

## **Political Persuasion and Use of Humor on Social Media: The Case of Turkish Youth**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Immigrants and their U.S.-born children comprise 27 percent of the overall U.S. population, according to the 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS) (Zong, Zong, Batalova, & Burrows, 2019). Immigration impacts a number of governmental, societal, and educational entities, and it is the responsibility of these agencies to initiate and integrate individuals and families into life in the United States. Without a critical look at how this integration takes place, as well as research into best practices to help immigrant families make the transition, opportunities for personal and societal growth are hindered.

Across the United States, the number of English language learners (ELL) students is a substantial part of the student population in public schools. Many of these students come from immigrant families who do not speak English. According to 2016 data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, English language learners comprised approximately 9.6 percent, or 4.9 million, of public-school students. These statistics do not include students who were once identified as ELL students and received services for English language instruction but later became proficient in English. In other words, in an average classroom of 25 students, two or three students are not proficient in English (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

A drive to implement English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in the United States began earnestly in the 1960's with the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968. This act recognized the educational disadvantages that students who did not speak English faced in the classroom. Currently, the United States federal government and state educational systems continue to implement policies to aid schools and educators with the most effective ways to teach students whose first language is not English. Most states in the U.S. recognize the need to educate teachers about best teaching practices and offer various pathways for teachers to earn English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher certification. Specific criteria are established by individual states and are met by the individual teacher seeking ESL certification such as completing additional coursework and/or passing a state-mandated exam ("How to become an English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher," n.d.)

The need for research pertaining to issues around immigration and children of immigrant families is strong. As schools are impacted by increasing numbers of families who keep their home language, government agencies, educators, and parents must work together to ensure success for all children. Historically, achievement gaps have been shown to exist between minority groups and white students in the U.S. (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2008). The white-black and white-Hispanic achievement gaps have declined over the past 40 years, but gaps still exist (Stanford CEPA, n.d.). In addition, factors such as parental education and family income are strong indicators of student achievement in school. Family income has become more indicative of student achievement over recent years, partly due to rising income inequality across the U.S. (Reardon, 2011). Gaps also exist between students who are first generation immigrants compared to students who are later generation (Hernandez, Denton, and Macartney, 2008). Immigrant families in the U.S. are often the hardest hit among minority groups due to their minority status, language barrier, and economic hardships that they encounter when establishing their families in a new country.

While the highest percentage of ELL students in the United States is Hispanic, composing approximately 76% of the number of ESL students in public schools, the second highest group of ESL students in public schools is Arabic-speaking students, with Chinese and Vietnamese following third and fourth respectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). This creates challenges for the U.S. to welcome and assist those immigrant families from a variety of countries, cultures, and language backgrounds. In order to do so effectively, the U.S., and other host countries, must use research-based facts to implement educational, financial, cultural, and housing programs. This research aims to contribute to those research-based facts in regards to the educational environment that works best for children in immigrant Islamic families.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Parental Mediation

Parents have a great deal of influence on a child's growth and development as they are often the child's first and primary caretaker from the moment of birth throughout adolescence and young adulthood. The parent makes several decisions about the environmental influences in the home and the community while helping the child navigate the world around them. One particular environmental influence that is an integral part of our modern world is the television. Beginning with the airing of Sesame Street in 1969, children's educational programming in particular, has become a significant part of television viewing among families. The role of the parent regarding raising a child who has access to all types of television programming adds to the list of parent responsibilities in today's modern world.

Given that 95.9% of homes in the U.S. include a television ("Nielsen estimates 119.9 million tv homes", 2018) a parent must make decisions about the content and amount of television viewing for their child. However, not all parental decisions and interventions are the same. Valkenburg, Kremar, Peeters, & Marseille (1999) identified three types of parental mediation of children's viewing of television. The first type of parental mediation is titled *instructive mediation*. In this, parents are actively discussing the show and/or characters during or after the program. They may discuss the motivations of a character, the plot development, or any topic that would promote critical thinking. The second type of parental mediation is *restrictive mediation*. This type of mediation involves implementing rules to guide the amount of television watched as well as the shows that are permissible. This may involve time limits for television viewing or restrictions on which shows a child can watch. Finally, the third type of parental mediation of television is *coviewing*. With coviewing, the parent sits down with the child to view a program. They may or may not engage the child in respect to the content of the show.

