

# Intersectional-Translocational Positionality in Arab-American Women's Narratives: Reading Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* and Laila Halaby's *West of Jordan*

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## Abstract

The present paper reflects on the perception of contemporary forms of identity construction within the interrelation of diaspora, ethnicity, belonging, transnationality, translocationality, and interculturality. It casts critical light on the complex subjectivity by introducing the concept of translocational positionality addressed by intersectionality theory. Intersectionality is presented as an analytical tool which sets a far more integrated analysis of diaspora, the shifting devaluation of racialized, sexualized, classed, and gendered lives and factors which shape social locationality. Thereby, Floya Anthias' concept of translocational positionality is used to address the complex and intersectional frame of social locationalities of in-transit Arab women and to unravel issues pertain to identity in terms of the status of in-transit Arab women and their unstable positionality on America. Identifying and scrutinizing the complex process of self-inscription in Randa Jarrar and Laila Halaby's narratives: *A Map of Home* (2008) and *West of Jordan* (2003), the study revealed that when the sense of non-belonging to place conceived as home occurs, liberating vision for change, fluid positionality and transformation perceptibly emerge. The research concludes locations are particularly fluid and therefore positionality, home and belonging are necessarily defined in relation to time, context and space and so susceptible to shifts, transformations and contradictions.

## Keywords

Belonging; Home; Intersectionality; Locationality; Translocational Positionality.

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of Palestinian victim diaspora turns to one of the most harrowing catastrophes of the twentieth century which caused countless Palestinians stateless and many displaced. America, the prime destination of traumatized Palestinians becomes the dream land inflicting even far more anguish, torture and agony for the displaced

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refugees. Thus, the sense of locality, positionality, translocationality and place in Palestinian victim diaspora emerge as the central issues for the articulation of identity, belongingness and subjectivity. More precisely, the research adopts the concept of translocational positionality in intersectionality theoretical framework for a more integrated analysis of social divisions and identities of South-Asian diaspora under the interrelations of gender, ethnicity, class, sex, national origin, national belonging, religion and race. The term translocationality refers to range of issues which their interrelation form hybrid or multilayered identity and weird sense of belonging. Thereby, translocational positionality is a concept dealing with issues of social exclusion and fractured identity on the basis of overlapping systems which rule complex and shifting locals.

Whether the stateless Palestinian freely tends to stand as a citizen of the world or is obliged to integrate into the host culture and community is the gap which needs an alternative research framework. Hence, the aim of present paper is to assess the place and positionality of translocational Palestinian diasporas and to reflect the manifestations of identity in the fiction of contemporary Palestinian diaspora writers Randa Jarrar (1978) and Laila Halaby (1966). Both Palestinian-American novelists whose hyphenated identities give rise questions regarding which side of the hyphen they belong to, have emphatically created works reflecting the complex burdens surrounded hyphenated Arab-American women. The choice of the present authors and their works are motivated by the fact that their novels centered on multifarious issues related to diaspora incorporating displacement, racial belonging, exile and diasporic identity.

This line of thought helps to understand the context which diasporic individuals of Palestinian origin move in the process of constructing social identity and formulating sense of belonging. It will thus extend the perception of how complex interplay of a range of factors, social spaces (locations), social mechanisms and transnationality in relation to social-demographic characteristics examine the versatility of diasporic ethnocultural identity contextually and situationally. The intersectionality theoretical framework through translocational positionality lens is used to realize the way of constructing social identity and social belonging of placing Asian Palestinian in-transit women characters in the two Palestinian-American women's novels. The overarching motivation behind the article is to recognize whether and how the Asian in-transit women's ethnocultural position in the American society changes in social local other than national borders and how their fluid identity is constructed under socio-cultural relations in various social, economic and political contexts. Thereby, translocational positionality as an analytical approach to study identity construction in spatiotemporal context and unravels different social locals in process of contradictions, complexities and shifts. The application of translocational positionality is drastically efficient for studying the Asian diasporic individuals' social locals, identity and sense of belonging whose diverse ethnocultural

characteristics is different from that of diasporic ethnocultural groups of African/Caribbean/European/Australian in the West. It emerges ideal for exploring Asian diasporic second/third generation women writers' whose socio-cultural relations, social locals and access to resources are subjected to their hyphenated identity in the American heterogenous society.

In what follows, the study first provides the review of literature showing the study's contribution to already done studies. Then theoretical framework introduces the concept of translocational positionality within intersectionality theory. Then, the study examines the narratives of the two diasporic female writers in relation to in-transit characters' identities, positionality and shifting relationships with place and location. The study sheds valuable light on the ways in which translocational fluid identities of in-transit Arab-American women arise from multiple belonging, borderline-ness and fluid locations.

## 2. Literature Review

Since the time Anthias (2001) has proposed the concept of translocational positionality, scarce studies have conducted to determine the positionality of in-transit women in the form of visible minorities in the host land. Catherine La Barbera (2013) has taken translocational positionality as a theoretical and methodological method to examine how migrant women living in Madrid manage the process of identity transformation due to migration, and how they negotiate and reinterpret their tradition, religion, and culture. Moreover, another study by La Barbera (2011) on translocationality of Black Muslim migrant women living in Europe represented that their tangible minority and maximum fragility result from in-transit locations of hybridism, multiple belonging and borderline-ness. The research demonstrated such women are living at the crossroad of intersecting conditions of subordination and experience ulterior state of social exclusion as a result of being Muslim, Black and woman. From theoretical point of view, the study also revealed that such women tolerate ultimate position of gender subversion because of falsely established stereotypical models in the West.

