ELOBEID, MAHA A., Ph.D. Defining Identities: Acculturation Experiences of College-Educated, North Sudanese Immigrant Women in Greensboro, North Carolina. (2020)
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This qualitative case study examines acculturation experiences of seven college-educated North Sudanese women in Greensboro, North Carolina, in light of three acculturation theories and models: (a) John Berry's acculturation theory, (b) John Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and (c) Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's segmented assimilation theory. I chose these theories because they are among the most prominent theories dominating the immigrant acculturation literature. It was important for me to examine the acculturation experiences of the women I interviewed against these theories to see how the theories apply to the population I studied. The study also aimed at understanding how college-educated Sudanese women from the northern region of the Republic of Sudan speak about their identity upon settlement in the US and how their attachment to the homeland affect their acculturation experiences in the US. In this exploratory case study, I used semi-structured interviews to gather data. I used thematic analysis where I organized the data according to emerging patterns then used linear analysis and logic modeling to help organize and interpret the data. Major findings include the limitations of Berry's acculturation theory, Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory. The identities of the women participants in this study are linked to their national, familial, social, and religious/spiritual affiliation. Drawing on Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model that includes: aspirational, familial, social, resistant, navigational, and linguistic

forms of capital, I incorporate educational and religious/spiritual forms of capital that have been nurtured by my participants and their community.

DEFINING IDENTITIES: ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGE-EDUCATED, NORTH SUDANESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled’ masses yearning to breathe free.” I borrow this phrase from Emma Lazarus’s poem that is mounted to the Statue of Liberty and serves as a symbol for welcoming immigrants who come across the sea. The United States has always been a land of immigrants, as new people arrive every day with the intent to settle and make it their home. As immigrants make the transition from their homeland to their new country, they experience economic, cultural, social, and political changes (Berry, 2011; Ogbu, 1978; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). In settling, they adjust to their new homeland by navigating and developing understanding of the US society and its institutions based on their own interactions and experiences. In doing so they undergo a process known as *acculturation* (Berry, 2011; Ogbu, 1978).

Acculturation theories propose that the more positive experiences the immigrant encounters, the better outcomes they will achieve in the land of settlement (Berry, 1997; Ogbu, 1978; Portes & Zhou, 1993). This acculturation process is crucial in determining the position of the immigrant in the host society for several future generations as explained by theories (Berry, 2005; Ogbu, 1978; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). In my research, based on the narratives of the seven North Sudanese college-educated women I interviewed, I achieve three goals. First, I claim that acculturation outcomes are not universal as claimed by John Berry’s (2005) acculturation model and Min Zhou and

Alejandro Portes's (1993) segmented assimilation theory. Only John Ogbu's (1978) cultural-ecological model was found to offer an alignment with the acculturation experiences of the women in this study per the narratives they told. Secondly, I offer a model that represents the experiences of the women in this research. Thirdly, I adapt Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to include the kind of capital and assets the women in my study have.

Research Insights

Research suggests that African immigrant women's experiences are shaped by discrimination (Elnour, 2012; Phillion, 2003). Research also suggests that Arab Muslim women's experiences are also shaped by discrimination (Davids, 2014; Elnour, 2012). The term "North Sudanese" in this study refers to Sudanese people whose ethnic roots are from the northern region of the Democratic Republic of Sudan. College-educated north Sudanese immigrant women in my study are both African and Arabs; thus, they are at the intersection of race and Arab ethnicity which makes them more vulnerable for discrimination in the US. They are also well educated and participate in the US society as reported in this study. The women in this study described their acculturation experiences in the US as a mixture of positive and negative encounters. Such mixed experiences pose a challenge to popular acculturation models, such as John Berry's (2005) acculturation model and Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's (1993) segmented acculturation theory, which require classification of experiences as either positive or negative without a spectrum or scale that can capture mixed experiences such as those reported by the women in this study. The two theories challenged in this research are important among

scholars who are concerned with acculturation theories. According to Google Scholar, Alejandro Portes and John Berry have collectively been cited over 249,000 times. This high citation number offer speculation about the number of scholars who have read and cited their work. In my study I offer scholars who are concerned with immigrant acculturation models some insight about the non-universality of the models known as acculturation model and segmented assimilation theory.

Yosso (2005) offers a model of community cultural wealth that she designed to capture experiences of People of Color. There are six attributes to this community cultural wealth model: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital. Based on my findings in this research, I adapted Yosso's model to include educational and religious/faith capital.

My personal motive for conducting this qualitative, interview-based research is embedded in my identity as a scholar who has a passion for social justice and an interest in immigrant women's issues. Feminist scholars recognize that women and other minorities are not well represented in research and make an effort to ensure their voices are heard (Yegidis et al., 2018). The way marginalized populations make meaning of their world is often clouded by the ways researchers interpret participants' experiences. As a feminist scholar, I focus on making the voices of the women in my research heard as they shared with me how they make meaning of their experiences. Yegidis et al. explain that basic qualitative study that uses interviews as a prime method of data collection can be used to give voice to vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Challenges to the Theory

It was logical to examine John Berry's acculturation model against the acculturation experiences of the women I studied because his model has been considered one of the prominent acculturation models (Ngo, 2014; Schwartz et al., 2010). Berry's (1997, 2005, 2011) acculturation model is one of the first bi-dimensional models that became popular among scholars. For example, Berry have been cited over 94,000 times according to Google Scholar. Secondly, Berry studied indigenous peoples from central Africa, the Arctic, and Asia, with different lifestyles such as hunting, agricultural, and urban areas to develop his famous four-fold acculturation model that was adopted by scholars in cross-cultural psychology. In theory, Berry's (1997, 2005, 2011) acculturation model could be applied to any population. However, as I found in this study, the acculturation experiences of the women I interviewed did not align well with Berry's model. The participants' in my study experiences did not fit any of the four acculturation paths offered by Berry's model (marginalization, separation, integration, and segregation). I hypothesize that Berry's model does not take into account the rich community wealth the north Sudanese college-educated women bring with them. Their familial ties and support, aspirations for the future, adherence to faith and religiosity, educational attainment, and navigational abilities all contribute to shaping the acculturation experiences of the women I interviewed.

Portes and Zhou (1993) created the segmented assimilation theory, which differed from Berry's (1997, 2005, 2009) acculturation model by taking into consideration the effect of the labor market. When I examined the women's experiences, this model was

also problematic. Although Portes and Zhou account for the human capital in terms of educational achievement and familial support, their model does not take into account the aspirational, religious, and navigational aspects of the community wealth the women come with.

Based on his Cultural-Ecological Theory of Minority School Performance, John Ogbu developed a caste model for minorities in the society on the premise that the school mirrors the society. Similar to Berry's model and Portes and Zhou's theory, Ogbu's caste model is dependent on how the community treats the immigrant and how the immigrant responds to the broader society (Ogbu 1978). However, Ogbu's model took into consideration the immigrant's frame of reference in the ways they compare themselves. Ogbu's cultural-ecological model was found to have the best alignment among the theories and models I examined. It is important to note that Ogbu's analysis of involuntary minorities was criticized by scholars (Foster, 2004). However, this research does not focus on involuntary minorities.

Although I added to Yosso's community wealth model, in ways that capture the experiences of the women I interviewed, it is important to understand that, as with basic qualitative study research in general, I cannot generalize findings from my research to all college-educated north Sudanese women, or immigrant women more broadly. I can only assert this meaning-making for the seven women I interviewed.

Background Investigations of the Study

Despite higher educational attainment, black African immigrant women, such as the women in this study, face unique challenges of racial discrimination, cultural

deprecation, and interethnic conflicts (Elnour, 2012; Read, 2004; Ross-Sheriff & Moss-Knight, 2013). Research also suggests that despite the high educational attainment, African immigrants are lagging behind in the US workplace (Mattoo et al., 2008). As with all other populations, acculturation experiences of college-educated north Sudanese women are shaped by the nature of their daily interactions and the degree to which they want to retain their culture (Berry, 1997, 2005, 2009). Their human capital—that includes their educational level, English language proficiency, and their willingness to interact with the broader US society—should make their acculturation experiences positive, as theorized by Berry's acculturation model. However, the women in this study encountered a mix of positive and negative experiences with the US society. Hence, it was not possible for them to classify their experiences as only positive or negative, as Berry's model required.

Further, Portes and Zhou (1993) assert that acculturation outcomes are affected by the labor market. In their segmented assimilation theory, Portes and Zhou's state that highly educated immigrants such as doctors and engineers can enter the labor market as professionals. As evident from this thesis, the narratives of the women in this study posed a challenge to this assimilation theory. Among the women I interviewed there were two engineers, a dentist, a lawyer, an accountant, a veterinarian, and one with a degree in business management. All the women in my study revealed they could not access the labor market with the credentials they earned in their home country until they obtained higher education degrees at US institutions.

Research Questions

Most college-educated north Sudanese women are ethnically African Arabs (Davids, 2014; Elnour, 2012) and Muslims, which makes them vulnerable to discrimination in the US. However, their educational attainment and participation in the US society holds high potential for positive acculturation experiences (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). At the same time, they bring with them what Yosso (2005) describes as forms of cultural and community wealth - aspirational, familial, social, navigational, linguistic, resistant, (I add educational and religious), which are not represented in dominant theories.

Against this backdrop, I set to accomplish three purposes. First, I tested the applicability of John Berry's acculturation model, John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, and Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's segmented assimilation theory to my study participants. Second, I developed an illustration that encompasses the experiences of the seven women I interviewed. Third, I developed an adapted version of Yosso's community wealth model that is informed by the findings from this research. Within the boundaries of this qualitative research, I explored how college-educated Sudanese women spoke about their identities in the context of their acculturation experiences through these three research questions:

1. How do acculturation experiences of college-educated north Sudanese women align with or challenge current acculturation models and theories, specifically, Berry's acculturation model, Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory, and Ogbu's cultural-ecological model?

2. How do college-educated Sudanese women from the north speak about their identity upon settlement in the US?
3. How does their attachment to their homeland affect their acculturation experiences in the US?

Limitations

As with most qualitative research projects, this study has limitations. In this section I explain limitations to this research study. First, basic qualitative study research does not attempt to generalize findings to populations; rather, it can be thought of as a single experiment inquiry that generates results that can guide the direction of research but cannot be used as conclusive evidence leading to generalizations (Yin & Campbell, 2018). Since this research is a basic qualitative study that involves only seven college-educated north Sudanese women, it is important to understand that this research does not intend to generalize findings about acculturation experiences of all Sudanese women. However, this research shows us some important aspects of the acculturation experiences of the seven women I interviewed, which is acculturation with their own cultural community in Greensboro, North Carolina (NC). This aspect of acculturation is not represented in Berry's acculturation theory, Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory.

Second, as a researcher, an immigrant, and a member of the Sudanese community, I brought my own subjective experiences that included my daily interaction, cultural, and educational experiences. My own experiences may have had the potential to influence my judgement at times when conducting research. Throughout this research I kept a journal

and conducted peer reviews to help me remain aware. Glesne (2011) explains, subjectivity of the researcher always influences the ways interpretation of human experiences in qualitative research. Using techniques such as journal keeping, peer reviews, and reflecting on the researcher's subjectivity can help the preserve integrity of the research study (Glesne, 2011; Yegidis et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). I employed these techniques throughout this research project which helped me balance the ways I interpret my findings. My subjectivity will always remain part of my analysis. However, I keep reflecting on my subjectivity as recommended in qualitative research (Glesne, 2011).

My Positionality

As a college-educated north Sudanese woman who grew-up in Sudan, I am privileged in many ways. When I lived in Sudan, I was privileged by virtue of my tribal affiliation, education, and social status. I belong to the *Galia* tribe, which is one of the prominent northern tribes in Sudan. I was privileged as a college graduate in Sudan who grew up in a middle-class family. Although I was always aware of my educational and social privilege, it never occurred to me that I was ethnically or racially privileged. I was not aware of my racial privilege in respect to Sudan or the world until I came to live in the United States in 1996 as an adult. Coming from Sudan, I was oblivious to the racial color-coding people use in US. This does not mean that I come from a society that does not discriminate against people based on their ethnicity. It just means that I was not used to the labels people in the US were using. Using US ethnic and racial terminology, Sudanese people are mostly considered Black. In Sudan people are identified according to their skin color as white, wheat, yellow, red-brown, green, blue, and black (Bender,

1983). These skin colors refer to how dark or light one's skin is on a scale where wheat is darker than white (the lightest skin color), yellow a bit darker than wheat and so forth. The darkest skin color is referred to as black. This Sudanese color code system does not carry the weight of a discriminatory US color coding, at least the way I understand it. Even the white and black color codes used in Sudan do not equate to white and black in the US Tribalism in Sudan is connected to power and privilege in the same ways racial identification in the US is. Tribal identification carries a higher weight than skin colors since all of these colors are usually represented in most tribes. My own siblings have skin colors that range from yellow to green according to the Sudanese skin color code.

Upon arrival to the US as an immigrant, I went to apply for my social security card. Filling out the application form constituted my first racial experience in the US when I was faced with the question about my race. I found myself not "fitting" in any of the available options, yet I had to choose one. I identify as African, but my skin color is not black according to my cultural color code. I have always been considered wheat or yellow thus I did not understand how to describe that on the form. At that time I did not know that these forms are about racial categorizations based on social construction of origin. As a Sudanese woman, my racial identity had always been tied to my tribal affiliation rather than my skin color. Similar to many families in Sudan, my extended family include people who are white, yellow, green, blue, and black.

My racial experience at the social security office was eye-opening because it made me think about my racial identity in the US. Later, as I started learning more through my education and interaction with others, I became more aware of my

positionality. Although I became a US citizen in 1999, I still identify as an African immigrant woman in the US. I remain an immigrant because part of me still retains my Sudanese cultural identity. In my first few years in the US, I used to feel uncomfortable when I spoke, my accented English always told the listener that I did not grow up here, that I am an immigrant. As time passed, my accented English became part of my identity, a part I am proud of. I do not think my English language skills are better now; instead I think that I became more confident as I learned more about the culture in which I was living. I also found ways to weave my culture into my life in the US. I listen to Sudanese music when I drive, enjoy cultural gatherings that remind me of the homeland I left, and occasionally socialize with people from my culture who understand my jokes, idioms, and subtle cultural cues. Now I feel my identity has broadened to encompasses my positionality in Sudan, the US, and perhaps, the world.

As a member of the Sudanese community in Greensboro, NC, I am familiar with the culture, language, and issues the community faces. I also attend some of the festivals and community gatherings that take place from time to time. During those meetings most of the conversation is centered around family issues such as raising American-Sudanese children. Most of the women usually complain that their children are too 'Americanized' and do not want to embrace their Sudanese culture. I empathize with those women because my own children did not embrace their Sudanese culture, identify as Americans only. My aspiration for my children is for them to be grounded in my culture, to preserve my heritage. I share this aspiration with many of the Sudanese women I know. My

aspirations led me to think about my culture and my identity as an immigrant Muslim woman of color.

As I read more about current acculturation and assimilation theories and models, such as John Berry's acculturation model, John Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's segmented assimilation theory, I found myself thinking about where I fit within those theories. I examined my own experiences against those theories and found bits and pieces of my experiences represented in the theories, but I did not feel I could reduce my whole acculturation experience and outcomes to fit within a single theory. I felt that theories did not take into account my cultural heritage, educational experiences, and my mixed interactions with the US mainstream culture. My personal quest for identity as I continued to acculturate in the US made me curious about how college-educated north Sudanese women who lived in the US described their identities as they acculturated in the US.

Throughout this research journey I was aware about my positionality as a member of the community I was researching. To be able to reflect on my positionality, I kept a journal that included my thoughts and emotions during the interviews and data analysis. On chapter III I provide detailed description of my positionality.

Cultural Background of Women in Sudan

In order to understand the narratives of the women I interviewed, it is important to have a thorough contextual understanding of where they emigrated from, including their history, culture, and their position as women in their homeland - Sudan. When studying acculturation experiences, Portes and Zhou (1993) remind us about the contextual

importance of relationship between settlement and home countries, the economic situation in the home country, as well as the structure and number of existing ethnic communities in the settlement country.

A Background on Sudan

Sudan: A Brief History

Sudan has a long, rich history that dates back to the Nubian kingdom of Kush (1070 BC–350 AD). This was followed by the influx of Arab Muslims in the sixth century, which influenced the language and culture to become what we now know as Sudanese (McMichael, 1922). Those early conquests opened new avenues for Arab immigrants, who became settlers in the lands of Sudan. The new immigrants came with their culture and language, thus influencing the local population. Over time, the local tribes, along with the newly assimilated immigrants, developed their own dialect of Arabic, and many branded themselves as Arab tribes (McMichael, 1922). Like many African countries in the colonial era, Sudan was later colonized by the British, who also influenced its culture.

Since Sudan gained its independence from the British in 1956, it has undergone two civil wars that consumed resources and exacerbated tribal affiliations. People from the North identified with their Arab heritage that carried privilege (much akin to whiteness), while people from the South identified as Africans and were oppressed (Fábos, 2012). Both the first Sudanese Civil War (1955–1972) and the second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005) were between the North and the South. The separation of South

Sudan from Sudan in 2011 was decided after a referendum (Sidahmed & Sidahmed, 2004).

Throughout its short history as an independent country, government-based power in Sudan was dominated by Sudanese people from the north through military-based dictatorship regimes with short and sporadic periods of democracy. The longest democratic period lasted four years (1985–1989) and was sandwiched between two military regimes. Nimeiri military regime lasted for 16 years from 1969 to1985, and Elbashir's regime lasted 30 years from 1989 to 2019 (Sidahmed & Sidahmed, 2004). Since then, the Islamist dictatorship regime forced hundreds of thousands of Sudanese youth and families from all parts of Sudan to leave the country in a quest for freedom, equality, and economic stability (Ayers, 2010). Since the 1980s, some fled the country as refugees or asylum seekers, while others sought employment opportunities in the oil rich Gulf area.

Since 1983, Sudan also suffered from drought and famine that hit the horn of Africa. This led to the internal migration of Sudanese people from their villages and cities to the capital city of Khartoum, where most of the resources are located. Resources have continued to be centered in Khartoum, resulting in population clustering in and around the city (Shami et al., 1990). The 1997 economic sanctions imposed by the US on Sudan posed an additional challenge for Sudanese businesses, educational institutions, and people. This resulted in a lag in health and education, which in turn shaped the experiences of Sudanese people both in and outside Sudan (Mujahid, 2014).

Sudan: Education

As previously mentioned, educational institutions and businesses suffered greatly from the political conditions. Lack of resources in public schools and poor regulation of schools led to a high increase in the number of private schools, thus increasing the educational gap for economically disadvantaged children and families since the late 1980s (Mujahid, 2014). Disadvantaged girls and women were more impacted by the privatization of schools due to the intersection of socioeconomic conditions and gender roles. Within families, education is reserved for males, while females fill the labor gap in the agricultural sector, which represents one of the two main work sectors in rural areas (the other being pastoralism; Metz, 1991; Shami et al., 1990).

Sudanese Culture and Politics

Although Sudan is located in the east central part of Africa, many Sudanese tribes also identify as Arabs. According to Sharkey (2008), the Sudanese Arab identity dates back to the early Islamic era when an influx of Arabs came to spread Islam in Sudan. In addition to adopting Islam, many tribes adopted the Arabic language and Arab cultural identity (Metz, 1991; Sharkey, 2008). In Arabic, the word *Sudanese* is derived from the Arabic word *Aswad*, which means black (Sharkey, 2008). Thus, Sudan in Arabic means "land of the blacks." Sudan is not a mono-ethnic nation and thus tribal affiliation is very important in self-identification. Tribal affiliation is often based regionally (Mahmud, 1996). For example, most Arab identifying tribes are located in the northern and central region of the country (Metz, 1991). Since people do not identify by racial groups, tribal affiliation is used in official business, such as when obtaining government issued

identification cards. As such, these affiliations are used as foundations for privilege and oppression (Abdulhadi et al., 2011; Sharkey, 2008; Suleiman, 1999), with northern tribes dominating government regimes and places of power (Metz, 1991). Further, Sudanese immigrants carry their tribal affiliations with them when they come to the United States (Abdulhadi et al., 2011). The Western concept of race correlates to tribalism in the ways in which power, privilege, and oppression operate. Some tribes, especially those in the North, are privileged based on their identification as Arabs, whereas the racial label black is stigmatized (Fábos, 2012; Sharkey 2008). Educational, political, and social institutions are implicated in nurturing this privilege and oppression.

Sudanese culture took a sharp turn in the 1980s. Since Islamic laws were imposed in 1983 under President Nimeiri, the culture started to shift in ways that reflected those laws (Metz, 1991; Sidahmed & Sidahmed, 2004). Some of those shifts included a ban on alcohol and imposing a strict dress codes for women in all public areas, including public schools and offices. However, this Islamic religious behavior was not practiced in private spaces, including private schools and businesses at the time of the 1983 laws. Following the military coup of 1989 that established the 30 years Islamic regime, private schools and businesses were forced to follow the dress code. For 30 years (1989–2019), the women's dress code became the official norm (Sidahmed & Sidahmed, 2004). It is important to note that these perceived Islamic laws were further imposed in ways that disfranchised those who did not support the regime (Metz, 1991; Sidahmed & Sidahmed, 2004).

In late 2018, street protests started and spread throughout Sudan against Omer Al-Bashir's Islamic regime. This peaceful people's movement led to the overthrow of the government in late 2019. A temporary government was formed with a mixture of civilian and military councils until the general elections that are scheduled to take place in 2023.

Women of Sudan

Women in Sudan face specific gender issues that are grounded in their cultural heritage and societal norms. These cultural issues do not disappear simply because the person emigrated to US. These special issues are ingrained in the Sudanese culture and determine roles, responsibilities, and limitations of a north Sudanese woman's life. The following section discusses issues of privilege and oppression faced by women in Sudan.

Special Issues for Sudanese Women

Issues that women in Sudan face depend greatly on their cultural and socioeconomic conditions. Women in urban areas tend to have more access to education than women living in rural ones. Additionally, women who are middle- or upper-class have different experiences regarding employment. However, all Sudanese women share similar experiences when it comes to gender roles. As Saʻdāwī (1997, 2005) explains, a patriarchal system is at the heart of Arab culture and is reflected in all aspects of life, including religious, judicial, social, and educational spheres.

Educated women are not exempt from Sudanese society's patriarchal societal norms. Women gained the right to education in 1906 (Sanderson, 1961) and have progressed rapidly since then. Although educated women often enjoy some freedom, they remain at the mercy of their husbands. According to Metz (1991):

> Although the educated young married or unmarried woman had greater mobility because of her job, she was not exempt from the traditional restrictions and the supremacy of the Muslim husband. She was aware that her education and job were not a license to trespass upon male-dominated social norms. ("Women and the Family," para. 3)

Accordingly, her right to divorce, travel, socialization, or guardianship of her children is conditioned upon her husband's approval. Metz (1991) argued that sometimes uneducated women enjoyed more freedom in female-dominated circles than educated women, depending on family tradition and region. Social roles are highly segregated: men occupy the public domain, while women are confined to the home where they attend to child rearing and social services.

Although gendered social roles have always existed in contemporary Sudanese society, it is highly strengthened by the ruling regime (Ali, 2010; Hale, 1992). Ali (2010) argues that the 30-year Fundamentalist Islamic regime (1989–2019) domesticated women by adopting extreme measures. Gender discrimination is visible in the way the dress code has been regulated, as well as how many women have been subjected to public lashing and humiliation when they have not followed the dress code. Over time, wearing the veil or hijab has become a norm in Sudanese culture, regardless of the spiritual or religious identity of the woman. I remember when I was in college in the early 1990s in Sudan, we were not allowed to enter through the university gates if the guards viewed our dress code as inappropriate. Appropriate dress code was deemed to be, as per the government rule, covering the body and head. On the institutional level, women have been excluded from leadership roles regardless of educational and experiential attainment (Ali, 2010). For example, women cannot work in certain occupations or take certain majors in college

(e.g., Survey Engineering and Mineral Engineering) on the premise that these types of occupations are not suitable for females.

Traditionally women assume social responsibilities in Sudanese culture. In addition to the housework and care for the children, women are expected to care for the sick and elderly. They are also expected to care for themselves in certain ways that make them desirable to their spouse. Women are allowed to go to school and work outside the home on the condition that it does not compromise their primary role within the home. This puts tremendous pressure on women to excel in both private and public life (Shami et al., 1990). It is important to understand that although the country's conditions apply to all women, each Sudanese woman is shaped by tribal and family cultures as well as her own experiences.

To reiterate, since Sudanese culture is essentially patriarchal and family-centered, Sudanese culture maintains that the family's honor lies within women and girls. Within this view, it makes sense for women to assume the role of preserving the culture while being protected by their male counterparts (Abdulhadi et al., 2011; Naber 2012).

Politics of Gender

Gender plays an integral part in a Sudanese women's positionality. Gender roles are ingrained in the private, social, political, and institutional parts of the society. Soliman (2012) studied the effects of income and education of Sudanese women on their bargaining power in terms of division of labor, decision making, and resource allocation within the Sudanese family homes. She found that although women might be financially contributing to the family's income, power dynamics are governed by social and cultural

norms with male power. Women's contributions are considered as "helping" rather than contributing. Soliman (2012) found that 40% of the women did not participate in expenditure sharing due to insecurity and fear of polygamy or divorce because the power is in the husband's hands. Expenditure participation increases bargaining power only in asset sharing but does not considerably affect social roles. Hence earning income does not impact the women's primary social role and does not excuse her from being subordinate to her husband (Metz, 1991).

