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Narratives of Biculturalism: Arab-American Identity Negotiation Post-9/11

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Narratives of Biculturalism:
Arab-American Identity Negotiation Post-9/11

A thesis presented by
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to the Department of Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

The process of identity negotiation for bicultural individuals is ongoing and psychologically challenging. Arab-Americans in particular must deal with this process in a contentious environment where the Arab World is demonized and “Othered,” especially after 9/11. This project was an exploration of the identity development of Arab-American youth in a post-9/11 context. Background research for this study included a review of identity theory from Erik Erikson to postmodern thinkers, as well as the immigration patterns and historical-political context of Arab-Americans. Participants included 14 Arab-Americans from seven Arabic-speaking countries, five of whom were men and nine of whom were women, from different religious backgrounds. The study employed a mixed methods design including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. All participants completed a scale that quantified the degree of their identity integration, participated in a qualitative interview, and created a piece of artwork that reflected a visual representation of their bicultural identity. The data of the study were analyzed along three themes: how participants experienced their external worlds, how they internalized this environment, and how their internal and external experiences came together to provide them, or deprive them of, a sense of home. Ultimately, there was variation within the sample in how the individuals perceived of their identities. Due to their various intersectional identities, including race and religion, the participants made sense of their identity differently. With these results in mind, this study served as a way to understand how all immigrant experiences, even within the Arab-American community, vary along a spectrum and cannot be seen as universal.

Keywords: Arab-Americans, identity negotiation, intersectionality, mixed methods, immigration

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*So, here you are
too foreign for home
too foreign for here.
never enough for both.*

—Ijeoma Umebinuo, “Diaspora Blues”

Narratives of Biculturalism: Arab-American Identity Negotiation Post-9/11

What is it like to live as an Arab-American in the United States right now? Particularly, what is like to be an Arab-American in a society that insists that we are in a clash of civilization between the Arab World and the “West?” How do Arab-Americans internalize this environment? How does it affect their sense of identity? To what extent do they view themselves as a marginalized group? How do Arab-Americans experience others’ perceptions of them? How do they navigate their lives and sense of selves under this umbrella of “othering?” Living as a second-generation immigrant, holding a hyphenated identity, may pose difficulties for individuals who feel as if they have to juggle two versions of themselves, which can be additionally challenging for people who identify with two cultures that are posed as unequal and incompatible.

Given the West’s historical othering of the Middle East, which intensified after the events of 9/11 (Sirin & Fine, 2008), Arab-Americans have lived under an antagonistic environment that activated an older dichotomy between the West and the Middle East. This study aimed to explore the lives of these individuals who are in the midst of developing and making sense of their own collective narratives in an environment that challenges the integration of the Arab and American identity. Are these identities mutually exclusive? What is it like to maintain both identities? How do Arab-Americans express and make sense of their identity? What are the positives and negatives of being Arab-American? What are the different memories and life experiences of Arab-Americans today?

This thesis examined the identity narratives of 14 Arab-American individuals post-9/11, specifically looking at how these individuals navigate and negotiate their bicultural identities along with their other identities, such as race and religion, that intersect with their ethnic identity.

The examination of this thesis's questions is rooted in the framework of identity theory. It encompasses various approaches to identity development, reviewing the debates and questions within the literature, and ultimately adopts a postmodernist approach to identity. This perspective provides a contextualized cultural analysis of Arab-American identity that fleshes out the various factors that affect selfhood in a postcolonial, particularized context. In doing so, it integrates existing literature on sociocultural, bicultural, and diasporic identities.

Background on Psychological Theories of Identity

Identity has been a subject of dialogue in psychology, anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines for several decades. Many current psychologists cite Erik Erikson as the father of identity psychology. Erikson (1963) described identity as a process of "triple bookkeeping," wherein individuals' identities are made up of biological, psychological, and social dimensions that are negotiated to create an individual's coherent sense of identity. In fact, Erikson (1968) posited that identity offers a sense of sameness and continuity. Therefore, identity according to him creates unity from possibly conflicting childhood identifications. Erikson wrote that "Final identity, then, as fixed at the end of adolescence, is superordinated to any single identification with individuals of the past: it includes all significant identifications, but it also alters them in order to make a unique and reasonably coherent whole of them," (p. 161). Erikson thus pinpointed a sense of cohesion as the goal of an individual's identity development and viewed it essential to healthy personality functioning.

Dan McAdams is a more recent psychologist who used a framework that built off of Erikson's conceptualizations of identity as cohesive and holistic; however, his research has brought narrative into conversations about these theories of identity, seeing identity as an individual's evolving and integrative life story. McAdams (1993) wrote that human beings are

natural storytellers, and that storytelling is a fundamental means of expression and communication. He then connected this concept to his own theories of identity. According to McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin, and Mansfield (1997), an individual's process of identity development is revealed in his creation of a life story. McAdams also wrote that identity is formed like a story, where individuals construct and understand their personal past, present, and future in terms of an integrative narrative self-story (McAdams, 2001). His research thus exhibits the same underlying focus on continuity as described by Erikson.

The development of these Eriksonian conceptions of identity as coherent and creating narrative continuity across the lifespan parallels a separate development of postmodern identity theory. Schachter (2004) was one of the first psychologists to contextualize Eriksonian conceptions of identity in social conflicts. Schachter, similar to other postmodernist thinkers, yet unlike Erikson and McAdams, argued against the idea of a coherent identity, recognizing that an integrated identity is not necessarily possible in particular social contexts. He cited the works of Gergen (1968) and Markus and Wurf (1987) on multiple selves, which suggest that "The contemporary sociocultural context, rather than promoting identity synthesis, requires that the individual manage different self-concepts flexibly..." (Schachter, 2004, p. 169). In addressing these controversies, Schachter tweaked Erikson's concept of identity configuration, which allows individuals with multiple identities to organize them. His research described how one develops an identity configuration that bridges a gap among multiple identifications and a single identity. Schachter identifies four basic identity configurations. The first is *the configuration based on choice and suppression*, wherein an individual chooses one identity to accept and rejects or suppresses the other. The second is *the assimilated configuration*, where multiple identities are synthesized and no longer conflicting. Schachter's third and fourth configurations allow the

individual to maintain both of his conflicting identifications. In the third, *the confederacy of identifications*, the individual keeps opposing identifications, rather than rejecting either one, seeing suppression as preventing a sense of wholeness. In the fourth configuration, *the thrill of dissonance*, individuals also embrace their conflicting identities; this clash between identifications offers individuals with this configuration a sense of excitement and uniqueness, yet also serious challenges. Overall, these configurations allow individuals developing in a complex sociocultural context to deal with conflicting identities by attempting to configure a relationship among them, a process that is particularly difficult in complex and conflicting sociocultural contexts. Nevertheless, it is important to note that one's particular context affects how he is able to configure his own identity; how an individual configures his identity is thus constrained by how his societal context already positions him.

Much of postmodern identity psychology thus debunks the idea of identity universality. Schachter explained that a harmonious and self-consistent identity is not possible in our contemporary social condition that is steeped in complexity and contradiction. In fact, according to Schachter, the continuous identity that Erikson conceptualized is not universally applicable; additionally, assuming that it is universal, according to Schachter, upholds a Western-centric conceptualization of identity that does not apply to all people. In this way, Schachter believes that the perception of a universal identity is a Western notion and is thus inherently culturally specific.

Another postmodernist thinker is Kenneth Gergen (1991), who theorized that a changing context means a constantly changing self. He wrote that many individuals contain a plurality of voices that cannot be easily integrated. He explained that, due to this plurality, under postmodern conditions, people are in a constant state of construction and reconstruction. Hermans, Kempen,

and van Loon (1992) adopted a similar viewpoint, defining the self as “dialogical,” or containing multiple voices that are constantly changing. They saw the sense of self as fluctuating among differing and even opposed positions. Hermans (2001) expounded on the dialogical self, writing that, “An increasingly interconnected world society requires attention to dialogical relationships between different cultures, between different selves, and between different cultural positions in the self (e.g. multiple or hyphenated identities),” (p. 272). This reference to different selves and cultural positions, and multiple or hyphenated identities, hints to the impossibility of perfectly coherent identities. Rather, postmodern thinkers have viewed culture and identity as in continual conversation. Cultures produce collective voices that exist and function in the self as social positions. Hermans sees the voices as being expressions of historically situated selves that are in constant dialogue with other voices, yet constantly subjected to differences in power. This invoking of power dynamics and multiple simultaneous contexts complicates the trajectory of continuity and sameness that Erikson highlighted within his original theory of identity. Universal theories of identity disregard the role of power dynamics in the development of identity. Therefore, other postmodernist writers also tend to challenge this idea of continuity, citing it as essentialist, ethnocentric, and possible oppressive.

Diasporic Identity and the Dialogical Self

The idea of a culturally-specific model of identity, as opposed to a universal model of identity, has been explored by many postmodern identity scholars who do particular research on diasporic communities and the dialogical self. For example, Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) wrote that an immigrant person of a socially devalued group, such as a non-White, non-Western group, as opposed to someone in a socially valued group, may experience a more difficult process of acculturation (which they define as the process of change when different

cultures come into contact) due to their specific experiences of oppression. For example, because issues of prejudice and institutional barriers are not universal, acculturation and identity development cannot be seen as universal. Moreover, they add that within each country, it is important to note that the dominant group determines what the culture is as a group (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). For example, White American men in the United States create and endorse certain values, which then become synonymous with American culture. Therefore, if Whiteness defines American culture, then non-White individuals are likely to have a more difficult pattern of assimilation because the dominant narratives of the White majority have traditionally overshadowed their experiences and struggles. Lastly, their research brought in the concept of bicultural identity to explain this disparity among immigrant groups. They suggested that bicultural individuals of cultures that are seen as similar may not acculturate with much difficulty. However, when the cultures are seen as different, acculturation may be a difficult and distressing “tug of war.” Bicultural identity within these immigrant communities is thus different than the bicultural identity within mainstream, White communities, rendering it not universal.

