

AGING ARAB IMMIGRANTS:
FAMILY PORTRAITS FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology
San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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December 2012

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ABSTRACT

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By Kanhong Lin

There are relatively few studies on Arab-American immigrant families. As the immigrant population grows older in the United States, their situations raise wider social issues about aging. I examined the social landscape of aging and health within Arab-American families in the San Francisco Bay Area amidst changing intergenerational relationships. This research used a life history approach supplemented by participant observation. Interviewees discussed how immigration and transnationalism affected their approach to caring for aging family members, raising American-born children, and growing older. Arab immigrant life expectancy is increasing as a result of access to the US healthcare system but this is having unforeseen social impacts. As family members live longer, the economic and personal costs brought about by the responsibility to care for the elderly is contributing to the stresses of daily life. In addition, the notion of what comprises the Arab family is changing. The research points to the growing need to examine the social impacts of aging among different populations in the United States as well as globally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Knowledge possesses no gender and age.” My Egyptian professor told me this Arabic saying one day as I confided to him about my struggles with my research. This proverb has resonated with me ever since. What he meant was that a reader does not necessarily know the personal characteristics, such as age or gender, of the person who has produced any work of creative effort. It does not matter if it took a few days or an entire lifetime to produce a work of knowledge; creative efforts do not operate on schedules. What the reader sees at the end is the author’s final product: a presentation of knowledge, ideas, and concepts.

This thesis is the result of four years of effort and research. At many times, I wanted to walk away from the project due to all the obstacles I faced to complete this project. I would never have been able to finish without a community of supportive people in my life, including my parents, who provided for me; my grandparents, who raised me and encouraged me; Jan English-Lueck, who generously provided intellectual guidance and inspiration; Roberto Gonzalez, who mentored me during my undergraduate and graduate studies, inspiring me to become an anthropologist; Sandra Cate, who graciously supported me over the years; as well as my friends and colleagues Kate Bowerman, Maritza Maksimow, Mahmoud Al-Ashery, Nafay Choudhury, Kristyna Storkova, Awad Awad, Faye Oweis, David Carrey, Elaine Lin, Meryl Kopy, David Jones, Charles Cianos, and Alice Chang. Finally, I give thanks to my

interviewees who generously shared their life stories with me, without which I could not have completed this thesis.

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Preface

I got the call while in Washington D.C., just hours after returning from studying Arabic in Yemen. My mother called to tell me my grandfather was hospitalized in the Intensive Care Unit. Sometime in almost everyone's life, you get the call. On the other end, a voice informs you that a family member or loved one has been hospitalized. Although many people go through this life stage, little prepares you for the silence that happens afterwards. Time seems to slow down. Your mind races as you try to chart your options out. All I knew at that moment was that I needed to return to California.

Everyone in the family had different ideas of what acts to take to show proper filial piety to my grandfather while he was in the ICU and throughout the last months of his life. My eldest uncle focused on the medical needs and became the primary spokesman for the family. He sought out different doctors at different hospitals for solutions to my grandfather's health crisis. Having lost her job recently at a tech company, my mother found it difficult to find work again in Silicon Valley as an aging woman. So she devoted her time to taking care of my grandfather and felt it was her duty to take care of his day to day physical needs. When I was unable to visit every day, we would argue and she accused me of not showing proper respect for my grandfather. One day, she angrily declared that I was banned from attending his funeral. Another uncle counseled us to visit when we could, but acknowledged that it was important to also take care of our

personal health. My grandfather was in a coma in the ICU and not waking up anytime soon. My grandmother visited every day to just talk to my grandfather even though he was not conscious. Although my grandfather worshipped ancestral, Buddhist, and Taoist deities, my evangelical cousin insisted on inviting a Christian pastor to proselytize my grandfather before he died.

No one in my family had ever been hospitalized and suddenly no one quite knew what to do. The hospital doctors were evasive and treated my family as if they were uneducated and ignorant. I seemed to earn their respect only after I began to ask pointed questions using medical terminology. The doctors approached my family for consent to perform a seemingly unending series of tests and surgeries in the belief that they were doing their job. But my family members perceived the treatment plan as an attempt by the hospital to squeeze costly medical procedures out of a dying man. Despite all the odds, my grandfather did not die immediately as predicted.

The family was left with unanswerable questions: How do you take care of very sick old man when no one in the family was trained or equipped to handle his needs? What was the proper way to show filial respect to the father/grandfather that raised you? How much do you sacrifice in your life to take care of a family member? On the day, I came alone to visit him. Because he was legally blind, he could not recognize me at first. His lips were chapped and his throat parched, but he started crying and whispered to me, "Kanhong, I'm in so much pain. Help me to find a way to die." I felt an arrow pierce my heart. I did

not know how to respond. For the next six months, I watched my family struggle to support my grandfather. When he finally died, he was physically gone but the difficulties of his last months had taken their toll on everyone in the family. These events inspired my thesis and my attempts to look at how other immigrant families are living their lives and trying to deal with familial responsibilities while they age.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2009, a *New York Times* article highlighted the problems faced by elderly immigrants coming to the United States (Brown 2009). Centered on Indian and Afghan immigrants in Fremont, California, immigrants discussed raw emotions of loneliness, isolation, and disappointment. Although these elderly immigrants came to be reunited with their adult children and grandchildren, their hopes and dreams of living together as a family withered in the reality of living in the suburban landscape of the San Francisco Bay Area. Problems faced by these elderly immigrants included adjusting to the busyness of life in the Silicon Valley with their adult children. These immigrant families were composed of dual-income earners where the adults worked all the time. This pace of life left elderly grandparents alone with the grandchildren at home all day. Others felt abandoned after their children voiced the need for “privacy,” an expectation that clashed with their parents’ vision of family, resulting in one case where the adult children forced their recently immigrated parents to move out and live alone in a rented room found on Craigslist. Some immigrants found themselves exploited by their own children who seized Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks, leaving them destitute. Other elderly immigrants felt voiceless because they had lost status within the family as they were sidelined out of family decisions (Brown 2009).

Collectively, these stories about the struggles of recent elderly immigrants only discuss one aspect of aging in immigrant communities, that of parents immigrating to reunite with their adult immigrant children. They stop short of discussing intergenerational immigrant families in the context of aging. My thesis attempted to capture how Arab-American immigrant families in the San Francisco Bay Area navigate the process of aging. In discussing aging, I am not simply talking about the medical notions of biological decay, illness, and eventual human death.

The heart of this research examined the social landscape of aging and health amidst changing intergenerational relationships. It followed families spread out among different countries with members moving back and forth across borders. Aging has led to unexpected financial, medical, and social challenges for my interviewees and their families. In addition, concepts of familial duty and obligation play a large role in how immigrant families approach caring for their aging and elderly members (Abudabbeh 2005). As these families deal with health incidents, they face a US medical system that typically employs a treatment philosophy that may run counter to the health expectations and wishes of an aging foreign-born population (Kulwicki, et al. 2000). In the examples above, these factors played a role in shaping the long term impacts of a booming aging population among immigrant families in a transnational world.

More than a decade after the events of 9/11, the War on Terror, and the second Gulf War in Iraq, public policy towards the Middle East is still shaped by

security concerns and military engagements (Obama 2011). And yet after trillions of dollars spent on wars in the Middle East (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008, Belasco 2011), public misunderstanding of the region and Arabs still remains at an all-time high. Academic studies on the Middle East have mostly turned their attention towards topics of terrorism/security studies and political Islam. After the Arab Spring protests across the Arab world in 2011, public interest quickly turned towards democratic change and freedom in Arab countries. Yet despite sustained research on the Middle East and high profile political events, very little attention has been paid to the lives of ordinary Arabs. Even less research has been conducted on Arab immigrants within the United States.

Arab-American immigrants are often considered to be an invisible community marked by their differences from mainstream “American” society as opposed to their commonalities (Malek 2009, Malek 2010). Instead of a quantitative based survey of the community, I decided to study the issue of aging within the Arab-American immigrant community in order to provide a humanistic portrait of a growing, and aging demographic. Within the field of anthropology, studies on Arabs have focused on issues surrounding political Islam, how Muslims in Arab countries face modernity (Messick 1996, Abu-Lughod 2004, Hirschkind 2009), and on Arab/Muslim women in the Middle East (Fernea 1985, Kanaaneh 2002, Deeb 2006). The few studies on Arab immigrants in the United States are typically framed in the context of a post-9/11 perspective (Detroit Arab American Study Team 2009, Shyrock 2010), struggles between identity and

religion (Abraham and Shyrock 2000), or acculturation issues (Hassoun 2005, Volk 2009).

Although politics and religion are important topics, my thesis shifted away from these heated issues to ask a more basic question about the lives and struggles of ordinary Arab immigrant families: What is happening to people in this population as they age? Although it may seem like a simple question, embedded within it are issues of physical aging, health care, intergenerational social support, shifting households, and transnational networks. It is important to examine these issues in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of contemporary Arab-American immigrant families, which has been missing from studies on Arab-American families. Furthermore, this thesis adds to the call for more attention and research on Arab-Americans (El-Guindi 2003).

The San Francisco Bay Area provides an interesting region in which to observe changes happening within Arab families. It is an important metropolitan region in the United States due to the constant domestic and international movement of people in and out of the region (English-Lueck 2002). In addition, the suburban/urban landscape, the general “busyness” of life (Darrah, Freeman, English-Lueck 2007), and the rapid technological changes in how people work and communicate are producing social changes within Bay Area immigrant communities. Thus, the challenges faced by immigrant communities here might serve as a bellwether for other diverse metropolitan regions across the United States.

More importantly, my research raises practical and logistical issues facing social institutions that are tasked with providing social services to an aging population. The problems raised in this study provide greater insight into how families are coping with aging and how transnational movements within families are producing a new type of demand on health care systems in the United States and in the Middle East. As people move around the world, they bring with them not just themselves but also their medical problems. This simple fact poses significant challenges to healthcare institutions that are currently unprepared to deal with growing immigrant populations in communities, differences in cultural attitudes towards aging, and treating a mobile population of foreign-born elderly.

Research for this thesis has taken me across three countries and over four years as I have asked, listened, and reflected on the issue of aging among Arab immigrants. It draws spiritual inspiration from “Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East,” a collection of life stories of ordinary Arabs living during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods (Burke and Yaghoubian 2005). The collection sought to counter the perception that modern Arab history was solely the story of political leaders and military campaigns. However the volume ended with stories of Arab migrant workers who migrated to other parts of the Arab world in search of a better future during the 1980s. My thesis picked up where that collection left off and followed the lives of Arabs as they immigrated to the United States and eventually settled in Northern California. I had three goals: first, to illuminate the social issues of aging among Arabs; second, to highlight

the importance of transnational connections maintained by Arab-American immigrants; and third, to explore how changing familial relationships shape the aging experience.

Each chapter in my thesis begins with an introduction of the main issues to be discussed and then presents a collection of excerpts from my interviews. Each person's story is followed by a short paragraph that highlights important points raised in the narrative. For some topics, multiple stories from different people are presented to show how similar trends play out in different lives. Each chapter ends with an anthropological analysis of the issues in the narratives.

After a discussion about my research methods, this thesis is divided into three parts. Part I, "Young Arab Lives," covers the early years of my interviewees' lives back in Egypt and Palestine, the process of immigration, and settling in the United States. To address the different historical contexts of political and economic events that affected the interviewees' lives, I organized my interviewees into two groups, the Egyptians and the Palestinians. Chapter 3 introduces a brief historical overview of the political history of modern Egypt, particularly of the political upheaval of the 1940s and 1950s. This political events of this era played an important part in shaping my interviewees' childhood and youth. The social milieu of Egyptian society under decolonization influenced their reasons for immigration. Chapter 4 covers a brief history of Palestine and situates my interviewees' lives within the historical events of the region. It begins with the Ottoman occupation of the Levant and the subsequent division of former

Ottoman controlled territories between the Allied Powers of Britain and France. This sets the stage for the political and social events leading up to the creation of the state of Israel and the resulting Palestinian Diaspora. It also briefly surveys the tensions between the Occupied Territories and Israel and the First and Second intifada, which led to the second wave of Palestinian emigration. Chapter 5 studies the process of immigration and settling for my interviewees, including what influenced their decisions to leave their homelands and the networks that they relied on to immigrate and create new lives in the United States.

In Part II, "Changing Arab Families," I explore how immigration and transnationalism have intersected with my interviewees' personal experiences of caring for aging family members, raising American-born children, and growing older. It shows how external and internal factors are playing a role in reshaping the structure of Arab families. Chapter 6 examines the changing relationships between the different generations within Arab families and the forces that reshaping them. From the perspective of one generation, it considers how people are caring for their elderly parents in both the United States and in the Middle East. It also examines relationships within the same generation and how they may support or hinder their lives. This chapter also discusses how my interviewees' relationships with their American-born or American-raised children differ from their relationships with their parents. These changes are having a dramatic impact on the aging situations my interviewees find themselves in.

Chapter 7 picks up from the previous chapter and presents portraits of new Arab families as a result of the forces reshaping them. Chapter 8 continues this examination of changing families by focusing on how my interviewees manage their personal health issues. It notes how health within a family plays a silent role in reshaping Arab families, both in terms of the interviewees' life expectancies and their approaches to maintaining their health.

Part III, "Aging Struggles," takes a holistic view of the challenges faced by aging immigrants in their daily lives as well as their expectations towards the future. Chapter 9 considers the daily struggles faced by my interviewees as well as their financial worries and spiritual trials related to aging. These issues are often overlooked by health professionals that are tasked solely for caring for their aging patients' physical and medical problems. Chapter 10 reflects on the future of aging, including issues related to longer life expectancies, the logistics of caretaking, and changing attitudes towards aging. Chapter 11 concludes by tying together the major themes in the thesis and by identifying areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Methods and Overview

My thesis is based on qualitative interviews with six individuals conducted in both English and Arabic. Five of the individuals with whom I spoke are Arab immigrants from Egypt and Palestine who now live in the San Francisco Bay Area. The sixth interviewee is a Palestinian who lives in Amman, Jordan. Although he is not an immigrant to the United States, his life is marked by forced migration and his interview serves as a comparative picture of aging against the interviews I conducted in California. His narratives parallel those of the California-based immigrants and highlight the importance of looking at aging through both a regional and a global view.

I relied heavily on social networks and personal contacts to find my interviewees and establish rapport. I visited Arab churches and mosques in San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Clara, and Campbell to find interested participants. I met with church elders, community leaders, and youth leaders in an effort to reach out to the community. I posted flyers and sent out emails through listservs. For a long time, I struggled to find someone willing to talk with me until my first interviewee reached out to me. Through his network, I was able to use the snowball method to obtain additional interviews. All the names of my interviewees have been exchanged with pseudonyms.

Interviews were conducted in homes and at places of work. I used a semi-structured approach, in which I first asked a general topical question and let the

interviewee talk. At certain points, the interviewees would drive the direction of conversation. At other times, I would probe and direct conversation back to topics I wanted them to discuss more in-depth. As a result, not all interviews with each person were the same; however, a general pattern of changes and problems emerges from their life histories.

I chose a small sample size of six individuals in attempt to do a close analysis of families. Previous health studies on Arab-American families relied on surveys with large sample sizes to develop a broad understanding of the epidemiology of the population (Nasseri, et al. 2007, Johnson, et al. 2010, El-Sayed, et al. 2011). On one hand, while these health studies allow for a general picture of Arab-American communities in the United States, they often end up portraying people as tables of numbers and percentages without social context. On the other hand, the field of ethnic studies tends to focus on the qualitative issues of immigration, identity, and acculturation for Arab immigrants. These studies often place emphasis on the initial cultural collisions for Arabs as they settle in American society. Although a reader learns about their acculturation struggles at the point of immigration, not much else is learned on a deeper level of their lives decades after immigration. These studies represent a snapshot in time of the lives of Arab immigrants. In addition, studies on religion that focus on the Muslim Arab community can inadvertently frame Arab families as somehow inscrutably exotic from the rest of society due to their beliefs and practices in Islam. This effect became more distorted in the post 9/11 social environment, in

which academics and other Arab-Americans have attempted to educate the public about the basics of Islam and Arab culture. But this focus on Islam overlooks the fact that not all Arabs are Muslim, and that Arabs from different countries are shaped by completely different national histories and narratives.

This thesis took a different approach by examining how the experiences of Arab-American immigrants are similar to the experiences of other immigrant and native-born groups in the United States. There are commonalities among all of these groups because almost every family in this country is experiencing shifting social relationships due to the inevitability of aging as well as the challenges associated with increased life expectancies. The stories highlighted in this thesis serve as case studies of Arab immigrant families as they make decisions in the face of aging. They also serve to paint a more human picture of these families' triumphs and trials. Although the results of this study cannot necessarily be generalized as reflective of the Arab-American population as a whole, it can serve as a data point for cross-population comparisons.

I also conducted participant observation in the daily lives of my interviewees. Some interviewees allowed me to visit and spend time with them at their work places. Some of my visits lasted over nine hours as I observed the interviewees during their daily work schedule. Other interviewees invited me into their homes and allowed me to join them while they ran daily errands and went about their everyday domestic lives. Each location where I met with my interviewees was an important geographic place for them, and it typically

was where my interviewees spent the majority of their time. My participation in their daily lives—either as an active member or as a passive observer—was critical to my understanding of the life histories that they related to me and to how these life histories fit into my research on aging.

I supplemented my interviews and observations with archival research to better understand historical trends and patterns in the lives of the people I spoke with. I sorted through demographic data on immigration to the United States, searching for clues about aging trends. While living in Amman, Jordan, and Doha, Qatar, I searched for nursing homes, visited local medical institutions, and tried to understand how health and social services were provided for the elderly. These inquiries often began informal conversations about aging and the elderly with locals. These conversations often spurred new lines of inquiry or provided insights that I overlooked.

This thesis utilized a polyphonic approach in presenting the data. Rather than extracting one sentence quotations or bullet points from my interviews, I used the interviewees' stories as the unit of analysis because these stories represent a web of description, emotions, and information reflecting their worldviews. In addition, the acts of storytelling helped my interviewees re-interpret, re-orient, and re-evaluate their life experiences. In *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*, Charlotte Linde writes that speakers embed within their life stories a principle of coherence. This coherence unites disparate stories and experiences, weaving individual tales into a collective experience. Life histories

are a valuable anthropological tool because “life stories express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way” (Linde 1993:3). Individually, these narratives are simply personal stories, but collectively, the narratives take on a life of their own as themes and patterns become evident.

One of the biggest problems with life histories is the discrepancies in the narratives. The stories told by my interviewees often clashed over the course of my interview sessions. For example, certain factual information varied from different retellings of the same event. Sometimes my interviewees could not remember details. At other times, the gaps are the result of my questions being ignored or given answers that were intentionally vague. Further, my interviewees sometimes recounted the same story but from a different angle or suddenly incorporated additional information that was previously unmentioned. Linde observes this phenomenon is not uncommon in taking life histories, and notes that “stories that are retold in various forms over a long period of time and that are subject to revision and change as the speaker drops some old meanings and adds new meanings to portions of the life history” (Linde 1993:219-220). I sometimes had the sense that while speaking with me, some interviewees were reflecting and giving new meanings to their life experiences in the context of aging. Although the narratives may seem disjointed because of these omissions, the exact details in the stories, such as numbers and dates, are not necessarily as important as the interviewees’ accounts of how they used and leveraged social networks throughout different stages of their lives.

Part I
Young Arab Lives

Chapter 3: Alexandrian Lives

Alexandria. City of contrasts. Full of comings and goings, a colonial air, clearly a place where foreigners live.

Eugène Fromentin (from *Journey to Egypt*, 1869)

The city of Alexandria looms large in the lives of Samer and Ali. When I spoke with them, there was a sense of place in their narratives as they recalled vivid memories of the city and what it meant to them. Originally founded in 331 B.C.E. by Alexander the Great, Alexandria was intended to showcase the pinnacle of his power. One of the peculiarities of the city is that it possesses two ports on the Mediterranean side, an eastern facing harbor and a western one beside it. After Alexander's death, it served as the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt. The city rose to prominence both on the ambitions of its rulers and as a port city because Alexandria sat at the crossroads between cultures, civilizations, and religions. It was a city that has changed hands between the Ptolemys, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, and Ottomans. Alexandria's location meant that trade, cultural ideas, religion, and languages flowed into the city leading to the creation of a cosmopolitan city that has witnessed dramatic events in Egyptian history. Although Alexandria is largely overshadowed by the fame of Cairo, it remains Egypt's second largest city and one that has witnessed pivotal moments in Egyptian history such as Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egyptian territory in

1798—marking the brief French period of occupation, and later the British naval bombardment of Alexandria in 1882—inaugurating firm British control over Egypt.

The Alexandria of Samer and Ali's childhood was a diverse cultural and social melting pot between Arab, Mediterranean, and European cultures. This is seen in their narratives as well as in the neighborhoods that Samer and Ali grew up in. In Moharrem Bey, where Samer grew up, the streets were full of villas and green gardens. These geographic features stood as testaments to the success and power of its inhabitants,

Alexandria's successful bankers, brokers and property tycoons... [The] neighborhood was a dense grid of streets and closely packed houses, where Arabic mingled with the sound of Ladino (medieval Spanish containing elements of Hebrew)... [and] the inhabitants of the southern quarters of Moharrem Bey were a mixture of 'well-to-do Arabs and comfortable middle-class Jews. (Haag 2004:234)

Samer's milieu stood in contrast to Ali's in Kom Ad-Dikka. While Moharrem Bey carried a European feel, the neighboring quarter Kom Ad-Dikka where Ali grew up was a poor hilly section of the city described by E.M. Forster in an early travel guide to Alexandria as an "Arab quarter...built along its crest, and the winding lanes, though insignificant, contrast pleasantly with the glare of the European town" (Forster 2004[1922]:89). As Samer and Ali narrated their stories, one sees how the people and experiences they witnessed shaped them into the people they are today.



Figure 1. Three neighborhoods in Alexandria

Alexandria in the 1930s was colored by the political backdrop of King Farouk I (r. 1936-1952). He was the last reigning king of Egypt's Alawiyya dynasty (1805-1952) that began when Muhammed Ali Pasha's declared his independence from the greater Ottoman Empire in 1805. After splitting from the Ottomans, Muhammed Ali Pasha (r. 1805-1848) sought to cement his legacy and to build a new modern state. Often considered the founder of modern Egypt, his policies modernized the Egyptian military as well as industrial and social institutions. Alexandria became a site of Muhammad Ali's experiment and witnessed sweeping urban changes such as the building of the Al-Mahmoudia Canal aimed to facilitate trade and transport, to reduce communication times with Cairo, and to bring fresh water to the citizens of Alexandria. In addition, Muhammed Ali hired European architects to redesign the city's boulevards and to

create a street car system that continues to run till this day. These large scale public works projects reshaped the city and attracted an influx of foreigners to live in the city.