Sa'dāwī (2005) asserts that violence against women is widely spread in Nilotic areas. In a 2009 report by UNICEF, it was found that the marrying age for girls may be as low as 10 years of age in some areas of Sudan despite the several Child Protection Acts that were enacted into law. UNICEF (2011) reported results from a household survey that indicated 88% of females in urban areas and 90% of females in rural areas undergo circumcision. Sa'dāwī (2005) reported similar findings in Egypt where she worked as a medical doctor.

Further, Monawar (1998) studied the perceptions and attitudes of Sudanese women towards their acquisition to the right to divorce, which is also known as *Isma*. Monawar stated that Sudan is a conservative, patriarchal society where divorce rights are reserved for men despite women's legal and religious right to divorce. In her study, Monawar found that women shy away from practicing their right due to social stigma of women having Isma. Women see this Isma (right to divorce) as a taboo that will lead to future marital problems. When women practice their right to have Isma, it is perceived that the marriage will not last, as if the woman is planning a divorce from the start. She

also found that men discourage women from seeking their right to Isma because they perceive it as stripping males of their right to divorce. Monawar further explained that women's right to Isma does not legally or religiously limit men's right to divorce. Further, Monawar explains that divorced women carry a stigma in the Sudanese culture because divorce is perceived to be the woman's fault. Women carry the burden of keeping the marriage alive.

Women have limited power to choose their spouse, as this role is highly controlled by parents and other males in the family (Hameed, 1998; Wani, 2003). Hameed (1998) studied the attitudes of Sudanese college female students towards the selection of a spouse in Sudan and found the majority of college female students considered marriage to give women status and respect, although women have limited power in choosing their spouse. Wani (2003) also claimed that racism and sexism play an essential role in marriage. Wani raised the case that women have no say in choosing their spouse, as it is a male-dominated decision. Further, Wani explained that as Sudanese people are tribal communities, ethnicity plays a fundamental role in marriage. Inter-ethnic marriage carries a negative stigma because it is culturally prohibited regardless of gender. Metz (1991) also reveals that a strong stigma is associated with inter-ethnic marriage. Women from the Arab tribes (mostly northern), are not allowed to marry men from non-Arab tribes even within their same socioeconomic class (Metz, 1991). As marriage is controlled by men, males from Arab-origin tribes can break the social norm and marry a woman from an African origin. However, Wani (2003) stated that it is impossible for an African-origin male to marry an Arab-origin (i.e., north Sudanese)

female. Further, Wani concluded that sexism occurs at all societal levels, and the strong cultural and social pressures cause women to react to sexism silently.

Elamin (2010) studied women's political awareness in one of the north Sudanese states (River Nile State) and found that the majority of women were not aware of their legal rights, which led to their total subordination even when their rights were protected by law. Building on Elamin's findings, Elnager (2013) adds that women are discouraged from learning their rights. Elnagar (2013) studied the challenges for Sudanese women's participation in decision making within political parties. She found that women who were involved in politics did so to participate in decision making. However, she also found the rate of women in top positions in political participation was only six percent. Women are discouraged to participate for a number of reasons: they (a) feel the strong patriarchal culture, (b) are overwhelmed with multiple responsibilities, (c) sense a lack of gender equality, and (d) know their voices are not heard.

The 30–years Islamic political regime (1989–2019) contributed greatly in suppressing women's rights. Abdien (2001) conducted research on the perceptions of Sudanese Islamic movement towards women's rights. Abdien collected data from three major Islamic parties in Sudan and found that Islamic fundamentalist parties view women's role as limited to reproduction. The more Islamic progressive parties empower women who are part of their party and subordinate others who do not share their political views and values. Again, sexism is used to silence women's voices and opinions from power.

Conceptualization of Terminology

In this section I define the terms as they are used in the context of this thesis. Yegidis et. al. (2018) remind us that different researchers may conceptualize terms in different ways as long as it is logical (p. 225). For this reason, I dedicated this section to defining how I use different terms and what it means in this thesis.

- **Acculturation**: Berry (1997, 2005) explains acculturation as an umbrella term of what happens when two cultures come in contact. Assimilation and integration are outcomes of the acculturation process (Berry, 2005). Portes and Rumbaut (2014) agree that acculturation resembles a precondition for assimilation. In other words, acculturation resembles the changes that happen in the two cultures when they come into contact with each other.
- **Assimilation**: According to Berry (2005), assimilation occurs when the immigrant conforms to the dominant group by adopting the dominant group's culture and values while discarding their own. Portes and Rumbaut (2014) explain that cultural values and norms usually flow from the dominant existing group to the immigrant with time. Thus, assimilation is a one-way process in which the immigrant sheds their own culture and adopts the dominant group culture.
- **Diversity Visa**: According to USCIS (2019), a diversity visa is obtained through a program that provides 50,000 immigrant visas annually to individuals who come from countries that have low rates of immigration to the US. Visa winners are drawn through an automatic random selection process. Upon notification, the selected candidate must go through a screening process and pay visa fees before

being granted a visa. When they enter the US, the immigrant can be eligible for permanent residency status that can eventually lead to citizenship.

- **Integration**: Integration is the outcome of acculturation when the host society is plural, and the immigrant adopts basic cultural values of the dominant group, while the dominant group accepts the immigrant as an equal member of the society (Berry, 1997). Integration requires the existence of a plural society that accommodates the needs of the immigrant and values them as equal (Berry, 2005).
- **North Sudanese**: refers to people whose belong to tribes from the northern region in the Republic of the Sudan.
- **Tar7a or hijab**: The head scarf worn by Muslim women.

Dissertation Outline

In this research I explored acculturation experiences of seven college-educated north Sudanese women who lived in Greensboro, NC, to better understand how their experiences challenged and/or aligned with John Berry's acculturation model, Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's segmented assimilation theory, and John Ogbu's cultural-ecological model. Experiences of the research participants did not align with Berry's acculturation model, had partial alignment with Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory, and aligned well with Ogbu's cultural-ecological model. In this section I provide an overview of the dissertation, chapter by chapter.

In Chapter I, I have laid the foundation for why I conducted this research, my motives and how findings from the interviews with the women participants provided

information about the shortcomings in prominent acculturation theories and models. I included a cultural synopsis that gave background knowledge about Sudan, its history, the position of women in the country, and issues related to women of the Sudan. This section offered a rich cultural background, which is important to understand for this research. I also provided my personal narrative as well as explanation of key terms and concepts as they are used in this dissertation.

In Chapter II, I explore literature related to African immigrants, Arab immigrants, and, when possible, African-Arab immigrant women. Chapter II focuses on tackling the theories and models that both inform my research and are critically examined by the research. In particular, I examine John Berry's acculturation model, Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's segmented assimilation theory, and John Ogbu's cultural-ecological model. I also introduce Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model that guides me in analyzing the other three theories.

Chapter III is concerned with the methodology I employed in this research. Through a step-by-step approach, I explain the research design, interview setting, and the rationale that guided me through this research journey. The chapter explains why I used basic qualitative study, chose interviews as methods, data coding, emerging themes, and linear analysis in this research. I also reflect on my subjectivity and disclose limitations in my study.

In Chapter IV, I present data from the interviews, as organized by emerging themes such as gender experiences in Sudan, interactions with broader community, relationship with ethnic community in Greensboro, NC, identity and the notion of home

and family and culture. I also use linear logical analysis to explain how the examined theories aligns in some areas and highlight the shortcomings in the theories. I develop an illustration in Chapter IV based on emerging themes and logical linear analysis. I also answer the research questions in Chapter IV.

In the conclusion, Chapter V, I bring together my contribution to the existing literature about acculturation of immigrants in the US and the implications of my research findings. I conclude this dissertation by providing recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is organized into two sections. In the first section I consider research about Sudanese women immigrants. Most of the research I found was related to refugee resettlement experiences of African women, Sudanese refugee women in Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Since college-educated north Sudanese women are a small, specific, subgroup that is not even represented in the US census, I expanded my search to include related literature, such as literature about the acculturation of immigrants in the US, acculturation of African immigrant women, and issues regarding college-educated immigrants.

In the second section I present Yosso's (2005) community wealth model. I also explain the three prominent theories and models that predict outcomes of acculturation of immigrants. I also discuss the notion of "community wealth," which Yosso based on Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro's (1995) black/white wealth work.

Part I: Sudanese Women as African/Arab Immigrants in the US

Why They Immigrate?

Sudanese immigrants come to the US in many ways such as refugees, asylum seekers, students, via family reunification, or through the diversity visa or lottery system (Ross-Sheriff & Moss-Knight, 2013). According to a conversation with Omer Omer, former director of North Carolina African Services Coalition (NCASC), which is one of

the two main refugee resettlement agencies in Greensboro, NC, those who come through the diversity visa are often called the green carders or *Al-lotarab* in Sudanese slang meaning, "Those who won the lottery visa," that allows them to become legal permanent residents (NCASC, n.d.). These green carders are permanent lawful residents who are eligible to apply for citizenship after five years of being lawful residents in the US. According to NCASC (n.d.), winners of the lottery "diversity visa" constitute the majority of the Sudanese immigrants in Greensboro. Similar to other African "green carders," Sudanese immigrants are driven by a quest for better opportunities that is perceived by people in most African nations to exist in the US (Nwoye, 2009). These opportunities include economic, social, and educational benefits, thus the "lottery visa" winner does not hesitate to resign from their job—even as a doctor or professor—pay the $2,000 in visa fees, and pay for an airline ticket, to pursue the perceived opportunity that awaits them in the US (Nwoye, 2009).

Settlement Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

In this section I discuss the acculturation factors that contribute to access to employment and higher education for Arab women, including Sudanese women, in the US. The most cited factors included national and religious identity, English language proficiency, and racism and discrimination (Mattoo et al., 2008; Naber, 2012; Phillion, 2003; Suleiman, 1999). Most of the available research included Arab or African women and did not directly mention Sudanese women. The Arab world consists of 22 member countries in the Arab League: Jordon, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, *Sudan* [emphasis added], Syria, Somalia, Iraq, Oman, Palestinian

National Authority, Qatar, Comoros, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, and Yemen (World Data, "Member States Arab League, n.d.). They share cultural traditions, Arabic language and most of them are Muslim (Amer & Hovey, 2007). Since Sudanese people are considered African-Arabs, exploring literature that dealt with the acculturation of Arab and African immigrant women helped me to contextualize the experiences of Sudanese women specifically. I have identified (a) attitudes towards employment, (b) English language proficiency, (c) national identity, (d) religious identity, and (e) racism and discrimination as the most relevant topics based on the literature.

Attitudes Towards Employment

Research suggested that employment rates for first generation Arab women, including Sudanese women, were among the lowest across all immigrant groups (Zong & Batalova, 2015, para. 3). However, the same statistics also indicated that second generation Arab women who were born in the host country had the highest rate of employment among all immigrant groups. Although this research did not delve into an analysis of why there was a high employment gap between first- and second-generation Arab women, it might be an indication of different levels of acculturation between generations. In addition to Zong and Batalova's (2015) statistics, Read (2004) demonstrated, in her research, similar cultural influences on Arab-American women's participation in the workforce. She conducted a national mail survey of Arab women and reported that, although Arab-American women were the second highest educated immigrant group following Filipinos, they were also the lowest group in terms of

workforce participation. Read (2004) also found that those women who lived in the US for less than 15 years were less likely to participate in the workforce than native-born women. These results were consistent for both Muslim and non-Muslim participants (about half were Muslims). Read (2004) concluded that cultural factors played a strong role in the non-participation of educated Arab women in the workforce despite their high education attainment.

Amer and Hovey (2007) did not agree with Read (2004). Amer and Hovey (2007) conducted a survey of 120 Arab Americans and examined factors such as Arab ethnic identity, acculturation strategies, and religiosity. Amer and Hovey used *The Arab Acculturation Scale* (AAS) that was developed based on Berry's acculturation model and found significant differences in employment between Muslim and Christian Arab women. Results from their study showed that acculturation experiences of Christians were consistent with the acculturation model used. However, it was not consistent with Muslims, where integration was not found to have positive effects on the mental health of Muslims. Instead, religiosity was found to have a positive impact on Muslim family functioning and low depression rate. Findings from the interviews I conducted with seven-college educated north Sudanese women were consistent with Amer and Hovey's (2007) research regarding the value of religiosity as a coping mechanism with positive impact on the women.

Mattoo et al. (2008) used census data to investigate the placement of immigrants in the US labor market and found that college graduates from Arab and African origins do not do well in the labor market. However, those professionals who succeed in

accessing professional careers do very well. Mattoo et al.'s findings are consistent with Read (2004) and Zong and Batalova's (2015) findings with regard to the fact that Arab immigrant women are among the lowest group of immigrants who access the workforce, especially as casual laborers.

The three studies mentioned previously (Mattoo et al., 2008; Read, 2004; Zong & Batalova, 2015) all found similar low employment rates of Arab women in the US. Whether it is due to culture, experiences of discrimination, or perceptions about employment in the US, further research is needed to understand why Arab women are lagging behind in the US workforce despite their high academic achievement.

English Language Proficiency

To be able to survive, one of the immediate needs that face immigrants is accessing employment. Current economic conditions have created new challenges for the integration of immigrants into the workforce. The changes in US labor market have made it difficult—even for US native born—to access employment (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Greater competition for employment makes the mastery of the English language more important than ever to help immigrants become self-sufficient. One of the most frequently cited barriers to gainful employment was English language comprehension (Grantmakers, 2003; Sienkiewicz et al., 2013; Yakushko et al., 2008). Even individuals with degrees or professional certifications from their countries of origin struggle to find any type of employment after they arrive in the US due to communication challenges.

English language comprehension does not just impact access to employment. Hebbani et al. (2012) conducted focus group-based research to examine acculturation

challenges faced by former Sudanese refugees in Australia. They found that among women, lack of English language proficiency was the biggest obstacle that affected their acculturation. Women reported that they relied heavily on their children to communicate on their behalf with the larger society, which in turn diminished their role as “elders” with their children and, thus, led to reversed family power dynamics that made parenting more challenging. The researchers however did not look at the educational level of the women prior to migration to Australia.

Further, Sadeghi (2008) explored the meanings of literacy and lifelong learning among first-generation Iranian immigrant women in Canadian institutions of higher education. Sadeghi’s (2008) research suggested that lifelong learning was highly impacted by participants’ early socialization experiences despite the challenges of culture, gender, and otherness. Sadeghi (2008) concluded that cultural values, their historical and social standing, and positioning as first-generation immigrants motivated these women to pursue higher education in Canada.

These studies alluded to the fact that English language proficiency is key to the acculturation process of immigrants and lack of proficiency may constitute an enormous barrier to access and participation in different aspects of daily life. While learning English for most types of employment is essential, mastery of the English language is crucial when accessing higher education and the professional labor market. Almost all universities require some sort of English proficiency credential when admitting students from countries where English is not the first language.

Yakushko et al. (2008) studied career development concerns of recent immigrants and refugees and found that those immigrants who learned English language and the US culture well have a better ability to navigate through systems and found ways to advance their career.

Racism and Social Discrimination

Accented English can also be used as a basis for discrimination against immigrants, particularly when it intersects with the host country's conception of race. Guided by Black feminist epistemology, Elnour (2012) conducted a study using narrative methods to explore the impact of the intersectionality of race, gender, and religion on the educational and career experiences of immigrant professional Sudanese Muslim women in the US. She interviewed five educated Sudanese Muslim women from the north and found that racial and religious discrimination were the most reported types of discrimination, especially among those who wore Islamic forms of dress such as hijab. Additionally, she found that immigration status and accented English were significant factors that influenced experiences of prejudice for her participants. She also reported that the participants did not see sexism as a major factor affecting their experiences.

Like Elnour's (2012) work, Phillion (2003) examined obstacles immigrant women (from India, Jamaica, and Somalia) faced when trying to access the teaching profession in Canada. In addition to systemic obstacles, Phillion's research participants reported experiences of racism and social discrimination due to their physical appearance, skin color, and accented English. Ross-Sheriff and Moss-Knight (2013) also researched

acculturation challenges African immigrants face in the US and found high levels of discrimination and denial of due process in residential and workplace settings.

Davids's (2014) findings were consistent with Elnour's (2012) and Phillion's (2003) research. In his 2014 study, Davids explored the misunderstandings of the identities of Muslim women and found the hijab to be the core of Muslim women's identities. He also stated that the hijab is frequently misunderstood as it is considered to be a symbol of oppression by society at large. This misunderstanding translates into prejudice and discrimination against Muslim women who wear it.

Despite the negative experiences of social discrimination, Suleiman (1999) claimed that acculturation had positive effects on the Arab immigrant population as a whole. Suleiman attested to the positive acculturation experiences of Arab immigrants in the US, despite the sense of hostility they felt. He attributed this sense of hostility to the political climate in the Middle Eastern region and the positioning of the US as a new colonial power in the Arab world. Suleiman stated that since the 1960s, Arabs have been well represented in the US Congress with at least one representative of Arab descent serving each session. Furthermore, in 2014, Arab Americans became a majority in Dearborn City, Michigan, with four out of seven city council members being of Arab descent (Warikoo, 2013, para. 2).

National and Ethnic Identity

Arabs, including Sudanese, are tribal people and, accordingly, tribal and ethnic affiliations carry a higher weight in Arab communities than racial identification. As such, these affiliations are used as bases for privilege and oppression (Naber, 1992; Suleiman,

1999). Furthermore, Arab immigrants carry their tribal affiliations with them when they come to the US. Naber (1992) explained the importance of tribal identification for Arab immigrants in the US as a foundation for building "safe" social circles for their children. Although they socialized widely with other Arabs, there was a tendency for Arabs to identify more with others from their same tribe, clan, village, or country. Through generations, this tribal affiliation started to fade, but Arab identity remained strong. The strength of Arab culture influenced immigrant experiences and the ways in which they chose to navigate systems in the US (Naber, 1992).

In addressing the social and national identities of Arab populations in the US, Suleiman (1999) wrote that acculturation-as-integration still constituted a threat to traditional Arab heritage. Historically, although Arabs had struggled to build their own identity by choosing aspects of US American culture that they deemed desirable, Suleiman argued that Arab immigrants tended to hold on to their ethnic cultures through their daughters while living the US American dream through their sons. Women and girls faced and continue to face strong anti-acculturation pressure and carry the weight of maintaining an Arab identity for their families and the community. The family is central to Arab identity, and the role of the woman as the family caregiver and preserver of Arab traditions (in and outside the home) has not changed from the old to the new homeland (Naber, 2012; Suleiman, 1999). Traditionally, they had a strong sense of personal identity centered around family. Other identities that were important to Arab immigrants included the tribe, clan, sect, or village with which they were originally affiliated. These other

identities allowed them to form communities outside the family that extended throughout North America (Suleiman, 1999).

Oppedal et al. (2005) agreed with Suleiman about the importance of the strong ethnic ties for Arab and African families. Oppedal et al. studied the effects of ethnic origin and acculturation factors on the mental wellbeing of immigrant adolescents where they collected data from 1,275 tenth graders from eleven different ethnicities. Among their research findings was the positive impact of the strong ethnic culture of the Somali participants. Oppedal et al. argued the high level of perceived discrimination and hostility towards the Somali immigrant coupled with the low cultural competence of the host society would predict high levels of mental problems. However, in the case of the Somali immigrants, their research showed lower levels of mental problems in the research participants. This is mainly attributed to the effects of the strong ethnic identity and support they youngsters receive from their ethnic community.

Naber (2012) also agreed with Suleiman and Oppedal et al. She explained that the development of Arab identities had been and remains typically family centered, as well as highly linked to clans and sects that eventually include all Arabs as an ethnic community. Naber continued by claiming that Arabs maintained a strong sense of cultural authenticity that continued to be reflected in the way they raised their children in the US. Following 9/11, Naber (2012) conducted interviews with a wide range of young Arab women over the span of 12 years while reflecting on her own experiences as a young Arab woman who grew up in the US. Using the data from those interviews, she explained the commonly experienced sense of the shield with which Arab families surrounded their

children in order to protect them from the undesirable American culture. Naber (2012) attributed this sense of protection to a fear of losing their Arab identity and pride. As carriers of the family honor, this shield is particularly evident in the ways that Arab women were expected to behave according to their male counterparts and based on the generally patriarchal orientation of Arab culture.

Naber's (2012) findings corresponded with Suleiman's (1999), when she examined experiences of first-generation Arabs who traveled to the US as adults and second-generation Arab immigrant young adults in the San Francisco Bay area following the attacks of 9/11 in 2001. Most of her research participants were women with different religious affiliations. She discussed the cultural, political, and religious identities of Arab immigrants as they acculturated in the US. She also found that females bore the burden of keeping Arab cultural authenticity alive by acting within the culturally expected norms and passing the culture to the next generation.

Religious Identity

Marshall (2003) conducted a national survey of Arab-American women that included ethnic and religious identities. Marshall found that regardless of religious affiliation, the Arab and religious identity of Arab-American women was strong. Amer and Hovey (2007) made similar discoveries as Marshall and claimed that married women had stronger religious identity and stronger attachment to their Arab culture. It was not clear whether they chose to get married because of their strong cultural identity that values marriage or whether they adhered to their culture because they were married. In other words, since the responsibility of preserving culture lies within the female members

of the family (Elnour, 2012; Naber, 2012; Suleiman, 1999), then perhaps the women in the study adhered to the culture because they were married. However, Muslim women had higher levels of attachment to their cultural lifestyles such as food, language, and friendship networks. Since their research was quantitative in nature, Marshall (2003) did not report on the link between the strong religious identity and acculturation experiences of Arab-American women.

Fábos (2012) researched how Muslim Arab Sudanese women negotiated their identity in Egypt and Britain and reported that they maintained a strong religious identity. Kunst et al. (2016) research supported Fábos's earlier work and warned us that Islamophobia hindered acculturation of religious Muslim immigrants. The more Islamophobic the society was, the more it pushed the Muslim to conform and assimilate. The more the Muslim immigrant felt pushed (i.e., feelings of discrimination), the more they distanced themselves from the society and found relief in their religious identity. Kunst et al. (2016) called this the vicious circle of religious prejudice (p. 249). Hence, Islamophobia is considered an obstacle that hinders acculturation.

Elnour (2012) concurred with Fábos (2012) regarding the strong religious identity of the professional Sudanese women in her case study research. She found that all five Sudanese women in her research used spirituality and religious rituals as coping mechanisms against the discrimination and injustices they encountered. Elnour (2012) also reported that family and friends constituted the main support system for these women, thereby helping them achieve their professional status.

Research suggests that the acculturation experiences of Arab and African immigrant women of color are complex. Darraj (2002) criticized the way many Westerners are judgmental in the ways they saw Arab women. Darraj argued that those critics were ignorant to what Arab feminism meant. She quoted Edward Said's book *Orientalism,* in which he argued, "[The] historical pattern of misrepresentation and demonization of the Middle East, many Americans continue to purchase wholesale the neatly packaged image of Arab women" (as cited in Darraj, 2002, p. 15). Darraj asserted that Westerners take an oriental view of Arab women because they do not understand the rich history of Arab feminism. Saliba's (2000) research findings coincide with Darraj (2002) in criticizing and added that the even the Western liberal and feminism are implicated in rendering Arab and Muslim women invisible within multicultural and political discourses (p.1090–1091).

Golley (2004) reminded us of the active participation of the Sudanese women in the struggle for the national independence of Sudan in the mid-1950s and their continuation as an organized feminist movement. Perhaps the most recent revolution in Sudan—that started late 2018 and ended with the removal of the Islamic fundamentalist dictatorship regime of Omer Elbashier in late 2019—was a good example of what Sudanese women were able to accomplish. According to reports by *Aljazeera*, *The Independent News UK*, and *The Washington Post*, Sudanese women constituted the majority of the protestors and were at the forefront of the revolution (see Hamza M., 2019; Lynch J., 2019; O'Grady, S., 2019). Before the revolution, *The Independent* reported that child marriage and marital rape were not prosecuted (Lynch J., 2019).

Women's travel in public was regulated, the women's dress code, including covering their body and hair, was imposed, and violators were flogged in public. Despite all these impediments, the women of Sudan led the biggest revolution in the recent history of Sudan.

National origin, religion, and gender all contribute to the outcomes of the acculturation experiences of professional Sudanese immigrant women in the US. Despite the abundance of research in the acculturation of immigrants, I found very little literature focused specifically on Sudanese professional women. This might be attributed to them being counted as Africans in general in the US Census rather than by country of origin and educational level. According to the US Census, African immigrants constitute only 5.4% of the US population (US Census Statistics, 2018). This makes these immigrant women almost invisible within the total US population. Nevertheless, I believe knowing about this specific population and their acculturation experiences may inform the way we look at the prominent acculturation theories, as I will show in this research. As the findings from my research suggested, acculturation experiences of the seven college-educated north Sudanese women challenged some of the prominent acculturation theories, including Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory.

African Immigrants

Guenther et al. (2011) interviewed 87 East African immigrants to study their identities in the Twin City area (Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota) and found that East African immigrants were aware of the privilege whiteness carried. While they

understood their positionality as blacks in the US, they resisted being seen as African Americans and insisted on using their ethnicity, religion, and culture as identification. The East African immigrants in Guenther's study insisted that their cultural heritage distinguished them from African Americans. Guenther et al. (2011) suggested that the East African immigrants sought selective acculturation, by which they continued to climb the economic ladder while preserving their own culture. They consciously worked on building their ethnic community and maintained their cultural identity through building ethnic neighborhoods with ethnic schools, maintaining cultural dress, and ethnic celebrations (p. 110).

Guenther et al. (2011) concluded that East African immigrants "mobilize religious and national identities as a source of status and pride to avoid the ascendance of race as a master status and to create social distance between themselves and African Americans" (p. 115). Hence, holding to their religious, ethnic, and national identities served as a shield to protect them from feeling targeted by racism. Although they understood that their position as blacks in the US made them targets of racism, they self-protected by hiding behind their national and religious identities. Hence, they perceived the racial discrimination they experienced as not targeted towards them as Eastern Africans, but towards others who existed before them.

