

“I’LL SMOKE, BUT I WON’T EAT PORK”:
OBSERVING THE EFFECTS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY ON DRUG DEALING AND USE
AMONGST A SAMPLE OF ARAB AND ARAB-AMERICAN MEN

by

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To my parents, for their never-ending love and support.

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Arabs and Arab Americans are an often understudied, or misrepresented, population in the field of criminology. This is especially true when discussing issues relevant to drug use and/or dealing, which are generally looked down upon in the Arab culture. This dissertation explores the drug using and dealing patterns of ten male, Arab and Arab American, Muslim active drug users. The data for this study were obtained through qualitative, in-person interviews over the course of three years. Data were coded using Grounded Theory. Aspects of Arab identity and participant drug use/dealing patterns are discussed. Suggestions for future research are presented.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Arabs and Arab Americans are an understudied population, especially in the field of criminology. A group that is often difficult to gain access to, and even difficult to classify, those of Arab descent are a unique population in that they are often classified as “Caucasian” while simultaneously failing to be viewed, in the eyes of greater society, as “White” (Naber, 2000, p. 50). Outside of the topics of terrorism and mental health, Arabs are rarely focused on as a unique ethnic group in the social sciences. The Arab American Institute Foundation estimates that the number of Arab Americans in the United States has increased by almost 1 million people per decade since the 1980s (AAIF, 2014).¹ The American Community Survey estimated that the number of Arab households in the United States between 2006 and 2010 was roughly 511,000, a 91% increase since 1990 (Asi and Beaulieu, 2013).² This increase in population could be due to higher numbers of refugees, greater access to Arab products and Arab communities upon emigration to the US, and a better understanding of how to properly measure what constitutes “Arab” descent.

The population is of growing research interest, as Arab culture goes through changes due to globalism and the widespread outreach of Western culture. In the United States especially, Arabs and Muslims have taken a more central focus in the political realm post-9/11 and continue to do so as presidential administrations decipher how to address Middle East based terrorist

¹ The number of Arabs in the US is currently estimated to be roughly 3.7 million.

² This survey conducted by the US Census only estimates 1.5 million Arabs residing in the US.

organizations, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Understanding Arab culture, patterns of deviance, and ideals through direct accounts can potentially humanize Arabs by giving them a voice while also providing data for better informing criminological theory and policy initiatives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to understand the drug use and dealing patterns of those of Arab descent. Using a Grounded Theory approach, this study examines the reasons drug users and dealers give for their participation in drug use and handling, and how their cultural identity as Arab or Arab American plays a potential role. Using face-to-face interviews with ten Arab and Arab American males, I explore participants' cultural identities as Arab by asking them about their family backgrounds, religiosity, and peer groups as well as their views on women and sense of belonging to Arab and American cultures. In addition, interview data were collected on their drug use patterns, motivations for engaging in drug use and dealing, and the techniques they rely on to access drugs, sell drugs, and avoid detection.

The study is of importance as this is a rare population to gain access to, especially in the field of criminology. Research presented in the Literature Review will explain that even in the medical field, those who ethnically identify as Arab tend to constitute a lower percentage of drug use treatment patients than non-Arabs (Arfken et al, 2008). Research has found that the underrepresentation of Arabs in treatment programs is not due to those of Arab descent simply having lower cases of drug use or treatment needs, but to a lack of sensitivity to cultural barriers in treatment facilities (Arfken et al, 2009a). News sources catered to Arab Americans have also begun to shed light on the issue of hidden drug use among young Arab Americans (Hunter,

2016). Collecting qualitative data from a sample of active drug users and dealers of Arab descent can contribute to understanding this phenomenon, while also adding to past research on drug use and/or dealing.

Understanding Arab Identity and Culture

An understanding of Arab identity, how Arabs view themselves and the world around them, as well as prior research on Arab identity and drug use informed the current study as to reasons why those of Arab descent may use or deal drugs and in what ways. A brief description of Arab culture and identity has been provided to allow for a well-rounded overview of the topic at hand. The articles discussed in this chapter, along with articles on drug use and criminological theory presented in Chapter 2, were used to shape the initial interview questions and topics. Although research on Arab drug use is limited, various works have explored the feeling of being the “Other” (see Said’s (1978) discussion in *Orientalism*), and how those of Arab descent are affected by Western views and portrayals of their culture.

Defining what constitutes an “Arab.” An “Arab” is someone who identifies as having an ethnic association to a country that is part of the Arab World. An understanding of what constitutes an “Arab” requires an understanding of which countries comprise the Arab World. Although Arabs are often referenced as descending from the “Middle East,” the term Middle East is a catch-all term, typically used by Westerners, that homogenizes Arabs, those of Mediterranean descent, those from primarily Muslim countries, and often, South Asians as one people. Unlike the Arab World, the Middle East is home to not only Arabs, but Persians, Jews, Turks, etc. (Kayyali, 2006). The “Arab World,” however, is comprised of those countries that

consider themselves to be a part of the League of Arab States, informally known as the Arab League. There are 22 countries (including the Syrian opposition) in the Arab League, consisting of most of North Africa, much of the Fertile Crescent, and the Arabian Peninsula. These countries all have Arabic as an official language in some capacity (some have more than one) and are thought to be culturally similar. All of them have voluntarily identified as Arab countries and have overall good relations with one another.³ Religion, while another common factor amongst citizens of Arab League countries, is not a determining factor of what constitutes an “Arab.” While most Arabs are Muslims, most of the world’s Muslims are not of Arab descent or descending from countries with Arab ties. Most Muslims live in non-Arab countries, which do not have Arabic as an official language, and adhere to varying cultures (Kayyali, 2006, p.1). The term “Middle East” often leads to the words “Arab” and “Muslim” being used interchangeably, although many Arabs are not Muslim, with certain countries, such as Lebanon, even requiring certain positions of Parliament to be reserved specifically for Christians only. Understanding the differences between “Arabs” and “Middle Easterners” is important for anyone seeking to study the population and can help to avoid conflict or confusion when defining what constitutes an “Arab.” Furthermore, understanding these variations can help researchers evade homogenizing people based on religion or through Orientalist perspectives (Said, 1978).

Scholarly research on Arab identity. Pertinent to the study at hand, and useful for guiding a general list of interview questions, is Naber’s (2000) research on the paradoxes that

³ The countries comprising the League of Arab States are: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian National Coalition, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. A map has been provided in Appendix A.

may exist among Arab Americans. Listing four specific paradoxes that those of Arab descent deal with in America, the study sheds light on confusion that may exist among Arabs in the West regarding cultural norm adherence. The first paradox explains that those of Arab descent are viewed homogenously in the media and in overall American society, despite being a population whose complexity ranges across races, religions, and regions. This is relevant to the previously discussed reasons as to why Arabs are often misclassified, as this homogenous viewpoint may lump Arabs together with other “Middle Easterners,” Muslims, or even Caucasians. This type of classification can lead to a seeming underrepresentation in research that may not be due to the group being understudied, but potentially misrepresented. Accounting for differences across Arab culture, regarding region and country, is also important to avoid homogenizing a varied group. The second paradox presents the idea that Arabs in America are viewed as both “white” and “non-white,” never fully able to belong to either group. Arabs are not defined as a minority on most legal documents but are often separated as one in daily societal dealings. The last two paradoxes state that Arabs are often incorrectly classified interchangeably with Muslims,⁴ and that the religious culture of the Arab World contradicts the racially structured culture of the United States. In the Arab World, religion takes precedence over race in regard to segregation. Contradictory to the culture common in the United States, Arabs are more likely to identify by religion rather than by race (Naber, 2000, p. 53). These paradoxes are important for

⁴ Hassoun (2005), Jackson (1996), and Kayyali (2006) also touch on the topic of the term “Arab” being interchanged with “Muslim.”

understanding the potential role of cultural identity and conflict Arabs within the US. face regarding deviance.

Abudabbeh and Aseel (1999) quell some of the misconceptions of Arab culture and explain the differences between Arab and Western cultures, indicating that culture may play a role as to why those of Arab descent are less likely to seek help regarding mental health. Naber's second paradox was seemingly expanded on by Ajrouch and Jamal (2007), in their survey-based study on how those of Arab descent in America categorize themselves: as Arabs, Americans, or Arab Americans. The results were mixed, with some respondents completely ignoring their Arab heritage and identifying as white Americans, and others choosing to identify as Arab Americans. Certain respondents were more adamant about identifying as both Arab and American, while others viewed themselves as "white" and strayed away from the "Arab" label, perhaps as a form of assimilation. Saskia (2007) found that self-identification as "Arab," "American," or by country of ethnic origin was highly dependent on the audience that the identification was being presented to. Post-9/11, many people were less likely to identify as Arab out of fear and as a method of assimilation. Location also played a role in self-identification. These studies were relevant in choosing how to classify the participants in this study, as is discussed in Chapter 3.⁵

Saving face and other cultural challenges. Arab culture tends to hold the opinions of others in high reverence, as the culture is a collectivist one (Alomosh 2008; 2016). "Saving face" is very important among those of Arab descent and admitting one's shortcomings tends to be

⁵ These paradoxical views are further emphasized by the media portrayals of Arabs, as is discussed in the works of Shaheen (1984;2001), Jhally (2006), Jackson and Nasser-McMillan (2006), Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, and Flanagan (2008), and Hatem (1998).

avoided in order to maintain honor (Naffsinger, 1994). This can impact the level of access that researchers are able to gain when it comes to studying those of Arab descent. This can hold true for medical and psychological research, as illness is often viewed as a weakness. Regarding criminological research on drug use, “saving face” may have a heavy impact on accessibility to potential research participants, as addiction is viewed as a dishonorable “choice.” In this particular study, not only did this characteristic contribute to a limited sample size, it added a layer of interest in determining if participants were being fully outright with the researcher. Presenting oneself as less than perfect can result in judgement and disappointment, and therefore, admitting to one’s faults or “negative” actions is not something that most Arabs are willing to do openly.

Arab culture “demands conformity to the group without questioning” (Shuraydi, 1981, p. 16). Especially in the case of qualitative studies regarding deviance, confidentiality and trust are key in finding participants who are willing to be open about their drug use. Arab culture holds individuals to a high standard. Often, this standard can be stigmatizing and deters people from seeking help if they need it (Soheilian and Inman, 2009). This has been exemplified in studies of mental health (Jackson and Nasser-McMillan, 2006; Kira et al, 2015). The current study can contribute to the research available and help further illustrate whether this sense of avoidance also occurs in drug use among Arabs.

Understanding whether these high expectations deter people from using drugs so that they can live up to parental/societal expectations, or have a straining effect on them, is important. Drug addiction in Arab communities is gaining more attention, as news outlets such as the *Arab American News* have published articles that shed light on the stigmatization that exists (Hunter,

2016). Addiction in Arab communities can result in death because people are less likely to seek help, due to fear of stigmatization. Understanding how those of Arab descent hide their use, and their reasons for using, can help to provide better aid to communities long-term.

Outline Summary

The following chapters will address the methods, findings, and analyses of this study. In this chapter, I discussed the characteristics of Arab culture that are relevant to understanding perceptions of identity and why Arab drug users are a population that is difficult to access and study. Chapter 2, “Literature Review,” provides a review of previous works on Arab identity and drug use, as well as prior research on active dealers and users. Chapter 3, “Methodology,” explains grounded theory methodology, and how the use of grounded theory interviews and follow-ups with participants were used to obtain data. Chapters 4 and 5 contain the findings of the study. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings related to Arab identity, while Chapter 5 presents the findings of drug use and dealing. The final chapter, “Discussion and Conclusion,” includes a discussion of the main findings, and their implications for theory. The study’s limitations, the challenges of field research, and suggestions for future research are also included.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Arab and Muslim Drug Use

Multiple searches for empirical studies were conducted, using search terms such as “Arab drug use,” “Arab drug dealing,” “Muslim drug use,” “Muslim dealing,” “drug use in the Middle East,” “international drug use,” “qualitative drug use,” “qualitative drug dealing,” and “minority drug use.” These searches yielded few results on qualitative, Arab drug use, but returned a few quantitative studies that were conducted in treatment facilities in the Arab World. Studies on Muslim drug users were also identified. The bulk of qualitative research came from ethnographies and studies conducted in the US.

Research in Arab countries. Research on Arab and Arab American drug use is limited to a few studies. Multiple studies assessing the effects of hash consumption in Egypt were conducted from 1958-1962, by the National Center for Social and Criminological Research in Cairo (Nahas, 1985). The studies’ authors, a committee of scholars appointed by then- Egyptian president Nasser (Nahas, 1985), surveyed 319 user and non-user free citizens and 1,689 user and non-user inmates in Egypt. Participants were asked about their views on marijuana use, relationships regarding marijuana use, incidences of recorded offenses, and perceptions of what characteristics they thought facilitated criminal behavior (Soueif et al, 1977). Results indicated that non-users judged users as having higher criminal tendencies and that there were no significant differences between users of marijuana and users of opium. Contrary to these perceptions, non-user inmates were more likely than user inmates to have had prior criminal

records before being incarcerated and users were more likely to have agreeable personalities. Users, when presented with stressful situations or seeking to evade responsibility, would behave in “morally unsound” ways (Soueif et al, 1977). They were also more likely to have withdrawal symptoms that impacted their demeanors, resulting in them acting impulsively and becoming ill-tempered. Awareness of Soueif et al’s (1977) study was important going into this study, because it discussed perceptions of participants toward marijuana use and what types of demographics in 1970s Egypt were using marijuana, but also established that a drug-using population existed in parts of the Arab World, even as far back as the 1970s.

More recent research conducted in the early 2000s found that the most popular drugs in Egypt were heroin, Rohypnol, and other opiates (Community Epidemiology Work Group, 2002). However, drug use varied by socioeconomic status, with inexpensive drugs such as benzodiazepines and hash being used most among those who had lower-incomes, who also generally used illegal methods to obtain income to buy drugs. Regarding addiction, the study found that most addicts had been addicted for over six years, either because treatment did not work or was not sought. The majority of young addicts had high levels of education and used drugs for social reasons (Community Epidemiology Work Group, 2002). Similar results were obtained by Okasha (1985) who found, in a survey of Egyptian university students, that 34% of passing students and 42% of failing students admitted to using drugs.

In a sample of 1,001 Arab-Muslims residing in Kuwait, the majority of respondents who participated in a 30-item questionnaire about alcohol and drug misuse condemned drug misuse and viewed it as defiant of Islam. However, most were in favor of using a sympathetic approach to punishment for substance abusers, as opposed to the harsh sentencing that was

prevalent in many parts of the Arab World (Bilal et al, 1990). The study was comprised of students from the country's only university, one male, and one female secondary school, as well as patients, employees, and relatives of patients at a general hospital, and five health clinics. Many participants were non-Kuwaiti Arabs.

In a study conducted by the Substance Abuse and Research Center in Palestine, 1,034 students in 26 Palestinian high schools (14 male schools and 12 female schools) were surveyed. Nearly 21% of Palestinian high school girls surveyed and 15% of boys admitted to taking unspecified tablets,⁶ with 9% of boys and 7% of girls claiming that they had seen other adolescents ingest substances (cited in Community Epidemiology Work Group, 2002). Heroin was viewed negatively by Palestinian high schoolers, although a small percentage of students said that it would be easy to obtain. Prescription drugs were considered less stigmatizing and easy to obtain by almost half of the participants of each gender (Community Epidemiology Work Group, 2002). In a survey of 500 residents, Alomosh (2008) identified drugs as one of the major social problems in the United Arab Emirates.

This finding was in line with that of Younis and Saad (1995), who indicated that the changing laws in the UAE at the time,⁷ along with high numbers of travelers, led to an increase in illegal drugs entering the market. The authors conducted a study from January 1990 to December 1991 using all case notes of patients admitted to the psychiatric ward of Al-Ain

⁶ This research was part of a larger discussion about drug patterns all over the world, and tablets were mentioned in other parts of the discussion multiple times but referenced a multitude of different drugs. The data on Palestine were obtained by the Substance Abuse and Research Center using a specially trained field team.

⁷ "Religious prohibition of the use of drugs" prevailed, but alcohol could legally be served to "meet the needs of non-Moslem individuals" (Younis and Saad, 1995).

district hospital. Of the 747 patients, nearly 10% of those admitted during the two-year timeframe were drug users and almost 34% of those users were repeated admissions. All of those admitted were men between the ages of 18 and 35, very few of whom were college educated. The majority of patients used multiple drugs and were UAE nationals. The data showed that heroin use without the use of other drugs was popular only with those under age 25, while alcohol was used alone only by those over age 25. Arab females are not represented in most studies, as any drug and alcohol use among women is generally secretive (Younis and Saad, 1995; Alomosh, 2016). Younis and Saad (1995) indicate that the findings from their research may not be indicative of how severe the problem really is, due to the “intolerant” attitude toward drug use in Arab societies. Other articles have also depicted an increase in drug prevalence and use in various regions of the Arab World since the 1980s onward, as well as increases in treatment programs (Sarhan, 1995; Weiss et al, 1999; Ghaferi et al, 2017).

Research in the United States. A search for empirical studies on Arab drug use yielded few results, and it was difficult to find any studies about drug dealers of Arab descent. Furthermore, most of the studies that exist are quantitative studies of drug treatment patient samples. Search terms such as “Arab drug use,” “Arab drug dealing,” “Arab drugs,” and “Middle East drug use,” were used. Searches using specific Arab country names were also used. One of the only US-based, qualitative studies that I was able to find was Abudabbeh (2005). The author is a psychologist, and the case study is in a chapter in her book about family therapy amongst those of Arab descent. In the chapter, she highlights passages about a Jordanian American teenaged girl, named Sana, and her choice to rebel by using marijuana and acting out sexually. The data focus on alternative methods for treating family issues resulting from cultural identity

clashes in therapy. However, this type of data is rare as therapy is often also seen as shameful (Jackson and Nasser-McMillan, 2006).

Arfken and colleagues (2008), in their study of admissions to publicly financed substance abuse treatment centers in the state of Michigan for the year 2005, found that Arab Americans were disproportionately underrepresented in public substance abuse treatment programs in Michigan. The study, comprised of nearly 70,000 cases, found that less than 0.05% of total admissions were persons of Arab descent and when Arabs did enter treatment, they did so after shorter durations of use as compared to other ethnic groups. Arfken and colleagues (2009a) found, in a two-part qualitative study consisting of interviews with clients of Arab descent in Michigan, that a lack of sensitivity to language and cultural differences in treatment centers was a barrier to Arabs seeking substance abuse treatment.⁸ The authors concluded that the lack of representation among Arabs in treatment facilities was not due to misidentification, but rather accessibility and approachability. In another study in 2009, Arfken (2009b) and colleagues found that higher levels of American acculturation among a sample of 156 men of Arab descent in Michigan were positively associated with polysubstance abuse, a similar finding in studies of acculturation and Latino and Asian American samples (Gfroerer and Tan, 2003). Thus, as minority youth became more accustomed to American culture, their likelihood of becoming polysubstance abusers also increased.

⁸ Ammar (2000) also discusses the lack of diversity training that American law enforcement have when dealing with Arabs, specifically regarding domestic battery charges, and Shuraydi (1981) discusses this barrier regarding Arab children in American classrooms.

Research on Muslims. Although most Muslims are not Arab, most Arabs are Muslim, and all of the participants in the current study also identified as Muslim. Research on Arabs is often tied in with research on Muslims overall, but it is important to note that there may be differences between Arab Muslims and Muslims of other nations, as the culture of a Westernized country such as Lebanon would be a stark contrast to that of South Asian countries, such as Afghanistan or Pakistan. The religious connection does result in some cultural similarities between Muslims globally, but other aspects of culture would likely affect these correlations. However, research on Muslim participants may have some correlation to research on Arab Muslims. Thus, the following studies have been included in the literature.

Tirmazi and colleagues (2015) found that although Muslim youth had previously been found to have lower rates of participation in risky behaviors as compared to non-Muslims in their age groups (Islam and Johnson, 2003; Bradby and Williams, 2006; Bradby, 2007), acculturation to US customs as generations shift has influenced substance use among young Muslims. In their study of 48 first and second-generation Muslims aged 18 to 24, the authors found that Muslims are more likely to use marijuana in late adolescence rather than earlier, and that the overall respondents in their study who had used marijuana did not deem marijuana to have any negative consequences in their lives regarding health and academic performance. The most common reason for use was that it was a way of socializing and/or relaxing. All participants agreed that marijuana was a “forbidden” sin in Islam but varied in their perceptions of its sinfulness. On trend with past research, the study found that men were more likely than women to use marijuana, and that tobacco use among Muslims was popular. Similarly, in a Spanish study using 2005 and 2007 data from national household surveys of respondents aged 15-64, researchers

found that Muslim immigrants were still less likely to abuse substances as compared to other groups, but this effect appeared to be negated as acculturation to Spanish culture increased (Sordo et al, 2015). Furthermore, research from Malaysia on how offering addiction recovery services through mosques affected 36 male, Muslim, heroin users (Abd Rashid et al, 2014) indicated that providing treatment options for Muslim addicts through mosques can be beneficial. Although qualitative research on Arab and/or Muslim drug use is limited, there are a number of qualitative studies on active users/dealers within US populations.

