

Experiences of Second-Generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans Managing Multicultural
Identity and its Impact on Their Relationships

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Abstract

This qualitative study sought to examine the experience of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing their multicultural identity and its impact on their relationships. Semi-structured interviews regarding how participants defined themselves, how they represented their identity to others, how they balanced the values, beliefs, and traditions came to take care of their parents, as well as its impact on their relationships, including family, friends, and significant others. The study addressed both challenges and advantages of multiculturalism. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis and themes were organized around the areas of inquiry. Participants spoke about highlighting their religious identity to avoid assumptions, the limitations of the Middle Eastern label for Copts, people's lack of understanding about the Coptic faith, the overlap between cultures. They also discussed their identity in terms of internal conflict, external conflict with parents over values and cultural distance, as well as their preferences in relationship choices. Participants addressed advantages in multiculturalism in their ability to relate to others, feeling a strong sense of community, as well as feeling uniqueness and pride in their identity. Limitations, clinical implications, and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Middle Eastern, Coptic, Coptic Americans, cultural identity, second generation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Problem and its Setting

Increasing diversity in the U.S. American society is growing into a more diverse conglomeration of cultures. In 2010, approximately two-thirds of all states in the U.S. had more than 5% foreign-born inhabitants, with several states containing 15% and over (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In 2004, the U.S. Census Bureau predicted that by the year 2030, only 50% of children will be non-Hispanic whites (as cited in Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2009, p. 641). Currently, 37% of residents claim minority status, and the U.S. population is projected to include 57% minorities by the year 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Today, children from birth to age eight are the most diverse age group in the United States; they are more likely to be foreign born or have foreign-born parents (first- and second-generation immigrants, respectively) and be related to cultural groups other than those of European origin (Hernandez, Takanishi, & Marotz, 2009). One in five children in the United States lives in an immigrant family, with at least one foreign-born parent (Hernandez et al., 2009; Mendoza, 2009).

Second-generation immigrants can be defined as individuals born in the United States to parents who are foreign-born or foreign-born individuals who immigrated to the United States before the age of five (Padilla, 2006). According to the Pew Research Center (2013) and their analysis of Current Population Surveys (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a), there are currently about 20 million second-generation adult children of immigrants and approximately 16 million more who are 17 years old and younger. Between the years of 2012 and 2050, the adult second generation is likely to grow 126%. Second-generation immigrants usually struggle with internal conflicts related to their identity, and they experience confusion over dual expectations and values from different cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Haritatos & Benet-Martínez,

2002). They must also manage pressures from different communities and may deal with various racial stereotypes (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). These are just some of the challenges faced by the growing second generation.

The second generation. Although first-generation immigrants experience similar conflicts, previous research has revealed less frequent reports of depression and anxiety compared to second-generation immigrants (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Harker, 2001). As opposed to their first-generation counterparts, who usually retain traditional practices and values of their upbringing, members of the second generation are exposed to at least two different cultural contexts: American mainstream culture and their parents' culture. These two cultural contexts often include different, and sometimes opposing, values, and expectations (Padilla, 2006). As members of both host and native cultures from birth, second-generation members simultaneously explore possibly conflicting cultures in order to settle in their ethnic identities on their own terms (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002). Consequently, second-generation immigrants report more everyday hassles, in-group and family conflict, decreased self-esteem, and internalizing disorders than first-generation immigrants and U.S.-born peers (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2005; Lay & Safdar, 2003).

Despite the number of cultural conflicts cited in the second generation, scholars have also noted a number of strengths associated with socialization in two cultures. Padilla (2006) suggests that these individuals possess social flexibility because of their competence in both cultures. Benet-Martinez and Haritatos (2005) explain that the interaction between different cultures fosters interpersonal traits such as expressiveness, sociability, and empathy. It is also likely that those balancing multiple cultures are open and tolerant of varying values and

lifestyles, and they also benefit from emotional stability as a result of resilience through managing conflicting cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Cultural identity and development. Culture can be defined as a set of worldview beliefs and expressions of those beliefs that are shared by members of a community; it includes making choices about contexts (ethnicity, race, religion, and gender) to form an identity (Jensen, 2003). Britto and Amer (2007) define cultural identity as a multidimensional framework for the development of a sense of self, extending beyond ethnicity to include religion, culture, and national identity and the interactions between these dimensions. For the purposes of this study, the term *multicultural* will be used in lieu of the terms *bicultural*, or *multiethnic* to include individuals (like Middle Eastern Coptic Americans) with multiple cultures or ethnicities whose religion is also a significant component of their cultural identity.

Berry (1997; 1984) proposed the idea that individuals adapt to multiple societies or cultures by using one of four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization (Berry, 1997; Berry, 1984). The *assimilation* strategy is used when “from the point of view of the non-dominant groups...individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures” (Berry, 2003, p. 24). In other words, they seek interaction with their host culture. In contrast, those who engage in identity *separation* “place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others” (Berry, 1997, p. 9; Berry, 2003, p. 24). Berry explained that *marginalization* occurs when “there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others [cultural groups],” often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination (1997, p. 9). Finally, individuals who

seek to maintain the integrity of both their culture-of-origin and the host culture “as an integral part of the larger social network” (p. 9) are said to be utilizing the *integration* strategy.

Biculturalism. The literature on cultural identity development in immigrants, particularly the second generation, has often referred to *biculturalism* (e.g., Verónica Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Padilla, 2006; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009; Willgerodt, Miller, & McElmurry, 2002, etc.) which corresponds to Berry’s integration strategy (Berry, 1997; LaFromboise et al., 1993). Analyses based on U.S. Census Bureau data and projection methodology used for 2005-2050 (Passel & Cohn, 2008), the 2011 National Survey of Latinos (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011) and the 2012 Asian-American survey (Cohn et al., 2013) revealed that approximately 20% of Hispanic/Latino and 23% of Asian American adult children of immigrants identify themselves in pan-ethnic (or bicultural) terms (as cited in Pew Research Center, 2013). A large percentage of those sampled (in addition to children born to parents of different cultures who also identify with multiple cultures) reported identification with their ancestral country of origin (i.e. Mexican or Chinese American) but also identified themselves as “a typical American.” This category included cultural or ethnic minorities, individuals who are biracial or multiracial, and immigrants (David, Okazaki, & Saw, 2009).

LaFromboise (1993) and colleagues proposed a type of biculturalism in which individuals move between two distinct cultures without either culture extending into the other. Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, and Morris (2002) proposed Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) as a model for understanding individual levels of biculturalism (in which overlap may occur) by investigating biculturals’ perception of the extent of overlap or conflict between their two cultural identities. It does not, however, necessarily address specific domains of culture. They also found evidence to suggest that bicultural individuals engage in *cultural frame*

switching, in which bicultural individuals vacillate between different cultural meaning systems and behaviors in response to context. Mixed findings about the challenges and strengths of bicultural individuals highlight the complexity of cultural identity negotiation.

Empirical and conceptual research on biculturalism has referred to both challenges and strengths associated with bicultural identity and balancing cultures. Challenges have included psychological distress including depression (Love & Buriel, 2007; Marks, Patton, & Garcia Coll, 2011), difficulty belonging to social groups (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009), confusion about ethnic identification and cultural cognitive dissonance (Inman, Ladany, Constantine, & Morano, 2001; Kibria, 2000), and stress associated with family cultural conflict (Britto & Amer, 2007; Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997). In contrast, studies reflecting strengths of biculturalism have noted individuals' social flexibility and competency in emotion regulation (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Padilla, 2006), cognitive flexibility (Omizo, Kim, & Abel, 2008), and reported self-efficacy in the ability to belong (David, Okazaki, & Saw, 2009). The mixed findings of both benefits and challenges of their experiences highlight the complexity of cultural identity navigation, especially for members of the second generation.

Identity and relationships. Mann (2006) asserts that identity cannot purely be intrapsychic because of the constant interaction between people and their social context and the mutual influence of each on one another. The core cultural ideas and values that are repeated in one's daily interactions shape an individual's internal self-representation, and "individuals from different cultures develop a very different sense of self, especially with respect to how the self is related to important others" (Lalonde, Hyne, Pannu, & Tatla, 2004, p. 504). It is important to understand identity and relationships and their mutual influence, because most values and traditions related to culture are reflected within those relationships.

Identity negotiation and intimacy-seeking are likely to overlap for individuals to progress in personal maturation (Barry, Madsen, Nelson, Carroll, & Badger, 2009). All of Erikson's developmental stages of psychosocial development (e.g., *identity v. identity diffusion, intimacy v. isolation*, etc.) imply the strong involvement of family (Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009). According to Kerpelman, Pittman, and Lamke (1997), individuals co-construct their identities by sorting through social feedback from daily interactions and interpreting that feedback to form a self-perception of how others view them and their behaviors. They suggested that the more that these relationships are meaningful and continuing, the more likely that the social feedback will have an impact on the individual. Meaningful relationships, therefore, are likely to be found in family members, friends, and romantic relationships.

As previously mentioned, identity formation can occur in the context family relationships, where members of the second generation face the potential for intergenerational conflict about values and expectations (Britto & Amer, 2007; Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997). Individuals also experiment with different ways of behaving and learning about themselves in romantic relationships as they separate from their families-of-origin (Kerpelman et al., 2012). For members of the second generation, this could involve entering into relationships with dating practices and expectations that differ from parents. McLean (2005) suggested that in later adolescence, peers are the primary audiences for individuals in identity exploration. Within the context of culture, peers serve as a catalyst for ethnic identity exploration but are also sources for discrimination (Galliher & Kerpelman, 2012). The mutual influence of identity and relationships, therefore, encompasses individuals' sense of cultural identity and the values and traditions they choose to adopt, how they choose to relate to others and with whom, and how they perceive themselves.

The challenges and strengths associated with cultural identification in second-generation immigrants have received significant attention among researchers. Nonetheless, the study of cultural identity in second-generation immigrants in the U.S. has focused predominantly on Latinos and Asians (e.g., Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen & Sheldon, 2012). Less is known about other increasing populations of second generation immigrants facing similar challenges, such as those whose parents emigrated from Arab countries. This study focused on the experiences of managing multiple cultures and its impact on relationships for a group whose presence in the United States is growing significantly but remains understudied in research: Arab/Middle Eastern Americans.

Arabs in the U.S. The Census Bureau's 2010 American Community Survey records 1,967,219 Arab Americans in the United States, but the American Arab Institute Foundation adjusts this number to 3,665,789 to account for underreporting. Census data from the survey specifically for "Arabs" included the responses of those who have ancestry in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, and included those that respond with Arab or Arabic; Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen were marked as "Other Arab" in this data set (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2012).

Between the years of 2000 and 2010, the number of U.S. residents claiming Arab ancestry increased by more than 72%, and the group is one of the fastest growing diasporas in the world (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2012). During this same decade, there was an increase in Arab population in almost all states, growing by about half in North Carolina, Washington, Colorado, and Virginia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). The latest U.S. Census report (2003) on Arab population estimated an almost 40% increase of Arabs in the U.S. between 1990

and 2000. It is noteworthy that in the year 2000, 46% of Arabs were native U.S. citizens (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2005). This group likely includes members of the second generation.

“Middle Eastern” versus “Arab.” The Census Bureau (2003) states that those included in the “Arab” ancestry category are from the above mentioned countries, and they are considered Arab if they report being Middle Eastern. Interestingly, some individuals from Arab countries choose not to identify with the Arab label because of sociopolitical reasons (Awad, 2010). For many Middle Easterners, the idea of the “Arab world” is suppressive of pre-Arab nationalities (Salameh, 2011) as well as linguistic and cultural variations among the countries of the Middle East (Amer & Hovey, 2007). Interestingly, some individuals from Arab countries (particularly some Christians) prefer to identify as “white” rather than Arab, possibly because of the common interchangeability between the labels “Muslim” and “Arab” (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Ajrouch, 2004). For the purposes of this study, the term *Middle Eastern* was used to describe those of Arab descent in order to accommodate the diverse nature of the group.

A very small number of studies have examined cultural identity experiences in Middle Eastern Americans (Awad, 2010; Britto & Amer, 2007; Chen & Sheldon, 2012). This may be due, in part, to the ambiguity in describing Middle Eastern Americans (David, 2007). Middle Easterners have experienced a social shift in racial classification over time between White and “Other;” they have been considered Caucasian/White for government purposes as a result of a series of legal cases in the early 1900s (David, 2007; Gaultieri, 2001). In some literature, some Arab/Middle Eastern Americans did not identify themselves as “white” (Ajrouch, 2004). Yet in another study, some Middle Eastern adolescents (particularly Christians) preferred to be identified as “white” over “Arab” (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). The unclear social and official

categorizations for this cultural group, as well as their relatively recent presence in the United States, may be a cause for limited empirical attention to Middle Easterners.

Little visibility has been given to Middle Easterners in the United States, especially concerning cultural identity formation; however, since 9/11, increased negative attention has been targeted at Arab Muslims by the Western world. The Arab American Institute (2002) administered a survey investigating views of ethnic profile and pride of Arab Americans after 9/11 and found that 40% of participants' experiences of past discrimination and profiling impacted their willingness to self-disclose their ethnicity. This, combined with unclear social categorizations, may pose challenges in cultural identification for Middle Eastern Americans.

Middle Easterners and religion. For decades, the Middle East has been viewed as a monolithic entity culture (Salameh, 2011). Many studies that use Arabs as their subjects do not report the distribution of religions in their sample, implying that the Arab families studied have a common religion, likely Muslim (Beitin, Allen, & Bekheet, 2009). Nonetheless, there are important religious and cultural variations among Middle Easterners, and 77% of those categorized as Arab American are Christian (Awad, 2010; Salameh, 2011). For this reason, using a generally Middle Eastern sample when studying cultural identity would be unrepresentative of the population (Beitin et al., 2009). The U.S. Census Bureau (2003) stated that although religious affiliation may be a significant element in ethnic identity, the 2000 ancestry question was *not* meant to collect data on religion, and those who gave religious responses were then re-categorized as "Other groups." This may account for some underreporting and should be noted when considering that some Middle Eastern groups identify themselves from both ethnic and religious perspectives. Since fewer studies about Middle Easterners address the Christian population (Beitin et al., 2009), this study investigated the

experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Christian Americans managing their identification with multiple cultures, with a focus on its impact on their relationships (e.g., family, friends, and romantic relationships).

Religion and cultural identity. Jensen (2003) explained that culture consists of worldview beliefs and expressions shared by members of a community, and it encompasses ethnicity, race, religion, gender, etc. Cultural identity intersects with identity formation in the areas of religion and morality, two domains which are crucial for peoples' understanding of themselves and their cultural identities, according to Jensen. Some scholars have spoken about "ethnic fusion," "ethnic religion," and "religious ethnicity" to describe the interweaving relationships between religion and ethnicity (Hammond & Warner, 1993; Lee, Chang, & Miller, 2006). Karpov, Lisovskaya, and Barry (2012) similarly introduce the ideology of "ethnodoxy," which connects a group's ethnic identity to its dominant faith.

Following Abramson (1980) in his writings on religion, Hammond and Warner understood three patterns in the relationship between ethnicity and religion. They described "ethnic fusion" as the pattern in which religion is the major basis of ethnicity, wherein the two are inextricably linked and dependent on one another (e.g. the Amish, Mormons, Jews). "Ethnic religion" is characterized by religion as one of several foundations for ethnicity, along with language and geographical nationality. Most likely, ethnicity helps to sustain religion. Through ethnic religion, one can uphold ethnic identification without religious identification, but the opposite is rare (i.e. Greek/Coptic Orthodox, Dutch Reformed). Finally, "religious ethnicity" links an ethnic group to a religious tradition, but other ethnic groups may also be linked to the same religion; it is characterized by identification with the religion, but not typically with the ethnic group (i.e. Polish, Irish, and Italian Catholics).

