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Rawan Hasan

Cultural Resilience in Diasporic Communities: The Case of the Arab Community
in Greater Seattle Area

Rawan Hasan

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Committee:

Rachel Berney

Renee Cheng

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ABSTRACT

Cultural Resilience of Diasporic Communities: The Case of the Arab Community in Greater
Seattle Area

Rawan Hasan

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Rachel Berney

Urban Design and Planning

Urban design and the placemaking profession are centered on a dominant model of spatial production of the public realm. Non-dominant groups, including the immigrant communities like Arabs, are underrepresented and often misrepresented in public spaces. This research aims first to underscore the importance of understanding immigrant communities in terms of the social integration and cohesion that emerges from multicultural representation, inclusiveness, and social capital; second, it aims to provide a reference that serves community planners and designers and placemaking professionals with culturally-aware lenses in placemaking.

Qualitative storytelling interviews were used in collecting the data in order to explore the phenomena in rich details, which cannot be determined in short-response interviews. Through the 14 conducted interviews, three predominant dimensions of resilience emerged that linked the

14 stories together: robustness, rapidity, and enhancement. When explaining the three dimensions in a graph, they form the “resilience triangle.” When a transition to the U.S. occurs, a loss of functionality is likely to happen due to the enormous environmental, political, economic, and cultural changes that people encounter when they immigrate. How much functionality is lost mainly depends on robustness. The time needed for an individual to return to the normal trajectory of functionality represents their rapidity. The learning and adaptation process people go through as they return to functionality can be represented as enhancement.

Where someone is in the resilience triangle might influence two major aspects that are crucial to the non-dominant groups’ representation in the public realm. One of these aspects is public participation. Where somebody is in the triangle might influence the interest or ability to participate in the government, planning, and design work. The resilience triangle can inform what people bring to the table and whether they can be on the table or not, or whether they would be interested in being on the table. The other aspect is people’s position within the triangle and how this might influence people’s design preferences and inform the community planner and designer processes.

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PREFACE

I moved to Seattle from Jordan in the summer of 2017. This big transnational experience changed my life dramatically. I was born and raised in a monocultural collectivist society that values social relationships over privacy and space and orients towards societal units like family, relatives, friends, and social groups. Before I came to Seattle, I had a stable life. I started my professional career, joined a graduate school and had the support of my family and friends.

When I moved to Seattle, I had a tough time adjusting to life in the US. Living in a multi-cultural society that privileges individualism was a shocking experience. I experienced feeling lonely, different, and excluded. After moving and settling in a new and foreign community, I was searching for a place where I felt that I fit, was included, and belonged.

One year after moving to Seattle, I joined the Master of Urban Design and Planning program, which happened to start one month after giving birth to my first child, my daughter Anne. In that year, I lived through many hardships balancing motherhood and school under new cultural norms while being away from the support of my friends and family. By using my position as a graduate student at UW, I dove into school and found a sense of community among a new "family" and support system of wonderful cohort and faculty members.

While I have found a comfortable community among my academic peers, the experience of being a first-generation immigrant does not escape my everyday interactions with the world around me. Aside from balancing the life of being a mother, an active participant in my community, and a student, I am constantly wondering what the true meaning of home, identity, culture, and community is. These questions have become more intense through raising my daughter. Child-rearing in the diaspora brings to light many difficult and complicated feelings of

connectedness to my own family. My daughter will grow up in a different culture and mindset and have different answers to the same questions I ask myself daily. It makes me scared and deeply curious about the answers to the questions we will both continue to face as Arab women navigating an American space. These inquiries inspired me to center my thesis on the cultural resilience in diasporic communities. Through qualitative storytelling interviews with Arab immigrants in Greater Seattle, I wanted to know how their transnational experiences shaped their definition of home, culture, identity, and community. I am curious about the Arab sense of place and the role of the sense of place in immigrant communities' resilience. In this research, I aim to cultivate inclusion in the public realm and represent a holistic sense of place. It is important to me to provide diverse and culturally aware lenses for urban designers and placemaking professionals who are centered on a dominant model of spatial production of the public realm. Furthermore, I hope my research findings answer my own questions of belonging and autonomy so I can grow and share them with my daughter as she grows.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration is one of the major forces shaping the world today. People immigrate for many reasons, with many implications. The immigrant community becomes part of society and changes the social structure of the cities. Cities evolve corresponding to the changes in their social structure, and it is crucial to understand the experience of immigrant communities and their influence in shaping cities today. The immigration process holds many hardships and adversities. Immigrants face many social, cultural, linguistic, economic, and political changes that affect every side of immigrants' life dramatically.

This research studies the transnational experience of immigrants and people in diaspora, which captures the process of movement and settlement across international borders in which individuals and groups shape multiple networks of connection to their country of origin while at the same time settling into a new country. This work tries to investigate and reveal how immigrant communities deal with the hardships and adversities that they face through their transnational experiences and how they continue to adapt and develop in their new life. It explores ways to support the cultural resilience of diasporic communities and aspects that affect multi-culture societies' social integration cohesion.

More specifically, this study examines the case of the Arab community in Greater Seattle Area. It tries to answer the question of “How is the Arab community in Greater Seattle Area resilient in the context of diasporic-driven cultural/social change? And what are the impacts of the sense of place¹ on its resilience?” Resilient in this context refers to the capacity to deal with the transnational change and to continue to develop.

¹ *Sense of place* is a concept used to characterize the relationship between people and spatial settings.

Qualitative interviews were used in collecting the data along with qualitative documents like newspapers and social media. The interviews were storytelling interviews since the research aims to explore the phenomena in rich details, which cannot be determined from short responses. The participants' selection process and the number of participants will be indicated in the research approach chapter.

The purpose of this research is twofold: first, to underscore the importance of understanding immigrant communities in terms of the social integration and cohesion that emerges from multicultural representation, inclusiveness, and social capital²; second, to provide a reference that serves community planners and designers and placemaking professionals with culturally-aware lenses in placemaking.

Arabs were affected by the September 11 attacks; they became subject to special examination in American society and faced a degree of both discrimination and acceptance. Accordingly, there was a rise in hate crimes targeting the Arab American community. Washington State is one of the six highest states in hate crimes targeting Arab Americans. In 2016, which is the most recent data available, Seattle reported 118 hate crimes against Arab Americans.

Arab Americans are experiencing pressure to decide on their cultural identification. If they are American and White, as the U.S. Census suggests, they deny their culture. And if they are Arabs, they feel they are labeled as terrorists and thus risk harassment. This research attempts to investigate the dynamics around Arab cultural identification in Seattle.

Moreover, it examines the factors that shape the Arab immigrant communities' ability to endure their transnational experience and hardships and the factors that affect how quickly recovery

² *Social capital* refers to the trust between people and institutions and the sense of belonging to a society.

levels are achieved. It also tries to capture the quality of recovery processes in terms of learning and adapting and the capacity to deal with change and to continue to develop. Questions were asked, such as the following: How do these communities protect, maintain, and practice their culture? How are they exposed to the new cultures? How do they resist the change? Furthermore, this research will explore what is the role of the sense of place in influencing and impacting these communities and their resilience? And what is the influence of the built environment design on social integration cohesion and place attachment?

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Arabs And Arab Identification in the U.S.

Arabs are represented in the twenty-two Arabic-speaking countries (figure 1). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the primary ethnic identification is derived from responses to the ancestry question on the long (sample) form of the 2000 U.S. Census. Census data on “Arabs” include the responses Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Palestinian, Moroccan, Arab or Arabic, and the following countries were collapsed as “Other Arab”: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (*Total Ancestry Reported Report*, 2010). This thesis will include the other Arabic-speaking countries of Somalia, Sudan, Mauritania, and Comoros, which are not aggregated as Arab in census reports. However, they are considered part of the Arab league. The Arab League, which refers to the union of the twenty-two Arab-speaking African and Asian countries, consists of different regions that share unique traditions and cultural norms: the Gulf, Maghreb, and Mashreq countries.

diverse group in terms of religious affiliations and practices. Most Arabs are Muslim, with a minority following other religions, largely Christianity.

Paragraph on the problematic census definitions, etc.

Arabs in the U.S. Census Bureau are considered White. The census was aiming to include an ethnic classification for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) populations using "MENA" as an ethnic category ("2015 Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East and North Africa Meeting Summary and Main Findings," 2016). However, in 2018, the Census Bureau announced that it would not include a "MENA" category. The 2020 census had the following options for race: white, black, Asian, American Indian and Native Hawaiian, having nothing that represented the MENA regions, which left the option for Arabs to either choose white or to identify as "some other race."

The problematic aspect with considering Arabs as white is in erasing their culture, identity and community. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee petitioned the Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency in 2012 to designate the MENA populations as a minority/disadvantaged community (Wiltz, 2014).

Arabs immigrated to the U.S. in many of the various waves of immigrants from the Arab World. Arab Americans are American citizens of either Arab ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage or identity, who identify themselves as Arab. Arabs in the U.S. usually use "Arab American" when identifying oneself as an Arab American and by country of origin, or as an Arab American alone.

Half of all Arab Americans have personally experienced discrimination in the past because of their ethnicity or country of origin, and 6 out of 10 Arab Americans are concerned about future

discrimination. Nearly 8 out of 10 Arab Americans who are Muslim are concerned about facing discrimination in the future (*Arab American Voters 2016: Identity and Political Concerns*, 2016).

1.1.3 Problems Arabs Face Living in the U.S.

The terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, affected Arab Americans' lives whether traveling, driving, working, walking through a neighborhood, or sitting in their homes. Arabs became a subject of special examination in American society (Cainkar, 2002).

There was a rise in hate crimes targeting the Arab American community as well as people perceived as Arab/Muslim after the September 11 attacks and the US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq (*Arab American Institute Foundation Issue Brief: Hate Crimes*, 2019). According to the Arab American Institute Report 2016, Washington State is one of the six highest states in hate crime targeting Arab Americans. Seattle reported 118 hate crimes against Arab Americans for an average of 16.8 hate crime incidents recorded per 100,000 people in 2016 (*Arab American Voters 2016: Identity and Political Concerns*, 2016).

Accordingly, Arab Americans are experiencing pressure to decide on their cultural identification, whether they are Arabs or Americans with little area for in between, which results in feelings of prevention, confusion, and anger. "If they decide they are American and White, as the U.S. Census tells them, they deny their culture. If they identify as Arab, they feel that they are labeled as terrorists and thus risk harassment" (Beiten, 2005).

Many questions arise here: How do Arabs identify themselves? What influences their identity? How do they practice Arab culture in the U.S.? Such questions might open a dialogue and provide more in-depth information, and that is what the storytelling interviews will try to capture

while finding answers to the research question: How is the Arab community in Greater Seattle Area resilient in the context of diasporic-driven cultural/social and political change?

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF RESILIENCE

Many definitions of resilience have been introduced in the literature, with no generally accepted definition (Cutter & Finch, 2008; Klein, Nicholls, & Thomalla, 2003; Manyena, 2006). It is important to highlight that various kinds of literature and research backgrounds have focused on resilience and related concepts, including ecology, economics, engineering, sociology, psychology and organizational research (e.g., Berkes & Ross, 2013; Carpenter et al., 2001; Holling, 1973; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008; Tierney, K., & Bruneau, 2007). The first use of the term was by Holling in 1973; he defined resilience as a "measure of the persistence of systems and their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables" (Holling, 1973). Resilience definitions vary in focus from the metaphorical to the definite. Resilience can be a metaphor applied to people and related to sustainability, and it can be a measurable quantity applied to studies of social-ecological systems (Carpenter et al., 2001).

Most definitions of resilience highlight resilience as the ability to adapt after a disturbance. However, there are many differences in specifying the forms of adaptation resilience can take and the type of disruptive events and shocks resilience adopts. The literature identified different system configurations (what the dimensions of resilience are) and which disturbances are of interest. In this context, it is important to mention that resilience has been more conceptualized as an ability or process than as an outcome (Brown, 1996; Norris et al., 2008) and it has been more conceptualized as adaptability than as stability (e.g., Norris et al., 2008; Waller & Ph, 2001).

2.1.1 Relationship to Vulnerability

The concept of vulnerability generally means the potential for harm, which varies over time, space, and different social groups. Vulnerability can be identified by the physical environment and by the social conditions. Social vulnerability can be described as the susceptibility of a social group to the impacts of the disturbance, and its ability to recover from them. “Susceptibility is not only a function of the demographic characteristics of the population (age, gender, wealth, etc.), but also more complex constructs such as health care provision, social capital, and access to lifelines (e.g., Support, care, emergency services, emergency response personnel, goods, services)” (Cutter & Emrich, 2006).

There are many conceptualizations of the relationship between resilience and vulnerability within the literature. Most scholars conceptualize an oppositional relationship of resilience and vulnerability, where vulnerability is often defined as the antonym of resilience (e.g., Norris et al., 2008; Tierney, K., & Bruneau, 2007). However, on the contrary, others have conceptualized the relationship of resilience and vulnerability as an overlap, like Cutter & Finch (2008), where both concepts are not completely exclusive nor inclusive. There are many characteristics that have an impact on either vulnerability or resilience, while others have the impact of vulnerability and resilience, such as social characteristics like socioeconomic status, education, and insurance.