Like Guenther et al. (2011), Fábos (2012) reported that Muslim Arab Sudanese women did not identify as black in Egypt or Britain. Fábos suggested that their rejection of blackness as a racial identifier was due to discrimination based on race. Agreeably, as Naber (2012) and Suleiman (1999) have reminded us, Sudanese are tribal people and

identify with their tribe rather than their race. Rivers (2012) echos Suleiman (1999) and explained that ethnic identity trumps the racial identity for first generation immigrants. According to Yosso (2005), distancing themselves from existing subordinated groups was a way that immigrants resisted and challenged inequality. In other words, by nurturing their cultural wealth they resisted racism. According to Yosso's community cultural model, resistant capital is one of the attributes of the community cultural wealth for people of color.

However, the second generation embraced the racial identity more. I explained earlier in Chapter I how ethnic identity was not related to skin color in Sudanese culture. Although they were not blind to the color line in the US, Sudanese people traditionally used the colors *abyad* (white), *asmar* (brown, red), *akdar* (green), *azrag* (dark blue), and *aswad* (black) to refer to skin color (Bender, 1983). These skin color labels are still widely used in Sudan today. It is important to understand that skin colors do not have much positive or negative connotation in Sudan. However, ethnicity and tribal affiliation carry the power of privilege and oppression as I discussed earlier.

There is also contrary research. Showers (2015) suggested that national identity, African last names, and accented English put African women at higher risk for discrimination than their blackness as reported by the women in the study. Showers (2015) interviewed 42 African women from West Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, who live and work as registered nurses in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Working in a white-dominated field, those women understood success in their field of work as being white. Showers concluded by posing the paradox that those women

recognized their experiences as racial discrimination, but it did not stop them from trying to assimilate into whiteness to gain upward social mobility.

Orientation Towards the Homeland

Many African and Arab immigrants left some family members behind in the hopes that they would soon return to the homeland. This strong orientation towards the homeland put a tremendous pressure on the African immigrant because they are expected to financially support their relatives remaining in the country of origin.

Suleiman (1999) found that Arab immigrants who considered themselves sojourners had strong orientations towards the homeland. This strong orientation was reflected in their economic conservatism, political engagement with homeland politics, and social isolation from the US community (Suleiman 1999). Nwoye (2009) studied experiences of African "Green-Carded" immigrants and found that African immigrants' connection with their homeland was strong.

Rivers (2012) agreed with Suleiman (1999) and Nwoye (2009), adding that the identity of African immigrants was more complex than simply skin color, citizenship status, or length of stay in the US. Rivers (2012) interviewed a group of sub-Saharan Africans and found that those who came to the US after the age of seven, although many of them could not remember Africa, identified with their country of origin. Rivers associated their identification to the ways their parents acculturated them. She affirmed the influence of their parents, who immersed them in the culture, language, and customs at home. This was also consistent in Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, in

which she asserted that such identification was part of the resistant capital that was passed to the next generations through cultural capital.

Nekby et al. (2009) further investigated the impact of identification to home and host cultures on the pursuit of higher education for individuals with immigrant backgrounds. They found that those who identified with both homeland and host cultures attained higher levels of education than those who were oriented towards only homeland or host cultures. Nekby et al.'s findings correspond with Berry's acculturation theory. Acculturation experiences of those who identify with both homeland and greater society were deemed positive and categorized by Berry as integration (Berry, 1997, 2008, 2011).

Part II: Theoretical Debate

Yosso's Community Wealth Model

I base this section on Yosso's (2005) community wealth model, which I use to understand the experiences of the seven women I interviewed. Yosso's (2005) model is informed by critical race theory and the ways traditional social theories are implicated in ignoring the rich, non-monetary capital that people of color possess. This is important because African immigrants, such as the women I interviewed in this study, mostly come with very little monetary capital, as evidenced by their need to immediately access the labor market (Nwoye 2009). Based on critical race theory, Yosso (2005) argued that the knowledge of people of color is valued less than the knowledge of dominant middle- and upper-class whites. She drew from the work of Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro (1995) on black/white wealth and the five tenants of critical race theory by Daniel Solorzano (1998): (a) the inter-centricity of race and racism, (b) the challenge to

dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches to establish her community wealth model (p. 73).

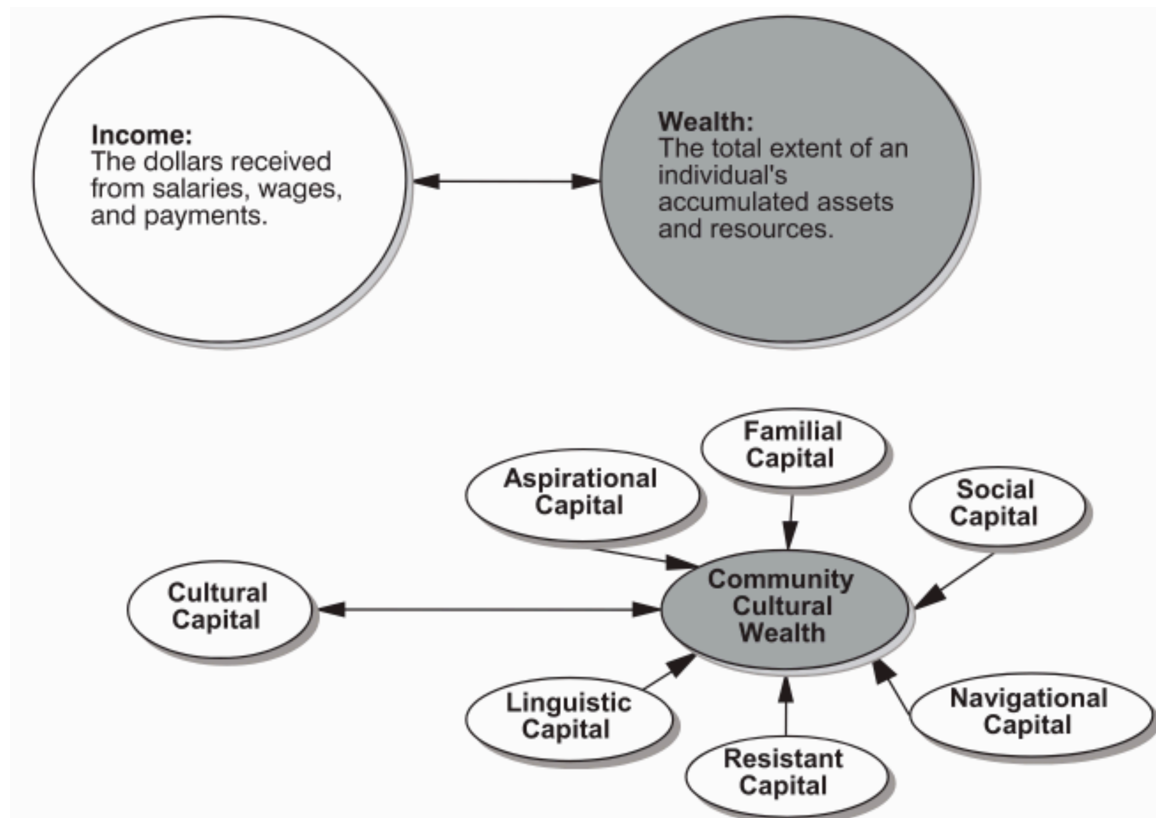
Yosso's model of community wealth goes beyond the monetary understanding of wealth that is described by Oliver and Shapiro (1995) as income. Instead, she identified the different types of capital communities of color have as: aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital (see Figure 2.1). These six types of social capital can arguably affect the social mobility of people of color (Yosso, 2005), such as the women I interviewed. With a spin towards my research population, in the following section, I explain each of the six pillars of social capital or community wealth as characterized by Yosso.

Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital represents the dreams and aspirations for a better future that are held by individuals. This future may include the individual's dreams for themselves and their aspirations for their children. In other words, given the obstacles they face and knowing they are currently lagging behind in terms of social mobility, the individual dreams of a better future for their children. This aspirational capital was evident in the interviews I conducted as the women reflected on their expectations and hopes for their children.

Figure 2.1

Yosso's Model of Community Cultural Wealth. Adapted from: Oliver & Shapiro, 1995



Note. From "Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth," by T. Yosso, 2005, *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), p. 78 (https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006). Copyright 2017 by Taylor & Francis. Reprinted with permission.

Familial Capital

Familial capital refers to cultural knowledge and support conveyed through families. It also expands the Western understanding of families to the extended family that is very common in many non-Western cultures such as the Sudanese culture. Like

other Arab cultures, Sudanese culture is family-oriented, and women are responsible for maintaining the family (Naber, 2012).

In Chapter I, I provided a background on culture in Sudan where family is not limited to the nuclear family as in the Western concept. Nuclear family includes aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. The family support each other in many ways that may include sharing resources and responsibilities such food, housing, child rearing, and care for the elderly. Family members also consult and comfort each other in ways that enhance their emotional and social wellbeing. Most of the women in this study reported they feel more comfortable when they talk to family and friends in Sudan. They also confessed to have daily communication with their families in Sudan.

Social Capital

Yosso (2005) defines social capital as the networks of people and community resources, such as peers and other social contacts. In communities of color, individuals rely on their networks to identify opportunities, such as scholarships. Yosso (2005) explains the role of social networks is not limited to providing advice. Members of those social networks might help a student with identifying scholarships and fill the application. Social capital also provides emotional and career support in education, healthcare, and employment.

Navigational Capital

Navigational capital is the ability of the individual to navigate through systems and institutions. For example, the person of color can navigate through a racially hostile university campus despite their vulnerability by employing strategies to help them thrive

and achieve. In the case of this research, the participants showed high navigational skills that allowed them to maneuver through different institutions, such as workplaces, universities and professional associations.

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital refers to the push-back strategies that people of color use to challenge inequality. One of the common ways in the case of Sudanese women is rejecting blackness because of the inequalities the label carries (Fábos, 2012). In addition, another strategy that people of color use to challenge inequality teaching their children to see themselves as intelligent, beautiful, and equal to others.

Linguistic Capital

The ability to communicate in more than one language is considered linguistic capital. Immigrants, such as the women in my study, speak at least two languages. Moreover, they often pass on their linguistic capital to their children. Most of the women in my study enrolled their children in Sunday school where they learned Arabic languages and Islamic studies.

Acculturation Theories and Models

Using Yosso's (2005) community wealth model along with findings from this research, I aimed to achieve three goals. First, based on findings from the interviews and Yosso's community model, I examined three of the prominent acculturation theories and models that dominate academia: John Berry's acculturation theory, Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's segmented assimilation theory, and John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory. While Berry's acculturation theory and Portes & Zhou's segmented assimilation theory

were challenged by this research, John Ogbu's cultural ecological theory aligned well with my findings. Secondly, I offered an acculturation model based on experiences of the seven north Sudanese, college-educated women and Yosso's community model. Thirdly, I proposed an adaptation of the community wealth model that is informed by the narratives of the women I interviewed.

I chose those theories because they are considered prominent theories in the field of immigration. For example, according to Google Scholar, John Berry is an accomplished author who has been cited 94, 292 times since 1969, and Alejandra Portes has been cited 144,863 times since 1992. No record on Google Scholar was found for John Ogbu. Ogbu died in 2003, and Google Scholar was created in 2004, thus he never joined. However, John Ogbu's theory was revolutionary in the 1970s as it challenged the ways several minority groups were educated in six countries: Britain, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and the US (Ogbu 1978). Ogbu studied minorities education for about 28 years and was concerned with social justice issues in education.

Berry's Model of Acculturation

According to John W. Berry (2005), acculturation is phenomena that takes place when two or more cultures come in contact, resulting in changes to one or more of the cultures involved. This cultural and psychological change happens at group and individual levels. The group change can be seen as change in the social structure and cultural practices of the group, whereas at the individual level, change is seen in the person's behavior, such as eating habits, dress, and speech. Further, Berry (2011) explained that the acculturation process has affective, behavioral, and cognitive

dimensions, referred to as ABC. The affective dimension (A) is concerned with stress and coping and is psychological in nature. Since I am not an expert in psychology, the affective dimension of acculturation is not discussed in this thesis.

The behavioral dimension (B) is concerned with cultural learning approach. This approach entails learning the dominant culture's communication styles such as language, idioms, verbal and non-verbal cues. The immigrant also learns about the rules, values, cultural norms, and acceptable communication styles of the dominant culture. Berry (2011) explained that learning to speak the English language with minimal accent was imperative for the immigrant in order to communicate and learn the culture. When speaking English language effectively, the immigrant was able to carry out daily tasks, including employment, and have cultural exchanges with the dominant culture (Mattoo et al., 2008; Phillion, 2003).

Lastly the cognitive dimension (C) refers to the social-identification and orientation of immigrants towards acculturation. In other words, the cognitive dimension is about the way immigrants perceive their experiences, how they think about themselves and others. Thus, to understand the cognitive dimension of immigrant acculturation, it was essential to understand how the women in this research spoke about their own identities and how they made meaning of their experiences.

Berry (2005) suggested that the acculturation process depends on five phenomena, namely the two original cultures (in this context Sudanese and US cultures, prior to migration), the two changing cultures (after Sudanese women settled in the US), and the nature of their contact and interactions. It is important to know the cultural

characteristics that Sudanese women bring with them to the US and the push-pull factors that led them to migrate to the US. Push-pull factors are those factors that push people away from their countries of origin and pull them to the country of settlement. These factors can be a combination of political, economic, and demographic conditions (Berry, 1997). These five sets of phenomena define acculturation at the cultural or group level and serve as the starting point for the psychological or individual level (Berry, 2005).

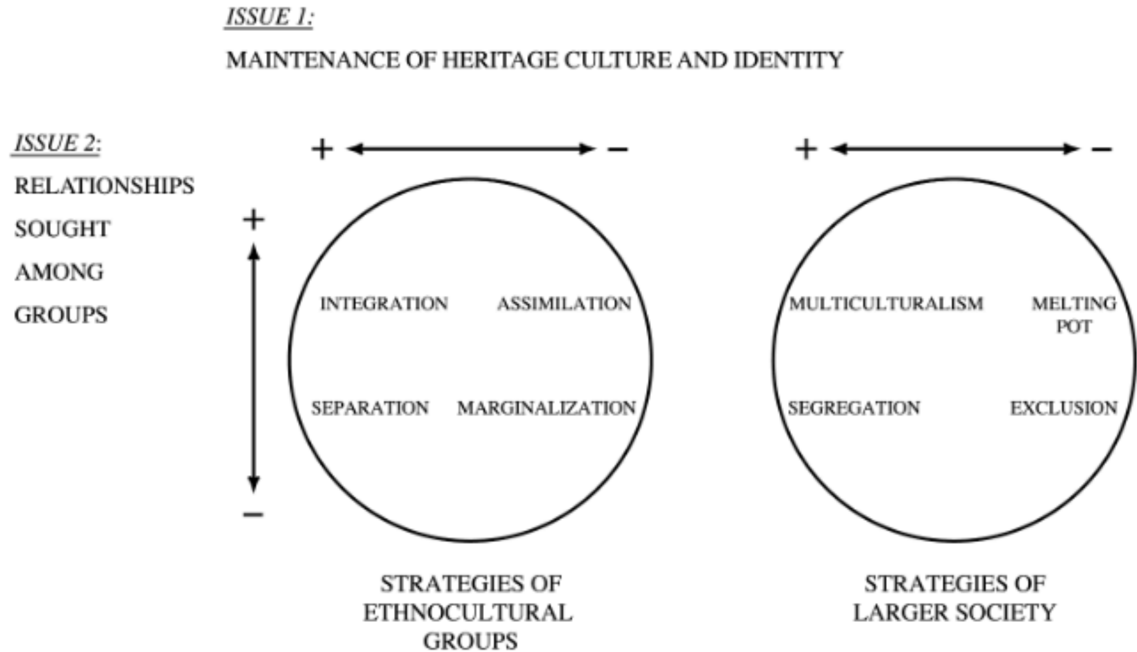
Berry (2005) also emphasized that groups and individuals vary in the *ways* they acculturate (acculturation strategies) and the *rate* at which they acculturate. People within the same cultural group acculturate at different rates with different goals. According to Berry (2011), acculturation of immigrants depends greatly on two underlying issues:

> 1. the degree to which there is a desire to maintain the group's culture and identity; and
> 2. the degree to which there is a desire to engage in daily interactions with other ethnocultural groups in the larger society, including the dominant one.
>
> Underlying these two issues is the idea is that not all groups and individuals seek to engage in intercultural relations in the same way (Berry, 1980, 1984); there are large variations in how people seek to relate to each other, including various alternatives to the assumption of eventual assimilation. They have become called strategies rather than attitudes because they consist of both attitudes and behaviors (that is, they include both the preferences and the actual outcomes) that are exhibited in day-to-day intercultural encounters. (p. 2.5)

Thus, understanding how college-educated, north Sudanese women speak about their identities after settlement in the US—their voluntary daily interactional experiences, perceptions about others, how far they hold to their culture, and their orientation towards their homeland—is vital in this research because they navigate their way through US systems. The following figure shows Berry's acculturation model (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2

Berry's Intercultural Strategies of Ethnocultural Groups and the Larger Society



Note. From "Integration and Multiculturalism: Ways Towards Social Solidarity," by J. W. Berry, 2011, *Papers on Social Representations, 20*, 2.5 (http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/). Copyright 20011 by Elsevier. Reprinted with permission.

Acculturation strategies are shaped by the individual's approach to acculturation. Acculturation strategies determine the acculturation outcomes of cultural groups but are highly influenced by the degree of openness and inclusion of the host society (Berry, 1997). Assuming the plurality and inclusion of the host society, acculturation strategies are influenced by the degree to which people want to hold on to their own cultural heritage and their willingness to participate in the daily life of the larger society (Sam & Berry, 2010). Since acculturation is a dual process, this strategy is employed by the immigrant as well as the larger society, but the larger society holds the greater power.

Depending on the person's approach, acculturation strategies can include marginalization, separation, assimilation, and integration. However, minority groups can only choose their acculturation approach when the larger society is open and inclusive towards cultural diversity (Berry, 2005). Integration requires accommodation from both the minority and larger society. The minority group must adopt the basic values of the larger society, and the larger society must adapt national institutions, such as education, health, and labor, to accommodate the needs of all the groups that live in the plural society (Berry, 2005).

Since most contemporary communities such as the US are diverse, they are considered plural by nature. Further, the US constitution upholds the rights of all citizens. For the purpose of this research, I did not delve into how the institution holds people's rights in reality. Thus, according to Berry's acculturation model, since the US is considered inclusive to all cultural groups, college-educated, Sudanese, immigrant women who adopt basic US values would identify well with US culture. The four strategies the immigrant can choose in a contemporary pluralistic, culturally open society are: marginalization, separation, assimilation, and integration.

Marginalization. Marginalization results from exclusion and discrimination by the larger society. It involves slight interest of the immigrant in maintaining their cultural heritage and lack of interest in participation in the larger society. The lack of maintenance of one's cultural heritage usually occurs from an enforced cultural loss, such as people who have experienced forced migration. As a result of exclusion and discrimination, immigrants become unwilling to participate in the larger society. Members of this group

do not participate in public events such as political and social occasions (Berry, 2005, 2011). Marginalization occurs when the larger society is not willing to accommodate minority groups.

Separation. Those immigrants who strongly hold to their heritage culture and avoid interaction with the larger society follow the *separation* strategy, which usually results in the formation of ethnic enclaves. Members of this group do not concern themselves with public issues and do not participate in local politics or social events with the larger society. Instead the group identifies with members of their same immigrant enclave (Berry, 2005). When the larger society adopts this approach, the result is *segregation*.

Assimilation. Assimilation occurs when individuals do not want to hold on to their heritage culture and prefer to adopt the culture of the larger society through interactions. They shed their cultures and values and adopt the larger society's culture and values. Immigrants in this group are oriented towards becoming the same as the dominant group because they see the rewards in employment, education, and economic stability.

When the dominant group pushes the immigrant towards shedding their cultures and adopting the dominant culture's values, this strategy is known as the *melting pot* (Berry, 2011). Since the US has a long history of immigration, the melting pot is the Americanization that aimed at producing a unified group and required conformity of Germans, Irish, Italians, and other white groups (Bell, 1996). However, historically, the same concept did not work well for people of color and native Americans. Joel Spring

(2013) reminded us of the early experiences of Native Americans and African slaves who were forced to abandon their cultures, languages, and religions. Instead, they were required to adopt the language, values, and culture of the dominant white men. Thus, the melting pot strategy does not value the immigrant's cultural, linguistic, or religious heritage.

Integration. The *integration* strategy is chosen by those who are interested in holding on to their heritage culture as well as interacting with larger society in daily life. Individuals who choose the integration approach maintain a level of their cultural heritage while becoming an integral part of the larger society. In the larger society, the strategy is known as *multi-culturalism* (Sam & Berry, 2010). In the integration/multi-culturalism model, all ethnic groups (including dominant, non-dominant, immigrant, and indigenous cultures) live their lives in the same large society. The integrated/multicultural society does not represent any single group's way of life; thus, all groups are ethno-cultural with rights rather than minorities (Berry, 2011).

Although Berry offers a model that hypothetically can be applied to all immigrant groups, it fails to recognize the complex characteristics of college-educated, north Sudanese, immigrant women. Berry offers a linear model that classifies individuals as high or low on adopting US mainstream culture and their heritage culture retention (Schwartz et al., 2010; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Berry's model fails to take into consideration the variability of the degree to which immigrants hold on to their culture or adopt the mainstream culture. From the interviews, the women in this research showed a selective approach to how they held to their cultural heritage. While all the women felt

strongly about preserving their culture, they were willing to adjust some aspects of their culture. For example, Ne'mat and Noon chose not to wear their hijab at work to avoid possible discrimination that they might encounter. Therefore, choosing which aspects of their culture to hold tightly is a decision the women took as they navigated through their acculturation journeys.

Research suggests that while the US might be open and inclusive to European immigrants, it is not as hospitable towards African women. Ngo (2008) insists that Berry's model cannot be universal because US society favors some immigrants over others. Thus, depending on the country of origin and the cultural heritage, immigrants may experience discrimination (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). European immigrants who speak English and share Western cultural values experience acculturation in a different way than other immigrants of color who do not share the Western cultural values and do not speak English. While the European immigrant might follow the linear acculturation model, the black, college-educated, north Sudanese, Muslim women who wear the hijab experience racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia. All of the women in this study experienced some sort of discrimination as they acculturated in the US; this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

Another major challenge to Berry's theory was a survey study based on his acculturation model and conducted by Amer and Hovey (2007). The study aimed at examining acculturation strategies for Arab Americans with a sample size of 120. Data was analyzed separately for Muslim and Christians for comparison. An important finding from this research was that integration of Muslims was not related to better mental health.

Instead religiosity was significantly related to better family functioning and less depression (Amer & Hovey, 2007, p. 344). This is consistent with findings in this research, which indicate that religiosity served as an attribute of the women's community wealth.

A third critique to Berry's model is the marginalization path where the immigrant rejects their culture and does want to adopt the mainstream culture. The viability of this path was questioned by Del Pilar and Udasco (2004), who argue that the probability that someone will develop their own culture without drawing from their heritage culture or the culture of the society in which they live is unlikely. In other words, it is almost impossible that someone would fully reject their own culture and the culture of the society they live in, develop their own new culture without copying bits and pieces from the culture they came with or the dominant culture of the society in which they live.

Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Theory

Ogbu (1978) examined the experiences of minority groups in six countries: Britain, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and the US. Based on outcomes of their acculturation process, Ogbu (1978) classified minorities into three groups: autonomous, caste, and immigrants. Ogbu's caste model for minorities is part of his cultural-ecological theory of minority school performance. According to the cultural-ecological theory, the ways minorities are treated in the society play out on a smaller scale within schools. The theory also utilized the idea that school performance is an indicator for social mobility. Ogbu (1978) studied school performance of different racial immigrant groups in those six countries to develop his theory. Ogbu's theory has two major aspects: the system and the

community forces (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). There are collective problems of the immigrant group, yet the minority group comes up with a collective way to adapt and solve their problems, including community forces.

The System and Community Forces. The *system* refers to the ways minorities are treated in the educational system (e.g., educational policies, pedagogy, school credentials). Ogbu (1978) found that differences in culture and language did not contribute to variation in school performance. In fact, despite the logic that those minorities with similar culture and language will do better in schools (Jacob & Jordan, 1993), Ogbu found that immigrant minorities that were doing better in school were those whose culture and language were distant from the public-school culture (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Thus, Ogbu suggested that community forces may explain the differences in performance of minorities in schools. Community forces have four dimensions: (a) dual frame of reference, (b) institutional beliefs about school/settlement society, (c) relational beliefs about school/settlement society, and (d) symbolic beliefs about schooling/acculturation.

Dual Frame. Dual frame of reference entails how good the minority opportunities are compared others, and who are the others. In the context of this research, dual frame is how the women in the study perceive their opportunities compared to others, and to whom do the women compare themselves? Do they compare themselves to a middle-class, white, US community; Sudanese ethnic community in the US; their social circle in Sudan; or another group? Dual frame provides a contextual understanding of where minority groups place themselves.

Institutional Beliefs. Institutional beliefs deal mainly with the folk theory of success or how the minority group defines success, their strategies to succeed, and which group in the society do they aspire to be like in terms of success.

Relational Beliefs. The third dimension that influences community forces is *relational beliefs*. It is defined by the collective struggle of the minority group and the amount of trust the group has for the institution/society. It is also influenced by the beliefs about the role of the institution/society in subordination and control of the minority group.