Kim (2011) explained that, by definition, ethnicity is based on the idea of shared identity through language, culture, and place-of-origin. The religious institution may also help preserve ethnic traditions pertaining to language, food, holidays, and values. For many immigrant groups in America, religion and ethnicity reinforce one another and some use religious groups to establish ethnic boundaries (Greeley, 1971; Lee, Chang, & Miller, 2006). Interestingly, the majority of studies pertaining to ethnicity and religion speak independently to either category and neglect the connection between the two cultural identities (Kim, 2011). This study, therefore, focused on the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Christian Americans managing multicultural identity and its impact on their relationships, and considered religion and ethnicity as aspects of their identity among these three cultures.

Coptic Orthodox Christians. Though there is minimal research on the Coptic Orthodox Christian population in relation to Middle Eastern studies, this group contains the largest Christian minority in the Middle East and North Africa (Botros, 2006; Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). The 2010 Orthodox Census estimated that in the United States, there were approximately 1,044,000 parishioners of various Orthodox Christian denominations including 92,000 members of the Coptic Orthodox Church (Krindatch, 2010). Other sources reported as many as 350,000 to 400,000 adherents to the Coptic Orthodox faith (Chaillot, 2009; Saad, 2010).

The Coptic tradition states that St. Mark (apostle and evangelist), founded a church in Egypt, following the commands of Jesus Christ (Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). There is a great deal of pride in ethnic and religious heritage among Copts, especially in light of the group's contribution to Christian history and faith via the establishment of several dogmas of Christianity (Van Dijk & Botros). Many Copts also believe that they are the descendants of the original Egyptians (presumably, pre-Arab settlement) and feel a strong bond to Egyptian land and

history, particularly the original Christian Egyptian tradition (Iskander, 2012). As the church seeks to establish itself in Western society, the second generation will likely feel pressure to carry on Coptic traditions and make the Church known to mainstream society (Botros, 2006).

To date, there have been no studies investigating how individuals in this group negotiate these aspects of their multicultural identity (religious, Middle Eastern, American) and how their experiences impact their relationships. In the past, some authors have suggested that Christian Middle Easterners have had a softer entrance into American life compared to Muslim Arabs because Arab Christians have often found refuge in the safety of religious freedom and commonality in the U.S. (Amer & Hovey, 2007). Nonetheless, the significance of ethnicity and religion in the lives of Coptic Americans may pose similar complexities for cultural identity negotiation and interpersonal interactions. Understanding how second-generation individuals manage multiple cultures will provide depth of understanding about the interaction between context (e.g. family, peers, coworkers, and other communities), culture, and identity.

Differences between cultures. Second-generation Middle-Eastern Americans who are members of the Coptic Orthodox faith may face challenges in negotiating their identity in light of a faith that emphasizes tradition, distinctions between mainstream Christianity and Coptic Orthodoxy, and the contrasts between Middle Eastern and American cultures. For example, family plays an essential role in the lives of Middle Easterners; interdependence among family members and respect between generations is highly valued (Awad, 2010). Collectivist cultures, Awad explained, give priority to family needs and goals over individual successes. In contrast, American culture often favors autonomy and individualism that may sometimes conflict with family-centered values (Dennis, Basanez, & Farahmand, 2009; Farver et al., 2002). As previously mentioned, Coptic values embody pride in both ethnic and Christian spiritual heritage

(Botros, 2006); this perspective is markedly different from relatively young mainstream Protestant churches who do not emphasize ethnic identity (Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). In addition, Arab Americans commonly share an emphasis on religion and traditions that may conflict with mainstream American culture (Awad, 2010) and America's "secular democracy" (Saad, 2010, p. 220). Awad explains that Middle Easterners are visibly a minority in the United States: for example, they highlight the importance of modesty, reject American dating practices, and observe fasts for religious reasons. This study sought to understand the experiences of Middle Eastern Coptic Americans as they enter young adulthood and manage their identification to multiple cultures and its impact on their relationships. It also addressed the added components of religious influence as an aspect of cultural identity.

Identity in early adulthood. A significant number of studies regarding cultural identity are dedicated to the study of adolescents in congruence with the idea that identity exploration and formation occur mainly during this developmental stage (Erikson, 1968; Kerpelman et al., 2012; Marcia, 1966; Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughn, 2011). More contemporary developmental theorists suggest that early theories of identity exploration as a part of adolescence now extend into the lives of emerging adults in their 20s, especially in industrialized societies (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). Arnett and Jensen explained that during emerging adulthood, much of the focus is on self-development and individualism, during which young adults form a distinct set of beliefs on different issues. They explained that emerging adults have the freedom to execute beliefs and behaviors that differ from those of their caregivers. Therefore, this study concentrated on second-generation young adults who identified themselves as Coptic Middle Eastern American.

Significance

The second generation is presented with a unique experience of cultural identity management. Studies revealed that when individuals with multiple cultures speak about their heritage, their descriptions are often complex and ambivalent (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; O'Hearn, 1998). These individuals must manage different expectations and values and balance their roles within both cultures. For individuals of the second generation who may experience the influence of a strong link between ethnicity and religion as a major identity marker, such a negotiation is likely complex. Statistics and census information track numbers of ethnic minorities in the United States as well as U.S.-born minorities but cannot capture the experience, strengths, and challenges of identifying with both ethnic cultures-of-origin (Middle Eastern and Coptic) as well as mainstream culture (American) (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Phinney, 1996) and the impact on relationships. Given the fact that children today are more likely to be first- or second-generation immigrants from cultural groups other than those of European origin, multicultural identity and relationships should be a research focus (Hernandez et al., 2009).

Contribution to knowledge. This study will fill the gap of needed research of a minority religious group in the Middle Eastern community in the United States. The way individuals organize their cultural identities shapes values, beliefs, expectations, behaviors, and social networks (Benet-Martínez & Leu, 2002). Learning about the experience of managing identification with the Christian, Middle Eastern, and American cultures and how it impacts their relationships may inform clinicians about the strengths and challenges of such experiences among second-generation immigrants and benefit family clinicians in understanding these unique relationships. Gaining sensitivity about the unique experience of personal and psychosocial

multicultural development that this population experiences in 21st Century America will help clinicians be better prepared to assist this group and develop culturally sensitive interventions.

Rationale for Methodology

A qualitative design was used to investigate the lived experiences of second-generation Coptic Orthodox Christians in the United States as they negotiate and integrate their multicultural identities in their relationships. Rather than generalizing, the purpose for this study was to understand the personal experiences of exploring cultural identity and perceived competencies and challenges in their relationships that result from managing identity within the context of three cultures. A qualitative design allowed for richer descriptions of these experiences with a presentation of more specific and unique perspectives that have been understudied in research.

Using a phenomenological methodology created opportunities to analyze participant experiences in context and extract clusters of meaning from relationships among variables and ideas (Creswell, 2007). This approach allowed the emergence of themes of experience and provide descriptions regarding the structure of integrating multicultural identity (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Descriptions were based on the ideas of the participants themselves, so theme generation was inductively developed and coincided with the reality of the subjects providing data. Similarly, interviewing multicultural individuals conjointly created space for participants to reflect on their own identity experience in light of their socialization in multiple cultures, illuminating the essence of their experience. In Beitin, Allen, and Bekheet's (2009) review of 256 studies on Arab families, 80% of those studies were quantitative. They encourage more ethnographic and qualitative studies, which provide a curious approach to the study of this group, rather than looking at "clashes" in cultures.

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology was chosen as a theoretical framework for guiding the conceptualization of the present study. It allows in-depth descriptions to capture the essence of participants' lived experiences through an interpretive process by the researcher (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1990). The philosophical assumptions of phenomenology assert that all knowledge is relative and that knowledge is socially constructed and, therefore, indefinite; consequently, objects, events, and situations carry a variety of meanings to different people (Dahl & Boss, 2005). Dahl and Boss state that postmodernists use phenomenology to understand how family members "experience their everyday worlds and how their perceptions lead to different meanings" (p. 65). In the present study, this idea is relevant in understanding how the experience of identification with Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American cultures among second-generation individuals varies from family members of earlier generations or peers and what challenges and competencies result from managing their multicultural identity in the context of relationships.

Phenomenologists are also interested in the routine aspects of life because understanding everyday life also helps make sense of family catastrophes and stress (Dahl & Boss, 2005).

Another important assumption of phenomenology is that researchers are not separate entities from the subject that they study (Dahl & Boss, 2005). Rather than simply observing, Dahl and Boss posit that researchers, too, are participants in sharing knowledge. Researchers' own feelings, values, beliefs, and past experiences influence interpretations and the types of questions asked in a study, and the researcher-participant hierarchy and boundary system become less clear and more collaborative.

Purpose of the Study

Existing research provides a general understanding of the experiences of bicultural individuals and the way they negotiate their identities, commonly in specific cultural groups such as Asians, Latinos, and Africans (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen & Sheldon, 2012; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). The primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to widen the research base on balancing the values, traditions, and beliefs of multiple cultures and relationships in the second-generation, particularly for those balancing Middle Eastern, American, and Coptic cultures. The contributions of this study include filling the gap for the insufficient body of research for this group and documenting the psychosocial development of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans. This study investigated, specifically, how individuals born in the United States who identify as Middle Eastern Coptic American manage their cultural identity in relation to all three cultural groups. This study included challenges and competencies that these individuals identify in managing their multicultural identity, and focused on its impact on their relationships.

Research Questions:

1. How do individuals born in the U.S. who identify as Middle Eastern Coptic Americans manage their identification to those three cultural groups, and how does it impact their relationships (e.g., family, friends, and romantic relationships)?
2. What challenges and competencies do they identify in themselves and their relationships with the experience of managing their multicultural identity?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

An exploration of issues related to cultural identity is necessary for a complete understanding of the context and need for the present study. A review of existing literature will assist in developing the scope of the present study by shedding light on gaps in research pertaining to this topic. The following literature review outlines previous research studies on cultural identity (and the acculturation process) of second-generation children of immigrants, using members of other cultural and ethnic groups as well as the Middle Eastern population. It will include impacts on relationships, including family, friends, and romantic relationships. It will also review several theories of cultural identity formation. Doing so facilitates understanding of the experience of managing multiple cultures and of multiculturalism as a stressor and/or benefactor to individuals internally and externally in their relationships.

This review also addresses the unique set of experiences of the second-generation, whose cultural identity negotiation experience may differ from first-generation immigrants who have been the focus of much of existing acculturation literature. The literature review also considers religion as an influence on cultural identity negotiation, specifically addressing the history of the Coptic Christian religious belief system. This will illuminate an aspect of cultural identity that is sometimes diluted by discourses on ethnic identity development. Included, therefore, is a discussion about the construct of ethno-religious identity as a significant part of cultural identity and important values and traditions carried out in relationships

Challenges and Strengths for the Second Generation

Challenges and conflicts. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, members of the second generation face challenges that differ from those of first-generation immigrants. First-generation immigrants receive their primary socialization in their home country and may feel

less pressure to conform to Anglo-American values because they have already internalized those of their culture-of-origin; second generation individuals are socialized with possibly conflicting messages and are faced with negotiating a balance between both cultures (Varghese & Jenkins, 2009). In addition, first-generation immigrants typically maintain ties to their native culture when faced with discrimination in their host culture (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Harker, 2001), a coping strategy not necessarily afforded to the second generation while navigating cultures. Whereas the first generation of immigrants are more concerned with learning, adapting, and surviving in a new culture, members of subsequent generations may be faced with complex issues of identity (Suárez-Orozco & Doucet, 2006; Varghese & Jenkins, 2009).

Identity and relationships. Despite the notion that children of immigrants can be viewed as the “bridge” between immigrant families and dominant culture (Willgerodt et al., 2002, p. 468), often times immigrant families attempt to guide their children in the way of the mainstream, doing so with limited resources and within a very different social context (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Haller, 2005). Kibria (2002) suggests that children of immigrants are blended into their immigrant community but are more familiar with American culture than their parents. Park (2009) submits that members of the second generation straddle the old and new worlds of their two cultures. During the process of identity formation, individuals begin to engage in social interactions outside of the context of family; often, those negotiating identity feel dissonance between how they define themselves versus the attributions assigned to them by family, peers, and their communities (Ajrouch, 2004). Accordingly, this is a source of intergenerational conflict when acculturation gaps exist between first- and second-generation family members.

Several sources cite family relationships as a principal contextual factor associated with self-cultural identification (Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Britto & Amer, 2007; Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993; Rosenthal, 1987). For members of immigrant families, the critical task of cultural identity formation is learning to manage home/family culture and mainstream culture, which may be at odds (Britto & Amer, 2007; Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997). Britto and Amer (2007) surveyed 150 second-generation Arab Muslim Americans about their cultural identity and found that those who scored with Moderate Bicultural identity reported less importance of family support and greater acculturative stress compared to High Bicultural and High Arab cultural groups, who reported more extended family in the U.S. They suggest that, based on this data, a larger family presence might foster a stronger Arab identity, and that “supportive family environment is linked with a higher sense of belonging to the cultural referent group...” (p. 147). In a similar study about bicultural identity and perceptions of parenting, Chen and Sheldon (2012) found that those who perceived their parents as more accepting of them were more likely to explore their identity with ethnic culture. These may be indications of sources of intergenerational conflicts about values and expectations between second-generation Arab Americans and their immigrant parents on cultural identification.

A number of scholars have also cited the challenges in the conflict between American values that children of immigrants are exposed to and their familial Eastern cultures; this conflict appears to lead to adjustment problems in families (Britto & Amer, 2007; Garcia Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Varghese & Jenkins, 2009; Wu & Chao, 2005). Likewise, Inman, Ladany, Constantine, and Morano (2001) describe the experience of cultural value conflict: negative affect (i.e., guilt or anxiety) and cognitive dissonance as a result of competition of values, behaviors, and expectations internalized from the culture of origin, with those reflected onto the

person from a new culture (p. 18, as cited in Varghese & Jenkins, 2009). In a study of Indian American women, second-generation participants reported higher levels of cultural value conflicts than first-generation women (with a moderate effect size), likely affected by the level of parental control and cognitive dissonance experienced by the influence of two cultures (Varghese & Jenkins, 2009). Gil, Vega, and Dimas (1994) found that these acculturation conflicts between generations were found to be more predictive of Latino participants' low self-esteem, however, than participants' perceived level of disparity between theirs and their parents' level of acculturation. In this study, generational status among Latino young adults was also significantly related to increased depression; higher generations (second) were more likely to be depressed and experience greater conflict between values and expectations.

As previously mentioned, members of the second generation are influenced by exposure to multiple cultural groups and must manage their level of identification with each. Common themes emerging from interviews with second-generation Chinese American women revealed that members of the second generation felt different and experienced confusion over their identity as they attempted to conform to the mainstream (Willgerodt et al., 2002). They also struggled with the feeling of "having two lives" and needing "select culturally specific characteristics or behaviors with which they felt comfortable" for the given context of home or (2002, pp. 474–475). This is one example of ways in which members of the second generation manage their multiple cultures.

