 1963, is among the classic literature on race in America. Though he is a Professor of English, Gossett’s book is considered to be one of the most important books of the last fifty years on the subject of race as an idea in the development of American culture.¹⁶³ Gossett’s chronological account details the history of race ideology, and of race scholarship, starting in ancient times, and leading up to the American 1960s. Like most modern thinkers, he debunks the myth of racial categories as biological entities.¹⁶⁴ He points out that though academic discipline has experienced a “sharp swing away from race interpretations,” there still are “race problems aplenty.”¹⁶⁵

This echoes much of what some important race scholarship says later: that even if there is reluctance to write about race, it *does* exist, both in the popular mind, and in sociological realities. Critical Race Theory developed as a response to this. The movement began in the field of law, but soon extended to other areas, and sought to highlight the importance of race, and the degree to which race permeates society.¹⁶⁶ Beginning in the 1970s, the founders saw that though Civil Rights reforms had succeeded in the 1960s, racial inequality still existed, and in many cases civil rights advancements were being reversed.¹⁶⁷ They saw the need for new “theories and strategies (...) to combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground.”¹⁶⁸ The five basic tenants, (though there are differences among the Critical Race scholars) are: first, that racism is ordinary and common. Second, that color-blind

conceptions of equality can only “remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination.”¹⁶⁹ Third, that race is a social product, not objective or inherent. Fourth, that “society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs.”¹⁷⁰ And finally, that people of color have a unique “voice” – a “presumed competence to speak about race and racism.”¹⁷¹ Critical Race Theory has met significant criticism, both from Liberals and Conservatives, from both white and non-white scholars and thinkers. Yet, this paper sees Critical Race Theory as central to an understanding of the Arab American racial dilemma, Arab American racial categorization, and the debate surrounding it.

Seemingly following in the footsteps of Critical Race Theory, though never mentioning it by name, is Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. Omi and Winant take over where Gossett left off, in the 1960s. They describe the history of race and racial scholarship, and continue on to describing their own theory of race. Central to their argument is that previous social science literature was inadequate in explaining race, since even when dealing with race it tended to “diminish the significance of race, to treat it as a mere manifestation of some other, supposedly more important, social relationship.”¹⁷² The authors propose a Racial Formation Theory, which looks at the “sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.”¹⁷³ They wish to put race at the center of discussions, and their book is an analysis of American politics and ideology from that perspective, rather than from the perspective of class, ethnicity or nation, where they claim that “race and racial dynamics in the U.S. have been theoretically understood” before.¹⁷⁴ Like Critical Race Theory, Omi and Winant argue that a Right-wing color-blind conception is inadequate, but they go further and suggest that it is at times covertly (and overtly) racist.¹⁷⁵ Pascoe follows some of these same conclusions calling “color-blindness” a racial ideology of its own, and in a memorable phrase says it is “an Alice-in-Wonderland interpretation of racism in which even those who argue for racially oppressive policies can adamantly deny being racists.”¹⁷⁶

In *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America*, Karen Brodtkin refers to Omi and Winant’s “racial state,” saying that she is writing of a racial economic system.¹⁷⁷ She seeks to explain how race and class are closely connected, and to explain their relationship to gender. She says that the roots of race in America are in the system of slavery: “slavery made race and (...) race justified a regime of slave labor.”¹⁷⁸ The later arriving immigrant working class was then constructed as nonwhite using stereotypes formerly used for blacks.¹⁷⁹ She says that this “construction of race almost *is* the American

construction of class, that capitalism as an economic organization in the United States is racially structured.”¹⁸⁰

Brodkin is not alone in tying construction of racial categories to class. David Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* sets out to describe how and why whiteness became so important to white workers.¹⁸¹ He says that he agrees with Toni Morrison that to “ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it.”¹⁸² Roediger makes the claim that class is privileged over race in research and policy, and says he would like to contribute to shifting the balance: “the privileging of class over race is not always productive or meaningful. To set race within social formations is absolutely necessary, but to reduce race to class is damaging.”¹⁸³ His analysis shows that whiteness was used as a way for workers to deal with their own alienation and fear of dependency, by gaining the privileges that came along with being white. This was especially gratifying for Irish workers whose whiteness was in question.¹⁸⁴ Roediger is part of what is considered “whiteness studies,” developed in the 1990s, which set out to study the privileges and status connected to (male) whiteness, and the developments that led to immigrants learning to “become white.”¹⁸⁵ The framework of these recent race theories is useful for the discussion of immigrant and second generation assimilation, because most of the immigrants of the last 50 years, and their children, are people “of color.” Overt or covert racism will then affect the immigrant family’s chance at social and economic incorporation.

Like scholarship on race, Ethnic Studies extends into many scholarly fields. Immigration History, as well as Anthropology and Sociology, to mention some examples, are full of important works dealing with ethnic groups and ethnic belonging. Although there is plenty of scholarship about ethnic groups, there is a long period of scholarly history that neglected the multicultural nature of American society, and instead focused on the presumed Anglo-American nature of the United States. During this time, scholars were more interested in national identity, and in Americanization and assimilation of immigrants, not in their ethnic identities as such.¹⁸⁶ In the 1920s, 30s and 40s we see the emergence of some “Contributions History”¹⁸⁷ where the second- and third generation immigrants point out *their* contributions to American society and history. At the same time, the Chicago School of sociologists were studying the effect of immigration to the city.

Oscar Handlin’s 1951 study, *The Uprooted*, marks a change in representations of immigrants to America. Though he has met with considerable critique later, the importance of his work should not be underestimated. He writes about the peasant societies of Europe being uprooted in the New World, and of the tragic loss of these social structures and homeland

identities.¹⁸⁸ He argued that Americanization was alienating rather than emancipatory.¹⁸⁹ He describes the immigrants as unprepared and as passive agents in their move to a new country. Rudolph J. Vecoli's small but significant article "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of The Uprooted," criticizes the assumption that immigration traumatizes and disorganizes the immigrant society, and "fails to respect the unique cultural attributes of the many and varied ethnic groups which sent immigrants to the United States."¹⁹⁰ He points to a variety of social structures brought from the homeland and retained in the U.S. In addition he shows how emigration was a voluntary means to "advance the material and social position of their families" and to "acquire capital with which to purchase land, provide dowries for their daughters, and assist sons to enter business or the professions."¹⁹¹ Virginia Yans-McLaughlin's *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* argues against Handlin as well. She posits that these Italian families did experience strain and conflict, but not disorganization. In fact, the nuclear family pattern proved to be "extraordinarily resilient."¹⁹² She wants to turn Handlin's assumptions around and look at why the families stayed together, rather than why they fell apart,¹⁹³ and says that the "family is a flexible organization."¹⁹⁴ In a similar fashion, John Bodnar's 1970 *The Transplanted*, criticizes earlier assumptions of the helplessness of immigrants. He argues, like Vecoli and Yans-McLaughlin, that systems from home *can* be transplanted.¹⁹⁵ This paradigm of the immigrant as active agent continues to be relevant today, and ethnicity studies frequently speak of the *creation* of ethnic identities. Conzen et al speak of the *invention* of ethnicity as a process "which incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories."¹⁹⁶

More recent scholarship has focused on reception – in other words - not only how the immigrant fashions his or her ethnic identity, but how the American society's reception plays into it as well. This is one of the important points made by segmented assimilation theory – that reception is one important determinant in the process of incorporation. The theory speaks of three kinds of reception: governmental policy, host society, and the existing coethnic community.¹⁹⁷ A central argument is that maintenance of ethnicity can be beneficial to immigrant families, as it creates networks for support and assistance in the urban immigrant enclave.

1.8 Religion in Studies of Immigration and Ethnicity

Will Herberg's *Protestant – Catholic – Jew: an Essay in American Religious Sociology* (1955) stands as a classic in the field of Immigration- and Religious Studies. Herberg's thesis

built upon Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy's study of intermarriage in New Haven published in the 1940s. Kennedy posited that marriage was confined not to national groupings, but to religious groupings, hence the term "triple melting pot."¹⁹⁸ Herberg also based his essay upon Marcus Lee Hansen's "The Problem of the Third Generation Immigrant." Philip Gleason says that Herberg, in fact, revitalized Hansen's ideas,¹⁹⁹ transferring them to the realm of religion. "Hansen's Law" as Herberg calls it, is that the grandson remembers what the son wants to forget.²⁰⁰ In other words, ethnic behavior is brought back by the third generation, who is secure in their position as true Americans. Herberg says that this explains how religion was revitalized in a period of increasing secularization. "Every aspect of contemporary religious life reflects this paradox - pervasive secularism amid mounting religiosity."²⁰¹ Explaining how the second generation felt "confused, anxious, and discontented," and not in touch with their parents' ethnic heritage, they sometimes transferred these feelings of rejection to the ethnic church. "To them religion, along with the language of the home, seemed to be part and parcel of the immigrant baggage of foreignness they were eager to abandon."²⁰² The American third generation, trying to find out what *kind* of Americans they were, turned to religion.²⁰³ In this way religious behavior was revitalized, as well as organizing American ethnicity along three religious lines: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish.²⁰⁴ Herberg's essay has since been criticized for ignoring race and class,²⁰⁵ yet remains an influential work, evidenced by the many references to him in academic work about assimilation, immigration and religion.²⁰⁶

The legacies of Herberg, Hansen and Kennedy bring us to a review of more contemporary literature about immigration, ethnicity and religion. In *Speaking of Diversity* (1989), Philip Gleason says "I was somewhat surprised to discover how little systematic attention the interaction of religion and immigration has received."²⁰⁷ Similarly, writing in 2009, the editors of *Immigration and Religion in America: Comparative and Historical Perspectives* say that "religion was initially a minor theme in the scholarship on the 'new,' post-1965 immigration."²⁰⁸ However a number of scholars *have* looked more closely at the intersection of the two, and have found some common themes that cross ethnic and national boundaries. These will be examined in the following.

The United States, as a whole, is a very religious country. Despite – or maybe because of - the fact that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights explicitly demand separation of church and state, and free exercise of religion, Americans are more religious than citizens of other Western countries.²⁰⁹ Portes and Rumbaut reviewed findings from the PEW Global Attitudes Project, and found that even though religious attitudes are negatively correlated to national

wealth, the United States is an exception among wealthy nations. They say that one reason for this is the vitality and importance of immigrant religion.²¹⁰ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark claim that the “most striking trend in the history of religion in America is its growth,”²¹¹ with a steady rise in religious adherence since 1776.²¹² They discuss the freedom of religion as a marketplace where churches and clergy competed for followers, and where those churches that did not make serious demands on their followers did not prosper.²¹³ They say that the “received wisdom is that pluralism weakens faith – that where multiple religious groups compete, each discredits the other and this encourages the view that religion per se is open to question, dispute, and doubt. (...) Historical evidence says otherwise.”²¹⁴ The variety of religious options meant that there was something to fit everyone’s needs, leading to more adherents on the whole.²¹⁵ Finke and Stark say that the lack of regulation meant it was easier to start new churches, and to form the church according to ethnically and racially distinctive needs.²¹⁶

It is well known that for immigrants, religious organizations function as a connection between the Old Country and their new home. Churches and other houses of worship are a meeting place where the immigrant can socialize with others from their home country, and sometimes even from the same village or town.²¹⁷ In times of crisis in the Old Country, immigrant religious institutions mobilize and collect money to send home, gather for common prayer, lobby in government to allow refugee settlement, or create charitable organizations to send money and people overseas.²¹⁸ The home countries, in turn, effect religious life in America by training and sending clergy to staff the ethnic houses of worship,²¹⁹ sometimes to the chagrin of community members who appreciate the more Americanized forms of worship that have evolved in America.²²⁰ For instance, Cainkar reports that when a new mosque was built in Chicago in the 1980s, staffed by an imported imam, women resented the fact that they suddenly were required to wear head scarves.²²¹

Religious institutions provide financial, emotional and practical support for immigrants and their families, as well as giving the immigrants a place to belong – a sense of identity in America.²²² For instance, the Detroit mosque study shows that most mosques offer certain social services like food donation, substance abuse programs, prison programs and clothing donation; and over 80% provide cash assistance.²²³ Handlin’s much mentioned *The Uprooted*, claims that religion was the one factor that immigrants could successfully transplant, and therefore became important for their stability as a group.²²⁴ Marcus Lee Hansen said much of the same, pointing to religious morality as an emotional stabilizer in the new land.²²⁵ For many immigrants, religious practice is also a way to teach children about

their heritage, and keep them from becoming “too American.”²²⁶ One way to ensure this is through religious education. Findings of the Detroit mosque study shows that participants see Islamic education as the top priority for their mosques, and this “demonstrates the deep concern of Muslims for their children – a concern that their children be raised as Muslims and that they avoid the danger of adopting un-Islamic practices.”²²⁷

Growth of religion can be connected to conflict and discrimination.²²⁸ On the other hand, religion is sometimes abandoned by immigrants who meet religious discrimination, and think it is best to blend in.²²⁹ The editors of *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish and Muslim Experiences in the United States* remind us that the unity of the Catholic church was “facilitated precisely because of the anti-Catholicism that has prevailed for much of the history of America.”²³⁰ The sources used in this thesis suggest that this is true for Muslim Arab-Americans as well.²³¹ Cankar writes that “[k]nowledge of Islam and its institutional growth is dialectically related to contestations faced by Muslims. As Islam and Muslims face more challenges, Islamic revival grows.”²³² However, in the past, when there were less Muslims in America, many downplayed or abandoned their religion in the face of pressure to Americanize.²³³

Gleason points out that works dealing with immigration and religion can be categorized as either seeing religion in a positive or a negative light. In other words, religion can help an immigrant adjust to the host society by offering psychological and practical help, or it can promote divisiveness both among the ethnic group, and between the ethnic group and the host society.²³⁴ These two categories coincide with some of the findings of this thesis as well. Religion and religious organizations certainly have aided adjustment for Arabs in America, by providing, for instance, financial help and a sense of belonging. At the same time, religion has created conflict between Arab religious groups, who at times use their religious differences to mark distance or closeness to the American mainstream.²³⁵

The Muslim experience is often compared to the history of Jewish immigration and assimilation in America.²³⁶ The Jewish immigrants faced considerable discrimination when trying to adjust in Christian America. Yet, they have succeeded in becoming incorporated, and have even been able to re-define America as a Judeo-Christian country.²³⁷ The question remains whether this development is possible for Muslims in America. Even though Islam is the fastest growing religion in America,²³⁸ the discrimination and hostility Muslims face make the future look grim. The definition of American as Judeo-Christian-Muslim does not look likely in the Islamophobic climate of American society today.²³⁹ The editors of *Immigration and Religion in America: Comparative and Historical Perspectives* write that “one does well

to remember that other ethnic groups have prospered after enduring similar periods of trial. (...) [I]t is too early to draw strong conclusions on whether the tensions and suspicions of the present will exclude Muslims from the mainstream.”²⁴⁰ Despite commonalities between the three major religions, Americans often see Islam as incompatible with American culture, while Muslims wonder whether American intervention in the Middle East is actually a war on Islam.²⁴¹

Segmented assimilation theory, at first, neglected the influence of religion on assimilation patterns. Warner laments this neglect and says that the early theory was “blind to the largely favourable reception of Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union; the largely hostile reception of Muslims, especially in the wake of 9/11; and the advantage enjoyed by Christian immigrants (...) in being religiously hosted by preexisting Christian, especially Catholic, congregations.”²⁴² The lack of religious data in the CILS was corrected with the third wave of the study, which collected data on religious affiliation, contributing the third edition of Portes and Rumbaut’s *Immigrant America: A Portrait* which added a chapter on religion.²⁴³ What the data shows is that over 80% of the second-generation respondents are affiliated with a religion, most of them Catholic. One third are regular church-goers.²⁴⁴ The authors created a “Downward Assimilation Index (DAI)” to measure the correlation between religion and indicators like incarceration and early parenthood, as well as taking into account educational achievement and occupational status.²⁴⁵ What the CILS found is that association with an “established religion is strongly and positively associated with higher educational achievement and higher occupational prestige, and it is significantly and negatively related to incidents of downward assimilation.”²⁴⁶ (The authors make note of the fact that it is not always possible to know with certainty the direction of the causal relationship, for example, educational success may lead to a reinforcement of religious convictions rather than vice versa.)²⁴⁷ These findings are consistent with the findings of Carl L. Bankston III and Min Zhou’s study of Vietnamese youth in New Orleans.²⁴⁸ Their research showed that church attendance strengthened ethnic identification, which in turn led to better scholastic performance and avoidance of destructive behavior.²⁴⁹ The third chapter of this thesis will examine these results more closely, and investigate whether the same patterns are true for Arab-American Christians and Muslims.

CHAPTER 2: Racial- and Ethnic Identities

This chapter asks how Arab-American racial- and ethnic identity are connected to assimilation. Race and ethnicity are separate, yet connected aspects of a person's identity. Arab Americans, for example, are divided about whether they consider themselves to be white or not, and about what – if any – ethnic label is to be used to characterize them. Even though the term “Arab American” is contested, it is used in this paper, partially for practical reasons since it is the only name that encompasses all of this paper's target group, but also because the term is embraced by major institutions and supportive organizations such as the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), the Arab American National Museum and the Arab American Institute.

The first part of the chapter discusses and analyzes Arab-American ethnicity. Among the topics discussed are the diversity within this group, the history and historiography of Arab America, how foreign policy and geo-political events shape this particular identity, and how Arab Americans have gone from being an invisible to a hyper-visible group in multicultural America. The second part of the chapter discusses and analyzes Arab-American racial identity. It looks at the history of Arab-American racial designations and racialization, the debates surrounding current racial categories, the confusions and complexities that come from not being comfortable in any existing racial category, and how racial identification is connected to discrimination, among other things. The third and final section of the chapter analyzes Arab-American race and ethnicity according to segmented assimilation theory. It will discuss how racial- and ethnic feelings of identity, and identity markers, affect the assimilation trajectory of Arab Americans in the Detroit Metro area. Though this is perhaps the most important part of this chapter, it is dealt with last. The reason for this is that there is a need to read the information offered in the earlier sections in order to get the full understanding of how Arab-American race and ethnicity relate to segmented assimilation.

The primary source materials used here are the interviews conducted for this study, the Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS), and federal census material. The subjects of the interviews are all second-generation Arab American. However, they are not a statistically representative sample, and their experiences cannot be used to universalize for all Arab Americans of the second generation. Their commentary is interesting as evidence of the diversity within the Arab-American community, as well as proving as examples of more universal trends. The DAAS does not distinguish between generational categories. In some instances references are made to the differences between native- and foreign born. The native born may be second – or third and fourth - generation Arab Americans. The foreign born can

be first generation Arab Americans, or what is often called the 1.5 generation (children immigrating with parents).²⁵⁰ The report refers to these distinctions only occasionally, and since the original data was not made available to this study, this thesis is unable to analyze accurately regarding generational categories. The DAAS sample is 75% foreign born.²⁵¹ The census material used here, similarly, does not cross-reference nativity with the other categories of interest. Generational categories are not used. The foreign-born population outnumbers the native born population only in Oakland County. In Wayne County where the vast majority of Metro Detroit's Arab Americans live, 55% are native born. In Macomb County the number of native born is even higher, at 63%.²⁵² This means that the DAAS sample has a higher percentage foreign born, than what is reflected by the census data. Neither the DAAS, nor the census material can give accurate answers to generational categories, which are of interest to this analysis. Out of necessity, this material is still used to draw careful conclusions about the second generation, who are at least *part* of the source material used in the census and the DAAS. Readers should remain alert to this flaw in the analysis, even beyond the places in the text where it is specifically pointed out.

2.1 Being Arab American

The American ethnic groupings may present foreign concepts to a newcomer. They may seem constructed, impersonal or even oppressive to those that are categorized in this manner. In the case of Arab Americans, this is especially true. The pan-ethnic label "Arab American" is contested by some of those it is meant to describe, as is even the label "Arab." Many people of Arab heritage prefer national or religious markers instead. Many prefer no label at all. The term was coined by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) as part of their larger goal to educate the public on affairs in the Middle East.²⁵³ Just like the term "Hispanic," "Arab American" is meant to cover people from a variety of backgrounds, and may therefore never be appropriate for all its intended subjects. "Arab American" covers a broad spectrum of people from both Asia and Africa, of both Christian and Muslim cultures, and a large variety of denominations within those religions. In addition, Arab Americans belong to different socioeconomic groups, are first- and second-generation (or even older) immigrants, have come as refugees, sojourners and immigrants, and have a variety of different physical characteristics. It is a matter of debate within the community (for there *does* seem to be a sense of common community, even if there is disagreement on labels²⁵⁴), concerning what name to use for the group. Randa A. Kayyali says that the 2000 census "indicated that 85 percent of Arab Americans still identify first by country of origin, although

this does not mean that Arab is not a secondary or tertiary identifier, or even the first choice in another setting.”²⁵⁵ She continues by saying that in recent years, an “increasingly Islamic consciousness rivals for primary identification,”²⁵⁶ and that religious identifiers are also common among some Christians, for instance, Chaldeans. Some religious minorities from Arab majority countries do not consider themselves Arab at all.²⁵⁷

So what does it mean to be Arab American? Who chooses this identity marker, and who does not? The eight people interviewed for this paper are all second generation, and have parents from seven different countries. They all used the term Arab about themselves, either directly, or more indirectly. Some use the term Arab American, but it is less common. A majority identify a nationality as their main ethnic identity. Sonya specifically chooses to identify as Arab American, in order to “promote a unified Arab identity.”²⁵⁸ None of the informants identified a religious identity as their primary choice when asked “How would you describe your ethnicity?” Of all the informants, the one who used the term Arab the least was Frank, who is Christian. The only reference he made to an Arab ethnicity was in saying that he was “looked at differently in a mostly non[-]Arab community,”²⁵⁹ which implies his “Arabness.” This is consistent with the DAAS’ findings, that Christians are less likely to accept the Arab-American label. The DAAS found that among Muslims 85% were comfortable with the label Arab American, and 61% of Christians feeling the same. The DAAS study team says that “[g]iven the diverse national, religious, and ethnic origins of Arabs and Chaldeans, it is hardly surprising that the term ‘Arab American’ would not appeal to everyone.”²⁶⁰ Their respondents gave “roughly 100 alternative identity labels.”²⁶¹ The 2000 census was accompanied by two special reports: “The Arab Population: 2000” and “We the People of Arab Ancestry in the United States.”²⁶² These reports reflect the United States’ Arab-American population as a whole, not just Arab Detroit. According to the first report, 17% identified as Arab or Arabic when asked about their ancestry. This was the second most common response, after Lebanese. The number of people who used this ethnic identification has increased by 61.6% since the 1990 census.²⁶³ The census’ American Community Survey of 2006 has Arab as the second most popular response to ancestry in the Arab population. These numbers are not easily compared to the findings of the DAAS, since the questions posed about Arab identification are different: one asking about a person’s ancestry, and one asking specifically whether the informant identifies with the label “Arab American.” Yet, the census numbers *do* reflect and acknowledge a pan-Arab ethnicity in the United States, and its relative popularity.

