2021

EXPATRIATE MIDDLE EASTERN MUSLIM MOTHERS' STORIES ABOUT SEX EDUCATION IN U.S. SCHOOLS: COMMUNICATION PRIVACY CHALLENGES AND NARRATIVE TYPOLOGIES

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By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In Rhetoric, Theory and Culture

MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

2021

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Rhetoric, Theory and Culture.

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the Name of Allah the Most Merciful the Bestower of Mercy

The nature of conducting any research involves the start point of the idea and someone who believes in its possibility. This dissertation's topic was not something I heard or read; it was a living experience that I walked through its details. Long before the topic takes the tangible shape, I carried the idea's seed, looking for a potentiality to put it in the reality's land. Without involve the help and support of several people who were believed in me, this project may remain as sketch notes in my memory notebook.

Therefore, I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Patricia Sotirin for believing in me and her continuous support and boundless patience. As an adviser and friend, she was always a source of guidance and steady encouragement. I consider myself a lucky person to be one of her students.

I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all my professors who served on my dissertation committee, Dr. Jennifer Slack, Dr. Diane Shoos, and Dr. Shari Stockero. I am exceptionally thankful for their willingness to give their time so generously to review my writing and offer valuable recommendations.

I owe many thanks to my family and particularly to my children, who patiently stood beside me, which I would not have been able to get through this challenging journey without their constant support and encouragement.

I extend heartfelt thanks to my dear sisters of the heart, the wonderful mothers who so willingly and enthusiastically participated in many ways to enhance this project's possibility to come out to the light. I treasure our friendship where I learned so much: jazak Allah Khair جزاكم الله خير (God bless you).

Thank you all.

Abstract

This study examines the stories of expatriate Middle Eastern Muslim (EMEM) mothers in the U.S. about how they talked with their children about the sexual education classes offered in U.S. public schools. Three concepts from the Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM; Petronio, 2002) were adapted to an interpretive narrative perspective drawn on Frank's (2013) typology of narrative types. A total of 15 EMEM mothers who had lived for more than one year in the U.S. were recruited in the study. Qualitative data were collected through written stories and interviews, and supplemented by the author's observations. All written stories and interviews were transcribed and translated by the author. The use of friendship as a method, narrative reflexivity, and insider status in working with the EMEM mothers' community are developed through the author's field diary. Stories were coded for emergent themes and the themes were then analyzed using the CPM concepts and narrative types. Findings showed that EMEM mothers navigate privacy violations by reasserting commitments to cultural and religious values but also by revising communication boundaries in order to talk with their children about sexual safety and health. Further, all three of Frank's narrative types--restitution, chaos, and quest--were evident in their stories and a fourth type--denial--was recognized. EMEM mothers' stories concerning their family privacy practices articulate cultural values and differences between residential and origin communities and countries; gendered mothering ideals and expectations; self-perceived religiosity; and multiple contextualizing tensions. The study underlines the value of communication-focused assistance to help EMEM mothers navigate these complexities, lead their families to follow safe practices, and maintain family stability and well-being.

1. Chapter one: Introduction

> The other day I found out that my daughter had a class about a 'sexual topic.' I did not know about this class before, and it turned out that the school did send a permission note asking for parents' permission to let their kids attend the class. My daughter hid the permission note and attended the class anyway. I later asked her what she learned in that class; she just said, 'I did not understand anything'. *(Anonymous Personal Communication, March 2014)*

This quote is from the narrative of an Expatriate Middle Eastern Muslim (EMEM) mother who has been raising her child in the United States. The *'sexual topic'* in question was related to sex education. The child had not received any sexual knowledge in a Middle Eastern setting. She was 13 years old, and American students of this age typically take sexual education classes in school to learn this type of knowledge. The child's mother disapproved and said that the topic should not be raised before the girl was at an appropriate age.

Recently, there has been an increase in Middle Eastern families moving to the U.S. for several reasons. Cumoletti and Batalova (2018) reported that in 2016, nearly 1.2 million immigrants from the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region lived in the U.S., accounting for roughly 3% of the country's approximately 44 million immigrants. Political conflicts and economic fluctuations in the region are considered to be the primary reasons that have led to a search for opportunities elsewhere (Cumoletti & Batalova, 2018) or obtaining a graduate or undergraduate degree in the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2020). According to an "*Open Doors*" report, there were approximately 72,325 Middle Eastern university students in the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2020).

Like other international people who have been relocated to a foreign country, many individuals from the Middle East face culture shock when they move to the U.S. (Oberg, 2006). Oberg (2006) attributed cultural shock to the anxiety resulting from losing all one's familiar signs and social intercourse symbols, that is, the thousand-and-one ways in which individuals are oriented to daily life situations through these familiar signs or cues. Emigrants may be confronted with challenges that they do not know how to deal with, which may cause difficulties and make their lives uncomfortable (Oberg, 2006).

1.1 The issue at hand

Sexuality is one of the issues that many EMEM parents rearing children in the U.S. contend with as it can potentially exacerbate cultural differences and cause conflict in the family. This is because sexuality and sexual education are far more widely discussed in the U.S, as compared to conservative nations of the Middle East. At the heart of such tensions are issues relating to the families' privacy and sexual information management. Specifically, the management of sexual education is essential between EMEM parents

and their children (particularly mothers and their daughters). This study's focus is on the experiences of EMEM mothers concerning their communication with their children regarding U.S. sexual education classes.

Studying the experiences of Middle Eastern family dynamics and communication regarding privacy management and sex education can contribute to a broader understanding of critical contemporary issues in family communication and Muslim cultural and familial experiences in the U.S.

1.2 Significance of the study

This study focuses specifically on the experiences of EMEM mothers regarding their communication process with their children about sexual education in the U.S. for many reasons:

- ✓ I have personal interest as a Muslim, a mother, and a Muslim mother in the responsibilities involved in children's well-being. Furthermore, the complications of each of these identities and their intersections are vital in identifying and addressing challenges facing EMEM mothers.
- ✓ I have professional interest as a communication educator who teaches educational and instructional materials available for current/future mothers related to their communication strategies with their children and their awareness of the importance of sexual education for their children in the new era (Flores, Docherty, Relf, McKinney, & Barroso, 2019). Moreover, I am interested in mothers' perceptions of prevailing communication practices and in identifying problems in the prevailing system. Additionally, I am interested in assessing the current system's strengths and empowering the stakeholders by adopting effective communication practices.
- ✓ It is critical to redress the shortage of research targeting expatriate Muslim mothers' communication strategies, particularly concerning their communication about sexual orientations. This demographic is insufficiently addressed in current studies given issues of access and prevailing presumptions about this demographic even among researchers. Their perspective on both the expectations and the struggle to meet those expectations deserves research consideration. The stories of these mothers can help in identifying their problems with the prevailing system. Additionally, including their perspectives helps in creating awareness about the complexities of the matter.
- ✓ There is a need to complicate knowledge regarding the Muslim mothers' experiences that recognizes the intricacies of cultural differences. Understanding the challenges that these mothers are facing may contribute to the ongoing work necessary to realizing inclusive socio-cultural communities. Specifically, identifying the difficulties these mothers face offers a starting point for addressing conflicts with social institutions such as the schools.

A better understanding of the nature of the challenges and opportunities in Muslim mothers' communication about sexual education contributes to communication research

about sexual education, family stability and child development. This is possible through the combination of schools' efforts and that of mothers (Shams, Mousavizadeh, & Majdpour, 2017). Additionally, the integration of cultural beliefs and challenges is central to long-term solutions. Addressing the problems these mothers face must be a primary task for the stakeholders regarding both opportunities and challenges.

This study suggests a perspective on the topic of mother/child communication about sexual education by giving a voice to Muslim mothers and describing their experiences while living in the U.S.

1.3 The story as it seems

EMEM mothers living in the United States face difficult and contrary expectations for raising their children: the prescriptions of religion, the cultural norms of their original country, the judgments of their local communities, the rules, and restrictions of U.S. institutions (especially the schools), and the needs and desires of their children, other family members, and themselves. There are certain stories about these demands and dilemmas that can be recognized through available studies and popular perceptions. This constitutes "the story as it seems" about the conservatism of EMEM mothers, the taboo over topics like sex, and the particular concerns over protecting children from sexual education.

In order to understand these prevailing perspectives, a brief review of three areas of research is offered. First, the studies about Middle-Eastern expatriates and sexual communication will be discussed to establish the difficulties and differences with U.S. practices and norms. Next, the communication of privacy issues for Middle Eastern families will be explored. Finally, the literature showing the importance of focusing on the meaning of being an EMEM mother and mother-children communication will be reviewed. It is not my intention to trivialize these dominant understandings but to tell "the story as it seems" in order to complicate it by looking at the lived experiences of EMEM mothers.

1.3.1 Middle eastern expatriates and sexual communication

From ancient times to today, Middle Eastern communities have been associated with the centrality of religion as part of daily culture and identity (Al-Jayyousi, Roy, & Al-salim, 2014; AlMunajjed, 1997). In Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, Islam is the major religion and exercises a prescriptive influence over individual activity:

> Islam plays a central role in defining the culture and acts as a major force in determining the social norms, patterns, traditions, obligations, privileges, and practices of society. This is especially so since Islam is not only a religious ideology, but a comprehensive system which embraces detailed prescriptions for

> the entire way of life (AlMunajjed, 1997 (as paraphrased in Al-Saggaf, 2004, pp.1-2),

These prescriptions resonate deeply throughout Arab culture, serving as an important part of daily routines and identity (AlMunajjed, 1997). AlMunajjed (1997) stated that Islam, established through the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* (the narrative record of the sayings or customs of the Islamic prophet (ﷺ) and his companions) beginning fourteen centuries ago, asserts cultural, political, and religious precepts that guide Muslims in daily ways of living and acting based on justice and equality. While the dominant story is that these prescriptions do not change, the contexts of interpretation change with historical shifts and contemporary conditions of life. Thus, the emphasis on justice and equality these days takes on new significance in the context of unrest and national antagonisms in the region and the world.

> Believers, be dutiful to Allah and bearers of just witness. Do not allow your hatred for other people to turn you away from justice. Deal justly; it is nearer to piety. Have fear of Allah; Allah is Aware of what you do (Al-Maaidah 5:8).[1]
>
> People, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might know one another. The noblest of you before Allah is the most righteous of you. Allah is the Knower, the Aware (Al-Hujurat 49:13).[2]
>
> The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), said during the middle of the day at the end of the pilgrimage, "O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no favor of an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness (Musnad Aḥmad).[3]

Further, this region is home to some of the world's most autocratically controlled regimes, with poor adherence to human rights and liberty provisions stipulated in the UN Charter. Authoritarian control is compounded by the entrenched customs and traditions of various tribes and clans, as well as a generational inheritance that is often manifested as absolute patriarchy (Barlas, 2019). In some cases, but not all, these social and political structures are unrelated to Islamic thought, especially considering sexual education (Sanjakdar, 2009). Thus, conversing about sexual behaviors in these regimes is considered from the patriarchy's perspective, which is more about preventing disgrace and face-saving. Islamic practices are about protecting the genealogy and the families, and about the conservation of human rights and health (Isgandarova, 2016). Thus, seeking knowledge to reach that purpose is encouraged by Islamic teaching (Isgandarova, 2016). In short, from the cultural perspective, there is little overt conversation about

[1] See: http://www.alro7.net/ayaq.php?langg=english&sourid=5&aya=8
[2] See: http://www.alro7.net/ayaq.php?langg=english&sourid=49&aya=13
[3] See: https://abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2011/12/30/lord-father-adam-one/

sexual behaviors, and children are restrained from it rather than encouraged to discuss such topics.

Along with these proscriptions, there is a cultural idealization of feminine shyness and dignity, which is evident in the popularity of the Arab proverb "shier than the virgin in her tent" when describing a shy person (Al-Saggaf, 2004). Shyness can be defined as a high moral behavior where "people should not dress improperly, should not be too outgoing, should not be confrontational, and should not talk about things that may cause embarrassment to them or to others" (Al-Saggaf, 2004, p. 2). Thus, Muslim women are caricatured as shy and subservient although in practice this is a stereotype that is another part of the "story as it is." However, the idealization of shyness in these societies enforces silence concerning many topics, especially sexuality, and this includes sexual education as well as frank conversations about marital sex or casual sex. Marital sex is considered the vehicle for the expansion of the nation, while sex practiced randomly is sanctioned as a disruption to religious practices, social customs, and cultural traditions, which are the 'essence' of 'the nation' (Yuval-Davis, 2003). Thus, the "story as it is" paints a portrait of a repressive, authoritarian, rigid, and patriarchal culture in which women are stereotyped as shy and modest and sexuality is never openly discussed.

This "story as it is" is about repression. Throughout the Middle East, sexual conservatism is reinforced by state repression. The Freedom in the World Index (2018), published by the bipartisan, independent research organization Freedom House, assessed a range of indices to evaluate factors contributing to repression such as the presence of elections, participation in political decision-making, and freedom of expression and beliefs (Freedom House, 2018). Freedom House researchers used a combination of on-the-ground research, consultation with local contacts, and information derived from news articles, NGOs, and other expert and objective sources. They found that this region is home to a range of absolute monarchies and non-monarchies which are authoritarian in nature. Out of the fourteen nations which comprise this region, most are classified as "not free" by Freedom House (2018). Similarly, in their 2018 Democracy Index, the *Economist Magazine* labeled most nations in the Middle East region as authoritarian, noting that some retain representative elements (such as partly free elections), but the region is sliding toward authoritarianism (EIU, 2018).

Reporters without Borders (2018) produced another vital index from which a general picture of human rights can be derived in these nations. This is a non-profit organization that mounts vociferous political advocacy campaigns to ensure that freedom of the press and information is respected worldwide. As both of these concepts form a critical cornerstone of political freedom and an essential safeguard against authoritarianism, it is essential to note that the majority of Middle East nations are noticeably bereft of press freedom, as with the broader freedom metrics produced by Freedom House. For example, these governments publicly prevent publication of any topics that include individuals' or groups' opinions contradicting the governments' system or intersecting with the rules and traditions of tribes and clans.

Undoubtedly, the attributes and laws common to controlled and authoritarian nations, directly or indirectly, limit sexual freedom and the exchange of sexual information in families. Nations with governments that are more authoritarian in nature, especially with regard to limits on human rights, freedoms of expression and the press, and democratic processes, are more likely to adopt gendered social divisions and greater repression of sexual and reproductive freedoms (Offenhauer, 2005). Such repression often coincides with religious doctrine that manifests in strict restrictions on sexuality, resulting in societies that are not open to the spread of liberal information, such as what is taught in Western sexual education. This confluence of factors enforcing conservative sexual attitudes and practices is a story that can influence individual Muslims who move from the Middle Eastern region to the U.S.

American culture may seem quite different for such expatriates, given that regarding sexual matters, it is highly diverse and can be both, at once, very liberal, and very conservative (Singer, 2008). The "story as it is" about America is that there is no one religion or vision of morality that dominates the culture. Indeed, religion may exist in the background but not as an explicit part of the government and public schooling, which is the role of separation of church and state. Upon their arrival to the U.S., many Middle Eastern expatriates may be confused and alienated by the lack of an overall narrative or sense of cohesion in American culture, along with feeling overwhelmed by the more straightforward approach to sexuality.

One significant difference that confronts expatriates is the tolerance for open discussions about human sexuality (Hall, 1976; Zaharna, 1995; Meijer and Aarts, 2012). On the one hand, U.S. citizens have the right to express their opinions about sexuality in public although, in many families, sex is an infrequently discussed topic (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Jaccard, Dittus, & Gordon, 2000). There is latitude for individual expression and debates over sexual orientation and practices. On the other hand, people from the Middle East tend to consider practicing sex out of marriage as a sin and sex a taboo topic that is appropriate only for private adult discussion (Feghali, 1997). Given that Islam's religion is woven into the culture, young people follow stricter societal regimens; hence, discussing the consequences of sexual practices, in general, is not an issue in Middle Eastern families. Thus, expatriate parents may feel an overall unease at American sexual openness.

In the Middle East, social and cultural standards dictate that parents do not discuss sex with their children or allow them to discuss it with other children. Commonly, children are forbidden from discussing sexual topics of any kind with anyone (Almunajjed, 1977). These topics are considered very private. When children do raise these topics, parents and other adults censor them, tell them to keep quiet, and immediately change the subject. As with broader sexual freedom factors, this behavior pattern might be linked to authoritarian repression in the Middle East region. For instance, evidence abounds of repression of sexual education there. Mohammad et al. (2007) reported that sex and sexual discussion in Iran remains a taboo subject, only to be taught after marriage. The result of such policies is often poor sexual education, along with higher sexual risk-taking

behaviors, particularly among adolescents. Shariati, Babazadeh, Mousavi, and Najmabadi (2014) found that particular cultural factors exacerbating such lack of appropriate sexual education included:

- "Social and cultural barriers, [such] as taboos" against sexual education or even discussions of a sexual nature, both in an institutional and familial capacity,
- "Structural and administrative barriers" to sexual education in Middle Eastern nations, such as what they deemed the "inappropriate structure of the health system," and
- "Political barriers, such as lack of an adopted strategy by [many Middle Eastern] governments" to improve sexual health (Shariati et al., 2014, p. 1).

As a result, adolescents are highly unlikely to seek healthcare for sexual matters, citing "sociocultural unacceptability," which often extends to the views of expatriate families (Shariati et al., 2014, p. 2). Further, 'sociocultural unacceptability' may be exacerbated by government censorship, as illustrated by McGrath (2010). McGrath (2010) reported that the Egyptian government ordered the removal of content related to male and female anatomy, reproductive health, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) from the school curriculum in 2010. These measures restrict public access to sexual education, often under the guise of cultural norms: although, they may reflect elements of religious propriety or even public sanction. So, when Middle Eastern families move to more permissive, liberal, and receptive societies or those with a more robust sexual health policy (like the U.S), sex education can be a source of tension and family conflict. As I will discuss, EMEM mothers are caught between these stories of Islamic repression and taboo and neoliberal Western permissiveness and public display.

1.3.2 Communication privacy and cultural differences

Cultural systems organize people's conduct and practices by helping to set the rules, norms, and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed (Hall, 1997, p. 4). Again, the "story as it is" sets out polarized assumptions about Arab and American cultures. Indeed, Zaharna (1995) observed that most international scholars tend to view the Arab and American cultures as cultural opposites. Communication patterns are among the many differences encountered in Arab and American cultures (Adelman & Lustig, 1981; Feghali, 1997; Hall, 1976; Zaharna, 1995). Middle Eastern culture is known as a conservative culture which pays significant attention to overtly polite interaction standards, and most behaviors are located between honor and shame (Adelman & Lustig, 1981). In this culture, social patterns are strongly inclined to courtesy and the use of indirect face-saving strategies (Adelman & Lustig, 1981; Feghali, 1997). As a result, families from Middle Eastern societies are expected to enact thick boundaries around topics that have a high chance of violating such rules.

This is especially the case in the family context with sensitive topics such as sexual behaviors. According to Davies (1982), the boundaries set independently and internally by these families may be tested in a way that may lead to family conflict or strain.

Specifically, these boundaries are tested when taboo topics are encountered within an unfamiliar and sophisticated culture. Sexual issues in an intercultural situation are just such taboo topics (Segrin & Flora, 2011) that are most likely to generate interpersonal difficulties in families (Petronio, 2010). In this situation, some scholars suggest that family communication may be dependent on avoidance strategies (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995b). In contrast, while this may characterize some families in American culture, the general perception is that U.S. families are more direct in their communication patterns, even if the nature of the content is harsh or uncomfortable (Feghali, 1997). Cultural values, beliefs, traditions, and gender rules have a huge impact on the expectations of families and individual family members in terms of privacy management (Bridge & Schrodt, 2013; Isgandarova, 2016; Petronio, 2013), communication, and dealing with different types of information (Zakaria, Stanton, & Sarkar-Barney, 2003). Obviously, individuals in each culture manage privacy about sexual matters differently, but the "story as it is" holds to quite polarized generalizations.

The "story as it is" about sexual discussions between Middle Eastern Muslim parents and children is supported by several assumptions that reinforce the taboos and privacy boundaries around sexual topics. For instance, it is assumed that having discussions about sex with children makes them aware of the issue at hand. In the process, they end up paying more attention to relationships and sexual matters (Isgandarove, 2016). This argument maintains that sexual education actually evokes sexual emotions rather than restraining them, thus creating a desire for sexual advances among adolescents or young adults. Another assumption is that adolescents do not have sufficient discipline to make their own decisions about sexual matters after receiving sexual education. As a result, children may violate cultural values, which might shake families' stability because of the social stigma against promiscuity in Middle Eastern communities. The "story" in Arab cultures is that only religion serves as the right tool to teach children sexual discipline appropriately (Isgandarove, 2016). A final assumption is that sexual education in itself is viewed as a practice created by the West. It is a technique to deal with the consequences of sexual freedom, such as promiscuity and teenage pregnancy. Such assumptions have contributed to the slow implementation of sexual education programs in the school curriculum of most Middle Eastern countries (Hasso, 2010).

By contrast, the "story as it is" is that "sexual topics" in the U.S. are taught in schools, and children are allowed, and often encouraged, to ask questions and talk about sexual orientation or activities, such as girl/boyfriends (Percival & Sharpe, 2012). Additionally, education plays a major role in increasing awareness of safe sexual practices, including proper use of contraceptives, focusing on a single sexual partner, or abstaining from sexual activities. The story is that such education was instituted in response to the burden of unwanted pregnancies and treatment costs of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Percival and Sharpe (2012) indicated that the U.S. government made laws requiring sex education in response to threats from HIV/AIDS and the social and economic costs of teenage pregnancy. Nambambi and Mufune (2011) identified a further rationale in the assumption that good sexual education ensures good morals and values in a younger population. At the same time, the debates over abstinence versus safe sex and the back-

and-forth legal status of sexual education in the public schools suggests that the "story as it is" may be more complicated than the contrast between Middle Eastern repression and Western permissiveness.

1.3.3 Meaning of being an EMEM mother

The simple story of motherhood in any culture is as a powerful institution, ideology, and set of care practices responsible for the well-being of young ones. So, what is the meaning of being an EMEM mother, and what are the reasons for the focus on mothers in this study? By definition, a "mother" refers to the person who does child birthing, childrearing, assisting in childrearing, and caregiving. A biological mother, adoptive mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, nurse, teacher, or any woman who has held some or all of these roles, either by choice or otherwise, may be labeled a mother and included within the institution of motherhood (Rich, 1976; Pappano & Olwan, 2016). Rich (1976) described the institution of motherhood not as a power position but instead as a position socially constructed for women, in which they find themselves restricted and disempowered. According to Thurer (1994), "the institution of motherhood can be seen as a device used to condition women to a particular social role, which may or may not be in the best interests of their children or themselves" (p.3). Mothering is widely recognized as a critical set of practices, an institution, and an ideology not solely because of the vital activities that a mother or maternal figure is supposed to perform but also because of the conceptual regime that positions the mother as responsible for the child's well-being. Mothers are charged with full responsibility as family caregivers and play an essential role in children's upbringing (Al-Jayyousi, Roy, & Al-salim, 2014; Hays, 1998). This maternal ideology casts a mother as the person who must look out for what is best for her children, driven by her instinctive feeling as caregiver and protector (Al-Jayyousi, Roy, & Al-salim, 2014; Hays, 1998; Pappano & Olwan, 2016; Thurer, 1994).

A Muslim perspective on communication among mothers and their children is presented by Hamed (2016). This author seeks to understand the role that Muslim "mothering" plays in Islamic education. She argues that a credible metaphor for such mothering can be found in the mother's idea as a "school" unto themselves (p. 87). The most famous metaphor in Eastern culture is *'The mother is a school,'* which is part of a work of great poetry titled *Ethics and Science* by the renowned poet *Hafez Ibrahim*. In this poetry, Ibrahim explains the mother's importance as a model for morality not only for her children's future but also for all society (Hamed, 2014).

ألام مدرسة اذا اعددتها
أعددت شعب طيب الاعراق
ألام أستاذ الأساتذة الألي
شغلت مآثرهم مدى الآفاق (إبراهيم حافظ، 1910)[4]

The mother is a school**,**

[4] See: https://adabworld.com/author/hafez-ibrahim/

> If established well, she establishes a noble people.
> The mother is the master of the first teachers,
> Whose legacies have reached the horizons. (Hafez Ibrahim, 1910)

Such education is framed in the household, where it takes the form of information transfer between generations, whereby these mothers "[transform] male-dominated impersonal knowledge" (such as religious doctrine or social mores) into personally meaningful experiences" (Hamed, 2016, p. 90). Moreover, the process of such translation, especially of religious truths and social expectations, is framed as imparting core knowledge, such as that which is haram (religiously forbidden) or halal (religiously permitted). Effective mothers are those who are able to not only transmit such beneficial information to their children but also do so in an evocative way that results in those children understanding the values and lineage their mothers seek to impart (Hamed, 2016). This complicates the story of mothering by suggesting that mothers make the teachings relevant to immediate issues rather than merely repeating them. This is a critical insight for this study as it points to the way EMEM mothers negotiate privacy proscriptions about sexual topics with and for their children.

This concept of the mother as school is extended by Yuval-Davis (2003) as the "burden of representation" in Muslim mothers. It is a responsibility which is further couched as the 'burden of transmission' (Yuval-Davis, 2003, p. 17). According to Yuval-Davis (2003), women "are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivist's identity and honour, both personally and collectively" (p. 17). This 'burden' is further elucidated by Hamed (2016), who reports that the burden of motherhood falls so sharply on a Muslim woman that she is forced to be an "exemplar of piety at all times"; while the "rest of humanity" is free to make mistakes and repent (p. 87). Given their institutional, ideological, and familial significance as the bearers of cultural and religious doctrine, it is appropriate to focus on Muslim mothers for this study.

Apart from religious and ideological idealizations, another reason for the focus on mothers is the interpersonal skills that are generally required for supporting their children. Post-positivist research generalizes about mother/child communication, adding to the "story as it is." According to Segrin and Flora (2011), "mothers have stronger emotional connections with their children, are more emotionally affected themselves by interactions with their children, and take a more active role in parenting than fathers" (p. 160). In addition, children in U.S. families tend to be communicatively more open with their mothers than their fathers (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a). According to Miller-Day, Fisher, and Stube (2014), mothers have a high level of involvement and interaction with their children concerning self-disclosure. As a result, it is easier for a mother to speak to her child and educate them about sexual matters (Miller-Day et al., 2014; Walker, 2001). Walker (2001) found that 72% of teenagers never speak to their fathers about sexual matters. On the other hand, only 43% of the same population had never spoken to their mothers about the same issue. In this study, the authors believe that mothers are more likely to earn children's trust and confidence than fathers when it comes to sexual matters.

In addition, mothers also play a crucial role in educating children and teenagers as well as in relation to sexual behavior (Walker, 2001).

Notably, daughters may require more attention than sons given prevailing assumptions about heteronormative sexual differences. According to Nambambi & Mufune (2011), it is primarily girls who approach their mothers to speak about sexual matters. On the other hand, boys may speak to both their mothers and fathers. In addition, parents tend to focus on girls more than boys when it comes to sexual issues (Nambambi & Mufune, 2011). Luker (1997) claimed that this tendency stems from a parental perception that sex and sexual relationships for girls are dangerous. They perceive the girls as vulnerable to sexual harm due to the male view of her body and her pregnancy chance. In contrast, parents perceive boys' sexual tendencies as adventurous (Nambambi & Mufune, 2011). Accordingly, mothers find themselves strategically placed to take care of girls' needs and communicate with them regarding issues of sexuality.

EMEM mothers in the U.S. may be caught between countervailing demands, specifically, their duty as parents to address issues relevant regarding their children's upbringing, the school-based discussion of sexuality, and cultural taboos against discussing that subject. They may worry over the decision to talk about this topic or avoid it and struggle with the negotiations over disclosure and privacy. These struggles may involve social, cultural, and psychological tensions (Petronio, 2002). Thus, it is critical to hear from EMEM mothers to attain a more nuanced view of their understanding and practices regarding the difficulties they experience in addressing U.S. sexual education for their children.