These policies continued under Muhammad Ali's grandson, Isma'il Pasha (r. 1863-1879), who also launched vast projects aimed at reshaping Egypt into the image of European nation states. Isma'il Pasha famously declared that, "My country is no longer in Africa; we are now part of Europe. It is therefore natural for us to abandon our former ways and to adopt a new system adapted to our social conditions." However, Isma'il's attempt to geographically re-align Egypt towards Europe (in this case, France and Britain) led him to become indebted to European banks and lenders. This debt crisis provided a pretext allowing Britain to force Isma'il from power and install his son, Tewfik Pasha (r. 1879-1892), thus cementing British control over the direction of Egyptian politics. This coup sparked the Urabi Revolt (1879-1882) against Tewfik Pasha. Fearing the strategic loss of the Suez Canal, British leaders decided to turn Egypt into a protectorate of the British Empire and hand-selected compliant Alawiyya rulers to continue ruling.

Decades of European domination and governmental corruption galvanized widespread social movements, such as the Wafd Party (a Nationalist party) and the Muslim Brotherhood (an Islamic political and social organization), against foreign occupation of Egypt. This mass discontent culminated in the 1919

Revolution and Egypt's nominal independence from Britain ("independence with British oversight") and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy.

By the time Samer and Ali were born in Alexandria, Egyptians were once again discontented with the broken political system in their country. Preoccupied with spending the country's fortune, King Farouk I allowed corruption to run rampant throughout the affairs of state. Fed up with both domestic corruption and the continued submission of Egyptian politicians to British interests, the country was ripe for change. Samer and Ali witnessed the twilight of the old colonial system, the events of World War II, and the promise of a new independent Egypt, free from Western influences.

The July 1952 Revolution marks a landmark moment in Egyptian history as the Free Officers' Movement, a faction of officers within the Egyptian military, removed the King and declared a sovereign Egypt free from foreign influence. Gamal Abdel Nasser became president of the new republic and was catapulted into Egyptian consciousness and into mythology of the Middle East looking for inspiration in a post-colonial world. It was a moment that reverberates in Samer's narratives. As a teenager from a politically active middle-class Egyptian family, these events provided him with a worldview that guided his actions for the rest of his life. Even after Samer immigrated to the United States he remained politically active within the Arab community as well as in Arab political organizations. On the other hand, Ali's perspective of Nasser's revolution is the opposite. As a child from a poor Arab family, the changing national politics did

not affect his fortunes. It did not matter whether or not Egypt was ruled by a King or a President; Ali lived near the bottom with the majority of Egyptians of that time. After Ali left Egypt, he spent the rest of his life focusing on obtaining economic success and building his business.

EARLY MEMORIES

Samer: "It was a time of revolution...and we were a part of that"

I was born on May 8, 1937, in Alexandria, Egypt. Egypt was a very, very important colony to the British with a highly populated rich land with schools, the cotton industry, and the Suez Canal. India was the Jewel in the crown but we were the second diamond. All this I was very conscious of at the age of six. When the newspaper came to our house, it was just mutilated by the end of the day because we kept stealing it from each other. You know, four boys, my mother read, my father reads. The neighbors would knock and borrow the paper. So the circulation was very limited by number but read by so many people. This was the boiling stage of my consciousness.

My mother's family lived in Alexandria in different districts than my father's. We always visited them. We moved between the two grandparents' houses. Once when I was nine years old, my brother was leading a protest and I remember walking behind him. He was leading a demonstration at Alexandria University and going on the streets with masses of people. He was arrested by the Egyptian police for shouting slogans against the King [Farouk I]. The King was just a playboy, a gambler. The political parties were corrupt and the Brotherhood was grabbing membership. But we stuck to Al-Wafd, which was the Nationalist party that wanted the British out. We wanted the King to be clean, give us another king or get the hell out of there. We are not affiliated with the Muslims [Brotherhood] or the Communists. The Muslim Brotherhood at the time was preparing to go to Palestine to join the armed struggle against the Zionists. We believed in the independence of Egypt from the British rule - Egypt for the Egyptians. There was no big dream of going taking over another country and at that time we were a

kingdom. Sudan was an integral part of Egypt. It was one country ruled by one king.

My father worked in the Ministry of Communication and retired at 58, he died at age 82. My father was way more upper echelon than Gamal Abdel Nasser's dad but at retirement they used to go one of the Sufi houses two blocks from where we live. There was this rich man who dedicated a big area in his house to invite all his close friends during Ramadan and he would bring Sufis. So my dad and Gamal Abdel Nasser's dad were very close.

When I was a child, the Jewish home, the Greek home, the Italian home were attended by the churches for orphans, elderly, or the poor. We had half a million Greeks living in Alexandria, a quarter of a million Greeks in certain districts. You walk places and nothing but Greeks or Italians. My father was very mobile till he died and my mother too. In the 50s, there were taxis or horse carriages. My brothers had cars and took them wherever they want. My father preferred always to walk. But my mother was always walked or move with public transportation. Alexandria was served by very clean, superb public transportation system.

I was very comfortable in my work at the Alexandria Stock Exchange. She was working in the National Bank of Egypt. We were like a middle-class Egyptian family. My family never had been merchants. I was the first one to stand in stores to make a living. You know? People work with their education in the government or in the army or in teaching or as lawyers. I worked in the Alexandria Stock Exchange from 1958 till end of 1969.

It was a time of revolution, the Beatles, the French guys¹... all the youth movements all over the world and we were a part of that. If you ask me that one day I was going to be an immigrant. I heard a lot of people immigrating. I would have said, "I'm not going to. I'm married. I have a good job. My wife works, I work." But people were leaving the country because of the socio-economic situation due to nationalization and the socialist direction that the country was going in.

¹ "French guys" refers to the May 1968 protests in France, where workers, in solidarity with student protesters, initiated wildcat strikes that shut down France.

But Nasser didn't communize the country. But we did not go red all the way like say, the Cuban system. But the pressure from the outside cause of the foreign policy due to his philosophy and administration didn't suit the American system. So we were always, having artificial shortages in supplies and daily food and stuff, some of us created lines. It wasn't very pleasant.

A Time of Upheaval

Samer paints the Alexandria of his childhood as a vibrant and multicultural society experiencing dramatic political upheaval. But it is important to note that he sees the city from the perspective of his family's economic privilege. All his family members, including his father, were educated and served in various government ministries. Through these connections, Samer had a job at the Alexandria Stock Exchange as soon as he graduated from university. The fact that Samer's father was friends with Gamal Abdel Nasser's father points to the social status his family carried in Alexandrian society. Lastly, Samer briefly mentions a social structure whereby religious organizations ran homes to care for the elderly that were unable to care for themselves. It provides an example of how aging was seen in Egypt at the time as a moral and social problem in society. This contrasts to how aging is often viewed as a personal problem facing families in America.

Ali: "The street that I lived on was 20% Egyptian, 30% Greek, and 20% Italian"

I grew up with King Farouk and his father was King Fouad. I was at the edge of Kom Ad-Dikka. It was a very traditional old style Egyptian neighborhood. Nobody moved in and out. They knew each other for generations and always married with each other. The whole population was two thousand, three thousand people.

The street that I lived on was 20% Egyptian, 30% Greek and 20% Italian. I was 6 or 7 years old and I remembered we go and play soccer ball all the time in the streets with the Greeks all the time. Every corner of the street you find three, four, or five kids standing there talking.

The apartment we used to live in was very modest. No furniture. We were in the hills high. Go down. And we see the best part of Alexandria. It was a stadium and another area of all the consulates and rich people lived there. Villas. No apartments. When I went down the hill, I found the rich foreigners, sons and kids from the rich families.

I remember Mohsen; he was ten years older than me. He carried me over his shoulders and walked me to go to my grandma. I always remember that. Everybody visits everybody...too much! There were no phone calls because there were no phones. Nobody knows who is coming. They just come and knock the door and get in. As a guest, you don't plan; you don't make an appointment or anything. And all the day you just have people coming. My grandmother used to come on Tuesday. My aunt on Wednesday. And my mother every Friday to visit homes. You have a habit of visiting each other's homes by days.

My mother was like most of the wives of that time, a housewife, uneducated. My father worked as a professional mechanic, he had his own shop and a contract with a French company that did all the lights in Alexandria. In World War II, you see the gentlemen riding the motorcycles with sidecars. My father was contracted with them to maintain these motorcycles. My dad used to come every day with dinner. He always passed the Greek grocery. We loved him because he buys pastrami but we called it *basterma*—it's kind of like pastrami but Armenian. It's just roast beef and they cover it with paprika and onion with salt, wrap it up, and then they hang it dry. Very famous. It's like the Egyptian bacon. Everything was made from pastrami. We eat it with eggs, cut very thin. That's all my memories of the area.

Social Interactions

Ali's narrative portrays another aspect of Alexandrian life from the perspective of the poorer Arab families in Kom Ad-Dikka, a neighborhood next to

Moharrem Bey, where wealthier families such as Samer's family lived. In Kom Ad-Dikka, families socialized by visiting each other frequently. It is interesting to note the amount of ethnic diversity of the neighborhood. Foreigners such as Greeks and Italians lived in close proximity with Arabs, and the neighborhood children played together. These early encounters with foreigners later influenced Ali's decision to immigrate.

THE DECISION TO IMMIGRATE

Samer: "The Defeat shattered my life"

The virus of immigration came attached to the defeat of the June War. I was of the generation that got burned up by the defeat of Egypt on June 5, 1967. I remember sitting with Nasser's brother in a dark room because we were afraid of the Israeli attacks. Sinai was occupied and they were already at the canal. And Ariel Sharon and Moshe Dayan even drove into Port Said and Ismaïlia. They wanted to put in history that they touched Egyptian soil and were 50 km from Cairo.

The defeat shattered my life and left a hell of a profound change on me. My generation didn't object to the idea of defeat or the loss of a battle in the war. I felt that with the size of the defeat, it was as if I was personally raped. You heard this from men talking in the coffee shops as I walked home. I felt like my mother was raped. My father was raped. My young wife was raped at the time. We all were raped. *Because* of those bastards! Those goddamn fat Egyptian generals that we fed. They had the best cars, best refrigeration, and best homes. The Egyptian people gave them all this. Yet that day they ran away instead of doing their jobs and the Israelis defeated them. The Israelis got our Air Force like sitting ducks. That was their main plan. When you catch an army in the Sinai Desert with no protection or cover from the Air Force, you're sitting ducks. This was the same goddamn plan that the Israeli military did to us in 1956. But at that time we had the honor of nationalizing the Suez Canal. And at that time were under attack by England, France, and Israel.

The June 1967 defeat was filthy. It was the filthiest moments of my life. I hated everybody around, I hated myself. I hated Nasser. I hated his system. My generation went off on the system; we went to the streets and declared it. Before this I was a part of the youth movement recruited by Nasser's political system. I had clashes with Gamal Abdel Nasser's brother. He was the big honcho in Alexandria. I went there and told them off. They started telling me, "Oh, it's not the Egyptian Army that got defeated. The Syrians betrayed us." I said, "Stop bullshitting Mr. Secretary. Stop bullshitting." The guy standing next to me in the dark started kicking me. I said, "Don't kick me!" That's what I feel. The so-called Revolution of July 23, 1952, in my opinion was gone. We needed another system here. I lost a lot of friends in the 1967 war. The price was paid by the youth. We paid the price.

With the changing social environment, the defeat, and the gloomy malaise, there was a bad feeling. It's either you're going to work against the system or you're going to join the party and get rich through corruption - there was very low grade corruption in Nasser's day. Or you just shut your mouth. I'm not one of the three. To make the story short, I had to leave.

Political Failures

Egypt's defeat in 1967 exposed the failures of Nasser's government as well as the general dysfunctions within Egyptian society. The high regard that Samer held for Nasser's government was shattered upon the defeat of the Egyptian army. However, the destruction of the Egyptian air force went beyond military pride to expose a stratified social order that favored the military and that rewarded those with the social connections to government officials. Although the 1967 war was a military defeat for Egypt, it also lost the hearts and minds of an entire generation of youth.

Ali: "We are so many people living on so little"

I majored in animal production at Alexandria University. My assigned job was working for a lab at the port of Alexandria. Before the ship unloads, I take a sample of fertilizer and send it to the lab in Cairo. If the results are fine, then they release the shipments and go. All day you see trucks coming in and out. That's all my job was. At the time I graduated, I got 1 pound for every year of my life I spent in education. I spent 20 years of my life studying. So it was nothing, 1 pound a day. After you pay for transportation, cigarettes, or a sandwich, it's nothing. A pound a day is nothing at all.

When I was like 11 or 12 years old I just remember coming out of the Golden Metro movie theatre. It always has MGM movies, American image. On Sunday, they have a special deal for kids where they drink Coca-Cola for free. It was very popular. We go there Sunday mornings and it made you love America. After you leave from a movie theatre, there is a little square where cars parked. Fancy cars. When I graduated from college, I went back to this area. I thought about how much these cars cost, maybe about 10,000 pounds. I figured that if I'm taking in 30 pounds, I need to save for 30 years to buy this car. 30 years! I was 25 now so I have to wait till retirement at 55 to buy this car? There was something wrong. Wayyyy wrong. I'd never buy a car like this in my life. I left the country because of this. We are a very crowded country living on 5% of the land because 95% is desert. In Egypt, there were so many people living on so little because five percent owned 90% of the wealth. It wasn't fair.

Later I found a job as an animal breeder for an organization called Gamaia El-Gazareen (Butcher's Association). I was the supervising engineer for their farm buying cows. The son of the guy that I worked with on the farm, his name was Solomon. I heard he was going to America too. I told him, "I'd like to meet him." We ended up staying together as business partners until 1995. He was very good friends with Said. I met Said while working in the same in the Agricultural Office in Alexandria. He learned that I'm applying to America. He said, "Okay, we'll go together. I am applying too." He explained to me that he has 4 brothers in America. I got in touch with him because he was going to be my lead. You are lost when you are going somewhere. Where are you going to land? I needed some direction. So it was very important to get attached with Said and build up a friendship. I worked at the farm for 6 months then I immigrated to America in 1969.

Struggling to Survive

Under the Nasser regime, Egypt embarked on a quest to nationalize different sectors of the country's industries as well as develop industrial output and self-sufficiency. This strategy involved recruiting recent college graduates and sending them to distant provinces to help with national projects such as improving agriculture or industrial output. Ali was similar to many college graduates who were channeled to these different job assignments. However, during Ali's time working at the port, he witnessed corruption first hand and how business was being conducted. The disillusionment forced him to a realization that it would be impossible for someone like him to succeed in Egypt without the social connections that he saw among the rich. Ali tried to tap into another social network, the Egyptian immigrant network, when he planned to leave for the United States.

Conclusion

The early lives of Samer and Ali set the stage for major decisions to come as they immigrated to the United States. The theme of disillusionment is present in both their narratives. After Egypt's catastrophic loss to Israel in the Six Day War in 1967, Samer lost faith in his country's politics and direction. Samer's life takes an incredible turn as he leaves Egypt behind and starts a journey as an immigrant moving through Toronto, New York, New Jersey, and Los Angeles, before finally settling in the Bay Area. Ali experienced a similar disillusionment with the social order and economic future of Egypt. It is important to note that

although these narratives described a historical Egypt from the 1930s until the 1960s, Samer's narrative of political upheaval bears striking resemblances to the frustrations unleashed during the 2011 Arab Revolution, and the political demands made by the youth of the Arab Spring remain very much the same.

Chapter 4: Stories from the Palestinian Diaspora

The stories of the three Palestinians that I spoke with encapsulate a large segment of the modern Palestinian historical experience. It is generally accepted that the Palestinian diaspora began on May 14, 1948, with David Ben-Gurion's declaration of the creation of the state of Israel. This act sparked a regional war between Israel and neighboring Arab states and the subsequent exodus of Palestinians from their villages and cities to Lebanon and Jordan. Many Palestinians ended up in the United States. However, an earlier period of Palestinian immigration is less well known.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Arab immigration to the United States and Latin America originated from the Levant, a region then under Ottoman rule that encompassed modern-day Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. When Palestinians arrived, they were often misclassified on immigration cards as Syrians (Naff 1993) in the United States and as "Turcos" (Turks) in Mexico (Alfaro-Velcamp 2007). In 1909, Christians within the Ottoman Empire were subject to a military draft. Five years later, when the Ottoman Empire entered World War I, Christian Palestinians began to migrate out of the Levant and founded a sizeable community in Honduras (Gonzalez 1993). Oscar Kafati, the former Honduran Minister of Industry and Commerce, stated that "My grandfather Gabriel was one of the first Arabs in Honduras. He was heading for Colombia, where he had a very rich friend. But he didn't like it there so he decided to visit

friends from Beit Jala who were already living in Honduras” (in Luxner 2001).

This account about one the earliest Palestinians in Honduras who originated from Beit Jala illustrates the strength of these social networks. Palestinians headed to completely foreign lands without knowledge of the language in search of economic prosperity and stability. In Honduras, Palestinians now number approximately 150,000 to 200,000 of the population (Luxner 2001). Although a small minority in the country, they have expanded into commercial and political roles—a trend seen also in the United States.

Table 1. Different periods of Palestinian movement

Immigration during the 1970s	
Mary Wife of Samer (Palestine)	Immigrated to Honduras due to an arranged marriage with her first husband. Later divorced and married Samer. Now runs a clothing store with her husband, Samer.
Forced Migration (1967)	
Talal (Palestine)	Family fled Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 1967 Resettled in Amman, Jordan only to be internally displaced in 1970 during Black September.
Immigration during the 2000s	
Edward (Palestine)	Left Palestine in search of a better economic future during the 2 nd Intifada. Now runs a snack food distribution company serving the Bay Area.

This “Honduran” part of Palestinian history ties into Mary’s account of her immigration experience. At the age of 16, she was sent by her family in Beit Jala to marry a cousin she had never met that lived in Honduras. She remained in

this marriage for fourteen years before finally divorcing her husband. In the time between, she lived in Honduras, became a fluent speaker of Spanish, and then moved to New York City and later lived in California. After her divorce at age 30, Mary decided to return to Palestine with her son. Her story illustrates how these transnational familial networks persist over long periods of time. In fact, between 2000 and 2005, approximately 3,000 Palestinian Christians from the Bethlehem area in the West Bank immigrated to Honduras to escape the violence of the Second Intifada (Lopez and Speer 2006). This resurgence of Palestinian immigration to Honduras and the surrounding countries has reinvigorated the older Palestinian community and has resulted in the establishment of community organizations and networks both in Honduras and back in the Middle East (Foroohar 2011). These new Palestinian immigrants in Honduras are even sending their children back to Palestine or Jordan for education (Foroohar 2011).

Talal is a 55 year-old Palestinian living in Amman, Jordan. His account of his family's exodus from the Jerusalem area returns the story back to Palestine and the effects of colonial policy as new nation-states sprung up from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In 1916, as World War I raged on in Europe and the Near East, the British and French struck an accord regarding the division of territory held by the Ottomans in the event they should triumph over the Central Powers. The Sykes-Picot Agreement set the stage for the expansion of British and French control in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the war, the League of Nations awarded Britain and France mandates to administer the

former Ottoman lands of Mesopotamia (Iraq), Palestine (Palestine and the Transjordan), and Syria (Lebanon and Syria). According to the guidelines of the mandates, the British and the French were to administer these territories until these territories could operate independently (Fromkin 2009). This so-called gentlemen's agreement ushered in a period in which the British and the French carved up vast tracts of former Ottoman lands into the modern Arab nations that exist today (Fromkin 2009).

The League of Nations mandates and the Balfour Declaration, in which the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, announced Britain's support for a Jewish homeland, set into motion an official effort to designate the land of Palestine as the home for a proposed Jewish state advocated by the Zionist movement. In the subsequent decades, waves of Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine, heightening tensions between Jews and Arabs in the region over political control of the land. Before the British Mandate over Palestine officially ended on May 14, 1948, a civil war began between the Jewish and Palestinian communities. While the inter-communal fighting raged on, a Zionist plan to depopulate Palestinian villages was executed by the Haganah—the predecessor to the modern day Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)—in which Arab villages were systematically attacked and conquered, forcing Palestinians to flee. In addition, the Irgun, a paramilitary splinter group from the Haganah, killed 250 villagers, including women and children, in what became known as the Deir Yassin Massacre (Smith 2010). This event, coupled with the widespread campaign to

geographically displace Palestinians, created an atmosphere of fear and panic. Many Palestinians fled their villages for safer lands, and some villages disappeared overnight. The day after the British Mandate ended, David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the state of Israel on May 15, 1948. This announcement prompted neighboring Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon) to declare war against Israel, starting the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. This war would be the first of many between Arab countries (particularly Egypt) and Israel.

Referred to as the Nakba (the Catastrophe), this period signals the start of the Palestinian diaspora into other Arab countries as well Europe, the United States, Canada, and Latin America. The 1948 war displaced approximately 750,000 Palestinians, or about 90% of the population, who were living within the declared borders of the new Jewish state (Pappe 2004). The displacement led to a tripartite division of the Palestinian people, in which they became subject to different international and national laws depending on where they ended up. One group remained in the state of Israel (approximately 100,000 to 180,000 people), a second group (approximately 500,000) remained in the West Bank, which was then administered by the Kingdom of Jordan, or the Gaza Strip, which was administered by Egypt, and the third group (approximately 750,000) became refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (Farsoun and Aruri 2006). After 1948, the Palestinians were not simply uprooted, but also left without political rights under the modern nation-state system. They fundamentally had no political

representation because they lacked state citizenship and were granted little to no political rights by the neighboring Arab states in which they sought refuge.

Talal was born into this land of instability wracked by the politics of decolonization that eventually pushed his family from Jerusalem into Jordan.

I was born in the Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem on June 20, 1957. My father, he had a shop selling flowers in Palestine during the British Mandate. I remember my uncle's house in Ramallah, our home. I remember our village close to Jerusalem and the holy places such as the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. I used to sit on the steps of the mosque. In Jerusalem there were many nationalities, Muslims, Christians, and Greeks living in harmony. My father and mother spoke Greek with them. I was happy until the Occupation. People described that there was a war so we came here to Amman. During the war, people were afraid for their children and fled. They left their lands, homes, and everything behind during the war.

In 1967, the Six Day War created another push against the Palestinians living in these regions as Israel and its Arab neighbors were once again embroiled in yet another regional war. In the opening shots of the war, Israel launched Operation Focus, a surprise air attack against Egypt in an attempt to destroy its entire air force as it sat on the ground. Described as a "Hail Mary" move, the Israeli military sent the majority of its air assets against Egypt, an operation that destroyed more than 350 aircraft, almost the entirety of the Egyptian Air Force (Oren 2002). During the next few days, Israeli ground forces captured the Gaza Strip and the entirety of the Sinai Peninsula. On the Jordanian front, Israel seized the West Bank (*referenced in Talal's narrative*) and the Golan Heights from Syria. Israeli victory during the Six Day War proved to be

a devastating blow to Egypt's military and political stature among its citizens (*referenced in Samer's narrative*) and the wider Middle East. This war known as the Naksa (the "Defeat" or "Setback") displaced another 400,000 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the majority of whom fled to Jordan (*Talal's narrative*) (Farsoun and Aruri 2006).