Vulnerability is conceptualized in literature as a pre-event process, while resilience is thought of as a post-event process. However, some scholars conceptualize both vulnerability and resilience as post-event processes. Norris and his colleagues theorize vulnerability as a dysfunctional post-event consistent process, and resilience as a post-event functioning or sometimes adaptive re-functioning process (Norris et al., 2008).

Resilience and Vulnerability

Scholars have made efforts to study the factors that shape social vulnerability. Some factors have a general consensus, including a lack of access to information and technology, a lack of social capital (including social networks and connections), limited access to political power and representation, lower levels of socioeconomic status, household composition, disability, minority status, and others. Although scholars have agreed on the major factors that cause social vulnerability, differences arise in the selection of specific variables that represent these broader concepts (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis, & Wisner, 1994; Cutter, 2005; Cutter, Boruff, Shirley, Cutter, & Carolina, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Tierney, Lindell, & Perry, 2001).

In the resilience literature, there are many types of resilience related to different systems. “Built environment resilience” encompasses physical and infrastructure systems and their characteristics to absorb harm and the loss of function; “organizational resilience” indicates the organizations and institutions that manage the physical systems and their properties that adjust their capacity to survive a disturbance; “economic resilience” encompasses the ability of an entity or system to maintain economic function when shocked; “ecological resilience” indicates the ability of ecological systems to absorb disturbances. The context of this research addresses “social resilience,” which demonstrates community characteristics that make a community more adaptable to disturbance and that make social groups either more vulnerable or more adaptable. Social vulnerability indicators can also be indicators of social resilience.

Some of the factors that shape social resilience are demographics and household composition variables like age, gender, race, income, education, occupation, English proficiency, and household composition. Household composition is furthered shaped by the elderly, disability,

and single parenting. Community competence is another factor that shapes social resilience. This factor can be described with variables like local understanding of risk, counseling services, absence of psychopathologies (alcohol, drug, spousal abuse), health and wellness (low rates of mental illness, stress-related outcomes) and high satisfaction of quality of life (Cutter & Finch, 2008). Also, people-place connections and social capital can be factors that influence vulnerability; a lack of connections and social capital is one of the factors that many scholars addressed (e.g., Cutter et al., 2003; Magis, 2010; Norris et al., 2008), like community networks, community and social organizations, access to resources, improvements in communications, risk awareness, and preparedness (Magis, 2010).

The terminology of cultural resilience has different meanings depending on the context. The concept of cultural resilience was first introduced in social-ecological system literature. Crane defined “cultural resilience” as “the ability to maintain livelihoods that satisfy both material and moral (normative) needs in the face of major stresses and shocks—environmental, political, economic, or otherwise” (Crane, 2010). In the context of diaspora, the terminology "cultural resilience" is rarely introduced. It refers to the capacity to deal with change and to continue to develop, whether this change is political, economic, or environmental, like natural disasters. The cultural characteristics of diaspora involve the material and imaginative connections between people and "territorial identity," often over diasporic space and via diasporic networks. Bronwen Walter clarifies, "Diaspora involves feeling ‘at home’ in the area of settlement while retaining significant identification outside it" (Walter, 2001). People in diaspora tend to form a new form of a sense of belonging towards their area of settlement after a period of time of settling in their new destinations. However, these feelings do not influence their cultural identification, which is usually connected to their former territories.

2.1.3 Resilience Measuring

Measuring resilience has dynamic settings that need to specify temporal, spatial, social, and management scales. The challenges in building methods of measurement for resilience lay in the multi-layered nature of resilience, which brings the question of what and to what of resilience? In other words, to measure resilience, we have to specify which system configuration (what domain and attributes of resilience) and which change/disturbances are of interest (Many of the resilience literature indicated hazards as the disturbance) (Carpenter et al., 2001). Referring to the main question of this research, "How is the Arab community in Greater Seattle Area resilient in the context of diasporic-driven cultural/social and political change?" this research will investigate the social and cultural system using social, economic, legal, and spatial attributes that address diaspora as a main change/disturbance.

Specifying the time scale for measuring resilience depends on the attributes we may wish to examine, which might range from long-term scales, like climate change, to short-term scales, like storms or hurricanes. "Time scale affects the classification of system components as fast or slow, variables or parameters" (Carpenter et al., 2001). This research deals with diaspora as a main change/disturbance, which involves long-term scale of cultural, social, economic, and legal components.

The spatial scale of measuring resilience varies from household to regional scales. The differences in scale and the unit of analysis incorporate different measuring attributes. For example, attributes like livelihood and entitlements are important on the household level. However, at the national and regional levels, the gross domestic product (GDP) is often used as an attribute of resilience (Cutter & Finch, 2008; *International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.*, 2004). Relating to the main research question, "How is the Arab community in Greater Seattle

Area resilient in the context of diasporic-driven cultural/social and political change?” the research will be confined on Greater Seattle Area as a unit of analysis and will incorporate measuring attributes that relate to the individual and community levels.

Resilience can be assessed by the functionality of a system after a disturbance or by the time it takes for a system to return to pre-disturbance levels of performance. The majority of assessment methods are quantitative and use selected attributes or variables as proxies, because most of the time, it is difficult to quantify resilience without external reference to validate the calculations (Cutter & Finch, 2008). Accordingly, the attributes that usually assess levels of resilience are either comparing the resilience between places or assessing resilience over time. Identifying the variables of resilience attributes can be a subjective process as well as a weighting process. For that, it is important to include criteria in selecting variables like validity, sensitivity, robustness, reproducibility, scope, availability, affordability, simplicity, and relevance (Birkmann, 2006).

2.2 IMMIGRATION PROCESS

The immigration process holds many hardships and adversities. Immigrants face many social, cultural, linguistic, economic, and political changes that affect every side of immigrants' lives dramatically. Immigration, planned or unplanned, is a transition that often entails the separation of community ties, the loss of social connections and familial bonds. It can mean the loss of sources and systems of meaning that are often taken for granted. Many scholars have discussed the harmful social and emotional challenges and consequences related to immigration and settlement in new or unfamiliar environments (e.g., Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Furnham, A., & Bochner, 1986; Sonn, 2002). The literature identifies many factors leading to involuntary or unplanned immigration like disasters, both natural and anthropogenic, in addition to factors that

influence people to immigrate voluntarily, like looking for better opportunities. Some scholars suggest corruption in the economic and political systems might be a factor that causes immigration (e.g., Ariu & Squicciarini, 2013; Poprawe, 2015; Wornall, 2012).

2.2.1 Immigrants' Adaptation Process

Adaptation is the process of change while responding to a new environment. Adaptation is increasingly significant when a social change affects important aspects of life over comparatively short periods of time, like the major transnational change that immigrants face. Many scholars addressed the adaptation process and the social and psychological consequences of a cross-cultural transition (e.g., Furnham, A., & Bochner, 1986; Hooberman, Rasmussen, & Keller, 2010; Perez et al., 2009; Sonn, 2002). Intercultural interaction often requires immigrants to exchange boundaries and identities and make revisions to meet the stresses and challenges of new contexts. In these contexts, immigrant groups often find themselves in minority positions, and this has implications for the way in which they adapt and convey their ethnic and cultural identities to intercultural contact, including integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. The adaptation process enables individuals to adjust behavior to conform to the dominant cultural norms⁴ and values in the new society.

2.2.2 Immigrants' Vulnerability and Resilience

Many of the literature that addressed social vulnerability emphasized the immigrant community as a socially vulnerable group (e.g., Bhatia & Ram, '2001; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Perez et al., 2009; Wornall, 2012). Immigrants' circumstances increase the likelihood of social isolation,

⁴ A dominant culture refers to cultural practice that is dominant within a society, in which various cultures are present. It can refer to a religious, language, social value or custom.

which is a lack of engagement in social ties, institutional connections, or community participation. This is due to missing the support of friends, family, and extended social circles, which is a big factor for most immigrants. Those who come from societies where traditional support structures within communities are strong can find that they feel lost, alienated, and disorientated when moving to a country like the U.S. where individualism is often prized over the family. These circumstances and isolation affect immigrants' susceptibility to ensure immigration changes (Hossen, 2012). Immigrants in recipient destinations that do not have similar social groups are more likely to be isolated with limited social and family networks to activate in times of crisis. For example, Latinos in areas with relatively small Latino populations rely more on emergency departments for their care than do Latinos in areas with relatively large Latino populations, and physicians in communities with small Latino populations report more language barriers and problems in communicating with patients compared to physicians in major Latino centers (Derose, José J. Escarce, & Lurie, 2007).

There is a wealth of literature that illustrates factors that influence immigrants' vulnerability; however, not many address their resilience. Many scholars (e.g., Hooberman et al., 2010; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Sleijpen et al., 2016, (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005). suggest that despite trauma, immigrant and refugee communities demonstrate levels of resilience that facilitate their resettlement process. Some scholars particularly mention undocumented immigrants as a vulnerable group that faces many hardships due to their legal status (e.g., Perez et al., 2009). Maddi and Khoshaba's proposed that early life experiences that are filled with challenges boost people's resilience and prompt them to pursue success (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005).

The literature that addressed gender differences, highlighted that women perceive themselves more vulnerable to risks and perceive greater severity of the consequences and possibility of failure compared to men (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004; LaGrange, Randy L., 1989; May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010; Reid & Konrad, 2004).

2.3 SENSE OF BELONGING

Belonging captures the idea of being accepted as a part of something. It is a simple word for a huge concept. The sense of belonging is a human need, just like the essential needs for food and shelter. This feeling is essential in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely negative emotions. When talking about immigrant communities, it is essential to mention a sense of belonging. Due to the transnational experiences that immigrants go through, they develop a great need for a sense of belonging. Immigrants develop forms of belonging to groups that share their ethnicity, culture, religion, or language, and after a while, they start to develop a form of belonging to their society or place (Salami et al., 2019).

Place attachment is the sense of being attached and belonging to a place; it is an emotional bond that an individual develops towards a place. It is influenced by the individual's personal experiences. There is a substantial amount of research in the environmental psychology literature that established reasons that make a place "meaningful" for individuals to be attached to include physical and social aspects (e.g., Idalgo, 2001; Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

Immigrant communities reveal the physical environment as a very meaningful aspect of social life. Attachment to place is a characteristic feature of life in immigrant communities (Fried,

2000). The development of a sense of spatial identity is a critical component of attachment experiences for immigrant communities.

The environmental psychology literature has a considerable amount of research that addresses the factors that influence developing a sense of belonging by individuals. Many scholars mentioned that factors like social, institutional and academic integration and cohesion within diverse groups and societies enabled individuals to establish and increase positive feelings of belonging (e.g., Johnson et al., 2007; Maestas, Vaquera, & Zehr, 2007). Social integration and cohesion had a positive impact on immigrants' satisfaction and sense of belonging in host countries (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2014).

2.4 ARAB AMERICAN RESILIENCE

Similar to other groups of immigrants, Arabs immigrate for involuntary or unplanned reasons, like disasters, both natural and anthropogenic. Or they immigrate voluntarily to look for better opportunities and to change their previous frustrating lives. Being an Arab imposes certain limitations on individuals based on cultural norms; some scholars addressed limitations on Arab women, like being restricted from access to education or having limitations in education choices and career advancement (e.g., Al-ahmadi, 2017; Al-asfour, 2017; Islam, 2014).

2.4.1 Discrimination against Arab Americans and Muslims in the U.S.

There is a wealth of literature that addresses discrimination against Arabs in the U.S. after 9/11 (e.g., Bilici, 2010; Boosahda, 2003; Cainkar, 2002; Kira, Amer, & Wrobel, 2014; Kiskowski, 2017; Nagel & Staeheli, 2010). Arabs became subject to special examination in American

society facing different forms of discrimination and being labeled as terrorists. Scholars covered many areas of discrimination in the job market, education, and in daily activities like, checking-in at airports, shopping or even walking on streets.

2.4.2 Arab Representation in the Public Realm and Arab Place Attachment

The literature has been increasingly focused on the ways in which space and place influence design, culture, and politics, and vice versa. The spatial dimension is influenced by ethnicity, culture, and nationalism. It is important here to mention the difference in meaning between space and place: space is often defined by an abstract measurable conception while place refers to the expanded cultural meanings people invest in or attach to a specific site or locale (Low, S. M., & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003). Place is not just about geography but also about memory and imagination. Places are secured by struggle and spirit on individual and collective levels.

Modest attempts in literature have tried to identify the landscape and the built environment affected by Arab Americans and the neighborhoods' redevelopment Arab American enclave (e.g., Kiskowski, 2017; Staeheli & Nagel, 2006). However, these have rarely investigated Arab Americans outside of enclaves.

This research tries to investigate the "Arab sense of place" and "Arab place attachment." The sense of place in this context refers to the feeling or perception held by people (not by the place itself) and fosters a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging (Agnew & Duncan, 2014). "Sense of place" was used in urban and rural studies in relation to place-making and place-attachment of communities to their environment or homeland (Groat, 1995).

Through in-depth storytelling interviews, this work tries to investigate "Arab sense of place" and placemaking. For the sake of the integrity and inclusion of the public realm and of representing a

holistic public realm where Arabs are underrepresented, this research tries to provide culturally aware lenses for urban designers and placemaking professionals who are centered on a dominant model of spatial production of the public realm. This research also tries to answer, "What are the impacts of the sense of place on Arab's resilience?"