The positionality of migrant Arab women from the so called third world to America and European countries due to destructive Palestine-Israel war lead into multitude experiences of identification, assimilation, social exclusion and various forms of discrimination in the way of reclaiming the hyphenated identity. Accordingly, La Barbera's studies offered inspiring insights on the complex subjectivity of migrant women and constituted the needed material from which the present study attempt to theorize the concept. Thereupon, to proceed partly similar studies conducted on positionality of in-transit women and add new insights, the current study builds on the theories of intersectionality taking Floya Anthias' (2002) *translocational positionality* concept to study the broad situation in which the intersections of multiple dimensions and structural

systems affect the positioning, belonging and processual identity of Arab migrants within the fabric of the United States. Building together the findings of concomitant studies in this area by La Barbera and steadily done studies on Arab migration, acculturation, identity construction and in-between-ness with fresh theories of intersectionality, the study asserts to look at the complex processual positionality of Arab-Americans in America.

### **3. Intersectionality Theory and Translocational Positionality**

The concept of "politics of location" introduced, elaborated and expanded by Adrienne Rich (1986) to challenge the location of women and to quest against discrimination and social subordination in different socio-cultural contexts. Over the last thirty years, the concept of locationality has undergone the tremendous reformations, alteration and specifications and emerged as an extremely prolific to address the intricate subjectivity of in-transit women in the West. In addition, the contemporary Feminist thought appeared inadequate to clearly explicate the subjectivities of migrant women who inhabit globalized and postcolonial societies. Thereupon, totally competent theory and concept is required to address the social locationality, marginal condition and complex subjectivities of marginal migrant women who are located within complicated social relation matrixes raised from concurrent interaction between racial, sexual, gender, class and ethnic processes.

Floya Anthias (2001; 2002; 2009) coined and proposed the location related concept *translocational positionality* to address in-transit individuals' multiple and mostly contradictory positions within socio-spatial locations where the interplay of multiple factors including ethnicity, race, gender, sex, national origin, class and their absolute contradictory effects affect in-transit agents' discrimination, assimilation and identification. The term *translocationality positionality* is the critical concept to structure the interplay of different locations relating to gender, ethnicity, race and class and their contradictory effects. This term addresses issues of identity in terms of unstable locations and prepares an intersectional framing for the perception of belonging.

Based on Anthias' view (2008) in intersectionality, translocational positionality acts as a useful analytical device for analyzing the notion of "identity in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions" (9). In this way, location is perceived as "a social space which is produced within contextual, spatial, temporal and hierarchical relations around the interactions of social divisions and identities of class, ethnicity and gender (among others)" (9). Likewise, Anthias (2002) conceives positionality as "a placement within a set of relations and practices that implicate identification and performativity or action" (501).

Correspondingly, highlighting *social position* which covers the result of social actions, practices, and meanings and *social positioning* which covers processes of practices, actions, and meanings within a social context, the translocational positionality involves processes of identification and confirms the intersection of structure and agency. Thereupon, Anthias presumes positionality as a denominator of social structures of social position and effect and agency as social positioning, meaning and practices (502). Accordingly, it can be set forth that *translocation* covers two issues. It initially and primarily engages with social space produced within contextual, temporal, spatial, and power relations and secondly it covers social spaces which are defined by boundaries, hierarchies and determined by a set of external conditions, practices and strategies of identity negotiation and belonging.

In the same token, the translocationality enables analyzing the relation/reaction of social structure and individual agency. Hence, Anthias holds that migrant individuals' translocational positionality is accessed by the narrative of self as "narratives of location and positionality at a specific point in time and space" center on "denial, on what one is not" rather than one really is (501). Anthias advocates "narratives of location are narratives of dislocation and alterity" (501). Through this overarching insight, Anthias suggests narration relating identity defined in relation to borders, spaces, territories and places are relational in a way that subjects usually tend to evade or refuse defining some attributions. Thereby, she maintains, "stories are told in terms of the bipolar: positive and negative, partly framed through the relation *to who and for what*" (501). Anthias pinpoints as narratives reflect social structure, social place and social position –"which are accounts of how one places himself in terms of social categories of gender, ethnicity and class at a specific point time and space"-locations are not stable but undergo frequent shifts and becoming in relation to time and context.

Simply put, by formulating and introducing the concept of translocational positionality, Anthias presumes issues of exclusion, belonging and political mobilization are not much adequately conceivable unless they are placed within the interrelation of other constructions of gender, ethnicity, class, and race. And most significantly, from Anthias' perspective, identity markers of culture, origin, and language can operate as contextual and situational origins for individuals and in this way, identity can be viewed and recognized as processed and operated, and relied on social structures. Despite transnationalism, which embraces contradictions and complexities of situating social actors within different social locals, translocational positionality asserts the fluidity, versality and changeability of social boundaries embodying identity and sense of belonging ("Intersectional what?" 5).

According to Anthias, the social identity construction is changing vis a vis the context and situation giving rise to contradictory, complex and dialogical positionalities (Anthias 2016). It inculcates that the individual's ethnocultural position in society may change in various contextual and situational categories or social locals. Therefore, according to Anthias (2002) translocational positionality prioritizes "the context, the situated nature of claims and attributions" in shifting and complex locals (493). Similarly, Catherine La Barbera (2013) underlines that translocational identities and in-transit locations of migrants who inhabit in the globalized west societies result from hybridism, multiple belonging and borderline-ness (4). Primarily, La Barbera (2012) has elaborated that translocational subjectivity of migrants, exclusively women in-transit, is perceivable through the multiple and interplaying psycho-socio-political belonging and perpetual interaction between cultural minority group and the society at large (24).

