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Bridging Arab American diaspora: A case for social support programming

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Executive Summary

Berry (1980) refers to acculturation as a model for adaptation, and states that there are different levels of acculturation "moving with or toward, moving against and moving away from a stimulus" (p. 13). Arab immigrants have been coming to America on a small scale since the beginning of the twentieth century; however, immigration has steadily increased due to the political developments in the Middle East. Stereotypes of Arabs and post-September 11th sentiments have led to heightened discrimination and racism toward Arab Americans. Studies indicate that racial and ethnic discrimination lead to psychological distress. Of thirty-seven nonprofit organizations identified; twelve senior staff members (n=12), and executive directors participated in answering a series of electronic surveys. The surveys sought to identify the types of programming and services they offer the Arab American community that seek to build community and cohesion, facilitate integration, and strengthen community support networks. While the majority of the organizations surveyed stated that they offered a wide range of programming which aimed to facilitate integration, and strengthen community bonds, the organizations did not offer any programs that attempted rectify psychological distress, mitigate depression, and integrate Arab Americans into mainstream society while maximizing their potential to create social justice and social change. This paper presents the findings, and concludes with a program proposal that uses cooking as an art form to create a nurturing environment and build community. The program seeks to promote self-expression, empowerment, and the development of the necessary stress management and coping strategies needed to overcome depression and stress.

Introduction

Through tear filled eyes, Fatima Al Awadi, only 17 years old, spoke to the media about finding her mother, slain, and lying in a pool of her own blood on March 21st, 2012, in their home in El Cajon, California (Carless & Lovett, 2012, p. 1). Next to her mother's lifeless body was a note left by the unknown murder; it read "This is my country. Go back to yours, terrorist," (Carless & Lovett, 2012, p. 1). Her voice trembling with an amalgamation of sadness, shock, anger, and hurt, she boldly stated: "…We are not the terrorist. You are the terrorist" (Carless & Lovett, 2012, p. 2). Shaima Al Awadi's murder has unified the Arab and Muslim American community in wide scale protests seeking justice for a senseless hate crime that has left 5 children without a mother (Carless & Lovett, 2012, p. 2). While this event is an extreme and isolated example of sentiments toward Arab and Muslim American communities, it does serve to call attention to the need to study, understand, and assist these under-represented and often misunderstood communities.

The purpose of this project is to deepen our understanding of what programs exist that can build and/or strengthen the community support networks of Arab Americans and facilitate their integration. The hope is that the knowledge gained through this research can serve as the foundation to establish an organization that serves to bridge the gap between the existing Arab American social service organizations and the Arab American community they serve, and in addition, to unite existing organizations serving this community to maximize their potential to create social justice and social change.

To reach this goal, this paper presents the findings of a research study that was designed as a needs assessment to examine the social service organizations that provide programming and assistance to the Arab American community across the nation. This paper seeks to answer the

overarching research question: what programs do the organizations offer that aim to strengthen the community support networks and facilitate the integration of Arab Americans into mainstream United States society?

This paper will be organized as such: first it is necessary to orient the reader with the Arab American community and its immigration history as such a contextualization is necessary to demonstrate the need for understanding this community. Second, Berry's (1980) model of acculturation will be presented to explain how the acculturation and integration process can be affected by depression as a result of racism and discrimination, isolation, and stress. Although the literature will be presented to highlight the difficulties of Arab Americans in integrating, when possible, particular emphasis will be focused on the experiences of Arab American women, in order to show the need for programming that aims to alleviate the challenges of a vulnerable community.

Third, an assessment of the types of programming that are offered by nonprofit organizations serving the Arab American community which seek to build community cohesion, facilitate integration, and strengthen the community support networks of Arab Americans is presented. The fourth section, will analyze the details of this investigation, and discuss four themes that were identified throughout the data. Finally, through the knowledge gained from this investigation, a program proposal will be presented which outlines the development and implementation of a social support group designed to assist Arab American women.

Literature Review

The following section will serve to provide as a foundation as it presents a brief overview of the history of Arab migration to the United States, as well as the theoretical framework for understanding the acculturation process of immigrants. Literature will be presented to highlight

the effects of depression and stress on the rate of integration of Arab Americans, as well as the

correlation of racism and discrimination and integration.

Understanding Arab & Arab Americans in the United States

At present date, there are 22 Arab countries that are part of the Arab League, and

comprise the area that is known as the Middle East: Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria,

Jordan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia,

Somalia, Sudan, Tunis, UAE, Yemen and the Comoros Islands (Ahmed, Kim-Keating, & Tsai,

2011, p.181). "Stereotypes of Arabs as terrorists, murky oil sheikhs, flag-burning fanatics and

submissive veiled women are rampant not only in Hollywood, but also in common, public

discourse and most certainly in the media coverage of political events in Arab states" (Said,

1981, p. 51; Haddad, 1998, p. 21). These blazing images are attributed to the uneasiness around

the term Arab American, by those who use it, as well as those who are identified by it. However,

the term itself is also arbitrary, in that it encompasses an array of groups who share "significant

characteristics, including the Arabic language, the Arabic culture, and pride in their heritage"

(Strum, 2006, p. 5). This project focuses on the whole of the Arab American population in the

U.S. and does not differentiate between recent immigrants and longer term residents. For the

purposes of this study, the descriptive term Arab American will be used to refer to those

individuals living in the United States who self-identify as either Arab or Arab American.

Arab Immigration

Immigrants from these countries have been coming to America on a small scale since the

beginning of the 20th century. At first these immigrants tended to be largely homogeneous, with

the vast majority being Christian and coming from Lebanon and Syria (Howell & Shyrock,

2003). It was not until the late 1960s through the 1980s that Arab immigration greatly picked up,

with, for the first time, a significant amount of these immigrants being Muslim (Howell &

Shyrock, 2003, p. 446).

Much like one cannot study the matter of Arab immigration to America without

knowledge of the political developments in the Middle East; it would be irresponsible to divorce

Middle East history from the discourse regarding the experiences of Arab Americans living in

America. Major catalysts of this wave of immigration were the political developments during

this period, namely the various Middle Eastern wars. Within the past 20 years, there has been a

plethora of developments in the Middle East, including: the Gulf War, the closure of the

Lebanese civil war, the start of the Algerian civil war, and of course the different dimensions of

the Peace Process between the various Arab states, the Palestinian Liberation Organization and

Israel, starting with the Madrid Conference, including a Peace treaty between Jordan and Israel,

Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations, the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO,

only for the Peace Process to later collapse after the failed Camp David talks and the beginning

of the second Palestinian Intifada. The present, much like the past, in the Middle East has been

riddled with twists and turns due to the War on Terror and the Arab Spring; economic instability,

political upheaval and contention are all the more motivation for Arabs to seek refuge in other

countries.