Qualitative research on drug users and dealers. Qualitative research on active drug users and/or dealers has contributed to literature on the techniques drug users and/or dealers use, reasoning patterns, and types of users/dealers. One of the most well-known, early ethnographic studies focusing on drug dealers was that of Adler and Adler (1983), which involved the researchers interviewing upper-level drug smugglers and traffickers. The authors interviewed 65 dealers and smugglers over the course of six years and were able to observe participants and their peers using participant observation. Their study built on previous works (Goode, 1970; Blum et al., 1972; Langer, 1977; Leib and Olson, 1976) on drug use focused on college campuses and low-level dealers (Carey, 1968; Goode, 1970; Blum et al., 1972; Langer, 1977; Leib and Olson, 1976). Goode (1970) interviewed 204 marijuana users in New York, with a median age of 22 years old. The study focused on variances in respondents' demographics, from family education levels to gender, religion, etc. It was found that marijuana users are more likely to be young, male, of a higher social class, to be liberal, have attended college, live in urban areas, be sexually permissive, be low-authoritarian, and not be religious. Jews were also more likely than those of other religions to use marijuana. The study did not specifically discuss Muslims or Christians,

nor race or ethnic group. It set up early guidelines as to the demographics and approachability of marijuana users by profiling marijuana smokers, explaining their views on marijuana use, and discussing polydrug use and dealing among marijuana users.

Leib and Olson (1976) explained the process of becoming a dealer in their study of 19 mid-level dealers in a university community. They used a snowball sample and grounded theory for their analysis, addressing the themes of prestige, paranoia, and profit, and comparing the process of becoming a dealer to that of system social mobility, as dealing had a hierarchal aspect to it, much like society. Atkyns and Hanneman (1974) also used a snowball sample in their study of 50 dealers in New England. As they used a survey method that included open-ended questions rather than interviews, the researchers were unable to follow-up the unexpected finding that most dealers reported dealing more than one type of drug. They found that most marijuana dealers were also users who dealt so that they could use drugs for free. They also found that friendship networks were the primary link to drug awareness. Expanding on the research of Leib and Olson (1976) and Adler and Adler (1983), Tunnell (1993) interviewed ten incarcerated, former drug traffickers. All participants had failed to finish high school and ranged in age from 29 to 46. Their criminal records were observed for a history of extensive drug offenses. The study indicated that most participants were low-level dealers, who dealt in order to have access to drugs, did not view themselves as or actively choose to become dealers, and had long prison sentences.

A few studies discussed first-hand street dealing in the US through an ethnographic lens. Williams (1991) developed an ethnography based on his observations of eight teenage cocaine dealers in Harlem who were comprised mainly of Dominican descent. Between 1982 and 1986,

Williams was allowed to observe the everyday works of cocaine dealers. The dealers in his sample packaged and distributed cocaine, diluting it to maximize profit. They formed a hierarchical crew and would transport, distribute, supply, and sell the drug. They often sacrificed their privacy for dealing, and their peer relationships were often dependent on maintaining their status as a dealer. Bourgois (1995) also observed the habits of crack dealers, focusing on Puerto Rican dealers in East Harlem. Despite living under the poverty level, many of the residents in his study location still seemed financially well off. In his book, he described the underground economy versus the legal economy. In East Harlem's underground economy, crack-dealing was a well-paying job with many opportunities. He explained that although a few of his participants tried to leave the underground workforce to turn to legal work, they were not given the opportunities to do so, either because of a lack of available jobs or because they were considered unqualified for positions that paid above minimum wage.

Zaitch (2002) conducted similar research, focusing on organized crime fieldwork that observed Colombian cocaine smugglers, dealers, traffickers, etc. in the Netherlands. He found that unlike cartels, Colombian trafficking networks were small and decentralized. They were not family businesses, but often depended on temporary partnerships. His overall sample tended to avoid involvement with violence in order to minimize their risk of detection. Elijah Anderson (2000) touched on drug dealing and use throughout his ethnography about inner-city, black America that discussed the unwritten "street codes" which people in these urban areas had to abide by as residents. He explained that it was not uncommon for children in these neighborhoods to be employed by drug dealers or to become addicted to drugs. He also stated

that drugs were a contributing factor to the rough environments that exist in these neighborhoods.

In 1996, Jacobs interviewed 40 street-level crack dealers who were also users of marijuana. Active dealers were studied in order to properly represent those dealers who were “successful.” A gatekeeper and snowball sampling were used to gain access to respondents who may otherwise have been suspicious. He found evidence for restrictive deterrence, explaining that dealers use environmental positioning, stashing, and transactional mediation to help avoid detection and nervousness. Jacobs (1996a) also used that sample to discuss how street dealers use shorthand amongst one another to identify narcs. He had conducted similar research in 1993, when he discussed how heroin dealers are able to read clues that indicate whether they are dealing with an undercover infiltrator. He found relationships to restrictive deterrence in these studies as well. Jacobs (1998) found, through the use of open-ended, qualitative interviews, evidence of negative reciprocity among a sample of 32, semi-institutionalized heroin users. His sample, obtained from a methadone maintenance clinic, was comprised of roughly half White and half non-White respondents, with a mean age of 48. Unlike his sample of crack dealers (1996), the institutional setting was chosen in order to avoid some of the difficulties that arise when interviewing active dealers.

Mohamed and Fritzvold (2010) furthered research on active dealers, studying 50 white college students from affluent families who dealt drugs on a university campus and very rarely faced reprimands for their actions. The dealers are said to have been very open and reckless with their methods of dealing. Participants were interviewed and observed, with findings contradicting with the theories of strain and rational choice. The motivations for these

participants were more about ego and appearances than actual need, although some did deal to supplement their own drug use. The study brought attention to dealers who did not fit the stereotypical idea of “street’ dealers.

Recent research has expanded in focus, addressing topics such as religion and ethnicity and varying in method of observation. An article from Norway (Sandberg, 2010) called for more attention to viewing Islam, in crime research, as part of the solution to crime rather than a contributing factor. The article focused on a 22-year-old, Muslim drug dealer in Oslo, who was interviewed as part of a larger study on drug dealers. The article is one of the only studies available on a Muslim drug dealer, and makes an important contribution to research on Muslims, pointing out that the media’s stereotypical views of Muslim crimes are not accurate.

Furthermore, the participant in the study was able to use neutralizing techniques to blur the lines between religions. He also discussed concerns about his “final judgement day,” due to the lifestyle he lived. In Sweden, Lalander (2008) found that ethnicity “merges with aspects of identity including social class and gender.” In his study of 17 ethnically Chilean heroin dealers and users in Sweden, Lalander (2008) found, through qualitative interviews, that ethnic identity was situational, with participants identifying with their ethnic heritage more than their Swedish nationalities during times where they felt marginalized, or during violent encounters with other ethnic groups. The study claimed that ethnicity can only “explain a small part of the process of becoming a heroin user and/or dealer.” The findings of the study revealed that participants turned to dealing heroin for self-respect, dignity, and wealth because they felt subordinate in society.

Although past qualitative research on Arabs is limited, this chapter presented quantitative studies about drug use in the Arab World, as well as quantitative research about Arab drug use in

America. Furthermore, general qualitative studies that focused on active dealers were presented, alongside international studies and studies on Muslim drug users.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study used a grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory, introduced in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, is a way of using data to discover theory. Rather than searching for ways to confirm theories through data, grounded methodology seeks to discover and understand theory through experimentation and induction, rather than deduction (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Using comparative analysis to understand data, this study followed the procedures outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Charmaz (2006) to develop a better theoretical comprehension of Arab drug use and/or dealing.

Grounded Theory

The goal of grounded theory is to start with a general research question, and to take an exploratory approach to developing an answer to it. The methodology requires that preconceived hypotheses be ignored. In the case of this study, it was important to understand the cultural background in order to gain access to the group and to understand what questions to ask. Although this study took a grounded approach, it did vary slightly from the traditional method. Once the topic and question were decided and narrowed, data collection began. This study used qualitative interviewing as its method for data collection. Analysis of the data began immediately, as grounded theory encourages a constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This allowed the researcher to improve the study before data collection was complete, resulting in questions being added to the interview guide that were not originally included. It was an ongoing process that made room for added analysis that could otherwise have been

overlooked. For example, when one early interviewee mentioned that his lack of use around his parents was the result of “respect” for them, it became useful to note that as a follow-up question to assess if the theme was prevalent among other participants.

The study used “open coding” to identify themes that emerged in analysis of the data. The process was ongoing, as is consistent with a grounded theory approach. As data collection and analysis proceeded, selective coding took place once enough analysis had been conducted that specific themes appeared to emerge. The data received from participants was transcribed onto text documents and coded for themes. The researcher then noted commonalities between interviews before categorizing similarities. Respondents’ family backgrounds, regions of ethnic origin, countries of birth, citizenship, onset of drug use, parental involvement, grade point averages, patterns of desistance and use, etc. were all used to determine if certain aspects of drug use or dealing were common among the group. Responses between Arabs of different origins and/or regions were compared and addressed for potential variance. These findings were then related to theories that were already in place and are discussed in Chapter 4. Grounded theory allows for flexibility, providing a set of guidelines and principles rather than methodological rules (Charmaz, 2006, p. 9), which deemed useful in this type of research.

Variances in grounded theory. Grounded theory is a methodology that starts with a “systematic” and “inductive approach” when it comes to both collecting and analyzing data (Charmaz, 2008). It is a theory that can allow for flexibility; one that minimizes preconceived notions regarding the research and uses data collection and analysis simultaneously (Charmaz, 2008). Although the methodology is revered as a useful tool for researching uncharted or understudied subjects, there has been debate as to how the method should be applied. Strauss’s

Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists (1987) emphasized the need for using a systematic approach when analyzing qualitative research, which was further asserted by his (1990) book with Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Glaser's (1992) book, on the other hand, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs. Forcing*, focused more on emergence and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2008; Kelle, 2005). Glaser's (1992) method focuses on a general frame that depends on the perceptions of the researcher, while Strauss and Corbin's (1990) is more structured (Douglas, 2003). Glaser (1992) discusses the importance of allowing data to emerge in grounded theory, but Strauss and Corbin (1990) allow for more focused observations (Douglas, 2003). Meanwhile, a new approach to grounded theory, the constructivist approach, takes a middle-ground between the methods and acknowledges the "nature of the method itself as arising from researchers' questions, choices, and specific strategies," making them "inseparable" from their earlier perspectives (Charmaz, 2008). These researchers view grounded theory as a flexible set of guidelines that can influence emergent theory. The latter played an influential role in the development of this study.

Data Collection and Participant Guidelines

Data in this study were collected through individual interviews with participants who identified as either Arab or Arab American and were willing to admit to using and/or dealing drugs. The focus of the study was on participants who use or deal, or have, in the past, used or dealt, marijuana on a regular basis. Those who deal or use other drugs in addition to marijuana were also included in the sample. All participants were over the age of 18. Although the study was open to males and females, usable data were only obtained from male participants. Even though female smoking, even in the case of cigarettes, is often culturally seen as "unladylike,"

“inappropriate,” and having the potential to “ruin a girl’s reputation and prospects for marriage” (Islam and Johnson, 2003), female users were identifiable and willing to speak to the researcher once their trust was earned, despite the end result of yielding unusable data. Still, studying the population over the course of time indicated that female users were much less common than male users, as well as less frequent with their use. Men, on the other hand, may have had an increased risk of smoking, as the act is seen as one depicting masculinity (Islam and Johnson, 2003). In defining what constitutes an Arab or Arab American, only participants who stated that they are ethnically from a country that is part of the League of Arab States were interviewed. As the term “Arab American” lacks a solid definition (Abraham and Shyrock, 2000; Pulcini, 1993), this categorization of what constitutes an Arab was used to establish eligibility criteria. For the purposes of this study, “users” are defined as anyone who admitted to having consumed marijuana, either through inhalation or ingestion, at some point in the past, and “dealers” are defined as anyone who admitted to having sold marijuana or other drugs in exchange for money or other commodities, at some point in the past. All of the “dealers” obtained in the sample were also users, but not all of the users were dealers.

Gaining Access

Access to potential participants was facilitated by a trusted gatekeeper, who recruited respondents that fit the eligibility criteria (i.e., Arab, user, dealer). The researcher met this gatekeeper through mutual friends, and was introduced to him due to their shared ethnic heritage as Arabs. This led to the development of a younger brother-older sister type of relationship, as the gatekeeper did not know many other Arabs upon initially moving back to the United States. The gatekeeper, who was interviewed, was an active dealer and user. He was trusted to make

initial contact with potential participants, who were then introduced to the researcher. Upon meeting, an explanation of what the study was about, its importance, and what the interview would entail was presented to the interested respondents.⁹ Meetings were set up with those who agreed to be interviewed. Interviews were held in semi-public places that allow for the safety of the participants and researcher yet provided enough privacy that conversations about drug use were able to be carried out freely. Prior to the interview, participants were required to verbally consent to partaking in the study. They were made aware that the interview was voluntary and that they were allowed to stop participating at any time. All but one interview were recorded with respondent consent and personal identifiers were discouraged. Respondents were allowed to refer other potentially interested participants to the study, in an attempt to use snowball sampling to maintain access (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). However, aside from one respondent, all of the participants present in the sample were recruited by the gatekeeper.

Establishing Credibility

Multiple measures were taken throughout the course of the data collection to try to ensure the most valid, clearly understood responses, as well as to double check the credibility of the participants and their stories.

First and foremost, the trust of the gatekeeper and the trust of nearly half the sample were established over the course of years prior to the interviews. A type of “preliminary” study was conducted before any sit-down interviews actually took place, as some of the participants were

⁹ A verbal consent form has been approved by the research institution’s Internal Review Board. See Appendix C

initially acquaintances of the researcher, introduced through the gatekeeper. The trust of some of the participants took, at the very least, months to earn, while other potential participants ended up choosing not to participate in the actual study despite showing initial interest. The researcher's role took time to navigate due to her status as a female who would be discussing personal and private issues with an all-male population. In order to establish trust, the participants were approached as friends and, over time, and developed a sibling-type of relationship with the researcher. The fact that I was sisterly with them, but not actually a blood relative who would judge them, created an atmosphere of openness and comfort among the participants. Once this trust was established with multiple members of the peer group, the study was able to move forward. The data collection timeline, from the first discussion of the study with the gatekeeper to the transcribing of interviews, was over three years.

Secondly, a digital recorder was used during nine of the ten interviews, which allowed for exact transcriptions of the majority of the data to be created. Once transcribed, these data were read and coded by the researcher on multiple occasions, to ensure thoroughness and consistency. Direct quotes were used to illustrate concepts in order to keep the presentation of the data as true to the original interviews as possible. Quotes were not edited, unless repeated stuttering and mumbling affected the clarity and readability of the verbal presentation. Thus, the data presented in the next chapters are in the participants' "own words."

Lastly, because participants were mostly acquainted in some capacity, if not close friends, they would often corroborate or debunk each other's stories. For instance, in my casual conversations (unrelated to the study), the gatekeeper would mention his friends or plans for the day and would reiterate a story or anecdote. Often, the people he referenced in personal

conversations were other participants or yet-to-be participants of the study. As time progressed, other participants would tell me anecdotes about their experiences since we had last spoken, which sometimes included other participants. Occasionally, the same stories would be reiterated by more than one person. If a story did not make sense, I was always able to ask the gatekeeper to elaborate on the situation. Although all of the interviews were single-person, the gatekeeper or other participants would sometimes join at the table where they were being conducted (i.e., in the case of back to back interviews, or when I had never met the participant prior). When this was the case, certain participants who were close would point out each other's mistruths. This only happened once or twice, and most of the participants seemed honest. When participants told me stories about drug transport in the Middle East, or types of availability there, I was sometimes able to corroborate their statements through internet news articles or message board posts. I was careful to maintain each participant's confidentiality and did not repeat information told to me by one participant about another.

Protecting Identities

Due to the nature of the research, confidentiality was maintained to protect respondents' identities. Names of participants and identifying locations were changed in any transcribed versions of interviews and in this document. As the group was difficult to gain access to, it was necessary to maintain an understanding with participants that the information which they discussed and revealed would not be traced back to them. To adhere to this, only verbal consent

forms were used for this study.¹⁰ Furthermore, identifiers such as country of origin were referenced by region of the Arab World, rather than country title. Data were only stored in password protected files, and recorded interviews were deleted upon transcription. Interviewees were allowed to follow-up if they chose to discuss any relevant matters with the researcher, but were encouraged to do so only at their own will.

Interview Questions

A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix B. The guide consists of a list of questions ranging from family background to religion, drug use, and sex. Not all questions were relevant to each participant. Therefore, some questions were dropped for certain interviews, while follow-up questions were added for clarification, or because it was deemed that they may provide a further contribution to the research. The questions were structured in a way that allowed the researcher to learn about the participants' backgrounds without overwhelming them with immediate questions about drug use. This method allowed for the interviewer to establish a form of trust with the respondents.

The questions were structured based on what prior research on Arab identity has indicated can create conflict (Shuraydi, 1981; Naber, 2000; Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007; Alomosh, 2016). They addressed issues of sexuality, gender, and politics. Past research has indicated that Arabs deal with issues of identity in regard not only to race, but to gender as well (Shuraydi, 1981; Hatem, 1998; Naber, 2000; Islam and Johnson, 2003). Assessments of how males viewed

¹⁰ A copy of the consent form has been added as Appendix C.

their own behavior, and their thoughts on how females should behave (and vice versa), how they viewed religion, how they regarded “American” culture, and whether they felt as though they “fit in” or not to either Arab or American society helped to unearth relationships between the patterns identified in the current study and those conducted in past studies. Questions were structured in a way that allowed for further analysis of whether commonalities between religious beliefs, reasons for using or dealing, parental involvement, stress levels, and/or discrimination existed. The answers allowed the researcher to understand the reasons for Arab drug use and dealing, and the role of Arab identity.

The Sample

The final sample size was comprised of ten male, Muslim participants. Of this group, nine of the ten participants had an ethnic background originating from the Fertile Crescent. One of the nine had a non-Arab, Caucasian-American mother. The tenth participant also had a non-Arab, Caucasian mother, who was of European rather than American origin. His father was from the Nile Valley region of the Arab World. Of this group, all participants lived in the United States at the time of their interview. Four of the ten participants were born in the United States, with two of the four having spent close to their entire lives in the US. Seven of the ten participants had lived in the Arabian Peninsula at some point in their lives. Seven of the ten participants were enrolled in college at the time of the interview, while two were taking a break. All of the participants were under the age of 30, and most, if not all, identified as Sunni Muslims.

Demographics of the Participants

The participants were overall ethnically from the Fertile Crescent region of the Arab World, which consists of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, and Jordan¹¹. Only one participant was ethnically from the Nile Valley region of the Arab World, which is located on the Eastern side of Northern Africa (and comprised mainly of Egypt and Sudan). He was also of Western European descent on his mother's side, while another participant also had a non-Arab mother. Two of the participants were raised in the United States, one having lived for a year in the Fertile Crescent as a very young child. Two other participants were US born but spent a few years living and attending school in the Arabian Peninsula, the region where Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates are. Three of the participants were raised in the Arabian Peninsula and had never resided in the US prior to entering college. One participant lived in the Fertile Crescent as a child and was raised in the Arabian Peninsula until immigrating to the US in adulthood. Only a single participant was raised in the Fertile Crescent, and no participants from other regions of the Arab World (such as Western North Africa, the "Maghreb") were interviewed. Other than those who were born in the US, all other participants moved from the Arab World upon beginning college.¹² All of the participants, at the time of their interviews, resided within two hours of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, but those who were US-born were not all originally from Texas.

¹¹ Sometimes, Iraq and Jordan are defined as being part of the Arabian Peninsula as well as the Fertile Crescent, depending on the region of each respective country. For the purposes of clarity, and because I do not have data for the exact cities of each participant's origin, I have chosen to code these countries solely as part of the Fertile Crescent, where they have more similarities legally and culturally, and comprise a greater stretch of land.

¹² Faisal attended a year of college in the Arabian Peninsula prior to moving.

The participants’ ages, ethnic origins, and home countries are more clearly organized in Table 1. Those participants marked with an asterisk have admitted to dealing drugs. Countries are grouped by region to help protect participants’ identities, as some of their stories, coupled with country identification, would increase their identifiability. However, the regions are each listed next to letters, A-D, which represent different countries, to help the reader better understand relationships between participants of similar backgrounds.¹³ This is also done to help avoid a homogenization of varied Arab countries.

Table 1. Participants

Participant Name	Age (at time of interview)	Home Country	Region of Ethnicity
Adam	20	United States—Lived in Fertile Crescent (C) for 1 year as a young child	Fertile Crescent (A)
Amir*	21	United States— Lived in Fertile Crescent (C) and Arabian Peninsula (A, D) ages 6-14	Fertile Crescent (A)
Bilal	22	United States	Fertile Crescent (B), Caucasian
Dawoud	21	Fertile Crescent (A)— Visited family in US often during summer breaks	Fertile Crescent (A)
Faisal	27	Fertile Crescent (C) until age 9, Arabian Peninsula (A)	Fertile Crescent (C)

¹³ For instance, Hani and Marwan are both from Arabian Peninsula country “B,” meaning they were raised in the same region of the Arabian Peninsula. Bilal and Kamil are both ethnically from Fertile Crescent country “B,” meaning that they are from the same ethnic heritage as one another, descending from the Fertile Crescent (i.e., Arabian Peninsula country “B” and Fertile Crescent country “B” are not the same country).