Challenging the notion of a universal experience of biculturalism, Radhakrishnan (1996) suggested that the notion of multiple, hyphenated, and hybridized diasporic identities challenge the idea that there can be a blissful marriage of integration of the two cultures. Bhatia (2002) elaborated on the complexity of immigrant bicultural identity, stressing the importance of a postcolonial context. He explained how the dichotomy of first versus third world and the role of imperialism, slavery, and representations of “the other” affect the self and create a unique identity for certain bicultural individuals. He adds that these bicultural experiences of many immigrant groups from the “third world” have been overlooked, such as in the Muslim American

and Arab-American communities. With this idea in mind, adopting a contextualized identity framework is critical for accurate scholarship.

Bhatia and Ram (2001) reiterated this need for culturally-specific conceptions of identity. With all immigrant experiences being homogenized, particular immigrant experience of injustice, in the form of imperialism, slavery, and representation, become minimized, an example of the inadequacy of a universal view of identity, especially with equity in mind. Therefore, the universal viewpoint delegitimizes the contextualized experiences certain immigrant groups have faced that are not shared by other cultural groups. These authors wrote that selfhood is intertwined with and cannot be separated from experience of colonialism, language, immigration, and racially-based laws. The importance of a particularized cultural context here can also be shown in the internalization of policies that affect identity and the immigrants' psyche. Bhatia (2002) explained that non-Western immigrants are more likely to face exclusion and discrimination, a distinct experience that Western immigrants do not face. He elaborated on the implications, suggesting that these identity negotiations caused by being othered "are tightly knit with evolving conceptions of a selfhood that is hyphenated, fractured, and in-between," showing how identity negotiation is connected to a larger historical and political narratives both at home and abroad (p. 71). Specifically, his research has shown that a historicized, postcolonial context is essential when studying the experience of an immigrant group.

Furthermore, Bhatia (2002) emphasized that these immigrants to the United States engage in a dialogical process that consists of constant movement back and forth between incompatible cultural positions. Immigrants thus are constantly forced to negotiate these multiple, conflicting, dialogical voices, such as Arab versus American. Bhatia explained this dialogical model by analyzing Edward Said's book, *Out of Place* (1999), a narrative of Said's

multivoiced self in a postcolonial context. Within this book, Said, a Palestinian-Egyptian-American Christian wrote of his struggle to reconcile the multiple voices of his self, explaining the identity tension of an Arab-American. He used his name as a representation of this negotiation, writing that “For years, and depending on the exact circumstances, I would rush past ‘Edward’ and emphasize ‘Said’; at other times I would do the reverse...” (p. 3). Although his full name was Edward Said, each half represented one of his worlds or voices, Arab or American, and were seen as mutually exclusive. Often, people were questioning his American identity, assuming that being both Arab and American was not possible. Of this, Said wrote that “The overall sensation I had was of my troublesome identity as an American inside whom lurked another Arab identity from which I derived no strength, only embarrassment and discomfort,” (p. 90). Bhatia explained that Said’s disconnected identity narrative shows his dialogical self in a constant movement among different cultural positions. These cultural positions, however, are not limited to ethnicity or nationality, but include positions such as race, gender, and sexuality.

In the postmodernist framework, not only is identity seen as culturally-specific, but many researchers have expressed the importance of seeing identity as intersectional as well. For example, Bhatia and Ram (2001) explained how the development of a hyphenated self and identity negotiation are connected to larger political and historical narratives that are shaped by issues of race, gender, sexuality, and power. They clarified that some of these labels of identity, or signifiers, such as gender, are ignored, assuming that men and women acculturate similarly. However, we can see the importance of intersectionality in Bhatia and Ram (2004). In their study of South Asian-American women, they examined intersectional, culturally-specific identity, arguing that the formation of immigrant identity is a process shaped by many voices of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality and that the many voices interact and intersect. Their study

examined non-White, non-Western women who experience a “polyphonization,” or the complex opposition of voices present within their senses of self. For example, Asian and Indian immigrants in the United States are often seen as both hypersexual and asexual, an example of a polyphony of conflicting voices.

Of this experience unique to women, Bhatia and Ram wrote how their conflicts are examples of the contradictions and negotiations immigrants experience among their different cultural selves, adding a level of complexity and difficulty to their identity development. Specifically, for example, they interviewed a Pakistani-American Muslim named Khan, who struggled with reconciling the Pakistani and American voices within her, which she saw as in opposition. Additionally, Khan’s sexuality as a lesbian individual added yet another layer of intersectionality that contributed yet another voice. The fluctuation among these voices show the construction of identity and the mixing and moving of cultures that are influenced by both gender and sexuality, among other factors. Here we can see how identity, rather than causing a harmonious integration of two cultures, can cause conflict and difficulty.

Many postmodernist thinkers have come to the consensus that a contextualized model of identity negotiation is essential; however, it is important to note that contexts are not fixed but rather evolve and change as well. In one of Bhatia’s more recent articles (2008), which examined Indian-Americans post-9/11, he illustrated how certain events, such as 9/11, can change an individual’s cultural context and therefore identity, as the two are firmly connected. Specifically, in looking at the individual narratives of Indian-Americans, he wrote about the many layers that affected how these individuals reflect on what it means to be Indian in the United States. The new post-9/11 cultural context affected their identity, making them feeling more conflict about being simultaneously Indian and American. Many Indian-Americans were thus forced to rethink

their Americanness as they were marginalized from mainstream, White America. Although they may have previously felt they were American, 9/11 brought out their Indianness and “elevated their otherness,” as even American-born Indians were classified as being Indians and others. Thus, the events of 9/11 caused them to question their hyphenated identity. Bhatia used these narratives to challenge again the universal model of identity, while emphasizing that it should be re-examined in a historical and political context. He wrote that the events of 9/11 clearly show that identity negotiation is not a universal, nor fixed, process.

Fine and Sirin (2007) described similar narratives of Muslim-American youth from various countries whose hyphenated identities also changed after 9/11. They speculated on the importance of political events on identity, using a metaphor of geology: “Young people respond to politically induced tremors that may erupt far away and yet reach deep into the soul, carving fault lines between self and other, where relatively smooth borders once existed” (pp. 1-2). By emphasizing the impact of 9/11 on these Muslim-American individuals, which will be drawn out later, they are also emphasizing the importance of a historical and political context when looking at identity.

Identity development is not simple. It is multilayered, complex, and variable. Conversations within the literature have shown a debate about the nature of identity. For the purposes of this study, I have adopted this postmodernist framework of identity as a culturally-specific and constantly changing phenomenon. Therefore, in this thesis on Arab-Americans, it is essential to understand their particular historical and political contexts.

Arab immigration to the United States

Although the “Arab World” encompasses a large territory that stretches from northwestern Africa to the eastern edges of the Arabian gulf, covering vast territories of diverse

cultures, all Arabs and Arab-Americans are often homogenized into one group, regardless of their variation. Read (2008) articulated that the phrase “Arab-American” is an inaccurate way to group together individuals of different national origins, ethnicities, and religious affiliations. Rather, she emphasized that Arab-Americans are in fact a heterogeneous ethnic population that is wildly diverse. According to the Arab American Institute (2012), there are of over 3.5 million Arab-Americans living in the United States today. Within this population, the majority of people are Christian, including Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants, at 77%, whereas only 23% are Muslim, including Sunni, Shia, and Druze individuals (Arab-American Institute, 2012). Nevertheless, despite the community’s religious variation, individuals within it are often assumed to be Muslim. However, although most Arabs are Muslims, the majority of Arab-Americans are Christian (Read, 2010).

According to Ajrouch (2000), Arabs have been immigrating to the United States since the late 1800s, coming in two major waves, the first being predominantly Christian and the second being predominantly Muslim (Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Read, 2008). Arab Christians mostly immigrated from the Levant region of the Middle East to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century with the hopes of better economic opportunities, like previous European immigrants (Read, 2008). Most of these migrants were poor, uneducated unskilled workers (Naber, 2008). Subsequently, the first Arab Muslim immigrants arrived at the turn of the century with the goal of acquiring economic growth and returning to their homeland; however, after World War II and political turmoil in the Middle East, many remained in the States (Ajrouch, 2000). Afterward, many of the Arab immigrants in the decades following were Muslim (Read, 2008). As more Arab immigrants were Muslim post-9/11, there became a greater diversity in appearance, cultural patterns, religion, and socioeconomic class.

In recent years, the number of Arab immigrants to the United States has increased due to lack of economic opportunities and political stability in the Middle East (Ajrouch, 2000). Additionally, the formation of immigration laws since 1965 have allowed family reunification and political asylum, which has increased the number of Arab immigrants as well (Ajrouch, 2000; Beydoun, 2013). Since then, Bagby (2012) reported that there are multiple mosques and Islamic centers in all of the United States. Nevertheless, a study by Baker et al. (2004) showed that Muslim Arabs are more likely to feel that their religion is not respected by the American public compared to Christian Arabs. Therefore, Muslims and Christians have had a different immigration experience partly due to their historical and political contexts, instigated by their religions.

The differences between Arab Muslim and Christian immigration to the United States was also mediated by race. Beydoun (2013) explained that throughout immigration “‘Whiteness’ was a prerequisite for American citizenship,” and during this time, Muslims were seen as non-White (p. 29). However, Arab Christians, because of the association between Christianity and Whiteness, were able to gain citizenship more easily. According to Naber (2008), race has become a framework for placing immigrants along a continuum between black and white. Ajrouch and Jamal (2007) pointed out that, although labeled by the American government as Caucasian/White, some Arabs-Americans have avoided a White identity. Generally, approaches to studying Arab-Americans that list them only as an ethnic or cultural category ignore the anti-Arab racist structural inequities that shape their experiences (Naber, 2008). Additionally, whereas some Arab-Americans pass as White, others do not (Naber, 2008). Some Arabs also tend to see themselves as white, especially when benefitting from historical Whiteness, while

others may not; nevertheless, this does not change their reality as a negatively stigmatized group (Cainkar, 2008).