#### **4. Intersectional Positionality in *A Map of Home* and *West of Jordan***

Two masterpiece narratives of the two in-transit Palestinian-American women novelists: Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008) and Laila Halaby's *West of Jordan* (2003) tackle the most harrowing catastrophe of Palestinians: imposed dispersion from their homeland, a specific traumatic diaspora recognized as victim diaspora. Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008) sets in Kuwait during the 1990 invasion augmented by Palestinian Israeli conflict and displays the life of a family and conundrums first in Kuwait, their movement to Egypt and finally to the United States. The female protagonist narrator, Nidali, recounts her family's various quests to find the meaning of home and identity and also reflects on experiences of crossing borders and cultures. Laila Halaby's *West of Jordan* (2003) is a brilliant and revelatory interweaving story of an Arab-American protagonist, Khadija, at the brink of maturity when she faces the complexities of transnational belonging and fractured identity physically and psychologically displaced between two diverse world of cultures and traditions: Palestine and America.

Strictly speaking, the produced literature on Palestinian diaspora dominantly evinces homesickness, anguish, dismal, agony and nonstop aspiration of homecoming. Accordingly, the exodus of Palestinians and prolonged unresolved Palestinian-Israeli strife result in dramatically dissimilar themes in Palestinian diaspora works comparing to the other diasporas writers' productions. The themes bear the formation of disparate transnational, cosmopolitan identities, constant reclaiming homeland and obliged integration into the host community. Both diasporic women novelists, Randa Jarrar (1978) and Laila Halaby (1966), incline to place characters transcending limitations of space, time and cultural borderlines and create transnational globalized identities labeling citizens of the world. The Arab-American novelists, both sharing common personal Palestinian victim diaspora experiences, devote the great bulk of their texts to conceptualizing the de-centralized and displaced identity. Their narratives compellingly give cadence, soul and spirit to the dislocated Palestinians and in this way undoubtedly prevents their oblivion from history.

The presupposition is that, questioning the politics of location in relation to national, local and gendered borderlines, Jarrar and Halaby demonstrate shaping the identity of their characters and define their locational position. It is presumed that the notion of intersectionality overlaps with positionality on the grounds that diasporised individuals define their identity by complex relationships between class, gender, race, job, religion, culture, national origin, ethnicity and sex. In this regard, translocational positionality works better for Asian-American diasporic novels as it pays extensive attention to geographical location and globalization.

There are various factors which affect the immigrant subject's positioning towards diaspora. Stuart Hall (2000) mentions some factors which affect diasporic individual's getting along their ethnicity and traditions: "there is considerable variation, both of commitment and of practice, between and within different communities-between different nationalities and linguistic groups, within religious faiths, between men and women, and across the generations" (220). La Barbera's notion of perceiving translocational subjectivity of women in-transit through perpetual interaction between cultural minority group and the society at large appears strictly accountable. Based on her view, it is claimed that the constant challenge against cultural, institutional and discursive practices and continuing intersections -concurrently performing and conforming Arab and American identity- give rise to dual American/Arab, White/ethnic, male/female, upper/working class, and valued/devalued pairs. Such paired interactions locate the transnational individuals within highly hierarchical social states.

#### **4.1. Translocational Positionality in Relation to Gender**

Cultural and structural systems provide the terrain for the construction of gendered positionalities. Positionality seems a very effectual concept to analyze the experience of individuals in terms of their location within and across the shifting networks of relationships. Regarding gendered positionality, there are several accountable arguments of its existence within a hierarchical, heteronormative and socio-cultural matrix of social life (Anthias, 2002; Butler, 1990; Schilt and Westbrook, 2009). Sheppard (2002) holds that different members within "the same household typically are positioned differently with respect to one another", so that "a working-class husband living in the north of England may experience the privileged positionality as a result of his gender and nationality but marginalized positionality because of his class and regional location" (322).

As position includes but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, sex, class, culture, national origin, national belonging, and color, the two female protagonists of *A Map of Home* (2008) and *West of Jordan* (2003) Nidali and Khadija's ambivalent experiences reflect uneven devaluations of intersected gendered, classed, sexualized and racialized which constantly bring them new translocational positionality. As underlined before, Anthias (2011) argues intersectionality looks at the way in which diverse social divisions

interconnect for the construction of social relations and people's lives. She postulates "gender is seen as inflicted by race and race is inflicted by gender-that is, they can be seen as mutually constitutive in terms of experience and practice" (9). Thereby, divisions amongst women and the disadvantages which follow such division give rise a more complicated perception of gendered forms of disadvantages. To be more precise, the processes of disadvantage emanates from the contiguity between intersectional triad (race, class and gender), even two or more different categorizations or identities, such as conjuncture between gender and class/race/racialized men/unemployment/poverty. According to Anthias (2011) insight, "the unity of two minority traits constitutes in fact a distinct single minority entity giving rise to unique forms of position and disadvantage that can be accounted for neither by race nor gender, nor by adding the one to the other" (8). One facet of such discrimination which construct distinct inequality experience for diasporic female individuals occurs in terms of girls' relation to their fathers.

Initially, as a result of their gender, Khadija and Nidali are considered underprivileged originally in their own ethnic community. The obvious and initial positionality in relation to gender is authentically created by their fathers. As it is revealed in Jarrar's narrative, Waheed Ammar, a displaced and dispossessed Palestinian exiled in the United States, keeps on maintaining the incurred violence by abusing his wife and daughter. He is first generation diasporic individual whose unresolved burden of homelessness and repetitive moving inscribe traumatic aggression on his mind projecting agony on his innocent daughter. This fact is far more underlined by Jamal Alghaberi (2018), who interprets Waheed Amar, Nidali's father's bad-temperedness toward her because "he wants a boy, a man fight for the cause of Palestine. He himself failed to return to Palestine, and thus his ultimate hope is to raise a child who would accomplish what he could not" (4). As it is seen Nidali's gender appears as the sharpest point of tension which underscores Arab women's positionality initially which is emphatically rooted in collective ethnic identity. The point is disclosed for Nidali when she shares her feeling with a boy on the school bus:

"Nidali," he said, his face changing a bit, "we don't have boyfriends."  
"We?" I asked. "What do you mean?" "I mean," he said, "boyfriends are fiancés, and then you marry them. You are only seven. How can you get married now? So you see, my little moon, you cannot have a boyfriend yet!". (Jarrar 16)

In this context, positionality involves power relations, in the sense that some positions disposedly appear to be more influential than others. Khadija's father's mindset is in common with Nidali's father. When Khadija, in a wedding family party, dances with her American friend, Ginna, her father violently approaches grabbing her hand offends Ginna shouting "'Slut,' he said to Ginna, how dare you lay hand on my daughter'. He spat and looked back at Ginna. 'Don't you ever get near my daughter again'"(Halaby 33-4).

Similar events were recurrent in Khadija's life showing her specific location within social structures of Eastern ethnocultural context. Another time she is harshly beaten and insulted by her father because of the fake story of kissing a boy created as a revenge by her brother. In this event Khadija's father does not even ask for truth but "he just came after her with a belt, yelling *slut* and *whore* at her" (31). Such events, in fact, the most obvious examples of Arab fatherhood implying the oriental Arab girls' social worth, social place and upward mobility rely on virginity, marriage and sexual chastity. This fact is stressed by Alyasery (2020), which maintains the novel tries to "reinforce some Arabic stereotypes as an oppressive father and stands as a barrier in front of her assimilation process of American culture" (5). Thereby, with such bitter reality surrounding Arab Muslim girls at home land and host land, Nidali and Khadija slowly come to understand that gender is a specific structural feature which will forever challenge their positionality. Accordingly, positionality determines the state of an individual affected by the structural features which the latter in turn are provided by the localities.

As it is conceived, gender violation and patriarchal domination are the basic areas which affect Arab women's social positionality. In this regard, Arab-American protagonists play as social actors within different social locals in the process filled with contradictions, complexities and shifts. Such presumption declared in Nidali's bitter remembering the violent episodes where her father spanked and whipped her with hanger because of mispronouncing some words of Holy Koran, and much worse she remembered "sometimes he'd do this to Mama, just drag her on the floor, and she'd cry and tell him to stop" (Jarrar 50).

The gender inferiority also emerges in close intersectional interplay with collective ethnicity and Eastern culture. This is evident in Nidali's success in the contest and the receipt of certificate as her reward; both of which target to gender discrimination. In an email Nidali receives it is written, "This certificate is awarded to the student Nidali Ammar in recognition of h—r winning the Koran contest. Signed, Headmaster of the City Boys' School, Kuwait." (56-7). Her parents were the first who excitedly explained what her achievement is, since "the judge had been forced to alter the word and add a feminizing *ha* to make the male student, the *tilmith*, a *tilmitha*" (57). In this regard, the sense of bodily and gender violation, crude paternal abusive behavior, imposed veil and stereotypical regulated body deeply depress Nidali and steal her sense of autonomy. For Khadija, such reality leads to her total estrangement from natural gender norms. She is constantly being cautioned and frightened by her rude father and passive oppressed mother to keep distance from American boys since they can sexually abuse her: "Your husband has to be the one to take it away from you,' Ma told me once. 'Otherwise, you are a disgrace to us and we are stuck with you forever" (Halaby 178-9). Therefore, Khadija, unconsciously adopting boyish traits, gradually forsakes her feminine

characteristics to easily connect with the American culture for the purpose of upgrading her positionality. Nidali and Khadija, haunted with Arab strict gender norms rooted in coarse Arab ethnicity, earnestly endeavor to change their positionality by struggling to lean closer to the American culture, as Cohen (2014) maintains conformity to normative social standards give rise to "greater access, opportunities, and mobility" (31).

The tensive unstable and shifting hierarchies with identifying complex power structures result in the construction of multiple identities. In this way, Nidali in *A Map of Home* (2003) and Khadija in *West of Jordan* (2008) positionality perfectly accord with what Cohen (2004) marks: "indicative of intersection of marked identities and regulatory processes, relative powerlessness and contradictory agency" (29). Such emotional violence is experienced since it is deeply associated with the state of being immigrant and immigrant individual definitely bears fragmented identity. However, Nidali and Khadija's behavior was radically transformative and both girls struggle to challenge such common practices through new ways of actions to embrace new positioning. So, if the intersected individual inclines to get released of victim position, they should search for new fields of experiences.

#### **4.2. Translocational Positionality in Relation to Ethnicity, Language, and, Patriarchy**

The distinct gender violation illustrated in *A Map of Home* (2008) and *West of Jordan* (2003) offers a new perceptive on Arabness and the specific location of the Arab stereotyped comparing to the other racialized ethnicities within the host land. It is presumed that social locations occupied by diasporic individuals differ dramatically in different societies. Ethnicity and ethnic belonging intimately interlink and interdepend to other social positions and roles of gender, class, race, color, occupation, and sex and therefore heterogenous experiences of ethnic identification create different social positions within different locations. In this respect, based on what Hong and Ferguson (2011) hold "racialized communities have always policed and preserved the difference between those who are able to conform to categories of normativity, respectability, and value, and those who are forcibly excluded from such categories"(2). Arabness, as a distinct mark of inferiorisation, constantly and dominantly entangles Nidali and Khadija at homeland, Middle East and host land, the United States.