What does it mean to have an Arab-American identity? How does this ethnicity play out in people's lives, and how does it make them different from other Americans? All of the respondents to interviews for this study said that their ethnic identity was important to them. Some referred to the importance of knowing your roots. Joseph responded to the question of whether he had ever concealed his ethnicity by saying: "To do so would mean denying my father and mother, and the essence physical/psychological being."²⁶⁴ Frank refers to family traditions that reflect his roots: "I married a typical American girl, but it is important for my kids to absorb as much [of] my culture as possible...we have beautiful traditions trying to keep them alive."²⁶⁵ Nayla has a broader, more international view of her roots, despite being born in the United States: "Yes, my identity is very important to me. It reflects on who I am in the world. (...) I live very far from my home country where I really feel like [I] belong."²⁶⁶ Janice connects her ethnic identity to knowing the "importance of family," and to her decision to study and travel in the Arab world.²⁶⁷ Also reflecting the importance of roots, is the DAAS finding that over 60% of the Arabs and Chaldeans in their study watch "some news broadcasts in Arabic." This is also indicated by the large number of satellite dishes in Arab and Chaldean homes, where 63% have them, compared to the 17% of the general population.²⁶⁸ However, these numbers do not tell us whether the Arab or Chaldeans mentioned are first- or second-generation.

As reflected by watching Arabic news, language is an indicator of ethnicity. Although the interview subjects for this study are all second generation, 6 out of 8 speak Arabic. The DAAS findings show that among Arabs in Metro Detroit 86% speak a language other than English at home, which for 69% means Arabic. At the same time, there are high rates of bilingualism with nearly 80% speaking English well or very well.²⁶⁹ The American Community Survey from 2006-2008 shows that of Arabs in Metro Detroit, 29% speak English only, 71% speak a language other than English at home, while 30% speak English "less than very well."²⁷⁰ This indicates that at least 40% speak both languages well. In comparing Detroit's Arabs to Arab Americans nationwide, the DAAS says that "[l]evels of English fluency are high in the Detroit area and among Arab Americans elsewhere, but Arabs and Chaldeans in the Detroit area are more often bilingual."²⁷¹ These findings show that the Arabic language is important to the Arab-American population, and is a reflection of their ethnic belonging, even though English is commonly used in addition.

Socializing and friendships often reflect ethnic identity. Interview subject Ron claims that 95% of his socializing takes place in Dearborn with other Lebanese or Palestinian Arabs.²⁷² Other respondents have more heterogeneous friendship circles, though many of

them refer to family in the Dearborn area. Nayla, who lives in the ethnically diverse suburb of Bloomfield Hills, says that her friends are “Americans” not Arabs.²⁷³ Seven of the respondents *do* spend time in Dearborn, though some only go there to shop for ethnic foods. Some respondents work in Dearborn, although they live in the suburbs. Janice says that working in Dearborn helps her “feel more connected to the Arab community.”²⁷⁴ Few of them say that being close to Dearborn has affected their choice of where to live, two of them grew up there, but only one respondent actually lives in Dearborn. Nayla likes the cultural familiarity of Dearborn: “When I go visit Dearborn, it seems as if I am back in Lebanon or Egypt surrounded by other Arabs who value the same [sic] as I do.”²⁷⁵ Suha has a similar experience: “sometimes it feels like I am in some Arab city, and not in the United States.”²⁷⁶ Four interview respondents work primarily with non-Arabs. A few of them were/are community activists and in that respect do work with other Arab Americans. Three of the respondents work for ACCESS and/or the Arab American National Museum, and naturally have Arab-American colleagues. The following section looks more closely at different aspects of Arab-American ethnicity, like political identities, pan-ethnic organizations, visibility, and discrimination. This is by no means an exhaustive list of ethnic identity markers; rather, it is a collection that is deemed relevant for this paper.

2.2 Arab-American Ethnic History and Historiography

A label can be a source of power, but also a way of “othering” a person. The creation of the “Arab-American” label was a result of a variety of historical and ideological projects. Most Arab-American scholars point to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War as a deciding factor. As Americans joined in their support of Israel, the “Arab enemy” was in focus. In response to this dislike, Arab pan-nationalism grew, both in the U.S. and in the Arab world.²⁷⁷ The happenings in the Middle East coincided with the American multicultural revolution of the 1960s. As many other ethnic groups were joining forces, and fighting for recognition, pride, and respect, Arab America followed suit by organizing interest groups. Starting with the formation of the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG), many more organizations began to use the labels “Arab American,” or “American Arab,” showing group solidarity and a collective identity.²⁷⁸ Before this time, individuals and their organizations tended to use religious or nationality labels. An example would be the Syrian American Association. Between the 1960s and 1980s, important pan-ethnic organizations like the National Association of Arab-Americans (NAAA), the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the Arab American Institute (AAI), and The Arab Community Center for

Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) emerged. ACCESS was established in 1972, and is considered today to be one of the most influential and important Arab-American organizations both in Metro Detroit, and nationally.²⁷⁹ From the beginning, ACCESS had “founders and board members from a variety of Arab backgrounds and so enjoyed wide acceptance.”²⁸⁰ In 2005, ACCESS opened the nation’s first Arab American National Museum. Both the organization and the museum are symbols of pan-ethnic commitment and solidarity. The influence of ACCESS is reflected by many of the interview subjects of this study, who mention it by name.²⁸¹ Writing about the history of Arab Detroit, Karen Rignall points out how “[i]n contrast to its predecessors in the Arab-American community that were organized along lines of religion or nationality, ACCESS offered non-sectarian social services that brought the specific needs of the Arab-American population to the forefront of local and regional politics.”²⁸²

In addition to becoming part of the American multicultural project of the 1960s and 70s, the pan-ethnic mobilization among Arab Americans was also a protective action. A variety of international conflicts and terrorist actions in the Middle East, some involving the United States, highlighted the Arab world as *the* American enemy. Starting with the Arab-Israeli War, followed by the 1979 hostage crisis in Teheran, the 1983 car bombings in Beirut, the 1985 TWA hijacking in Beirut and Algiers, 1991 Gulf War, the 1993 World Trade Center terrorist bombing, and culminating in the 2001 terrorist attacks, Arabs have been cast as America’s enemy. Although it is true that some radical Islamic Arab groups have committed atrocious acts, Arabs in America have had to take an inordinate amount of the blame. Arab Americans have faced discrimination, stereotyping, hate crime and a variety of discriminatory governmental programs. Nadine Naber says: “Anti-Arab racism after World War II emerged in an interplay of U.S. military, political, and economic expansion in the Middle East, anti-Arab media representations, and the institutionalization of government policies that specifically target Arabs and Arab Americans in the United States.”²⁸³ In the face of such negative attention, Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut say that it is not uncommon to see the formation of a “reactive ethnicity,” which is “one mode of ethnic identity formation, highlighting the role of a hostile context of reception in accounting for the rise rather than the erosion of ethnicity.”²⁸⁴ Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock, writing about the formation of an Arab-American identity, say that “[b]ecause Arabs are viewed negatively by most Americans, attempts to combat this negative image, with or without reference to the geopolitical conflicts that shape it, have become a powerful agenda around which to organize an ethnic community.”²⁸⁵

While the formation of ethnicity could be seen as a reaction to outside events, the institutional and organizational flowering of Arab America also served to locate and highlight a community that seemed lost in the mainstream through assimilation. Most scholarship about the early waves of Arab Americans points to a largely assimilated population.²⁸⁶ Aswad says that “[u]ntil the mid-1960s most Arabs as well as other ethnic groups in America strove to assimilate American ways,” for instance by using American names and American clothing.²⁸⁷ Interestingly, the names of the respondents in this study reflect this trend. Though all of them are second generation, they range in age from 15 to 68. All the older participants (over 30) have “American” names, like Frank, while the younger participants (with one exception) have “Arab” names, like Nayla.

In studies of Arab Americans, scholars have commonly written about invisibility.²⁸⁸ Louise Cankar writes: “Unlike other ascribed and self-described ‘people of color’ in the United States, Arabs are often hidden under the Caucasian label, if not forgotten all together.”²⁸⁹ Elia Nada points to a “systematic erasure” from American political discourse and representation, from “the discourse of multiculturalism,” and from popular culture.²⁹⁰ These and other scholars are referring both to physical invisibility, through disappearing in white suburbs and losing cultural markers and traditions, but also to the ideological invisibility of not being a known group in America’s racial and ethnic hierarchies. Interview respondent Joseph points out the political aspect of this invisibility. He co-founded and chaired the Arab-American Voter-Registration and Education Committee, in the 1980s, and says that the “work of AAVEREC was specific to politicizing the Arab-American community, which had no voice in American politics.”²⁹¹

Following 9/11, this new visibility turned into hyper-visibility, when Arab America suddenly was the center of a lot of negative attention, both by government, the public and the media. The government enacted laws allowing surveillance, profiling, detainment and the deportation of Arab Americans. The public was scared, and Arab Americans (along with other individuals perceived to be Muslim or Arab) became the target of violence, hate mail and discrimination. The media played into the public fears by reporting on supposed terrorist connections. In the end, the government’s hunt for terrorists turned out to be fruitless. Very few of the detainees were proven to have any connection to the 9/11 attacks.²⁹² Unfortunately the damage done to the Arab-American community was more long-lasting, both in distrust of Arab Americans by the American public, and by Arab-American distrust of the government. In the DAAS, even though nearly half of Arabs and Chaldeans are willing to give up “some civil liberties to curb terrorism,”²⁹³ when these infringements are directed specifically at Arab

and Muslim Americans, the support goes down dramatically, to 8 -17% depending on the issue at stake.²⁹⁴ This shows that Arab Americans in the DAAS sample do not have complete confidence in government fairness. At the same time, “Arabs and Chaldeans express more confidence in local and government institutions [such as schools, police and legal system], than does the general population.”²⁹⁵ 86% have confidence in local police, which is higher than the general population. 66% have confidence in the legal system. “The confidence of Arabs and Chaldeans falters only on the question of fair trials for Arabs and Muslims accused of terrorism.” 50% believe that they can receive a fair trial, against 66% of general population.²⁹⁶

Moustafa Bayoumi claims that Arab and Muslim Americans are “the new ‘problem,’” emerging after 9/11, while before they were “virtually unknown.”²⁹⁷ When asked about the impact of 9/11 on his community, Ron replies: “From some of our highest elected officials in the country to our neighbors living on the same street people look at Arabs, no matter what generation they are, as ‘The Enemy.’ Presidential candidate [John McCain] ‘defended’ candidate Barack Obama from an accusation that he was an Arab by saying, ‘No Mam [sic], he is a decent family man.’”²⁹⁸ Seven of the respondents referred to some negative effects that 9/11 had on their community, while the eighth respondent said that 9/11 simply reinforced old stereotypes.²⁹⁹ Nidal makes reference to the media’s portrayal of Arabs and Muslims and blames it for his experiences of discrimination. He says: “people rarely think outside the box; they rarely think objectively because they are exposed to a media that is ridiculously one sided and close minded.”³⁰⁰ Joseph says that “[j]ust after the Arab oil embargo and after 9-11 our organized activist groups and individuals, myself included, received considerable hate mail, and death threats that were turned over to the FBI.”³⁰¹ The DAAS reports that the community feels the need to “fight stereotypes and foster a more equitable, less hostile environment for Arabs in America.” 16% believes the way to that goal is through “better representation in the media and government.”³⁰² In other words, the hope is that through more Arab-American representation, the visibility will be of a more positive character. Of the DAAS sample, 50% believe the news is biased against Islam and Muslims. (41% of the general population agrees.) 38% believe they see bias against Arabs and Chaldeans in the media. (35% of the general population agrees.)

Due to the “hyper-visibility,” many Arab Americans have been the target of discrimination and violence after 9/11. According to the DAAS sample, 15% of Arabs and Chaldeans report having “a bad experience” due to their ethnicity after 9/11. “These experiences included verbal insults, workplace discrimination, targeting by law enforcement

or airport security, vandalism, and, in rare cases, vehicular and physical assault.”³⁰³ Of these people, Muslims and non-citizens are more likely to be targets. Only 2-4 % of Arabs and Chaldeans report “that their ethnicity, race, or religion resulted in a loss of employment, vandalism, or physical attack,”³⁰⁴ but about half of the population reports feeling less secure.³⁰⁵ The Arab American Institute has compiled the following reports showing how 9/11 has impacted the Arab-American community: “Profiling and Pride: Arab American Attitudes and Behavior Since 9/11,” and “Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination Against Arab Americans: The Post September 11 Backlash.” The findings of these reports show that in “the first nine weeks following the September 11 attacks, (...) over 700 violent incidents directed at Arab Americans, or those perceived to be Arab Americans” occurred.³⁰⁶ One in five reported experiencing discrimination after 9/11.³⁰⁷

Being the focus of negative attention has led some Arab Americans to conceal their ethnicity. Although all the respondents expressed pride in their ethnicity, half of them admitted concealing it in some situations. Ron says: “I have never concealed my ethnicity, but as of late when I travel to Canada I take the Quran or mashala (Rosary beads) down from my rear view mirror [in order to avoid] automobile searches, body searches, lengthy questioning, etc.” Both Janice and Sonya mention that in childhood they avoided explaining their ethnic background to people, because they found it difficult to explain what and where Palestine was.³⁰⁸ Suha, who is Sudanese-American, has a different experience. When asked whether she has ever concealed her ethnicity she says: “It is very rare that I let people know that I am Sudanese, most often I refer to myself as Black. Proclaiming my ethnicity to people tends to bring a lot of confused looks, and questions about the civil/political situation in Western and Southern Sudan.(...) I cannot hide my ethnicity because I look different from others. However, if there is no need to announce my place of origin I don’t.”³⁰⁹

Visibility has led to a sort of defensive ethnicity for Arab-American individuals who feel the need to constantly prove themselves as “good” or as true Americans. Ron explains the effect of 9/11 on his identity: “I feel much more of a moral responsibility to act very properly, and engage my fellow citizens whenever possible to explain what being an Arab is and how Islam is being unfairly denigrated.”³¹⁰ Andrew Shryock says that in order for Arabs or Muslims to be fully accepted as Americans, they must denounce and distance themselves from “bad Arabs/bad Islam,” and cultivate “good Arab/Muslim” identities.³¹¹ Joseph explains how he has felt the “need of educating the outside community of the qualities and contributions of our community and the Arab world to the general world population. I have made a number of presentations in high schools and before various organizations about those

contributions.”³¹² Shryock and Howell describe the situation well in saying that “in the aftermath of 9/11, Arab and Muslim Americans have been compelled, time and again, to apologize for acts they did not commit, to condemn acts they never condoned and to openly profess loyalties that, for most U.S. citizens, are merely assumed.”³¹³

Historically, some individuals have shown loyalty by joining U.S. war efforts, something that may be especially problematic when the United States is waging war in Arab countries. Orm Øverland points to “blood sacrifice” as one way immigrants have historically proven themselves as Americans.³¹⁴ He says that “immigrant leaders saw an obligation to make loyalty and sacrifice of immigrants visible and in doing so to promote the view of immigrants as Americans, not foreigners.”³¹⁵ Øverland points out that by doing this, the ethnic community is not trying to glorify their contribution, as much as “knocking on the door of a home that will not accept you as a full member of the family,” and is therefore more of a “response to being closed out than it is a glorification of ethnic excellence.”³¹⁶ The Association of Patriotic Arab Americans in Military is an organization with similar motives. It lists 3,500 Arab Americans currently serving in U.S. Armed Forces. The organization was created after 9/11 and lists as one of its objectives to “[e]ducate our fellow American and Arab communities of our proudness to our ancestral heritage, coupled by our patriotism and burning dedication to our country, by emphasizing our service and sacrifice as military service men and women in the United States Armed Forces, and [t]o ultimately close the gap that lies between bigotry, ignorance and prejudice on one end, and tolerance on the other.”³¹⁷ Ron, who is a member of this organization, did not join the military to prove his loyalty or patriotism, he was drafted. He says: “I am very proud of my service to my country, but I [was] absolutely opposed to the war in Vietnam. Many that were more courageous than I refused to go and went to jail.”³¹⁸ Ron continued to serve his country by becoming a police officer. “My career as a police officer had nothing to do with displaying my patriotism either. (...) But [m]y community holds me in high esteem because I was a police officer.”³¹⁹ Joseph who joined the military voluntarily does not claim patriotism or loyalty as a reason either. Yet, he does point out that “[a]s an Arab American, I always believed it was important to project a positive image to overcome the scrutiny and criticism that was/is typically associated with being a Arab/Muslim.”³²⁰ To this end, “[s]ome fifteen years ago I organized an Arab-American military veterans presence in the city's annual Memorial Day parade to project the military sacrifices that Arab-Americans have made in the service of America.” Though some Arab Americans undoubtedly have served their country through military service, the number of Arab-American veterans is lower than the general population of Metro Detroit. The ACS

from 2006-2008 shows nine percent as being civilian veterans in the population as a whole, while Arab Americans in the same area have two percent. It is hard to say exactly what causes this difference, but it is not hard to imagine the difficulties for Arab Americans in joining an army that is engaged in war in the Middle East. In order to honor those who did join, in addition to others that have served their country in other ways, the Arab American National Museum is currently compiling artefacts for a new exhibit that will be called: “Patriots and Peacemakers: Arab Americans in Service to our Country.”³²¹

In the same way as Arab Americans themselves, Arab Detroit as a whole and Arab-American organizations must prove themselves to be loyal to America. Shryock claims that “domestic recognition as ‘good Arabs’ is granted in exchange for acquiescence in matters of U.S. foreign policy.”³²² After the attacks of 9/11, mosques, imams, and Arab-American organizations publicly condemned the terrorists. The mosques encouraged their congregation to give money following the attacks.³²³ In fact, law enforcement in Dearborn was especially helpful in the months following 9/11, aiding the FBI in their hunt for terrorists. Shryock says that “Dearborn is touted nationally as a model for community cooperation in the war on terror.”³²⁴

While neither invisibility nor negatively charged hyper-visibility are desirable goals, post-9/11 visibility has had some positive outcomes. Following the attacks, the American public became hungry for knowledge about this population group they knew little about, and sought information from books, classes and public figures³²⁵. Kayyali reports that though some “Arab Americans have reacted to the post-9/11 atmosphere in the United States by distancing themselves from their heritage, most Arab Americans have felt a larger responsibility to educate others about their community and about the Arab world.”³²⁶ Ron explains how 9/11 has affected Arab Americans, but also his own ethnic self-identification: “9/11 also aroused interest in Islam and Arabs. (...) What is an Arab? What is Islam? These and other related questions were being asked constantly of me in my capacity as a community leader/spokesperson. Journalists from around the world asked to interview me and others like me. It causes me to do research to answer some of the stickier questions. Along the route of finding answers to these questions I learned more about myself.”³²⁷ When asked the question “Do you think that 9/11 has affected the way you see your own identity?” most respondents answered no. Nayla explains that “I was still proud to say I was Arab and I came from the Middle East, a place not many people came from in my area. At the mere age of 5 years old I witnessed the news and the gossip of my own people. Instead of thinking ‘Arabs are bad’ I thought we are all different and you can’t judge us based on others actions.”³²⁸ Nidal has a

similar view, he says: “People are People, bad or good.”³²⁹ The AAI reports show that 88% of Arab Americans have “more” or “the same amount” of pride in their ethnicity following 9/11.³³⁰

Another form of visibility is a new “politics of inclusion,” a conscious attempt to include Arab Americans.³³¹ Examples of this new inclusion are elections and appointments of Arab Americans to political office, creation of University programs to study Arab Americans and Islam, and the creation of the first Arab American National Museum. The AAI reports that several ethnic organizations, for instance The Korean American Coalition, lent their support.³³² The media did a part as well. The Detroit Free Press issued “100 Questions and Answers about Arab Americans: A Journalists Guide.”³³³ The Ad Council created a series of television and radio spots and print public service announcements about hate violence against Arab and Muslims. Starz Encore Group (a cable and satellite movie provider) ran public service announcements that reached 64 million households.³³⁴ Many Arab Americans report positive outreach from people outside their community. In the DAAS, one third say they “received gestures of support from non-Arabs after the attacks.”³³⁵ The AAI lists many individual actions done by non-Arabs to show support, such as donating money for victims of hate crimes, candlelight vigils outside mosques, free legal assistance and solidarity websites.³³⁶ As a result of all these developments, the “Arab American” is no longer an invisible figure.

Though a pan-ethnic label was created, it has not had the same course through American history as many other pan-ethnic labels have. By being a relatively small and well-assimilated group, Arab Americans may well have remained in the shadows of ethnic America, were it not for major geo-political events, as mentioned above. These events brought Arab America into the spotlight, and many Arab Americans and Arab-American scholars claim that these events (and American foreign policy connected to them) are the main reason Arab Americans are discriminated against.³³⁷ Wayne Baker and Shryock say that “Arabs are set apart from other hyphenated American populations by aspects of U.S. foreign policy that drive a sharp ideological wedge between Arab and American identities.”³³⁸ Some scholars go even further and say that anti-Arab images and discriminatory government programs are purposely meant to “intimidate, harass, and discourage Arab American resistance to U.S. policies in the Arab world,” and to “quell criticism of Israeli state policy by demonizing its critics.”^{339 340}

American foreign policy and international crises can affect American identities, as some of the interviewees explain. Suha, points out how the situation in her parents’ home

country affects her sense of identity in America: “whenever a discussion about Arabs [in] Africa[] or African nations and Sudan is brought up I am instantly looked at as the expert. Although more often than not, my knowledge of these countries and their social/political status is the same as the people who consider me to be an ‘expert’. (...) Most questions directed towards me are from the angle of ‘how can you allow such atrocities to occur.’ When more likely than not I really can do nothing about these situations.”³⁴¹ Though the informants do not tie foreign policy to discrimination, there is definite interest in American foreign policy, and in the politics and warfare in the Middle East. Joseph, talking about the troubles of Yemeni youth, blaming a change in American values: “America has lost its sense of priorities, and what should be important. We seem to be good at making weapons and war, and not much else. And I honestly believe that the violent nature of our society is tied to the expansionist policies projected by our government using the military. Diplomacy is [a] word that's absent from the American lexicon.”³⁴² The DAAS shows that “Arabs and Chaldeans and the general population are equally attentive, and anxious, about events in Iraq,”³⁴³ with about seventy percent paying attention. However, there is not always agreement between Arab Americans and the general population on the specific issues. 53% of general population believes the U.S.’ involvement in the Middle East is bringing stability to the region. 36% of Arabs and Chaldeans agree. One major area of difference is the creation of a Palestinian state. The DAAS shows 70% support among Arab and Chaldean Americans, with only 3% opposing it. “Among Arab and Chaldeans, there is overwhelming, across-the-board support for the creation of a Palestinian state. In no single sub-group does resistance rise above 4 percent.”³⁴⁴ In the general population only 8% oppose a “two-state solution,” while over 50% have not given it much thought.³⁴⁵ Two of the informants to this study mention support of a Palestinian state.³⁴⁶ Ron explains that his support is political, not religious by saying: “We boycott those businesses that support Israel in its war against Islam. We do not boycott Jewish owned businesses because they are Jewish owned.”³⁴⁷ Joseph, explains that his “prayers are confined to asking for justice in Palestine for the Palestinian people, and a redressing of the wrongs perpetuated by Israel in Palestine and Lebanon.”³⁴⁸

Increased visibility is tied to benefits like inclusion in minority programs, and increased political power. This is the reason why many Arab Americans feel that embracing pan-ethnicity is beneficial for their community, even though the pan-ethnic label is not embraced by all. In the following section we will look at how Arab Americans view their racial identity, and how this is tied to many of the same complexities as questions about ethnic identity.