According to the 2008-2010 American Community Survey, there are approximately 1.6

million Americans of Arab ethnicity living in the United States (United States Census Bureau,

2011). While an exact number of the Arab American population is unknown because of census

misclassification methods and underreporting, most scholars agree on a population estimate of

approximately 3.5 million Arab Americans (Amer & Hovey, 2012, p.409; Strum 2006). These

communities are "found in all states of the union, about two-thirds live in 10 states, and almost one-third reside in the three states of California, Michigan and New York" (Strum, 2006, p. 5).

What is known is that there is a documented history of institutional racism toward members of the Arab American community. Legislation such as Proposition 187 in California, the Omnibus Anti-Terrorism Act of 1996, and the Immigration Reform Law of 1997, in addition to policies that allow for racial profiling at airports as well as directly target "Muslims and Arabs and their community organizations," are all forms of exclusionary expressions toward immigrants (Rignall, 1997, p. 2; Padela & Heisler, 2010, p. 284). Furthermore, according to Padela and Heisler (2010) "the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) reported 1600% increase in hate crimes against these populations in the events after September 11" (p. 284).

Theoretical Framework

A starting point to understanding a group's experiences through the acculturation process is to first understand the concept of culture, and the many dimensions of which it is comprised.

> Culture explains the pattern of assumptions and behavior formulated by human systems in response to their environment, whether it is a nation and its macro-culture, a local community with its needs and customs, a market with its consumers and suppliers, or an industry with its colleagues and competitors (Harris & Moran, 1991, p. 132).

Berry (1980) offers a model for acculturation that suggests a multidimensional approach to understanding integration by recognizing that immigrants can chose to acculturate. Berry (1980) refers to acculturation as a model for adaptation, and states that there are different levels of acculturation "moving with or toward, moving against and moving away from a stimulus" (p. 13). Often "when people come into contact with a new culture, differences in the language, physical, and psychological dimensions from their original culture cause them to experience acculturative stress" (Berry & Annis, 1974, p. 383). Furthermore, these differences lead to "racism, discrimination and other social stratification mechanisms which shape attitudes and

treatment based on race, ethnicity, religion, social class or gender" which according to Ahmed,

Kia-Keating and Tsai (2011), "have impact on the acculturation process and acculturative stress"

(p.182). For example, Padela and Heisler (2010) found that "racial and ethnic discrimination is

associated with increased psychological distress and anxiety, increased risk for adverse mental

health outcomes, and poorer health status. Moreover, immigrants who perceive increased

discrimination in their new country are more likely to have high levels of psychological distress

and decreased levels of trust in society" (p. 284).

Multiple studies have linked depression with acculturation or "the process of adapting to

a new culture" (Cummings, Sull, Davis & Worley, 2011, p. 161). Studies indicate that as

acculturation increases, psychological distress decreases (Cummings et al., 2011, p. 161;

Ghaffarian, 1998; Mui & Kang, 2006). Cummings, Sull, Davis and Worley (2011)'s research

suggests that levels of depression decrease when immigrants have both access to supportive

circles (for example, having a network of friends and family) as well as a sense of independence

(for example, having a knowledge of resources) (p. 162). The rate of acculturation however, has

been found to vary between men and women, with immigrant women having "to face unique

barriers to successful adjustment" because they must maintain the role of both a caretaker and

breadwinner (Koert, Borgen & Amundson, 2011, p. 195; Ataca & Berry, 2002; Remennick,

2005).

Furthermore, research suggests that immigrant women are more likely to feel "isolated,"

and "confused, frightened to go out in public and feeling disoriented" (Casimiro, Hancock, &

Northcote, 2007, p. 58). These findings are supported by Cummings et al. (2011), who found that

"the presence of significant relationships and social support influence the level of depression"

that is experienced by immigrants (p. 162). Similarly, Aroian, Templin and Ramaswamy (2010)

found that "immigrant women are at risk for social support deficits" because in relocating, they leave behind "extended family and close friends," and cannot turn to their husbands to supplement their deficiency because they too are likely to be "struggling to cope with their own immigration difficulties" (p. 154; Aroian, 1992; Aroian, Spitzer, & Bell, 1996; Llacer, Zunzunegui, del Amo, Mazarrasa, & Bolumar, 2007; Menjivar, 1995; Simich, Beiser, & Mawani, 2003; Waters, 1997). In addition to a lack of social support, and deficient social network, post-September 11th studies have found that "Arab women may be at an increased risk for discrimination and psychological distress," placing a greater urgency to develop programming that not only aims to alleviate acculturative stress, but also seeks to help women reestablish their social support networks (Padela & Heisler, 2010, p. 287).

Social support networks can help immigrants integrate because they not only serve as outlets for stress but also function as propagators of information and resources (Cummings et al., 2011, p. 162). Social support networks are not new to immigrant communities, and are often referred to as hometown associations (HTAs) or "immigrant organizations based on a common hometown," which are "typically informal, voluntary groups that bring members together for social, cultural, political empowerment, and economic developmental goals" (Somerville, Durana, & Terrazas, 2008, p. 1). While the literature on HTAs varies, what is known about immigrant organizations is that immigrants often turn to them "to seek advice on employment, housing, and immigration in addition to maintaining cultural practices in their new country" (Somerville et al., 2008, p. 7). HTAs play an essential role in integration because they "serve as social networks" by bringing immigrants together for community activities (Somerville et al., 2008, p. 8).

The aforementioned research suggests that immigrant and Arab women are more likely than men to suffer from the stresses and challenges associated with resettlement, and that they are at greater risk for experiencing deficiencies in their social support circles, and are victims of increased discrimination and psychological distress (Koert et al., 2011; Ataca & Berry, 2002; Remennick 2005; Aroian et al., 2010; Padela & Heisler, 2010). While social service organizations serving Arab Americans exist throughout the nation, the challenges that these communities, specifically, Arab American women face make their integration experience more stressful and challenging because they are prone to falling victim to discrimination associated with anti-Islamic and anti-Arab American rhetoric.

No time has been more pertinent than the present for scholars and practitioners to attempt to understand the experiences of the Arab American community. Multiple studies have attempted to bridge this gap by examining the effects of racism on the acculturation and integration of Arab Americans. However, an area of needed research is an examination of what the organizations that serve these communities are doing to help mitigate psychological distress, and assist in easing the integration process. The following sections present the methods, findings and analysis of a joint investigation that sought to examine the programs offered by the social service organizations that serve the Arab American population. The hope is that this investigation will not only contribute to the overarching academic literature, but can also, serve as a bridge to synthesize both the academic literature with everyday life; in essence, serve as a catalyst for changing how policymakers, practitioners, and professionals approach and serve the Arab American community.

Methods

This study was conducted to identify existing programs that strengthen the community support networks and facilitate the integration of Arab Americans. This study assessed the programs offered by the social service organizations that provide direct service to the Arab American community. The survey creation, implementation, and portions of the analysis are part of a joint investigation. This portion of the study seeks to specifically answer the following researching question:

RQ: What programs do the existing organizations offer to strengthen the community support networks and facilitate the integration of Arab Americans?