After the Palestinian exoduses of 1948 and 1967, Palestinian fighters used neighboring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon to launch attacks against Israel. As a response, Israel launched retaliatory military offensives into Jordanian and Lebanese territory in an effort to stop the Palestinian attacks. Soon the military strength of the various Palestinian paramilitary groups grew to a size that threatened the legitimacy of the nation-state. In the case of Jordan—a traditionally Bedouin country with a small population, social tensions between the two groups increased with the huge influx of Palestinians seeking refuge (Cleveland and Bunton 2009). By 1970, facing external pressure from Israel as well as internal fears that Palestinian fighters posed a threat to the Jordanian monarchy, King Hussein launched a military offensive against the Palestinians. Known as Black September, Jordanian military units attacked, killed, and displaced Palestinians. Despite the pretext of dismantling the military capabilities of the Palestinian military groups, Jordanian artillery targeted and began shelling two Palestinian refugee camps in the city of Amman, including Jebel Hussein where Talal's family lived. Talal's family later moved to Jebel Natheef, another area in Amman, to escape the violence. By the end of Black September, between

3,000 and 20,000 Palestinians, a number heavily disputed due to the lack of documentation, were killed by the Jordanian military (Massad 2001). Although Talal gave me very few details regarding his family's experience during Black September, it was clearly a traumatic time for him, and he subtly avoided it during our conversations.

When we came to Amman and our conditions changed. Firstly, we lived in Jebel Hussein for a period. After Black September, we moved to Jebel Natheef. In Jebel Natheef, there is a mix of Palestinian and Jordanian families living together. We've lived there for around 37 years in the same house. My father's work became simple. After 1967, my father worked in an electricity company as a government employee reading electrical meters. He worked there until he reached 60 years old and then retired. There was no social security. He stopped working and remained at home. We grew up and became his support and my two older brothers worked to support the household. After marriage, we all left. My mother remains in the house that you visited but my house and my repair shop are close by.

Although little official documentation exists of Black September, the chaos and fear can be seen in Palestinian author Liana Badr's visceral description of the attack on Jebel Hussein refugee camp.

Out of their tin-roofed house, wrecked by the eight days of shelling, they drove thousands of men, women and children. They separated out the men; the women stood to one side in their long black dresses, their wailing and lamentations rising to form a dense cloud in the sky above the shattered camp while the men and youths raised their arms high, like a vast forest of severed, broken trees. I lost all feeling and will as I witnessed a fantasy world of soldiers in torn khaki with gun muzzles leveled, bazookas hurtling to earth and American tanks driving to and fro.

Excerpt from A Compass for the Sunflower (Badr 1989[1979]:11)

The Black September killings of Palestinian civilians created a divisive tone for Jordanian-Palestinian relationships. Although the Jordanian monarchy had proclaimed support for the Palestinian cause in the past, their actions sowed distrust that has lasted until the present. It is a legacy reflected in Talal's statement that although he is 55 years old and has lived in Jordan for over forty years, he continues to feel that he is simply a "guest in this country."

Although Edward is younger than Talal, his story parallels Talal's narratives of displacement. Both Edward and Talal were displaced from their homeland because of Israeli-Palestinian violence. Edward was born in Bethlehem in 1972, and his story picks up after end of the regional wars between Israel and its neighbors. Israel had occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip occupied since 1967. Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization), and the Israeli government engaged in decades of on-and-off negotiations to solve the political impasse over the occupied territories. Frustrated by the lack of political progress, mass demonstrations erupted in the Occupied Territories and the First Intifada (1987-1993) began. Palestinians were fed up with the suffocating conditions of daily life under occupation from the Israeli military and the daily humiliation they experienced. They watched decades pass as they continued to live in uncertainty, while the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza ate away at the last remaining lands for a proposed Palestinian state.

The result of the protests led to the 1993 Oslo Accords, agreements which were signed between the PLO and the Israeli government that established a timeline for eventual Palestinian self-rule, albeit under Israeli supervision of the process. Supporters of the document hailed the agreement as a landmark event that would bring about an eventual independent nation-state and economic prosperity for the Palestinian people. The economic promises of Oslo were perhaps best represented by the Oasis Casino, which opened in 1998 as a result of international investment, where Edward found work as a card dealer. Built in Jericho in the West Bank, the casino was part of Yasser Arafat's and the Palestinian Authority's attempt to chart a new economic future for the Palestinians. Although gambling is forbidden in Islam, the construction and operation of the casino promised to create much needed jobs and inject money into the Palestinian territories. However, the Vegas-inspired dreams of prosperity could not survive the ground realities of Israeli occupation.

Despite the agreements made in Oslo, what was assumed to be a plan for Palestinian sovereignty in the occupied territories ultimately cemented further Israeli control over every aspect of Palestinian life. Israeli checkpoints established a system of control that severely restricted Palestinian movement while subjecting the population to daily humiliations, such as searches and detainment (Baroud 2006, Makdisi 2010). Random border closures killed off economic activity and daily life. In fact, some people began to argue that Israel had no real intention of supporting an independent Palestinian state based on the

1967 borders. The promise of the Oslo Accords evaporated as ceasefires were continually broken. Conferences and summits failed even before leaders arrived, and Israeli settlements expanded quickly in the West Bank and around East Jerusalem, threatening any hope of a two-state solution.

After the collapse of negotiations between Israel and the PLO, the Second Intifada (2000–2005) began. This intifada was an intensely violent clash between armed Palestinian groups and the IDF. Suicide bombings became the hallmark of Palestinian resistance against the Israelis. Israeli visitors into Jericho trickled to a handful. Eventually, the fear of violence shuttered the casino in 2000 and, along with it, the dreams of young Palestinians for political freedom and economic prosperity in their ancestral homeland. Like many Palestinians, Edward saw his life shattered by the violence of the Second Intifada. Facing a bleak future with no economic prospects, he decided to immigrate to the United States.

Chapter 5: Changing Fortunes in a New Land

*You said: "I'll go to some other land, I'll go to some other sea.
There's bound to be another city that's better by far.
From "The City" (1910) by C.P. Cavafy*

When Samer, Ali, Mary, Edward, and Rashid began new lives in the United States, they joined a long history of Arab immigration that started at the end of the 19th century when predominantly Syrians and Lebanese began immigrating to New York City (Naff 1993, Orfalea 2006). The First Wave of Arab immigration lasted from 1870 to 1920 (Orfalea 2006). During this time, Arab immigrants typically originated from the Levantine area that was under Ottoman rule. These immigrants were mainly Christians of various sects and poor. They settled in the New York and New Jersey areas, as well as in Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Michigan City (Naff 1993). The early Arab immigrants often worked as traveling peddlers, going from house to house selling household wares off their back (Naff 1993). Even in the late 19th century, the Arab immigrant population was mobile, moving back and forth from the Middle East to the United States. For example, the life of the famous Arab-American writer Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883-1931) illustrated these early transnational movements of Arabs. Although Khalil Gibran was born in Lebanon, he and his mother immigrated to Boston where her brother lived in an early example of the transnational social networks drawing Arabs to the United States. Khalil Gibran later returned to Lebanon for

further education and then returned to the United States. Upon his death, he was buried back in Lebanon.

The Second Wave of Arab immigration occurred from 1948 (sparked by the Arab-Israeli War) until 1965. During this period, the majority of Arab immigrants were Palestinians fleeing the conflict in Palestine following the establishment of Israel and the successive wars (Orfalea 2006). Egyptians were the second largest majority during this wave and were often educated and more well off than the First Wave immigrants. Samer and Ali belong to this Second Wave of immigration.

The US Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished quotas based on national origins and focused on immigration criteria such as job skills and familial relationships. This change sparked an increase in immigration by Arabs and one that plays a large role in facilitating the transnational movement of Arab families between the United States and the Middle East. The Third Wave is considered to be ongoing beginning from 1966 until the present day.

Palestinians dominated this wave again after being pushed out following the Six Day War in 1967 as well as the First and Second Intifadas. It also is noted that a sizeable Coptic Christian population from Egypt arrived in the United States during this time, thus establishing a growing Coptic community. Rashid and Edward both belong to the Third Wave.

This chapter highlights the social networks utilized and maintained by Arabs as they embark on a path to immigration and acculturation. Not only are

Arab immigrants are using social networks to immigrate but these networks play a critical role in the fortunes of individuals once they arrive to the United States. As they age, some individuals rely on these networks as supplementary social support in addition to their familial networks. These transnational networks are organic, growing and changing over time based on the needs of people. For some, these networks are built around work and for others, their narratives point to these networks being utilized as health support networks. As my interviewees age, their social networks continue to play a large role in their lives, bridging families spread across multiple geographic locations.

Samer: From Wall Street to Main Street

We are always thumped down by the West. Always! Always! How can you love America? I chose to immigrate to Canada and not to go to the United States. I didn't want to come here, to a country that I didn't like. The idea of immigration came from a co-worker who was working on his immigration. He said, "I cannot live in Egypt. I'm going to Canada. I cannot go to the States. Australia is too far. I have relatives in Canada." We were going to join hands and immigrate together. I sent him to relatives in Toronto that signed both our affidavits of support. They were the first cousins of my ex-wife. He lasted in Toronto for one month. He went there and then changed his mind. He said, "No, this is a very loose community. There is a lot of kissing on the streets. One day I came late and took a shortcut to Fred's apartment. There were two people making love on the grass. I don't want my daughter to see things like that."

I said, "So what? Your daughter is one month old."

He said, "Go back. Get your retirement back. Get your apartment! Don't come!"

I said, "Your daughter!? I sold my apartment. I sold my furniture. I sold everything. I resigned and cashed [in] my retirement."

He said, "Are you serious about staying?"

I said, "Absolutely. Yes. When I take a decision I'm not going to change my mind because of your paranoia. Listen man, we just want to live comfortable and breathe. Be educated and take it slow because we've been pushed in our lives so much." He left. I took him to the airport and gave him a hug. He went back to work where he became the head of the Alexandria Stock Exchange Commission. I was groomed to be in that position.

Trying to find a job in Canada combined with the weather, it was a heartbreaking thing. It was not easy. You come from a very situated, clean life... [laughs] and you find yourself waiting for the bus in the freezing cold. I got caught twice in the snowstorms. I'm not used to seeing snow in my life. The weather was very harsh but then accepting a very low paying job. I stayed in Canada, two winters, the third winter. But I realized that I had a green card to the United States. I said to myself, "Let me go and see what this America is about." She was pregnant in almost the eighth month. We had friends in New York City. I called them. We took the Greyhound bus and entered from Buffalo. The second day, in less than twenty-four hours I was working on Wall Street in New York City, at the same bank that I applied fifteen times at the Agency Bank of Montreal. Less than twenty-four hours! At the same bank in Canada, they were telling me I was overqualified, underqualified. The Canadians can stick it to you! Okay, on their literature they tell you they are very polite and nice. It's gorgeous country. But you go live between them and they stick it to you. [Laughs] Yea! We were really legal immigrants, people that stood in line. And I was accepted because I applied as a statistician. I was the head of the Statistical Department back at the Alexandria Stock Exchange.

I was given an entry level job in the Bank in the Securities department, in charge of collecting for leverage people or coupons from the bonds and pensions. Many of these holdings were power companies in Québec or Ontario. There were no computers at the time. We had the typing pool and anything that you wanted to type goes to them. Girls sitting there and smoking was allowed at the time. It was fun working there.

What made me stay in America was Watergate. It made a believer out of me that America was not a country with just cowboys with machineguns killing everybody. There were institutions. There were honorable people. They could grab Nixon. I'm used to unshakeable big guys in the Middle East. Sam Ervin was on that committee listening and grabbing everybody... John Dean, George Mitchell, and all these guys. I was in awe. I ate in front of that black and white TV. I slept in front of that black and white TV. And I came back and watched the repeats. I started sleeping like two or three hours a day then go to the bank and work.

I worked there for almost three years. They sent me people to train for a few weeks, then the kid will disappear and suddenly he's in charge of a whole section in the building. One day I spoke to my bosses and I said, "What's going on?"

They said, "You still have an accent."

I said, "What accent? You didn't hire me here to teach a Shakespearean course in English in a university. I work with numbers and I'm doing a good job. It's almost been three years and a half. I won't take this anymore." I just lost confidence in climbing the corporate ladder.

It was June 1973. At that time I was in touch with some Egyptian friends. I used to visit them when they worked in the clothing industry on Broadway in Manhattan and all over New York City. But they moved West to L.A to meet up with the brothers and cousins of one of the three people that drove West (*See Ali's Narrative*). They had a station wagon and they joined to establish a small jobbers operation, where they bought old stock and reselling it at small stores or to people who go to flea markets. These guys kept calling me and I said, "No, I need more assurances about what you guys are doing." They said, "We're growing. We're making a lot of money but the work is very hard. Twelve hours a day, fourteen hours a day. A store needs to be open with every man, one store." That's the lie they sold us at the time.

I was the first man to come at the time. At that time, they opened the first store on Channing Way and Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. From July 9, 1973, I was already in charge of Berkeley store and it was already pipping. I used to come in the morning to find customers filing in a line waiting for me. I saw them really growing! We were living the three of us, the Northern California

boys, by Lake Merritt in Oakland. I came first and then my wife followed me. We all lived in the same complex. It became a little community, all of us settled in Alameda because it reminded us of Alexandria with the water all around you. Kids in the same school, very warm feeling of all of us together. We were leading a success story. It's true! It was very emotionally satisfying. A startup, with all the romance of the startup! The success! What a satisfying feeling! You could see our success, we were on the radio. We were being written in the paper.

The company expanded to own twenty-one stores in Northern California and in Southern California. But the Southern California operations did not last for long. The American Pants Company was the holding company with retail divisions, World of Pants–Southern California and World of Pants–Northern California. The World of Pants–Northern California out lasted World of Pants–Southern California because of the holdups and the caliber of people they were using down south was not like the caliber of people in Northern California. In L.A. there were a lot of holdups and lot of inside jobs from the managers.

Zorba was the head guy with all the leases and bank accounts in his name. He and Frank owned 100% of American Pants Company. I didn't know all these things in the beginning. The first six months they told us that there'd be a bonus check of five or six thousand dollars according to your effort. I found a check for 500 dollars. All the money, it went to Zorba. This was kept from me. I was a soldier and I was a hell of a lieutenant. The first store they gave me was making \$24,000. I raised it up to \$150,000 per week. Taxable. I had twenty-three kids working with me with in three shifts. We opened at nine in the morning and closed nine in the evening. Seven days a week. Give me a break! You eat standing up and at that time I was smoking. Pff... one! Another one! Six or seven cigarettes a day. Yea! I was burning! When you work in a capitalist system, especially small people, you really do work for every dollar.

We started bringing in more people and expanding it. This friend called this friend. The Northern California was a different caliber of people, all of them married and Egyptians that went to the same university. One guy was from the agricultural college. This guy was from economics. This guy was from the cotton institute. We all knew somebody who knew somebody. It was close. Eventually the pie got so big because there were so many of us. I

then discovered that they used my name to lure other Egyptians to come and work with them. People asked, “Who worked with you?”

They would reply, “Samer El-Jabry.”

“From Alexandria University? From Moharrem Bey?”

I was carrying say 98% of the load but the salary did not compensate for the hours that we were putting in. I told Zorba, “Look, what was delivered to me as the bonus for December is BS. We worked very hard. I never took one day off! What kind of garbage have you guys been selling us for three years and a half? You stole three years and a half from my life! Telling me that I’m one of you! You remember that day. You put your hands on the Qur’an and you swore with me after reading the Fatiha (Surat Al-Fatiha)!” The men and women working with me never took a day off. We were scraping by with our fingernails to build the company. And then they start borrowing money from me! It was an honor system that was betrayed big time. I came to realize that working with these guys was based on an illusion and I was just burning myself. It was a hell of a realization that these men were going back on their word.

Yes, I have regrets. Not a lot. There are people I should have cut out a little earlier. I gave people from the Egyptian community more credit than they deserved. When they needed help, I stood by them because I’ve been in their situation. I let down my guard and trusted that in our culture, they would come and pay me back. They failed me bad.

Networks of Trust, Abused

From the outset, Samer’s narrative reveals how his immigration was not an individual experience. His decision to immigrate along with a co-worker follows the path of other Egyptians streaming out of the country after the bitter sting of Egypt’s defeat in the 1967 war. His description of his immigration experience relies on utilizing both family (strong) and acquaintance (weak) networks. Through acquaintances from work at the Alexandria Stock Exchange,

Samer makes plans for immigration but the critical part of the process is fulfilled by familial networks, brothers-in-law from his first marriage, in Toronto vouching as support for both himself and his co-worker.

Samer's discussion of the Watergate scandal marks a turning point from being a sojourner, like his friend who later returned to Alexandria, into that of a transmigrant who maintained ties with his native land while adopting the values of the United States. It is important to note that Samer is not solely an economic immigrant but rather is searching for a different life after the disillusionment with Nasserist policies and ideals. During Samer's time in Canada and the United States, he maintained his ties with Egypt and he could have easily returned to Alexandria where his family and other informal networks would have helped him find a job at the Stock Exchange or at another ministry. Although an immigrant, Samer describes how he kept a distance from the Egyptian immigrant community in Canada and in New York while he worked on Wall Street. It is only after his rude awakening of the challenges of being a foreigner working in America that leads him to make a life altering decision to engage more directly in the Egyptian immigrant community. Samer leaves corporate life behind him after becoming disillusioned by his inability to establish himself through personal merit. Samer's work as a clothier at World of Pants reveals the social relationships important for immigrant entrepreneurship. Studies have shown that a large number of Arab-American immigrants were self-employed owning their own business (El-Badry

2004). However, the ways that these businesses operate were not readily discussed or shared with outsiders.

World of Pants becomes an interesting case study of the power of transnational networks among the Arab immigrants. However, World of Pants is not an ordinary story of a startup company, but rather a story that underscores the power of familial relations as well as informal associations that rely on reputation, trust, religion, and identity. Samer describes the dark side of some immigrant businesses that are reliant on networks within the immigrant community. It is a familiar scenario whereby the trust of immigrants is exploited by their own countrymen, who are often more established immigrants. The transnational networks of Egyptian immigrants and their trust in their fellow countrymen played a critical role in the expansion and success for World of Pants. Without these networks, Ali and other people involved in World of Pants would not have made their fortunes.

Ali: From Flea Market to Retail Empire

Why did I leave? First of all, I grew up with foreigners and they left. I became like a stranger in my country because I didn't have Egyptian friends. I just felt that it's not my place to spend the rest of my life in Egypt. *Khawaga*... it means a foreigner in Egypt. "If you want to be a Khawaga, you live with a foreigner. If you want to be rich, live with them!" That's the saying my father told me. If you want to be khawaga, live with khawaga. I kept it in my mind. That's the way I want to live. Besides with the Emergency Law, the police treated the people very bad arresting anybody without cause.

What a day in my life! When the plane went up from Alexandria and turned around. I looked. It was yellow. Everywhere just desert! I said, "My God, I'm out of the nightmare. At last! I am now

leaving Egypt like all my friends.” It was a dream day. Just go up! I was just enjoying everything on the flight. I felt I was in a different standard of life. Fathi and I landed in New York but Fathi’s plan was just to stay with his brothers. For me, New York was just the start.

Said and Solomon worked with me in New York every day for two years selling suits before deciding to move to California. We were lost. Where were we going to go? Who are we going to see? Once you find somebody, everything will be good and then you can have a good start. We decided that because Said had a successful brother named Jalal in Los Angeles. We were going to go to Los Angeles to meet him. I bought a Dodge station wagon and we drove to California. Jalal worked in Libya and his partner was a Sabahi, from the biggest family in textiles in Egypt. Nasser took everything from them. They had 20,000–40,000 employees in a huge town making Egyptian cotton. He immigrated too, so that’s why they worked in the garment industry in America.

Jalal made a contract with Lee to buy all the “seconds.” In the garment business, people inspect the quality before they get stacked in the boxes. If there are anything problems like a spot, a stain, something torn or loop of the belt that is crooked, they make a red mark on it and they put it aside as irregulars (IRs). So he was buying number 1 IRs. And the cost difference was huge! He was selling them back to the Palestinians and other people. Lee’s at that time in the 1970s were \$6. He bought them for \$2 and sold them for \$2.50. Then we noticed a lot of Palestinians coming and buying a lot of clothes. We asked, “What are you doing?” They said, “We go to the flea market.”

He explained it to us and we went there, saw it, and liked it. We told Jalal, “We’re going to go to the flea market.” So Friday night, he took two vans and loaded it with merchandise. Everyone had \$100–200 dollar savings, just enough to pay for the hotels. We went early at 1 a.m. in the morning for the first row spot. The earlier you go, the better you get a location because once you get to the end; the people have spent their money. We were always careful to be in the front all the time. Whatever money we got, we paid Jalal for the clothes. We started to make money. Within six months, each one of us had \$10,000–15,000. That was a lot of money for our age at that time. Jalal liked the way we did business because we sold more than anybody else, more than the Palestinians. He told us that, “Hey, we should open a store for you

two. We're going to be partners." I told him, "Fine. We'll go up north and open stores for you." So we went to San Francisco. We didn't know where to go. We crossed the Bay Bridge to Oakland. We got lost and then we ended up near the end of Telegraph which is a one way street. My God! Jalal, he has a business eye. He said, "That's it. That's it. The first store is going to be here."

For anybody opening a store, the main problem is with suppliers. When an immigrant doesn't have credit, it's very hard to survive. But we had cash. When the credit bills came, Solomon and Said always sat at the desk at night paying the invoices! We didn't pay Jalal until we first paid the suppliers. So we ended up having "A" straight credit. Anything you wanted shipped right away. Salesmen started coming and knocking on our door. We found ourselves doing very well so much that everyone in the Arab community knew my name.

By 1988, I had 150 employees working for me and I owned seventeen clothing stores in the Bay Area. Berkeley, Oakland, San Jose, Sun Valley, East Ridge Mall, Santa Rosa Mall, Fresno Mall, Capitola, everywhere! Christmas time was a pay day! [Laughs] My God! Each store makes \$5,000–\$10,000 a day. I was sitting on half a million, three-quarters of a million. Amazing. Retail is very good for immigrants. That's why a lot of Chinese, Indian, and Egyptians open retail stores. I hired Egyptians for most of my employees. People who came and visited and then decided they wanted to live here. So they were illegal. They always came to me and I took them in. I paid them, and then I helped them get their papers by getting married or something. I wasn't taking advantage of them. I was paying them good. That's why they respected me and they liked me because I treated them good. I never paid them under the minimum. I could have paid them below the minimum wage and they would still have loved it because of the cash. But I didn't do it. You see, I have to respect the country.

In 1990, I was doing all the deals and Solomon was my right hand man. I was somehow influenced by my wife; she was saying that I was doing everything even though Solomon was my partner. And she just kept telling me these things and made the evil thoughts come. So I asked him that it wasn't fair to be partners. I gotta have some edge in the business. He refused and while he was in Egypt, I turned ownership of the seven stores to my name. That was my BIGGEST mistake. I shouldn't have done that. I had enough money. Everything was fine. Solomon and I split in 1990.