Culture and adherence to either collectivistic or individualistic values has also been associated with differences in mate selection and perspectives on romantic relationships (Lalonde et al., 2004). In a study of individuals from 27 countries concerning gender differences and preferred mate characteristics, Buss et al., (1990) found some characteristics to be much

more important in some cultures than others (i.e. chastity was important for those from India and China), which they assume was influenced by individualist and collectivist ideals, though not tested. Several studies have pointed to mate selection and dating as a source of tension over two contradictory sets of norms for members of the second generation (Hynie, 1996; Manohar, 2008). Among 18 second-generation Patel Indians in Florida, common difficulties associated with dating included defining what dating meant to them versus their parents, not feeling a freedom of choice in selecting a partner, and secrecy in dating (Manohar, 2008). Similar sentiments were expressed by second-generation young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 from various countries-of-origin; they expressed relatively significant parental influence on mate choice, the role of their original culture and religion on dating practices, and the desire for “uncomplicated” relationships by marrying someone understanding of both cultures (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012). Members of the second generation are also presented with the possibility of intermarriage, which may not be approved by their parents (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012).

Self-labeling. In a study of bicultural adolescents and young adults, Marks et al. (2011) found that there were variations in the way individuals labeled themselves when given an Identity Sorting Task. Participants identified mainly with Hispanic, Asian, and African American groups. Marks et al. found that their identification varied when presented with implicit tasks (i.e. response time to making associations between words/ethnic labels) and explicit tasks. Participants subscribed to certain labels in explicit tasks, but not during implicit tasks. For example, although participants may have used the word “Hispanic” to describe themselves in explicit interviews, the implicit tasks reflected “Hispanic” as an inadequate representation of personal labels among participants. Marks et al. suggest future research is needed to consider context and social and cultural influences/biases on individuals’ identification

with specific labels. Often, the adoption of a pan-ethnic label (i.e. Chinese American) provides an avenue for categorizing bicultural/multicultural groups as “other” and different from the dominant mainstream, while somewhat conversely also indicating a form of “mainstream assimilation” (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). Bicultural members of the second-generation face the challenge of personal labeling of their cultural identities in a meaningful way.

Strengths and competencies. A number of scholars have also cited the benefits of managing multiple cultures in social skills and emotional regulation (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Padilla, 2006). Padilla cites the ability for bicultural individuals to be open to others and act as a cultural broker between those of varied backgrounds. Padilla also explains that their flexibility in social interactions extends beyond the cultures that bicultural individuals identify with themselves. Adherence to values from both cultures was positively related to cognitive flexibility (the ability to be flexible in communication and social situations) and collective self-esteem (positive attitudes toward both groups) in a study of 112 Asian American high school students in Hawaii (Omizo et al., 2008). David, Okazaki, and Saw (2009) studied bicultural undergraduates of mostly Asian, Latino, and African descent and found that belief in the ability to competently function in two cultures was related to psychological well-being; this finding suggests that bicultural individuals may have higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of anxiety and depression.

Some studies have pointed to identification with ethnic culture-of-origin as a protective factor against mental distress. In a longitudinal study investigating first- and second-generation Asian and Latino youth, research pointed to changes in ethnic identification as a significant predictor for withdrawn and depressed symptoms over time (Rogers-Sirin & Gupta, 2012). In fact, as ethnic identification (vs. American identification) increased by one unit,

withdrawn/depressed symptoms decreased by an average of 4%, but was not moderated by specific ethnicity. Rogers-Sirin and Gupta state that despite the experience of acculturative stress, these results may be evidence that improvements in mental health may occur over time.

Novin et al. (2012) similarly considered varying emotion-regulation styles in individualistic vs. collectivistic cultures. They conducted a study with Moroccan, Dutch, and Moroccan-Dutch youths, exploring how contradictory socialization (i.e. East vs. West; individualistic vs. collectivistic) affects anger regulation and distress in bicultural individuals. Overall, anger-regulation patterns among bicultural adolescents were similar to those of their Dutch peers, but in the home, bicultural adolescents are more likely to be influenced by their Moroccan parents who value group harmony and respect. Individuals who identified with either the Dutch or Moroccan culture were more likely to express their anger more calmly, whereas lack of identification with either Dutch or Moroccan culture predicted more externalizing regulation styles. Novin et al. speculated that some sense of belonging to a culture (dominant or parental culture of origin) may act as a mediator for emotion-regulation styles. This research suggests that, though members of the second generation might experience conflict because of contradicting cultural values (collectivistic vs. individualistic), identification with one's culture-of-origin or sense of belonging to any culture may be a protective factor for these individuals. Additional research investigating participant-perceived benefits of multiculturalism is needed to better understand the experiences of those managing their identification with multiple cultures and its impact on their relationships. This study investigated both perceived benefits and challenges associated with the experiences of members of the second generation as they manage multiple cultures, including its impact on their relationships.

Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American Cultural Values

Middle Eastern cultural values. Although Middle Eastern families are a diverse group in terms of culture and country-of-origin, some generalizations have been made by scholars about their cultural values. Middle Eastern families value interdependence and family obligation, and children may feel pressure to conform (Sue & Sue, 2008). In addition, Sue and Sue explain that parents remain involved in the lives of their children for as long as possible. Eid (2007) interviewed second generation Arab Canadians, and one participant explained that even during mid- to late-twenties, it was typical for children to live at home with their parents because of the value of community. Middle Eastern American families emphasize the maintenance of community, hospitality (through food and service), and “identity that revolves around culture and God” (Sue & Sue, 2008, p. 412).

Eid reported that the majority of the respondents interviewed consider their parents as responsible to prioritize the ethnic culture and transmit identity to them. This included gender roles, Arabic language, and standards that are native to their country-of-origin at the time of immigration. The respondents attributed this to Middle Easterners’ commitment to upholding family reputation. Eid states that these values are not necessarily religion-specific, though approximately 80% of respondents reported that religion held a “very important” (52.6%) or “important” (30.5%) role in their lives (Eid, 2007, p. 106) and view religion as a way to bolster personal and group identity.

Coptic Orthodox Christians: Description and history. Currently, the Copts in Egypt make up the largest Christian minority in the Middle East and North Africa and approximately 10% of the population in Egypt (Botros, 2006). Calculations of numbers of Coptic churches outside of Egypt estimated just under two hundred churches, many with memberships of more

than 2,000 families (Botros, 2006). The Coptic Orthodox Church is considered to be the ancient church, established before the Arab conquests and the introduction of Islam to Egypt (Chaillot, 2009). The word “Coptic” means “Egyptian” and is derived from the Greek word for Egyptian, *Aiguptos* (Henderson, 2005). Chaillot explains that the original Coptic language is derived from Pharaonic hieroglyphics and was written using Greek letters, as Greek was the international language during that period. The word Copt, therefore, refers to nationality, but with a primarily religious connotation identifying Egyptian Christians (van der Vliet, 2009). Botros stated that the church takes pride in sustaining itself through 2,000 years of Christianity, with its foundations in the first century. St. Mark the Evangelist, one of the direct disciples of Jesus Christ, was the first bishop of the church of Alexandria, Egypt, and he is said to have brought Christianity to Egypt (Botros, 2006; Chaillot, 2009; Henderson, 2005).

The Coptic Christians were seen to be in agreement and union with the church in Rome and Constantinople until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, in which the nature of Christ was debated between the Eastern and Western Christian churches (Botros, 2006; Henderson, 2005). According to Henderson and Botros, the Copts maintained the belief that Christ’s nature was both human and divine in accordance with the Council and Armenian and Syrian churches. At this point, traditional Egyptian Christianity became distinct from Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy (van der Vliet, 2009). During this time, the Coptic Orthodox Church became a “truly national church” (van der Vliet, 2009, p. 280).

Islam was introduced to Egypt through the Arab conquest, during which the Egyptians adapted to new heads of state who were often discriminatory against Christians and Jews (Chaillot, 2009). In the year 705, Arabic was enforced as the new national language, leading to the decline of the original Coptic language (Chaillot, 2009) although it is still used in liturgical

worship, much like Latin in the Roman Catholic Church (van der Vliet, 2009). Through a series of different Islamic governments and church leaderships, the Copts worked to assert their rights and freedoms in Egypt, according to Chaillot. Henderson (2005) explains that the Copts experienced secularization, Pan-Arabism, and Pan-Islamism, exemplified by the loss of Sunday as a day of rest and government mandated Islamic studies. In the 1970s, under the leadership of Anwar Sadat, violence between Copts and Muslims increased with attacks on tourists and Coptic churches, the Coptic pope and priests, and congregation members (Chaillot, 2009). The result of the Copts' experience of discrimination led to the Coptic diaspora.

Coptic diaspora. The first large wave of Egyptian emigration occurred during the adoption of socialism by President Gamal Abdel Nasser during the 1960s, and most emigrants were fleeing to Europe, the United States, and Australia (Saad, 2010). Church gatherings began first in families' homes, and by 1970, the first Coptic churches had been established in Toronto, Montreal, Jersey City, and Los Angeles, according to Saad. The second wave of emigration of the Copts was due to economic reasons and mostly fears of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt during the 1970s (Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). Coptic churches were also established in other parts of the Near and Middle East, including Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, the Gulf countries, and the United Arab Emirates (Chaillot, 2009). These waves of Coptic immigration as a result of the Islamist movement continue until today (Chaillot, 2009; Saad, 2010). Between the years of 1970 and 2010, growth of the Coptic Church all over the world has been exponential, with 151 churches and 203 priests (totaling about 350,000) in the United States (Saad, 2010).

Transmission of religious tradition. Over the last ten years, the Coptic Orthodox Church has ordained a group of priests born to immigrant parents in the United States (Saad, 2010). This is likely an attempt to bolster the focus of the Coptic immigrant church: youth and adolescents of

the second generation (Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). Aside from church newcomers, Van Dijk and Botros explain that leaders of the Coptic church emphasize to youth the richness and tradition of the Orthodox church, without ethnically “separating the second generation from mainstream society” (2009, p. 199). Through interviews with second-generation Coptic youth, Botros (2005) found that pride in being Coptic emerged as a common theme among those interviewed and remains a major focus for clergy members in the Coptic diaspora today. Henderson (2005) suggests that this movement is part of the attempt to reform the Coptic Church in the diaspora. Second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans are likely part of this experience.

American cultural values. Among the core values for Anglo-Americans are individual freedoms and “psychological individualism” (McGill & Pearce, 2005, p. 520). These American values are rooted in English individualism, brought to America via English Protestant settlers who sought religious freedom away from European standards, according to McGill and Pearce. They also explain that Anglo-Americans value self-reliance and autonomy; American children are raised to be “self-contained, principled, responsible, independent, self-reliant, self-determining” (McGill & Pearce, 2005, p. 525), and are encouraged to develop a strong adult identity by early adulthood. Western individualism creates a sharp boundary around one’s sense of self, where the emphasis is on rights versus obligations, seeking happiness over sacrifice, and the individual as a priority over the group (Spence, 1985). European American values also highlight the importance of individual expression and directness; in a study exploring the effect of cultural values on communication styles, European Americans were less likely to use indirect styles and more likely to use open styles than their Asian American counterparts (Park & Kim, 2008). Kim (1994) explains that individualistic cultures have a tendency to emphasize tasks over relationships, which contrasts the group orientation of collectivistic cultures.

Religion and Ethnic Identity

Middle Eastern Christians in research. The majority of studies on the Middle Eastern population focus on Muslims. In Beitin et al.'s (2009) review of 256 studies on Arab families, almost half of the studies ($n = 120$) did not report on religious affiliation of their sample but implied the presence of Muslim background. They also found that only four articles studied only-Christian samples. This may be due, in part, to the socially incongruous relationship between Arabs and Christianity (van der Vliet, 2009). According to van der Vliet, “when all Egyptians are Arabs (linguistically, culturally), and when Copts are Egyptians, and Arabs Muslims, the very existence of Christian Egyptians is an anomaly” (2009, p. 281). Middle Eastern Christians, as a whole, are underrepresented in research, and little is known about their experiences in balancing multiple cultures which may seem contradictory to mainstream society.

Ethnic religion. Both religion and ethnicity provide individuals a sense of belonging, a way to create meaning, and a means to build identity (Kim, 2011). Research has shown value in ethnic religion as a way to facilitate group connection and belonging, as well as development of a secure ethnic identity (Cha, 2001; Lee et al., 2006). As previously mentioned, second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans have been the focus of church leaders and the first generation in transmitting culture and spiritual traditions (Botros, 2006). No studies, to date, have been conducted to understand the experience of second generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans, but previous studies about the role of the ethnic church have suggested that affiliation with church youth groups have benefitted second-generation youth in balancing their sense of belonging (Lee et al., 2006). In a qualitative study about second-generation Korean American Christian youth, Lee, Chang, and Miller’s participants expressed a benefit in having an ethnic church community to explore identity issues. Lee et al. suggest that this may be an

indication that experiences in multiple cultural contexts may encourage individuals to explore their identity more openly because of their exposure to new ideas and possibilities. The combination of ethnic, mainstream, and religious cultures afforded them these opportunities.

Members of the second generation face the task of negotiating their relationship to the first generation; though they remain distinct from their parents' generation, they often still practice their faith in ethnic-specific contexts (Alumkal, 2003; Cadge & Ecklund, 2007). Chong (1998) conducted fieldwork with second-generation Korean Americans in Korean Presbyterian churches and found that church members sought to use church to preserve ethnicity and culture, not only for themselves, but for future generations. Second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans may have similar experiences, but more research is needed to understand how this particular group experiences managing identification multiple cultures in their relationships and the role of religion in their experiences.

Cultural Identity in Early Adulthood

The majority of research regarding cultural identity is dedicated to the study of adolescents in congruence with the idea that identity exploration and formation occur mainly during this developmental stage (Erikson, 1968; Kerpelman et al., 2012; Marcia, 1966; Pittman et al., 2011). More contemporary developmental theorists suggest that identity exploration and formation extends into the lives of emerging adults in their 20s, especially those in industrialized societies (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) recognize that individuals may revisit identity issues in different stages of their lives; however, this area has been underresearched and is unacknowledged in much of the literature on development. Dennis, Basanez, and Farahmand (2009) studied 331 Latino college students aged 17 to 26 to better understand intergenerational conflicts in early adulthood. The majority of participants were

second-generation Latinos, but first- and third-generation participants were included as well. Those aged 23 to 26 were significantly more likely than Latinos in late adolescence to report acculturation conflicts, likely because discrepancies between participant and parent values become more salient as adults took on more responsibilities.

Second-generation Chinese American women aged 25 to 32 indicated in interviews that they began to think about their cultural identity during adult developmental transitions and the emergence of new life stages, such as starting a career or marriage (Willgerodt et al., 2002). Cultural identity development, therefore, should be viewed as dynamic and non-linear; it does not simply “end in a certain bicultural state” (Willgerodt et al., 2002, p. 478). More research is needed to understand the experiences of cultural identity development in early adulthood, rather than limiting the focus to adolescents.

Review of Cultural Identity Theories

Literature has reflected a great deal of complexity related to cultural identity, presenting scholars with difficulty in conceptualizing and measuring the construct (Haritatos & Benet-Martínez, 2002). As a result of variations in language, religion, race, etc., consistent definitions of cultural identity have been difficult to reach (Nassar-McMillan, Lambert, & Hakim-Larson, 2011). In addition, according to Marks, Patton, and Garcia Coll (2011), not all individuals with multiethnic heritages identify themselves as bicultural or multicultural, possibly further impacting the mixed results in research.

