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Intergenerational Cultural Transition: Iraqi Female  
Migrants Talk About Cultural Adaptation and  
Preservation in New Zealand

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## ABSTRACT

Research on immigration and cultural adaptation has only recently caught the attention of researchers, especially in the field of psychology, and this area remains relatively unexplored in New Zealand. The aim of this study is to explore how Iraqi migrants talk about, and make sense of Arab culture and the preservation of Arab culture in Western society. Arabs face various challenges when resettling in Western society, a society which is considerably different from Arab society. Arab mothers are concerned that their children will take onboard Western values and customs, which go against Arab culture, thus risk blackening the family's face. Arab mothers in particular expressed their concern for their daughters who are raised in Western society, which encourages behaviours that are considered inappropriate according to Arab culture. Concern for daughters stem from the fact that female Arabs are considered the honour and reputation of Arab family. The methodology used is that of qualitative discourse analysis. Ten semi-structured interviews with five Iraqi mothers, and their daughters were carried out. The participants were interviewed about the processes of cultural adaptation and preservation in Western society. Their talk was analysed in relation to how the participants constructed, the other, Arab culture, the bint – the unmarried virgin daughter, and the Arab mother. Most important, on the basis of these four issues we were able to examine the practice of intergenerational cultural preservation. Findings exemplified that Arab mothers in Western society seek to preserve Arab culture and beliefs, whereas Arab daughters who are raised in Western society want cultural conservation, which will free them from cultural and parental control. In general, Arab culture and identity is defined in terms of difference and exclusion from dominant sectors of Western society. Their sense of difference and exclusion, in turn, informs many of their social behaviours and activities. Although the participants constructed a distinctive identity for themselves in relation to Western society in New Zealand, they were also keen to some extent to establish membership to that society despite their sense of difference and exclusion.

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