

Running Head: THE MISSING DEMOGRAPHIC BOX

The Missing Demographic Box:
The Importance of Arab-American Representation in Higher Education

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
California State University Channel Islands

In (Partial) Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership, emphasis Higher Education

By
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Abstract

Although higher education institutions recognize various ethnic identities, the Arab identity and the sub-identities within continue to receive little to no recognition. In addition to lack of recognition, the media and society continue to associate the Arab identity with a negative stigma. Consequently, our Arab students are not feeling as supported as they should. The purpose of this study is to understand the Arab-American experience in public, four-year higher education institutions in California. 25 volunteers participated in a survey which gathered information on their experience as an Arab at their campus. In addition to the surveys, the existence of clubs and organizations related to the Arab identity was examined in these higher education institutions.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Maha, Ghassan, Rola and Rania.

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Next stop: Ph.D.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Higher education institutions typically comment about diversity in their student affairs mission statements, supporting a desire for diversity to aid learning through peer interaction (Niessen and Meijer, 2017). This strive toward diversity focuses on many major ethnic backgrounds, but oftentimes fails to recognize the Arab population. In fact, Arab-American students are typically not included in studies involving people of color. For example, Douglass, Wang, and Yip (2016) conducted a qualitative study of everyday implications on ethnic-racial identity process. This study involved 395 ethnic-racially diverse adolescents who identified as Black or African American, Asian or Asian American, Native American or American Indian, White, or other. This study focused on group identities, but Arab was not one of the demographic options. This is important because it forces Arab-Americans to check the “white,” even when these individuals are not white. Having a box that Arab-Americans can select would provide universities with clearer information about who is on their campuses, which then would provide universities an opportunity to support this population better. If an Arab-American student wanted to attend a university with—for example—a large Arab-American population, there would not be a way for the student to find this information, as Arab-American demographics are not available.

Because representation contributes to one’s sense of belonging, the absence of this information may interfere with one’s college experience. Shamma (2009) conducted a qualitative study to investigate potential interrelationships among perceived discrimination, the level of diversity of Arab and Muslim students’ friendships on campus, and the students’ sense of inclusion on campus. The researcher distributed a 92-item survey to participants that encompassed four populations: Arab Christians, Arab Muslims, Non-Arab Muslims, and Arabs

with other faiths. The target population was 753 community college students from 20 Southern California community colleges and 5 Southeast Michigan community colleges; 409 were females and 292 were males. The findings showed a positive relationship between Arab and Muslim students' campus friendships and a sense of belonging to the campus. These students felt a sense of belonging because of their relationships with people who looked like them; that was their way of feeling a sense of belonging. This study is important because it shows how impactful representation is to a students' experience.

It is evident that there is a lack of Arab representation not only in higher education, but in society itself. The media reinforces the negative stereotype that Arabs are dangerous, associated with terrorism, and are all Muslim. There are many quotes from leaders, scholars, and pundits who do not identify as Arab or Muslim speaking on this population. For example:

"It is of questionable wisdom to continue allowing Muslims to serve in the US military in combat roles in the Mideast and to have access to classified information, except under extraordinary circumstances and after thorough background checks" (Malkin, 2004).

Michele Malkin is an American conservative blogger who is implying that those who originate from the Middle East should not be allowed in the military unless absolutely necessary and after extensive background check.

Another example of a person in a position of influence speaking negatively on this population is Christian evangelist and missionary Franklin Graham:

"The God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian Faith. It's a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion." (Graham, 2001).

In August 30, 2010 issue of *Time Magazine*, Graham reported that Islam is a “religion of hatred. It’s a religion of war.”

Although some Arabs are Muslim, not all are. The Arab identity and Muslim identity are two very different identities, yet society tends to clump the two together. With historical knowledge on this oppressed identity, I was curious to learn if and how higher education institutions were supporting this population. This study explores these two aspects: To what extent are Arab-American students represented in clubs and organizations at California State Universities (CSU) or University of California (UC) campuses; and how do Arab-American individuals themselves feel their Arab-American identity is represented on their college campus? This research may benefit higher education academic and student affairs leaders in highlighting the Arab-American student experience and how it may differ from other students of color.

In the following chapters, I first review the relevant literature on which the study’s framework is grounded. Chapter 3 outlines the study methods. In Chapter 4, I present the results of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the implications to higher education academic and student affairs leaders, study limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 1 discussed the purpose of this study and identified my two research questions:

(a) To what extent are Arab-American students represented in clubs and organizations at California State Universities (CSU) or University of California (UC) campuses? And (b) How do Arab-American individuals feel their Arab-American identity is represented on their college campus? In this study using mixed methods, I gathered information on the resources offered for Arab-American students on CSU and UC campuses and analyzed survey results from Arab-American students regarding experiences with their ethnic identity on their campus.

Studying a diverse population such as the Arab-American identity requires integration of multiple literature genres. In this second chapter, I provide a literature review that examines previous studies examining the implications of Arab-American students, other ethnic identities, and ways to cater to different populations.

Ambiguous and Missing Demographics

In order to gather information on the Arab-American college student experience, one would need to start by gathering statistics on the Arab population. Where are there large Arab populations? How successful are these students? Typically, demographic information is provided by universities on their websites because students fill out demographic census surveys when they apply to universities, but if one was to search the demographic census for the UC and CSU campuses, one would learn that Arabs and/or Middle Eastern descent is not listed. According to the United States Census Bureau (2016), the race options provided are:

White alone, Black or African American alone, American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, two or more races or Hispanic or Latino.

None of these options provide a box suited for the Arab-American or Middle Eastern population. The few times “Arab” or “Middle Eastern” do make it onto a demographic census, it is typically in parenthesis next to the “White” box (Kayyali, 2014). This provides inaccurate information because it is grouping two ethnic identities together when they are different.

According to a study conducted by Awad (2013) on Middle Eastern decent and the missing Middle Eastern piece to the demographic Census, 82 of participants considered themselves an ethnic minority due to their experiences of discrimination and due to feeling less represented in the United States. Therefore, because there is not accurate demographic census information, it is necessary to use other sources and literatures to better understand this population.

Misperceptions of Arab-Americans

Recent research in the United States has shown that individuals of Arab descent are at times treated differently by their peers due to the language they speak or their religious identity (Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Gallay, & Cumsille, 2009). For example, the authors found that more Arab-American participants experienced or knew someone who experienced prejudice than those of Latino or European descent. A majority of these discriminatory acts occurred in school or in informal settings such as sports events, banks, or restaurants. One participant shared how she is a Muslim woman who wears a veil and would oftentimes get ridiculed due to her visible religious identity. Research has further documented examples of misconceptions and stereotypes about Arab-Americans (e.g., “they are all Muslim,” “they are racist”) as well as a high rate of prejudice and discrimination directed at this group (DeRosier, 2004; Flanagan et al., 2009; Ibish, 2008).