Berry (2003) asserted a conceptual approach to the idea of acculturation, which he acknowledges may be defined in number of ways. Berry used a bidimensional model, in which the units of analysis are “(a) the maintenance of one’s own culture and (b) seeking contact and participation with other cultural groups” (2003, p. 27). He described four possible strategies of

acculturation and management of multiple cultures: *assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration*. As previously noted, those who assimilate reject their own culture and seek interaction with other cultures. Those who separate wish to maintain their own culture and reject others. Individuals are said to use a marginalization strategy when they reject their own culture as well as others (usually out of force by discrimination), and those who integrate maintain the integrity of their own culture and participate with other cultural groups. Though widely cited, Berry's model does not specifically address *how* individuals engage in these acculturation strategies or address other domains of culture, such as religion, which would be significant to participants of the current study.

Instead, *biculturalism* has been cited as a common descriptor of cultural identity for immigrants, refugees, those with mixed ethnicities, ethnic minorities, etc. (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007; Padilla, 2006; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009; e.g., Willgerodt et al., 2002 etc.). As a result, research on biculturalism is not necessarily focused on members of the second generation whose experiences may vary from those of other groups. Biculturalism has also been closely associated with Berry's integration strategy, through which they negotiate identification and involvement with both cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007). Both are valid models for understanding how some define and maintain their two cultures, however the bicultural model assumes that bicultural individuals *integrate* their cultures at different levels, when integration may not be the espoused strategy. Like Berry's model, the bicultural model does not necessarily address specific domains of culture, such as religion, which may be important for Middle Eastern Coptic Americans.

More recently, there has been support for exploration of individual variances in the process of bicultural identity formation and meanings associated with the experience of that

process, specifically sociocultural differences (i.e. generational status, community culture) and internal social-cognitive factors (i.e. personality, outlook), as well as social influences from discrimination stress or pressure from members of the in-group (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Research suggests that bicultural individuals engage in *cultural frame switching*, in which they vacillate between different cultural meaning systems in response to contextual cues (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

For example, in the 2002 study by Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, and Morris, a sample of first-generation Chinese American immigrants were primed first with either American or Chinese conditions and then asked to engage in a task and interpret meaning from that task. Each individual was assigned a “bicultural type” or level of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII; low, meaning high perceived opposition between their two cultures, and high meaning low perceived opposition). Results suggested that bicultural type significantly moderated the effects of cultural priming on meanings interpreted from tasks. Those who scored high on BII made stronger internal interpretations (a Western attribution style) when primed with American cues versus Chinese primes, while those with low BII scores demonstrated the contrary. In other words, although both bicultural types engaged in cultural frame switching, they did so differently. Individuals high on BII responded with behaviors congruent with their respective primes, while those low on BII exhibited prime-resistant behaviors. This approach is more inclusive of variances in experiences of managing identification with different cultures, but it is still limited to understanding bicultural individuals and their dual cultural identities. In addition, most studies investigating the process of cultural frame switching have combined the first and second generations in their samples and make no distinction between their experiences (e.g., Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Mok & Morris, 2012).

Based on the aforementioned acculturation model of Berry and his colleagues, Luque, del Carmen Garcia Fernandez, and Rojas Tejada (2006) developed and tested the Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM), establishing seven domains of acculturation that lie on a continuum of closeness to culture (e.g. work, economics, and political system in the periphery; family relationships, religious customs/beliefs, values at the core; social relationships and friendships as intermediate). The model distinguishes between immigrants' espoused (actual) acculturation strategy versus their preferred (ideal) strategy in each domain. They reported that African immigrants espoused the separation strategy for core domains of culture, assimilation for the peripheral, and fell between integration and separation for friendships and intermediate domains. Luque and colleagues suggest that distinction between strategies across domains may provide a more complete and nuanced view of acculturation. It may be more applicable for understanding the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans, the subject of the present study.

Conclusion

Existing studies have explored the experiences of members of the second generation in balancing their parents' culture-of-origin with mainstream American culture and have been particularly focused on Asians and Latinos. Most studies quantitatively identify psychosocial conflicts associated with this experience, but more recent scholars have identified strengths that result from identification with multiple cultures. The Middle Eastern population has been underrepresented in research, despite their growing presence in the United States. In addition, adolescents have been the targets for cultural identity development research since identity exploration has been long theorized as a process that occurs during this stage. Few studies have addressed young adults of the second generation and how they manage multiple cultures. This

qualitative study sought to explore the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern young adults using a qualitative design to provide rich descriptions.

Popular theories of cultural identity development have been limited in scope, often excluding important factors related to culture, such as religion, especially for those of Middle Eastern descent. In addition, descriptions on the process of managing identity with multiple cultures in the second generation have been limited to *biculturalism* which has not addressed religious culture as a significant domain. This study addresses the gaps in literature concerning second-generation Middle Easterner Coptic Americans and their experiences (both challenges and strengths) managing their identification with multiple cultures in relationships, including religious identification as a significant factor in their cultural identity.

Chapter 3: Methods

Design of the Study

The present study was conducted using a qualitative, phenomenological design exploring the experiences of second-generation, young adult Middle Eastern Coptic Americans in managing identification with multiple cultures and how their experience impacts their relationships. A qualitative design allowed participants to share the depth of their lived experiences, and provided rich descriptions about their understanding of their experiences. Creswell (2007) states that the presentation of a qualitative study should accurately portray “all the complexities that exist in real life” (p. 46). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of challenges and competencies associated with participants’ experience of managing identification with multiple cultures and assessing their cultural identities and its impact on their relationships. The following sections include details about the participants, procedures, and analysis of the study.

Study Participants

This study employed non-probability purposive sampling as well as snowball, word-of-mouth sampling techniques to obtain a sample of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans and their experiences of managing identification with multiple cultures and its impact on their relationships. Eight participants were recruited primarily from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, which includes Washington D.C., Virginia, and Maryland urban and suburban areas. This region had a growth rate that was greater than the United States growth rate between 2000 and 2010 (Center for Regional Analysis, 2011). According to the Center for Regional Analysis, the Washington area no longer had a racial majority by 2010 and the non-Hispanic white population was reduced to 49 percent that year. The Census Bureau (2003) reported

significant growth of Arabs in many states, including the state Virginia. This area is likely to support the presence of Copts with its diversity in population and class. Among Copts, the Washington D.C. area churches have been seen as effective in serving the second generation of Copts and the Christian community through the establishment of programs and schools in the area (Saad, 2010). Many Copts in the greater Washington D.C. area have been incorporated into the community and work for the federal government (Constable, 2011).

Participants were both male and female and were between the ages of 18 and 24 and born in the United States, or born abroad and immigrated to the United States before the age of five. Additionally, both parents of each participant emigrated from an Arab country in the Middle East and identify as Coptic. The Census Bureau (2003) stated that those included in the Arab ancestry category are from the following areas, but not limited to: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, North Africa, Palestine, Syria, and are considered Arab if they report being Middle Eastern. Participants reported some identification with the following three cultural groups: Middle Eastern, American, and Coptic.

Participants were through advertisements and informational flyers (Appendix A) placed in local religious and non-religious locations. Flyers were placed in Coptic Orthodox churches, and given to members of those churches in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Flyers were also be placed at university common advertisement areas (e.g., Virginia Tech, George Mason University, etc.). Participants were also recruited using snowball sampling techniques including referrals from priests and Internet postings, including social media websites (Appendix C) and listserv e-mails (Appendix B). They were also recruited through personal announcements at a local Coptic church at young adult events. Participants were not reimbursed for participation in this study and all identifying information remained confidential.

Procedures

Before recruitment and data collection phases began, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), assuring compliance with informed consent, confidentiality, and other research procedures. Participant recruitment began upon IRB approval, via flyers and Internet advertisements as previously outlined. Advertisements for recruitment outlined participation requirements and expectations for the study, including a criteria screening, demographic questionnaire, and a roughly one-hour interview (in-person, over the telephone, or virtual Skype). All participants were screened to confirm their qualifications for the study's sampling criteria: between the ages of 18 and 24, born in the United States or moved to the United States before the age of five, have parents who are both immigrants from the Middle East and identify as Coptic, and must have identified as Middle Eastern, American, and Coptic (Appendix D). Participants who did not meet the criteria were thanked for their interest participating, and encouraged to refer others that may be eligible for the study.

Each screened and qualified participant was briefed with detailed descriptions of the study's purpose and design, and was asked to provide availability for an interview time. Both researcher and participant agreed on a time and location for the interview, which eventually took place at a private location to ensure confidentiality. Participants who were not physically available for a face-to-face interview were offered virtual interviews. Participants were offered to receive study materials via e-mail or mail instead of completing them at the time of the interview. Materials included the informed consent form (Appendix E), the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F), and instructions for how to complete and sign both forms. Informed consent included information about the purpose of the study, study design, potential risks and benefits associated with participation, and an outline of the researcher's arrangements to

maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity throughout the data collection, analysis, and distribution phases. A demographic questionnaire was given to each individual in order to collect information including: age, gender, marital status, city and state of residence, whether or not they practice the Coptic Orthodox faith, their parents' country-of-origin and length of residence in the United States, and whether or not they reside with their parents at the time of the study. They were also asked to combine their three cultures (i.e. Middle Eastern, American, Coptic) in the way in which they identify themselves (i.e. Coptic Middle Eastern American or American Middle Eastern Coptic, etc.).

Participants who did not opt to have the study materials sent to them prior to the interview received and were asked to complete the forms at the interview appointment before the interview began. In an effort to help maintain confidentiality, participants were asked to choose an alias as an identifier in lieu of actual participant names at the time of the interview. Each participant was reminded that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time throughout the course of the study.

Once the researcher received each participant's verbal and written informed consent to be interviewed and audiotaped for transcription purposes, the interview began. No interview took place without signed informed consent from each participant. Interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length and were completed individually. Each interview was semi-structured, allowing for probes and relevant questions to be used by the researcher for the purpose of expounding on participant experiences. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked for permission to be contacted in the future, if needed, to affirm themes that emerged from their experiences before the dissemination of research findings.

Interviews were transcribed by the principal researcher or third party transcribers who were required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix G) before transcription occurred. All data collected and documents containing identifying information remained confidential and were housed in a secure location. Audio recordings and electronic data/information were accessible only to the principal researcher and research committee chair and were stored in a password-protected computer in a secure location. Audio recordings were destroyed upon completion of their transcription. Each audio recording was given a name corresponding with the participant's chosen alias to ensure confidentiality.

Instruments

Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions aimed at understanding the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing their multiple cultures and its impact on their relationships. Participants were asked to answer the questions as honestly as they could.

Interview outline. The interview script for the study was as follows:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I will be asking you questions to understand your identity as a Middle Eastern Coptic American. I will be focusing on your experience of managing the values, beliefs, and expectations of being Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American and its interaction with your relationships, including family, friends, and significant others. Are you ready to begin?

1. When did you become aware that you identified yourself as Middle Eastern Coptic American*?
 - a. When did you become aware that others in your close relationships identified you as Middle Eastern Coptic American?

2. What does it mean for you to be a Middle Eastern Coptic American?
 - a. What are the traditions and values that you follow in your life that help you identify as Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American?
 - i. Who, in your close relationships, did you learn these values and traditions from? Can you give examples?
 - b. Do you always identify with Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American traditions and values across different contexts in your life (family life, work/school, friendships, romantic relationships)? If not, please explain.
 - c. How do you explain your culture to your non-Middle Eastern friends?
3. In what ways are the values, beliefs, and expectations of being American, Middle Eastern, and Coptic similar or different from one another, from your perspective?
 - a. Which parts of these cultures/traditions (Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American) do you value or reject in your close relationships?
4. How do your family/friends/significant other identify you?
 - a. How are your cultural expectations and values similar to/different from your parents'? (includes romantic relationships, religious participation, acceptable social spheres)
 - b. How do you reconcile differences in your expectations and values from others'? Can you provide an example?
5. What is the difference, for you, between being Coptic and being Middle Eastern?
 - a. In what ways are they similar?
6. What are some challenges you experience in your relationships by identifying with Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American traditions and values?

7. What are some strengths/benefits you experience in your relationships as a result of identifying yourself as Middle Eastern, Coptic and American?
8. What would you most like your parents/friends/significant other to understand about what it is like to be a second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic American?

*Participants were asked this question based uniquely on the cultural identifier they provided in their initial demographic screening. For example, those who identified as American Middle Eastern Coptic were asked about their interpretation of that identification in that specific order.

Validity and reliability. To ensure validity and credibility of the study, data entailed thick, detailed descriptions of participant experiences through interviews, triangulation, and peer debriefing to allow for participant feedback, as outlined by Creswell (2007). Dr. Mariana Falconier served as chair of the thesis committee, and reviewed codes, field notes, and transcripts along with the principal researcher to establish intercoder reliability. Peer debriefing occurred with other thesis committee members to discuss methodology and interpretations of data as well.

Reflexivity. Creswell explains that phenomenologists attempt to understand and present the “essence” of a participant’s experience. Moustakas (1994) asserts that phenomenologist researchers ought to outline a description of their experiences with the phenomenon being studied in an effort to establish validity for the study. One of the primary researchers of this study (MFM) is a 24-year-old second-generation Egyptian Coptic American, who has experienced a challenging process of cultural identity negotiation involving all three cultures.

To maintain awareness of this experience throughout data collection and analysis, and in an effort to transcend the impact of personal experiences on observations, MFM kept a journal to bracket her own experience and reflect on her process during the study and allow opportunities for peer supervision related to the study.

Proposed Analyses

Consistent with the goal of phenomenological research, the data from this study was analyzed using thematic analysis to allow for flexible, yet rich themes to emerge from participant experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke define thematic analysis as a “method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (2006, p. 79), and identify six steps in the process. The first step is to familiarize oneself with data as the researcher. The second step involves producing preliminary codes from the data; followed by searching for tentative, code categorizing themes that emerge. Braun and Clarke explain that during this phase, the analysis is focused on broader themes, rather than codes. Step four is the phase during which themes are refined to maintain a cohesive pattern that fits with the data overall. During step five, themes are further refined and are designated for presentation. This step is significant in identifying the “essence” and overall narrative of the phenomenon through each theme. Step six, the final step in the process, is to generate and disseminate findings after themes are established. The write-up should provide evidence for themes, using examples from data to place it within the scope of the research question, previous literature, and the narrative told by the data.

Throughout the research process, the main researcher (MFM) bracketed her own values, beliefs, and similar experiences related to the topic, as she is also a second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic American managing her multicultural identity, and has experienced the effect of cultural management in her relationships, particularly with family and an intercultural romantic relationship. She achieved this by keeping a reflexive journal addressing thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that may have affected her position on issues that arose in the process (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). The journal included brainstorming ideas for interview questions (before data

collection), reactions to interviews, and thoughts throughout transcription and data analysis.

MFM discussed ideas with her thesis chair about thoughts, and perceptions to be sure that there was space for ideas to emerge from the data, rather than imposing ideas onto the data.

To become familiar with the data, as in the first step, the researcher transcribed or read each transcribed interview. Once transcribed, the researcher listened to the audio files again and checked transcripts for accuracy. The researcher then read each transcript several times and wrote initial codes based on the data. The codes were theory-driven to some degree, as Braun and Clarke explain, because the researcher approached the data with specific questions in mind. The participants' answers to these specific questions were the units of analysis. Initially, data extracts were coded liberally to provide for many opportunities for potential themes/patterns. Any part of the transcript that was relevant, interesting, or significant was coded. Afterwards, the codes and their data extracts were categorized into initial, broad themes. While looking at relationships between codes, the researcher combined, separated, or discarded those codes and their data extracts to eventually form different levels of themes (potential themes, main themes, sub themes, etc.). The relationships between themes and stories were meant to promote understanding of the greater story of the data.