Shryock (2008) found that those who identify as White were more likely to be Christian and live in upper- and middle-class neighborhoods, whereas those who identified as “other” racially were more likely to be Muslim and live in neighborhoods concentrated with other Muslims. Furthermore, in her study on race and Arab-American identity, Cainkar (2008) found that Arabs who said that they were not White were affected by how they were treated in American society, seeing themselves as non-White because they did not have societal benefits of Whiteness, showing the correlation between self-identified race and experience. She explained that many saw themselves as White as a survival mechanism. On the other hand, many saw Whiteness as being associated with being Caucasian and European, which Arabs are not. Many also saw Arabs as not being a racial group because the Arab World contains many geographic regions with a variation of skin color. Overall, her research demonstrated how racial identity is an ongoing, contextual, constructed process for Arab-Americans, who are seen as being in-between racially. She described this ambiguity as a double burden, as Arab-Americans were being excluded both from being seen as White and as people of color.

The racialization of Arab immigrants to the United States was especially true after 9/11, where there became a shift from Arabs being considered marginally White to having common experiences with people of color, such as negative representation, patterns of discrimination, and policies directed toward them (Cainkar, 2008). Abdulrahim (2008) explained that after 9/11, the long narrative of Arab immigrants being racialized as White halted, as Arabs and Muslims were now portrayed as the “Other” outside of the construction of an American identity. Naber (2008) added that in this context, Arabs have transformed over time from a proximity to Whiteness to a

proximity to “Otherness,” showing how 9/11 consolidated the racialization of the already conflated “Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim” category. This conflation between Arabs and Muslims, as well as with Middle Easterners, continues today, especially after 9/11; Arabs are often seen as Muslims, and Muslims are often seen as Arabs.

Overall, Arabs from diverse religious and national backgrounds have left their homeland to settle in the United States with difference experiences. Their immigration history has played a role in the subsequent lives that Arab-American individuals navigate. As these immigrants have settled in the United States, they acquired a hyphenated identity, switching from the label of “Arab” to “Arab-American” in a new cultural context that affects their process of self-identification.

Arab and Arab-American Identity

There are 22 Arabic-speaking countries today, all of which contain different cultures both across and within borders. However, many have the tendency to clump these groups together in a singular “Arab World.” Naber (2008) explained that the meaning of the very term “Arab” has been contested because various scholars and writers have argued whether the idea of an overarching, collective Arab identity is real.

For example, Khalidi (1991) posited that Arab people are linked by unique bonds of language, history, as well as religion. Muslih (1991) argued that language, culture, and history, rather than religion, are the binding concepts of Arab people. He wrote that along with Arab nationalism came local identification with being Arab, rather than a specific nationality, such as Algerian, Syrian, or Iraqi. Beydoun (2013) suggested that this idea of pan-Arabism, or a unifying Arab political identity introduced an alternative to the regional factionalism in the postcolonial Arab World. In addition, Shyrook (2008) explained how pan-ethnic Arab identities flourished in

the United States following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, as an overarching sense of Arabness emerged, when enemies of Israel were collectively seen as “the Arabs.” This concept was shaped by American policies that supported Israel and opposed anti-imperial Arab nationalism.

Other scholars have argued against the idea of a unifying Arab identity. For instance, Rejwan (2008) suggested that the idea of a unifying Arab identity or “‘Arabness’ is a mere façade, that it is not rooted in their souls, and that its degree varies as Arab environments vary” (p. 21). He added that the umbrella category of “Arab” is an artificial way to clump a diverse population of people together. Rejwan wrote that there are many cultural differences among Arabs, even some that cause hostility. He explained that “Arab” is merely a linguistic category, and that even so, Arabic is linguistically diverse because of the various spoken Arabic dialects that cannot count as a unifying force among all Arabs. In contrast to many writers of Arab nationalism, Rejwan asserted that there is no distinct Arabness, explaining that “Arab” is but a label. This cultural disconnect points to the artificial construction of Arabism that clumps together all Arabs without appropriate reason. Therefore, not only are many unifying theories of Arabs artificially constructed, but they also lead to the illogical homogenization of Arabs.

Arab individuals and nations are still clustered together today, especially in context of Arab immigration to the United States. As stated before, although the Arab-American population is heterogeneous, its members have been lumped into one racialized category, obscuring and disregarding its diversity (Read, 2008; Salaita, 2005). This umbrella category of Arabs and Arab-Americans has fed into various preconceived notions about the Middle East. Regardless of the ethnic, linguistic, and religious variation of the region, individuals from the Middle East have been clumped together as Arabs Muslims into one group that has been historically “Othered.”

Orientalism and Islamophobia Pre-9/11

Edward Said's groundbreaking and pioneering book, *Orientalism* (1978) brought to light the lens in which the Western World, or the "Occident," has historically perceived the East, particularly the Middle East, or the "Orient." Orientalism is structured as a dichotomy between the two, in which the Westerner holds hegemonic economic and political control over the Easterner, with roots in the colonization of the region. In a modern context, Orientalist structures are upheld by the West's control over how the Orient is perceived, perpetuated by an unequal power dynamic.

Said theorized about this asymmetry of power, writing about "...the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures," (p. 7). This hegemonic relationship is based on the idea that the Middle East is the West's to own because it is viewed as inferior. This sense of entitlement made possible by European colonization of the region dehumanizes its inhabitants. In fact, Said described Orientalism as a modern form of imperialism over the Eastern world writing that, "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony," as in a colonial relationship (p. 5). This imbalance of power between the Orient and the Occident has yielded to polarizations and binaries that situate the West and the East as opposite.

This notion of European dominance is enabled by depicting the Orient as "Other." Said illustrated this manner of "Othering" by showing how the Middle East is depicted as "...a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences," distancing the two parts of the world as opposites (p. 1). Through these depictions, the Occident maintains control over how the Orient is perceived in distinction to itself, being depicted as

opposite from the West since antiquity. This binary paints the Occident as powerful, dominant, and superior in opposition to the inferior and “Other” Orient.

Perry Nodelman (1992) built upon Said’s concept of the hegemonic Occident-Orient relationship, discussing how the Orient is depicted as the inherently inferior, female, stagnant, voiceless, opposite, dangerous, and “other” as a way to prove its difference from the West and its need of the West’s control. Said also described how, although the West is seen by Orientalists as complex, “the East” tends to be homogenized and falsely unified. For example, Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners are often conflated, homogenized, and collectively “Othered” simultaneously, even though the three identities do not always overlap and are actually quite diverse. Throughout history, Westerners have been perceived as rational, peaceful, liberal, while the “Arab-Orientals” are devoid of these values (p. 49). He elaborated on the accepted Orientalist depiction of Arabs, explaining that, “Not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians,” (p. 59). Here, we can see how Arabs and Islam have become conflated in an overarching Orientalist depiction that has demonized them and posed them as opposite to Westerners. Said continued to explain how Arabs have been perceived, writing that, “Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization,” (p. 108). Therefore, the homogenization of the “Other” reinforces the Orientalist East-West dichotomy, mystifying the Middle East and taking away a nuanced understanding of and humanization of Arab people.

Although Orientalist discourse has historically been perpetuated by European (mainly British or French) colonialism and imperialism of various countries in the Middle East, the increased power of the United States in the global arena had led to a new form of American

imperialism. According to Said, these Orientalist depictions of Arabs and Muslims have been accepted as truthful and perpetuated throughout mainstream academic discourse, such as through scholarly books. Orientalism is not simply an academic abstraction, though; it also is visible in American popular culture and media. Orientalist depictions of the Middle East have also infiltrated the media and popular culture, highly accessible and easily absorbed by the Western sphere. However, it is essential to note that Orientalism plays a strong role in the political relations between the East and West. Said elaborated on this consequence, writing that, “the United States today is heavily invested in the Middle East, most heavily than anywhere else on earth: the Middle East experts who advise policy-makers are imbued with Orientalism almost to a person,” (p. 321) showing its powerful political consequences that specifically changed after the attacked on 9/11.

Orientalism and Islamophobia post-9/11

Orientalist conceptualizations of Arabs magnified after 9/11, serving as a catalyst for how Arab-Americans were viewed. Salaita (2005) emphasized that 9/11 polarized anti-Arab racist sentiments that were already in place for years. Sirin and Fine (2008) expanded on this notion, adding that “it is well recognized that anti-Muslim sentiment, Islamophobia, preceded 9/11, was inflamed in 2001, and has remained high and become even worse since then,” (p. 73). They explain how the simplification of all Arabs and Muslims into one artificially constructed homogenous category also made it easier for them to be blamed, targeted, and “Othered” as a single threatening force. Additionally, as these sentiments intensified, the abstract concepts of “America” and “Arabs/Muslims” were polarized and solidified.

These magnified, negative representations of Arabs can be seen in various aspects of American society. Alsultany (2012) emphasized how American pop culture and media reflected

intensified stereotypes of Arabs in the years following 9/11. She examined how the television landscape after 9/11 included various story lines that reinforced a greater need for a War on Terror against Arabs and Muslims, simplistically portraying them as either terrorists or oppressed. All Arabs and Arab-Americans were thus framed as threats to the American collective identity through a popular medium. Therefore, the media made such stereotypes more accessible to the American public. In this way, after 9/11, the media strongly linked Arab and Muslim identities with terrorism, extremism, and oppression in a manner that contributed to shifting the public opinion on the Arab World.