Hitti and Killen (2015) further found in their study of white American and Arab-American peer groups that these misrepresentations result in peer groups unlikely to interact with each other and cross ethnic boundaries. A contributor to this divide may be associated with the way Arabs are portrayed in the media. After conducting an analysis, Josey (2016) discovered that stereotypes and misrepresentation persist in the internet, specifically with Arabs being associated with terrorism. These films not only associate Arabs with terrorism, but they also lump Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners together (Merskin, 2004). Stereotypes contribute to society's understanding of the world around them. Once a population is viewed as an "outsider," these individuals experience isolation and loneliness (Cover, 2018).

Although historical data suggests that the negative perception of Arabs existed prior to the September 11 terrorist attacks, data show that the negative perception has increased since then (Jones, 2001). "The Image of the Arab in America: Analysis of a Poll on American Attitudes" (Public Opinion Poll, 2006) conducted a public opinion poll to gather information on the perception of Arabs and Muslims. The results showed that 27% of respondents shared that they felt Muslim Americans should be required to register their location with their federal government. 26% shared that they believe mosques—the Muslim holy place of prayer—should be closely monitored by law enforcement. 22% shared that the government should profile citizens as potential threat based off apparent Muslim and/or Middle Eastern identity. Overall, 44% shared that there should be curtailment of civil liberties for Muslim Americans. When asked what they admire about Muslim societies, the most frequent response was "nothing" (Mogahed, 2006). Lastly, 44% of Americans shared that Muslims are too extreme in their religious beliefs and 22% of respondents shared they would not want a Muslim as their neighbor (Public Opinion Poll, 2006).

These negative perceptions of Arab-Americans are constantly reinforced through the media. The following are quotes from individuals with some level of social power, all who do not identify as Arab or Muslim (Public Opinion Poll, 2006)

In 2004 on CNN's American Morning show, the following was said:

“The Arab World is where innocent people are kidnapped, blindfolded, tied up, tortured and beheaded, and then videotape of all of this is released to the world as though they're somehow proud of their barbarism. Somehow, I wouldn't be too concerned about the sensitivity of the Arab world. They don't seem to have very much [...] It's going to come down to them or us” (Cafferty, 2004)

Cafferty is generalizing the “Arab World,” saying that this is a place where bad incidents occur and those who participate in such acts are proud. In 2004, another TV host shared the following:

"I tell you right now - the largest percentage of Americans would like to see a nuclear weapon dropped on a major Arab capital. They don't even care which one [...] I think these people need to be forcibly converted to Christianity. It's the only thing that can probably turn them into human beings” (Savage, 2004).

The TV host made a generalized statement that most Americans do not care about any Arab country and would favor seeing any country bombed (Savage, 2004). Savage also shared that the Arab countries should forcibly be converted to Christianity. This implies that his assumption is that Arab countries do not practice Christianity. Christianity is actually a popular religion in the Middle East. For example, Lebanon's Christian population is 34-41% (Tristram, 2017). Regardless, the TV host is oppressed the religion he believes is practiced there, which

contributes to the stereotype that all Arabs identify with the same religion. During the 2008 Presidential campaign, Republican candidate John McCain had the following exchange with an audience member at an October town hall event:

Audience member: "I don't trust [Barack] Obama...He's an Arab."

McCain: "No, ma'am. He's a decent, family man, a citizen that I just happen to have disagreements with" ("Arab Stereotypes," 2008). McCain's response implies that "decent, family man" and "Arab" are incongruous.

As shown, individuals with large platforms are regularly reinforcing these negative perceptions of Arabs and Muslims. These quotes were stated between 2004 and 2008. More recently, the Arab-American National Museum collaborated with the National Network for Arab-American Communities partnered with the National Voices Project to conduct a national survey to measure the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in the media ("Perception of Bias," 2013). Respondents were asked:

"Do you think there is persistent negative bias in the media against people from the following groups? Muslims, Arabs/Arab-Americans, African Americans/Blacks, Christians, Hispanic/Latinos, Jews, Whites, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asians/Asian Americans, Hawaiian Natives/Pacific Islander"

The top two identities with the highest scores were Muslims at 49% and Arab-Americans at 44%. The remaining identities were 40% or below ("Perception of Bias," 2013). A 2002 report of the Arab-American Institute Foundation revealed that 78% of Arab-Americans felt there has been an increase in profiling since the September 11 attack and two in five participants reported that their display of their ethnic identity has been impacted (Zogby, 2002). Overall, the Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim identities have been viewed negatively and are seen as similar or

the same by many people. Ethnic identity development has been studied for years, but there is little research on the development of Arab-Americans (Nassar-McMillan, Lambert, & Hakim-Larson, 2007). This is why it is important to examine the ethnic identity issues among Arab-Americans; this is the only way to expand empirical knowledge of this ethnic minority group as well as learn ways to improve interactions with these groups (Nassar-McMillan et al, 2007).

Identity and Intersectionality

The Arab identity itself is an “umbrella” for various sub-identities. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (“American-Arab,” n.d.) defines the Arab identity as any of the following:

Arab-American/Arab, Middle Eastern/ Middle East, Lebanon/Lebanese, Egypt/Egyptian, Jordan/Jordanian, Saudi Arabia/Saudi Arabian, Palestine/Palestinian, Kuwait/Kuwaiti, Yemen/Yemeni, Morocco/Moroccan, Libya/Libyan, Mauritania/Mauritan, Oman/Omani, Qatar/Qatari, Tunisia/Tunisian, United Arab Emirates.

This does not include the complexity of these individuals, as there are other identities not taken into account, such as religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and culture. Hancock (2011) discusses intersectionality in depth. She asserts that intersectionality—or “diversity within” (Hancock, 2011, p. 45)—emphasizes how many identities together create subgroups within larger groups. For example, the author states that one would not categorize talk show host and philanthropist Oprah Winfrey disadvantaged the same way one would categorize unemployed African Americans from the south side of Chicago due to intersecting category of socioeconomic class (Hancock, 2011). The complex interaction between individuals (as both individuals and

members of a larger group) and institutional practices, norms, and structures create the culture in how we interact with one another (Hancock, 2011).

What Hancock shares about intersectionality and how individuals interact with one another is reflected in the following study. Amer and El-Annan (2009) conducted a study with focus groups conducted with Arab Muslim early adolescents in the New York and New Jersey area to see how these two identities affect the experience of the individual. The aim of these focus groups were to explore ethnic, religious and psychosocial dimensions of identity development within the context of the participants' experiences after the September 11 attack. There were four focus groups: Two female focus groups and two male focus groups. The facilitators took notes and the audio was recorded and later transcribed. Results from this study indicated that Arab and Muslim youth face numerous additional barriers in developing a sense of self. Identity awareness was influenced mainly by parental teachings, gossip, and the media. Some participants described the internalization of racism after the September 11 attack as a contributor to anxiety and depression. Muslims and Arabs are both at risk for anxiety, depression, and other ailments (Winerman, 2006). This may be due to the challenge of merging the two identities together: The home identity and the other with the wider world, trying to acculturate to mainstream American Western culture (Winerman, 2006).