In sum, the EMEM mother's perspective regarding sexual education deserves focused study. Moreover, their communication strategies when this topic comes up with their children may be varied (Advic & Buyukdurmus, 2015). Apart from the public-school curriculum regarding sexual education, the parents' input, particularly that of the mother, is significant (Othman et al., 2020). Giving these mothers the opportunity to talk about these challenges and their strategies for addressing them provides a more grounded basis for assisting expatriate parents whose home cultures may have prepared them for very different demands and responsibilities regarding their children's education and safety.

1.3.4 Communication within the family

In any social relationship, communication is central to the quality and success of the interactions that occur. Interpersonal communication is a dynamic and complex process involving awareness, listening, comprehension, and reciprocated exchanges that facilitate the transmission of information and emotions between people (Hortsman, Hays, & Maliski, 2016). Families are the most primal structure of relationships that weigh in heavily to a human being's development and their successful integration into society (Runcan, Constantineanu, Ielics, & Popa, 2012). Communication in parent-child relationships is fundamental to the formation of bonds through affectionate and supportive exchanges, the appropriate socialization of children to ease their transition into society, and creating a conducive family environment. The "story as it is" puts great stock

in the nuclear family and the communicative influence of parents. I will sketch this story in order to show that it is too linear, adopts a transmission view of communication from parent to child, and renders the parent-child relationship static.

First, communication between parents and their children is supposed to be among the most impactful connections in an individual's life (Hortsman et al., 2012; Van Egeren & Barratt, 2004). In the nuclear family, parents have the responsibility of providing children with basic resources necessary for their sustenance and development as human beings, including meeting their physical, psychological, and social development needs (Van Egeren & Barratt, 2004). A considerable body of literature shows evidence of parents' motivation to provide love and protection for their offspring. Consequently, parents' investment in the form of time, finances, and emotional support to their children (especially through communication) - and hence, the resulting interdependence - creates a vital interpersonal connection between them (Hortsman et al., 2012). As the story goes, it is through this system that children are socialized into adulthood and their communication patterns and skills are developed.

Family studies highlight the importance of a nurturing and caring relationship in a child's social, cognitive, and emotional development (Popov & Illesanmi, 2015). Hortsman et al. (2016) indicate that a secure connection to their parents enables children's adaptive adjustment. In this sense, communication not only is verbal but also contains logical and non-verbal aspects (Runcan et al., 2012). Further, parents develop a communication pattern that characterizes the family relationships of authority, affection, and support, and this pattern can be generalized as facilitating either conformity or conversation. With regards to conformity, the parents are tasked with the obligation of creating a climate that emphasizes synchronicity of attitude, values, and beliefs (Doyle, Moretti, Brendgen, & Bukowski, 2004). Effective conformity increases the cohesiveness and unity of a family. In contrast, a conversational orientation involves the freedom with which family members participate in open discussion as they interact with each other (Doyle et al., 2004). Through frequent conversations, parents and their children are able to share their thoughts and feelings. The “story as it is” is that parents need to have effective family communication to create a secure environment that encourages their children to open up to them and interact with them freely in order to avoid a plethora of personal and social ills. However, this story about nuclear family relationships and communication fails to consider the cultural differences that confound EMEM mothers (Segrin & Flora, 2011), especially when the topic on the communication table is considered taboo.

1.4 The complications

When Middle Eastern parents move to the United States, they find their children mingling with the host culture’s children and in situations in which sexual topics are often openly discussed with educators, parents, and other responsible parties, and among the children themselves. This difference can lead to complex cultural negotiations between Middle Eastern parents and their children living in the United States.

There is pressure for Middle Eastern children to participate in sexual education once they are enrolled in American schools. While the seemingly obvious solution for Middle Eastern parents would be to keep their children out of sexual education classes, this is not an easy decision. If the children avoid sex education in the classroom, they will risk being labeled outsiders or out-group members. There will be considerable pressure on the students to participate in sexual education classes if they do not wish to alienate themselves from their peers, in addition to the ways in which they may already be culturally alienated (Giuliani, Olivari, & Alfieri, 2017). Hence, families are often drawn into complicated boundary management interactions.

If Middle Eastern expatriate children seek such education anyway: they can cause considerable strain in their families. While discussing sexual behavior with their children seems to some parents to be a simple task, for EMEM mothers their story goes far beyond simple talk. Understanding the situation faced by EMEM mothers is critical to forming a body of recommendations grounded in the cultural changes which these individuals experience. To this end, a qualitative narrative approach will be employed to adapt the family communication theory of privacy management from a post-positivist emphasis on empirical relations to an interpretive emphasis on narrative elements and structures. Mothers' narratives will be analyzed to explain these mothers' privacy communication strategies as they address the issue of their children's sexual education. For these mothers, this is often more than just communication strategies but can entail serious reflection on their religiousness, their moral status, and their responsibilities as mothers to ensure their children's well-being and safety. In short, it is complicated.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The assumption of this study is that the topic of sexual education complicates communication between Middle Eastern mothers and children in the U.S. by requiring them to address a taboo topic. Further, both mothers and children may be reluctant to address this topic, provoking conversational privacy management strategies. The next section explicates the relevant concepts from the Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPM). Narratively, the way in which ideas come together, pull apart, bounce around, and finally land in a cohesive pile are informed through intellectual history. A story is likely to narrate people, or the characters involved in the development of the theory. An individual has the capability of adding or shifting ideas that alter the narrative approach of thinking, and imaginations are ignited. Therefore, it is believed that the narrative framework identifies historic events influencing the development of the theory, such as in the case of CPM. However, this study reframes CPM ideas to focus on mothers' stories rather than on relationships among abstracted concepts. Thus, the theoretical framework is interpretive and adopts a narrative approach to analyze mothers' experiences and their stories. A justification and explication of narrative communication analysis follow the section on CPM.

1.5.1 Communication privacy management

The Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM) introduced in 2002 by interpersonal communication scholar Sandra Petronio focuses on the decision-making process of revealing and concealing information. CPM is a practical theory for understanding communicative issues about privacy (Petronio, 2002). The basic premise of this theory is that individuals have "*privacy boundaries*" that circumscribe what an individual may deem to be either personal, private, or shareable. Individuals strive to coordinate and maintain their privacy while communicating with others based on the perceived motivation or costs and benefits that would result from the disclosure of information (Petronio, 2002). *Disclosure* is defined as the procedures by which people obtain private information. Ultimately, this theory argues that people have a vested interest in the control of such information (Petronio, 2002).

CPM theory indicates that individuals believe that they have a right to control their own personal information, as is commonly the case in interpersonal interaction or interactions within the healthcare or educational environment. Petronio (2002) used "privacy boundaries" as a metaphor and argues that people's sensitivity to differential 'levels' of information privacy is only attenuated when others request such private information, or otherwise show an interest, or may seem to threaten personal or sensitive information held by the individual (Petronio, 2002). According to Petronio (2002), controlling private information generates a position of dialectical tension, which situates the individual in between opposites pulling forces. On one hand, there is a need to be private through concealing, while on the other hand, there is a call to being public through revealing. By extension, the right to protect one's personal information often results in intense, often culturally-informed, or otherwise personally-held rules that dictate when, how, and why others may be granted access to their information. In addition to culturally-informed or personal decision criteria, people have different motivations and risk-benefit calculi, serving as metrics upon which the individual determines whether the disclosure is appropriate (Petronio, 2002).

This theoretical element does not solely apply to the disclosure of personal information to third parties, but can also be applied in a reactive manner regarding the disclosure of sensitive information from such parties back to the individual. Moreover, people's sensitivity to the disclosure of private or 'difficult' information is also influenced by their relationships with others, such as between parents and children. For instance, parents often serve to dictate the type and extent of sensitive information to which their children are exposed (Petronio, 2002). The CPM perspective suggests that there may be conflict and confusion among family members about what and how to discuss sensitive or otherwise delicate topics or whether they keep them private, given cultural differences regarding discussion boundaries over topics such as sexuality.

Several CPM concepts are relevant to the present study. First, the disclosure of information often entails a negotiation over rules regarding the subsequent privacy of that information to regulate further disclosure. An important component of CPM is "*access*

rules," which are often culturally-dependent on other things (Petronio, 2002; Petronio, Martin, & Littlefield, 1984). Access rules refer to the '*permeability*' of the privacy boundaries or the amount and depth of the information allowed to be passed to or out of these boundaries. Another important component of CPM is *"boundary turbulence,*" which may arise when violations of privacy boundaries occur (Petronio, 2002). Violations exist when private information leaks into or out of these boundaries. According to Petronio (2002), individuals will develop their privacy boundaries through life events, family relations, and social and cultural values.

There is a connection between the rules of families' privacy orientations and the permeability of family boundaries (Petronio, 2002). Segrin & Flora (2011) explained that the family is a system governed by rules, a place in which family members behave in an orderly manner, with explicit and implicit rules frequently based on larger cultural values. The conceptual factors upon which familial interaction elements are predicated are explored throughout the Segrin and Flora volume. These authors start with defining the concept of 'family' with broad strokes, and as a culturally-informed social, organizational unit, which revolves around the 'Circumplex' model of familial functioning raised by Olson (2000). According to Olson (2000), the circumplex model defines familial interactional structures as based upon the factors of flexibility, cohesion, and communication skills, with the clustering of those factors and their relative weights in familial interaction, framed as central to defining the family. However, the purpose of designing this model is not to categorize family structures as discrete but instead to provide a dynamic landscape to assess the relationships between the three factors mentioned earlier, their relative weights, and the ability of a given family to function effectively.

The model was also designed to break the purely theoretical factors and instead find relevance in "clinical assessment, treatment planning, and research," especially on how to optimize the effectiveness of familial or marital therapy outcomes (Olson, 2000, p. 144). The Olson model has reached some strong conclusions regarding the various interactions among the theoretical elements it addresses. For instance, families who maintain "balanced levels of cohesion and flexibility are most conducive to healthy family functioning," while families who have "unbalanced levels of cohesion and flexibility (very low or very high levels) are associated with problematic family functioning" (Olson, 2011, p. 65).

The concept of excessive rigidity is relevant to this study in the familial interactional space. This can lead to a family being incapable or unwilling to shift in response to change, whether of a sort which is internally engendered or which is imposed externally by an organizational actor or by some other factor outside of the family (Sanders & Bell, 2011). By contrast, a great degree of flexibility in the family structure might result from a family too willing to assimilate into a new culture. This eventually leads to family members being "unable to create shared agreements that govern their actions and inter-relationships, providing no firm base on which to stand" (Sanders & Bell, 2011, p. 3). Thus, it is critical for families to reach an appropriate level of balance between flexibility

and rigidity, which is an especially difficult challenge in light of the stressors imposed on the family in flux due to rapid cultural change.

The culturally-informed family structure is also likely to shape a family member's choices regarding the disclosure of family-private information. However, as children grow, they tend to detach themselves from the privacy orientations of the original family, resist cultural norms or question them in general, and form their own standards of privacy that match their personal privacy needs (Morr Serewicz, Dickson, Morrison, & Poole, 2007). Thus, in some cases, they develop their own rules that are separate from the family, and those rules become their privacy boundaries. Child (2007) used the concept of family privacy orientations as a basis for examining whether parental socialization regarding privacy orientations influenced bloggers' privacy management in their blog postings. The findings indicated that even with more open family privacy orientations or more flexibility, young adults still did not apply these values about access to information in their rules of blogging to their privacy choices (Olson, 2000). In the same way, the rules guiding the blogging choices of young adults were not affected even when families advocated for more closed family privacy orientations (Child, 2007). The outcome of Child's (2007) study suggested that family privacy orientations may become contentious in the relationships among parents and young adults.

Indeed, CPM theory explains that individuals can face dilemmas when reacting to 'mixed' boundaries, or those in which boundary lines are fuzzy and unclear (Petronio, 2002). For instance, in the anecdote above, a child decided to attend the sex education class without her parents' permission. In the case of her Middle Eastern family, boundary turbulence resulted because the child was exposed to external information that was considered taboo (based on their privacy orientations) and caused violation of family privacy boundaries. This leakage has the potential to impact family relationships because it exposes information that conflicts with the family's cultural values, as observed in this family's story.

1.5.2 From CPM to Narrative

Given the dilemmas and complications of conversational taboos in the context of intercultural differences, the plan is to adapt the Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM) to an interpretive perspective. Most CPM studies are framed by *a post-positivist* view. However, this framework fails to address the way families understand their experiences in rich and contextualized ways, rather than reducing interactions to rules and their violations. The post-positivist perspective guides the researchers "to stable patterns that can explain and predict why collectivities," or families, "stick together to develop value-free conclusions, with investigator bias controlled using operational definitions of concepts and experimental procedures" (Putnam, 1983. p.40). In contrast, the interpretive research method focuses on the meaning of social action. By reframing CPM, this study focuses on achieving a meaningful understanding of mothers' experiences (Heracleous, 2004).

Putnam (1983) explained the interpretive approach "to understand the actor's view of his or her social world that extends beyond disclosing subjective meaning to an examination of why and how shared meanings exist" (p. 41). This work attempts to reframe CPM theory through a performative narrative assessment, to reach a contextualized understanding of the experiences under investigation (Petronio & Durham, 2008). The storyteller embeds (albeit unwittingly) the CPM concepts, such as access rules, privacy boundaries, and boundary turbulence in their story, and not as static variables outside of that story (Sandelowski, 1991). Thus, the way of manifesting subject understanding of these concepts is within the contents of the stories. In this respect, the narrative approach values these concepts in terms of the participants' cultural expectations and lived-meanings. EMEM mothers navigate myriad challenges as they engage in their host cultures while trying to maintain a steady cultural identity for their family. This includes maintaining close relationships despite potential barriers to communication. The present study will consider family struggles over access, boundary turbulence, and privacy orientations when sensitive information is involved, especially regarding school-based sexual education classes, addressed through family narrative and story construction (Daly, 2007). CPM concepts will be addressed through narrative constructions, rather than considering them as operationalized entities.

By extension, narrative performance theory, as an epistemological context, is argued to provide a firm basis for the effective theoretical understanding and recognition of variability in family communication practices (Langellier & Peterson, 2018). Such variation is similar to that which presents under CPM but reflects the performative nature of the storytelling more than variability in private disclosure. Such variables include differences in how stories are told, which stories are told, and what identities these stories constitute, both in the familial context and in the presentation of such stories outside the family (Langellier & Peterson, 2018). The value of assessing the storytelling performance is argued to result from the high number of factors which influence why and how a story is told, rather than merely the factors presented by the content (Langellier & Peterson, 2018).

1.5.3 Narrative methodology

Family researchers consider family stories and testimonies as meaningful methods of collecting first-hand data for their research. Also, the researcher can engage with participants as they make sense of and give meaning to families' experiences (Bamberg, 1997; Daly, 2007; Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004). Bamberg (1997) pointed out that "narrative is linked to personal experience in particular and sense-making in general," or simply serves "as a window to people's experiences" (p. 335). From the individual level, the narrative gives voice to mothers to embody their experiences, especially if these experiences carry a kind of dilemma or challenge. For instance, privacy boundaries for each family are socially and culturally constructed (Petronio, 2002), that is, regulated by access rules about what counts as private information along with the cost of control and ownership of such information. Thus, any dialectic tension within these rules would lead to boundary turbulence and family dilemma (Petronio, 2002). Although the

aforementioned theoretical factors stand to supersede the voices of the mothers assembled through the use of CPM factors, it is important to recognize that CPM will be used only as a 'framework' for such narrative evaluation. While the mothers' voices are considered foremost as a matter of narrative, this work seeks to 'code' their responses, when applicable, in terms of CPM theory but will not use the elements of CPM to 'force' the mothers' responses into those terms.

There is a distinction between a post-positivist approach and a narrative approach to analysis. Whereas the latter would be looking at variables and their relationships, the narrative approach focuses on meanings and their constructions and connections within a story and beyond that story (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, 2018). For present purposes, a narrative analysis maintains the focus on mothers' voices, the details and narrative relations within their stories, and the way personal stories are embedded in larger cultural, religious, and historical narratives. Storytelling grants the mothers the chance to express the details of the story in their own words (Frank, 2013). Such narrative expression serves to refamiliarize them within their environment and "discover new perception of [their] relationship with the world" (Frank, 2013. p. 1). This can be clarified as a narrative perspective suited to turbulence in privacy boundaries and the sense of de- and refamiliarization.

1.5.3.1 Temporal ordering, threshold activities, sense-making

Communication and daily conversation contain many stories, considering the common preface to conversational storytelling *'let me tell you the story'* (Ochs & Capps, 2009; Georgakopoulou, 2006). A person narrates "using language or another symbolic system to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order to demystify them and establish coherence across past and present as an unrealized experience" (Ochs & Capps, 2009, p. 2). Narrative works as a way of tracking events (beginnings, timeframes, locales, processes, and procedures, contexts), and guides researchers to create understandable and insightful meanings of subjective experiences. For instance, if a mother's story were about her children's disclosure of sexual education when she began to feel that privacy boundaries were becoming unstable, the story would portray the challenges that such an EMEM mother may face regarding the differing views of sexuality and sex education. These factors follow the specific factors which are present in interpretive research, through its focus upon the specifics of the situation, rather than seeking to use this data to offer an overarching or general theory.

When families tell stories about themselves, they follow constructions that "create, interpret, and solidify meanings about their experiences and identities, which provides a window into family sense-making, communication, identity work, and well-being" (Nelson & Horstman, 2017, p. 2). According to Vangelisti, Crumley, and Baker (1999), narrative and performative analyses recontextualize stories to produce a richer understanding of subjective experience. Sandelowski (1991) pointed out that narrative approaches will involve a "temporal ordering of events" as well as an attempt to "make something" that constitutes "threshold activities." The narrative exposition is likely to

capture the vision of the narrator as this person seeks to interpret "a link among elements of the past, present, and future." This exposition also involves the differential cultural, value-based, and contrasting issues, which influence the narrative (p. 162). Such threshold activities are also highly relevant to a qualitative approach. This is because the content of such recollection, its sensibility for the subject, underwrites enactment. In other words, how people understand and "enact" their lives through narrative recollection manifests a subject understanding of both their own observations and what is expected of their lives and observations based on context or environment (p. 163). The timeline of storytelling can serve as a sense-making tool for understanding experiences, especially in a family context (Kellas, 2018). This insight will be elaborated in the Methods Section, where Frank's narrative types will be adapted for the privacy management issues encountered by EMEM mothers addressing sexual education with their children.

1.5.4 Frank's typology

Arthur Frank's typology of illness narratives provides a schema for rethinking the CPM concepts in the case of the Middle Eastern family and sexual education. This is not to say that their dilemma is an "illness"; rather, people manage disruptive issues through narrative frames that can be adapted to consider the strategies and stories of EMEM mothers. According to Frank (2013), people can lose their sense of familiarity with their surrounding environment when an external or internal intervention affects the normality of their routine. For instance, Frank (2013) claims that "serious illness is a loss of the destination and map" which previously guided the ill person's life, so that those with illness are forced to learn "to think differently" (p.1). This is achieved by listening to themselves, telling their stories, absorbing others' reactions, and experiencing their stories being shared.

The mothers aim to understand, locate themselves, and restructure their positions within a new environment when they tell their stories and express their experiences regarding privacy boundary turbulence or contradictions and challenges to accessing rules. According to Frank (2013), "stories have to repair the damage that illness has done to the ill person's sense of where she is in life, and where she may be going" (Frank, 2013, p. 53). Telling the story can be a coping mechanism for people undergoing life challenges (as a person who has been seriously ill, or even the mother who moved far from her local environment to a foreign country to start a new life). For instance, Frank (2000) pointed out that storytelling can allow the person to gain a safe spot in the hard times and can even be used as a tool to make familiarity with the strangeness of an untoward experience. Entering the relations of storytelling recuperates persons, relationships, and communities (Frank, 2000).

For researchers, telling a story can reveal valuable information about the storyteller's place within a network of relations, including the relationship of the family members to each other, such as a mother-daughter relationship or a mother-son relationship (Miller-Day et al., 2014; Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004; Lowinsky, 2004; Vangelisti et al., 1999). Listening to people's stories as a data collection tool allows the researcher to ask more

questions for clarity; hence, a better understanding of the narrator's experiences is acquired (Frank, 2013; Langellier & Peterson, 2004; Riessman, 2008; Sandelowski, 1991). In the present case, the one-on-one conversations can help to unveil secret or avoided topics such as sex (Petronio, 2002; Segrin & Flora, 2011).

As described by Sandelowski (1991), this theoretical approach contextualizes research subjects as "narrators" and the stories that they tell "as texts to be interpreted" by the researcher (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 161). As opposed to more quantitative or objectively rigorous systems of data collection, the narrative approach involves assessment of the "ambiguous nature of truth [and] the metaphorical nature of language." Both of these factors come into play when discussing the subjective nature of reality, along with people's interpretations of their lives (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 161). Thus, a deeper conceptual perspective can be reached that considers the historical and socio-cultural constraints against which people define their lives, backgrounds, and vision, through analysis and evaluation of past events and solicitation of direct narrative (p. 161).

1.5.5 Why Frank's narrative types?

Frank's (2013) narrative typologies of "restitution, chaos, and quest" were proposed as a way of analyzing the ill person's narrative or, as Frank called it, wounded story-telling using each of these types as a "listening device" (Frank, 2013, p. 76). According to his description,

> "The wounded storyteller is anyone who has suffered and lived to tell the tale. Suffering does not magically disappear when the tale is told, but the more stories I heard the less space my own suffering seemed to take up. I felt less alone. This book was my attempt to widen the circle, to amplify and connect the voices that were telling tales about illness, so that all of us could feel less alone. The wounded storyteller is a guide and a companion, a truth teller and a trickster. She or he is a fragile human body and a witness to what endures." (Frank, 2013, p. xi).

The challenge that the person faces in a major illness springs from the change that interfered in the person's life, causing a loss of the "destination and map" that had previously guided them. Ill people have to learn "to think differently" (Frank, 2013, p. 1). This can be used as an analogy to describe any critical circumstances or events that come into the person's life that caused them to feel insignificant, challenged, and existentially vulnerable (Frank, 2013, p. 1). The case of Middle Eastern mothers is not the same as that of people who were dealing with major health changes. For one thing, these mothers are not facing physical changes or the threat of death. Secondly, their dilemmas are not about the impossibilities of previous life plans; rather, it is about the implications of possible life choices by themselves as parents and their children. Third, for Middle Eastern mothers, it is not an end of the road situation as it is with the ill storytellers in the story of Frank. The mothers still have a chance to rethink about the future.

Nonetheless, the illness narrative types are applicable. For instance, in this study, Middle Eastern mothers are facing two kinds of challenges: privacy management and family relationships. The challenging situation of sexual communication is applicable to any mother with children, especially with high school children but even with children at younger ages. This topic is often counted as private, which makes engaging parties feel awkward, embarrassed, or uncomfortable (Coffelt, 2010). At the same time, it may also seem meaningful, and mothers may feel there are risks and vulnerability for their child and for their relationship with that child. This happens most especially when the child's values and boundaries' permeability are different than the family's (Child, 2007). Specifically, for Middle Eastern mothers, cultural differences between the Middle East and U.S. cultures become more difficult and pertinent in the face of contrasting cultural mores regarding sexual behaviors. The discrepancy of the culturally constituted mores may manifest in differences among access rules, or the privacy boundaries enacted by mothers and children. In the face of these troubling family divergences, mothers may feel alone in the throes of opposing cultural forces, or they may feel dogmatically committed to enforcing more conservative values and practices. Any of these possibilities suggest that their stories will be about these challenges and their own parental commitments and decisions. Thus, this study will incorporate the narrative typologies of "restitution, chaos, and quest" described by Frank (2013) as patterns to analyze the experiences of the Middle Eastern mother's negotiation of conversational taboos with their children in the context of intercultural differences.

1.6 Purpose and Research Questions

This study aims to explore the experiences of Middle Eastern mothers and their children in the U.S. by analyzing their stories to identify the challenges and opportunities in their communication with their children regarding family privacy, using the sexual education classes offered by the U.S. public schools as the topic of their talk. Based on this focus, the research questions focus on the stories told by Middle Eastern mothers about their experiences with their children regarding sexual education in U.S. schools in terms of two issues:

- What strategies do their stories reveal about how mothers enact cultural expectations of conversational privacy management regarding sexual education topics?
- How do the stories told by Middle Eastern mothers make sense of their experiences of communicating with their children in relation to sex education?

2. Chapter Two: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This study explores mothers' experiences toward their communication strategies with their children concerning sexual education. Qualitative research leads to a set of interpretive and material practices that offer a kind of flexibility that is essential for studying such experiences (Creswell, 2013; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), curiosity is fundamentally the motivation of qualitative research and often described by improvisation. Interpretive qualitative research questions usually focus on several perspectives. Specifically, questions are about the meaning, the influence, the process, and the outcome of events and activities in relation to the people involved (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Maxwell, 2009).

Family stories and a narrative approach are appropriate for accessing rich information about family matters and family practices, including communicating about private topics and other culturally-informed family communication patterns. Specifically, due to the sensitivity of communication about sexual education with their children, expressing the events in the form of a story provides richer and more contextualized (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004). Managing privacy within the family emerges from family interaction patterns, such that privacy is not limited to one person (Petronio, 2002). The symbolic production of family interaction patterns reads the past, preserves the present, and creates an awareness of the future to create a shared reality of life for family members (Segrin & Flora, 2011; Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004). Family storytelling links these family realities to larger historical and cultural contexts. According to Daly (2007), "narratives offer a window on culture through the process of storytelling that helps to understand how culture is constituted" (p. 113). Thus, using family stories as a bridge to understand these mothers' experiences is an appropriate strategy.

2.2 Participants and sampling procedures

Criterion sampling as a type of purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2009; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) was applied to select the participants. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), criterion sampling refers to the criterion that is "derived from commonly understood definitions of the case" (p. 112). The inclusion criteria for recruiting participants in this study are as follows:

- Mothers are from the Middle East, with children ages 10 to 17 years old (the age group that is eligible for a sex education class) and
- They have lived in the U.S. for more than one year, to ensure they encountered the cultural differences concerning the conversational taboos.

This follows the model shown by researchers Reese and Newcombe (2007) in their exploration of mothers reminiscing about their children through autobiographical

narrative. According to this model, some lowly educated mothers dispense highly elaborative reminiscing; however, reminiscing in mothers with higher levels of education tends to be more elaborate.

Fifteen Muslim mothers in total participated in the study. This number of participants was also found to be relevant in Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, and LaRossa (2015), which established that such a sample was sufficient to obtain a qualitative body of data of enough depth. The snowball sampling strategy was used to identify participants. According to Creswell (2013), the snowball strategy "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (p. 158). The location of the study was Ohio (Kent, Akron, and Cleveland) because:

- There is a well-established Muslim community there,
- Many of these Muslim families include school-aged children, and
- Personal previous contacts with this community enabled me to rely on established friendships with members of the community (Tillmann-Healy, 2003) to begin the snowball process.

As a first step, 20 potential participants were identified through the snowball technique and agreed to participate in completing a demographic questionnaire. The purpose was to ensure their suitability for the study and to learn basic information about their involvement in their children's school and their knowledge about sexual education classes. In this stage, all the invited participants were within the study criteria. Also, the mothers were asked for their email address, and all mothers provided one, which was used to communicate with the mothers who agreed to write their story. The mothers use two languages, Arabic and English, in their daily living, so the questionnaire also requested their preferred language for the interview as well for the written stories. Second, the snowball strategy was used continuously by asking these participants to introduce me to people from their network who would meet the study's criteria, and ten additional potential participants were given the demographic questionnaire. A list of participants was made who met all criteria and were willing to do the study based on the information gathered from the questionnaire, which resulted in fifteen participants. Finally, I approached the fifteen selected mothers to explain the aims of the research and explore their willingness to participate in this study. Once confirmed as participants, signed informed consent forms were obtained. IRB permission was received for this study based on a pilot project (MTU IRB # M1598). Some of the participants permitted me to use their real names while two of them opted for the use of pseudonyms for privacy reasons. Therefore, it was decided to give pseudonyms to all the participants.