Chapter 3. RESEARCH APPROACH

The storytelling approach is a method of qualitative data collection whereby a story is generated through an interview. In comparison to other qualitative interviewing approaches that emphasize a question-answer format, the purpose of storytelling interviews is to provide an opportunity for the interviewee to narrate their experience for the researcher in order to understand the complexity, establishing a common ground and eliciting participation and collaboration with the participants.

Story gathering and story making/building make sense of complex, interconnected situations the topic interferes with. It is a tool for information and narrative gathering from participants to explore the way people interpret the phenomena and their place within it, which can be difficult to assess through other means. Storytelling is considered a generative tool for research that captures participants' self-expression (Sanders, 2000).

3.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

To be able to understand and investigate the factors that contribute to Arabs' resilience in Seattle, the thesis used qualitative interviews in collecting the data along with news sources like newspapers and social media platforms. Because the research aims to explore the phenomena in-depth with rich details, which is unlikely to be determined from short responses, the interviews followed a storytelling approach.

The thesis intends to obtain a holistic picture of the subject through an emphasis on portraying the experience of the individuals who were interviewed. It attempts to capture the whole picture that reveals how Arab people in the U.S. in general and in Seattle in particular describe and structure their life changes in the diaspora.

3.1.1 Sampling Strategy

To help me collect a range of stories, I used a quota sampling strategy in the participant selection process. The sample aimed to provide diversity in demographics in terms of gender, age, country of origin, legal status, generation, location within Greater Seattle Area, years in Seattle, level of income, level of education, type of job, religious affiliation, and reason for immigration (figure 2). Because sharing life stories is a process that requires trust, I found my participants primarily through personal and professional networks, including through my internship with the City of Seattle. I also found them through Arabic social media platforms, Arabic community organizations, and Arabic community events. The targeted number of participants was between 12 to 15 interviewees. This number of participants would cover most of the Arabic regions (Gulf, Maghreb, and Mashreq) and would provide solid ground for the analysis, since reaching saturation might take a longer time than the period of the thesis.

Number	Name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Generation	years in the U.S.	Country of Origin	Date of the interview	Religion Affiliation	Legal Status	Intreview Length/ mins	Location within WA
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												
13												
14												

Figure 2 Quota Sample Main Demographic Attributes

Fourteen interviews were conducted in total. The seven women and seven men, ranging in age from their 20s to their 70s, are Arab immigrants. The interviewees have different legal statuses, including citizens, permanent residents, and work or student visa holders. They have different reasons for immigrating; some immigrated to the U.S. to get an education and ended up finding a job after getting their degrees; some immigrated to look for better life opportunities; some

wanted to change their life circumstances and came for the hope of the “American dream”; some came to the U.S. as refugees of war; others had no other option and were forced to leave their country because of occupation; and others left their countries because of the disillusionment after the Arab Spring failure and the increased corruption and repression in their former countries.

Some of the interviewees have lived in Seattle for over thirty years, and others for less than three years, while many fall somewhere in between. The interviewees range between first- and second-generation immigrants; some were born and have lived their entire lives in Seattle while others moved recently either from their former countries or from other states. Some moved to Seattle and established a family and raised kids, and some moved temporarily.

The interviewees vary in their settlement locations within Greater Seattle Area; they live in north Seattle, south Seattle, and Shoreline. Many live on the east side, including Kirkland, Redmond, Bellevue, as well as Issaquah, Renton, and Kent.

The interviewees cover most of the Arabic regions (Gulf, Maghreb, and Mashreq). They came from Yemen, Kuwait, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia. The sample did not cover more Gulf countries since there are fewer immigrants from the Gulf countries in Seattle. However, many of the interviewees have lived and were raised in countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates because Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have more job opportunities than their home countries.

Most of the interviewees are Muslims. Only a few have other religious affiliations. This reflects the majority of the Arab population who are Muslim, with a minority following other religions, largely Christianity.

Although the sample was designed to have diversity in socioeconomic status (including income, education, employment, and type of occupation), the majority of the sample has a high income, has completed higher education, and works in high-tech professional and managerial occupations. There are many reasons for this. First, the majority of Arabs who live in the Seattle area are highly educated and work in white-collar occupations. However, Arabs who come from certain countries work in blue-collar occupations, like the Somali community, which mostly came as refugees and resided in South Seattle and Tukwila. Second, many of the potential participants who have a lower socioeconomic status who were contacted had not shown interest in participating in the interviews. Third, due to the COVID-19 situation and stay-home orders—which during these circumstances, half of the interviews were conducted virtually—I suspect that some of the lower socioeconomic status people who have been contacted did not feel they had the time/energy to participate in a virtual interview.

3.1.2 Interview Protocol

I developed an interview protocol that asked respondents about aspects of resilience in the Arab community (see Appendix X). The interview protocol included a heading (day, time, participant), ice-breaking questions, followed by the interview questions divided by relevance, and probes to give the participants time to explain more ideas, to explain in more detail or for me to elaborate on some of their answers. The interviewees were given time to narrate their stories without probes in this part to allow them to continue without losing their train of thought. Explanations were asked for latter if need.

Interviews were recorded using handwritten notes and digital recording when possible. The handwriting was preferred over typing because it allowed me to maintain eye contact with the

participant and to engage with them. A log was created to keep a record for all the interview documents.

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis of the interview data went hand-in-hand with the interview process. While transcribing the interviews, typing up the notes, and sorting and arranging the answers within the Excel sheets, I made a list of ideas, and I clustered together some of them and started to provide a general sense of the information. I reflected on some of the data in earlier stages, and earlier interviews were analyzed and built on while going with the other interviews.

The analysis of the interview data took an inductive approach. The inductive approach of the analysis aims to generate meanings from the data collected from the interviews with the purpose of identifying patterns and relationships to build a theory. I conducted a content analysis, sorting content into patterns/categories and using themes developed from the data and stated interpreting based on the literature review. The interrelating of patterns and themes and the meaning of the findings were developed along the interview process. These influenced the interview process; it contributed to developing the questions along the interview process. I modified some of the questions, added some questions, and shifted the focus on some sections. It also influenced the interviewee selection process in the later interviews.

Learning from interviewees' transnational experiences, I was able to draw/observe patterns, resemblances, and regularities and develop a theory of Arab resilience from the interview data and the literature review, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

3.2.1 Reliability

As an Arab immigrant to Seattle myself, I might bring a certain bias to this research. I made every effort to ensure objectivity, although biases may shape the way I view, understand, and interpret the data collected by the interviews. In order to check for accuracy and avoid bias, I employed certain procedures: I used triangulation, and I tried to find other sources of data or literature that support the interpretations.

Moreover, to ensure the accuracy of the findings, I conducted some follow-up interviews, to discuss and comment on some of the major findings with the participants. I also sent part of the refined findings to some of the participants, where I asked them to review the results and to decide whether the interpretations were representative of their beliefs. Furthermore, part of the findings and major themes were reviewed with the thesis committee.

In order to respect the privacy and to maintain the confidentiality of personal information about research participants in the interviews, this study protects the anonymity of individuals, roles, incidents, and any confidential information they shared. Pseudonyms for individuals and places were used to protect their identities.

Chapter 4. RESILIENCE DIMENSIONS

During the interview process, I conducted 14 interviews with participants who represent first- and second-generation Arab immigrants to Seattle, WA. Each interview produced unique insights into the factors that shaped people's ability to endure immigration changes and to continue to develop and function. The interviews built a substantial database of stories to draw from and to code.

Through these interviews, I hoped to better understand the major challenges and changes that they faced through their transnational experiences, and how they coped, dealt, and adapted to these changes and continued to develop. I also wanted to learn the ways that support the cultural resilience of diasporic communities and the aspects that affect multi-culture societies' social cohesion.

From the interviews, three predominant dimensions emerged that linked the 14 stories together. The first dimension that emerged was "robustness," which captures the ability to endure potential change impacts. Some of the individuals showed higher robustness due to the many factors that I discuss in greater detail later in this chapter. Others showed less robustness, which was affected by their levels of vulnerability. Robustness and vulnerability played an enormous role in the adaptation process of each of the participant's experiences. The adaptation process enables individuals to adjust behavior to conform to the dominant cultural norms and values in the new society. Adaptation becomes increasingly significant when a social change affects important aspects of life over comparatively short periods of time, like the major transnational change that immigrants face.

The second dimension was "rapidity," which captures how quickly recovery levels are achieved after the disturbance/change caused by immigration. It investigates the factors that influence the time it takes for an individual or a group to return to pre-immigration levels of performance or functionality. The adaptation process was highly influenced by individuals' speed in absorbing immigration changes and the loss of functionality. Time plays a significant role in the adaptation process. Recent immigrants tend to take more time to return to normal functionality compared to those who immigrated a long time ago.

The final dimension represents "enhancement," which captures the quality of the recovery processes in terms of learning and adapting. As a product of the journey that each of the participants has gone through in their transnational experience, they showed different levels of personal growth. Their personal growth significantly shaped their resilience process. The resilience process reflects how people's background (i.e., cultural values, language, customs, norms, etc.) and the after-immigration characteristics and environmental variables (i.e., social networks and connections, community spaces, legal status, etc.) help individuals overcome immigration adversities and to continue to develop and function.

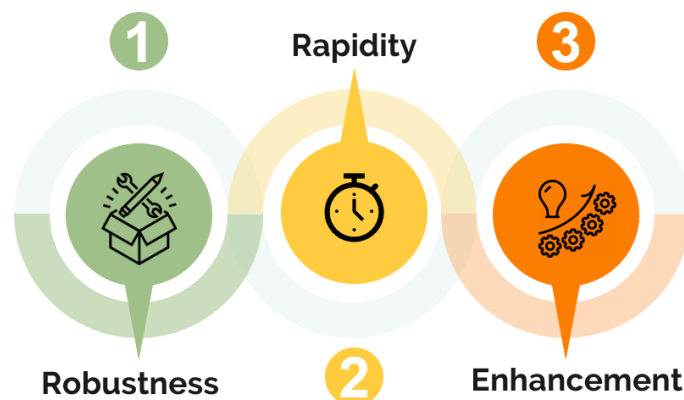


Figure 3 Resilience Dimensions

Robustness, rapidity, and enhancement represent the three resilience dimensions (figure 4). To explain these dimensions in relation to one another, figure 4 shows what I call the resilience triangle. When the transition to the U.S. occurs, a loss of functionality is likely to happen due to the enormous environmental, political, economic, and cultural changes that people encounter when they immigrate. How much functionality is lost mainly depends on robustness. The more robust an individual is, the less likely they are to experience a drop in functionality, and their drop is less severe than those with less robustness. The time needed for an individual to return to the normal trajectory of functionality represents their rapidity. The learning and adaptation process that people go through as they return to functionality can be represented along a trajectory that represents enhancement. The area and angles of the resulting triangle represent resilience.

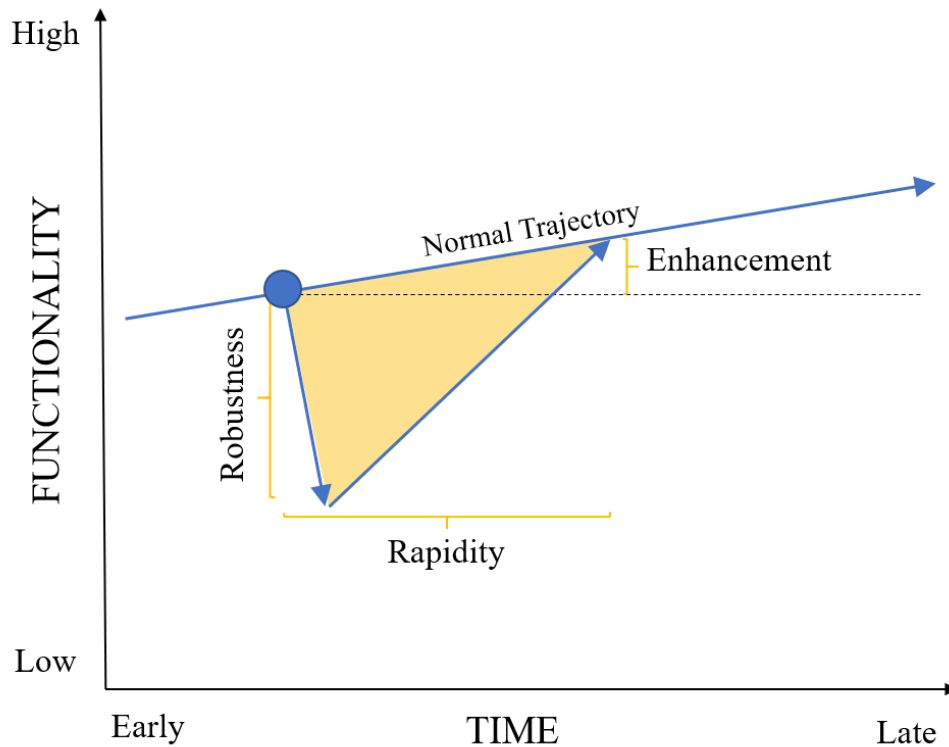


Figure 4 Resilience Triangle

4.1 ROBUSTNESS

Robustness indicates the ability to endure immigration change impacts. As drawn from most of the interviews, robustness depends mainly on pre-change factors. That is, an individual's robustness is based on their qualities and characteristics pre-immigration. Individuals' backgrounds played an important role in their robustness and their resilience process.