The increased Orientalism and Islamophobia post-9/11 can also be seen in both political rhetoric and policy. For example, Cole (2011) illustrated how Islamophobic political rhetoric was heightened after 9/11, particularly during the Bush Administration. He explained that during President Bush's terms, he continually associated the "Muslim World" with terrorism, depicting it as a threat to American national security. Similarly, Gerges (2005) wrote how many American "terrorism experts" conflated Islam with radicalism, militancy, extremism, jihad, and terrorism, associations that were similar to accepted Orientalist discourse. This lack of a nuanced understanding of the Middle East and Orientalism, in turn, posed Islam as a threat to the West, suggesting that we were entering a clash of civilizations between the Muslim Middle East and the Christian West. In addition, intensified patriotism enabled the "Othering" of Arabs and Muslims as well, which helped to distinguish between "us" and "them." Salaita (2005) explained that in a post-9/11 context, Arab-Americans were viewed as unpatriotic because they were seen as not fitting into the mainstream notion of "being American." He commented that the growing patriotism during this time, which Arabs and Muslims were excluded from, amplified xenophobic views, viewing people of Arab origin as being outsiders incompatible with American

society and patriotism. Furthermore, Maira (2011) added that 9/11 solidified the historical dichotomy of two abstract concepts of “America” versus the violent “the Middle East.” In this way, as Middle Easterners became demonized, excluded, and further “Othered,” 9/11 allowed Orientalism to live on and flourish.

The American climate post-9/11 also shifted in terms of discrimination, as seen through the sharp increase of hate crimes and other discriminatory acts reported by Muslim and Arab-Americans (Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Rippy & Newman, 2006). However, this Islamophobia affected not only Muslims, but also those assumed to be Muslim, such as Arab-American Christians, non-Arab Muslims, and the Sikh immigrant community, along with Muslim Arab-Americans. For example, since 9/11, many Sikh Americans have faced hate speech, racial profiling, and discrimination for “looking Muslim” and thus “non-American” and threatening. For example, Bhatia (2008) described the murder of one Sikh American male, Balbir Singh Sodhi, who was killed for appearing Arab directly after the 9/11 attacks. Such indiscriminate brutality illustrates how modes of “Othering” and racializing are inseparable from the experience of non-European, non-White immigrants of the United States, particularly after 9/11 for many communities.

In terms of the policy shift after 9/11, the American government enforced a program called Special Registration, which required certain individuals who were thought to be Arab or Muslim, and thus deemed threatening, to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) to be fingerprinted, photographed, and interrogated, which was mandated by the Patriot Act (Bazian, 2014). Moreover, the American government implemented a National Entry-Exit Registration system, which targeted individuals from 25 Arab and South East Asian countries, all of which are predominantly Muslim, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Algeria,

Bangladesh, and Indonesia. Bazian (2014) reported that, by the end of program's implementation, more than 113,000 individuals were registered and more than 13,400 were deported. These events affected the lives of the individuals who were being targeted by the American government.

The extent of these programs illustrates the institutionalized Orientalism within American society and policy that were amplified after 9/11 to target Americans from certain countries who were seen as "Other." Bazian (2014) commented on this structural Orientalism: "The law is racially and religiously directed at people from specific countries...the intent of the Patriot Act and the INS registration is to target Muslims, Arabs, and Southeast Asians as a group in response to the events of 9/11," (p. 95). Therefore, these targeted laws strengthened the already present dichotomy between "the West," and the Middle East, which was conflated with Islam, holding Arabs and Muslims indirectly accountable for the 9/11 attacks.

With these programs came a feeling of isolation for many of the individuals subjected. Bazian (2014) reported that such programs made targeted Americans feel threatened, dehumanized, and "Othered." In his interview with one, an individual expressed that, "As matters stand, the [INS] policy draws on the 'us vs. them' syndrome," showing the intensified, more prevalent, and institutionalized Orientalism and Islamophobia (p. 86).

This magnified and institutionalized Orientalism and Islamophobia post-9/11 posed other, psychological problems for Arabs and Muslims in the United States. For example, Alsultany (2012) wrote that these government measures led to higher rates of depression, sadness, and shock within the Arab and Muslim populations. Additionally, Sirin and Fine (2008) looked at how Muslim American adolescents make sense of their identities within this society that

Orientalizes them. One of their Muslim American interviewees described how this feeling intensified after 9/11:

When the World Trade Center towers in New York fell, two cultural identities, “Muslim” and “American,” were reinvented. A vast, incredibly diverse amalgam of spontaneously suspect “Others” were thrust together under the categorical umbrella “Muslim,” abruptly evicted from the moral community of psychological citizenship in the United States. (p. 11)

The attacks on 9/11 changed the connotation of a Muslim American identity, and by extension an Arab-American identity, as these individuals internalized the toxic Orientalist and Islamophobic environment. This caused an internal struggle of psychological tension for many who felt connection with both cultural identities. Their research found that, although Islamophobia preceded 9/11, its magnification following the events affected how certain individuals develop and understand their sense of selfhood. Overall, growing up with these Orientalist depictions ultimately affects how Arab-Americans piece together the two parts of themselves: the Arab and the American.

The development and understanding of a hyphenated identity is already a complicated and difficult act of negotiation. This can be especially difficult for individuals like Arab-Americans who have been subjected to Orientalism and Islamophobia, especially in an intensified post-9/11 context that already prescribed them as “Other.” The identity of these Arab-Americans has been affected by the political, social, and cultural factors present in the United States, some that are of historical origin and others that draw on post-9/11 circumstances. So, how do Arab-Americans navigate their contested bicultural identity in a post-9/11 context?

The Present Study

The aim of this present study was to investigate the life narratives of Arab-Americans in a post-9/11 context. I was interested in exploring how Arab-American individuals make sense of

their identities and craft their life narratives despite having two pieces of their identities being posed as opposites by society in multiple ways. Little psychological research is conducted on the Arab-American community. Additionally, to my knowledge, no research has been done focusing on Arab-American identity using a mixed methods design.

In this study, fourteen individuals filled out in a quantitative scale, participated in an interview, and created a piece of artwork, all of which reflected their perceptions of their bicultural identity. In order to examine the intersection of ethnic and religious identity, all participants came from a variety of national and religious backgrounds. I explored whether participants who identify their religion as Christian, as opposed to Muslim/Druze, and who identify their race as White, as opposed to Middle Eastern, would express less identity conflict and more perceived social acceptance. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, no precise hypotheses were established. These questions about identity conflict guided the study:

- How do Arab-Americans negotiate the two halves of their identity?
- How do Arab-Americans make sense of their identity in an environment that is hostile toward them? Do they see themselves as marginalized or “Othered”? Do they internalize this environment? If so, how?
- Where do Arab-Americans find their sense of belonging, allegiance, and home?

These general questions shaped the design of this study, as well as the manner in which the results were analyzed.

Method

Research Design

This research project was a mixed methods design. The quantitative survey allowed the participants to rate their feelings about being both Arab and American, which made the results more comparable and standardized. Most of the remaining data were collected through semi-

structured qualitative interviews. In order to recognize my own biases when interviewing the participants, I identified certain concerns that can be read in the “Qualitative Concerns” section. After the interviews were conducted and recorded, each was transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The last portion of data collection, also qualitative, was an art component, where each participant depicted their identity using art materials, allowing them to engage with their biculturalism in a creative and expressive way. Using these three methods, both quantitative and qualitative, connections across the methods were identified. After all the themes were solidified, they strongly connected to the background on identity theory and historical analysis that guided the conceptual origins of this thesis.

Participants

Participants included 14 Arab-American individuals, five men and nine women. All identified as Arab-Americans, meaning that both parents of each participant were of Arab descent, to ensure that their heritage was strongly linked to their sense of identity. The participants came from seven Arabic-speaking countries in total, including Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Tunisia. Additionally, each participant had to have spent at least 10 years in the United States. In order to examine intersectionality and conflicts of identity, six of the participants were of Christian descent, and eight were of non-Christian descent, four identifying as Muslim and four identifying as Druze.

Participants were recruited from Connecticut College and other nearby colleges, as well as local religious community centers or places of worships, such as churches or mosques. I sent emails to all potential recruits I knew who identified as Arab-American. Other participants were recruited by snowball sampling, or word of mouth, as I asked participants whether they knew other individuals who would potentially participate in the study. Although the recruitment was at

first largely focused on finding college students, the actual participant pool was included a wider age range. Five participants completed the study over Skype and mailed or scanned and sent me their demographics questionnaire and artwork, and I knew four before conducting the research.

The following table provides demographic information about each participant (all of the names presented are pseudonyms).

Table 1

Descriptive Data of the 14 Participants

Participant Name (N=14)	Gender	Age	Arab Country of Origin	Religion
Akram	Man	24	Lebanon	Christian
Amir	Man	24	Egypt	Christian
Dalal	Woman	22	Libya/Tunisia	Muslim
George	Man	20	Lebanon	Christian
Laila	Woman	33	Palestine/Syria	Muslim
Mariam	Woman	27	Egypt	Christian
Maya	Woman	20	Lebanon	Druze
Mohammad	Man	23	Iraq	Muslim
Nabil	Man	28	Lebanon	Druze
Nayla	Woman	22	Palestine	Christian
Rania	Woman	23	Lebanon	Druze
Salma	Woman	21	Lebanon	Muslim
Yasmine	Woman	18	Lebanon	Christian
Zahra	Woman	19	Syria	Druze

In addition, all participants but one had at least one parent with a professional background, showing an overall similar socio-economic class among participants. Almost all participants said that their cultural identity was the most prominent piece of their identity (as opposed to gender, religion, and sexuality, among others), but all expressed that it had influenced them greatly.