I ended up with eight stores. He had eight stores. When we split, he was active in his stores but he didn't have the brain to run them. I had the brain to run my stores but I wasn't active. So the successful combination between us was gone. We both got tired. It was too much business, too much pressure. And you have to have the control, power. We didn't have it and the both of us became very weak financially. And then in 1991 there was a big recession and a lot of businesses went bankrupt. Amazingly, retail is very cruel; it is either very generous or very dry. Solomon and I finally liquidated the stores in 1994.

World of Pants, From the Top

Samer and Ali's narratives show how some immigrants can benefit from immigrant social networks while other immigrants can be exploited by those same networks. Ali's narrative describes how he acted strategically, often searching for ways to expand his social network with people he perceived as successful. He noted the importance of becoming attached to certain people in the immigrant network. Ali conferred respect upon people with affluent or powerful friends. His childhood in Alexandria provided the influential grounds where he developed a personal mission statement that guided the rest of his life. Recognizing the importance of developing his social network in order to attain his goals, Ali looked for people who would provide him the social capital for prosperity. Ali did not rely on a familial network during his quest to leave Egypt. In fact, he rarely discussed familial networks and spoke solely about the immigrant network of other Egyptian men that played an important role helping him achieve material success in the United States.

Edward: From Card Dealer to Food Dealer

I moved to California to try a different life. I used to work at a casino in Palestine before they closed it down because of the political situation. After I got married in 1997, I came to America as a vacation and stayed three months. When I came to California, I made many friends and we kept in contact each other even when I returned to Palestine. When things got worse and there were no jobs, it was easy for me to move to America to start because I knew where to go.

I worked for my cousin for the first two years at a deli making sandwiches. And after that I worked with a natural foods distribution company that supplied big stores. So when I decided to do something for myself. I saw friends that they used to be in this business so I had the idea for a snack distributor. In 2003, I established the company by myself with help from friends. They gave me ideas about what to do and how to do it. They gave me connections with companies and the contacts to the right people to buy from so I could buy direct from the manufacturers not from second or third parties. I started from scratch. I started by going out selling \$100 dollars a day, \$200 dollars a day to build it up step by step. I was by myself. I didn't have a warehouse when I started. I used to store my entire product in my truck. And if I have extras after I get a delivery, I put it in my house in the kitchen of my apartment. I used to do everything by myself. I used to have the truck in front of my house. In the morning, I'd just go to the truck and start work from there.

A New Life through Networks

Throughout Edward's narrative, one gets the sense that he solved his problems through his own efforts. Although there is no doubt that Edward worked hard to set up his business, it is interesting that he did not mention the role of established networks in helping him to reach his current situation. When Edward first came to California in 1997, he had cousins who lived in the Bay Area. He also had friends and met other Palestinians within the Arab-American community that he actively kept in touch with even after he returned to

Bethlehem. These social influences channeled him into his current job, much like how Samer and Ali entered the clothing industry based on their contacts with other Egyptians.

Conclusions

A central theme of the interviewees' narratives is their descriptions of immigrant networks that are based on networks organized around the concepts of "strong ties" (e.g., family and close friends) and "weak ties" (e.g., voluntary associations and acquaintances) (Granovetter 1973). These immigrant social networks are transnational in scope, linking Arabs in origin countries with already established Arabs in destination countries. These immigrant social networks have been described as forming a type of social capital (Massey, et al. 1987) that allows immigrants access to resources and an established community. The idea of social capital embedded within immigrant networks builds upon concepts developed by Bourdieu where he describes how social obligations and connections can be converted into economic capital (Bourdieu 1986). Furthermore, Bourdieu emphasizes that these kinships and relationships are actively mobilized and maintained (Bourdieu 1977). These transnational immigrant networks then are organic depending on how relationships are maintained amongst participants in the country of origin and the destination country. As soon as there is a critical mass of people who have already immigrated, these social networks become self-perpetuating across borders and are maintained by "relationships that are built on and perpetuate reciprocal

obligation” (DiCarlo 2008:4). These obligations come in the form of remittances sent back home, providing assistance to others who are migrating, and taking care of people in their community.

By the time that Samer, Ali, and Edward began the process of immigrating to the United States, they had access to a mature transnational network. In Samer’s case, his networks were based on other Egyptians from Alexandria University as well as family members. When he arrived in Toronto, he tapped into an established Egyptian community. Similarly, Ali tapped into this network by making friends that had a connection with other Egyptians who were living abroad. Edward’s first visit to California showed the steps that he took to gain access to the Palestinian immigrant network and plan his move to the United States. These informal immigration networks existed in addition to the more formalized associations of Arabs in the San Francisco Bay Area. Some networks served as physical cultural centers, such as the Arab Cultural and Community Center, which was formed in 1973 in San Francisco. This cultural center served both public and private needs by educating the public about Arab culture and by providing a pan-Arab network for other Arab immigrants to meet each other. Other associations were more internally focused and consisted of Arabs from particular geographic regions such as the Jordan or Lebanon. For example, the American Federation of Ramallah served as a national organization with local branches that united Palestinians from the city of Ramallah. These associations were both local and transnational and were intended to strengthen relationships

between Arabs living in the Bay Area suburbs and communities in their countries of origin. Sometimes, these associations had a greater impact; for example, the American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals started as a social network of educated Yemenis and morphed into a philanthropic organization that sent contributions to Yemen. Other social networks were organized through religious affiliations, as evidenced by the Egyptian Coptic Church, the Orthodox Churches for Palestinians, the Maronite Churches, as well as mosques.

Although most of the scholarship has focused on the positive benefits of the social capital that gained through immigrant social networks (Massey, et al. 1987), very little scholarship has discussed the potential of these networks to have negative and exploitive aspects. The history of the Los Angeles janitorial industry provides documented examples of how immigrant networks can turn from being a positive resource for immigrants into an exploitive economic arrangement (Cranford 2005). Over the decades, the work system for the janitorial industry shifted from direct contracts between building owners and janitorial staff to a system of middlemen contracting companies. Building owners signed contracts with these cleaning companies and, as a result, they divorced themselves from the responsibility for the labor conditions of janitorial crews. Janitorial firms often competed for the lowest bid to service buildings, but did so at a human cost of lowered wages and illegal work conditions. To fulfill contractual cleaning obligations, these firms typically employed supervisors that possessed a large social network of contacts. These supervisors were not

simply hired for their management abilities, but for their ability to recruit directly from the immigrant community. However, as the demand for cheaper labor increased, these supervisors often resorted to illegal practices that violated labor laws, such as requiring immigrants to work without pay under the guise of work training, hiring undocumented workers, and decreasing staff size while increasing workloads on remaining employees (Cranford 2005).

Similar tales of exploitation within Egyptian immigrant networks are revealed at length in Samer's narrative. World of Pants was a multi-million dollar clothing company that started out of the back of a car. In a sense, it is a classic start-up business that relied on harnessing the enthusiasm, energy, and commitment of Egyptian immigrants in lieu of initial monetary capital. These hidden "secrets" became the keys to success of the company based in Northern California. First, the company relied on labor that was recruited through a professional and geographic social network of former Alexandria University graduates who had immigrated to the United States. Second, Samer's high social status in Alexandria provided a social guarantee of the legitimacy for company operations and the promises made by the company's leadership. The discussion of reputation and honor illustrates how symbolic capital in the form of prestige, honor, and reputation can play an influential role in social capital (Bourdieu 1977). Third, the Egyptian immigrants involved in the company were not simply united by Egyptian cultural identity, but also by religion, as signified by Samer's use of the Qur'an as the ultimate guarantor of trust. In the end, Samer

realized that the idea of a community of equals working together in the company was an elaborate lie. The Egyptians involved in building World of Pants were not all immigrants on equal footing who were struggling to build a new life in America. Instead, the company was set up hierarchically to exploit those at the periphery and to ensure that all profits flowed to the legal owners.

The reliance of an industry on hiring employees through immigrant social networks has been observed in the janitorial industry in Los Angeles (Cranford 2005) as well as in other immigrant businesses. For example, in the New York Turkish community, “gas station and diner owners employed identical hiring practices. Whenever possible, they would hire co-villagers and regional compatriots, then Turks from other areas” (DiCarlo 2008:113-114). Similar trends have been observed among Lebanese immigrants in France that rely on “strong” and “weak” ties in their social networks to secure new opportunities or to start their careers. People in these networks who lived in France play a critical role in convincing friends and family members visiting them from Lebanon to eventually immigrate, thus shaping career paths (Al Ariss and Ozbilgin 2010). These trends have also been seen among Mexican immigrants to the United States (Massey, et al. 1987) and Dominican immigrants to New York (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). In addition, these immigrant social networks exist between countries of origin and transit countries, where immigrants often languish while waiting to get visas so they can continue onward to destination countries in Europe, Canada, and the United States (Akcapar 2009).

Another aspect of World of Pants' meteoric rise depended on reciprocal immigrant social ties through the immigrant network. The success showed the immense potential for those that are able to harness this resource but also illustrated what happens when one breaks the fundamental rule of reciprocity that holds together the social bonds. Samer dedicated his energy and time to the company under the belief that he would be compensated according to the owners' promises. When the reciprocal exchange was broken, he decided to leave. When Ali chose to seize total control of the company from his longtime partner and friend Solomon, he shattered the working trust between them. This division never healed, ultimately dooming the company.

Each of the interviewees relied on transnational immigrant networks to come to the United States and start a new life. However, once they became established, each person made personal and financial decisions that wound up affecting their current aging situation. Samer's and Ali's narratives diverged after Samer ends his work for World of Pants. Samer distanced himself from the Egyptian community because of his disappointment in the actions of its members. His social network shifted from one that was based on business partners and co-workers to a network that was centered on familial relations. After Samer left World of Pants, he worked as a sales representative for a clothing company in Los Angeles until he retired. Later, Samer tapped into his family network when he came out of retirement to operate a retail clothing store. When I met him, he was selling young men's urban street wear in a suburban

strip mall. His wife, Mary, served as a critical partner in managing the day-to-day operations. His sons were involved at the beginning of the venture. Samer's shift from a social network of "weak ties" to one of "strong ties" impacted his current aging situation, in which he currently is burdened by familial obligations in Palestine as well as by familial obligations in California.

During Ali's working life, he focused all of his efforts on his business. Although he was married during this period, he rarely mentioned his family life. The decisions and mistakes he made in his business affected his current aging situation, because he alienated both his business associates and his family members. After his divorce and health crisis, he was left with no one to care for him. Although Ali was retired in Alexandria for several years, he had to rely on his money to hire servants to care for him. This monetary-based support network evaporated when his money disappeared. As a result, Ali moved back to California where he lived by himself.

Lastly, although Edward is much younger than Samer and Ali, he engaged in very similar strategies to immigrate and develop his business. Edward relied on a combination of friends and family members to find stability. In this process, he engaged in various social relations that are establishing the groundwork for how he might age. The process and strategies used by Arab immigrants are not simply stories of social networking, but instead weave a complicated story about networks based on kin and kith obligations and the trust that binds them together.

Part II

Changing Arab Families

Chapter 6: Arab Families In the Midst of Aging

The events and topics in this section take place decades after immigration and the struggle of acculturation in the United States. These interviews happened in 2011 where my interviewees discussed their families and the intergenerational challenges and pressures that they faced at that moment in time. Their descriptions shed new light on the changing nature of Arab immigrant families trying to balance a life rooted in the United States but with familial ties and obligations in other countries.

At the time that I met Samer and his wife, Mary, they were running a clothing store focused on young men's urban street wear in a strip mall in Antioch. Although Samer is 75 years old and Mary is in her mid-60s, they run a high stress business at an age at which most of their contemporaries would be retired. Despite the burdens of the business, they must simultaneously care for their parents as well as for their older children while managing their own health crises.

After selling all his stores in his clothing empire in 1994, Ali retired in Egypt with his savings. A series of bad financial decisions led to his bankruptcy and the collapse of his retirement strategy. Without money, Ali moved back to California to live out the rest of his days. Because of his poverty, he now lives alone in Pittsburg, California, where the cost of rent is dramatically cheaper than in other

parts of the San Francisco Bay Area. He rents an apartment in a converted garage of a single family home. Over the years, Ali's family has been torn apart by the bitter emotions and fallout from his divorce. He has adult children with whom he no longer communicates with. However, despite the fact that Ali lives alone, he has assembled his own social support system of established friends that help him.

Rashid, who was 71 years old when I interviewed him, is a recent immigrant to the United States. After spending the majority of his life in Egypt, he decided to immigrate to California to be reunited with his adult daughter. In 2005, Rashid and his wife moved to California to continue their retirement in a foreign country. Here, he spends most of his time visiting friends, taking care of his health, and serving as a deacon at the local Coptic Church. Unlike typical elderly Arabs, Rashid has no grandchildren and his adult daughter remains unmarried.

At age 40, Edward is hardly elderly, but he is aging. After escaping the political and economic turmoil in Palestine, he started his own business distributing snacks in the East Bay. He has recently expanded his operations with the help of his older brother and his nephew who both are recent immigrants to the United States. Edward supports a young family with children in primary school. Because Edward's older brother and his nephew are employees in his business, he has the added pressure to expand his sales to provide a living for them. Additionally, Edward's mother and extended family live in the United

States and Palestine and his business provides financial support to a family spread across borders.

Talal is a 55 year old Palestinian living in Amman, Jordan. After his family fled Jerusalem in 1967, he grew up and spent the majority of his life in Amman. Although Talal is not an immigrant to the United States like Edward, his life is marked by violent upheaval and forced migrations. Moreover, as a Palestinian refugee in Jordan, he possesses limited rights in Jordanian society that could be stripped away from him without any notice. This unease is reflected in his conversations, in which he states that he feels like a guest in a country that he has called home for over 45 years. Talal also is raising two young children in a period of sustained economic stagnation, high unemployment, and social unrest within Jordan.

This chapter captures a snapshot of how different Arab families are aging together while adapting to the pressures of life and familial obligations. In order to better illustrate the changes occurring within Arab immigrant families, this section breaks down the changes by the different generations. My interviewees serve as the epicenter of the familial analysis as they discuss issues involving the generation above and below them as well as people within their own age group.

The Arab Family: Academic Perspectives

Aging is widely considered to be a personal experience in the United States; however, in reality, aging situations rests upon a foundation of social relationships that are both kin and kith. As an individual grows older and families change, obligations are expected and received that can have either a positive or negative impact on the individual's and the family's experience of aging. Because familial relationships play a critical role in how aging is experienced, it is important to understand family structures and dynamics.

In the context of Arab and Arab-American studies, researchers often take the concept of the "Arab family" for granted. However, anthropologists have noted the importance of the family in politics and the national policy in the Middle East (Kanaaneh 2002, Kashani-Sabet 2011). Most Arab countries have a set of laws known as "Personal Status Laws" that define the family unit and legally recognized kinship ties. In addition, the structure of the family and control over women's bodies are politicized as topics of national debates about the values of tradition versus modernity (Abu-Lughod 1998, El-Shakry 1998). Given this background, the concept of the Arab family is a term loaded with history and pre-conceived notions beyond simply consanguine ancestry and ties. When asked to describe the Arab family, many scholars reply that the Arab family is "patriarchal," "hierarchical," "extended," and "patrilocal" (Patai 1952), with the father at the head of the household (Lichtenstadter 1952). Other responses tie the Arab family to ancient patriarchal Arab tribes that have endured without change in the

face of modernization (Lichtenstadter 1952, Patai 1962, Abudabbeh 2005).

Another view conceptualizes the Arab family as one of “close” personal relationships, in which members place a high value on familial relations and duty and are bound together by love (Fakhouri 2001).

All these terms provide characteristics of the Arab family and yet what exactly constitutes the Arab family still imprecise and nebulous at best. Not only is the Arab family an arena of debate for national projects seeking to influence people’s minds and futures, it is also a perennial topic of academic debate. The Arab family (and, by extension, the Arab-American family) has been mythologized by researchers and by Arabs themselves to the extent that the social reality of today’s Arab family is obscured from true understanding. For a while, doubts about the nature of the traditional Arab family prompted demographic and household studies aimed at disproving the existence of the extended Arab household. In a retread of debates over tradition and modernity in the Arab world, scholars argued that the extended Arab family was said to represent a description of ideals rather than reality. With the advent of decolonization in the Arab world, urbanization sparked academic interest in the impacts of economic and cultural modernity upon Palestinian families (Rosenfeld 1968), Egyptian families (Petersen 1968, Al-Thakeb 1981), and Kuwaiti families (Al-Thakeb 1985), as well as families in other Arab countries. Scholars were keen to point out that the Arab family was fragmenting into Western-style nuclear households in conjunction with the modernization projects of Arab politicians.

However, these previous studies were preoccupied with comparing the Arab family against European ideals and visions of family. Critics have argued that researchers still do not understand the realities of Arab families (Arab Families Working Group 2010; Beitin, Allen, and Bekheet 2010) and that their research frameworks often perpetuate colonial visions of Arabs, a criticism first raised by Edward Said.

More recently, anthropologists and scholars have sought to revisit the study of the Arab family by using principles of kinship, inheritance, and property devolution (Mundy 1988, Goody 1990, Mundy 1995, Doumani 1998, Meriwether 1999, Mundy and Smith 2007). These scholars have argued that the Arab family can take more than the form commonly believed (i.e., patrilineal and patriarchal) and that historically, the family structure has been flexible. In a study of *waqf* endowments in Ottoman Greater Syria, legal documents revealed that individuals in different cities (Nablus, in the modern-day Palestinian Territories, and Tripoli, in modern-day Lebanon) sought to designate inheritance very differently from traditional patterns of inheritance. For example, some individuals chose to designate daughters and widows as beneficiaries of a portion of the estate in addition to their sons. In contrast, others chose to exclude the female family members and instead keep inheritance strictly among the male children and agnates (Doumani 1998). The crucial difference in these legal arrangements rests upon patrilocal residence patterns after marriage in which women often left the family to join another family. Women who inherited property in this patrilocal

context, in effect, diluted family wealth and holdings. Male inheritance kept familial wealth consolidated in the hands of the patrilineal family. But these records indicated that in Tripoli, some families rejected the notion of consolidating wealth in the patrilineal family. In fact, they had set up inheritance guidelines that provided for the women of the family and their families. What this illustrates is that through the mechanism of family law and legal inheritance, some Arab families (at least, among the landed and moderately wealthy) were actively shaping how their vision of the family would be enacted and how power and wealth were to be distributed in the family (Doumani 1998, Meriwether 1999). This argument of the “flexible” Arab family has largely focused on historical studies that rely on legal and inheritance records from the Ottoman period. However, how does this concept of the flexible Arab family play out in the modern day realm and in a transnational context? In the contemporary Middle East, what form does the Arab family take in the Gulf, where Filipino or Nepali maids often serve as the primary caregivers for the children in the household (and are considered by some as part of the family)? The influx of foreign born labor into the Arab family unit raises questions about how outsiders that are linked to intimate family practices affect familial structures and relationships.

Returning to the United States, the trends of transnationalism and flexible families are quite evident among Arab-American families. Thus, it becomes critical to understand how the different faces of the Arab family can impact a person’s aging experience in the context of transnationalism and generational

change. Immigration is an inherently disruptive act upon people's lives and family relationships. For Palestinians of the diaspora, the trauma surrounding expulsion is compounded by family members scattering around the world in search for a better future. On the other hand, family and familial social networks represent one of last remaining stable social institutions in Palestinian culture (Schulz and Hammer 2003). Immigration presents new challenges for each generation in the family as they age. The challenges become greater when members of one generation reside in different countries and lead busy lives as they try to make it in their adopted land. It is commonly observed that transnational family networks are actively maintained through remittances (money sent home), letters or phone calls, visits home, as well as practical assistance for other family and friends who have immigrated. But these transnational networks are not always actively maintained as each member becomes busy with their own household in different countries (Schulz and Hammer 2003). These economic and geographic realities can lead to a situation where family members are not in contact for years.

It is important to note that there are wildly varying differences in familial expectations and obligations towards aging depending on the generation, from the family members left behind, to the 0.5 generation (elderly immigrants over the age of 65), to the first generation (foreign-born immigrants), to the 1.5 generation (individuals immigrating in their teens), and finally to the second generation (American-born children of foreign-born immigrants). Even researchers of Arab-

descent can fail to highlight these important differences within the Arab family, choosing instead to see the family as monolithic and bound together into perpetuity. In societal and practical terms, understanding how the family unit plays a role in an individual's aging process is important to crafting better social policies that meet the needs of healthcare clients.

In this thesis, the interviewees discuss encounters with their family members. These stories provide a multi-layered account of how aging plays out within the context of a family. From the perspective of the interviewee, we see the expectations and obligations that are conferred upon the interviewee by the preceding and subsequent generations. These obligations are expected to be socially reproduced and adopted by the generation below. But economic, political, and personal forces have caused disjuncture and have created completely new aging scenarios that my interviewees never anticipated. For example, when I met Samer and Mary, they were struggling to keep their business afloat after enduring plummeting consumer spending since the 2008 Recession. Although Samer and Mary described themselves as "retired," they operated the business in order to provide additional income so that they could support relatives in Palestine as well as pay off the legal fees from a criminal case involving Samer's son.

Ali's narrative provides another example of how immigrants experience aging in ways they never expected. After Ali survived a heart attack and closed his business in 1994, he returned to Egypt to retire. But after he ran out of

money, he decided to return to the United States. I met him in his apartment in Pittsburg, California, where he lives alone in the converted garage that he rents from a Mexican immigrant family. Ali's health is poor, and he suffers from the effects of multiple heart attacks and diabetes. He has limited mobility and is confined to an electric wheelchair.

Although Edward, at age 40, is much younger than Samer, Mary, and Ali, his narrative provides many parallels to the others. Edward discusses the difficulties of supporting elderly parents back home in Palestine, generational conflicts arising from his mother's visits to the United States in order to care for her grandchildren while Edward and his wife work to make ends meet, and the stresses of trying to support a family in an expensive region such as the Bay Area. These narratives are not always happy stories, as my interviewees discuss family tragedies, painful deaths of loved ones, and familial infighting that destroys the trust and fabric of a family.

Forces Shaping New Arab Families

THE GENERATION ABOVE

(Grand)Mothers without Borders

A common phenomenon among Arab-American immigrants and other immigrant communities is the trend of parents visiting the United States in order to take care of grandchildren. These aging parents make repeated visits, often staying for several months before returning to their countries. My interviewees

discussed a common theme of their mothers traveling back and forth from their country of origin to the United States. Despite the distance, these visits served as a way for the grandparents to provide social support and to be involved in their children's lives. However, these visits also highlighted personal costs such as isolation, lack of transportation, and cultural and language barriers faced by these grandmothers.