2.3 Arab-American Racial History and Historiography

Although racial markers are socially, and not scientifically, constructed, many ethnic groups have a history of struggle connected to their move from one racial designation to another. As discussed in the introduction of this paper, scholars have written about the “whitening” of various ethnic groups, such as the Irish and the Jews. This section investigates Arab-American racial history and historiography. Arab Americans began their story in America as “white by default.” This was followed by years of court battles to keep their white designation. At the dawn of the new millennium, many Arab Americans wish to be recognized as something other than white.

In the beginning of Arab immigration history, the immigrants from the Arab world were so few, and lived so dispersed, that they avoided negative attention and enjoyed the privileges of “whiteness.” This changed when the 1910 census began to count Syrians and Palestinians as “Asiatics,” and thereby excluded them from citizenship and other “white” privileges.³⁴⁹ From this time and until the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, Arab Americans (like many other “borderline whites”) used the court system to fight for status as “white” in America. In fact, according to Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, who has written extensively on the subject, they were disproportionately represented in “racial prerequisite” cases.³⁵⁰ The courts have at various times allowed for or denied white status, often depending on the ideology of the time. Decisions have been based on what was considered to be scientific evidence, on physical appearance, on religion, on perceived assimilability and democratic mind, on differing definitions of “Caucasian” and on so-called “common knowledge.”³⁵¹ Ian F. Haney-Lopez says that “the Supreme Court abandoned scientific explanations of race in favor of those rooted in common knowledge when science failed to reinforce popular beliefs about racial differences.”³⁵² Though he is referring other national groups’ court battles, the same can be said for Arab-American court cases. Kayyali points out that Syrians were found to be white in some years, but not others, because “[i]n the 1913 and 1914 cases, common-knowledge arguments swayed the courts’ decisions in rulings that Syrians were not white.”³⁵³ Similarly, Gualtieri says that “[w]hen scientific and common-knowledge rationales reinforced each other the courts embraced them, but when they differed the courts jettisoned science in favor of common knowledge.”³⁵⁴ One of the most effective arguments Arabs used to their advantage was their common Christianity with whites, and its origin in the Middle Eastern region.³⁵⁵ One Arab who pleaded for citizenship is quoted saying “If I am a Mongolian, then so was Jesus, because we came from the same land.”³⁵⁶ Another common way to argue their case for inclusion as citizens was to distance themselves from other groups that were seen as

undesirable, for example, from Mongolians or Muslims. The arguments were often based on what was then considered scientific evidence, a racial indexing of all peoples, which placed Arabs/Syrians as “Semitic,” who in turn were Caucasians.

By 1924, Syrians were officially categorized as white, but the battle for Arab “whiteness” resurfaced in court in 1942. This time it was a Muslim Yemeni who lost the right to naturalize based on his skin being “undisputedly dark brown in color,” among other factors. However, following this decision the “immigration authorities issued a statement that a person of ‘the Arabian race’ was eligible for naturalization” in 1944.³⁵⁷ The 1952 Immigration and Naturalization Act “affected a policy of color-blind naturalization (...) [and] negated any further need for racial prerequisite cases.”³⁵⁸ Arabs continued to be counted as white. Gualtieri argues that “questions about race were central to the construction of Syrian ethnicity in the United States in the first half of the century, [and how they] came to view themselves in racial terms and position themselves within racial hierarchies.” Thus Arabs are placed “at the center of discussions of race and racial formation, from which they have for too long been marginalized or ignored.”³⁵⁹

Achieving a status as white had clear benefits, as Arab Americans could be granted citizenship. However, there can also be consequences to not being seen as a distinct group in America’s racial system. The United States’ racial organization is an ever-changing, politically and socially constructed system. There is no all-encompassing classification system that all can agree on, nor should there be, perhaps. Michael Omi and Howard Winant point out that “race in the U.S. is concurrently an obvious and complex phenomenon. Everyone ‘knows’ what race is, though everyone has a different opinion as to how many racial groups there are, what they are called, and who belongs in what specific racial categories.”³⁶⁰ Similarly, Peggy Pascoe says that “although most Americans are sure they know ‘race’ when they see it, very few can offer a definition of the term.”³⁶¹

At the same time, the government needs a guiding framework. To this end, the Office of Management and Budget has provided Statistical Policy Directive No. 15. Directive 15 “provide[s] a common language to promote uniformity and comparability for data on race and ethnicity” in order to “enforce civil rights laws,” for use in the decennial census, but also for surveys, administration forms and research.³⁶² Within this framework, Arab Americans are considered white, thus excluded from a variety of statistics and benefits awarded minority races. On a more local level, or in certain situations, Arab Americans do have minority status. Kayyali says that “[i]n the business environment, Arab Americans are officially considered as minorities (...) in a few isolated cases.”³⁶³ The Michigan Office of Minority Health identifies

“Arab” as one of five “populations of color” that they serve.³⁶⁴ Rosina J. Hassoun says that “Michigan is one of the few states that has officially recognized Arab Americans as an ethnic and underserved population,”³⁶⁵ and Shryock says that the Michigan state government has given Arabs “[d]esignation as a ‘special population.’”³⁶⁶ However, according to the Arab American Specialist at the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Arab Americans are “not classified as a minority at all” though there is a federal health survey conducted in Michigan “to recognize health disparities among Arabs and Chaldeans to separate them from the mainstream Whites.”³⁶⁷ Professor Ronald Stockton agrees, saying “Arab American[s] are not a legally protected minority under Affirmative Action law. In fact, people from the Middle East are specifically prohibited from being included in the law as written (when I checked it some time ago). Politically and in other ways, Arab Americans are commonly identified as a ‘minority’ but that is not a legal designation.”³⁶⁸ In an article for the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Minority Business Development Agency, Detroit’s Arab-American and Chaldean population pleads their case: “The Arab American and Chaldean communities have been productive contributors to our society. Yet still they have the same barriers [language and culture] commonplace to other minority groups that have been granted such status. (...) It is important to identify the barriers this community is facing and to implement remedies that will ensure continued progress in business development.”³⁶⁹

This dilemma is not unique to Arab Americans, many white “ethnics” have faced a similar challenge: gaining access to affirmative action programs on the basis of discrimination faced by society. However, the exclusion from affirmative action programs is not the sole reason Arab Americans are fighting for a new racial designation. There are practical reasons for it too. Since the U.S. Census (and other government statistics and research) bases itself on Directive 15’s racial categories, Arab Americans are not distinct in these statistics. In the census, Arab Americans have been classified in a variety of ways. They have been wrongfully labeled as “Turks” or “Ottoman,” and at times they have simply been called “Asian.” This has led to a problem of counting the Arab-American population. Abraham and Shryock point out that “[t]he U.S. Census determines how government funds will be distributed. The controversy over the size of Arab Detroit is, at heart, a struggle over money: who gets it and how much.”³⁷⁰ The census itself expands on that, explaining how the race data is used: “Race is key to implementing many federal laws and is needed to monitor compliance with the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act. State governments use the data to determine congressional, state and local voting districts. Race data are also used to assess fairness of employment practices, to monitor racial disparities in characteristics such as health and

education and to plan and obtain funds for public services.”³⁷¹ After the 1980 census was conducted, Arab-American advocates, along with other ethnic advocates began to argue the need for a category on ancestry or ethnic origin.³⁷² Following the 1990 census, “AAI [the Arab American Institute] testified that current federal definitions (...) were inadequate at best and confusing to the growing number of immigrants from that region.” They “proposed an ethnic category that would, like Hispanic Origin, complement race data.”³⁷³ This was not successful, but they were able to, with the help of other ethnic advocates, save the ancestry category from being dropped. The 2000 census included this category of ancestry, which allowed for a count of those who claimed an Arab (or other Middle Eastern national) background, but the 2010 census has removed this option, leaving it now to the American Community Survey.³⁷⁴ Along with the ancestry question, the census of 2000 allowed for respondents to choose “other race,” and some Arab Americans used this as their opportunity to gain visibility. However if their ancestry was traceable as Arab, these respondents were re-coded as “white,” meaning that in the census they are once again invisible.

In order to gain access to the benefits of being counted in the census, various Arab-American interest groups (for instance the AAI) have conducted campaigns, in cooperation with the census, to get Arab Americans to fill out the census forms, ahead of the last 3 census counts.³⁷⁵ Immigrant groups often qualify as “Hard to Count” in census terms. This means that they are less proficient in the language, and have often left countries where government is not a source to be trusted.³⁷⁶ Arab Americans are especially skeptical to government investigations of their private lives, due to profiling and other negative attention after 9/11.³⁷⁷ The fact that there is no race category that fits properly for Arab Americans has, according to Helen Hatab Samhan in her testimony to the House Subcommittee on Information, Policy, Census, and National Archives, caused “confusion, alienation, and even anger” within segments of the Arab heritage group.³⁷⁸ Samhan explains that “Given this context, and the fact that ancestry data is no longer collected in the decennial census operation, activists and advocates have the dilemma of encouraging participation in a survey which does not appear to recognize who Arab Americans are.”³⁷⁹ One solution used by some Arab-American interest groups is to urge that Arab Americans write in “Arab American” as their race. One campaign calls it “Check it right – You ain’t white.”³⁸⁰ According to Abed Ayoub of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, unfortunately, the same pattern as the 2000 census will apply: identified Arab identities will be re-coded as white.³⁸¹ Ayoub points out another reason why counting is important: “hate crimes against Arab-Americans post-9/11 has drastically increased. And the FBI is not keeping statistics on these hate crimes. And we're being told

they don't keep statistics because of the fact census does not keep count of Arab-Americans. So, we got no way of telling how many hate crimes have been committed against Arab-Americans.”³⁸²

We will now turn to how race is recorded and perceived by the census, the DAAS, and by respondents to this study. The Census 2000 has eighty percent of Arabs nationwide reporting race as “white and no other race.” Less than twenty percent report two or more races, only 1.1% report black and one percent chose “some other race.”³⁸³ In the DAAS, which is limited to the Detroit Metropolitan area, 64% call themselves white, while 31% prefer “Other.” In the Dearborn area identification as “Other” rises to 45%, elsewhere it is lower, at 25%. Christians are much more likely to identify as white (73%), as are the American born, and citizens.³⁸⁴ The DAAS states that “[t]he preference for ‘white’ or ‘other’ is nearly exclusive. Only 4 percent (...) call themselves ‘Asian,’ and only two individuals (...) say they are ‘black.’”³⁸⁵ When the respondents were asked to suggest what kind of other race they belong to, the majority chose “Arab.”³⁸⁶ What these numbers tell us is that identification as white is more likely among Arab Americans generally, than it is to Arab Detroiters specifically. However, we must keep in mind that people may choose to respond differently to questions asked for a census, than for a local research project. Arab Americans are aware that they are “supposed” to choose the “white” box,³⁸⁷ and perhaps this influences their choices. What is consistent in both the census and the DAAS is that very few Arab Americans identify as “black” or as “Asian.”

The findings of this study reflect the perceived racial diversity of Arab Americans. None of the study participants answered “white” when asked: “Do you consider yourself to be of a particular race?” Suha is one of those few that identify as “black,” though she says that she chooses “Arab” if it is available. Being Sudanese-American might explain her choice of racial classification. None of the other informants to this study opted for “black” classification. More commonly the preference is for “other,” though not everyone finds this to be a comfortable option. Suha explains: “I used to check the ‘other’ box, until I realized that the term *other* is probably doing more harm than good.”³⁸⁸ Joseph is the only participant who chooses white on official forms, although he says: “by default.”³⁸⁹ A few participants reject the idea of racial classification all together.³⁹⁰ For instance, Sonya says that she thinks “race is a vague and archaic way to identify someone.”³⁹¹ Ron, on the other hand, feels that he *does* belong to a particular race: “I consider myself as a member of the Semitic race known as Arab.”³⁹² Many of the participants lament the lack of accurate labelling on official forms, preferring to write in Arab whenever possible. When asked about racial self-identification

rather than on official forms, there are also a variety of answers, but most often the choice is Arab or Arab American. Janice is unique in saying that she is “technically Asian,” though she does not identify with that category.³⁹³ Frank prefers a national label: Palestinian.³⁹⁴ Thus – in quoting Helen Samhan again – “confusion, alienation, or even anger”³⁹⁵ seem to all be present in the participants to this study.

The final aspect of Arab-American racial identity that will be explored here, after having looked at official designations and problems of counting, is questions of personal identity and belonging. The reality felt by many Arab Americans is that though they are officially classified as white, the white majority does not see them as white, nor are they treated the same as the white majority.³⁹⁶ As pointed out above, it can be confusing and problematic not to have a racial category to belong to. Cainkar calls it “the double burden of being excluded from whiteness *and* from mainstream recognition as people of color.”³⁹⁷ Kayyali points to larger ramifications of the Arab-American “racial dilemma”: “Inclusion in the generic ‘white’ racial category blurs Arab American ethnic identity and distinctiveness. It diminishes opportunities for community outreach and the right to participate in multicultural structures and the racialized discourses of ethnic studies and scholarship.”³⁹⁸ One way to see Arab-American exclusion from “whiteness” is in the public’s reaction to terrorist actions. Cainkar points out how the actions of Timothy McVeigh (the Oklahoma City bomber), or members of the IRA are seen as “extremists whose actions do not reflect on an entire race, religion, or civilization,”³⁹⁹ while after 9/11, Arab and Muslim Americans were singled out for “collective responsibility”⁴⁰⁰ with broad public support of special treatment of this group.

There is general agreement today, that race is a social, not biological construct. A larger discussion of the history of racial scholarship was covered in the introduction. Here it will suffice to point out that though race is a social creation, it is still a very real part of American life, and therefore it is something a new immigrant will have to contend with. Arab-American scholars writing about race is a relatively new phenomenon. Earlier studies have used the “language of ethnicity” or focused largely on religion.⁴⁰¹ Gualtieri locates early scholarship on Arab Americans within what she calls “the celebratory tradition of immigration studies, a tradition that focused on the ability of an ethnic group to maintain a distinctive culture while assimilating into a mainstream American core.”⁴⁰² She continues by saying that this “emphasis on assimilation, however, led frequently to an uncritical acceptance of whiteness within Arab American studies, [and] avoided discussing the implications of claiming whiteness.”⁴⁰³ Naber says that “[a]pproaches to Arab American studies that refer to Arab Americans as an ‘ethnic/cultural’ group while ignoring the realities of anti-Arab racism

and the structural inequalities that shape Arab American experiences illustrate the limitations of ethnicity theory.”⁴⁰⁴ At the same time, Arab Americans were hardly ever mentioned in the emerging field of race studies that dealt with not only black and white, but also Asian, Native American and Latin racial discourse.⁴⁰⁵ Only in the 1990s do we see a growing number of scholars write about Arab Americans and race. Some important work has been done in this field not only by Gualtieri, but also Kristine J. Ajrouch, Helen Samhan, Nada Elia, Amaney Jamal, Louise Cainkar, Andrew Shryock, and Nadine Naber. A recent edited volume deals with this explicitly, *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*. (eds. Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber). Here they “highlight[] the heterogeneity of Arab American histories and the shifting and contradictory historical contexts through which Arab Americans have engaged with immigration, assimilation, and racialization.” Racialization is the term often used in much of this literature, and it is most frequently connected to American foreign policy, and the creation of “the Arab” as enemy to the nation.⁴⁰⁶ “Racialization” can be defined as the process of creating a race, or of seeing someone or something in racial contexts.⁴⁰⁷ In other words, Arab Americans used to be seen as an ethnic group, or as a variety of national and/or religious groups. In recent years, however, their experience points more towards a racial designation of the group as a whole. This plays out both in how they feel about their own experiences, but also in how the American public views them. Cainkar, arguing that Arabs are now considered a race, says that “the social exclusion of Arabs in the United States has been a racial project because Arab inferiority has been constructed and sold to the American public using essentialist constructions of human difference.”⁴⁰⁸ She points to the Clash of Civilizations view, and says that the “seemingly race-neutral lens of essentialized cultural and religious differences was evoked after blatant racism had lost its power as an effective hegemonic tool.(...) Nonetheless, all the components of a racial project were there: the assertion of *innate characteristics* held by all members of a *group*.”⁴⁰⁹ Like many other scholars writing about Arab-American race, she ties this recent racialization to America’s involvement in geopolitical events in the Middle East.⁴¹⁰

Anti-Arab racism is surprisingly obvious in the form of representations in the media. These can be seen as stereotypes in films and tv-shows, but also in the way Arabs are portrayed in mainstream news coverage. Stereotypes of Arabs include: backwards or uneducated immigrants, Muslim fundamentalists or terrorists, violent and barbaric, sexual perverts (in the case of men), rich sheiks (who want to buy American women), or victimized, subservient sexual objects (in the case of women).⁴¹¹ Scholars have pointed out the

pervasiveness of these stereotypes in American culture and media, and commented on how it seems that people find it more legitimate than other racial/ethnic stereotyping.⁴¹² Jack Shaheen, who has researched and written extensively on the topic, points out that though racist lingo is no longer tolerated towards Asians, Blacks, Italians, Irishmen, Jews, Indians, or Hispanics, one group is still fair game: the Arabs.⁴¹³ “[I]mage makers are now giving children of other ethnic origins positive role models to identify with (...), just about every racial and ethnic group on the planet, except the Arabs.”⁴¹⁴ Laurence Michalak suggests that some of the reasons for this may be lack of representation in corporate and administrative worlds, small numbers/invisibility, and lack of knowledge about Arabs among the American public.⁴¹⁵ Michalak’s article is from 1988. Since then we have experienced an increase in geopolitical conflicts involving the U.S. and the Middle East. As argued before, the Arab American is no longer invisible. Yet the stereotypes persist, and have perhaps gotten more violent in character. 9/11 is not commonly seen as the starting point of anti-Arab racism, it is more of a turning point, with “representations of ‘terrorism’ and ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ (...) increasingly replac[ing] other representations (i.e., the rich Arab oil sheikh and belly-dancing harem girls).”⁴¹⁶ Interview respondents say the same thing.⁴¹⁷ For instance, Suha says that 9/11 did not change the way Arabs are seen in America, “it just reinforced the old ideas. Prior to 9/11 ster[e]otypes of Arabs were that we Arabs are womanizing, violent, religious fanatics, and ignorant FOBs [Fresh off the boat]. These stereotypes still exist.”⁴¹⁸

The informants had a variety of explanations for discrimination they had experienced. Some quoted religion as the source of discrimination/racism. This will be looked at more closely in the next chapter. Suha ties her discrimination to her national ancestry rather than her phenotype. She says that proclaiming her Sudanese background can result in “treatment that is less than nice,” while she cannot hide her ethnicity because she “look[s] different than others.”⁴¹⁹ Frank says that his ethnicity led to him being “[h]indered, picked on at school, (...) unable to achieve leadership positions very easily.”⁴²⁰ Joseph ties discrimination to race and religion, though he says it is hard to identify at times: “[r]acism and bigotry in America conceals itself behind more subtle touches that are not easy to identify and understand how it has affected one’s life.” He also says that “[i]n the homogenous oriented American society, if your [sic] not ‘white’, and ‘Christian’ the social road is not as smooth.”⁴²¹ He has had experiences that tie discrimination against him directly to phenotype. He relates how “[a]s a young man, in Kentucky I wasn’t allowed into a bowling because of my dark complexion. And I was referred as a ‘nigger.’” Ron also has a story that shows this: “In 2002 I was flying out to Knoxville, Tennessee with my partner for a police training class. My partner was very

fair with blue eyes. Back then you could still check baggage outside of the terminal. He was allowed to do so. I was directed to go inside, stand in line for people who had not yet received their tickets (I had mine) and have my check-on baggage go through additional security check. I had worked for 11 years at the airport as part of the Airport Police Detail. My partner protested more than I did to the security staff, to no avail.”⁴²² Janice says that since she lived in a “white suburb” her dark complexion and Arab food choices caused teasing.⁴²³ Other respondents have cited the problem as being stereotypes and wrongful representations. Nidal explains that he feels one problem is “people’s racism and ignorance and their acceptance of sources of Fox News as Credible, they just don’t know any better.” He relates how this has had an effect on his personal life: “In Grand Rapids where I live, some females are less likely to date me because of my race/religion. (...) [T]hey’re raised in a culture that is less accepting of different cultures, particularly a culture that is painted with such a bad set of stereotypes by the media.”⁴²⁴ Suha also sees how stereotypes, added to familial expectations, can lead to problems with the opposite sex: “As a woman, I often feel that in relationships I have to be extra defensive of my ethnicity and self. It is hard to (...) have close relationships with men because of the various ideas that people have about Arab/Muslim women, and my family’s expectations.”⁴²⁵

Some Arab-American activists are seeking to be removed from the category of “white,” though not everyone wishes for a separate *racial* category. Samhan, in her testimony to the House of Representatives, asks for a closer look at those that choose “Some Other Race” and the extent to which it is chosen by Arab-American respondents to the 2010 census, followed by looking at the “results of the experimental 2010 census panels that will evaluate alternative ways to word questions on race and ethnicity.”⁴²⁶ To sum up: there is unease and conflicting views on Arab-American race, both in the sense of official categories, but also in personal identification.

A new immigrant to the United States is met with a racial system they may not be familiar with. Although the idea of a racial categorization of people is not unique to the United States, there does seem to be something unique in its history and in how it is played out in America today. Omi and Winant’s racial formation theory addresses this specifically, as they claim that a “sort of ‘exceptionalism’ turns out to be necessary if one is to address racial dynamics in the U.S.”⁴²⁷ The outcome of the meeting between immigrant and racial dynamics, then, will be part of their assimilation process. Ajrouch and Jamal say that “[i]mmigration to the United States includes the experience of being placed into a racial hierarchy, which becomes one of the primary means by which identity is established. (...)

Racial identity is one of the primary means by which immigrants assimilate to the United States.”⁴²⁸ Shryock and Ann Chih Lin claim much of the same, saying that “[i]n learning to think of themselves as Arab American, or white, or racially ‘other’, people of diverse national, religious, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds learn to represent themselves, and to be represented, using identity labels that make sense to millions of Americans. Fluent, convincing use of these labels is proof of Americanization, because little of this terminology is brought to the United States from Arab homelands.”⁴²⁹ The implications made by these scholars is that in order to assimilate to an American mainstream, one needs to be able to place oneself in the American racial hierarchy. Arab Americans, then, could simply choose to “remain” white, which is frequently the choice made on official forms and questionnaires. However, their experiences are leading them to feel less comfortable in the white category. Samhan makes the claim that “[m]any immigrants and second generation Arab Americans do not understand the race distinctions (...) and have lived through experiences, both before and after 9/11, where they do not feel treated like the White majority population, and therefore do not relate to that racial classification.”⁴³⁰ Since there is not an adequate racial category to choose (and “other” is not always an option on forms), they are left in a “racial void.” Shryock and Lin claim that there are “real consequences, socially and politically, for citizens who cannot be located, or cannot locate themselves, on the existing ethnoracial grid.”⁴³¹ This, then, seems to apply to most Arab Americans, for even if a person chooses to identify as white, there is no automatic acceptance of that person’s whiteness by the mainstream.