Subjects and Procedures

The participants in this study were senior staff members (n=12), most often Executive Directors, of nonprofit organizations. The criteria for targeting organizations for the study was the following: organizations based in the United States which are registered as nonprofits or operating as nonprofits and which serve the Arab American community. To protect the anonymity of the organizations as well as the individual respondents, the complete list of the organizations is not included in this report.

The organizations were found through a number of methods, including extensive searches on Google as well as snowball sampling. Queries were run using the following keywords and phrases: "Arab American social service," "social service organizations for Arab American," "Arab American network," and "Arab American centers." Derivations of those phrases and keywords were manipulated until the queries no longer yielded new results.

In total, thirty-seven organizations were identified, with working contact information unable to be located for 3 organizations. Initial explanatory and invitation to participate emails

were sent to 34 organizations. Responses were received from, and the survey was sent to 14 organizations, of which 5 were sent reminders, and finally a total of 12 completed the survey.

The survey tool was created with questions pertaining to both portions of the joint project. The survey consisted of twenty-six questions divided into five sections (See Appendix A for the complete survey). Initial surveys were administered either online or via telephone interview between February 2012 and March 2012. On average, the survey took approximately 22 minutes to complete online, which was consistent with the 15-20 timeline given to our prospective respondents. One survey, the only one administered by phone, took approximately 45 minutes to complete.

In the initial survey instrument, an error in question structure invalidated the responses to two questions. The first error was found in section one and the second error was found in section two. The questions were supposed to allow for multiple responses to each question, but instead only allowed the respondent one answer per question. One of these two questions was corrected and sent in the follow-up survey, which is explained below. The other of these two questions did not need to be re-asked as the organizations clarified their answers as needed.

The follow-up survey was administered in two parts: 1) a short 10 question survey, which included the one question that was discussed above from the original survey, along with 9 question that sought to expand on the original response; and 2) individual questions catered to the initial responses of each respondent administered via email (See Appendices B & C for the follow-up questions, and the organization specific follow-up questions). Follow-up electronic surveys were sent to the 12 participants that completed the original survey. Two organizations received longer email portions, as their original surveys were not complete; these questions were included in the organization specific portion. Most of the organizations received 1-3 questions on

this portion. Follow-up surveys were administered either online or via telephone between April

2012 and May 2012. On average they took approximately 1 hour to complete by phone. A total

of 7 participants (58%) completed the follow-up questionnaire. The data from the follow-up

survey was later combined with the data from the initial survey.

Variables measured

Four principals were examined to answer the research question. First, participants were

asked to identify how successful and/or challenging it was for their organization to accomplish

the goal of community cohesion. This variable was defined as any program or event that was

offered by the organization that aimed to unite, strengthen, build or rebuild the network or social

ties of the Arab American community. Additionally, respondents were asked to explain why they

found this goal to be a success and/or a challenge.

Second, participants were asked to identify the programs which aimed to strengthen the

community support networks of Arab Americans in the U.S. Additionally, respondents were

asked to identify what these programs are, and if these programs were designed to target only

males, females, or both male and female community members. Community support networks

were defined as any programming that sought to expand, develop or promote the development of

relationships among the community in order to encourage support on shared issues as well as

propagate information and resources.

Third, respondents were asked to report if offered community building programming.

Respondents were also asked to explain in detail the types of programming offered by the

organization, and to indicate if these programs are gender specific. This variable was defined as

any program offered by organizations that aimed to bring the Arab American community

together to celebrate, empower, embrace and/or reflect on Arab culture. Additionally, this

variable was defined as any programming that aimed to unify the Arab American community together on shared cultural interests, as well as any program that aimed to bridge the gap between non-Arab and Arab American community members.

Finally, participants were asked to identify which programs they offered that facilitated the integration of Arab Americans into main stream culture. Additionally, the respondents were also asked to identify if these programs were designed to target only males, females, or both male and female community members. The choice to use the term 'integration' over 'acculturation' was due to the fact that 1) the words are interchangeable within the context of Berry's (1980) model of acculturation, and more specifically, 2) the term is more reflective of mission and vision of these organizations, and is a term that they could more closely identify with. The variable integration was defined as the process of "moving with" or "toward main" stream society (Berry, 1980, p. 13).

Findings

The first two sections of the survey collected general background information regarding the organizations' incorporation statuses, size, and geographic distribution.

Of the twelve organizations (n=12) that responded to the survey, 58% (7) of the respondents indicated that their organization was operated locally, 17% (2) indicated that they operated nationally, 8% (1) organization reported operating statewide, 8% (1) organization indicated operating regionally, and 8% (1) organization stated that they operated internationally. Figure 1 (Appendix D) displays the geographic distribution of the 12 organizations (n=12) that responded to the survey. The findings closely mirror national population statistics in that California, New York, and Michigan rank as the top three states in estimates of total Arab American population (Strum, 2006, p. 5).

Table 1 (Refer to Appendix E) shows the budget, staff, average number of volunteers per week, and average number of community members served. Organizations A and K are outliers in regard to the Table 1 comparison. Organization A did not report a budget for 2011, and therefore is unable to be ranked regarding that question. Organization K serves the Arab American community by supporting member organizations as opposed to individuals, and therefore cannot be compared to the other organizations regarding staff, volunteers, or members served. The figures suggest that, while not an exactly even distribution, there is a fairly consistent progression in the categories of staff, volunteers, and community members served in relation to budget.

In an effort to identify or eliminate any selection bias based on size or capacity, the 12 participant organizations were compared to the entire group of the 37 originally identified organizations. This was done by searching each organization's reported budget on the GuideStar, USA website. (Guidestar, USA is classified as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and is a database which promotes transparency by "gather[ing] and public[izing] information non-profit organizations," including financial information (GuideStar, USA, 2012)). Many of the reported budgets were not from 2011; hence, the figures from the most recent reporting year were used to make this comparison. First, the latest reported GuideStar, USA budgets of the 12 participant organizations were compared to their reported budgets from their respective survey responses. Only two of the 12 organizations reported a budget that would have put them in a different category (used above: under $100,000; $100,000-$500,000; and over 1 million). It is still, however, very close to their original category of analysis, and therefore this finding is determined to be insignificant to this research.