During Samer's divorce, his wife broke a court-ordered stay and took one of their children back to Alexandria. Her action added an international dimension to a custody battle that Samer's mother helped defuse by acting as an intermediary between the families. Later, Samer's mother began a back and forth movement between Egypt and California to help him care for the children after his divorce in 1980. Although Edward is of a different generation than Samer, we see the same trend. Upon the birth of Edward's children, his mother moved to the United States and stayed for two years. Although Edward's mother ultimately returned to Palestine, this type of residence pattern is not uncommon for parents of Arab immigrants who often come to the United States and stay for months at a time. The parents' stay is long enough for them to provide social support to their families, as well as to require healthcare and social services. However, most of the parents do not decide to permanently immigrate and typically return to their home countries for several months out of the year. Edward revealed that his mother-in-law also resides with him. As a result, throughout the year, Edward has at least one grandmother, either his own

mother or his mother-in-law, who lives with his family and provides social support.

Absence of Fathers

A common pattern in my conversations with all the interviewees is the absence of the father. Although the Arab family is still considered to be patriarchal, these aging Arab immigrants mentioned their mothers more frequently. The main reason for the focus on the mother was because their fathers died prematurely (in their late 50s, early 60s) in comparison to their mothers (*see Chapter 7*). In every case for the interviewees, their mothers have survived for years, sometimes decades, after the death of their fathers. Samer's father died at age 80 in Alexandria, thus prompting Samer's mother to move to the United States. Rashid's father died at age 59, and Rashid's uncles died at age 52 and 54, respectively. Although Talal's father died in 1990, his mother is still alive two decades later. Edward's father died at the age of 62, leaving behind his wife.

Some of my interviewees were still caring for their mothers, even though they themselves are reaching an elderly age. Samer and Talal's narratives discuss how their elder brothers took care of their mothers after the death of their fathers. However, both of them describe how their mothers outlived their elder brothers. Ultimately, the burden of care fell upon them. But what happens when elderly parents outlive all of their children? There is almost no research on how

early mortality rates for men in Arab families are affecting social dynamics and familial structures.

Caring For Elderly Mothers

As the parents of Arab-American immigrants age, families can struggle with ways to care for them. However, this balancing act becomes more complex when the adult children reside in different countries as a result of immigration. The narratives below describe different care scenarios for the elderly mothers of my interviewees. In some cases, the interviewees brought their parents to America to live with them and to obtain medical care. In other cases, the interviewees were unable to bring the parents to the United States, so they send remittances as a way to fulfill social responsibilities within the family. There is a bidirectional nature to these efforts. For example, monetary remittances can be sent from the United States back to the Middle East, as in the case of Mary's mother. Alternatively, fulfilling these obligations can involve relocating people from the Middle East to the United States.

Samer: "I observed some really tragic endings like my mother's"

After I lost my two older brothers, it was grueling for my mother to live by herself in Egypt. Sudden death is never calculated. My brothers died from smoking, and hard work. I work way harder than they did, but I stopped smoking. She had nobody in Egypt. I was the oldest living son for her, so then she came to stay with me in America.

I observed some really tragic endings like my mother's. Nobody can really plan life by the minute. A year before my mother died, they discovered she had colon cancer. She was losing blood count

in her blood tests, so they did a colonoscopy and found a small tumor. If I knew then what I know now, I never would have let my mother go through radiation therapy at Herrick Hospital. That's why when it came my turn for radiation treatment, I gave them the middle finger. She died in January 1999 from congestive heart failure at the age of 80. She's buried in Saratoga, California.

Tragic Medical Endings

Samer's mother made repeated visits to California to help raise his children after his divorce. After Samer's brother in Egypt and Libya die, Samer took care of his mother when she immigrated to California to join his household. When Samer's mother fell ill with cancer, he pursued all medical options to care for her, including aggressive radiological treatment. It was a decision that he later regretted after he watched his mother suffer at the end of her life. He was left with a bitter taste for Western healthcare after watching his mother interact with the US healthcare system and endure physical suffering from invasive medical procedures. This experience changed his perception about how to interact with the medical establishment and lead him to take a different, less aggressive path for treating his prostate cancer.

Samer: "[Mary's] nephews failed us...We take care of our own"

We help Mary's mom now that she's 96 years old and lives in a facility for elderly people in Palestine. Her nephews failed us; the kids forced Mary's mother to sign some papers handing them ownership. They seized the house and kicked everybody out. In the last two to four years, the family situation deteriorated. Mary and her sister decided to pull the mother out of all these politics. We take care of our own and decided to put her in a very nice facility. My brother-in-law and Linda, Mary's sister, chose the facility which is a state of the art and clean place with home-made meals. It's owned by a Palestinian doctor in the West Bank in Beit

Jala, their hometown. They charge us \$400 dollars a month. We alternate payment with Mary's sister. So we have to deliver on this.

Sending Care to Palestine

The experience of Mary's mother stands in contrast to the aging experience of Samer's mother. At age 96, Mary's mother became a victim of a family dispute over property. Although the children of the family (Mary and her sister, Linda, who resides in England) ultimately found a way to care for her, the solution remains a transnational one that relies on a nursing home (a relatively new institution in Palestine as well as the wider Middle East) and monthly remittances. Another issue hinted at in the narrative is the fragmentation of familial loyalty and ties in Palestine. We see a concrete example of how familial discord in another country can spill across borders and add unexpected burdens upon aging Arab immigrants.

Talal: "My sister is weary from her work with the elderly"

Currently there is very little happiness in my life. Why? Because of all the suffering; my mother is ill, my brother will die. When I visit them, it is difficult to listen to them. What am I physically able to do to help them? I'm always confused. My mother suffers from Alzheimer's and she is not able to go anywhere. We support her. She's not able to cook. She's lost her vision due to diabetes. She's deaf. She doesn't remember her children. My brother used to support my mother, but now he's in the hospital with cancer and needs care. He may die before Eid al-Fitr, in two, three, four, or five days. Only God knows when.

Now I support my mother and I buy anything that she wants such as bread, vegetables, and fruits. My younger sister, around 41 years old, supports my mother the most. She bathes my mother, brushes her hair, and changes her clothes. If my mother wants to go to the bathroom, my sister takes her. My sister is

weary from her work with the elderly. Because my mother cannot see, she doesn't what time it is. At midnight, she'll say to my sister that she's hungry. My sister has to get up and prepare food for her in the middle of the night. She doesn't sleep well and is usually exhausted. She always complains that she has a headache.

Gendered Division of Care for Elderly

Although Talal and his family are not Arab immigrants to the United States, we see similar trends in his family's approach to caring for the preceding generation. While I was in Amman, Talal invited me to his home for an *iftar* meal during Ramadan. I met Talal's sister and his mother, who was deaf and blind in addition to having Alzheimer's disease. I witnessed the gendered nature of elderly care in which the women of the family often bore the burden of supporting elderly relatives with their day-to-day physical needs. Although Talal described how he provided material support for his mother, the true burden of daily caregiving fell upon his sister, who experienced the stressful nature of family care. Although Talal's sister's efforts were instrumental to maintaining a certain quality of life for the mother, his sister's health suffered under the stress.

WITHIN THE SAME GENERATION

The In-Laws

Most academic research examines the successful benefits from leveraging immigrant social networks to gain economic benefits and success. However, Ali's account points to the limits of cooperation within familial networks. It provides a different picture of a harmonious family sometimes painted in the academic literature.

Ali: “The people that have really hurt me...”

In 1994, I was at the top financially but I made mistakes till I ended up with nothing now. Before I moved back to Egypt, I was living in a beautiful house in Danville. When I moved to Egypt, I rented it for \$2,500 to pay the mortgage. But my mistake was that I didn't hire people to take care of it. Instead, I left to my brothers-in-law. But I made another mistake, I asked him to put the house for sale. It was a big mistake. The biggest problem in my life was my wife and my brothers-in-law. I brought them from Egypt to work for me and they destroyed my company by stealing from me. When I tried to fire them, they became my enemies. The people that have really hurt me are my wife and my brothers-in-law. Even now they are my enemies. She's the one with the bad habit. She always looks at what other people have? Always a complainer, never satisfied. It's a bad habit. Because of them I sold everything and went back to Egypt.

Detrimental Familial Networks

My concern is not necessarily on the veracity of Ali's claims regarding his in-laws, but rather on his perception that some of his family members played a role in undermining his success. Ali attempted to utilize his familial networks to expand his business operations by assisting with his brothers'-in-law immigration to the United States. The business and financial mistakes that he blamed on the family (although he, in part, shared responsibility for his decisions) set up his current aging situation. Alienated from his family networks, Ali now rents an apartment in a converted garage and lives alone, a stark contrast to the wild success he once enjoyed.

Friendships

Family is widely considered to be important to Arabs and is a subject repeatedly emphasized by Arab researchers and health practitioners. However,

friendship is also another important social relationship sometimes unexplored in discussion about aging and families. These friendships can provide a source of support that supplements familial networks. Throughout Ali's life, he spent his time navigating the Egyptian social network in California to promote his business. It seems fitting that he once again relies on this network of friendship near the end of his life. In the case of Ali, his best friend serves as his last form of social support after his divorce. Mohammed not only found a cheap apartment for him to live in, but he also checks up on Ali every other week and takes care of his errands. In fact, Ali never mentioned his children being involved in his life at all, despite the fact that they also live in the Bay Area. Rashid also relies on the power of friendships after he immigrated to California. Through the influence of his friends in America, he maintains and practices healthy habits that he admits he would not do in Egypt. This constant contact with his social support sets up an informal health support network, the value of which cannot be underestimated.

THE GENERATION BELOW

As noted, my interviewees described how they provided care for the generation above them, in this case, their mothers. However, this reciprocal caregiving is not always fulfilled by their American-born or American-raised children and illustrates a rift between different conceptions of what a family is. The narratives below describe my interviewees' efforts to care for their children

and their grandchildren, as well as their disappointment when there is no reciprocal effort.

Samer: Unexpected Death, Unexpected Costs

In early 2006, my son was involved in a wrongful killing. At the time, he owned a private security company making two million dollars a year. They were dropping my nephew and his roommate after a get-together in San Francisco. They were in San Lorenzo double parked at 3 o'clock in the morning saying goodbye before starting their morning shift at 6 o'clock. A man started a fight with them over a parking space. The guy attacking them had a rap sheet from here to the freeway, a criminal with double the legal level of alcohol. My son was trying to cool off all the parties and begged the attacker to go. But he started putting the car in reverse and trying to hit people with his car. My nephew started shooting in the air then to protect the group, he shot at the car. When the guy heard the bullets, he fled. A few days later, the press reported that a well-known drug dealer in a drug deal went bad, died in front of his house. Police found the attacker after he crashed his car with one bullet in him.

I was working in Los Angeles and I got a call from my brother in Fremont. "The kids got arrested." In forty-five minutes, I closed the office and drove back to the Bay Area.

The press framed the story as a case of "rogue security guards." For three days you see your son wearing an orange jumpsuit on TV. [It was] very devastating. No one took our side. I hired Mark Rosenbush, one of the top criminal trial lawyers in San Francisco, and his partner, Robert Wagner. Wagner took my son's case and Mark took my nephew's case, the one who pulled the trigger. My nephew's bail was set at a million. We couldn't raise it. I went and called Aladdin [Bail Bonds]. This whole experience is new to me. I've never seen anything like this. I managed to bail out my son but my nephew stayed there until he served his sentence of twenty-six months.

It was very hard times for everybody. It took its toll on us. Many nights we slept with our shoes and clothes on. Every week we went to the courts. When we got there the family of the deceased surrounded us to fight us inside the court. In the bathroom, they

attacked my sister-in-law and my wife. We really regret the loss of life. I don't put any blame on them but sometimes these are things that you have no explanation.

On the verdict day, the police escorted us to the cars. Three armed sheriffs with every family to their car. It was hairy days. Man, it was bad days. We reduced it to wrongful death. We fought the case the way a family should fight. But what was the price that we paid? We spent more than a quarter million dollars out of our pocket. I took out a home equity loan. If anything were to happen to me? Who's going to pay that debt? My nephew? My son? When there's a problem, we have to come together as good people and solve it. My brother and my son never paid me back but there is an unwritten agreement with the family. Why am I working till now? I'm working at this store to pay the interest for that loan and to pay my daily expenses. That's a lot of weight on a 74 year old sucker, you know? Mary gets very frustrated and I see her frustrations leaking out. If the shooting never happened, I wouldn't be operating this store. But now I have to survive. You think I'm going to survive on a social security check?

“Taking Care of Our Own” Revisited

When I first met Samer, he told me he had recently retired from working as a sales representative for a clothing company. For the longest time, I could not figure out why he would be running a retail store alone with his wife at his age. His dramatic story about his son's legal case explains how he arrived in the aging situation that he is in. It also provides an example of how unexpected events can sometime accelerate or exacerbate the changing familial dynamics happening. Despite Samer and Mary's advanced age, they are called to financially support the legal defense of his son and nephew. Although Samer helped his son avoid a prison sentence, no one in the family has repaid him for the costs incurred in the trial. However, the debt is about more than money;

when Samer and Mary described their own health crises, the children were once again absent from their narratives.

Mary: “Having kids is not worth it”

Sam has a girl and a boy. Each one lives his life. We used to take the grandkids for the day. My son would leave the children with us when they were young but now we can't because we are busy with the store. We see them when we have time and sometimes months pass without seeing them. We come here to work in the morning and then we leave at night. We only eat with the family on occasions such as Easter. In reality, we don't see each other every day, and we only talk on the telephone maybe once or twice a week. If I don't remember to call, then they don't remember. Having kids is not worth it.

Busy Families, Busy Lives

Mary's main complaint about the lack of contact and visits between the children and the parents signals shifting familial dynamics between the generations. Within transnational families, “paying visits, spending vacations, sending letters, receiving phone calls, attending weddings and funerals, helping to facilitate migration, sending remittances are all more or less routinized ways of maintaining contact, of keeping the family together despite wide dispersal” (Schulz and Hammer 2003:171). However, even though Samer and Mary's children live in the Bay Area, the children do not maintain a strong relationship with their parents. Mary's disappointment shows the gap in generational expectations regarding what a family is and how to maintain family ties. One generation wants the constant contact that they grew up with and are accustomed to. But the American-born or American-raised children, who are

now adults, have moved out and split into autonomous nuclear households that do not visit or inquire about the parents with the frequency that the parents would prefer.

Ali: "I'm not going to love them more than they love me"

I like to live alone. I don't want to bother anybody but I worry about living alone. My daughter and my son are grown up but my ex-wife put something in their head. She told them that "your father just hurt me doing these things." They call me sometimes but they never say I missed you. You know? I'm not going to love them more than they love me. If you do good for me, then I will do good for you. They live their lives and I live mine.

Unreciprocated Love

Ali voices a similar disappointment in the lack of connection and ties between his generation and the second generation. After spending the bulk of his life working to provide for his family and children, Ali finds himself alone after the death of his entire extended family in Egypt, his divorce, and his abandonment by his own children. Ali's disappointment does not simply stem from the lack of "verbal communication," but rather from his children's lack of support in his old age.

Conclusion

The forces that are changing Arab families emerge over a period of decades. These changes begin as soon as people make the decision to immigrate, thus stretching family ties across borders. We see how mothers move back and forth between the United States and the Middle East. When they

arrive, they often stay for extended periods of time in order to visit their children who have immigrated and to take care of grandchildren. However, these journeys are not without costs, and many migrating mothers suffer problems of acculturation. Another aspect that is changing Arab families is the absence of fathers in the family. As seen in Chapter 8, the early mortality rates of Arab males within families play a role in shifting the burden of responsibility upon individuals who never expected to shoulder such familial responsibilities. For Samer, he ended up caring for his mother in her old age after his father and two elder brothers died prematurely in their early 60s. Early mortality thus plays a silent role in reshaping the structure and dynamic of the Arab family.

As family members age, we see how different family members have different experiences of aging. The parents of first generation immigrants are not only moving back and forth between countries; they now have the option to experience aging both in the Middle East and in a foreign country. In the case of Samer's and Rashid's mothers, they are able to access the American medical system for advanced medical care to treat their cancers. However, this access to healthcare may not always produce the expected results and may actually cause more stress or suffering for families. For elderly family members who are unable to immigrate or relocate, first generation immigrants must find strategies to care for their aging parents despite the distance, and at the same time, they must manage their own aging situation. The intergenerational social obligation to care for an elderly parent also can play out across an uneven gendered landscape, in

which women in Arab families are expected to take care of the day-to-day needs of an elderly parent or relative. Although men may assist in caring for elderly, they may not suffer the same stresses as those of a primary caretaker. For example, Talal describes himself as taking care of his mother, but his main contribution is financial because his sister performs the day-to-day caretaking.

Another force reshaping families involves relationships within the same generation. The interviewees briefly talked about how their relationships with their in-laws have helped or hindered their lives. Moreover, although friendships can be overlooked or minimized in importance, but they can play an important role in people's lives. Friends can provide positive influences that promote and reinforce positive health behaviors. These bonds can play a part in determining how older immigrants age.

Lastly, the American-born or American-raised children of immigrants provide another viewpoint into how Arab families are changing. The second generation possesses different visions of family and of family obligations to their parents. Some of the children of my interviewees have interracial marriages, which is not common in the Middle East and can create tensions within families. Some of the interviewees have adult children who are still unmarried, which is unusual in the Middle East where marriage is a typical marker of adulthood. Others have adult children who are not independent of their parents and rely heavily on their senior parents for social and financial support. In the narratives, there is a noted absence of any descriptions of first generation immigrants

receiving social or financial support from their American-born or American-raised children. Rather, these first generation immigrants appear to rely solely on themselves and their friends as they age.

Chapter 7: Portraits of New Arab “Families”

Building upon the previous chapter’s discussion about forces affecting Arab-American families, this chapter examines how my interviewees’ families are configured as a result of these changes. Some of these changes are a result of immigration, internal family dynamics, socio-economic conditions in the United States, and personal health. I present five portraits of their families that are the result of these external and internal pressures.

Table 2. Portraits of families in flux

Stretched Thin, Under Pressure 1.0	
Samer Age 75	Currently runs a clothing store that sells young men’s street wear in a strip mall with his wife, Mary
Mary Age late-60s	Married to Samer. Helps Samer run the clothing store.
Old and Alone	
Ali Age 72	Divorced and living alone renting an apartment in a converted garage from a Mexican immigrant family.
Stretched Thin, Under Pressure 2.0	
Edward Age 40	Runs a snack distribution business and is married with young children. His elder brother recently emigrated from Palestine for a better life.
Living in Insecurity	
Talal Age 55	Retired but supporting a family with young children. Owns a small repair shop in Amman and works part-time as a security guard.
Retiring in Another Land	
Rashid Age 71	After retiring in Egypt, Rashid immigrated to California. Now lives in his adult daughter’s household and also in the household of an Egyptian friend. Also serves as a deacon at the Coptic Orthodox church.

Stretched Thin, Under Pressure 1.0

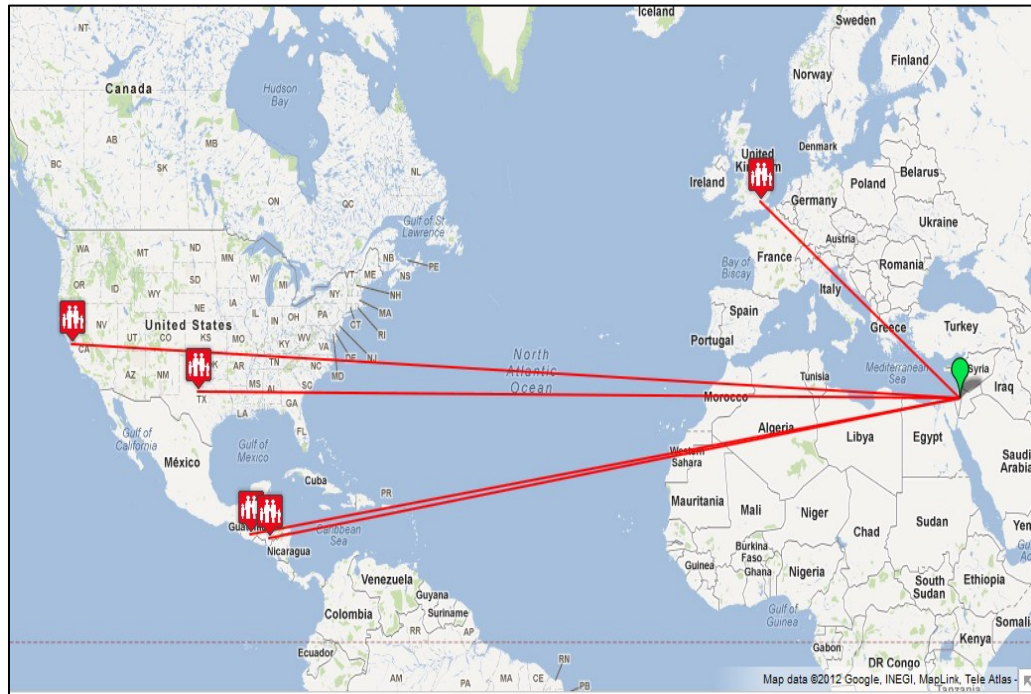


Figure 2. Geography of a family: Mary and her siblings

Samer and Mary's lives tell a story of a family in the midst of a dramatic restructuring; one that is stretched geographically, economically, and socially. Firstly, Samer and Mary's family represents a new type of configuration for the Arab family. Both were divorced from a previous marriage and come from a generation where divorce is not religiously or socially common. Both Samer and Mary have children from their first marriages but none from their marriage to each other. Samer fought a transnational custody battle with his ex-wife when she returned to Egypt with the children despite a court order meant to prevent her from leaving. Despite this Samer is still in contact with his ex-wife in the present day as she calls him to discuss problems with their children.

Secondly, because of immigration, there is a hollowing out of the family in Palestine as members of Mary's generation are scattered across different countries in the world in search of political and economic stability. While Mary's parents are left in Palestine, her siblings are distributed in Texas, Guatemala, Honduras, and England (see Figure 2). Another aspect of this hollowing of the old family structure is that Mary's nephews, children of the generation that have remained in Palestine, have grown up in a smaller family marked by the absences of their uncles and aunts. One result of this absence is seen in Samer's narrative about the nephews in Palestine that "failed us".

The present failure is the fragmenting intergenerational obligations between parent and children and more broadly elders and youth. Ideal expectations within Arab families are that parents will care for their children with the expectation that their children and their eventual grandchildren will care for them in their old age. As a generation ages and they become grandparents, they often help out with caring for their grandchildren thus establishing a bond between the generations. It is an unspoken social contract within families however one must caution from classifying this social obligation in a strictly economic or functional role.

Samer talks about how the nephews in Palestine stole the family home from their grandmother, Mary's mother, by forcing her to sign a transfer of title for the home. This act then is the failure of one generation to respect and to care for an older generation.