Symbolic Beliefs. Symbolic beliefs about schooling or the settlement society in this context resembles the fourth dimension of the community forces. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998), symbolic beliefs fall into three categories:

1. Cultural and language differences as barriers to overcome or as markers of collective identity of the minority group.
2. Group identity: beliefs about whether society way of life, culture, and language are a threat to the minority culture, language, and way of life.
3. Group membership: beliefs about group members who adopt the society culture and ways of life. (p. 163)

More precisely, in the US, the theory looks at the ways the minority group perceive how they are treated by the majority (the whites) such as discrimination practices in employment, wages, social and residential segregation, and denigration of the minority culture and language. The theory examines how the minority group responds to the way they are treated by the whites and the collective solutions they come-up with to face the ways they are being treated. Thus, by interviewing the college-educated, north Sudanese women I was able to understand their perceptions about how they were being

perceived and treated by the white community. Similar to Ogbu's findings, all the women interviewed in this study expressed that they experienced or witnessed episodes of discrimination.

Community forces ae also influenced by how and why the group became a minority (e.g., racial, ethnic) and whether they came to the US voluntary or has been forced to come for reasons beyond their control (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 158). Ogbu (1978, 1990) also does not define minority status based on numerical representation. Rather, minority status is based on the level of power the group holds within the country or society. Ogbu and Simons (1998) clearly distinguished between voluntary and involuntary minorities:

> The classification of minorities into voluntary and involuntary groups is determined mainly by (1) the nature of white American involvement with their becoming minorities and (2) the reasons they came or were brought to the United States. (p. 164)

Thus, similar to Berry's acculturation theory, Ogbu argue the acculturation outcomes were influenced by the ways the minority was treated by the powerful (white community). Earlier, I reviewed literature about why different groups similar to the population I studied immigrate to the US. I also asked the women in my study about the reasons why they came to the US. Since the women I interviewed either came through the diversity visa, through family reunification, or being born in the US, they are considered voluntary immigrants based on Ogbu's and Berry's definitions. Further, although African Americans are considered involuntary minority because their ancestors were brought against their will through enslavement, Ogbu and Simons (1998) remind us that voluntary

classification is not determined by race. For example, black Caribbean are considered involuntary immigrants in the Caribbean because they were brought there against their will, but they are voluntary immigrants in the US because they came voluntary. Thus, blackness does not contribute to the voluntary/involuntary status in Ogbu's theory. Ogbu's theory predicts that minorities fall into one of these three categories: autonomous minority, caste minority, and immigrant minority. I explain below each of these groups and where the women I interviewed fit best within these groups.

Autonomous Minority. Autonomous minority includes members of a minority group with a well-defined racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or religious identity. The minority's strong identity allows them to participate in the local politics and are not threatened by the dominant group. In other words, their relationship with the dominant group is not defined by inferiority. However, the autonomous minority maintain their identity and do not identify with the dominant group. Autonomous minorities have their own system and do not compare themselves to the dominant group (Ogbu, 1978). A good example of these well-established minorities are the Amish, Jews, and Mormons. Hence, the north Sudanese, college-educated women I interviewed are not considered members of an autonomous minority.

Involuntary Caste Minority. Involuntary caste minority are members of a minority group that is subordinated by the dominant group and viewed as less worthy and inferior to the dominant group. The inferiority is further emphasized by economic and political systems that exclude them from positions of power. Ogbu (1978) claimed that members of the caste minority were born into their caste, making it a permanent status

that cannot be escaped by education. Access to quality education is often not equitable between the dominant group and the caste minority. Since this minority group compares itself to middle-class whites, they see themselves always falling behind. This is further emphasized by educational institutions. For example, the ways in which schools in middle-class white neighborhoods provide good education compared to the educational opportunities caste minorities receive in their neighborhoods.

Although this involuntary caste minority category believes in the value and rewards of white middle-class strategies—hard work, following the rules, getting good grades—they often do not see the rewards of these strategies in comparison to whites (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Since they do not see the rewards, eventually, they occupy the low jobs that are necessary but not desirable in the employment market and do not participate actively in the political arena. Although they may not believe they are inferior to the dominant group, they come to accept the social hierarchy and operate within its boundaries. Ogbu (1978) proposes that their ascribed status as inferior minority and its consequent characteristics then become a self-fulfilling prophecy (pp. 350–351). Since the women in my study were voluntary immigrants, they were not members of the involuntary caste minority.

Immigrant Minority. Immigrant minorities are also referred to by Ogbu (1978) as voluntary minorities because they chose to come and live in the US with the option to return to their homeland if they desired. Immigrant minority members may initially occupy the low jobs in the employment market. Unlike the caste minority, who occupy the same type of low jobs in the employment market, immigrant minorities do not feel

inferior to the dominant group. They differ from the caste minority in that they operate outside the existing social hierarchy. Immigrant minorities view institutional discrimination and social aggression as the cost of being newcomers to a system that existed before them (Ogbu, 1978). Although all the women I interviewed reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination against their cultural group, they attributed it to cultural differences and xenophobia. None of the women in the study felt threatened by the discriminatory episodes they experienced. Immigrant minorities mostly have the option to return to their homeland or another location if conditions become undesirable in the host country. Most of the women in the study expressed their desire to return to Sudan at some point when conditions become desirable. As outsiders of the social hierarchy, immigrant minorities compare their economic status to those who are in their homeland. Thus, their aspirations are not the same as the dominant group. Based on internal and external factors, in the next generations, immigrant minorities may later become autonomous or caste minorities.

Portes and Zhou's Context of Reception

Similar to Berry's acculturation theory and Ogbu's Cultural-ecological theory, Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou proposed a theory by which the context of how the immigrant is received in the host country, including government policies and labor market characteristics, are crucial in determining how well the immigrant community will do in the host country. Portes and Zhou proposed three background determinants that highly influence the acculturation experiences of immigrants and predicted the future of

three generations of immigrants. These determinants are known as the context of reception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Portes and Zhou (1993) explain that changes occurred in context of reception of early immigrants to contemporary, more recently arrived immigrants for two reasons. First, the demographic of immigrants has changed in the last three decades. While the early immigrants were mostly white Europeans, contemporary immigrants have darker skin color that hinders their assimilation into the white mainstream society (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). Second, the current economic conditions do not foster social mobility even for US born citizens. Globalization and industrialization decreased the number of blue-collar jobs that immigrants traditionally occupy in the US (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Additionally, technological advances in the industrial and agricultural sectors diminished the amount of accessible jobs. Context of reception has three dimensions. These dimensions are government policies, labor market, and characteristics of the existing immigrant ethnic community (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Government Policies. *Government policies* can lead to exclusion, passive acceptance, or active encouragement of the immigrant group.

Exclusion. When the government chooses exclusionary policies and practices, the immigrant community operates secretively to protect itself (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Zhou, 1997). A clear example of government policy that led to exclusion is what is known as the "Muslim ban" or President Trump's Executive Order 13769 that banned the entry of aliens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen to the US. These countries are Muslim-majority countries, hence the nickname *Muslim ban*. The

Muslim ban was mentioned more than once by the women I interviewed in this research. The women's responses included fear and the need to distance themselves. These natural responses were mitigated by the friendly gestures they found from their "American friends" who, through acts of kindness, assured their acceptance and extended friendship to the immigrant women I interviewed.

Ogbu (1990) agrees that the immigrant community will develop collective solutions to solve their collective problems. Immigrant experiences are influenced by the nature of the daily encounters and interactions with the host society as well as the level of acceptance, tolerance, and inclusion they experience. Another example is the acculturation experiences of Muslim and Arab immigrants, including Sudanese, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which were shaped by negative public attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims and resulted in a spike of harmful incidents against Arab immigrants (Abu-Bader et al., 2011).

Passive Acceptance. Passive acceptance occurs when the government provides admission but does not provide any further assistance to the immigrant (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). A good example of passive acceptance is the diversity visa program through which immigrants are admitted lawfully without further assistance. Immigrants admitted through the diversity visa program are not eligible for public benefits such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF; also known as food stamps), and other public benefits. Most of the women in my study fell into this category. Thus, passive acceptance policies occur when the government grants admission of immigrants without providing any further assistance upon arrival to the US. There is

usually a very different outcome when the government chooses active encouragement—the immigrant group thrives.

Active Encouragement. A good example of an *active encouragement* policy is political refugees who receive resettlement assistance from the government (Portes & Manning, 1986). The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has in place a number of programs to assist refugees with housing, health, cultural adjustment, employment, English language acquisition, mental health, schooling, as well as many other forms of support (see ORR website, n.d.). Such programs constitute an active encouragement policy that fosters the wellbeing of refugees.

Along these lines, government policies can foster exclusion of immigrants, passive acceptance of immigrants without support, or active encouragement of refugees with programs and benefits that can help the newcomers flourish. The type of government policy the immigrant experiences may determine the trajectory of their acculturation outcomes.

Labor Market. Portes and Rumbaut (2014) discussed the labor market as the second dimension in determining how well immigrant communities will do in the US. Stereotypes about certain communities play a role in the labor market. For example, low wage, unskilled jobs are sometimes associated with "Mexican" laborers (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). These discriminatory stereotypes often affect the way a certain immigrant group is treated in the labor market. As such, employers tend to hire employees from their same ethnic group. Thus, the attitudes of employers towards the

immigrant group determines where they end up in the employment ladder and eventually it can contribute to the immigrant acculturation path.

Ethnic Community Characteristics. The third dimension of Portes and Rumbaut's theory that determines how well an immigrant group will do in the US is the characteristics of the ethnic community. Similar to Berry's acculturation strategy, Portes and Rumbaut (2014) suggest that if employers do not discriminate against the immigrant group, then the human capital becomes the determinant of how well the immigrant will do. Theoretically, if the immigrant group does not face discrimination in the labor market, then they will enter the labor market according to their skills and knowledge. This is very important to my research because I examined the experiences of college-educated, north Sudanese women who entered the US already equipped with education and skills that theoretically would allow them to enter the labor market as professionals. The experiences reported by the women negated this theoretical assumption. In fact, all the women in my study reported they could not enter the professional job market with the credentials they came with. All the women came to the US with a college education. All of them had to recertify, get a graduate degree from the US, or pursue another bachelor's degree to be able to access the US professional job market.

In summary, context of reception is determined by the level of hospitality of government policies, the societal willingness to accept the immigrant including the economic readiness, and the existence of a supportive ethnic immigrant community. These categories may predict how the immigrant will be incorporated in the host society

(Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). The following section about segmented assimilation theory explains the outcomes of the immigrant experiences for three generations.

Portes and Zhou's Segmented Assimilation Theory

Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) asserted that acculturation of immigrants is not unilinear. In other words, acculturation experiences and outcomes are not the same for all immigrants. Segmented Assimilation refers to the range of outcomes that results from the acculturation of immigrants. In segmented assimilation there are four different paths that ranges from upward social mobility to a downwards mobility that is characterized by immersion in poverty, drugs, and gang activities (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008, p. 13).

Portes and Manning (1986) discussed the four pathways that immigrants can enter into the mainstream. These pathways are based on the labor market. The four pathways are: (a) primary labor migration, (b) political refugees, (d) middleman minorities, and (d) ethnic enclave economy.

Primary Labor Migration. Portes and Manning (1986) claimed that skilled migrants, such as doctors, engineers, nurses, and technicians, enter the labor market to address a specific shortage that they can fill with their skills. It is easier for skilled migrants to assimilate culturally and linguistically because of their work success (Portes & Manning, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Additionally, skilled migrants do not concentrate in a cultural enclave but are dispersed throughout many regions and follow different career paths (Portes & Manning, 1986). The absence of a cultural enclave

together with their career success encourage them to assimilate faster into the host society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Human capital is very important in determining the success of immigrants. Skilled laborers bring their skills, motivation, and knowledge with them, which allows them to become salaried professionals or follow the managerial route (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). These skilled laborers may start from the bottom of the professional labor market, then work their way up as they gain the skills and knowledge that allows them to navigate through systems. Their earnings increase with time unlike those laborers who rely solely on their physical energy (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Refugees. Refugees are a special type of immigrant, as classified by the United Nations through the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.* In Chapter I, Article I, A (2), refugee status applies

> To any person who:…As a result of…well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR, 1951, p. 14)

President Carter signed the Refugee Act into US law in 1980, 30 years after the convention (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Refugees are considered involuntary immigrants since they did not seek relocation based on personal choice. Rather, refugees are settled in the US based on governmental decisions between the US and the country of origin (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Political refugees follow many work paths. Since they are not

economic migrants, political migrants may enter the employment market through different types of employment. Refugees also receive a resettlement package of welfare assistance that include time limited health, educational, and legal benefits (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Professional refugee groups utilized these opportunities well and used it to advance themselves, while unskilled refugees also enjoyed the temporary economic stability they receive from the US government (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Middleman Minorities. These are small groups of immigrants who act as intermediaries in a particular country or region. When immigrants are faced with discrimination and difficulty navigating through culture and systems, they often gravitate towards entrepreneurship as an alternative way to achieve economic stability (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). This entrepreneurship became a means for economic mobility. These entrepreneurial minority usually cluster in large urban areas where they have access to labor and market (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

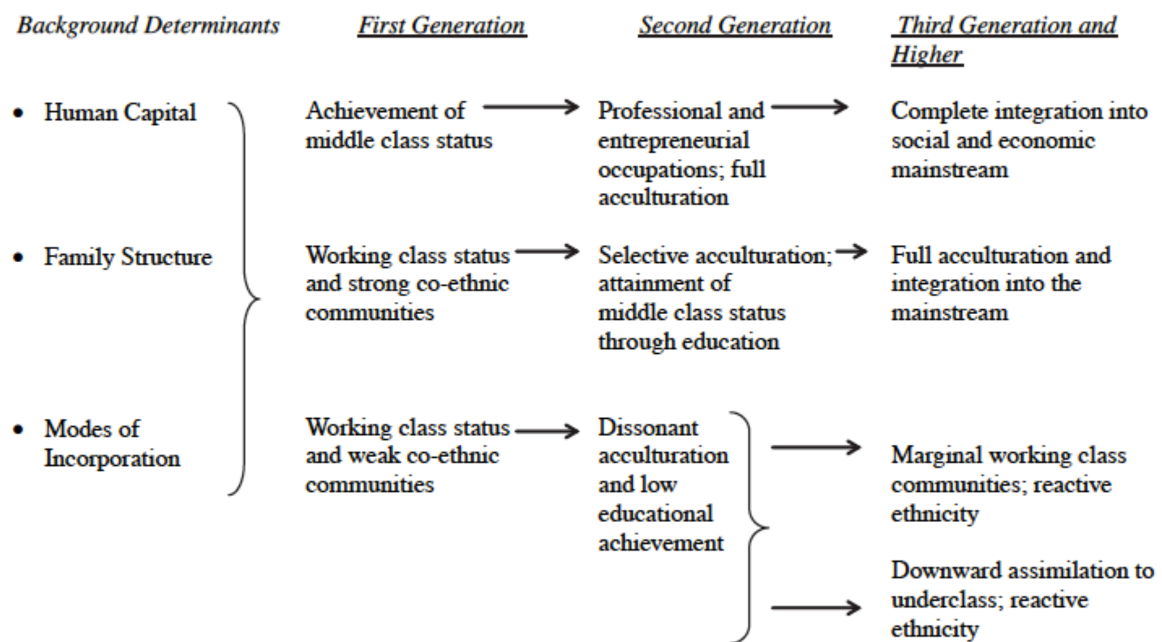
Immigrant Enclave. Jews in Manhattan constitute a good example of and immigrant enclave, where they were physically concentrated in a small area and created a strong network of industrial and commercial businesses after World War II. Unlike other immigrant groups who start from the bottom of employment market, the Jewish ethnic enclave helped its members access economically and socially prestigious positions (Portes & Manning, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Ogbu's autonomous minority group is very similar to the immigrant enclave.

Mobility Paths Across Generations. Further, Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) identified human capital, family structure, and modes of incorporation as the three major

background determinants that affect immigrant experiences and outcomes for first, second, and third generations. Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) claim that the combination of these determinants will lead to three distinct paths for the first generation that will affect experiences of second and third generations. Figure 2.3 describes the progression of each generation based on each path.

Figure 2.3

Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's Segmented Assimilation Model



Note. From "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants," A. Portes and M. Zhou, 1993, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 530*(1), pp. 74–96. Copyright 1993 by SAGE. Reprinted with permission.

Path 1. In the first path, the first generation achieves middle-class status based on human capital. In this context human capital refers to education, skills, and financial status. Human capital is very important in this research as the women I studied are all

college graduates, speak English well, and are financially stable. Thus, theoretically, they come with strong human capital. Segmented assimilation theory predicts the second generation in Path 1 will be fully acculturated and will hold professional and entrepreneurial occupations. Subsequently, the third generation following this path will achieve full integration into the social and economic mainstream.

Path 2. In the second path, the first generation is comprised of working-class people with strong co-ethnic communities. Due to the strength of their ethnic communities, the second generation will undergo a selective acculturation process in which they attain middle-class status through their educational achievement. The third generation in this path will be fully acculturated and integrated in the mainstream.

Path 3. Finally, those who follow the third path are those who are working class with weak co-ethnic communities in the first generation. Segmented assimilation theory predicts the second generation will undergo dissonant acculturation with low educational achievement. The third generation will either settle into subordinate menial jobs or fall into a downward assimilation into deviant lifestyles (Portes & Fernandez-Kelly, 2008).

However, Walters et al. (2010) conducted a study whose findings challenged the segmented assimilation theory. Walters et al. conducted a random telephone survey of 3,415 respondents who were second generation immigrants and found dissonant acculturation of the second generation was the exception, not the norm, as suggested by the segmented assimilation theory. Walters et al. concluded that the type of acculturation and the characteristics of the ethnic community did not affect the social mobility in the

second generation across all paths. This finding is clearly challenging to the segmented assimilation theory.

Before I end this chapter, it is important to remember that according to Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008), the human capital in the segmented assimilation theory includes educational, aspirational, social, and familial capital. However, if we look at Yosso's community wealth model for people of color, we find that the segmented assimilation theory's "human capital" is missing important aspects of capital such as navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital. As the findings of this research suggest, these other forms of capital that are not represented in the theories I examined, which might be the reason for the misalignment of the experiences of the women I interviewed with the theories in question.

Summary

This chapter brought together the literature I used to inform my research. In the first section, I reviewed literature that pertains to acculturation experiences of African and Arab women. The most cited acculturation challenges were found to be English language proficiency and accented English (Grantmakers, 2003; Sienkiewicz et al. 2013; Yakushko et al., 2008). Racial and social discrimination were among the common obstacles to acculturation. I also reviewed literature pertaining to ethnic, national, and religious identities of Arab and African women to understand how it informs their acculturation experiences. Strong ethnic identity was found to be very common among Arabs and African immigrants (Naber, 2012; Suleiman, 1999). Religious identity was

also found to be therapeutic for Sudanese women as they coped with the stress of acculturation (Elnour, 2012).

In the second section of this chapter, I reviewed the theoretical foundations that informed my research. The three theories I examined in my research were John Berry's acculturation theory, John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, and Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's segmented assimilation theory. Berry' acculturation model offered four strategies that immigrants choose for acculturation, namely integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization (Berry, 1997, 2005, 2011). Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory predicted four categories for immigrant acculturation outcomes, named autonomous minority, caste (involuntary) minority, immigrant minority, and immigrant enclave (Ogbu, 1978, 1990; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory predicted the path of mobility across first, second, and third generations of immigrants based on their human capital, family structure, and modes of incorporation.

All three theories agree about the importance of the human capital in terms of attitudes/willingness of the immigrant towards acculturation. I also discussed the notion of community wealth as theorized by Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro (1995). The community wealth model explains the different modes of community assets and values that are often ignored by mainstream research (Yosso, 2005). The research for this dissertation is centered around the experiences of the seven, college-educated, Sudanese women who possessed high levels of community wealth as interpreted from the interviews I conducted with them. The next two chapters, III and IV, introduce the

research process, and explore the findings of those interviews and analysis of the acculturation model, cultural-ecological theory, and segmented assimilation theory.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I explain how I embarked on my research journey. I start with the IRB Protocol then I explain the logic that drove this study: from design to implementation in the field and, finally, analysis and reporting. I start by describing how I designed and planned the research. Then I shed a light on what basic qualitative research is to help readers understand the rationale behind choosing this method for this research. I provide a contextual description of the research setting as the Sudanese community in Greensboro because I am investigating acculturation experiences of college-educated, north Sudanese women in Greensboro, North Carolina. This is followed by a description of the participants and how I recruited them for the interviews. I also explain the sampling techniques I used. Then I detail how the data was collected, including the interviews, field notes, and researcher's journal. After that is the data analysis section, where I describe the transcription process, data sorting, and analysis. I also discuss how I attended to issues of research relationships and ethics as well as trustworthiness. I conclude this chapter with a summary as a way to highlight the significant points for the reader.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol

This section focuses on the IRB submission and approval process. I submitted a brief summary of the research together with an email from the community leader who

agreed to introduce me to prospective participants, adult consent form, interview questions, and recruitment script. All documents are available in the appendix at the end of this thesis.

Summary and Rationale

This qualitative study will examine how college-educated north Sudanese women speak about their identities in US in the context of their assimilation experiences. I will focus on the ways they speak about their identities, their attachment to their homeland, and how it affects the ways they raise their children. This is important because this population is in the intersection of race, gender, religion, and social status but have rarely been studied. By interviewing these women, I hope to understand how they make meaning of their new lives and allowing their voice to be heard.

Most college-educated Sudanese women from the north who have emigrated to the US come from a strong patriarchal culture and mostly identify as Muslims. Additionally, they are mostly privileged in Sudan by virtue of their education, tribal affiliation, social and economic status, or a combination of these factors. Upon settlement in US the Intersections of race, gender, religion, and social status for this population have rarely been discussed in the literature and my hope is to understand how these women make meaning of their new lives in the US and how their acculturation experiences redefine their identities and the ways they raise their children.

Consent Process

Five to seven women will be recruited to participate using snowballing method. After I introduce myself and explain what my research is, I will explain her role in the

research. I will then give her the consent form and explain it to her as well. I will also give her the chance to read over it and assure her of her right to not participate in the research at any point. If she agrees I will ask her to sign and date it. I will provide her with a copy of the consent form to keep. Minimum age of participants is 21 years. All participants speak Arabic and English. Interviews will be conducted in both languages based on preference of the participant. The researcher speaks both languages fluently. Each interview will last two to four hours with up to two to three rounds of interviews for each participant to obtain clarity. Interviews will be audio-recorded and written notes will be taken.

Confidentiality and Data Security

An audio-recording device will be used to record interviews. The device is password protected. Transcribed data will be stored behind two locked doors. Fake names will be used for all participants. The master list with the participants' names and pseudonym will be stored behind two locked doors and will be kept separate from the other data. To ensure privacy and comfort of participant, the participant will choose the meeting place. All interviews will be in-person and will be recorded using a password protected device. For best results, a quiet place will be preferred to ensure privacy and good recording.

After reviewing the documents and submission, the IRB granted an “Exempt’ status due to the minimum risk associated with the study. The IRB approved the study on February 2018.

Research Design

Through this research I was looking to understand acculturation experiences of seven, college-educated, north Sudanese women as they spoke about their identities in the US. I looked at their acculturation experiences in light of several contemporary assimilation and acculturation models: Berry's acculturation model, Ogbu's minority model, and Portes, Rumbaut and Zhou's segmented assimilation and modes of incorporation theory.

I interviewed seven, college-educated, north Sudanese women who resided in Greensboro, NC, regarding their life experiences in the US. I conducted two rounds of interviews that yielded twenty one hours of audio-recorded data. I chose to interview the women in this study for two reasons. The first reason is cultural, and the second reason is methodological. Sudanese people have a strong oral tradition, thus oral communication is used as a means to pass information through generations (Ibrahim, 1985). In other words, Sudanese women communicate best through speaking and storytelling; thus, by interviewing them, I was able to capitalize on their strength in articulating how they see the world. Methodologically, interviews seemed to be the most suitable method of data collection in this basic qualitative study research. Kvale (1983) explains that interviews centered around the interviewee's life experiences produce descriptive knowledge that allows the researcher to understand the meaning of a certain phenomenon. Kvale further explains that the interview allows research participants to describe their experiences, the meaning they ascribe to them, and what is important to them in those experiences. Although I am a member of the community of Sudanese women in my study and have

similar experiences, I was surprised by the ways some of the women articulated their experiences. Their interactions with the Sudanese cultural community were the most surprising for me. It was not the nature of the interactions because, as mentioned, I share some of these experiences. Instead it was the way they articulated their experiences. Their experiences helped me understand that as immigrants, we also undergo acculturation with our cultural community in Greensboro, NC, as I show in Chapter IV.

Yin (2018) explains that qualitative research is most suitable in research where description of a social phenomenon is sought in order to understand. In this exploratory qualitative study, I sought to obtain description of the acculturation experiences of these college-educated, north Sudanese women to understand how they interpret their acculturation experiences and how it informs the ways they raise their children. I also looked at current acculturation models to see where these women's experiences might fall within the theories. In particular, the theories I examined are Berry's acculturation model, Ogbu's minority model, and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation and modes of incorporation model. Qualitative study design is also suitable for the "how" questions (Yin 2018), so it aligns well with the questions I sought to answer in this research. The questions I aimed to answer are:

1. How do acculturation experiences of college-educated, north Sudanese women align with or challenge acculturation theories and models such as Berry's acculturation model, Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory?

2. How do college-educated Sudanese women from the north speak about their identity upon settlement in the US?
3. How does their attachment to the homeland affect their acculturation experiences in the US?