2.3 Methods of data collection

A triangulation of data sources has been used to explore the mothers' experiences. According to Daly (2007), "Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of information as a way to understand the social situation at hand, more completely" (p. 88).

Data was collected via the following sources: (a) demographic questionnaires, (b) family stories in relation to the targeted topic, (c) semi-structured individual interviews, and (d) small group discussions (from 2 to 5 individuals in each group).

First, after receiving the demographic questionnaire, all the participants were encouraged to write about their experiences with their children concerning the sexual education topic. To do that, a form called 'Narrative Reporting' had been given to participants via a phone app (Whats App), email, and in hard copy. The mothers were asked to think of a time when they had to communicate, negotiate, explain, or ask their children about any topic that related to sex. They were asked to write a short story, a long story, or just a moment describing the event with all the details and the language they prefer. There are two reasons for an advance request of the stories: to give them adequate time to remember and reflect on the details, precisely because "stories are always at some level incomplete" (Daly, 2007, p. 110), and to consider these stories as background for the interview questions. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) illustrated that researchers often use interviews as a vehicle to "verify, validate, or comment on information obtained from other sources" (p. 175). There was an opportunity to develop a richer understanding of the target experiences by using the interview questions to flesh out stories' details. According to Daly (2007), "Although the expression, 'I want the whole story' is used, this too is a fallacy as a story might always include more detail if constructed in a different manner" (p. 110). Multiple data sources helped to construct a deeper understanding of the mothers' experiences.

Next, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted, which means these interviews were guided by a set of structured questions in addition to a set of flexible questions based on the main focus of the study (Creswell, 2013; Daly, 2007). Some of the participants were not fluent in English; however, all the participants chose Arabic as their preferred language, attributing this choice to *'it is the best way to express their feeling'*. When these mothers are speaking their mother tongue, they do not have to think of the appropriate words to express their feelings, they can avoid oral mistakes, and feel more comfortable and less formal (Squires, 2009). The researcher is a native Arabic speaker and speaks English fluently as well, so the interviews were conducted in Arabic and later translated into English and transcribed for this research project.

Finally, three small group discussions were conducted. Small groups bring together people who have shared experiences to understand the complexity of their experiences because the small group "can provide a supportive environment for disclosure of experience" (Daly, 2007, p. 154). Individuals with similar situations can expound on topics with each other. There is also the possibility for group reflections and creativity, which may help develop a deeper understanding of their experiences. During the process of collecting data, I recorded all the participants' individual interviews as well as the small groups' interviews using a digital recorder, and I took hand-written notes.

Finally, my own narrative diary of my data collection experiences became a complement to the data collection. This includes not only the time that I gave myself immediately

after each interview gathering to set down the meeting story but a recounting of how I encountered and engaged with the mothers in their Muslim community in Ohio. I believed that by recording my own notes, commentaries, stories, and experiences of meeting the mothers, I would have details of the context that might complement my analysis. Such details included nonverbal signs, details of living spaces, and social practices. This was not meant as “ethnographic fieldnotes” but was initially recorded as a personal account of my time in Ohio. However, once I began to reflect on the interviews and written stories, I realized that my diary account provided an opportunity to apprehend "a more elaborate reflection on" the context of the gathering (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.212). Specifically, my diary account offers both a self-reflexive perspective on my research and brings in rich descriptions of these encounters that are often left out of interview reports. Reflexivity is a critical tool of qualitative researchers because in this way, the researcher’s own position viz a viz the participants and the data can be considered. Given that I have been part of this community and have a personal connection to many of the mothers, my diary offered a way to recognize the importance of these contextualizing relationships. While I did not code my diary account, I did draw on my observations for additional insights into the interview and story data. Because this rich contextualization affords a critical understanding of the difficulty of sexual education for these women, I include my diary narrative as Chapter 3.

One final aspect of data collection was the use of a member check procedure. Once I had collected all the written narratives and interviews, I contacted my participants again to ask about their stories because they had shared private details about their family communication with me. I asked each one, “Do you want me to use this story in my dissertation?” If they were reluctant, I asked about which details they no longer wanted me to use and I redacted those details from my data. While this changed the stories, there were no participants who withdrew from the study altogether and even though some details were lost, the elements of privacy and the story types were still readily discernable.

In the end, the data in this study represents the lived experiences of 15 Muslim mothers residing in the USA with their families, comprised of many different ethnic and racial groups, originally coming from the Middle East. The twenty-nine narratives collected for this study include twelve written stories, eight individual interviews, and three small groups including two mothers (group 1), three mothers (group 3), and five mothers (group 2), respectively in each group. A detailed explanation of these data will be introduced in chapter three.

2.4 Data processing method

This study has three types of data: Twelve written stories, including three stories that were written in Arabic, which I personally translated to English, and nine stories which were written in English. For the stories that were written in English, the choice to clean up the language slightly has been made in certain places in the text in order to give the reader a better sense of the meaning of these mothers' stories. For example, in some

stories, there was mixing between the helping verb (is, are), the verb tense (past, present), or plural and singular, which could distract the readers. Unless word choice and sentence structure made it hard to understand in English what a mother was saying, the excerpts have been left verbatim since nonfluencies and awkward wording can suggest how uncomfortable these mothers were or how difficult this topic was for them.

Second, three hundred and fifteen minutes of recorded spoken interviews, including eight individual interviews and three small groups, were transcribed in 63 pages in total. All these interviews were conducted in Arabic, and then the chosen parts were personally translated into English. Further details of the data sources and collecting process will be introduced in the next chapter.

2.4.1 Data Transcription

One of the primary data preparation methods used in this work was transcription. I chose the personal transcription mechanism for all the recorded interviews because I was unable to use any transcription program such as NVivo transcription. Even though the program has an Arabic choice in their language list, their use of a 'standard' or 'homogenized' version of Arabic, lacking the nuances of the spoken language, meant that the software results in unreadable text. A more important reason for choosing personal transcription was capturing the hidden meaning in the spoken words. On the surface, this might seem a simple process, with a standard view of such processes viewing transcription as consisting of taking the subjects' spoken words and putting them into a text format. However, there are far greater complexities to be taken into account. As Ellingson & Sotirin (2020) describe transcription of a sort which forms such a strong aspect of subject-driven qualitative research, is at its least accurate when it consists of the nature of the spoken word; that is, when it produces transcripts in agreement with the discursive conventions of written text, or which essentially consist of 'formal' language. While authoritative, such transcriptions, particularly when unexamined before informing qualitative findings, may lack many of the core cultural aspects (or indeed, any other aspects) conveyed through informal speech. No matter the degree to which a given researcher uses a transcript to pursue some degree of objectivity in qualitative findings, 'objectivity' remains a highly elusive goal. Instead, the transcript itself is informed both by the subject being transcribed, as well as by the researcher doing the transcriptions, the latter in a manner which "[invokes the] disciplinary histories and practices" of the researcher (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p. 54). Cases in which the researcher seeks to achieve some degree of 'invisibility,' especially that which coincides with any attempt to transcribe interviews 'verbatim,' neglect the inevitability of such researcher bias.

Rather than seek verbatim transcription (a task which Ellingson and Sotirin indicate is impossible), it is critical that the transcriptionist, as in this instance, seeks to achieve a meaningful "engagement" with the transcription subject, through which an evidentiary document perhaps greater than the product of subject and researcher input alone, is produced (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p. 55). By extension, there are few transcription domains where the researcher's own input is so critical as translation. While all

transcription implies a strong role to be played by the researcher in determining transcribed output, this process is even more subjective when it takes place across languages. For instance, translation, both through the implicit interpretation of the researcher and across normative language structures, might seek naturalization, as to achieve some formal version of the 'output' language, but it is argued to be most accurate when acknowledging that there is also far too much 'room' for interpretation across languages to neglect the researcher's role in determining final transcription 'output.' In essence, because "accuracy in translating spoken speech" is an elusive goal even when the transcription is in the same language that the subject uses, it is impossible to prevent transcripts from becoming "constructed, selective… [and denoted by] continual, active choice-making," especially when the language of transcription differs from the subject's spoken language (Ellingson & Sotirin, p. 58). To this end, the transcripts provided in this work will, at some point, reflect the implicit viewpoint of the researcher, particularly in the form of this researcher's role in subject translation processes.

Finally, this transcription method distinguishes between the researcher's role in the encounter (the spoken "I") and the third person voice ("the researcher") used to denote the "current self who now encounters the same data at a different point in time" (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p. 69). The purpose of this 'dual' basis for assessment is to distinguish the researcher at the point of data collection from the researcher at the point of data *assessment*. This is intended to differentiate between the two subjective voices upon which the transcription results are based, neither of which can be ignored if the results are to be predicated on the true subjectivity of the encounter. In all, these procedures were adopted to acknowledge the implicit difficulties of transcription methods.

2.4.2 Data Translation

Likewise, there are issues involved in the choice made to self-translate and to include two languages. The findings for this work include English quotes and an English translation of a spoken dialect of Arabic. Findings comprised of subject quotes are written in two languages, indicating that this information was collected in Arabic and then translated by the researcher into English. The obvious rationale for choosing to include quotes from both languages is to provide evidence of the translation's accuracy as well as prevent the participants' voices from being lost during the translation (Al-Amer, Ramjan, Glew, Darwish, & Salamonson, 2016; Hassan, 2014). However, as Hassan (2014) observed, "however accurately the translator may search into the inner depths of the writer's mind, the two texts cannot be fully equivalent" (p. 2). In addition to that, this researcher's choice not to employ a professional translator to conduct this translation might seem presumptuous. Still, to understand the rationale for this choice, it is necessary to consider the difficulties which can be faced by any translation from one language to another. Hassan (2014) explains the role of the translator as uneasy work because of the need "to reproduce the experiences of a different person" (p. 2), especially if the translation is from Arabic into English (Al-Amer et al., 2016).

According to Hassan (2014), there are strong differences between Arabic and English sufficient to complicate any translation effort. For instance, Arabic has a 'single' present tense and does not distinguish actions that were completed in the past; in other words, Arabic does not provide a 'future perfect' tense. Moreover, Arabic has no indefinite article, leading to difficulty in interpreting ownership (such as 'the man's dog', which is translated from Arabic as 'man the dog'), and includes the pronoun in relative clauses where such pronouns are omitted in English (such as: 'where is the dog which I lent him to you yesterday?) (Hassan, 2014). Finally, the outright lack of cognates between English and Arabic (those words with the same linguistic derivation) means that it can be very difficult to obtain a 'direct' translation between English and Arabic, or vice versa, with much of the translation and ultimate word choice being left up to the translator. In this instance, this work sought to achieve the most accurate interpretation, but when there was ambiguity in responses (or their English equivalent), it was presumed that this researcher's interpretation, judgment, and knowledge of the dialect was sufficient (Al-Amer et al., 2016).

In addition, one potential means of standardizing English-Arabic translation is through automated software translation tools of a sort that have become more common and accurate recently. However, the specific dialect often used in these interviews and stories was not suitable to even these sophisticated translation tools, like Google Translate. Though strong automated objective translation-based research outcomes might be reached through software in years to come, such tools are insufficient at present and might result in a less accurate translation than what was produced here. Considering all these barriers, therefore, the researcher's translation at this time was the best choice.

2.4.3 Data Displaying

The first and second data, which were provided by the participants, present two sides of the same currency—written data where there was no interaction with the researcher, and spoken data that witnessed the presence of the researcher during the collection process. However, I believe that both of these data come together in the ways in which these mothers are using these stories for themselves as frameworks for understanding their experience. The development of a narrative through written text and through a verbal narrative provided distinct advantages for this research. The written approach provides textual data that frame a starting point for the complete story through the use of the mother's written words to come up with the meanings of the original narrative. With the narrative approach, the value of the information is based on the reduction of biases from the respondent, and this can be effectively attained through the written stories. The written narrative is essential in the enhancement of the validity of the information provided by the mothers, mainly because they are not influenced by the researcher's presence, unlike the interview. However, the spoken narratives provided the same stories but through a paradigm that gives more freedom in the use of verbal and nonverbal expressions (Daly, 2007; Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020). As well, the personal interaction through interviews enhances the ability to reach more clarification in regard to the event detail and identify the non-verbal concepts in communication, which may have provided

more information that is not captured in the narrative (Caro, 2016; Daly, 2007). Thus, using "story fragments" from the two sources is recommended to indicate the types of narratives since the women are constructing various versions of their experiences with less or more details. Practically, using the two forms of data for the narrative interchangeably is the right approach for the narrative structure of this research. The narrative structure is not just in what the mothers are saying or writing but it is in their mind, the way of thinking about the event, and the way of handling the situation that they are trying reach to either resolve it or come to some place of comprehension. As well, this interchangeability of data use strategy enabled the narratives to complement each other and enhance the comparability of data. Therefore, the research analysis and reporting used both of these kinds of data interchangeably and contextualization provided by the fieldnotes and commentaries in order to discern a narrative structure that this study argues is the way these women are thinking about their experience.

2.5 Data coding process

For the research at hand, Lindlof and Taylor's (2011) data analysis procedure including "labeling and breaking down (or decontextualizing) raw data and reconstituting them into patterns, themes, concepts, and propositions" was adapted to uncover representative emergent themes in the data set (p. 243). They explain that the tasks include of the qualitative researcher "data management, data reduction, and conceptual development" (p. 243). The data included written stories and transcript interviews which were coded. There were several sources of contextualizing information that were part of the data gathering process. For example, while conducting interviews, I made notes about nonverbal cues or hesitations, and other observations. Such notes about the side talk, nonverbal signs, and body language of interviewees provided valuable contextualizing information. In addition, I wrote extensive diary entries about my experiences with the Muslim community where I collected data. While these were not coded as data, they provide rich contextualizing information and are included for that reason as Chapter 3 (Watt, 2007). All these written and verbal records assisted in the transcribing, reflecting, and verifying processes that took place throughout the data coding and analysis.

To do the coding, similar ideas and concepts expressed by the participants were aggregated and categorized. Before this process, I grouped all the participants' responses in separate files, the written stories in one file, and the interview transcription in another as the first step of data management for coding (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). As a second step, the data coding for this study went through the data reduction phase which started from repeated reading of the data. The main goal of this general reading phase as Lindlof & Taylor (2011) clarified is to eliminate collected materials that are not related to the research problem. For example, in the interview and due to the friendship relation, some participants shared stories about successful shopping, finding a new store, or even disagreement with a husband about an event unrelated to the research focus.

After carefully revisiting the data and retrieving significant codes for several days, some terms/phrases started to stand out repeatedly in these narratives. At that point, I started to

use highlighters to mark these terms/phrases. Then, terms/phrases that appeared to be synonymous were highlighted with the same color (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Extra reading and coding were continuous processes that I followed in each stage of coding (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The next phase of coding took place through a close rereading of the data to group highlighted terms/phrases into themes. These themes were identified by a representative phrase or story fragment. Finally, I recontextualized the themes into stories. These stories detailed various aspects of the mothers' experiences with sexual education as well as other challenges. For example:

- ✓ Self-roles as a parent
- ✓ Existing regulation of cultural/religious expectations
- ✓ Family's position in a foreign country
- ✓ Expected outcome of cultural differences

After I had identified themes in the verbatim words of the stories themselves and identified stories about the experiences with sexual education in schools, I turned to analytic coding. Through using colored sticky notes on a whiteboard, I drew lines to make connections between the story themes and the study's theoretical and conceptual framework (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). My goal was to identify stories and themes related to the CPM theory's concepts (boundaries, rules access, and turbulence) and Frank's story types (restitution and chaos) in order to examine these participants' experiences (Petronio, 2002). Thus, I made careful connections after looking closely at the emergent themes and stories from my coding.

Through repeatedly coding these mothers' narratives and closely examining the way these mothers chose to tell their stories and their word choices to explain their experiences, I identified themes that could then be addressed in the analysis. The analysis related the patterns in the data to the conceptual categories of Frank's typologies and CPM. This involved its own back-and-forth consideration of data, themes, and concepts, as I will discuss in the next section.

2.6 Methods of data analysis

Many researchers support the value of narratives and storytelling as sources for data collection and analysis (Frank, 2013; Kellas, 2008; Langellier and Peterson, 2004; Riessman, 2008). More broadly than just a data procedure, a narrative approach taps "storytelling performances all around us" (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, p. 2). Bauman (1975) argued that storytelling represents a type of performance. According to Langellier and Peterson (2004), individuals understand the context by analyzing the narrative within which relations are organized (p. 30). Critical factors of storytelling and narrative theory can be delineated through performance analysis, which flows from the assessment of "what situational resources exist and how are they mobilized and ordered" (Langellier and Peterson, 2004, p. 14). Pivotal research by Labov (2008) indicated that when an individual tells a story, whether formally or informally, under any context, their storytelling is informed by cultural and structural contexts, particularly those that have

previously defined the subject's understanding of what a story is. For instance, the concept proposed by Langellier and Peterson known as "situational and material constraints" help in understanding the narrative structure (Langellier and Peterson, 2004, p. 13). In this context, the research analysis is focused upon the story itself as it falls within the given conditions.

In addition, researchers describe the wide range of other factors that are also germane. According to Langellier and Peterson (2004), there is a need to "focus on what is said and what is not said within a horizon of speaking, listening, and feeling—a lived unity of bodily participation" to describe storytelling (p.11). Such ancillary but no less critical factors will depend on the performative aspects, which are conveyed by the subject, such as facial expressions and body movements. A focus upon the implied meaning of what is presented in the narrative account is further framed by Riessman (2008). Riessman (2008) urged researchers to do a "close reading of contexts, including the influence of investigator, setting, and social circumstances" (p. 121).

2.7 Narrative and storytelling research methods: background and analysis

This study aims to understand the experiences of Middle Eastern mothers regarding their communication with their children about sex education. Daly (2007) argues that "the story is constructed in ways to highlight events at different points of time and to move between the past, present, and future to capture memories, current experiences, and anticipated events" (p. 110). Therefore, the data of this study were collected in a narrative format because people organize their experiences through and into stories to give them meaning through storytelling. According to Daly (2007), the narrative methodology is an essential mechanism that offers an approach to tap into the structures and understand familial reality. Through narrative, it is possible to make sense of one's existence, since stories enhance the process of constructing and interpreting not only actions and events, but also identities and culturally established personalities (Daly, 2007). Therefore, narrative analysis forms a useful methodology to achieve the goals of this study.

Effective narrative analysis requires researchers to evaluate four elements. First, "the validity of the [description] and the degree to which it corresponds with reality" (Daly, 2007, p.110). Stories are often analyzed for narrative coherence and validity. That is, stories organize elements in recognizable patterns that give a sense of reality. In other words, the narrative relies on the efficacy of the construction as well as the content disclosed. Thus, the narrative analysis may examine the way that the mother tells and constructs her story to convey something about the meaningfulness of the experience that she went through while communicating with her child.

Second, a narrative analysis may also consider the sequential nature of the story (Daly, 2007). For instance, an appropriate manner of creating a sequence of incidents is to acknowledge that narratives entail beginnings and endings. Such an approach offers a

sense of causal structure to the narrative that gives experiences regarding systematic placement and meaning. This aspect may be helpful in following the ways that mothers construe the implications of their negotiations over privacy and disclosure with their children for their ongoing relationships.

The third mechanism of narrative analysis focuses on creating and recreating a life experience since stories are able to move flexibly in the past, present, and future (Daly, 2007). Under this conceptualization, the story is recognized as a 'point in time', but also as existing along a continuum, where its relevance extends to influence other stories (in the past and future) over which it holds a degree of relevance. A fourth aspect of narrative analysis revolves around the characters of a narrative, and that leads to the function of the story in society. By this consideration, stories involve hardy archetypes, visions of people acting in conventional or relatable situations, often with the understanding that the stories are relevant due to the lessons the storyteller stands to offer to those individuals hearing the story. These third and fourth points can indicate larger significances about sexual education, ex-patriate parenting, and negotiating tensions between residential and cultural contexts. Thus, ways of organizing events in the stories and searching for themes and patterns within the content of those stories can be a way to highlight the critical points illustrating the communicative experiences of these mothers and their larger significances.

A useful typology for narrative analysis is Frank's (2013) three types of stories— Frank's concentration was on illness time stories (e.g., cancer)--specifically *restitution*, *chaos*, and *quest*. Each of these illness narrative types can serve as "the most general storyline that can be recognized underlying the plot and tensions of particular stories" (Frank, 2013, p. 75). I am using this typology even though the mothers are not facing illness crises. The structure of these story types addresses critical exigencies that disrupt people's lives. For these Muslim mothers, the sex education issue is such an exigence that brings to the fore the expatriate disruption to their lives. The three types of 'illness' stories result from personal experiences, which trigger storytelling.

2.8 Frank's narrative typologies of restitution, chaos, and quest

In this section, I will elaborate on the three narrative types that Frank identified and that I will adapt to the stories told by Middle Eastern mothers. The three types are restitution, chaotic, and quest narratives. Frank (2013) pointed out that when telling *restitution* stories, narrators focus on the steps that assisted them in recovering from a lapse in their life plans, routines, or from the challenges of stressful situations. "Restitution denotes an end, a solution or resolution to the problem with the hope and promise of the body returning back to its normal state" (Nosek, Kennedy, & Gudmundsdottir, 2012, p. 997). The narrators position themselves in relation to others as "protagonists and antagonists or as perpetrators and victims" while telling stories of restitution (Bamberg, 1997, p. 337; Frank, 2013). In most restitution stories, the storyteller minimizes the size of the experience by saying *'it was nothing.'* The storyteller takes a retrospective perspective by looking back on and minimizing the negative impact of the experience, such as saying '*I*

am well,' or through recurring behavior patterns, or by presenting a happy ending and return to normality without mentioning the hard details that led to this ending (Frank, 2013).

Restitution narratives often involve time-shifting. For instance, many of the stories describe the start of a new beginning as it takes the audience back to the moment before the beginning (Frank, 2013). The focus on the moment before the beginning forms part of the performed narrative and highlights the possibility of fixing problems that arise. People construct a narrative that keeps them within normal cultural norms and expectations by telling the story prospectively, retrospectively, and institutionally, in essence, predicting the future. For example, being healthy is narrated as, "Yesterday I was healthy, today I'm sick, but tomorrow I'll be healthy again." (Frank, 2013, p. 77). For instance, Huisman (2014) pointed out that when a family tells a story, they are choosing a narrative that represents them as a normal and acceptable family based on cultural criteria.

Additionally, Frank (2013) pointed out that individuals harbor hope for the future through restitution narratives, show optimism for avoiding future illnesses, and protect their memories from disruptions. Restitution stories also represent the memory outside memory in the sense that individuals narrate experiences that resulted in their current state. For instance, stories about illnesses represent an aberration from the ordinary. Therefore, the act of telling restitution stories protects the mind from disruption by focusing the mind on the evolution of experiences into patterns and avoiding suffering experiences (Frank, 2013). In telling stories, narrators avoid the memory of their challenges to represent themselves as culturally 'normal.'

Restitution narratives depict both strengths and limitations. According to Frank (2013), stories of restitution can be compelling. They often enact the realities involved in returning to normal. They also convey cultural power in that the teller is a hero who overcame an obstacle. The narrators lack a new version to fall back on in a deconstruction of mortality when a restitution story fails and is unable to recover (Frank, 2013). Primarily, the language of restitution focuses on the self-story of survival experience, which "is the simplest narrative to hear and to tell" (Bally et al. 2014, p. 291). This is quite different than the chaos narrative.

A chaotic story represents a lack of optimism and the negation of expectations. Frank (2013) observed that chaos is the opposite side of restitution. The chaos narrative represents the loss of control when the individual is struggling with illness challenges (Bally et al. 2014). Langellier and Peterson (2004) asserted the idea that recapturing a lived experience functions as the power of knowledge in performing narrative. Additionally, narratives can be a form of social control that may situate protagonists as the agents of moral good (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). The audience of chaos narratives may find them threatening to hear because this narrative form captures the struggles in lived experience, and the stories can ignite a kind of anxiety that pressures the audience (Frank, 2013).

The wounded storyteller of a chaos narrative lives in chaos; hence, he/she cannot tell the story in words. The major characteristic of a chaotic story is "the narrative is told using a staccato pacing of words, without causal sequence or purpose" (Bally et al. 2014, p. 291). Chaos stories allow listeners a vision of some chaos, even if in narrative form. For instance, Frank (2013) noticed that in one story about a mother's struggle with Alzheimer's disease and other family problems, the teller emphasized such chaotic events that her audience failed to recognize their order of occurrence. The teller also failed to explain the sequence of events that built to her current predicament with a sick mother. The person that has lived through the chaos may reflect on the experience (Bally et al. 2014; Frank, 2013), sorting out the events related to a chaotic story resulting in new chaotic events.

The third type of story, the *quest* story type, describes the relationship between an individual's challenging moments and their desire to accept or resistance to accepting the situation. In their narration, storytellers focus on quest stories to avoid chaos and instead highlight their perspective on the story in context (Bally et al. 2014; Frank, 2013). According to Frank (2013), quest stories are the most popular stories because they include a series of obstacles that the protagonist faces and overcomes to conquer the quest, together with experience and knowledge. Quest narratives treat an illness challenge as a journey where there is "a story to tell" (Frank, 2013, p. 115). The quest narrative possesses common themes, including those of departure, initiation, and return. A description of these three stages is built in an orderly way to form the whole story, starting with the symptoms, moving through the struggles and actions to the climax, and then closing with the conclusion in which the person celebrates the end of the struggles (Frank, 2013). In the final stage, the return stage, the narrator outlines their victory in fighting an illness but well understands its likelihood to re-occur (Frank, 2013). Essentially, the quest story underlines the transformation from a narrator's perspective and exhibits some form of a lesson that a narrator gains from their journey (Frank, 2013).

A quest story often invokes an ethic of solidarity, whereby the voice of the narrator inspires others throughout the story commitment to that expresses the voice of the narrator to others. By the use of the quest form, the narrator enacts an ethic of inspiration with the inspiration resulting from the previously suffered wounds (Frank, 2013). The narrator recollects their memories of the lived experiences and uses such recollections as the voice to inspire others and fulfill the pedagogical responsibility of memory. The recollection of memories underlined in quest narratives arranges proper events and makes it easier for others to learn from the experience.

Frank acknowledges that his "suggestion of three underlying narratives of illness does not deprecate the originality of the story, because no actual telling conforms exclusively to any of the three narratives" (Frank, 2013, p. 76). Instead, he identified these three types because "more than three seems less than helpful" (p. 76). The present study aims to adopt Frank's narrative typology as an initial guide for analysis to add more dimension to mothers' experiences. The application may lead to identifying additional types depending on their experiences, as suggested by Frank (2013).

2.9 We are friends

Hearing the voices of Muslim mothers as they address a challenging situation with their children is critical because nobody can describe that situation more expressively than the people who live it every day (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016; Din, 2017). Some of the women, when asked for their input, turned their faces away from me, and some laughed loudly in shock or smiled in embarrassment before beginning to reply. As a Muslim mother who was raised in the Middle East, I can understand their reaction. In fact, this response was expected, and I was well aware of this possibility. It is a bit hard to talk about sexual matters with these women, who might have otherwise sought to achieve a demanding standard of interaction with their children. Eastern societies idealize mothers as people with no flaws, no mistakes, and perfect morals. The progress in understanding can be made only by remaining sympathetic toward these views, and through the mothers' own construction of dynamic narratives. One aspect of this study that contributes to facilitating the analysis and richness of the finding is the friendship I had with most of the participants and being an insider; while friendship counters ideas about objectivity and methodological distance, it was an asset to this study (Aroian, Katz, Kulwicki, 2006). Many studies propose friendship to be a bridge to better insights into subjective experiences.