Once preliminary themes were formed, the researcher will refined these themes, and, similarly to the previous phase, combined, separated, or discarded them. Potential themes were reworked until they followed a cohesive pattern together captured the essence of the coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To do this, data extracts were first re-read to ensure that they were meaningfully related to the theme that each was categorized with to form a consistent pattern related to the theme. The researcher then assessed whether or not the theme was coherent and if data extracts were appropriately categorized under that theme. At this point, themes were

discarded or revised until they captured the essence of the data. Once patterns were established, the next phase began. The next level of refinement involved reviewing the transcripts again to ensure that the themes were representative of the overall data set. This ensured the validity of the data. Again, if the themes did not represent the meanings of the overall data set and relate to each other in a significant way, themes were discarded and revised.

At this point, themes were clearly defined and named to capture the spirit of each theme. The researcher then decided which aspects of the data were represented by each theme. As the researcher 'defined and refined' each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92), the goal was to concentrate each theme into a main idea. The researcher reviewed data extracts under each theme to check it against a meaningful narrative, and wrote about the theme by describing the main idea and overall story told by the data. Next, the researcher determined whether or not each theme required sub-themes. The researcher was then able to extract the main idea and describe the scope of each theme in a few brief sentences. Naming each theme helped create its definition. Braun and Clarke explain that the definition should clarify both what the theme is, and is not. Each theme name should be concise, striking, and make the idea of the theme quickly evident to the reader. The final step was dissemination of results. The researcher wrote about the results of the analysis and included a discussion that portrayed the story revealed by the data.

Chapter 4: Manuscript

The Experiences of Second-Generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans Managing Multicultural Identity in Their Relationships: A Qualitative Study

American society is growing into a more diverse conglomeration of cultures. In 2010, approximately two-thirds of all states in the U.S. had more than 5% foreign-born inhabitants, with several states containing 15% and over (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Today, children from birth to age eight are the most diverse age group in the U.S.; they are more likely to be first-generation immigrants (foreign born) or second-generation immigrants (have foreign-born parents) (Hernandez, Takanishi, & Marotz, 2009). According to the Pew Research Center (2013) there are currently about 20 million second-generation adult children of immigrants and this population is expected to grow by 126% from 2012 to 2050.

Second-Generation Immigrants

Whereas first generation immigrants are more concerned with learning, adapting, and surviving in a new culture, members of subsequent generations may be faced with complex issues of identity (Suárez-Orozco & Doucet, 2006; Varghese & Jenkins, 2009). As members of both host and native cultures from birth, second-generation immigrants usually struggle with internal conflicts related to their identity, and they experience confusion over dual expectations and values from different cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Haritatos & Benet-Martínez, 2002). In fact, second-generation immigrants report more everyday hassles, in-group and family conflict, decreased self-esteem, and internalizing disorders than first-generation immigrants and U.S.-born peers (Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2005; Lay & Safdar, 2003). In addition, bicultural adolescents and young adults showed incongruence between their ethnic identity labels in explicit interviews and implicit identity sorting tasks

(Marks et al., 2011). This may be an example of the challenge of biculturals in self-labeling, and the importance of context in self-labeling.

A number of scholars have also cited the benefits of managing multiple cultures in social skills and emotional regulation, including the ability to cultivate positive interpersonal traits (e.g., expressiveness, sociability, empathy) and build tolerance for varying cultures and lifestyles (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Padilla, 2006). In a study of bicultural young adults from Asian, Latino, or African descent, David and colleagues (2009) found that the belief in the ability to competently function in two cultures was related to psychological well-being and higher levels of life satisfaction. The mixed and somewhat opposing findings about the experiences of challenges and strengths of bicultural individuals highlight the complexity of cultural identity negotiation (Haritatos & Benet-Martínez, 2002).

Existing research provides a general understanding of the experiences of bicultural individuals and their identity negotiation, commonly in specific cultural groups such as Asians, Latinos, and Africans (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen & Sheldon, 2012; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). Less is known about other minority groups, such as Arabs in the U.S. The purpose of this study is to understand how second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans manage their identification to multiple cultures, with a focus on how their experiences impact their relationships. Before addressing the characteristics of the group, it is important to understand the history of this ethnic group in the United States.

Arabs in the United States

The number of U.S. residents claiming Arab ancestry increased by more than 72% between 2000 and 2010, and the group is one of the fastest growing diasporas in the world (Arab American Institute Foundation, 2012). In some literature about Middle Eastern Americans,

Arabs preferred not to be labeled “white” although the Census Bureau classified them in that way (Ajrouch, 2004). Interestingly, in one study, some individuals from Arab countries (particularly some Christians) prefer to identify as “white” rather than Arab, possibly because of the common interchangeability between the labels “Muslim” and “Arab” (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Ajrouch, 2004). For many (like Egyptians), the idea of the “Arab world” is suppressive of pre-Arab nationalities (Salameh, 2011). Consequently, the term *Middle Eastern* will be used to describe individuals with Arab descent. A very small number of studies have examined cultural identity experiences in Middle Eastern Americans (Awad, 2010; Britto & Amer, 2007; Chen & Sheldon, 2012). This may be partly due to the ambiguity in describing Middle Eastern Americans, whose official racial classification has shifted over time, posing possible challenges in cultural identification for Middle Eastern Americans (David, 2007).

Salameh (2011) stated that the Middle Eastern population is typically oversimplified and associated with the Muslim religion, yet there are important religious and cultural variations among Middle Easterners. In addition, 77% of those categorized as Arab American are Christian (Awad, 2010). Since fewer studies about Middle Easterners address the Christian population (Beitin et al., 2009), this study will investigate the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Christian (Coptic) Americans managing identification with multiple cultures in their relationships.

Coptic Orthodox Christians. Though there is minimal research on the Coptic Orthodox Christian population in relation to Middle Eastern studies, this group contains the largest Christian minority in the Middle East and North Africa, and about 10% of Egypt’s population (Botros, 2006; Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). Between the years of 1970 and 2010, there has been exponential global growth of Coptic churches, with 350,000 parishioners in the U.S. (Saad,

2010). In the first century, St. Mark (apostle and evangelist) founded a church in Egypt, following the commands of Jesus Christ (Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). The Coptic Orthodox Church is considered an ancient church, established prior to Arab conquests and the introduction of Islam to Egypt (Chaillot, 2009). The primary purpose of this study is to widen the research base on multicultural identity and relationships in the second-generation, particularly for those balancing Middle Eastern, American, and Coptic cultures.

Theories of Cultural Identity

As a result of variations in various domains, such as language, religion, ethnicity, or race, consistent definitions of cultural identity have been difficult to reach (Nassar-McMillan et al., 2011). According to Marks and colleagues (2011), not all individuals with multiethnic heritages identify themselves as bicultural or multicultural, possibly impacting the mixed results in labeling. Britto and Amer (2007) define cultural identity as a multidimensional framework for the development of a sense of self, extending beyond ethnicity to include religion, culture, and national identity and the interactions between these dimensions. For the purposes of this study, the term *multicultural* will be used in lieu of the terms *bicultural*, or *multiethnic* to include individuals (like Middle Eastern Coptic Americans) with multiple cultures or ethnicities whose religion is also a significant component of their cultural identity.

Berry's theory of acculturation. Berry (1997; 1984) proposes the idea that individuals adapt to their dominant (mainstream) and non-dominant cultures by using one of four acculturation strategies that address whether (a) immigrants feel that they can retain their cultural identity and customs in the host society and (b) whether relationships with others in mainstream society are valuable and adoptable. The responses are organized into the four strategies: assimilation (rejects original culture, adopts mainstream culture), integration (maintains original

culture and adopts mainstream culture), separation (maintains original culture and avoids mainstream culture), or marginalization (rejects both cultural groups due to exclusion or discrimination). Though widely cited, the model does not specifically address *how* people engage in these acculturation strategies or address other aspects of culture, such as religion, which would be significant to participants of the current study.

Biculturalism and Bicultural Identity Integration (BII). The literature on cultural identity development in the second generation has often referred to *biculturalism* (e.g., Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Padilla, 2006; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009, etc.) which corresponds to Berry's integration strategy (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Biculturalism can be defined as the balanced integration of two distinct cultures, and bicultural individuals move between two distinct cultures (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009). Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, and Morris (2002) propose Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) as a model for understanding individual levels of biculturalism by investigating on biculturals' perception of the extent of overlap or conflict between their two cultural identities, without necessarily addressing specific domains of culture. They also found evidence to suggest that bicultural individuals engage in *cultural frame switching*, in which they vacillate between different cultural meaning systems and behaviors in response to contextual cues. In fact, in a study of Chinese American biculturals, Benet-Martínez and colleagues (2006) found partial evidence to suggest that bicultural (vs. monocultural) individuals have more complex cultural values, beliefs, behaviors, and schemas, likely because of their experience in cultural frame-switching.

Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM). Based on the aforementioned acculturation model of Berry and his colleagues, Luque, del Carmen Garcia Fernandez, and Rojas Tejada (2006) developed and tested the Relative Acculturation Extended Model,

establishing seven domains of acculturation that lie on a continuum of closeness to culture (e.g. work, economics, and political system in the periphery; family relationships, religious customs/beliefs, values at the core; social relationships and friendships as intermediate). The model distinguishes between immigrants' espoused (actual) acculturation strategy versus their preferred (ideal) strategy in each domain. They reported that African immigrants espoused the separation strategy for core domains of culture, assimilation for the peripheral, and fell between integration and separation for friendships and intermediate domains. Luque and colleagues suggest that distinction between strategies across domains may provide a more complete and nuanced view of acculturation. It may be more applicable for understanding the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans, the subject of the present study.

Religion and cultural identity. Some scholars have spoken about the interweaving relationship between religion and ethnicity (Hammond & Warner, 1993; Lee et al., 2006). Research has shown value in ethnic religion as a way to facilitate group connection, belonging, and secure ethnic identity (Lee et al., 2006). For example, second-generation Coptic youth expressed pride in being Coptic in interviews (Botros, 2005). In a mixed religions study of Arab identity by Eid (2007), approximately 80% of respondents reported that religion was very important/important in their lives and viewed religion as a way to bolster personal and group identity. Interestingly, the majority of studies pertaining to ethnicity and religion speak independently to either category and neglect the connection between the two domains of cultural identity (Kim, 2011). This study focuses on the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing multicultural identity and its impact on their relationships, considering religion and ethnicity as aspects of identity.

Identity and Relationships

Identity cannot be examined in individual psychological isolation because the cultural ideas and values that are repeated in one's daily interactions shape an individual's internal and relational self-representation (Lalonde et al., 2004). Kerpelman and colleagues (1997) suggest that meaningful and continuing relationships (family, friends, romantic relationships) have the highest likelihood of impacting an individual's identity construction through social feedback. Several sources cite family relationships as a principal contextual factor associated with self-cultural identification (Bornstein & Cote, 2006; Britto & Amer, 2007; Knight et al., 1993; Rosenthal, 1987). Second-generation young adults from various countries-of-origin expressed relatively significant parental and cultural influence on mate choice and dating practices (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012). Intergenerational conflict may occur when individuals begin to negotiate their identity outside of their family context and feel dissonance between their self-definition and those attributed to them by others (Ajrouch, 2004). Gil, Vega, and Dimas (1994) also found that acculturation conflicts between generations were more predictive of Latino participants' low self-esteem than participants' perceived level of disparity between theirs and their parents' level of acculturation.

Middle Easterners and Copts in Research

In Beitin et al.'s (2009) review of 256 studies on Arab families, almost half did not report on their samples' religious but implied the presence of Muslim background. Only four articles studied only-Christian samples. This may be due, in part, to the socially incongruous relationship between Arabs and Christianity (van der Vliet, 2009). In Amer and Hovey's (2007) mixed religions study of second-generation Arabs, Christians who retained their Arab religious and family values reported higher acculturation stress, likely because of their opposition with

mainstream values. Findings suggested that Christians found integration to be the optimum assimilation strategy for decreased depression and stress. Specifically for Coptic Orthodox Christians, there is an emphasis on transmission of rich tradition to youth (Van Dijk & Botros, 2009). There have been no studies, to date, investigating how members of the Coptic Christian community manage their identification to multiple cultures with a focus on how their experiences impact their relationships.

Differences in cultural values. Middle Easterners value modesty, reject American dating practices, and observe fasts for religious reasons (Awad, 2010). While American children are taught to achieve individual freedom, self-reliance and psychological autonomy by early adulthood Middle Eastern families value interdependence and family obligation throughout their lives (McGill & Pearce, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2008). Though cultural identity literature is focused predominantly on adolescent development when most identity exploration and formation occur (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966; Pittman et al., 2011), this study will focus on the experiences of emerging adults in their 20s have the freedom during this stage to execute beliefs and behaviors (including religion) that differ from their caregivers (Arnett & Jensen, 2002). This study seeks to understand the experiences of Middle Eastern Coptic Americans as they enter young adulthood and manage their cultural identity, as well as its impact on their relationships.

Purpose of the Study

Existing research provides a general understanding of the experiences of bicultural individuals and the process of identity negotiation, commonly in specific cultural groups such as Asians, Latinos, and Africans (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen & Sheldon, 2012; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to widen the research base on multicultural identity management and relationships in the second-generation, particularly for

those balancing Middle Eastern, American, and Coptic cultures. The contributions of this study include filling the gap for the insufficient body of research for this group and documenting the psychosocial development of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans. This study will investigate specifically, through interviews, how individuals born in the United States who identify as Middle Eastern Coptic American manage their identification to multiple cultures in general, with a focus on its impact on their relationships.

Studies reveal that when individuals with multiple cultures speak about their heritage, their descriptions are often complex and ambivalent (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; O'Hearn, 1998). This study will fill the gap of needed research of a minority religious group in the Middle Eastern community in the United States, whose religion is a major identity marker (Coptic Orthodox Christians). Learning about their experience of managing identification with the Christian, Middle Eastern, and American cultures in relationships may inform marriage and family therapists about the complex psychosocial issues that arise in the second generation and understand topics of conflict across generations. It may help deter therapists from making assumptions about this group and guide them toward developing culturally sensitive interventions that are in line with clients' values and goals.

The Present Study

The goal of the present study was to examine the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing their multicultural identity in their relationships. In particular, this phenomenological study sought to explore their experiences of balancing the values, beliefs, and expectations of multiple cultures, and how their experiences impact their relationships with family, friends, and significant others. In order to acquire qualitative data describing their experiences, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person and

via Skype. These interviews provided rich description and context of the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing their multicultural identity, on which there is no previous research.

Methods

Procedures

Approval was obtained by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruitment and data collection. Recruitment materials were disseminated via flyers, personal announcements, e-mails, and Internet postings, and the eight participants who completed the telephone screening were recruited to complete a brief demographic questionnaire and an interview via Skype or face-to-face that lasted approximately one hour. Eligibility criteria were listed on recruitment materials. Participants were not compensated, and all read and signed an informed consent form prior to their interview.