Eleven of the 12 total respondents answered questions about their 2011 budget. Of these 11, 3 (just over 27%) reported a 2011 budget of under $100,000; another 3 organizations (just over 27%) reported a 2011 budget of over $500,000. The remaining 5 (topping 45%) organizations reported a 2011 budget between $100,000 - $500,000. Moving forward with the analysis of the 37 identified organizations, it was determined eleven of the 37 were not listed on GuideStar, USA; 6 did not have budget information listed; and one was listed as "not registered with the IRS" (GuideStar, USA, 2012). Of the remaining 19, 5 (26.3%) reported a budget under $100,000; 9 (47.4%) reported a budget of between $100,000-$500,000; 5 (26.3%) reported a budget of over $500,000 (GuideStar, USA, 2012). In comparing the data provided by the organizations on the survey to the information gathered on GuideStar, USA, the percentage of organizations in each of the above categories are virtually exact. This comparison is shown in Figures 2 and 3 (refer to appendices F and G). With these comparative findings of organizational budgets, it can still be said with confidence that the respondent sample of 12 exhibits no selection bias in comparison to the larger identified sample.

The second section of the survey sought to assess the programming offered by the organizations. The following is a presentation of the data that pertains to the research question: What programs do the existing organizations offer to strengthen the community support networks and facilitate the integration of Arab Americans?

Community cohesion

Figures 4 and 5 (Appendices H and I, respectively) display the responses to how successful and/or challenging respondents believed it was for the organization to accomplish the goal of community cohesion Interesting, while a vast majority of respondents (46%) believed

that they were "often successful" at achieving community cohesion, an almost equal amount

(42%) believed it to be "always a challenge."

The open-ended responses for this question provide a richer explanation. Many of the

participants stated that their success in achieving the goal of community cohesion is because of

their "collaboration" with other agencies. However, they also stated that the challenge of

achieving this goal was because "there is a lack of sophistication about community advocacy and

alliances usually end up based on personalities rather than the issues." Other respondents stated

the challenge was because of a "lack of willingness of community participation/dedication."

These responses suggest that those organizations that are able to collaborate with other

organizations, and share resources are able to achieve the goal of community cohesion, whereas

those organizations who stated this goal was "always a challenge" to achieve may not have

access to the same pool of resources and alliances as their counterparts.

Community support networks

In the follow-up questionnaire, participants (n=7) were asked to also identify the

programs they provided which attempted to build the community support networks of Arab

Americans. All 7 participants (100%) indicated that they offered a form of programming which

sought to expand, develop, or promote the development of relationships among the community.

Interestingly, 4 participants (57%) stated that their organization served as a central location for

community members to meet and described this function as creating a "safe place," to "promote

belonging and safety," as well as embrace "the culture."

In all 20 programs were identified by the participants that aimed to build the community

support networks of Arab Americans. Figure 6 (Appendix J) presents the types of programming

identified by the respondents that aim to strengthen the community support networks. The data

suggest that organizations provide a wide range of programming offered, however, the majority the focuses on adult programming and youth programming and community outreach.

In total the participants identified 11 programs that were geared toward adults to build support networks. Figure 7 (Appendix K) shows the distribution of programming by gender, while the data appears to suggest that there are more programs offered for women than men, further examination indicates that this is misleading as two of the organizations are geared specifically toward women. These outliers, coupled with the responses by the other organizations (5) create a biased answer. Additionally, the reason for gendered programming was explained by the participants as follows: 1) the focus on women was because of either the nature of the programming (for example, domestic violence support groups), or stipulations in the grant, 2) because of "modesty" in the culture, some respondents indicated that programs needed to be segregated otherwise the community members would not participate, and 3) some respondents attributed the lack of programming for males was due to the fact that "the men don't attend everything because they are always at work."

Community building programming

Ten out of the 12 organizations (83%) surveyed indicated that they offered community building programming. Overall, the respondents indicate that there is a strong variety of programming that aims to build community among Arab Americans. The programming ranges from encouraging "civic engagement" through community service and volunteerism. One organization (8%) did not answer this question. Only 1 organization (8%) stated that they attempted to organize the community around issues that pertain to them such as "local issues such as [city's] Police Department's use of force and intimidation at protests, lack of religious accommodation in jails, and local immigration policies; national issues such as increasing Arab

participation in the 2010 Census; as well as international issues such as the ongoing war in Iraq and occupation of Palestine." Ten out of the 12 organizations (83%) stated that the programming was offered to both males and females. One organization (8%) did not answer this question. One organization (8%) stated that they only offer programming to females as they are a women's group.

Integration

The follow-up questionnaire asked respondents to identify directly the types of programming they offered which facilitated integration of Arab Americans into the larger U.S. culture. Six respondents (86%) described programming which ranged from meeting the needs of immigrants such as assisting them in applying for insurance, language training, "cultural awareness training," and "immigration services." One respondent (14%) stated that the organization attempted to "encourage involvement" in the community, but did not offer programming specific to integration. Of the organizations which stated that they offered programming specific to facilitating integration, 100% stated that the programs were open to both males and females.

Analysis

Four themes emerge from the findings that help to better understand the landscape of the types of programming that are offered by nonprofits serving the Arab American community which seek to facilitate integration and build the community support networks of Arab Americans residing in the United States.

The findings show that there is a conscientious effort to raise awareness across all the programs. The focus is on engaging the Arab American community with the non-Arab American community in an attempt to bridge the cultures and to dispel stereotypes through providing

competency training workshops, serving on informational panels, and organizing multicultural events.

Furthermore, the data suggests that there are a plethora of programs that attempt to meet the basic and serviceable needs of integration such as employment, translation services, and highlighting culture. With the exception of one organization which lists in its mission that its goal is to achieve social change, the programs that have been reviewed do not address any issues of institutional racism and discrimination, nor do they address sufficiency and individual agency within the community. The literature suggests that Arab Americans are targets of discrimination; furthermore, that Arab American women are more severely impacted by violence, depression, and isolation than their male counterparts.

Yet, the programming discussed earlier does not attempt to address any of these issues and fails to recognize the human element of integration: the existence of psychological distress and depression and the ramifications of isolated individuals who are targets of discrimination and racism. What is needed to fully address these issues is a program which offers a forum for Arab Americans to simultaneously integrate and build community while developing support networks and promoting social justice and social change. This program would seek to alleviate those problems associated with integration through encouraging community bonding, the development of interpersonal relationships, and initiating a dialogue, while simultaneously creating an environment that fosters the development of ideas that encourage sustainable systemic change.

Recommendation

The results of the study provide a vivid glimpse into understanding the reality of the programming available to helping Arab American community members integrate into mainstream society, and develop community support networks. The results also continue the

conversation of how organizations can continue to best serve these community members, and in doing so, allow for the recommendation of a program with a proven success rate that is rooted in sound theoretical and practical research.

The following is a program proposal aimed to assist Arab American women fully integrate while establishing their support networks, and addressing key issues that are affecting their personal lives and their community. It is designed on the sole belief that the programs and services that are offered to assist Arab Americans integrate are sufficient, however are not adequate as they do not go beyond viewing integration as simply assistance with food, housing, employment, translation and medical services. They must extend the definition to encompass the recognition of the human element of integration and begin to provide programs that support and help community members manage and cope with the stressors and challenges of isolation, depression, and of being targets of racism and discrimination. This includes taking a creative approach to identifying and implementing programs that are not strictly based on assisting Arab Americans with finding employment, or learning the language, but that seek to address emotional and mental health challenges.