When talking about resilience, it is important to introduce the concept of vulnerability. The concept of "vulnerability" generally means the potential for harm. Robustness can be seen as an antonym to vulnerability. In the context of this research, I will use the term vulnerability specifically to refer to social vulnerability. Here, social vulnerability is the inability of people to endure the impacts of the stressors and changes which they are exposed to due to immigration. Social vulnerability affects robustness negatively.

The interviews manifested many factors that affect robustness and vulnerability. Scholars have made efforts to study the factors that shape social vulnerability. Some factors have a general consensus, including a lack of access to information and technology, a lack of social capital, including social networks and connections, limited access to political power and representation, lower levels of socioeconomic status, household composition, disability, minority status, and others. Although scholars have agreed on the major factors that cause social vulnerability, their differences arise in the selection of specific variables that represent these broader concepts (Blaikie et al., 1994; Cutter, 2005; Cutter et al., 2003; Putnam, 2000; Tierney et al., 2001).

Factors Influencing Robustness and Vulnerability

Social, economic, legal, and spatial characteristics of the interviewees shape the factors that influence their robustness. These dimensions shape individuals' ability to anticipate, respond, and recover from change and potential loss of functionality through and after their transnational experience.

4.1.1 Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status emerged as a theme in all 14 stories. The level of income, the level of education, employment, and type of occupation are major dimensions influencing both robustness and vulnerability. Socioeconomic status is strongly associated with robustness.

The interviews revealed the importance of socioeconomic status on the levels of robustness, either explicitly or implicitly. An individual's educational level, work type, income, and family structure affected their capacity to endure immigration changes. The level of education they attained prior to their arrival in the United States and the additional education attained after immigrating, which was the case of most of the interviewees, enabled them to find jobs in white-collar occupations. Having an occupation with a good income enables individuals to tackle common immigrant challenges, like the ability to provide for their families, live in decent housing, and have access to services. These qualities decrease people's vulnerability and reduce the loss of functionality. In other words, they boost the individual's robustness. Zaid said,

“I do not face many challenges because I work in a big company in a managerial role. I have this kind of protection. I am not living paycheck to paycheck, which gives me a type of security.”

There is an agreement that wealth helps individuals and communities to tackle social vulnerability and to recover more quickly (Cutter et al., 2003; Morrow, 1999; Tierney et al., 2001). People with low income and assets have difficulty preparing for and recovering from possible shocks (Cutter et al., 2003; Morrow, 1999).

Educated individuals are likely to have a good level of English proficiency. They have the ability to access information and technology, and they raise their children to succeed in school. This makes them more robust in facing linguistic, social, cultural, and political changes.

Although socioeconomic status influences an individual's robustness positively, it is different when it comes to resilience. The following section will explain an example of the relationship between socioeconomic status, robustness, and resilience.

Socioeconomic Status and the Perception of Difference

Socioeconomic status also influences an individual's perception of their differences.

Respondents of high socioeconomic status showed a positive perception of their cultural, social, and religious differences. They perceived their differences as a positive aspect and a strengthening point that helped them tolerate the changes that they face while living in the U.S.

Highly educated women were less threatened by their differences compared to non-educated women. They perceived their differences as strengths that empower them to make changes in society. On the other hand, non-educated women tend to be threatened by their differences; they perceived them as challenges or potential things to defend against. Hala stated,

"As a woman of color, a Muslim, and a hijabi engineer working in a White male-dominant field, I am proud of my differences, and I break stereotypes about Arab Muslim women."

Individuals who work in big companies in white-collar occupations and those who have wealth and own businesses expressed being very comfortable with their differences. They are confident in being different and perceived their difference as an asset. They were expressing their socio-cultural qualities. Zaid expressed,

"When I joined my work, the first thing I did was to block the two hours of Friday prayer in my schedule. When I meet racist people, I make sure they know I am an Arab and a Muslim. I am standing my ground!"

Both those who perceived their socio-cultural differences positively or negatively could be in cultural polarization. According to the Intercultural Development Inventory⁵, "polarization is an evaluative mindset that views cultural differences from an 'us versus them' perspective."

Polarization might manifest in two forms. Defense is the form manifested by those who conceive of their culture as better than other cultures and want to retain it; in this research, I refer to this as "positive polarization." Reversal is manifested by those who conceive of their culture as a threat and feel the need to hide it or defend against; I call this "negative polarization."

Within the participants, those who were in positive polarization showed more robustness and less loss of functionality. On the other hand, those who were in negative polarization had less robustness and, therefore, a more severe loss of functionality. However, both of these cases have low levels of resilience. They have less ability to cope with change and continue to develop.

Although positive polarization might be more robust, it shows low levels of resilience. Figure 6 shows how positive polarization has less drop-in functionality. However, it might take a long

⁵, The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assesses intercultural competence—the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. <https://idiinventory.com/#>

time to get back to a normal trajectory. Due to their feelings of the advantage of their culture over other cultures and arrogance of their ability to cope with potential change impacts, they ultimately show less capacity to deal with the changes and to continue to develop.

If robustness and resilience are represented in a Cartesian coordinate system, the positive polarization is in the second quarter (Figure 5). Using the resilience triangle, positive polarization can be visualized in the following figure.

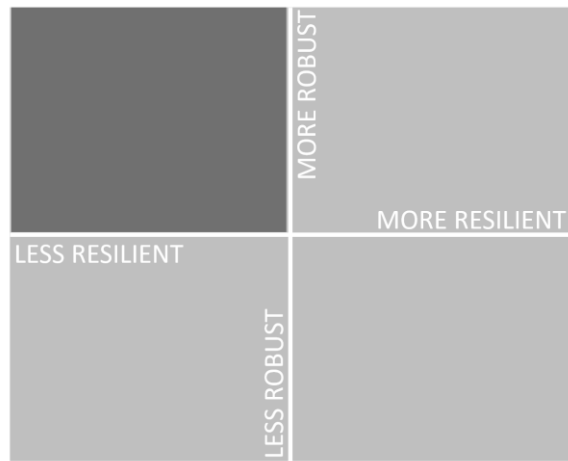


Figure 5 Positive Polarization Resilience-Robustness Visualization

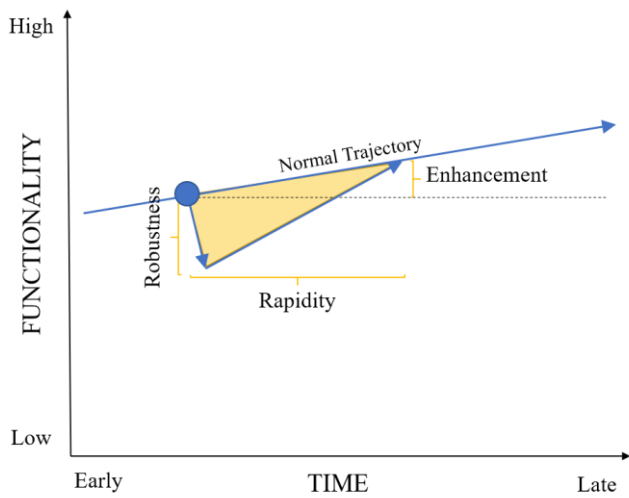


Figure 6 Visualization of the Positive Polarization Resilience Triangle

Negative polarization reduces robustness through a loss of functionality due to the uncertainty that individuals face when immigration happens. They struggle in deciding on their identity, home, and community. They question their previous life experiences. This especially appeared in the interviews of individuals who were frustrated with their previous life experience and immigrated to change their reality. After settling in the U.S., Participants who were frustrated with their previous lives faced major changes and challenges, and they struggled with differences from their dominant culture. However, although they experienced less robustness, they were likely to reach resiliency in similar rapidity to those with positive polarization because they were more willing to change and adapt (Figure 7,8).



Figure 7 Negative Polarization Resilience-Robustness Visualization

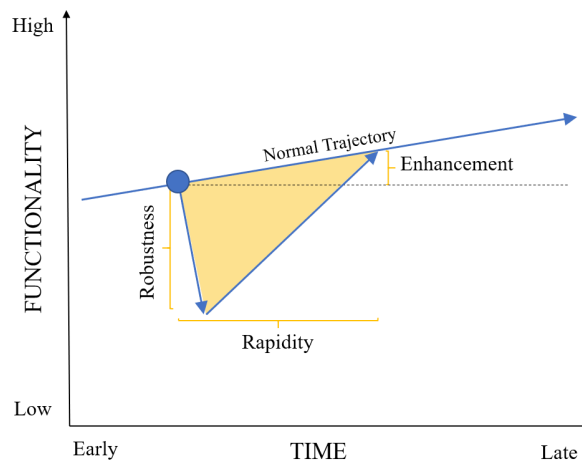


Figure 8 Visualization of the Negative Polarization Resilience Triangle

4.1.2 English Proficiency

Being able to communicate affects every area of life in which people have to interact with others, from jobs to schooling, to simply finding your way around or buying food. The educational level plays a part in the level of English proficiency; individuals who have a bachelor's degree or higher are more likely to have higher English-speaking abilities than those with less than a high school education. It also depends on the time spent living in the U.S. Many individuals with long periods of residence in the United States speak English well. However, some have limited English-speaking abilities or may not speak English at all, even after residing in the United States for many years.

English proficiency is strongly correlated with robustness. The better individuals are in speaking English, the more robust they are. Individuals with limited English proficiency face more loss of functionality when moving to the U.S. They are more vulnerable to change. In social vulnerability literature, scholars agree that limited English proficiency is one of the major factors influencing immigrants' vulnerability (Blaikie et al., 1994; Cutter et al., 2003; Nawyn, Gjokaj, & Agbényiga, 2012; Putnam, 2000; Tierney et al., 2001)

Limited English proficiency is a fundamental hurdle for immigrants that prevents them from making vital connections in their communities. In the interviews, it appeared that a lack of English proficiency influenced resilience negatively. Due to the hardship in communicating with other people, limited English speakers were more likely to become isolated from the American community. Their relationships are limited to individuals who share their same language. Therefore, they are less likely to develop and adapt to the new culture. They are less robust and

less resilient (figure 9, a). Razan, a woman who immigrated with her husband to the U.S. from a Gulf country, who did not continue her education, said,

“I am isolated from American society; all my social networks are with Arabs. My English proficiency does not help me to communicate easily.”

Within professional settings, limited English speakers tend to do technical work. They prefer to work on their computers and are more comfortable limiting their communication with others. They are less likely to experience professional growth because of their limited professional networks. Malek said,

“Because of my limited English proficiency, I was isolated at my work. I used to spend all my time in my office. I did not like having lunch with others.”

Interviewees who have a good level of English proficiency but have an accent were less confident in dealing with American society. They felt that their accent affected their job opportunities, while others faced discrimination due to their accent. Many interviewees explicitly expressed that they face discrimination because of their accent. Zainab said that some people at work have a problem with her accent. Individuals with an advanced level of English tend to be more confident with their linguistic abilities, especially those who are fluent with no accent. They are engaged with American society and have more diverse social networks. They are more robust and more resilient (figure 9, b). Khaled said,

“Because I look white, grew up in the Midwest, and have no accent, I don’t face discrimination.”

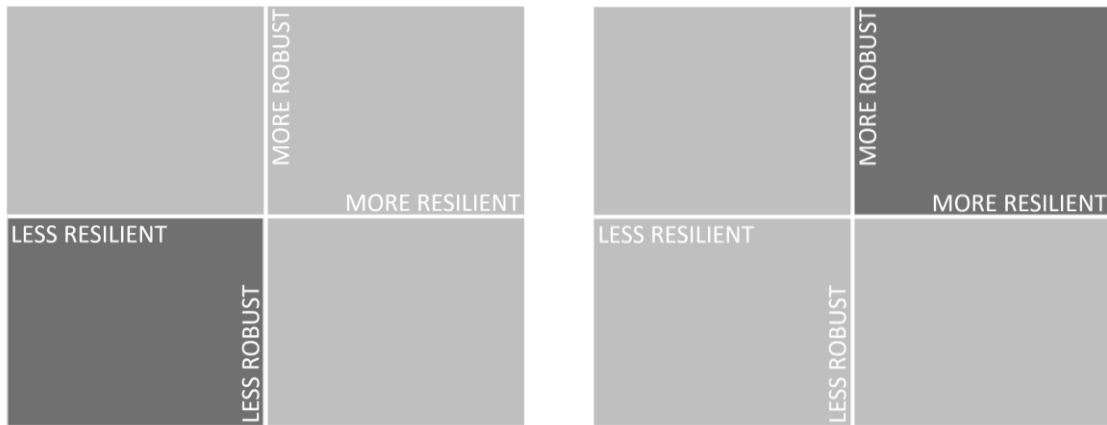


Figure 9 Resilience-Robustness of (a)Limited English proficiency (b)Advanced English proficiency

4.1.3 Minority Status

Minority status simply represents the “quality of otherness.” It refers to the quality of being not alike. This factor emerged in almost all the interviewees’ stories. Most of the challenges that individuals reported facing as Arabs living in the U.S. were related to the quality of otherness. These challenges affect individuals' robustness in different ways. Some of the challenges make people less robust because they affect people’s ability to tolerate change. These challenges make people more vulnerable to change; therefore, they face marginalization and a severe loss of functionality. However, many of these challenges make people more resilient (figure 10). Although these challenges make them less robust, the interviews revealed that these people show high resilience. The challenges increased their ability to cope with changes and to adapt. (figure 11). Zainab shared,

"I am other because I am different."