According to Tillmann-Healy (2003), friendship as an approach to data-collection methodology can enhance research relationships, creating an interpersonal bond characterized by affection, idealization, and acceptance. In a sense, the friendship relation of the researcher with these mothers strengthens the opportunity to be involved in some of their daily life activities and hear their stories. Friendship as a method of collecting data narrowed the gap between the researcher and the participant through sincere engagement, "permitting each to explore the complex humanity of both self and others. Instead of 'speaking for' or even 'giving voice,' researchers get to know others in meaningful and sustained ways" (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 733).

The mothers provided a logical starting point for identifying participants because of the close friendship I have with five mothers from the Muslim community in Kent, Akron, and Cleveland, Ohio. These were friends that I used to get together with from time to time to talk about different interests and topics. These casual talks were the environment in which the research question was originally born. According to Tillmann-Healy (2003), people seek friendship to gain trust, respect, honesty, loyalty, and acceptance. Realizing these aspects of friendship bonds leads to an alliance between parties, emotional connectedness, and a focus on mutual interests (Tillmann-Healy, 2003). Moreover, the value of friendships and being an insider with the key participants was also important as the mothers not only responded with sincerity but also facilitated my access to other mothers (Aroian et al., 2006). By reaching out to my friends and beginning the snowball process of recruiting participants with them, I found that there were approximately 27 prospective participant mothers' names on the list by the beginning of May 2019.

I planned a trip for a week in Ohio. At the time that, the trip was planned, Ramadan (fasting month) had started, which meant a high chance of meeting some mothers in the Taraweeh prayer time as well as in other places. So, I contacted my friends for more information about the prayer schedule and whether there were any activities after that. As a member of this community, I knew Taraweeh prayer time is when people engage in friendly chatting after finishing their prayers.

In the meantime, the meeting schedule with the five mothers was organized. Copies of the consent form, narrative self-report, and participation agreement were sent via the phone app (WhatsApp) to provide them with more information about the study. All the meeting times were planned with them to occur within the first three days of the trip. The two main reasons for these first meetings were to provide a face-to-face explanation of the study and gain their consent and signatures, and also to discuss how to introduce me to the other mothers.

The details of the research narrative with the interviewed mothers are therefore included as a separate chapter because they illustrate the importance of “insider” cultural knowledge and membership in the Muslim community where the study was conducted (Aroian et al., 2006). Moreover, the research diary's value was also important as a contextual tool that facilitated access for a meaningful understanding of these mothers' experiences. This research diary gave context to the stories, particularly to the difficulties that these women had. Finally, the chapter provides a basis for reflecting on my experiences of data gathering and the role of friendship as method.

3. Chapter Three: My story of field experiences

Due to the nature of the qualitative inquiry as "a uniquely personal and involved activity," the researcher needs to make his/her own identities and contexts as a part of the research itself (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 5). All the knowledge is situated and developed through a particular perspective to avoid any objected or disinterested point of view. Therefore, the perspective of an individual is clarified by explaining the entire storyline of conducting the qualitative inquiry through my research diary (Watt, 2007). As well, friendship and the fact of being an insider significantly contributes to access, empathy, and interpretation as part of data collection to reveal the research itself as a co-constructed narrative (Aroian et al., 2006). The reluctance of the women to discuss topics related to sexual awareness, their curiosity, and their concern to portray themselves as disciplined wives and mothers helped in shaping the narrative approach in this study. Narrative analysis in this study highlights the enactment of CPM concepts within their community and friendships by showing the cultural norms structuring engagement with a taboo topic.

> "Fieldwork produces detailed knowledge about scenes of social life. This knowledge is based on observing social action and reflection about what it was like to be a participant. These acts create the foundation on which research claims are built" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp.158-159).
>
> "Audiences should have the opportunity to see how the researcher goes about the process of knowledge construction during a particular study. By engaging in ongoing dialogue with themselves through journal writing, researchers may be able to better determine what they know and how they think they came to know it. An introspective record of a researcher's work potentially helps them to take stock of biases, feelings, and thoughts, so they can understand how these may be influencing the research" (Watt, 2007, p. 84).

The research diary in this chapter narrates the scenes of social life that contextualize my data and analyses. It represents what Ellis and Bochner (2000) explained as a "personal tale of what went on in the backstage of doing research" (p. 741). Although some of the women who were involved in these notes are not among the participants, their comments represent the expectations of the community to which the participated mothers belong. This indicates that there is something of a 'homogenous' cultural grouping on the part of these mothers, represented in terms of their religious/cultural background. My understanding of these mothers, however, can be credited to my being 'grouped' alongside them, with respect to my own religious and cultural background.

Another reason for this chapter is that it enacts "friendship as method." I share the same background as these mothers, and this is a factor that I link to my ability to engage with them and to receive reliable information for the purposes of this study (Aroian et al., 2006). I believe that any friendly movement that presents good intentions may help to strengthen the relationship with these mothers, which can be a significant key to get more

detail, and my link to these subjects' community represented that sense of friendliness and goodwill conducive to subjective data collection. Thus, the reason that encouraged me to include the story of field experiences was the idea of the embodied context of the narrative (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). To understand any narrative, you need to explore all the details that are involved in this experience, which provides the readers with the full picture of the story. Without my own understanding of and acceptance by these mothers, I might have had more difficulty interpreting their stories.

Finally, another reason for including lengthy field narratives is to reflect on my own position as a cultural insider (Aroian et al., 2006). The details of this diary clarify the nuances of cultural expectations and interactions. For instance, the expectations and protocols of hospitality form the basis for the thoughts about the world. In addition, personal reactions towards environmental happenings are evident through these narratives, especially those moments when one feels that the research is being compromised or redirected. The postpositivist mandate keeps the researcher invisible whereas the researcher is part of the story in an interpretive and narrative approach. The story of the researcher is interwoven with those of the participants, particularly in the present study, considering the shared experiences with respect to the norms considered in the Middle East.

3.1 The first round of meetings (May 2019)

On May 7th, I flew to Kent-Akron, Ohio, after preparing several copies of the consent form, narrative reporting form, and participation agreement, to ensure having enough copies in case someone needed to keep one for their records. As soon as I arrived around 12:30 pm, the meeting was conducted with the first mother (Fnon) at the university's library. According to the participant, this was a convenient place because she is a Ph.D. student at this university. After discussing the study description, she agreed to participate and signed the consent form and filled out the participation agreement. She shared her questions about my decision to conduct this kind of study. It later emerged that she was not the only one who had such questions. After that, she introduced two mothers from her network through the phone. The first one (Deem) expressed her interest in being a participant in the study, and the meeting time was scheduled. The second one listened to the explanation of the study, and then she apologized for not participating. In the same library, an in-person meeting was held with Rama, another Ph.D. student. At the beginning of the talk, she stated that if she did not know me, she would choose not to participate in this kind of study because she does not know what to say. She felt comfortable expressing her reservations because of our friendship. She was wondering if she could be like F A (an Arabic woman who specializes in sexual behavior). After explaining the nature of the study and the main points, she signed the consent form and filled out the participation agreement.

On May 8th at 11:00 am, a meeting was held with Alsa at her house. After chatting for a while, I started to talk about other women's reactions toward the topic when she was attempting to recruit participants. She stated that some of the mothers that we planned to

contact decided not to participate after they heard a little about the study, and they were not willing to hear more. After that, Alsa was supplied with more details about the study description, and then she agreed to participate. She provided the contact information of four mothers. At that time, I texted those mothers through the phone app (WhatsApp) to introduce myself and ask them if they were willing to participate. All four mothers asked to meet face-to-face and wanted to hear more about the study. So, the meeting was planned at the Masjid after Taraweeh prayer on Friday, May 10th. On the same day, the meeting was also conducted with Manal, the fourth mother that I intimately know, at her home at 4:00 pm, where she seemed to repeat other mothers' concerns about the goal of this study. So, the conversation took place in detail about the nature of the study, and she agreed to participate. After that, she texted three of her friends, asking for their permission to meet, and the meeting was scheduled in the Masjid after Taraweeh prayer on Saturday, May 11th.

On May 9th at 12 noon, I visited Nana at her home to explain the nature of the study. She seemed excited to participate and ready to start talking and tell her story, but I explained that there are steps we need to go through while collecting the information. She repeated several times that the community needs a study like this. After providing consent to participate, Nana was asked if she had any others in mind. She gave three phone numbers and mentioned that she spoke with them, and they may participate. I tried to schedule a meeting time with these three mothers, but they did not respond. However, she said, there is a chance to meet them on Saturday, the 11th, because there will be a potluck dinner for the Muslim community. I told her about the plan to meet other mothers after Taraweeh prayer on the same day, but she said there was no guarantee that they would stay for the prayer.

On Friday, May 10th, at 4 pm, the meeting was conducted at the University library with Deem. A brief discussion was conducted about the study, and she signed the forms. Then, it was planned to meet again in September, similar to what was decided with the other mothers. On the same day at around 10 pm, I went to the Masjid carrying my purse and backpack with all the forms and other papers. There were two security men to check the bags because they are new employees, and this is the first time they had seen me there. It is a security procedure and a sign of the external hate crime threat that these communities are facing, and I took a minute to watch these guards, *'may Allah protect them,'* and think of the unrecognized risk they are dealing with every day (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006). After that, a meeting was held with Alsa at the women's prayer room, when she started pointing out the mothers who were willing to talk. After finishing with the prayer, she called together the mothers who agreed to meet me. I introduced myself to the four mothers and explained the nature and the goal of the study. Those mothers were curious to know about my interest in this kind of study and whether this is something related to the government. I gave them more explanation about the confidentiality of the study and showed them the consent form because some of them were concerned about who might hear or see this information. After answering their questions, three of the four mothers agreed to participate, and they signed the forms. The fourth one apologized for not participating because she did not feel comfortable talking about sexuality. At the end of

the talk, I thanked them, and I told them to meet again in September. Also, it was mentioned that I would be at the potluck dinner on the following day if they had any questions.

On Saturday, May 11th, I ordered two vegetable pizzas, bought cakes and juice, and went to the Masjid. I was sure they would welcome anyone who wanted to attend this dinner (Haddad et al., 2006); however, bringing food would give more chances to engage with potential subjects without feeling awkward. This was especially because there were many new people who did not know me. I was sure to arrive in advance before the Maghrib time (sunset) to have a chance to talk to the mothers before they got busy eating and then praying. This is because they were likely to leave immediately after that (this was Nana's advice). When I arrived, Nana was there, and she was gathering the mothers with whom it was planned to talk together. I was introduced to those mothers, and they immediately started to ask why this topic was focused on. They were curious to know what one would gain by studying how mothers dealt with sexual conversation and education issues. They were told that when you study such experiences, it can reveal suggestions or strategies that can help people in the same situations navigate through their difficulties with wisdom. Two of the mothers agreed to participate, but the third one said she needed to think. So, the signatures of the two mothers were obtained. One of the mothers asked to use a pseudonym even though the confidentiality of the study had been previously explained to her.

Usually, there is approximately one hour between Maghrib (sunset) time and Isha-Taraweeh prayer time. It seems that my friends spread the word about this kind of study and that there was a need for some participants. So, many women stopped me to ask about the study during this hour. Some of the older women thought that there was some problem and needed to find a solution. So, they provided some advice about how to deal with the situation. Many suggested just to ignore it and keep moving, rather than wasting time by going through all these interviews and studying these topics; '*what will happen will happen.'* They explained that, and it was supported by Nana; *what I am doing, even if it is not essential to you at this moment, may be relevant to other mothers at different times*.

One of the pieces of feedback I got from an old Jordanian lady was,

> *we live in a different era, everything was changed, nothing remains as it was in our time, it's hard to watch the kids these days to ensure they are safe, so the best way is to make a lot of Dwaa (prayers), in this time Allah (God) is the only one who can help.*

Another one was laughing and saying:

> "مالك ومال وجع الراس هاي ماراح تلاقي من وراه غير النكد"
> "why bother, you would not find anything, just the unhappiness".

One of the stories that an elderly lady shared was that she used a teaching technique when she was raising her kids a long time ago, and she confirmed this strategy worked well with her kids. She said:

> *"I taught my kids every time you are thinking of doing or even having an idea about something Haram (forbidden or proscribed by Islamic law) such as drinking, gambling, having sex...etc., just go and get a hot shower, and when I say hot, I mean hot. So, this would remind you of some of the heat you would encounter in hell if you committed this Haram act."*

The sound of the prayer's call rose, announcing the time of Isha prayer, which ended the debate. It was a long hour, with unending talk. I felt tired, confused, and kind of disappointed. However, after saying goodbye to Nana and starting to prepare for the prayer, Manal arrived. After praying together, she introduced three of her friends. They did not attend the dinner, so they had not engaged in the conversation. They also received an explanation of the nature of the study and the point of it. All the mothers agreed to participate and gave their signatures. Nevertheless, two of the three mothers asked to use pseudonyms.

The process followed every time while meeting mothers was that the participants were informed about the nature of the study, and I walked them through the consent form. If they agreed to participate, I explained the procedures for collecting their experiences. They were also informed about completing the Participation Agreement to gain information about their kids' ages and their own contact information. Second, they were given the Narrative Reporting form to learn which language they prefer in the interview, and they were asked to write their stories. They were also informed about meeting again in September for the interview.

Table 3.1 Participating friends, participants referred by the friends, and participation status

Friend's name	*Time and place of the meeting*	*Participants referred by a friend*	*Time and place of the meeting*	*Status*
Fnon	12: 30 pm, May 7th at the library	Deem	4: 00 pm, May 10th at the library	Agreed
Rama	2:30 pm, May 7th at the library	Non		
Alsa	11:00 am, May 8th at her home	Ream	After Taraweeh prayer, May 10th at the Masjid	Agreed
		Seren		Agreed
		Kifah		Refused
		Fahema		Agreed
Manal	4:00 pm, May 8th at her home	Amina		Agreed
		Abla	After Taraweeh prayer, May 11th at the Masjid	Agreed with a pseudonym
		Sarah		

				Agreed with a pseudonym
Nana	12: 00 noon, May 9th at her home	Hanan Aisha Amira	At the potluck dinner, May 11th at the Masjid	Still thinking Agreed with a pseudonym Agreed

I started to receive some of the stories a week after returning from the trip.

However, not all the mothers sent their stories, so they were sent a reminder with an Eid congratulations post, which are the circulated holiday congratulations messages that come after Ramadan, such as *'Eid Mubarak to you and your family.'* I was gratified to be a member of this community, with my friendship with members of this group providing a foundation for my use of these subjects in this study. Although I did not believe myself to be 'leveraging' my role in this community for personal research gain, it was nonetheless a positive outcome which I attribute to my 'insider' status in this community. By the end of the summer, there were 12 stories, including three in Arabic and the rest in English. The following observations seem important for further analysis:

- The length and details of the stories were uneven and varied.
- Some of the stories were long and contained precise details, while some were very short.
- Some stories had diversified tones whereas some stories included details of the experience, and some carried pieces of advice.

I went through these stories to specify the interview questions based on the narrative before planning the September trip to Ohio. The most important observations from the first-round meeting are as follows:

- Participants were comfortable in expressing their reservations because of the friendship between them and me.
- According to their comments, the community needs a study like this.
- Some mothers were reluctant to talk about sexuality.
- Suggestions or strategies are revealed by studying how mothers dealt with sexual conversation and education issues as it helps people in the same situations navigate through their difficulties with wisdom.
- A few mothers requested pseudonyms.

3.2 The second round of meetings (September 2019)

The first thing that I did to plan the trip was to contact the mothers and schedule interview times and specify the place. The decision to meet the participants at the place and time of their convenience helped to show respect for friendship and improve their level of comfort to guarantee trust, understanding, and cooperation (Tillmann-Healy, 2003).

Not all the mothers showed up, although an interview time was scheduled for all the mothers on the list. Mothers who did not show up for the interview claimed that *"we sent you our stories and we do not have more to say."* However, some of them attended the small groups. Some mothers declined to participate in the small groups claiming that talking in public about this private issue was not their style.

Table 3.2 Time and place for the individual interview, and the small group status and place.

Name	*Time*	*Place*	*Group Status*	*Group Number and place*
Alsa	Sep, 12th at 12 noon	Her Home	No	X
Fnon	Sep, 12th at 2 pm	Univ Library	Yes	Group (1), at Univ library
Rama	Sep, 12th at 6 pm	Univ Library	Yes	Group (1), at Univ library
Seren	Sep, 13th at 10 am	Her Home	No	X
Nana	Sep, 13th at 12 noon	Her Home	Yes	Group (2), at the Masjid
Sarah	X	Story enough/ no time	Yes	Group (3), at Nana Home
Ream	X	Story enough	No	X
Manal	Sep, 13th at 5 pm	Her Home	Yes	Group (3), at the masjid
Fahema		Story enough	No	X
Amira	Sep, 14th at 12 noon	Her Home	Yes	Group (2), at Nana home
Deem	Sep, 15th at 9:30 pm	Univ Library	No	X
Hanan	X	X	Yes	Group (2), at Nana Home
Aisha	X	Story enough	Yes	Group (2), at Nana Home
Abla	X	No time	Yes	Group (3), at the masjid
Amina	X	No Time	No	X

On September 12th at 11:12 am, I was on my way from Akron airport to meet Alsa when I received a voice message from her asking to delay a little bit because she had something that needed to be finished before the meeting. I knew Alsa so well and was sure she had something on her mind. So, ignoring her request, I arrived at the time where we were supposed to meet. She was laughing and apologizing that she could not finish on time because she was preparing food for almost 12 women that she invited.

I explained to her that the meeting would be conducted as an interview, which means that she needed to sit and talk about her experiences without being interrupted by others. She said, *"You are my friend, and you are not doing this to me by stopping me from doing the hospitality."* She suggested that it may be a good opportunity to talk to other mothers as well. However, most of the guest mothers did not fit with the study criteria except one, who was already on my list. Anyway, one of the guests was the woman who gave the "hot bath" tip. So, she was interviewed while we were preparing the food. She was talking fast, trying to give me all the information about her experiences. She was trying to rush but also trying to give as much information as she could. She stopped from time to time, rolling her eyes, asking herself, "*what else what else.*"

At one point, she explained her hurried actions: she did not feel comfortable talking about her life in front of others, which meant that she was not willing to engage in the small group. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, and then other women started to arrive. While enjoying a fancy homemade Middle Eastern meal, there continued an animated chat about different topics, and of course, about to the study topic.

I arrived at the University library around 3:00 pm and was worried about being late because the meeting was planned at 2:00 pm. It was already late. After my arrival, because I am a former student of the University, I asked at the front desk to use the conference room. They were very nice, and they welcomed and allowed us to use one. I sat in a small study room on the first floor of the library, taking notes and listening to the previous interview for more than 30 minutes. After a while, Fnon arrived laughing with a long list of things that needed to be done together. She is one of my close friends, and it was always fun together, joking around and sharing hard moments. However, I was worried she would not take the interview seriously. Therefore, first, she was given some time to chat, and then we proceeded with the study. Then, she was asked to focus (in her case, it was hard to do that because it was a long time since we had last seen each other), and I explained to her how important it was to get this information.

Finally, the interview started, which lasted for less than 30 minutes. After wrapping up the interview, she said:

> *"Now I feel relieved*". Did I ask why? She laughed and said: *"It took me a long time thinking about how I am going to share this with you without being judged by you."*

She continued;

> *"You know I made a lot of mistakes in my life, but not doing well with my kids; it is not an easy thing, especially after their father died."*

I reassured her and explained that I was not looking for the right answer or the ideal way. This idea was shared with all the mothers because a tone of concern was present in their talk.

Close to 6:00 pm, the participant was informed about an appointment with Rama, as promised to meet after finishing the current meeting. So, she left, and then some notes were written, and preparation was done for the next interview. It was not long until Rama arrived, and after a few minutes of general talk, the interview started. It took less than 30 minutes. She is a quiet person of few words, so it was necessary to spend more effort to get her to open up. After finishing the interview, I thanked her and scheduled the small group meeting at the university library on September 16th at 12 noon. For this meeting, it was planned to gather all three mothers, Fnon, Rama, and Deem, in a group (1). Deem asked not to include her in this meeting. At the end of the meeting and after she left, I wrote down notes. Before going to sleep, confirmation was received from Seren, Nana, and Manal about their appointment, and they were also asked for their addresses. They

were also asked not to invite anyone because there was a need to talk with them individually.

On September 13th at 10 am, I was in front of Seren's house. She opened the door and welcomed me, although she was scolding because she was stopped from showing hospitality. She asked why the "*individually talking*" excuse did not work with Alsa (she was there). However, she prepared a nice Mediterranean breakfast, and she kept saying that she wished she was allowed to welcome me in a better way.

During this interview, I was again appreciative of how friendship as a method can contribute to accessibility and connection, as Tillmann-Healy (2003) noted. Specifically, Seren gave a tour of the first floor of her house, and then she showed a room on the second floor and told me, "This is my daughter's room" (Not sure why she did that; maybe she thought it was useful information for the study). When she was asked for the reason for showing the room, she said: '*Nothing I want you to see, that's all.'* After that, the interview started and lasted for around 30 minutes. Seren is an Islamic teacher and very conservative; to keep her on the story-telling track was a challenge because from time to time, she would switch to an advisory role. After finishing, she was asked to participate in the small group. Her answer was nicely, "*no*".

Gently asking her not to invite anyone else worked with Seren but failed with Nana. At 12 noon on the same day, I was in Nana's house with four mothers, Aisha, Amira, and Hanan, including Nana. She explained her action, saying:

> "*All these mothers fit for your study, and I know that you have them in your list, but they did not respond to your request for the interview, so I invited them so that we can talk together."*

They were surprised, but no one declined to participate or complained about her act, although they were complaining about what we needed to talk about. Aisha was the only one of the three guests who sent a story. She explained that "You just need to remember and tell me in detail what happened in that time." They were laughing and joking about the topic.

So, the small group (2) interview started after enjoying food. The conversation took more than an hour and a half, moving in different directions. At the end of the talk, they asked if the same interview would be conducted with their daughters. They wanted to know about their opinions and what was in their minds. Because they were told that the focus of the study is on experiences, one of them (Hanan) asked to conduct a study on her experience of wearing the Hijab in the workplace after she took it off thirty years ago. She said she would send her story about every day of this experience to see how her life may change and how society would deal with her new outlook. In addition, she shared a side story with me before she left:

> *"When first I moved to the USA with my husband thirty years ago, was just got married, and I was so young, I tried to find a job, but because of my Hijab I could*

not work, no one wants to hire me except one place told me if you want to work you need to take off the scarf. So, I uncovered my head and started to work. After we started to have kids, I began to feel guilty concerning my kids' religious orientations. I disclosed my fears to my husband; you know we want our kids to be a good Muslim. Still, neither my husband nor I could do as well on teaching them, so we hired an Imam, who was recommended by a good friend, to ensure our kids get the right idea about Islamic teaching from a trustable person'.

She was especially happy when she told me, "*When I see my kids now, I thank God for this idea; both of my daughters are wearing the hijab*".

After finishing, all the participants were thanked and asked if they were willing to participate in an individual interview. Amira and Nana agreed, but Hanan and Aisha said they had already talked too much, and they had nothing more to say. Therefore, the meeting time was scheduled for the two mothers. Nana agreed to start immediately after the other mothers left, and Amira agreed to meet at her house at 12 noon the next day. At 3:30 pm, everything turned quiet, and there was time to start the individual interview with Nana. The interview lasted for around 20 minutes. I thanked Nana for everything and especially the surprise gathering, and then I headed for the next appointment. I stopped on the side of the road to take a deep breath and take notes after such an energetic session.

At 5:00 pm on the same day, it was the time for Manal to arrive in front of her house. She texted saying she would be about 10 minutes late because she needed to pick up her daughter. After a while, the sitting arrangement was made in her living room with a cup of Turkish coffee talking about life. She said that living in the US was not her first choice. She had dreamed of living in Turkey or Malaysia. However, her husband thought the US has more opportunities for a better life. After starting their life and having kids, he seemed to regret this decision. Unfortunately, he started to look for another place. From her words, *"going back to Syria is not a good thing to do in the meantime, especially with kids, and living in the US with three girls seems so risky if you care about their religion."*

At that moment, the recording was started, and she was asked about her experiences, and the conversation continued for 15 to 30 minutes. After wrapping up the interview, she was asked if she was willing to participate in a group conversation. She welcomed the opportunity and agreed to meet on Saturday at the Masjid because there would be a potluck dinner. I loved the idea because some mothers were not reachable, so there would be a chance to see them there. Manal was thanked, and then I headed home to write notes and prepare for the next day. Amira was contacted to confirm the appointment and ask for her address.

On September 14th, at 12 noon, I met with Amira at her house. She is a formal person, and she served an Arabic coffee with dates, and then the interview started. At the beginning of the talk, she said, *"I am not sure if I have more to share with you, however...*" and she started to tell her story. The interview took around 10 minutes. I was

busy thinking of the potluck dinner, so Alsa and Nana were called to ask them who would be there. I hoped that the mothers who did not respond to the individual interview would be there, or at least some of them. Alsa and Nana told the names of many women who would be there. I brought cakes and juices and then headed to the Masjid. How funny it was seeing their faces as they saw me. They started laughing and asking, "*How are you and your study?"* One elderly lady said, *"You again, did you still not finish yet?*" But the good thing is all of them were praying for me to achieve what I desired. Manal, Sarah, Abla, and Ream were asked about their willingness to participate in an interview, individual, or group. Abla and Sarah agreed to do the group talk and told me that they would tell the same story, and you can ask whatever you want. Therefore, there was no need to repeat it in an individual interview. Abla was laughing while she was saying that *"You are a lucky woman, and your mom loves you because I was planning not to talk on this topic because I feel sick of all these ideas, and I feel shame."* She was comforted by saying that she wasn't the only one who felt that way. Abla and Manal are teachers in the Islamic school located in this Masjid, so they have the authority to get a private space where we could talk. The conversation lasted for about 30 minutes. Manal's contribution was limited; she seemed tense while Abla was laughing and saying, "I feel you are planning to cause me trouble." On the other hand, Sarah was formal and straightforward in her talk. All the participants were thanked for their time. Deem was texted to confirm the meeting time, and then I wrote notes about the group (3) meeting.

On the morning of September 15th, a text message was received from Deem asking if the meeting could be held after 9:30 pm because she needed to get her kids in bed before she left. So, the meeting was planned at 9:30 pm in the study room at the university library on the first floor. I reached the library earlier than the time to go through some notes and to charge the digital recorders. I have two digital recorders, one with a mic that is held in the hand while interviewing mothers, and the other a smaller recorder, which usually is turned on and left on the table. When the interview finished, the one with the mic was turned off, but the other one was kept on until the participant left, in case we had a side conversation. As soon as she arrived, the interview started, which lasted more than 35 minutes. She showed her interest in the study's topic when she was told about sharing the results of the study. She was asked again about her willingness to participate in a small group, but she said that she did not feel comfortable talking in front of the others about her life. A total of 20 minutes were spent in the library writing notes and arranging for the next appointment with Fnon and Rama.

On September 16th at 10:30 am, I went to the library to ask for the study room and prepare everything before Fnon and Rama arrived. Fnon's daughters (two girls) and Rama's daughters (two girls) are at the same grades, so there is a kind of competition between the four girls. The girls' behavior toward each other generated some sort of competition between their mothers. Unfortunately, Fnon, Rama, and Deem were the only mothers from Saudi Arabia who fit my study criteria. Deem declined to be part of the small group, even after trying hard. The Saudi mothers were not comfortable talking with the other mothers from different ethnicities, and I was worried they would not be open in front of each other. However, there was, fortunately, an event in the library located in

front of our study room with free food and drink. So, before starting the interview, the event's organizer invited all to have some food and drink and asked about what was going on. This fortunate circumstance helped to break the ice between the two mothers.

At the beginning of the talk, Fnon got choked up while she was laughing and said, "This is precisely what happened to me when I heard about this topic for the first time." During the talk, I attempted to keep these mothers from disagreeing with each other and convince them to stay on topic. This took about 18 minutes, but overall, the interview went well. In the end, the mothers were thanked for their time, and the conversation lasted until everyone moved out of the room to join the others at the library event. At the end of the day, I wrote the notes from that meeting. In addition to the notes, all the interviews and the small groups were audio-recorded to capture all the conversations, which allowed full engagement in those conversations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). All the interviews and the small groups were conducted in Arabic, which was translated into English.