Previous research has been conducted about parental mediation of children's television viewing. Valkenburg, et. al. (1999) conducted an investigation of parental mediation among middle to upper class Dutch families. The major contribution of the Valkenburg study was the development of a valid and reliable scale to assess the three types of parental mediation: instructive, restrictive, and coviewing. This scale has been utilized in several research studies, including the study discussed here. An additional result of the Valkenburg study was that coviewing was found to be the most popular type of mediation among Dutch parents and that instructive mediation was more often used than restrictive mediation, at least in the Dutch population that participated in the study. Due to Valkenburg's limited population of only Dutch middle to upper class families, Warren (2003, 2005) expanded on Valkenburg's research by investigating Caucasian and African American middle- and low-income populations in the United States. Warren found that parental education was a significant predictor for parental mediation. Parents with lower educational levels were more likely to be authoritative parents and use a restrictive mediation style of television viewing. An additional study by Zhao and Phillips (2013) that utilized Valkenburg's scale and early findings compared two different US immigrant populations, Hispanic and Asian, and found that Hispanic parents enacted significantly more coviewing behaviors than Asian parents. These studies seem to indicate that the variety of parental mediation among populations may be based on cultural and/or economic differences. Ecological theory of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2001) may help to explain how cultural, political, and economic influences are interwoven into the fabric of parent-child interactions.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2001) ecological theory aligns with the socio-cultural approach to learning which posits that children learn from the social interactions between one or more knowledgeable persons and another (Vygotsky, 1986). His ecological theory of child development states that shared social activities between children and caregiver are what drive child development. These shared activities happen within ecological niches. The ecological niches are the broader environments which impact the shared activities, i.e. social interactions.

The ecological niches begin with *microsystems*, which are identified as the immediate environment where the child lives and participates, for example the home, school, friend group, and media systems would be included in this niche. While the microsystem addresses the social interaction within a particular system, the next ecological niche, *mesosystem*, involves the links among those particular systems. The mesosystem, for example, would be a parent-teacher conference. A link is formed between the home microsystem and the school microsystem, hence, the mesosystem is formed. Child development is enhanced due to the transition from one system to another being provided by a significant other. The *exosystem* is the next level of ecological niche and involves “settings that influence child development without involving children’s direct participation” (Warren, 2005, p. 849). For example, educational policy would fall into the exosystem, such as the policy in schools about internet use and safety. Finally, the exosystem is set within the *macrosystem* which encompasses cultural beliefs and attitudes that may influence the other ecological niches. An example would be the differences between educational systems in Western nations versus Middle Eastern nations and the integration of religion into schools. The integration of cultural beliefs such as when and how to include religion in the school setting will have an impact on the social interactions that occur at even the lowest ecological niche, the parent-child interaction in the home.

These ecological niches are important to consider when one looks at parental mediation of television viewing in the home. In Warren’s (2005) study, the microsystem of Hispanic’s cultural beliefs about education and family as well as Asian’s beliefs about collectivism, overlay other ecosystems to impact the very basic parent-child microsystem of television watching. The study conducted here inspects a Middle Eastern population in the United States in order to shed light upon the parent-child microsystem that is demonstrated in Middle Eastern U.S. immigrant families.

### **Parental Acculturation**

A segment of the macrosystem ecological niche is the various acculturation approaches utilized by immigrant families. Acculturation refers to how a person assimilates into a different culture, usually the dominant culture. Not all people acculturate themselves into a dominant culture similarly. The various acculturation approaches can signify the importance, or lack of importance, that families place on integrating into the new culture and/or country. By using Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2001) ecological niches theory, one can predict that parental acculturation (macrosystem niche) influences parent-child interactions (microsystem niche) surrounding TV watching.

The old model that was developed to explain acculturation relied on Gordon’s (1964) work which is a linear model. In this model, a person gradually integrates into the host culture in a linear fashion. It depicts the immigrant family as losing the home culture while taking on the host culture in a rather clear wearing away of old habits, rituals, and language while assuming the new habits, rituals, and language of the host culture. A newer model by Berry (1980) posited a back-and-forth process whereby a person and/or family acquires the host culture but does not necessarily lose the old culture. The stance taken by this model is that acculturation is a fluid, long-term, two-dimensional process whereby an immigrant person modifies aspects of their home culture while also learning and modifying pieces of the host culture.