The previous discussions indicate that Arab-American identity is not only defined by nationality and language, but other identities as well such as gender, religion, and generation ("American-Arab," n.d.). Intersectionality, therefore, may be a useful framework to assist in understanding the diversity within the Arab-American identity.

Applying Organizational Theory to Diversity

In order to support the Arab-American population in universities, it is important to have cultural identity competency. For the purpose of this project, I will refer to the human resource frame to better understand how an organization functions and translate that to higher education functioning effectively with an Arab-American population (Bolman and Deal, 2013). The human resource frame focuses on what organizations and the people in the organizations can do for one another. Overall, organizations typically hope for a team of highly motivated individuals who work well together and always try their best. Often, though, these same organizations rely on outdated practices that cause workers to give less and demand more. Bolman and Deal (2013) compared the practices at two companies: Nucor Corporation and McWane. Nucor's employees viewed their work as more than just a job; Nucor employees valued pride. It was important to see the company's name listed on covers of corporate publications. This was because Nucor's electricians felt valued and were treated with bonuses whenever the company succeeds. Nucor treated their employees as individuals and not just as numbers. Sacrificing employees for profit will lead to insensitive, heartless employees. Nucor's foundation was inspired by the human resource frame, which highlights the following points: People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities. If the fit between an individual and an organization is not compatible, one or both suffer. A good fit benefits both the individual and the employee. Bolman and Deal (2013) used the plant analogy. A gardener knows that plants have specific needs; each plant needs a specific temperature, moisture, soil, and sunlight to grow and flourish. Similarly, humans require certain conditions or elements to survive and grow.

The reason this is relevant is because it is important to understand the needs of employees to better serve them. Similarly, higher education institutions need to not only understand the

needs of their employees, but understand the needs of their students. The purpose of higher education is not only for students to attend class, retrieve a degree, and leave. Institutions could benefit from the use of the lens that Nucor's foundation used, which is ensuring the organization (in this case, the university) and the population (in this case, the students), are compatible. In order to be compatible with the population, it is important to understand what the population consists of, what those populations need, and how to cater to those populations in the most inclusive way possible.

In order to strive for cultural competence in ethnic identities that are oftentimes ignored, leaders in higher education have to hold the adaptive leadership characteristic. Adaptive leadership goes beyond the environment and consider the best path that will positively affect the organization (Khan, 2017). Not only does adaptive leadership elicit change for the greater good of an organization, but it also provides leaders the professional development competence because adaptive leaders are able to identify an issue, define the issue, and find appropriate solutions all while considering external factors in the environment (Khan, 2017). Critics of adaptive leadership tend to resist the idea due to it challenging beliefs, values, and norms that have existed for many years prior, however, the adaptive leadership approach can contribute to growth and evolution. In addition to training staff on cultural understanding, biases, and interacting with others, cultural trainings also assist with website design, orientation coordination, conduct programming, and recruitment advertisements.

There is very little research on how to best support Arab-American students, but there is plenty of research on how to support populations from other ethnic backgrounds. I later discuss some of these strategies in hopes of finding possibilities to support the Arab-American population. Olive (2014) claims that motivation to pursue higher education is a rare occurrence

in Hispanic households, especially with those whose parents did not attend college. Olive (2014) also claims that it may be likely that Hispanic parents lack the basic information regarding opportunities for their child to attend college, which decreases the likelihood for enrollment. However, since 1975, Hispanics have remained the most likely group to attend a four-year university as a first-generation college student (Olive, 2014). A contribution to this may be the Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), which are institutions that participate in a federal program designed to assist college or universities in the United States that are intended to assist first generation, majority low-income college students. According to the United States Department of Higher Education (2016), 14 out of the 23 CSUs are HSIs and 4 out of the 11 UCs are HSIs. In this case, institutions are putting in effort to increase holistic success for the Hispanic population, which was a population that has been historically underrepresented. Efforts are also made to reach out to Hispanic youth, to actively increase participation in higher education.

Outreach and Marketing

There is a substantial amount of empirical research that confirms that diversity is beneficial to the learning, growing, and development of higher education institutions (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Diversity provides different perspectives, different experiences, and different knowledge. It is important to put this into consideration when recruiting employees of an institution or students. An example of taking diversity into consideration during recruitment is with intentional advertising. Practitioner literature has suggested that organizations revise their recruitment materials to portray their organizations as one that is committed to teamwork and diversity; it is said that this will result in a more desirable applicant pool (Rau and Hyland, 2003). Rau and Hyland (2003) examined 22 college recruitment brochures and found that 9 of

those brochures had explicit statements about diversity or equality and 13 brochures mentioned a commitment toward teamwork.

Students who view college brochures are more likely to apply to the campuses that have similar values to theirs, similar to the way Schneider (1987) explains it in his attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theory (as cited in De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, Du Bois, Caers and Jergers, 2009). Schneider's ASA theory posits that (a) individuals are attracted to organizations with similar characteristics to the ones they hold; (b) organizations are more likely to select individuals who possess knowledge and skills similar to the members they already have; and (c) those who do not fit the organization well are likely to leave. Overtime, the organization and its new members are likely to grow together in similarity, which is how an organizational culture is formed (De Cooman et al, 2009). Because of this theory, organizations should be able to attract a specific type of applicant by targeting recruitment outcomes (e.g., increasing percentage of female applicants). In addition to recruitment items, simply having Arab-American representation in the staff and faculty may make Arab-American students more attracted to a campus. It is suggested that values of diversity and teamwork (or whatever quality is lacking from a department) should express a greater attraction for those individuals in their advertising methods (Rau and Hyland, 2003).

Summary

In this chapter I have proposed that Arab-Americans are not represented on demographic Census data, thus making it difficult to locate and study them as an individual group. Moreover, if this population continues to be ignored and the media continues to portray Arabs negatively, Arabs may continue to feel oppressed and may lack a sense of belonging. In order to understand the Arab-American identity, it is important to understand the intersectionality and how it plays

into diversity within the larger group. This is why it is important for an institutional organization to prioritize diversity. An institution with a diverse team would be better equipped to market toward diverse populations.

This literature review leads to the focus of this research, to better understand the Arab-American student experience in higher education in California. The study aims to fill a gap in understanding the organizational representation and the individual perceptions. Of specific focus of this study are the following questions:

- (1) To what extent are Arab-American students represented in clubs and organizations at California State Universities (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses?
- (2) How do Arab-American individuals feel their Arab-American identity is represented on their college campus?

In the next chapter, I outline the study methods for each question.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

This chapter outlines the study methods by research question. I conclude with a discussion of how results were triangulated across data sources.

Research Question 1

To what extent are Arab-American students represented in clubs and organizations at California State Universities (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses?