Hani	20	Arabian Peninsula (B)	Fertile Crescent (A)
Kamil	22	Arabian Peninsula (C)	Fertile Crescent (B)
Marwan*	21	Arabian Peninsula (B)	Fertile Crescent (A, B)
Rami	21	Arabian Peninsula (A)	Nile Valley, European
Sameer (gatekeeper)*	22	United States—Lived in Arabian Peninsula (A) ages 15-19	Fertile Crescent (A)

CHAPTER 4

ARAB IDENTITY

In this chapter, the themes that emerged from the data surrounding Arab identity are discussed. Several themes were identified in the coding schema that were relevant to various aspects of the participants' cultural backgrounds. During each interview, participants were asked questions about their family structure growing up (size, whether their parents were strict, religious, etc.), their own religiosity, their views regarding women, and how assimilated they felt into American culture. The emergent themes in each section are discussed below.

Family Background

Each participant's family size, composition, and structure were inquired about to determine whether any links existed in the data, as well as to understand potential differences between users. Interviewees were asked questions such as, "What was your family like growing up?", "Was it big or small?", "Were your parents strict, religious, not religious?"¹⁴ Most participants were raised in traditional, nuclear households with multiple siblings. The strictness and religiosity of their parents ranged, but most participants had religious parents whom they described as "openly" religious or strict "to a point [extent]."

Family structure. A common link between participants' family structures is that nearly all of them came from families in which their parents were still married to each other. This could

¹⁴ See Appendix B for Interview Question Guide

be a coincidence, or in line with the fact that divorce is often frowned upon in Arab culture, especially in Islam (Alghoul, 2017). The answer is beyond the scope of the current study and data. Only one of the participants, Bilal, had parents who were no longer married, although another participant, Rami, indicated that his parents were married, but not necessarily happily. Both participants have mothers who are ethnically non-Arab, but whether this link is significant is indeterminable with the current sample. Of those with married parents, it was also typical for the father to be the bread-winner of the household and the mother to be, what Marwan described as, “a sit at home mother.”

Family composition. Most participants came from families with three or more children and were either the oldest or second oldest child. Rami was the only participant without siblings and Kamil was the only participant to have only one sibling. Adam and Faisal were each the oldest of three children, with Faisal being the only participant with multiple siblings who did not have a sister. Marwan also had two siblings and is the only participant to be the youngest child in his family, though he has a sister close to his age.¹⁵ Bilal and Sameer were the oldest of four or more siblings and only had one sister each. Amir also only had one sister, while Dawoud and Hani each had a younger and an older sister. Amir, Dawoud, and Hani were each the second eldest of four children. Half of the sample were the oldest of their siblings, and eight of the ten were either the first or second eldest child.

¹⁵ Marwan indicated that his brother, who was 16 years his senior, behaved as more of an authority figure than a sibling due to the age difference. There was also a large age difference (more than 10 years) between Dawoud and Hani and their younger siblings.

Family religiosity and strictness. Aside from Rami’s family, most of the families were Islamically-oriented families who were opposed to drugs, alcohol, pork consumption, and dating, and encouraged daily prayer, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, as well as adherence to other pillars of the religion. There was a common theme among the participants that their parents were strict about knowing “right and wrong,” or “morals,” with an assumed understanding as to what those words comprised.¹⁶ Alcohol and/or drug consumption with or around family members, consumption of pork, and open discussions about dating were considered, according to Sameer, “ill-mannered.” Marwan, Faisal, and Hani did state that their mothers had met past girlfriends, however. The participants’ families, overall, seemed to be least concerned with aspects of the religion regarding the hijab (religious garment worn by women to evoke modesty), and “halal” (religiously permitted) food consumption other than pork. Sameer stated, regarding his mom and sister not wearing the hijab, that “Their morals are very high, but, you know, hijab doesn’t mean you’re a good person.” Marwan claimed that his parents stated, “do whatever you wanna do” regarding halal food upon his move to the US, and Kamil also indicated something similar.

There were slight exceptions to the overall group. Bilal’s parents were strict about all aspects of the religion, including the hijab and halal food consumption, even sending their children to Muslim schools. However, they “eased off the gas a lot” once they had to work more outside of the home and within a few years of their children entering public schools. Rami was the only participant to indicate that his family was not religious, explaining that his mother was a

¹⁶ These responses were followed with questions inquiring an explanation as to what these words meant to each participant.

Christian who left the church and that, “They believe in God and that’s it.” He stated that his father was still strict, but because of his career and concerns over how his son would be perceived, rather than due to religious concern. He described the strictness as “consequential,” and explained:

A rule that my father kind of made for me is that I could do whatever I wanted, as long as I didn’t humiliate him. And for those things that could’ve humiliated him, those would have been strict. For example, like alcohol use and things like that.

He also said that his father had a problem with drug and/or alcohol use due to a familial history of addiction, but his mother was less concerned.

Religiosity and Perceptions of Drugs

Although the majority of participants came from religious family backgrounds, it was important to assess whether they also viewed themselves as religious. Questions were asked to assess whether religiosity had a relationship to perceptions of whether drugs were considered, what Muslims reference as, “halal” (permitted) or “haram” (forbidden). The questions in this section were along the lines of, “When it comes to other things that are ‘against’ the religion, like marijuana, alcohol, pork, sex, etc. what do you partake in?”, “Do you think one [sin] is worse than the rest? Which would you pick if you could only choose one?”, and “Does the religion ever lead to you using more or less, or affect how you use drugs?” Despite all being members of the same religion, the participants were varied in their practices, commitments, and interpretations. However, three main themes emerged: guilt and justification for drug use and a disdain for pork consumption. As many of the responses regarding guilt and justification overlapped, they are discussed jointly in this section.

Guilt and justification. Most of the participants admitted to having felt guilty for any drug or alcohol use at some point but stated that the feeling had waned over time. Alcohol was generally described as “worse” than marijuana because it is directly forbidden in the Quran. Most participants explained that marijuana use was not something they viewed as a sin, and that their guilt about it had lessened over time, or never existed. Sameer explained:

I mean, what’s bad about it is, like, as you’re growing up, it’s always, “No, no, no, no, no, no, don’t do it, don’t do it, don’t do it.” That’s always gonna be there in the back of your head, even when you’re doing it, enjoying it, and you see nothing wrong with it; that’s always gonna be there because you grew up with it.

Eight of the participants admitted that they were not religious, but believed in the religion and its teachings, even if they did not follow them at the time. Bilal and Dawoud admitted to still feeling guilt about any drug or alcohol use when thinking about the religion. Dawoud said that he “fears God,” but did not think of himself as religious because, “Right now, I know I’m not doing right by Him, because of marijuana and all...” He said that he believed God would forgive him, but justified his marijuana use by stating that he still prayed and believed that alcohol, pork, and sex were “way worse” than marijuana. Hani explained that he did not feel that he was committing a sin if he was not hurting anyone, but then stated:

I’m not religious about the stuff that I do, but I do feel guilt sometimes, because, if, if you truly believe that there’s a God, you wouldn’t be doing what you’re doing.

Marwan admitted that he thought certain types of drug use were a sin to an extent, as was dealing, but he “doesn’t really give a fuck,” despite believing in the religion. His guilt, like that of most participants, surrounded alcohol more than marijuana. Adam and Rami were the two

participants who described themselves as “not religious.” They came from opposite family backgrounds, with Adam’s family being very strict when it comes to religion and Rami’s family being mostly open-minded. Neither admitted any guilt about using drugs or partaking in other religiously “forbidden” acts.

Pork consumption. The most common theme that emerged in this section, among the entire sample population other than Rami and Adam, was the disregard for pork. Hani explained, “Us Arabs, it’s like, we do everything that’s حرام (haram—taboo), except pork. I don’t know why, but... I don’t do pork, no.” Amir considered pork a “delicacy” that can be avoided, while Kamil and Dawoud said that pork consumption was a worse sin than marijuana use. Faisal admitted that he had tasted and disliked pork, and Bilal did not “ever eat pork,” and stated that it was likely due to how he was raised. Sameer found pork disgusting and compared it to “human flesh.” Marwan had one of the more descriptive and frank answers regarding pork:

I use all of it [referring to the ‘sins’ referenced in the sample question], but when it comes to pork, I wouldn’t be—I don’t want to be a hypocrite or anything. But, when I eat pork, uh...if I don’t know it’s pork, لو بفكرو (lao ba fakro—if I think it’s) chicken or something, it’s *fucking good*. But when it comes to eating pork, I’m like, “Uhhh, this is, it’s not حرام (haram—taboo/prohibited), this is خرى بأحكي (khara, bahki—shit, I speak). I’m like, “This is shitty.”

He admitted to eating pork hot dogs or bacon when he is drunk. He said, “Bacon’s good. Bacon’s *good*. (laughing)” As Bilal put it, this negative view of pork could be, in part, because pork is less tempting than the other “sins” and is hard to consider as a food option when it has not been one for the majority of a person’s life.

Participants' discussions of their religiosity and perceptions of drug use included justifications similar to those found in Neutralization Theory (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Most participants were able to justify marijuana use by either explaining that marijuana was not a "drug," or downplaying its effects compared to other types of drugs. Cross-comparisons between drug use and pork or alcohol consumption, in which drug use was considered less of a "sin," also further exemplified this relationship. This topic is elaborated in the discussion chapter of this dissertation.

Views Regarding Women's Equality in the Culture

Participants were asked questions regarding their views of women in the Arab culture, because gender roles are a big aspect of Arab culture and understanding participants' perceptions of women could help illustrate how traditional or modernized their views are, relevant to Arab identity. First, they were asked whether the culture, overall, treated men and women the same. Second, those with sisters were asked whether their parents treated sons and daughters equally. Lastly, they were asked questions regarding their personal views about women, such as, "How would you feel if your mother/sister/future wife used drugs or drank alcohol?" These questions were followed-up depending on the responses. The results in this section were mixed, although the overall majority of participants seemed to hold a double standard toward males and females, at least to some extent. Research on Arab culture has indicated that these views are fairly normal. Shuraydi (1981) explained that dating in the culture, particularly, is:

...an area where the double standard of morality with respect to the sexes dominates Arab culture. That is, if males date and "have fun" their behavior can be tolerated, if not

encouraged; but females engaging in such activities must be sanctioned and their social reputation is usually smeared.

Three themes emerged from this section: the lack of acceptance of dating or drug/alcohol use by a sister, the lack of acceptance of past romantic relationships or drug/alcohol use by a future romantic partner, and an overall agreement that women are, generally, treated differently in the culture.

Drug use or dating among sisters. Most of the participants, despite dating, using drugs, and drinking, were not comfortable with their sisters participating in these behaviors, although many of them said that it would be okay for their brothers to do so under their supervision. Marwan admitted that even though he had always been open with his family about his dating life, he would be very upset if he found out his sister was dating. He said that the situation might have changed since they became older and explained, “If she dated now, it would be for the greater good...she’ll be clean about it,” but admitted that he “beat the shit out of” a guy that she had been talking to when they were younger. Amir admitted that it was a bigger deal to him that his sister did not turn out the way he did because she is a female. He said that although he cared more about her safety than her reputation, reputation was important and he “has to accommodate” people’s ignorance in order to protect her. Kamil also reiterated this type of thinking when he stated, “Men can be more open, while women’s reputation is more important,” referring to why it would be okay with him if his brother used marijuana, but not if he had a sister.

Hani said that he would only feel comfortable if his sister smoked marijuana with him because, “With family, you gotta be safe.” Adam stated that although he would not mind his

sister using marijuana, there would be no reason for her to use harder drugs because she would not be working long hours like a male in the culture would be expected, or allowed, to do. Bilal was the only participant to state that his sister was treated equally to her brothers, and that she had a boyfriend and was allowed to be open about it.

Drug use or prior dating among future romantic partners. Most of the sample also admitted that they would shy away from a romantic partner who had used drugs or alcohol and that they would judge her. The respondents in this section had deep feelings regarding their future spouses' pasts, and many of them admitted to being hypocritical. Sameer, for instance, said that he would only approve of his future wife or girlfriend smoking with him. If she had done it before they met, he would try to keep an open mind because, "I mean, weed better than alcohol, weed better than dating a boy, weed better than..." When asked why weed was "better than alcohol," he explained:

Because alcohol makes you do things that you're not in control of. Weed won't do that, weed will actually stop you; it'll make you think a hundred times about the situation before you actually go through with it...I don't know, that's my sense of security.

Definitely. I was raised with it. I was raised with the idea, so it just makes sense to me. He said that even if she had only tried alcohol, but had not had sex, that he would still not want to date her because, "You could never know." If she had tried harder drugs, like psychedelic mushrooms, he would question the type of person she is because, "You don't just do 'shrooms out of the blue one day." He admitted that this was a double standard, stating "Of course. But it's like, I know my place," and explained that he would not want to date a girl who was exactly like him, or who had done the same things that he had done.

Many of the participants agreed that they would be okay with their girlfriends or future wives using marijuana with them but would feel uncomfortable if she had used it in the past. Hani, similar to Sameer, explained that his comfort with past use would depend on the company that the drug was used in:

Because she could be doing it, like, with the wrong people, who had wrong intentions, and might've slipped up and done something wrong... You know, like, that basic, Arab stuff. Like, that you don't want your girl doing with other guys... You know, messing around.

Adam explained that he would not want to meet a woman who had done hard drugs or had been an addict, but would date a woman who had used what he had used as long as she had not abused it. "Like if you told me you used to pop three bars—three Xanax's a day then, I know you had a problem." He admitted:

This might sound hypocrit- hypocritical but, like, you could say, like, culturally, like...like involuntary, like... culturally... yeah----yeah, it's gonna effect you, how you're gonna think of it, like, that's not right, you know? Even if you did it, or whatever... ye-yeah...

Along these lines, Marwan stated that he would actually prefer for his future wife to be a "pot smoker" who is accepting of his drug use and had been exposed to the drug prior to meeting him, so that he would not have to feel like a bad influence. However, he would not want her to use harder drugs:

I wouldn't want my wife to take cocaine if she's having my baby, for example. You know what I mean? You know what kind of families turn out to be like this, if you're both, like, addicts.

Coincidentally, Rami and Bilal, the two participants with non-Arab mothers, were the only two respondents who did not mind if their future wives or girlfriends had used drugs before meeting them. Bilal stated that it would make him a hypocrite to judge people for actions he had also taken. Rami laughed and said that it would make them "even." Both of them stated that they would not want to end up with someone who was a hard drug user or a drug addict, but that at that point, they, too, would be on the same page.

Treatment and views of women in the culture. All of the participants believed that women were treated differently in the culture, whether they admitted to personally viewing women differently or not. Amir explained, "You know Arabs...Arabs are more strict toward women in general...It's a given." Adam said that although girls had more parental monetary support, it was still "way harder" for them culturally. Hani explained this, but insisted that there are differences between genders that exist in every culture:

In America, they won't admit their sexism, but in a way, there always will be. Like, we're born into our role. To be, like, in our roles, like men [meant women] are men—are meant to be mothers, and men are meant to be fathers, like, it's, it's, it's, it's already set and done... it's not worse in Arab cultures, because, like, women are treated with respect. And nothing but respect... But, there is the exception in every culture, obviously, but yeah, mostly like, women are, are, have the highest stature in Arab countries. They're respected, but they have less freedoms.

He explained that women had less freedom to work and that he “wouldn’t let [his] girlfriend work,” but that it is a personal choice for him. He also stated that his parents would not approve of his sister dating even though they knew about his girlfriend. He said:

There’s always that like, some kind of, you could call it sexism, in, like, in us Arabs. No matter what. You can’t, you can’t filter that out. It’s in our culture...Like, I believe so, like because... a woman will always, like... as, as, as, as, as once Sameer told me, (laughing), a, “A key that opens many locks, is a good key. But a, but a lock, that’s opened by any key is a bad lock”...You don’t want...you don’t want to be with a person and imagine, like, if you love that person so much, you will think far, and you will start imagining it happening, like—other people. Like, wh-why she did it with other people. He specified, after hesitating when asked if this issue of virginity applied to both sexes, that “In us Arabs, it’s the girls...It’s hard to say that I don’t agree, because I, I, I go by it. But it’s, it’s actually like, it’s just preference, to be honest.”

Sameer also had a similar viewpoint regarding virginity and how women in the culture are viewed:

This is very straightforward, very simple. There’s nothing that [weed] leaves behind it unless, you let it happen, you know. But with sex, it’s more looked down on. I mean, especially for a girl, you know. Yeah. It’s uh, dishonorable. It’s like, you took, you took, it’s like, where’s the girl’s purity? She’s gonna raise kids one day and she did that? You know, it’s like, it doesn’t fit. I would never want somebody like that to be the mother of my kids.

Dawoud further explained that this viewpoint, regarding women, is not simply applied to sex, but rather to any “dishonorable” behaviors. He said that for women in the culture, it is “embarrassing” to be known as a “pothead.” Rami explained that this type of differential treatment between men and women in the culture exists because women are more sheltered and, “With boys, it’s kind of expected in Arab culture—they screw up all the time. Girls are angels, they need to be good.” He said that if he had a sister, he believes his parents would be stricter toward her because of these reasons. Faisal reiterated that point and explained, “Parents are more strict about their daughters than they are about their sons.” To show how widespread this type of thinking is in the Arab World, Marwan described the segregated bathroom locations in the Arabian Peninsula, where the men’s bathroom was “a mile across” from the women’s in order to prevent potential interaction or temptation. These results are similar to the findings of prior literature (Shuraydi, 1981) on Arab culture.

Assimilation to American Culture

Participants were asked questions about how assimilated they felt into American culture. As past studies have shown (Arfken et al, 2009; Tirmazi et al, 2015; Sordo et al, 2015), acculturation does have a positive correlation to drug use among Muslims. Furthermore, Arabs often describe themselves in different ways (as Arab, Arab American, or simply American) depending on their sense of belonging and the audience to which they are speaking (Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007; Saskia, 2007). In this sample, most participants were not US citizens and thus, did not view themselves as “American.” Those who were born in the US stated that they felt that they were a mix of the two cultures, but mostly identified as Arab. Participants tended to view themselves as Arab in terms of morals and Americanized in terms of their carefree attitudes,

highlighting a divide between shame and guilt cultures (Keisler and Keisler, 1969) which is further elaborated in the discussion chapter. Here, a few of the accounts of the participants' feelings of identity are summarized.

Adam, who was born and raised in the United States, described himself as “white as fuck” while laughing that he did not have any Arab friends until he moved to the Dallas area. However, he described himself as “Arab...If somebody asks me where I'm from, I'm not gonna tell them, ‘THE SOUTH,’ you know?” Despite being made fun of for wearing boots, owning a specific style of car, and “Starbucks and shit,” he considered himself more Arab than American, because:

The relationship between Arabs is definitely more different than a relationship between like, Americans and stuff like that ... Definitely feel closer and ... more, there for each other than, you know—Than you are like, f-for like, if you're friends with like...the bond is not gonna be the same as if you were friends with like, another Arab.

He stated that he was Arab with other Arabs and American with Americans—highlighting the key focus of Naber's (2000) second paradox (i.e., that Arabs in America are seen as white and non-white simultaneously). Sameer also said he felt adapted to both cultures but fit the “stereotype” of an Arab. His explanation that, “Because to Arabs, I'm an American, and to Americans, I'm an Arab,” further illustrated Naber's (2000) second paradox.

There was a repeated theme that Arab culture had more “morals” while American culture was more “friendly.” Amir, also born in the US, stated that he was “50/50,” because as an Arab, his guests always came first, but as an American, he was outgoing and did not care about how people perceived him. He said that he was “more accepting of other cultures” and that Arabs and

Americans were the same with slightly different mentalities. Faisal also said that after coming to America, he was more “proactive” and nice to people, but that he had not lost his Arab “traits.” Marwan also mentioned feeling American in terms of his appearance, but still Arab in that many American traits went against his “ethics.” Hani also believed that he had his “basic fundamental morals” from overseas but had picked up professionalism in America. Dawoud stated that he was “Arabi” (Arab) because he was born in the Arab World and is proud of his culture, but also that he has learned to be more “laidback” in America. The respondents may have felt caught between the Arab, shaming culture that was more “ethical” and the American, “guilting” culture that was more “outgoing” (Keisler and Keisler, 1969).

Adaptability was also a common theme among all of the participants—they said that they were capable of blending, or adapting to their surroundings, or conforming to be accepted and to avoid being seen as rude (Shuraydi, 1981). Kamil insisted that he was not Americanized and felt that Arabs were more caring, but that he could blend into both cultures if he had to. Other respondents shared similar views. Rami said that he did not feel like he fit in to any culture, because of his varied background, but that he could adapt anywhere. In contrast, Bilal believed that he fit in “perfectly” with either culture (Arab or American) but struggled to describe Arab traits he still possessed since having distanced himself from people of the culture.

Obedience and Conformity in Arab Culture

This section will highlight some of the findings in the data that were relevant to the portrayals and importance of maintaining certain personas in front of parents and personal, respected figures in the participants’ lives:

Conformity to the expectations of significant or related others deeply penetrates the structure of Arab culture to the extent of invading the individual's privacy in many important domains (Shuraydi, 1981).

This conformity is developed through a portrayal of obedience to cultural norms. However, this “Obedience to authority, although ideally very desirable, is met with discontentment and challenge in actual situations, particularly among the young and educated strata of society” (Shuraydi, 1981). Furthermore, Arabs generally use coping mechanisms to deal with these issues (Shuraydi, 1981). These mechanisms:

...generally refer to the ability to suppress one's feelings in order to avoid discourtesy to others, particularly in situations where the demands of other people run counter to one's values, beliefs, or true feelings.