Building off of Berry’s model, Sam (2006) discusses a variety of approaches that immigrant families use to acculturate into a new culture. Sam mentions that these approaches do not encompass the many ways that individuals or families will acculturate, but have provided a description that can begin to give researchers and policy makers a reference point for discussion. One approach is *integration* where individuals learn a new culture while maintaining the old, home culture. A second approach is *assimilation* in which an individual completely absorbs the new culture and loses the old one. Another approach is *separation* where an individual separates themselves from the new culture. A final approach is *marginalization* in which an individual has nothing to do with either the new culture or the old culture.

Parental acculturation, therefore, is the method that a parent uses to adapt into the new culture and which is modeled to the children in the family. The methods for acculturation defined by Sam (2006) were used to develop a highly reliable and valid acculturation scale for Hispanics (Marin & Gamba, 1996). This scale was modified to fit a Middle Eastern population and is utilized in this study in order to assess the parental acculturation style of participants. In former studies, Eng, Kanitkar, Cleveland, Herbert, Fischer, & Wiersma (2008) reported that two parental acculturation approaches, integration and assimilation, related positively to school achievement in Chinese and Filipino children.

Zhao & Phillips (2013) reported that parental acculturation significantly predicted some types of parental mediation of TV viewing. Parents with a high acculturation level were more likely to be highly involved in their children's TV viewing and interact with them by questioning and setting rules.

This leads to the research questions posed in the current study. Research question one: What type of parental mediation of TV viewing was most popular among Middle Eastern families? Research question two: What factors contributed to the parental mediation type of TV viewing in U.S. immigrant Middle Eastern families? How was education and SES related to the type of parental mediation in Middle Eastern families? Research question three: What are the parental acculturation patterns in Middle Eastern families? Research question four: How are these parental acculturation patterns related to parental mediation type in Middle Eastern families? Finally, research question five: How do these findings compare to the results of Zhao & Phillips (2013) in their study of parental acculturation and parental mediation in TV viewing among Hispanic and Asian U.S. immigrant populations?

## **METHODOLOGY**

A parent survey with three components was created to determine demographic information, acculturation, and parental television mediation style. The first component measured demographic information and included eleven questions regarding parent education levels, parent occupations, income, number and gender of children in the family, and children's language use at home and at school.

The second survey component included 14 questions that measured parental acculturation. Like Zhao and Phillips (2013), this survey was adapted from Marin and Gamba (1996) and Stilling (1997) to measure parental acculturation in three aspects: language, food, and media. The survey questions consisted of questions with answers that represented a range of possibilities. Sample language questions included "what is the best description of your linguistic ability?" with 5 answer choices, including "I speak Arabic only, I speak mostly Arabic and a little English, I speak both Arabic and English nearly equally as well, I speak mostly English and a little Arabic, I speak only English." . Sample food questions included, "what kind of food do you usually eat at home?" with sample answers of "almost exclusively Middle Eastern food, Mostly Middle Eastern, but some other types of food, equally Middle Eastern and other types of food, some Middle Eastern, but mostly other types of foods, almost never Middle Eastern food". Sample media questions included "English-language television programs permit me to see North Americans as they really are" with answers of "totally agree, agree, undecided, disagree, totally disagree" available.

The third survey component measured parental television viewing mediation type. This survey included 15 questions regarding television viewing mediation type based upon Valkenburg, Kremar, Peeters, & Marseille's (1999) study. Five questions measured restrictive viewing habits, five questions measured instructive viewing habits, while four questions measured coviewing habits. Restrictive viewing questions included "how often do you set specific viewing hours for your child?", and "how often do you forbid your child to watch certain programs?". Instructive viewing questions included "how often do you point out why actors do some things that are bad?" and "how often do you try to help your child understand what she or he sees on tv?", and coviewing questions included "how often do you watch tv together because you both like a program?" and "how often do you laugh with your child about the things you see on tv?". A Likert scale was used to indicate never, rarely, sometimes, often, and never in a progression from one to five, with one representing never and five representing always.

Surveys were distributed at community gatherings by a member of the Islamic community. Before surveys were given, consent forms were signed. Consent forms and surveys were available in both English and Arabic.