The demographic questionnaire included questions regarding participants' age, gender, marital status, city and state of residence, whether or not they practice the Coptic Orthodox faith, parents' country-of-origin and length of residence in the United States, and whether or not they currently live with their parents. Also included on the questionnaire was a task requiring participants to combine the three aspects of their cultural identity (Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American) in the way in which they would like to identify themselves. Each participant was also asked to select an alias to help identify them while preserving confidentiality.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured, individual interviews aimed at understanding the individuals' personal experience. The interview questions served as a guide for the interview structure, while also allowing the opportunity for unstructured follow-up questions and

clarification. The interview questions were developed in order to gain an understanding of how each participant identifies him or herself culturally and how they identify with and balance the values, traditions, and beliefs of each of their cultures. Participants were asked about how they reconcile conflicts over differing expectations from others, how they describe their culture, and what challenges and benefits they face as members of the second generation. They were also asked to discuss ways in which their experience of managing multicultural identity impacted their relationships, including family, friends, and significant others.

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed by both the researcher and third party transcribers who signed confidentiality agreements. Six-step thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to formulate themes from the data. The initial step in thematic analysis is to help the researcher become familiar with the data through transcription and repeated reading of the data to begin extracting an initial set of patterns. Next, the intimal patterns become organized into groups and possible themes. As themes are reviewed, subthemes emerge, new themes develop, and some themes may be discarded. Themes continue to be refined until they are found to represent the full data set. Finally, the themes are brought together to create a complete report of the data to depict the experiences of the participants and answer the research questions.

The researcher ensured credibility by reviewing existing literature on the subject, as well as theories that guide the research question. Themes were evaluated against existing literature to ensure credibility in data interpretation. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and checked after transcription to ensure reliability of the data.

Researcher Characteristics

One of the researchers of this study is a female second-generation Egyptian-American and Coptic, who conducted the interviews and coded them. This researcher kept a research journal throughout the data collection process to bracket her own experiences, which were often similar to those of the participants. The journal was used to bracket biases, process experiences of the participants that resonated with her, and reactions to the interviews. The journal was also used during the data analysis process to organize initial codes and themes and distinguish which themes felt poignant as a result of personal resonance versus actual representation of the data. The second researcher who also coded data from this study is a first generation immigrant from Argentina and has no religious affiliation, which provides a balanced perspective.

Participants

Eight individuals who identified as second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans (all with Egyptian ancestry) were interviewed for the present study. Participants were emerging adults in their early 20s with varying living and work arrangements. Participants were recruited via flyers posted at local Coptic Orthodox churches and community establishments, e-mails sent to Coptic group listserves and personal announcements made at church gatherings and young adult groups, word-of-mouth, snowball sampling techniques, as well as various Internet postings.

Demographics

Name	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Parents' length of residence in U.S.	Living w/ Parents?	Cultural Identification
Mary	24	F	Single	33 years	No	Coptic American
Saucy	24	M	Single	33 years	No	American Coptic Middle Eastern (Outsider/Different)
Christy	23	F	Single	24 years	No	American Coptic Middle Eastern
Marie	23	F	Single	28 years	No	Coptic Egyptian-American
Julia	23	F	Single	25 years	No	Coptic American Middle Eastern
Mark	23	M	Single	24 years	Y	American Middle Eastern Coptic

Vanessa	20	F	Single	25 years	Y/College	Coptic Middle Eastern American
David	24	M	Single	25 years (Participant immigrated to U.S. at age 1	No	Coptic [Orthodox] American

A total of eight participants, including five women and three men were interviewed for this study. Participants were between the ages of 20 and 24, and all reported “single” as their marital status. Seven of the eight lived in and were recruited from the D.C. metropolitan area, but not all of those seven were native to the area. All reported practicing the Coptic Orthodox faith. All participants reported Egypt as their parents’ country-of-origin, and the length of their parents’ residence in the U.S. ranged from 24 to 33 years. Seven of those interviewed were born in the United States, and one was born in Egypt and immigrated with his parents to the United States at the age of one. Six participants reported not living with parents; one reported currently living with parents, and one reported being away at college, living with parents during semester breaks. Participants were asked to combine the three aspects of their cultural identity (Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American) in the way in which they wished to identify themselves. Each participant reported a different combination or variation of their identity, though all participants identified as being members of the second generation.

Findings

Eight themes and fourteen subthemes emerged from the data regarding the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans. The themes addressed: defining identity to self and others, internal conflict about identity, conflict with parents over American values, values about romantic relationships shaped by Coptic faith, values about gender roles shaped by American culture, challenges and preferences when relating to others, advantages of multiculturalism, and uniqueness and pride. Illustrative quotes from each of the interviews are

included to represent the various themes and subthemes. Although the term “Middle Eastern” was used for study recruitment and interview questions, all participants reported Egypt as their culture-of-origin, and none identified as Middle Eastern first in the demographic questionnaire. Findings here are reported in terms of Egyptian, rather than Middle Eastern culture.

Defining Identity to Self and Others

Participants were asked to describe their cultural identity in terms of what it means to them, as well as how they explain it to others. Five subthemes that emerged in this area were: the limited role of the Middle Eastern label, overlap between Coptic and Egyptian cultures, highlighting religious identity to avoid being assumed as Muslim, people’s lack of understanding about the Coptic faith, and cultural identification influenced by relationship context

Limited role of the Middle Eastern label. None of the participants identified first as Middle Eastern on the demographic questionnaire. Four participants described the limited role of the Middle Eastern label, using it only as an identifier on questionnaires, or as a way to enjoy the language, food, and characteristics of people of Middle Eastern descent, as Julia shared:

Middle Eastern again, falls by the wayside...you sort of have to seek exposure to Arabic.

That is part of it... the food you eat...a lot of gesticulation when you talk. [laughs]

People are loud [pause] and yeah, that’s as far as the Middle Eastern part goes I think.

Overlap between Coptic and Egyptian cultures. Seven of the eight participants identified an overlapping or intertwining of the Coptic faith and Egyptian culture. Some witnessed the overlapping of ethnic and spiritual traditions, and others expressed difficulty in separating “Coptic” from “Egyptian.” Four participants described the all-encompassing nature of the term “Coptic” as being inclusive of both Egyptian culture and Christian faith. They explained that those who are Coptic are inevitably Egyptian, but not vice versa. Marie said,

I'm Egyptian because I am Coptic. I don't know if that fully makes sense, but like I guess I can't take the Egyptian cultural stuff without also being Coptic, so they kind of mean the same thing in terms of expectations and the values. It's completely tied to my religion and my faith. Um, so they're kind of one in the same.

Three participants also described the experience of witnessing the mix of ethnic and spiritual traditions and practices. Some also stated that they believed that culture and religion should *not* mix, but in reality, they do. David shared his view of the mix of ethnic and spiritual traditions, along with his difficulty in distinguishing between the religious and cultural labels:

I wouldn't say I'm Coptic American, I would say I'm Egyptian American, because the word Coptic to me is included in [implies] the faith. I guess what it means to be Coptic American is to be the same as it would be to be Egyptian... We are in the season of Lent right now and so we are all supposed to be fasting, but everyone in Egypt or in the Middle East, they eat *foul medames* [fava beans] and all these different types of food...and that is tradition. No one said that you ever had to eat *foul* all the time, all of these different foods that Egyptians are known for that are *seami* [appropriate diet for religious fasts] ...Fasting is [not about] changing your diet to a different way of eating; you're abstaining from a pleasure to seek your faith.

In summary, some saw their experiences of defining their identity to self and others as difficult, and some as positive, but participants were aware of the lack of understanding that others had about their community and practices. Participants also saw similarities between the Coptic religion and Egyptian culture, and were not able to fully distinguish the traditions, practices, and identity labels that were exclusive to each.

Highlighting religious identity to avoid being assumed as Muslim. Seven of the eight participants reported that other people often assume that they are Muslim when they reveal that they are Egyptian or Middle Eastern. They explained that this is the reason why they tended to emphasize to others that they were Coptic. Highlighting their Christian faith was used to combat the assumption and association with Islam. Participants felt that this distinction was important to make in defining their identity to others that they encountered. Marie shared:

If I was given the option to explain to somebody what I was then I would specify that you know, I'm Egyptian American but I'm Coptic, I'm not Muslim. And that distinction was always important just because of the way like my mom always explained it... Because you know, there was a distinction that we're not like everyone else. That's why... they came to this country, etcetera, etcetera.

In addition, two participants felt that it was important to highlight their Coptic identity in contrast to the Muslim label in light of the group's history of persecution and conflict with members of the Islamic faith. Mark shared:

Well first I tell them that we're Christian, because they have a hard time believing [laughs] that Coptic is Christian. I always tell them about the persecution. I make it very clear that it's Muslims that are doing it and they do it because they think it's okay according to their religion. I also make it clear that not all Muslims believe that. I kind of go into the history of our church. I always tell them about St. Mark, about how he brought Christianity to Egypt like 2,000 years ago.

Julia explained that the Middle Eastern label was not representative enough of Copts because of the betrayal and persecution of Copts by Middle Easterners as a whole:

And I mean they are different because the predominant faith of people who tend to identify as Middle Eastern is a faith that is not very friendly to those of us who identify as being Coptic, so it's seems kind of out of place or sort of strange.

People's lack of understanding about the Coptic faith. Participants reported being aware of others' lack of understanding about the history, practices, and beliefs of the Coptic community. Seven out of eight participants expressed the need to explain the Coptic faith to people. Saucy shared about his realization that others outside the faith saw him as different because of the Coptic religious traditions and practices that he adopted:

I slowly started realizing like every single thing I was doing with people outside of our culture—not to say people outside of our culture are bad—but I started realizing like they just don't understand. Like if I tell them I'm fasting for this, I get the questions like, "Why?" "Doesn't make any sense." "Why Wednesday? Why Friday? I don't understand."...that's weird for them.

Three reported that people outside of the faith often knew about other Christian denominations, but did not understand what Coptic is or how the faith is practiced. For example, Julia said,

So they understand Catholics, they understand Protestants, they understand all the off-shoots, all the faiths that come from the group that end up being Catholic after the schism. In terms of everyone else on the other side you know who rejected the Pope in Rome they sort of have no concept they think like, "Oh, you just kind of don't exist." ... We are not a group that is like...well known about.

Cultural identification influenced by relationship context. Three participants described their tendency to identify differently to match their relational context and either fit in,

or make those around them feel comfortable. Mark explained how he chooses to highlight the parts of his identity that would mirror others this in his relationships:

Honestly, it's like it depends on the day...Just to fit in more. I have to be like more accepted...I go out of my way to make sure I make them as comfortable as possible.

When it's a Coptic person, I relate to them as being Coptic. When it's a like a Lebanese Christian, I relate to them as being Middle Eastern.

Two participants stated that different parts of their cultural identity are highlighted in contrast to people around them, depending on the context. Saucy gave an example:

So the American side comes out because they [family] are complete opposites, so even if I was a little bit of American, a little bit of Coptic, I am still way more American than them. When I am with my [American] friends, the Coptic side comes out 'cause that's just who I am like, they're not Coptic. However, when I am hanging out with Coptic people, my American side probably shows more than them.

Interestingly, even for participants that desired to present their identity and values to others in a consistent way, they still noticed that different parts of their cultural identity outwardly manifested themselves more with different groups of people. David explained:

I would definitely say across every context of my life I would want to be known as Coptic Orthodox American you know, I think my values are like, reflected across all my relationships in my life. I mean, you're always going to mirror the atmosphere like...let's say I'm hanging out with my American friends or even friends from work...they don't know my history or background...my American side I guess would come out, but still the Coptic in me, the Coptic Orthodox in me would still be present.

Internal Conflict About Identity

All of the participants shared a feeling of internal conflict over balancing multiple cultures. They wanted to uphold the traditions of their Egyptian or Coptic culture and also assimilate to the American culture in which they live. Mark described his struggle to learn to balance his cultures and wanting others to see:

If they [family, friends, significant others] could see the world from my eyes, I've literally got three different things going on, American, Middle Eastern, and Coptic and I'm trying to balance all of them at once. And I'm trying to really get the best of both worlds. And it's really hard to do that. I'm trying to grow as a person too, I'm still a young man...and I'm going to be raising kids that are born and raised in America and have way less Coptic and Middle Eastern influence than I did. So I'm trying to like, I'm trying to grow, and it's really hard in a Coptic environment.

Four participants expressed a fear of disappointing their parents or God while making choices. Some felt the pressure from their parents and the church to conform to the traditions of Egyptian or Coptic culture and mistrust American mainstream culture. Christy shared her desire to please her parents:

I guess the biggest challenge in being an American but still identifying with my roots is not wanting to disappoint my parents but knowing that eventually, probably, I will somehow, even though that's not what I want...I'm understanding that you can't please everybody, but your parents are such a big part of your life and they gave up so much for you, so I don't want to ever make them feel disappointed. But it comes to the point where sometimes my own happiness is at stake 'cause like I'm trying to make my parents happy and I don't think that's right either.

Marie also described her feeling of guilt over choosing time with friends or time with God. She feared that she would disappoint one of them:

Life would be so much easier—it would be less interesting perhaps— but, it would be a lot easier to like, not have these internal conflicts all the time about like “do you go out on Saturday night or do you go to *Asheya* [vespers; evening prayers] on Saturday night?” And like...you’re going to feel guilty regardless, like you’re ditching your friends on Saturday night if you go to *Asheya*, and you’re ditching God [laughs] if you go out. ...to really be fully dedicated to like one lifestyle or the other is very hard.

In summary, participants felt an internal conflict managing and the pressures placed on them by their parents, the church, their own beliefs, and the task of assimilating to mainstream American culture. Participants did not want to disappoint themselves, their parents, or God and their faith, creating an internal conflict about how they should be and what they should do.

Conflict With Parents Over American Values

Seven participants shared their experiences of intergenerational conflict, particularly with their parents. They cited disagreements or having different mindsets than their parents on a number of topics because they followed more American values and practices. Three subthemes emerged in this area: disagreements about career expectations, disagreements about dating and socializing, and overall feeling of cultural distance.

Disagreements about career expectations. Though all participants explained that there is a general cultural expectation for them to be doctors, lawyers, or engineers, five participants described experiencing disagreements with their parents about their career decisions or standards for success. David discussed the tension between following the American values of freedom of choice and Coptic/Egyptian expectations for his career as an engineer:

...In my mind I want to be free to have my own business and work for myself. They are like, “No you have to go down this path and do this specific thing, doctor, lawyer, engineer” you have to work for a living...I want to reject it because I’m in America. And you can be whatever you want to be, but they put this Coptic Orthodox or Egyptians, even, in general put this...I feel trapped almost like, you can’t really be whatever you want to be even though you’re American because you’re pre-determined to be either a doctor or engineer because of the prestige that you would have in Egypt if you were one of those things.

Disagreements about dating and socializing. Six participants identified instances of disagreement that they had with their parents concerning who were acceptable friends as well as appropriate social activities. Some of their parents hoped that they would have only Coptic friends, or would not allow them to have sleepovers with friends during childhood. For example, Christy shared her disagreement with her mother about friendships:

She did not like me having American friends. She never really took time to really get to know their parents just because—I don’t know why—like in her mind, like American bad. Even though she’s lived here, like she wanted me to be born here, she did not want me to be born in Egypt, so I just still don’t really understand.

Participants also expressed differences in their beliefs about dating practices, noting that their parents did not allow them to date or spend time with the opposite gender. Some stated that their parents had expectations that they would marry within the culture. Saucy gave an example:

I heard my dad telling my youngest cousin there’s no point to date anybody while you’re in high school because you’re not gonna marry them. I actually completely disagree with that. Because I think that you’re gonna raise up everybody to be socially awkward. They

need to have experiences with boys and girls...I'm not talking touchy-feely stuff. I'm saying just simply having a conversation with that person or going on a date with them.