My first research question was investigated with the use of publicly available data on the internet. To explore this question, all CSU (n=23) and UC (n=11) student life and student organization websites were identified. I went on the website of each university, located each campus' student organization pages by searching the term "student organizations" or "clubs and organizations" in the search bar on their home page. Once this page was found, I searched a list of terms related to the Arab ethnicities. For each university, a search for Arab-American clubs was conducted using the following search terms:

Arab-American/Arab, Middle Eastern/ Middle East, Lebanon/Lebanese,
Egypt/Egyptian, Jordan/Jordanian, Saudi Arabia/Saudi Arabian, Palestine/Palestinian,
Kuwait/Kuwaiti, Yemen/Yemeni, Morocco/Moroccan, Libya/Libyan,
Mauritania/Mauritian, Oman/Omani, Qatar/Qatari, Tunisia/Tunisian, United Arab
Emirates.

These are Arabic countries as defined by the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee ("American-Arab," n.d.).

Once the student organizations were identified by campus, I calculated frequencies of organizations that had these words in the title. I compared frequencies across campuses and Arab sub-identities. The second research question was investigated with the use of a survey.

Research Question 2

How do Arab-American individuals feel their Arab-American identity is represented on their college campus?

Participants and Procedures. Twenty-five (8 Male; 16 Female) participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Participants were Arab-American college students in four-year public institutions, or recent graduates, in California. I posted an advertisement on my social media platform personal profiles: Instagram, Instagram Story, Snapchat Story, and Facebook. I “tagged” the Arabs that I knew in the post—which is a feature on social media to notify users—and asked them to “tag” their friends and/or family who qualify as well (see *Appendix A* for the advertisement).

Individuals who were interested contacted me via social media, email, or text message and were asked to provide me with their email. The participation criteria stated that the participants must be an undergraduate college student (18+) enrolled in a four-year university or a recent graduate with a bachelor's degree (within the last two years) who self-identify as Arab-American. In this email of personal contact, the individuals were asked for their voluntary participation and received a consent form found in *Appendix B*. Participants were expected to print, sign, and scan the consent form or provide an electronic signature through Microsoft's Adobe program. After consent letter was received, surveys were distributed electronically via email with a Qualtrics link. The survey questions can be found in *Appendix C*. To minimize risk,

the researcher completed the National Institute of Health (NIH) Certificate of Completion in *Appendix D*.

Data Collection Instruments. This survey was intended to gather information on the experiences Arab-American students had on their college campuses. The survey asked how the participant felt their Arab-American identity was represented on their college campus, their experience with staff and faculty in regards to their ethnic identity, how comfortable they feel with their ethnic identity on their campus, and how they felt their ethnic identity was represented in campus clubs and organizations. Survey results were then compiled using descriptive statistics. I did this by inputting all the information onto Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. I asked participants what their Arab-American identity was and left the question open-ended. I wanted to provide the participants the freedom to input their identity however they wanted, allowing flexibility for a variety of results. For example, some individuals put “Lebanese,” “Lebanese-American,” or “First-generation Lebanese.”

Analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated for survey responses (e.g., frequencies and means) allowing for comparisons of survey questions. The open-ended questions were followed by 10 Likert-type questions, ranging from 1 (not at all or never true) to 5 (extremely or always true). For the open-ended questions, I calculated frequencies of themes depending on how many identities a participant listed. For example, if a participant wrote that they identify as “Lebanese” there was a tally added to the “one sub-identity” category. If a participant identified as “Palestinian-Egyptian,” there was a tally added to the “two sub-identities” category.

Data Triangulation

Once all data were analyzed across the two research questions, I used critical reading and analysis to compare the survey means and frequencies to the data gathered in the university

campus club and organizations results to examine whether the descriptive statistics obtained from the internet search data on universities (Research question 1) were comparable to the student experiences (Research question 2), in this mixed methods design.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter reports the findings from the data gathered in the study. The first part of the chapter presents the Arab-American student representation in the California public university systems as measured by student organization identification. Various frequencies by campus and by group category are presented. The second part of the chapter discusses the findings from the surveys on how students identify themselves, and how they perceive their representation. Finally, I discuss triangulation of findings.

Research Question 1

To what extent are Arab-American students represented in clubs and organizations at California State Universities (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses?

Figure 4.1 depicts the total number of student clubs associated with Arab-American identity on CSU and UC campuses. As can be seen in the Figure, UCs have 30 student organizations, while the CSUs have a little over half that amount (see Figure 4.1).

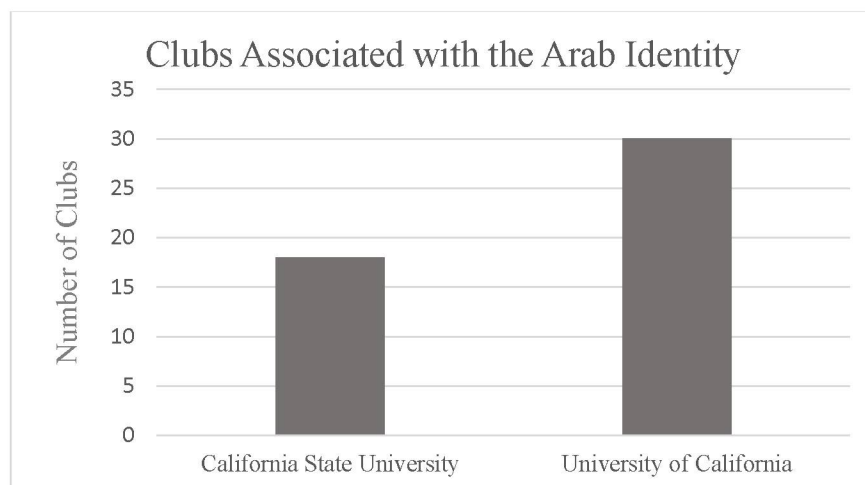


Figure 4.1 Clubs Associated with the Arab Identity on CSU and UC Campuses

I was then interested in breaking down the graph into two graphs to see specifically what minority groups within the Arab-American minority were represented. I did this to see if there was a significant representation of one group over another. In the UC system, there were mostly Palestinian clubs, followed by Yemeni, Jordanian. The campus reported having one club for Middle Eastern, one for Lebanese, and one for Qatari. Figure 4.2 provides a breakdown of the Arab-American clubs at CSU and UC campuses.