The conflicting personas between a person's private life and that which he or she portrays to his or her loved ones to “save face” (Naffsinger, 1994) can result in an internal conflict for that individual. In this study, the conflict was most evident when participants discussed how they would feel if their families found out about their drug use. Kamil admitted that if he were to move back to his home country, he would not need to use drugs because he would feel more innately fulfilled and there would be no need to. He had never used drugs overseas, despite their availability to him. Similarly, Dawoud also admitted to using because he did not have “many eyes over” him while residing in the US with his family residing in the Fertile Crescent. He also said that he would not use drugs overseas because his family's reputation was important to him:

Because, it's just for me, for myself, you know, just to have a good reputation for myself, you know, uh, for my family to get, you know—I don't mean to sound braggy or

anything, but you know, like, like a lot of people know my mom and dad. They've been here for a while, you know, so they know the Arab community really well. You know, so um, yeah, speaking of that, you know, like, if they know me, as their son who's all high, you know, he showed up here high, that could tick off a lot of shit...And then you know, like, it's for like...Arabs, when their kids get married, they go and ask around you know? I don't wanna be that bad guy, you know, I don't wanna, you know, I don't want that girl, you know, to be taken away from me just because of that.

Sameer also stated that his ability to use drugs more openly was relevant to his lack of family in the area. He explained the importance of maintaining an image of respect in front of parents and siblings:

Everybody has um...their own score with God, but you have to maintain your respect with the people around you. If you don't wanna respect yourself in front of God, that's your own business. But you have to respect yourself in front of your parents, and your sister, and your younger brothers.

He explained that because of this belief, he would never show up drunk to his parents' house or use drugs when they were nearby. Similarly, Amir had claimed that stricter drug use punishments would not stop him from continuing to use drugs, or even lead to him using less frequently. However, when asked about his parents, he replied:

Oh, ye-ye-ye-ye-yeah if my-my, if when my parents move here actually. If they ever move here—actually, I will never touch a drug like... Or at least like, not s-anything close to like, coke.

If his parents found out about his drug use, he claimed, “I would like... sincerely just live my life after that moment to their satisfaction 'til I die.” He explained that because they did everything for him, he would never want to disappoint them.

Rami also stated that if there were a higher risk of his parents finding out, “No way, I’m done...I’m terrified of my parents. I’m not—I don’t screw around with them.” He admitted that this was due to a mix of financial dependence and a want for respect that keeps him in line. Hani also feared disappointing his parents, although he did not know if them finding out about his drug use would lead him to desistance. Marwan explained that the version of him that his family knows is different than who he is when they are not around. He said they would disown him if they knew about the frequency of his use:

Whatever I tell them on the phone is different than what it really is. Not even on drugs, حتى بي اشياء ثاني كثير، يعني (hata bi ashya a tani kateer yaaneh—even with a lot of other things). Like, uh, my court cases for example. My studies, my grades, my car. No, they don’t know shit.

Faisal and Bilal were able to be the most open with their parents, as each set of parents knew about their son’s drug use. They were still concerned with disappointing their families but were less fearful than the other participants. The least bonded to his family, however, seemed to be Adam, who explained that the over-strictness of his parents drove him to rebellion:

One thing that I’ve seen is repetitive is, like, the-the uhh.. the uhh strictness of parents. The like, the strictness of parents really backfiring on them... and I’ve seen it a lot. And now, I’m, like, the biggest case of it. Like, I’m the biggest case of the biggest backfire. Like, my mom teaches at a mosque. My dad, never, s-never has a cigarette in his life. All

religious. Prays five times a day...The pressure they put on you like, umm, that I'm growing up shit, and the no talking to girls like, umm, you know, you grow up, like, ok, you deal with it, you deal with it, you deal with it, you deal with it, then all of the sudden you get a car and then you just... you take off, you know? (laughs) Like, one time I got into it with my mom once. I was like, "For all the times that you didn't let me go out when I was younger, I-I could spend the next 20 years going out every night and it still wouldn't make up for the times..."

He did still make a conscious effort to avoid detection and said that he was "stamped a liar on [his] heart" because of the extent he had to go to hide his behaviors.

Every participant except Bilal was more concerned with his family finding out more so than facing the legal system. Faisal stated that if he could choose between being arrested and going through the legal system, but his family never knowing, or his family finding out about his drug use, he would choose his family knowing because of the fact that he would tell them if he was caught anyway, because he wants to protect the open relationship that he has with them. Marwan said that his answer would depend on his location. He would rather deal with his family than the Arabian Peninsula's legal system, but he would gladly go through the American system rather than have his parents find out about his use. However, he changed his mind and admitted that it would depend on what type of drug he was caught with:

Well, if I got caught with like, maybe cocaine and all these drugs, and blah blah blah blah blah, I'd face the charges I have to. But, if it was just marijuana or something, كمان (kaman—also), uh...I'd let my parents know.

It is important to note that the three participants who said that they would not mind their parents finding out rather than facing jail time, in at least some capacity or instance, had parents who had known about their drug use to some extent. The only participant who had been caught before but was still more concerned with his family knowing about his use, was Dawoud, who said he did not want to disappoint them again. Amir was insistent that, "I'd rather get beaten every single day. For like a year," than to have his family know and to lose their respect. Kamil stated that disappointing his family would be worse than dealing with the legal consequences. These views are fairly representative of the rest of the study's sample and symbolize the overall family structures in the Arab World. They also are in line, mostly, with the coping mechanisms used by Arabs that were discussed earlier in this chapter (Shuraydi, 1981).

Summary

This chapter highlighted themes relevant to each participant's Arab identity. Each participant's family background was presented. All of the participants in this study were Arab, Muslim, and male, and the vast majority were ethnically descended from the Fertile Crescent. Most of the participants were either the oldest or second oldest child in their families, and came from traditional, nuclear households where their father was the breadwinner. All but one participant came from fairly religious families, and most of the participants believed in Islam despite claiming that they did not feel religious at the time of the interview. Many of the participants admitted to feeling guilty about using drugs, due to religious reasons, but many also claimed that the guilt had lessened over time. Most of the participants held strong convictions against pork consumption, and many admitted to having double standards when it came to women. Overall, most of the participants felt that they could assimilate to American culture

when necessary, but that they felt more Arab than American. However, the majority of participants cared more about their parents' opinions of them and maintaining the respect of their loved ones than anything else.

CHAPTER 5

DRUG USE AND DEALING

In this chapter, the themes that emerged from the data surrounding drug use and dealing patterns are discussed. Multiple themes were identified in the coding schema that were relevant to various aspects of the participants' drug dealing and/or use patterns, reasons, frequency, and experiences. During each interview, participants were asked questions about how they began using drugs, what types of drugs they had used, how often, whether they had dealt drugs and relevant follow-up questions related to dealing, their drug use patterns at the time of the interview, their drug preferences, techniques for hiding drug use, negative experiences with drugs, whether drugs had ever affected their productivity or grades, and which drugs were easiest to obtain in the Middle East. The emergent themes—patterns of drug use, motivations for drug use and dealing, consequences of drug use and dealing, and techniques for procuring drugs and avoiding detection—are discussed below.

Patterns of Drug Use

Age of Onset. Every participant in the sample had used drugs, minimally marijuana, at some point in his life, and at least within a few months of his interview. Common themes were found regarding when these participants began their drug use. Six of the ten participants first tried marijuana after the age of 18, but half the sample began using drugs or drinking alcohol prior to graduating from high school. All of the participants, except for one, were introduced to

drugs by a friend, and every participant's first exposure to drugs was either marijuana, alcohol, or a combination of both.

Amir, Adam, Marwan, and Rami were the only four participants who began smoking marijuana and/or using other drugs under the age of 18. Bilal began using while still in high school, at age 18. The other half of the sample waited until they were college-aged to try any drugs, including alcohol. Both participants who were born to non-Arab mothers (Rami and Bilal), and all of the participants who were born in the US, exempting Sameer (Amir, Adam, Bilal), had used drugs before finishing high school. Due to the size of the sample, it is impossible to use this information to make assumptions about the overall population of US-born Arabs, but important to note the coincidences for future studies.

The average age of onset in the study, as well as the median age, was around 17 and a half years of age. Out of the participants in this study, Amir was the youngest when he tried drugs, having first smoked marijuana at age 12. He was living with his brother, who was 16 at the time, and took a "hit" of his brother's "blunt" when his brother was not in the room. He did not start smoking again until age 16, when he was on a camping trip with friends. Marwan was the youngest participant to begin using drugs consistently, purchasing hash regularly by age 14 (hash is more common in the Middle East than marijuana). He explained that his best friend as a young teenager used to smoke hash in front of him regularly, but that he initially stuck to cigarettes and would react negatively when passed a blunt:

I'd never accept. I'd be like, "Fuck that shit. Fuck that shit. Fuck that shit." Annd, by like, 14 and a half maybe, like, he used to smoke in front of me for almost... eight, ten months maybe. بعدان (Baadan—after/then) I was like... I was curious one day, and I, I

wasn't feeling like...really good that day, so I was like, "Why not?" ...I tried it, I was like, "Mmm...it's not getting me high." He's like, "It's supposed to." I smoked, nothing happened. I got even more curious. I'm like, I'm like... "Well, why hasn't anything happened?" I smoked another one. I started feeling it. Then, he's like, "You wanna go buy?" and shit. I was like, "I don't wanna make this a habit."

Marwan ended up using due to the influence of that friend, after having observed the behavior for almost a year. He smoked cigarettes prior to trying hash and had tried alcohol by age 13 while visiting the Fertile Crescent. Rami began using marijuana at age 16, while visiting family in his mother's country of ethnic origin. A friend's brother offered it to him one night, and he continued using it when it was available to him, mostly in Europe or the US. Adam began using drugs at age 17, after meeting the gatekeeper.

Bilal first tried alcohol on his high school prom night and ended up smoking marijuana as well. He believed that the alcohol influenced him to lower his inhibitions regarding marijuana. Sameer, Hani, and Dawoud all began using within a year or less of when they first moved to the US (in Sameer's case, upon moving back), around age 19. Faisal tried marijuana or hash around age 18 or 19, while in the Arabian Peninsula. It had been obtained for him as a birthday gift from his friends and was ordered six months in advance. He began drinking and smoking cigarettes during his first year of college, while attending an American university overseas, and began using marijuana regularly after being introduced to it by a classmate while attending college in the United States. Similar to other participants, Kamil tried marijuana for the first time at age 20, while on vacation with a close friend and after having moved to the US. He began drinking alcohol at 21 but had not done other drugs.

Drug preferences. This study began as a way to research marijuana use among Arabs and Arab Americans. However, as time went on, the types of drugs that participants in the sample were using expanded. To address the extent of drug use, participants were asked questions about what types of drugs they used and their drug preferences. Only two of the participants in the current sample, Kamil and Dawoud, had limited their drug use to alcohol and marijuana. The rest of the participants had tried a minimum of three or more drugs other than alcohol.

All of the participants had tried alcohol at some point, although every participant except for Rami claimed that alcohol was not a preference for him. Kamil said that he used marijuana because it was less “حرام (haram—religiously prohibited)” and dangerous than alcohol, in that it had less side effects and would not result in death. He did drink alcohol regularly on weekends after turning 21 but did not like it and ceased his use. Dawoud shared similar feelings toward alcohol, but admitted to drinking from time to time. Most of the other participants stated that they drank alcohol on occasion or when it was available, but that it was not something they enjoyed as much as drug use. Bilal, having cut back his drug consumption to occasional, social use, admitted to drinking more since cutting back on drugs. Rami and Marwan both admitted to having obtained alcohol in regions of the Arabian Peninsula where it was illegal.

Most of the participants openly discussed or mentioned tobacco use.¹⁷ It was common for participants to smoke regularly, in various ways. Many of the participants hinted that they had begun smoking cigarettes before ever smoking marijuana, which may have influenced them.

¹⁷ The study did not directly ask about tobacco use, but it was a common substance mentioned by participants.

Dawoud said that, initially, marijuana was “something to go with a cigarette” for him. Faisal also admitted that he never thought he would use drugs, but he also never thought he would try cigarettes and ended up smoking them prior to smoking marijuana. Many of the participants smoked cigarettes or “vaped” regularly, and it was not uncommon for participants to take cigarette breaks or vape throughout interviews. Sameer was rarely ever seen without his vaporizer.

Although all of the respondents had regularly smoked marijuana at some point in their lives, Dawoud and Kamil were the only participants who had not experimented with multiple drugs. Even Bilal, who no longer used drugs regularly at the time of his interview, had regularly used Adderall in the past, had taken Xanax a “handful of times,” and had tried cocaine three times. He stated that he began abusing Adderall within a year of trying marijuana, and that he believed Adderall was his “gateway” drug to trying cocaine a year later (with alcohol being his gateway into overall drug use). Adam admitted to regularly using marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy,¹⁸ as well as having tried Xanax and Adderall. Hani had tried hash, marijuana, Molly,¹⁹ “XO’s,”²⁰ Adderall, Xanax, cocaine, Valium, and Vicodin at the time of the interview, explaining that he liked to experience the different feelings each drug had to offer. Sameer used marijuana and drank alcohol regularly, but had tried cocaine, MDMA, psychedelic mushrooms,

¹⁸ He sometimes referred to ecstasy as XO’s, a drug that is contested on the street as being ecstasy mixed with oxycodone or oxycontin. However, his interview could be using the word simply as slang for ecstasy, as he states that he uses stimulants during the day and depressants at night, and oxy is an opioid depressant.

¹⁹ Molly is a nickname for a drug that is supposed to reference pure MDMA but has, in recent years, become more synthetic. See Palamar (2017).

²⁰ This again is not specified as either a slang term for ecstasy or the street usage, which refers to a mix of X and oxy. However, he does indicate that he mainly likes stimulants.

TCI, morphine pills, Adderall, and Xanax, as well as “pretty much anything you can list.” Faisal admitted to having at least used marijuana, Xanax, ecstasy, and cocaine.²¹

Rami, Amir, and Marwan were the most adventurous of the users, and admitted that they may not have been able to fully recall all of the drugs that they had used at some point in their lives. Rami, after verifying that, “It’s [the interview] really confidential?” seemed happy to share his experiences, “Really, I’ve tried a lot of things. Um...I’ve done, uh, well, marijuana obviously. There’s, of course, cocaine, Xanax, amphetamines, heroin, everything you can think about.” He said that he also planned to try salvia in the future and enjoyed using psychedelic mushrooms every so often. Amir joked when asked what he had tried, asking “Alright, you have time, right?” before admitting to having used marijuana, hash, cocaine, Xanax, ecstasy, LSD (possibly synthetic), and basically “everything” other than heroin, crack, meth, PCP, etc. Marwan also laughed when asked the question and separated his drug use by region. In his home country, he had used hash, Captagons, Xanax, LSD, ketamine, and alcohol. When asked what he had tried since moving to the United States, he replied, “Here? America. *Shit*.” Giggling, he continued:

Oh, *shit*, that’s a lot. Ok. I’ve tried, let’s see...cocaine, Xanax, Vicodins, uh, all kinds of downers, uh, hydros, oxycodones, uhh, took a hit, hit, one hit of meth... I’ve tried DMT once. MDMA. MDMA, Molly are kind of the same thing. Ecstasy, sometimes.

Later in the interview, he remembered that he had also tried Klonopin and methadone, and laughed that, “Haha, I’m forgetting a lot of drugs, by the way.”

²¹ Some of the responses may not be exhaustive as to how many drugs have actually been tried in each participant’s lifetime.

Many of the participants, despite being willing to experiment with various drugs, had very strong convictions about heroin, meth, and crack cocaine. Rami admitted to trying heroin one time, never having used it again so as not to get addicted to it. Marwan also admitted that he tried meth once but did not keep using it despite claiming that it was the best high he had ever experienced. He said that he “didn’t fuck with opium” but did try morphine pills once and felt safer using those because they were “medicine.” He had never injected anything and had never done bath salts, heroin, PCP, or crack. Hani, despite having tried numerous drugs, said he had never used LSD, heroin, meth, crack, or anything that would be “permanent or that might, like, harm me for the future,” and Sameer had used numerous drugs as well but refused to try “anything with a needle” and looked down on drugs such as heroin and meth. Rami and Marwan were the only participants who mentioned having been willing to try heroin or meth. All other participants referred to the drugs in a negative way and indicated that they would never even consider using them. Marwan explained, “The Arabs that I met here, they’re all against meth. That’s one thing common with Arabs here...Arabs don’t like meth for shit.”

Even though most of the participants used other drugs somewhat regularly, the majority of them still chose marijuana as their “favorite” and most liked “long-term” preference because of its low-risk side effects. Kamil’s favorite “drug” was marijuana because, “You can’t pray for 40 days when you drink,”²² and he was scared of the effects of other drugs. However, he and Faisal both stated that they did not think of marijuana as a drug. Marwan also went so far to ask if it counted as one while trying to determine what his favorite “drug” was. Dawoud’s favorite

²² This is referencing a religious “hadith,” or traditional saying or teaching of the Prophet Muhammad.

drug was marijuana because he liked that it kept him calm. Faisal, Sameer, and Marwan's favorite drug was also marijuana. However, Marwan said that he preferred hash, given the option,²³ but that he had only found Afghani hash in Colorado in the US. When asked if he preferred marijuana to Xanax or methadone, he admitted, "Welll, they're all around the same thing, like I'd pop a Xanax, then I'd smoke so I could feel it." He would choose marijuana as his favorite overall drug, though, because "Xanax fucks up your brain," while with marijuana, "I just get chilled out and I do sober up in any case I need to. Like, I can sober up from weed whenever I need to." Faisal claimed to like it because it let him stay "10 steps ahead" while keeping him mellow.

Rami said that he preferred European marijuana to marijuana in America or the Middle East, because the hash or marijuana used in the country he grew up in was a heavy sativa that had an almost psychedelic effect, while the marijuana in Europe was stronger and also more natural. However, his favorite drugs would be psychedelics if he could use them without side effects. He struggled to pick a favorite drug, ultimately choosing marijuana because:

Again, all drugs have consequences, you know. If there—there's no such thing as a drug without consequence so I couldn't just say there's a favorite drug. If I could make a drug without consequences, then yeah. But no... I guess marijuana the most, because you can't overdose on marijuana for example.

Most participants who had tried drugs other than marijuana had an affinity for stimulants. Despite choosing marijuana as his overall favorite drug, Sameer said that if he could have an

²³ Hash and marijuana are often used interchangeably by participants and also in the Arab World, as both come from different parts of the cannabis plant, with hash being processed from the resin of the plant and being more potent.

unlimited supply of any drug, he would choose Adderall because, “It increases your motivation. It gives you really sharp reflexes, thinking, whatever it is. Um, and you become very optimistic, pretty much, about everything.” Adderall was also Bilal’s favorite drug, but he claimed that it was also his least favorite drug. “I just like feeling up and energetic and the—my profession and the fact that I work 60 to 70 hours a week; it requires me to, to be up and energetic.” However, the withdrawals were unpleasant for him. This is discussed further in the sections about bad experiences and addiction.

Hani also chose Adderall as his favorite drug, because it helped him concentrate, but he also liked Molly and stimulants in general. However, he preferred Adderall because “it’s mostly controlled.” Adam also had a preference for stimulants. He said that most people seemed to like Molly, but that it sucked after taking it for four or five days in a row. His favorite “drug” was the combination of cocaine and ecstasy that he used daily. “That one’s... That one’s.. yeah.. that one’s insane...It really takes away laziness, like it’s-it’s-it’s... kinda weird.” Amir also referred to ecstasy as his favorite drug “in the world,” despite spacing out his use to avoid withdrawal effects.

Many participants explained that there were drugs that they enjoyed using but avoided because of their withdrawal effects, but justified the use of those drugs claiming that they were helpful if used in the “right” way. Furthermore, many participants also justified the use of prescription pills, like Adderall and morphine pills, as being “safer” than other drug use. For instance, Marwan explained that when he tried morphine, it was less harmful than using other opiates because, “It was like, it was medicine morphine, so...I was like, it’s pharmaceutical.” Hani had a similar explanation as to why Adderall was safer than other stimulants, stating:

It's the most controlled out of all of 'em. Like, it's like, because you prescribe it to children, so obviously they're gonna try to make it safe as possible, so...to me, yeah, it is like, the best way to go if, you know, for stimulants.

These explanations were in line with the insinuation by numerous participants that marijuana is a "healthy" drug because it is natural and not chemically compounded.

Frequency of use. All of the participants admitted to using marijuana on a regular basis, with different levels of frequency. Other than Bilal, the rest of the participants typically smoked marijuana at least once every two days except during exams. Of those who had used other drugs (alcohol excluded), a few were daily users, while others used them based on availability or on special occasions. Kamil and Dawoud were the least frequent users consistently, while Bilal was the most infrequent user at the time of the interview. Marwan was the most frequent user over time, in terms of both variety and amount of use.

Kamil and Dawoud both claimed to only use marijuana. Kamil stated that he typically only used marijuana at night, around five nights a week, as a way to relax. He did not use it at all while visiting his family in the Arab World and he did not use it during times he had exams, so that he could focus. Dawoud used marijuana daily, throughout the day, but in small quantities each time. He said that he smoked "like half a blunt" in the morning, afternoon, and "'til like 9 o'clock," and would get "a little high" a few times each day. When Bilal was smoking marijuana consistently, he was doing so several times a day and always wanted to be high, but he had reduced his use to around once a month by the time of the interview. Adam did not use marijuana daily at the time of the interview, but rather, once every other day to help him sleep.