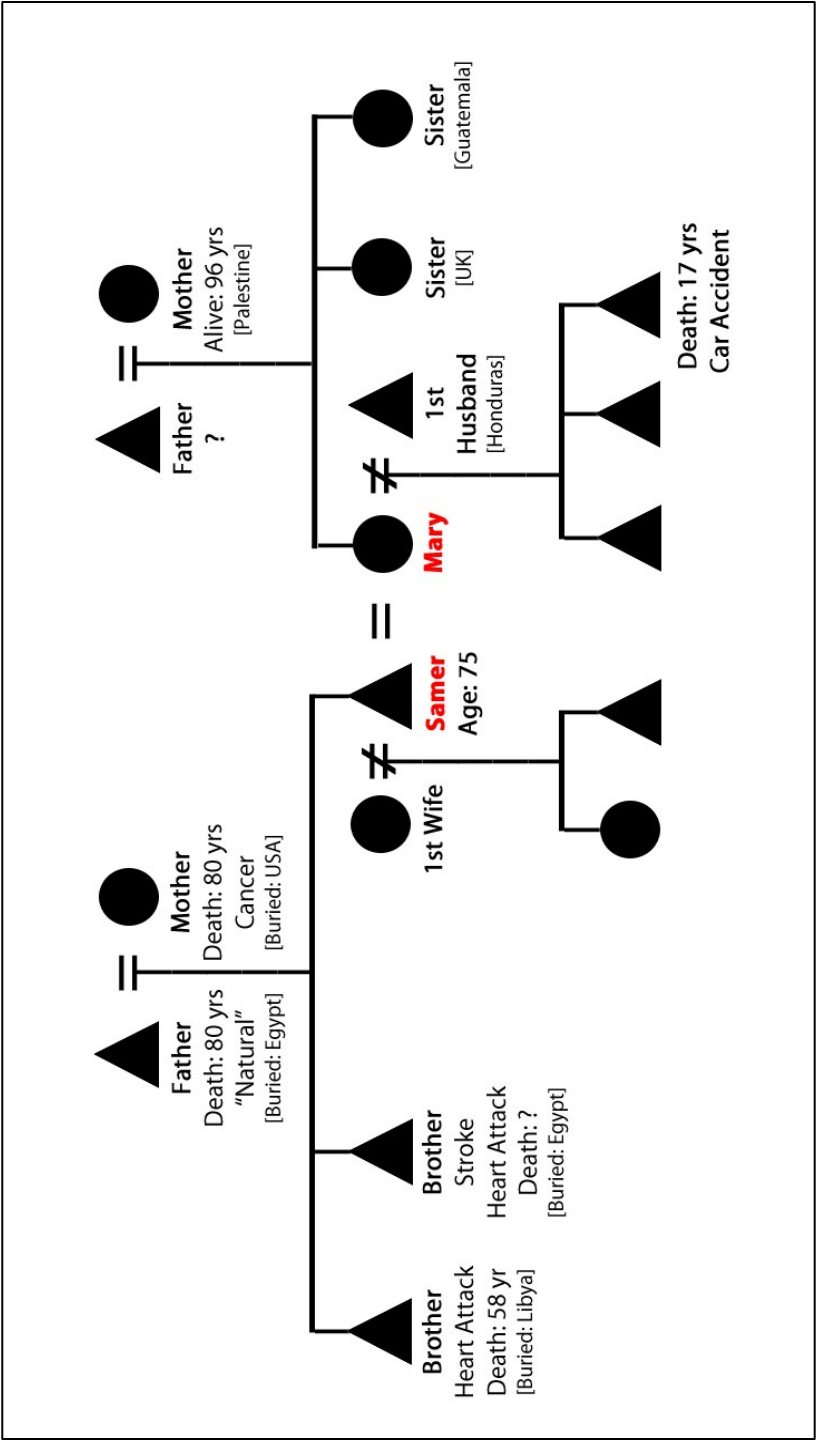
In addition, it highlights the erosion of familial bonds due to the Palestinian diaspora where sometimes an entire generation is absent from the family. The result of this scattering of an entire generation means that each person must work harder to maintain ties or even lose connections for long periods of time (Schulz and Hammer 2003). Often times, people lose these connections as evidenced when Mary declared she had not seen her sisters for more than twenty-six years. The absence of a generation is amplified by the political and daily climate of Israeli occupation in the West Bank where land is both scarce and shrinking as Israeli settlements encroach on Palestinian lands. In addition the skyrocketing Palestinian birthrate is creating even more crowded conditions for families. Whatever the reasons that drove Samer's nephews to take control of the grandmother's home and force her out, it is a symptom of these larger forces acting upon the family. The results of the nephews' actions forces a transnational response where Mary in America and Mary's sister in England are providing remittances to care for their mother in a nursing home.

In America, intergenerational obligations are shaped by different forces. If inquired Arab-Americans will reply that they take care of their aging parents as part of the expectations within Arab culture. But because a large majority of Arab-Americans are entrepreneurs (El-Badry 2004), they are vulnerable to the lack of consumer spending in a weak US economy. Arab families experiencing difficulties supporting their nuclear household often find that the time and economic costs make fulfilling their familial obligations difficult. Instead of caring

for their parents in the United States, some families may seek a transnational solution by simply sending their parents back to their home countries to be cared by other siblings (Ajrouch 2005). Others are using transnational structures to fulfilling their obligations by sending remittances home, once again seen in Samer and Mary's family.

In considering Samer and Mary's experiences of aging, the most striking aspect of their situation is the amount of social and economic obligations placed on the two of them. Both of them are first generation immigrants who are considered seniors by American standards, and yet they are providing social and economic support to both the generation above them and the one below them. Because of shifting family relationships overseas, the ripples are felt in America. For example, when Samer's brothers died from heart attacks, there was no one left in Egypt to care for his mother and so she immigrated to California to be cared for by him. Another example is the situation surrounding Mary's mother whereby the actions in Palestine place unexpected financial obligations upon Samer and Mary. Their response in face of these familial changes in both the Middle East and the United States is to find methods to continue fulfilling their obligations. However, at the same time, a different story is playing out with their relationship with their own children.

Figure 3. Diagram of Samer and Mary’s family



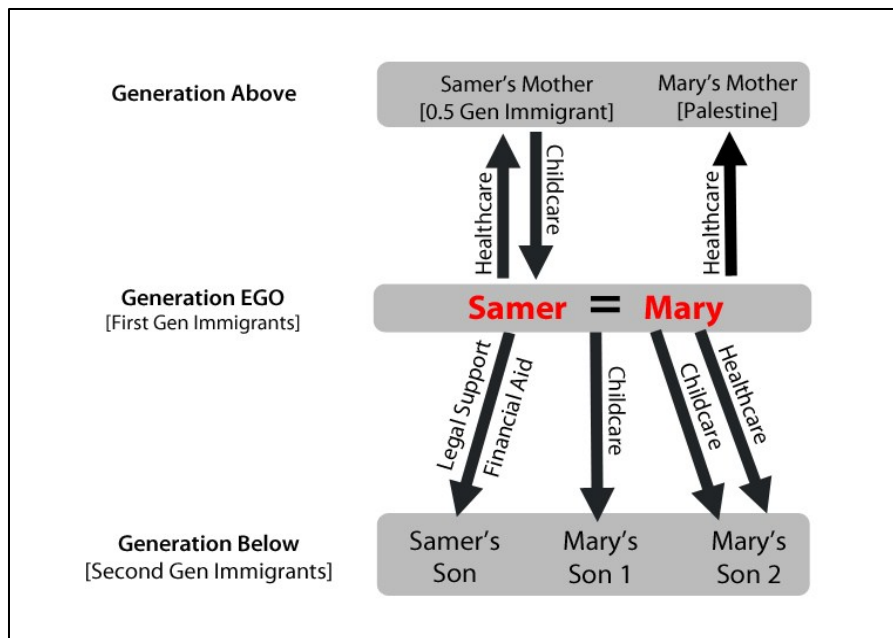


Figure 4. Diagram of changing intergenerational relationships

Samer and Mary each have adult children from previous marriages who are married with children (see Figure 3). What is startling in their accounts is that they rarely described their children's involvement in their lives, whether it is acts that maintain social bonds or signs of social support from their children. It is expected that given their circumstances, their children would be providing some type of social support to them. However, their situation is the opposite: they are still providing support for their adult children without receiving much back (see Figure 4). For some adult children, this may involve watching the grandchildren. For others, I observed Samer and Mary spend time handling another adult son's medical needs. Although their son had a serious medical condition, it was Samer and Mary who were booking the doctor's appointment and handling medical

insurance matters on his behalf. But the biggest form of support Samer and Mary have provided their children was the legal and economic support needed to defend Samer's son and nephew when they were arrested after a fatal shooting. Before this incident, Samer and Mary were both retired and living a radically different life than when I met them in 2011 when they were furiously working at the retail store. In the face of possible lengthy prison sentences for their son and nephew, Samer and Mary took out a home equity loan to hire the best legal defense they could afford. The family managed to avert jail time for their son but not without costs. They incurred dramatic financial debt that has not been repaid by their son or by their nephew's family. This single event placed them in their current aging situation and pushed them to return to work in order to repay their debts.

Samer and Mary have become what is described by sociologists as a "Sandwich Generation", part of a group of people who are simultaneously caring for their aging parents and supporting their children (Miller 1981). At the time of research in the late 70s, Miller described a rapid reconfiguration of American family relations. However for Samer and Mary, the fact that they are immigrants maintaining transnational bonds presents a new dimension to this sociological phenomenon. In addition, a transnational "Sandwich Generation" poses new challenges to both family and greater society.

Living Alone

Ali's life tells a similar story of changing intergenerational ties except in his case, it is a family fragmented by early mortality and divorce. Although he blames a genetic predisposition towards heart attacks, poor health habits also played a role in the early death of his family members in Egypt. The early deaths within a family mean that the obligation to take care of the generation above is not always there. But deaths play a dramatic role in reshaping families as evidenced by the pattern of fathers dying early in my interviewee's narratives. Not only do families lose a family head, but early deaths means that sources of social support disappear also. In Ali's case, the deaths of his entire family in Egypt meant his main family unit was composed of his wife and in-laws. But a bitter familial fight between Ali and his wife's brothers meant that the divorce left him with no family members that he could rely on. Even his children allied themselves with their mother against him.

Ali now lives alone in Pittsburg, California, where there is no Arab community. In addition, he is isolated from any familial contact. If Ali were living in Egypt under similar circumstances, he could at least count on religious organizations to provide social support to a person in his situation. In America, he has some options available as a sick senior immigrant with limited income, although these options do not necessarily replace the lack of familial support. The suburban nature of Pittsburg means that he is geographically isolated while wheelchair bound with limited mobility.

Ali's main source of support comes in the form of his best friend, a fellow Egyptian immigrant, who plays a critical role by assisting Ali with his daily needs and making social visits. But what is unprecedented in Ali's situation is that it is likely that he could die alone in the near future. His health situation is precarious and without his best friend to check on him, Ali could lay in his apartment dead for a period of time before being discovered. This aging scenario is unprecedented for Arab families in both in the United States and the Middle East.

Stretched Thin, Under Pressure 2.0

Edward's familial situation shares similarities with Samer and Mary's. Although he is about thirty-five years younger than Samer, Edward supports both his mother and mother-in-law while also raising his children. But a key difference in Edward's family is the inverted hierarchy as a result of immigration. Not only is Edward supporting the generation above as well as below, he also is supporting his eldest brother, Sabour; Sabour's wife and children in Palestine; and Sabour's eldest son and his family in the United States. Traditionally, the eldest son in the Arab family has unique set of responsibilities to care for the parents as they age and for the rest of the family. However, this role is subverted in Edward's family because he is able to run a successful business.

Sabour's inability to provide for his family and support the extended family is in no fault of his own. Rather, unexpected events with Israeli soldiers provide the impetus for him to lose his livelihood as well as his ability to fulfill his familial

obligations. In Bethlehem, Sabour sold water to individuals and relied on a delivery infrastructure of water truck tankers. At a checkpoint, Israeli soldiers shot up his water trucks—under the pretense that they were searching for potential militants concealed in the tankers. This incident destroyed Sabour's livelihood. With nine children and a wife to support, he made the difficult decision to leave his family behind to work in the United States. The political and economic situation in Bethlehem also forced Sabour's eldest son to immigrate.

After Sabour and his eldest son moved to California, they became completely dependent on Edward. Sabour works at Edward's snack delivery business and struggles with the inverted role of an older brother following a younger brother's commands. Tension can be observed between Edward and Sabour as they work together. As an aging immigrant with a poor command of English, Sabour has relatively few options because he is dependent on the income to send home to his large family.

Living in Insecurity

Talal's story tells of a family living in insecurity in Jordan. He is a father trying to cope with dual roles of taking care of his elderly mother while also providing for his young family. Talal's mother, who is blind and deaf, also suffers from Alzheimer's disease. While he provides material support, it is his sister who provides the day-to-day care, a full time job that takes a psychological and physical toll on family caretakers. Although Talal is not the eldest son in the

family, the responsibility of support passed to him because his older brothers were unable to help their mother. His eldest brother already has died from disease, and his second eldest brother suffers from cancer and is in the last stages of his life. It becomes worrisome then that this family is struggling to support an elderly parent in her 90s, while the generation below suffers from cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease or already have died. Whatever the causes for the health problems, Talal's family is rapidly reaching a point where the children are dying before their parent's generation. As the younger generation dies out in its 50s, it leaves questions about how these early deaths impacting Arab families and who the burden of care will fall upon.

In addition, Talal is 55 years old, which old by Arab standards to be raising children who currently are 6 and 7 years old. He was previously married for a long time, but he does not have any children from the first marriage. In contrast, the children of Talal's brothers are all adults. Because Talal's children are so young, Talal has insecurities about his own future. How will his children be able to care for him were he to suddenly fall ill? This is not an unfounded fear as his siblings are dying. Further, the insecurity within his family is exacerbated by the external insecurities in Jordan.

Like many Arab countries, Jordan faces high unemployment with few economic opportunities for citizens. But Talal is not a Jordanian citizen and does not have full rights under Jordanian law. His status is tenuous and subject to the whims of politics in the country, and what little rights he possesses can easily be

stripped away. Talal's age means that trying to find a job will be difficult, especially considering that he does not have a university level degree. In a land with a burgeoning youth population, Talal must compete against teenagers, unemployed college-educated youth, and displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees for the same jobs. The rapid social changes in Jordan are playing an immense role in destabilizing his family.

Retiring in another Land

Although Rashid is of the same generational cohort as Samer and Ali, his life took a much different turn. Rashid spent most of his adult life working and living in Egypt before retiring from the Ministry of Agriculture. By the time he decided to immigrate to the United States, he was not searching for an economic future but instead reuniting with his family already living here. As a recent immigrant in 2005, Rashid tells another story of shifting intergenerational obligations and relationships but from a vastly different perspective. An interesting aspect of Rashid's family is that although he has an adult daughter, she is unmarried and never had children, so he has no grandchildren. Rashid's network is completely different from the rest of the narratives where one family may be comprised of three or four generations. He has his daughter, but his narrative is filled with discussions about his Arab friends in the San Jose area and their activities together. This vibrant social network of friends provides him with positive influences for his health and religion. He notes this type of informal

health support association is rare back in Egypt. In addition, despite the fact that his daughter lives in San Jose, Rashid does not live exclusively with her but also with another Egyptian friend that he met when he moved to the area. The fact that Rashid resides with a friend challenges old debates about the composition of the Arab household. It opens up the possibility that Arab households can extend beyond nuclear or extended families and can be comprised of non-consanguine relations.

Unburdened by the need for economic stability, Rashid devotes his time in America to social activities and causes. He serves as a deacon in the local Coptic Church. Before the 1960s, the Coptic Orthodox Church had virtually no presence in the United States. As Egyptian Coptic Christians immigrated to the United States during the 1960s, they brought with them their religion and eventually established a religious community that would expand the reach of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt (Saad 2010:208). Rashid's service to the church plays a small part in this rapid expansion of the Coptic Orthodox Church in America. Moreover, his participation in the church serves as an example where immigrant seniors are playing important social roles within their community despite the fact that there may not be economic roles for them in wider American society.

Conclusion

As a collection, these narratives start to form a kaleidoscopic picture of new Arab immigrant families as they age in the United States. Contrary to

established academic discussions, Arab immigrants do not simply arrive to the United States and face a cultural crisis as they try to adapt to life in America. It is no longer beneficial to talk about Arabs as a homogeneous population. These narratives show that the Arab family as a single monolithic type does not exist; rather, the shape and idea of Arab families are changing rapidly in accordance to the physical and social environment. More importantly, discussions about the Arab family needs to be widened to encompass a broader examination of kinship as friendships can often play critical roles in people's lives. These narratives then form an image of families in motion amidst dramatic external and internal forces.

Externally, the forces of immigration and transnational movement play an obvious role in reshaping families as they are no longer geographically clustered together. Distance and absence due to immigration or diaspora alters how familial obligations are performed and actualized. We see attempts by an older generation as well as by the immigrating generation to fulfill these obligations despite the distance. Secondly, one cannot ignore the influence of regional and international political events upon Arab families. The successes, failures, and decisions of the nation-state are shaping the physical and imaginary environments for families. But more importantly it is the perception of hopelessness that has driven some of my interviewees to immigrate to the United States. For Samer, it was after the complete defeat of the Egyptian Army during the Six-Day War and the subsequent loss of faith in the Nasser regime. For Ali, it

was the realization that he had no economic future under a corrupt patronage system of governance. For Talal, the threat of impending Israeli war was enough for his family to leave everything behind. For Edward and Sabour, the continued Israeli occupation and withering economic future for Palestinians meant that leaving home was the only option left open to them.

In addition, another force is playing a role to reshape families from within. Personal health practices as well as generational health problems are changing families. People are dying at different ages, and these deaths thrust new obligations and responsibilities upon the surviving members in the family. Early mortality plaguing male family members means that old notions of a patriarchal head may not always exist in every family. Furthermore, death from cardiovascular disease plays a quiet force in hollowing out entire generations in families. All these forces are reshaping Arab families and thus they must prepare to deal with the issue of aging in different ways.

Chapter 8: Arab Families Navigating Health

While the previous chapter showed how Arab and Arab-American families are changing, their health events are also playing a parallel and powerful transformative force in reconfiguring these families. Yet what interested me was not the occurrence of illness among aging Arabs but rather the responses when confronted with a health crisis. These health decisions revealed individual expectations towards health as well as how the corporate health of families as a whole is playing a role in the changing shape of families. There are several broader trends happening in the people's lives as they respond to personal health crises. Some people are choosing to embrace changes towards a healthier lifestyle helped in part by supportive health networks. One response to health crises seen within my interviewees is the importance of a social network that promotes healthy lifestyles and behaviors. Samer and Rashid rely on this type of communal support to improve their lives. Others chose to rely on medical solutions to their physical ailments rather than change any health behaviors. Ali's narrative represents this response. And still others delay thinking about their health concerns until a major health crisis. For healthcare workers trying to increase health awareness, understanding these responses allows for better strategies to improve community and family health.

PERSONAL HEALTH CHOICES

Samer: Watchful Waiting

I was diagnosed about four or five years ago with a very early stage of prostate cancer. They took twelve biopsies from me to get the level of PSA [Prostate-Specific Antigen]. They found one sample with cancer at 5% beginning. It was very early. I was told that I should go and meet immediately with my radiologist. I refused. I went and I bought a bestselling book about prostate cancer talking about a system called "Watchful Waiting". The book described different treatment options according to how the case developed. At the time I was part of the Kaiser Permanente System in Southern California because we were working in the garment district and showroom in downtown L.A.

We started educating ourselves about the situation. We found that immediately we have to think about what we eat. We normally eat very healthy but she went crazy. She started me on a diet of food and supplements that raises the immune system. We heard stories about friends of friends with close family members being treated for cancer Mary's physical therapist told her about her husband who had mouth cancer and was taking Essiac supplements, an herbal remedy from native Indians in Canada that was publicized by an Irish nurse. Vicki buys Essiac tea from the Rainbow Grocery, a cooperative in San Francisco. I know them because they started in Berkeley on Telegraph Avenue.

So I kept watch and cut the fat from my diet. I focused on good quality foods in very small portions. When I moved back to the Bay Area after retiring from being a sales rep in L.A., I joined the Stanford medical system. Stanford said, "It's been almost two years that you haven't done anything. Let's go in and test." Three days later they called me with very good news. All the twelve pieces were clean, there was no cancer there. But am I completely cured of cancer? 100 percent? I don't know.

Social Health Networks: A Supportive Wife

After Samer's diagnosis of early stage prostate cancer, his wife played a critical role in shifting his diet. The onset of a health crisis started an even

“healthier” diet oriented to foods. In addition, Mary sought out supplements and herbal teas that are popularly believed to boost immune defenses and to fight against cancer. Again, it is not important is whether or not these health diets and supplements are effective against cancer, a fact that Samer contends he does not know. Rather these actions show how a social network can play a role in the social activities that surround health. Another point is the absence of his children’s involvement throughout the health crisis.

Rashid: “All of my dad’s family died from the silent murder of blood pressure.”

My father died at 59 after suffering from many illnesses from obesity. He ate food without rules. The health habits were very bad in Egypt because there was no awareness. From [age] 20 to 60, I weighed about 200 lbs. I depended on my youth to keep me healthy. I smoked about five cigarettes per day. Sometimes when I had problems, I smoked two or three packs per day. Even now, I still smoke once or twice a month. I ate everything in big quantities. I was very fat during my forties. I ate a lot of meat because it is very delicious. Everything that is dangerous is delicious. [Laughs]

Beginning from 50 years old, I started visiting the doctor because of my family’s problem with high blood pressure. He gave me medicine, one for cholesterol and one for blood pressure. My blood pressure was a sign of stress. My sister, who is a doctor, gave me a blood pressure measurement as a gift. I began to take care of my blood pressure. Now I am 160 lb. and walk for one or two hours every day. I am in better health than family members who don’t do the same.

Three years ago I went to the emergency room the day before traveling back to Egypt. The doctors thought it was a problem with my prostate. Now every year I test the PSA levels for my prostate. The normal is +2.4. Two years it went from 2.4 to 4.2, which is not normal. Last year it shot up to 5.6. I found in Costco a vitamin for the prostate made from the seeds of pumpkins. I take it for one year now. I take antioxidants tablets daily that I buy from Trader

Joe's. In Egypt, vitamins are very expensive but here it is very cheap. Today, I found out that my PSA is now 3.6 today! So I decided not to go to any doctor after that. I am very happy that it went down because I took care of my health.

All of my dad's family died from the silent murder of blood pressure. They died suddenly from a stroke. My uncle died when he was 52 while walking in the street. Another uncle died the same way when he was 54. When I reached 60 years old, I finally made a regime to take care of my health. My older sister has high blood pressure and takes medicine. My younger sister has high blood pressure and suffered a stroke two or three years ago. My sister-in-law also suffers from high blood pressure. Last week I went to buy her a blood pressure measurer and sent it to her in Egypt. It is very easy for me to do this from here and it is very important for her. I will give it to my friend who will travel this week to Egypt.