Program Description

"Women have always had a special relationship with food, as they have universal responsibility for food preparation and consumption, are often defined as nurturers and carry out this role mainly through feeding" (Sukovic, Sharf, Sharkey & St. John, 2011, p. 229; Counihan & Kaplan, 1998, p. 102). This program builds on the idea of using food as a common ground to nurture others. Sukovic, Sharf, Sharkey and St. John (2011) studied the use of communal kitchens by immigrant Mexican women in Texas. Their (2011) findings indicate that the kitchen serves as a "safe haven" and is a "privileged site where the recognition of domestic creativity

enables empowerment" (p. 238). In addition to empowerment, Sukovic et al. (2011)'s study

found that food preparation served as a means to recreate tradition and maintain stronger familial

ties and relationships with friends (p. 239).

As members of a collectivistic society that emphasizes traditional gender roles, Arab

American women are similar to the Mexican immigrant women documented in Sukovic et al.

(2011)'s study and are primarily responsible for maintaining their households. Thus, food

preparation in Arab American household is as much an art as it is a skill. In order for Arab

American women to succeed, they need a program that can help them develop a social support

network that provides them with the emotional and mental care as well as training to conquer

their depression, stress, and societal barriers.

Statement of Goals and Objectives

The goal of this program is to assist Arab American women, develop the necessary stress

management techniques and coping strategies needed to ease the dissonance created by

integrating into a new society, in addition to the depression and anxiety that has resulted from

post-September 11th sentiment. To do so, this proposal suggests the establishment of a social

support group designed to assist women in integrating into mainstream U.S. culture and to

further their likelihood of leading fulfilling and happy lives. The following is a list of the short-

term goals and objectives for this proposal:

Short Term Goals:
- Aid Arab American women in feeling less isolated in their community.
- Assist Arab American women in developing management and coping strategies for stress.
- Enable Arab American women to be agents of social change

Short Term Objectives:
- Introduce Arab American women in the community to one another.
- Inform Arab American women on stress management and coping strategies.
- Inform and train Arab American women on U.S. politics and the policy process

Feasibility

A program of this nature although unique is not an entirely novel idea for promoting social support for individuals experiencing depression, trauma, or stress. The literature available on similar programs includes the use of instruments such as cooking or art to aid in building community, creating a common space for discussion and facilitating emotional expression. While studies on these types of programs may vary, the results are consistent in both applications.

The link between the use of food to empower and promote social support has been studied through participation in communal kitchens. For example, the Mexican women interviewed by Sukovic et al. (2011) were already using communal kitchens to not only reduce the cost of food they incurred to provide for their families, but indirectly, the kitchens served as a way in which to promote "creative thinking and strengthen[s] the cultural environmental and socio political bonds among them" (p. 244). Further research indicates that participation in communal kitchens "can be individually empowering, and also can create group empowerment;" has been found to promote "skill building," and has also been linked to an increase in individual self-esteem and confidence, along with support-group development, and an "increased interest in participating in public life" (Engler-Stringer & Berenbaum, 2005, p. 249; Crawford & Kalina, 1997; Fernandez, 1996, Racine & St. Onge, 2000; Ripat, 1998).

Other forms of social support groups have used art therapy to stimulate group cohesion, participation as well as encourage discussions. For example, Collie and Kante (2011) found that female cancer patients who attended five weekly sessions of an art therapy and social support group showed "significantly greater improvements in self-reported quality of life and general health than those who had not attended the groups" (p. 653). Other studies have shown that in art

therapy support groups for women, participants used art to express and resolve their emotions, enhance their self-awareness, gain new insight, and empower themselves (Collie & Kante, 2011; Puig et al, 2006; Svensk et al. 2009, Collie, Bottorff & Long, 2006; Prediger, 1996; Reynolds & Lim, 2007; Malchiodi, 1997).

This program proposes using food as an art form to create a nurturing environment and build community to promote self-expression, empowerment, and the development of the necessary stress management and coping strategies needed to overcome depression and stress while also promoting active citizenship and social change among the participants, as well as their community.

While the literature suggests a program of this nature will be successful and effective, there are limitations that are worthy of discussion which may make its implementation difficult. The first limitation may be access to a neutral location with a fully equipped kitchen. However, as was previously outlined in the program description, the location must be considered a safe place where participants are at liberty to discuss their experiences openly and the location must also be accessible to all participants and must be secular as participants' religious backgrounds vary. Using a school cafeteria is the best setting for this program because a school is a neutral and secular location, with a fully equipped kitchen, and eating commons.

The second and most important challenge may be barriers that limit participation, which include: privacy, accessibility and transportation, and recruitment. First and foremost, participants must feel comfortable attending, and engaging in discussions about possible challenges they are experiencing. In order to ensure privacy, discussion topics will be structured so as to promote a general group discussion. Any idiosyncrasies in experiences that arise will be shared with the group at the willingness of the participant. Participants who are compelled to ask

for help, but do not want to share their challenges with the group will be referred to one-on-one sessions with the facilitators who will also serve as mentors (if the need arises, mentors will direct them to the appropriate mental health practitioners). Issues with accessibility and transportation may arise because some participants may not have a vehicle to transport them to the location. These issues will be addressed through organizing a carpool; whereby the mentors and other willing participants may transport those members without reliable transportation to the venue.

Finally, as in any program, recruitment of participants would be the most difficult adversary to overcome. However, this limitation can be overcome through implementing the program within an organization that is trusted by the community. The aforementioned survey allowed for rapport to be built with organizations already serving the community. Organizations could recommend members of the community to participate who indicated that they do not have a functional social network, (for example, they are either completely isolated from friends and family) or have limited access to relatives living in the U.S.

There are four critical limitations to this study worth discussing. Of primary concern is the use of "Google" to locate the organizations invited to participate in this study. While this was the foremost limitation of the research, this was done purposefully in order to approach the project from the standpoint of a community member who may be searching in that manner. Future research can search using a more rigorous database as well as using the literature to identify possible participant organizations. Furthermore, it is important to remember that: 1) The identified sample of 37 organizations was gathered with a snowball sampling technique and is not meant to be representative of the whole of Arab American serving organizations in the

United States; 2) The respondent sample of 12 is a small scale qualitative study and is not meant to be generalized.

A second limitation is the low response rate from the organizations solicited for participation. A third limitation is the flaw in the survey design; items were created for the purpose of this study and their reliability was not measured. Future research should use a measure that has been empirically tested and validated, and that ensures true measurement of all variables.