The most important observations from the second-round meeting are as follows:

- There are tensions and challenges involved in the initial stage of communication with the researcher.
- The majority of the mothers believed that there was no need for an interview when the stories were already sent.
- Interviews play an important role in improving the level of comfort to guarantee trust, understanding, and cooperation.
- The commentaries technique was applied at this point to gather information, which is the observation of the side talks.
- Individual talking was suggested so that the mothers could talk easily and openly.
- The majority of mothers were not comfortable using critical resources such as school to meet the present and future demands of society and culture.
- Intercultural friendships can only be better maintained and sustained through greater social bonding as more textual information is created.
- Mothers felt their kids were at risk while living in the US concerning their religion and its practices.

3.3 The outcome of the procedures

At the end of the visits, I had 29 data sources in total, in addition to the side notes:

- ✓ Four mothers participated in all the requested forms of data collection: Fnon, Rama, Nana, and Manal provided the story, the individual interview, and the small group.

- ✓ Three mothers participated in two of the requested forms of data collection: Alsa, Seren, and Deem provided the story and participated in the individual interview.

- ✓ Three mothers participated in one of the requested forms of data collection: Ream, Amina, and Fahema provided the written story.
- ✓ Two mothers participated in two of the requested forms of data collection: Aisha and Sarah provided the written story and participated in a small group.
- ✓ Two mothers participated in one of the requested forms of data collection: Abla and Hanan participated in a small group.
- ✓ One mother participated in two of the requested forms of data collection: Amira participated in an individual interview and a small group.

Table 3.3 The types and total of the data sources

Mothers' Name	*The Types of The Data Sources*			*The total of the Data Sources*
	Story	Individual	Small Group	
Alsa	√	√	X	2
Fnon	√	√	√	3
Rama	√	√	√	3
Seren	√	√	X	2
Nana	√	√	√	3
Sarah	√	X	√	2
Ream	√	X	X	1
Manal	√	√	√	3
Fahema	√	X	X	1
Amira	X	√	√	2
Deem	√	√	X	2
Hanan	X	X	√	1
Aisha	√	X	√	2
Amina	√	X	X	1
Abla	X	X	√	1
Total	15	12	8	9	29

Interestingly, it was the theme of not talking, or not disclosing one's views, much less disclosing one's views in a storytelling context, that was one of the most frustratingly consistent variables throughout my course of qualitative data collection. In essence, data collection employed a qualitative process in which requesting the subject views was

critical. These mothers' perspectives on sexual education represented no less than solicitation of their views of topics in a context rife with ample socio-cultural taboo. Despite my every (and extensive) effort to help ensure that these women felt comfortable in the data collection context to disclose their feelings, there was still considerable difficulty reaching a dialogue conducive to this research. Many of the subjects were not merely reluctant to disclose their deep feelings on the topic but many were also hesitant, as indicated in the study analysis. Subject hesitation formed a major obstacle to my collection of pertinent data; however, I was eventually able to appreciate some strong insight into my subjects' views.

3.4 The importance of friendship in stories: Listening and crossing boundaries

Research based in friendship aims to understand "more fully both others and ourselves" (Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 732). Most of the women who took part in the study had been friends with me for a long time. I first met most of them after moving to Ohio in 2013. We met mostly at the Masjid, and friendship developed over time as we prayed together and shared issues as mothers, Muslims, women, and expatriates. Over time and shared stories, our relationships deepened and expanded as friends and sisters. I had no idea at that time that the friendships and part of these shared stories would be a part of my studies someday. However, after starting the research project, I looked forward to taking my relationship with them to the academic level, encouraged by the power of this friendship and the role of being an insider (Aroian et al., 2006). Over an Arabic coffee with traditional sweets or Mediterranean dinner, we shared a lot of our past and present families' stories as well the hope for the future. Looking back to our conversation about challenges, struggles as mothers, laughing at opportunities of achieving or misachieving our dream as women, gathering to share our easy talk, hard talk, and sharing secrets in relation to our position as Muslims and in a foreign country, all was proof that I was not dreaming when I believed that they would provide the most sincere and useful research information. The topic's sensitivity may build a wall preventing these mothers from opening their hearts and sharing the pain, but friendship worked as an agency to cross this wall. While the sensitivity created a gap, a friendship built bridges to fill that gap.

4. Chapter Four: Findings (Part i)

4.1 CPM and narrative performing theory

This chapter presents the results concerning the analysis of the stories of Muslim mothers from the Middle East in relation to their communication with their children about sex education. The Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory and Narrative Performance theory informed this part of the analysis results, which is centered on the idea of negotiating in communication, focusing on the research question:

- What strategies do their stories reveal about how mothers and children enact cultural expectations of conversational privacy management regarding sexual education topics?

Both CPM theory (Petronio, 2002) and Narrative Performance theory (Kellas, 2018; Langellier & Peterson, 2018) indicate the necessity of exploring storytelling by assessing more than the content of stories alone. Dainton and Zelley (2017) present CPM as chiefly "concerned with the dilemma of how and what communicators should say," especially in order to contextualize the maximization of reward and the minimization of cost in disclosure-focused decision-making (Dainton & Zelley, 2017, p. 68). Most notable among the range of factors explored by this theory is the idea of privacy rulemaking, guided by cultural norms and values about the topic and even the proper way to discuss such disclosure of information when the topic is private to one or both parties in an exchange (Dainton & Zelley, 2017).

Analyzing the mothers' stories in this research began with coding the mothers' stories and interviews to identify themes and then discerning whether these themes were relevant to the CPM concepts. The themes were categorized into *privacy boundaries*, *rules-access*, or *boundaries turbulence* (Petronio, 2002).

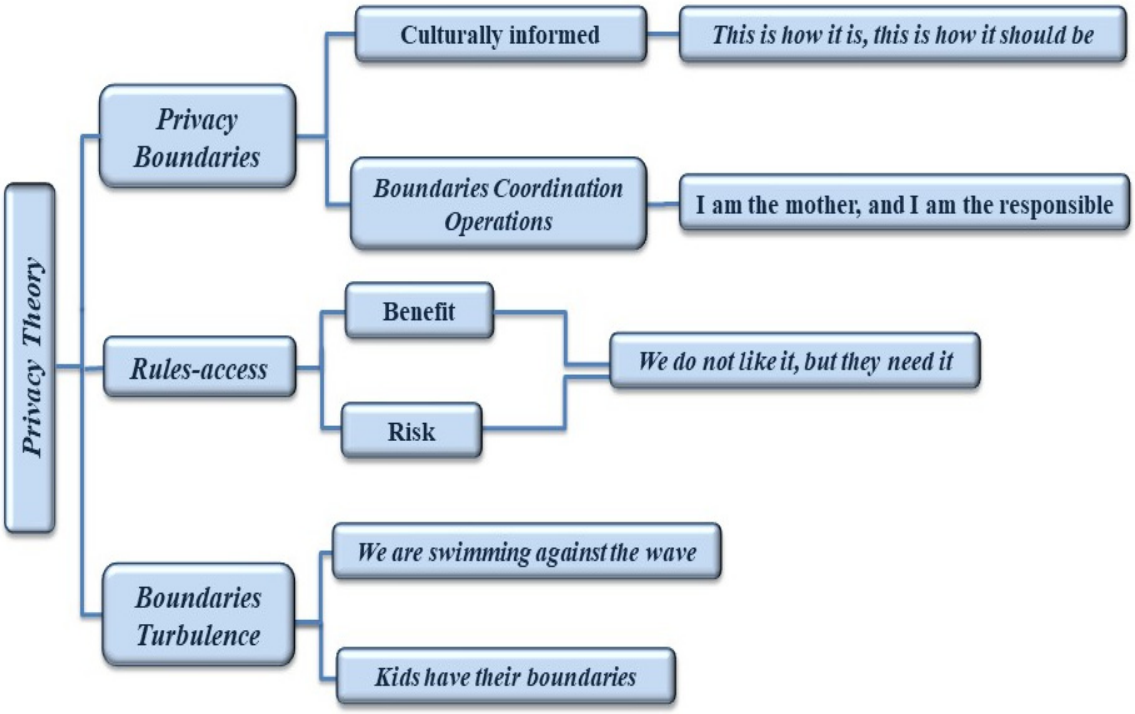

Figure 4.1 The privacy theory

Figure 4.3. displays the way the themes from the mothers' narratives related to the categories of CPM concepts. For example, within the '*privacy boundaries'* CPM category, the narrative themes '*I am the mother, and I am the responsible'* illustrate the CPM concept of '*boundaries coordination operations.'* In the '*rules-access'* CPM category, the concepts of '*benefit'* and '*risk'* are illustrated by the narrative themes, '*we do not like it, but they need it.'* Finally, within the '*boundaries' turbulence'* CPM category, there are two themes, '*we are swimming against the wave'* and *"kids have their boundaries."* Most of the titles used in this analysis paraphrase the participants' words.

4.1.1 Privacy Boundaries

The following contains an explanation of the themes that emerged related to the CPM concepts of privacy boundaries (Petronio, 2002). I will proceed by drawing out the operational constructs of privacy boundaries and relating emergent themes from the mothers' narratives to show how concerns about privacy management are evident in their narratives.

4.1.1.1 Culturally informed

According to Petronio's (2002) explanation of how people enact privacy boundaries, cultural criteria are key components of the ways individuals conceive of what is private and how to manage their private matters in communication with others.

4.1.1.1.1 This is how it is culturally, and this is how it should be

By telling stories, storytellers outline life events cohesively and gain a sense of meaning, identity, and direction. Sandelowski (1991) explained that during storytelling, storytellers create an illusion of a sequence of events and develop a causal link to illustrate the historical and moral enterprise of a story. Additionally, by telling stories, narrators explore the relationship between their related stories and the consequences of the events described in a story (Sandelowski, 1991). All the mothers told their stories and utilized this approach to explain the aftermath of the events in the stories. Most of the mothers expressed their personal opinions of the events narrated in their stories as informed by their native culture as opposed to American culture. For example, Sarah's narrative below reveals the extent to which she relies on cultural communication patterns about the permeability of privacy boundaries (Petronio, 2002).

> "Sex education or so-called sex talk is such a taboo subject in our Muslim society that it almost is never a proactive conversation where parents will educate the kids before they get exposed as they'd like to delay having the talk as long as possible. In the event it is brought up by the kids, it's always, oh that's Haram or having a boyfriend is Haram, and that's all the explanation is given. This is the case with many of our Muslim families" (Sarah; as originally worded).

Critical to such narrations as Sarah's is the idea of topics that are culturally deemed taboo to discuss with children, in this case, sexuality and sexual education. Clearly, Middle Eastern Muslim cultures and the dominant American culture differ in terms of the privacy boundaries for these topics. Both the pressure to conform to cultural privacy boundaries and the differences between the home culture and American culture are evident in the mothers' stories. First, these stories, and the idea of the 'taboo', transcends the mothers themselves, and appears to reflect more than parenting alone: The mothers in these instances are typically facing difficulty in relating to their children with respect to discussing sexual education and related topics, and second, they also betray their own discomfort with respect to discussing such topics in general. Despite their awareness of the distinction between their cultures of origin and their adoptive cultures, this sense of discomfort permeates the dialogues. Both of these concerns are evident when they refer to the disclosure or discussion of topics that were previously forbidden from interpersonal (even familial) disclosure.

Sarah, in her written story, describes the cultural method of shaping children's behavior and values, and across other mothers' stories, there seemed to be considerable agreement. It also highlighted the idea of "taboo," which was repeated by other mothers, but with the distinction between the proactive/delayed and fragmented story at the end. For example, Alsa repeated that "sex education is taboo in Arab culture; it was always a private affair never to be talked about publicly" (Alsa). Likewise, Seren confirmed that culturally we must not speak publicly about this topic, and each person, especially girls, should have characteristics of modesty and shyness. She emphasized that:

"هذي الشغلات احنا كمسلمين مابيصير الان نحكي فيها او نسويها حتى لوانت عندك علم ولو بسيط فيها لازم يكون عندك نوع من الحياء وان انت ما تتفاخري وتحكي وتعلني انك بتعرفي هاي الاشياء"

"These things and we as Muslims, we must not talk about or doing it, even if you have the knowledge, even if simple, about it you must have some kind of shyness and that you are not acting proudly and telling and declare that you know these things." (Seren)

She then identified shyness as a normative behavior for girls and women:

"احس ان هذا نوع من انواع الحياء الي لازم البنت تتعلمه وان ما تفقد حيائها"

"I feel this is a type of shyness that girls need to learn it and not lose it" (Seren).

Many mothers emphasized the idea that talking about sexual topics is a cultural taboo and described it as nothing but natural not to talk about it. "It is something new for me because in our country we do not talk openly about certain topic like sex" (Ream). Almost the same stories were narrated about family communication and sexual topics. Mothers do not discuss this topic because of cultural taboos, limited experience, and the belief it is not a good topic to share with kids. Their stories are about family privacy where the boundaries are set culturally, and the parents reinforce them. The main focus of these stories is on the mother's struggle to make and maintain boundaries around taboo topics. This accords with the literature on motherhood that the mother is socially responsible for proper cultural practices, and she must meet cultural expectations for the ideal mother, family propriety, and children's behavior (Rich, 1976). As Seren put it, "My experience with this subject was very limited as we normally don't discuss sexual matters at a very young age." She was not the only mother who thought that it was normal to avoid conversations with children about sex, especially at an early age. Aisha explains that this is in accord with cultural norms: "normally, this topic is forbidden in our culture and talk to the kids at an early age is not a good idea". Moreover, incorporation of sexual talk or even a bit of it in their daily conversation was not a part of their cultural norms, just as Alsa explained to her children: "I told each of them that it was not something we really talk about in our culture."

Despite their children's exposure to cultural differences, these mothers still resisted the idea of changing their own deep commitments to a particular cultural-religious worldview and their culturally-mandated maternal responsibilities. However, through their story details, they were straightforward regarding their flexibility about boundary permeability.

"انا بحاول ان ما اسكتهم واخليهم يحكوا اي شي وما بساوي زي ما امي ربتنا على عيب واسكتي لان هذي الطريقة ما بتمشي هون لان لو انا قلتها اسكتي ممكن هي تروح لحدا ثاني ويشرح لها غلط او حتى يقنعها بشي غلط"

"I am trying not to keep them silent and let them talk about anything, and not like my mother who raised us to not talk about this topic because this way does not go well here because if I said do not to talk, they might go to a different person who may explain it wrongly or even convince her of something wrong" (Manal).

These mothers' narratives ably illustrate the differences in such permeability regarding their ability to negotiate the access rules within their families.

Finally, across the different types of stories, especially those presented previously by Sarah, “Sex education or so-called sex talk is such a taboo subject in our Muslim society…”, there is an appeal to community membership through allusions to the lives and struggles of all Muslim families. In particular, the use of the collective possessive 'our' or ‘we’ seemed to designate the normative force of a proper Muslim family/society and signal this sense of community and normative mothering responsibilities.

4.1.1.2 Boundaries coordination operations

There is a multidimensional focus that comes into consideration when people coordinate their owned privacy boundaries including the type and depth of information, whom to share with, and how. In the following explanation, these mothers disclosed in their narratives the ways of coordinating the information that flowed to their children given that they count themself as the responsible persons.

4.1.1.2.1 I am the mother, and I am the responsible one

Both the Islamic and Western cultural discourses of “good” mothering make mothers accountable for their children's performance of cultural norms. The mothers I spoke with confirmed this as a repeated theme in their talk. The blame will be on the mother in the first place if something goes wrong with the children; as Nana said:

"يعني تخيلي شلون الناس هلا بتطلع في الام."

“Imagine how the people will look at the mother.”

For Ream, as with other mothers, the mother carries a lot of responsibilities toward her children, especially considering the decision to move to the U.S. and all the cultural differences:

> "We moved to the USA to have a better life for us and raise our kids in a secure place, and we promised our self to do anything to protect our kids because we know it is a different culture, and maybe there are things not fit with our religion" (Ream; as originally worded).

Also, the words 'I am the mother, and I am the responsible person' appeared in many places in the mothers' stories and talk. For instance, Alsa explained that her worried behavior came from her religious obligation as a mother:

"انا حكيت مع بنتي قلت لها ماما هم هيك هيك هيك بدهم يعملوا ويعلموكم شو بدك تعملي؟ بتعرفي شي بيقلق شو ممكن يحكوا. بتعرفي كام لازم انتبه على كل شي بيصير مع اولادي بتعرفي مسؤوليه مو بسيطة والله راح يسألنا عنها"

> “So, I talked to my daughter, and I told her this is what they will teach you if you want to go, you know it is something to worry about. You know, as a mother, I should take care of everything related to my children, you know it is not an easy responsibility, Allah will ask us about it” (Alsa).

Similarly, Fnon talked about her responsibility toward her children, especially because they moved from their culture:

"هذي الاجيال الجديدة وخصوص زي بزورتي اتربوا برا المجتمع في كثير اشياء اتغيرت فصار لازم اتكلم معاهم لان انا المسؤولة"

> "But these are the new generations, especially like my children, they grew up outside our society, where many things are changed, so I have to speak with them because I am responsible" (Fnon).

She was talking in a sad tone, explaining her role as a mother who chose to raise her children for a time in a different culture or, as she called it, "outside our society." She spoke as well about the consequences of not fulfilling the obligation as a mother and questioning whether she failed to establish their cultural identities and their privacy boundaries.

Fahima, in her written story, introduced the way that she dealt with her children as a Muslim mother to make sure they are on the right path and linked to their religion:

> “As a Muslim mother, I would consider returning back to the *Quran* and *Hadith* to explain what would be good or bad. I would like to include them in a discussion within their culture values and make sure they understand our rules that are directly related to our religion. They need to learn, not everything you hear is fit with your manners, and they need to ask me if they don't understand anything. I always remind them that we live in a different culture, so we need to be careful all the time and choose what we can apply in our culture” (Fahima; as originally worded).

In her written story, she introduces the primary sources on which her family boundaries are based. In addition, she was emphasizing the importance of teaching the children these rules and continuously remind them. Fahima was not the only one who did that; other mothers mentioned the idea of culturally and religiously setting boundaries and passing them on to their children. For example, Dem and Nana, in their stories, explained the weekly family conversation where they established Islamic background knowledge for their children, especially in cases when the US behaviors and norms were contradictory to their religion and culture, such as sexual behaviors and relationships with the opposite gender.

When the mothers talked about setting boundaries, they acknowledged a level of difficulty as Muslims in a foreign country and the challenges that it entails. Then they introduced the process of setting these boundaries, which started from the first child.

"احنا هون كمسلمين بيقع علينا ضغط كبير فعلشان كذا ومن تجربتي اسسي الولد الاول وهو بيساعدك في المحافظة على الباقين لان الشغلة ابد مو سهله وكل يوم في تحدي لنا وضغوط على اولادنا بس ربي بيساعدنا "

"We, as Muslims, have a lot of pressure on us, and from my experience, establish the first child, and he/she will help you with the rest because the job is not easy and every day is a challenge for us and is a pressure on our children as well, but my Lord helps us" (Alsa).

Interestingly, even when some mothers claimed that preparing the first child was a helpful step in dealing with the next children, other mothers consider it as extra pressure on the first child. For instance, Hanan was not satisfied with her experience with her two daughters.

"دايم التجربة مع البنت الأولى مختلفة عن الثانية، بنتي الكبيرة بينها وبين اختها ٤ سنين فتعاملي مع بنتي الكبيرة غير كنت كثير محافظه وحطيت ضغط عليها كبير، اصحي، اصحي، بحس عقدتها هلا بشوفه كثير، ولكن مع الثانية بحس حالي اسهل ومنفتحة اكثر حتى هي تسألني ليش هيك".

"Always, your experience with the first daughter is different than the second, I have two daughters where there is four years difference between them, with the first one, I was so conservative, and I put a lot of pressure on her, be careful, be careful, which I think now it was too much, but with the second one, I feel I was more flexible and open, even my first daughter ask me why" (Hanan).

After introducing their culturally-informed privacy boundaries, same mothers mentioned their need to teach themselves and expand their privacy boundaries to be able to deal with this new situation. For example, after Fnon talked about her cultural boundaries regarding the conversation about sex, she began to talk about her need to learn how to be open with her children.

"احنا اتربينا في بيئة ان هذي المواضيع عيب انك تتكلمي فيها وخصوصا البنات...علشان كذا كان مرره صعب عليه في الاول...فلازم تعودي نفسك لان هذا شي غير عن طبيعتك فيأخذ وقت علشان تتعودي عليه وتقدري تأخذي وتدي معاهم بالطريقة الصح"

" We were raised in a culture where it is shameful to talk about these topics, especially girls ... it was difficult for me in the first ... so you must train yourself because this is something different than your nature, so it takes time to get used to it and to be able to talk to them the correct way" (Fnon).

Fnon was not the only mother who talked about her need to learn a new communication pattern contrary to what she learned in her culture. Ream was one of these mothers who clarified that in her written story:

> “Since we moved to the USA, I trained myself and my kids to be open, so they can come to me and asked me about anything they need, especially the relationship with the opposite gender. It is something new for me because, in our country, we do not talk openly about a certain topic like sex” (Ream; as originally worded).

4.1.2 Rules Access

Rules' access is the second CPM concept that I considered in this study (Petronio, 2002). In the following, I discuss stories of cultural expectations and mothers' strategies for addressing the sexual education of their children. I relate these stories to CPM arguments that people adjust privacy boundaries to deal with challenges and risk/benefit assessments (Petronio, 2002).

4.1.2.1 We don't like it, but we need it

Revising personal attitudes was not something these mothers preferred, but they were willing to try for the sake of their families' and children's best interests. Some mothers were concerned that ignoring sexual education might raise the chance that children would be exposed to misinformation or, worse, inadvertently would try something contrary to their culture. So, some of them made the weighty decision to let their children attend the class even if it is different from their culture. They explained the need for that as the school was more professional. Others preferred to introduce the topic to their children personally because they believed the school view did not fit with their culture or their religion.

> "It was not something we really talk about in our culture, but they'd have to take the class and if they had any questions to come to either me or their father" (Alsa; as originally worded).

> "بتأكيد لانهم يدرسونها اكاديمي وأحسن من ان تتعلم من اي جهة أخرى لأنه بخاف عليها ان تأخذ معلومات خاطئة من اي جهة غير المدرسة"
>
> "Certainly, yes, because they will teach her academically. And it is better than she learns from any other side because it is risky for her to take the wrong information from any side other than school" (Nana).

> "زوجي حكى لازم تحضروا، لان اذا ما حضرته راح يصير عندها فضول، وممكن وخاصه ان عندنا النت وكل شي موجود يعني ممكن تروح تتفرج على اشياء سيئة او افلام لحتى تأخذ المعلومة لان ما راح تعرف تبحث بشكل علمي في هذا الموضوع"
>
> "My husband said she should attend it because if not, she will be curious, and with the availability of the Internet, she will look for the information through bad movies or other sources because she will not be able to search in the right way" (Seren).

> "علي دائما ان افتح الحوار معها حتى لا تسال عن هذا الموضوع الأشخاص غير الصحيحين"
>
> "Always I open a dialogue with her and talk to her, so she does not ask anyone or incorrect people about this topic" (Manal).

Fnon and Amira explained their reasons for allowing their children to attend this class--though they did not like it, they lacked the ability to educate them at that moment. At the

same time, they expressed their concern and the need to make sure the children are not involved in culturally unacceptable behaviors.

"بس الناس الي زينا عائشين في بيئة منفتحة وكل شي قدامهم وتقولي ما اكلمهم .. معليش هم بيشوفوا دا الشي قدامهم كل يوم وحولينهم وفي كل مكان حتى لو ما خرجوا التلفزيون والجوالات والنت... يعني في بيئة منفتحة فا اذا انت ما اخذتي شويت كنترول انك توجيهي فهم راح يتوجهوا حسب الي يشوفوه فعلشان كذا بالنسبة لي خليتهم يحضروا الكلاس لحد ما انا اصير قادره ان اتكلم معاهم...ان يحضروا الكلاس يعتبر اشياء صغيره وحتى وانا ماني راضيه عنها بس اتقبلها مقابل ان ما تصير اشياء اكبر انا ما اكون راضيه عنها"

"People who live like us in an open culture, and everything is available for them, and you say I will not speak to them ... they see these things every day around them and everywhere, even if they don't go out, the TV, cell phones and internet, means open environment, so if you did not provide some control and direct them, they would go according to what they see. So, for me, I allowed them to attend until I become able to speak with them ... attending the class is considered a small thing, and even I do not like the idea, but I accept it in order to avoid bigger things happening, and I will not be satisfied with it" (Fnon).

"الحق ان حبيتها بس ما حبيت اكون جزء منها يعني حبيت ان هي تجي من طرف خارجي لان عن جد ما عندي ال experience ل احكي في هيك مواضيع تعرفي انا جايه من مجتمع ما اتعودنا فيه على الانفتاح وعلى تربية الاهل ان عيب وهش بس انا حبيتها لان هي صحيح شغله جديده بس في وضع الاولاد هون في هذا البلد تعتبر مهمه انهم يتكلموا فيها بصراحه لان ما تضمني ايش ممكن يسمعوا او يشوفوا وهي راح تكون بطريقه علميه فحسيت ان هيك شالت شوي من العبء عني وانا صرت شوي خارج الموضوع او ان كبداية يعني تعرفي لما الولد يكون عنده شوي معلومات وانت بتكملي عليها بالطريقة الي تتناسب معكم اسهل من ان انت تبدأ الموضوع كل لوحدك فحسيت ان اسهل تجي من برا ومن ناس دارسه وفاهمه هي عن شو بتحكي وبتعرف نفسية الطفل وشو بتناسب عمر الطفل لهيك وافقنا"

"The truth is that I like the idea, but I did not want to be a part of it, I mean that I liked it because it is coming from an external party because I do not have the experience to talk about these topics, you know I come from a society in which we are not accustomed to openness, but I liked it even it is an unusual thing, but in the situation of our children in this country, we must speak openly because we cannot ensure what they may hear or see, and it will be in a scientific way, so I felt it carried some of the burdens and I am somehow out of the conversation, and it sounds like they are starting the topic for you, and you need just to complete, it is easier than if you start the topic all by yourself, I felt that it is easier to come from experts and from people who studied it and understand it and knew what they are talking about and knew the child's psychological and what is appropriate for the child's age, so we agreed" (Amira).

In contrast Deem chose not to allow her children to attend the class and took the education responsibility for this sexual education:

"في المدرسة، زي ما قلت كنت مبلغه الكاونسلور انه ولدي ما يأخذ هذا الكلاس في اي مرحله المتوسط اوالثانوي، بالنسبة لبنتي نفس الشي، لكن كانت احيانا يصادفها تسمع من صاحباتها البنات انه عندهم بوي فريند وكذا وتجي تحكيني, علشان كذا احتاج اقلها كل مره هذا الشيء غلط ومو مقبول في ديننا"

> “For the school, as I said, I told the counselor that my son is not taken this class at any level, middle and high school. For my daughter in school, I did the same with her counselor, but sometimes she is hearing from her female friends that they had a boyfriend, and she came to me to tell me about them all the time. So, I need to tell her every time this is not right and not acceptable in our religion” (Deem).

> "بدأت باتفاق بيني وبين أولادي انه كل شهرين حنتعلمو معلومة جديدة يمكن ما تعرفوها او تكونوا سمعتوا عنها وتتأكدوا مني ولكم حرية السؤال عن اي شي"
> “I started with an agreement between my children and me that every month we will learn a new piece and information that you may do not know about, or if you have heard about it, and you can make sure about its accuracy from me, and you are free to ask about anything” (Deem).