Last year, my brother had emergency open heart surgery. He was astonished... it was a shock for him and for us. The doctor said to him, "In two or three days, you will be dead from high blood pressure and cholesterol." He thought that because he was young he didn't need to be careful with his health. After his surgery, he stopped smoking completely and eats healthy foods like me. If I lived like my old ways, I would have died about ten years ago.

Social Health Networks: A Sick Family, Healthy Friends

Rashid's narrative of his family health histories stands in dramatic contrast to the stories he talks about his friends in California. His family all suffers from high blood pressure and cardiovascular related diseases. Although his family is in relatively poor health, they are living longer due to their encounters with American medicine. But compared to his family members, Rashid appears to be the most health conscious in part due to his community of Egyptian friends in the San Jose area. Their lifestyle and support provides him a health community to keep practicing his healthy behaviors.

MEDICAL SOLUTIONS

Ali: “All my family members died of heart problems when they were 55 to 60”

All my family members died of heart problems when they were 55 to 60. We inherited the same thing from generation to generation. Narrow veins. High cholesterol. I had my first heart attack in 1994 at the age of 54. The doctor told me, “Listen if you keep up the pressure, you’re going to die. You’re not going to live.” So I just kept reducing the company till things went bad. The recession hit hard. When you have a standard of living and then you can’t afford it anymore, life becomes very souring! I finally closed my business in 1994. The doctors put in a balloon for my heart and I went back to live in Alexandria in 1995. Two years later I was supposed to get the balloon redone.

When I redid the operation in Egypt, they didn’t do it right and as a result my veins tightened and my heart got bigger so now I have congestive heart failure. If I didn’t go back to Egypt and just stayed in America, I wouldn’t have the problem. But I couldn’t afford to stay in America. When I don’t have any income from my stores, how can I live? I could live in Egypt on \$1,000 a month in the same way I live in the US for \$12,000 a month. It’s a big difference and besides my villa in Alexandria was paid for and I had a cook, a driver, and a maid. But the money that I had from America started to vanish. I went to the bank there and asked for a loan. But it was a very bad deal, 15% interest and they have the right to seize the building immediately without going to the courts. It was a very bad deal. So I lived there until I came back here in 2003. Then again five years ago, I should have been dead. I installed a pacemaker in 2006 and eight months later, I fell down and my heart stopped. The pacemaker shocked me three times to wake me up. My heart stopped again, last March. I died! I was coming out of the bathroom and I fell down. I finally woke up from the shock. Shock, shock, like they do in the hospital.

A Life Extended Through Medical Technology

Ali never discusses any behavioral changes towards a healthier lifestyle as witnessed in Samer’s or Rashid’s narratives. Rather his health narrative is

filled with medical procedures that extended his life but never addressed underlying behaviors. He bounces back and forth between the US medical system as well as the Egyptian system. Although Ali has managed to live longer as a result of these medical procedures, he's not grateful to even be alive anymore.

HEALTHY ENOUGH UNTIL A CRISIS

Edward: "Everybody from the Middle East always has these problems"

When I didn't have kids before, just me and my wife, we didn't have insurance. I couldn't afford the insurance. I used to work for my cousin making \$7 dollars an hour. But now we have to have insurance even if we don't eat. The doctor says I have high blood pressure and high cholesterol but everybody from the Middle East always has these problems. My doctor always tells me, "Watch what you eat." But I never do. Maybe the first week or two, I watch what I eat, then after that I forget about what she says.

Cruising Along

Edward displays many typical responses about Arab health that sometimes function as truisms. His statement that everyone in the Middle East has a propensity towards high blood pressure and high cholesterol points to an epidemiological trend becoming a social belief that these health problems are normal. Because he has not suffered any health crisis as of yet, Edward's response is to forget about his health until something a major crisis occurs.

Health Reshaping Families

Studies on the health of Arab-American populations have examined the problems facing Arab Muslims interacting with the medical system in the United States (Ross-Sherif 1994). These complaints dealt with the cultural competence of healthcare providers so that they are more aware of dietary restrictions for Muslims such as halal meat or abstinence from pork as well as appropriate social interactions between male and females (Kulwicki 1996, Yosef 2008). However studies that emphasized the cultural differences of Arabs and Muslims only identified cultural characteristics rather than real problems facing the community. Another study found that elderly Muslims perceived and evaluated their health needs very differently than American medical professionals (Sengstock 1996). This research found that elderly immigrants that came from even worse conditions in their home countries tended to be satisfied with their living conditions in the US despite serious deficiencies or problems. Further, elderly immigrants did not utilize public social support programs because of the community stigma attached to asking for assistance. However while these studies point to the lack of cultural competence among American medical professionals and the healthcare system; they stop short of further analysis. This represents a problem as Arab-American studies in the realm of health have not advanced for the past few decades. The heart of the issue is not simply the cultural difference that separates Arab immigrants and healthcare services; rather what is the result when Arab families with different health philosophies

interact with the US healthcare system that has a health philosophy of medicalization? This becomes important as some physicians are beginning to question the American healthcare system's medicalization of "aging", which was not always seen as a medical problem requiring aggressive treatment in the form of drugs and medical procedures.

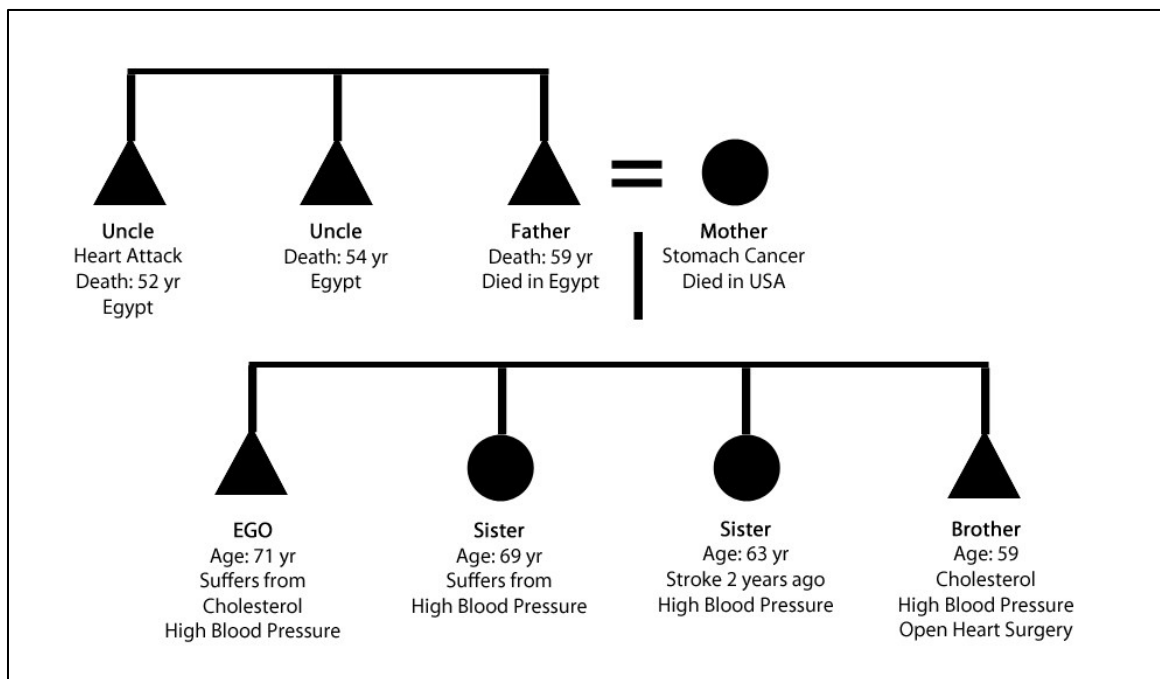


Figure 5. Health and mortality in Rashid's family

In addition to personal health narratives, I also asked people to talk about what they remember of their grandparents and the lives they lived back in Egypt and Palestine. I also asked them to talk about their parents as they aged and what they remembered. Samer described his grandparents and his parents in social terms rather than their medical conditions. They were living actively and being an important part of the family. They could get around the city and live

their lives. He would regularly visit them in Alexandria. Ali describes his grandmother in similar ways. The social characteristics of their grandparents aging narrative stands in contrast to their own. Samer and Rashid narrated to me a multi-year account of their Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) levels and their steps to try to reduce PSA levels within “normal” tolerances. The fact that once they reached “normal” PSA ranges, Samer and Rashid felt a sense of relief at being healthy only attests to a new medical definition of healthiness being felt by aging Arabs accessing the medical system. What is striking though is that even in the healthcare community there is a lack of consensus on the benefits of PSA testing for prostate cancer.

In addition, Samer, Mary, Rashid are very health conscious in terms of their food intake. They describe their daily regimes that involve taking vitamin supplements that are easily purchased in Bay Area stores. Samer describes going to Berkeley or San Francisco for certain stores that sell these supplements, an example of the geographies of health of the Bay Area where certain areas are hotbeds of sustainable philosophies and holistic health practices (English-Lueck 2010). Even business of health supplements have trickled down to grocery stores such as Costco and Trader Joes, places where Rashid purchases his. Even the act of buying vitamin supplements is described by Rashid as easy and part of the “healthy” society in the United States compared to Egypt.

Death is another way of examining the larger trends happening within Arab immigrant families and their interactions with the healthcare system in

America. Examining Rashid's family (See Figure 5), all the male Egyptian members in the generation above died in their early to late 50's. The World Bank reports that for Arab males born in 1965, life expectancy at birth was 48 years old (World Bank 2012). Because of investments in the Egyptian health sector, these figures have steadily risen to 69 years for Egyptian males born in 2009, and 73 years for Egyptian females born in 2009 (World Health Organization 2012). However life expectancy for Arabs born in the Middle East still lags behind Americans born in the United States where American males born in 2009 have a life expectancy of 76 while females carried an expectancy of 81 (World Health Organization 2012). Economic factors play a role in access to the Arab and US healthcare system. An Arab immigrant does not have immediate access to the US healthcare system upon arrival as Edward conveyed. This pattern is confirmed in other studies that noted 28% Arabs in Southwest Brooklyn were uninsured in contrast to the 22% immigrants who were uninsured in the whole of New York City (Sarsour, et al. 2010). However once they have access to the US healthcare system, how does this affect Arab families socially?

Epidemiological studies tend to point at the diseases and risk factors that plague populations within the United States. Studies have already established lower life expectancy for Arab-American immigrants and the second generation children when compared to White and Latino populations (El-Sayed, et al. 2011). Life expectancy for Arab-American males in Michigan stood at 72.8 years at birth while life expectancy for Arab-American females was 78.7 at birth (El-Sayed, et

al. 2011). This was two years lower than comparable life expectancies for White populations in the state. Arab-Americans suffer from a high prevalence of cardiovascular disease blamed on diets with high fat intake, and cultural practices that lack explicit exercise, practices that lead to obesity and other chronic diseases such as diabetes (Hassoun 1999). These health disparities are certainly a problem within the Arab-American population. However if one looks within the Arab-American families, the immigrating generation is surpassing the life expectancy of their family members back home. Ali may be sick with many chronic illnesses but he is living longer because of the results of medical treatment in the United States from pacemakers, stents, and prescription drugs. However within his family, his parents and his siblings have all passed away leaving him the only member surviving. In Samer's family, the members that have immigrated to the United States are still living while the rest of the family remaining in Egypt have already passed away, even within the same generation. In Rashid's family (See Figure 5), once again, he and his siblings have lived longer than their parents but are all burdened with serious chronic diseases.

In addition, due to transnational migration patterns for Arab families, the parents of these Arab immigrants are also able to access the US healthcare and receive medical care. After the hurdles to attain access have been achieved, American medical care is opening up new opportunities of medical treatment as well as extending their lives. For this elderly generation, Samer's mother ultimately came to live with him in California and was then treated for cancer.

For Mary's mother, she is being cared for in a Western style elderly home with medical capabilities in Beit Jala, Palestine. Rashid's mother also quickly brought over to the United States to have a cancer surgery in Washington, D.C.

It is these encounters with the American medical system that are having a direct impact on individual Arab lives as well as their immigrant transnational families. But it is important to note that access to the US healthcare system does not necessarily lead to "healthier" lives. Immigrant lives may be extended as a result of medical procedures and drug treatment but they are living longer while managing chronic illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. This is seen in the case of Ali, his life is extended but he is saddled with numerous chronic conditions that he is taking medication for. In fact next to his couch is an entire table full of different prescription medication. For others, access has helped them overcome health crises. However their general healthiness is not simply a result of medical access but due to other factors such as increased health literacy, health support groups, and changed personal habits.

What is happening within Arab immigrant families raises a host of questions about the impact of the American healthcare practices on immigrant populations. If American healthcare institutions are fulfilling their roles and providing access to better healthcare for Arab immigrant families, what are the resulting social impacts on families? The previous chapter illustrated how Arab families are shifting due to various internal and external forces related to immigration and socio-economic circumstances. However the sustained

encounters with the American healthcare system also play a critical role influencing family dynamics. Family members in Arab immigrant families who would have died earlier are now living longer placing social strain upon different members. In Samer and Mary's case, they are experiencing almost unprecedented strain as they struggle to support themselves, their parents, as well as their own adult children. Their situation is even more shocking when one realizes they are considered seniors by American standards. The amount of time and energy required to fulfill social obligations to family members is impacting their own aging situation. Thus one cannot ignore the social changes resulting from accessing Western style medical care. As bodies are cared for, lives are being changed within Arab families still struggling to adapt to new social roles in an era of change.

Part III

Aging Struggles

Chapter 9: The Daily Struggles

Samer and Mary's store in Antioch specializes in young men's urban street wear. Along the wall hung t-shirts emblazoned with weed, skulls, and designs influenced from famous tattoo artists. The racks were filled to the brim with shirts and designer jeans from Ed Hardy, Fubu, Roca Wear, and Sean John. Jerseys from Bay Area sports teams stood out on another side of the wall. The clothing here possess high value driven by images seen through the entertainment media, celebrities, and pop culture. As I was interviewing Samer one day, two customers working as a team attempted to shoplift several pants. While one asked for help, the second man stuffed merchandise into his loose baggy pants. In an instant Samer was on top of them as they attempted to leave. Both sides exchanged tense words before the shoplifters backed down and returned the stolen merchandise. Afterwards the incident triggered an hour long fight between Mary and Samer about their struggles with theft in the store. Mary became combative as she railed against Black and Latino customers in the area, people in her words who were less educated and treated them poorly. Samer tried to temper her views with reason instead of painting groups of people with wide strokes. The debate about race was never resolved. Angered at the words his wife said, Samer walked away in frustration. Mary vented to me, "Today I want to fight with everybody because I'm sick and tired."

This incident represents just one of the daily challenges faced by Samer and his wife in their daily lives. I witnessed a 75 year-old man confronting shoplifters half his age without hesitation despite the fact that the situation could easily escalate into violence. These types of daily struggles evoke emotion and yet “disappear” almost as quickly as it happened. Yet the emotions left from these events build up and impact other areas of life. Mary’s diatribe stems from her feeling dehumanized and stressed working long schedules at the store. Aside from working at the store, she needs to prepare meals, take care of her household as well as provide support for her adult children.

I asked people to describe their daily schedules in order to understand the struggles they face every day and to elicit emotional responses about their situation. The events of daily life may not be not worth research or discussion by health researchers however they are a multi-faceted account of aging that point to broader trends. The emotions tied to daily struggles provide another insight into their current struggles with aging. Frustrations, yearnings, worries hopes, and speculations can be sensed from these narratives. Everyone discusses living amid change and uncertainty as best as they can. More importantly the daily struggles and the reflections on the future form a picture of aging Arab immigrants in a social context.

Table 3. Growing Older: Where are they now?

Struggling To Keep It Together	
Samer	Struggling to keep their retail clothing operation profitable in spite of the 2008 Recession. Worries about financial stability and paying off his debts.
Mary	Works with Samer running the clothing store. Also plays a critical support role in cooking and maintaining healthy meals for the couple. Wants an exit to the clothing store and a return to a more humane life.
Ali	After returning from Egypt in 2003, lives in Pittsburg alone in a rented apartment. He is wheelchair bound and his only source of social support is a fellow Egyptian friend, Mohammed
Edward	Recently expanded the operation of his business to support his older brother and his nephew (and their respective families). Worries daily about the performance of the company and losing everything he built.
Talal	Struggling to find a stable job in Jordan to support his elderly mother as well as a young family. Worries that his young children will be unable to take care of him if he falls ill or grows old.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Samer: “Sometimes I want to go into the back and cry”

We are always here at the store. I drive 800 miles a week, sometimes a thousand a week from San Leandro to Antioch. That's a hundred miles round trip every day. Lately I've been driving to Las Vegas twice a year. I visit L.A. once a month to attend to her medical situation. Without a car it would be a disaster. We try to arrive here a few minutes before 10:00 AM because of the contract with the mall. We eat breakfast here in the

store. If somebody is with us, we eat together. If not, each one eats separately. I take care of the front. She calls me, I go in back for ten minutes. I just want the privacy to eat casually. Lunch and dinner is 99% of the cases home cooked, very heavy on vegetables, pastas, or rice. It's all based on fresh vegetables and fresh fruits all the time. Comparing to families we know, they consider us crazy to still cook at home. But there are some economic reasons behind that as well as health too. We eat dinner after 9:00 to 9:30 PM after we close the shop.

I'm a very LATE and very BAD sleeper. I sleep 4 hours a night and then come and put in 16 hours of work at the store. It's been like this since we took over the store. That's not healthy. I feel sometimes I want to go into the back and cry. With the pressure of making a living things are fading, you know? There's no intellect in this kind of a business. I go home very exhausted and I read a few pages from a book. I cannot sleep without a book in my hand. I used to bring books here with me. It's just too much, I have no time to absorb, reflect, and think.

Always On the Go

What is striking in Samer and Mary's lives is that they are extremely active and mobile. Not only are they commuting between San Leandro and Antioch daily, they also drive to Las Vegas and the Los Angeles area for work and medical visits. Their work schedule is grueling for someone in the 20s let alone someone in the mid-70s. The business sets the rhythm of life and they wake up early and sleep late. In addition they have to worry about the paperwork and financial accounts of the business. What bothers Samer the most about his aging situation is the inability to take personal breaks, whether it is the chance to eat alone while sitting or to enjoy the little pleasures of life.

Mary: “This is not life. This is not life.”

We’ve been working here for three years. At the beginning business was really good, because the economy was better. But this year, it stinks. It’s not worth it, you know? And it’s far away too. We spend too much going back and forth from home and work. On top of that, we never sleep enough. You can’t sit down and eat normally like the way people sit down and eat. By the time we go home, it’s 10:30pm before we sit down and eat. You know? It’s even not healthy you know? The thing is just the far away travel [from home in San Leandro to the store in Antioch]. That’s what I hate.

We are very active people. We can’t sit down around in the house. All my life I’ve been like that. And he’s the same, very active. He likes to make friends, talk, and go places, you know? If he’s a dull person, I won’t even marry him! I swear! I’m telling you the truth! My ex-husband, he used to stay in the house doing nothing. I hate this kind of people. It’s not my type. We used to do things before we got in this business. We used to go to the movies, picnics, or eat outside.

I wake up before him. He likes to sleep more but I don’t blame him. We go to bed at one o’clock or two o’clock in the morning because of paperwork. We don’t sleep more than five hours because we need to get up every day at 7 o’clock to drive to work. This schedule is for someone who is twenty years old, not for us.

You know, physically I don’t feel good. Because there is no rest and we eat out at a lot at restaurants but sometimes I don’t want to eat outside. I’m crazy about cooking healthy food. Here, you can’t even sit on the table and eat. You have to eat here while customers are coming. This is not life. This is not life.

Visions of Aging

Mary’s main complaint is about how life is now dictated by the demands of the business. Simultaneously, she compares her life before the store in an effort to show her personal vision of aging. In her aging ideal, she does not want to be working like “a twenty year-old,” rather she wants to return to their previous lives

before they decided to open a retail store. This is significant because the only reason Mary and Samer are operating this store is to pay back their debts incurred from defending Samer's son during his legal trial.

SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES

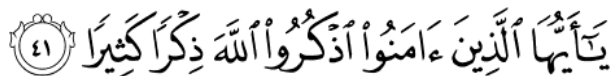
Ali: "Live for your afterlife as if you will die tomorrow."

I'm of limited mobility because of my heart. I'm a diabetic. I have edema. And I can't walk that much. So I sit here in my power wheelchair doing very little activity, just the minimum requirement for rehab. I have to go take at least 100 steps a day. Other than that I sit here watching TV and worship God in my head, being thankful but in my way.

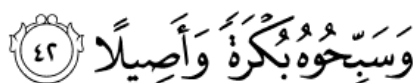
In 1995 when in Egypt, I learned something from the imam. What did he say? "Live your life as if you will live forever. Live for your afterlife as if you will die tomorrow." It hit me at that moment. I was sitting at home in my penthouse, thinking, "Oh my God! All my life, with regards to school, immigration, my business, I worked hard to secure my future. But what did I do for my afterlife?" Nothing. I raised my kids. It was okay. But I was a bad man with bad habits. I smoked for 40 years and I'm glad I stopped. The second bad habit was too much sex.

Now I'm Sufi. I'm sitting here doing nothing but worshiping God and saying "Subhan Allah." I think saying "Subhan Allah" is more important than praying. People go to the mosque, pray and then go. Do they do anything in lives? No! I say, "Subhan Allah" all the time. I don't pray. Praising God is more important than praying.

[Ali quotes to me from the Qur'an]



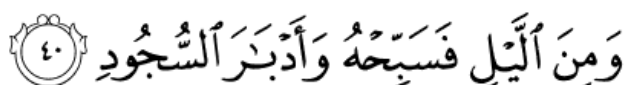
O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembrance



And exalt Him morning and afternoon.

(Holy Qur'an 33:41-42)

[Ali continues quoting from the Qur'an]



And [in part] of the night exalt Him and after prostration.

(Holy Qur'an 50:40)

I always say these verses all day long. It makes a lot of sense for me. God is really a forgiver. I do this every single day more than a thousand times. Always say it. Never get tired of it. It makes me feel good. It makes me feel faith. Secure. Calm. Don't worry about anything. Don't care. I have the faith stronger than the medicine, that's why my blood pressure is always low.

Spiritual Needs of Aging

Contrary to surface readings, Ali's narrative is not simply the archetype of a man finding religion near the end of life in order to find salvation in the afterlife. When asked about his daily struggles, Ali chose to discuss his spiritual beliefs rather than his health struggles. In the face of congestive heart failure, diabetes, obesity, edema in both his legs to diabetes, severe constipation due to poor dietary behaviors and the general inability to walk, he has many daily struggles with his body. However other than his heart attack, he never complained about these matters when I asked. His retirement in Alexandria marks a rekindling of his faith but rather than turning towards Sunni Islam and the orthopraxy of his

faith, he declares himself a Sufi. Sufism is a mystical practice of Islam concerned with finding a close connection to God but typically socially frowned upon. Ali's Sufi practices represent a type of daily mindfulness, a focus on the spiritual view of aging rather than the corporeal.

ECONOMIC STRUGGLES

Edward: "I'm afraid to lose everything."