Finally, the scope of this project was limited in nature, and therefore, many possibilities to expand on this project lie outside that scope. For instance, similar questions could be asked of the Muslim and Muslim Arab American and the Christian Arab American communities. A comparative analysis could be conducted among the findings of each separate population as well as a comprehensive study of the whole. Issues of nonprofit administration of these types of programming within other comparable communities should be conducted to generate a broader knowledge base. This type of research should be careful, however, to not universalize possible findings either within or across these groups, just as this research has striven to overlook the heterogeneity of the Arab American serving organizations which participated in the study or the communities they serve.

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APPENDIX A
Original Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated and is integral to the successful completion of our research. This survey will be used in an effort to identify existing organizations and programs that serve Arab and Arab American communities as well as to gauge specific organizational and programmatic successes, challenges, and needs. To do this, we will first ask general questions about your organization. Following, we will ask questions regarding the size of your organization. Next, we will ask questions concerning the specific successes, challenges, and needs of your organization. Then, we will ask questions regarding specific programming offered by your organization. Last, we will give you the opportunity to direct us to other organizations and to share with us any further information. This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Again, we value your time and appreciate your willingness to assist us in our research. Thank you!

Section 1:

The following questions will be used to gather some general information about your organization along with the contact information of the person completing this survey.

Please answer truthfully and to the best of your ability.

Q1 Organization Name:

Q2 Organization Location (City, State):

Q3 Name (of person completing this survey):

Q4 Email Address (of person completing this survey):

Q5 Telephone Number (of person completing this survey):

Q6 Is your organization Local, Statewide, Regional, National, or International?Please enter the specific geographic area under your answer choice.
- Local (1) _____
- Statewide (2) _____
- Regional (3) _____
- National (4) _____
- International (5) _____

Q7 Type of nonprofit: (Please choose all applicable answers.) In the space provided, please list the year each entity was incorporated. If "Other," please list the type of organization and the year it began operating.
- 501(c)3 (1) _____
- 501(c)4 (2) _____
- PAC (3) _____
- Other (4) _____

- ▪ None of the above (please explain) (5) _____

Section 2:
The following questions will be used to gauge the size of your organization.
Please answer truthfully and to the best of your ability.

Q8 How many paid staff does your organization have? *
- • Full-Time (1) _____
- • Part-Time (2) _____

Q9 How many board members does your organization have?
- • 0 - 5 (1)
- • 6 - 10 (2)
- • 11 - 15 (3)
- • More than 15 (please enter number below) (4) _____

Q10 How many regular volunteers does your organization have in an average week?
- • 0 - 5 (1)
- • 6 - 10 (2)
- • 11 - 25 (3)
- • 26 - 50 (4)
- • 51 - 100 (5)
- • More than 100 (please enter approximate number below) (6) _____

Q11 Is your organization a membership organization? If "Yes," how many members do you currently have?
- • Yes (1) _____
- • No (2)

Q12 Approximately how many community members do you serve on a regular basis?
- • 0 - 25 (1)
- • 26 - 50 (2)
- • 51 - 100 (3)
- • 100 - 500 (4)
- • 501 - 1000 (5)
- • More than 1000 (please enter approximate number below) (6) _____

Q13 What was your budget for 2011?

Section 3:

The following questions will be used to determine the various successes, challenges and needs of your organization.

Please answer truthfully and to the best of your ability.

Q14 How often is your organization successful in accomplishing the following goals?

	Never Successful (1)	Rarely Successful (2)	Sometimes Successful (3)	Often Successful (4)	Always Successful (5)	N/A (6)
Community Cohesion	•	•	•	•	•	•
Coalition Building	•	•	•	•	•	•
Fundraising	•	•	•	•	•	•
Information Dissemination	•	•	•	•	•	•
Securing Venues	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other - Please Specify	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q15 In your own words, please explain the specific reason(s) why your organization has been successful or unsuccessful in accomplishing each of the above goals.

Q16 How often does your organization find accomplishing the following goals a challenge?

	Never a Challenge (1)	Rarely a Challenge (2)	Sometimes a Challenge (3)	Often a Challenge (4)	Always Challenge (5)	N/A (6)
Community Cohesion	•	•	•	•	•	•
Coalition Building	•	•	•	•	•	•
Fundraising	•	•	•	•	•	•
Information Dissemination	•	•	•	•	•	•
Securing Venues	•	•	•	•	•	•

Other - Please Specify	•	•	•	•	•	•

Q17 In your own words, please explain the specific challenges experienced by your organization in accomplishing each of the above goals.

Q18 In your own words, please list the most frequent challenges or most difficult barriers experienced by your organization and explain the reason(s) for these challenges/barriers.

Q19 Please rate your organization's level of need on the following:

	No Need (1)	Some Need (2)	Great Need (3)	Extreme Need (4)	N/A (5)
Funding	•	•	•	•	•
Staff	•	•	•	•	•
Volunteers	•	•	•	•	•
Officer/Board Training	•	•	•	•	•
Coalitions	•	•	•	•	•
Programming	•	•	•	•	•
Facilities	•	•	•	•	•
Equipment	•	•	•	•	•
Other, please specify	•	•	•	•	•

Q20 Please explain, in detail, the items above for which you chose "Great Need" or "Extreme Need."

Section 4:

The following questions will be used to assess the type(s) of programming offered by your organization.

Please answer truthfully and to the best of your ability.

Q21 Which of the following programs does your organization currently offer?

	Do Not Currently Offer (1)	Currently Offer (2)
Legal Services	•	•
Community Building	•	•
Mental Health	•	•
Sexual Health and/or Sex Education	•	•
Sexual Orientation	•	•
Job Training	•	•
Civil Rights Training	•	•
Job Placement	•	•
Dispute Management/ Conflict Resolution	•	•
ESL Classes	•	•
Other Language Classes (please list)	•	•
Other (please list)	•	•

Q22 For those programs that your organization DOES offer:
Have these programs been successful? Why or why not?

Q23 For those programs that your organization does NOT offer:
Please tell us the reason(s) for not offering these types of programs.

Q24 For those programs that your organization does NOT offer:
Is your organization interested in offering these types of programs in the near future? Why or why not?

Section 5:
The following questions will be used to give you the opportunity to tell us any further information you would like to share and to direct us to other organizations that you believe we should contact.

Please answer truthfully and to the best of your ability.

Q25 Are there any other organizations that serve the Arab and/or Arab American community that you believe we should contact?

Q26 Is there anything else that you would like to share with us at this time?