Within white societies in the United States where the socially accepted norms are sharply detectable among races (Latinos, blacks, Arabs), the devaluation toward the Arabness is far more distinctive, perceptible and normalized. Here, such racial coded category renders the Arab invisible and deprived. Nidali's Arab Americanness is repeatedly interrogated by the American. Such reality is strictly salient in *A Map of Home* (2008) when on her first school day, she confusingly misconstrues the Pledge of Allegiance recitation with praying and eschews the joinder. However, she is sternly

reprimanded by her teacher that, "if you had filled a conscientious objector form, you have to participate, it's not a prayer. No. It's a patriotic thing" (Jarrar 220). Similarly, Nidali's unbelievable reaction evokes her American teacher's racist view in establishing her transnational position as "suspicious Arab in the making" (220). Such reality is also firmly underlined by Hong and Ferguson (2011) who argue that there are "processes by which subjects, within racial collectives, are differently incorporated or excluded from the class, gender, and sexual norms of respectability, morality, and propriety and thus placed on different sides of the dividing line between valued and devalued" (3). Such events have always been common in the Arab world. Nidali's teacher narrates a deplorable magazine story of a girl murdered by her Arab father of Palestinian descent because of dating a black boy. The reflection of the racist teacher discloses the normative category of Arabness and the category of valued and devalued in the American mindset. Nidali states:

Out of blue it seems, Mrs. Ruben, who, up to then, I thought really liked me, asked me to stand up and say a few words about my Palestinian dad. It took me a few moments to register if she was trying to make the class understand that not all Palestinians were bad or if she was simply reducing me to my Palestinianness. Either way I hated her. I couldn't imagine her bringing a static about a black or Latino criminal then asking a black or Latino kid to stand up and defend entire race. (Jarrar 273)

Such reality is prevalent in Khadija's life as well. For her, being a hyphenated and above all a diasporic subject defines her disadvantaged positionality. Once she mentions, at school, her teacher, a hybrid Italian-American, irrationally: "expects me to know more than the other kids because my parents are not American, though there are lots of other kids in the class who aren't American themselves. I want to scream at him that I am just as American as anyone here" (Halaby 74). The reason of such reaction directly relates to her diasporic Arab ethnicity which leads to experiencing inevitable difficulties, cultural depreciations and social distances and therefore splits her from the other American and specifically non-Arab diasporic but hyphenated classmates. Abusive verbal narrative of Nidali's teacher and the dogmatic racist mind of hybrid European-American teacher of Khadija are the significant dimensions of their intersectional downgrading and victimization which they full heartedly resist.

Such events hardly correspond to what Anthias advocates on diasporic communities. Anthias (2002) categorizes the place of the migrant in the three dynamic locals and their intersection, "the society of migration, the homeland and the migrant group" (10). Thereby, to refer to the migrant positionality, such "symbolic, ascriptive and identification/nonidentification" which "fixes the migrant in time, space and process"

value (10). Also, other attributions which make difference in identity construction emerge worthwhile as the current events in two migrant narratives prove in formation of positionality ethnicity can be seen as being as important as gender, race, class and other dimensions. Then, in the light of Anthias explication on ethnicity, it can be interpreted that the structures which determine the racialized position of a diasporic individual belonging or not belonging in a way that to be identified not as Other and hyphenated entails being accepted by the others as a member of that community or group rather than identifying with particular group or community. As it is clearly perceptible from both narratives the unacceptance of migrant individuals at host land lies on integral interrelation of intersectional attributions. This is one of the conspicuous areas of social location which is specifically constructed by creating the sense of belonging, individual identification and social acceptance. Moreover, the above scenes signify two facts concurrently, one inculcating the society unacceptable positionality of the Arab in the context of the West illustrates who is valuable and who is not and the other the reasons for the marginalization of the Arab. Thereby, it would be likely to draw the conception of Anthias (2012) that positions are the outcome of interconnections among various social structures of ethnocentrism, transnationalism, racialism and ethnocultural divercism (12).

Language is also the specific area which abuses Nidali's Arabness within the American hegemony ascribing imposed positionality. In a related scene, Nidali's new friends in new coming host-land constantly correct her English implying she "spoke like a white girl on NPR, all boring and with nary a crazy emotion" (Jarrar 225). Accordingly, Nidali's simultaneous intersectional gender, sexual violation and racialized devaluation give rise to racial injustice, gender injustice, economic injustice and self-indetermination.

Probing the origins of racialization of the Arab in America reaches to the interrelation between structures of power internally and externally and self-representation under complex intersections of gendered, racialized, and class-related formations. Based on Sheppard (2002) "the unequal power relations stem from such asymmetries" (319). As Waheed and Khadija's father, both embodiments of Arab masculinity, unable to resist the white supremacy and because their racist mind are also too feeble to assimilate to normative host land culture, they inevitably project such traumatized inability in the shape of abusive violence on their daughters (Nidali and Khadija) and passive wives to the point that constant bodily and gendered abuse coincidentally force both girls to call police and report fathers. Such stunningly coincidental episodes narrated in the two novels by the two different novelists reveal how Arab patriarchic mind is afflicted with strict gender abuse and violence.

This relation of subordination and domination is justified by Anthias (2012) by her notion on social division. She holds the problem with social division is its "mutually reinforcing" disadvantage. Her particular case is "racialized migrant woman in terms of

subordination". According to Anthias intersections may "construct multiple and uneven social patterns of domination and subordination. Produce *contradictory* locations" (Anthias, 1998, 2002), as in the case of racialized men or dominant women who inhabit a different location in terms of the parameters of race and gender" (11). She means in such state a person is more likely to be simultaneously positioned in both domination and subordination at diverse times or spaces. This is exactly Nidali and Khadija's fathers' position to each other who are totally be in subordinated position in race and class terms, but is positioned advantageously in relation to their female partners and daughters. The same fathers are source of power and be definitely positioned higher in class and gender position in their homeland and achieve class benefits despite being subordinated in race terms in country of migration. Thereby, such context gave them a contradictory social location positionality.