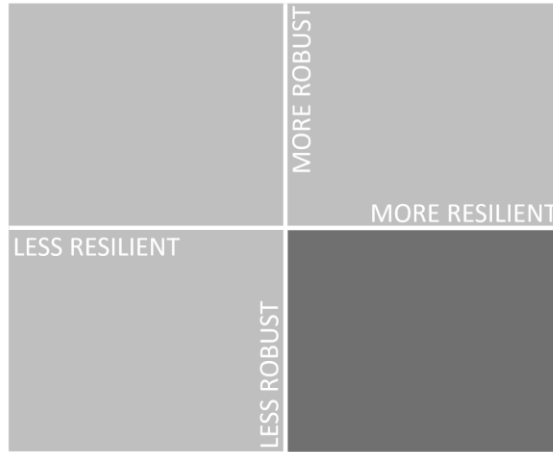


Figure 10 Minority Status Resilience-Robustness Visualization

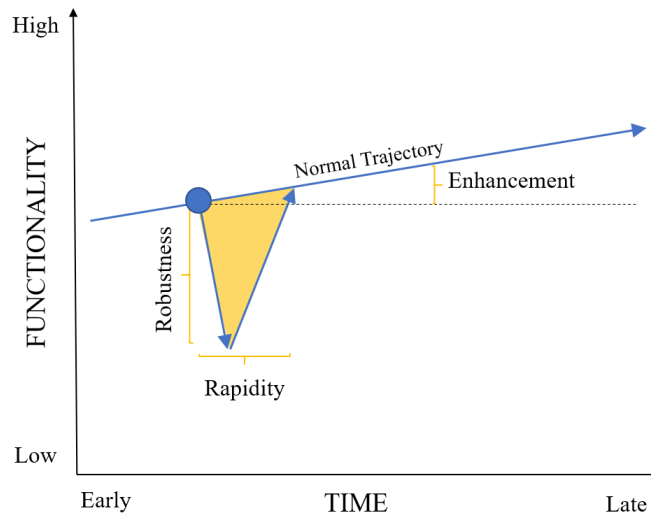


Figure 11 Visualization of the Minority Status Resilience Triangle

Many of the interviewees face challenges because of their appearance: looking different, and especially “looking Middle Eastern,” having a Middle Eastern name, having an accent, being a Muslim, which might be obvious through men’s beard styles or women’s hijabs or their conservative way of dressing, or the color of their skin in some of the Arab African countries. People often make judgments about Middle Eastern people based solely on how they look. Waleed, who is Christian, reported that he always felt excluded and was treated differently at

work because he looks Middle Eastern. People assumed he was a Muslim just because he looks like an Arab. On the other hand, between his Arab friends, he always felt he was different because he is the only one who is not Muslim.

Being Arab and Muslim in the U.S. comes with many challenges that make individuals less robust. Some interviewees mentioned that after 9/11, it became harder for them or for their Muslim friends to find jobs. Muslims are scrutinized in airports because of their looks and sometimes their names. Some Muslims who have similar names to “wanted people” suffer from extra airport checks and delays every time they travel (Bilici, 2010). Muslims face challenges in their prayers. They are unable to pray at the proper times because of work or school schedules; they also face challenges in finding places to pray. Muslim kids in the holy month of Ramadan have the same number of tasks at school, and on Eid, they are not given the day off for the holidays.

Many of the interviewees indicated that they feel more discriminated against than ever before under the current U.S. administration. Saba said, "There are two times when I felt that I was not American and will always be treated as a foreigner: after 9/11 and under the new administration."

Looking different affects individual lives in many ways. Zainab said the first time she thought she was different was when she became a mother. “My kids are black Muslims, and they dealt with that at the young age of 5 or 6 years old.” They went to a school where they were the only black kids. She added, "At a young age, I started to the kind of conversation, with them like; if they were to stop by police, what should they say and do." She continued to reflect, saying *"I am in a box because I look different, and I dress like a Muslim, the school tested my son in English although he was born here."*

Hijab-wearing women reported facing more difficulties and discrimination compared to non-hijabi women. Many hijabi women were challenged due to their difference in appearance. Fatima said, "There are a lot of people who are ignorant and judgmental. People might leave the aisle when they saw me while shopping." She added, "I always feel obligated to be extra nice to be people even if they are rude because I represent hijabi women and Muslims."

Some interviewees mentioned other types of otherness. Due to their interactions with Americans, their culture started to change. They started to feel excluded and different from their own communities. Zainab said, "The Somali community thinks I am not Somali enough because I am engaged a lot with Americans." She added, "With our own community, we become different when we start adapting."

Through the interviews, it was notable that there were gender differences in the perception of challenges. It appeared that women perceive more challenges and difficulties than men. This has appeared in most of the interviews that I have conducted with men; most of them did not perceive any challenges as Arabs living in the U.S. On the other hand, women shared many aspects where they felt they were challenged because they are Arabs and Muslims. Khaled said, *"Honestly, I do not face challenges, but I am aware of the challenges that other people face, especially women. I always have conversations with my wife about the different challenges that she faces."*

While Saba mentioned 9/11 as the point in time when she started to feel that she was not American and could never be considered American because of the discrimination and extremists, Malek mentioned 9/11 as a point of time where he felt the solidarity of American society in supporting the Muslim community, in defending the Northgate Mosque (in North Seattle) and

standing up against extremist attacks. The literature supports this gender split regarding the perception of risk. Women perceive themselves more vulnerable to risks and perceive greater severity of the consequences and possibility of failure (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004; LaGrange, Randy L., 1989; May et al., 2010; Reid & Konrad, 2004).

Some Arabic cultural norms impose limitations on women. Arab women from certain territories are or have been restricted from access to education or have many limitations in education choices and career advancement. Saudi women, for instance, attend segregated campuses and have limited fields and subjects to study compared to men, and they face many challenges in their career development (Al-ahmadi, 2017; Al-asfour, 2017; Islam, 2014). Some cultural norms impose controls over women's free will, including choices about domestic roles, marriage, and childbearing. Razan underscored this when she said,

“It is new to me to express my opinion; we were raised in a way that we were trained not to oppose or have our own way of thinking. That is one of the reasons why I do not feel I belong there anymore!”

4.1.4 Reasons for Immigration

The participants were driven to leave their former countries and move to the United States for a variety of reasons. Some chose to immigrate, while others had no other option. Participants who were refugees of wars or occupations were forced to leave their countries. It was clear that participants who had planned immigration have different levels of robustness and resilience than the ones who had unplanned immigration.

Planned Immigration Process

Most of the interviewees had a planned immigration process. The reasons for immigration varied between getting an education, looking for better opportunities, and looking for a new place after the disillusionment that followed the failure of the Arab Spring revolutions.

Those who left their former countries to get an education found jobs when they graduated and decided to stay in the U.S. Most of these individuals showed a high level of robustness. Their educational experiences have helped them navigate American society and have empowered them to endure the potential change impacts. Their degrees enabled them to find good employment opportunities, and they have high socioeconomic status.

Although most of these individuals showed high levels of robustness, not all of them have similar levels of resilience. The ones who came from more challenging backgrounds—in terms of family status, income, less urbanized regions—were more resilient (figure 12, a). They were eager to change their lives and succeed; they showed a higher ability to cope with the changes and to adapt to their new environments. Their challenges and previous struggles prompted them to adapt to the new society. This supports Maddi and Khoshaba's finding that early life experiences that are filled with challenges prompt people to pursue success (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005). Mazen stated,

"I was very eager to succeed; I wanted to change my reality. And I knew that the U.S. was the place to achieve that."

On the other hand, the ones who came from less challenging backgrounds were less eager to change and succeed. They revealed an exaggerated sense of one's own ability to cope with

potential change impacts, and they ultimately showed relative capacity to deal with the changes and to continue to develop (figure 12, b).



Figure 12 Robustness-Resilience Visualization of Planned Immigration (a) from Unchallenged Background (b) from Challenged Background

Participants who immigrated to look for better life opportunities mostly got their degrees in their former countries and immigrated to the U.S. to find better job opportunities; their main motivation was to change their previous financial and social situations and to succeed in the U.S. Many of them were looking for equality of opportunity in the U.S. and wanted to live the “American dream.” These individuals showed less robustness. They went through an expectation gap that made them more vulnerable when their high expectations were confronted with real challenges. Some were unable to find jobs and, as a result, they reported a significant loss of functionality. Malek said, “I thought I would find a job quickly, and I spent a year with no work. This has prompted me to go back!” Some wives who moved with their husbands were dreaming about moving to the U.S. to change their previous social and cultural situations showed low levels of robustness. They struggled to tolerate the cultural changes, and they faced a severe loss of functionality. Razan said, “I had always been dreaming about coming to America. But when

we settled in the States, I was shocked! I started to question if this was the life that I really wanted?!"

Although this group of people had low levels of robustness, they had a decent level of resilience (figure 13). They showed an ability to cope with changes and to adapt. However, this adaptation process needed a longer time than the other participants. I will discuss this in more detail in the “Rapidly” section.



Figure 13 Robustness-Resilience Visualization of Planned Immigration that faced an Expectation Gap

Others left their former countries because of their disillusionment after the Arab Spring revolution. They lost their hope for the possibility of change. The increased corruption and repression in their former countries drove them to move to the U.S. Fatima said, “We had good jobs and a financially stable life, but we left because we did not want to raise our kids back there in this culture.” She added, "After 2011 in Egypt, everything was so beautiful; we hoped for a better life, for freedom, democracy, and social justice. And after the military coup (or what others might call it as counter-revolution), everything became so ugly.”

She added, "For thirty years of my life, I did not know but one president. After the revolution in 2011, we hoped for change. There might be people who were not satisfied that one of the Muslim Brothers has won, but we were happy that we chose, and for the first time in our lives, we chose our president. After 6/30, we lost our hope that things could change.

"I was scared for my kids all the time. This is just a simple example: the health care system is corrupted back there. If you call 911 in the U.S., they will be there in 3 minutes. On the other hand, if you called them in Egypt, you could never know when they might come. I do not want to raise my kids there. I know that I will face a lot of challenges raising my kids here regarding our culture, religion, and identity, but I am positive it will be much easier than raising them back there," said Fatima.

Literature suggests that corruption in the economic and political systems is one of the factors for immigration (Ariu & Squicciarini, 2013; Poprawe, 2015; Wornall, 2012). Ahmad shared, "Doing business back home is very hard as corruption is rampant. Also, the political system is autocratic and corrupt."

Unplanned Immigration Process

Those who did not have a planned immigration process, like people who are refugees from wars and occupations, have less levels of robustness. They went through more stressors and shocks and had a severe loss of functionality that made them very vulnerable. They did not expect nor choose to leave their countries; they were forced to leave to survive. They faced many challenges when they first moved to the U.S. financially, socially, and linguistically.

"I did not choose to leave my home; I would not choose any place else to live, other than Palestine. I was forced to leave; I had no other option," Malek said.

Although these people had the least robustness levels, they showed high levels of resilience; they were able to cope with these major changes and shocks and to recover over time. Their challenging situations made them more willing to adapt and change compared to other immigrants (figure 14).

Literature suggests that despite the trauma, refugee people demonstrate high levels of resilience, which facilitates their resettlement process (Hooberman et al., 2010; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Sleijpen et al., 2016).



Figure 14 Robustness-Resilience Visualization of Unplanned Immigrants

Some of these people end up working in low-profile, unsecured jobs, living in bad conditions, in poverty and crowded housing, lacking knowledge of their rights, facing various cultural shocks and language insensitivities. Their circumstances increase the likelihood of social isolation, which is a lack of engagement in social ties, institutional connections, or community participation. This is due to missing the support of friends, family, and extended social circles, which is a big factor for most immigrants. Those who come from societies where traditional support structures within communities are strong often feel lost, alienated, and disoriented

when moving to a country like the U.S. where individualism is often prized over the family. These circumstances and isolation affect immigrants' susceptibility to ensure immigration changes (Hossen, 2012).

4.1.5 Socio-Cultural Environment

The socio-cultural environment refers to the social networks and community places that immigrants find when they settle in the new destination. Some of the interviewees moved to other states before they came to Seattle. Immigrants in new destinations not common with Arab communities probably have a different set of social networks than those in traditional destinations with big Arab communities. Recent immigrants in new destinations are likely to know relatively fewer immigrants who are long-term residents to whom they can turn for assistance and knowledge. Immigrants in new destinations are more likely to be isolated with limited social and family networks to activate in times of crisis.

“My social networks made my life easier. They helped me navigate the work system and the legal immigration process.” Zaid said.

Immigrants in new destinations are less likely than immigrants in traditional destinations to have well-developed safety nets, culturally competent providers, and immigrant advocacy or community-based organizations, which make them more isolated and vulnerable. Although social networks appeared to increase interviewees' robustness, it did not necessarily influence resilience. On the other hand, these social networks and community spaces can affect the resilience process negatively. In some of the interviews, it appeared that having a strong social network and community spaces can make people immerse themselves in them and become isolated from the American community and

less able to adapt and change (figure 15). Referring to his parents, Khaled said, “Social networks have limited their relationships to existing circles and isolated them from society.”

Participants mentioned the role of the community spaces in supporting their robustness and resilience. Ahmad said, "Mosques play a central role in my life and help me stay attached to my culture while embracing the new one."