Insight of Interview Based Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as:

> A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Qualitative research aims to reveal hidden meanings of the lived experiences that can help us see the world from a different perspective. In qualitative research the researcher seeks to uncover the multiple ways we may see the world. As our participants tell their experiences as they lived it and what it meant to them, we learn new ways to see the world we live in. My intention has been to provide the world (i.e., readers) an opportunity to witness and understand how these seven women make sense of their lived realities. Through this research I strive to give us an alternative way to see our world—through these women's lenses.

I used an interview-based, qualitative study approach to study how college-educated, north Sudanese women spoke about their identities and their acculturation experiences in the US. My goal was to uncover how their experiences fit within or

challenge prominent acculturation and assimilation theories. I used Berry's acculturation model, Ogbu's minority model, and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory as a framework for the multiple prominent immigration theories in the US. The interview-based qualitative study yields in-depth data (Yegidis et al., 2018; Yin, 2018), which helped me gain insight about the acculturation experiences of these college-educated, north Sudanese women.

Yin (2018) explains that qualitative study research "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 15). While immigration is not a new phenomenon in itself, acculturation experiences of these college-educated, north Sudanese women constitute a contemporary phenomenon that are best investigated through descriptions by the interviewees in this basic qualitative study research. Using their own words, these women tell their acculturation experiences and how they have made and continue to make meaning of those experiences.

Qualitative study research requires several skills, including asking good questions, being a good listener, staying adaptive, having a concrete understanding of the issue being studied, and conducting the research ethically (Yin, 2018). This means, as a researcher, I had to be well prepared to conduct the research study. I gained experience on interviewing skills when I worked as a research assistant at the UNCG Department of Physics and Astronomy on a qualitative research project, during which I conducted semi-structured interviews with 18 participants. The study, published in 2019, is titled, "Three

critical issues that shape and complicate STEM self-efficacy intervention research: Reflections and analysis from an interdisciplinary research team" (Sedberry et al.).

At the same time, throughout this research, I learned that no matter how prepared I was, there was always something in the fieldwork that surprised me. The most challenging skill for me was asking good questions. I had to stay attentive and alert during the interviews to be able to ask follow-up questions that could help me obtain good data. Conducting interviews for basic qualitative study research is a mentally exhausting and energy-draining task because it requires the researcher to be attentive and responsive at all times (Yin, 2018). I found this to be true as I struggled through the first interview. Since each interview is unique, I learned quickly that I had to be a good listener and read between the lines to ask the right questions. I enjoyed listening to participants' stories and it helped me see the world from their perspectives.

Settings

I conducted this study with seven, college-educated, north Sudanese women who emigrated to the US more than five years ago and currently reside in Greensboro, NC. In this section I provide a general description of the Sudanese community in Greensboro as context. I also provide a description of the settings where I conducted the interviews with the women.

Contextual Setting: Sudanese Community in Greensboro, NC

This section is based on my experience as a member of the Sudanese community in Greensboro since 1996 and my work with Sudanese immigrants and refugees through the UNCG Center for New North Carolinians (CNNC). No formal statistics exist about

the number of Sudanese people in Greensboro. Community leaders estimate the number to be 5,000 (CNNC, "Africa," n.d.). Of the approximately 5,000 Sudanese people in Greensboro, it is estimated that one third are refugees and two thirds are immigrants (NCASC, n.d.). Many emigrated through the diversity visa program. The diversity visa program works by way of a lottery system through which applicants from other countries apply to be admitted as permanent residents to the US (Nwoye, 2009). Winners of the lottery visa then go through rigorous screenings and interviews before being granted the permanent residence status that is also known as a Green Card (Nwoye, 2009). Winners have to pay a mandatory fee of about $2,000 for visa processing, and they are responsible for their travel expenses as well (Nwoye, 2009). These expenses constitute a huge financial burden on lottery visa winners and their families. According to a report by the World Bank in 2017, 36.1% of the Sudanese population live below the poverty line, which is defined as income of less than $1.90/day. Further, upon arrival to the US, Green Card holders are not eligible to receive any federal assistance for the first five years (Nwoye, 2009), thus they have to survive on their own.

The Sudanese are tribal people, so many still identify by their tribal affiliation. This tribal affiliation was encouraged by the 30-year ruling regime (1989–2019). In 2013, I visited Sudan and applied for the Sudanese National Identification number, which resembles the social security number in the US. The officer asked me about my tribal affiliation, and when I inquired about why this information was needed, he said it is used as an identifier for their records.

Some tribal associations exist in Greensboro as small, tightly knit communities providing special support to their members within the larger Sudanese community. Other grassroot organizations welcome Sudanese people from all tribes and affiliations. The purpose of most of these associations is to provide support to members and help preserve the culture through programming to teach children the Arabic language, Sudanese culture, and Islamic studies. These organizations also provide community gatherings and celebrations as well as social and financial support to members in times of need.

Many social roles spillover from the homeland's culture to the Greensboro, Sudanese community culture. Women are still considered the nucleus of the family, and they assume the traditional role of caring for the family. Although the absence of extended family members often makes a woman's role easier, as she only has to care for her immediate family, most women stay connected with their extended families back home in Sudan. Social media has made it easier to communicate internationally at a very low cost (free with internet access). Connection of the women with people in the homeland of Sudan is fundamental in this study as it relates directly to my third research question in which I explore how attachment of college-educated, north Sudanese women to the homeland affect their acculturation experiences in the US.

Since this study is concerned with acculturation experiences of college-educated, north Sudanese women as they speak about their identities in the US, it is important to know how many college-educated, north Sudanese women reside in Greensboro. Although there is no formal statistic about the number of Sudanese women in Greensboro, it is estimated by local Sudanese community organizations to be around

1,500 women (personal communication with leader N. Sirelkhatim, 2019). Greensboro attracts around 2,000 new immigrants and refugees every year (CNNC, 2013). Many of them come to reunite with extended family members or friends who already live in Greensboro. Others come for higher education or work opportunities and the mild weather conditions (CNNC, 2013). There are no statistics that indicate the annual arrival number of Sudanese immigrants to Greensboro.

In 1996, the number of Sudanese in Greensboro was estimated to be less than 100. Today the Sudanese community has grown to over 5,000 members (CNNC, n.d.). This exponential growth is attributed to the existence of a good immigrant and refugee service providers' network that helps refugees and immigrants, including Sudanese, settle (CNNC, n.d.). Additionally, the City of Greensboro continues to encourage its multicultural citizens to participate and engage in social and political life by encouraging and supporting immigrant grassroot organizations and including them in advisory roles for the city council through the International Advisory Council (City of Greensboro, "International Advisory Committee," n.d.).

Interview Setting

Each of the interviews took place in a setting chosen by the interviewee. Each one of the participants chose her own pseudonym name that I use throughout this thesis. The first interviewee was with Noon, and the interview took place at the park. Noon chose the park because she liked the outdoors. My goal was to interview her where she was most comfortable. The second interview was with Ahlam. I interviewed her at her office, which allowed me to observe how she personalized the space. Again, Ahlam chose to be

interviewed in her office, and I obliged. Maria preferred to be interviewed in my office, which was conveniently located for her. I interviewed Linda, Ne'mat, Nancy, and Sarah at their homes, upon their request. All the settings were reasonably quiet and comfortable. I audio-recorded all the interviews using my phone. I conducted two rounds of interviews. The average time for each of the interviews in the first round was about two hours and the average for the second round was about one hour. The total audio recording I have is about twenty one hours of interview time. I also recorded my observations in my field notes and observations about myself in my journal. Further, I conducted member checking to ensure quality of data. Detailed setting and observations are presented in the next chapter.

Participants and Sampling

Recruitment

My goal in this study was to explore how college-educated, north Sudanese women speak about their identities in the context of their acculturation experiences. I used snowballing method where I recruited participants from Greensboro, NC, mainly through my relationship with community leaders who connected me with my first participant (Noon) who, in turn, connected me with the other women I interviewed. Criteria for recruitment included: (a) attainment of a college degree from Sudan, (b) arrival in the US as an adult, (c) having family in the US (e.g., spouse and/or children), (d) pursuit of college education or certification in the US, (e) and having resided in the US for five or more years. The five-year minimum residency requirement for this study was important since acculturation is a process that often takes years (Berry, 2015; Ogbu,

1978; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). In addition, most immigrants who are Green Card holders are eligible to become citizens after five years of residency (USCIS, 2019).

Sampling

I recruited participants from the Sudanese community in Greensboro, NC, using snowball sampling. In the snowballing sampling technique, the researcher obtains knowledge of potential research participants from people who know people who meet the research criteria (Glesne, 2011; Yegidis, 2018). This technique is used when researching hard to reach communities such as ethnic communities (Yegidis, 2018). Snowball sampling served my study interest well since the Sudanese community has its own tightly knit network where members socialize together; thus, it was easy to identify potential research participants through other Sudanese community members. This technique helped me choose carefully and identify participants who provided rich data for my research. Noon was the first woman I interviewed. She connected me to Ahlam, Ne'mat, and Maria, who connected me to Nancy and Linda.

Since this is a basic qualitative study research aimed at gathering rich in-depth information, it was logical to use a small sample size. The sample size in a qualitative study can be as small as one or two (Yin, 2018). I chose to use seven participants to increase data rigor and reach saturation.

Data Collection: Interviews

After obtaining approval from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this research, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with seven, college-educated, Sudanese women. I conducted two

rounds of interviews. The first interview typically averaged about two hours. After the preliminary analysis of the first interviews, I conducted the second round of interviews during which I clarified some of the participants' responses and probed more deeply if needed. The second interviews lasted approximately one hour each. The second interviews were shorter since I only asked a few, focused, follow-up questions that arose from the preliminary data analysis of the first round of interviews. Overall, I had about 21 hours of recorded interview data.

Of the seven women I interviewed, three chose to be interviewed in English and four in Arabic. Noon, Ahlam, and Ne'mat preferred English, while Nancy, Linda, and Maria were more comfortable expressing themselves in Arabic. Using Arabic was not challenging since it is my mother tongue as well. In addition to the main interview questions, I also gathered demographic data that included: age, religion, ethnicity/tribal affiliation, place of birth, marital status, number of children, age of children, children's birthplace, work status, educational level before migration, and current education level. I used the demographic data to help me contextualize the findings that I discuss in the next chapter.

Women's Profiles

In this section I describe the women I interviewed about their identities in the context of their acculturation experiences in US. I present a profile for each of the women I interviewed. These profiles include background information about the women and an overview of the interview. I include a demographic chart in the appendix.

Noon

Noon is in her late forties and has been living in the US for about 18 years. She came to the US with a bachelor's degree in engineering from Sudan. Noon and her family were one of the lucky winners of the lottery visa (Diversity Visa) that allowed them to come and live lawfully as permanent residents in the US. She came with her husband and two-month old, first-born, baby girl. Upon arrival she worked in a factory together with her husband to make ends meet. Noon stated that she knew she would be working in a trade job when she first arrived in the US despite her degree in Engineering. She knew that her academic credentials from Sudan would not be recognized by employers in the US. She indicated that her expectations were realistic because she had a friend who already lived in Greensboro, and that friend helped Noon prepare and manage her expectations before her arrival. Noon then joined AmeriCorps as a volunteer. She served for one year at a non-profit agency, then she was hired by the same agency. A few years later, Noon decided to pursue her dream of completing graduate school. It was a long and tough journey, but she was able to obtain her master's and PhD in Engineering. Now she works as an Assistant Professor in Engineering.

I interviewed Noon at the park upon her request. She loves the outdoors and considers the park as a place to relax and unwind after a busy day at work. The interview was mostly done in English with occasional Arabic. Noon is also an activist for social justice issues with a special passion for gender equality issues. Noon grew up in Kassala, which is a small city in the eastern part of Sudan. She belongs to the "Shaigi" tribe, which is one of the prominent north Sudanese tribes.

Noon's perceptions of home have changed. When she arrived, she thought that home is where the person was born and raised (i.e., her home was Sudan). Now she believed, "Home for me is where you find yourself." Noon did not experience discrimination herself, but she said she had seen it happening to others, especially more recently. She indicated feeling increased hostility from the broader community since Trump's presidency.

Ahlam

Ahlam is in her late thirties and was born in the US. She returned to Sudan with her family when she was three years old and came back to the US with her husband. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in architecture from Sudan. When she arrived in the US, she decided to pursue higher education, so she enrolled in a master's, then a PhD, program in engineering. Ahlam works as an assistant professor in engineering. I interviewed Ahlam at her office upon her request. The interview was done mainly in English with a few Arabic words here and there.

Ahlam's father was in the Sudanese military and her mother was a teacher. Ahlam and her family belong to the "Galia" tribe from northern Sudan. Ahlam learned early on the value of education, although her extended family believed that women's education was a waste of time and money. Ahlam experienced gender discrimination in Sudan from her extended family and her college professors. They considered engineering as a male profession where females should not exist.

Ahlam experienced discrimination in graduate school and during her internship at NASA. She also reported that she was the victim of racial slurs in the street. Ahlam feels

she fits in more in the US despite the discrimination she has faced. She believes that wearing the hijab is one of the reasons she experienced discrimination, but she is not ready to give it up as it represents part of her identity. She believes that wearing the hijab has freed her from the tyranny of fashion.

Ahlam was aware of her social and economic privilege when she was in college and worked intentionally to act outside her privilege. Although she had a wardrobe with fashionable clothes, she made a pack with her friends in college to wear a limited number of clothes to school so that they do not flaunt their privilege. Unlike her extended family, Ahlam's parents were liberal and allowed her to participate in sports such as swimming and to join social clubs.

Linda

Linda is in her forties, and I interviewed her in her home in a quiet neighborhood in northeast Greensboro. Linda preferred to be interviewed in Arabic because she could express herself better in Arabic. She came to the US in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in accounting. When she found her credentials were not recognized by employers in US, she decided to pursue another bachelor's degree. She enrolled in a public health program and graduated five years ago.

Linda struggled in school because of her accented English. She felt self-conscious in class and was afraid to talk to people. She was worried she might be misunderstood and judged. She continued taking ESOL classes to boost her confidence. It was important for Linda to graduate from college in the US because she considered herself a role model

for her children. She plans to purse graduate school and will not stop until she completes her PhD.

Linda's life is centered around her family. During her school years, she made sure that her husband and children were well cared for. She studied at night when everyone was sleeping and got up early in the morning to prepare breakfast. Linda made mention more than once in the interview that her family's wellbeing is her first priority in life. She believes her primary role is being a mother and a wife.

Linda is connected with friends and family in Sudan via social media. She aspires to instill Sudanese values and culture in her children. She also dreams of going back to live in Sudan one day. She says her children are more comfortable in the US. Although she took her children to visit Sudan about 10 years ago and they did not like it, she believes she can convince them to return with her and live in Sudan one day.

Nancy

Nancy is in her forties and came to the US as a visitor to spend time with her sister in Detroit, Michigan, about 17 years ago. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in accounting from Sudan. At that time Nancy was happy to visit her sister in the US but was also fearful and uneasy leaving her sheltered life with her parents in Sudan. Her fear was magnified when she met Salva Kiir Mayardit, the current president of South Sudan on the plane coming to the US. He told her stories about how dangerous life in the US was, especially in the inner cities, where gang activities were a norm. She started remembering the stereotypes in the American movies she watched in Sudan. Those

movies portrayed American cities as crime-infested urban areas with gang members roaming the streets carrying guns.

Nancy did not know at that time whether she wanted to live in the US or go back to her parents in Sudan. She decided to use her time to experience life in the US with the option of going back to Sudan if things do not work here. She worked as a medical record assistant for her brother-in-law, who was a medical doctor. Nancy felt lonely, unsafe, and homesick when she first came even though she was staying with her sister and family. She felt like she left her comfortable and familiar life with her parents to explore a life of uncertainty. Nancy's persistence drove her to stay and make the US her home. She was then introduced to her husband through her sister's Sudanese neighbors. Her husband is also from Sudan, and they got married about one year after she arrived in the US. She then immediately moved to Greensboro, where he worked. Nancy then moved to South Carolina and Alabama before finally settling again in Greensboro. Nancy got her legal residency status adjusted after her marriage.

Nancy grew up in Medani, the second largest city in Sudan after the capital Khartoum. Ethnically, she identifies as "Mahas," which is also a north Sudanese tribe. Nancy lived a sheltered life with her family, who provided her with anything she needed. Her parents believed in the value of education as the woman's best "weapon" against life's difficulties. After settling in Greensboro, she started looking to advance herself academically. Nancy enrolled in a public health bachelor's program at a local state university, and she graduated in 2013. Nancy had small children at that time, and she believed caring for her children at home was more important than her own education, but

still, her passion to advance herself was very strong. She decided to continue her education and pursued an online master's degree.

I interviewed Nancy in her home in the northwest part of Greensboro. I interviewed her in Arabic upon her request. Nancy described her experiences with the mainstream community as mostly positive. Although she experienced discrimination especially, in Alabama, she thinks that most people are afraid of foreigners because they do not know them on a personal level. She believed her experiences in an all-white community in Alabama were positive because she was able to build good relationships with them. She believed that that biggest obstacle was the language barrier since it does not allow people to communicate with each other.

Ne'mat

Ne'mat is in her mid-forties, and she came to the US with a bachelor's degree in veterinary medicine and a master's degree in microbiology from Sudan. Ne'mat and her husband won the lottery visa (Diversity Visa) and decided to come and live in the US about 11 years ago. Ne'mat spoke English well so she decided to work as a customer service representative from home because she had a small child and was worried about childcare needs. She said that phone customers could not tell where she was from, and she mostly did not encounter problems because of her accent.

While she worked in customer service, Ne'mat pursued a master's program online to advance her education and be able to enter the professional field as a scientist. She completed her master's degree in quality assurance, and now she works as a research scientist at a pharmaceutical company. Ne'mat loves the work she does, although she

says it is not easy. She indicated that hard work makes employers recognize you no matter where you are from. Ne'mat put a serious effort to act in ways that makes her fit in as a scientist. She does not wear hijab at work because she does not want to be discriminated against. She wants to be seen as a scientist and nothing else.

Ne'mat grew up in Atbara, which is a mid-size city in Sudan. As a veterinary, she worked in the field in Sudan, and she experienced gender discrimination and harassment. Ne'mat belongs to "Galia" tribe from northern Sudan, but now she identifies as an American. Ne'mat is still connected with her family and friends in Sudan. She talks or texts with them daily using social media applications. Ne'mat also socializes with her American neighbors and her colleagues from work. Despite her socialization efforts, Ne'mat recognizes the cultural differences and says it is hard to relate to people when the conversation is about places you have never seen or dishes you have never tasted.

I interviewed Ne'mat in English at her home in northwest Greensboro upon her request. Her home is reflective of her passion for reading. Her books are neatly displayed in her living room along with her family pictures. Ne'mat was hospitable and pleasant when she welcomed me into her beautiful home.

Maria

Maria is in her thirties and came to settle in the US following her husband who had been living in the US since 1999. I interviewed Maria in my office at UNCG. The interview was conducted in Arabic with some English words in between. Maria belongs to the north Sudanese Galia tribe and grew up in Shandi, which is a small city in northern Sudan. Maria lived in California before coming to live in Greensboro. She and her

husband decided to move to Greensboro because of the hospitable conditions. He wanted to enroll in graduate school and be able to support his family, and she liked the Sudanese community support that existed in Greensboro. Maria came from Sudan as a dentist and struggled in navigating through the complex system to be able to recertify with the American Board of General Dentistry. Although she is now a certified dentist, she is still unable to find work or even volunteer in a dental clinic. She believes that she is being discriminated against because of her accented English and her appearance since she wears hijab.

Maria has a child with special needs, which made her pursue a degree in special education to be able to help her son. She considers Sudan to be her home but feels that life in the US is better for her son's developmental and health needs. Maria also has a five-year old daughter, and she is worried about raising her in the US. She wants her daughter to grow up with Sudanese culture and values.

Maria grew up in a conservative community where gender roles are strict. Now her brothers criticize her when she travels to attend conferences while her husband cares for her children. They consider her behavior unacceptable because it challenges her cultural gender roles. Her husband is supportive and helpful at home. Maria explained that the Sudanese community thinks that it is a woman's role to care for her husband. She engaged in a debate with Sudanese women online, and some of the women believed the husband should divorce the woman who does not prepare breakfast for him no matter what her reasons are. Maria has challenged these gender roles in her life in the US.

Sarah

Sarah is in her late twenties and arrived to live in the US about six years ago. She came to the US with a bachelor's degree in law. Sarah came to settle in the US following her husband who had been living in Greensboro for over 10 years. Upon her arrival, she enrolled in ESOL classes at the local community college to enhance her English language skills. After mastering the English language, Sarah started navigating through the US law system to get her credentials recognized. She was faced with the fact that she had to start law school from the beginning to be able to graduate with a degree in law. The credentials she came with were not worth anything in law school in the US. She decided to take another route for becoming professional, so she enrolled in radiology at the local community college. She chose to study radiology because it was only a two-year program, and the profession paid well. She did not give up her dream of practicing law in the US but decided to postpone it until her two children are old enough for her to go to law school.

Sarah's father worked as a diplomatic representative for Sudan, which meant they lived in a different country every few years. She does not have a strong attachment to Sudan because she did not grow up there, although she misses her extended family sometimes. She is also connected with people she knows in Sudan through social media. Sarah considers Greensboro her home with her small family. While Sarah felt homesick and lonely when she first came to the US, that feeling went away after she had her first child and her life became busy.

Sarah likes the Greensboro community and describes it as friendly and multicultural. She has not experienced discrimination or harassment; on the contrary, she has felt mostly welcomed. She described the Sudanese community in Greensboro as supportive and social. However, she feels overwhelmed sometimes from the social obligations that arise from socialization with people from Sudan. She also feels judged sometimes by members of the Sudanese community because she does not follow cultural roles and norms. I interviewed Sarah in her home at her request. Her second baby was one-week old when I interviewed her. The interview was conducted mainly in Arabic with some English words here and there.

My Role as Researcher

Kvale (1983) explained that in a focused interview, the interviewer leads the interviewee to speak about certain themes and areas of their lives without hinting or leading to answers. I designed my interview questions in a way that helped participants focus on their experiences. My questions were broad enough not to lead participants and focused enough to help me obtain the data I need. I also used follow-up questions to encourage participants to elaborate about areas that I thought would help my research. I also used body language, such as nodding, to indicate that I was listening and encouraged the women to continue telling me about their experiences. A copy of the interview protocol is included in the appendix at the end of this thesis.

Insider Status

As a member of the Sudanese community I was conscious of conducting all the interviews in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways; I followed cultural norms

without compromising the integrity of my research. As Yegitis et al. (2018) explained, "Knowledge of the culture certainly helps the researcher gain access and build trust with interviewees but prevents the researcher from asking critical questions to challenge the status quo" (p. 136). My knowledge of cultural cues allowed me to interact seamlessly with the interviewees. However, this same cultural knowledge may have prevented me from noticing certain important details. I did my best to stay vigilant at all times. Besides audio-recording the interviews, I recorded details of the participants' body language during the interviews in my field notes to ensure I did not miss important details.

The main issue that I encountered during all of the interviews was that participants saw me as an insider. Being a college-educated, north Sudanese woman, I shared similar experiences with these women. Many times, during the interviews, the women used phrases such as, "You know what it is like" and "You know how it feels." As an insider, I did know what they meant, but I had to remind them that my role as a researcher dictated that I only reflect the experiences that they shared. I constantly encouraged them to share as much as possible rather than relying on my cultural knowledge and my experiences.

I also felt welcomed by all of the women I interviewed. They were eager to tell their stories and be heard. They were also excited to help me conduct my research study. As college-educated women from north Sudan, they considered me a peer. Thus, participating in the study was extending the courtesy of helping a colleague. Overall the interview experience was pleasant but exhausting for the interviewer and interviewees.

To protect the participants' information, I used my cell phone to record the interviews. My phone is protected with a six-digit password and fingerprint lock to ensure security of data. I then downloaded and transcribed all the interviews before starting the analysis. Unless I was using the materials, I kept my research notes and journal locked away at all times in a file cabinet in my home office to minimize the exposure of data.

Field Notes and Researcher's Journal

In addition to the recorded interviews, I observed actions and reactions of the interviewees from the time I met them for the interview until I left. I recorded those responses in my field notes, which I used alongside the interviews to help me understand and analyze the interview data. Glesne (2011) described the researcher's field notes as the primary tool for recording descriptions of places, people, activities, and the researcher's own thoughts. These field notes were very useful since I was able to capture body language and expressions at certain times during the interview. I also documented in my field notes descriptions of each setting where I interviewed the women to help me make connections when analyzing the data. As Yin (2018) advised, field notes are raw data that need to be written in a formal way as soon as possible to avoid loss of important detail. I revised and rewrote my field notes promptly after each interview to avoid the loss of details. Those field notes served as a second source of data in this study after the interviews.

I also kept a researcher's journal at all times during this research to record my ideas, thoughts, and feelings. A research journal helps the researcher think about their

frustration, ideas, and actions and reactions of participants and themselves (Glesne, 2011). My journal served as an innovative tool that helped me link ideas together, especially when analyzing data. The journal also included questions I asked myself as I continued with the study. And the journal helped me know myself; I was able to keep an eye on my biases during the study by continuously reflecting on my thoughts and feelings.

My journal served as the third set of data with the interviews and the field notes. I use these three data sources together to achieve triangulation of the data. According to Yin (2018), using data from these three data sources increases the rigor of the data.