For similar events with Khadija, Nidali reacts this way: "daughters in America can teach their parents lessons. Cops in America don't like Arabs and they definitely don't like Arabs who hit their teenage daughters and chase them around the house with knives" (Jarrar 249). Khadija's reflection to this event is filled with ambivalence as she doubts her submissive mother's reaction to such event: "scary is what is going to happen to us until Ma comes home. Scary is what Ma will do and if they'll say it's my fault" (Halaby 208). In fact, this is what dominant power system teaches, the power of the system which according to Hong and Ferguson (2011) rules in the vein of individual freedom for racializing the victim across racialized communities. Therefore, patriarchy violence in the racist host land augments the oppression of discrimination. It accords with what Anthias (2001; 2008; 2009; 2016) holds, that changing on the context and situation give rise to contradictory, complex and dialogical positionalities. Yet, the rigorous violence, in the form of structural violence embedded in structural power system in the United States, is rendered in the ethnic representations and stereotypes of "angry Arabs", "terrorist Muslims" (Jararr 2008) and "alcoholic", "poor Arabs", "drunkards", "evils", "loose women" and "gamblers" (Halaby 2003). In fact, the establishment of Arab stereotypes ostensibly illustrate what diasporic Arab individual can do or cannot, or most dominantly since they are the Arab, so they should be in poverty. Regarding Stereotypes, Mervat Hatem (1998) declares the United States:

Views Arab culture as patriarchal/restrictive and of Arab women as its submissive victims and legitimate objects of their (American) criticism and attack. Assimilation into U.S. society has been seen as a means of combatting Arab sexism and of claiming for Arab American women the privileged status of Western". (382)

Such clear evidences illustrate gender-based mis-information and stereotypes across Arab-American communities which both perpetuate existing hierarchies of positionality and legitimately justify more racialized violence.

### **4.3. Translocational Positionality in Relation to Religion**

Religion is the other dimension the intersectional interplay of which results in racialized oppression and influences on Arab-Americans' translocational positionality. This is because, the individual's ethnocultural position in the society changes in various contexts, situations and social locals. According to Anthias (2012), "all social categories are equally salient all of the time, but the degree of importance of one or the other and other types of intersection will vary within different societal arenas such as different institutions or different discourses, as well as in terms of given social forces at different times and spaces" (129). Religion is one dimension in intersection which can force its much stronger role over other category at a particular space, time and locale. Then, religion is one form in practice of power which can be directed particularly against racialized diasporic groups. The fact is that it plays out much more in terms of the salience in the ethnic, racialized and diasporic boundary. Anthias justifies the saliency and potentiality of religion in interplay of other dimensions citing an example of "secularization of Muslims in Europe" which she believes "much more tied to issues of religion, ethnicity and race" rather than relating to class and gender dimensions (129).

The conservative religious beliefs of Nidali's father and his cousin Esam as well as Nidali's first sexual encounter with her classmate Medina are clearly weird illustrations of dominant nonnormative Arab and Muslim mind. Nidali compares her first sexual experience to a pilgrim and philosophizes on her partner's Arabic name creating a complicated symbolic metaphor which could merely be shaped by Arab ethnocentrism. Similarly, such eccentrically dogmatic Arab moral codes emerge in Khadija's life when in a scene she witnesses her American friends, Patsy and Michael's sexual relation:

I turned away and shut the door behind me. I felt horrible, like can't-see and can't-think kind of horrible. My books were all over the place and I couldn't stuff them in my bag fast enough. I ran from her front door to our house. Thinking about what I saw made me feel dirty, like when you go by a car crash and look by accident and on purpose at the same time, but then you feel sick because of what you saw. (Halaby 179-80)

In the same token Arab culture, dogmatic beliefs, moral codes and nonnormative norms would determine Arab-American individual's positioning in the American context. Henceforth, based on Anthias' (2002; 2008; 2016) perspective identity markers of culture, religion, origin, gender and language can operate as a contextual and situational origin for individuals and in this way, identity can be viewed and recognized as processual and in operation which relies on social structures.

#### 4.4. Translocational Positionality in Relation to Belonging and National Origin

National origin and belonging play far more crucial roles in the construction of translocational/transnational identity. Identity is forever particular, not much of a difference on shared belonging. It should be underlined that there are clear arguments (Anthias, 2002, 2008, 2012; La Barbera, 2011; Jackson, 2006) in favor of the close link between one's identity and the sense of belonging (Anthias, 2002, 2008, 2012; La Barbera, 2011; Jackson, 2006). What's more, there is strict link between identity, belonging and home. This is advocated by Esra Öztarhan (2015), "there is a close link between one's identity, sense of belonging and the concept of home, especially for the hyphenated identities. Belonging and rootedness are significant ways of relating to one's surroundings. But for people who have no place or more than one place to call their home, it is difficult to find a solution like the poet proposes" (2).

Such arguments can be extended to include translocational positionality as well. The concept of positionality refers to individual agents and companies which take specific geographical locations, by the same token, individual agents occupy specific geographical locations and so positionality ascribes to the bodies. Hence, during the time, the split Americanness and Arabness is replaced by the coined dual hyphenated Arab-American which proffered alienation and distance from homeland and marginalization in the host land. Khadija full heartedly inclines to be identified with the American and strictly rejects Arabness in culture and history. She constantly resists Arabness and eagerly justifies her Americanness convincing her mother "I can't speak Arabic right, I've never even been there, and I don't like all of those dancing parties. I like stories and movies. I can be American and still be your daughter" (Halaby 74). In the same vein, reading the history of diaspora illustrates the majority of new generations of Palestinians prefer to cultivate firm relations with the host land. Although Nidali and Khadija were not born in Palestine and do not seek traces of Palestine anywhere, they forever have to bear the load of constant reference.