Measures

The Bicultural Identity Integration Scale—Version 2 (BIIS-2) (Huynh & Benet-Martinez, 2010) (see Appendix A)

The BIIS-2 measures general bicultural identity integration styles. The scale allows individual researchers to fill in which secondary cultural identity they would like to input (such as “____-American”); for the purposes of this study, the word *Arab* was filled in. Each of the items is scored on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The scores of the BIIS-2 were calculated to show how well participants felt their two identities were integrated. Two subscale scores were calculated: harmony versus conflict, to see whether the individuals see their two cultures as congruous or incompatible, and blendedness versus compartmentalization, to see whether the individuals see their two cultures as being fused or separate. On the first subscale, a higher score indicates more identity harmony, whereas a lower score indicated more identity conflict; on the second subscale, a higher score indicates more identity blendedness, whereas a lower score indicates more identity compartmentalization.

The first subscale was calculated by dividing the total of the first half of scores by 11, and the second subscale was calculated by adding the second half of scores and dividing by 9. High scores on the first subscale indicates greater harmony, whereas a lower score indicates greater identity conflict. Participants used a rating scale from 1-5. The alpha coefficients for cultural harmony were .86 and for cultural blended-ness were .81 (N = 1049 multi-ethnic biculturals cited who did this study).

Qualitative Interviews

After taking the BIIS-2, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with all participants. Incorporating qualitative research was an important way to give participants more agency in expressing themselves and their experiences. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative inquiry acts as a way to hear silenced voices: “We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (p. 40). Therefore, incorporating qualitative methods into this study gave the participants a platform to better voice their experiences. The protocol of questions was as follows:

- How do you primarily culturally identify yourself?
- Is your cultural identity the most prominent piece of your identity, as opposed to your gender, sexual orientation, or religious identity, etc.?
- Do you feel as if your identity is split?
 - At what age did you first decide this?
 - Do you feel as if your identity is incompatible?
- Do you feel discriminated against for your ethnic identity?
- Has your dual identity provided you comfort or creativity? How so?
- Describe a memory in which you first recognized your bicultural identity.
- Describe a memory in which your bicultural identity provided positive meaning in your life.
- Have you ever had a memory in which you felt as if your identities could never be compatible? If so, please describe.

- Have you ever had a memory in which your bicultural identity caused you discomfort or distress? If so, please describe.

These questions show the general direction of the interview; however, the conversation always naturally flowed and went longer than expected. With permission of each participant, the interviews were recorded in their entirety to make sure the content was being saved to be properly examined. Consent to be audiotaped was obtained during the Informed Consent procedure.

All of the interviews were conducted in the winter 2015-2016, between late November and early January. In order to analyze the interviews, this study employed a grounded theory approach, meaning that, although general questions guided the nature of the interview, theories about the data were generated after all responses were already collected. After a deep, thoughtful reading of all the interview transcripts, I pinpointed the dominant themes and repeated ideas that had emerged, looking for anything particularly unusual or memorable, while seeking to avoid prior assumptions about the data and allowing the data speak naturally with its most salient themes. This process yielded a framework with which to analyze the interviews, and later the qualitative artwork. Once I recorded the emergent themes, a research colleague also reviewed the interviews and confirmed that my selected themes were the most accurate way to capture the data.

After finishing the interview, the participants were asked to fill out the demographics form. For individuals being interviewed in person, they were handed the demographics sheet. For individuals being interviewed over Skype, they were mailed the sheet to mail or scan and send back to me.

Demographic Questions

Each participant was asked to provide the demographic information listed below. Due to the debate over Arab collective identity and race within the literature about Arab-Americans, I thought it would be most appropriate to allow participants to self-identify:

- Age
- Gender
- Arab country of origin(s)
- Place you grew up
- Race
- Religion of mother
- Religion of father
- Religion you were raised in
- Religion currently practiced (if any)
- College attending (if any)
- Languages spoken (indicate which is native)
- Occupation of mother
- Occupation of father
- Years mother spent in country of origin
- Years father spent in country of origin

Qualitative Artwork

Lastly, the participants were asked to create a piece of artwork (identity map) that reflects their bicultural identity. They were given little direction for this, but all had a general prompt to follow: *“Draw a visual representation of your Arab-American identity.”* All participants were given the same art supplies: magic markers and card stock. Participants interviewed in person

were given art supplies, whereas others who were interviewed over Skype were mailed materials and mailed or scanned their artwork to me.

In order to examine the pieces of art, all participants were asked to describe their artwork to the interviewer as the final part of their interview. Additionally, the pieces of art were analyzed using a coding system designed by Sirin and Fine (2008) (see Appendix B). In their system, two raters scanned each piece of art for location, identity labels, symbols, scenes of discrimination or surveillance, emotions, and responses and reactions. A research colleague who was trained in this coding system double checked the coding and analysis. The qualitative artwork was also examined through the same developed framework as the qualitative interviews.

General themes that existed overall among all 14 pieces of artwork include nationalistic symbols, such as flags, cultural symbols, such as food, religious symbols, such as mosques and crucifixes, political symbols, such as the animals that represent Democrats and Republicans, both the Arabic and the English language, and other concrete symbols that represented their identities. Participants also used abstract imagery and certain placement and space on the piece of cardstock in order to represent various aspects of their identities.

Most of the participants used up the whole page, and almost all used more than one or two colors. Some drew horizontally, while others drew vertically. Some participants drew themselves depicted in the artwork, whereas others did not employ any human figures. Language was also used as a way to differentiate between cultural selves (English and Arabic representing Americanness and Arabness, respectively). Some added these phrases and others left the artwork wordless.

Procedure

Despite the differences in locations and manner in which the study was conducted (in Skype versus in person), the procedure was always identical.

Participants were recruited in various ways. Some were individuals who went to my College that I knew were Arab-American, who agreed to participate in person. Other participants were recruited through local places of worship, such as mosques or churches. These individuals received the following message:

“Dear members of the (mosque/church), my name is Janan Shouhayib, and I am a psychology student at Connecticut College in New London, CT writing my senior thesis on Arab-American identity post-9/11. As a (mosque/Arabic church), I was wondering if you knew any Arab-American college students who would be willing to participate in my study. My research aims to understand the whole lives of Arab-American individuals. It will require participants to fill out a short questionnaire, be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes, and to create a small piece of artwork (identity map) that represents their bicultural identity. If you know of any individuals who may be willing to participate, please send me an email, and I will send them a follow-up email with attachments to the informed consent form and a brief survey. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.”

Other participants were recruited from student cultural and religion organizations, such as the Arab-American Society or the Muslim Student Association, from local colleges and universities, from Facebook, and from the Arab American Institute List Serv. All received the following message:

“Dear members of the (club/association/Facebook group/list serv), my name is Janan Shouhayib, and I am a psychology student at Connecticut College in New London, CT writing

my senior thesis on Arab-American identity post-9/11. I am contacting your organization because I was wondering if some of its Arab-American members would be willing to participate in my study. My research aims to understand the whole lives of Arab-American individuals. It will require participants to fill out a short questionnaire, be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes, and to create a small piece of artwork (identity map) that represents their bicultural identity. If you know of any individuals who may be willing to participate, please send me an email, and I will send them a follow-up email with attachments to the informed consent form and a brief survey. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.”

Once identified as a potential participant, all recruits will receive the following message:

“You are receiving this email because, as an Arab-American, you are invited to participate in my study on Arab-American identity post-9/11. This study aims to understand the whole lives of Arab-American individuals. It will require you to fill out a short questionnaire, be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes, and to create a small piece of artwork (identity map) that represents your bicultural identity. If you decide to participate in this study, please write back with your agreement, and I will send you a follow-up email with attachments to the informed consent form and a brief survey. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.”

If they wrote back in agreement, the participants received the following message:

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study! In this email is a link to the informed consent form and a brief survey. Additionally, please send me your availability in the next few weeks to participate in an interview either in person or on Skype. You will not need to prepare anything for this interview, but please complete the survey prior to our interview. Thank you again for your participation.”

Following this exchange, I scheduled a time to interview each participant. When the participants received the email, they were given a link to the Informed Consent document, as well as the scale to complete before the interview. After providing their consent, they progressed to the scale, which was provided online.

After taking this survey, I coordinated a time to meet with each individual participant at a private location, such as the Psychology Department building on the Connecticut College campus or in another quiet, private location for individuals who did not attend the College, such as a public library. Others were interviewed via Skype.

Once they had officially completed the study, they received debriefing information. At the end of the study, participants were given either \$25 or class credit for participating.

Ethical Issues

The protocol of this study was approved by the Connecticut College Institutional Review Board (IRB). It raised several questions about each participants' own identity and was not anticipated to be triggering, sensitive, or difficult. As a researcher, I checked in to make sure nothing in the interview caused the participants to be upset or distressed. In addition, a few had questions about the confidentiality of the study, but all participants were ensured that their recordings were kept confidential and subsequently destroyed at the end of the study.

Participants also knew that they would be given pseudonyms. Three participants wrote their real names on their pieces of artwork in either English or Arabic, so their names were covered in order to ensure anonymity. Finally, the participants began the study with informed consent and ended with debriefing information, which provided resources for further reading on the topic.

They also all had my contact e-mail for questions or concerns.

Qualitative Concerns

In order to delve into the layers and nuances of one's complex identity and allow for participants to voice their own stories, I thought an open-ended qualitative interview would be most appropriate. Nevertheless, there are various concerns and biases I have as a researcher that have influenced my conduct in these interviews and my coding of their content. These are important to outline.

First, I contain bias about my own identity. Problems, issues, and questions that arose in the interviews are also questions I deal with in my personal life, as an Arab-American myself. I did not explicitly share my own identity with the participants who did not know me before the study, though some might have been able to speculate given my name and accent. I anticipated hearing things that would resonate with me, but also experiences that did not match my own at all. I also expected to hear answers that would give me an emotional reaction, such as anger or sadness. There were times that I wanted to share my experiences with my participants, but did not because they could have influenced their responses. Being an Arab-American, and them knowing this about me, may have also affected them to disclose more information than if they had seen me from a "neutral" standpoint.