Similarly, Sarah tied her sexual education strategy to religion:

> “I’m not a perfect parent, but I try to be my kids’ best friend. We talk about these things, but not in details, and I tell them what Islam teaches us on this subject and how our prophets’ life is an example for us to follow. I tell them it’s normal for human beings to have those feelings but what we do or not do about those feelings is an important aspect of Islam. Thinking of any sin is ok if you don't act on that sin” (Sarah; as originally worded).

In sum, all mothers appeared to share the same conservative views regarding juvenile sexual education in American schools and addressed it in terms of family communication privacy. For example, some subjects' views of privacy extended to sexual education not rooted in the mother's own perspective but in culturally informed conceptualizations of what an appropriate education should be. For others, the mother would express her role as originator of the rules for her house, which appeal to a larger cultural or moral authority. Mothers considered whether their children should attend sexual education in terms of morality and in terms of the respective benefit and risk that such exposure would incur over time, including concerns over diluting cultural values (Isgandarova, 2016). Put in terms of CPM concepts, their stories reveal that these mothers are taking the *contextual challenge* and *risk-benefit ratio* as motivation for adjusting their family privacy regulation (Petronio, 2002).

4.1.3 Boundary turbulence

Two CPM concepts inform my analysis of another set of themes from the mothers’ narratives. These are related to the concept of boundary turbulence as a time when individuals are unable or fail to coordinate or governor their privacy boundaries (Petronio, 2002). Relevant to the stories are the ideas that privacy boundary rules may be interrupted as agreed upon boundaries may “leak” in the face of violations.

4.1.3.1 Kids have their boundaries

According to some of the mothers, the significant concern was that children who live between two cultures and are exposed to contrasting boundaries might start to create their own boundaries and roles to alleviate the pressures that may arise as a result of cultural differences, to avoid exclusion from their environment.

> "هي راح تضطر تكذب على البنات، وتقلهم انا عملت وانا جربت علشان ان تتفاد الحرج ان هي ما عندها نفس الثقافة الي عند طلاب صفها وانها مختلفة، علشان كان الموضوع مرره صعب"
>
> "She may lie and tell the other girls; I had, and I tried, to avoid embarrassment if she did not have the same culture as her peer and other students in her class and that she was different because the topic was difficult"(Seren).

The children who grow up in a cross-culture environment might be reaching a separate place where they start to produce their own privacy boundaries (Reken & Bethel, 2005) based on their perspective, regardless of their family privacy rules. This production of rules for privacy boundaries relies on certain criteria (Petronio, 2002). As Petronio (2002) points out, there are fundamental criteria that impact the way people regulate their privacy, including the *surrounding culture*, *motivation*, and *risk-benefit ratio*.

> "نحن عندنا التزام مع التعامل مع الجنس الآخر لأني سمعت كثيرا من غير المسلمين انهم فقدو عذريتهم من مجرد الاختلاط مع الجنس الآخر بدون رقابة و اذا سالتهم هل كنتم سعيدين بهذا الشيء فكانت إجاباتهم هو مجرد عبث و تجارب فواجبي كام مسلمة ان اساعد ابنتي في هذه المرحلة ان أكون دائما بجانبها و ادعمها كي لا تتعرض لأي خطا تندم عليه في المستقبل لان الأولاد في سن المراهقة ما عندهم الوعي الكامل بهذه المواضيع"
>
> "We have a certain obligation when dealing with the opposite gender because I heard a lot from non-Muslims that they lost their virginity just from mixing with the opposite gender without supervision, and when I asked them whether you were happy with this thing, their answers were; it was just absurdity and experiences, so my duty as a Muslim is to help my daughter at this stage, and always be by her side and guide her so that she does not do any mistake that she will regret in the future because teenagers do not have full awareness of these issues" (Manal).

The tone of anxiety in the mothers' stories reveals their awareness of this unwanted influence on the privacy boundaries of their children. According to their words, while their children are interacting with members from a different culture and engaged in their activities, they will adopt some of their cultural habits and rules, which at some point contradict with their home culture. As the above excerpt shows, Manal explains that the children's needs will form the basis for judging the quantity and quality of the adaptation.

4.1.3.2 We are swimming against the wave

In their stories, there is a challenging process that these mothers faced, and they often felt terrible about their experiences:

"اه الصحيح كنت متفاجئة وشعرت بالخوف يعني ايش هذا اول مره بسمع فيه"

"In fact, I was surprised and afraid, what is this, this is the first time for me to hear about such a thing" (Alsa).

For Alsa, the community she came from defines sex as private information. This means that there is a cultural obligation to prohibit communication about sex. In contrast, children who integrate into a different culture may not hold the same boundaries. Abla also expressed her feelings about the cultural openness in the public school regarding the sex topic and her interactions and conversations with her children:

"تعرفي احنا في بيئة منفتحة ما تقدري تتحكمي في الي يدور حولين اولادك او ايش الي يسمعوا بس لو كانت بنتي في مدرسه اسلاميه راح اكون مرتاحة اكثر لان مهما كان ما راح يكون الانفتاح زي المدارس العادية وهذا الي مخليني على طول قلقانه وخائفة فموضوع ان انا مو قادره اتحكم في الي يدور حوليها مخليني في قلق وخوف دايم لان بتعرفي صعب تتابعي كل شي يتقال في المدرسة، او بين البنات....مرروره صعب"

"You know, we are in an open environment, you cannot control what goes around your children, or what they will hear, but if my daughter were in an Islamic school, I would be more comfortable because whatever it is not open as the regular schools, and this is what makes me anxious and fearful all the time, the idea of being not able to control what is going around us making me worried and permanently concerned, you know, it is hard to track everything been said in school or between the girls... it's so difficult" (Abla).

"شي ثاني كان تعرفي، ان في بنات وأولاد في الصف فما بعرف كيف بيصيروا يفكروا بعد ما يأخذوا هذا الكلاس ويسمعوا هذا الكلام راح يصير عندهم فضول بدهم يشوفوا يجربوا"

"Another thing, as you know, there are girls and boys in the class, and you do not know how they will think after they attend this class, or when they hear this talk, they may have a curiosity to see or try" (Seren).

Some mothers, felt like their hands were tied; there was nothing to do except tolerate the situation and keep up with events.

"استنيتها لحد ما اجت من المدرسة هذاك اليوم لحتى اسمع منها فهي لما اجت من المدرسة كانت كثير متحمسة وتقولي تعالي لاحكيلك شو حكوا معنا، الحق انا كنت كثير خجلانة وهي عم تحكي شو علموهم وشنوا بيدور بين المره والرجال عن جد كنت كثير خجلانة انا الام وكنت كثير خجلانة وكيف هي البنت عم تحكي بكل ثقه وبدون خجل"

"On that day, I waited for her to return from school; she was so excited to tell me about the class. I was shy while she was telling the details of the couple relationship. I felt ashamed of it and how the girl was talking with confidence and without shame" (Nana).

Dealing carefully and openly with the situation was the best way to protect the children from drifting in such an open culture or, as Nana called it, "*swimming against the wave.*"

"اولادنا في هي البلد زي الي بيسبح في نهر شديد التيار وهو بيسبح عكس هذا التيار فلو شدينا عليهم هذا ممكن يخليك تخسريهم علشان هيك نحتاج نكون شوي لينين معهم وان لازم معهم ونكسر حاجز الخجل

منشان نقدر ندفعهم ان يجوا يحكوا لك فزي هذا الكلاس ما فيني ما خليها تروح لان ممكن هي زي ماسوت بنتي الكبيرة تحضره من غير ماتقلك او انها تسمع معلومات يمكن تكون غلط من رفيقاتها"

"Our children in this country, like the one who swims in a river with a strong wave, and they swim against the wave. If we treat them strictly, we may lose them; this is why we need to be soft and open with them and break the barrier of shyness, so that will motivate them to come to tell us about everything, so for this class, I cannot prevent her from attending because she may attend it without telling me like what her oldest sister did, or she may hear wrong information from her friends" (Nana).

"انا بس بحكيلكم لا تحطوا ضغط على اولادكم لانهم هما بالفعل مضغوطين بهذي البلد"

"I just want to say, do not put pressure on your children because they are already pressured in this country" (Hanan).

These examples illustrate the intense difficulty which the mothers had in coping with the cultural transition they encountered, as well as with respect to how best to raise their children in a more permissive environment than that in which they themselves were raised. Put simply, the mothers were reluctant to adapt but also recognized the value in adaptation after weighing and comparing the pros and cons of their choices, at least for the sake of their children, who were also encountering intercultural obstacles which these mothers may not understand.

4.2 In Essence

The present study's focus is a close examination of how these mothers interpret and negotiate such challenges in order to discuss sensitive topics with their children and how they manage the family privacy rules and boundaries of such topics. By looking at the mothers' narratives, it is clear that stories and storytelling are significant in reaching such understandings and managing the communication exchanges' challenges between mothers and their children on sex and sexuality. Specifically, there was limited mother-child communication about sexuality and uncomfortable feelings in their conversation, especially with daughters. The mothers' main barrier is their reluctance and shyness in conversing about sex, as well as their lack of knowledge, skills, and generational parental models, which prevent them from initiating detailed conversations.

The research findings indicate that the mothering process in many cultures involves adopting different communicative strategies to navigate through challenging times, such as talking about taboo topics. Given that the topic of sex presents communicative challenges within most cultures and not only in Middle Eastern cultures, mother-child discussions about sexuality and sex tend to be difficult topics for all mothers. However, mothers main concern is that their daughters and sons grow up to be good human beings, which is most mothers' desire. Unsurprisingly, then, the mothers in this study reported that this type of situation required them as mothers to make significant adjustments because this topic is often considered taboo in their home societies.

Many of these societies have put a serious expectation on mothers to play their role in mothering and raise children within strict cultural norms and beliefs (Hamed, 2016; Hays, 1998; Rich, 1976; Thurer, 1994). So, mothers perform their teaching responsibilities with a surprising degree of flexibility for promoting a more 'modern' approach to sex education at home. Notably, most mothers agreed that awareness about sex education is essential, helping children and adolescents learn about healthy relationships, reproductive health, and responsible sexual activity. However, health reasons were not the only motivation behind the mothers' anxious attitude: religious rules, cultural expectations, and their community's observations were considered the basis for judging familial manners.

This expectation has key implications for the way mothers engage in storytelling about their conversations with their children on the subject of sexual education. Also, this finding offers a more complicated understanding of the challenges and opportunities of how cultural beliefs and norms are passed on from EMEM mothers to their children in the U.S. context. More explanations regarding the significance of these findings and the implications will be in the final chapter.

5. Chapter Five: Narrative Typologies

5.1 Frank's narrative typology in light of CPM

This chapter analyzes the mothers' storytelling using Frank's narrative typology (2013), with a particular interest in how the story-tellers relate their experiences with information-sharing. Negotiation a topic that culturally from these mothers' perspective considered taboo. The chapter will answer the research question:

- How do the stories told by Middle Eastern mothers make sense of their experiences of communicating with their children in relation to sex education?

The narrative typology offered by Frank provided a basis by which the narrative structures presented by the study subjects was assessed, with the three types (*restitution, chaos, and quest*) used to broadly categorize the different storytelling postures which were reflected in the subjects' narration of their lives and challenges related to their privacy violations. In other words, the storytelling depicts the efficacy of the construction and content disclosed. However, there is no story that can be encompassed by only one type of narrative. As will become evident in my analysis, in situ storytelling often combines all identified narrative types, restitution, chaos, and quest, in addition to denying, where each one could interrupt the others constantly and at any given time (Frank, 2013).

5.2 Frank's typology on the narratives

In this section, an initial table is displayed to present Frank's typologies within the mothers' narratives. Each narrative type is identified by its plot and then connected to the narrative that leads to that plot's recognizable patterns. It also includes the present study's new narrative typology *denying,* which corresponds to the elements of stories identified from these mothers' narratives. According to Frank's typology (2013), challenging moments are defined as mothers tell their stories; the stories detail changes to their lives and the impact of those changes on their self-identities. In this way, mothers tell and construct their stories to convey something about the meaningfulness of the experience that they went through in relation to their communication with their children. In the case of these mothers, the challenging situations resulted from privacy regulation disturbances related to family relations, cultural values, and life events, among others.

Table 5.1 Narrative typology identification

	Narrative Typology	**Examples of mothers' narratives**
Frank's Narrative	*Restitution*: Enacting the realities involved in returning to normal described by the plot, 'We were previously, interception happened, we are	"It was the first time I heard about something like that, because we don't have something like this in our society…and it's a very hush hush topic and it's bad to talk about it, so I remember that I talked with my husband and he said this is

	back to normal again. Also, conveying the cultural power in that the teller is a hero who overcame an obstacle.	good and this will benefit her in the future Because it looks at it from a scientific standpoint…and I did not talk to her about it after".
	Chaos: The central plot is when the person felt the loss of control. The chaotic narrative represents a lack of optimism and is told without causal sequence.	"My daughter was nine, and I do not want her to see things like this scene, my struggle always starts with the internet, I had permanent fears from the people she will seat with or when she watches the TV."
	Quest: The main characteristic of the quest narratives is treating the challenge as a journey. Describes the relationship between an individual's challenging moments and their desire or resistance to accepting the situation. Often narrative possesses common themes, including those of departure, initiation, and return.	"I was worried, and I thought a lot, but on my side, I was wanted them to take it and learn these kinds of stuff from professional people. My concern was the other kids' reaction because I always told my daughter we are Muslim, and we do not have sex out of marriage."
Research's New Narrative Typology	*Denying*: Characterized by the plot, 'Nothing happened'. The denying narrative is identified by a rejection of the idea of been exposed to the challenge. This type of story is told when the person feels a loss of position. Often this narrative comes first before the person starts to open to the details.	"All my kids ever learned about was the male and female body parts, the process of a fertilized egg, periods and puberty, and of course abstinence."

5.3 Narrative typologies

The broad 'typologies' presented by Frank (2013) are not meant as definitive categories. Instead they offer a basis for story assessment. As Frank indicates, one or two types of narrative may take the 'lead' with respect to the story flow, or in some cases, "actual tellings [can] combine all three [typologies], each perpetually interrupting the other two" (Frank, 2013, p. 76). In addition to this acknowledgment that the different narrative typologies (under the Frank model) are rarely encountered in isolation and will instead often emerge in tandem, or different 'proportions,' this theory recognizes that there is the potential for additional typologies to arise from themes encountered during storytelling assessment: "other types of narratives can and should be proposed," as they flow from the assessment of narrative storytelling of both a specific and theoretical nature (Frank, 2013, p. 76). As I will discuss, the present analysis recognizes the three narrative types—

restitution, chaos, and quest—as well as a new narrative type that I call “denying.” I will explain the findings underwriting each of these in detail below.

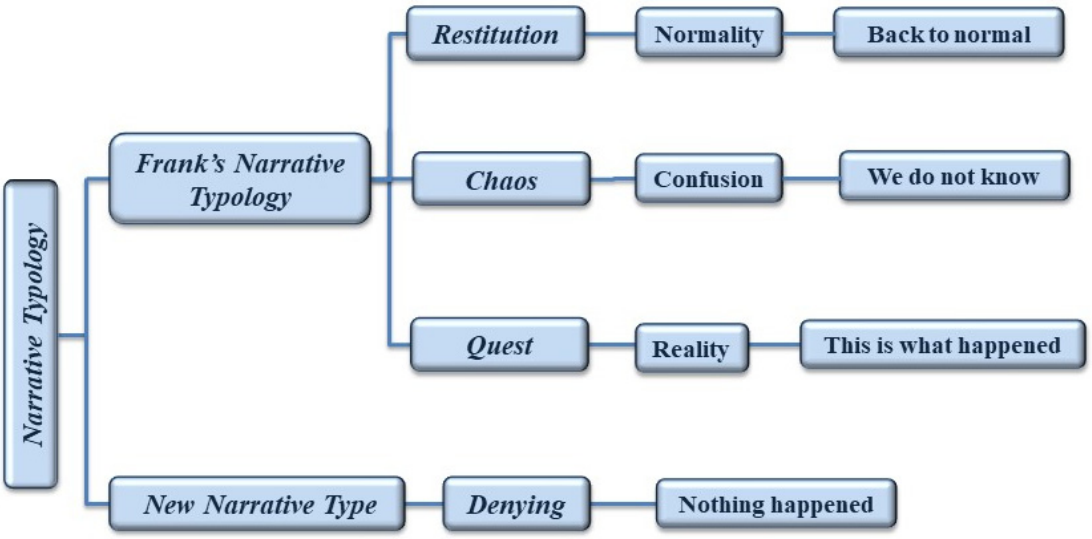

Figure 5.1 The narrative typology

5.3.1 Back to normality

One of the styles of storytelling, restitution, influences storytellers to tell stories because they believe others have an interest in the particular information they have to share (Frank, 2013). As further described by Nosek et al. (2012), stories of restitution are characterized by the presence of "an end, a solution or resolution to the problem" with the hope and promise of "returning...to a normal state" (p. 997). In general, the arc that restitution narratives follow tends to consist of presenting a problem, with the acknowledgment that the problem, as presented, consists of a deviation from a ‘normal’ state, but also the anticipation that the problem will be solved, and the normal state will be achieved once again. In telling restitution stories, storytellers adapt their stories to their cultures, with the recognition that the ‘problem’ encountered (and overcome, or which is anticipated to be overcome) is frequently cultural in nature, and that the satisfying end to the restitution tale is ‘felt’ through the storyteller offering a reaffirmation of the original cultural attributes, especially when they are rejected or ‘lost’ as part of the problem to be overcome (Frank, 2013).

For instance, the return to the normal, stable family situation, achieved by applying a particular cultural norm, which is the person's original home culture norms can form the ending ‘goal’ state of a given tale (Lewis, 2010). A culturally informed restitution story features external elements or forces that disrupt the stability and traditional values of the family. The influence of the ‘outside’ culture, particularly that of sexual education upon the mothers’ cultural understanding and norms with a traditional, sexually conservative mindset, is thus defined as the problem to be overcome. In the stories themselves, this

acts as a negative influence, which has resulted in the situation ‘deviating’ from a normal state of affairs. Restitution stories thus offer a valuable form of storytelling, insofar as the resolutions that they offer are presented within narratives in which the initial values or structures which were deviated from (by the particular problem which the author presents), are either solved completely or traditional (starting) states are restored in their entirety. As presented by Sharf (2005), the restitution plot "posits that [specific] problems can be remedied," and that a given state of affairs can be "restored to normal" (p. 326).

In the course of this research, it was found that outside influences, defined as U.S. sexual education and privacy norms, were strong disruptive influences on familial stability in the eyes of the subject mother storytellers. Moreover, this story form requires that the traditional cultural framework be maintained and that deviations from the traditional value structure be overcome, so that the initial culturally informed state of affairs would be restored. More precisely, privacy boundaries are distinguished as factors that are culturally informed and enacted in the family (Benjamin, 2017). When presented in a restitution narrative, if such privacy norms are being threatened by outside cultural norms, they must be restored to their original state. For instance, some of the mothers introduced their family narrative, followed by a temporary deviation from the normal situation, then a return to the original path, as might be described as *‘we were…and it happened…but we are back to normal.’* In one example, Seren described her experience in her written story as follows:

> "Very limited as we normally don’t discuss sexual matters at a very young age. When my daughter took this class, she already had the understanding that no sexual activity is permissible before marriage, and discussing this subject will only make kids anxious, curious, and maybe more willing to experience. Our approach to this subject is to limit communication between genders to school and necessary matters, we allow kids to mature at their own pace at the same time we build trust between us and answer questions as they come without initiating the discussion" (Seren; as originally worded).

She started her narrative by introducing their family’s normality, which is not talking about the topic with children. And when she notes that her daughter was exposed to the information, she brings up her daughter's knowledge of the family boundaries. Then after that, she returns to the normal status of the family by explaining her maintenance of the privacy boundaries within their daily life (Bally et al.2014). When I met Seren, the first thing she did was give me a tour of her house and show me her daughter's room. The house and the room reflected the conservative culture where they came from. From the heavy curtains covering the windows overlooking the street, to the segregated places that were designed to receive guests, to the Quranic paintings that decorated the walls, her house as well as most of the participants' houses reflected their Islamic identity.

Figure 5.2 Photos from some participants' houses

The curtains and Quranic paintings were not the only signs that most mothers made sure to show me as an indication that the nature of their children's Islamic identity and their reverence of the Islamic culture and traditions were not shaken despite the exposure of their children to the challenge of cultural differences. For example, the mothers described their girls' behaviors as evidence of their daughters' respect for the established parent-child boundaries and their commitment to their identity as Muslims, such as their style of dress and attitudes toward the opposite gender (Feghali, 1997). For example, putting on the hijab and refraining from associating with people of the opposite gender reveals how narratives on sex and sexuality are enacted as Muslim religious identities.

"بالنسبة لبناتي، الحمد لله رب العالمين، حجابهم هو حجاب لهم، خلاهم مميزين خلاهم يختلفوا عنهم خلاهم يفكروا أن احنا غير عن الامريكان احنا ما بنعري اجسامنا، ما في انسان بيقدر يشوفه غير زوجي او محارمي. اما في الاجواء العامة شو مابيشوفوا they ignore everything ما بتطلعوا الحمد لله رب العالمين"

> "For my girls, thank God, their veil is considered protection for them. Distinguish them and made them different than others; we are different; we do not uncover our bodies in front of a stranger. As for the general atmosphere, whatever they saw, they ignore everything; they do not look, thank God". (Alsa)

When Alsa was describing her daughter's attitude toward their obligation to maintain family boundaries, she began with their external appearance, which represents their religious orientation beginning with the meaning of the hijab for them as a means of protection from external influences, as well as a sign of the difference between the two cultures. The evidence that this story reflects the formula of the restitution narrative is

shown in the degree to which the storyteller frames the threat posed by the encounter with taboo topics to be mitigated by her religious and cultural signs and practices, such as the hijab, which creates a barrier between normality and non-normality. Her story thus explains how her family behavior patterns ensure that the family returns to normal, or as close to normal as possible in case of any turbulence. Notably, the restitution narrative "return to normal" was one of the most prevalent aspects in the stories of the EMEM mothers.

5.3.2 We do not know

As defined by Frank (2013), the chaos narrative is in many ways the opposite of the restitution narrative, defined not by the storyteller's presentation of overcoming challenges but by their expression of desperation or a lack of understanding as to whether the challenges presented (which may be the same as those under the restitution narrative) will be overcome, or indeed, if they even can be overcome; such tales often have no definitive ending (Frank, 2013). These stories may even be presented as "anti-narratives," meaning they cannot be told while they are happening, but only lived, often marked by acute feelings of despair, or even suffering beyond words (Frank, 2013, p. 98). The chaos type is also defined as a stage when the story does not convey a logical order of events (Frank, 2013). I found this stage to be another very prevalent aspect of the MEME mothers' narratives. In this stage, the narrator reaches the confusion point caused by the pressures of the challenge. I characterize this by the narrator's use of the words 'we do not know.' In these stories, we can see the mothers' concern about losing control and feelings of uncertainty about their children's positive or adverse reactions.

"ابنتي كانت في عمر التسع سنوات... ولا أريدها ان تشاهد أشياء كهذه، وبدأت معاناتي دائما مع الإنترنت، عندي دائما مخاوف من الأناس التي تجلس معهم او عندما تشاهد التلفاز"

"My daughter was nine, and I do not want her to see things like this scene, my struggle always starts with the internet, I had permanent fears from the people she will sit with or when she watches the TV" (Manal).

"شفت كثير عوائل هون يا حرام ضاعوا ولادهم لان ما اتفقوا على مبدأ واحد فبسمع قصص كثير بتخوف كيف ان البنت طلعت مع شاب او حملت منه بالحرام او ولد على علاقه مع بنت وحملت منه شي كثير بيخوف، عن جد ما بعرف، بس لما بسمع هيك قصص بحس راسي راح ينفجر"

"I saw many families here, lost their children because they did not agree on the same rule, we heard many scary stories, about the girl been in a relationship with a boy, or she got pregnant outside of marriage, or the boy in a relationship with a girl, it is horrifying, I do not know, but when I hear these stories, I get a headache" (Seren).

"وحتى لما بشوفها سرحانه انا متأكدة ان هي بتفكر فيه هي طفله وما عندها وعي عن اي شي وجاها هذا الموضوع وهو موضوع كبير وهي كانت في مرحله كثير صغيره"

"Even when I saw her distracted, I am sure she is thinking about it, she is a child, and has no awareness of anything, and got this topic, which is a big topic, and she is still at a very early age" (Seren).

"والله ماعد اعرف شولون بدي احكي المشكلة بهذي البلد الكل يربي أولاده على العلاقة الجنسية سواء صبيه عمرها سنه او عمرها ٩٠ سنه كل أصحابها مصاحبين يعني انا بنتي صحبتها الروح بالروح مثلا اثق فيها وبحبها واطعميها وبعرف كل شي عنها محترمه وكل شي بس هيا بنتي اش شعورها لما صحبتها بتقولها انو عندها صاحب وانا بروح معاه على السينما"

"I don't know what to say, the problem in this country that everyone raised their children that it is ok to have a relationship, whether one year old or 90 years old, my daughter's best friend, I know her, she is a good girl, but how my daughter feels when she tells her that she has a boyfriend and goes with him to the cinema" (Aisha).

For Nana's experience was marked by the contrast between her two daughters. Her narrative started when her second daughter brought the permission paper home. She said: "I was so worried and confused, why I never heard about this before from my first daughter."

Each of these examples provides a basis for understanding the 'chaos' narrative because these mothers reveal fears and anxiety caused by their inability to talk with their daughters about sexual issues (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016). In this way, the mothers appear to be powerless in the face of changes over which they have no control and little understanding. Although these storytellers may wish to control their family's exposure to sexual factors and elements, they ultimately show that they are powerless in this context and fearful of possible results over which they have no control.

5.3.3 This is what happened

The third primary narrative type outlined by Frank (2013) is that of the *quest* typology. While the quest was not evident as a complete story form in the MEME mothers' narratives, there were elements of this narrative type in the themes. The quest typology is similar to that of the restitution story but involves less emphasis upon the return to the original, traditional state; instead the focus is on the lessons to be learned from the hardship endured and along the path to a goal which may resemble restitution, but which is, in fact, unique and different than the starting point. As indicated by Harter, Japp, & Beck (2005), the purpose of the quest story is most often to frame the particular problem encountered, in this instance, the challenges posed by the different perspective toward sex education and privacy, as a "source of some insight that needs to be shared with others," with the lessons learned resulting from the storyteller detailing their encounter with the problem in question, but not necessarily overcoming it, as is the case with the restitution narrative; there may be a return, but it will be to a new normal (Harter et al., 2005, p. xii). "Departure" is the first stage, initiated with a call (Frank, 2013, p. 117). For the Muslim mothers' experiences, the call varies based on the ways they had been introduced to the sexual topic. In some stories, the call was receiving a permission paper or hearing from a friend, while in other cases, it was through the experience of an unexpected situation such as Manal's experience with her daughter in the park:

"لكن الصاعقة كانت عندما مرة ذهبنا الى الحديقة وكانت ابنتي تتحدث مع فتاة ظننت انهم يلعبون ولكن كانت هذه الفتاة تخبر ابنتي عن المواقع الاباحية وابنتي اعتقدت انه موقع للألعاب او الأشياء الممتعة فعندما عدنا الى البيت جاءت ابنتي ترتجف وتبكي وقالت لي لا ادري ما هذا الشيء الذي شاهدته كانت مشاهد فظيعة وقصت علي القصة...ابنتي كانت في عمر التسع سنوات"

> "But the shock was when we went to the playground, and my daughter was talking to a girl, and I thought they were playing, but this girl was telling my daughter about bad sites, and my daughter thought it was a site for games or fun things. When we went back home, my daughter came to me crying and said, 'I don't know what this thing that I saw, they were terrible scenes,' and she told me the story, she was upset, she was at the age of nine years" (Manal).

According to Frank (2013), this journey can be positioned in three stages, starting with departure, then initiation, and then return. Departure begins with accepting the idea of an existing challenge; starting the journey that needs to be faced is the first threshold and the start of the second stage of the quest narrative, *initiation*. In most of the mothers' stories, the initiation stage involved either allowing the children to attend the class and then opening a dialogue with them or rejecting the idea of attending this type of class and providing an explanation, expanded or limited, for this refusal decision.