2.4 Segmented Assimilation Theory’s Relation to Race and Ethnicity

Segmented assimilation theory speaks explicitly about both ethnicity and race. Starting with ethnicity, Min Zhou and Alejandro Portes discuss its positive force. They see a “coethnic” community (in other words, a community of people that share a sense of common ethnicity) as beneficial to assimilation. They call the coethnic community the third and most important type of resource available to “confront the challenges of contemporary assimilation,” since networks in the coethnic community give “[i]mmigrants who join well-established and diversified ethnic groups (...) access from the start to a range of moral and material resources.”⁴³² They point to ethnic/private schools and job opportunities or business apprenticeships as ways to “circumvent outside discrimination and the threat of vanishing mobility ladders.”⁴³³ Zhou goes further in claiming that immigrant communities can use “*deliberate* cultivation of ethnicity” to help children achieve in school, through the help of parental pressure (my emphasis).⁴³⁴ She sees ethnic networks as social capital, where both

support and control can affect children's adaptation. This adaptation is in turn affected by how the ethnic community fits into the mainstream society. Zhou explains that the coethnic society can function as a mediator and "buffer zone" between an immigrant family and American society.⁴³⁵ These ideas are not new, of course. David Ward, in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, says: "Too often the social problems of particular ethnic groups have been related in a simplistic fashion to their segregated residential patterns."⁴³⁶ He says there are benefits to be had by ethnic geographic concentration, for instance political power, economic advancement, protection and a reinforcement of group solidarity and well-being.⁴³⁷ Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's influential *Beyond the Melting Pot* also discusses some positive effects of ethnic concentration. Speaking of Jews in New York, they credit the ethnic community with benefits like "a strong family life" and "a low rate of alcoholism."⁴³⁸

However, Zhou and Portes point out, arriving to a "large but downtrodden coethnic community may be even less desirable than no community at all. This is because newly arrived youths enter into ready contact with the reactive subculture developed by earlier generations. Its influence is all the more powerful because it comes from (...) 'people like us'."⁴³⁹ Zhou and Portes believe that the deciding factor for whether ethnicity is a positive force in assimilation and upward mobility is the nature of the coethnic community.

Segmented assimilation scholars claim that race *is* a factor to be considered in segmented assimilation theory. Portes and Rumbaut say that "[i]n America, race is a paramount criterion of social acceptance that can overwhelm the influence of class background, religion, or language."⁴⁴⁰ Zhou and Portes say that "the majority of contemporary immigrants are nonwhite. Although this feature may appear at first glance as an individual characteristic, in reality it is a trait belonging to the host society. Prejudice is not intrinsic to a particular skin color or racial type, and, indeed many immigrants never experienced it in their native lands. It is by virtue of moving into a new social environment, marked by different values and prejudices, that physical features become redefined as a handicap."⁴⁴¹ This bears resemblance to what David Roediger calls a long tradition of "Blacks pointing out that race in the US was not a 'Negro problem' but a problem among whites."⁴⁴² In a 1997 article, Zhou says that racial discrimination is on-going, not simply a thing of the past. It affects residence, which she points to as the most important element in matters of mobility. Class and race, then, go hand in hand, affecting the schools, neighborhoods and local environments that confront immigrant and second-generation youth.⁴⁴³ In some of these urban environments, youth are met by an "adversarial subculture"

that views school achievers as “sell-outs” or as “acting white.”⁴⁴⁴ Zhou uses the example of Chicano and Puerto Rican youth who were “forcefully excluded by their coethnic peers as ‘turnovers’ acting ‘white’” when they did well in school.⁴⁴⁵ Portes and Rumbaut write extensively about Haitian youth experiencing the same dilemma.⁴⁴⁶

Segmented assimilation, as described in the introduction, is divided into three possible trajectories. The first trajectory is the kind often used to describe the assimilation of various European immigrants: Americanization coupled with upward mobility. The second trajectory is economic advancement through cultivation of ethnicity. The third trajectory is downward mobility due to assimilation to an urban American underclass. These three paths will be discussed in the following section using data from the census, the DAAS and the interviews.

Traditionally, Arab Americans have been described as very assimilated, successful and suburban. This has been the case for those who arrived before WWII. Those who have arrived later have had more divergent paths. As described earlier, the suburban population and the Christian population (often the same people) are more likely to feel “white” than the Dearborn population. In this regard we can conclude that part of the Arab-American community have followed this first path of segmented assimilation.

There are many ways to report or analyze upward mobility. Segmented assimilation scholars use determinants such as school achievement and attainment of professional occupations.⁴⁴⁷ According to the American Community Survey of 2006-2008, Arab Americans in Metro Detroit have similar levels of college and graduate school enrollment as the general population of the same area (27% for Arab Americans, 24.8% for general population). The attainment of education for the 25 and older population shows that the Arab-American population also has similar percentages as the general population regarding Bachelor’s degrees or Graduate and Professional degrees. When looking at “Management, professional or related occupations,” the Arab-American population is slightly behind the general population (35% versus 31.7%).⁴⁴⁸ All in all, the Arab-American population of Metro Detroit has similar levels of educational and professional occupation achievement as the general population of the same area.

These numbers change when we look at the differences by county. The three focus counties of this study are Wayne, Macomb and Oakland. Dearborn and the city of Detroit are in Wayne County. In Wayne County, the numbers for Arab-American college and graduate school enrollment are 1% below that of the general population. The levels of educational attainment for the 25 and over population are 1% above the general population for Bachelor’s degrees, and 1% below for Graduate or Professional degrees. For “Management, professional

and related occupations,” the Arab Americans have nearly identical numbers to the general population.⁴⁴⁹ This means that in Wayne County, the Arab-American population’s education and occupation does not significantly differ from the general population.

In Oakland County, school enrollment for Arab Americans in college or graduate school is significantly higher than the general population, at 38% and 26.6% respectively. The educational attainment of the population of 25 and over, however, is more or less the same. The numbers for “Management, professional and related occupations” show the general population at 6% higher occurrence than the Arab-American population (45.4% to 39.6%).⁴⁵⁰ In the third county, Macomb, school enrollment in college or graduate school is 10% higher than the general population. The attainment of Bachelor’s and Graduate degrees is similar to the general population. Employment in “Management, professional and related occupations” is lower for Arab Americans than for the general population, with 26.1% compared to 32.6%.⁴⁵¹ What we can gather from this, is that Arab Americans in the suburbs are ahead of the general population regarding school enrollment in higher education, but in the city they are approximately the same as the surrounding population. In respect to attainment of college degrees, the Arab-American population more or less mirrors the general population of the area, both in the city, and in the suburbs. The numbers for Management and Professional occupations show that Arab Americans in the city are better off than the general population, where in the suburbs it is the other way around.

The DAAS reports that “Arabs and Chaldeans have roughly the same percentage of college and advanced degrees as the general population,”⁴⁵² a similar finding to the American Community Survey. The DAAS uses a different categorization for occupation, and says that “Arabs and Chaldeans are more likely to work in sales, office, and administrative positions” than the general population (38% to 25%). The numbers for “management, business, or financial occupations” show Arabs and Chaldeans trailing behind by 4%. When it comes to professional occupations, both the Arabs and Chaldeans, and the general population have a 22% participation rate.⁴⁵³ Neither the American Community Survey, nor the DAAS show the differences within this category according to choice of racial identification. It is therefore difficult to say how these findings are affected by race. The only conclusion to be drawn at this point is that when comparing Arab Americans to the general population (using DAAS data) in matters of education, the suburban Arab Americans are ahead of their fellow suburbanites, a pattern that does not hold true for the city dwellers. Employment in management and the professions show the suburban Arab Americans trailing behind the general population, which is not true for the city populations.

To conclude, we should go back to the original question: Are Arab Americans following the first possible path of segmented assimilation – the classic path of Americanization followed by upward mobility? There is some evidence to support that this has occurred among those that live in the suburbs. This population is also the most likely to choose a white identity, according to the DAAS.⁴⁵⁴ Therefore there is an indication that a choice of white identity is connected to upward mobility, though we cannot make any conclusions as to the causal relationships of these determinants.

The second described path of segmented assimilation is “rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community’s values and tight solidarity.”⁴⁵⁵ Zhou and Portes point out the importance of a strong and diversified coethnic community.⁴⁵⁶ Portes and Rumbaut speak highly of the benefits to a strong ethnic community in blocking downward assimilation. “The varying character of co-ethnic communities determines the level of social capital available to immigrant families. Social capital, grounded on ethnic networks, provides a key resource in confronting obstacles to successful adaptation.”⁴⁵⁷ They point to economic opportunities and reinforcement of parental authority in ethnic networks as key to the success of the second generation. They continue by saying that “[s]ocial capital depends less on the relative economic or occupational success of immigrants than on the *density* of ties among them.”⁴⁵⁸

The Dearborn Arab community is known for its strength.⁴⁵⁹ Arabs have been in the area for about a century. Kayyali explains that the Dearborn enclave was the only Arab-American cluster to survive the Americanization and assimilatory efforts of the early 20th century.⁴⁶⁰ The community has powerful institutions (notably ACCESS and the Arab American and Chaldean Council, ACC), and has gained political influence as well as political representation. Ron talks about his (former) city: “Two of the 7 members of the city council are Arab Americans, one male and one female. The Chief of Police is a 3rd generation Arab American. The recently retired Fire Chief is 2nd generation Arab American.”⁴⁶¹ Baker and Shryock point out the diversity of agencies, businesses, organizations and institutions in Arab Detroit, and say that “[d]espite obvious success in the small business sector, most Arabs in greater Detroit are not entrepreneurs; they can be found in all sectors of the local economy and at all income levels.”⁴⁶² They continue on to say that “no other [Arab-American] enclave rivals Dearborn in size or political prominence.”⁴⁶³ Sally Howell and Jamal claim that Arab Detroit is “exceptional,” saying that “Michigan’s Arabs, through the work of myriad individuals and the efforts of many successful ethnic institutions, have been incorporated to a remarkable degree into local structures of economic, social, and political capital. At the

national level, by contrast, Arabs have found their efforts to organize and influence governmental policies (...) blocked.”⁴⁶⁴ After 9/11, Arabs in the Detroit area fared better than their coethnics in other cities in America.⁴⁶⁵ Howell and Jamal analyze data from the DAAS and compare to other national polls, and conclude that Detroit is a contrast to Arab America as a whole. Arab Detroiters experienced less discrimination and violence, worried less about their future, and were less willing to forgo civil liberties in exchange for security after 9/11, than Arab Americans nationally.⁴⁶⁶ It is important to remember that in this particular context, the Arab-American enclave, though more demographically dense in Dearborn, must be understood to include suburban Arab Americans as well. (This is because of cultural and familial ties that the suburban population have to Dearborn, as discussed earlier in this chapter.)

The combination of the density of Arab Americans, and great demographic and the economic diversity is a sign of a healthy ethnic community. This is what Portes, Rumbaut, and Zhou all claim can help block the likelihood of downward assimilation, and instead be a way to “[u]pward assimilation combined with biculturalism.”⁴⁶⁷ The high levels of bilingualism, discussed earlier in this chapter, are an indicator of this biculturalism. The same are the similar statements made by several of the respondents about their biculturalism.⁴⁶⁸ Frank says much of the same when describing his family: “We participate in American Activities, for instance we are masons, moose members. Coach athletics. Kids participate in them. English is spoken in the home. Into American pop culture. We do however, try to incorporate our traditions into our daily lives as well.”⁴⁶⁹

According to the respondents to this study, the presence of an ethnic community can have two effects, phrased nicely by Ron: “The large community in Dearborn acts as a shield against the slings and arrows of my fellow Americans on the one hand. On the other hand it is the focal point for those that would do their best to make bogeymen out of Arabs and Muslims.”⁴⁷⁰ Ron has made the move out of the city of Dearborn and into suburban Livonia: “In the national census of 2000 our city, Livonia, was dubbed ‘the whitest big city in America.’ The population is about 100,000 and 98% white. (...) I was extremely le[e]ry about moving into Livonia initially. It has been ten years now and I must say that I have encountered more bias against Arabs in Dearborn, Michigan than I have in Livonia, Michigan.”⁴⁷¹ When asked whether he thinks that he would experience less prejudice and racism had he lived in Dearborn, rather than living in West Michigan, Nidal replies: “Maybe; not sure. I think even being in an area with people more similar to my own culture/religion/values etc. would not necessarily make Americans feel comfortable.”⁴⁷² It is

noteworthy, however, that Nidal is the respondent who has made the most mention of racism and prejudice, though it is not safe to conclude that that is due to his geographic location. Sonya has a different experience, and makes specific mention of the protection that Dearborn has afforded her in the wake of 9/11: “I was out of high school by the time 9/11 happened and the college I attended was in Dearborn where there is a large Arab population and people seemed to be more open-minded and willing to learn, rather than discriminatory and racist.”⁴⁷³ She also sees advantages in the ethnic enclave in relation to her job: “I work at the Arab American National Museum which is located in Dearborn. We are responsible for educating people about Arab Americans, so being in such a concentrated community is helpful.”⁴⁷⁴

It is difficult to make any conclusions about whether or not Arab Americans in Detroit are following the second path of segmented assimilation. The literature based on the DAAS findings, along with other studies, would seem to suggest that the ethnic community of Dearborn is the typical environment that segmented assimilation scholars point to as beneficial to the second trajectory of segmented assimilation. Yet the experiences of the informants show that they see both benefits and downsides to this ethnic concentration.

The third path of segmented assimilation is assimilation - not to the mainstream culture, but to the underclass - leading to permanent poverty, often called downward assimilation. This is usually characterized by inner-city immigrant youth adapting the values and norms of existing inner-city cultures, often marred by crime, high drop-out rates from school, and drug use. Zhou and Portes note three features that “create vulnerability to downward assimilation:” color, location, and absence of mobility ladders.⁴⁷⁵ The first, color, has been discussed at length in this chapter. Though Arab Americans do not have a clear “color choice,” it can be argued that they are often seen as a “people of color” and sometimes see themselves as the same.

Detroit, however, does have a clear color profile. It is a majority black city, with the American Community Survey from 2006-2008 reporting 83% African American inhabitants.⁴⁷⁶ The inner-city youth that the Arab immigrants’ children could be expected to assimilate to, are therefore black. Detroit ranks as one of four large U.S. cities with the lowest median income, and highest poverty rates.⁴⁷⁷ Detroit has the unfortunate reputation of violent crime and high murder rates. In a 2007 article, *Forbes Magazine* has Detroit topping the list of most murderous cities in America (based on statistics from the FBI). “Detroit’s murder rate is more than 8% higher than the country’s second most murderous city, Baltimore.”⁴⁷⁸ A 2009 *Forbes* article names Detroit as the nation’s most dangerous city, with a number of crime

syndicates and gangs operating in the city.⁴⁷⁹ *Time Magazine* is currently doing a year-long report on Detroit, “Assignment Detroit.” They write that “[n]ot all that long ago, Detroit was one of the richest places in the country (...). Today it struggles for its life: not one national chain operates a grocery store in the entire 138-sq.-mi. city limits of Detroit. The estimated functional illiteracy rate in the city limits hovers near 50%. The unsolved-murder rate is about 70%, and unemployment is around an astonishing 29%.”⁴⁸⁰ The EPE Research Center has done research that shows graduation rates in US cities. Detroit City School District had a 37.5% graduation rate for the class of 2005, placing it in the bottom three of the 50 largest cities in the country.⁴⁸¹

It is clear, then, that Detroit has an urban underclass, and that according to segmented assimilation theory, this underclass could be a draw to the neighboring ethnic enclaves’ disenchanted youth. However, this does not seem to be the case. One reason for this could be the Arab Americans’ relationship to African Americans and color. Shryock claims that Arab Americans have kept a “strategic distance from black identities” as part of a cultivation of a white *ethnic* identity.⁴⁸² He follows by saying that “outright identification with African Americans among Arabs, (...) is virtually nonexistent.”⁴⁸³ Kayyali says much of the same, speaking of Arabs using distance from other races as part of their assimilation to an “American middle-class lifestyle,” specifically setting “themselves apart from African Americans.”⁴⁸⁴ Aswad says that “Dearborn has a reputation of being racist.”⁴⁸⁵ Hassoun blames the bad relationship between African Americans and Arab Americans on the distrust between shop keeper and the black community suffering from “economic disempowerment.”⁴⁸⁶ She says that the African Americans do not “understand the insular nature of the Arab family structure,” and the Arab Americans do not know or understand the history of African American poverty.⁴⁸⁷ Kayyali, similarly points out that “when an Arab Muslim family opens a store in an urban area that is predominantly African American, there are usually tensions between the ethnic grocery storeowner and the customers from the community. As with other ethnic groups, such as the Korean American storeowners in Los Angeles, these tensions can escalate into violence that results in fatalities.”⁴⁸⁸

At the same time, Kayyali says that on a national and on a local level, “Arab Americans have good relations with African Americans.”⁴⁸⁹ Shryock quotes Lisa Majaj advising other Arab-American writers that “our experience has shown us, time and again, that our formal status as white is merely honorary, and is quickly revoked in the wake of political events (...), we need to probe links with other groups of color.”⁴⁹⁰ However, Shryock says, the identification between “blackness” and Arab Americans’ identity is largely restricted to

media, film, music and art.⁴⁹¹ While Arab Americans may not understand or wish to be linked to black culture, Shryock and Baker point to studies that show that “[w]hites and blacks alike in the Detroit region prefer more social distance from Arab Americans than from any other group.”⁴⁹² In other words, the distrust and dislike goes both ways. This may affect the likelihood of Arab youth assimilating to a black culture.

Using the American Community Survey of 2006-2008, we can look at differences between Arab Americans and African Americans. Concentrating on Wayne County, since that is where both the city of Detroit, and the city of Dearborn are located, shows little indication of Arab Americans assimilation to the African American urban culture. The rate of female households with no husband present and children under 18 years is 6% for Arab Americans, and 20% for African Americans. The percentage of the population that is divorced is 5.5% for Arab Americans, and over double that for African Americans. Arab Americans have a much higher percentage of their population with less than a high school diploma (31.5%, to 21% for African Americans). The numbers change when we look at how many have college or graduate school, where almost 22% of Arab Americans have at least a Bachelor’s degree, versus 11.2% of African Americans. 8.4% of Arab Americans are unemployed, (mirroring the general population), African Americans have a slightly higher number, with 12%. When looking at the Median household income, African Americans trail behind Arab Americans by \$7,000, though both populations have significantly lower incomes than the general population. Both populations have higher numbers than the general population, of families “for whom poverty status is determined,” though Arab-American poverty rates are a few percentages higher than African Americans (30.2% and 27.2% respectively). Almost 64% of Arab Americans live in owner-occupied housing units (close to the level of the general population), the same number for African Americans is 52.4%. Almost 8% of Arab-American households have no vehicle, for African Americans, that number rises to almost 21%.⁴⁹³ All in all, for most socioeconomic criteria in this random selection, Arab Americans are better off than African Americans. However there are significant exceptions, namely in poverty rates and in numbers of people lacking a high school diploma. The latter can possibly be explained as a result of childhood in a foreign country. The fact that Arab-American poverty rates are higher than the African American population, who in most other categories seem more disadvantaged, is interesting, and lacks obvious explanations. This will not be pursued further here, suffice to say that the census findings do not show Arab Americans replicating Detroit’s urban culture to a significant degree.

The second vulnerability factor (after color), according to Zhou and Portes, is location. The close contact between minority and immigrant youth “exposes second-generation children to the adversarial sub-culture developed by marginalized native youth to cope with their own difficult situation.”⁴⁹⁴ Dearborn borders the city of Detroit. There would seem to be plenty of opportunities for downward assimilation, yet the Arab Americans have not entered the Detroit underclass in significant numbers. Though some of the inhabitants of Dearborn are at the lower end of the income scale, there is little evidence that they are joining Detroit’s gang-and drug culture. This does not mean there are no problems for the young people of Dearborn, though. Joseph points out: “Our [Yemeni] teenage boys are going through a difficult time. The school dropout rate is high, but there’s no indication that gang activity is a major factor among our youth. In my recent experiences at a substitute teacher at the high school level across the city of Dearborn, I recognized as a problem the disregard and disrespect that a large number of students have for others, including their teachers. I’ve associated it with a general lack of self-esteem that’s associated with self-respect.”⁴⁹⁵

The city of Detroit is heavily African American, and has few Arab Americans. On the other hand, Dearborn’s population has over a third claiming Arab ancestry. This would seem to imply that most Arabs are remaining within the enclave, or moving to places other than the city of Detroit. One could argue that members of the community moving to the urban underclass of Detroit, joining gangs or other subcultures, would not be counted by the census, and thereby remain invisible. The argument is valid, however, for lack of evidence it will not be pursued further in this paper. Attempts to uncover proof of large numbers of Arab-American gang members in Metro Detroit have proven unfruitful; therefore the assumption in this work is that there is not a large Arab-American presence in Detroit’s underworld.