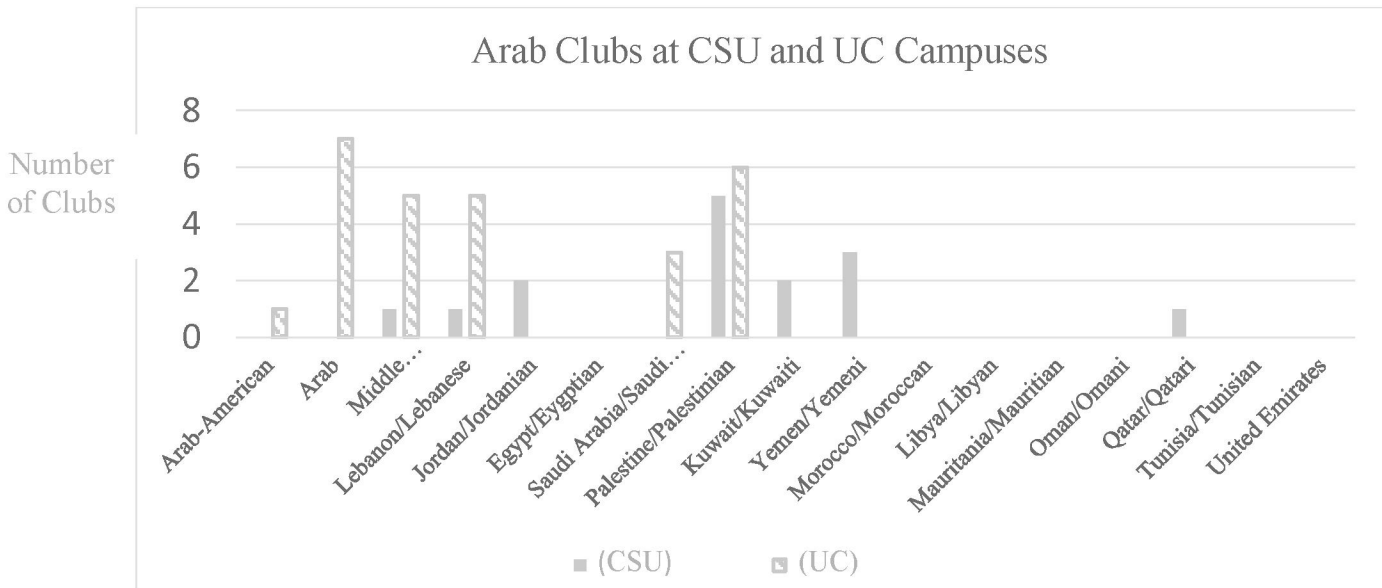


Figure 4.2 Number of Clubs Separated by Subcategories Under the Arab-American Identity at CSUs and UCs.

To situate the data in a comparative context, I was then interested to compare Arab clubs and organizations to Hispanic clubs and organizations, as these are both broad terms that represent identities with various subcategories. I compared these two identities at two randomly selected campuses: CSU Fullerton and CSU Channel Islands. As can be seen in Figure 4.3, both campuses have more clubs associated with the Hispanic identity than with the Arab identity. At CSU Fullerton, there is a little over five times more Hispanic clubs than there are Arab clubs; at CSU Channel Islands, there are no clubs related to the Arab identity at all (see Figure 4.3).

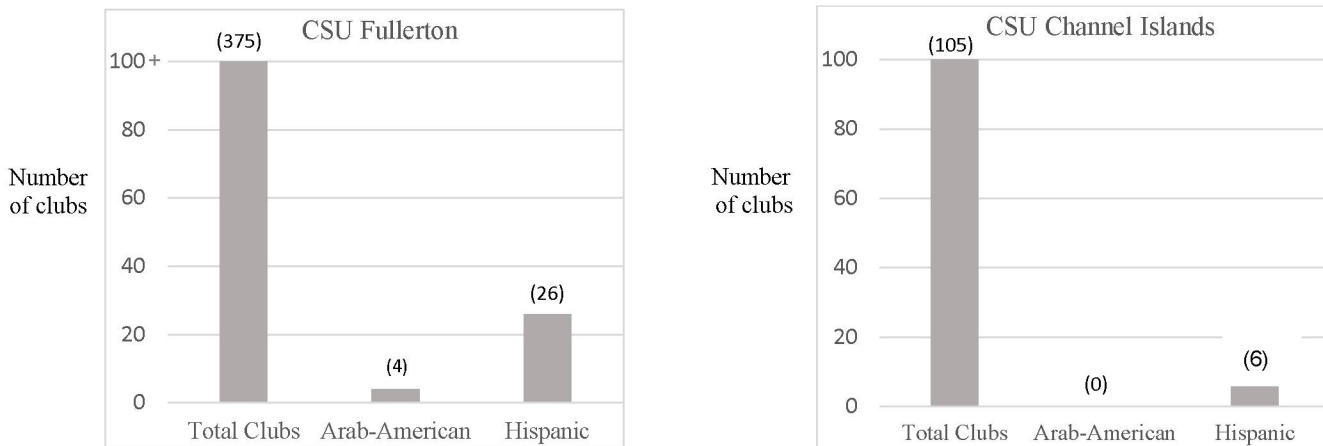


Figure 4.3 Number of Clubs at CSU Fullerton and CSU Channel Islands associated with the Arab identity and Hispanic Identity.

Next I analyze the survey data.

Research Question 2

How do Arab-American individuals feel their Arab-American identity is represented on their college campus?

The first survey question asked participants to name their Arab identity. The purpose of an open-ended question was to examine intersectionality of identities. As can be seen in Figure 4.4, the majority of participants identified as having one sub-identity (n=13). The second largest responding group listed at least two sub-identities (n=8). However, 14 participants identified with two or more intersectional identities (see Figure 4.4). These included listing American, first generation, and multiple Arab sub-identities. Only one participant identified religion as part of their identity (i.e., Coptic Orthodox, which is a Christian church based in Egypt, Northeast Africa, and the Middle East).

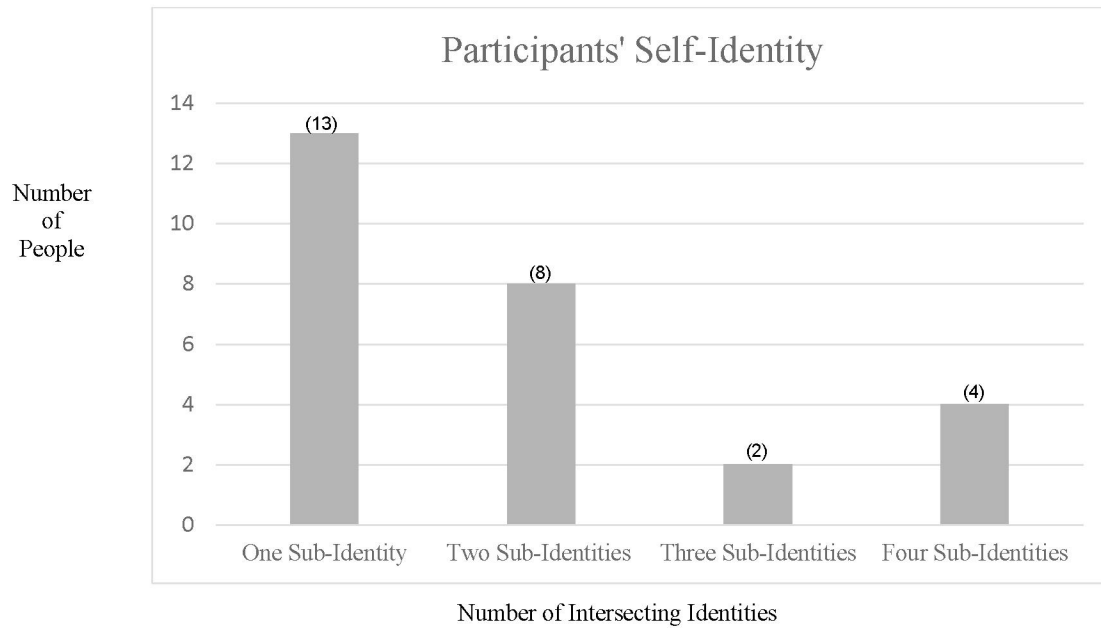


Figure 4.4 Participants' Self-Identity

The survey then inquired how others perceived the participants' identity. In 88% of the responses, participants stated that they were perceived inaccurately (see Figure 4.5).