Rami also was only using marijuana every two to three days at the time of the interview, or when he knew he had nowhere to be and nothing important to do for a few hours.

The rest of the respondents used marijuana more frequently, and other drugs consistently as well. Amir used marijuana twice a day, or “whenever he [could],” while Hani usually used it nightly as a way to destress after work. Sameer used it “consistently” every day, but his use varied depending on the day. Faisal used marijuana during every break he had at work, and sometimes more, resulting in a minimum of three times on a normal day. Similarly, Marwan’s marijuana use varied based on the amount he had on hand, but he typically smoked roughly four blunts, or around three grams, per day. Most of the participants would not smoke, or would cut back heavily, during exam periods. Most of them also reduced their use or cut back completely when they were around their parents.

Kamil was the only respondent who did not drink at the time of the interview. He admitted that he drank alcohol on weekends for a few months after turning 21 and desisted after. Adam also drank alcohol almost every day for a month at one point in his life but did not drink it regularly at the time of the interview, if at all. Bilal no longer used drugs on a daily basis, but drank alcohol twice a week, taking six to seven shots at a time. At the time of the interview, Rami lived in a location that did not allow residents to possess alcohol, even if they were of legal age. He adhered to that rule but said that if it were not the case, “I’d probably have a beer every night.” He also stated that he would drink if there was alcohol around. This concept of availability seemed to be a common factor for most participants, as they admitted that they did not care for alcohol but would drink it if it were around.

Aside from Kamil and Dawoud, all of the participants admitted to mixing drugs and had tried at least three drugs other than marijuana or alcohol. The frequency of use differed among participants, ranging anywhere from once a month to multiple times a day. Amir indicated that he had used ecstasy and Xanax regularly at some points in his life, but that his drug use shifted often, between the types of drugs and frequency of use. At the time of the interview, he said he was using ecstasy once every two weeks, but explained that he would use it every day if it did not have a withdrawal effect. He was also using Xanax once or twice a month but had planned on quitting at the time of the interview.²⁴ Sameer also used drugs other than marijuana every two to three weeks, while Faisal used them as often as they were obtainable. Rami also used harder drugs sporadically, having used mushrooms roughly twice a month for about a year in the past, but did not use anything other than marijuana regularly at the time of the interview.

Marwan used a variety of hard drugs every few weeks but took at least one Xanax bar (2 mg) nightly on a normal day. Adam mixed drugs daily, taking one ecstasy in the morning and a “few bumps” of cocaine throughout each day. Hani also used stimulants daily but varied between specific stimulants often. At the time of the interview, he was “stuck on XO’s” and using them multiple times a day but spacing them out so that he could still eat.

When he was a consistent user, Bilal had used Adderall on and off for around a month at a time, for about three years:

²⁴ At the time of the interview, he indicated that he planned on quitting everything other than marijuana starting that day. He also continued drinking, and it was confirmed in conversations with him and other acquaintances in the sample that he did end up using other drugs again shortly thereafter.

Like I would... you're never supposed to exceed like one, one maximum dosage. I did like three of them a day. I was... for a whole month in a row, I wouldn't sleep but maybe but two hours on some nights. And I just played video games and listened to music, and did more of it, and drank coffee, 5-hour ENERGY com- combined.

He had also used Xanax a handful of times, but never consistently, and used cocaine, one time each, at ages 20, 21, and 22 while on vacation with coworkers. He had cut back on regular drug use at the time of the interview, but used Adderall about once every other month, and never more than one day in a row.

Summary. Every participant was influenced to try drugs by his peer group, except for Amir, whose first interaction with marijuana was alone. Even so, Amir was initially introduced to the drug, indirectly, through a family member, and then reintroduced through his peer group. The data also suggested that most participants began using drugs, or using them more consistently, when they moved to the United States. Exposure to the new cultural environment, along with peer experiences, seemed to have a joint effect in influencing the participants' onset of drug use and drug use frequency. These accounts suggest support for Social Learning Theory (Akers, 1985) and are expanded upon in the discussion chapter. Furthermore, elements of Neutralization Theory (Sykes and Matza, 1957) were displayed in participants' justifications as to why certain drugs, like prescription pills and marijuana, were considered safer than others.

Motivations for Drug Use and Dealing

Participants not only differed from each other in their motivations for using drugs, but sometimes varied in their motivations for using certain types of drugs as opposed to others. However, a few common themes emerged in the overall sample, as most participants used drugs

due to peer influences, stress, or thrill-seeking and experimentation. Motivations for dealing drugs are also discussed in this section.

Peer influence. Every participant in the sample was introduced to marijuana and other drugs by a friend or family member. Most of the respondents said that they preferred to use marijuana, as well as other drugs, socially rather than alone. Drug use also played a role in many of the participants' friendship structures.²⁵

Dawoud stated that he was spending time with an old friend from his home country, who he reconnected with upon moving to the US. When the friend offered him marijuana, Dawoud was hesitant to try it because he had always been told that it was a bad substance:

I was tricked about it. Like, I was tricked about it. I remember, like, a thing happened in high school—we were talking about it in high school. I had a friend. He was from New Mexico, and um, he told me he had tried it before, and um, he told me it's not what I think. Yeah. Mm, looking it up, researching it, you know, "No, this is bad, no this is not good, no, this destroys your brain cells."

However, the friend that he was spending time with upon having moved to the United States told him that it did not have negative side effects and began using it front of him. As Dawoud explained, it increased his curiosity:

He took, like, a good hit, like, he showed me how to do it; like, he took a good hit, and then he just flew away...and then he was like, just give it a little bit, let it sink in and

²⁵ Although many of the participants were friends with the gatekeeper and part of the same peer group as one another, at least three of the participants were either simply acquainted with the gatekeeper or completely detached from the rest of the sample, and still fit these findings.

then, you know, we were listening to music and I was zoned out, you know, I was like, “Oh, my God!”... You know, one thing leads to another, you know. So, it was like “Ok, cool.” So, I did it, you know, it was ok, you know, at first, you know, whatever.

Whenever you get your first hit, and you see you know, like how high it is, to be, and what munchies are and all your senses and audio is working fine, you know, you don't feel anything, I mean, that was a good feeling to feel. I know it was.

Sameer was introduced to marijuana through friends with “similar personalities,” and once he had tried it, it became a “trend”:

For example, one of your friends tries a new drug. It doesn't even have to be weed, tries that, a new drug, a pill, eventually your next friend will wanna try it, your other friend would wanna try it, your other friend will wanna try it, and so forth...

He said that his friends overseas were aware of his drug use, and if given the opportunity, would also try marijuana. He began using it after watching how his friends reacted to the drug:

I knew other friends from the Middle East, and they smoked, and they seemed to be able to hold their shit; it wasn't something crazy, it was something that seemed very recreational from the beginning, um, and it's kind of subtle. Not very, like, you won't lose control, you won't get in trouble really. There's minimal chance, because people just like to smoke and stay at home, so it was a very comfortable kind of thing.

Adam began smoking marijuana after meeting Sameer, and explained that he was never pressured by the other group members to try marijuana, but he chose to do so because:

I didn't really have a motive to start smoking it like, I didn't know, I didn't know why I started smo—I mean it's just 'cause... I'm honestly, “Yeah, everybody was smoking, so

like you can't...Ok everybody is smoking, what's?... Why? What's the hype about? Like, let me smoke, see what it is. And then, you see it. And then, yeah, you smoke...and then eventually, yeah, like I said, you find a purpose for it. Whatever it is.

He said that the harder drugs also became “available” through friends who stated that the drugs would give him energy. Furthermore, he admitted that he lost friends once he began using drugs more, and surrounded himself with other friends who also used drugs:

When you do drugs and stuff like, like, like, stimulants or uhhh, smoke weed, it sucks, but like, there are those friends that don't partake in those activities that you slowly actually, like, push them away. Whether you li-, whether you like it or not. Like, you just find yourself not talking to them as often.

He went on to joke that, “If I didn't smoke weed, these guys would not talk to me (laughs).” He explained, “When you sm-when you smoke together, when you do stuff. When you take XO's together, it's like a whole other level of friendship.”

Bilal was influenced to try marijuana and alcohol due to peer pressure in high school while attending prom. He explained, “I felt like an outcast if I didn't.” He said that over time, his friends had tried to convince him that marijuana was not bad, and despite usually resisting their offers, he ended up using it on prom night because the alcohol lowered his inhibitions. He admitted that the friends he associated himself with regularly were all using marijuana, and that it helped him to fit in more because the popular crowd in high school also smoked.

Stress. Many of the participants admitted to using drugs to help them overcome pressures in their lives brought on by work or school, fatigue, overthinking, etc. Stimulants were usually used to help overcome exhaustion, school stress, and long work hours, while drugs such as

marijuana and Xanax were used to cope with insomnia and anxiety. A few of the participants admitted to having used the downers to counteract the effects of the uppers, so that they could rest.

Adam had used Adderall as a young teen, as it was prescribed to him, and hated it at the time, because of the comedowns. However, he liked it as an adult and used it in a way it was not prescribed to stay up to study when he was attending school. To cope with his busy work schedule, he used stimulants in the morning to give him energy, and depressants, like marijuana or Xanax, to help him sleep at night. He began using the stimulants because, “You can’t smoke weed and go to work.” Working full-time at a fast-paced job stressed him out to the point of needing something to keep him going, and he became desperate for a solution that would take away some of the stress. The cocaine and ecstasy combination was “amazing” and resulted in him being more productive at work. He claimed that the cocaine counteracted the negative side effects of the ecstasy.

Bilal, before reducing his use, had also used stimulants to help him be more productive at work. He said that he used drugs partly as a way to escape reality and any problems that he was facing. In terms of marijuana:

It didn't seem bad. And also, it felt really good. It did...I kinda got hooked on it. I know it's not necessarily an addictive substance. But, the feeling of escaping is, just really...

When I was addicted to it, I was alone. I always wanted to be smoking and listening to music. I would be going in a dark, quiet place by myself and doing it... I used it as a way to escape from my problems, but...they never really went away, you know? It just

kinda... it was a temporary escape. And then when I came back down to Earth, I wanted more of it to get away again.

The addiction resulted in him having to use marijuana or Adderall constantly in order to avoid the stress of facing his problems. He said that he used to mix Adderall, marijuana, and coffee because it made him feel good, and it was worth it even though he felt really dumb at the time. He referred to his first experience with Adderall as a “moment of weakness.” After having cut down his use, he had to face his stress and his problems head on to help him avoid using drugs that could physically harm him.

Despite experimenting with a variety of drugs, Marwan also used Xanax daily to help him sleep, picking up “a pop or two of Xanax a day” from his dealer. He stated that, on a daily basis, his drug use was fairly consistent except during heavy exam weeks:

Um, my daily basis, ok, so, I do wake up, I have five, five classes a week. I don't miss any of them. I used to, in my first two semesters, but after second year started, I didn't miss any class. But, it was the hardest thing ever doing it with Xanax, to be honest. 'Cuz, I couldn't sleep at night without the Xanax. Not from anxiety reasons or anything, because maybe I got too hooked up on it, and without it my system, خلاص (khalas—that's it) I feel like... I can't sleep, like I force myself to sleep, even sleeping pills won't even work and shit.

He began using the Xanax only on weekends, but this changed over time as he became dependent on it for sleep:

بعدان (Baadan—then), it evaluated [escalated], صرت اخذه (surt akhdo—I started taking it) like, صرت اخذه (surt akhdo—I started taking it) when I had my classes at 2 pm twice a

week. و (Oo—and), the three more days of uh, the week, ما كنت اخذه (ma kunt akhdo—I wasn't taking it), لما كان عندي (lemma kan aindi—when I had) 7, 8 am classes. Then, I started taking it every day.

He used full bars of Xanax (2 mg) because the lower doses “won't do shit to me.”

Rami used marijuana to relax. He explained that he used it because:

It helps me a lot. It really, it helps me calm down. One-one-one of the reasons I do it is because if I study a lot during the day, I get really stressed, really frustrated, my brain starts burning, and it can just shut me down immediately. And then I go to sleep, I wake up the next morning, and I'm fresh and ready to study again.

He said that he had desisted from drug use two weeks prior to the interview, “Just to see like, to make sure that maybe I'm just telling myself I need it. Maybe I don't actually need it.” When asked if he did actually need it, after having taken a break, he said, “Uh, hell yeah. It helped so much. It really helps...it helped me with a lot of all sorts of situations.” He admitted that he used it to self-medicate and treat anxiety, thus using it in response to negative stimuli, and to help with his overall impulse control:

It helps me with my life in general. It's just, it's really nice to just shut down my brain. I'm a very impulsive person, and I get very paranoid, very anxious, and so it just (claps once) eliminates all of that... Like, mostly, if I don't know how to expl—I do things and I don't know why, it's just really irritating, yeah.

He thought of marijuana as medicinal and alcohol as recreational, and stated that marijuana would not be necessary to use if he did not need it medicinally. Most participants said that they

used marijuana more when they needed to destress after a rough patch, or as a way of easing tension and anxiety.

Thrill-seeking and experimentation. Sameer, Faisal, and Amir admitted that their use of drugs mainly depended on availability. According to them, drugs other than marijuana and alcohol were not a daily activity, but rather something reserved for special occasions. They were mainly used for experimentation. Marwan also used recreational and prescription drugs, such as cocaine, “When [they were] there.” He said that he would limit his experience with meth to one use to avoid addiction to it but would use methadone again. He also admitted that while he needed Xanax to sleep, he would take up to four a day if he wanted to “get fucked up.”

Rami also mainly used new drugs as a way of experimenting. He did not use other drugs often at the time of the interview and explained that he only tried new drugs to experience what they were like.

I’m extremely—I have a very impulsive personality. So, sometimes when I see something, I’m not even gonna think about consequences or forethought; I’m just gonna do it.

He admitted that although he would have likely used drugs sooner had they been legal, the illegality of marijuana was “a little exciting, actually.” He went on to say that he liked the thrill “a lot.” When asked if this was done as a rebellious act, he stated, “I wouldn’t say rebellious, but more like, the thrill of it. You know, like, ‘I could get totally screwed over for this.’” Rami went on to describe a situation in which he was drunk driving (which is punishable with deportation) in the Arabian Peninsula and explained how it felt to take a risk:

Umm, again, it was so thrilling. I really enjoyed the thrill. You know, just to speed with a car, going 200 km per hour, not having a clue what's going on. Really, really thrilling. But uh, I wouldn't do it anymore. I've already had my fun. I also look at it in a way that, now, I've already—to me, once I reach some peak, I don't need to do anything under it anymore. That's why I always try to go for the highest thrill...if I believe that there can be a higher, I will very likely want to go for it.

He admitted that this behavior was why he tried heroin but only limited himself to one use. He was more careful in the Middle East but admitted that his impulsivity sometimes took over his judgement:

It depends like also, depends also on my mood, you know, because I'm, if I'm impulsive, I'll just do it. It won't matter; I won't think about it. I'll just do it. But if I have some time to think about it and realize I could pull this whole thing off, then I act on it more impulsively, 'cuz I've already done the thinking for it. I don't need to think about it again.

Rami said that he was always curious to try new drugs because they increase creativity and the ability to look at things from different angles. He used them:

For knowledge sake. Just to expand. Um, you know, I found, like, if you, if you have a meth—if you have an ability to have some kind of thought process, once you've thought it, you can always think of it again. Especially, like, heavy psychedelic, you can get some of the most abstract thoughts and apply them when you sober up again.

Like Rami, Amir discussed the thrill and explained that anything made illegal would result in people taking it for no reason.

Hani also liked to experiment and used drugs for the sake of knowledge, “Everyone in this world craves something constantly. And with me, in my case, it’s like, knowledge you could say.” He discussed neuroplasticity:

...the ability of the brain to build new neurons in certain areas, just because, like, instead of using like, the, the usual... neur—neuropathways, you’re creating different ones and finding ways around. Which with drugs, too, gives you different perspectives.

Motivations for Dealing. Only three of the participants admitted to having dealt drugs, mainly marijuana, at some point in their lives. The common theme among them was that dealing was an easy way to make extra money, because they were talented at it and intelligent enough to avoid being caught. Amir dealt for the least amount of time, while Marwan had been dealing the longest. He was the only one of the three dealers to deal both in the US and the Arab World, while Sameer and Amir dealt only in the US. Each dealer had different motivations and techniques for dealing, but the main reasons were the desire for extra income and the ability to supply their own drug use habits.

Money was a motivation mentioned by all three dealers. Marwan began dealing at the youngest age, roughly around 15 years old. His dealing grew over time, and as he became older, he did turn to it when he needed money. He stated that sometimes the financial gains were too good to pass up:

If it was a really, good deal, you know what I mean, but with that money too, يعني (yaaneh—I mean), whatever, زي ما قفلك بالعربي (zay ma ihki bil arabi—like I said in Arabic), whatever فلووس حرام (floos haram—forbidden/dishonest money) I get, I just put it back into فلووس حرام (floos haram—forbidden/dishonest money) again, you know.

Amir admitted that he has dealt “from time to time,” but that he was not an active dealer at the time of the interview. He started dealing at age 17, for the benefit of having additional money, because it was “just basic common sense.” He said that while his using may have had to do with a mix of curiosity, rebellion, and other influences:

Dealing, on the other hand, I was just a teenager. I was like, hey, ummm... at the time I was young and you know... middle school and high school. I could sell a “g” for like, 45 believe it or not.²⁶

Sameer, the gatekeeper, began dealing at age 20 while living alone in the US. He said the reasons for doing so were simple and business-oriented. Dealing resulted in “extra money” and he “knew [he] had the mind and the resources to do it very safely and discreetly, so [he] didn’t see a problem with it.”

Although Amir only admitted to dealing as a teenager for extra income, Sameer and Marwan both claimed to initially have begun dealing to supply their own drug use. Marwan said that while the money was a motivator sometimes, he mainly dealt for drugs more so than for money, and to “get [his] shit for free”:

You get an ounce of weed, you pay \$200. You put 10 grams aside and sell 10 grams. Make out your money, exactly \$200, and you’d still have 10 grams on the side for yourself to smoke.

He began primarily dealing marijuana and hash but expanded to dealing special requests “at a cost, of course.” He also progressed to trading drugs for other drugs and said that, “Weed works

²⁶ The average street price of a gram of marijuana in DFW typically ranges from \$10-\$20.

as a currency to people.” He had traded marijuana for Xanax, Vicodin, and other pills and said that it is very easy to access “everything” in the United States.²⁷ Sameer also began dealing because he could “smoke for free,” which was an enticing reason to continue.

Summary. There are three types of motivations for drug use that are discussed in this chapter: peer influence, stress, and thrill seeking and experimentation. Although each participant’s motivations fit under at least one category, some participants had multiple reasons for using drugs that fit under more than one category. Sometimes, participants even had different motivations for using different types of drugs. Participants tended to use either “uppers” to help combat fatigue or “downers” to help induce it. Some relied on both to combat the effects of each other. All of the participants used drugs socially to some extent and were influenced by the people they were around. Many of them only spent leisure time with other drug users. Many of the participants had also experimented with different drugs, and described a thirst for knowledge, thrills, or curiosity as their motive for using new drugs. This section has elements of Social Learning Theory (Akers, 1985), in relation to the part about peer influence. It also has elements of General Strain Theory (Agnew, 2006), exemplified in the section about stress as a motivating factor. Finally, it has elements of Rational Choice Theory (Becker, 1986), in that participants chose to experiment with drugs despite the risks. Furthermore, elements of rational choice are also present in the dealers’ motivations for selling drugs, as their reasons for doing so were primarily economic.

Consequences of Drug Use

Bad reactions to drugs. As everyone in the sample had been using drugs long-term at the time of each interview, each participant had a mix of positive and negative experiences with drugs. Although negative experiences tended to be rarer for those who had only used marijuana, each participant had at least one negative experience to discuss. Those who had limited experiences with drug use, like Kamil and Dawoud, had negative experiences regarding arguments with friends while intoxicated, or laziness due to marijuana overuse. Participants who used multiple types of drugs frequently tended to have more experiences to discuss.

Hani and Marwan, having been very close at one point, shared a bad experience that Hani had, from two different perspectives.²⁸ Hani, at first, seemed to have forgotten the experience until asked if he had ever been hospitalized in relation to drug use.²⁹ He explained that he had a seizure, but that it was not the result of drug use, but “malnutrition.” He stated that the malnutrition was due to the drugs, but that if he had taken better care of himself while using them, then he would have been fine. He admitted to being on a mix of cocaine and Xanax at the time, stating “That was the fuckup.” His experience is discussed again in the section about techniques for avoiding detection. Marwan stated that his “friend,” who the researcher knew to be Hani, had a seizure from drugs. He said that was the only time he had seen a seizure in person, and described it as the result of using cocaine, mixing drugs, and being dehydrated.

²⁸ They were not spending as much time together at the time of each interview and may have been on poor terms. I am unsure of the current status of their friendship, but they were interviewed on separate occasions and at separate locations.

²⁹ I had remembered the gatekeeper mentioning in conversation that Hani had been hospitalized, and thus knew to ask about it.

Marwan claimed that Hani had taken Nyquil while on a cocaine comedown, vomited, and seized when he went downstairs to play soccer.