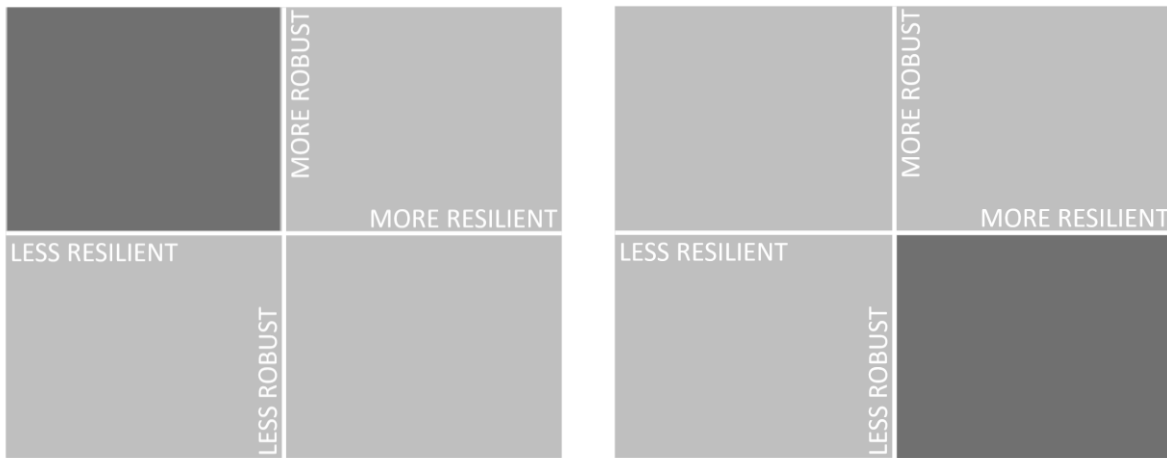


Figure 15 Robustness-Resilience Visualization of the Socio-Cultural Environment of (a)Traditional destinations (b)New Destinations

As we discussed in this section, all these factors affected robustness either positively or negatively. Some of these factors have influenced resilience in an explicit way. Other factors varied in their influence on resiliency, depending on each individual case, like socioeconomic status. It played a major positive role in robustness. However, it conflicted with its influences on resilience. Figure 16 represents a summary of each of the factors' influence on robustness and resilience.

Factors	Resilience	Robustness
Socioeconomic Status	Positively	Varied
English Proficiency	Positively	Positively
Minority Status	Negatively	Positively
Planned Immigration	Varied	Varied
Unplanned Immigration	Negatively	Positively
New Destination	Negatively	Positively
Traditional Destination	Positively	Varied

Figure 16 Summary of the Factors Affecting Robustness

Within each of these factors, many themes have manifested in the interviews. Figure 17 shows a representation of where each of these themes is located in the Cartesian coordinate system of robustness and resilience.

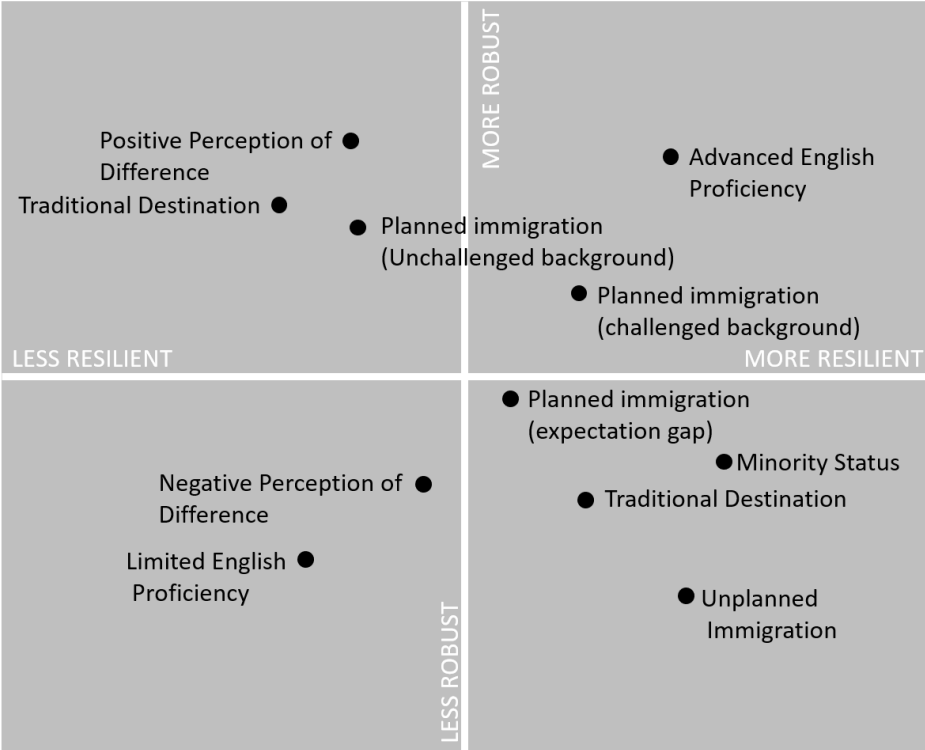


Figure 17 Emerged Themes on the Robustness-Resilience Cartesian Coordinate System

4.2 RAPIDITY

The second dimension of resilience that manifested through the interview was "rapidity," which captures how quickly recovery levels are achieved. Resilience and adaptation processes were highly influenced by an individual's speed in absorbing the change and the loss of functionality. Time plays a significant role in the adaptation process. Recent immigrants tend to be down in the functionality trajectory compared to those who immigrated a long time ago. There are many factors that affect the speed of getting back to the normal trajectory of functionality.

4.2.1 Legal Status

Legal status is a major factor that influences rapidity. It manifested in almost all the interviews, playing a major role in the rapidity of adaptation and recovery. Immigrants who came to the U.S. holding U.S. citizenship or permanent residency were able to adapt more quickly than those who came with a visa. It was easier for them to find jobs, and they were eligible for welfare benefits. They were able to reorganize and get back to the functionality quickly. Fatima said,

"Because I am a citizen, we made the decision to leave. Even if we did not have jobs, we knew that we would be able to survive."

On the other hand, noncitizen immigrants faced hard times finding jobs and went through many challenges that made their adaptation and recovery process much slower. Lack of identification, work authorization, and Social Security numbers are the main barriers that exist to getting adequate jobs along with other reasons like a lack of sufficient language skills and education, Malek said, "Because I was on a visa, I could not get a fine job. After a year, I went back to Kuwait, and I had to come back here again, after the Gulf War. If I were a citizen or had a green card, things would have gone differently."

Noncitizen immigrants tend to be more vulnerable to immigration changes. Their legal status limits their access to social services and jobs with benefits. For instance, noncitizen legal immigrants are ineligible for most welfare benefits, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), state-administered general assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for low-income elderly and disabled persons, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), free and subsidized school lunch, Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program (WIC) (Welfare Benefits for Non-Citizens Report 2002).

These issues became more critical given the COVID-19 public health crisis. There are no provisions in any of the COVID-19 relief bills that prohibit U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from conducting immigration enforcement in any of the designated sensitive locations, including health care centers. Undocumented immigrants reported being afraid of going to hospitals because they worried about their immigration status (Perez et al., 2009).

During the interviews, it was clear that noncitizen immigrants went through lower levels of robustness and rapidity. They lived through the uncertainty that affected their speed of adaptation and recovery; therefore, they were less resilient compared to those who immigrated having legal status. Mazen said,

"I was unstable when I was on an H1b visa; I could not make decisions. If I lost my job, I would have to go back."

4.2.3 Socio-Cultural Environment

As I mentioned in the previous section, immigrants who had a socio-cultural environment of the Arabic community found places of support, well-developed safety nets, culturally competent

providers, and advocacy or community-based organizations that embraced their culture. Finding these supportive destinations boosted immigrants' robustness. However, it was notable in many cases that these social networks and community spaces had affected their resilience negatively; people who immersed in these atmospheres and became isolated from the American community were less able to adapt and change.

Social networks and community spaces in these cases have decreased people's speed of adaptation and recovery. People who immigrated into a new destination not common with the Arab community were quicker to adapt to life in the U.S. Although they had a severe loss of functionality when they first moved, they were able to get back to the trajectory quickly.

4.2.4 Expectation Gaps

Many of the interviewees, when they came to the United States, had an idea that the United States was the gateway to achieving their dreams, becoming wealthy, and living in better conditions unlike when they were in their home countries. However, the moment they crossed the oceans and settled down, they started to realize that this was not the case. Achieving their goals and dreams came with challenges and difficulties, like language barriers, which made even daily tasks, like taking a bus or grocery shopping, feel overwhelming; finding suitable employment; housing costs, which was the biggest barrier, since some of them obtained low-paying jobs when they first moved; access to services including health care, legal advice and access to social services; access to transportation; cultural differences including social customs, attitudes towards gender, religious diversity, ethnicity and sexuality, which can all be vastly different in their home countries; prejudice and discrimination; children gap with parents experiencing different issues when bringing their children to a new country like the U.S. where

children are likely to be quickly immersed in the new culture through their schools and may begin to seem foreign to their own parents.

As I discussed earlier in the “Robustness” section, these aspects decrease immigrant's robustness. They need a decent level of resilience and an ability to cope with changes and adapt. However, this adaptation process needed a longer time than the other participants. To overcome hardships, this group of participants needed a long time for recovery and adaptation.

4.3 ENHANCEMENT

The final dimension is "enhancement." This captures the quality of recovery processes in terms of learning and adapting. Most of the interviewees went through a phase of loss of functionality; they faced many challenges on their way to being able to function effectively again. As a product of their transnational experience, they showed different levels of personal growth. Their personal growth significantly shaped their resilience process.

4.3.1 Embrace Own Culture

Interviewees who were still down the resilience trajectory, mainly recent immigrants, were confused when they were asked simple questions about their home, identity, and culture. They were not able to decide on their identity. They were threatened by their differences and were not able to decide on their national, cultural, or social identity. It felt like they were in a time of their life when they felt lost.

Those who had negative experiences in their former countries could not decide on where home is or what home is. They did not feel home here in the diaspora. Neither did they feel home in their

former countries. They took time to think of something or a feeling that supported their sense of belonging, and in many cases, they could not come up with anything.

On the other hand, interviewees who went back to the normal trajectory, usually people who had spent a long time in the U.S. or people who were able to absorb the change and adapt quickly, were embracing their culture and celebrating their differences. They had a prompt confident answer when they were asked about home, identity, and culture. They had a variety of national, cultural, or/and social identities. Most of them stated that what identifies them more than anything else was being an “Arab American” or “Muslim American” or “Arab Muslim American.” Most of them mentioned that they would not code-switch if they were asked this question by someone else other than the researcher who is an Arab and Muslim. Khalid said, *“Media convey a certain image of today's world. If you are in this age and you are American, whatever your background is, you should act this way. I needed time to realize that it is okay to be different, and now I am working on getting my kids to understand that you can be a very proud American and your differences are part of what makes this country.”*

Second generations who were raised in the U.S. showed a high level of confidence in their differences. They realized their differences at a young age and were able to deal with these questions. Hala said, "Mama used to say, “We are not white!” she never sugar-coated it. We are different, and we never make an effort to be one of them. We grew up appreciating our differences and being proud of our culture that makes us who we are.”

4.3.2 Sense of Belonging

People who went back to the normal trajectory were able to hold a feeling of belonging in their new communities. Their sense of belonging enabled them to be comfortable in their new lives.

Saba said, "This is home; you can never feel comfortable and function well unless you feel you belong in this country."

In some cases, people's sense of belonging was supported by other feelings. Hala feels that she belongs in diverse places. She shared, "I feel I belong to diverse spaces. I chose a job offer over another because it was a more diverse space. I feel more comfortable around diverse spaces."

Zaid, who grew up in an Arabic country, had lived in France and Canada before he settled in Seattle. He felt he belonged where he was able to embrace his culture. Zaid said, "I belong in places where it is easy to integrate. Canada embraced my culture, so I felt I belonged there, unlike France, where they wanted me to be like them so I could become one of them!" He added, "In Canada, if you are a minority, the majority adapt to you, and that creates a sense of belonging".

"In Canada, they look at immigrants as an investment. They pay money to this family now, but in the future, they will become responsible people and contribute to the economy. Immigrants who come from corrupted countries are eager to succeed. And that is the difference between Canada and Europe. Europe leaves immigrants to suffer. The U.S. has a decent immigration process; the problem lies in the new administration that is allowing xenophobia. The problem does not lie in their process; it is in the current administration that is giving people permission to be racist. As an immigrant, you are better off in Canada."

Community spaces were mentioned in many of the interviews as places that supported people's feelings of belonging. Nine interviewees out of the total 14 mentioned the "Muslim Association of Puget Sound MAPS" in Redmond, Washington, as a place in Greater Seattle Area where they

feel comfortable and like they fit and belong (figure 18). It is a place that embraces their culture and celebrates and honors their heritage.



Figure 18 Muslim Association of Puget Sound MAPS, Redmond, Washington⁶

Although people in the interviews found ways to be able to belong to their new life and community, the interviews reflected a loss of Arab belonging and placeness in the public realm. Eleven out of 14 participants felt they, as Arabs, were not represented and were often misrepresented in public spaces⁷

⁶ Muslim Association of Puget Sound MAPS, Redmond, Washington

⁷ Public spaces refer to places that are open and accessible to the public.

