

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

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

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Psychology
At Massey University
Albany, New Zealand

Rose Joudi

2002

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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like express my great appreciation to my supervisor Kerry Chamberlain for all those times I ran to him for advice and guidance and for all those emails he would instantly reply to, regardless of what he had on his hands. I would also like to thank ANZCS for giving me the opportunity to present my thesis. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the participants that had agreed to partake in this study, without you I would not have made it. Special thanks to my family who have been supportive and understanding during my highs and my lows, encouraging me and putting up with me during this stressful period, and a big thank you to my dear and close friend Kanaway who has been my friend and confider during so many rough times. I would also like to say a HUGE Thank you to Tim, thanks loads for all those insightful words whenever I got stuck, and especially the times when we read the horoscopes! Last, but not least a special dedication goes to my beloved Ayman, who has been my solid rock, my advisor, my mentor, my source of motivation and inspiration. Your love has given me the strength to go on. I Love You!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER ONE	6
INTRODUCTION	6
Ethnic Identity and Acculturation	6 vi
Research on Arab Immigrants	4
Arabs and Arab Culture	6
Arab Migration to Western Societies	9
The Arab Family: Functional and Structural Roles	10
Arab Daughters: Sharaf and Sumaa	12
The Arab Family in Western Society	13
Arabs in New Zealand	15
The Aims and Objectives of this study	18
CHAPTER TWO	19
METHOD	19
Participants	19
Procedure	21
Analysis of data	22
Reflexivity	23
Methodology	26
CHAPTER THREE	29
FINDINGS	29
1. Constructing the other	29
2. Constructing Arab Culture	39
3. Constructing the bint	47
4. Constructing the Arab Mother	55
5. Intergenerational Cultural Preservation	69
CHAPTER FOUR	79
DISCUSSION	79
REFERENCES	88
GLOSSARY	94
APPENDIX A	95
ANZCS LETTER	95

APPENDIX B:.....	97
INTERVIEW POINTS	97
APPENDIX C.....	99
INFORMATION SHEETS.....	99
APPENDIX D	102
CONSENT FORMS	102