One of problematizing memories of homeland Palestine which never leaves both of the protagonists is the names that bear great significance and produces a resonance in their mentality. The names of the Arab immigrants, in fact, do not signify only their individual suffering and burden. The Arab names tensely affect the second-generation Arab female's translocational positionality in the United States. Both girls tend to evade their Arab names' essentialism, as these names simply point to Arabness. Khadija reflects such reality with embitterment: "I'm sure the original Khadija was very nice and that's why the Prophet Muhammad married her and why my father gave me her name, but I'm also sure that if the original Khadija went to school in America that she would hate her name just as much as I do" (Halaby 36). Later she wishes to have had a non-Arabic name to feel more integrated into the American community and to stop the estrangement feeling received by the mispronunciation of her name by the American. She aspires having a Western name:

I think Princess Diana is beautiful, and even though Diana is a pretty western name, I thought I'd like to have it, so I told my friends at school that I was going to change my name to Diana and they should call me that from now on. "But you don't like a Diana," Roberta told me. What do I look like then?,, I don't know. Like a kadeeja I guess. (37)

Similarly, having been given masculine Arab name meaning "my struggle" by her patriot Palestinian father, Nidali resists representing Palestinian historical struggle. Such reality demonstrates even if an Arab-American individual personally evades her Arab origin, names reveal their Arabness and ethnic origin and therefore, the struggle for Americanization themselves even through changing names is doomed to fail.

Another conception which builds on translocational positionality of in-transit Palestinians is the designation of home both as a place/location and as a concept. Sara Ahmad (1999) formulates it is the impossibility of returning home that creates a lifelong "out of space feeling" (343). Henceforth, the lifelong aspiration for home and the resultant discomfort destructively affect the current space and positionality. The non-real and non-existent space of home results in loss and the creation of a fiction with imaginary homeland. This is true for both Nidali and Khadija who are profoundly tied up with fanciful parents who are ceaselessly weaving stories of paradise Palestine and idolizing imaginary homeland lamenting its loss. The problem raises when both patriot parents eagerly expect the new generation sustain genuine emotional bond with their birthplace but in fact make it problematic for their children to appropriately connect to host culture and position. In *West of Jordan* (2003), for instance, Khadija's father permanently shows discontentment: "my ache comes from losing my home,..this country has taken my dreams that used to float like those giant balloons, and filled them with sand. Now they don't float, and you can't even see what they are anymore" (Halaby 37-9). These arguments result in serious debate that as far as an exilic, in-transit individual falsely perceives home as precious and highly desirable fetish object, he emphatically imprisons himself in one home while plurality of homes supposedly affect in-transit people's lives in a rather positive way. Based on Ahmed (1999), fixing to one territory home fixes an individual's identity and deters desire of change, liberty, positionality and movement, as migrancy and in-transition means "movement, dislocation, crossing of borders" (331).

By the same way, Azade Seyhan (2001) sets forth, in "paranational communities and alliances", an exilic, migrant, ethnic or diasporic individual has to place himself in "communities that exist within national borders or alongside the citizens of the host country but remain culturally or linguistically distanced from them, and, in some instances are estranged from both the home and the host culture" (10). Thereby, unsurprisingly for Nidali and Khadija, host space and moving in and out of home and

ethnic culture promise development and change, which accords with what Chambers (1994) claims for in-transit state of being of discontinuity, dynamicity, change and development, "to translate is always to transform" (3). As for Nidali, to carry translocational positionality, she needs to move to Boston, a new place for shift and transformation, a location which promises her new transnational positionality and identity. It is in comply with Sheppard (2002) notion that complex positionalities are "the shifting, asymmetric, and path-dependent ways in which the futures of places depend on their interdependence with other places, and which connect people and places together" (308). The significance of shifts in positionality is demonstrated in the way Nidali and Khadija move from place to place.

In fact, one factor which most crucially helps Nidali identify and acknowledge her ability to make logical connection between host land and her ethnic essentialism and also determine confident translocational position is the selected living city in America, Texas. Randa Jarrar chooses Texas as the setting because as she acknowledges: "Texas, which is where I've felt most at home in the U.S. The proximity to the border, the ethnic makeup of the state, and its Southernness all lent Texas a great 'Arab' feel. I wanted to write about how such an American place can also be so Arab, or Other" (Hoffman 62). Nidali and Khadija's positionality in the United States could be challenged by the way they react to restrictions, power system and ethnic related downgrading. Briefly, positionality helps transnational individuals' quest to reach globalization, that is, as Sheppard (2002) maintains "positionality stresses that the conditions of possibility in a place do not depend primarily on local initiative or on embedded relationships splayed across scales, but just as much on direct interactions with distant places" (319). This was clear in Nidali's movement to Boston and Khadija's settlement in California which demonstrate the tendency of the migrants for upward global positionality in the metropolis.

#### **4.5. Translocational Positionality and Identity**

In the words of Jameel Ahmed Alghaberi (2018) migrancy is regarded as an overriding threat to Palestinian national identity as it violates the substantial connection and the normal relationship between place and identity. As Palestinian diaspora is totally characterized by "out of place identity, without center and constant journey", the exilic refugees fight against stateless position on the ground of lacking a valid passport because Palestine is not recognized as a state in the world (Jarrar 39). Similarly, Iain Chambers (1994) sees migrancy and its impressive effect "as a movement in which neither the points of departure nor arrival is certain, it is a site of constant mutation always in transit with no promise of homecoming" (5). For him identity construction is an incomplete journey, characterized by unstable identity and endless destination (25). Such conceptions directly accord with what Sara Ahmed (1999) explicates on identity of in-transit individuals: "nomads resist socially coded

modes of thought and behavior" (334). In this ground, homelessness challenges static boundaries, conventions and fixed identity. Ahmed further manifests "by refusing to belong to a particular place, the world becomes nomad's home" (337).