Rami had “a few” bad experiences related to drug use. He said that he almost overdosed once, while using Vyvanse, the drug that he also listed as his “least favorite...because they fuck you up.” He described the experience as follows:

Oh my God, yeah, I remember. So, I mixed Vyvanse with Adderall, and the whole day, I was vaping. I didn't drink any water, I didn't eat anything; I was very quickly dehydrating. It was terrible; I could see my bones from my ribs, you know, like, I'd get extremely—I know the, like, the heartbeat, would be, you know, the pounding heart beat? From being dehydrated. You start getting this heart pounding. It's rel—it's as if someone's hitting a hammer against your chest, you know. That's, that's very, very bad point of dehydration.

He said that it was “absolutely” the mix of drugs that caused the reaction, but that he did not like Vyvanse on its own, either, because it kept him awake for 24 hours the first time he tried it.

Adam admitted to having a bad experience regarding Xanax and asked, “Who hasn't?” He said that it resulted in him “forgetting a lot of shit,” although timing of the drug use was important:

Like one time I took one in the morning. That was the one time where I really hated Xanax— I was like, “But why would anybody do that?” But there's people that do that, you know. They abuse Xanax like crazy.

Timing of drug use seemed to be an important factor in determining positive or negative experiences among many participants. Faisal admitted to often getting paranoid when he was not

in the “right” mindset to be smoking, because “it does mess with your head.” When he was in a mood where he began overthinking, he ended up blaming himself for things and becoming over-stressed. He claimed that he had never been hospitalized for any drug-related incident, although I was told later by the gatekeeper that Faisal had become sick from Xanax withdrawals, and that it was not necessarily a rare occurrence (although he did not go to the hospital for treatment).³⁰ Marwan also admitted that Xanax “fucked up” his sleep and he could no longer sleep without it. Amir agreed that Xanax was a drug that resulted in bad experiences, because it “just makes you an asshole.” He said that when overused, the pills could change people’s attitudes and make them “crazy.” He described cocaine as “the worst” because, “I want to go to sleep or something. You can't do anything about it. It's cocaine.” He had many bad experiences with drugs, particularly with ecstasy, and began spacing out his usage because it depleted his serotonin at one point, causing him to keep popping pills to avoid the side effects.

Sameer said that the only bad experiences he had with using were the result of having used too much and becoming dehydrated, but that he had never had health issues because of it. Bilal, like Rami and Amir, had a few bad experiences, especially with Adderall, because he “abused it.” He described one particular instance where he felt scared and motivated to change his habits:

This is about, I don't know, the 30... about a month. I've been doing it every day. And I was lying in bed trying to sleep one night... It didn't- it didn't work. I- I wouldn't fall

³⁰ It is important to note that this information was volunteered by the participant in discussions that were non-relevant to the study, and that the researcher did not seek out the information, question the integrity of the respondent, or violate confidentiality expectations.

asleep, obviously. My brain was just going on, but I've done so much of it each day, and it was just catching up to me. I felt like my heart was skipping a few beats. And that was really, really concerning to me. So, I pulled out my phone while I was in bed, and I typed that in and I found out that- that cardiac arrest, sudden death, heart attacks, stro—all these things are possibilities. Especially for people who aren't prescribed them and are abusing them. And I was more than abusing them. It was bad. So, I was... starting to kind of get a panic attack. I couldn't stay calm, and I was really concerned that I was going to go into cardiac arrest. Or, if I fell asleep, that I wasn't going to wake up. I was... you know. It-it... that—that really opened my eyes and made me stop. Yeah.

He also hallucinated once after eating too many marijuana brownies that were too potent and took a while to affect him, which he said felt like a horrible “nightmare.” Although he had never had a bad experience with cocaine, nor with marijuana that he had smoked, ingesting marijuana was scary for him:

All of my worst fears were kind of just... vividly like happening right in front of my eyes kind of. And it felt like a nightmare. I felt really nauseous and dizzy too. I felt like if I moved out of my chair at all I would puke. So, I stayed completely still, like a statue. I fell asleep, woke up five hours later... still the same. Felt exactly the same, so I went to sleep again. Fff- it lasted for about eight hours. I woke up two or three times, and it was still that bad, so... that was a really bad experience. That made me not want to do edibles again.

Hani, along with his bad experience mixing drugs, also had a bad experience with Molly, similar to what Bilal described as his experience with edibles:

Uh, I've like, I felt things that I shouldn't feel. I was too aware. (long pause) Yeah...I can't describe the feeling. It's, it was so, it, like, ah...it scared the shit out of me. It was the first time I tripped from something. Like, I took 'shrooms before, and I took like, a lot of stuff, but I never tripped like that.

Marwan also described his only personal bad experience as being “the Molly flu.” He said it is known among people who have used the drug and that it caused a fever and a “fucked up” throat. He also said that while his experience was not negative, trying meth was not worthwhile because:

I just took one hit, then it ruined all the other highs for me, like—it was a *reallllyyy* good high. But when I smoked weed after it, 'til this day, I don't get as high or as happy...that's the bad part of it.

Effects of drug use on productivity. Three of the study participants were not enrolled in school at the time of their interviews, although two claimed to be taking time off while the other said that he would like to go back someday, when he knows what he wants to study. All of the study participants who were enrolled in school had mostly passing grades and aspirations of obtaining college degrees and becoming successful in either the US or upon return to their home countries. The two participants who were working full-time, trade jobs and were not enrolled in school, Bilal and Adam, both were successful at their businesses and working long hours each day. All three participants who had dealt drugs were students.

Despite being one of the more adventurous users, Amir had the highest (self-reported) grades of all the participants, with a 3.7 average. He stated that he did not fail classes and made up for classes he skipped to maintain his academic standing. Marwan was able to pull himself off

of academic probation, working his way up from a 1.9 GPA to a 3.1. He admitted that doing this required cutting back on drug use during exam periods, as laziness and apathy due to drug use led to his grade point average falling. Rami also had mostly good grades. The other student participants had average grades, although Sameer and Dawoud did admit to their grades slipping at times. Dawoud admitted that he had over-used marijuana to the point of being unable to study, which he believed was the reason that he was failing certain classes that he could have easily passed otherwise. Sameer explained that marijuana affected his productivity if he let it dominate him. He had smoked and skipped class in the past, or used it as a reason to procrastinate, and then he felt guilty and worried about not wanting to make it a habit.

Faisal also said that drugs negatively affected his productivity and sometimes made him depressed. Bilal, who no longer regularly used drugs, believed that his drug use affected him long-term and felt like his brain had become more focused since weaning off. Hani and Marwan both admitted that the beginning phases of drug use were bad for productivity, because the lack of tolerance to the drugs can lead people to become easily distracted. Similarly, Kamil said that marijuana made him lazy sometimes, and decreased his productivity when he was tired, and Amir said that he “can’t function” while high on it.

Not all of the effects of drug use on productivity were bad, according to participants. Stimulants, especially, were discussed as having a positive influence on the quality of respondents’ work. Adam credited his success at work to the stimulants he used, and when he was in school, to Adderall. He said that the drugs kept him from getting lazy. Amir also said that he had skipped school in the past because he was “under the influence,” but Adderall helped him to focus more. Kamil said that marijuana use sometimes also increased his creativity and his

productivity. Rami claimed that drugs helped his productivity, because marijuana helped calm his mind when it was kept on “overdrive for long periods of time.” In tandem, Sameer explained that when used as a reward system, marijuana increased his productivity.

Getting caught. Marwan had dealt both in the US and in the country where he was raised, where dealing and use are punishable by deportation, long imprisonments, and even the death penalty in certain situations. He was caught at one point and served a limited amount of time in an Arabian Peninsula jail when he was roughly 18 years old:

To be honest, I’m good at dealing drugs. I’m always low-key because I’ve also done it before in COUNTRY, and the consequences over there were way harsh and worse. And, when it comes to the bad part, I got caught up once over there. And almost got sent to prison; they put me in jail cell for three days. Anddd they fed you fucking bread and hummus. For three fucking days.

He explained that he was lucky, in that, “When we got caught, we didn’t get caught for drug dealing.” Had they known he was dealing, he chuckled that he “would’ve not been with you right now.” He “didn’t speak shit” and it was assumed that he was carrying for personal consumption.

Like, هناك (hanak—there) when you’re caught with drugs, زي ما قتللك (zay ma ultillik—like I told you), there is no lawyer, no nothing. Like, you’re only gonna have to wait in what they call the DEA? Until they send you to prison.

He had been dealing hash for three years at the time he was caught, which occurred at a random checkpoint. There were random checkpoints that allowed for people of non-ethnic lineage of the region to be searched:

Anddd uh, hashish over there is very traceable, like...we have to burn that shit, so I used to use my key, to burn it with the tobacco. ف (Fa—so) if he finds any, anything on my key that's black, or brownish, he can smell it—that's probable cause for him. He can turn you in. You don't have a word to say, like, y-y—you can't, you don't have the right to mer—remain silent, blah blah blah blah.

He explained that this occurred two weeks before he was supposed to head to the US. He was released due to what is called a “واسطة (wasta).” واسطة (Wasta) does not have an exact English translation in the context which it is being used, but roughly means “hook-up or deal.” “I don't know how to say واسطة (wasta--- “making a deal based on who you know”) in English? But, over there in COUNTRY, it works that way.” This deal was struck thanks to somebody that he knew, the parent of a friend:

Somebody that I knew, to be honest. Like, my parents knew that shit went down, but if you're not a lockal, a local and shit, you're gonna need someone who's like... One of my friends that was caught up with me; he was a local, too. So, he talked out to one of his dad's friends. And he was some kind of company owner, manager; as soon as he entered, everyone was like, ah, “السلام عليكم” (assalamu aalaikum—peace be upon you/hello/greetings)... A local COUNTRY company. He came and he's like, “Get these two out of here and delete their records.” They're like, “ابشر (absher—look forward to), of course.” و (Oo—and) blah blah, they let us out.

He said that in the Arabian Peninsula, there was an added layer of fear when it came to getting caught because there were rumors that dealers, and criminals in general, who had been caught in

certain instances were raped by officers. It is difficult to confirm whether these rumors held any merit.

Marwan had been cited in the US for public intoxication twice but had never been caught possessing or dealing drugs. He had, however, been caught using by his mother while still residing in the Arabian Peninsula.

My mama caught me (laughs). I rolled up a joint inside my room. Hid everything up exactly where it was. و كنت طاللع من البيت بعدان (Oo kint talaeh min al bait baadan—and I was leaving the house, then) I just like, decided to go back and hide my shit somewhere else. Uh, ف (fa—so), روجت حطيتو فوق بالخزانة (h--arouht, hatayto foq bil akhzani—I went, I put it up in the closet)—the closet. و (Oo—and), I came back high as fuck و (oo—and) looking for, لا الاقي كل اواعيي مشيولة (la lai'I kul awayi masyuli—to find all of my clothes removed) from the closet and shit, and I can't find the case. So, I'm like, "Shit." My mom اكيذ طلعتلي اواعيي لتغسله و لاقتة (akeed talaaitli awaai la tighsilha oo laetheh—for sure took my clothes out of the closet to wash them and found it). So, I go to my mom's hiding place, اللي (illi—that) she puts everything she finds in it, ah ha. As soon as I come to open it, I find her behind me. She's like, "تعال، تعال، شو هذا، ولك؟" (Taaal, taaal, ash hatha willa—come here, come here, what is this, you)?" I'm like, I'm like, "Shit, I swear it's not mine mom. I swear it's not mine." I blamed it on one of my friends.

Despite trying to shift the blame to a friend, he said his mom was very suspicious of him after that day and was still asking him about it two years later. Dawoud had also been caught by his dad multiple times, and Amir was with Marwan one of the times he was cited. None of the other

participants admitted to having been caught, either legally or by their parents, but did admit to worrying about it frequently.

Addiction. Another consequence of using drugs is the potential to develop an addiction. Most of the respondents in this study justified their drug use by stating that they could quit any time that they wanted, but that their use was a choice. However, a few did admit that they felt addicted to certain drugs. For instance, Rami said that he was addicted to nicotine, but that he also felt a psychological addiction to heroin despite only trying it once. He admitted to missing the “happy” feeling that resulted from it. Similarly, Amir admitted that he was addicted to ecstasy because it was “too good,” but followed up the claim by stating that he could quit anytime he wanted. Bilal openly admitted to his past addictions, stating that he had an addictive personality and was very capable of becoming addicted to alcohol if he did not proceed with caution. He claimed that the key to avoiding relapses into these addictions was to keep himself occupied with a full life.

Hani admitted that he was addicted but claimed that his addiction was to the “knowledge” he was searching for through the drug use, and not the actual drug use itself. He said, “I hate having the same perspective of life that, that routine; I don’t like it. I like to be spontaneous.” He also admitted that he was “not doing so well” with his stimulant use because he was not getting enough sleep while trying to find the “medium point” for being able to use drugs and still function normally. He then concluded that “the medium point is just stopping, all in all.”

Dawoud openly admitted to feeling mentally addicted to marijuana:

It’s definitely mental. It’s, it’s...it’s getting your mind resetted... So, whenever your mind doesn’t go through the cycle again, that’s when it hits you and you’re like ok,

there's something missing... And then you get that urges where you just wanna smoke again, you know. Like, because there's, there's a gap where there's, you know, that not filled the way it sho—it's supposed to be, you know, where you actually wanna be.

Marwan was also straightforward about his addictions, though he seemed to still be trying to assess his own understanding of them:

To be honest, very honest, I do... I don't know if it's marijuana, uh Xanax I, I wanna say I'm an addict. Like, technically, 'cuz I take it every day. But if I do find something else that would make me sleep or some theory that would make sleep, 'cuz I've always had sleeping problems من قبل كمان (min abel kaman—from before, too), but Xanax pulled that part in. Sooo, I did consider myself a xanas—a Xanax addict before. عشان (Ashan—because) I used it a lot. بس بعدان (Bes baadan—but then) when I moderated it و عرفت انه (oo aarift inno—and I knew that) I could stop it and get back to it, stop it, I didn't consider myself an addict...Uh, I do feel like I'm an addict to weed, but I do believe that weed is nothing wrong, that's all.

He further admitted that he was to the point of no longer feeling the effects of his drug use:

Yesterday, I was on three bars and I went out, I communicated, I even saw a woman—she had an accident. I even went down and I helped her. And I was barred the fuck out. Like, زمان (zaman—long ago), back in the day when I first started and shit, I used to forget a lot. Now they don't even affect my memory that much, to be honest. كتير اتعودت (Ikteer itawadit aalah—I got very used to it). Like, now I just use it to sleep... I use it every day just to sleep.

Summary. Despite negative consequences related to drug use, such as bad reactions to drugs, decreased productivity, and concerns about getting caught or becoming addicted, there were benefits to drug use, such as increased motivation and productivity due to stimulant use, and anxiety relief due to benzodiazepines and marijuana. Although participants discussed the loss of productivity they faced due to withdrawal effects or overuse of depressant drugs, the effects of stimulants on their productivity and grades were highlighted as being worth the risks. Many participants explained that their drug use also simply had an unmatched euphoric effect that made the withdrawal effects worthwhile.

Techniques for Procuring Drugs and Avoiding Detection

Techniques for avoiding detection. All of the participants had various techniques for hiding their drug use and/or dealing, both from parents and police. Common themes that emerged among most participants were the use of eye drops, cologne or air freshener, and making sure to keep drugs hidden when possible. Faisal would rub his fingers on a “very, very kind houseplant” to get rid of the scent on his fingers, while Marwan would store his drugs in an abandoned mailbox.³¹ The majority of participants either did not take their parents’ calls when high, or were able to maintain their composure while on the phone. Overall, they tried to keep others’ awareness of their drug use as infrequent as possible, and mostly only spent time with other Arabs who also used drugs.

³¹ Mailboxes in parts of the Middle East are rarely ever used, according to multiple participants.

Sameer stated that he avoided transporting drugs when possible, and when he did transport he would use a “casual car” and go the speed limit all the way so that he did not risk being pulled over. He usually locked up any marijuana he had while driving, and did not smoke and drive unless he smoked the evidence first. Amir said something similar, claiming that he did not drive “like an idiot,” using extra caution to avoid detection. Marwan, like Sameer, also locked up marijuana in the glove compartment, or hid it in his socks or other locations. He said that it was easier to evade detection in America than the Arabian Peninsula, and that to do so required that people, “Drive like a human being. Go to speed limit, put on your signals, e-even if they stop, pull you over here, they can’t search you right away.”

Marwan had been pulled over multiple times since moving to the US, and had served probation, but had never been caught with drugs, and explained that he would go to extreme lengths to avoid being caught with drugs on his person. He said that at times when it was too risky to leave drugs in a locked glove compartment or hidden in the car during a traffic stop, he had swallowed them. He had swallowed four Xanax pills and four or five oxy- or hydro- codones with a “baggy” on separate occasions while in the US, and admitted to having had to swallow a bag of hash “about a dozen times” in his home country. He always swallowed with the bag to destroy all evidence, which made him “high as fuck” when he had to swallow the hash, “It got me high, it got me, paranoid high, too. But I knew why it was, because I had a large ass amount.” He had choked on the bags several times, as he had been forced to dry-swallow them. When Hani was hospitalized, Marwan stole a blood sample order to prevent Hani’s parents from learning about their drug use. He said that Hani “wasn’t in his senses” when he had his seizure, and did not realize that there were drugs in his blood, so Marwan warned him:

I was like, “Bro,” and I was pinching him, I was like “Bro, wake up you have cocaine in your system, why, why are you giving them consent to do all of this to you?” He started like, sobbing and breathing. I was like, “Don’t worry, I got you.” As soon as she turned around, another friend was with us, too. We snatched that bottle, I put it in my pocket, they looked for it, they asked for it, we’re like, “Uh, some nurse came and took it.” They were like, “We can’t find it, we need another one.”

After that, Hani acted as though he was upset by the situation and consented to being let go.³²

To avoid getting caught on the Arabian Peninsula, Marwan explained:

You have to stay in compounds, complexes; you can’t be in the road running with that shit. Uh, you can’t sell to people who, you can’t sell to kids. Kids talk a lot. Uh, you need to trust some people over there. ’Cuz anyone can snitch and get money off your head. And, what I did to be honest, I always kept it indoor. And if I wanted to smoke outdoor, I’d just take this one highway, which goes between two cities. It’s like HIGHWAY. A roha, rajaa (coming and going). And that’s about it, bes (but) inside the country, I... inside the city and shit, you can’t be like high as fuck or something, like, even locals if they look at you and they find out they’re high and say, they’d give you looks and shit. If it was a policeman, he’d take you in right away.

Both Marwan and Sameer explained that when dealing in the US, it was necessary to be choosy about who to deal to. Marwan and Sameer both discussed special rules that they followed to

³² Hani’s version of the story varied from Marwan’s, in that he claimed that he was the one who took the sample, and that he did not initially consent to anything. Both stories explain the same technique for avoiding detection.

avoid detection, legal trouble, or physical harm. To protect himself when it came to dealing, Marwan took precautions such as lying to his customers about himself:

Like, when it comes to drugs, I don't usually deal with Arabs, كمان (kaman—also)... عشان (aashan—because) like, with me, in dealing I take it a bit professionally 'cuz it's the only thing I do. And if I deal with an Arab, he doesn't know my name, he doesn't know shit, he just knows I sell it at 10 a g. فاهمي عليي؟ (fahmi aalaya—are you understanding me)? I just, 'My name is Tom, Brad,³³' whatever. Whatever the fuck it is. Just save my number blah blah, فاهمي عليي؟ (fahmi aalaya—are you understanding me)? And, the place I live in, it's right beside my college. و (Oo—and), there is this store, it's always full of people who live over there who are looking for drugs and shit around the store. Mm, so I don't really have to move around a lot. But I used to. I used to move around a lot, move shit, but then I settled down.

Throughout the course of this study, Sameer's dealing habits shifted frequently from consistent dealing to sporadic dealing only to friends. There were times when he was able to find full-time, legal employment that he was not dealing at all. He admitted that he has had certain bad experiences with dealing, and that he took preventative measures for his safety. He explained that these precautions were “kind of racial,” and that he no longer dealt to African Americans as “his number one rule.” He admitted that he had in the past, and that it did not start off as a stipulation at the beginning.

³³ Street names and nicknames have been changed

It's through experiences. The only people that have screwed me over in dealing, are Black people. That's it. So, black people I don't deal with. As long as I haven't dealt with black people, I have not had problems. They're the only people that are very sketchy, that are very risky, that get caught very easily. The reason I don't like to, like, pretty much deal with them at all is because I'm very simplistic, and organized, and very efficient and clean, versus very sloppy and risky, disorganized.

There were times that Marwan and Sameer partnered up in dealing, in order to help each other expand in terms of customers, transportation, and cheaper costs. However, due to differences and disagreements in the ways they dealt and used, the setup and the friendship came to an eventual halt.

Summary. In this section, various techniques for avoiding detection while using or selling drugs were presented. The simplest forms of these risk minimizations were the use of eye drops and cologne to mask the scent of marijuana use from family members and passerby. The more elaborate techniques involved stealing blood samples from hospitals and dry-swallowing bags of drugs to avoid being caught for possession by legal means. One of the more common methods was the idea of driving carefully and following traffic laws to avoid detection or being pulled over in a traffic stop. These driving techniques are similar to what Jacobs and Cherbonneau (2014) referred to as “normalcy illusions” in their study of auto thieves, and also to Cherbonneau and Copes’ (2006) findings that auto thieves tried their best to make sure themselves inconspicuous to deflect attention away from the stolen vehicles.