Survey answers were then converted into numerical values. Items on the demographic scale were converted into numerical values as well. Since the acculturation survey was worded to resemble a Likert scale, numerical values of one to five were assigned based upon the respondents' selections in increasing value. For example, one question asked, "what is the best description of your linguistic ability?" Answers (in order on the survey) were as follows: I speak Arabic only, I speak mostly Arabic and a little English, I speak both Arabic and English equally as well, I speak mostly English and a little Arabic, and I speak English only. Values were always assigned from the top down, meaning "I speak Arabic only" received a value of one, which "I speak English only" received a value of five.

The television mediation style survey had a Likert Scale of values for the participant to circle. Questions included “how often do you set specific television viewing hours for your child?”, “how often do you watch television together because you both like a program?”, and “how often do you explain the motives of tv characters?”. The Likert Scale extended from one to five, while corresponding responses were never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always.

Survey information was then analyzed using bivariate Pearson correlation to determine if there were correlations of significance between the demographic information, acculturation information, and the television viewing mediation style.

## RESULTS

Before examining data for results, reliability of the survey questions was measured. Questions that indicated an instructive television viewing mediation approach had a reliability measure of .848. Coviewing style of parental mediation had a reliability measure of .954. Restrictive style of parental mediation had a reliability measure of .813. Given that reliability coefficients above 0.8 are deemed reliable, all of the measures indicated solid reliability between the questions for each television viewing style.

After determining that questions were reliable, the researchers gathered some descriptive statistics. The researchers determined what the means and standard deviations were for each television viewing style. See Table 1 for results.

**Table 1**

*Means and Standard Deviations for Television Mediation Style Table*

Mediation style	M	SD
Instructive	9.355	6.284
Coviewing	5.140	2.465
Restrictive	17.010	7.346

For instructive viewing style, the mean of responses was 9.355. Given that there were five questions that correlated with instructive viewing, a hypothetical mean of 15 can be derived. (Five questions with a mean numerical response of three on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, leads to a hypothetical mean of 15.) This 9.355 is well below the hypothetical mean of 15. The standard deviation refers to the range of the answers provided. The standard deviation means that answers ranged from 6.2835 above and below the mean. This gives a range of 3.0715 to 15.6385. Thus, instructive viewing mediation style was well below the expected value.

For coviewing style, the mean was 5.14. Given that there were four questions that correlated with coviewing, a hypothetical mean of 12 would be expected. The coviewing mean was well below that hypothetical mean, which was derived by multiplying the number of questions (4) by the mean numerical answer available, which was three. In this case the standard deviation was 2.465, which means that the given answers ranged from 2.675 to 7.605 for the total of the 4 questions. The Coviewing style of television mediation was also well below the expected value.

The restrictive television mediating style had a mean of 17.01 across five questions. With a hypothetical mean of 15 expected, this is the only television viewing style with a higher mean than the hypothetical mean. The 7.346 standard deviation indicates that answers ranged from 9.664 to 24.356 on the total of five questions related to this television mediation style.

## Correlational Statistics

Bivariate correlational statistics were gathered using SPSS. Correlations between the parental style of TV mediation (coviewing, instructive, restrictive) and parental acculturation is described below.

### Coviewing Mediation

A negative correlation was seen in the TV viewing style of coviewing. Coviewing was the least prevalent television mediation style; however, this style did have a significant negative correlation with two factors. One such negative correlation was the watching of programs together because of common interests and the linguistic ability of the parent. As the linguistic ability of the parent increased, the likelihood that they would watch a program with their child because of a common interest decreased.

Foods eaten at home, which was a characteristic used to measure parental acculturation, was tied to three negative correlations. One negative correlation was found between watching TV together for fun and the types of food eaten at home. As watching TV together for fun increased, the variety of foods eaten in the home decreased. Another negative correlation was between foods eaten at home and laughing with the child over things seen on TV. Finally, there was also a negative correlation between foods eaten at home and watching TV together. As the presence of more American foods in the home increased, the likelihood that parents watched TV with their children decreased, laughing with the child over things seen on TV decreased, and watching TV together for fun decreased. See Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Correlation of Coviewing Mediation Table*

Questions	<i>df</i>	Sig	Correlation
Watch TV together because of common interest in a program/parental linguistic ability	77	.029	-.249*
Watch TV together for fun/types of food eaten at home	76	.027	-.254*
Watch favorite programs together/types of food eaten at home	78	.034	-.241*
Laugh with your child over things you see on TV/types of food eaten at home	78	.013	-.279*

\* $p < .01$ .