Thank you so much for your time in filling out our survey. If you have any questions, or would like further information regarding the survey, please contact Jennifer Smith at jlsmi5@pubpol.umass.edu or Elham Sliman at esliman@pubpol.umass.edu.
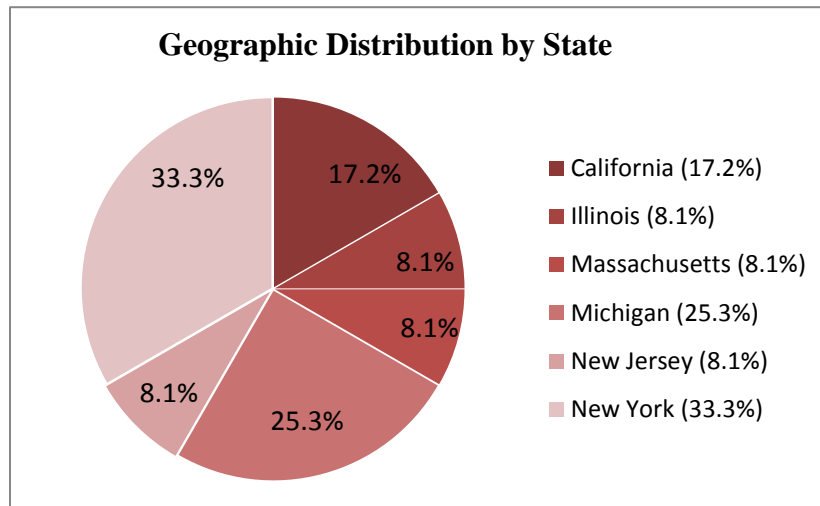
APPENDIX B
Follow-up Survey Questions

1. What is the name of your organization?

2. In your own words, who is your organization's target beneficiary audience?

3. Please list how many full-time and part-time staff employed by your organization.

4. What programs does your organization offer that aim to strengthen the community support networks of Arabs and Arab Americans in the U.S.?

5. What programs does your organization offer that aim to facilitate the integration of Arabs and Arab Americans into mainstream U.S. society?

6. Please explain in detail any programs or services your organization offers to relieve stress? Are these programs or services offered to males only, females only, or both male and female members of the community? Why or why not?

7. What programs exist that introduce topics relating to women's rights, gender roles, and/or sexual issues such as education, health, and orientation into Arab and Arab American communities in the U.S.?

8. How can programs relating to topics such as women's rights, gender roles, and sexual issues such as education, health, and orientation be improved? What additional programs can be developed? How can these programs be created and introduced so that they are culturally sensitive and provide accurate information on these topics?

9. Does your organization partner with organizations which offer programming, events, or services on any of the following topics: community building, women's rights; gender roles; sexual health; sexual education; sexual orientation; mental health; dispute/conflict resolution? If so, please list and explain these partnerships.

10. Are any programs offered by your organization offered specifically to males or specifically to females? Please list and explain.

APPENDIX C
Organization Specific Follow-Up Questions

1. We asked you about community building programming. By community building we mean any programs that aim to bring the Arab and Arab American community together to celebrate/empower/embrace/reflect on Arab culture; any programming that aims to unify the Arab and Arab American community together on shared topics of interest; additionally, any program that aims to bridge the gap between non-Arab community members and the Arab and Arab American community members. Please explain in detail your organization's community building programs. Are these programs offered to only males, only females, or both male and female members of the community? Why or why not?

2. Please explain in detail your organization's mental health programs. Are these programs offered to only males, only females, or both male and female members of the community? Why or why not?

3. Please explain in detail your organization's sexual health/sexual orientation programs. Are these programs offered to only males, only females, or both male and female members of the community? Why or why not?

4. Please explain in detail your organization's sexual orientation programs. Are these programs offered to only males, only females, or both male and female members of the community? Why or why not?

5. We asked you about conflict resolution and mediation programming. Here, we are asking you to please disclose any programs or services you offer that aim to 1) resolve or mediate conflict between Arab and Arab community members or 2) resolve or mediate conflict between non-Arab community members and Arab and Arab American community members. Please explain in detail your organization's dispute management/conflict resolution programs. Are these programs offered to only males, only females, or both male and female members of the community? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D
**Figure 1: National distribution of organizations by geographic location**

Geographic Distribution by State

- California (17.2%)
- Illinois (8.1%)
- Massachusetts (8.1%)
- Michigan (25.3%)
- New Jersey (8.1%)
- New York (33.3%)

APPENDIX E
Table 1: Organizations by budget, staff, volunteers and community members served

ORGANIZATION	2011 BUDGET	FULL-TIME STAFF	PART-TIME STAFF	VOLUNTEERS PER WEEK (AVERAGE)	COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED
A	X	2	3	0 - 5	100 – 500
B	$2,000	0	0	11 - 25	26 – 50
C	$60,000	1	8-10	0 - 5	100 – 500
D	$65,000	2	X	6 - 10	26 – 50
E	$200,000	1	2	6 - 10	100 – 500
F	$200,000	1	1	6 - 10	>1000
G	$232,000	5	X	11 - 25	100 – 500
H	$445,000	11	X	11 - 25	>1000
I	$453,000	10	X	0 - 5	100 – 500
J	$1,292,000	18	6	11 - 25	>1000
K	$2,000,000	5	2	0 - 5	0 - 25 (orgs)
L	$17,000,000	163	80	25 - 50	>1000

*Budgets have been rounded to the nearest $1,000.

APPENDIX F
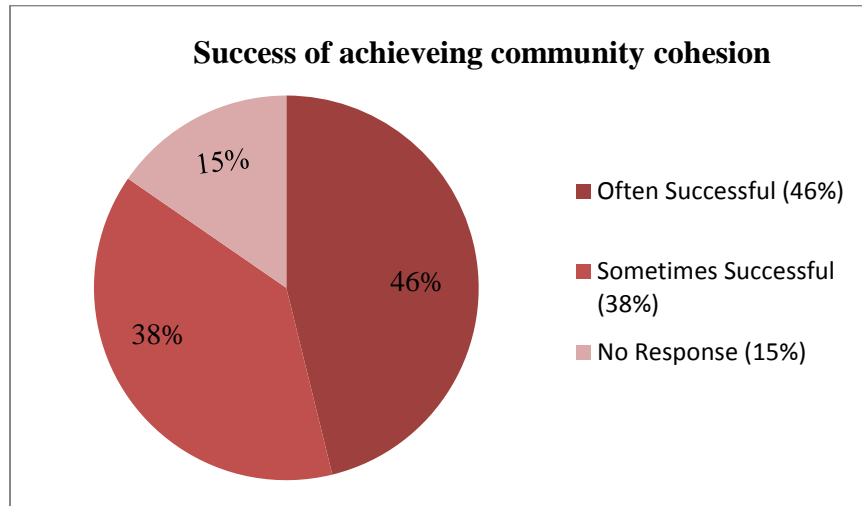**Figure 2: Distribution of the 11 Reported Budgets from the Survey**