However, it is important to note that my particular identity may have posed certain biases as well. For example, I am a Lebanese-American individual. Some of my participants were also Lebanese-American. In this case, these individuals may have felt like they needed to answer in a certain way that would be acceptable. They may also have felt more comfortable answering with someone they viewed as more relatable or similar. For individuals who were not Lebanese-American, they may have felt reserved in their answers. These participants may have been unsure of whether I had prejudiced views against other Arabs and Arab-Americans.

My religion as a Druze individual is another potential bias in the study. Because there are few Druze individuals in the United States and in Lebanon as well, Druze participants may have felt the need to fulfill a certain role of a Druze individual in the diaspora. As with country of origin, interviewees who are not Druze may have been unsure of whether I held prejudiced views toward non-Druze people. Lastly, my gender as a woman may have posed similar biases. While it may have made some participants, men or women, more comfortable, it may have unintentionally pressured others to answer in a certain way.

It is essential to note that my intersectional identity as a Lebanese-American Druze woman may have introduced particular biases due to roles that Lebanese women or American Druze individuals are supposed to fulfill. Participants with the same or very similar identities may have felt the need to respond in a desirable way that fulfills all or most of their respective social roles. For this reason, I did not directly disclose my identity unless asked, although I may have been identifiable as a Lebanese Druze woman due to my appearance, accent, and gender expression. My similarities or differences in identity with participants overall was a potential bias in the study. However, as far as I could ascertain, although these were risks of such biases, participants seemed to answer authentically without any clear signs of skewing their responses because of this.

I am also biased by having researched the history and background for this thesis. Throughout the course of this process, I have also come to be familiar with understanding topics of immigration, biculturalism, and specifically Arab-Americans from an intellectual and academic standpoint as well. I have read extensively on theories and histories related to topics discussed in the interview, which may have resulted in certain pre-conceptions toward my data.

Furthermore, the fact that I had known a few of the participants beforehand may have affected their answers based on what they felt comfortable to share with me. Although it was much easier for me to recruit individuals that I had personally known, interviewing people I had known may have added bias to our interviews. Some participants were referred to by a mutual friend or family member. In these circumstances, these participants may have felt the need to present themselves more positively. On the other hand, some of the participants I had never met at all. These individuals may have felt awkward at time, disclosing personal information about their lives to a stranger, which also could have affected their answers.

Additionally, some of the topics brought up in the interview, although unplanned, were related to political conflicts, such as the Syrian refugee crisis and the Israel/Palestine conflict, which may have been both difficult for interviewees to respond to and also made them more hesitant to be honest about their political standpoints.

Although all participants knew that these interviews were completely confidential—that they would be given pseudonyms and that their interview recordings would be destroyed at the completion of the study—anxiety over confidentiality may have added another potential bias to the interviews. Some participants double-checked whether the study would be confidential, reflecting a worry for them. This worry of confidentiality may have affected how comfortable or fearful participants were in answering questions.

Lastly, another factor that may have affected how participants responded was a social desirability bias, which is common in most psychological research, meaning that participants tend to respond in both qualitative and quantitative measures in ways to make them appear more favorable. This is especially pertinent to self-report measures, but is applicable to the qualitative measures of this study as well.

I discussed all of these potential biases openly with my research group and was able to get feedback at different stages in data collection and analysis. This process allowed me to be more aware of my position within the interviews and to avoid anything that would skew the data.

Results

Overall, the data were collected through three different measures, one quantitative and two qualitative, which allowed for a multidimensional approach of exploring Arab-American identity post-9/11 across the participants.

Self-Identification

Given the multilayered map of the Middle East and the construction of labels, throughout the process of collecting data from each participants, I wanted to see how they self-identified. In the qualitative interviews, I first asked participants how they primarily culturally identified themselves when asked where they were from, what their heritage was, or their country of origin. This question yielded an array of different responses. The responses are listed in the Table 2.

Table 2

Self-Identified Cultural Label

Participant (n=14)	Response
Akram	Arab-American
Amir	Arab-American
Dalal	American-Arab
George	Lebanese-American/Arab-American
Laila	Palestinian
Mariam	Egyptian
Maya	Lebanese
Mohammad	Arab
Nabil	Lebanese
Nayla	Arab
Rania	Arab-American
Salma	Arab
Yasmine	Lebanese-American
Zahra	Middle Eastern

Whereas some participants were more specific of their country of origin when asked, others gave umbrella terms like “Arab” or “Middle Eastern.” Out of the participants who answered more broadly, some explained that they were worried people wouldn’t know where their country is.

Although their specific answers varied, six of the 14 participants responded to the question with a hyphenated identity, such as Lebanese-American, Arab-American, and American-Arab (which the participant explained was different from Arab-American because she felt more American than Arab). The remaining eight participants gave themselves a singular label, such as “Arab,” “Middle Eastern,” or “Egyptian.” Six out of these participants who did not choose a hyphenated identity were non-Christian, and four of the eight participants identified as non-White, showing how race and religion affected how individuals culturally labeled themselves. Some also said they chose their label based on which side inspired more pride or which side influenced them more.

Interestingly, although some participants identified themselves solely as being “Arab,” none of the participants identified themselves as being solely “American.” In fact, one participant, Maya, who responded that she identifies as being “Lebanese,” said that the term *American* is too broad.

Two participants were from two different Arab countries: Dalal and Laila. Dalal expressed herself as being “American-Arab,” encompassing her Libyan-Tunisian-American origins. On the other hand, Laila, a Palestinian-Syrian-American, identified solely as being “Palestinian.” When asked, she explained that being Palestinian is such a unique experience and that when she is asked what she is, she believes it is important that people only hear the word *Palestinian*. Furthermore, she also said she wouldn’t write “Palestinian-American” because she

believes that in the current climate, there is no space to be both Palestinian and American. Her cultural label in this way reflects the psychological tension of her hyphenated identity.

Next, in the demographics questionnaire, participants were asked to self-identify their race. Table 3 includes the participants' self-identifications exactly how they were written on their demographics sheet.

Table 3

Self-Identified Racial Label

Participant (n=14)	Response
Akram	Middle Eastern/White
Amir	Arab-American
Dalal	Afro-Arab
George	White/Middle Eastern
Laila	Not designated
Mariam	Egyptian
Maya	White
Mohammad	Middle Eastern
Nabil	Caucasian
Nayla	Arab
Rania	Middle Eastern
Salma	White
Yasmine	Caucasian
Zahra	White

As explored before, research has tackled the ambiguity of the racial label in the Arab-American community and how the conceptualization of the race of people of Arab descent has evolved over time. In a post-9/11 context, the 14 participants gave quite different answers of how they perceived their own race. Some participants also answered this question with the same answer as their cultural label, such as Nayla. Out of all the seven participants that did not label themselves as being White or Caucasian, three were Christian, and four were non-Christian.

Quantitative Data

The results of the BIIS-2 were calculated using the directions initially described by the scale authors, Huynh and Benet-Martinez (2010) (see Table 4). Individual item scores were used to measure levels of harmony versus conflict, as well as blendedness versus compartmentalization. In this sample of 14 participants, the scores had a wide range on the first subscale, showing variation in whether people saw themselves as being harmonious or conflicted about their identity ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.67$). There was a much smaller range of values on the second subscale; on a scale of 1-5, all scores were consistently above the midpoint of 3, showing that the sample saw their identities as being consistently blended with some scores veering to highly blended ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.49$). Therefore, overall, the sample tended to see themselves as pretty well blended; however, there was variation in whether people saw themselves as feeling harmonious or conflicted about having a blended identity.

Four participants, all of whom were non-Christian, were below the midpoint of 3 on the harmony versus conflict subscale. Additionally, three out of these four participants identified as being non-White, as opposed to White, demonstrating how religion and self-perceived race affect the level of identity conflict that the individuals reported.

Table 4

Scores on the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale – Version 2

Participants ($n=14$)	Harmony v. Conflict $M (SD)$	Blendedness v. Compartmentalization $M (SD)$
Amir	4.64 (2.01)	4.78 (1.19)
Nabil	3.91 (0.92)	4.11 (-0.18)
Mohammad	3.91 (0.92)	3.89 (-0.64)
Salma	3.55 (0.38)	4.67 (0.96)
George	3.45 (0.24)	4.67 (0.96)
Yasmine	3.45 (0.24)	3.78 (-0.86)
Mariam	3.45 (0.24)	3.56 (-1.32)
Akram	3.36 (0.11)	3.33 (-1.78)
Maya	3.27 (-0.03)	3.67 (-1.10)
Nayla	3.18 (-0.17)	4.67 (0.96)
Rania	2.73 (-0.84)	4.67 (0.96)
Laila	2.73 (-0.84)	4.11 (-0.18)
Zahra	2.55 (-1.11)	4.33 (0.27)
Dalal	1.91 (-2.06)	4.56 (0.73)

On a scale that ranged from 1-5.

$M = 3.92, SD = 0.67$

$M = 4.20, SD = 0.49$

Overall Themes in Qualitative Data

Based on the results of the qualitative interviews across the 14 individuals, certain repetitive themes seemed to emerge that are organized in the diagram below.



All together, the content of the interviews yielded a conceptual framework that shows how Arab-Americans navigate their bicultural identities. First, their experience as an individual in relation to others was examined. This included their experiences of otherness and discrimination. Next, themes emerged that reflected how participants internalized this external environment and how that process affected their self-organization. Finally, I looked at how both the external and internal dimensions of each participant merged together to form an overall experience of biculturalism and belonging. Not all measures equally contributed to the analysis of each layer, but the cumulative results from the three measures formed a coherent picture of how each participant made sense of their multiple identities. To illustrate more deeply how each of these aspects of the model played out, I present specific examples for each aspect.