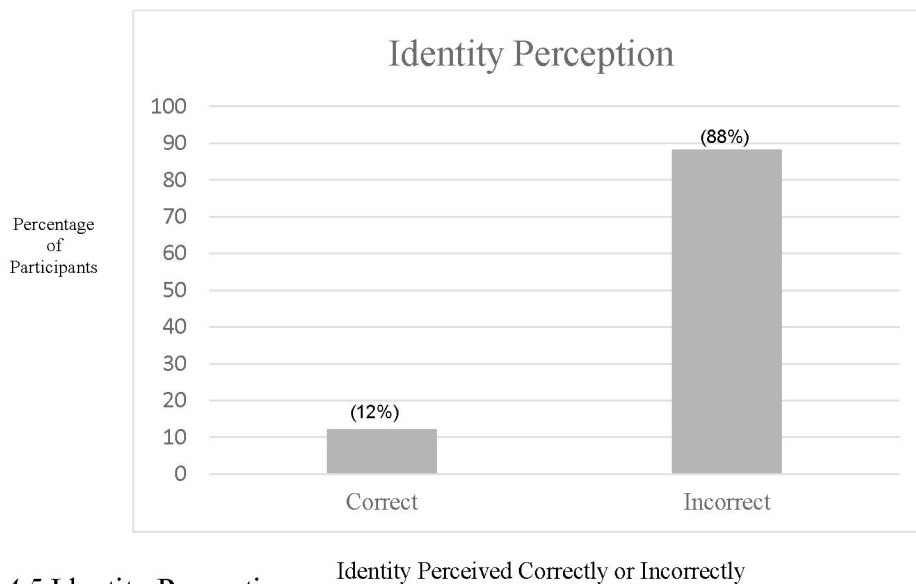


Figure 4.5 Identity Perception

The most common mistaken identities included Mexican, White, and Persian (see Figure 4.6).

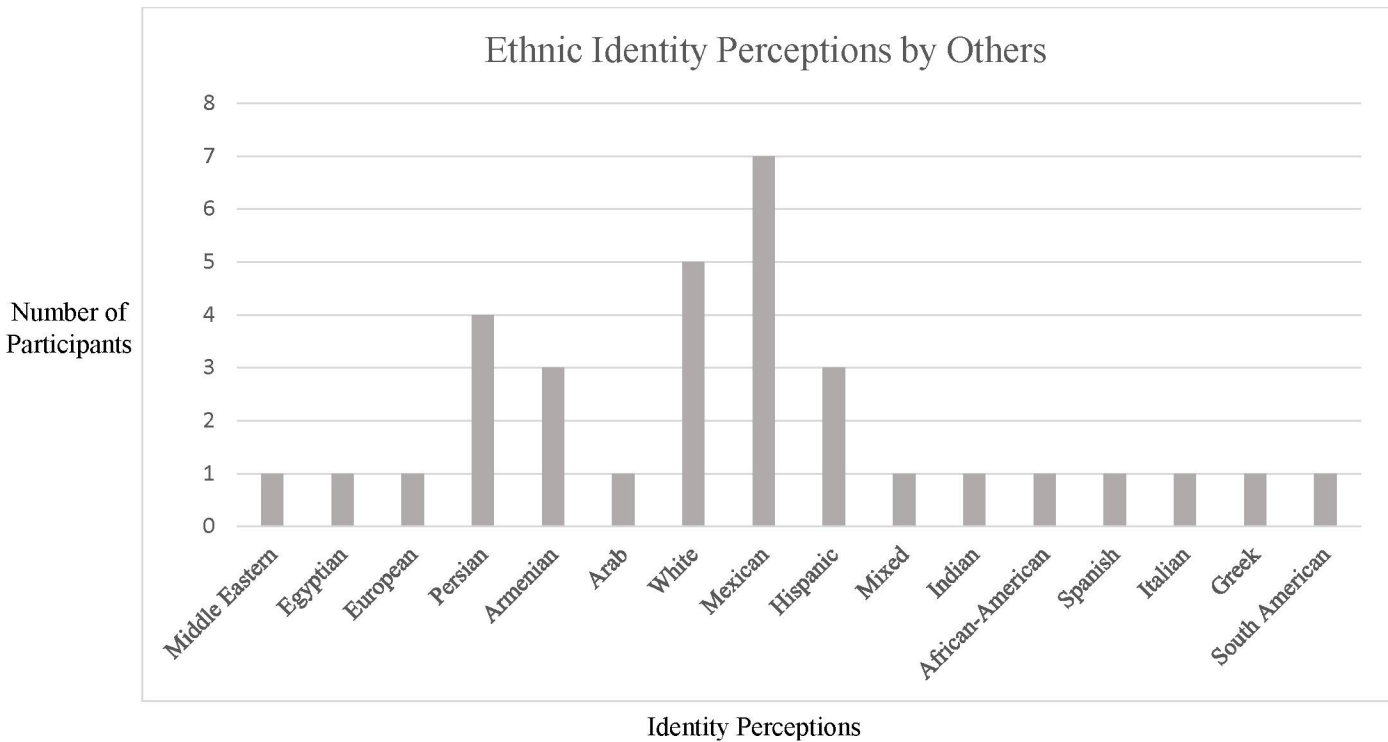


Figure 4.6 Ethnic Identity Perceptions by Others

The survey then moved onto ask a series of questions in Likert-scale format on representation of Arab identity on college campuses. The first four Likert-style questions were associated with representation on college campuses:

1. I feel like my ethnic identity is represented in the student population on my college campus.
2. I have seen a support group advertised for my ethnic identity on my college campus.
3. There is a club or organization associated with my ethnic identity on my college campus.
4. There are campus events bringing awareness of my ethnic identity.

I calculated the mean of each question to see what the average response was on a scale of 1 (not at all or never true) to 5 (extremely or always true). Figure 4.7 depicts these results. When asked about general representation on campus (Question 1), the mean was 2.08 or “slightly or seldom

true.” When asked if the participant has seen a support group advertised for their ethnic identity on their college campus (Question 2), the mean was 2.35 or “slightly or seldom true.” When asked if there is a club or organization associated with their ethnic identity on their college campus (Question 3), the mean was 3.24 or “moderately true.” When asked if their campus has events bringing awareness to the participant’s ethnic identity (Question 4), the response was 1.72 or “slightly or seldom true.” The results then suggest that participants, overall, did not experience, being represented.