Distribution of the 11 Reported Budgets from the Survey

- Under $100,000 (27%)
- Between $100,000 - $500,000 (27%)
- Over $500,000 (45%)
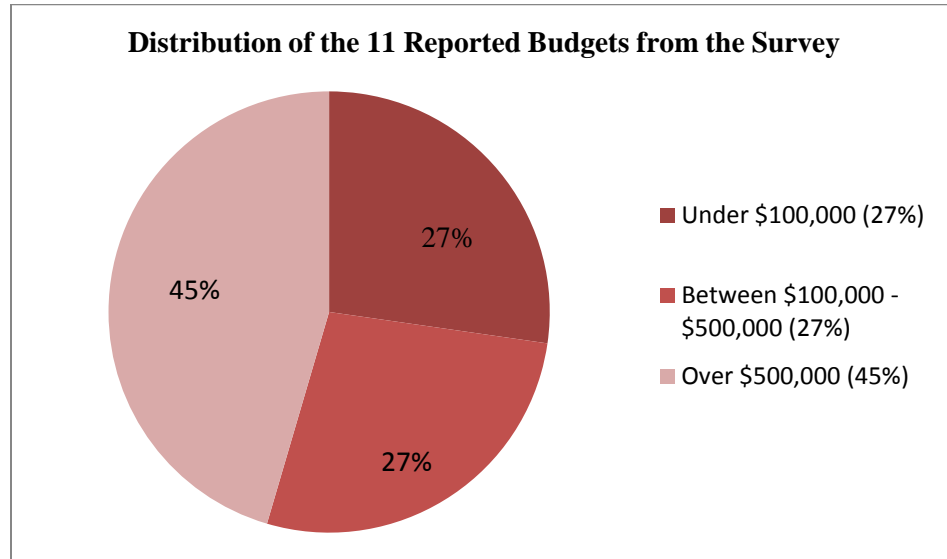
APPENDIX G
Figure 3: Distribution of the 19 Available Budgets from GuideStar, USA

Distribution of the 19 Available Budgets from GuideStar, USA

- Under $100,000 (26%)
- Between $100,000-$500,000 (47%)
- Over $500,000 (26%)
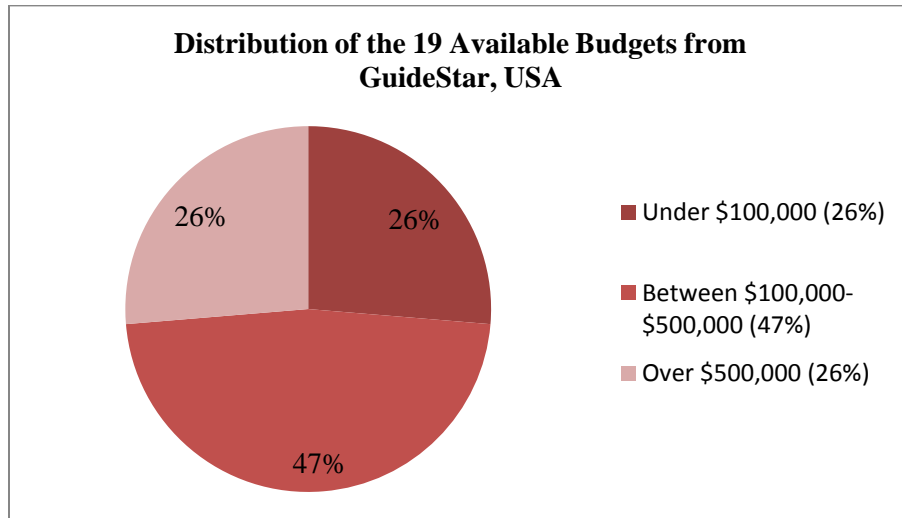
APPENDIX H
Figure 4: Success of achieving community cohesion

Success of achieveing community cohesion

- Often Successful (46%)
- Sometimes Successful (38%)
- No Response (15%)

46%

38%

15%

APPENDIX I
Figure 5: Challenge of achieving community cohesion

Challenge of acheiving community cohesion

- Rarely a challenge
- Sometimes a challenge
- Always a challenge
- No answer

25% 25% 8% 42%
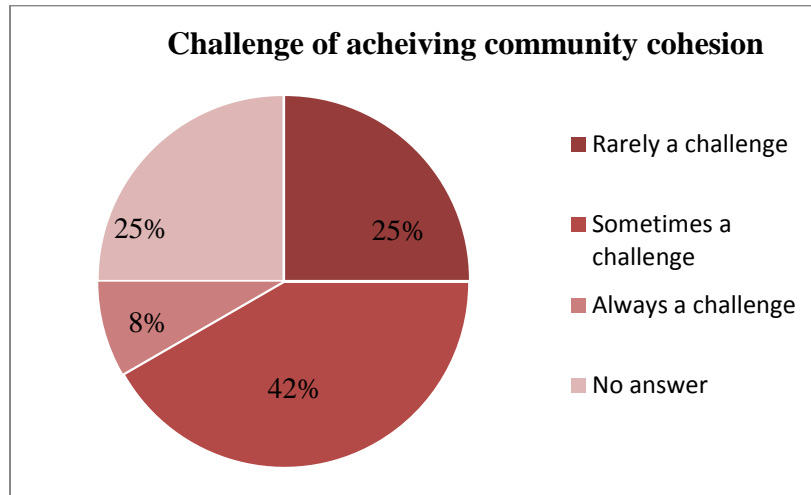
APPENDIX J
Figure 6: Types of programs offered by organizations

Types of programs offered by organizations
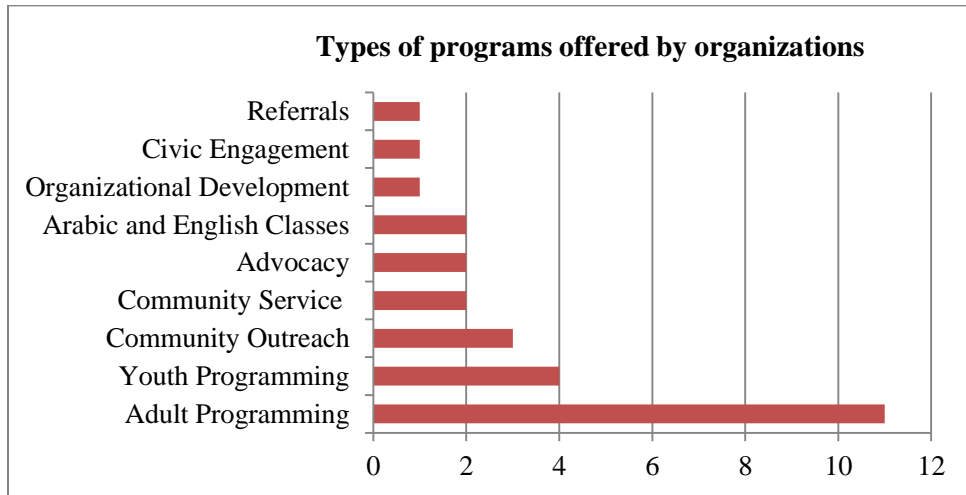
APPENDIX K
Figure 7: Adult programming by gender

Adult progamming by gender

- Women's Programming (54%)
- Men's Programming (0)
- All (45%)

45%   54%

0%