Overall feeling of cultural distance. Seven participants reported noticing cultural differences in mindset between themselves and their parents. They felt that there were barriers in their ability to understand or relate to their parents because their parents are culturally closed-minded or due to language barriers. David said,

They just think a certain way and it's hard to relate. It's hard for them to relate to how I feel in the same way it's hard for me to really tell how they feel...related to a number of topics...like I remember going out with a really good friend...I consider her like, a sister and my dad was like, "What are you doing taking her on dates?" And I'm like, "I'm not taking her on date." He's like, you need to focus, and I was like, "Focus on what?" He's like, "You can't be doing this" and I'm like, "I'm just going out to eat with a friend. To catch up." So that was hard talking about things like that.

Almost all of the participants expressed disagreement with their parents on a number of topics. In general, they attributed it to differences in culture and impacted their ability to relate to one another.

Values about Romantic Relationships Shaped by Coptic Faith

Despite feelings of internal conflict and conflict with parents, all of the participants indicated that their faith dictated the rejection of American mainstream standards of open sexuality and casual dating. Mark described how he emphasizes the values of his Coptic spirituality over mainstream values in regard to sexuality in his relationship with his girlfriend:

I want to grow spiritually with her first before we start like doing a lot of the physical things that she's interested in doing. 'Cause you know there is a stigma, a very negative

stigma against men in America, that like don't want to have sex. Before marriage. Like you get labeled as a wimp...you know, loser or whatever. Or like a virgin, you know, you don't want to be a virgin when you're 23...and for the girl, it's like "my boyfriend doesn't want to have sex with me." You know, it's not 'cause of her looks or whatever, it's 'cause like, it's a cultural thing.

Six participants expressed the importance of having spiritual and religious values as central to their romantic relationships. Christy explains how she came to base her values about dating on the Coptic faith:

I think the more I'm growing up the more I do value it [the way Copts date] a lot, and I can see why...so many people in America like have such a high divorce rate because of the way they go about dating...So the gist of the [church] dating series was that you shouldn't—like here in America you're always looking for the one...and then, Abouna [*Father*, priest] in the series was saying how like "the one" needs to be Jesus and you wanna find your "two" through the One. So unless you're connected to Jesus, like it's a triangle, your relationship is gonna fall apart...I can completely agree with [that] now.

Although many of the participants reported disagreements with their parents about timing for dating and marriage, they upheld the value of spiritual relationships that was instilled in them by their parents or the church. They also resisted the standards and influence of friends who pressured them to date casually or have sex, or engage in relationships that did not value God.

Values About Gender Roles Shaped by American Culture

Six participants disclosed their perception of unequal gender roles as a part of their Egyptian culture and their preference American values regarding gender roles. Those who shared this described the opportunities that are afforded to women in America versus the Middle

East, rejecting the repression and lack of choice of women and the idea that they are expected to be subordinate to men in the Egyptian culture. Marie remembered her experience of recognizing differences in expectations for gender roles as an adolescent:

But in terms of the American side of me, I feel like I'm much more of a feminist than a lot of Egyptians that I grew up around...The small church we did have was very much people who like, had just come from Egypt, and like the moms stayed at home and their daughters went to high school and then got married. I was just like, I don't want to get married right out of high school, and I want to play soccer with all the guys.

In summary, participants discussed attributed their values about equal gender roles to American culture. Generally, they rejected traditional Egyptian gender roles that they observed in their families or overall Egyptian culture.

Challenges and Preferences When Relating to Others

Participants identified challenges and preferences when relating to families, friends, and seeking new relationships based on their values and cultural identity. Four subthemes emerged in this area: difficulty relating to Copts/Egyptian family and friends, difficulty relating to non-Copts, feeling caught between cultural groups, and seeking friendships with other second generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans.

Difficulty relating to Coptic/Egyptian family and friends. Three participants expressed difficulty relating to other Copts or Egyptian friends due to major cultural differences, or because there was not a large presence of Copts in close proximity to their hometowns during their upbringing. David also shared about his difficulty relating to his relatives who are immersed in Egyptian culture, and do not understand the American side of him:

I have distant family...who live in Egypt and like, a lot of times I don't want to talk to them or get close to them because they are Egyptian and they are not going to understand the way I think...like, this is what I'm thinking in my mind. I don't really like, invest my time when it comes to foreign...or just Egyptians, and like, the term "FOB..." "fresh off boat"...someone who from overseas like, I look at people like that and it's hard for me to even want to talk to them...

Difficulty relating to non-Copts. Five participants reported having difficulty relating to non-Copts, including Americans, members of other Christian denominations, or non-religious people. Mary explained how her ability to connect with friends is hindered when they do not have the same faith background:

I can't fully be myself when I'm around people like that...I had a friend who was going through like a really hard time. If I were speaking to a fellow Copt or person like me, I bring in Bible passages and remind them of lines of sermons I heard or like pray for them ...or pray with them. When it comes to people who aren't of that background and who don't share the same religious values as me, I just say everything happens for a reason, it's going to be okay...I just keep saying that. But it's just a lot richer...with someone else like me.

Feeling caught between cultural groups. Two participants specifically expressed the feeling of not being able to completely relate to, and therefore, feel completely understood by either cultural group. They reported noticing extremes in values and beliefs of their friends on each side, and having difficulty fitting in when there is no balance. They also shared that they sometimes felt judged by their friends when making decisions that do not match the values of each group. Marie shared her experience of being between circles of friends:

So like I can't fully relate to my American friends ...they don't get, you know, necessarily all the religious part of my life...and I think that can sometimes be like a barrier to that friendship. But...like with other Coptic kids, I don't always relate to them either because I feel like some Coptic people are just so, *so* Coptic that they don't know what it's like to have friends that aren't Coptic...it's hard to find a middle ground between the super Coptic and the hardcore like American partiers.

Seeking friendships with other second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic

Americans. Three participants reported the ability to relate better to others who identify with the same cultural groups. They reported seeking out members of the same generational status and upbringing. Vanessa described her experience of seeking a friend who understands her:

I feel like it's just much easier to relate to and if it's like Middle Eastern and ...Coptic and then on top of that born in the States. So there's like three categories that like, that if you fit all three, then, it'll be so much easier to relate.

In summary, participants had different experiences of their ability to relate to different groups of people among the cultures they identified with. Some felt in between, and some specifically sought out people who were like them so that they could feel understood.

Advantages of Multiculturalism

Despite the complexity participants felt in identifying with multiple cultures, participants expressed several advantages of their multiculturalism. Two subthemes emerged in this area: the ability to relate to different kinds of people and strong sense of community.

The ability to relate to different kinds of people. All of the participants indicated that their ability to relate to different kinds of people, particularly minorities, or have a larger circle of friends was a benefit of their multiculturalism. Several stated that they are able to understand

members of each of their cultures as a result. Vanessa described how growing up in America has provided her with this advantage:

I feel like being born here kind of gives me an advantage because I grow up with like a whole bunch of different people...from all over the place. Christians, Muslims, Jews, whatever. They're all in my class and we all grew up friends. So why would I care what religion you are, why would I care where you're from? ...Whereas in Egypt, you're growing up in a Christian-Muslim class and it's always that separation between Christians and Muslims...So that really affects like the first generation, so being like second generation...you don't think that negatively, you don't think that stubbornly.

Strong sense of community. Six participants also communicated their appreciation for the strong community support they experienced as a result of being Coptic. They felt a unique bond to the Coptic community. They explained that this was because of the availability of ethnic gatherings, and the sharing of unique cultural and religious values and beliefs. Mary shared:

If I didn't have them [Copts] I feel like I would be a loner honestly and have very few friends and only associate with medical school friends...I think I have more of a chance to meet someone in a romantic relationship and to start a relationship because I have the whole community...We have church, we have conventions...we have so many places where we see people even when we're not trying to like reach out to them...and it really makes your circle of friends and your support system bigger.

Mark also shared about his bond with other Copts:

So being Coptic gives me a community. A community that I know I always have. So whether I'm celebrating a birthday, or whether I'm in the hospital, or whether someone in my family dies, like, my Coptic people will always be the first people to respond to me.

...I still feel like, you know the Lebanese people only care about Lebanon, the Iraqi people only care about Iraq...they don't care about me from like their heart. You know? And feel like with all Copts, we have this connection to one another.

Though Mark expressed a strong connection to the Coptic community, he also expressed a desire to reject overreliance on the church and clergy members for belonging and direction. No other participants expressed this sentiment.

Uniqueness and Pride

Six of the participants commented on their feeling of uniqueness as a Copt. Many of them felt pride about the history of their heritage as well as the uniqueness of their ancient faith. Julia shared her excitement about relaying that message to others:

People just sort of look at you and they are like, “but Catholic churches are everywhere.” I’m like, well, “I’m not Catholic, it’s kind of complicated, but I’m like so excited,” and people are like, “You’re very excited!”...American Christian culture is sort of like, you’re either sort of Christian in name only or you take it very seriously, but those people are very hard to come by. So, they meet someone who is not of the typical faiths and someone who is very passionate about it—it’s very interesting, because they are like, “Oh, you’re really intense about this.” Well yeah, it’s a big part of who I am.

In summary, participants expressed appreciation for their unique identity and strength of faith. As a result, some also felt compelled to share it with others.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of second-generation Egyptian Coptic Americans managing their multicultural identity and its impact on their relationships. The eight participants interviewed gave rich detail about how they define their

cultural identity, the beliefs, values, and traditions that help them identify with each culture (as well as how those values manifest themselves in their relationships), how they explain their culture to others, and how managing multiple cultures with different values impacts their level of conflict and belonging with their parents, as well as friends and significant others.

The sample for the present study contained all participants with Egyptian descent, and whose parents were all immigrants from Egypt. The results from the study should be interpreted, therefore, in the context of an Egyptian-only sample.

Each participant chose a different order of words on the demographic questionnaire (Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American) to define their multicultural identity, and one even chose to replace the word Middle Eastern with Egyptian. Participants in this study indicated that the Middle Eastern label was either too broad to define their identity. This is consistent with Salameh's (2011) assertion that the term Middle Eastern encompasses a variety of nationalities, cultures, and religions; it seems that participants did not feel that it captured their Egyptian heritage. In addition, participants observed an overlap between Coptic and Egyptian cultures and identities. Some felt that they could not separate being Egyptian from being Coptic, because they carry the same meaning, with the added component of religion. Others viewed this overlap occur when their Egyptian culture manifested itself as part of Coptic religious traditions.

In this study, participants described the importance of their religious identity. This is common among some immigrants who tend to emphasize religious identity over ethnic identity, but continue to use religious institutions to create and sustain both ethnic and religious boundaries (Lee et al., 2006; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001). This may have been a value transmitted to the second-generation participants by their immigrant parents. Interestingly, some participants expressed the idea that there should exist a separation between their ethnic and religious

practices, a new finding from this study that does not been readily observed in previous literature. Their examples, however, reflected participants' wish to preserve the integrity of their religious identity and Coptic practices by rejecting superfluous or cultural influences, including those that stem from Islam.

Despite the fact that the majority of Arab Americans in the U.S. are Christian (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Awad, 2010), participants in this study reported that they often needed to emphasize their religious identity to avoid being assumed as Muslim. This fear that has also been described in previous studies given that Middle Eastern or Arab is sometimes associated with Islam (Ajrouch, 2004; Awad, 2010). Some participants also felt that it was important to highlight their Christian identity to others in light of the historical persecution of Copts by Muslims. Furthermore, most participants considered that people were usually ignorant about the Coptic faith and therefore, they also felt the need to educate them about the Coptic identity, values, beliefs and practices.

Despite participants' identification with the Coptic, American, and Egyptian cultures, participants felt that relationship contexts affected which of their cultural identities would be more salient. For example, some felt that they should identify a certain way to "match" the groups around them, and others felt that certain parts of their cultural identity became highlighted in contrast to whomever they were spending time with. This is precisely what Benet-Martínez and colleagues (2002) have identified as *cultural frame switching* (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002), a process in which contextual cues impact bicultural individuals' behaviors and cultural frames of reference. Even though in Benet-Martínez and colleagues' study it is unclear whether individuals were aware of their cultural frame switching, in the present study, participants seemed to be cognizant of the process and applied it purposefully.

In addition, participants also reported that some dimensions of their lives were more influenced by the practices and values of one culture over another. For example, participants explained that their values about gender roles and career paths were shaped by American cultural values, and values concerning romantic relationships were shaped by their Coptic/religious culture. This is consistent with the Relative Acculturation Extended Model (Luque et al., 2006), which argues that immigrants' acculturation strategies vary across cultural domains depending on how closely or remotely those domains are related to their culture. For example, family relationships and religious customs/beliefs are core domains (most central/closely related to their culture), and immigrants usually adopt a separation strategy and maintain culture-of-origin practices. Participants in this study also seemed to have followed a separation strategy in these areas, as maintaining their religious beliefs and spirituality in their romantic relationships was a priority. Nonetheless, they seemed to have adopted an assimilation (to American culture) strategy regarding more peripheral domains, such as gender roles and career paths, also consistent with RAEM.

For many participants, identifying with multiple cultures was accompanied by internal conflict and tension. Participants reported feeling that they could not live up to the values and standards of both Coptic/Egyptian culture and American culture. They feared that thorough managing their multiple identities, they would always be disappointing someone: either friends, the church/God, or their parents, especially since it seemed that their parents held values that were consistent with Coptic/Egyptian culture (e.g. attending church regularly, etc.) and their friends held very different values closer to American culture (e.g., partying, independence, etc.). This internal conflict is consistent with empirical data about bicultural individuals and the challenge of balancing the values of their different cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005;

Haritatos & Benet-Martínez, 2002). It is possible that this internal conflict was more prominent or intense for our participants considering that they were all young adults and they were going through a developmental stage in which they are learning to distinguish and assert their values from others (Arnett & Jensen, 2002).

In addition to internal conflict, identifying with multiple cultures created conflict for participants in the relationship with their parents. Participants reported disagreements with parents about career expectations, dating practices, and standards for socializing. In these areas, participants mostly identified with American values regarding the freedom to choose their careers, building friendships/relating with members of the opposite sex, and choosing the friends (not only Coptic) that they wish to spend time with. As a result of these differences, participants experienced a feeling of cultural distance from their parents. This intergenerational conflict over cultural values and practices is common in immigrant populations as the first generation immigrants tend to adhere more to their culture-of-origin whereas the second generation, which has been raised in the U.S., feels closer to American values and traditions (e.g., Abad & Sheldon, 2008; Dennis et al., 2009; Padilla, 2006). Despite the conflict with parents over the adoption of American values, participants adopted and followed the religious beliefs and practices espoused by their parents, which may be unique to Middle Easterners (Eid, 2007).

Participants also discussed the challenges associated with relating to only Copts/Egyptians or non-Copts because of their mixed identity. Some felt that relating to only Copts/Egyptians was difficult because they held only values and customs of that culture and did not understand their American culture. Some also were not raised around many Copts, and felt that their Americanness kept them from being able to relate to them or be able to talk to them in a meaningful way. Others felt it was difficult to relate only to non-Copts, because they did not

understand the importance of their religious practices and values, or the reasons they choose not to engage in certain activities. Some participants also specifically addressed the feeling of being caught between the two cultural groups and not being able to fully relate to either because of the idea that their values were a balance of the two. This may explain why some of them preferred to seek friendships and relationships with those who were also members of the second generation, specifically those that identified with all three cultural groups as they did.