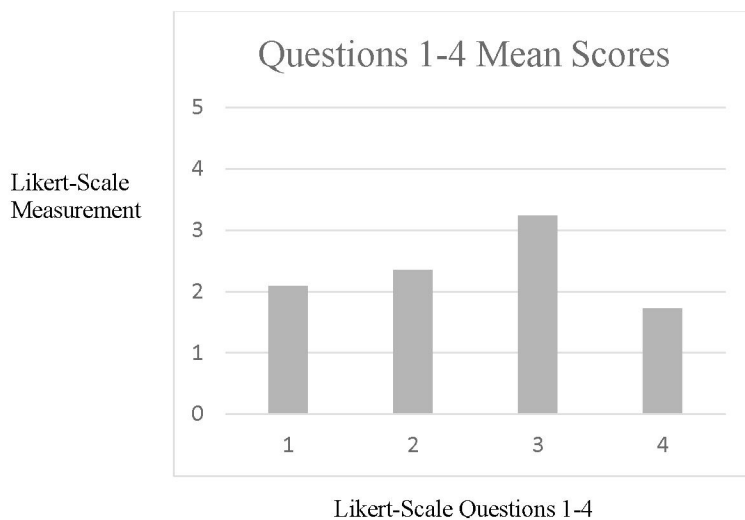


Figure 4.7 The Mean Score for Questions Regarding Arab-Identity Representation on the Participants’ College Campus.

It is important to note that the participants who marked 3 or higher for the third question indicating whether their campus had an organization for their identity are participants from CSU Campuses: Fullerton, Long Beach, and Northridge; UC Campuses: Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. All of these institutions are located in Southern California in or near Los Angeles County, a metropolitan, cosmopolitan, diverse county in California (Census Bureau, 2016). All 25 participants represented 7 of the 34 California universities. The schools the participants represented are listed in the following figure (see Figure 4.8).

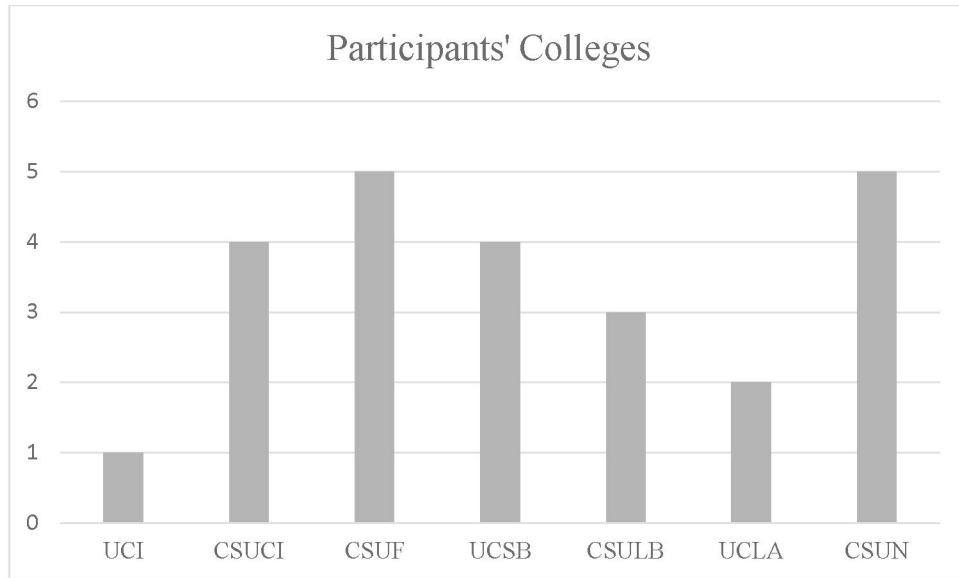


Figure 4.8 The College Participants Attend or Attended Colleges

All of these institutions are located in Southern California between Santa Barbara County and Orange County, all within 147 miles of one another.

Triangulation

It appeared that overall, there is a lack of clubs and organizations associated with the Arab-American identity on CSU and UC campuses. These data were supported by the survey responses. Those who participated in the study marked mainly 1 (not at all or never true) and 2 (slightly or seldom true). Those who marked 3 (moderately or sometimes true) or higher were from institutions that had more representation of clubs and organizations. For example, when asked to rate the statement “There are campus events bringing awareness to my racial identity,” the mean score was 3.24. Five participants marked 3 or higher for this statement: two students from UCLA, two students from UCSB, and one student from CSULB. According to the clubs and organizations search results, UCLA has seven clubs and organizations associated with the Arab-American identity and UCSB has eight. These institutions are also the top two schools with the most clubs and organizations associated with an Arab-American identities. It is likely the

mean was higher for this question compared to the others since 20% of the participants were from institutions with a diverse population on campus.

The survey results are thus not representative of the Arab-American student population in California public universities. However, these results do suggest that Arab-American students are generally not represented in campus organizations which may cause a disconnect between the students and the campus. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings and implications to higher education student services.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

The previous chapter provided data on Arab-American clubs and organizations on CSU and UC campuses and survey results from current or past Arab-American CSU or UC students. Analysis of the data collected revealed that although Southern California is known to be a diverse area, Arab-Americans lack representation in clubs and organizations at their institutions. This information was gathered by utilizing each institution's website search engine. Surveys also revealed that Arab-American students tend to feel their identity is viewed negatively. In this chapter, I discuss the findings of this study to understand the implications of the experiences that Arab-American students face during the duration of their undergraduate career. This chapter is intended to address the needs of the Arab-American population, the importance of reversing the negative stigma associated with this identity, and the significance of the university's role in ensuring that this happens. This chapter concludes with study limitations, recommendations for institutes of higher education and for future research.

Ambiguous and Missing Demographics

It is important to understand the lack of Arab representation in higher education. The findings in this study clearly suggested that Arabs felt disengaged from the university experience from the start. It began with them not having a "box" to check on the school application to having little to no representation in the student life department. One recommendation would be to expand the options on the demographic applications to allow Arabs and/or Middle Eastern students the ability to check a box that they identify with. This may be a more difficult to accomplish across the entire CSU or UC system, but within campuses own in-house data collection, this information should be easier to gather by adding additional "boxes." Due to the

complex intersectionality Arab-Americans may have, it would be most beneficial for the box to be open-ended to allow students to identify themselves accurately. This was reflected in the survey results, which showed more than half the participants had two or more subidentities.

Organizational Diversity

The lack of Arab student clubs and organizations was evident when the numbers were compared to other minority clubs and organizations. For example, CSU Fullerton had about six times more clubs and organizations associated with a Hispanic identity than Arab identities. Although clubs are typically started and run by students and it is their responsibility to make this happen, we must dissect this issue to see why very few clubs exist.

There may be many reasons why Arabs may not be starting clubs associated with their identity. As the Literature Review (Chapter 2) outlined, the Arab identity has a negative stigma in society. If an individual identifies with an identity that is negatively viewed, it is fair to presume they may not want to draw attention to this identity. When survey participants were asked to rate their experience with their Arab identity on their college campus via Likert Type Scale, a majority of the responses reported below the median threshold. Lastly, survey participants reported that a majority of people perceive their ethnic identity to be different than one it actually is, with the top two identity misperceptions being in Hispanic or White. The combination of misrepresentation and misperception may contribute to the small quantity of clubs associated with Arab identities. It would be helpful to receive encouragement from a staff or faculty to push for students to recognize their identity. It is important to add that even those Arab clubs and organizations that exist do not cover a large portion of sub-identities under the Arab identity. Out of the entire CSU and UC systems, there was no club or organization

associated specifically with the following identities: Egyptian, Moroccan, Libyan, Mauritian, Omani, Tunisian, and United States Emirates.