I think everybody living in the Bay Area has stress and pressures. [Laughs] It never ends. I've been living this same movie every day. Here, you work like machines. You don't see anything, just numbers pass by. You have to take care of your bills and this and that. Now I have more stress than before. When you have your own business, your mind is always working. Even when on vacation I still work through the phone.

I'm always going forward. But now I always have to find new clients to keep sales consistent. I'm barely making a living out of this business by myself. I feel like if I expand any more I'm going to lose control. Since my brother and his son moved here in 2007, I have to find more business to make enough for everybody. Expanding to this warehouse is recent and I even feel this current situation is too much pressure for me. I have to have more control. I always look at the big companies that go out of business when they expand too much.

So I try to keep my expenses low. I need to have control over everything and then I feel comfortable. I'm afraid to lose everything. I've been thinking about moving to a bigger warehouse but I'm still worried about growth. I want to stop where I am now. I have enough. But why do I increase the number of drivers I have? Because I have family members that all live from this business.

Insecure Success

Although Edward is doing well in his business, the sense of insecurity to his success is visible. Perhaps this anxiety is rooted in his experiences in

Palestine where fortunes come and go and dreams evaporate in a flash whenever a political conflict rages in the area. Another aspect to Edward's daily struggle is that he, like Samer and Mary, is a small business entrepreneur subject to the fluctuations of consumer spending which has been low since the 2008 Recession. His success is partly due to his own efforts but also to wider forces at work. Edward is able to expand his business dramatically due to the power of familial connections but this power comes at a cost, his success depends on these family members as well as his obligation to provide for them. Edward is not simply supporting his family in California but also his older brother and indirectly his older brother's family in Palestine as well as his nephew and his family.

Talal: "All these demands come at once."

In the morning, I visit my mother, and then I go to my repair shop and wait for work. Life is difficult when I have no business, so I work a second job as a security guard but it is temporary. I work because my retirement pension is not enough for the demands of life. After I pay for rent, living costs, transportation, electricity, water, and telephone, I have no money. After this summer, only God knows where I will be employed. When I search for a job, they ask me, "What is your age?"

I say to them, "53 years old." No one will employ me.

They say, "There is no work. You are too old. You are not able to handle it." Even if you can find work, the pay is nothing.

Every day I worry about the lack of stable work. In my household, my family wants food and clothes. All these demands come at once. If you don't have work, how will you provide for these needs? Currently, my children are young but when they grow up, my responsibilities increase with them. They need more

money, more clothes. We're not rich people and if we don't work, we don't eat.

Thank God, my health is good. I am able to live a normal life. How do I maintain good health? The most important thing is to work so I can buy quality food. If you eat well then your health is well and you are psychologically healthy, then you will not have aging problems. Without security, it influences a man's health. If you don't have money, you fall into depression and it causes fights at home. If you don't come home with food for the entire household, the wife becomes upset and the children are troublesome. Everyone is worried and it causes discord in the family. They tell you, "You did not provide the things we need." I am not able to tell my children I don't have anything. I want to provide for them. When your health is good, money comes. But if your health is weak, there is no money. You work and eat from the labor of your hands. Where does money come? There is an expression, "The sky does not rain gold nor silver." You must toil until you acquire money.

Stability as a Prerequisite for Health

Talal raises an interesting link between economic stability and health and aging. He describes both a causal and cyclical relationship between health and work. Without financial stability, he cannot eat well which affects physical and mental health. His physical and psychological struggles all tie back to the lack of work in his life and the demands to provide for the family. Talal's problem is compounded by the fact that he is considered old by Arab standards. As he tries to support a young family, he experiences an ageist system in a society that is predominantly full of youths. Talal's insecurity is by no means extraordinary and his life provides insight into aging in Jordan and other Arab countries.

Conclusions

Aging is not simply a bio-medical condition and the complaints discussed to other social layers to the aging experience that is often unconsidered. While epidemiological issues within the aging Arab-American community are important, mortality rates, chronic diseases, or health trends only point to one aspect and only sees aging from the perspective of the physical body. However health is not always the most pressing daily struggle related to aging as people try to live their daily lives. For many people aging involves different domains of worries with issues of quality of life, spiritual struggles, and even economic stability that are often more pressing. For issues of quality of life and spirituality, these categories are often difficult to quantify and measure. However, Samer and Mary's quality of life is not simply a decision under their control. The fact that the business has taken over their lives is directly related to their social obligations to family. It shows another example of how aging struggles can be directly influenced by other people in the family. This is seen again in Edward and Talal's lives as the worries they carry every day is a result of the responsibilities they have to their families.

Chapter 10: The Future of Aging

“Where do you see yourself in the future?” I posed a series of future-oriented questions to my interviewees in the hopes of eliciting deeper reflections on people’s present aging situations. Many struggled to answer these questions, perhaps because they thought I was seeking a specific answer. Their speculations about what the future might bring provide insights into their personal worldviews as well as on their thoughts about the wider trends in society. I spent many days in the company of Samer, Ali, and Talal, during which they shared their opinions about the future of their lives and eventual deaths.

SUSTAINABLE AGING

Samer: “What we’re doing here is not sustainable.

”If you ask me why I’m working, I got stuck with this business on a recommendation from a friend. He wanted to leave and he said, “Why don’t you take the place and finish the lease?” It was May 2007 and the plan was to leave after Christmas. My son was going through depression after the trial. I told him, “Why don’t you get out? Take a shower. I’m going to send you to a place to take a look at.”

Three years ago, the economy was better. We operated under the name Fashion Front. Then my son renamed the store based off street lingo that a customer chose for him. We merchandised the whole thing for trendy sportswear and young men’s urban style with a focus on brand names. If you’re not a social animal, you could not survive in this retail...racket. [Laughs]

This business is endless because fashion is always evolving that goes with pop culture. At one time in the clothing industry,

consumers bought what we designed. Now we follow the music business and rappers who lend their name to a line and have joint ventures with the fashion industry. So now we follow what this rapper is wearing or what he says. Fashion, high fashion, street wear is very volatile. This is like a horse race.

I worry about money. I need to have the safe level of dignity and life style that I used to carry on. I don't believe I'm living a lavish lifestyle with the freedom of movement. Just our basic needs, you know? If I desire a piece of fruit, piece of meat, or a nice fresh fish. I'll buy it. I don't want to feel like I'm turning my face to fight my desires. I'm worried about immobility where I need somebody to depend on, someone to move you and wash you and put a spoon in your mouth. That feeling will never leave.

I feel like I'm in a continuous loss of the level of energy even though I'm performing at a very high level. I thank God that even at this age and after all the health issues, I'm still working like a 21 year old. But the scariest thing is that what we're doing here is not sustainable. It's not. It's against nature. We tell nobody our age.

As much as I can, I try to plan for the next month, the next year. But even if you plan in America, all the variables attack you. I do everything to make the store appealing and clean, but if there is no traffic in the mall, what can you do? These are unknowns that disturb me. When we add up the Social Security checks, we only have \$1,400 before we even pay the mortgage and the utilities. I don't think we can live only on this. It's a hell of a big problem. So Mary's thinking about putting an ad on Craigslist and renting out the three bedrooms in our house. She's done this before when she got divorced in San Francisco.

In five years, hopefully I'll be retired if things go the way I want. I hope the economy will not deteriorate more or that would be a problem. I want to start dropping the load this year, gradually and successfully. In ten years, I hope to be able to walk and talk and still have a reasonable income and lifestyle. My next plan is to buy and prepare a small burial place in the Bay Area. The end of life period is the dropping of the curtain on the last act. In Egypt, there are traditions, but here everything is in flux. Things change very fast and very suddenly too. In Egypt, there is some stability, you know where the rest of your family will be buried and you know that at any stage people will take care of that.

Sustainable Aging

Samer realizes that given his changing family dynamics and social relationships, he cannot sustain his current way of life. It is impossible for him to provide housing and other essentials for himself and his wife while simultaneously providing monetary and other forms of social support for the generation above (his elderly relatives in Egypt and his elderly in-laws in Palestine) and the generation below (his American-born children). As a result, at age 75, Samer continues to work twelve-hour days, six days a week. However, as Samer has gotten older, his body can no longer handle all the stress involved in running the business. In addition, as a sole proprietor, he is at the mercy of wider consumer spending patterns and economic changes.

Although Samer provided financial support for his parents and still supports his adult children and step-children, he never mentions any expectations of support, either financial or otherwise, from his children. Instead, he specifically laments the lack of certainty he feels regarding where he might be buried or who will take care of him when is no longer able to. Samer contrasts his anxiety over growing old in the Bay Area with the situation in Egypt, where he would know his final resting spot and could be assured that family members would take care of him in his later years. Instead Samer and Mary are planning to support themselves financially as they get older by renting out rooms in their home to supplement Social Security income.

SOCIAL LIFE EXPECTANCY

Ali: “We are like guests that stayed longer than we’re supposed to”

What bothers me is getting older because of the very unpleasant results. Weaker. Tired. If I didn’t have the best medical care, I would have died at 67 years old. But I’m not grateful to be alive. I’m living longer than I should be. All the time I just ask God to live to another day so that I don’t need anybody carry me to go to the bathroom. That’s all that I ask God. As long as I can go to the bathroom myself, I’m fine. Thank you. To be dependent on somebody, I don’t want to live *one* minute in that kind of a life. I went to visit some areas to some facilities. And I’ve seen some people and [what] they get in these areas. They think they live long, but they don’t live.

You remind me of a joke yesterday. Mohammed and I laughed. He was sitting here and telling me, “Oh my God! I’m really tired. I don’t know what happened to me. I just drove down here and I got really tired.” I told him, “We are like guests that stayed longer than we’re supposed to.” We are living more than [we’re] supposed to be. [Laughs] I’m 71 now. All my family, everybody around me has died in the 60s. Now I’m suffering because my parts are just worn out. My parts are like worn out car parts. But I’m still trying to survive. Thank God I can depend on myself at least for the minimum.

Medical Life Expectancy versus “Social Life Expectancy”

Ali’s narrative shows a clash between two different ideas of life expectancy: medical life expectancy and social life expectancy. Medical life expectancy is discussed within the field of medicine and factors in family and personal medical history, diet, health behaviors, as well as access to medical care. In a sense, it is an objective standard of how long a person can be expected to live before the person’s physical body can no longer sustain itself. Here, we see the incongruence between the medical establishment’s conception

of life expectancies and social expectations of what it means to have a “life” and how long one should be expected to live among some people in the Arab immigrant community.

CLASHING VISIONS OF AGING

Talal: “Here, in Arab countries, there are no elderly”

In my old age, I worry if my children will support me like how I supported my parents. I don’t know. As you age your life becomes closed off. You think to yourself, “How will I live?” I’m just hanging on right now. We’re poor simple people living day by day. Who will support me? I don’t know. These are matters for the supernatural realm. I don’t know about the future. Will my health remain strong? My life is like any other person here. I worry about the future because I am not young anymore. I’m middle-aged, but my financial situation is terrible.

When one reaches 60 or 70 years old, do life conditions improve for someone? No! We go backwards. In Arab countries, when we age, our responsibilities increase. There is no relaxation. It is the opposite of foreign countries. In Europe, when one ages, they relax and enjoy life. Here we grow weak and sick. In foreign countries, a person becomes 60 years old and still is active.

Here in Jordan, when a person reaches 60 years old, one’s life is ended and you become hospitalized. Why? Because of the pressures of life burden the soul with worry about the future. Here, we are becoming like India. The rich dominate while the poor beg on the ground. Most of the people here are poor. What middle class? It doesn’t exist! Most of the people need help because there is no work. So the government distributes money to the people as support.

Here in Arab countries, there are no elderly. Why? If you don’t have money, a hospital will not accept you. If you are rich or have the right social network, you can visit private hospitals and have a private room, all the possibilities of treatment. If you are poor, you go to a hospital with poor quality of services or you just die.

Where do I see myself next year? I don't know. I can't tell you where I will be or what the direction of the country will be. The most important thing in life is stability. The demands of life require stability as the basis. If your country is problem-free, then you will have stable work and live a content life. However, if your country is experiencing problems, you will remain worried about the future feeling unhappy. I want stable work and [for] the political situation to improve. We've lived here for many years, but we are guests in this country. Maybe if peace comes and return to Palestine is possible, I will go back to my country. There, I own land and a home.

Where There Are No Elderly

In Talal's narrative, we hear that his worries and discussions about the future mirror the rapidly shifting dynamics within Arab families that are driven by global and regional stability and lack thereof in both economic and political matters. His doubts about whether his children will be able to support him are similar to the changes happening in Samer's and Ali's lives. Like Talal, both Samer and Ali are supporting themselves in their old age without active involvement from their children.

Talal also makes an interesting comparison of aging in Arab countries versus aging in the "West". Because of Jordan's economic reliance on tourism, Palestinians and Jordanians not infrequently come into contact with middle-aged and elderly foreign tourists. This exposure provides him with an idealistic vision of what aging is like in Europe or the United States. Talal reflects on the social expectations that many people have of retirement and old age, which they envision as a period during which people can relax and enjoy themselves. He states that because of poverty and insecurity, elderly people do not exist in the

Middle East as they do in Europe or the United States. What he is really saying is that money determines how a person ages in the Middle East, because it provides access to healthcare. If a person is wealthy or has the right social connection, he or she can obtain care. If a person is poor or not well connected, he or she is alone and will likely die from lack of adequate healthcare.

Conclusion

This set of narratives develops the idea that there is a gap between aging in a medical context and a social context. Medical technologies and treatments have evolved to the point where human life can be extended much longer than possible for previous generations. This effect is seen most dramatically in Arab-American immigrant families where transnational forces bring different family members into contact with the medical system in the United States at different points in their lives. For some people, access to the American healthcare system produces positive changes and allows them to live longer than what might have been possible in their native countries. For others, it brings mixed results, in which people are physically able to live longer but perhaps no longer have the type of life or abilities that they deem socially important. Regardless, people are trying to adapt to the challenges associated with living longer while being older. If people are living longer, how can they support themselves economically in a society that does not value elderly people? Some people, such as Samer and Talal, have opened their own businesses as a way to carve out an economic

support system that adapts to the demands of aging. Others, such as Ali, already feel marginalized from society and appear to simply be waiting to die.

Chapter 11: Conclusion and Future Research

Historically, Arab and Arab-American family structures always have been in a state of change due to internal family dynamics and external socio-political forces. Immigration and transnational movements are now dramatically increasing the speed in which families are being reshaped and how relationships are structured across geographic and generational lines. This observation is seen in other immigrant communities and there are parallels within Arab-American families.

Arab immigrant families that try to maintain connections to their native countries to fulfill traditional obligations often experience great strain within the different generations in the family. Tensions can build up between first generation immigrants and their parents, regardless of whether the parents reside in their native country or have relocated to the United States. Social strain can develop between first generation immigrants and their American-born or American-raised children, who may subscribe to different beliefs or expectations about their roles within the family. Sometimes families are so caught up in the busyness of life and the need for economic stability that they lose contact with other family members. The idea of the socially connected Arab immigrant family that maintains strong ties with kinsmen and distant relatives is not always the case. However, these families still are connected in the sense that decisions made in their home countries can impact immigrants' lives in the United States

and vice versa. This is most typified in Samer's case, where Samer's mother was uprooted from her home by her grandchildren in Palestine, and in Samer's and Edward's narratives, which describe how their mothers migrated to the United States to care for their grandchildren. Although this thesis focuses on the issue of aging among aging first generation Arab immigrants in the United States, their experiences of aging are strongly interlinked with the circumstances of their families who still live in their native countries in the Middle East. The struggle to maintain relationships and obligations within transnational families can introduce a new set of pressures. This is most evident in the realm of aging because medical access and technology is extending people's lives beyond previously established social expectations. How families respond to the burden of caring for family members living with chronic diseases decades longer than originally expected remains to be seen.

In the United States, aging is often conceptualized as an individual experience by society and healthcare organizations. However, the impact of aging and the medical decisions associated with aging often play out in the multigenerational arena of the family. This observation is not simply a reductionist argument that immigrant communities have a more "collectivist" mentality as opposed to the more "individualist" American worldviews. Rather, as families change and as responsibilities are conferred on different individuals over time, medical decision-making for aging family members may be placed in the hands of different generations within the same family. Health decisions and

practices may be influenced by other family members or even friends. It is important to recognize that there may be multiple health philosophies, cultures, and practices all within the same family.

For a health practitioner interfacing with immigrant families, it is important to note:

1. Immigrant families are facing intergenerational changes in terms of familial roles and obligations that impact healthcare decision-making.
2. Medical care in the United States is extending the life expectancy for Arab immigrants who have access to healthcare. However, access to healthcare and medical treatment is a contributing factor to changes within Arab families and is increasing the stress about expectations of family support and the lack thereof.
3. Aging is not always perceived as a medical concern, because aging immigrants often have other concerns in addition to medical and health problems, such as maintaining a perceived quality of life, financial well-being, or even spiritual desires that become more pressing as they age.

These findings are important to keep in mind, because immigrants even in the same population can have vastly different experiences of aging and expectations of aging. For example, a 0.5 generation elderly immigrant, such as an elderly parent who immigrated to join an adult child, might have different health expectations and practices than a first generation immigrant, and so on.

There can be stark differences even between immigrants of the same generation, as seen in the differences between Samer's narratives and Rashid's narratives. In addition, socio-economic backgrounds play a significant role in establishing healthcare practices and expectations within families. For example, Samer immigrated in his youth and started a new life and family in the United States. As a result, Samer has a good deal of experience with the US healthcare system and is at ease in navigating through it. In contrast, Rashid immigrated to the United States in 2003 at the age of 62. He represents a new class of elderly immigrants that come to the United States to be reunited with family members who immigrated before them. Rashid interacts with the US healthcare system with less familiarity and also maintains idealized expectations of healthcare quality. This is exemplified in Rashid's story in which Egyptian doctors recommended that Rashid's mother go to the United States for surgery because the system is better. Whether the quality of healthcare is actually better in the United States compared to Egypt is not the issue; instead, it is the perception that the United States has a superior healthcare system that can influence how immigrants make medical decisions. As a result, we must reconsider the classic argument that posits that immigrants accessing the US healthcare system face a clash of cultures that results in detrimental health decisions. While there is a clash of cultures in the healthcare context, what is perhaps more important is the potential clash of institutional healthcare cultures, expectations, and practices between patient and client.

It is not enough for healthcare professionals to rely solely on the generalities and stereotypes embodied by so-called “cultural competence” in which Middle Eastern patients are identified as merely “Arab” or “Muslim” in developing an appropriate healthcare regime. Simply focusing on cultural sensitivity will not necessarily improve the healthcare relationship between provider and client or even improve healthcare delivery practices. There must be an understanding of the history and social dynamics within immigrant families, as well as an understanding of how health decisions may be influenced by factors such as friends and family members and not solely made by the individual patient. Moreover, the focus on the cultural ignorance of the US healthcare system towards Arabs and Muslims fails to take a deeper look at the results of how a long and sustained encounter with a medical model of health can change health decisions within Arab families.

Another important issue related to aging immigrants is the transnational nature of movement within this population. Aging is often viewed by national and international organizations as a national problem facing individual nation-states. However, both recent political upheavals, such as the Iraq war and the Arab Spring, as well as ongoing political and economic struggles, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have affected the structure and geographic proximity of families. For example, the wars in Iraq and Syria have dispersed families, including aging family members, to different countries, placing strains on the healthcare systems of the receiving countries. In addition, civil and political

conflicts have affected the structural integrity of families because of the absence of family members. For example, the continued strife in Palestine has fundamentally reshaped Palestinian families in several key ways (Abu Nahleh 2006a, Abu Nahleh 2006b). Some of these changes are a result of a lost generation of men and even children (Sherwood 2012, Defense for Children 2012), who are targeted by the Israeli Defense Forces and imprisoned for months, years, and sometimes indefinitely (B'tselem 2011). In addition, Israeli refusal to issue permits have divided Palestinian families across borders, leaving some family members stranded in Israel while others are stranded in the Occupied Territories (B'tselem 2006). The absences of these fathers, brothers, and sons due to the circumstances of the Israeli occupation are reshaping how Palestinian families are created and structured. A dramatic example illustrating this point occurred when a Palestinian woman, Dallal al-Ziban, gave birth to a boy conceived through in-vitro fertilization by using her husband's sperm that was smuggled out of prison (BBC News 2012). These examples show that the assertion of the static, "traditional" Arab family discounts the impact of colonialism and nationalism on the structure of the Arab family.

Further, as people live longer and move more fluidly across borders, they also bring their health issues with them, which can impact healthcare systems. The influx of elderly immigrants challenges definitions of an inclusive society. While many healthcare providers want to help immigrant populations to lower disease rates, what are the resulting impacts on these immigrant communities?

If immigrants live longer, are there adequate social, religious, and medical support systems for them? This raises several policy issues, underscoring the need to start a policy conversation between organizations that deliver healthcare services and social workers and religious organizations in order to envision a broader strategy for addressing aging in a more diverse society. As families experience the stresses of change when family members grow older, what social and religious support strategies can provide support to families under pressure?

This thesis merely begins to delve into the changes that immigrant families are experiencing as family members age, as seen from the perspective of one generation, that of the first generation immigrant. It lays the groundwork for future research that could provide a more nuanced picture of changing families as viewed by all generations within a family. Additionally, this thesis raises the issues posed by the medicalization of health and aging, and how this approach to aging affects and interacts with different health expectations within immigrant families. Further studies can provide greater insight on how repeated and sustained encounters with the American medical system changes immigrant families and their perceptions of health. What aspects do immigrant families adopt? What aspects do they bypass? Why? Lastly, this thesis raises questions about how a healthcare system can use improved understandings of family kinship in order to develop health programs that target different generational perceptions of health and aging.

This research is not simply a story of aging Arab immigrants but a story of how many families in America are changing as they face the problems of aging. The American family is transcending commonly held notions of the nuclear household by mutating into a multiplicity of households that can involve non-consanguine relationships. Moreover, as the shape of families and households change, individuals also are living longer, thus posing unprecedented challenges that are redefining familial roles as well as the state's role in caring for the elderly. An example of this situation is the growing numbers of childless Americans who have no one in the family to care for them in their old age, a role traditionally carried out by next generation within a family (Korkki 2012).

In a global context, the current global population of people over 60 years old is 810 million (roughly 12% of current global population). This population is projected to reach two billion by 2050, or approximately one fourth to one third of the global population (UNFPA 2012). This booming population of aging and elderly individuals threatens to create fiscal and social crises for most nations across the world as pension systems and medical institutions struggle to respond to increased demand. The aging issue will prove to be the dominant issue facing the world in the decades to come, impacting all areas of society from urban planning, healthcare, social services, economics, politics, and even religion. While this thesis does not address all of the broader social, political, medical, and technological changes in the United States and the Middle East that are affecting aging populations, it is my sincere hope that this research will contribute to the

ongoing conversation about aging. It may perhaps lead to changes in healthcare policy and the development of medical and social programs that take into account the needs of aging immigrants and the impact on immigrant families.

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