Likewise, Brah (1996) expresses translocational identity of diasporic ones is "the critique of discourses of fixed origins while taking into account of homing desire, not a desire for homeland" (15-6). Accordingly, it is less questionable that the intersectional dimensions of ethnicity, belonging, nationality and culture give rise to volatile positionality in the American community. In this context, it seems plausible to validate the idea that as identity and home are fluid, then belonging and diasporic translocational positionality take fluidity and built as a process rather than a finished project.

There are abundant evidences in the novel which justify that belonging and diasporic translocational positionality are fluid concepts and constructed in process. presumption. The positionality obliges in-transit Palestinians to leave for Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian or other Arab countries' passports not identity. As the same way, Waheed Ammar, Nidali's father in *A Map of Home* (2008) reflects his stateless position in a bitter fantasy, "our people carry the homeland in their souls, you can go wherever you want, but you'll always have it in your heart" (Jarrar 9). Translocational positionality or optimally stating transnational positionality for a hyphenated Palestinian individual who is neither considered refugee nor diasporic strictly relies on his place (as the dislocated one) in the host land.

The presupposition that the concepts of identity, home, location, positionality and belonging are fluid and permeable are firmly bolstered in Palestinian narratives of Randa Jarrar and Laila Halaby. Nidali, born in the United states, raised in Kuwait, grew up in Egypt, and finally settled in Texas is the obvious example of in-transit fluid identity holder. Her ceaseless attempt to find a certain place in-split position of Palestinian (Arab) and American culture is predominantly evident from her initial exposition;

My little passport, the one looked nothing like Mama's medium green one or Baba's big brown one, said I was American. I didn't have to stand in a different line at airports yet, but soon I would. And Mama would stand in a different line and Baba would stand in a different line. It would make me believe that the world wanted to split up my family, so I'd pull to them even more. (Jarrar 9)

Being raised in Kuwait, forced escape-like moving to Egypt and final settlement in America, Texas, leaves displaced Nidali exceptionally too split and scattered to find a position in a new home. This fact is ostensible in her reaction to borders and her perception of fluid positionality:

One afternoon, I sat at the dining table and drew a map of Palestine from memory. I pointed at the western border...That map is from a certain year. The maps that came earlier looked different. And the one that comes after, even more different. I mean there's no telling where home starts and where it ends. (192-3)

Similarly, Khadija who was born in the United States, importunately rejects any connection with her parent's homeland and persists her only American nationality disregarding double hyphenated identity. It reads through her dialogue with mother: "*You* are Palestinian. I am American" and strictly rejects her mother's claim: "No! No daughter of mine is American" (Halaby 74). Here, both mother and daughter are trapped in such a social classification that their transnational positionality becomes the target of exclusion.

For both protagonists, translocational positionality in terms of finding no place to locate and no home to return to cause constant loss of the sense of belonging and result in fluid in process homeland and positionality. For them, the instability of positionality results in transformation and developmental change. The reflexivity in identifying homeland and defining the fluid concept of home result in adjustable position and in fact in-process translocational positionality. In other words, as diasporic Palestinian agents living with constant mobility, Nidali and Khadija pass the three steps of awareness, initiating with bewilderment in homelessness and nonbelonging and finding nowhere to belong to or identify with. Then they experience a sharp entrance to the position which inculcates to acknowledge in-between-ness and hyphenated identity. And at last, they find fluid positionality, namely to embrace non-belonging-ness to any particular place, identity, culture and home, and to be liberated enough to sense change and transformation. From translocational positionality perspective, this is preferably tactical positioning of the self, characterized by constant shift, transformation and contradiction and final result of dynamic relation of mediation, reflection, and dialogue. Accordingly, both protagonists finally neither accept any cultural markers nor tend to identify as the displaced identity, but prefer to move across borders of any state called home. It can be concluded that, locations are particularly fluid and therefore positionality, home and belonging are defined in relation to time, context and meaning and so susceptible to shift, transformation and contradiction.

## 5. Conclusion

Studying positionality's relational and contextual nature by adopted Floya Anthias' concept, it is proved that social identity is forever multi-dimensional, dynamic, singular and unfinalized. The two Palestinian diasporic characters were insistently challenging hegemonic visions of Americanness and limitations of multiculturalism while undergoing intersectional racialized, gendered, and sexualized oppressions in the

American domain. The interplay of intersectional mantra give rise shifting configurations of power, position and value of female Palestinian protagonists. Moreover, the pervasive effect of intersecting normative structures in positionality of translocational Muslim Arab women in the West are patriarchy, gendered racialization, sexualization and imperialism which result in racial injustice, gender injustice, economic injustice, and self-indetermination.

The perfect study of female translocational characters demonstrated that for the racialized, sexualized, classed, and gendered Arab lives under the complex relation of power system, the historical, political, cultural, class and social variables give shifting translocational positionality. Furthermore, on the basis of intersectional mantra, the Arabness, by itself, simply creates devaluation and lower positionality which ranges from disinclusion, disincorporation, marginalization, racism, social violence, lower-income employments, and ethnic stereotyping. In addition, the resultant dynamic translocational positionality is firmly subjected to shaded alteration because regulatory and normative power structures starkly augment patriarchal and racist violence and norms on female Palestinian immigrants in America. Ultimately, it was deduced when identity is fluid and subject to change and transformation, then locations, home, belonging and particularly positionality turn fluid, susceptible to changes, shifts, and contradictions and are to be defined in relation to time, context, space and meaning.

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