Looking at my field notes and journal after each interview helped me realize the areas I needed to focus on more. For example, I thought I was well-prepared in the first interview, but when I looked at my field notes and journal, I realized that I did not have enough detail in certain questions. I also realized that I was so focused on staying unbiased when I interviewed my first participant (Noon), that I did not ask great follow-up questions. I addressed this shortcoming by conducting a second round of interviews after looking at all the data. In the second interview I focused on clarifying some areas, by asking participants to elaborate on their initial answers. This allowed me to gather sufficient data to answer my research questions.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, I transcribed the interviews and translated the Arabic versions to English. Since transcription is a time-consuming task, I decided to outsource the job. I used Temi, an automated online service, to transcribe the English interviews,

checked for accuracy, and edited as needed. The Arabic versions were more challenging because language-specific online services are not readily available. Since Greensboro is a relatively small community, I could not use local transcribers because of confidentiality issues. To diminish the probability of identity exposure of my participants, I used transcription services in Sudan for the Arabic interviews.

When I first started my analysis, I ran into a dilemma. I found myself in the middle of tremendous data with no clue on how to start my analysis. Being overwhelmed, I decided to rely on my African heritage wisdom that advises, "To eat an elephant, you have to slice it first." I decided to delve into the women's narratives to get ideas on how to "slice up" all the data into tangible pieces that made sense. Yin (2018) promoted the development of an analytic strategy to make sense of qualitative studies. I heeded Yin's advice by putting the information into multiple arrangements to reflect themes and subthemes, using a matrix with supporting evidence (Yin, 2018, p. 167). After going through several rounds of listening to the narratives and reading my own notes, I felt I was more familiar with some words than others. These words kept repeating themselves, and so, I started writing them up. These words constituted my first coding round. Coding the data was the most challenging part in the analysis because I did not want to omit any detail and, thus, ended up with 68 words that appeared to resemble different codes. Words such as relationships, home, community, and culture were repeated several times by almost all of the interviewees. I went back to listening and reading the narratives of the women and reading my own research journal. This technique worked, and I managed to collapse the codes into categories that made sense based on emerging patterns and

themes. This technique is called “pattern matching” (Yin, 2018). I then analyzed my data in three logical stages as recommended by Yin (2018).

First, I organized my data according to emerging patterns. For example, patterns such as “identification towards homeland,” “experience of discrimination,” and “preserving culture” caught my attention and helped me organize the words generated from the first coding round. At this stage, I followed Glesne’s (2011) recommendation and looked through the data to identify what was at the core of that data. I looked at the data in one theme (e.g., “identification towards homeland”) to see if there was a relationship with other themes. Yin (2018) recommended using cross-case synthesis when analyzing multiple participants. I achieved cross-case synthesis by first observing the results of each participant then looking for patterns across the participants as recommended by Yin (2018). This meant that I was going back and forth between participants to ensure and how it held on participant by participant and with changing variables. Creating a table for themes across participants was helpful to keep track of the data. I also found some variations in how participants made meaning of some of the discrimination experiences they had. Although most of them attributed it to cultural differences, some participants attributed it to politically charged xenophobia. This helped me establish relationships and adjust themes. I then looked at the themes in light of Berry’s acculturation model, Ogbu’s minority model, and Portes and Zhou’s segmented assimilation theory. I created a matrix with themes, supporting quotes, relevant theories, threats, and rival explanations. Yin (2018) emphasized the need to attend to rival explanations in order to address the threats to my matrix (p. 177). After conducting three

cycles of data coding and four cycles of organizing themes, I was satisfied that the data made sense. I then used linear analysis as a writing method.

Research Relationship and Ethics

As a college-educated, north Sudanese immigrant woman, I share some experiences with the women I interviewed, which puts me in the middle of my research project. I understand the challenges that come with being an insider researcher—personal experience can interfere with the role of the researcher and the learner. I kept a journal throughout this study and reflected on my subjectivity by thinking about ways my personal perspective affected my research. As a member of the Sudanese community, I was familiar with culturally appropriate ways to build trust and rapport with the participants. According to Glesne (2011), researchers build trust through commitment to acts that demonstrate value and interaction of the researcher with the participants and create an opportunity to know people (p. 145). As a service provider, I know about the challenges most immigrant families face when first moving to the US and the continuous adjustments and adaptations that occur as part of their acculturation experiences. As a feminist, I am passionate about women's issues, and as a scholar I am a strong advocate for education.

Before conducting the interviews, I prepared by reading about interviews and the attributes of a good interviewer. My intent was to conduct the best interview I could so that I gathered the data I needed to answer my research questions. Glesne (2011) advised interviewers to consider certain attributes before embarking on the research. These attributions were: (a) anticipating situations to respond well, (b) keeping an open mind to

learn, (c) analyzing the interview to ask follow-up questions, (d) being therapeutic and comforting the interviewee, (e) being patient and probing deeply for insightful information, (f) being aware of the power of hierarchy as an interviewer, and (g) being caring and grateful for the knowledge and time your interviewee shared with you. I kept this advice in mind when conducting the interviews.

To minimize bias throughout this research project, I maintained a journal for notes about how I felt in different situations during the interviews and during data analysis. I kept an eye on myself and reflected on how my positionality affected the ways I interacted during the interviews and when interpreting the data. For example, as a feminist, I hold strong feelings about positionality of women in my own Sudanese culture. These feelings were triggered during one of the interviews. Writing how I felt in my journal helped me to focus on the interview and maintain impartiality. Keeping a journal proved to be beneficial as it made me aware of the ways my subjectivity interjected while conducting the research. The reflections I recorded in my research journal helped me understand my own biases and the ways I see the world. Throughout this study I consciously was aware of my words, actions, and body language. My knowledge of cultural norms and codes of the Sudanese culture as an insider allowed me to build trust with the participants in ways that made it easier to interview them. This knowledge also helped me conduct the interviews since some of the participants preferred to be interviewed in Sudanese Arabic. However, being a cultural insider comes with risks. Yegitis et al. (2018) explained that sometimes it is easier for an outsider to notice an important detail that an insider would not notice and would consider as a cultural

norm. Being aware of my position as insider, I kept as much detail as possible in my journal to capture obscure cultural norms.

Trustworthiness

Good research is trustworthy research. Throughout this research journey I did my best to adhere to ethical research methods, from preparation to data collection, analysis, and reporting. Glesne (2011) suggested several techniques to ensure trustworthiness of research studies. I used three of the techniques suggested by Glesne: triangulation, member checking, and clarification of researcher bias. To thoroughly triangulate the data, I conducted two rounds of interviews, my researcher's journal, and field notes. Using three data sources can make the data rigorous and trustworthy (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2018). I also conducted member checks in which I shared interview transcripts and findings with the women I interviewed. I asked for their feedback and used the feedback in my final data analysis in the next chapter. I also continuously reflected and worked on clarification of my bias. I recorded this clarification in my research journal. Despite the trustworthiness and rigor in this study, it is important to remember that findings from this study cannot be generalized to all college-educated, north Sudanese women. I claim it to be true only for the women I interviewed. This is one of the limitations of basic qualitative study research (Yin, 2018).

Summary

In this basic qualitative research, I interviewed seven college-educated, north Sudanese women in Greensboro, NC, about their identities in the context of their acculturation experiences. In this chapter I described how I conducted the research, from

design to implementation. I described the participants, setting, interviews, and other data collection methods. I paid special attention to the analysis using Yin's (2018) recommendation to conduct pattern matching analysis, cross-case synthesis, and a logical illustration. I also attended to ethical issues that include the researcher's subjectivity and trustworthiness.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this basic qualitative study research, I examined the acculturation experiences of seven college-educated, north Sudanese women in Greensboro, NC. The women in this study reported acculturation experiences with the broad US community as well as micro-acculturation with the existing Sudanese ethnic community. Further, the women shared their values, aspirations for their children, and the ways they were preserving their culture. In this section, I present findings from the interviews I conducted with the seven women. These findings are organized according to emerging themes that made the most sense. The emerging themes are: gender experiences in Sudan, interactions with broader community, relationship with ethnic community in Greensboro, NC, identity and notion of Home, and family and culture.

Based on the narratives offered by the seven women in this study, I developed an illustration that connects the concepts the women related based on their experiences and the literature I gathered. I also offer an adapted version of Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model for people of color that is informed by the narratives of the women I interviewed.

Gender Experiences in Sudan

In the literature review chapter, I gave a background about women's positions and politics of gender in Sudan. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998), understanding the

conditions of the location from where the minority group came helps us understand the ways they make meaning of their experiences. Hence, asking the women about their experiences in Sudan was instrumental in understanding how they perceived and navigated through the acculturation experiences they had in the US. In this section I organized the gender discrimination experiences of the participants in Sudan as they told it.

As a veterinary doctor Ne'mat worked in slaughterhouses in Sudan that are male dominated. In addition, Ne'mat reported, most of the men who worked at the slaughterhouses were uneducated and working-class. She shared her experiences being harassed as a woman in the workplace. Ne'mat also reported experiences of harassment and gender discrimination in public spaces such as public transportation. She compared gender experiences in Sudan with her experiences in the US. Ne'mat stated,

> If there are no men, some of our colleagues around us at one point we are going to feel that harassment. I found it amazing here that ladies work in the factories and wearing whatever they want, and no one would harass them or do anything to them. So that, that really, um, gave me the feeling that women here are respected, here you are protected by law. No one can touch you. But there you feel like if you want to speak up, someone is going to silence you because they could have put all the blame on you. You feel like you are not in a strong position while here is different.

Thus, not only did she fear being harassed and intimidated as a veterinarian for working in a field that is traditionally reserved for males, Ne'mat also felt that she could not report incidents of harassment because she would be blamed for the situation. Ne'mat did not deny that women in the US experience harassment, but she felt the situation was better here since she felt she could report it. She also recognized that there are laws that

protected her as a female, and she would not be blamed for reporting a harassment incident if it occurred.

Ahlam also reported discrimination experiences from professors in Sudan for being an outspoken female. She explained that some of her professors always tried to silence her in class on the premise that "women should not [be] loud." Ahlam felt that those comments and attempts to silence her were directed towards her because she was enrolled in a male-dominated major. Ahlam was an engineering student at that time, and the vast majority of students in her class were males. Ahlam pointed out that gender discrimination was not only a public issue, she also reported that her extended family thought that her college education was a waste of time and money because she would end up married and doing housework and raising a family. She felt pressured to fit the traditional female stereotype by extended family and professors.

Living in the US, most of the women felt these were better conditions when it came to gender discrimination. This was understandable given the strong patriarchal system they came from, which was described in Chapter I. They felt they were relatively safe—at least protected by law—in the US against gender discrimination.

Interactions with Broader Community

All the women from the study reported positive and negative interactions with the broader US community. For example, Ne'mat described her positive experiences at work, "I always feel I was treated with dignity; no one gave me the feeling that I'm an immigrant in this country even with my accent. I was treated respectfully."

Feeling Welcomed While Different

Ne'mat also described how her American neighbors supported her after the White House released Executive Order 13769 on January 27, 2017, signed by President Trump and entitled, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." This executive order barred nationals of Iran, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan from entering the United States on the premise that "in order to protect Americans, the United States must ensure that those admitted to this country do not bear hostile attitudes toward it and its founding principles" (The White House Press Release, January 27, 2017). Ne'mat said, "My neighbors here, when Trump announced this ban against Sudanese, it was to my surprise that my neighbors, they came to me and gave treats and stuff and they were feeling very sorry. They were very supportive."

Noon also reported overall positive acculturation experiences. However, she also noticed the increase in xenophobia that followed Executive Order 13769. Noon stated, "In terms of people, they don't treat you as a stranger or different than them but recently I see a lot of change with Trump's period."

Noon further explained the changes in societal attitudes towards immigrants as she observed it. "You feel people are not welcoming the immigrant, even people who are already citizens. sometimes they don't want to distinguish who is legal and who is not."

Although Ne'mat felt that she was respected and treated fairly at work, she always saw herself as an outsider. She described her relationship with her work colleagues as mostly formal. She was never able to feel that she fit in within her colleagues at work. Ne'mat attributed her feelings to the difference in culture. She explained,

> When I say the culture, people usually when they get together, they talk about what they done, like with their families during the Christmas or what they'd done during the vacations and most of the time it's difficult to relate to them because they are talking about places you've never been to or they speaking about dishes you've never tried or stuff like that. That makes it a little bit harder to relate to them.

Thus, her feelings of being an outsider was not due to negative experiences within her work environment, it was the differences in cultural heritage and the lack of common ground for conversation. Linda agreed that it is difficult to relate to the US culture because of the different background, heritage, and history. Linda admitted that she did not encourage her children to have close relationships with non-Sudanese. Her children were only allowed limited interactions outside the cultural community. She justified her decision as her way of preserving her culture and passing it to her children.

My Scarf, My Hijab, My "Tar7a"

Ahlam reflected on her internship experiences at NASA. On her first day she entered the NASA building and the front desk person assumed that Ahlam was not a citizen because she wore a hijab on her head. Ahlam stated, "I show up and she, I remember she look at me like this and she told me, don't you know this place is for US citizens?" When asked how she felt at the time, Ahlam said she felt angry for being singled out because of her dress choice. Ahlam's name was on the admitting list, but the front desk person did not bother to check the list. Instead she assumed Ahlam was not a US citizen. Ahlam also reported that she experienced these types of blatant discrimination episodes because of her hijab more than once.

On other occasions she reported hearing xenophobic slurs regarding her scarf. She reflected on those experiences.

> I just struggled with it…but I feel if you have a right in the United States to wear a bikini, why I don't have the right to wear a piece of scarf on my head? ... the scarf is part of my identity, and I feel more freedom with it.

Contrary to the common understanding among many people that the hijab is a sign of oppression, Ahlam felt that wearing a hijab freed her. She felt that women are objectified most of the time and pressured to dress a certain way. She felt that dressing conservatively and wearing a hijab made her less objectified as a woman. She claimed that "instead of focusing on my cloths as a woman, people can focus on me as a person."

Ne'mat also reflected on her fear of being discriminated against. Ne'mat avoided wearing her hijab at work because she wanted to be seen only as a scientist. She feared her employers would think less of her if she wore the hijab. Ne'mat expressed,

> At work I don't want to identify as a Muslim, just a scientist and that's it…. Outside my work, I used to wear my tar7a [head scarf] because it was normal for me, but now after Trump and all this talk about Muslims, most of the time I don't feel safe wearing it.

Maria also reflected on her career in dentistry and the discrimination she continued to encounter when she wore her hajib despite passing the American Dental Board and earning her license to practice in the US. She explained,

> This happened to me several times. When I apply for work at dental clinic, they review my resume, talk to me over the phone and everything sounds good. When I go for the face-to-face meeting, I immediately see it in their eyes, the same look, when they see me wearing my scarf, I feel they immediately make the decision

> not to hire me and they tell me they are not hiring now. I can feel the discrimination.

Whether they chose to wear it in public or reserve it for cultural gatherings, the women in this study had strong feelings towards wearing their hijab, or tar7a, as it resembled part of them, part of their identity.

Relationship with Ethnic Community in Greensboro, NC

In addition to the acculturation experiences with the US community, the women reported experiences of acculturation with the local Sudanese community in Greensboro (micro-acculturation). Ne'mat struggled with fitting in with the US culture as well as Sudanese community in Greensboro. She stated,

> But also, on the other side, even people from your own culture, the people who are Sudanese here most of the time I find it hard to relate to them also. Um, it could be because they have different mindset, backgrounds, or they have different hobbies or maybe interest that this could be also a reason.

Despite sharing the same language, and religion, Ne'mat felt she could not relate to them well as she did not share the same interests with them. Further she felt she had a different mindset and attitudes which might also be attributed to the difference in ethnic backgrounds

Sarah also felt the lack of common ground and the difficulty fitting in with the Greensboro Sudanese community. At the beginning, she felt judged by the Sudanese community because she did not fit the cultural norm that was expected of women. It took her a while before understanding how to balance her relationships within her ethnic community. She described her experiences as,

> At the beginning I felt that people did not understand me well, I felt they judged me because of the way I dressed, the way I talked. I understand that even within our community we are diverse in the way we think and act. I struggled with this, but at the end, I decided to be myself, and if they accept me that's fine and if not then not.

Ahlam also felt hostility and judgement by Greensboro's Sudanese community for pursuing higher education rather than having children immediately after marriage. She reported that her husband's friends, "Sometimes they say to him, in my face, how you do allow your wife to be more educated than you?" On another occasion she reported that a Sudanese colleague and friend of her husband met her in the university campus where she was taking night classes and said, "If you were my wife, I would divorce you."

These hostile comments are coming from a strong patriarchal stance that made her feel isolated from the ethic community. Ahlam felt the need to have a community that accepted her as a professional, liberal, Sudanese female who did her best to balance her professional and home life. Ahlam reported that she was happy to find a network of educated Sudanese women in the Triad area and connected with them.

On the other hand, not all the interactions with their cultural community were negative. Maria asserted the support she received from the community at a time of need. She recalled,

> I went through tough times in my life here, but people were always there for me. When I was pregnant and after I gave birth, people supported me. When my mother-in-law passed away here, I found a lot of support from them as well…. I also found online support from a network of Sudanese professionals who help Sudanese with career advice and referrals.

Noon's remarks are similar to Maria's. The cultural community played a tremendous role in supporting its members in times of need. Noon attested that when she first came to Greensboro, she found support from the community that allowed her to experience a positive transition in order to settle in. She asserted that Sudanese people in Greensboro were helpful,

> People will be there for you if you need them. If anything happened to you, good or bad, and you call ten members of the community; believe it or not, they will all be there for you in no time.

Thus, despite the negative feelings and judgement the women sometimes felt from their cultural community, they also agreed about the unconditional and timely support their community provided to its members in times of need. As described in Chapter II's literature review, the supportive community feature is one of the characteristics of the Sudanese culture. This kind of community support is one aspect of Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth.

Identity and Notion of Home

Where is Home?

Most of the women identified as Americans and as Sudanese. Like them, I find it hard to clearly label my identity as either Sudanese or American. I carry both of my identities with me all the time. When I am in the US, I can be nostalgic and want to feel the connection with my friends and family in Sudan. However, when I go to Sudan, I also find myself feeling homesick and wanting to come back home to the US. Thus, the notion

of home for me is fluid in the sense that both the US and Sudan are my homes. Thus, I identify with both places.

When I asked Ne'mat about how she identified herself, she said, "I identify more as an American than Sudanese." She further explained,

> The quality of life, social justice, a feeling that as a woman you have the freedom to do whatever you want. You are supported, there is no discrimination as a woman, and you have all the opportunity, you have access to everything, and I never experienced that in my country or even in other country I've been to Qatar. So that created that passion about this country. I don't see myself living in another place and I think that's what makes it my own.

The notion of home can change over time, as can the acculturation journey. This was brilliantly expressed by Nancy, who felt a loss when she first came to US. She was isolated and far away from home, but after a while, her perceptions of home changed. She explained,

> When I first came here, I felt that I lost my home [Sudan], but after a while I realized that the United States is my home. Here I found all the opportunities I wanted especially the education. I am happy to say that US is my home.

Like Ne'mat, Nancy found better life opportunities and felt comfortable calling the US her home.

Noon was more vocal. She asserted that the United States was her home because she felt it was where she belonged. Noon described her experiences when she visited Sudan. "When I go visit now, I don't feel I want to stay there. I feel like I want to come back to my second country [US] which is becoming my first country."

Noon also explained that when she first came to the US, she and her family did not intend to stay long, but the political unrest in Sudan forced her to stay, and after a while, the US became her home. Noon added,

> You know, home is basically for me is where you can find yourself, where can you feel like you really can contribute, you can easily find your way, have your basic stuff. It is where you can secure education for your children, the basic needs of life you can have without problems that will be home. And you'll be equally treated no matter what's your gender, your age, what's your belief. You know, and uh, unfortunately I don't find that [in] my first home, but I can see it here on my second one. So that's why this is home.

Maria tells a different story. She first came to California but decided to move to Greensboro because she liked the ethnic community support in Greensboro. Additionally, her husband wanted to enroll in graduate school in North Carolina. Maria identified herself first as a mother of a child with disabilities and as a dentist second. When asked about home Maria wrestled with the question for a bit. She finally answered,

> If you ask me about how home feels like I would say Sudan is my home, but the logic says home is here…. When I dream of opening my dental clinic, I picture it in Sudan, but when I look at other Sudanese experiences, I realize that the reality is that our children will not want to live in Sudan, so it is really not an easy choice.

Connection with Homeland

Five of the seven women in the interviews expressed that they were closely connected with family and friends in Sudan through social media, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, and Imo. These apps allow users to text and make calls via VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), which is free of charge with an internet connection. All

the women attested that they communicated daily via text or call with family and friends from Sudan. I also use some of these apps on a daily basis to stay connected with family and friends from Sudan who reside in different parts of the world.

For example, Nancy was strongly connected with family and friends in Sudan through social media. She described, “I call them every day using WhatsApp, my sisters and brothers and most of my extended family are in Sudan…. I am also very connected with my friends and neighbors in Sudan.”

Ne’mat reported feeling good when talking to friends in Sudan and compared her thoughts about her relationships with people in Sudan with relationships she has in US. To her the difference was,

> People who would understand you without even explaining…. That’s not the case in the community here in America. And that's the piece which is missing. Even if you have friendship with American people, you're not going to contact them in daily basis. Just as if it's, as if it's in the work environment, once the work is done, you are done.

Noon expressed her connection to her family and friends in Sudan. She said: “I call my family in Sudan a lot, I text my friends almost daily”. Linda also stated that “my brothers, sisters, and most of my family are in Sudan. I talk to them on daily basis using WhatsApp. I am also in close contact with my neighbors and friends in Sudan.” Maria attested that “I am in contact with my family in Sudan almost daily.”

Thus, their strong connection with their friends and families in Sudan helped enhance the lives of the women in this study. Their connections with people in Sudan helped them feel they belonged to that community of friends and family. Hence, those

virtual relationships with family and friends served as a capital that helped the women cope with stress.

Family and Culture

Family and culture came together as a theme as the women started reflecting on their values and future aspirations. When discussing culture and family, all the women indicated their wishes to preserve their culture and pass some of it to their children. Family was the most important aspect in all their lives.

Maria clearly expressed that her role as a mother is her priority in life and comes before her career. She asserted, “My children come first then everything else follows.” Maria admitted that she struggled to keep a balance between preserving her culture and keeping up with living in a Western culture. She felt pressured by Sudanese community friends to conform to cultural norms in child-rearing, explaining,

> I try to let my daughter participate in school activities and celebrations although some people from our community criticize such participation on the premise that it is not part of our culture. I cannot make my child feel isolated from her classmates. I feel that since we live here, we must compromise…there are things that are off limits like having a boyfriend, but I can let her join ballet classes although I know I will be criticized and judged for that by my community.

Muslim First

Five of the seven women wore the hijab all the time. Noon and Ne’mat wore it sporadically in social settings. All the women identified as Muslims who adhered as much as they could to the religion. Linda spoke with passion about being a devoted Muslim. In fact, religion was the first dimension she mentioned about her identity. Linda described herself as “Muslim first, then I see myself as a successful mother.” Nancy also

expressed herself as a Muslim first before being a woman "of course I am a Muslim, a woman, a mother, and a wife.…" Noon also described herself as "a Muslim, a mother, a sister, and a friend."

Elnour (2012) helped us understand the importance of religion among professional Muslim Sudanese women. She explained that religion in those women's lives served as a coping mechanism that helped them through difficult times. Women interviewed in Elnour's study revealed similar responses as the women from this study. Consistent with Elnour, faith was ingrained in the identities of the women I studied.

Preserving Culture

Sudanese culture was very important to Linda. Culture was integrated into all aspects of her life, from the way she decorated her home to the ways she raised her children. Linda explains,

> I am very conservative when it comes to my children. For example, I help them to have selected relationships with friends. I only allow limited socialization with non-Sudanese friends. Even with Sudanese friends I do not encourage group relationships, only selective individuals…. I want my boys to marry a Sudanese from a good family but if that does not work and they marry an American, she has to come from a good family.

Ne'mat also reflected on her family and daughter. She said,

> I am very passionate about my family…my life is around my daughter and my family and everything I do, I want it to reflect on my daughter, so I want to see her in a better place, way better than me. I don't want her to go through the challenges I went through.

Similarly, Linda valued her family first and defined success as,

> To me the most important thing in life is my children's success. If they succeed, then I succeeded. My son is handicapped, and I drive him to school and around school every day. Although I am a college graduate and can get a job, my priority was to be with my son, so he can go to school and finish college. He graduates soon so I feel that my mission is almost done.

Nancy also aspires to preserve her culture through her children. She stated that her priorities in life were her children and the need to raise them with Sudanese culture.

> My children were born here, and like any other Sudanese family, I try to instill our culture and traditions in them. I was worried that if I go to school and spend time outside my home, I will jeopardize this plan. It took me a long time to finish my master's degree online because I was trying to balance my time for my children. Now I work part-time to make sure I have time for my children.

The women in this study viewed their culture as an asset that needed to be preserved and passed along to the next generation. Their representation of their culture in their homes and offices, together with their need to pass their culture to their children, suggests that the women regarded their culture as an important part of their identity. Their attachment to their culture is considered one of the aspects of Yosso's (2005) community wealth.

Theoretical Discussion

In the literature review chapter, I discussed three theories that predict trajectories of how well immigrants will do upon settlement in the US. The first theory is Berry's acculturation model that predicts four outcomes of acculturation experiences: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization, Secondly, Ogbu's cultural-ecological

theory, which predicts settlement of the immigrant into one of these three types of minorities: autonomous minority, caste (involuntary) minority, and immigrant (voluntary) minority. The last theory I discussed was Portes and Rumbaut's segmented assimilation theory that predicts immigrants will follow one of four paths when acculturating. The four paths are: primary labor migration, refugees and asylees, middleman minority, and immigrant enclave. In this section, I reconsider these theories in light of the results from the interviews with the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women.