### Instructive Mediation

With regards to questions designed to measure instructive television viewing, the researchers also found some correlations with participants' approach to acculturation, i.e., integration, assimilation, or marginalization. One such item was the negative correlation between instructive television viewing and English speaking. Parents who preferred to speak in their native language were less likely to engage in instructive television viewing. This is logical given that the parents themselves are less likely to understand the content of the television program and be less likely to provide help in understanding the actions and motives of the characters.

Another correlation between instructive television viewing and acculturation was observed in how the parents culturally identified themselves. Parents who categorized themselves as more North American, or were more assimilated into the North American host culture, were more likely to point out something bad the actors did on the TV program (instructive mediation). One possible explanation of this could be that people who self-identify as bicultural, or both Middle Eastern and North American, are more likely to participate in the host culture. Therefore, these participants sought to instruct children using television programs that represented the majority culture. Not only did this correlation show up in participants self-identification as bicultural, but it also showed up in participants who ate a variety of different foods over the course of the average week. Participants who ate a variety of foods from different cultures were more assimilated into the host culture. These participants who identified as bicultural engaged in the instructive style of television mediation. See Table 3.

**Table 3***Correlation of Instructive Mediation Table*

Questions	df	Sig	Correlation
Point out why some things actors do are good/parental linguistic ability	77	.027	-.253*
Explain motives of TV characters/frequency of Middle Eastern food eaten each week	79	.046	.225*
Watch TV program together/self-identified cultural association	77	.013	-.282*

\*p&lt;.01.

**Restrictive Mediation**

There were also several correlations between parents' acculturation patterns and restrictive parental style of television mediation. Parents whose spoken and thought languages were higher in Arabic were more likely to be restrictive in television style. Parents who preferred to speak, and reported that they thought more in Arabic, were more likely to restrict programs and viewing hours and more likely to turn the program off if it was unsuitable. Results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4***Correlation of Restrictive Mediation Table*

Questions	df	Sig	Correlation
Set specific hours for TV watching/frequency of Middle Eastern food eaten each week	79	.002	-.338**
Set specific hours for TV watching/types of food eaten at home	80	.021	-.258*
Forbid certain programs/self-identified ethnicity	79	.002	-.341**
Restrict amount of TV/language parent thinks in	78	.046	.227*
Restrict amount of TV/parental preferred speaking language	78	.017	.269*
Restrict amount of TV/ preferred parental language to read in	78	.036	.238*
Specify in advance which programs can be watched/preferred parental speaking language	78	.044	.228*
Specify in advance which programs can be watched/parental linguistic ability	78	.022	.259*
Do not allow children to watch unsuitable programs/self-identified ethnicity	77	.034	-.241*
Do not allow children to watch unsuitable programs/self-identified culture	78	.010	.292**

\*p&lt;.01. \*\*p&lt;.001.

Homes in which the father had higher education levels were also less likely to engage in all styles of television mediation behaviors described by the survey. In homes where the father had higher education levels, the participants were less likely to explain what things on TV really meant. For example, participants were less likely to help children understand what something on television meant or the motives of any of the characters (instructive). Those homes were also less likely to specify in advance what programs could be watched (restrictive). In these more educated homes, television was less likely to be watched together (covieing).

## DISCUSSION

The first research question posed in this study addressed the type of parental mediation that was most popular among Middle Eastern families in regards to television watching. The sum of the means of the television viewing survey indicate that restrictive mediation was most popular among Middle Eastern immigrant families, with instructive mediation and coviewing mediation following quite far behind. Restrictive mediation is the type of mediation where parents exhibit more control over programming choices and limit viewing time (Warren, 2005).

The second research question addressed the factors that contributed to the parental mediation type of TV viewing among U.S. immigrant Middle Eastern families. Education level of the father was the overarching factor that contributed to the mediation type of TV viewing in U.S. immigrant Middle Eastern families. According to the results of this research, as the father's level of education increased, the likelihood of restrictive television mediation style increased. Fathers in these families did not watch television with their children or laugh with their children about a television program which would have indicated a co-viewing style of parental television mediation. The fathers also did not talk to their children about the plot or motives of the characters in the programs. There was no correlation found between television viewing and the mother's education level.