One exception is important to note, namely the existence of a gang called the Chaldean Mafia. The FBI describes the gang as “predominantly of Iraqi nationals, operated a narcotics distribution network moving drugs from Phoenix and San Diego to Detroit. Involved in violent crimes such as homicide, assault, kidnaping, armed robbery, and arson, the gang used intimidation and brutal force to move the narcotics and collect drug proceeds.”⁴⁹⁶ The FBI has arrested over a hundred individuals involved, and seized large quantities of narcotics. The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (Administered by the U.S. Department of Justice) calls the Chaldean Mafia “a highly exclusive organization,” with ties to international drug cartels, whose focus is “[o]btaining income rather than ‘representing’ or generating public attention.”⁴⁹⁷ In this sense, the Chaldean Mafia is not a typical street gang. Its exclusivity means that it is not likely to recruit new members from the Arab-American

population in general. None of the respondents to this study have mentioned the Chaldean Mafia, even when asked specifically about Arab gangs. Frank says: “I have worked with youth in the Arab American community for over 10 y[ea]rs. I have never seen any suggestion of gang activity at all. Its a non starter.” Ron, who has worked as a police officer and community activist for decades says: “I am aware of no ‘gang’ that has formed in the Arab Community of Detroit.” It is possible that these respondents do not think of Chaldeans as Arabs, since Chaldeans tend to disassociate themselves with the label. Or perhaps they did not think of the Chaldean Mafia as a “gang,” since it operates in more of a “mafia style.” There is also the possibility that they have not heard of the Chaldean Mafia, or preferred not to mention it. None of the literature used for this study speaks of the Chaldean Mafia, though Aswad makes a brief mention of Chaldeans having “become a force in the local drug business.”⁴⁹⁸

It is interesting to view Detroit’s Arab population as a contrast to the Arab-American population in Chicago, where there indeed was evidence of an Arab-American underclass, similar to other urban underclass cultures. Cainkar has done extensive research on this community and says: “Our research indicates that current [1990s] problems within the community exist partly because of a deteriorating ‘ethnic safety net,’ which is defined as internal Arab community networks that provide for the cohesion, safety, security, and prosperity of Arab families through interaction, assistance, and intervention.”⁴⁹⁹ She found evidence of drug use, alcoholism and domestic violence,⁵⁰⁰ and also gang membership. “Arab street gangs are part of the local scene, and Arab theft ring members, who largely victimize other Arabs, have instilled fear and distrust among community members.”⁵⁰¹ Cainkar’s research shows what is often called “role reversal:” “Many Arab parents feel they have lost control of their children and, as immigrants, do not know how to handle parenting in urban America. There is no longer a strong, insular Arab community to provide them with help.”⁵⁰² The study of Arab Americans in Chicago shows evidence of segmented assimilation theory’s third trajectory. Though Cainkar does not show that the Arab second generation is *joining* the existing underclass, they are certainly showing signs of the same behavior. Their story bears resemblance to what has happened in other immigrant communities across America. Portes and Rumbaut detail many such cases, and say that “community networks are often the only factor compensating for the weakness of the parents’ own economic position. Dissonant acculturation [defined as the situation where children are more acculturated than the parents, leading to role reversal] can be most effectively resisted when parental authority is reinforced by supportive kin and ethnic networks.”⁵⁰³ “Atomized households and the consequent lack of

social capital mean that parents must confront the challenges of the outside environment and the threat of role reversal on their own. For those of modest condition, the challenge is all too often overwhelming.”⁵⁰⁴ Kayyali also mentions the Chicago case, saying that “[th]e high rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, and domestic violence in the Chicagoan case indicated that the family structure has been weakened.”⁵⁰⁵

The third factor creating vulnerability to downward assimilation, according to Zhou and Portes is the absence of mobility ladders in a new “hourglass economy.”⁵⁰⁶ The way to combat this potential problem is through education and financial resources, combined with parental guidance in providing proof of “the viability of aspirations for upward mobility.”⁵⁰⁷ As we have seen in an earlier section of this chapter, the Arab-American population is not trailing significantly behind the general population when it comes to education, at least not when looking at the youngest segment of the population, which includes much of the second generation. In some instances the Arab population is ahead of the general population in higher education. The DAAS shows that “Arabs and Chaldeans have roughly the same percentage of college and advanced degrees as the general population, but a higher percentage has less than a high school degree. Those born in the U.S. [ie the second or third generation] have more education than either the general population or Arabs and Chaldeans born abroad.”⁵⁰⁸ The American Community Survey shows Arab Americans in all three counties having approximately twice as many people with less than a high school diploma, compared to the general population.⁵⁰⁹ The numbers reflect those that are 25 years and older, and could be both first, second and third generation Arab Americans. There is a likelihood that many of those without a high school diploma went to school outside the United States, in other words before emigration. The foreign-born Arab population in all three counties is about half of the total Arab population, according to the American Community Survey. Hassoun says that the “second, third and fourth generations of Arab Americans [in Michigan] invariably have benefited from better education. Education is highly valued (...) in Arab culture in general.”⁵¹⁰ There is no evidence that the Arab-American second generation is assimilating to an urban culture where school drop-out rates are high.

At the same time, the concentration of Arab businesses and organizations can provide jobs and training that Arab-American youth might not have access to outside the community due to prejudice. The DAAS reports that a slightly higher number of Arabs and Chaldeans own their own business, compared to the general population (19% to 14%).⁵¹¹ It is interesting to note that among immigrants, “business owners report the highest levels of income,” while among the American born, “higher incomes are associated with higher levels of education

rather than with business ownership.”⁵¹² When comparing occupation and citizenship, the DAAS finds that citizens (the second generation among them) are more likely to work in management, business, finance, and professional occupations, than are non-citizens.⁵¹³ All this data from the DAAS indicates that the younger generation of Arab Americans is getting both an education, and higher paying jobs.

The interviews conducted for this study cannot be used to generalize for the Arab-American population as a whole. However, a survey of the education and occupation of the participants is in order. One participant is a high school student. The rest have at least a Bachelor’s degree. Several of the participants are or have been community activists. One works in the government. One is a teacher. Three work for the Arab American National Museum. One works in finance. None of the participants are entrepreneurs. Sonya explains that her ethnicity has been an advantage in her job pursuits, since she has worked in places like the Arab American National Museum.⁵¹⁴ Working the same place, Janice says that being Arab helped her get “a job that makes me happier than any other job I’ve ever had.”⁵¹⁵

In summary regarding the third trajectory, there is little evidence to support a trend of downward assimilation among the Arab-American second generation in Metro Detroit. Even though Aswad points to unemployment, some drugs and alcohol, some illegal activities, increased welfare, and some role reversal amongst Lebanese Americans in the 1980s,⁵¹⁶ there is little indication that this is a continuing problem on a large scale. Overall, the Arab-American youth in Metro Detroit are seemingly being “sheltered” by the strength of their community. Or perhaps the reasons can be found in the relationship between Arabness and color, where an association with black Americans is not seen as desirable.

The three trajectories described here are all present in the parts of the Arab-American community of Metro Detroit. However, when looking for general trends, the third path – that of downward assimilation – seems the least applicable. The trend of downward assimilation is generally used to describe urban ethnic communities with proximity to an American urban underclass. Since Dearborn borders the city of Detroit, and is indeed an urban environment, there is fertile ground for such a development. Yet it does not appear to be taking place on a large scale. The more suburban Arab-Americans in Oakland and Macomb Counties are not expected to be following the third path, nor is there any indication that they are. A more likely scenario for these suburban Arab Americans is to follow the first path, which there is an indication of in the data used here. In this regard, many Arab Americans are following the classic American story of immigrant assimilation, by becoming “white” and “suburban.” The second trajectory is more relevant to the population of Wayne County, mainly in Dearborn.

This is where the Arab American community is concentrated enough to constitute the environment described in segmented assimilation theory. The data implies a likelihood that this ethnic community functions as protection and a benefit to Arab Americans in the area.

The following chapter will look at how assimilation is affected by religion. Certainly race and ethnicity are closely tied to religion. For instance, Muslim respondents to the DAAS are more likely to choose a racial identification as “Other.”⁵¹⁷ Using their common Christianity, early Arab immigrants were able to argue their whiteness. Arab Muslims share a common religion with a large group of American Black Muslims. These are a few examples of the links between race, ethnicity and religion. The next chapter will discuss this more thoroughly, as well as look at how religion plays into segmented assimilation theory for Arab Americans.

Chapter 3: Religious Identities

This chapter asks how assimilation has been affected by Arab-American religious identity. The three trajectories of segmented assimilation theory will be discussed in turn, using an analysis of the differences between Christian and Muslim Arabs, developments in American Islam and increased religiosity among Muslims, and finally an analysis of Dearborn's Southend as a possible example of downward assimilation. There is an imbalance in the amount of material regarding Muslims compared to Christians. More time is spent discussing Arab Muslims because there is more focus on Islam in public debates and in scholarship. For the purpose of this thesis, moreover, this focus is appropriate in that most Arab Christians are more assimilated, while Arab Muslims constitute the majority of more recent immigrants, and city dwellers, on whom segmented assimilation theory tends to focus.

Segmented assimilation theory, as it was originally developed, did not take religion into account. Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut have at a later time incorporated a chapter about religion in the third edition of *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. The only work that explicitly deals with segmented assimilation theory and religion is Min Zhou and Carl L. Bankston III's study of Vietnamese in New Orleans, which resulted in scholarly articles and the book *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States*. These authors have found a strong connection between the well-being and educational attainment of these second-generation immigrants and their belonging to an ethnic church.⁵¹⁸ P. Stephen Warner laments the lack of religion in work on segmented assimilation, urging students of urban religion and students of assimilation to incorporate the model into their studies.⁵¹⁹ That is precisely what has been done here.

3.1 The First Trajectory: Assimilated Christians

The first trajectory of segmented assimilation is when acculturation is accompanied by upward mobility into the traditionally white middle class. Arab Christians are more assimilated than Arab Muslims, therefore they can be seen as more likely to be following the first trajectory of segmented assimilation theory. Arab Christians constitute a majority of Arab Detroit and of Arab Americans nationally. They are diverse in their national origins, as well as their religious orientations. Common for all is that they came from Muslim majority countries, and some from Islamic states. Accustomed to being a minority, perhaps they had a benefit right from the start, when they arrived and joined America's multitude of minority populations. Most scholars agree that for these earlier immigrants, a Christian religion gave them significant advantages in gaining access to American society.⁵²⁰ Randa A. Kayyali

writes that Christians were more likely to work as rural peddlers than Muslims, since Christians “could reach a comfort level with the farm wives by quoting from the Bible and finding a religious commonality with their customers.”⁵²¹ Muslims, on the other hand, arrived in a country without common religious traditions, or houses of worship, and arrived in smaller numbers than Christians.⁵²² Due to religious discrimination, Muslims were unable to integrate, despite the higher education levels of these second wave immigrants.⁵²³ In a recent volume about Arab Americans, Sally Howell and Amaney Jamal write that Arab Christians are more integrated in the American middle class than Arab Muslims due to having been present in the country longer.⁵²⁴ Yet it is too simple to rely entirely on time of arrival to explain assimilation, although it *does* have an effect.

The fact that Arab Christians are more likely to live in the suburbs, than in the city, shows a higher degree of assimilation. Like the debate over the priority of the chicken and the egg, one could question what came first, the move to the suburbs or the assimilation; but nonetheless it is a self-perpetuating cycle. Suburban living brings Arab Christians into contact with mainstream middle class Americans at a much higher degree than living in an urban environment does. The Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS) found that only 5% of Christian Arabs live in or near Dearborn, the rest are dispersed in suburbs to the north, east and west of Detroit.⁵²⁵ In contrast, the same study found that two thirds of Arab Muslims in Metropolitan Detroit live in Dearborn or Detroit, rather than in the suburbs.⁵²⁶ An exception to this pattern is the Iraqi Chaldeans, who have established an urban enclave along Seven Mile Road, many of them running grocery, liquor and convenience stores. Surrounded by urban blight, many of these Chaldeans move to the suburbs when they can afford to,⁵²⁷ in line with the general pattern of Christian and Muslim settlement. The income and educational levels of Arab Christians and Arab Muslims can help explain the residential patterns, as well as indicate upward mobility of Arab Christians. In the 2009 book about Arab Detroit, *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11*, the editors say that one-third of Muslims have not finished high school, and they are less likely to have college education than Christian Arabs. Muslims are twice as likely to have an annual household income of less than \$20,000, while the majority of Christian household earn more than \$50,000.⁵²⁸ In other words, having lower incomes blocks the possibility of moving to the suburbs, while the lack of higher education means income advancement is less likely.

Self-identification shows assimilation too. Christians are more likely to identify as white, the DAAS found 73% accept their race as white, compared to 50% of Arab Muslims.⁵²⁹ They differ in ethnic identification as well. Arab Christians are less likely to

accept the “Arab American” label, the DAAS reports that 61% of Christians, compared to 82% of Muslims that welcome the term. Citizenship and place of birth do not have a bearing on identification as Arab American,⁵³⁰ therefore this cannot simply be explained by time of immigration. Jen’nan Ghazal Read says that the fact that Muslims identify more readily with the Arab American label “indicate[s] that Christians are more assimilated than their Muslim counterparts, in terms of both attitudes and behaviors.”⁵³¹ The implications of racial and ethnic identifications for segmented assimilation were discussed in the previous chapter, and are simply mentioned here to show the differences within the religious groups, and how personal identity is proof of Christian assimilation.

Arab houses of worship show differences in levels of assimilation. Forty percent of Arab mosques use Arabic only,⁵³² in other words, sixty percent use both English and Arabic. In contrast, the largest Orthodox church, The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, uses 90% English.⁵³³ Arabic classes are rare in Arab churches (with Palestinian churches being a notable exception), while mosques frequently hold Arabic training.⁵³⁴ A similar comparison can be made of the clergy. The Detroit Mosque study found that nearly all of the trained Detroit Imams are immigrants, and had their training overseas.⁵³⁵ The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, on the other hand, has 90% U.S. trained clergy.⁵³⁶ Fr. Shalhoub of St. Mary’s Antiochian Orthodox Church in Livonia (a western suburb of Detroit) was trained both in Lebanon and in the United States. He was one of the founders of his church, and says that right from the beginning St. Mary’s purposely made efforts to “reach out to the neighborhood community socially, politically and in civic affairs.”⁵³⁷ He says that this gave his church respect in the mainstream. Fr. Shalhoub says that both Christians and Muslims in the Detroit area are well integrated, and in the church 30% have married cross-culturally.⁵³⁸ In fact, many Arab churches have suffered from “drastic out-marriage rates,”⁵³⁹ according to Kayyali. Alexei D. Krindatch’s study of Orthodox churches shows that the second generation’s “natural desire to assimilate with the dominant American culture has caused them to drift away from the language, customs, and, to a large extent, the Orthodox faith of their parents.”⁵⁴⁰ Fr. Shalhoub agrees that the second generation practices religion differently than their parents, they are less involved, though he claims they take their faith more seriously.⁵⁴¹ Frank is an example of this development. He says religion mattered more to his parents than it does to him, because his parents had more time to be involved.⁵⁴² This is a contrast to Arab Muslims who show a marked increase in religious practice and behavior.

Many scholars have pointed out that as part of their acculturation, some Arab Christians have distanced themselves from their Middle Eastern Christian faith, for instance

by affiliating with Orthodox churches of more established immigrant communities.⁵⁴³ This bears resemblance to Italian immigrants that arrived around the turn of the 20th century, who associated with the already established Irish Catholic church. Yvonne Y. Haddad writes that the Arab Americans who have achieved leadership positions in America have “mostly abandoned eastern Christianity (...), and joined mainline American churches.”⁵⁴⁴ Mary Sengstock found that some Detroit Chaldeans had assimilated by choosing to attend the Latin rite Catholic churches, rather than the Chaldean rite churches.⁵⁴⁵ A commonality with fellow Christians was seen, according to Sengstock, in that Christian Lebanese identified more strongly with the West than with Lebanese Muslims, and she sees a similar pattern among Iraqi Chaldeans, saying that “during the British protectorate in Iraq in the early Twentieth Century, many Chaldeans identified with the British more than with Iraqi nationalists.”⁵⁴⁶ Arab Christians bring with them memories of hostility between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East.⁵⁴⁷ For instance, in the Lebanese Civil War, Maronite Christians joined Israel against the Muslim population, leading to distrust on both sides.⁵⁴⁸ This means that Arab Christians and Chaldeans arrived in America with a feeling of commonality and fellowship with the West, a fact that encouraged assimilation.

In addition to distancing themselves from the Middle East, Arab Christians use distance from Arab Muslims to gain acceptance, and this need became more pressing in the aftermath of 9/11.⁵⁴⁹ Read says that “Christian Arab Americans may be able to use their Christian identity as bridge to the American mainstream, thereby distancing themselves from 9/11 and demonstrating that they are not terrorists or terrorist sympathizers.”⁵⁵⁰ This strategy is not unique to Arabs, it has been used by many immigrants to the United States as a means to easier acceptance and assimilation. Orm Øverland says that a way to improve one’s immigrant status can be to “claim that you are different from those who by association may lower your status. The definition of your proximity to the elite must include a definition of your distance from those who are looked down upon by the elite.”⁵⁵¹ For instance, ethnic organizations may fear identification with Muslim extremism.⁵⁵² Scholars argue that some of Detroit’s Christian churches, especially Maronite and Chaldean ones, have worked to isolate their congregations from Arabs and Arab identity.⁵⁵³ Andrew Shryock says this is true of community spokesmen too, claiming that some Chaldean and Maronite Catholic community leaders “cannot resist the urge (...) to distance themselves from Arab Muslims, or make disparaging remarks about Islam,” when talking to reporters.⁵⁵⁴ This strategy can also be employed on a personal level. Barbara C. Aswad reports that “as Muslim Arabs receive so much attention in this country, many Christians Arabs in the Detroit area are distancing

themselves by wearing large crosses. I've seen them as big as six inches."⁵⁵⁵ It is also exemplified in Nadine Naber's study, where some Christian Arabs have incorporated "Orientalist approaches," used by the mainstream, such as stereotyping which claims that Muslim men are violent.⁵⁵⁶ This was used as a strategy among her interview respondents' parents, to discourage their daughters from marrying Muslim men.⁵⁵⁷ None of the respondents in this study say anything negative about the other faith. However, Frank *does* use his Christianity to distance himself from terrorism. When asked whether he thought 9/11 had affected the way he sees his identity, he replied: "Not really, being Christian I do not identify at all with the terrorist."⁵⁵⁸ Janice explains that both her gender and her faith have been advantageous in avoiding discrimination: "As an Arab Christian female, I haven't felt the affects [sic] of 9/11 directly, but many of my male friends and relatives, along with my female Muslim friends, felt a lot of animosity from many people after the attacks."⁵⁵⁹ The DAAS shows that Arab Christians display an acculturation of American beliefs, when asked about the causes of 9/11. Where 37% of the general population saw the causes of 9/11 to be American beliefs of "democracy, freedom, and equal rights for women," only 9% of Arab Muslims agreed, in contrast to 31% of Arab Christians.⁵⁶⁰ All in all, 9/11 has consolidated some of the differences between the Arab Christians and Muslims. The fact that the attacks were carried out by Muslims, gives Arab Christians yet another advantage, even though one should remember that not all Americans have a clear idea of the differences in Arab-American religious identity.⁵⁶¹

Arab Christians, then, are more assimilated than Arab Muslims both because they are more similar to the mostly Christian mainstream, but also because they have actively made changes and cultivated their commonalities with most Americans. Looking back to the previous chapter, one does well to remember that this population fought court battles to prove that they were similar to Americans. Certainly, Arab Christians face discrimination and stereotyping; however, in comparison with Arab Muslims their situation is vastly better. Added to the religious difference is a class difference, and a difference in the time of immigration, which again makes Muslims more visible, and easily targeted. It is important to remember that part of the reason that Arab Christians are more assimilated than Arab Muslims is that Muslims are more discriminated against than Christians. It is not solely the assimilative efforts of the Christians that create the differences. The portrait of Detroit's Arab Muslims as unassimilated, however, is unfair and inaccurate. There are plenty of developments that point to Americanization of this population, as well as economic

advancements. Perhaps this is due to the strength of Detroit's Arab enclave, a point that will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 The Second Trajectory: Muslims are Assimilating Too!

The second path of segmented assimilation describes how community support and ethnic retention blocks downward assimilation. Since this chapter deals with religion, it is more appropriate to speak of religious retention, rather than ethnic retention. The Arab Muslim community in Dearborn and Metro Detroit provides an example of this type of assimilation, where both the emergence of an American Islam, and the growth of Islam among the second generation grant Detroit's Arab Muslims the support and strength needed to prevent downward assimilation. The support can be in the form of peer and parental guidance found in mosques and religious schools, ethnic or religious pride, or kin networks in religious institutions that can assist in finding jobs and services. Religious institutions can be schools, mosques, or other organizations. These institutions provide financial and practical help or training in order to make sense of American society in a way that ultimately can lead to acculturation or assimilation. Bankston and Zhou say that church membership "is a prime source of identity and motivation precisely because it is a focus for organizing the social relations of a group. First-generation immigrants perceive it as the one element of real continuity between their country of origin and their new home and as an effective strategy for linking themselves with their American born or raised children while acquiring acceptance in the host society."⁵⁶² It is important to remember that psychological well-being is just as important as economic well-being in regards to feeling at home in America, and one may well lead to the other. Second-generation immigrants are often described as being trapped between two cultures, and feeling alienated as a result. The privileging of a religious identity over an ethnic identity, along with participation in mainstream society, allows youth to remain connected to God, their parents and the old country, while at the same time being fully American. The danger of role reversal and dissonant acculturation is thereby avoided, and Muslim Arabs are free to become part of a multicultural America. The main hindrance they face in this endeavor is Islamophobia, which is prevalent in American life and media at this point in time. Yet, the support and degree of homogeneity in Arab Detroit shelters them somewhat from this. Therefore it is possible to claim that Detroit's Arab Muslims are following the second trajectory of segmented assimilation theory. This section will start by discussing the emergence of an Americanized Islam, followed by a discussion of the growth in religiosity among young Arab Muslims, that ties these developments to segmented

assimilation theory's second trajectory. The role of religious institutions in these developments will be part of the discussion.