Berry's Acculturation Model

I started with Berry's acculturation model because it was the most controversial among the theories I examined for this research. Berry (2005, 2008, 2011) argued that the degree of maintenance of heritage culture and identity, willingness to interact with the other culture, and the nature of those interactions determine the trajectory of the acculturation experiences of the immigrant and can predict the outcomes of their acculturation. Table 4.1 shows where the participants in my research fit within Berry's linear acculturation model.

Table 4. 1

Participants in Relation to Berry's Model

Strategy Employed by Immigrant \ Acculturation Outcomes	Assimilation	Separation	Marginalization	Integration
Preserving heritage culture	No	Yes	No	Yes
Willingness to interact with US broader community	Yes	No	No	Yes
Nature of interactions	Positive	Negative	Negative	Positive

Combining Berry's acculturation model matrix and the findings from the interviews, I plotted the model to examine where it holds with the acculturation experiences reported in this study (see Table 4.1). The shaded cells represent the data from the interviews. If we look simply at the matrix, we might think the women from the study are integrated. However, if we take a closer look, we see that the nature of interactions the women had were both positive and negative. Their experiences were positive in so far as they were able to interact effectively on a daily basis. All the women reported they were able to communicate and carry-on with daily duties, such as going to work, shopping, and running errands. On the other hand, all the women in the study reported incidents of discrimination, fear of experiencing discrimination, or feeling they did not fit in well with the US society. Ne'mat and Noon explained that they did not wear their hijab to work for fear of discrimination. Noon stated, "At work I don't want to

identify as a Muslim, just as a scholar. I do not want to add islamophobia to the xenophobia I already encounter."

In addition, all the women were able to socialize and make "American" friends (i.e., friends from the mainstream society). However, most of the women expressed that their "real" friends were their friends from Sudan. This sense of friendship may be attributed to the commonality in culture and background with those friends in Sudan as expressed by Ne'mat:

> People who would understand you without even explaining…. That's not the case in the community here in America. And that's the piece which is missing. Even if you have friendship with American people, you're not going to contact them in daily basis. Just as if it's, as if it's in the work environment, once the work is done, you are done.

Another important flaw in Berry's theory is that it does not take into account the acculturation experiences that immigrants might have within their own cultural community in the US. All the women in the study, except one (Linda), reported feeling that they could not fit in with their cultural community. The women reported feeling judged and attacked, as well as a general sense of not belonging. However, Noon put things in perspective when she said, "It is the desire of the community for me to conform to cultural norms and roles such as wearing the hijab and acting in certain culturally acceptable ways. I did not conform, and I feel judged." Berry's model fails to account for the positive and negative micro-acculturation experiences the women had with the mainstream society and their own cultural community.

Ogbu's model, on the other hand, does take into consideration detailed parameters that include collective problems faced by the minority group, collective solutions adopted by the group, and the community forces that influence minority experiences. Perhaps Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory might be more promising in explaining acculturation experiences of immigrants.

Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Theory

According to Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory that I explained in Chapter II, autonomous minority is a well-defined minority with a strong sense of identity. Members of the autonomous minority do not feel threatened by the dominant group and participate in local politics. This group have been in the US for a long time and are usually well established, such as the Amish, Jews, and Mormons in the US. Since the north Sudanese community in Greensboro, NC, is more recent with most arrivals in the mid 2000s, north Sudanese, college-educated women in this study cannot be considered members of an autonomous minority.

Ogbu (1990) defines involuntary minorities as those who did not choose to be members of the US society, rather they were brought into the society against their will through colonization of Mexican Americans, conquest of American Indians, and enslavement of African Americans (Ogbu 1990, p. 46). The women in this study are also voluntary immigrants who came to the US by choice and could return to Sudan anytime they choose. Thus, they are not members of Ogbu's involuntary minorities.

However, when examining the characteristics of the participants in this research against the characteristics of Ogbu's immigrant minority, a close match is found. Ogbu

and Simons (1998) argued that the distinguishing feature of an immigrant minority is not religion, culture, or language. The two distinguishing features are: (a) members of this group chose to move to the US voluntary, and (b) they do not interpret or perceive their stay in the US as forced upon them by the US government or the white community (p. 164).

All the women in the study reported that they, or their spouses, started with trade jobs upon arrival and worked their way up the economic hierarchy. Economic hierarchy, according to their narratives, is how they compare themselves with members of their social class in Sudan and members of the Sudanese communities in the US. Ogbu (1990) insisted that immigrant minorities interpret the economic, political, and social barriers as temporary and could be overcome with time and education. Six of the seven women I interviewed earned a graduate degree after they moved to the US. The women exhibited a high passion for education. Further, all seven women felt socially secure, identifying as members of the "middle class" in Sudan. Ogbu (1990) reminds us that the frame of reference that immigrant minorities compares themselves to is not the dominant cultural group (whites). The women did not compare themselves to the dominant white group in the US, rather they evaluated their economic based on their homeland.

Therefore, according to Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, immigrant minorities have positive attitudes towards US society and institutions. Since the immigrant minority does not feel threatened by the need to learn the language and culture of the US society, they usually do well in schools and society. The women in my study did not feel threatened by the US culture or the need to learn English. They accepted that as a price of

migration that they had to navigate. Noon reflected on her experiences when she first came. Noon admitted that she came to the US with realistic expectations about life in the US. Although she was a college graduate, she was aware that she and her husband would have to start with trade jobs to make ends meeting initially. She also knew that she had to learn the language and culture to be able to live effectively in the US. Thus, she did not feel threatened when she worked as a temporary worker in a factory assembly line. She navigated through the systems and pushed herself, went to school and earned her master's and then her doctoral degree in engineering. Now she works as a college professor. Noon's story of her realistic expectations and her ability to navigate through systems clearly meets Ogbu's characteristics of immigrant minority group.

Additionally, since all the women in this study were college graduates, most of them already came with at least fair English language skills that helped them navigate through US cultural and institutional systems. However, all the women except Ahlam reported they had a problem understanding the American accent when they first came to the US. They reported that it took them several months to get used to the ways people spoke in the US. As a college-educated, north Sudanese immigrant myself, I experienced the difficulty of understanding and learning the American English accent. In Sudan, I was educated in Catholic schools, where we learned British English. Most of the country at the time spoke British English as a second language after Arabic. The media also brought us British movies. In short, the English language most people in Sudan understand and speak is the British English. British English is different from the American English in the accent, the ways certain syllables are emphasized, the vocabulary, some grammar rules.

Spelling of some words such as the word color is spelled as 'colour' in the British English, check as 'cheque', airplane as 'aeroplane' and so forth. Among other words, speakers of British English use the word 'crisp' for chips, 'chips' for french fries, 'biscuit' for cookies, and 'pants' for 'underwear'. These examples show how confusing it can get, thus, coming to the US with the idea that one can communicate well then experiencing the difficulty of the American accent can be shocking at the beginning. Even as resilient as the women in this study were, they reported it took them a few months of getting used to the accent and unscrambling it. Clearly, the women saw the need to relearn the English language the American way to be able to effectively communicate and navigate through systems. Even with these challenges, none of them expressed any negative connotation of the language barrier. They just considered it, as Ogbu (1978) said, a temporary barrier that could be overcame.

Although the characteristics of the seven women in this study fit well within Ogbu's theory, the theory does not go as far to predict outcomes for the next generation. I believe that Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory is promising for understanding acculturation trajectories of immigrants of color. However, more research needs to be done to examine and predict what will happen to next generations of immigrants. Possibly, Portes and Rumbaut's segmented assimilation theory might offer us some predictions about future generations of immigrants.

Portes and Zhou's Segmented Assimilation Theory

In Chapter II, I explained Portes and Rumbaut's context of reception and how it affects the outcomes of immigrant acculturation. Government policies, the labor market,

and the immigrant community's ethnic characteristics determine how well the immigrant community will do in the host country. Further, Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory predicts four paths for the immigrant group: primary labor migration, refugees and asylees, middleman minorities, and immigrant enclave. In this section, I discuss these components in relation to the findings from the interviews.

The first part I discuss here is the context of reception. Since the women in my study came mainly as lawful immigrants through the diversity visa or family reunification, they were not eligible to receive any government benefits upon arrival. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2014), this government policy is called *passive acceptance.*

Four of the women accessed the labor market upon arriving in the US and worked as laborers. Three women chose to stay home and care for their children because the cost of childcare exceeded the returns from the labor jobs they could access. However, none of the women was able to access the professional job market based on her credentials when she arrived. These results clearly challenge Portes and Rumbaut's labor market theory that assumes a direct transfer of parallel jobs for educated immigrants, such as doctors and engineers, to immediately enter the professional job market with their credentials.

The simplest logical explanation is that the job market does discriminate against the north Sudanese women as an immigrant group. Perhaps the employers do not recognize the academic institutions these women graduated from or they do not trust foreign credentials. Either way the bottom line is that the professional labor market

discriminates against these Sudanese women. In accordance with Yosso's (2005) application of critical race theory, educational capital is valued only when it resembles the education of the dominant group in the society. When employers do not value educational credentials from other countries, they may do so because they assume it does not measure up to the education they value, the education of the dominant group.

Maria earned her degree as a dentist from a prestigious university in Sudan. When she moved to the US, she knew she had to certify and obtain a license to be able to practice in the US. Maria struggled to juggle her responsibilities of caring for her autistic son and his sister, taking care of her sick mother-in-law who lived with her at the time, and her other home responsibilities. Even with all of these demands, she took the series of tests and passed the American Dental Association Board exam. Being so happy, Maria started applying for internships in the area, but she was rejected several times. Maria attributed these rejections to discrimination. She offered these thoughts about employers in the dental field,

> They would have given me a chance if I were white! When I usually apply for an internship, I submit my resume, then they ask me for a phone interview. After the phone interview they ask for an in-person interview. Usually, I get to the point where they invite me for the in-person interview. I can see the expression on their face when they see me. I feel they do not see me, they see my skin color, my cloths, my hijab.

Maria is not the only woman who reported discrimination in the workplace. Ne'mat and Noon also reported they do not wear their hijab at work because they fear discrimination. Hence, it is viable to conclude that the current professional job market in Greensboro, NC, is prejudiced against these north Sudanese, college-educated women.

Since this is basic qualitative study research, I cannot generalize my findings beyond the group I interviewed.

According to Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory, four paths are proposed for immigrants: primary labor migration, refugees and asylees, middleman minorities, and immigrant enclave. In the primary labor migration skilled laborers possess a high level of human capital and have the highest potential to enter the skilled job market. The women I interviewed came with degrees in medicine, engineering, accounting, business, and law. Theoretically, they should be classified as primary labor migration. However, due to discrimination in the job market that I established earlier, the women had to obtain credentials from a US educational institution before accessing the labor market as professionals. Thus, according to Portes and Rumbaut (2014), the women in this study are not members of the primary labor migration.

Similar to what I stated previously when I discussed Ogbu's theory, the women in this study are not asylees nor refugees. They came to the US mainly through the diversity visa or family reunification. The women in the study do not fit the characteristics of the middleman minority since none of them is an entrepreneur. Since the immigrant enclave characteristics are similar to Ogbu's autonomous minority, it is safe to rule out that the women in my study are members of an immigrant enclave.

The lack of similarities in characteristics and the acculturation experiences of the seven women I interviewed with the four paths suggested by Portes and Rumbaut leaves me no choice but to develop an illustration based on findings from this research to better understand their unique acculturation experiences.

An Alternative Explanation

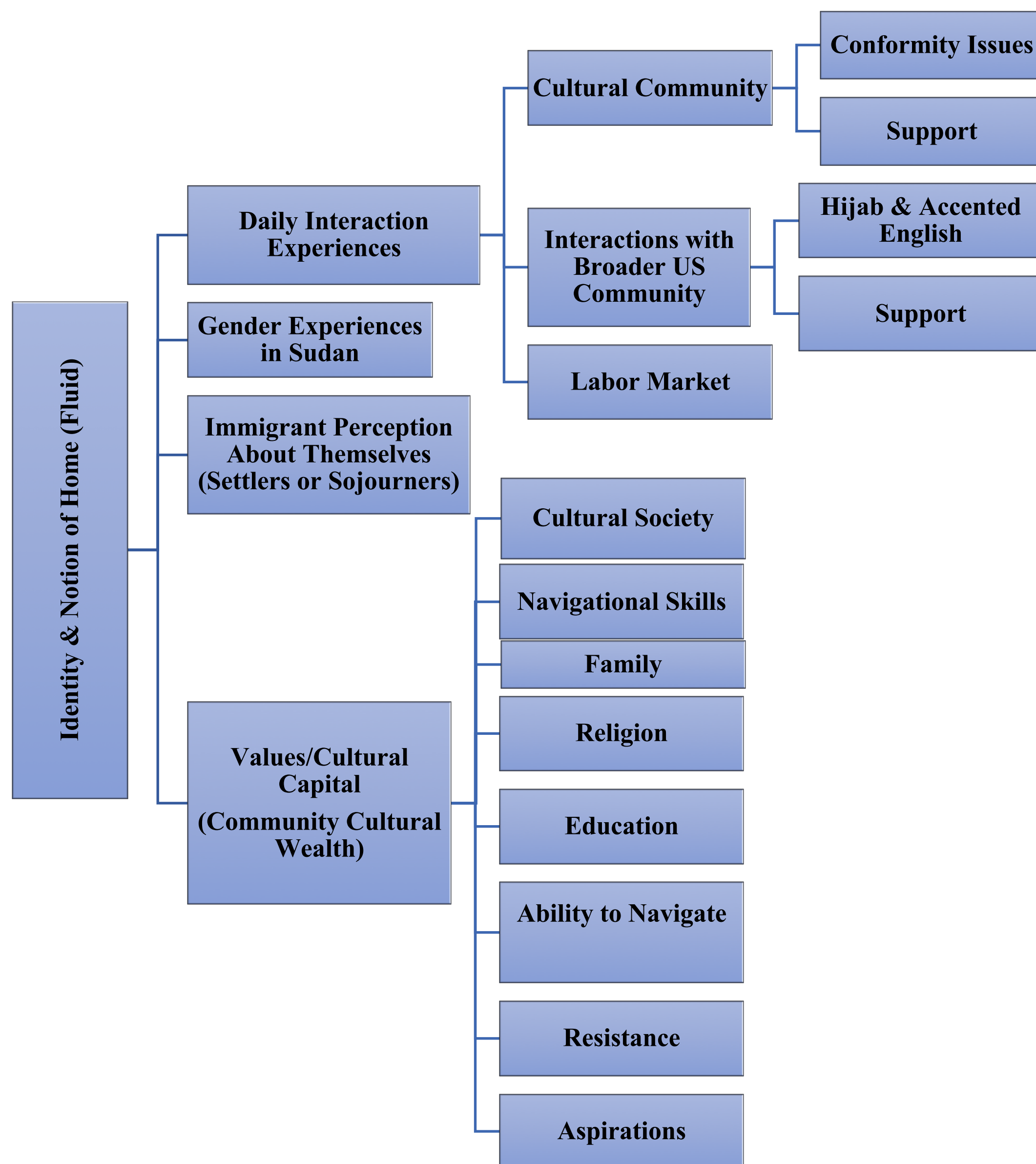
Culture, family, religion, and education are part of the women's values and capital heritage. Their aspirations and ability to navigate through complicated systems in the US are also part of the capital they have. Berry's acculturation model does not take into consideration the familial, aspirational, religious, educational, and navigational forms of capital. These sorts of capital are important determinants in the acculturation experiences as it supports the immigrant through their acculturation experiences. Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory, although it addresses human capital, also fails to recognize the importance of religious and navigational capital. The exclusion of these types of capital in such theories can only be explained by the critical race theory made clear by Yosso (2005). Using critical race theory and the works of Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro's community cultural wealth, Yosso emphasized the importance of recognizing the cultural and community cultural wealth within communities of color, such as the participants in this research, that usually goes unnoticed by scholars (Yosso, 2005).

I developed the following illustration (Figure 4.1) to show findings from this study. The illustration is a sensible representation of the emerging themes from the interviews. The literature I reviewed together with the three acculturation theories and models I examined served as foundational knowledge that helped me make sense and organize the themes. My analysis is also informed by my position as an insider-outsider researcher; in other words, as a college-educated, north Sudanese immigrant woman, I am an insider who shares many of the experiences the women voiced in the interviews.

As an insider I have a unique understanding of their background, experiences, and the insight of the cultural community. As a scholar and an outsider, I was conscious of the need to stay objective even when I share my experiences.

Figure 4.1

Representation of Study's Findings



According to the illustration, the women's identity and notion of home are influenced by four major experiences: (a) daily interaction experiences, (b) gender experiences in Sudan, (c) immigrant perceptions about themselves, and (d) their community cultural wealth (values/capital).

Daily Interaction Experiences

Daily interaction experiences are experiences people have on a daily basis, such as casual conversations, attending events, or even going to a city office to pay a bill. These daily interactions occur at three levels: (a) with the Sudanese cultural community, (b) broader US community, and (c) formal interactions with authorities.

Micro-Acculturation with Sudanese Cultural Community

Most of the women reported positive and negative experiences with the Sudanese cultural community. The women attributed the negative experiences to their decisions to not conform to the cultural norms that their ethnic community desires and the misunderstandings that might arise from those interpretations. All the women also attested to the tremendous support community members provided for each other. Noon explained,

> The support is part of the cultural heritage we came with. Traditionally, as a collective culture, people are always looking out for each other. They support each other in times of need. Despite the limited resources for many members of the cultural community, they will provide their time, wisdom, and money to support a community member in need. When some new Sudanese immigrant comes to Greensboro, people will help them settle, get a job, and enroll the kids in school. They will take care of them till they stand on their own.

Ogbu (1978), Portes and Rumbaut (2014), and Berry (2010) all agreed that outcomes of acculturation experiences are positive when the receiving society is supportive. What if we consider the local cultural community as the receiving society? If the cultural society is supportive and helps the newcomer acculturate with the broader community, then the cultural society can be acting as a mentor to the newcomer. Through this mentorship, the newcomer may adjust well and thus have positive acculturation experiences. In due course, the cultural society can be considered a societal asset as part of the women's "community wealth."

Interactions with Broader US Community

According to the women in this study, two types of experiences were encountered. The two discriminatory factors were the hijab and the accented English spoken by the women. Two of the women reported they did not wear the hijab because of fear of discrimination, two women reported they felt uneasy going in public wearing it because they were afraid, but they wore anyway. Two women reported they were attacked with racial slurs because of their hijab. In theory, this kind of Islamophobia hinders the acculturation process of the women in the study. Kunst et al. (2016) explained that Islamophobia constitutes a major obstacle in the acculturation process of Muslims because it increases the gap between the Muslim immigrant community and the mainstream community.

Despite these negative encounters, four of the women also reported positive support experiences they had from the broader community. Noon also attested to the

importance of the role of immigrant serving organizations that help immigrants and refugees settle in Greensboro.

Formal Interactions With Authorities

The third aspect of the daily interaction experiences are formal interactions with authorities, which in the cases of the women was the labor market. As I explained earlier, the women I interviewed reported experiences of undervalued foreign credentials and difficulty accessing the professional labor market. The question here is why their credentials are well received by academic institutions when they apply to graduate school but are worthless to employers?

Gender Experiences

As discussed in the findings section, while four of the women admitted to experiences of gender discrimination in Sudan, two of them were outspoken about it. Ahlam and Ne'mat spoke strongly about their gender discrimination experiences in Sudan. They understood that there was gender discrimination in the US as well but at least it was a better situation when compared to the situation in Sudan. Thus, in coming to the US, gender discrimination and harassment was an issue they did not worry about, at least till now.

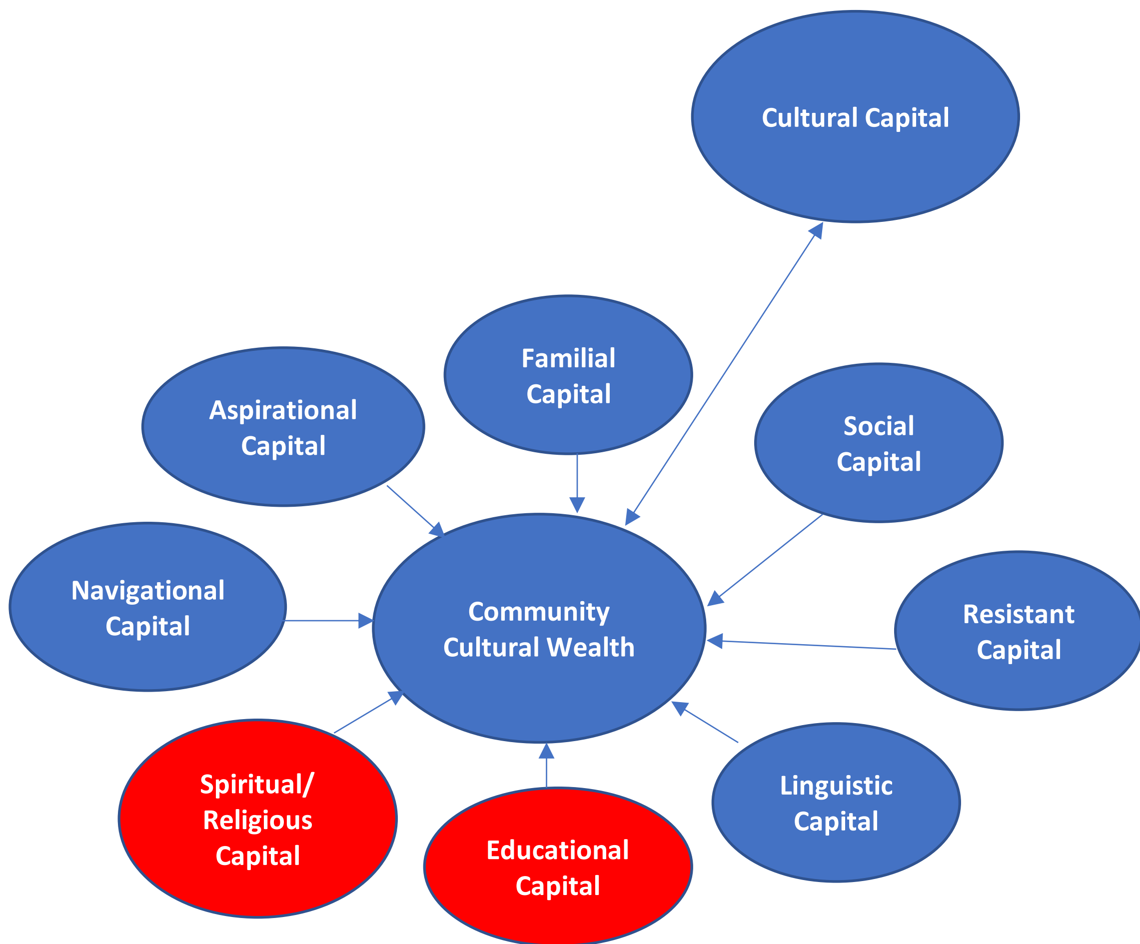
Settlers or Sojourners

Most of the women went back and forth with this question. Maria articulated her feelings very well when she said, "My heart says home is in Sudan, but my logic says home is here." Many of the women shared these same feelings. For example, two of the women shared with me that they were buying homes in Sudan. When I asked them about

their plans for moving there, they both said they were not sure whether they would move or not. Thus, the idea of being a settler or sojourner was not conclusive for the women I interviewed.

Figure 4.2

Adaptation of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model Based on Research Findings



Community Cultural Wealth

The fourth dimension that informed the identity and notion of home for these women was their community cultural wealth, which included their values and human and social capital (see Figure 4.2). I adapted this model from Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to represent the reported types of capital the participants in my research possessed. According to the interviews from this study, eight aspects of community cultural wealth were found: social, resistant, linguistic, familial, religious/spiritual, educational, navigational and aspirational capital.

Social Capital

The women reported micro-acculturation experiences with the Sudanese ethnic society in the US when they first arrived. However, they also reported receiving some sort of support from their community networks and friends. Maria reported receiving support from the ethnic community in Greensboro as well as support from Sudanese professional networks that helped her in accessing educational opportunities. Her professional network taught her how to navigate through complex educational systems to certify with the American Dental Association. Ahlam also mentioned the support of the professional Sudanese women she found and connected with. All the women reported they received help and guidance from friends when they first settled in the US. These types of social capital were crucial in helping the women settle.

Resistant Capital

All the women I interviewed were aware of their racial position as Blacks in the US. However, none of them mentioned her race when asked how she identified. They

shared feeling discriminated against as immigrants and Muslims in the US. Again, none of the women mentioned racial discrimination. The women identified as Africans, as Sudanese, as Americans but none of them identified as African American. Maria, Noon, Ahlam, Linda, and Ne'mat expressed their awareness of the privileges 'whiteness' brings and the oppression 'blackness' carry. They do not compare themselves to either of the two groups although they are aware of their position as African immigrants. Consistent with Guenther et al.'s (2011) and Fábos's (2012) findings, the women in my study distanced themselves from the subordinate racial group in the US by choosing to identity as Africans, Sudanese, and Americans rather than African Americans. According to Yosso (2005), people of color distance themselves from subordinated groups as a way of resisting subordination themselves. Yosso (2005) considers the resistant capital a component of the community cultural wealth for people of color.

Linguistic Capital

All the women participants are at least bilingual. They are all fluent in Arabic and English and use both languages to communicate every day. Being fluent in English meant they could enroll in school, attain higher degree and thus better employment status. It also meant being able to take part in the daily activities outside the home such as interacting with people. On the other hand, their mother tongue (Arabic language) allowed them to keep their connections with their friends and family at home who provided and continue to provide them with emotional support that helped them through their acculturation journey. In addition, five of the seven women reported their children are now enrolled in Sunday school to learn Arabic and Islamic studies. Thus, teaching their children Arabic

language is important to the north Sudanese, college-educated women I interviewed. Yosso (2005) asserts that this sort of bilingual education is considered linguistic capital and is one of the aspects of the community cultural wealth.