After they talked about the initiation stage, they expressed feelings, related decisions taken, and told of how they adapted and these details can be taken as a description of how the journey or quest was undertaken to navigate the challenge of the sex education class and the topic of sexuality with their children. For example, Aisha described the shock she and her husband felt as the point of departure for their quest to navigate the sex education issue and they describe several ways they attempted to find a way out of their dilemma and eventually they came to a journey's end involving sending their children to back to Jordan:

> "We were shocked, and we start to ask around about the nature of these classes. All what we heard was not good, especially the kids' reaction towards these classes. So, we decided to homeschool them, but my husband and I were not proficient in most of the school subjects. So, we sent them to our family in Jordan to study these two grades (fifth and sixth)" (Aisha; as originally worded).

Living without her children was a "new normal" for Aisha and her husband that significantly changed their family life through the quest to navigate a significant challenge to their sense of religious and cultural identities.

Fnon's story had two different parts related to sex education, the first with her daughters and the second with her son. As noted in her story, when her oldest daughter asked for permission to take the sex education class, she was worried about how the children in the class would understand sexual relations outside marriage. However, she wanted her daughter to learn from the educational professionals as she explained in her written story. Fnon's experience with the questions her daughters asked her was part of her quest to reconcile the school information and their religious commitments with her children. She faced this challenge differently with her son given the lessons she had learned with her

daughters and so her quest to reconcile sex education and religious commitments led to a "new normal":

> "And at the same time, I tried to teach them that not everything that they have learned from school is consist with our religion and tradition because the idea of accepting everything as they learned from school terrified me. After taking the classes, they start to ask me a few questions about the sexual relationship that was reduced by now (they are in 10 and 11 grades). On the other hand, when my son took the class, I had really wanted him to take it because I feel impressing if discuss this topic with him and his dad is passed away, so there is no one can talk to him about these stuffs. Anyway, he is rarely asking me questions about the sexual relationship" (Fnon; as originally worded).

As noted, quest stories represent a journey, where the narrators "tell of searching for alternative ways of being" (Frank, 2013, p. 117). In the stories, there is a tale of the thresholds that had been crossed in the narrator's journey, which represents significant evidence of the new normal these mothers reached. In adhering to the quest model, these mothers implied that their story had come "full circle" and that in effect, they had met their challenges. The use of this typology thus represents an implication that the storyteller is satisfied that a suitable conclusion has been reached to benefit all. It should be noted that there were few examples of the quest narrative, perhaps because the MEME mothers did not see their experiences as a journey to a new place but more as a way to return to normal which is why the restitution type was more prevalent.

5.3.4 Nothing happened

Due to the sensitive cultural nature of the sex related topics, one interesting and valuable typology of storytelling that appeared in this study is denial, as was used by some of the mothers in order to contextualize their stories. As framed by Gocek (2014), the denial narrative is frequently used as a means of maintaining dignity or a semblance of control over culturally informed items most acutely threatened by the problem presented (if reluctantly) by the storyteller of the narrative. In particular, denial narratives are framed as being generally predicated upon "two strategic moves" regarding story details, "selectivity and decontextualization," with the goal being a story made up of "selective half-truths" which can serve to obscure storyteller intent, but also to maintain dignity or cultural values which the storyteller holds in high regard (Gocek, 2014, pp. 42, 457). An analysis of the told stories of the mothers revealed that the mothers exercised denial and utilized this format at the beginning of telling stories and before revealing the details. Denial utilizes two aspects: face-saving and denying that such an event had significant consequences. According to Goffman (2005), when denial comes up in a story, storytellers utilize it to maintain their "place in the social world beyond" the story events, as well as to keep away feelings of regret and inability (p. 7). In the stories, the mothers avoid the memory of their challenges to represent themselves as culturally 'normal.' We can see that most of the mothers at a certain point reject the idea of being exposed to

change, insisting that *'nothing happened.'* For instance, Rama, in her written story, started by saying:

> "I've never heard about sex education being offered to kids in school until late when someone mentioned it to me. All my kids ever learned about were the male and female body parts, the process of a fertilized egg, periods and puberty, and of course, abstinence" (Rama; as originally worded).

However, in the details of the ongoing story, she talked about her communication strategy with her daughters and what happened when she heard about the class, "when I asked my daughters about it, they laughed and left" (Rama; as originally worded).

Another instance of denial is shown in the written story told by Fahema:

> "I have not discussed this with my kids yet at that time. There are a lot of things they need to think of rather than sex. Especially with their early age. They need to learn, not everything you hear is fit with your manners, and they need to ask me if they don't understand anything." (Fahema; as originally worded)

In this instance, the storyteller is using denial as a means of bolstering her own perspective and the importance of the traditional values which she holds dear. Through denying her own exposure to the corrupting influences she describes, the subject is able to separate herself, as if nothing happened, from the threats to traditional values. Denial thus contributes to the typologies established by Frank (2013), for the purposes of this study, which is related to the cultural challenges. In that, these stories represent a strong effort on the part of the subjects toward face-saving (Goffman, 2005). Although there is no certainty of any of the subjects' narratives being truthful, it was evident that their basis for denial was to maintain their reputation and self-respect.

5.4 Rethinking the CPM concepts through Frank's narrative typologies

EMEM mothers navigate myriad challenges as they engage in their host cultures and try to maintain a steady cultural identity for their family. The present chapter has analyzed stories as examples of narrative types, incorporating the dynamics of communication privacy management in the face of a culturally taboo topic. The analysis highlighted some major communicative challenges. EMEM mothers are likely to feel beleaguered in the face of opposing cultural forces or in their efforts to enforce more conservative values and practices as they face troubling family divergences. These challenges prompt stories that display the features of Frank's (2013) narrative types of restitution, chaos, and quest. The analysis revealed that a fourth type, "denying," is also evident.

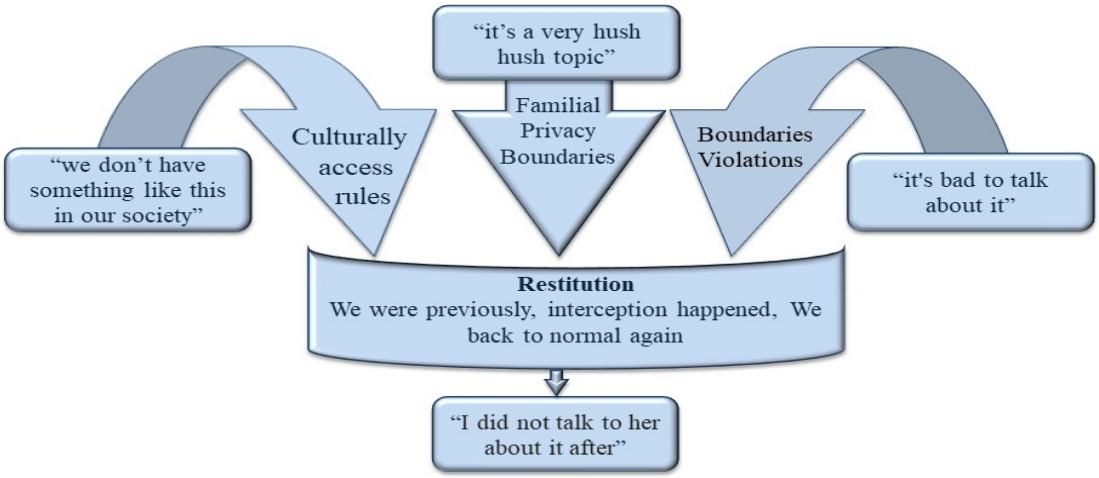

Figure 5.3 The CPM concepts through Restitution type

The main characteristic of the *Restitution* narrative type is the (successful) effort to return to normal described in the plot: "*We were normal previously, normality was interrupted, we are back to normal again*." Cultural power is conveyed as the teller takes the role of the hero who overcomes every obstacle. I argued that this story type addresses privacy management by starting with and returning to access rules endorsed by the cultural values, social norms, and religious teachings of their Islamic home cultures. The rules define strict communication boundaries around what is deemed taboo about sexual information. In these stories, boundary turbulence occurs when these strict regulations are violated. The mothers' stories describe the experience of violations and turbulent moments in family communication, but they eventually reaffirm the cultural privacy management rules.

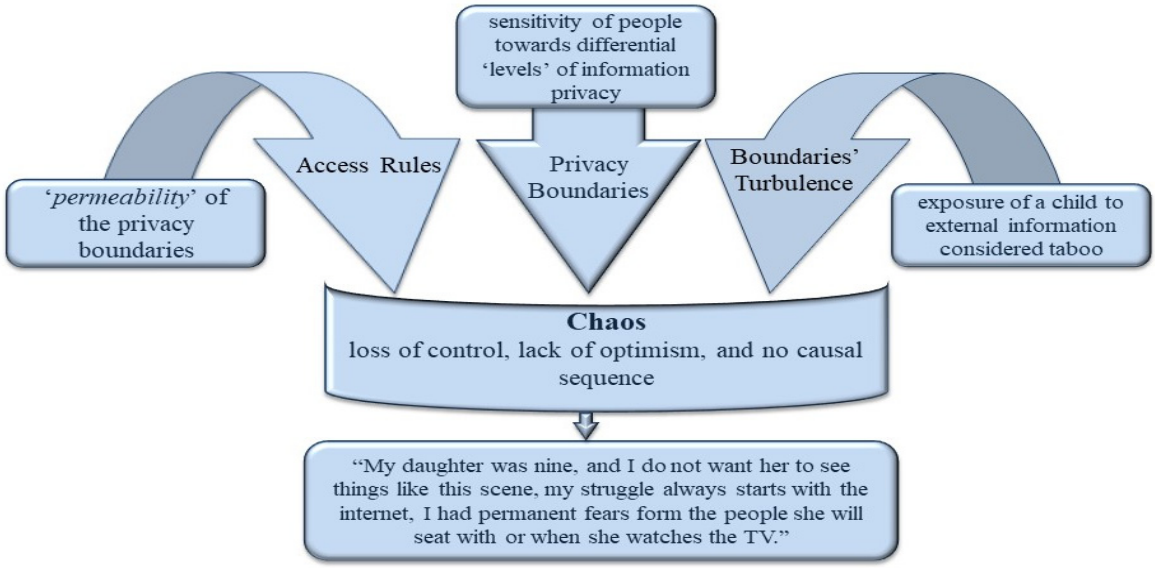

Figure 5.4 The CPM concepts through Chaos type

The central plot in the *Chaos* type is confusion over the order of events, and the teller feels a loss of control; indeed, the phrase "I don't know" appears frequently. The chaos narrative expresses a lack of optimism (Frank, 2013). In this plot, the boundary turbulence of privacy violations that expose children to a taboo topic remains unresolved and troubling with uncertain outcomes.

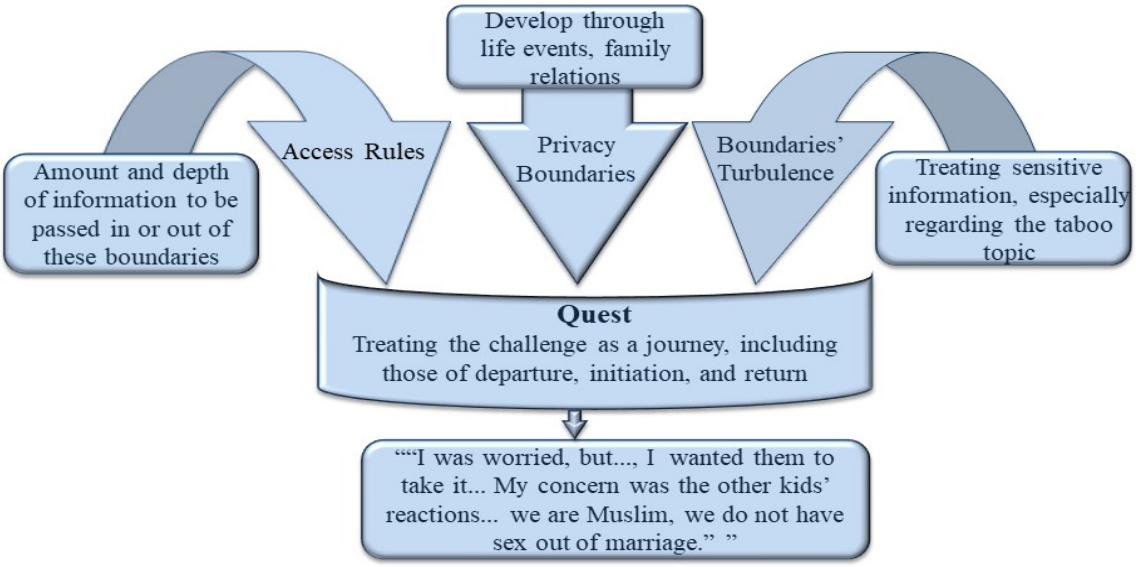

Figure 5.5 The CPM concepts through Quest type

The *Quest* narrative type treats the challenge of privacy boundary violations as the basis for a journey. The features of the plot are a departure (receiving a call), initiation (actions taking place), and return, which is always to a new normal. The Quest narratives told by EMEM mothers begin with receiving information about the sexual education class. The journey involves navigating the turbulence of privacy violations and finding a way through these challenges, whether by resisting or adapting.

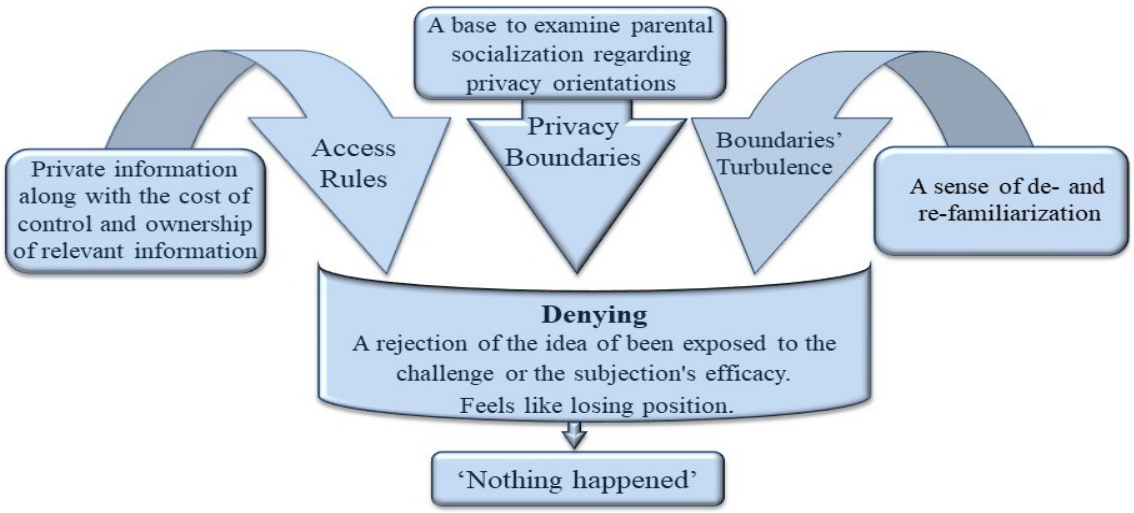

Figure 5.6 The CPM concepts through Denying type.

The plot of the Denying narrative type is characterized as “Nothing happened.” The Denying narrative rejects the idea that the narrator has faced a challenge. This type of story may be a defense against criticism for failing to meet a cultural expectation about dealing with the challenge. EMEM mothers who felt very uncomfortable about disclosing their personal experiences with a taboo topic resorted to using a Denying narrative. By denying that there had been any privacy boundary violations, they not only re-enforced their family and cultural privacy boundaries but also their own self-presentation as devout Muslim mothers. While some of these mothers opened up about their experiences after a time, the use of the denial narrative type was an initial defensive strategy in answering questions about their experience.

In sum, a connection was made (shown in Table 5.2 below) to show how Frank’s typology (2013) can accommodate the primary CPM concepts of access rules, privacy boundaries, and boundary turbulence (Petronio, 2002). As I have argued, despite the development of CPM concepts in a post-positivist frame, they were relevant and useful tools to the interpretation of the stories told by mothers talking with their children about taboo topics. In their narratives, the mother's words, "It is a very hush hush topic, and it's bad to talk about it," show the boundaries these mothers enacted according to their cultural expectation for the type of information that they considered to be a private matter. However, the accessibility and availability of this type of information violates these boundaries, which led to challenging situations that drove these mothers to rethink their access rules regulations. In each of these narrative types, the CPM concepts engaged from a certain angle. For example, in Restitution, the access rules were dependent on cultural (and religious) norms and returning to those normative parameters. In Chaos, the permeability of the boundaries around privacy and taboo contributed to the feelings of confusion and disruption. In Quest, access rules depended on the amount and depth of information about the journey and challenges that passed in or out of these boundaries and privacy boundaries were more negotiable although not permeable in the same way as the Quest. In one mother’s quest story, privacy boundaries based on cultural and religious taboos were dramatically and geo-physically reaffirmed when the children were sent back to their home culture. Finally, in Denial, the challenge to family privacy is both disavowed (“Nothing happened”) and yet the disavowal itself serves to affirm privacy boundaries and taboos. Denial thus implicitly acknowledges the potential cost of admitting this topic into family conversation and defers boundary turbulence. While denial stories changed as mothers began to talk about them more, the denial story is a way to exercise control over a potential boundary turbulence and defend a family’s privacy rules and boundaries based on their cultural norms and understandings. The way mothers chose to tell their stories relied on disavowing the privacy communication challenges in their conversational engagements with their children. The primary CPM concepts and their application in telling stories have been presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Overlay Frank’s typology on CPM concepts

	Narrative Typology	**Overlay Narrative typology on CPM concepts**	**Examples of mothers’ narratives**

Frank's Narrative Typology	*Restitution*: Enacting the realities involved in returning to normal described by the plot, 'We were previously, interception happened, we are back to normal again. Also, conveying the cultural power in that the teller is a hero who overcame an obstacle.	*Access Rules*: culturally-dependent on other things *Privacy Boundaries*: limited to what an individual may deem as either personal, private, or shareable. *Boundaries' Turbulence*: violations of privacy boundaries occur	"It was the first time I heard about something like that, because we don't have something like this in our society…and it's a very hush hush topic and it's bad to talk about it, so I remember that I talked with my husband and he said this is good and this will benefit her in the future Because it looks at it from a scientific standpoint…and I did not talk to her about it after".
	Chaos: The central plot is when the person felt the loss of control. The chaotic narrative represents a lack of optimism and is told without causal sequence.	*Access Rules*: '*permeability*' of the privacy boundaries *Privacy Boundaries*: sensitivity of people towards differential 'levels' of information privacy *Boundaries' Turbulence*: exposure of a child to external information considered taboo	"My daughter was nine, and I do not want her to see things like this scene, my struggle always starts with the internet, I had permanent fears from the people she will seat with or when she watches the TV."
	Quest: The main characteristic of the quest narratives is treating the challenge as a journey. Describes the relationship between an individual's challenging moments and their desire or resistance to accepting the situation. Often narrative possesses common themes, including those of departure, initiation, and return.	*Access Rules*: the amount and depth of information to be passed in or out of these boundaries. *Privacy Boundaries*: develop through life events, family relations, and social and cultural values. *Boundaries' Turbulence*: sensitive information, especially regarding school-based sexual education classes	"I was worried, and I thought a lot, but on my side, I was wanted them to take it and learn these kinds of stuff from professional people. My concern was the other kids' reaction because I always told my daughter we are Muslim, and we do not have sex out of marriage."

Research's New Narrative Typology	*Denying*: Characterized by the plot, 'Nothing happened.' The denying narrative is identified by a rejection of the idea of been exposed to the challenge. This type of story is told when the person feels loss of position. Often this narrative comes first before the person starts to open to the details.	*Access Rules*: counts as private information along with the cost of control and ownership of relevant information. *Privacy Boundaries*: family privacy orientations as a base to examine parental socialization regarding privacy orientations. *Boundaries' Turbulence*: a sense of de-contextualizing and de-emphasizing	"All my kids ever learned about was the male and female body parts, the process of a fertilized egg, periods and puberty, and of course abstinence."

6. Chapter Six: Conclusions, Implications, and Future Directions

In this chapter, I will consider implications of my findings for some of those larger communication relationships. I will begin with a brief summary of my study and findings. Next, I will consider larger implications of cross-cultural differences for expatriate parenting, mothering, and religious minorities. Then I will discuss theoretical and methodological lessons from this study and practical lessons for engaging international families on campus, empowering expatriate mothers, and teaching sexual education. Finally, I will discuss limitations of this study and future directions.

6.1 Overview

The primary consideration of this project is the challenges and opportunities of EMEM mothers regarding their communication with their children in relation to family privacy regulation within the context of Western sexual education. Given that sexual education for children is a taboo topic in their home cultures, the study focused on mothers' stories about their experiences and strategies of communication privacy management. The study particularly examines communication about sexual education and how mothers navigate differing expectations about privacy, parenting responsibilities, and school mandates. However, the study is more broadly about complex communication relationships: among mothers and children, within families, between families and schools, across cultural and religious differences, within expatriate graduate student communities, and between expatriate communities and the communities within which they temporarily reside.

Methodologically, I was very aware that sexual education was a sensitive topic for these mothers, so I maintained a reflexive stance as an "insider" in order to interact with them and a narrative methodology to elicit written stories and conduct interviews about their experiences. Writing my research diary while collecting the data allowed me to meaningfully contextualize the research and explain the cultural background of the study subjects to give the readers the opportunity to better understand the research finding (Watt, 2007). My analysis adopts Frank's topology guided by CPM theory's concepts to understand, at the micro-level, the reasons for mothers' reluctance in communicating with their children regarding sex education in school and, at the macro level, the challenges these mothers were experiencing living in Western society. The methodology borrowed its foundation from the premise that family interaction patterns, which are culturally-informed, are narratively structured and shaped by larger cultural differences, in this case, religion and family privacy.

The primary data is drawn from semi-structured individual interviews, small group discussions, and written stories. Data collection took place between May and December 2019. My own field diary narrates my field experiences as a supplementary source of information. This detailed story uncovered lived scenes of these mothers' socio-cultural lives and detailed the role of friendship as a basis for trust and mutual agency between

involved parties, representing the equality of decision making. I personally transcribed and translated all collected data.

Both Frank's narrative' typology (2013) and the concepts of CPM theory contributed to my understanding of cross-cultural mothering and EMEM mother-child relationships. My approach to analysis assumes that culture has a direct impact not just on the strategies that mothers used to communicate with their children regarding subjects that are considered taboo but also in the way they told their stories related to these experiences. For example, the CPM theory explains the ways mothers try to apply their cultural morals and values to define their families' identity. However, the host culture educational system presents a type of threat to these EMEM families' privacy boundaries. According to Frank's (2013) explanation, this threat creates a challenging situation, in this case, the challenge of a sexual education class that confronts the cultural-religious commitments of the expatriate family. For Frank, such a challenge generates a culturally-sanctioned story about the teller's identity, actions, and fate. In the present case, these mothers are faced not only with managing the privacy violations of this taboo topic in their communication with their children, but also they must meet the expectations of their Muslim communities while navigating the expectations of mothering from the U.S. community in which they (temporarily) reside.

The stories of the mothers' experiences, evidence features of all of the story types in Frank's typology as well as an emergent type. Some mothers described how the introduction of the sexual education topic caused confusion in their families; their stories took on the features of chaos narratives. However, most of the mothers reframed this chaos into a restitution narrative, claiming that through their faith and cultural commitments, their families returned to a normal state. The narrative pattern of some mothers' stories was a bit different because they began by denying the challenge before they described their strategies for dealing with it, which by possible interpretation is a face-saving strategy (Goffman, 2005). In their denial, these mothers reject the idea of the outside turbulence's efficacy by saying '*nothing happened.'* In this way, they tried to preserve a preferred view of their family's Muslim identity that accorded with the conservative expectations of their home culture and their immediate expatriate community.

Regardless of the type of narrative, all the mothers reacted to a lack of tolerance in their home cultures and immediate communities for deviations from the traditional value structure. This exacerbated the challenge of the sexual education class for maintaining family privacy boundaries around topics of sexuality and sexual relations (Benjamin, 2017). For instance, most mothers believed that talking about sex was considered a red line in their culture because practicing sex out of marriage is religiously prohibited, making it culturally something related to honor and family reputation, which needs to be preserved. In other words, it was not a permissible family topic for them in their culture. In my own experience, information about sex was provided in secondary school in a simple scientific way. There was no discussion about sexual relationships because it was believed that such topics should not be discussed until marriage. This was the way in

which the mothers were raised, and they wanted to do the same with their children. At the same time, these mothers expressed a duty to help their children and support them, especially with regard to sexual temptations that they might regret in the future. Thus, sexual education posed a challenge not only from the host culture and in the communication between the school and the family but also as a contradictory injunction for mothers not to talk about a taboo topic but also to talk to children about threats to their moral and physical safety. My analysis points to the struggle that these mothers expressed in their efforts to meet complexly conflicting expectations and community evaluations.

6.2 Larger Implications

This work is predicated on a desire to bridge cultural gaps in order to provide greater support for EMEM mothers and their families who face contradictions not only over U.S. reproductive health education but a myriad of issues regarding difference, community, and safety (Haddad et al., 2006). In the context of antagonisms over immigration, global relations, and Islamophobia, these mothers find themselves struggling to hold their families together and provide a safe psychological environment in which their children can achieve healthy development (Haddad et al., 2006; Wanless, 2016). In the following subsections, I apply insights from research on these issues to identify some of the challenges that complicate international parenting, expatriate relations, and Muslim life in the U.S. These contradictions suggest the complexities that contextualize the privacy narratives I have elaborated in this study.

6.2.1 International parenting

Challenge 1: There are vital distinctions between the paths that mothers and children, and even societies, have regarding what is best in the parenting context. However, parents may experience complicated choices when dealing with raising their children in a culture different than theirs. Parenting practices and knowledge differ culturally regarding what parents should do for their children in order to ensure that their children are able to achieve the best outcomes of which they are capable (Coll & Pachter, 2002). For example, how to organize social interactions with their children differs dramatically for Japanese and for American mothers (Bornstein, & Cheah, 2006). At the time where "American mothers promote autonomy and organize social interactions with their children so as to foster physical and verbal assertiveness and independence, Japanese mothers organize social interactions so as to consolidate and strengthen closeness and dependency within the dyad, and they tend to indulge young children" (Bornstein & Cheah, 2006, p. 7). Additionally, expatriate parents are scrutinized in accord with local practices in the residential culture not only by their neighbors but also by educational, medical, and legal authorities. A majority of the schools may accommodate the expectations of Islam yet lack understanding and fail to integrate such accommodations into school practices—for example, religious fasting or religious holidays on school days. The difference in parenting objectives and style is likely to breed alienation and

differentiation, thus affecting the attempts at appropriate adjustment. In the position of these mothers, it can be challenging for them to decide which action is right to avoid uncomfortable situations.

Challenge 2: Despite what seems to be common ground in that both domestic and international parents are responsible for their children's safety, well-being, and growth, international parents are often criticized on the basis of cultural stereotypes about their parenting styles and practices. For example, Muslim parents may be criticized for restricting their children from certain educational content and social activities, thereby reinforcing the stereotype that they are overly strict and controlling. EMEM mothers' opposition to their children entering Western-style sexual education is an eminently challenging decision.

Challenge 3: U.S. public schools give parents choices about what their children will participate in (sexual education, field trips, violent course content, etc.); however, children are exposed regardless of parental wishes through their friends and social contacts. Given the religious diversity of the U.S., it is the case that even domestic parents may be opposed to sexual education in the schools on religious grounds. The arguments over abstinence-only versus comprehensive sexual education attest to the prominence of such opposition (Mota-Back, 2017; Slominski, 2021). Such arguments may be obscure for EMEM families, leaving them to negotiate their concerns alone. This can make mothers feel solely responsible and more determined yet more anxious to protect their children from such exposure.