The researchers also found that parental linguistic ability was negatively correlated with coviewing television style. The more English that was spoken by the participant, the less likely they were to engage in coviewing behavior. This trend occurred in four of the five questions related to coviewing.

The third research question asked what parental acculturation patterns were seen in the Middle Eastern families that were surveyed. Most previous research studies regarding parental mediation of television watching did not identify immigrant families as a part of the study and drew conclusions based on native populations. Warren's (2005) results investigated U.S. African-American low SES mothers while Valkenburg, Kremar, Peeters, & Marseille's (1999) foundational study interviewed middle to upper middle-class Dutch parents. In relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological niche theory, native populations do have a macrosystem of cultural beliefs and behaviors to consider when analyzing data about parental mediation and how the macrosystem influences the microsystem of parent-child interaction. However, the study conducted here added an additional layer to the macrosystem for consideration – acculturation. Immigrant families bring with them the cultural beliefs, ethnic identity, and even the religious and/or political philosophies that create a different type of macrosystem than the native population. Therefore, the fact that these families are immigrants plays a large part in considering how their specific macrosystem influences parent-child communication and interaction at home while watching television.

Approximately half of the Middle Eastern parents who participated in this study identified with the separation type of acculturation. This means that they tended to separate themselves from the U.S. culture. On the parental acculturation survey, 75% (64/85) of participants identified themselves as very Middle Eastern with a high Middle Eastern ethnic identity. In addition, 73% (60/82) of participants spoke either only Arabic or mostly Arabic with a little English, and 72% (61/85) of participants ate Middle Eastern food every day. It is evident that the Middle Eastern culture is an important macrosystem to consider when interpreting parental mediation of TV viewing in this study.

The fourth research question addressed the ways in which the parental acculturation patterns related to parental mediation type in Middle Eastern families. In families whose acculturation status was classified as "bicultural" (21/ 85 participants) the parental television mediation type was instructive. This is logical for several reasons. First, those who classified themselves as bicultural or mostly Arabic had some or good understanding of the English language. With some understanding of English, they were more likely to understand the programming and have the language skills to navigate the nuances necessary to use television as a teaching tool.



However, the researchers found that the instructive mediation type was present across the language spectrum represented. Perhaps parents who weren't comfortable in English were able to have their children explain programming in their primary language and then able to instruct children in the good and bad qualities revealed by their children.

In families whose acculturation status was classified as "mostly Arabic" or "only Arabic" (64/ 85 participants) the parental television mediation type was restrictive. These families tended to separate themselves from the mainstream population. Because they set restrictions on television watching, this could indicate that they are not using television to engage in or reach out to the host culture. This is in contrast to the instructive mediation types of families who could be using television as a mediator and educational source for mainstream culture.

The final research question asked how the findings in this study compared to the results of Zhao & Phillips (2013) in their study of parental acculturation and parental mediation in TV viewing among Hispanic and Asian immigrant populations. Zhao & Phillips extended Valkenburg's (1999) study to investigate immigrant populations. The current research replicated their study and applied it to an alternate immigrant population, Middle Eastern families. Zhao & Phillips compared parental styles of television mediation between Hispanic and Asian immigrant families in the United States while also considering the parental acculturation type for those immigrant populations. They discovered that covieing was the highest type of parental mediation among Hispanics while restrictive mediation was highest among Asian populations. In Zhao & Phillips' study they found that as parental acculturation increased, so did the parents' inclination to interact with their children and discuss the television programs.

While this research indicated that restrictive mediation was highest among Middle Eastern families, one interesting piece of data is that participants who spoke more Arabic, or were less acculturated, were less likely to covie. Perhaps given the language barrier, these parents were not interested in spending time viewing programs they struggled to understand.

In addition, the results in this study found that as participants identified themselves as more bicultural (adopting both American and Middle Eastern culture) the more likely they were to use instructive mediation with their children. This may be an indication of their understanding of both cultures and their desire to discuss this understanding with their children. This interpretation fits with Zhao & Phillips (2013); as parental acculturation increases, parents tend to become more instructive in their mediation of TV viewing.