A development that is given much attention by scholars of Muslim Americans is the movement to create a new "American Islam," influenced by American life, and adapted to American traditions. Part of the motivation for this development is greater unity and cooperation among American Muslims, especially important in the face of widespread Islamophobia. Haddad says: "The new understanding was that only an Islamic identity, creating solidarity between Muslim nations, can provide the necessary resources to fight for Muslim causes."⁵⁶³ She points to young activists who use modern means of communication, like the internet, to collaborate with religious rights organizations, and who "take American values very seriously."⁵⁶⁴ Those advocating a unification of the faith are national organizations and community leaders, many of them immigrant professionals from South Asia and the Middle East.⁵⁶⁵ Often they see America as the perfect place to begin to build the Muslim *Ummah*, because America affords them many freedoms.⁵⁶⁶ (The *Ummah* is an "overall community, with no boundaries of race or ethnic identities."⁵⁶⁷) M.A. Muqtedar Khan explains that many Muslims are thrilled with the idea of practicing Islam and building movements and institutions in the U.S., rather than in "the presently autocratic Muslim world"⁵⁶⁸ However the optimism of being able to create the *Ummah* has been tempered by 9/11, and the hostile climate following it. In addition to Islamophobia, the internal divisions within the American Muslim community (ethnic and racial, immigrant and native-born) can create conflict over who is to be the authority, how progressive Islam in America should be, and who should represent and interpret Islam in America.⁵⁶⁹ Yet, though there certainly is conflict, the major American Muslim organizations – CAIR and AMC – purposely have a multi-ethnic leadership,⁵⁷⁰ and 90% of contemporary US mosques have congregations with mixed ethnic backgrounds where a new American Islam can be cultivated.⁵⁷¹ Although 9/11 has made the idea of a pan-Muslim community seem less likely to some, the civil rights abuses in the aftermath have ironically also given many Muslims the incentive to try to achieve it. Ron says that "Muslims are banding together as never before just to try to hang on to the civil and human rights all Americans have."⁵⁷² The Detroit mosque study's respondents named "greater Muslim unity and a stronger sense of community"⁵⁷³ one of top three priorities for their mosques. The development of this new brand of Islam is in itself a movement towards assimilation. It also gives Muslims in America the chance to be part of something beyond their ethnic community, installing pride in being part of America's religious multitudes. For Arab Muslims, this new Islam can function as a connection between

the new and the old, along with providing support in networks and communities *outside* the Arab enclave. Mosques have been Americanized, as part of the project of “fitting in” and attracting a wide audience. In the American mosques, practice of faith, and types of activities can be quite different than in the Middle Eastern mosques. Karen B. Leonard writes that this leads to conflicts between the board of directors (who are often educated or “Americanized” Muslims) in the mosque, and the imam they hire (who often is foreign-born).⁵⁷⁴ Generally, mosques are governed by both the imam and the board. Gary David and Kenneth K. Ayouby write of a Dearborn mosque that fired several imams for “attempting to apply the overseas model.”⁵⁷⁵ Yet, one should not assume that most imams are traditional, even though they are foreign-born. The Detroit mosque study shows that 71% of Detroit’s imams prefer to read the Quran in light of modern circumstances, and influenced by modern Islamic scholars.⁵⁷⁶ In other words, only a minority of imams follow a traditional approach. Immigrant imams often play roles they never would have played at home, for instance as counsellors or community activists,⁵⁷⁷ a role more similar to that of the American pastor or priest.⁵⁷⁸

While mosques in the Middle East are primarily a place for prayer, almost all mosques in Detroit host events other than prayer, for instance schooling or social activities.⁵⁷⁹ Almost 40% host fitness or sporting events regularly. The Detroit mosque study shows that most mosques offer certain social services like food donation, substance abuse programs, prison programs and clothing donation; and over 80% provide cash assistance.⁵⁸⁰ Muslim interview respondents report that their mosques hold fundraising dinners for charity and for the mosque, ecumenical conferences, Sunday school, parties, tours of the mosque, bake sales, and health screening.⁵⁸¹ Almost 40% of mosque participants see the central purpose of the mosque as a center of activities. Unsurprising, in light of it being a religious institution, nearly 60% see the mosque primarily as a place of religious observance,⁵⁸² and the 5 daily prayers are held in 70% of the mosques.⁵⁸³ Another kind of Americanization concerns the day of religious worship. Some mosques have chosen to hold services on Sundays, more in line with American traditions, and work schedules, rather than the Muslim tradition of Friday.⁵⁸⁴

Another element of this Americanization is the changing role of women in American mosques. In the Middle East, in general, women are not a major part of mosque life. Some mosques prohibit their entry, and some limit their worship to segregated areas of the mosque. In America, and in Detroit, women have other options. Many women have been instrumental in the building of mosques. Women may sit on the boards, or teach in Islamic schools. The Detroit mosque study found that “[i]n Detroit, mosques are still the domains of men, but Muslim women have a small but significant presence.”⁵⁸⁵ Countering this study, are the

findings of Jamal. In her article published in 2005, she found that among immigrant Arab Muslims in the Detroit area women are more likely than men to be involved in mosques and ethnic organizations. In their participation they feel more linked to broader Arab Muslim interests, and are more likely to exercise their political voice “when they perceive the community is targeted.”⁵⁸⁶ Similarly Howell and Jamal say that “women are more likely to be in the highest attendance categories, a pattern that defies expectations, given that participation in congregational prayers is considered more of an obligation for men than for women and that many of Detroit’s mosques do not accommodate women as readily as they do men.”⁵⁸⁷ The Detroit mosque study found that the accommodation of women in the mosques varied, with African American mosques being the least restrictive and South Asian mosques the most restrictive. The Arab mosques are in the middle, regarding women’s presence, where they are allowed to pray, and whether they are allowed to serve on the board.⁵⁸⁸ Aminah Beverly McCloud argues that mosques established since the 1960s are less liberal; the tendency is for older mosques to have more female participation.⁵⁸⁹ An example of that is the Dix mosque in Dearborn, built in the 1930s, where “women had been the primary instigators” in its establishment.⁵⁹⁰ Mosques are also Americanized in the regard that they have become a place for the whole family,⁵⁹¹ in line with the role of mainstream American churches.

Nayla, the youngest interview respondent, sees mosque attendance as assimilation: “The term assimilation means becoming a part of one. I believe this is a term bringing religions together. I think I have assimilated in many ways and many times. Every time I go to the mosque I believe this is a form of assimilation. This is coming together as one.” She represents the second generation that is looking for a new kind of Islam. Scholars have pointed out that although the first generation of immigrants tend to hang on to culture-specific practices and traditions, their American raised children are more interested in a “more essential Islam,”⁵⁹² less colored by Old World ways.⁵⁹³ Ron gives an example of the more flexible kind of Islam that he prefers, and says that “Islam teaches us to look beyond ethnicity, color, geography and that ALL Muslims are brothers and sisters.”⁵⁹⁴ In their article about Muslim Arab second-generation youth in Dearborn, David and Ayouby show that these youth have created their own local Islamic culture. These authors found that the youth would drink and date in secret. They would get tattoos, but with Islamic words or symbols on them⁵⁹⁵ The girls frequently wore hijab, but accompanied it with full make-up or tight clothing.⁵⁹⁶ David and Ayouby explain that “[i]n the minds of the Arabic youth, none of this makes them ‘bad Muslims.’ Rather they are simply carrying out their localized cultural variant of Islam.”⁵⁹⁷ The efforts of the second-generation Muslim Arabs are an attempt to create a bridge between

their parents and the American culture they are part of. In creating an American brand of Islam, they are attempting to join the American mainstream. The mainstream they are trying to join is not the typical American middle class, rather it is the mainstream envisioned by Multiculturalists, where religious- and racial tolerance is a reality. Scholars are optimistic that the American Muslim *Ummah* is possible, exemplified by McCloud who sees both foreign- and American-born youth as “bright lights on the horizon of this emerging American Islam [by] rejecting the efforts of their parents and grandparents to define Islam in culture-specific terms.”⁵⁹⁸ If the *Ummah* is realized, Muslim Arabs will have a larger community of support in addition to their local Arab Muslim community in Dearborn. There is strength in numbers, and perhaps, by banding together, Muslims in America will be closer to recognition as an *American* religious group, instead of being “others.” For the second- and third-generation immigrants, recognition is a great step in path towards upward mobility and assimilation.

As established by Bankston and Zhou in their study of the role of ethnic churches among American-Vietnamese, belonging to an ethnic church promotes adjustment “precisely because it promotes the cultivation of a distinctive ethnicity, and membership in this distinctive ethnic group helps young people reach higher levels of academic achievement and avoid dangerous and destructive forms of behavior.”⁵⁹⁹ Bankston and Zhou maintain this “is also generalizable to other immigrant and ethnic groups.”⁶⁰⁰ Mary Waters’ research among Afro-Caribbean families yielded similar results, showing that the most important factor in their lives is the ethnically rooted church. “The key factor appears to be the combination of connecting both parents and teens to social networks that reinforce their values and attitudes as well as the moral and cultural reinforcement that church teachings provide for the messages parents give to children.”⁶⁰¹ A number of scholars have similar findings – church or mosque participation facilitates assimilation, and discourages youth from ‘falling out.’⁶⁰² Portes and Rumbaut’s CILS, Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, (the basis of segmented assimilation theory) shows “significant positive correlations between religious involvement of youth and their educational and occupational achievement and negative correlations with indicators of downward assimilation.”⁶⁰³ Though Detroit’s mosques include several national backgrounds, they are to a large degree ethnically homogenous.⁶⁰⁴ Therefore, in theory, they can function in the same way as Bankston and Zhou’s Vietnamese churches. Looking to the future of the mosques, Ann Chih Lin points out that incorporation is dependent upon the next generations and “the ability of communal interaction and institutions to claim the attention and allegiance of these immigrants’ children and grandchildren.”⁶⁰⁵ Of this study’s 5 Muslim respondents, only one respondent goes to mosque regularly (once or twice a month); the

others only go a few times a year. This all to limited sample gives the impression that for these second-generation Muslims, mosque attendance is not their primary choice of religious practice. Four out of the five pray, but no one performs the 5 daily prayers. However, they all practice their religion in one form or another, for instance through food choices. Joseph explains that he has “adopted a perspective that I’m a citizen of the world, with the world being my church and my religion to do good, (...) I do embrace the fundamental principle of Islam that deeds speak more of conviction than words of belief.”⁶⁰⁶ Nidal explains his religious philosophy in saying that “I believe in God and I believe any way that a person decides to worship Him is up to that person; there should not be influence from another person as that is the most intimate relationship there is.”⁶⁰⁷ If these sentiments are a representative reflection of second-generation Muslim Arabs, the role of the mosques may change drastically in the future.

As described by many of the scholars above, participation in religious schools can hinder downward assimilation. Ethnic or religious schools are easier for parents to understand (language and culture), and therefore promote parental involvement, which leads to higher educational achievement for their children.⁶⁰⁸ One should remember that in an ethnic enclave like Dearborn, youth can find community in their public schools that is nearly as homogenous as it would be in private religious schools, with staff of the same ethnic group. For instance, the Salina Elementary School, in Dearborn’s Southend, is 99% Arab⁶⁰⁹ and has an Arab American principal.⁶¹⁰ Yet, public schools are not necessarily organized around the same moral principles or ethnic considerations as the private schools would be. Jane I. Smith says that many Muslim parents in the United States are worried about the quality of education in public schools, especially in metropolitan areas. They worry about the influence of drugs and crime as well as the exposure to “un-Islamic requirements,” such as inappropriate attire for gym classes, coeducational physical education, and sexual education.⁶¹¹ Islamic schools in America are generally of high quality, and tend to be expensive, and are therefore out of reach for some parents.⁶¹² Weekend schooling is provided in some mosques. As a way to attract the younger members of the community, some of these mosques are offering sports as part of their programs.⁶¹³ The main focus for most of these schools is Arabic instruction. The 1990s growth of Islam in America has also led to the creation of Islamic graduate studies, some of which offer training for imams.⁶¹⁴ Because of this, the newer generations will see a growth of American-trained religious leaders. The post 9/11 climate has led to a fear that Islamic schools are functioning as “sleeper cells” and are training radicals.⁶¹⁵ This study has not uncovered any evidence of this being the case.

It is perhaps a paradox, that some of the benefits of religious schooling and close-knit ethnic networks can also be a constraint on members of the communities. Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton's National Study of Youth and Religion found religious institutions to be inductions into a "moral order" and a promotion of "network closure for the diffusion of social control," among other things.⁶¹⁶ In other words, the "ethnic options" can be narrowed, and parental authority can become too dominant. The social control enacted by the close-knit community can limit adults and children alike. Aswad's study of Yemini immigrant women on the Southend found that the majority of the women "indicate that their husbands rely on religious authorities as a means of controlling them."⁶¹⁷ Sonya recalls how the close-knit community has positive and negative effects, and says that "an important part of Arab culture is a reliance on family and extended family, and supporting each other. In this regard, the support has really helped me in my life. However, there are two sides to every issue, and while I would say that I have felt supported, I have also felt hindered by the somewhat sheltered lifestyle that can be fostered through such a tight-knit existence."⁶¹⁸ Warner explains some of the pros and cons of this situation saying that "[e]nhancing parental social control is not always to the advantage of youth, particularly of girls who may be abused by parents or stepparents and whose aspirations may be discouraged in the name of traditional gender norms. Nonetheless, because girls are typically subject to greater social control by their families, they often do better in school and are more likely to be effectively bilingual than their brothers."⁶¹⁹ Bankston and Zhou differentiate between psychological adaptation and adaptation as achievement and upward mobility, and remind us that these two kinds of adaptation may not always coincide.⁶²⁰ The gender roles of Arab Americans will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter. Here it will suffice to remember that not all parental control, or religious authority is beneficial, even if there are some great advantages to being part of a strong ethnic community.

Islam is fast becoming America's second largest faith.⁶²¹ There are several reasons for the growth of Islam in America, for instance international trends, Islamophobia, and new immigration from Muslim countries. Muslim immigration has shown a marked increase since the 1990s.⁶²² The New Immigrant Survey Pilot (from 2001) found that Muslims are the second largest group of new immigrants, although Arab emigrants are not coming in high numbers. The largest group of Muslim immigrants is from Pakistan.⁶²³ Another reason for growth in numbers is through conversions, many of these are African Americans in prison, or students on University campuses.⁶²⁴

Not only is the number of faithful growing, the Muslim population is experiencing an

increase in religiosity. This development is similar to other immigrant groups. The editors of *Immigration and Religion in America: Comparative and Historical Perspectives* say that a “consistent pattern to be observed in incorporation into American society is that immigrant groups, especially in their native-born generations, tend to become more religious over time.”⁶²⁵ Warner has said that in order to ensure that immigrant children keep their religion, many people say they are “more religious here than they were at home.”⁶²⁶ Since there is a growing number of Muslim immigrants, in this view, it is not surprising that both immigrant and second-generation Muslims are experiencing an increase in religiosity. Louise Cainkar, Linda S. Walbridge, and Aswad have all studied Middle Eastern populations in the American Midwest, and agree that there is a measurable difference in religiosity of Muslim Arabs, starting in the 1990s.⁶²⁷ Aswad, speaking of Lebanese Americans, says the reasons for this development result from “Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and of anti-Islamic feeling in the United States.”⁶²⁸ The combination of Islamic revival in the Middle East, and of discrimination and Islamophobia in the U.S. has been a potent mix for religious revival. “The increased religiosity in the community is due both to the infusion of immigrants and to the attempts to assume a position of solidarity in the face of the antagonism felt in the United States in general and in Dearborn in particular against Arabs and Islam,” says Aswad.⁶²⁹ Ron agrees that part of the reason for increased religiosity among Arab Muslims is Americans’ perceptions of Islam. He says that “[o]ne reason is peer pressure. (...) Another reason for the greater practice of the faith is the siege mentality that has been forced upon us. There is safety in numbers! Attacks against Islam are practically a routine now in the media.” The failure of pan-Arab nationalism has added momentum to the Islamic movements’ and their struggle against secularism and the West.⁶³⁰ Cainkar says that the appeal of Islam “to Arab Americans lay in its capacity to provide meaning and resilience for the Arab American experience.”⁶³¹

The second-generation is of course also affected by increased religiosity. In many cases they are more religious than their parents.⁶³² In a famous quote, Haddad has said of Islam that “the grandparents fought for independence, their children for nationalism and socialism and their grandchildren for Islam.”⁶³³ The Detroit Mosque study revealed that the older participants were more likely to wish for a flexible approach to Islamic practice, than the younger participants,⁶³⁴ who may often be second generation. Cainkar’s research among second-generation Arab Muslims in Chicago shows that Islamic revival among youth is clearly related to discrimination faced in America. She says that Islam provides “meaning and resilience”⁶³⁵ and helps them “cope with their particular local experiences as homogenized,

dehumanized and voiceless Arabs in America.”⁶³⁶ Ron is an example of this increase in religiosity, and again ties it to Islamophobia. He says that even though his parents did not fast, pray or go to hajj, he does. He says that “[i]n their defence my parents did not experience the bias and prejudice that I and my brethren do.”⁶³⁷ For some respondents, though, the experience is the opposite. Nayla says “I think religion mattered more to my parents than me. They grew up in a time of basics where everyone was focused on their culture and practiced the religion as their number one priority.”⁶³⁸ Suha only goes to mosque on holidays. She says that religion matters less to her than her parents, and gives exposure to many different religions in America as the reason for her lack of religiosity. It is interesting to note that Nayla and Suha are the two youngest respondents, and Ron is one of the two oldest. *If* religiosity increases over the life span, Nayla and Suha’s religious outlook may change over time.

The previous chapter includes a discussion of how 9/11 and other international crises make the Arab-American population visible, where they used to be invisible. Of course, this is all true of Muslims, as well. In the aftermath of 9/11 there were reports of non-Arabs being targeted for attack due to the fact that they were Muslim, or were thought to be Muslim. In addition to this type of negative visibility, Muslims have become more visible simply because their numbers have swelled, and because of their increase in religiosity and willingness to show it. Haddad and Smith say that “Muslims who are members of minority communities are increasingly aware that when they congregate, become visible, they may invite various forms of retribution. Visibility may lead to identification as dangerously foreign, ominous, and threatening given the anti-Muslim atmosphere that currently permeates Western society. (...) Despite these concerns, however, growing numbers of immigrant Muslims in all areas of the Western world are now opting to be more visible.”⁶³⁹

One type of visibility that results from the growth of Islam in America is the growth in hijab-wearing. In the 1960s, few Muslim women were covered.⁶⁴⁰ Haddad explains that newly arrived immigrant women may choose to wear hijab, even when neither their mothers nor grandmothers wore it.⁶⁴¹ Ron, speaking of newly arrived Iraqi Shia, ties their veiling to arrival time: “Many of them still wear the long black Chadours from head to foot. Very few, if any, of the Lebanese Shia women dress in this manner. The Iraqi Shia are still new to America and these more ancient traditions will fade or adjust with time, as they have with the Lebanese.”⁶⁴² Haddad and Adair T. Lummis found that the degree of adherence to Islamic dress varied from mosque to mosque.⁶⁴³ The meaning of the hijab for these Muslim women varies too. A veil is a cultural symbol, hence it can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The meaning is not inherent to the veil itself.⁶⁴⁴ Recent scholarship warns that although there is

certainly evidence of subjugation of women in the Middle East, “a growing number of scholars now argue that claims about the oppression and subjugation of veiled Muslim women may, in many regards, be overstated (...) [since] women’s motivations for veiling can vary dramatically.”⁶⁴⁵ Studies have found that hijab can function as a way for Muslim women to participate in public life, and work alongside men.⁶⁴⁶ The veil, for these women, functioned as protection, allowing them to safely enter the public sphere they otherwise would have avoided. In this regard, the hijab certainly needs to be seen as a means to upward mobility (through possibility of work), and greater assimilation.

The most common reason for veiling is that it is proscribed by the Quran.⁶⁴⁷ There are other reasons for veiling, many of them center around the idea of obedience (to God, to gender rules), but a different kind of argument of why to veil, is as a symbol of defiance towards the West.⁶⁴⁸ Read and John P. Bartkowski say the hijab can function as a “sign of the devout Muslim woman’s disdain for the profane, immodest, and consumerist cultural customs of the West.”⁶⁴⁹ Yet another reason for veiling, found in Read and Bartkowski’s study, is women’s networks that form around the veil, which are “particularly indispensable because they live in a non-Muslim country.”⁶⁵⁰ The veil gives comfort and ethnic distinction in a foreign land. This is a way that increased religiosity leads to psychological well-being, which is indicative of segmented assimilation’s second trajectory. The authors make an interesting point when they remind the readers that ‘culture wars’ are fought by the elite and by activists, their beliefs are not necessarily in correspondence with opinions of actual women.⁶⁵¹ Haddad and Smith say that in contrast to Muslim countries where the hijab may be banned or enforced, “the West, at least theoretically, provides the freedom to be Muslim in the way that one chooses.”⁶⁵²

This religious freedom has led to some Muslims’ claim that they are just as American as everyone else, and that they deserve acknowledgement of this fact. Since assimilation is a process that requires willingness both on the part of the immigrant and of the mainstream, acceptance of an immigrant’s religion is necessary. Immigrants have employed different strategies to this end. One method is to downplay or discard ones religion.⁶⁵³ Another is to claim that to be American one must have the freedom to practice religion how one pleases, whereby one can celebrate or accentuate differences as being part of an American religious mosaic.⁶⁵⁴ Lin says that immigrants can “try to modify American society and culture so that it acknowledges what they bring as legitimate and valuable.”⁶⁵⁵ Scholars write that in the 1970s, Muslim leaders and individuals saw the Americanization of earlier Muslim immigrants as having gone too far. As a reaction to this, some Muslims started to emphasize their

differences.⁶⁵⁶ Khan says that in the 1990s, there was more confidence among leaders and in the community: “While the senior generation was content to defend, the new generation is eager to be more proactive. They are not satisfied with the mere preservation of Islamic identity. They want it accepted and recognized as a constituent element of American identity itself.”⁶⁵⁷ Ron’s definition of assimilation is an example of this type of assertion. He says that “[a]ssimilation to [me] means that my fellow Americans have accepted me as I am. Not tolerated me, but accepted that I am as American as the next person even though I may have a different faith, different customs, language capabilities, skin color, facial features, etc.”⁶⁵⁸ Awareness of constitutional rights has led to the establishment of organizations to demand the privileges and rights owed them.⁶⁵⁹ This type of religious assertion is new to many immigrants to the United States who have not enjoyed religious freedom in their home countries. For some people, it was their main reason for emigrating. Freedom of religion, secured in the Declaration of Independence, has led many Muslims to feel optimistic about their future in America. Leonard writes that Muslim leaders saw “the existence of a Muslim public sphere where Muslims can think freely to revive and practice Islam [as a] gift to Muslims, something unavailable in most of the Muslim world.”⁶⁶⁰ The participation in a multicultural society, and gaining acceptance as “one of us,” rather than “other,” is only possible if the mainstream allows Muslims the right to be American. Zhou and Portes explain that context of reception is one of the main determinants that decide which trajectory an immigrant family is likely to follow. They describe both government policy and societal reception as part of the context, alongside the strength and health of the pre-existing coethnic community. Government policy has not had a major bearing on the newer immigrants from the Arab world – at least not officially. The main exception is Iraqi refugees, who have had the benefit of some government programs.⁶⁶¹

Societal reception, on the other hand, has had a major impact on Muslim Arabs’ possibilities. Many Americans are unwilling to accept Arabs, perhaps especially Muslims, as true Americans. Shryock writes that “[i]n the days following September 11, Arab Detroit was awash in American flags. (...) For some, American flags were talismanic shields; for others, they were defiant assertions of patriotism. Many non-Arab and non-Muslim observers thought it was all for show – some of it was, of course – but this sceptical attitude only proved how hard it was for Arabs and Muslims to be seen as ‘authentically’ American.”⁶⁶² Scholars say that concerns about the compatibility of Arab values to American values are reminiscent of Nativism in the past.⁶⁶³ One could, for instance, point to the fear that Irish Catholics would not be able to be real Americans, due to their allegiance to the Pope in Rome, rather than to

American democracy. Looking back, these types of worries almost seem comical, since Irish Americans at this point in time are as American as apple pie. We could perhaps assume that we will feel the same about Middle Easterners in a hundred years. Wayne Baker and Jamal use the World Value Study to show that “the traditional values of Arab Americans are not that far from the traditional values of other Americans, once we view values in global perspective. (...) Americans in general are closer to Arab Americans and the Middle East [on the traditional-secular scale] than they are to the peoples of all historically Protestant European nations.”⁶⁶⁴

Writing about hate crime in the form of attacks on individuals, mosques and businesses after 9/11, John Corrigan and Lynn S. Neal make the claim that “the interpretation of these groups and their religious traditions as ‘foreign’ justified action against them, all in the name of upholding American values and protecting American liberty.”⁶⁶⁵ The authors name the contemporary media as part of the problem, and say that it depicts Islam as a violent religion saying that is “antithetical to the American way of life.”⁶⁶⁶ McCloud explicitly mentions assimilation, saying that Muslims are hindered by Americans who cannot accept immigrants from “countries that are not considered friends of this nation.”⁶⁶⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, the views portrayed by the media, about Muslims, are tied to American foreign policy in the Middle East. Since the United States generally has favored Israel, many Arabs feel that they are enemies “by default.” The fact that most Middle Eastern extremists are Muslim has led to identification of Islam as America’s enemy abroad. Islam has taken over the position formerly held by the USSR⁶⁶⁸ In combination with increasing Zionism, Arab and Muslim organizations are portrayed as “spies and propagandists for foreign interests”⁶⁶⁹ Interventions in the Middle East are commonly seen as a war on Islam.⁶⁷⁰ Khan says that some Muslims in America have a negative view of America and Americans as a whole, because they have “trouble reconciling America’s benign attitude toward Muslims at home with the consequences of its malevolent foreign policy.”⁶⁷¹ Joseph exemplifies the Arab American view of American foreign policy: “The media emphasis on Muslim fundamentalism in America is part and parcel of Israel's propaganda machine in America. All to advance Israel's interests, even when it runs contrary to America's strategic interests. President Obama and other ranking officials have finally recognized that the status quo in the middle east [sic], particularly as it relates to the Palestinian question and Israel's abuse of the Palestinian people serves as a recruiting poster for extremism that puts American soldiers in harms way. Finally, the tail no longer wags the dog. Thank God!!!!!!!!!!!!”⁶⁷² Joseph has hope for the current administration’s betterment of American-Middle Eastern relations. Until this is achieved,

Arab and Muslim immigrants will be unfavorably received in the United States. This will ultimately affect their chances at assimilation.