Despite their internal conflict, conflict with their parents, and challenges associated with relating to others, the majority of the participants highlighted a number of advantages to their multicultural identity. All of participants indicated that identifying with multiple cultures provided them with a wider circle of friends and allowed them to relate to different kinds of people, including other minorities, other members of the second generation, and people of other religions. This is consistent with previous research on bicultural individuals and their ability to cultivate positive interpersonal traits (such as expressing empathy for others) and have tolerance for varying lifestyles aside from theirs, in addition to being able to think about culture in complex and flexible ways (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2006; Padilla, 2006).

Another benefit that participants in the present study identified was a strong sense of community and a strong bond to other Copts as stemming from their religious identity. They attributed this to having many opportunities to interact with people because of the availability of Coptic religious and community events. For the majority of participants, there was a sense of uniqueness and pride in their multicultural identity, particularly about the uniqueness of being Coptic, matching the limited literature on Copts (Botros, 2006). This is also consistent with findings that that religion served as a way to bolster personal and group identity (Eid, 2007) and

ethnic religion a way to facilitate group connection and secure ethnic identity (Lee et al., 2006). Participants' feeling that Copts are not well known in the United States, and responses from non-Copts who are intrigued by their faith and culture may contribute to their feeling of uniqueness.

Another consideration is the age group of the current study's sample. Participants in the study were all emerging adults between the ages of 20- and 24-years-old, beginning to assert their values independently from their parents. Most participants did not emphasize the impact of managing multicultural identity on their own personal experiences in romantic relationships or friendships and seemed to speak more broadly of their perspectives in these particular domains. The challenges of this particular developmental stage in managing multicultural identity may be different than those who are in different family life stages, such as those who are married or are raising children, who may comment differently on conflict with parents, as well as attribution of values to different cultures and belonging. The results from this study are likely particular to emerging adults, and in this case, those who are unmarried and childless.

In summary, participants identified themselves as Coptic Egyptian American, and some of these cultural backgrounds became more salient for them depending on the relationship context as well as the dimension of life. Although many experienced internal conflicts as well as conflict with their parents over differences in values between American and Coptic/Egyptian cultures, they also found several advantages in identifying with multiple cultures. Participants' religious identity, which they reported often overlapped with the Egyptian identity, played an important role in participants' lives and provided them with a strong sense of community, pride and uniqueness.

Limitations

The findings of this study are taken from a small sampling of self-referred individuals. Though recruitment was not limited to places of worship, all participants were recruited mainly by word-of-mouth, practiced the Coptic Orthodox faith and attended church regularly. Those who identify as Coptic but do not express the same religious devoutness/level of religious practice may express different experiences. In addition, when asked to self-label their identity in the demographic questionnaire, none identified as Middle Eastern first, and one participant changed Middle Eastern to Egyptian. Because all participants reported Egypt as their parents' country-of-origin, the study does not include Coptic Orthodox Christians with mixed Middle Eastern heritage.

Future Research

More research should be conducted to fill the gap in literature about this group and their experiences of managing multicultural identity. Future studies should recruit participants from different Middle Eastern countries as well as different levels of adherence to their Christian faith in order to gain more descriptions about this population. In addition, a mixed methods study using measures from the Relative Acculturation Extended Model as well as qualitative interviews may provide a more organized picture of participants' ideal and actual acculturation strategies, while also providing rich descriptions of their experiences. Additional individual studies should be conducted to understand more about how their multicultural identity impacts more specified domains of their relationships, including romantic relationships, friendships, and parents. Finally, future research should address ways in which these individuals can be supported by members of their relationships as they navigate multiple cultures.

Clinical Implications

The results of the study have several implications for marriage and family therapists and mental health clinicians, especially those who are not Middle Eastern or Coptic Americans. The complexity of self-labeling and balancing multicultural identity may be a source of ambivalence for clients regarding a number of decisions, especially when those decisions involve the influence of conflicting cultural values. At the same time, they may have solid values (e.g., strong religious beliefs) but need support in navigating internal conflicts. They may also require family mediation on potentially divisive issues, particularly across generations. Because second-generation Egyptian Coptic Americans also seemed to retain religious values passed down to them from their parents, therapists can also highlight this benefit in helping bridge generational and cultural gaps between clients and their immigrant parents, while also acknowledging the complexity of the experiences of members of the second generation.

This particular group seems to be sensitive to assumptions made by others who lack understanding of their culture and faith, but also value the ability to share their unique background. Many therapists may have never heard of the Coptic Orthodox Christian religious denomination. Therapists would benefit from educating themselves about this history of this group, while also providing space for their clients' varying interpretations of their experiences. Therapists should acknowledge that their values may differ from the mainstream, and encourage them to live according to those values without pressuring them to assimilate to societal norms, as this may not be their preferred outcome. Most importantly, clinicians should be sure to acknowledge the link between managing identity and its impact on relationships and help clients understand it as well. Abdelsayed, Bustrum, and Tisdale (2012) explain that Coptic Orthodox priests have a unique role as church leaders because their pastoral roles extend beyond preaching

and church management and into holistic care of their congregation, often through counseling. Priests, however, may not be trained to manage mental health and relational issues that extend beyond spirituality. Mental health professionals' awareness about the cultural identity and relationship experiences of this population can improve the quality of resources available to them as well as their comfort level in seeking professional treatment.

Conclusion

This qualitative study sought to examine the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing their multicultural identity and its impact on their relationships. Participants addressed how they define their identity for themselves and to others, and discussed both the challenges of managing multiple cultures as well as benefits of their multicultural identity for their relationships. The participants could identify the influence of their religion on their lives and relationships and used different acculturation strategies in their lives for different domains of their cultural identity. Future research should investigate the experiences of those who identify as Coptic but may not necessarily practice their faith devoutly, and consider the experiences of Christians with nationalities other than Egyptian. Findings from this study will aid family therapists and other mental health professionals by raising awareness about this group's values and behaviors related to their cultural identity, sources of internal conflict as well as intergenerational conflict between members of the second generation and their immigrant parents.

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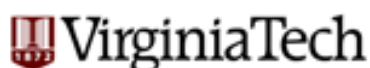
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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer

ARE YOU MIDDLE EASTERN?...AND COPTIC?...AND AMERICAN?



For my thesis, I am currently recruiting second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic young adults to participate in a research study to explore their experiences of managing multiple cultures and its impact on close relationships.



www.nwsonline.com/news/2013/apr/20/ordangard-copt-20130420/

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY INVOLVE?

You will be asked to complete a 10-minute telephone screening to see if you qualify. Then you will participate in an approximately one-hour interview, reflecting on your experience as a Middle Eastern Coptic American managing your identification with multiple cultures and how that affects your close relationships.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

You were born in (or immigrated to the U.S. before the age of 5) and live in the U.S., you are between the ages of 18 and 24, your parents are immigrants from the Middle East, and you and your parents identify with the Coptic Orthodox Christian faith!

Please contact

Mary Moussa at:
(703) 470-3588
mmoussa@vt.edu
(Principal Researcher)

to find out if you are eligible to participate

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment Email

Hello!

My name is Mary Moussa and I am currently working on attaining my M.S. in human development with a concentration in Marriage and Family Therapy from Virginia Tech. For my thesis, I am examining the experience of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic American young adults managing their identification with multiple cultures in their close relationships. I am currently recruiting participants for this study.

You are eligible to participate if:

1. You were born in the U.S.
2. You live in the U.S.
3. You are between the ages of 18 and 24
4. Your parents are immigrants from the Middle East (Including Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, North Africa)
5. You and your parents identify with the Coptic Orthodox Christian faith

What does participating in this study entail?

- A 10-minute telephone screening.
- Brief demographic questionnaire.
- Approximately one-hour interview in-person, over the phone, or via Skype. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your experience as a Middle Eastern Coptic American managing your identification to multiple cultures within the context of close relationships. If the interview takes place in-person, it will take place at a location convenient to you.
- Possible check-in after analysis of results to ensure that your experience has been portrayed accurately

If you, or anyone you know is interested in this study, please contact me at mmoussa@vt.edu or 703-470-3588. Thank you!

Mary

Appendix C

Internet Posting

Hello!

Are you Middle Eastern?...And Coptic?...And American? My name is Mary Moussa and I am currently working on attaining my M.S. in human development with a concentration in Marriage and Family Therapy from Virginia Tech. For my thesis, I am examining the experience of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic American young adults managing their identification with multiple cultures and its impact on close relationships. I am currently recruiting participants for this study. See the attached flyer!

ARE YOU MIDDLE EASTERN?...AND COPTIC?...AND AMERICAN?

 **VirginiaTech**

For my thesis, I am currently recruiting second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic young adults to participate in a research study to explore their experiences of managing multiple cultures and its impact on close relationships.



www.nwaconline.com/news/2013/apr/20/ordangr03-copt2-20130420/

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY INVOLVE?

You will be asked to complete a 10-minute telephone screening to see if you qualify. Then you will participate in an approximately **one-hour** interview, reflecting on your experience as a Middle Eastern Coptic American managing your identification with multiple cultures and how that affects your close relationships.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE? You were born in (or immigrated to the U.S. before the age of 5) and live in the U.S., you are between the ages of 18 and 24, your parents are immigrants from the Middle East, and you and your parents identify with the Coptic Orthodox Christian faith!

Please contact
Mary Moussa at:
(703) 470-3588
mmoussa@vt.edu
(Principal Researcher)

to find out if you are eligible to participate

If you, or anyone you know is interested in this study, please contact me at mmoussa@vt.edu or 703-470-3588. Thank you!

Mary

Appendix D

Screening Questions/Telephone Script

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study. I am going to ask you some questions to be sure that you are eligible to participate. If you are, then I will tell you a little bit about the study. It will take a few minutes.

1. Were you born in the U.S.?
 - a. How old were you when you moved to the United States?
2. Do you currently live in the United States?
3. Are you between the ages of 18 and 24?
4. Are your parents immigrants from the Middle East?
 - a. Did they come from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, or a country in North Africa)
5. Do your parents identify as Coptic Orthodox Christian?
 - a. Do you identify as Coptic Orthodox Christian?

Thank you for answering the screening questions. Let me tell you a little bit about the study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experiences of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing identification with multiple cultures in their close relationships. In order to understand your experience, I will ask you to meet me for an interview that will last approximately an hour. I will be asking you questions to understand your identity as a Middle Eastern Coptic American. I will be focusing on your experience of managing the values, beliefs, and expectations of being Middle Eastern, Coptic, and American and its interaction with your close relationships, including family, friends, and significant others. I would like to use the description of your experience, along with the other participants' experiences, to help future therapists work with others with your background in the future. We can set up a date/time and location that's convenient to you. What is your preference? Before the interview, I need you to complete some paperwork and a consent form for participation. Would you like that mailed/e-mailed to you, or would you like to complete it when we meet for the interview? If you prefer to have it e-mailed, you can mail it back to me or you may bring it with you when we meet for the interview.

Location preference: _____ Day/time: _____

Thank you for your time. I'm looking forward to the interview.

Appendix E

Research Informed Consent

Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Experiences of Second-Generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans Managing Multicultural Identity in Close Relationships

Principal Investigators:

Mariana Falconier, Ph.D., Assistant Professor/Committee Chair, Department of Human Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Mary F. Moussa, M.S. Candidate, Department of Human Development, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

I. Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experience of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing identification with multiple cultures in their close relationships.

II. Procedures

You will be asked to complete a demographics questionnaire and an interview lasting approximately one hour either in-person, over the phone, or via Skype. In-person interviews will take place at a location decided on by you and the researcher.

III. Risks

You may feel emotional discomfort when being interviewed about your personal experiences. The researcher will have mental health referrals available should you wish to further process thoughts or emotions that arise from the interview. Payment for service from any mental health providers to which you are referred shall be your responsibility, and shall not be covered by the researchers, nor Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

IV. Benefits

The answers you provide will help us learn about the experience of experience of second-generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans managing identification with multiple cultures within the context of close relationships so that clinicians may be better able to help others with that experience in the future. Talking about your experience may provide some therapeutic benefit to you. No promise nor guarantee of benefits has been made as an incentive for participation in this study.

V. **Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality**

- All of the information provided during the interview and over-the-phone screening is confidential.
- At no time will the researchers release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent.
- All identifying information provided during the audio-recorded interview will be removed and replaced with aliases in the typed transcript and study report. Any identifiable information will be stored separately and securely from coded data.
- All data will be kept in a locked and secured location.
- If you wish to delete any information that may violate your confidentiality, you can bring that to the researcher's attention for omission. If you do not respond by the designated date for your review, the researcher will assume that you have no changes to submit.
- The only individuals with access to the audio recording and original transcript will be the Principal Investigator and the Co-Investigator. If an outside transcriber services are used, the Co-Investigator will request that the transcriber signs a confidentiality agreement.
- The audio tapes will be destroyed as soon as they have been transcribed and checked.
- Portions of your interview text may be used verbatim in the report of the project and/or in subsequent publications. No identifying information will be associated with any part of your interview that may be used.
- The Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. **Compensation**

Participants will not receive compensation for participating in the study.

VII. **Freedom to Withdraw**

You do not have to participate in this research study. If you agree to participate, you can decide to stop participating at any time without penalty.

VIII. **Participant's Responsibilities**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

1. I will complete a demographics questionnaire. I will complete a one-hour interview in-person, over the phone, or via Skype. If I complete my interview in-person, it will take place at a location decided upon by myself and the researcher.

IX. Participant's Permission

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Name (please print)

Researcher's Signature

Date

If you have any questions about this research study or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, you may contact:

Mariana Falconier, Ph.D

Investigator

Mary F. Moussa, M.S. Candidate

Investigator

Dr. David M. Moore

Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research Compliance

703-538-8461/marianak@vt.edu

Telephone/e-mail

703-470-3588/mmoussa@vt.edu

Telephone/e-mail

540-231-4991/moored@vt.edu

Telephone/e-mail

Appendix F

Demographic Questionnaire

Your...	
Age	
Gender	
Marital status	
City and state of residence	
Do you practice the Coptic Orthodox Faith?	
Parents' country-of origin	
Parents' length of residence in the U.S.	
Do you currently live with your parents?	
<p>Please combine these three aspects of your cultural identity in the way in which you wish to identify yourself:</p> <p>a). Middle Eastern b). Coptic c). American</p> <hr style="width: 30%; margin: 20px auto;"/> <p>Examples: Middle Eastern Coptic American Coptic Middle Eastern American American Middle Eastern Coptic</p>	

Appendix G

Confidentiality Agreement for Third Party Transcribers



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Human Development
Northern Virginia Center
7054 Haycock Road, Falls Church, Virginia 22043-2311
703 538-8470 Fax: 703 538-8465

Confidentiality Agreement for Interview Data

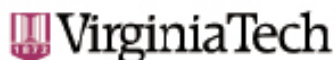
I, _____ agree to safeguard the identity of participants enrolled in the *Experiences of Second-Generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans Managing Multicultural Identity in Close Relationships* study. I will not disclose or discuss participant related material outside of meetings with the research team. I will protect the confidentiality of all participants by safeguarding participant related materials, which includes identifiable information disclosed in participants' interviews. I will destroy audio recordings upon confirmation of receipt and acceptance of transcripts by researcher.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
 300 Turner Street NW
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
 email irb@vt.edu
 website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 26, 2014
TO: Mariana Falconier, Mary Moussa
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Experiences of Second-Generation Middle Eastern Coptic Americans Managing Multicultural Identity in Close Relationships
IRB NUMBER: 13-1048

Effective March 26, 2014, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the Amendment request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7
 Protocol Approval Date: November 21, 2013
 Protocol Expiration Date: November 20, 2014
 Continuing Review Due Date*: November 6, 2014

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.