There was a consensus between the interviewees that Arabs and Muslims are underrepresented, and even when they get represented, they are usually misrepresented. Muslim women, especially women who wear the hijab, are underrepresented at gyms and sports centers, and sometimes when they get represented, they end up being misrepresented. Fatima gave this example: “YMCA made an event for ladies only, and they put a lady wearing a hijab on the poster. It felt like representation for Muslims and hijabi women who do not feel comfortable in gyms and sports centers. On the other hand, another sports center had a poster of a model wearing a hijab with clothes that do not reflect the clothes of a hijabi woman, and I felt it was a misrepresentation of us.” She added, "If you want to represent a group of people, you should not be ignorant and understand the culture before you make any representation of them.

Zaid gave an example when he was living in Montreal. There was this issue about hijab in media, and to present hijab and Islam, a T.V. channel decided to bring people to speak about Arabs and Muslims. What ended up happening was they brought a random Arab person who was not specialized in media, and he did not represent Arabs or the Arabic culture in general; he represented his own country and culture. The week after, the mosques came together and chose people to represent them on this show. They decided to bring a young hijabi lady who specialized in public speaking, communication, and media, and she was able to convey the right message about Arabs and Islam. To present a non-dominant group in media, specialized people should speak. The Imams in North America are not scientists in Islam; they are people who lead the prayers, and they are not the right people to be asked or present about Islam.

4.3.3 Changing the Negative Cultural Norms

Many of the interviewees, when they went back to the normal trajectory, were able to assess their old cultural norms. They mentioned many aspects of the Arabic cultural norms that they cherish

and wish to keep and transfer to their kids, like generosity—a quality that was repeated by many interviewees, respect for elderly people and family members, caring for others in a community way rather than individualized, and others like Waleed mentioned: “Arabic music, food, and the unique culture that people have to take kids back home to capture the ‘originality’ of the culture that cannot be felt here.”

Ahmad stated, “Religion was the bedrock of my life. It helped me chose the best of this culture without losing my culture or identity.”

At the same time, they were able to use their experience within the American society to highlight negative cultural norms that they started to control and change, like the case of dominant men.

Waleed expressed, "I am not saying that having a dominant male figure is an Arabic norm, but it is common in many Arabic regions." He added, "this is something that I changed in my culture and the way I was raised." Many of the Arabic regions give advantage to men over women in education, work, etc. Zaid mentioned, "I hate the fact that the woman needs to take care of everything in the house. I was raised that way, and I am working on changing this by taking more housekeeping and cooking responsibilities."

Many have mentioned how they were raised not having strong opinions; the elderly of the family made all the decisions, and the younger ones obeyed. Mazen said, "Child-rearing philosophy back home is that one should not debate elderly people."

Khaled mentioned the cultural stigma about kids working in the service industry before graduation, and how it is rare for young people to work before they graduate. He explained, "Back home, it is shameful to work before graduation or to work in the service industry,

especially for educated families. This makes kids lack a sense of responsibility until an advanced age.”

According to the Arabic community norms, success is measured based on work or academic achievements at a young age. Many of the interviewees mentioned this norm as a reason to hold Arab people from what they are passionate about. They changed this quality when they came to the U.S., and they do what they are passionate about doing, and they started to care less about what people think.

Chapter 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 BELONGING WITHIN THE PUBLIC REALM

Due to the transnational experience that immigrants go through, and what it entails of the separation of community ties, the loss of social connections, familial bonds, and the loss of taken-for-granted sources and systems of meaning, immigrants develop a great need for a sense of belonging. Immigrants develop forms of belonging to their ethnocultural groups, and after a period of time, they start to develop a form of belonging to their new societies (Salami et al., 2019). Immigrant communities reveal the physical environment as a very meaningful aspect of social life. Attachment to place is a characteristic feature of life in immigrant communities (Fried, 2000). The development of a sense of spatial identity is a critical component of attachment experiences for immigrant communities.

The interviews reflected the sense of belonging that the participants feel towards living in Greater Seattle Area. When they reached back to the normal trajectory of functionality, they were able to develop feelings of belonging towards their new environments, and their feelings were fashioned towards certain physical spaces due to evolving certain emotions related to these places. Many of them mentioned the first place they moved to when they immigrated. They mentioned private spaces like their houses, or their friends' houses, yards, and certain places within these places. Others mentioned public spaces, parks, waterfronts, shops, and the streets where their houses are located. Some of them mentioned a very detailed image of these places and certain elements that supported their feeling of belonging.

Public spaces are places that are open and accessible to the public. They are not just the physical component of the public realm. They are also the pillars of social, cultural, economic, and

political public interests. They are flexible spaces that host a variety of people who share different cultures, norms, values, and beliefs. They allow people to meet and interact with others within the context of the community as a whole. When referring to the social structures or representations of public spaces, the term "place" is used.

Some of the interviews mentioned public spaces like parks as places where they celebrate Eid or special occasions with their friends or held events like the Seattle Arab Festival. In these places, they felt that they were included and that they were part of something. They developed a positive sense of place towards these places. The participants established a sense of attachment to these public spaces. Three of the participants had the prompt answer of "parks" when they were asked questions related to Arab belonging.

There was a consensus between the interviewees that Arabs and Muslims are underrepresented in public spaces, and even when they get represented, they are usually misrepresented. They also agreed that diversity and integration in the public realm supported their feelings of belonging. This supports Amit & Bar-Lev findings that social integration and cohesion have a positive impact on immigrants' satisfaction and sense of belonging in host countries (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2014) along with other scholars who found that social and institutional cohesion within diverse groups and societies enables individuals to establish positive feelings of belonging (e.g., Johnson et al., 2007; Maestas et al., 2007). Many interviews reflected a feeling of loss of Arab belonging and placeness in public spaces due to the lack of their integration within these spaces. Presenting Arabs and Muslims in public events, websites, television shows, commercials, and even in small posters like, "Muslims are welcome," or posters with an Islamic figure support their feelings of belonging. This brings to light that this issue is not only about the Arab communities or the immigrant communities in the U.S.; it is about integration in the public realm as a whole.

In a country of democracy like the U.S., people have a free choice, and their choices are supposed to be respected without the need to explain. In the interviews, most of the participants felt the need to explain themselves and their choices and differences. The question that arise include, who should accommodate whom? Dominant groups⁸ or non-dominant groups⁹? When the dominant groups accommodate the non-dominant groups and adapt to them, it boosts community integration and creates a non-dominant sense of belonging and placeness. Public spaces are places to practice democracy through public representation; they are places where the civil society needs can be seen, recognized, resisted, or erased. (Jenlink, 2007; Mitchell, 2003; Nuñez, 2019).

The interviews supported by the literature revealed that integration is one of the crucial aspects of belonging; it has a positive sense of place. The integration of the immigrant communities or non-dominant groups in public spaces boosts their feelings of belonging. On the other hand, interviewees stated that a positive sense of place had helped them to easily integrate with the dominant culture. How easy it was to integrate made a big difference in their adaptation and resilience process.

I conclude here that public representation of non-dominant groups improves their integration process. When the dominant groups accommodate the non-dominant groups and adapt to them, it boosts community integration. Social integration and cohesion reflect a positive sense of belonging and a sense of place and vice versa. Having an easy integration process as well as a

⁸ A dominant group refers to a social group that controls the value system in a particular society, it is a group with power, privileges, and social status. The dominant group is often in the majority but not necessarily.

⁹ A non-dominant group is the opposite of a dominant group, it refers to a group which lacks of power and control.

positive sense of place and belonging influences the adaptation and resilience process, boosts the rapidity of reaching resilience and makes the adaptation process smoother.

The integration and representation of non-dominant groups open the dialogue of who are the involved actors in the production of space in the public realm. Placemaking professionals, including urban designers and the users of the public space from the local community, are key stakeholders. Urban designers, among other placemaking professionals, should have culturally-aware lenses for non-dominant groups' culture to contribute toward an inclusive public realm. In order to achieve non-dominant group representation and integration, it is crucial to recognize the history, identity, and culture of the non-dominant group, with sensitivity to unique local contexts.

5.2 IMPLICATION OF THIS WORK

In chapter 4, I highlighted the 3 dimensions of resilience that influence people's ability to endure immigration changes and to continue to develop and function. These dimensions were:

"robustness," which captures the ability to endure potential change impacts; "rapidity," which captures how quickly recovery levels are achieved after the disturbance/change caused by immigration; and "enhancement," which captures the quality of recovery processes in terms of learning and adapting.

I explained these three dimensions in relation to one another through what I call the resilience triangle (figure x). As I discussed earlier in chapter 4, when the transition to the U.S. occurs, a loss of functionality is likely to happen due to the enormous environmental, political, economic, and cultural changes that people encounter when they immigrate. How much functionality is lost mainly depends on robustness. The more robust an individual is, the less likely they are to

experience a drop in functionality, and, furthermore, their drop is less severe than those with less robustness. The time needed for an individual to return to the normal trajectory of functionality represents their rapidity. The learning and adaptation process that people go through as they return to functionality represents enhancement.

I was able to locate the participants in the interviews using the resilience triangle. Where people are within this triangle helped me assess their resilience levels. This assessment was based on the factors that I drew for each dimension. These factors affected each dimension either positively and negatively. Figure 19 and figure 20 below represent the factors that influenced robustness and rapidity either positively or negatively.

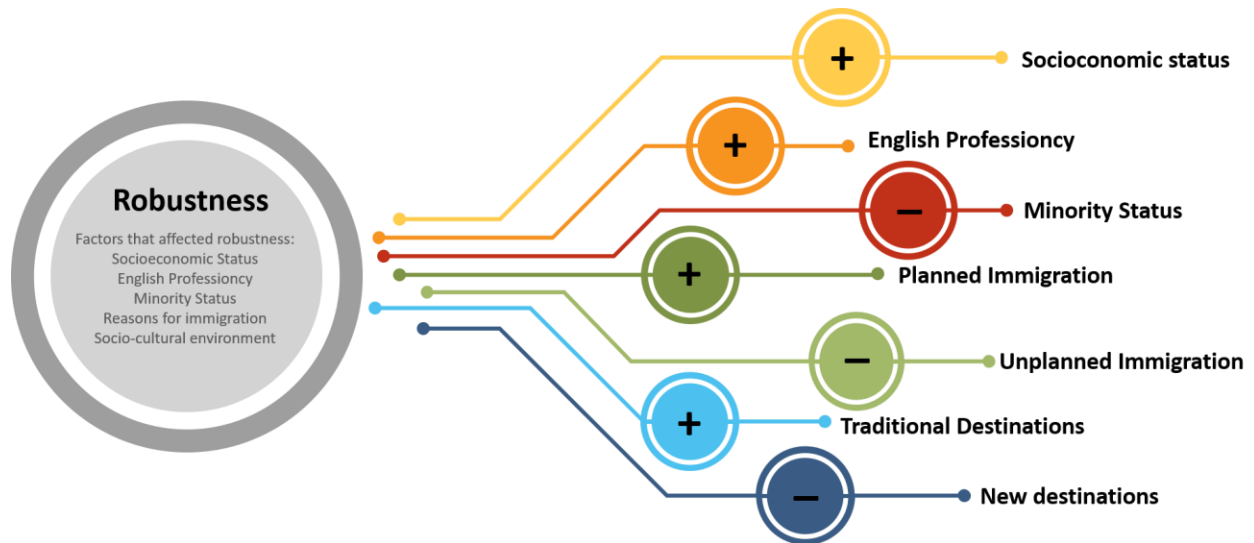


Figure 19 Factors Influencing Robustness

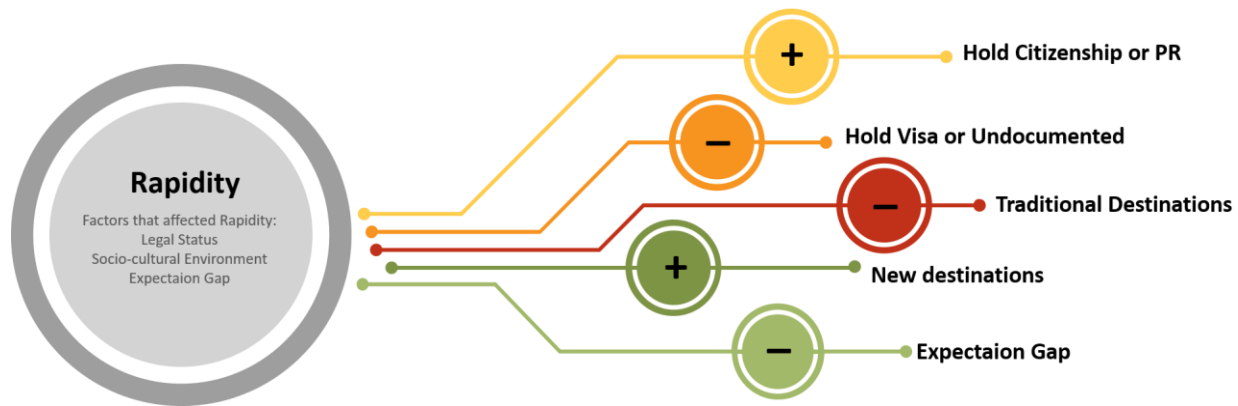


Figure 20 Factors Influencing Rapidity

Where people are within the resilience triangle can affect two major aspects that are crucial to the non-dominant groups' representation in the public realm. One of these aspects is public participation. Where somebody is in the triangle might influence the interest or ability to participate in the government planning and design work. People who are down in the trajectory, who are likely to be recent immigrants, suffer from severe loss of functionality, that might be due to lower socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, lack of support and social capital, lack of confidence regards cultural differences, having unplanned immigration processes and undocumented immigration status and other factors that I explained in more specifics in the previous chapter. The loss of functionality makes daily simple activities like writing an email, responding to phone calls, going for grocery shopping, or taking the bus overwhelming. People who are down in the functionality trajectory show less interest and ability to participate in the government planning and design work. This is crucial to the equitable and inclusive access to public resources. Public stakeholders, officials, local governments, place making professionals and urban designers who push for "equitable and inclusive participation" should be aware that these people will not show it to the table. These people are not part of their "equitable and inclusive participation process," given this, they should be aware of the short coming of their

process and reassess it, how equal and inclusive it is? And how it can be more equitable and inclusive? And find ways to ensure that these vulnerable individuals/groups have a space at the table.