Procuring drugs. All of the participants were able to easily obtain their drugs of choice in the United States. Faisal stated that one of his influences in seeking out drugs when he came

the US was, “I noticed that... more than 50% of the people around me almost in any place actually smoked marijuana. In the US... And people know it's illegal... and they're still doin' it. People get in trouble for it, and they're still doin' it. So that says something.” Marwan explained the ease of obtaining drugs in the US, compared to the difficulty of obtaining them in the Arabian Peninsula, made him more laid back when it came to seeking drugs:

Welllll, over there, to be honest, hashish is very addictive, because it's uh, it's really hard to find... Like, it's really hard to find over there, so you're always on the run for it, يعني (yaaneh—you know/kind of). As soon as I pick up, I talk to my dealer, I'm like, “In three days, I'mma need some more.” You gotta have me on all these, like—like, you gotta pre-plan it. Over here, I, like, when I came ss--, when I came over here, like, by across every fucking corner, you'd find someone selling weed. Sooo, بطل بطل الي نفس انو انو دائماً ادخن و هيك (battal, battal illi nafas inno, inno dayman adkhan oo haik—I stopped, I stopped having an urge for, for always smoking and that).

He explained that his dealer at the time of the interview lived across the fence from him, “He sells whatever the fuck I need, but like, most of times it's just like, uh... a pop or two of Xanax a day.”

Obtaining drugs in the Arab World was more difficult. A common claim among many respondents was the indication that drugs are fairly easy to obtain, and quite common, in certain parts of the Nile Valley and the Fertile Crescent. They were much more difficult, but not impossible, to find in the Arabian Peninsula. Kamil stated that K2 spice was easy to obtain in his home country, but that he had never tried or wanted it. Marwan explained that no drugs were necessarily “easy” to obtain, but that it was possible with the right connections. However, drugs

were easier to obtain in small amounts. He was able to obtain hash, Captagons, ketamine, LSD, and alcohol in the Arabian Peninsula. Captagons are similar to Adderall, but have effects that last “a day and a half” according to Marwan. The importance of having the “right connections” was further emphasized by other participants. Hani said that, “If you have the right money, you will find anything you want.” Rami also stated that marijuana is not impossible to get, but only with the right connections. He explained that prescription pills, like Adderall and Xanax, might be the easiest thing to obtain overseas. Amir claimed that he could obtain heroin in the Fertile Crescent if he wanted, but only because he knew the right people. According to Marwan, hash was becoming more popular in the Arabian Peninsula, because when he started, around seven years prior, “It wasn’t that famous,” and not a lot of people smoked, but he knew of 14 year-olds who smoked it at the time of the interview.

Drugs were transported into the Arab World from other countries in the Middle East.

Marwan explained:

They usually come from the seas between Iran and HOME COUNTRY. I don’t know how they get into the country. اكد (Akeed—surely, definitely) they’re supported by like, rich ass people. Princes, مش عارف شو هيك (mish aarif shu haik—I don’t know what like/that). They’re transported by Indian drivers.

He said that despite the illegality, there was also a local alcoholic drink in the Arabian Peninsula, that was distilled by civilians, and sold discreetly in bottles:

It’s called Sid or Senior?... Uhh, actually, it’s uh, Filipinos make it over there. They drip it, its ga—you know the thing you put on your nails? Acetone? زيو بالظبط (Zayo, bizabt—like it exactly), it’s 99% alcohol. Over here, في واحد يشبهه (fi wahad biyshbaho—there’s

one that resembles/looks like it). It's called moonshine. You know what I'm talking about? Moonshine is classy, compared to what we drink...99% dripped, uh, we used to buy a bottle, how many liters is this? (asking about a water bottle) Uhh, 500 mL...a bottle foorr...15 dollars. و (Oo—and) we used to call it شعبي (shaabi—popular, public, of the local people).

Amir explained that farm areas in Christian neighborhoods where people were more liberal in general, and not many people lived, could be used for growing marijuana or hash. Other drugs could be smuggled into the Arab World through Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, especially, or Afghanistan. There was no direct route to Afghanistan, but Amir referred to it as the opium capital of the world. He said that terrorist groups sometimes produce opium for Westerners so they can “You know, use drugs and die, basically, that's what their point is.” He claimed that Afghanistan does it on purpose and that 90% of their opium goes to Europe and 10% is smuggled in. Marwan claimed that,

ISIS does its recruiting in Turkey. Like, uh, I've heard st-stories about ETHNICITIES (home country) who used to live in my city, كيف راحوا (keef raho—how they went) to ISIS. Like, uh, they book them a flight to Turkey. بعدين (Baadan---after) from Turkey, they send them to either Syria or Iraq, because it shares borders with both.

He explained that the drugs used to come from a neighboring country, but due to political reasons, were instead coming through a sea nearby. He said, “Uh, it comes from uh, Iran and Afghanistan. People who bring the big shipments in, they're like, uh, people with power and money.” Marwan further explained that ISIS, at the time of the interview, did sometimes bring in drugs as well, because they were targeting the country. “I've heard some like, ISIS soldiers

getting caught smuggling drugs in or weapons.” He explained that they sell just so they can corrupt the country:

You know what they do, actually? They send in some drugs, the good drugs get caught, then they send in some weapons. And the weapons go through and the drugs are caught, you know what I mean? It’s like a coverup for sending weapons, you know what I mean? And that’s how they supply their weapons and shit. Like, the drug is just a bait for the government to look at.

Weapons are rare in the Arabian Peninsula, as “a civilian can’t register a gun to himself over there.” Only police and government officials can carry guns legally. LSD is smuggled the same way as other drugs are, and resold for high costs.

Rami was able to explain the transport process with more detail:

Uh, (laughs) well, what happened is---umm, they get it from Afghanistan, they send it through the Arabian Peninsula, and then it goes to Oman. And then from Oman, my friend has a connection in Oman and he sends it to us. A passenger takes it in his car, takes it in his trunk.

He further stated that in some parts of the Arabian Peninsula, alcohol is legal for Westerners, but not for registered Muslims who were born there. He claimed that checking ID was rare, as long as the person looked old enough, especially if the person was able to pass for non-Arab.

However, some Arabs would park their cars in front of the store, “They honk their horns, and then the guy will come and they’ll tell him what kind of alcohol they want to pay and then they’ll bring it out for ’em.”

Drugs in the Arabian Peninsula were much more expensive than those in the US. Marwan claimed that a tab of LSD cost \$120 dollars over there, but cost \$5 or less in the US. He stated when buying hash:

People cut you off, people would short you--So, you get cheated a lot over there. And it's expensive, too, like the least you can buy with it is like, 250 CURRENCY, which is like, let's say, 70, 80 dollars? For like, 10, 11 joints maybe? But, they're hashish joints, they're not like weed. Uh, they're not as strong as weed, but if you wanna come and ask me, I prefer hashish over weed, all day. Uh, it's just a dirty high to be honest. It gets you couched as fuck.

Hani also explained that a gram of "weed" in the Arabian Peninsula cost about \$80-100, whereas it was \$10 in the US. Marijuana was expensive because hash was the more common commodity, but hash costs were inconsistent.

Another issue with purchasing drugs in the Arab World was the lack of authenticity. Marwan explained that a friend of his had smuggled what they thought was marijuana on a plane, and was later determined to be ketamine:

Annnndd he was like, ah "شوفوه هذا حشيش" (shufo, hatha hashish--look, this is hash). Uh, we're like, "Wow! This is weed!" We smoked the first joint. و (Oo—and) we were like, five people. We started tripping. Swore never to do it again. And, by the end of the week, we almost got done with half of it. (chuckles)

When buying drugs in the Arab World, it was easy to get ripped off. The extent of illegality and difficulty in obtaining illegal substances made it difficult to challenge dealers who charged unfair

prices or provided less than promised. The profit that stood to be made for the dealer was high, as was the risk. Marwan explained:

Annnnd... for me, like, I'd spend around like, a thousand dollars on an investment over there. And a thousand dollar investment on hashish, for example, gets youuu...mmm...let me say, if I wanna compare it to weed, 5 ounces. If you buy in COUNTRY, if you sell, you make like, five, six times the profit. Like, يعني (yaaneh—meaning), like, for exam---ahhh we don't charge by grams, we don't charge like, uh...we charge by like, it comes in finger shapes... هلاء (hella—now), even if I like, cut him or like, سحبيت عليه (sahbit aala—I pulled (one) on him), even if I took his money and went away, he cannot do shit to me anyways. عشان (aashan—because) drug dealing هناك (hanak—there) he'd get fucked up for.

Summary

This chapter discussed the drug use patterns of the sample, including the age of onset of drug use, drug preferences, and frequency of drug use. It also discussed the motivations that participants had for using drugs—primarily peer influences, stress, and thrill-seeking/experimentation, as well as the motives for dealing drugs, which were mainly economical. Some of the positive and negative consequences that result from drug use, such as bad reactions to certain drugs, effects on productivity, and getting caught were covered in this chapter as well. Lastly, techniques for procuring drugs and avoiding punishment for using or selling drugs were presented. These techniques discussed tactics relevant to both the Arab World and the United States.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the drug use and dealing patterns of those of Arab descent. Grounded Theory and inductive coding were used to identify the motivations that Arab and Arab American drug users and dealers gave for their participation in using and selling drugs. A sample of ten male participants was collected, and was comprised of Arab and Arab American Muslims under the age of 30. The study explored aspects of participants' backgrounds that were relevant to Arab identity, such as their family backgrounds, religiosity, and their views on women. Drug use patterns, including preferences and frequency of use, motivations for drug use and dealing, and techniques for procuring drugs and avoiding detection were also discussed.

Motivations for Dealing

Only three of the participants had dealt drugs at some point, and all three did so for similar, yet varying, reasons. Similar to Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010) sample of "dorm room" dealers, these participants used "closed-market dealing," selling only to close friends or acquaintances. In addition, the participants in this study also do not fit into the stereotypical depictions of street-drug dealers portrayed by the media. All of the dealers in the sample dealt, at least in part, to help, what Mohamed and Fritsvold (2010, p. 42) called, "underwrite costs of personal drug use," meaning, they dealt to supplement their own use. In some instances, participants dealt to "underwrite other incidental and entertainment expenses," (p. 45) although this money was typically used to pay for household expenses or unexpected bills, rather than entertainment. In other instances, participants' reasons for dealing aligned with Mohamed and

Fritsvold's (2010) third explanation of motivations for dealing— “the spirit of capitalism,” (p. 47) because selling drugs seemed like a feasible business venture.

Apart from the already mentioned motivations above, Mohamed and Fritsvold (2010) found that dealers in their sample also dealt for “ego gratification” and in pursuit of status, for thrill seeking, and to ward off the “emasculating force of privilege” (p. 50-62). The participants who had dealt drugs in this study did so primarily to supply their own drug habits, and to supplement their income when needed. They were not proud of their statuses as dealers, did not give any indication that they were embarrassed by privilege, and tended to take breaks from dealing if the risk-factor became too high. Marwan explained that he quit because:

I didn't need anymore. I had enough for me. And, ahh...like, كمان (kaman—also), some of my friends fell into trouble from dealing oo hak (and such) so, I was like, “I don't wanna be next and shit.” And it took out a lot of my time. A lot of my time. Like, six hours a day I'm just calling? Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

As in Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010) sample, this study's participants had the potential to be upwardly mobile in life through legitimate means, experienced polydrug use and selling, including being “reluctant dabblers” (p. 20) in the cases of Marwan and sometimes Sameer, had a thirst for experiencing different ways to get high or alter their day to day lives, sometimes used stimulants to study, used techniques of neutralization when discussing marijuana, experienced aspects of drift between norm violation and obedience, and operated within private residences. In the case of Marwan's initial arrest, recalling the discussion about “wasta” in Chapter 5 of this study, “It's not what you know, it's who you know,” (p.158) proved to be true for avoiding time in prison, especially in the Arab World.

There were many similarities between this study's sample and that of Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010) dorm-room dealers, but there were also many differences. Although I did not discuss social status or class directly with most of the participants in this study, none of them seemed strikingly rich or well off. The students in the sample were dependent on their parents, who seemed very invested in the well-being of their children but did not provide them with excess disposable income.³⁴ Most of the student participants were financially secure, but did not own transportation, let alone \$50,000 cars. Those who were not students worked 60 hours or more each week. Although many of the participants planned on desisting someday, only one of the dealers in the sample stated that he could possibly quit using drugs completely by the time he graduated. The other two participants who had dealt drugs both were unsure if they would ever desist from smoking marijuana. Furthermore, while many of the participants in the study tiptoed around their addictions, a few were close to admitting that they had addictions in this sample, and some openly admitted it. Most of the dealers in this study also lived off campus. The biggest difference between the sample in this study versus that in Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010) *Dorm-room Dealers* study is that the participants in this study, whether using or dealing, took extreme precautions and measures, and applied risk minimization techniques regularly. They were very suspicious of and untrusting of police officers being near them, and they typically did not transport large quantities at any given time. When they transported drugs, they followed all traffic laws. More often, they would have customers come to them for pickup. These risk

³⁴ Marwan seemed to come from an affluent family, as he had large sums of money which allowed him to purchase drugs to deal in the Arab World, but seemed to live modestly in the US. It was also not uncommon for friends in the sample to pool their money or belongings to sell to purchase drugs or food together when they were running low on funds.

minimization techniques, which were evident in my study but not Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010), could be due to a few reasons relevant to this study's sample population.

First and foremost, while Mohamed and Fritsvold (2010) were dealing with participants who came from prestigious families, my sample was comprised of mostly international students. Regardless of the prestige of their families overseas, many of the respondents in this sample were on student visas and had less access to the luxuries that US citizens would have. Secondly, although a few of them came from educated families, many may have also been the children of refugees.³⁵ As some of their parents were not citizens of their own countries of residence, many of the participants were also not afforded the same luxuries in the countries they born in that citizens would have. Thirdly, the participants in this study came from varied social classes, and many of them may have also had to deal with cultural barriers that non-Arab participants would not have faced. Finally, the aspects of conformity and obedience to family may have played a big part in their fear of getting caught, and their reasons for taking added precautions. Due to their residency status, the participants had to be more careful regarding legality. However, the underlying fear of disappointing their parents, which was evident in the majority of the sample, may have guided these measures.

Arab Identity and Drug Use in the Arab World

In stark contrast with the dealers studied by Mohamed and Fritsvold (2010), the users and dealers in this study's sample were willing to commit crimes and risk their health in order to

³⁵ At least a few were, as their parents' citizenship did not match that of their home or ethnic countries. Many parts of the Arab World do not grant citizenship to Arabs who are not ethnically descended from the country they are residing in.

avoid detection. They took numerous precautions in order to avoid getting caught, especially overseas, where the easiest to obtain drugs were hash and prescription pills. Drugs were illegal and expensive in the Arab World, but still available in the Arabian Peninsula, and much easier to obtain in the Fertile Crescent. Drip alcohol was homemade in the Arabian Peninsula, but regular alcohol was legal in the Fertile Crescent, and purchasers were rarely asked for identification. Drugs were sometimes sold by terrorist organizations in the Middle East, but were most frequently transported from Afghanistan by car. Only some of the participants had tried alcohol or drugs in the Arab World, as most did not want to deal with the legal risk or the risk to their reputations.

Most of the participants viewed themselves as Arab even though a few had lived in the US for a long time or were born in the country. They viewed themselves as American in terms of judgement, outgoingness, and professionalism, and Arab in terms of morals and ideals. A few also felt like they did not fit in to either culture, which is emphasized by Naber's (2000) second paradox about Arab Americans, and states that Arabs in America are viewed as neither Arab nor American. This multi-dimensional understanding of identity among ethnic minority groups is common not only in Arab populations, but also in other minority groups (DuBois, 1903; Engle, 1945; Phinney, 1989; Verkuyten and Kwa, 1995; Kinket and Verkuyten, 1997; Phinney, Cantu, Kurtz, 1997; Naber, 2000; Verkuyten and Dewolf, 2002; Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones, 2006; Ajrouch and Jamal, 2007; Chen, Benet-Martinez, Bond, 2008; Lalander, 2010). Many of the participants admitted to being hypocritical toward women and blamed their cultural upbringing for it. Those participants who were raised by non-Arab mothers, coincidentally, had the least judgment toward women. All of the participants indicated that their productivity and

grades had suffered if they had let their using get out of control, but that they had, for the most part, learned how to adapt over time so that it no longer affect them.

The majority of the sample, regardless of their religiosity, were opposed to pork consumption. Some stated that this aversion was because they were raised without eating pork all their lives, while others admitted that it was a less exciting “sin” to partake in than drug or alcohol use, or sex. Furthermore, most of the participants were more fearful of their parents, and the idea of disappointing them, than they were of the legal system. Many of the themes discussed by Shuraydi (1981) and exemplified in Keisler and Keisler’s (1969) description of conformity through compliance were also evidenced in the data, such as the overall views on women and conformity to please authority. The ideas of “saving face” by hiding their drug use from loved ones that were expressed in Chapter 4 also fit with other literature, such as Naffsinger (1994) and the “shame” culture in Japan that was studied by Benedict (1946).

Drug Use

Four of the ten users began using drugs before age 18, but the study was split evenly between those who started using in high school versus after high school. At least two of the participants had used drugs in the Middle East before ever setting foot in America. The ages of onset for drug use in the sample ranged from 12 to 20. There were no interesting or standout demographic traits that set the youngest users apart from the sample. However, those who began using at the youngest ages, Amir and Marwan, also both ended up dealing later in life and were two of the heaviest and most frequent users at the time they were interviewed. Amir’s first time using marijuana was five years before the average age of onset, although he did not begin using it consistently. Marwan, who was smoking cigarettes and drinking by age 13, began consistently

using drugs three and a half years before average age of onset of 17.5 years. Other than Dawoud and Kamil, all of the participants had used harder drugs, and continued to do so. Dawoud and Kamil, the least frequent and heavy drug users over time, were also the oldest participants at their age of onset. All of the participants had tried alcohol, and most, if not all, of them use tobacco products in some form. The least frequent users were also those who did the least variety of drugs, other than Bilal, who had cut back due to bad experiences. Many of the more adventurous users also tended to use more frequently, although their drug use varied and was inconsistent. Most of the participants chose marijuana or Adderall as their “favorite” drug, while Xanax was the drug that most participants had bad experiences with.

The motivations for participants’ drug use varied between peer influence, stress, and thrill-seeking and experimentation. Some participants’ motivations fit under all three categories, while some motivations differed depending on the type of drug being discussed. Stimulants and marijuana or Xanax were the drugs typically used to deal with stress, as well as those introduced by peer groups, while the drugs used for experimentation were more broadly defined. Reasons for dealing were primarily economic, and were used as a way to supply the dealers’ own drug use.

Theory

Participants’ accounts of using and dealing provided some support for a number of criminological theories. In the analysis of the data on motivations for using and dealing (see Chapter 5), elements of three theories evidenced: Social Learning Theory (Akers, 1985), General Strain Theory (Agnew, 2006), and Rational Choice Theory (Becker, 1986). A fourth theory, Techniques of Neutralization (Sykes and Matza, 1957), was exemplified in participants’

discussions of drug preferences (see Chapter 5), and in their justifications of drug use regarding religion (see Chapter 4).

Social learning theory. Nine of the ten participants were introduced to drugs by a friend or acquaintance, and the tenth participant was introduced to it through his environment and by observing his sibling's behavior. All of the participants in this study learned how to use marijuana from interacting with their environments or watching their peers. This makes sense, as Arab culture is a collectivist and social culture that focuses on shame more than guilt (Keisler and Keisler, 1969). Participants not only learned from their peers, but seemed to maintain use because of the peer groups that they spent time with.

Dawoud seemed to have learned to accept marijuana by observing that it did not have, what he would consider, negative effects on his friend. He was insistent throughout the interview that he was uninterested in using marijuana prior to his first experience with it, and claimed that he was "peer pressured" into it. Faisal's realization that marijuana was so easily accessible, and accepted, in America seemed to increase his frequency of use, as he had tried drugs in the Middle East but avoided using them on a regular basis because of the risks. He explained that as his social circle expanded, he began trying things that he never thought he would prior, such as cigarettes and alcohol, and that these steps led him to eventually using drugs. Marwan watched his friend smoke hash in front of him for nearly a year before he decided to try it, and Sameer tried it within a short amount of time upon his return to the US, when reconnecting with old friends. He was also introduced to dealing through peer groups.

Adam was influenced specifically by Sameer and his friends. He claimed that he did not really have a motive to smoke at first, but that his curiosity grew the longer he was exposed to

people using it. His use slowly expanded from marijuana to harder drugs, and he seemed to use drugs based on imitation. He mainly only took drugs that his friends recommended to him, and provided him with. Bilal also began using because he “felt like an outcast” if he did not try to fit in with the new peer group he was in at the time.

Adam’s explanation of losing touch with non-drug using friends once he began using regularly depicted this scenario. His joke that his friends would no longer spend time with him if he stopped smoking marijuana may have held some explanation as to his motivations for continuing his drug use. Other participants also seemed to be encouraged to maintain their use because of their peer group. Drug use was seen as a way of being close to one another, and sharing a special bond. Furthermore, every time one of the members of the peer group tried a new drug, as discussed in Sameer’s explanation of how his friends overseas became curious about marijuana use, the other participants tended to dabble in that new drug as well.