3.3 The Third Trajectory: Southend Poverty

The third trajectory of segmented assimilation is commonly described as the situation where an immigrant population acculturates, but instead of a move towards the white middle class, they take on the characteristics of the urban (often non-white) underclass. The Muslim Arab community in Detroit is not only diverse, but also a divided community. The Iraqi and Yemeni Muslims living in the Southend of Dearborn are easily described as unassimilated, in contrast to the Muslims described in the previous section. The question is whether they are vulnerable to downward assimilation, or will they over time become assimilated into the American Islam described above? Low socioeconomic status, social and geographic isolation, as well as the discrimination they suffer from more assimilated Arab Muslims, leads one to believe that they are likely to feel alienated in the Arab Detroit community. Findings in the previous chapter do not indicate that these Arab Muslims are joining gang- or drug-related activities, but one can wonder whether Islamic radicalism could be a draw to disenfranchised youth in this enclave of the enclave. This study has not uncovered any evidence of that particular development. However, it is likely that radicalism, being so strongly linked to criminal activity (terrorism), would in fact be difficult to discover, especially from an academic standpoint. This section discusses developments that point to an isolated sub-community of Arab Muslims, where many members do not show signs of assimilating, nor do they perhaps wish to assimilate. This in itself means they are less likely to gain mainstream acceptance, as well as acceptance into the growing American Islamic community, leading them to become permanent “outsiders,” which in turn can lead to downward assimilation over time.

This section will also discuss the possibility of dissonant acculturation, as a result of cultural gender expectations that clash with typical American gender roles. Dissonant acculturation is defined by Portes and Rumbaut as the situation that develops when the children’s knowledge of American culture and the loss of immigrant culture happens at a different rate than their parents’. This “undercuts parental authority” and places children at risk for downward assimilation.⁶⁷³ As a part of young peoples’ acculturation, they are likely to oppose Arab gender roles, which in turn can lead to conflict between the generations. In a less assimilated and more isolated environment like the Southend, the maintenance of traditional gender roles is more likely. If the second-generation is without a larger support

group, and feels alienated from both Muslim American youth, American youth, as well as their parents, their opposition can lead to more dire consequences than is likely in a more diverse, resourceful, and culturally accepting environment as was described above.

Dearborn's Southend is an enclave within an enclave.⁶⁷⁴ Being an area that is close to the Ford manufacturing plant, it used to be inhabited by a variety of immigrant groups, especially those arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe. As with the rest of Detroit, white flight took those immigrants to the suburbs, and the area was left to Arab immigrant populations.⁶⁷⁵ The Southend of Dearborn is separate and distinct,⁶⁷⁶ Aswad says "it has been regarded as the 'other side of the tracks' for many in Dearborn."⁶⁷⁷ It is isolated, geographically, by freeways and the plant, and is a staging area for new immigrant settlement.⁶⁷⁸ The area is inhabited by Arab Muslim working class families, often of peasant background, mainly Yemeni, but also Palestinians, and Iraqis.⁶⁷⁹ The area is marked by pollution, high unemployment, government subsidized housing, low socioeconomic status,⁶⁸⁰ and more traditional religious practices.⁶⁸¹

The Iraqi Shia came to the United States as refugees, often having spent time in refugee camps before arrival. Some of these refugees have reported torture, rape and trauma.⁶⁸² The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement have assisted these refugees, for instance by helping to obtain jobs or in learning English. This assistance was limited to two years, making successful incorporation "a very daunting and nearly impossible task in so short a time," according to Rosina J. Hassoun.⁶⁸³ Many observers say that these Iraqi Shia are not part of the larger Muslim Arab community of Dearborn⁶⁸⁴ and experience some discrimination by other Arab Muslim groups in Dearborn.⁶⁸⁵ This is exemplified by Ron who says that despite their common Shi'a faith, Lebanese Muslims would prefer that the Iraqi Shi'a did not come to the Lebanese mosque, because of their conservative and traditional ways.⁶⁸⁶ Along with the Yemeni, who are also a newly arrived, these populations are often referred to as 'boaters' by Arab Muslims elsewhere in the Metro area.⁶⁸⁷ They are discriminated against, and David and Ayoub found that in order to be distinguished from these 'boaters,' Arab Muslim youth call themselves 'Arabics' rather than Arabs. These authors found that in Fordson High School, which is over 90% Arab American, "the 'boater' youth (...) are viewed in condescending terms as unsophisticated and generally nerdy."⁶⁸⁸ Shryock and Nabeel Abraham write that Arab Detroit has two faces, "one is American(izing), one is Arab(izing), and each is potentially a source of embarrassment to the other."⁶⁸⁹ In many cases, this division is between the first and second generation, leading to the possibility of dissonant acculturation described later in this chapter.

There is a marked class difference between Iraqi and Yemeni Muslims in the Southend, and other Muslims living in East Dearborn and in suburbs. Karen Rignall says that the “cycle of starting out in Dearborn and then moving to the suburbs is happening less and less. The socioeconomic foothold of the most disadvantaged immigrants, the Yemenis and the Iraqi Shia, is so tenuous that it creates virtually insurmountable barriers to long-term skilled employment.”⁶⁹⁰ Aswad studied Yemeni and Lebanese working class immigrants, and their attitudes towards welfare and women working. She found that the auto recession had brought on a new acceptance of welfare.⁶⁹¹ The acceptance of welfare was seen as an embarrassment to the Yemeni men, and to their children, while the women saw it as a source of independence because it left them less dependent on their men.⁶⁹² The Yemeni displayed more traditional gender practices than the Lebanese, for instance in wanting their daughters to marry other Yemeni, and to marry young. This led to conflict between the generations, which in turn led to an increase in family counselling at ACCESS.⁶⁹³ In conclusion, Aswad says that this 1994 study shows that since her last study of Dearborn Arabs in 1971, “the numbers of Arabs on welfare is markedly increasing due both to high rates of unemployment and the influx of new refugees.”⁶⁹⁴ The finding that Yemeni and Iraqi Muslims in the Southend are more isolated and less assimilated than the Lebanese (who primarily live in East Dearborn) is confirmed by Howell and Jamal in 2009,⁶⁹⁵ meaning this was not just a passing phase.

Shryock, writing in 2002, calls the Southend “gritty, (...) easily the most conservative and visually ‘exotic,’” and says that in his many communications with the media, *this* is the imagery and community they are interested in writing about.⁶⁹⁶ Abraham and Shryock point out that Arab Detroiters are all “boaters until proven otherwise.”⁶⁹⁷ This exotic community, according to Shryock, exemplifies what the American public fears: a religiously conservative Muslim Arab community, with a “possible presence of a ‘fifth column.’”⁶⁹⁸ Yet, this study has been unable to uncover evidence of such a presence. The Detroit mosque study reminds us that following a more traditional interpretation of Islam “does not imply isolationism or rejection of American society.”⁶⁹⁹ The study concludes that “[r]adicalism and isolationism are not evident in Detroit mosques.”⁷⁰⁰ The Arab American study team reached the same conclusion,⁷⁰¹ and interview respondents say much of the same. Ron and Joseph are both tired of Islam being linked to terrorism and radicalism, and remind us that there are radicals in all religious persuasions. When asked if he is aware of any fundamentalist groups in Arab Detroit, Ron says “NO! Are there mosques and religious leaders who have a stricter interpretation of the Holy Qur'an than other mosques or Imams? YES! That does not mean that they are terrorists or that they are anti American.”⁷⁰² Joseph ties these assumptions to

foreign policy saying that the “Muslim community, myself included, are vocal in expressing disgust and anger with the U.S. government's policies in the middle east [sic] that allows Israel to brutalize the Palestinian people, and senselessly attack Lebanon. To some taking this stance and holding these opinions qualifies as being an extremist and a fundamentalist, then I guess the entire Muslim community, myself included, qualify.”⁷⁰³ Joseph says that if there are fundamentalists, they are a small minority. Frank also says that he has never heard of fundamentalist groups operating in Detroit or Dearborn.⁷⁰⁴ Since this study has not found any evidence of radical fundamentalist groups, it cannot make any assumptions or predictions of the Southend second generation’s downward assimilation towards such groups. The only possible conclusion is that the alienation of these youth, can lead to vulnerability, which can be taken advantage of by such groups, if they do in fact exist in Detroit.

One source of disagreement between the parental generation and their children is in gender roles. Lin says that “immigrants use changes in family and gender roles as one way to mark their adaptation – or resistance – to American society.”⁷⁰⁵ This is part of what is happening between the first and second generation of Arab Americans. Most scholars that study Arab Americans agree that the source of their gender roles is the Arab culture, not the religions specifically.⁷⁰⁶ Aswad says that “Muslim and Christian Arab families both have the same general family organization and rules, which often are incorrectly characterized as Islamic.”⁷⁰⁷ Read has done a variety of studies about Arab women (some in cooperation with other scholars) and has found that inegalitarian gender roles, feminist orientations, and labor force participation are tied to degree of religiosity, not to religious affiliation as Christian or Muslim.⁷⁰⁸ Likewise, Naber found that feminist affiliation was linked to race, class and historical circumstances, not to religion.⁷⁰⁹ These findings are similar to the findings of scholars of other religious and ethnic groups; it is the degree of religiosity, or how conservative the sect of the religion is, that determines women’s roles.⁷¹⁰ This coincides with the findings of this study. Both Muslim and Christian interviewees report feeling restricted by their parents’ ideas of women’s roles. Suha says that it is “hard to (...) have close relationships with men because of the various ideas that people have about Arab/Muslim women, and my family’s expectations.”⁷¹¹ Janice was raised Orthodox Christian and says she hated not being able to date or go to parties and sleepovers.⁷¹²

The Southend population is nearly exclusively Muslim, therefore they are the focus here. As displayed earlier in this chapter, the younger Muslim generation is experiencing a rise in religiosity, yet they are eager to “divorce” their faith from Arab culture. One of the arenas this is likely to occur is in gender relations. The parental expectations of the home as

women's sphere, for instance, will be challenged by the second-generation's awareness of women in the American workforce, as well as by receiving higher education themselves. Read has demonstrated that the stronger the cultural bonds are, the less likely women are to be employed and have power in family decisions, while strong religious identity, on the other hand, led to higher labor force participation rates.⁷¹³ Scholars have shown that Muslim women in America are active participants in public life, and in discussions of women's roles.⁷¹⁴ For instance, the Detroit mosque study found that females are more likely to be registered to vote.⁷¹⁵ Aswad's study of Lebanese and Yemeni women mentioned above found that in the Yemeni families men controlled the money, women were hindered in gaining employment, and neither men nor women attended the mosque much.⁷¹⁶ In contrast, the Lebanese families were more religious, attended mosque more often, and men and women were more likely to both work and share financial responsibilities.⁷¹⁷ In other words, religiosity need not be a hindrance in women's public life.

If the gender roles ascribed are a cultural phenomenon, acculturation is inevitably going to change them, even while maintaining religious identities. U.S. born Arab American women are more educated, have fewer children, have higher employment rates, and have more autonomy and power in the family,⁷¹⁸ according to Susan E. Marshall and Read's research. Portes and Rumbaut's CILS found that across almost all nationalities, female students aim much higher than male students, as well as perform better in school.⁷¹⁹ Public participation, even if endorsed by parents, will inevitably lead to more interaction with mainstream youth, which in turn will work against maintenance of traditional gender roles. In a case of dissonant acculturation, parents lack coethnic support, children Americanize rapidly, and rebel against their parents. If the parents are not familiar with American forms of discipline, they can alienate their children even further. Portes and Rumbaut write that many immigrant parents rely on physical punishment to control their children. In the United States, however, children can threaten to call the police. "Parents of modest education, who often lack the skills to devise other means of social control, thus fall at the mercy of peer pressure and the external environment."⁷²⁰ In many cases the parents resort to private schools or overseas education, if they can afford it, and if the home country's conditions are stable enough. One could imagine that sending their children home for education is not a viable option for Iraqis at this time, nor are private schools, due to their cost. Thus it is likely that rebellion over gender roles will cause parent-child conflict in the Southend Muslim communities

3.4 Conclusions about Religion

The main conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that the community is too diverse to be described as following one specific path of assimilation. Not only is the assimilation trajectory affected by Christian and Muslim affiliation, it is affected by geography, societal reception and class. The lower socio-economic conditions that condition the opportunities of Southend youth are unlikely to improve in the near future. The geographical isolation, the low levels of social capital of the new immigrants along with their histories of mistreatment, and the discrimination they face by both mainstream Americans, but also by Arab Americans, leads us to believe that the children growing up in the Southend today face some serious barriers to successful incorporation. The light in the tunnel is the strength and numbers of the East Dearborn Muslim community, along with its community organizations, which possibly can help these immigrants overcome their obstacles.

Looking beyond the Southend, the Arab Americans living elsewhere in Metro Detroit seem to be well-integrated, even if they are religiously segregated. Their strength lies in the fact that they can be part of a larger Arab Detroit – and be part of an “us” – even if the mainstream sees Arabs or Muslims as “others.” Lin says that Detroit’s Muslim Arabs “still face discrimination and prejudice, (...) [b]ut the size of the community is such that there are a variety of ways to combat enemies or pursue common goals, as well as ways to find community without engaging in battle.”⁷²¹ Living their formative years in such a supportive environment leads to a likelihood of both economic and psychological well-being for the Arab-American second generation. It is possible to acculturate, yet have high degree of religiosity. If Americans are willing to accept Islam as an American religion, these youth would no longer face major barriers to mainstream society. However, in the current political climate, both in America and globally, this seems unlikely.

The conclusion is that most Arab Muslims are following the second trajectory of segmented assimilation, while most Arab Christians are following the first trajectory. There is little evidence to support downward assimilation in Arab Detroit’s religious communities, but current developments leave the Muslims on the Southend vulnerable, especially in the face of Islamophobia, where this population seems to be the personification of ‘the Muslim’ that America fears.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This conclusionary chapter has two goals. First, to compare and analyze the findings from the chapters about racial- and ethnic identity and religion, concerning segmented assimilation trajectories. Second, to compare the experiences of Arab Americans to those of other immigrant groups, in order to show that perhaps they are not as different as many Americans think they are. The research for this thesis is primarily done in the field of Arab-American studies, and the reader could be misled to think that Arab-American immigrant experiences are novel. Some of them, of course, are. Yet, many of the assertions made in this thesis could easily have been made about other ethnic groups as well. The first part of this chapter will detail some of these assertions, the second part will look at the main topic of this thesis, segmented assimilation, and make some conclusions regarding the findings from both chapter two and three. Finally, this conclusion will point to areas for future research regarding segmented assimilation and Arab Americans.

Arab Americans have had a shifting, and uneasy relationship to race, similar to that of many other immigrants to the United States.⁷²² Some individuals of non-European descent went to court to prove their whiteness, in order to gain the right to naturalize. At this time in American history there was uncertainty regarding how to classify races, and the courts relied on a variety of “experts” and “scientists” to help them decide whether or not, for instance a person from India, was white. Peggy Pascoe says that racial categories in this period were “more notable for their malleability than for their logical consistency.”⁷²³ Court cases involving persons of Indian and Japanese descent show how the category of “white” shifted from referring to skin color, to perceived racial categories (Caucasian), to common knowledge arguments of what was meant by “white.”⁷²⁴

Although Arab Americans achieved white status, after the 1960s there was growing discontent about belonging to that category. One reason was that in being white, they were excluded from minority benefits such as affirmative action. Other white ethnics, like Slavs and Italians, were also saying that they felt overlooked, and that they needed access to social programs to help with upward mobility.⁷²⁵ Jews had become quite successful by the 1960s, and were considered white too, though they had a history of being considered what Eric Goldstein calls “a racial conundrum.”⁷²⁶ Goldstein shows how becoming accepted as white had social benefits, but also emotional costs.⁷²⁷ He says that the “loss of [Jewish] ‘race’ as a term for self-description rendered inarticulate some of their deepest feelings of group solidarity and difference. (...) the need to identify as white made it exceedingly difficult for

Jews to assert a minority consciousness in American society, something that was extremely central to many Jews' self-conception."⁷²⁸ This resembles Arab American racial history as well. Increasingly they feel uncomfortable in the white category, and in some cases are actively lobbying for a distinct racial category. Arab American interest groups have fought to keep the "ancestry" category in the census, since it gives them an opportunity for visibility. They are not alone in wanting this. Goldstein explains that Jews often wrote in "Jewish" in the category for "other race" on the 2000 census, just like Arab Americans wrote in "Arab."⁷²⁹ Helen Hatab Samhan speaks of a national Working Group on Ancestry in the U.S. Census, where Arab Americans joined forces with advocates of the Italian, Polish, German, Hungarian, Greek, and Armenian communities.⁷³⁰

In other words, Arab Americans do not have a simple relationship to race, but they are not alone in this history. Karen Brodtkin says that "ethnoracial assignment" is not a choice, however an individual can self-consciously invest in the construction.⁷³¹ Groups like the Irish, for instance, have invested in a white identity in order to rise from their lowly position as marginal whites.⁷³² Arab Americans have used distance to other racial groups, especially African Americans, to prove their whiteness. The same is true of other groups, for instance Jews and members of the Irish working class.⁷³³ "For Jewish whiteness to be unambivalently embraceable, as Toni Morrison argues about whiteness in general, it needed blackness that was its repellent opposite."⁷³⁴ One way to create this distance is to use stereotypes. Brodtkin says that stereotypes "invented in service of slavery and imperialism" were used about other racial minorities as a way to support domination over them.⁷³⁵ Stereotypes used about Arab men were also used about for instance African American and Polish men, who were portrayed as hypersexual and lusting after white women.⁷³⁶

Arab American ethnic history and development is not unique either. The creation of the Arab-American ethnic identity took place in the 1960s. At this time, America was experiencing an "ethnic revolution," where other groups were becoming visible, and fighting for minority rights too. César Chávez' strikes among Mexican American workers got national attention, though it perhaps gave the workers more recognition than actual monetary benefits.⁷³⁷ Jews were by this time integrated and successful enough that they could pursue more distinctiveness.⁷³⁸ The Jewish Renewal Movement used symbols and language from the Black Nationalist movement to argue their cause.⁷³⁹

Scholars argue that the earliest Arab American immigrants did their best to blend into American society, in order to gain acceptance and avoid discrimination. Among other things, Arab Americans changed their names. This behavior was common among other immigrants

too, for instance Jews.⁷⁴⁰ In later times, some Arab Americans have avoided loud proclamations of their ethnic identity, especially when the United States was at war in the Middle East. The same can be said of other immigrant groups. For instance, during World War I, German Americans changed their names “from Schmidt to Smith.”⁷⁴¹ Øverland says that German Americans had to “argue for their loyalty and their sacrifices for a skeptical audience that identified them with the enemy.”⁷⁴² In times of war, various immigrant groups have joined the military to prove themselves as loyal members of the American citizenry. This is true of Arab Americans, but also of for instance Germans, Romanians, Finnish, Lithuanians and Italians.⁷⁴³ Øverland shows that for Greek Americans “the world war became the most important opportunity to demonstrate that they too had sacrificed their blood for their land of choice.”⁷⁴⁴ When the United States was at war with the immigrants’ homelands, these groups have suffered from discriminatory governmental programs. Arab Americans were rounded up for questioning after 9/11, some were detained, and some were deported. Similarly, Japanese Americans were put into internment camps during World War II. Military leaders justified it by explaining that even if the Japanese were assimilated, they were still of the Japanese race, and those “racial strains are undiluted.”⁷⁴⁵ One can wonder if this was the rationale of the American government after 9/11 too.