External (Self in Relation to Others)

The participants differed in how they reported whether or not they have experienced discrimination, which encompassed broad experiences such as stereotyping, racial slurs, and hate crimes. The simplified responses are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Experiences of Discrimination: Answers to the Question “Have you been discriminated against for your Ethnic Identity?”

Participant (n=14)	Response
Akram	No
Amir	Sometimes
Dalal	Yes
George	No
Laila	Yes
Mariam	No
Maya	No
Mohammad	No
Nabil	Yes and no
Nayla	I don't know
Rania	Yes
Salma	No
Yasmine	Yes
Zahra	No

As the table exhibits, exactly half of the participants reported no discrimination, whereas the other half reported they had or reported that they were not sure or that it happened sometimes. Others articulated that even though they had never personally experienced discrimination, the general environment surrounding Arab-Americans affected them negatively. Many of the participants who expressed that they had not experienced discrimination also reported that they spent most of their time around other Arabs. In addition, out of all the participants that said they had experienced discrimination, answering “Yes,” all were non-Christian and identified as non-White. Some participants also expressed that their race and religion was exactly the reason they had or had not experienced discrimination.

During the course of the interviews, the participants offered very different responses to how they had, or had not, experienced discrimination. For those who had not experienced discrimination, here are some examples.

Not too much because I am surrounded by a lot of Arabs, so like I'm used to people being used to that, so I don't have that much pressure against myself. (Salma)

No, I don't think so. None of the responses—you know how you'll notice, just by looking at someone or asking them a question, your response and their facial expression or their voice or something. That's kind of what I look for when I say Syrian more recently. But I haven't really found anything that would've required me to change how I speak or become more hesitant or scared or discriminated against, so I think it's been okay. (Zahra)

Others expressed that they were not sure:

This one, I don't know. It's tough for me. I don't know if I'm just like blind to it, but I wanna say no, that I've never been discriminated against, but then I'll tell someone a story, and they'll be like, 'yeah, that's discrimination,' but I would have no idea... I feel a little bit safer

because I'm not hijabi. I'm not Muslim or something. But then, you know, still at the end of the day, we get roped in, Arab Christians, Arab Muslims, Pakistani people, Sikh people, all of them are in the same category nowadays. (Nayla)

Yes and no. I mean, me personally I've never felt a discrimination, but as being part of a greater picture, being part of Arab-American identity, you know you see instances where it exists, and because the discrimination exists to the greater identity, I almost find that that's discrimination against me as well. So it's almost like an indirect discrimination. Personally I don't feel like I've been affected by it, but I know it's out there. (Nabil)

Other participants were adamant that they had experienced discrimination as Arab-Americans. These individuals tended to give longer stories about their particular experiences:

Rania

Now more than ever. I mean I lived in North Carolina, where you know, it was pretty black and white, literally. Moving up here to Maryland and the DC area, it's so diverse. It was nice. It was like a breather. Um, but now in the light of everything that's going on in the world, it's hard. Like ISIS, like any group, but especially ISIS. People are terrified, they should be, of course, I could see why, but at the same time, Arabs get painted, and Muslims in general, get painted, you know, one brush. And um it's hard. People don't wanna hear you're Arab, I feel.

Later on in the interview, when being asked whether her identity causes her discomfort or distress, Rania also expressed more feelings of discrimination:

I feel like I'm almost being bullied and pushed out, when this is where I was born. This is where I was raised. This is where we pay taxes. I mean, come on. This is my country just as much as any other person, just as much as any other—and I hate to bring this up—any White person. I mean, it shouldn't matter. But it does, it's been bothering me, and more than ever now 'cause

people are just, I mean, now it's like going crazy Islamophobia, "Arabphobia," I feel. All together, it's really hurtful, and my dad worked really hard in this country, and I think we deserve more than what we're getting. So did my grandparents.

Dalal

And then when I went to high school, and I did wear the headscarf, we would like make jokes about each other 'cause we were all from different cultures, but at the same time I didn't really like it, but the only reason I replied back making fun of my friends' other cultures was because they made fun of mine, but it wasn't more say the culture, but they would say things like 'oh, Osama is your uncle,' but I would take it as a joke. But now the more that I think about it, the more I think oh that really wasn't a joke, and I wish I had the guts more to say that's not funny. And sometimes I did say like 'no, that's not funny,' and then they would apologize, but then they'd do it again. Like we would exchange mean words but in a joking matter even though nothing is really a joke. It's more religion than culture for me at least, because I wear the headscarf and stuff.

She continued later on, when asked about her safety as an Arab and a Muslim in the country:

But on a normal day, I don't really feel safe. You just get the stares. No, I do feel safe, you just have stares that you sort of like become numb to, but you do have, like after certain events, where it's like heightened Islamophobia, certain words that are said by a politician, or like terrorist attacks in, I don't know, a country that is obviously a European country, minus Turkey, because that's not really included. I don't hear any of my friends say 'pray for Istanbul' today. But, um, after those types of events, you feel scared. Especially if you're a hijab-wearing woman because you're a target right there.

Dalal also reported that her uncle often faced difficulty in the airport due to his appearance, a typical form of discrimination for many Arabs and Muslims.

Mohammad

Mohammad's interview had a shift in the middle. He initially reported that he had not experienced discrimination. However, he later expressed that he had been called stereotypical racial slurs.

No, not at all. I've never been discriminated against before in my life. I guess it's because I blend in so well, people don't know I'm Arab so they act accordingly. So for all my life, in high school, middle school, people knew I was Arab because I'd tell them, and they, you know, fortunately they wouldn't really say 'Oh, you terrorist,' or anything like that. Sure, they'd joke about it, but I knew they were joking. Although these days people would take that very seriously. But since I knew it was a joke, and they didn't really discriminate against me, I didn't really feel discriminated by it?

In addition, Mohammad also reported an incident of discrimination that his family experienced when questioned about whether bicultural identity causes him discomfort or distress:

Me and [my dad] and my brothers and my mom and everyone were at Chuck-E-Cheese's and my dad went into the bathroom and took his jacket off and started to wash his hands and his face, and some people thought, you know, 'Oh, this guy has a big beard and he's scary because he's doing this,' and they decided to tell the manager, and the manager called the police. But nothing really happened, and the officers were really understanding and said that some people were just ignorant and if they see anything that's different to them, it's scary, but like I said that has never happened to me before, but I could see where it could happen.

Laila

100%. Always. Constantly. And I think we were talking about this a few moments ago, where you know, I do feel discriminated against, and I'll tell you a story in a minute, but I also feel like I have to censor myself if I want to be just living as part of normal fabric of society here in DC. I don't feel like I can be prominently Palestinian and be incorporated into a normal business setting or any other type of community that maybe isn't so contentious. I don't feel like it's acceptable.

She continued to tell the story about a woman who approached her during a silent vigil protest:

...this woman was very angry, she had a lot of anger, and she was saying really incendiary things along the lines of, 'you know Muslims are the reason this world is such an evil place,' and all of this, basically attributing all the ills of the world, and not just 9/11, 'cause this was post-9/11, in 2003, you know, just saying some things that were really unacceptable. And I realized that the point of a silent vigil was to not speak, but this man that she was talking to at one point was like, 'you know what, I can't really.' He was trying to reason with her, and he just walks away. And she just continued to stand there and speak at us. And so I stepped out of the group, and I wanted to appeal to her more human nature, right? And so I approached her, and meanwhile the entire Students for Justice in Palestine are behind me standing, and I said to her, 'you know, I understand that you're angry. I'm angry, too. I'm really angry at the way the world unfolded. I'm angry at 9/11, and I understand your emotion, but what you're saying is that—she was saying that she thinks all Arabs should die and go to hell. She was saying this very clearly for everyone to hear. And for me, I saw that as an opportunity to dialogue, and I said, 'you know, I'm an Arab. I'm Palestinian. I'm Muslim. And I'm American. I'm all of those things. Do you

really think that I—me, standing right here in front of you—should die and go to hell?’ and she looked at me straight in the eye—and I was very young... I think I was 20 years old. She says to me, ‘I think you should die and burn a fiery death in hell,’ like really just with her whole soul. And you know, being young and not really having the life experience to process something like that, it was very, very shocking. I mean, I was shocked to the point where I couldn’t speak. I couldn’t understand how someone could not just say that but feel that about me, who’s genuinely trying to get them to see me as a human being, you know, someone that has similarities, that has some kind of shared experience as an American. And I remember, I just started shaking.

Laila also reported that she was once denied service after someone noticed her wearing the word “Allah” on a pendant. She has indeed experienced discrimination for different aspects of her identity, both culturally as an Arab and religiously as a Muslim.

Overall, there was a clear variety of answers that reflected the participants’ experiences. Many reported discrimination, many did not, and a few were unsure. This may have been affected by the ambiguity of the idea of discrimination, which can be defined as interpersonal, institutional, or even internalized.

Internal (Internalizing the External)

The second layer of the diagram denotes how participants internalized their external environment from the previous layer and how those experiences affected their organization and sense of selfhood.

Internal organization of the self was first measured quantitatively. The BIIS-2 measured to what extent participants saw their Arab-American identity as being blended and harmonious. As stated before, all of the participants saw their identities as being more blended than compartmentalized, with little variation in the scores. However, they varied in whether they

viewed their blended identities as being in harmony or in conflict. As Table 4 indicated, the scores ranged from 1.91 to 4.64, reflecting a wide spread in perceptions of conflict versus harmony.

Within the interviews, the results were equally varied. I asked all participants whether or not they viewed their identity as being integrated or incompatible. Many suggested that their identity did not feel divided:

I think that it's not split because I had Arab heritage, and I live in America. I think that my identity as an Arab-American is just my identity. I'm not pulled in one direction or the other.