Future Research

Although this study did not examine staff and faculty composition of Arab origin, this would be an important topic to study for future research. A recommendation to consider is for staff in student affairs to represent this identity because student affairs professionals are typically involved in student engagement, programming, and initiatives to be as inclusive as possible to the student population. Another recommendation to consider includes student affairs staff, who identify as Arab, who could integrate the culture into programming. Future research could then examine, for example, the organizational impact of staff diversity on student representation.

Outreach and Marketing

In addition to intentional changes in the organization to ensure leaders represent diversity, it is recommended that outreach and marketing include representation of the Arab identity. Whether this is through incorporating more diversity in student staff hiring process, having representation in student body photos on brochures and online, or recognizing large events associated with the Arab community, it is important that this population is represented. If there is a concentration of communities in a particular demographic group, members of this group may choose the specific campus because of the representation. It is especially important since the few times Arabs are represented in the media, it is in a negative light, requiring even more effort to reverse this stigma and to educate the general population on this identity, as almost all study participants stated that they are perceived inaccurately by others.

Limitations of the Study

This study sheds light on the experiences of students from Southern California four-year universities. This is a limitation because not only is California a diverse state, Southern California is especially diverse compared to Central and Northern California (“2018 Most Diverse Counties,” 2018). This constraints the discussion of the experiences of other Arab students not only in other parts of California, but other parts of the country. It would be particularly interesting to learn about the experiences of Arab students in Southern or Mid-Western states. Another limitation was the small sample size of the participants. A larger sample size may have provided more insight on the experiences of Arab-American students. Lastly, a majority of the participants were females; this is a limitation because there were not enough males to provide the male perspective. However, the majority of persons attending college are female. There were also no other gender identities used, resulting in a limitation on Arabs with different gender identities. It may be beneficial to see how the intersectionality of other identities effect the experiences of individuals.

Because of the limited time I had to conduct this study, I had to rely on snowball sampling to gather volunteers. I reached out to my Arab-American network through social media and asked them to reach out to their Arab-American network,~~and so on~~. I contacted a few Arab-American clubs pages from other institutions and asked they repost my advertisement for research participants. I learned that many of the Arab-Americans in my network attended universities out-of-state, so this social media tactic was beneficial for research participant recruitment, but beyond the scope of this study.

A gap found in the literature was programs and events held around the Arab-American identity. Aside from the Arab demographic being unidentifiable on the Census, there were little data found on the Arab-American student experience. There was no publicly available

information found on how to better the Arab-American student experience or ways institutions have celebrated Arab-American awareness.

Concluding Thoughts

Despite these limitations, this thesis study explored the importance of an overlooked identity. My hope is that this thesis encourage educational leaders to examine their practices and see if their practices cater to the Arab-American community. I also hope that students are inspired to take the initiative to start clubs and student affairs leaders are sensitive to the unmet needs of this overlooked population.

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Appendix A

Social Media Recruitment Advertisement

Understanding the Arab-American Experience on College Campuses

Seeking participants to complete an online,
anonymous survey on their experience as an Arab-American.

Survey takes approximately 15 minutes.

If you are...

- 18 years or older
- Identify as an Arab-American
- An undergraduate student or a recent graduate (the last 2 years)
- Attended a CSU or a UC

Please contact me!

Suesue Eldanaf
M.A. Higher Education Student at CSUCI
suesue.eldanaf@csuci.edu

(You may text me if you have my # or
contact me via social media)

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research *Information to Consider About this Research*

The following information is provided to assist you on deciding to take part in a research study of Arab- American experiences on college campuses. Please read the following carefully and ask me any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

The purpose of this study is to understand the Arab-American experience on college campuses and ways Arab- Americans may or may not feel supported and represented in their campus community. To participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years old. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be one of twenty- five participants. By participating in this study, future higher education leaders will be able to learn more about Arab-Americans and can utilize this information to better serve this population. With learning more about the experiences Arab-Americans encounter due to their ethnic identity, educational leaders can create methods, strategies, and implement resources to provide an a more inviting environment for this population. If you agree to participate in this study, I will provide you with a survey link. This survey will include 10 questions in Likert-Scale format.

A risk may include emotional distress when reflecting on self-identity. If you experience any emotional discomfort or distress, you can terminate the process at any time and you have access to me and Dr. Tiina Itkonen should any issues arise. Should you contact me and Dr. Itkonen, you will be told about counseling resources to help you with whatever issues that may have arisen. The counseling session may have a cost and will not be waived. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your current or future relationship with your institution. Some of the answers you provide may be personal. Your answers will be confidential and you will be assigned a code number when you enter the study. Your institution will be identified as a Northern Californian university, Central Californian University, or Southern Californian university. Only participating in this study is voluntary. **You may skip any question you choose and you may withdraw at any time.** The benefits of participating in this study are related to improving the student experience for Arab-Americans. Federal regulations require research records to be retained for five years after the completion of the research.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Salwa Eldanaf at salwa.eldanaf100@myci.csuci.edu or 310-508-7721 and Dr. Tiina Itkonen at tiina.itkonen@csuci.edu or 805-437-3249. For questions or issues regarding your rights as a subject, please feel free to contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 805-437-8496 or via email at irb@csuci.edu.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to questions I have (if any). I give consent to participate in this study.

Your name (printed) _____ Date (mm/dd/yy) _____

Your signature _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of this study.

Revised 2/1/2018

Appendix C

Survey

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Name of undergraduate institution
4. What ethnic identity do others often perceive you as (e.g., People oftentimes think I am Indian).

Rate how true each of the following is of you, from not at all or never true, to extremely or always true using the following 5-point scale:

- 1 Not at all or never true
- 2 Slightly or seldom true
- 3 Moderately or sometimes true
- 4 Highly or usually true
- 5 Extremely or always true

1. I feel like my ethnic identity is represented in the student population on my college campus.
2. I have seen a support group advertised for my ethnic identity on my college campus.
3. There is a club or organization associated with my ethnic identity on my college campus.
4. There are campus events bringing awareness of my ethnic identity.
5. I learned about my ethnic identity in school growing up.
6. I have had a teacher or professor state a microaggression* toward me due to my ethnic and/or religious identity or perceived religious identity. (Definition of microaggression: A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority).
7. I have had someone reference the 9/11 terrorist attack with my ethnic, religious, or perceived religious identity from my college campus.
8. My campus has educational leaders who share the same ethnic identity as me.
9. I feel like my ethnic identity is positively represented in the media.
10. I can express my ethnic or religious identity without worrying about what others may think.

Appendix D

The National Institute of Health (NIH) Certificate of Completion