People who have better socioeconomic status, decent levels of English proficiency, planned immigration process, hold a citizenship or permanent residency, been in the U.S. for a while, and have started to be more familiar with the system will be in the middle of trajectory of functionality. These people will more likely to have an interest and ability to participate in the government planning and design processes. However, even if they made it to the table, they will listen but most likely will not speak, and even if they participate, they will probably feel they are not understood and will stop showing up.

People upward on the functionality trajectory are likely to be highly interested and able to show up and have the vocal ability to participate and engage. These people are most likely to have a planned immigration process, high socioeconomic status, excellent English proficiency, and have been in the U.S. for a considerable amount of time, which made them comfortable with the system.

The second aspect that might be influenced by the position of where someone is within the triangle is their design preferences and the ability to inform the community planner and designer process. Design preferences might be aesthetic preferences and depend on individual personalities; however, the interviews revealed that it can be influenced by people's position within the triangle.

People upward in the trajectory, who have a planned immigration process, high socioeconomic status, excellent English proficiency, and have been in the U.S. for a considerable amount of

time were more open to compromise in terms of form and space and adaptability of buildings and spaces. For instance, these people showed a positive sense towards houses' small square footage or low ceilings compared to their previous countries. They developed positive emotions towards the small square footage houses, as if they are more sustainable and save energy, are easier to clean, and are part of the modern urban lifestyle. On the other, people downward the trajectory were less happy and less open to compromise in terms of form and space and adaptability of buildings and spaces. They revealed negative emotions towards the small houses and low ceilings. They said that average house size in the U.S. is less than a fifth of the house sizes back home and 5 times 5 the price. They mentioned negative perceptions of these houses when they were asked about the spatial aspect of belonging, saying that it's like living in a tuna can.

People downward the trajectory developed negative feelings towards differences between the U.S. and their former countries in terms of the perception of public spaces and community spaces, like the adverse sense of a mosque that does not look like a mosque. In contrast, people upward the trajectory developed a constructive sense towards these mosques.

The Arab community and their preferences are not monolithic or static. What they bring to the table and whether they can be at the table or not, or whether they would be interested to be at the table are going to be shaped by the resilience triangle. This research provides a reference for community planners and designers on how to approach their work with immigrant communities with as much knowledge, compassion, intention, and communication as possible with the community. In this research, I aim to provide diverse and culturally aware lenses for urban designers and placemaking professionals to employ in the production of spaces in the public realm.

As urban designers working with immigrant communities, we first need to acknowledge the problem of having a dominant model of the production of space and we need to change our design mindset into more diverse and multicultural models of spatial production through advocating more diversity in the fields of the built environment. And have a multi-cultural placemaking perspective, so that professionals in the built environment fields reflect the immigrant communities they work in. Practitioners need to use all the available tools in participatory design, community development, policy, community organizing and building that bring inclusive, equitable development to these communities.

Give the control of the development process, resources and decision-making authority directly to groups in the community. The communities are the best judges of how their lives and livelihoods can be improved, and if provided with adequate resources and information, they can organize themselves to provide for their immediate needs. Community meetings are not the most appropriate for marginalized communities, especially for people who speak foreign languages who usually are not invited to the table. We need to approach our work with sensitivity and better measured tools, like using the resilience triangle, to include non-dominant groups to be invited and supported to join the table. We can use this tool to be aware of who goes to the table and who doesn't, to assess the level of engagement of those who make it to the table.

Through having a revolutionary design mindset, steering towards diversity in practitioners, using multicultural placemaking, design for equity, community engagement, community organizing, community building, and through steering towards community-driven design more than the expert-driven design, or in other words, a bottom-top design process, we can boost the non-dominant groups' integration and representation in the public realm (Figure 21).

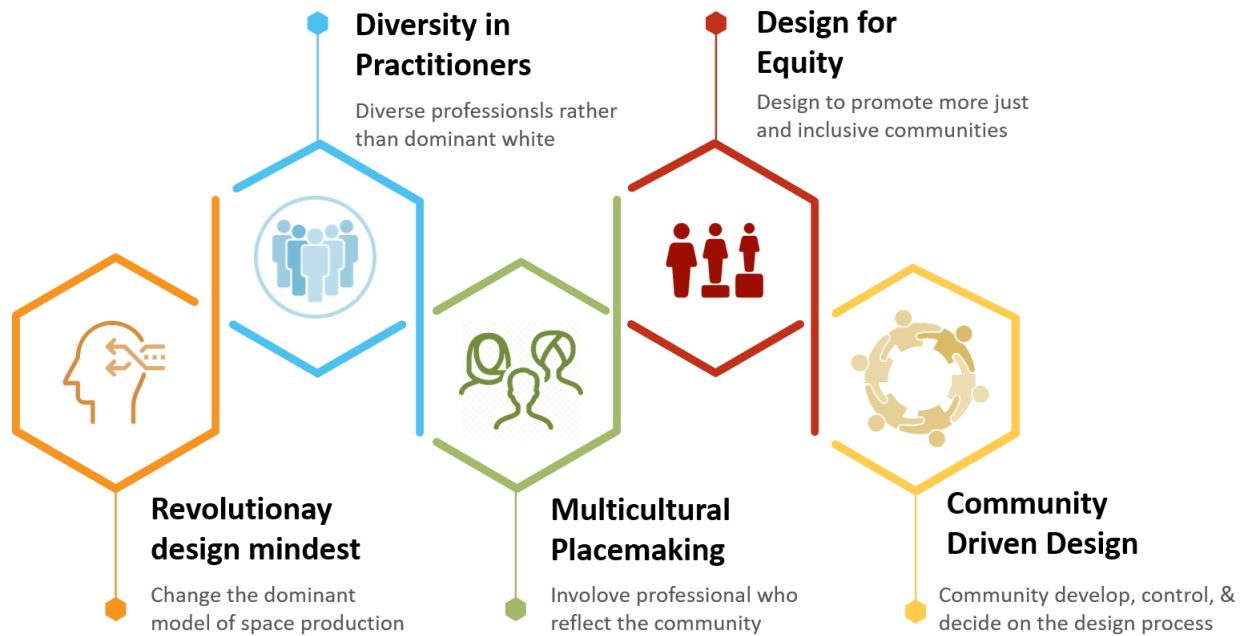


Figure 21 Ways to Enhance Immigrant Communities' Planning And Design Process

This work tried to acquire a better understanding of the non-dominant groups' resilience through studying the case of the Arab community in Seattle, and it focused on the international experience as a change of interest. This research will enrich the literature about Arab American culture and Arabic identity. It investigated Arab belonging, placeness, and representation in the public realm. Moreover, it fills the gaps in the literature about Arab cultural identification and the resilience and adaptation process.

5.3 CRISIS IMPACTS ON IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Immigrant communities tend to be more vulnerable to crises (Bhatia & Ram, 2001; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Perez et al., 2009; Wornall, 2012), especially noncitizen and undocumented immigrants. Their legal status limited their access to social services and jobs with benefits. These

issues became more critical given the COVID-19 public health crisis, for people to be able to visit health care centers without fear of immigration enforcement. There are no provisions in any of the COVID-19 relief bills that prohibit U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from conducting immigration enforcement in any of the designated sensitive locations, including health care centers.

Despite the country's state of national emergency since the spread of the COVID-19 public health crisis, ICE has continued to engage in immigration enforcement actions, ignoring state and local stay-at-home orders and strict social-distancing guidelines. At a time when nonessential establishments are closing, and people are being urged to stay home, it continues to conduct work, as usual, exacerbating the fear that immigrant communities already are feeling.

Regarding the COVID-19 public health crisis effects on the immigrants' community, a coordinated advocacy effort to fight COVID-19 must affirm the principle that these locations, which are spaces that the federal government itself has long designated as “sensitive locations,” are necessary to keep immigrants, their families, and the greater community safe and healthy during this time.

5.4 NEXT STEPS

The literature has been increasingly focusing on the ways in which space and place influence design, culture, and politics and vice versa. The spatial dimension is influenced by ethnicity, culture, and nationalism. As this research revealed, understanding these relationships and dynamics is crucial for non-dominant groups' integration and representation in the public realm. There is much more work needed to further explore the complicated relationships and

attachments of people and place. We need to further investigate these dynamics so it can better inform community planners and designers' work.

Modest attempts in literature have tried to identify the landscapes and environments affected by Arab Americans and vice versa (e.g., Kiskowski, 2017; Staeheli & Nagel, 2006). This research tried to investigate the "Arab sense of place" and "Arab place attachment." For the sake of the integrity and inclusion of the public realm, representing a holistic public realm where Arabs are underrepresented, this research tries to provide culturally aware lenses for urban designers and placemaking professionals who are centered on a dominant model of spatial production of the public realm. It tried to answer, "What are the impacts of the sense of place on Arabs' resilience?" There is much more work to do to explore the Arab sense of place. What is the relationship between Arabs and spatial settings? This is a complicated question that involves many aspects that need to be captured and analyzed. We need to do more work to know the characteristics that make a place special or unique and to support the feeling or perception held by people or by certain characteristics influencing their place attachment and sense of belonging.

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APPENDIX A

THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Time interview began:

Length of interview (minutes):

Introduction

My name is Rawan Hasan and I am a student at the University of Washington in Masters of Urban Design and Planning Program. I am writing my thesis about Cultural Resilience of Diasporic Communities. I will be studying the case of the Arab Community in Greater Seattle Area. The purpose of this study is to cultivate inclusion in the public realm and promote a holistic sense of place where Arab are represented. I am really interested in your opinion and your experience of living here. One thing that I am interested to know in particular is how do you face cultural/social/political challenges/changes as an Arab person navigating an American space. And what are the aspects that help you overcome/adapt/cope with these challenges/changes and continue to grow and develop. The information in this interview will be critical to the final analysis of my thesis.

I want to let you know that everything you will share in this interview will be anonymous. Identifying information will be separated from the answers. The data will not be shared and it will be only used for the analysis of my thesis. The interview will take approximately an hour. You can stop the interview at any point and you can skip any question you prefer not to answer.

Prior to this interview,

Do you give me the permission to interview you?

I would be interested to record this interview and take notes, do you give me permission?

Do you prefer to have the interview in English or in Arabic? Or both?

Do you have any further questions before we begin?

Rawan Hasan

Masters of Urban Design and Planning Candidate

<insert contact information here>

The interview questions focus on two main themes: Identity and Space. If you are not a first-generation immigrant please answer the questions that apply relating to your parents/family and/or how do you feel your perception is different from your parents/family?

Warming up question

How old were you when you immigrated to the states? How long ago?

How often Arabic is spoken in your home? Have this changed over time?

How predominant is the use of Arabic in your daily life/ community spaces?

Questions

What does home mean to you? You might have more than one answer.

How would you describe your identity in terms of what's most important to you – e.g. national, cultural, and/or social identity?

If someone else asked that question would you change your answer? Codeswitching?

Within the US context, can you describe your community? You might have more than one answer.

Are there places in Greater Seattle area where you feel you belong?

Are there places where you feel least belong or do not fit?

What are the social and spatial aspects of a place/places that support your sense of belonging?

As an Arab, do you feel you that you are represented in public spaces?

Are there challenges that you face as an Arab or because you are an Arab?

If you were raised in the US, can you tell me about your childhood what is it like to be raised in an Arab family? What are the aspects that made you different from other kids?

What aspects of your culture you want to change or already changed in your life? Give some examples if needed.

What aspects of your culture you cherish and wish to transfer to your children and grandchildren? And what aspects might not be transferable?

If you have children or take care of children, can you describe your child rearing philosophy/style/practices that you have adopted to raise your child/children in diaspora? Or things or problems that you're dealing with?

The following questions only applies if you are a first-generation immigrant

Through your transnational experience:

Describe your experience, did your feelings towards living here changed over time?

How did you resist change in your culture? And how did you maintain and protect your culture?

In what aspects did your culture transfer? Can you explain how?

What is your level of engagement/isolation with the American society?

What is the role of community places and networks in your adaptation process?

Additional Probes

Ask for more information

Ask for an explanation

Closing Instructions

Thank you very much for your time! I appreciate it. The thesis will be finished in June, 2020. I would be happy to share it with you if you would like to have it. Would it possible to contact you in the future in regards to any clarifications?