Familial Capital

As discussed in the literature review chapter and the findings within this chapter, Sudanese culture is centered around the family. The women participants in this research reported that they contacted their family, including extended family, at least once every day. Family is important in the Sudanese culture because it provides support and was part of the individual's social network as reported by Noon. Family gave a sense of belonging to Ne'mat, provided comfort for Sarah, and a sense of cultural heritage for Noon. Ne'mat's life revolved around her daughter, Linda's mission was to see her son succeed, and Nancy's daily activities were scheduled according to her children's needs. Each of the women I interviewed reflected on her relationship with her family and the amount of social support they received and give as well. These findings are consistent with Yosso's (2005) familial aspect of her community cultural wealth model.

Religious/Spiritual Capital

Although all the women reported experiencing some sort of religious discrimination such as negative comments about their hijab and the way they dressed, the women also reported that religion was ingrained in their identity. When asked about their identities, four of the women expressed they identified as Muslims first. Noon clarified that her spirituality, being a good Muslim, meant to treat people well and live a good life, doing good deeds, and helping needy people. She expressed that it gives her inner peace

when she practices her religion. All the women asserted the importance of adherence to their religion in their life. All of them expressed that daily prayers help them feel internally balanced. Linda and Nancy went further and said that playing the recorded recitation of Qur'an (the Muslim Holy Book) in their homes make them feel safe and protected. Elnour (2012) claimed that adhering to religion was therapeutic and used as a mechanism that helped the professional Sudanese immigrant women in her research cope with acculturation stress. The women's narratives in my study agree with Elnour's analysis that religiosity in this context can be considered a type of community capital that served the women participants in my study well during their acculturation journey.

Educational Capital

This type of capital was not originally found in Yosso's model. I introduced educational capital to the community cultural wealth model I adapted from Yosso's model. I interviewed seven college-educated, north Sudanese women in this research project. Although all the women attested they could not access the employment market as professionals when they first came and had to start with trade jobs, all of them were eventually access higher education in the US. Although the college degrees they came with were worthless in the job market, it was recognizable in the academic field in ways that enabled them to enroll in graduate studies and earn master's and Doctoral degrees from the US. As an educational capital, the college education they came with served them in accessing educational opportunities in the US. Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory acknowledges education as part of the human capital that affects the outcomes of acculturation of immigrants.

Navigational Capital

All the women I interviewed have the “know how” of accessing and navigating through systems. According to their narratives, they learned how to navigate through US systems and institutions through their social and familial networks. They all reported that a friend or family member guided them at the beginning when they first settled in the US. All of them attended some level of education in the US. All of them conveyed they knew how to get things done by navigating systems. In fact, four of them reported helping other Sudanese families navigate institutional systems. They shared their navigational capital with others in their social and cultural network. This finding is in agreement with Yosso’s (2005) definition of navigational capital.

Aspirational Capital

The participants in this study shared their aspirations of a better future for their children. Ne’mat dreamt of a future where her daughter would not go through the obstacles she went through. Linda wished her children would marry from Sudan. And Maria desired a good balanced education for her daughter. All the women had aspirations that their children would not go through the hurdles they experienced as they acculturated. They were invested in the wellbeing of their children, and they hoped their children would attain better status in the US than the participants achieved. The narratives of the women I interviewed were consistent with Yosso’s definition of aspirational capital.

These eight attributes of community cultural wealth overlap in some areas. The women reported they valued their culture and wanted to preserve it by instilling it in their

children. According to Yosso's model (2005), cultural capital and community cultural wealth draw from each other. The culture contributes to the community cultural wealth and in turn the community cultural wealth adds to the culture. Thus, when the women in this study instilled the culture in their children, they were in fact instilling their community cultural wealth in their children. When I interviewed the women in their homes, I noticed the cultural influence on the decorations they had. All the women I interviewed at their homes and office (i.e., Ahlam, Ne'mat, Sarah, Linda, and Nancy) had at least one sort of Sudanese artifact proudly displayed.

As I entered their homes, I could smell the Sudanese traditional incense made from sandalwood that is treated with perfumes. The women greeted me with Sudanese traditional hospitality that starts with a warm greeting to invite the guest to their homes. Upon sitting, the guest is offered snacks and a beverage. In the Sudanese culture it is considered ill-mannered if the guest does not eat and drink when offered food and beverages. I could hear the sound of Sudanese music or 'Qur'an' playing in an ambient voice somewhere in the house. But the main way the women wanted to preserve the culture was through their children. In fact, Linda, Nancy, and Maria agreed that they would like to teach their children about their culture, religion, and the value of education. What follows is a description of the eight types of community cultural wealth as related to findings from this research.

They all have high aspirations when it comes to their children education. Their passion appeared to be understandable given their own educational quests. The women also confirmed that they sent their children to Sunday school every week, so they could

learn the Arabic language and Islamic studies. Multiple Arabic Islamic schools exist in Greensboro, NC, so there are several options for the children to learn Arabic and Islamic studies.

It is important to declare that, although the cultural wealth model I adapted from Yosso's model represents the narratives of the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women I interviewed, I cannot claim it as a universal model that represents experiences of all college-educated, north Sudanese immigrant women. However, I recommend replication of such a study in other cities to test the model.

Revisiting the Research Questions

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the themes that emerged from the interviews. I also discussed Berry's acculturation model, Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and Portes and Rumbaut's segmented assimilation theory. In addition, I argued the illustration I developed based on the thematic findings from the interviews and supported by theory and the literature I discussed in Chapter II. Finally, I explained the model I adapted from Yosso's community cultural wealth model in representation of the narratives from interviewing the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women. In this section, I answer the research questions that guided my research journey.

College-Educated, North Sudanese Women's Experiences and Theory

The first question I asked was: How do assimilation experiences of college-educated, north Sudanese women align with or challenge Berry's acculturation model, Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and Portes and Rumbaut's segmented assimilation

theory? To answer this question, I go back to the discussion I had about where the acculturation experiences in this study fit within the studied theories.

Berry's acculturation model did not fully capture the acculturation experiences of the seven women in the study. First Berry's theory did not give a definitive answer to where the women fit within his acculturation model. Berry's model did not allow for a spectrum of positive and negative interaction experiences—namely the discrimination experiences in the labor sector, the discrimination due to wearing the hijab, and fear of experiencing discrimination that the women clearly expressed. Another way the women's experiences challenged Berry's model is that the model does not account for the acculturation experiences the immigrant might have within their own local ethnic community. This major flaw in the theory is made clear by the stories the women told.

Ogbu's theory was the only theory that provided enough details to position the experiences of the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women within the theory. Ogbu' theory took into account the dual frame of reference which is how immigrants perceive their opportunities compared to others and which group they compare themselves to, perceptions about barriers, and the attitudes towards acculturation. The only shortcoming of Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, based on the narratives of the seven women I interviewed, is that the theory does not predict the trajectory of the next generation. In conclusion, Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory is well supported by the research I conducted.

Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory did not fully capture the experiences of the seven women I interviewed. The experiences of the women in the

study did not fit well with any of the four paths suggested by the segmented assimilation theory. The women did not fit the primary labor market they could not access the professional job market when they came despite their credentials in engineering, medicine, and law. They did not fit the refugees and asylees path because they are neither asylees nor refugees. The middleman minority path entailed choosing to become entrepreneurs which none of the women were. The women did not fit the path of immigrant enclave because immigrant enclaves entail establishment of strong network of industrial and commercial businesses such as the Jews in Manhattan. Thus, the characteristics of the women's experiences as they told them did not fit within any of the paths suggested by Portes and Rumbaut's segmented assimilation theory.

Identities of College-Educated, North Sudanese Women

The next question I asked was guided by the literature about the changes to identities of immigrants as they acculturate in their new homes. Acculturation models such as Berry's (2005) acculturation model, Ogbu's (1978) cultural-ecological model, and Portes and Rumbaut's (2014) segmented assimilation theory claim that the perception about oneself or identity affect the ways one acculturates. Guided by this notion, I asked the question: How do college-educated, northern Sudanese women speak about their identity upon settlement in the US?

In the literature review section, I explored literature about cultural, ethnic, religious, and national identities of Arab and African immigrants. The literature suggested strong cultural and religious identities that were not racial (Elnour 2012; Fábos 2012; Naber, 2012). Findings from this research agreed with the reviewed literature.

When asked how you identify yourself, four of the women identified as a Muslim. Religion was one of the top ways the women identified themselves. Ethnically and nationally, the women identified with both their national heritage as Sudanese but also proudly acknowledged being Americans. Another way six of the women identified themselves was familial or relational (i.e., they identified as mothers, daughters, sisters, or friends). Thus, the women's identities appear to be grounded in the values they shared, which is shown in the illustration I developed. These values are culture, family, religion, and education.

Assimilation Experiences and Attachment to Homeland

The literature I explored mentioned attachment to the homeland and the notion of being settlers or sojourners (Suleiman, 1999) as mediating factors that affect the acculturation experiences of immigrants. Following the question about the ways the women in this study identified, and given their strong ties to Sudan, it was logical to ask how does their attachment to the homeland affect their acculturation experiences in the US?

All the women reported strong ties with extended family, friends, and neighbors in Sudan. Six of the seven women indicated that they communicated with someone from Sudan at least once a day via text or voice. Four of the women expressed that they felt more comfortable talking to people from Sudan and two of those women communicated they were building or buying a home in Sudan. On one hand the women definitely were strongly attached to their homeland. On the other hand, they seemed to have a grounded sense of identity. I cannot help but wonder if their attachment to the homeland resembles

attachment to their extended family and friends. If so, then is their attachment to their homeland ingrained in their values (i.e., family)? Following this logic, their attachment to their homeland becomes part of their familial and social capital. All the women reported feeling good when they talked to family or friends in Sudan. Yosso (2005) argued the importance of familial and social capital as parts of the community cultural wealth for people of color. Clearly, the women I interviewed were all attached to their homeland, Sudan, and this attachment had a positive impact on their wellbeing (i.e., reporting feeling good).

Summary

In this chapter I presented findings from the interviews I conducted with seven college-educated, north Sudanese women in Greensboro, NC. The women reported acculturation experiences with the broader US community and their own Sudanese ethnic community. Their experiences were a mixture of positive and negative encounters. I positioned their experiences within the examined theories to see how their experiences aligned or challenged the theories. Important findings were that only Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory held well according to the narratives told by the seven women. I developed an illustration that captured the experiences of the seven women I interviewed. Additionally, I found the women to have rich community cultural wealth that helped them overcome the negative discriminatory experiences they encountered. I adapted Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to include social, resistant, familial, religious, educational, navigational, linguistic, and aspirational capital. The women's

identities were rooted in their culture, family, religion, and education. Their attachment to Sudan was found to have a positive impact on their wellbeing.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

"The wave of the future is not the conquest of the world by a single dogmatic creed but the liberation of the diverse energies of free nations and free men" (President John F. Kennedy, March 23rd, 1962).

The process of acculturation is more complex than what the theories tell us. Although, it is very difficult to reduce the multiplicity of human experiences of immigrants to a theory, we can use theory to help us understand the lived experiences of individuals or even groups of people. Maxine Greene reminds us of the importance of recognizing the differences in the lived experiences of different groups, especially immigrants. "The strains of cultural clash and adaptation have always had different meanings, depending on the class, pride in the family, level of mobility" (Greene, 1988, p. 109).

Therefore, it is important to continue to examine the acculturation theories with new groups of immigrants to understand the limitations. Narratives of the women I interviewed shed light on some of the ways their experiences did not match Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory. Berry's acculturation model did not take into consideration that in a plural society, such as the US, certain immigrants, such as the women I interviewed, may have positive experiences

with some people while feeling discriminated against by others. Thus, their acculturation experiences cannot be described as conclusively positive or conclusively negative.

The women recalled sporadic acts of kindness, such as what Ne'mat experienced from her neighbors, the help of humanitarian organizations in the community that Noon mentioned, and the sense of belonging and acceptance Nancy felt from the school community where her son went. At the same time, the women told the stories of the xenophobia they all dreaded and experienced, as well as the discrimination at school and work Ahlam and Noon suffered. Thus, reducing all of their varied experiences into simply a positive or negative seemed to be a challenging task.

Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory acknowledged the different modalities of the immigrant acculturation experiences. When examining the different paths offered by their theory, I was looking for the path the participants'' narratives would fit, even to some extent. I could not find any path that the women would say, "This looks like my experience." The inability for either of these two theories to represent the narratives of the participants in this study brings me back to emphasizing the limitations of Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory.

Ogbu's cultural-ecological model offered a plausible category that resembled the experiences of the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women as they described. Ogbu's immigrant minority model's main similarities with the women's narratives are that immigrant minorities are voluntary immigrants, they compare themselves in terms of wealth to the communities they came from (i.e., homeland), and they operate outside the existing social hierarchy and thus do not feel inferior to the dominant group. All these

characteristics match the descriptions of the women participants. They were all voluntary immigrants who came through the diversity visa or were joining family members; they compared themselves in terms of wealth to the communities they left behind in Sudan; and they did not feel inferior despite the xenophobia, racism, and discrimination they encountered in the US.

It is important to understand that although Ogbu's cultural-ecological model fit the characteristics of these women, their narratives offered more insight into their experiences, such as the aspects of their community cultural wealth. These aspects were the eight types of capital, or assets, the participants revealed, and they include aspirational, familial, educational, social, linguistic, religious/spiritual, resistant, and navigational capital. I adapted Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model for people of color to include the types of capital the women I interviewed possess. The modifications to Yosso's model were the inclusion of educational and religious/spiritual capital to her original six types of capital. The educational and religious/spiritual aspects were revealed through the women narratives in the interviews. Hence, it was important to modify Yosso's model to include these two new aspects. All these cultural wealth aspects become part of the cultural heritage that is sustained within the immigrant community and passed to their children (Yosso 2005).

While these women attested that they did not have an abundance of monetary wealth, they all possessed cultural wealth that is not recognized by the dominant culture. Their cultural wealth was the very reason they were able to navigate through complex systems, access education and employment, and resist racism, xenophobia and

discrimination. Their cultural wealth was what made them adjust and become part of society's fabric without shedding their own culture or feeling threatened. The women were proud to identify as Sudanese and American at the same time. As US citizens, they all participated in some ways in local politics and social agendas.

When I interviewed Noon, I asked her about engagement in local events. She passionately described her role as an AmeriCorps alumnus who served the community for two years. She also told stories about her family's Fourth of July celebrations and the fun they have every year watching the holiday's parade in downtown Greensboro. Most of the women also stated that they were registered to vote and that they voted.

At the same time, the participants were also actively concerned with the social and local politics in Sudan. In the interviews, they all remarked on their socialization with people in Sudan through social media. Besides national identification, the women also used familial and social labels for personal identification, such as a mother, a sister, a daughter, and a friend. Another very important way the women identified was by religion. I heard the sentence, "I am a Muslim" more than once in almost all of the interviews. These familial, social, and religious/spiritual labels are consistent with the aspects of the community cultural wealth I developed to represent their experiences.

To reiterate, I answered three research questions in this dissertation. The first question I asked was, "How do acculturation experiences of college-educated, north Sudanese women align with or challenge Berry's acculturation model, Ogbu's cultural-ecological model, and Portes and Rumbaut segmented assimilation theory?"

The simple answer to this question was that both Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory had limitations when compared to the experiences shared by the women participants in this study. Berry's model lacked the ability to capture the effects of the mixed acculturation experiences the women had undergone that could not conclusively be classified as totally positive or negative according to their narratives. As immigrant women of color, the women experienced racism, xenophobia, and discrimination but they also had positive interactions and felt supported and accepted from other members of the US community.

Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory did not align with the college-educated, north Sudanese women's acculturation experiences either. The limitation in their theory was the inability to fit the women's experiences in any of the four paths suggested by Portes and Zhou. Hence, neither Berry's acculturation model nor Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory bared an alignment with the acculturation experiences as captured by the women participants' narratives.

Ogbu's cultural-ecological model aligned well with the acculturation experiences the women in this study told. Based on the women's acculturation experiences, I would classify them as an immigrant minority according to Ogbu's model. The characteristics that led me to this conclusion were: (a) they are voluntary immigrants; (b) they have the ability to return to their homeland if they desire; (c) despite experiencing xenophobia, racism, and discrimination, the women participants did not feel threatened by the dominant group; (d) and they do not compare themselves with the dominant group in the US, instead they compare their economic wealth to people in the homeland. These

criteria as required by Ogbu's cultural-ecological model fit the descriptions of the women participants as they voiced them in the interviews.

The second question I asked at the beginning of this research was, "How do college-educated, Sudanese women from the north speak about their identity upon settlement in the US?" The short answer to this question is that the women identified in multiple ways that included national, familial, social, and religious ties such as "a Sudanese and American, a mother, a sister, a daughter, a friend, and a Muslim." This type of identification aligned well with the values they shared in the interviews.

The last question I posed in this research was, "How does their attachment to the homeland affect their acculturation experiences in the US?" The seven college-educated, north Sudanese women who participated in this study showed strong connections to Sudan through daily communication with family and friends in Sudan, active engagement in conversations that concerned the social and political affairs of Sudan and seeking to own assets in Sudan (e.g., home ownership). Their connections to their homeland had a positive impact on their emotional and social wellbeing in the midst of their acculturation experiences.

In addition to answering the research questions, this research revealed further findings. According to their narratives, the women experienced acculturation with the broader US society as well micro-acculturation with their local ethnic Sudanese community. As revealed in their narratives, upon arrival in the US, the women felt like outsiders who did not fit in well and were not fully accepted by their local cultural community at the beginning. They had to navigate through social norms and adapt the

ways they behaved around other community members to fit in. In doing so, they had to be aware of the community's culture, negotiate their own values and beliefs, and make conscious decisions to be able to be part of the community without compromising their own way of life.

The nature of the interviews I conducted was casual, with an organic flow. At some points during some of the interviews I did not feel like I was conducting a research interview. I felt more like I was having a conversation with a friend. All the women I interviewed were intellectuals who engaged me in conversations beyond the scope of this research. As a result, I learned from the women more than I ever needed in this research. After the interview was finished, we continued our conversations, debating issues in our communities, our own educational quests, and how to get our children to be interested in our traditional Sudanese food. As a college-educated, north Sudanese woman myself, I found myself close to the women I interviewed. I shared their experiences, their aspirations, values, and dilemmas. Besides advancing my education and attaining a doctoral degree, I gained seven friends who will be part of my community cultural wealth.

Limitations

As with the nature of all qualitative studies, this exploratory research cannot generalize findings from the sample to a larger population. Instead, the findings can only be deemed valid for those who participated in the research. I used a snowball sampling method whereby the women participants referred me to other potential participants. In this sense they helped choose who would contribute in this study. On the other hand,

through semi-structured interviews, this study revealed in-depth cultural insight that could not have been obtained if I utilized a research design that included a structured interview method. I was able to answer all my research questions using this in-depth data as well as design an adaptation to Yosso's cultural-ecological model in ways that represent the acculturation experiences of the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women.

Implications

In addition to enriching the existing literature that is concerned with acculturation experiences of immigrants, this research has two main contributions. First, findings from this study showed some of the limitations of Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory. Berry's model used a grid matrix to represent the four outcomes of the acculturation of immigrants. These four outcomes are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization, and they are dependent on the nature of interactions the immigrants have with the dominant group and their willingness to adopt the dominant group's culture. The acculturation experiences of the women according to their narratives were a mixture of positive and negative experiences. Thus, the women could not conclusively say their experiences were positive or negative. Their narratives reflected both types of experiences. Consequently, the acculturation experiences had no place to fit within Berry's model.

Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory could not accommodate the acculturation experiences of these seven college-educated, north Sudanese women. The segmented assimilation theory suggests four paths that describe the immigrant

acculturation experiences outcomes: primary labor migration, refugees and asylees, middleman minority, and immigrant enclave. The women do not belong to the primary labor market group because they could not access the labor market until they obtained advanced academic degrees from the US. The women were all voluntary immigrants who were not refugees or asylees. The women were not entrepreneurs, thus they were not part of the middleman minorities. Finally, the women I interviewed were not part of an immigrant enclave because their community does not have the properties of an enclave. Obviously, acculturation experiences of the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women I interviewed in this study showed the limitation of Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory.

The other main contribution of this work is the development of an adapted model of Yosso's community cultural wealth model for people of color. Yosso's model indicates that communities of color possess six types of capital: aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, resistant, and navigational capital that are not recognized and valued by the dominant society group. The adopted model I developed added two new types of cultural capital that was reflected in the unique narratives of the women I interviewed. Educational and religious/spiritual capital are the two types of capital that were displayed by the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women I interviewed in this study. These two types of capital are part of my contribution that will need to be tested with other similar groups.

To summarize, this research project contributed the following:

1. Exposing limitations of Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory.
2. Adaptation of Yosso's community cultural wealth model for people of color to include two new aspects: educational and religious/spiritual capital.
3. The literature review and the narratives of the women I interviewed constitute rich cultural data that can be further utilized by researchers.

Recommendations for Future Study

Based on the findings from this research I recommend the following:

1. There is a need to revisit some of the prominent immigrant acculturation theories that dominate academic circles (e.g., Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented acculturation theories). Based on the participants interviews in this study, there is evidence of a need for more nuanced understanding of the various experiences using different samples of immigrants with different demographics.
2. Further research is needed to explore different aspects of community cultural wealth that immigrants possess. In order to do so, I recommend that researchers actively listen to how immigrants interpret their own experiences and how they make meaning of the world from their point of view. This is only done when we hear their voices through their narratives and amplify them through qualitative research studies.

3. I address my last recommendation to myself as I close out this dissertation. I recommend that I further analyze the rich data I collected and find ways to enrich the existing literature. I can also share the collected data with those who are concerned with immigrant social justice issues to help shed a light on how they perceive their racial experiences as newcomers to a racist system that existed before them.

Summary

This chapter included conclusions from the research such as major findings, answers to the research questions, and recommendations for future research. Another interesting finding was the micro-acculturation experiences reported by the women I interviewed. According to the women's narratives, Berry's acculturation model and Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory did not offer alignment with the women's experiences. Ogbu's cultural-ecological model offered better alignment and classified the women as an immigrant minority according to their characteristics.

The women's identities were related to their national, familial, social, and religious/spiritual association. Examples of these identities are Sudanese and American, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a Muslim. Their grounded sense of identity had a positive impact on their acculturation experiences as their familial, social, and religious ties helped them cope with their acculturation stress in the US.

Further, the women have strong ties to their homeland Sudan through different sorts of social media, such as WhatsApp, that allowed them to talk to family and friends in Sudan on a daily basis. All the women were regular users of WhatsApp. Their ties to

their homeland made sense given the ways they identified (i.e., familial, social, and religious).

Some of the other major findings were the development of an adaptation to Yosso's (2005) community wealth model that include six types of community cultural wealth capital: aspirational, familial, social, resistant, navigational, and linguistic. I modified her model to include educational and religious/spiritual capital as aspects of the community cultural wealth model that represent the experiences of the seven college-educated, north Sudanese women I interviewed.

Moreover, the narratives of the women offered rich cultural data that can be used in future research projects and will contribute to the limited existing literature about the experiences of college-educated, north Sudanese women.

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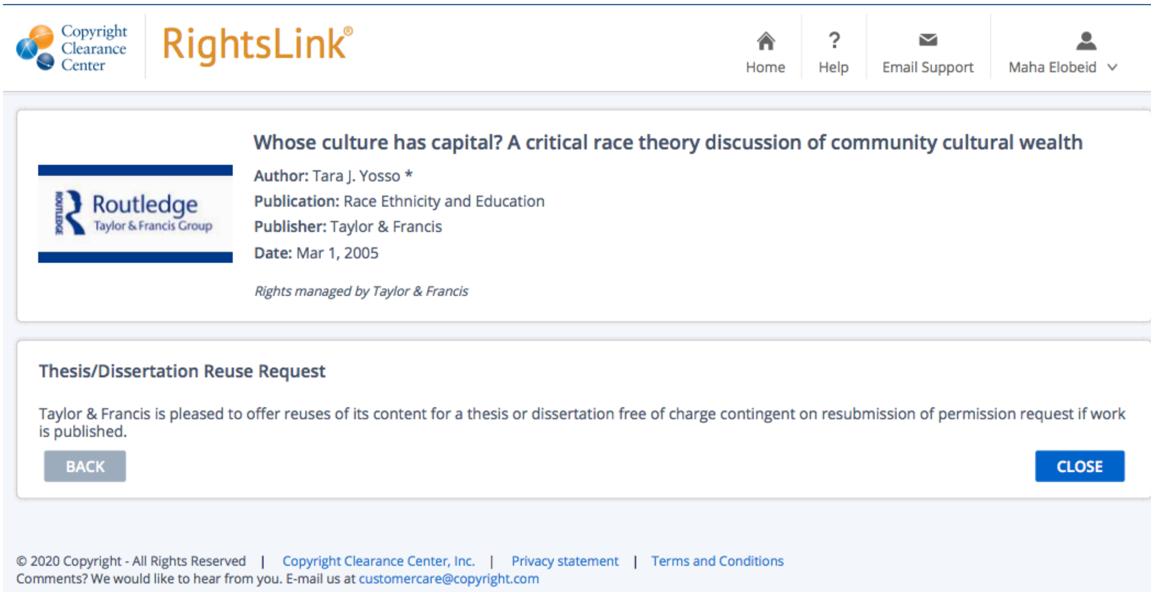

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