Thus, Arab Americans have struggled to be seen as authentically American, and have employed some of the abovementioned measures to that end. Over the course of American immigration history many other immigrant groups have been seen as un-American or as un-assimilable too. Brodtkin says that Asians, Mexicans and some Europeans were seen as “so foreign, so savage, and such dangerous criminals that they could never be assimilated.”⁷⁴⁶ Øverland’s *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870-1930* is a study of how immigrants from for instance Italy, Scandinavia and Ireland employed “homemaking myths” to prove that they too were American.⁷⁴⁷ American Catholics faced discrimination for a long time, in part because Americans feared that their loyalty was to the Pope, and not to America.⁷⁴⁸ Gleason writes that the separate Catholic schools were a major reason why Catholics were not accepted as loyal citizens.⁷⁴⁹

This thesis argues that Islam as a faith in America is growing, as well as mutating. It is becoming Americanized, and there is a movement to unite Muslims of all ethnic and racial backgrounds under this new American Islam. Part of the reason for this move to unite is the discrimination faced by Muslims in America. These developments, however, are not unique to Muslims.⁷⁵⁰ Haddad, Smith and Esposito write that the unification of the Catholic Church was “facilitated precisely because of the anti-Catholicism that has prevailed for much of the

history of America.”⁷⁵¹ A common religion means strength in numbers, but it can also mean gaining access to recognition and status that is denied the immigrant in mainstream society, as has been found to be the case in the development of black churches.⁷⁵² The growth of Islam, and the increased religiosity of Muslims is partially due to developments in the Middle East. However, immigrants in America have commonly embraced religion as a means to grapple with their experiences in the new country.⁷⁵³ Religiosity can grow with subsequent generations, as evidenced by for instance the high levels of church affiliation and religious practice among second-generation Haitians in Miami,⁷⁵⁴ and does not necessarily disappear when the immigrant becomes upwardly mobile.⁷⁵⁵ Hirschman says that a “recurrent finding in research on religiosity is that persons with above average socioeconomic status are more likely to join churches and attend services regularly.”⁷⁵⁶ He also points out that “there is very little support for the secularization hypothesis that religion will disappear with modernity.”⁷⁵⁷

Immigrants in America are often concerned about the quality of American education, and of school giving their children access to undesirable aspects of American society, such as drug cultures, or class requirements that go against religious dictates. This is a concern for Muslims, just as it has been and continues to be a concern for immigrant families of other ethnic backgrounds. Philip Gleason writes that for Jews, the return to religion was seen as a way to “‘inoculate’ the next generation against assimilation.”⁷⁵⁸ Brodtkin writes that in her childhood, she was not entirely sure she wanted to belong to the mainstream society, since it “was somehow materialistic and shallow, lacking in real meaning.”⁷⁵⁹ Interviews done by the CILS show a number of examples of parents that are concerned about their children’s access to American culture, for instance in schools where they see “teachers who can’t discipline, unruly classes, and the ominous presence of gangs.”⁷⁶⁰

One way to ensure that your children avoid excessive acculturation is to enrol them in religious schools. As mentioned in chapter three, not all Muslims can afford these schools, and some are worried that their children will become too isolated. Gleason writes that Catholics and Jews have traditionally had different approaches to this dilemma. He says that Catholics “held that the need for religious schooling outweighed the negative effects of having a system that kept their children apart from other young people,”⁷⁶¹ while Jews have generally had their children attend public schools, but have used “supplemental education to fulfil religious needs.”⁷⁶² Gleason writes that among German and Poles, the desire to preserve the mother-tongue was one incentive to starting religious schools.⁷⁶³ Portes and Rumbaut write that Cuban Americans have a “high probability of attending bilingual private schools and, consequently, of finding themselves in an upward-mobility.”⁷⁶⁴ Likewise, Hirschman

writes that Catholic schools “may have been critical for the upward mobility for the children and grandchildren of immigrants.”⁷⁶⁵

A final finding of this thesis that should be compared to other immigrants’ experiences is the finding that higher religiosity and fundamentalist religion reinforces restrictive gender roles. These findings are true for Protestant, Jewish and Muslim religions.⁷⁶⁶ Sherkat says that for Protestant fundamentalists the “divine order of family relations relies on the headship of a Christian husband, the submission of the wife to her husband, and the subordination of children to their parents. Without this pattern of authority, many conservative Christians believe that the family cannot function properly, and a host of personal and social problems will proliferate.”⁷⁶⁷ Jen’nan Ghazal Read has found that Muslim religiosity “exerts a negative influence on women’s labor force participation, but only when children are present in the home,” and says this is true for Christian and Jewish women too.⁷⁶⁸ Certainly we could find examples of this in other religious groups too. This is important to remember, since one of the most enduring stereotypes of Arabs is that they are misogynistic.

Having given some examples of how other groups are similar to Arab Americans, we now turn to segmented assimilation theory, and the conclusion regarding the likelihood of Arab Americans following the three trajectories. The overall conclusion that can be reached is that Arab Detroit is too diverse, with its multitude of national-, generational-, socioeconomic-, and religious groupings to find an overall pattern. The picture is too complex to make a clear assessment of which trajectory is most fitting in describing Arab Americans in Metro Detroit. Yet, some generalized patterns can be observed, as long as we keep in mind that there are certainly many exceptions to these “rules.”

The first generalization to be made is that the suburban population, which is more likely to be Christian, and more likely to consider itself white, is following the first trajectory of segmented assimilation. The suburban population is ahead of the general population of the area regarding school enrollment in higher education. They mirror the general population in respect to attainment of college degrees. They are consistently described as well-integrated and assimilated. Their suburban-living means they belong to an economic class that differs from some of those who live in the city. The fact that they are more likely to choose a white racial identity reinforces the assumption that they feel like part of the (primarily) white mainstream. Their religion does not differ significantly from the mainstream’s and therefore is not a hindrance to assimilation or mobility. Perhaps one reason for their acceptance of the white mainstream, and the mainstream’s acceptance of them has religious roots. Arab Christians felt a commonality with American Christians right from the start, and have actively

used their common religion to their benefit. At the same time, the fact that most of the first Arab immigrants to America were Christians means that they have a longer history in the United States, generally a trait that encourages assimilation. They lived in America through the Americanization pressures of the pre-war era, and many of them purposely changed their names and home country behavior to suit their new American home. It is harder to pinpoint, from the sources used in this thesis, whether all of this holds true for the second-generation. We can assume that living in the suburbs, and growing up with Christian traditions still gives assimilative benefits. Yet, having foreign-born parents, and living through 9/11, means that these Arab Americans are still subject to stereotypes used about both immigrants and Arabs.

The second generalization to be made is that Arab Americans do not seem to be following the third trajectory of segmented assimilation – often called downward assimilation. The proximity to Detroit, with its significant urban underclass, is not a draw to disenchanted Arab-American youth. Comparing African Americans and Arab Americans of Wayne County using a variety of socioeconomic criteria, this study found that Arab Americans are better off in most regards. One exception, that Arab Americans are more likely to not have completed high school, can be explained by foreign birth. The other exception, higher poverty rates among Arab Americans lacks obvious explanations. However, there is a segment of the Arab community that belongs to the lower socioeconomic class: the Southend Yemeni and Iraqi Muslims. It is possible that this population, along with other recent immigrants make up the population with high poverty rates. There is no evidence that Arab-American youth are replicating patterns of school drop-out that plague Detroit. Neither is there evidence that Arab-American youth are joining urban gangs in Detroit, nor that they are creating their own gangs. One possible explanation for this is that Arab Americans do not wish to associate with African Americans, either because they are racist, or because they use distance to blackness as a means to gain access to mainstream society. Another possible explanation is that the Detroit Arab community's strength renders downward assimilation unnecessary. Youth can find community, networks and acceptance in Detroit, leaving the Detroit underclass a less attractive option.

Yet, there is a segment of Arab Detroit that is displaying characteristics typical of a socioeconomic underclass, for instance in higher numbers of welfare recipients. The Southend population is consistently described as separate and unassimilated. Their geographic isolation along with low levels of social capital and higher poverty rates makes them distinct in Arab Detroit. There are many refugees in this population, meaning they are likely to have experienced hardships in their past, and their status as “boaters” means they are discriminated

against by others in the Detroit Arab community. These factors are likely to contribute to a sense of alienation among young Southenders, who may or may not seek out alternative forms of resistance to American society. One such outlet could be Islamic radicalism. There is no evidence that this is taking place among these Southend Muslims, but one could wonder if it is a possibility in the future. The current political climate in the United States - portraying Muslims as America's number one enemy - would seem to make radicalism an even more attractive option for alienated youth. Certainly, radical groups can identify this vulnerability, and may try to take advantage of it.

The other factor that can lead to downward assimilation in this population is the danger of dissonant acculturation and role reversal, which leaves the parents unable to cope with their children's behavior. Joseph mentions that young Yemeni boys are struggling to find their place, and are disrespectful of their teachers. He has hope for the newly realized recreation center where he hopes youth will find a "controlled outlet of using their energy in a worthwhile way."⁷⁶⁹ The assimilation trajectory of the Southend second generation is too early to predict. Many of the first-generation Iraqi and Yemeni Muslims in this area arrived as late as the 1990s, thus the second generation is just now coming of age. In addition, one can hope that the large Arab community in East Dearborn, as well as in the suburbs provides enough support that downward assimilation can be avoided.

The third, and perhaps most important, conclusion to be made is that the second trajectory of segmented assimilation is the most fitting scenario regarding Arab Detroit. The second trajectory describes an ethnic environment that is diverse and healthy enough to support its inhabitants, who through actively cultivating an ethnic identity are able to adjust socially as well as advance economically. Arabs in Metro Detroit, who do not feel comfortable in, or have access to the white mainstream, can find networks, jobs, ethnic- and religious pride, ethnic- and religious institutions, parental support, political power, protection from discrimination, and connections both to the Old Country and to American life in the Arab-American enclave. The diversity of the community leaves many options open to second-generation youth who will be able to cultivate identities that are more likely to fit into both the Arab-American community, and to American society as a whole. These bicultural identities are exemplified by the high levels of bilingualism in Dearborn; and by David and Ayouby's findings among Dearborn second-generation youth, who they say constitute a "third Arab American community, symbolically situated between East and West, but with the dynamism and fluidity to function within either."⁷⁷⁰ The findings of the American Community Survey show that Arab Americans in Wayne County are obtaining the same levels of education, and

have access to the same occupations as the general population of the same area. In obtainment of management- and professional occupations, Arab Americans are ahead of the general population. The DAAS found that the younger generation of Arab Americans is getting both an education and higher paying jobs. Thus, in matters of education and occupation, Arab Americans are not falling behind the American public.

Muslim Arabs are increasingly embracing a religious identity, rather than a cultural identity. Access to American culture is likely to erode cultural practices that are seen as disadvantageous or old fashioned, while privileging behavior that is advantageous to upward mobility. For instance, U.S. born Arab-American women are more educated, have fewer children, have higher employment rates, and have more autonomy and power in the family, than their foreign-born “sisters.” Participation in religious organizations such as schools and mosques can hinder downward mobility by fostering psychological well-being and pride. The movement toward a common Muslim community – the Ummah – is also beneficial to Arab Muslims. A common Muslim-American community could offer some of the same benefits as the ethnic enclave: recognition, political power, strength in numbers, pride, and networks. In creating an American Islam, some of the more culture-specific practices would be left behind, and Islam would be more likely to be considered an *American* religion, drawing on the experiences of both foreign- and native-born Muslims. If the ascribed gender roles are a cultural phenomenon, acculturation is inevitably going to change them, even while maintaining religious identities.

There are two factors that can be considered hindrances in this scenario. The first is that the tight-knit community becomes a constraint on individuals who do not fit in, or who do not wish to fashion an “ethnic” identity for themselves. Hopefully those individuals have enough social capital by the time they come of age that they can successfully integrate into whichever environment they seek to join. The second hindrance, and perhaps more prevalent, is the current hostility felt by the mainstream towards Arab and Muslims. Assimilation being a two-way process cannot proceed if the mainstream is unwilling to accept Arabs and Muslims as true Americans. The current American political- and social climate seems permeated by Islamophobia. Because of on-going conflicts between the West, and certain radical groups in the Middle East, it is unlikely to end soon. Even if Americans are willing to accept individuals, and individual religious behavior, the likelihood of Islam becoming a charter faith in the near future seems dim. The Islamophobic climate affects Arab Christians as well as Arab Muslims, since Americans do not have a clear conception of their differences. The Arab enclave offers a degree of protection against discrimination, but as argued above, it

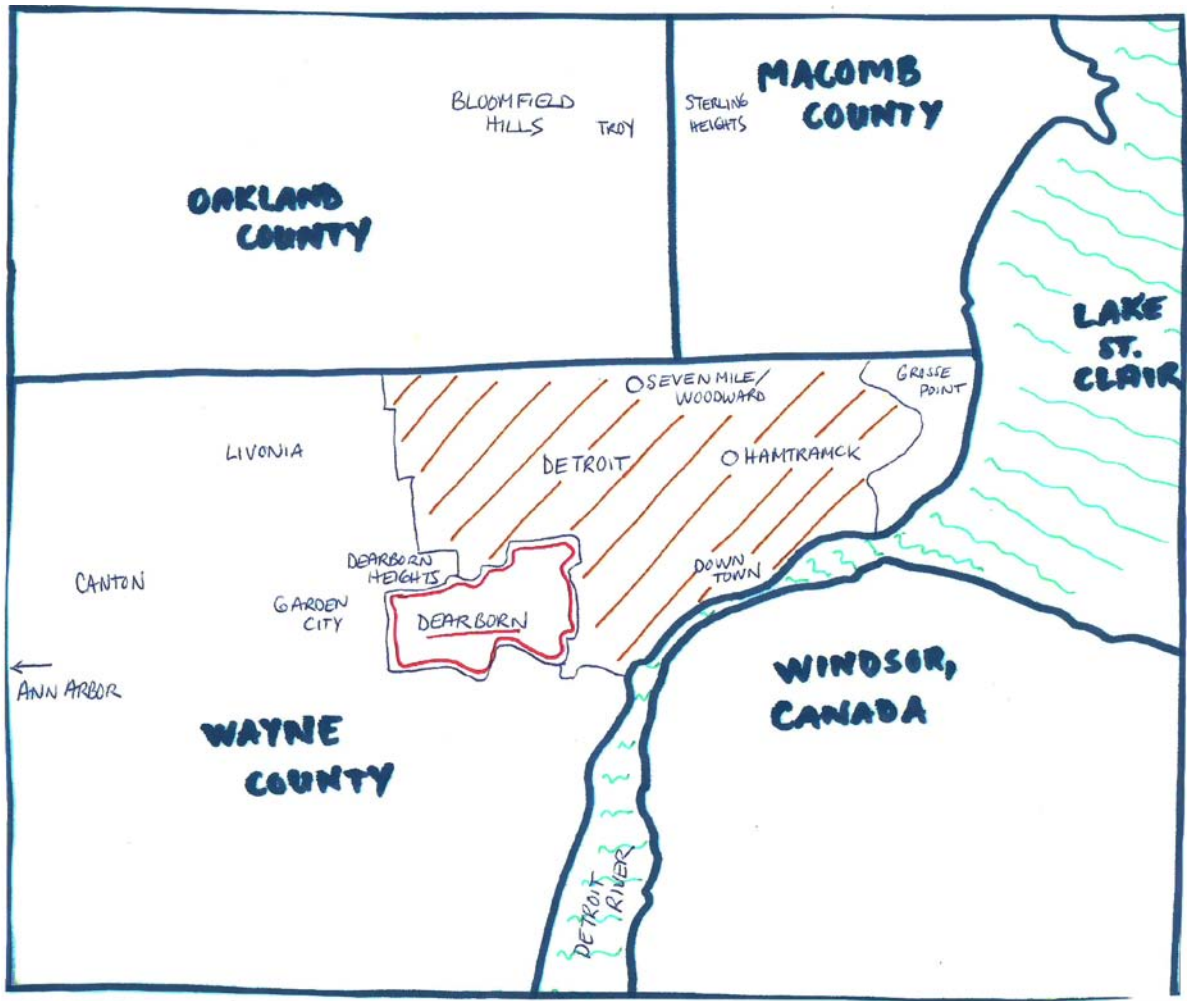
is not enough if the goal is full participation in American society, and acceptance of Islam as an American faith. By banding together, Muslims in America are trying to realize this goal, and perhaps in a generation or two it will be realized, in the same way that Jews and Catholics were able to become recognized. However, there is a major difference. When the Jewish faith and the Catholic faith became recognized as true American religions, the United States was not at war with countries that had a strong presence of either faith. Both the perceived and the real threat of Islamic radicalism, as well as economic and political interests in the Middle East, leaves many commentators pessimistic of the future of Islam in America.

Does this mean that religion is the main determinant in assimilation trajectories? If the Christian Arabs are assimilated and suburban, does this mean that Muslim Arabs are not? The answer is no. First of all, as many as twenty percent of Detroit's Muslim Arabs reside in the suburbs. Second, the Muslims in East Dearborn are in fact doing well when we look at socioeconomic criteria. Their choice to live in Dearborn is clearly not affected solely by socioeconomic determinants. Third, Muslims in the Southend are not faring as well as their East Dearborn neighbors and coethnics. This cannot be explained by religious differences, especially since higher income and education among Muslims encourages religious affiliation. Perhaps a better explanation is that the difference is one of class. Cainkar's study of Islamic revival in Chicago shows Iraqi refugees there as being in somewhat of the same situation as Detroit's Southenders. She blames their isolation on socioeconomic status, U.S. – Iraq relations, and Shi'a affiliation.⁷⁷¹ In Dearborn, the Shi'a affiliation is not the reason for the divide, since there are so many other Shi'a Muslims there. The Lebanese Shi'a of Dearborn do not display signs of isolation, or of socioeconomic difficulties. What we are left with is class and foreign policy. Karen Rignall says that "the more potent socio-political divisions in Arab Detroit exist across class lines or reflect degrees of cultural assimilation."⁷⁷² Likewise, Lin reminds us not to forget the importance of class when studying Middle Eastern immigrants.⁷⁷³ Since the Southend Muslims are more recent immigrants, and many of them are refugees, their differences in many cases are a difference of class. The scope of this thesis has not allowed for a more detailed look at class, but it would be a valid starting point for future research of segmented assimilation theory in Arab Detroit.

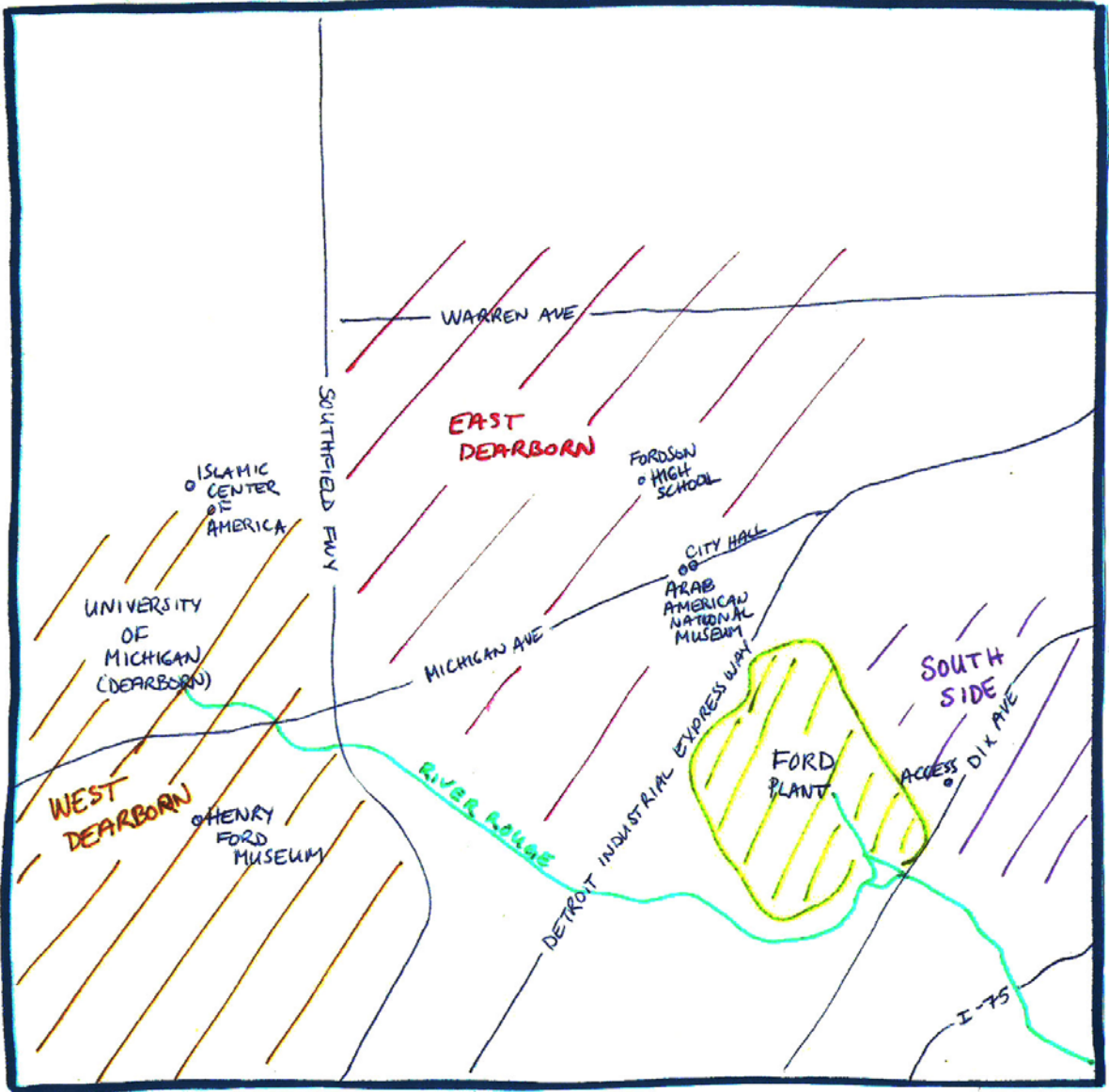
Another topic of interest would be a comparative study of Arab Detroit to other Arab enclaves in America, or to Arab Americans who do not live in enclaves. The comparison of segmented assimilation trajectories between such groups would give a richer picture of Arab immigrants in America, and would either give legitimacy to the claims of this thesis, or find that the assimilation trajectories have different explanations. Louise Cainkar is currently

conducting research about segmented assimilation in Arab Chicago,⁷⁷⁴ and her findings are of particular interest, since Detroit and Chicago have similar histories as former industrial Midwestern cities.

The definition of assimilation conceived for this paper was that assimilation means going from being an “other” to being “one of us.” Have Arab Americans assimilated according to this definition? The answer lies in whether Americans can accept Arabs and Muslims as “one of us.” There are no other all-encompassing barriers to incorporation – Arab Americans as a whole resemble mainstream Americans in many regards. They are religious, they are well-educated, they work in a variety of fields, and they participate in American politics. The strength of the community means that Arab Detroiters can be part of an “us,” even if they are considered “other” by parts of the mainstream. Of course, first-generation immigrants can be quite different than the average American, but the question posed by segmented assimilation is whether the second-generation is able to assimilate. This thesis sees societal acceptance as the main barrier to Arab-American assimilation.



Map II: Metro Detroit.



Map III: Dearborn

| NAME | AGE | BORN/ LIVES | PARENTS | RELIGION | EDUCATION/ JOB | FAMILY | LANGUAGES SPOKEN |
|---------------|-----|---|---|---|---|--|--------------------------------|
| NAYLA | 15 | Bloomfield Hills | From Libanon and Egypt. Arrived at age 3 and 21. | Muslim | High School student | Single, lives at home. | English, French, Arabic |
| NIDAL | 30 | Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids | From Palestine. Arrived: 1971 | Muslim | Bachelor's degree, Financial Planner | Single | English |
| RON | 64 | Grew up Dearborn, lives in Livonia | From Lebanon ⁷⁵ | Shi'a Muslim | College graduate, Army veteran, Police officer, and more | Divorced and re- married, Muslim wife, 3 daughters | English and Arabic |
| FRANK | 37 | Garden City | From Palestine, father came via Columbia. Arrived: 1960s | Orthodox Christian | Masters of education, teacher | Polish-American wife, 2 children | English and Arabic |
| JOSEPH | 68 | Dearborn | Father :Yemen, Mother :Bosnia- Herzegovina. | Muslim | Bachelor's degree, Veteran, Community activist | Single, 2 children | English and some German |
| SUHA | 22 | Born Saudi Arabia, lives in Ann Arbor | From Sudan, Arrived: 1990s | Muslim | B.A., Museum Public Programmig Coordinator | Single | Arabic, English and Spanish |
| SONYA | 27 | Garden City | From Palestine, Arrived: 1970s | Orthodox Christian | College graduate, Museum Educator | Single | English and some Arabic |
| JANICE | 33 | Canton | From Palestine, Arrived: 1960s | Converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints | Bachelor's degree, Museum Curator | Single | English and Arabic |

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