### **Limitations**

Although every effort was made to conduct the research without the element of error, that was not possible. The limitations in the study were either not predictable or were unavoidable. Following is a discussion about the limitations that were identified by the researchers.

Even though 85 surveys were collected from Middle Eastern U.S. immigrant participants, the sample size was not large. A larger sample size would increase the statistical power of the results. In addition, convenience sampling was utilized; the participants were gathered from one metropolitan city in the U.S. Generalization to the larger population of Middle Eastern immigrants in the U.S. is not possible. However, the data collected in this research provides a firm foundation to explore the Middle Eastern immigrant experience in North America, specifically the U.S., and to provide a vehicle for comparing and contrasting a variety of immigrant populations. Future research avenues should expand the number of participants as well as collect data from a variety of locations around North America.

One additional limitation that existed involves the nature of the survey. Parents self-reported their own perspective of acculturation and TV viewing practices. Measures were taken to guard against the impact of self-reporting practices by collecting surveys anonymously. In addition, participants were notified in writing that their responses were completely anonymous. The notice accompanying the survey was translated to Arabic, which was commonly used in the Middle Eastern population, in order to ensure that participants understood the nature of the survey and all instructions.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated acculturation patterns of Middle Eastern U.S. immigrant populations and the impact of those patterns on parent-child interactions during TV viewing. Keeping in mind Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2001) ecological theory, the researchers were able to add to the literature regarding how broader ecological macrosystems (i.e., culture, language, education level) impacted smaller, microsystem niches (i.e., parent-child interactions).

The type of acculturation pattern present in Middle Eastern families did impact the ways in which the parents mediated television viewing with their children. This result has also been found in similar research with Hispanic and Chinese immigrant families (Zhao & Phillips, 2013). Given this conclusion, the researchers have determined that other media tools used in the home should be investigated further. Although television is still quite prominent in most homes in the United States, other tools such as social media and/or video games are on the rise. Future research should investigate the types of mediation - interactive, restrictive, or co-viewing - that parents utilize with their children around these media tools. In addition, a comparison should be made in terms of which media tool encourages particular types of parent-child interaction. This information is important for educational agencies so that appropriate decisions are made about curriculum for and communication with immigrant families.

The researchers concluded that one important step for host countries is to encourage and provide instruction in the dominant language of the country. Learning the language of the dominant culture is a step toward becoming acculturated into the new country. Many of the participants in this study felt separated from the dominant culture, but, as the participants became more acculturated, they were more likely to have instructive interaction with their children regarding TV viewing. TV programming may be a tool to springboard discussion and provide shared experiences for parents and children during the acculturation process. Middle Eastern immigrants benefit from learning English, not only to participate in the culture, but as a tool for teaching/instructing their children while watching TV.

There is much yet to explore. The United States is host to many cultures. Additionally, media tools continue to be a significant part of ecological niches among all cultures and are changing at a rapid pace. The researchers encourage future studies that continue searching for the best methods to acculturate immigrant families into host countries.

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APPENDIX

## Acculturation Survey

Please indicate how you would describe yourself regarding the items on the survey. Indicate your choice by placing an "X" in the space provided.

What language do you speak?

\_\_\_\_ Arabic only

\_\_\_\_ Mostly Arabic, a little English

\_\_\_\_ More or less equal amounts of Arabic and English

\_\_\_\_ Mostly English, a little Arabic

\_\_\_\_ English only

When you think to yourself, do you hear yourself thinking in:

\_\_\_\_ Arabic only

\_\_\_\_ Mostly Arabic, a little English

\_\_\_\_ More or less equal amounts of Arabic and English

\_\_\_\_ Mostly English, a little Arabic

\_\_\_\_ English only

What language do you prefer to use?

\_\_\_\_ Arabic only

\_\_\_\_ Mostly Arabic a little English

\_\_\_\_ More or less equal amounts of Arabic and English

\_\_\_\_ Mostly English, a little Arabic

\_\_\_\_ English only

In which of the following ethnic categories do you place yourself?

- Middle Eastern
- Middle Eastern with North American cultural influences
- Equally Middle Eastern and North American
- North American with Middle Eastern influences
- North American

On average, how often do you eat Middle Eastern food?