General strain theory. Aspects of strain were evident in the data that discussed stress as motivation for drug use. Particularly, work and school stress led multiple participants to turn to stimulants, such as Adderall and cocaine, to keep up with the pressures they faced at these institutions. The participants who worked the most hours, Adam and Bilal, also both admitted to having hooked on stimulants to increase their productivity and sale. Marijuana and Xanax also were indicated as being used in higher frequencies to help participants cope with stress. Multiple participants admitted to self-medicating with these drugs to help treat anxiety and insomnia. Rami stated that despite quitting drug use for two weeks, he realized that he “needed” marijuana to help him cope with overthinking and anxiety. Marwan used Xanax nightly to treat insomnia,

and other participants, such as Adam and Hani, used these drugs to help counteract the effects of the uppers they took so that they could calm down after work.

Adam explained that his stressful job hours led him to turning to stimulants. Since “You can’t use weed and go to work,” stimulants were a helpful tool in increasing productivity and focus needed for making sales. He admitted that if he did not need the stimulants for the job he had, he would probably not be using them. Bilal also worked full-time, in a stressful position with long hours. He admitted that he used Adderall to help him keep going at work, and marijuana to escape from any problems that were going on in his personal life. He believed that drug use as a result of strain and stress led him to addiction, and that other people who used drugs as a method of problem-avoidance would also either end up addicted or eventually have to face reality.

There were also aspects of strain related to Arab identity. Shuraydi (1981) wrote:

Being in constant confrontation with authority since the day he is born, the Arab child, though very dearly valued, is forced to wrestle with many contradictory expectations that require a variety of coping mechanisms and justifications. Obedience to parental demands, chiefly the father’s, is not only required during the early years of the socialization process, but is a lifelong commitment. Coupled with this requirement of obedience is the expression of loyalty to the extended family.

Thus, “children grown up fearing the same authority which they are obliged to respect.” This way of thinking is exemplified by the responses in Chapter 4 in the section on conformity, which discusses that most participants would choose legal action over parental disappointment. “I’d rather get beaten every single day. For like a year,” Amir insisted, explaining further that if

people he knew suddenly found out about his drug use, not only would his family stop talking to him, but he would also lose 85% of his peers. Thus, the fear of getting caught and risking one's relationships is a strain in and of itself.

Rational choice theory. An aspect of free will is evident in the section of Chapter 5 that discusses thrill seeking and experimentation as motivation for drug use. All of the participants began using drugs after being introduced to them by their peer groups, but most participants admitted that they chose to partake in, and continue their drug use, because they were curious and wanted to know what effects drugs would have on them. Despite residing in countries where the legal repercussions were high, roughly half of the participant sample still had risked buying and using drugs in the Arab World. Marwan had even been caught with drugs in the Arabian Peninsula, and still continued to use and deal drugs afterwards. Hani stated that even though his friends introduced him to drug use, he did not choose to participate until he was ready to. Rami also indicated that his need for excitement drove his decisions more than his fear of the consequences did. Furthermore, all of the participants had used drugs alone, without friends around. Thus, even though the social aspect of drug use is exemplified, there are other aspects at play that drive them to keep using even when their peers are not around.

Of those participants who had dealt drugs, rational choice seemed to be a good indicator of their motivations. They viewed dealing as the most rewarding path in their situations, allowing them to earn extra income and use drugs free of charge. Some of the participants, like Sameer, Dawoud, and Kamil, were also able to completely stop using drugs when they visited their families in the Arab World. They stated that the risks were too high to make it worthwhile. Amir and Faisal both also claimed that they were able to stop using if they wanted to, but kept doing so

because they “liked it.” Amir, specifically, was able to regulate certain types of drug use to make sure that he avoided unsavory withdrawal effects. Hani, Adam, Rami, and Marwan also used certain drugs in very specific ways for the same reason. Rami, an admitted thrill seeker, used drugs to feed his impulses but was able to try them only once and wean off quickly. All of the participants, at some point, had indicated aspects of choice regarding their drug use or dealing, while Bilal made the choice to stop consistently using drugs altogether.

Techniques of neutralization. Numerous participants justified their drug use in ways that fit with Sykes and Matza’s (1957) description of “denial of injury.” They indicated that even harmful drugs could be useful if used the “right” way, taking precautions to avoid side effects, and that certain drugs were better to use than others. For instance, Hani explained that although Xanax use had resulted in a bad reaction for him before, it was because he was not using it in the right way. In this case, the “right” way does not mean as prescribed, but rather, in a way that would allow him to get high while avoiding ill effects. He explained the same thing about ecstasy, stating that he would space out his pills throughout the day so that he would still feel enough of withdrawal effect to be able to eat.

Another common neutralization technique was the justification of medical or natural drugs as “healthy.” For example, Marwan stated that marijuana use was a healthier choice than cigarettes. He also explained that although he “didn’t fuck with opium,” he had tried morphine pills because as a medicine, they were safer than other opioids. Hani also viewed Adderall as being a safer stimulant for this reason, and explained that it was a better drug to use than ecstasy because it is prescribed to children. Other participants had similar views, and even justified their drug use through claiming that they did not view marijuana as a “drug” because it did not have

significant enough effects or risks to be considered one. In discussions of religious, they “appealed to higher loyalties,” claiming that marijuana use was more acceptable than other sins, such as the consumption of pork or alcohol, which are implicitly stated as being forbidden in Islam.

Limitations

As with all social science research, the current study is not without limitations:

Regardless of the contributions that the study makes, the sample size of 10 is quite small. Other researchers (Humphreys, 1970; Williams, 1991; Tunnel, 1993; Sandberg, 2010) have also written quality work with a small sample size, but it does limit the transferability and applicability of the work. However, there have been many studies that have suggested that saturation can be achieved despite a small sample size (Humphreys, 1970; Creswell, 1998; Boyd, 2001; Thomas and Pollio, 2002; Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006; Latham, 2013). Some studies have even stated that basic elements of saturation occurred as early as at six interviews, with full saturation happening within the first 12 (Thomas and Pollio, 2002; Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). The nature of using and dealing, and the nature of the culture, are usually secretive. Arabs, especially those raised in an Arab environment, tend to be fearful of appearing undesirably or risking their reputation (Sharabi and Ani, 1977; Shuraydi, 1981; Naffsinger, 1994; Alomosh, 2008). Drug use and drug dealing are not only viewed as being religiously prohibited actions in Islam, but are looked down upon by the overall culture as well. Therefore, approaching a group that is already hesitant to open up about perceived negative characteristics and asking about something that is extremely taboo culturally, is a difficult and daunting task. It took roughly two years to schedule an interview with Marwan, who arguably provided the most

information and had the longest interview. He was friendly at first, but earning his trust and appearing non-judgmental enough for him to feel comfortable opening up to me on a personal level was a serious challenge. He scheduled multiple interview times before actually following through with one, and eventually apologized for having had cold feet.

Looking at the sample demographic, it becomes evident that the group, as a whole, is fairly homogenous in terms of ethnic origin, gender, age, and home country. Having a more varied range of Arabs, from different backgrounds and religions, would have provided more depth and a better understanding of Arab culture on a broader level. However, when recruitment of individuals in general has proven difficult, it becomes even more difficult to be selective about the sample demographics. While a larger sample size may have yielded more heterogeneity, it was not an option. Furthermore, the homogeneity could be indicative of the types of Arabs that live in the region that the interviews were conducted in. As immigrants and refugees from the Arab World come to the states, they tend to move to regions where other Arabs of the same ethnic group already reside (Kayyali, 2006). The sample did include Arabs from different countries that tend to have higher numbers of emigrants to the United States.

Many of the participants were introduced to the researcher through the same gatekeeper. Most of them were acquainted with one another, and thus, there is no way to tell if some of the results are specific to this group of people alone, or if other participants would have added something new to the data. Attempts were made to access other participant groups, but were met with resistance. Throughout the course of recruitment, I tried to contact friends who may have been able to reference eligible participants. That resulted in a mix of empty promises, outright rejection, laughter, and apologies. In larger Arab communities, the attempts by acquaintances to

recruit were met with skepticism and annoyance. I had one instance of success with this recruiting method, with Bilal, who is not acquainted, to my knowledge, with the gatekeeper or any of the study's other participants. I attempted to use snowball sampling, but all of the references that were snowballed ended up cancelling, or avoiding attempts at communication. Two female participants were successfully snowballed, but due to a conflict with the study's IRB, their interviews were unusable.

There is always a risk, with the nature of this research that participants may choose to be untruthful. Although efforts were made to prevent any untruths on the forefront and then catch them on the backend, there is a chance that some of the accounts are inaccurate. It is impossible to tell, especially with active user research that depends on participant accounts, whether the interviewees are being fully forthcoming. It is taken at face value that, upon finally deciding to participate in the interview, respondents will be truthful, as they have nothing to gain from lying. As I did not compensate the participants, there was no reward for providing an interview other than helping the researcher. If anything, the participants gave up their time to be at the interviews and contribute their experiences. As explained in the methods section, efforts were made to clarify accounts that did not completely add up. Additionally, the few white "lies" that were caught were actually to hide the amount of use the participants had done, not to increase it or show off with made up stories.

Lastly, the researcher may have preconceived biases, having been raised in Arab culture. Although precautions were taken to avoid this infringing on the data collection and analysis, it cannot be discredited as a potential issue and thus, needs mention. However, the ethnic background of the researcher is what piqued an interest in this topic in the first place. Although I

cannot say for certain whether the findings are without bias, I am not at liberty to assess whether the analyses are without any bias or influence. It is this cultural background and understanding that helped me to formulate a question guide. In fact, the guide was referred to as “straight up” by one of the participants, and given accolades by others, and it is more than likely that my cultural background is why I was welcomed and accepted into the group, as well as given their trust. Thus, the risk of minimal bias may be worth the access to the population.

Study Contributions

Despite the small sample size, this study makes a contribution to the literature by acknowledging and addressing the drug use and dealing habits of Arabs and Arab Americans, a group that has been frequently overlooked or mislabeled in criminological studies. During the study, I encountered numerous people, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, who asked me if Arabs and Muslims even use drugs, and if I would be able to draw a sample. The answer that the participants in the study would provide, though likely inaccurate, is that “All Arabs smoke,” but that they tend to keep it “low-key” and deny it publicly. This study, even though the results are by no means generalizable, can be used to guide larger-scale quantitative or open-ended survey research questions. Future research should look to expand this study, using a larger sample size with participants from different regions of the Arab World or US. Including Christians in the sample would also add to the depth of cultural-specific aspects of marijuana use, as religious differences could then be accounted for. Furthermore, a study that includes Arab women, an even more difficult group to access than Arabs as an overall population, would contribute new understandings to the literature. Lastly, using deductive coding in a larger sample size, to assess

whether aspects of social learning, strain, rational choice, and techniques of neutralization are still evident would add to the current study's findings.

APPENDIX A
ARAB WORLD MAP



Figure A.1. Map of the League of Arab States

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons: User: Arab_Hafez

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Age?

How long have you lived in the United States?

What was your family like growing up? One-parent, two parent? How many siblings?

Were they strict, religious? What aspects are they religious about/lax about?

For both boys and girls?

Ask about sisters, dating for parents, etc.

Do you feel as if you've assimilated into American culture? Feel like you fit in completely? Still carry Arab traits?

What Arab traits do you still hold on to? What American traits have you taken upon yourself?

Do you deal, or just use? When did you begin doing each?

Why?

Did you begin using in the Middle East or America?

Did you ever do it in the Middle East? Did you try other things?

How do you feel about restrictions? How would you feel if they applied them to America?

What's the difference between the US and other countries you've lived?

Worry about gossip?

Does it being forbidden provoke the curiosity to use it?

What makes you curious to try the drug?

Is it like that with alcohol as well?

Does the legal aspect play a role? Excitement?

Anything easy to obtain in the Middle East? Illegal or otherwise.

Did somebody get you into using/dealing?

How'd you get started?

What made you keep using it?

Have you done other drugs? Which ones?

How often did you do those? Do you still do them?

How often do you use marijuana?

Why did you end up using the other drugs?

What's your favorite drug?

Why?

Have you ever had a bad experience?

Smoke with people or alone? Why alone when alone?

Self-medicate, bad mood?

Impacted by culture? Parents or religion affect you to do it?

Culture pressure pushes you toward or away from doing it?

Do you ever want to stop or plan to stop, or do you want to do it for the rest of your life?

When married, kids? Would you smoke with wife/girlfriend?

You're ok with future spouse doing it?

What if future spouse had done it before meeting you?

If against it---personal or cultural? Impacted by the culture?

If mom or sisters tried weed, would that be ok? Other family members?

Does your family know you use/deal? If yes, have they ever smoked with you?

Do you think the culture can push people toward or away from smoking?

Do you think your cultural/religious background affect your views on marijuana use? Affect your thoughts on whether it is good or bad?

Do you ever feel guilty or like it's bad?

Has it ever affected your productivity in terms of school/work?

Do other stresses ever contribute to you smoking?

Do you ever feel like you're addicted, or like you've gotten close?

How many times a day do you smoke? What time during the day?

Would it impact you if your family, or respected people from a similar background found out?

Someone who knows your parents?

How would they feel about it?

Would it make a difference if they knew how often? (if they know)

When it comes to other things that are against the religion, like marijuana, alcohol, etc., what do you partake in?

Sex, pork? Dogs?

Do you think one is worse than the rest? Which would you pick if you could only do one?

Do you think it's different for men and women in the culture?

What methods do you use to keep from getting caught? Either with legally or parents?

How do you avoid getting caught with people you don't want knowing? Like if parents call?

How do you keep people who know your family from finding out?

Do you think it's worse for you with judgement, growing up as an Arab, where weed is not allowed?

Do you worry about the risks?

How would you feel if you did get caught? By family or legally

Would you rather be caught with weed, alcohol, sex, etc.? family wise

Anything that would sway you from continuing to use?

Are there any times you take a break?

Why here and not Middle East? (If you don't smoke there)

Do you worry about your parents more, or legality more?

Why would/wouldn't you tell your parents?

Do you think you're a religious person?

Do you ever feel bad, upset, etc., if religious?

Status wise, do you think using helps you become more/less popular?

Have you ever been judged because you're Arab? In regard to using or otherwise

Do you feel like you fit into both cultures, or that you're judged by either or both?

Does it ever get to you? Has anything racist ever been said to you or mistreated you due to being Arab?

Do you ever use marijuana or alcohol in regard to deal with stereotypes of the religion?

You're in school? What do you want to do when you're done with school?

How are your grades?

Are there aspects of your life that lead you to using more or less?

Is there anything else important that I should know?

APPENDIX C

VERBAL CONSENT FORM

University of Texas at Dallas Consent Information Sheet

Title of Research Project: "Drug use and distribution among Arab American college students: Observing the effects of cultural identity on 'dorm-room' dealing"

Investigators:

Principal Investigator: Amny Shuraydi, M. A.
Faculty Sponsor: Lynne Vieraitis, Ph.D.

Contact Number

(313) 377-7009
lynnev@utdallas.edu

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to increase our understanding of college-aged drug use and dealing by Arab Americans and the effects of cultural identity on this topic

Description of Project: You will be interviewed face-to-face by the Principal Investigator and asked questions about your drug habits, family life, cultural background, etc. You will only be asked about crimes committed in the past. No questions about current or future crimes will be asked. The Principal Investigator will take notes using shorthand notes and may also use a tape recorder to record your audio responses. You may still participate in this study if you choose not to have your voice recorded.

The interview will take place in a location of your choosing, and should last approximately 90 minutes. If the participant would like to provide additional information after the initial interview has been completed, the participant may contact the Principal Investigator to conduct a follow-up interview.

Payments for Participation: Participants will not receive any reimbursement for participation in this study.

Voluntary Participation: All individuals have the right to agree or refuse to participate in this study. Individuals who consent to participate also have the right to change their minds at any point during the experimental procedure. Participants may tell the investigator that they no longer wish to participate. Refusal or withdrawal of participation will not involve any penalty.

Records of Participation in this Research:

Information Stored at the University of Texas at Dallas

All of the information you provide to investigators as part of this research will be protected and held in confidence within the limits of the law and institutional regulation. Aliases will be used in notes and recordings, which will be kept under lock and key, or password protected. The Principal Investigator have access to the information, as well as the Faculty Sponsor.

Information Available to Others: Members and associated staff of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Texas at Dallas may review the records of your participation in this research. An IRB is a group of people who are responsible for assuring the community that the rights of participants in research are respected. A representative of the UTD IRB may contact you to gather information about your participation in this research. If you wish, you may refuse to answer questions the representative of the IRB may ask.

To help us (the Investigators) protect your privacy, we have obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health. The investigators can use this Certificate to legally refuse to disclose information that may identify you in any federal, state, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceedings, for example, if there is a court subpoena. The researchers will use the Certificate to resist any demands for information that would identify you, however the Certificate cannot be used to resist a demand for information from personnel of the United States federal or state government agency sponsoring the project and that will be used for auditing or program evaluation of agency funded projects or for information that must be disclosed in order to meet the requirements of the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

You should understand that a Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent you or a member of your family from voluntarily releasing information about yourself or your involvement in this research. If an insurer, medical care provider, or other person obtains your written consent to receive research information, then the researchers will not use the Certificate to withhold that information.

The University of Texas at Dallas
Institutional Review Board

DEC 14 2016

DEC 03 2017

Approved

Expires

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- Zaitch, D. (2002). *Trafficking Cocaine: Colombian Drug Entrepreneurs in the Netherlands*. The Hague: Kluwer Law International.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amny Shuraydi is a PhD candidate in the Criminology Program at The University of Texas at Dallas. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan-Dearborn, from which she received a Bachelor of the Arts in Communications: Journalism and Screen Studies with a minor in Sociology. She holds a Master of the Arts from the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada, in Communications and Social Justice.

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Updated: April 2018

AMNY SHURAYDI CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL DATA

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EDUCATION

PhD Candidate—Criminology

University of Texas at Dallas—Richardson, TX

Dissertation Topic: *Arab drug use and dealing*

Final Defense: April 5, 2018

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Lynne Vieraitis, Dr. Bruce Jacobs, Dr. Alex Piquero, Dr. Tomislav Kovandzic

Master of Arts, Communications and Social Justice (2013)

University of Windsor: Windsor, Ontario, Canada

M.A. Major Research Paper:

“*All-American Muslim*: A review of contemporary Arab American identity, double consciousness, and Orientalist perspectives”

Bachelor of Arts, Communications: Journalism and Screen Studies, minor Sociology (2011) University of Michigan-Dearborn: Dearborn, MI

PUBLICATIONS

Peer Reviewed:

Vieraitis, L., Medrano, J., and Shuraydi, A. (Forthcoming). ‘That’s a damn good officer any day of the week’: Inmates’ Perceptions of Correctional Officers. *Criminal Justice Studies*.

Book chapters:

Vieraitis, L., & Shuraydi, A. (2015). Identity Theft. *Oxford Handbooks Online*.

<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935383.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935383-e-94> doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935383.013.94

Encyclopedias:

Vieraitis, L., & Shuraydi, A. (2017). Identity Theft. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of the Internet*, 3v.

Vieraitis, L., & Shuraydi, A. (2016). Identity Theft. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Criminal Psychology*.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Associate (Fall 2016-Spring 2018)

- Media and Crime
Instructor of Record
- Theories of Justice
Instructor of Record

Teaching Assistant, University of Texas at Dallas (Fall 2014- Spring 2016)

- Contemporary Issues in Justice Administration (Graduate level)
- Corrections
- Criminal Prosecution and the Courts Process
- Introduction to Crime and Criminality
- Introduction to Criminal Justice
- Pro-seminar (Graduate level)
- Research Methods (Graduate Level)
- Youth Crime and Justice

Assisted professors with course work and students, and held lectures on topics such as women in prison, drug use, history of the U.S. criminal justice system, and measurements of crime.

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Windsor (2011-2013)

- Introduction to Film Studies

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Shuraydi, A. (2017). 'I'll Smoke but I Won't Eat Pork: A Study on Arab American Drug Use, Rationalization Techniques, and Cultural Awareness. Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Kansas City, Missouri.

Shuraydi, A., & Vieraitis, L. (2016). "'I'll smoke but I won't eat pork: Observing the effects of cultural identity amongst an Arab American drug population.'" Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Denver, Colorado.

Shuraydi, A. (2015). "Drug use and distribution among Arab American college students: Observing the effects of cultural identity on 'dorm-room' dealing." Southwest Association of Criminal Justice. South Padre Island, TX.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Cultural effects on Criminology | Social Media effects on communications, crime, and/or culture |
| Crime comparisons across countries | Gender Roles |
| Drug Use | Eating disorders |
| Identity Theft | |
| Effects of media on crime and/or communities and policy implications | |

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- American Society of Criminology
- Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences

AWARDS

- Teaching Assistantship, University of Texas at Dallas (2014–Present), Criminology Program
- Graduate Teaching Assistantship, University of Windsor (2011-2013)
- Master's Entrance Scholarship, University of Windsor (2011-2013)

UNIVERSITY CITIZENSHIP

- University of Texas at Dallas: **Criminology Graduate Student Association (CGSA)**
President (Fall 2016 – Fall 2017)
Community Service Coordinator (Fall 2015-Spring 2016)
- Certificate of Completion
Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences "Doctoral Summit" (2017)
- Editor, Criminology Department newsletter (Fall 2015)