6.2.2 Insider and outsider tensions

Challenge 1: EMEM mothers are often in need of information, advice, and support as cultural newcomers or outsiders; however, their differences often render them socially isolated, both physically in terms of their ability to access needed resources and socially in terms of their differences from local community members (Haddad et al., 2016). Successfully navigating a new society involves more complicated factors than just knowing the values of the new culture or speaking the language (Coll & Pachter, 2002); it can be a fundamental challenge that includes the acceptance and support of the members of this new society (Tummala-Narra, 2004). Historically, the literature on expatriates in the U.S. displays the dominant idea of 'the other,' whereby expatriate families have been treated as outsiders. As "other" and outsiders, EMEM families may be isolated and socially limited in receiving the support they may need most (Coll & Pachter, 2002). According to Coll and Pachter (2002) the particular mechanisms such as racism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression, among others, constitute in U.S. society a "social stratification system," which depicts the cultural differences "as deficits and the real consequences for these families in terms of opportunities, resources, and rewards" (p. 2). To assist international students, U.S. universities have International Programs and Services (IPS), which provides "support through advising on immigration, personal, and cultural matters, and by organizing events and activities to support students' engagement

and development within the campus community."[5] Yet IPS has limited resources to directly assist students with families. Even when an EMEM mother requests assistance, there is little available when it comes to a family matter.

Challenge 2: EMEM mothers may gravitate toward enclaves of women from similar home cultures as a critical support mechanism; however, these enclaves may expose the mother to scrutiny and insider criticism, undermining support. Given that these mothers face common difficulties regarding parenting and the obstacles to appropriate parenting in the traditional mode, they provide each other with mutual support, albeit not without criticism. However, the support which EMEM mothers receive in these enclaves is not limited to parenting issues alone. Instead, these groups offer support and understanding of a sort largely absent in their daily interactions and recognize the legitimacy of the values they hold dear. In effect, these enclaves provide these mothers with an opportunity to resist, if perhaps temporarily, social pressures toward assimilation and westernization that may contradict their perspectives (Abushouk, 2006).

Thus, these enclaves represent a crucial support mechanism, but one which carries a significant degree of risk to the mothers who come together in these contexts. Unfortunately, by congregating in such enclaves, these mothers expose themselves to scrutiny and insider socio-culture judgment. Critically, by sharing their struggles, they risk exposing their families' activities, which may threaten their privacy boundaries and put the mother herself in a suspect position with regard to her support community. Although during the study's data collection EMEM mothers expressed their wishes to help, in order to avoid the risk of exposure, some mothers refused to be involved in the small group discussion explaining that *'I do not feel comfortable sharing my family's story in front of others.'* In these communities, the parents, specifically the mothers, are considered the main agents for transmitting life values, morals, and principles, including sex-related values to children (DiIorio, Kelley, & Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999). Thus, these EMEM mothers act in the position of responsible persons for their children's Islamic identity. This means that a mother's parenting approach is likely to be questioned by their communities if something goes wrong with their children or the children are perceived to lose their way in terms of Islamic identities representation.

Challenge 3: EMEM mothers are encouraged to participate in assimilation/identity change for themselves, for their children, and for their families; however, this often makes them anxious about preserving the culture of origin commitments, practices, and identities. In many cases, these expatriate parents attempt to be seen within this cultural group's perspective (Goodnow, 2006). Believing that, the deviation from their minority communities and home society's expectations in terms of shaping their children's Islamic identity is interpreted as a parenting failure.

[5] See: https://www.mtu.edu/international/

Given that they want to avoid the appearance of impropriety or acting in a manner counter to the host culture, this results in intense pressures by exposing them to residential community observations and questions about Islamic socio-culture (Haddad et al., 2006). On the other hand, Muslim mothers' wish to protect their children from Western-style practices and identities, and losing their Islamic identity carries the risk of exposure, not only as an illegitimate cultural 'other,' but they must also 'balance' between supporting their children and preserving their cultural ancestry in the face of intense assimilation pressures, which are faced more acutel by their children (Noormohamed, 2008). Cross-cultural communities expose children to new information and perspectives (Reken & Bethel, 2005) which may conflict with their home cultural perspectives and promote a heightened level of anxiety and fear as they raise their children (Child, 2007). Thus, these mothers must determine how comfortable they are with permitting their children to assimilate, knowing that their children might lose track of their Muslim heritage due to being exposed to cultural norms the mothers find improper. This choice is also balanced with the degree to which these mothers prioritize their cultural background. Both as a function of culture and to avoid being perceived as threatening 'others,' Muslim mothers are pressured not merely to assimilate but also to permit their children to incorporate. The result is that the choice to counter such inclusion pressures is a difficult one that exposes the mother, and perhaps, her children, to being critiqued from different directions.

6.2.3 Xenophobia

Challenge 1: Even as universities have recruited international students and their families, antagonisms toward immigrants and expatriates have become more visible. Figure 6.1 shows the increases in international students over the past decade[6].

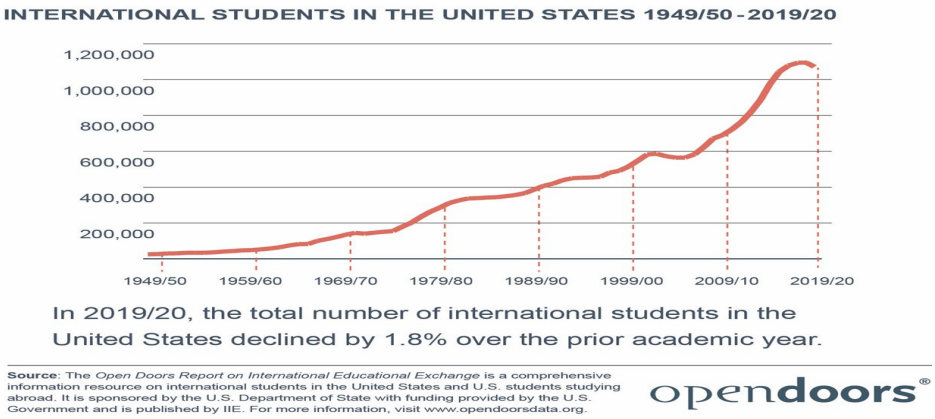

Figure 6.1 International Students in U.S.

[6] See: The Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange is a comprehensive information resource on international students in the United States and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.

However, the hate crimes that are diversified between life-threatening assault, simple assault, or intimidation against immigrants and expatriates have notably increased (Hassan, 2019), particularly for the Muslim population (Agrawal et al., 2019). According to the exploratory study by Agrawal et al. (2019), despite the fact that most official statistics about anti-Muslim violence did not reflect the true extent of such violence (60%), the results showed that different types of assault in different settings and targeting different age groups and genders have been significantly witnessed. CAIR (September 2019) indicated that in the first half of 2019 759 anti-Muslim hate crimes were recorded as reported in figure 6.2 [7].

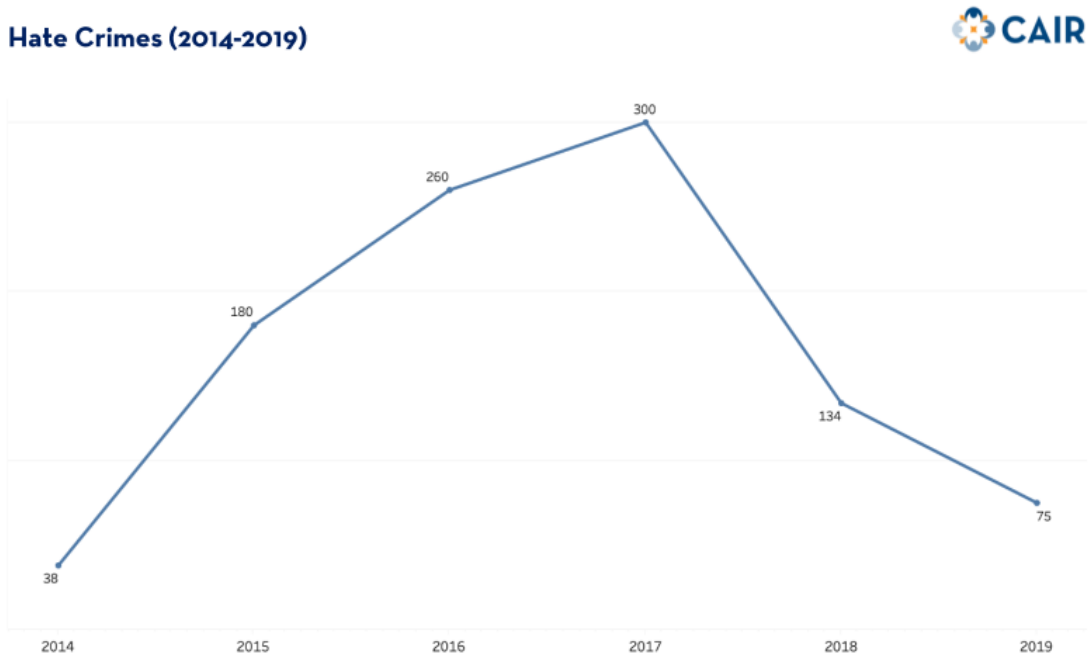

Figure 6.2 The statistics of hate crimes in the U.S.

Challenge 2: Despite American commitments to justice and equality, Middle Eastern families are subject to Islamophobic discrimination. Practices that are strongly linked to some Muslim families' practices, such as praying in a public place or wearing traditional clothes, can instigate negative attention, harassment, and even more vehement responses (Haddad et al., 2006). This makes public movement, access, and visibility less safe and more restrictive for expatriates (Haddad et al., 2006). Because all Muslims are perceived as threats, no Muslim can be safe from discrimination (Lacassagne, 2016). Muslim parents must be constantly vigilant about the safety of their children; just as black parents must have “the talk” with their children, especially sons, about behavior for avoiding police profiling and potential brutality, so parents of Muslim children must be alert to

[7] See: The bias brief: Trump's impact on anti-muslim bias. (2019, September 16). Retrieved March 14, 2021, from http://www.islamophobia.org/articles/262-the-bias-brief-trump-s-impact-on-anti-muslim-bias.html for mor information about the type of these crimes.

potential threats and educate their children about avoiding difficult situations and perceptions. But another reason that they may be under threat of hate crimes is due to their being perceived as culturally 'backward' due to their socio-sexual conservatism (Soltani, 2016). So, while they wish to raise children who are committed to their religion and identity, at the same time, there is an intense desire to ensure their safety in a threatening context.

Challenge 3: While America respects religious freedom, as a religious minority in the U.S., Muslims are subject to marginalization and oppressive social biases. Muslim women, in particular, are subject to Islamophobic discrimination as visible signs of difference because of wearing the hijab (Ali, 2002). This means that the 'balancing act' which Muslim student-mothers must perform is an extraordinary one. It requires that they satisfy their own cultural needs alongside those of their children and do so while not 'exposing' themselves as 'outsiders' deserving of harassment or violence. As Haddad et al. (2006) explain, when Muslim women choose to practice their religion, such as wearing the hijab or even negotiating their Islamic teaching concerning sexual freedom, it may result in them being excluded from their right as a campus member (Bishop, 2015), making the excuse that it is in the team's interest, or excluded from the community's activities because *'children are afraid of the headscarf.'*

6.3 Contributions

In this section, I will discuss several distinct contributions of this study. Methodologically, the study draws on postpositivist concepts to guide an interpretive analysis. Practical contributions extend the study's focus on education to both communicative competencies for EMEM mothers and reproductive health as part of the curriculum in Muslim higher education.

6.3.1 Methodological lessons learned

6.3.1.1 Using an interpretive narrative methodology with a post-positivist CPM model

CPM theory provides this study with richness and more contextualized understandings. The CPM concepts (2002)--privacy boundaries, rules-access, or boundaries turbulence--were key to an interpretive analysis of themes from interviews with the EMEM mothers. While these concepts are informed by a post-positivist view, in order to address the participants' cultural expectations and lived-meanings, these concepts were reframed by an interpretive narrative approach. Looking at the way mothers talk about their privacy communication experiences as narrative patterns is a unique contribution of this research. Langellier and Peterson argue that narrative performance theory provides a firm basis for the effective theoretical understanding and recognition of variability in family communication practices (Langellier & Peterson, 2018). This study examined communicative variation regarding the maintenance of privacy and family privacy rules and boundaries. However, the analysis discloses the performative nature of the

storytelling more than mechanisms of private disclosure. The value of assessing storytelling performance is that the analysis is not limited to the factors presented by the content but examines narrative patterns (Langellier & Peterson, 2018). Such narrative patterns include differences in how stories are told, which stories are told, and what identities these stories constitute, both in the familial context and in the presentation of such stories outside the family.

Another advantage of using CPM theory (Petronio, 2002) was giving a fuller sense of the lived meaningfulness of these experiences. In telling stories, storytellers adapt their stories to multiple cultural frames and expectations, with the recognition that the 'problem' encountered (and overcome, or which is anticipated to be overcome) is frequently cultural in nature and that the satisfying end to the tale is 'felt' through the storyteller offering a reaffirmation of the original cultural attributes, especially when they are rejected or 'lost' as part of the problem to be overcome (Frank, 2013). During this research, the EMEM mothers identified public school sexual education as a threat to religious and familial privacy norms, and this threat disrupted familial stability in the mother's eyes as storytellers. The primary story pattern was the restitution pattern in which deviations from the traditional value structure are overcome and the initial culturally informed situation is restored.

Some mothers introduced their family narrative, followed by a temporary deviation from the normal situation, then a return to the original path, as might be described as *'we were…and it happened…but we are back to normal.'* They were highlighting a return to their religious observations and value alignment with their native Middle Eastern, Muslim cultural and religious practices and beliefs. However, other EMEM mothers described the chaos of switching locations and experiencing a new culture, underlining the temporal deviations that created a sense of chaos, most especially, the unexpected disruption of a decision about whether to allow their children to take sexual classes or educate them as parents. In a story pattern about quest, EMEM mothers struggled with this decision but eventually seemed to return to a "new normal," pointing out that although they felt threatened by their children's engagement in sexual classes, they believed normalcy would resume if they educated their children on their cultural requirements. The quest for a satisfactory negotiation between the immediate cultural norms and school requirements of their temporary home and their religious beliefs and Islamic community norms brought them to a revised understanding of the sexual education taboo.

6.3.1.2 Engaging Frank's narrative typology

The adoption of Frank's narrative typology (2013) and privacy management theory (CPM) concepts of privacy boundaries, rules-access, and boundary turbulence to analyze mothers' storytelling exposes how mothers as storytellers relate their experiences with information-sharing and privacy negotiation on sex discussions, which are perceived as a taboo topic. One of the key implications of engaging Frank's narrative typology (2013) is that this typology provides a strong basis for assessing the level of personal challenges

that were portrayed within their narrative. In this study, the complex cultural negotiations regarding privacy management challenge these EMEM mothers in relation to maintaining the stability of their family (Huisman, 2014). According to Frank's (2013) definition of these types, all three types (restitution, chaos, and quest) were found in the process of categorizing the different storytelling postures adopted by the mothers as they narrated their life experiences and challenges.

In addition to these three types, another type arose from themes encountered in assessing these mothers' storytelling. Frank (2013) explains, "other types of narratives can and should be proposed" as they flow from the assessment of narrative storytelling of both a specific and theoretical nature (p. 76). On this ground, I argue that denying is the new type that emerges from analyzing these mothers' challenging narratives. Denying is related to face-saving in the current situation and the mothers' position within their wider social world (Goffman, 2005). However, different narrative typologies are not encountered in isolation (Frank, 2013). Importantly, while some gave greater emphasis to some aspects over others, all of the mothers told their stories by overlapping elements of the denying, restitution, chaos, and quest narratives to explain the aftermath of the stories' events. This suggests that the different types of stories have different properties that can be combined to achieve different effects, much like different paint colors on a canvas. Unfortunately, recognizing and 'weighing' the different qualities of a story, along with their respective impact upon delivery and reception, requires more extensive coding and analysis than is feasible for the current study. Broadly, it might be argued that the use of story typology is an important 'meta-narrative,' with choice of story type and composition helping achieve one's goals, but that this choice reflects the cultural background and social environment, and needs, of the individual.

6.3.2 Reflecting on friendship as a method

Friendship played a critical role in enriching this study and generating valuable research results. Giving a chance for the EMEM mothers' voices to be heard enables a useful understanding of their behind-the-scenes struggles. A conversation about sex and sexual orientation is not going to be an easy discussion for these mothers. Such dialogue does not exist in their everyday chatting, especially if related to their children and families' standing assessed by their Muslim community's socio-cultural expectations. For these reasons, having a friendship connection with these mothers offered me both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it opened the door for me to share the table with them and listen to their families' secrets. Sharing a strong relationship with these mothers allowed me to explain the study's significance and its focus on their struggles, which improved participant openness and influenced the focus on details to meet my study's goals and objectives. The mothers who agreed to participate provided the study with useful information to make a sound argument based on their views. Knowing the mothers at a personal level influenced my capacity to ask refined questions that dug into the finer details of these mothers' experiences. Our relationship encouraged them to share their stories that contained their challenging time, agreement, challenges, openness to change,

confusion moments, and decision-making. Analyzing these stories was the essence of this research to reach a purposive understanding of these mothers' perspectives.

On the other hand, being a Muslim mother, I understand this topic's meaning within an EMEM cultural context. The moment that I decided to involve my friendship in my academic research, I made it clear to my friends that it will be a formal study in which I will discuss their stories. However, I faced a time when one of the mothers stopped me in the middle of the interview and asked, "Who will hear this talk?" Sharing a friendship with the study's subjects as a researcher and a member of their cultural group may carry some concerns (Ellis, 2007). During the interviews, some of the mothers shared deep reflections that may be considered as a dark, family secret. This kind of disclosure positioned me in between, thinking of the way to represent these important pieces of information for the sake of the study's benefits while at the same time respecting ethical research requirements and these mothers' confidence. According to Narayan (1993), personal factors that are related to the researchers at some point may exceed their identity as researchers. However, it is a researcher's responsibility to concentrate their attention on the representation of studied individuals' voices, views, and challenges in an ethical way.

Although the private information shared by these mothers can be regarded to be vital towards informing the study and can act as a significant rationale or background for some major study findings, it can be unethical to disclose information that comes from close friends' positions. Disclosing such important information may reduce the sense of trust that mothers put in me to protect their social welfare, and hence disclosing their confidences generates significant social or even psychological costs for all of us. Through engagement with these EMEM mothers, I was privy to important family secrets that would be essential towards informing the study (Burgess-Proctor, 2015). However, disclosing these family secrets requires careful treatment and interpretation for the sake of these mothers' overall welfare and to maintain their trust as friends. According to Ellingson (2020), that can be reached through taking enough precautionary steps and applying research ethical standards in order to respect the privacy boundaries of the participants.

6.4 Practical Implications for empowering mothers

6.4.1 Communication education

This study's findings indicated the importance of understanding EMEM mothers' positions concerning complex cultural negotiations. In this study, the mothers who participated were diverse in terms of their legal status, including U.S. citizens through immigration or asylum and international students seeking an academic degree. Regardless of whether their future goals were to stay or leave the U.S., in their interviews and written stories, they all pointed out the significance of observing their original cultural manners, although they lived away from their homelands and experienced a new

culture in their everyday living. Improving the mothers' communication skills and equipping them with knowledge regarding privacy negotiation with their children would be really helpful. While hundreds of international students who are parents are admitted annually into American colleges, there are few on-campus programs that deal with these families' needs. Unfortunately, international offices do not have particular programs and services that engage with expatriate mothers' needs who would like to enhance their communicative ability for the children's wellbeing in a new cultural context.

Communication skills can be improved through education. Cultural knowledge, in some cases, highlights the communication breakdown gap between mothers and their children regarding privacy (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995b). The provision of a support mechanism stimulates the transition process. As a result, setting up centers which would provide the families, especially Middle East mothers, with a platform where they could improve their communication skills is vital. This would enhance their capacity to share with their children regarding subjects that were considered taboo when they were children. Having experienced their conservative culture, they are better placed to help their children comprehend the suitable way of complementing the knowledge they receive from the school.

6.4.2 Greater community involvement in school sex Ed curriculum

Moreover, through school, mothers should be engaged in a shared program to design a sexual education curriculum by listening to their opinions about the best information to provide to their children concerning their cultural manners and values toward sexuality. For instance, Wise College is an example of establishing "a Professional Learning Team (PLT)" seeking to develop a sexual health education curriculum from an Islamic perspective (Sanjakdar, 2009). Professional Learning Teams enable inquiry into planning and focusing and utilize individual strengths to implement co-planned inquiry. In American schools, Professional Learning Teams could benefit Muslim mothers and their families as the mothers would be consulted on the best and most fitting information to pass on to their children. In the process, the mothers would play a role in their children's learning procedure. Expatriate Muslim mothers in the United States would have little room for resisting sexual education in schools since they would understand the nature of the classes and contribute to its delivery through their informed opinions.

According to the UNESCO report on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) (2018)[8], a significant proportion of young children receive conflicting information regarding sexual education. Therefore, the agency proposes the alignment of the education initiatives to limit confusion. When children receive holistic and accurate sexual education, they are likely to curb the negative consequences associated with sexual relationships such as x and x. Therefore, it reiterates that schools are not the only ones

[8] See: Why comprehensive sexuality education is important. (2018, June 19). Retrieved March 01, 2021, from https://en.unesco.org/news/why-comprehensive-sexuality-education-important

responsible for imparting this knowledge (Herat, Plesons, Castle, Babb, & Chandra-Mouli, 2018). They encourage greater community involvement, including their families and religious and social entities. This would help in the dissemination of accurate and beneficial information regarding sexual education to young children. Moreover, it would help convince the expatriate Muslim mothers that this information is beneficial to their children. Subsequently, it would heighten their interest for the purpose of helping their children deal with challenges.

6.4.3 Sexual education and communication in Muslim home cultures

Although I respect the cultural manners and values, I believe that mother/child communication should be an open channel for the sake of the child's well-being and family stability interest disregard the topic. However, the most culturally complicated subject that has a significant impact on society in general and the child's well-being in specific is sexual health education. Developing a sexual health education curriculum considering the Islamic perspective is a cornerstone to reach that goal. However, the Muslim mother's role in the child's development is undeniable; thus, this work aims to develop a method to encourage Middle Eastern mothers to adopt effective communication strategies with their children regarding sexual behaviors and orientation. Such methods could be used to create courses to educate these mothers on how to be open with respectful manners in their communication with their children regarding sexual matters.

Discussions and discourse of sexuality are marred by silence and denial in the context of Muslim prohibitions on these topics. This becomes a weak link in the campaign to enhance youth awareness regarding sex and sexual relationships. Guidance is necessary to help the youth navigate these complex and challenging times (Sterle, Fontaine, De Mol, & Verhofstadt, 2018). On the other hand, Islam is a revered religion and based on its teaching, individuals are always encouraged to seek all knowledge, and any Muslim should follow this goal (Isgandarova, 2016). Thus, from the perspective of Islamic belief, to promote healthy youth and enhance their sexual awareness, there is a need to integrate sexual education and private negotiations into a health curriculum. This might proceed through the provision of statistics that highlight both the benefits of sexual education and the consequence of its absence. Furthermore, it is essential to involve mothers in the transformation of the communication platform. Fulfillment of the engagement of mothers who are aware of the proper communication strategies in addition to the culturally supported scientific knowledge ensures that the children are safer regarding sexual education and relationships.

6.4.4 Support for expatriate families on campus

One issue which this work has confronted is that of bias, and in some cases prejudice, in the form of implicit and explicit lack of support encountered by expatriate mothers as a family mainstay. From personal experiences, some campuses rarely address the needs of

the expatriates' families. Subsequently, the gap affects the capacity of the expatriate family to settle successfully in the United States. Although most campus environments look after their students' interests, they do not provide any type of support directed explicitly to the needs of these students' families. At the same time, many of these families need both social and material support such as health insurance for the family members or disability counseling and support for the family's member in need, along with an orientation or introduction to the community so that they also feel they are a part of it along with others because they are away from their origin countries and lack familiarity with the host country's rules, precipitating feelings of being ignored and isolated. The EMEM mothers must, however, handle the conflicts and inequalities resulting from intersecting religious, socio-cultural differences.

6.5 Limitations and next direction

6.5.1 Include more family members in the study

This study's focus was on the point of view of the mothers about their communicative challenges in cross-cultures where children are exposed to new cultures, people, and settings. However, a possible future direction might take a family view in which the focus is on the family unit and where the parents and the children are included to highlight their interactions with each other in a storyteller style to reach a better understanding of the family wellbeing (Langellier, & Peterson, 2018; Segrin & Flora, 2011). For example, the storytelling literature looks at how people talk to each other and tell stories together; they co-author stories together (Langellier & Peterson, 2004; Ochs, & Capps, 2009). This dyadic and dialogic kind of conversation or kind of a multiplex conversation could be another way to pursue this studying line. Such a perspective could help researchers to explain cross-cultural family communicative challenges from different angles.

6.5.2 Expand the Nationalities/ethnicities/religious identities studied

Another limitation that narrows this study's scope is the focus on EMEM mothers. Future studies might expand to include expatriate Muslim mothers from other home cultures. This would be useful given that such other groups may perceive the sexual education class as a threat differently or may find other elements of contemporary American school culture and education to be troubling. One issue in including expatriate mothers other than Middle Eastern mothers is that language competencies might preclude an insider approach to sensitive topics. The fact that I shared the same background, language, and friendship relations with the research subjects was an advantage. In addition, other factors, such as social background, economic background, and educational level of the participants were not analyzed as a factor in the study. However, a less homogeneous sample that highlights multiple differences among expatriate mothers might offer more insight on privacy negotiations within the family.

6.6 My Starting Point:

At a certain time, my starting point was research to answer a specific question related to a family matter, children, daughter. The search was quiet, and the question was asked in a low tone of voice and limited to the closest one or two friends with whom you can discuss private matters like family issues and deep concerns that you may never tell anyone. I thought that when I could find an answer, the problem would be easily solved. However, the question that was asking turned to have a deeper root than a bump appearing on the surface. It turned out to be not as simple as asking, how do I talk to my children about sex education? I agree it is an important topic these days and anywhere, not just in the west. Several worldwide studies and reports showed the consequences of insufficient sex education, especially for children. Nonetheless, being that I am a Muslim mother in the U.S., the question was not just how to talk but when, where, and what next? However, the friend I reached out to seek an answer was in the same position as I was, confused with no answer.

It was simply a mother in need and desperately looking for someone who could listen to me and advise me. That frustration of not knowing what to do, what was the challenge ahead of the family, and my desire for help encouraged me to extend the research range to include individuals who I had thought went through this experience and made decisions about their life and their family, Muslim mothers who have lived in the U.S. Unfortunately, these mothers have little or no voice, and fewer chances than I, but at the same time they have the most need to be heard. Although I am a Muslim mother spending time with my children in the U.S. facing cultural differences challenges, I have a dream that one day we will return home, in contrast to these mothers who are looking to these challenges as a permanent daily lifestyle, living the feeling of the journey that Stuart Hall (1987) described as “a one way trip” (p. 44). During COVID 19 restrictions over international travel, we were prevented from going to our homeland to be with my family; even though it was only for a certain time, it is a matter that carries a lot of pain and frustration. Thus, comparing the two positions, I believe these mothers’ need to be heard is greater than mine. So, as a Muslim mother attempting to be a communication and family studies scholar and driven by the ethics of science, I felt responsible toward these mothers to introduce their voices and give them the chance to tell their stories in their words, in addition to the interests of my scholar field to identify socio-cultural factors that have significant impacts on communication strategies and family wellbeing.

Indeed, understanding these mothers' situations will not just help identify these mothers' challenges in order to provide support for them and their families; it will also benefit most the interests of U.S. institutions and society. Being Muslim and expatriate mothers will not change the fact that they are a part of the U.S. society and directly and indirectly impact the political economy and society's safety. I strongly believe that hearing their voices and paying close attention to their struggles will help to increase the chance of humanity’s wellbeing.

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