- Almost every day
- Five or six times per week
- Between three and five days per week
- Once or twice per week
- Almost never

How would you rate yourself?

- Very Middle Eastern
- Mostly Middle Eastern
- Bicultural
- Mostly North American
- Very North American

What is your ethnic identity?

- Middle Eastern
- Middle Eastern with North American cultural influences
- Equally Middle Eastern and North American
- Mostly North American
- Very North American

What kind of food do you usually eat at home?

- Almost exclusively Middle Eastern food
- Mostly Middle Eastern, but some other types of food
- Equally Middle Eastern and other types of foods
- Some Middle Eastern, but mostly other types of foods
- Almost never Middle Eastern food

What is the best description of your linguistic ability?

- I speak Arabic only
- I speak mostly Arabic and a little English
- I speak both Arabic and English nearly equally as well
- I speak mostly English and a little Arabic
- I speak English only

What is the best description of your reading ability?

- I read only in English.
- I read better in English than in Arabic.
- I read in both English and Arabic, nearly equally well
- I read better in Arabic than in English
- I read only in Arabic

I watch television in English so I can learn about the United States and its people.

- Totally agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Totally disagree

I watch television in English so I can learn to speak English better.

\_\_\_\_ Totally agree

\_\_\_\_ Agree

\_\_\_\_ Undecided

\_\_\_\_ Disagree

\_\_\_\_ Totally disagree

English-language television programs permit me to see North Americans as they really are.

\_\_\_\_ Totally agree

\_\_\_\_ Agree

\_\_\_\_ Undecided

\_\_\_\_ Disagree

\_\_\_\_ Totally disagree

English language television programs permit me to see the North American culture as it really is.

\_\_\_\_ Totally agree

\_\_\_\_ Agree

\_\_\_\_ Undecided

\_\_\_\_ Disagree

\_\_\_\_ Totally disagree

## Demographic Survey

Please indicate the response that best describes you and/or your family by placing an “X” in the space provided. For father’s and mother’s occupations, please write a response in the space provided.

How much education does the father of the family have?

- Less than high school
- Some high school
- Graduated high school
- Some college
- Graduated College
- N/A (not applicable; no father in the home)

What is the father’s occupation?

How much education does the mother of the family have?

- Less than high school
- Some high school
- Graduated high school
- Some college
- Graduated college
- N/A (not applicable; no mother in the home)

What is the mother’s occupation?

What is the annual family income

- Less than \$16,000 per year
- \$17,000 to \$30,000
- \$30,000 to \$75,000
- \$75,000 to \$100,000
- \$100,000 to \$150,000
- >\$150,000

Number of children in the family

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 or more



Gender of children (please write the number of each in the space provided)

\_\_\_ Boys      \_\_\_ Girls

Ages of children (please write the number of children of that age in the space provided)

How many of your children were born in the United States?

- \_\_\_ None
- \_\_\_ 1
- \_\_\_ 2
- \_\_\_ 3
- \_\_\_ 4
- \_\_\_ 5
- \_\_\_ 6 or more

What language do you use in your home?

- \_\_\_ All Arabic
- \_\_\_ Mostly Arabic
- \_\_\_ Roughly half Arabic, half English
- \_\_\_ Mostly English
- \_\_\_ All English

What language does your child use at school?

- \_\_\_ Arabic
- \_\_\_ English
- \_\_\_ Other, please specify.

### Television Viewing Survey

Please answer the following questions based upon your television viewing habits. Please indicate the number that best matches the following terms:

- 1= never
- 2= rarely
- 3= sometimes
- 4= often
- 5= always

How often do you....

1. Try to help the child understand what she or he sees on tv?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
2. Point out why some things actors do are good?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
3. Point out why actors do some things that are bad?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
4. Explain the motives of tv characters?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
5. Explain what something on tv really means?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
6. Say to your child to turn off the tv when he or she is watching an unsuitable program?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
7. Set specific viewing hours for your child?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
8. Forbid your child to watch certain programs?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
9. Restrict the amount of television viewing of the child?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
10. Specify in advance the programs that may be watched?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

11. Watch tv together because you both like a program?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

12. Watch tv together because of a common interest in a program?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

13. Watch tv together for fun?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

14. Do you watch your favorite program together?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

15. Do you laugh with your child about the things you see on tv?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5