(Nabil)

*Yes I mean, whether it's combining friend groups or if it's, like, if we're having food depending on who's coming over. What are we going to cook? But at the same time, we're so proud of where we're from on both sides... **(Rania)***

*Well, it depends on really who I'm with at the time. If I'm with, you know, my family in Iraq, I'm not going to act like I do in America, and I'm not going to say things—I'm not going to talk about certain things that I talk about with my family here like I would over there, but I don't find it hard to at all to alternate between the two cultures. **(Mohammad)***

*Um, it's somewhat split, like I feel like I have to tailor myself depending on who I'm with. So if I'm with Arabs, I'll act more Arab, and if I'm with Americans, I'll act more Americanized, but it's pretty easy to blend the two... I could be both. **(Salma)***

Other participants viewed their identity as being more divided:

*When I was in high school, definitely. It was difficult to balance both. It was like these two identities that I had, but then again I'm kind of confused as to whether it was the Arabness or the Muslimness. **(Dalal)***

I think when I'm in Lebanon, people think of me as the outsider, and then sometimes when I'm here I feel like an outsider. (Yasmine)

Many of the participants described their identities as being split. However, for some, this feeling of being split was not necessarily a negative source of tension. On the quantitative scales, the participants overall saw their identity as not being split, yet perhaps being a source of conflict. On the other hand, within the qualitative interviews, participants tended to see themselves as having a split identity, but that separation did not necessarily yield psychological conflict. Even if it did make them feel tense, some participants reported that it was not because they were *Arab-American*, but that they were bicultural.

This was not the case for Laila, whose interview expressed a deep feeling of tension in being Arab-American. She took the question more emotionally, viewing the idea of a split identity as being a place of emotional dislocation.

I don't think there's space for [being Arab-American]. I don't think we're wanted... I mean the way that Arab-Americans have found their place in society is either by denying their heritage and whitewashing themselves or by accepting that they're Arab-American and that their experience is just about what their designation has been, that it's just about having to deal with discrimination. (Laila)

Here, we start to get a sense of how Laila internalized her external discrimination in a way that affected her feelings of isolation as an Arab-American and her overall sense of self.

Internal & External: Sense of Home and Belonging

Cutting across both the external and internal dimensions of their bicultural identities was a theme of “home” in both its literal and figurative meanings. Home, as a spatial, relational, and emotional motif reverberated throughout most of the interviews.

For some participants, they found belonging—or home—in more than one place:

Amir

Amir, when asked whether or not his dual identity brought him creativity, expressed the ideas of having two separate homes, each reflecting half of his bicultural identity:

Oh yeah. When I'm in America, I take pride that I'm from Egypt because Egypt is made up of so many beautiful things, so when I'm here, I'm proud to be an Egyptian. If someone asked me where I'm from, I say I'm from Egypt...but at the same time, when I go down in Egypt, I'm a proud American.

Rania

Similarly, when asked about how her cultural identity provided positive meaning, Rania mentioned the idea of home while describing Lebanese Druze weddings:

In a weird way, one memory, I mean I would say the weddings. If I were to mention the weddings, when you go to the Lebanese weddings, it's like, everyone comes together from everywhere, and they pick up the bride, they pick up the groom, you know. You just feel at home. Wherever I go in Lebanon, I do feel like I'm at home, in like a weird way. It's very hard to explain it, but then when I come back here, I'm excited because I'm back here and things change and everything. So if I were to choose one memory...yeah, I have two senses of home. Lebanon, my home and my history, like it's where my ancestors are from, it's where that part of me when I'm in America comes out. This is where I'm from. This is where my parents were both raised, my grandparents and everything. But I would say our house in Lebanon, although there are very negative things attached to it. I also feel like for me, it's positive, when I'm in there, I almost feel the presence of like my ancestors, my grandma, my grandpa, and I feel like, when you're there in our village, our village just makes me really happy when I'm there, particularly [her village

name]. Like I feel so at home, so when I think of the village, I smile. Like it always makes me happy. I think it's awesome, and it's just such a weird feeling. It's hard to describe. So I'd say my best memories would be in the village.

Akram

For Akram, home and a sense of belonging was found in the middle ground between being Lebanese and American, as if he had found home in the merging of the two cultures. At the end of his interview, when I asked if he had any additional comments to make, he expressed this feeling:

I like that you said it's a third culture. That's kind of interesting. It's a good point because I feel like a full Lebanese wouldn't understand, and a full American wouldn't...it's very unique. It's very refined. Not in an elitist way, but in a specific way.

Laila

After describing the discrimination she had faced, which was discussed earlier, Laila philosophized about what the feelings of belonging and home were like for her as an Arab-American.

So that was one of the biggest formative moments for me, where I realized it doesn't matter that I'm American—it matters in the sense that I have agency and freedom to do and say things that are important to me, but it doesn't matter on a cultural level because at the end of the day, post-9/11—9/11 kind of solidified it—we're not wanted to be American. We're not needed. It's like, we don't really need you to be part of our society. You can just go back to where you came from, which is a phrase we hear time and time again, regardless of the fact that we're active members of American society and that we build and grow and live and have memories and experiences—we live our lives here. But still we can go back to where we came from. And what

does that even mean? Because where do we come from? Where do I come from? I don't come from here, clearly, and I don't come from there because I've never been to Palestine.

...

I would never say I'm not American. But I would say that that's my nationality in terms of the fact that I pulled out an American passport. I'm grateful for having the opportunities that Americans are given that I wouldn't necessarily have if I were born in another place—the opportunity to travel freely is something that people underestimate, but there are so many things that come with being an American that I'm grateful for, but it's not part of my emotional identity. It's part of my cultural identity to a certain degree, in the sense that I'm habitually—the way that I practice things, the way that I've been raised in American society—because it's habit—but emotionally? I don't think I'm American at all. Because I get emotional about my identity as a Palestinian and even as a Syrian, especially now. Some kind of depth and desire, of needing, of feeling like that's home—and this is another thing I struggle with, and I think it goes hand-in-hand with identity is this idea of home. I don't really believe I've ever experienced what that feels like. I don't really know that I know what home feels like.

...

[As refugees in the Palestinian diaspora,] we haven't been allowed to feel as though this is our home. And, I mean, so what is it even—where do you go? What do you do? Home then becomes something that's an interior state that you have to create for yourself, almost like out of a crisis situation. You know, a crisis of 'ugh, I don't have a place to be rooted geographically,' so I have to create that for myself. It's like this psychological default or trigger that you have to set off because it's necessary for us to live healthy emotional lives, to feel like we have safety. And home is tantamount to that space, right? And so when you don't have that safe space, which I

don't think Palestinians do anywhere—no where—and right now, I don't think Arabs in general have that safe space, except for in their country of origin.

Laila's absence of home was represented both spatially, since she could not geographically go back to either Palestine or Syria, as well as emotionally, since she did not feel welcome in the United States.

Qualitative Artwork Interconnecting the Three Themes

The pieces of artwork that all participants created allowed me to see their senses of otherness, internal self, and home (or lack thereof) in a visual medium. Therefore, the final measure synthesized the participants' experiences of an overall identity narrative across themes and measures.

The participants' experiences of otherness showed in whether they included themselves on the page and where they were located. For example, participants who viewed themselves as generally included in American society tended to draw themselves in the center of the page, often smiling (Amir, Mohammad).

Similarly, the participants' organization of the self appeared throughout various pieces of art. Some participants represented feelings of identity blendedness. For example, many participants drew blended flags of their countries or the two flags beside each other (Akram, Amir, George, Nabil, Rania, Salma, Zahra), cultural symbols of both countries, such as food and pop culture references (Mariam, Maya, Mohammad, Nayla), and included both the Arabic and English languages in their pieces of artwork (George, Maya, Rania, Salma, Zahra). Other participants created obvious divides between their Arab and American identities by depicting visible barriers between the two, highlighting their identity conflict in their artwork (Laila, Rania). As seen in the artwork of these two participants, both of whom identify as non-Christian

and non-White, race and religion were shown to have affected the level of identity conflict within the qualitative artwork as well.

The merging of the participants' external and internal environments to create an overall experience of home was also represented within the artwork. For example, some participants included the word *home* in their pieces or included elements of their physical homes in either the United States or their Arab country of origin (Maya, Rania).

Case Studies

Examining four participants in details allows us to view the holistic nature of such a mixed methods procedure. These particular cases were selected in an attempt to present a diversity of voices in terms of religion, nationality, and gender.

These case studies also make reference to Schachter's perspectives of identity configuration. As mentioned before, Schachter (2004) argued that, as a way to navigate conflicting voices, individuals with multiple identities arrange their identities in four distinct configurations: rejecting one identity (*the configuration based on choice and suppression*), merging the identities (*the assimilated configuration*), holding all identities at once in an attempt to achieve wholeness (*the confederacy of identifications*), and embracing their conflicting identities, viewing this conflict as both unique and challenging (*the thrill of dissonance*). These various configurations allow individuals to organize their multiple identities. Although individuals arrange their identities in different ways, the process of identity negotiation is also strongly affected by how their external world already depicts and configures them, a give-and-take between individual and context.

In the context of this study on Arab-American identity, a suppressing configuration would be a participant seeing himself as either Arab or American, rejecting the other. The

synthesizing configuration would be a participant seeing herself as Arab-American, being both Arab and American at the same time and feeling like the merging of the two is possible. In contrast, the confederacy configuration would be an individual seeing himself as being Arab in some contexts, American in others, and connecting with each identity separately in their own spheres without integrating the two. Lastly, a dissonant configuration would be a participant viewing her identity as being a mess of contradictions and seeing the identities as being somewhat mutually exclusive. However, they might express drawing a certain creative energy or power from the intensity and difficulty of this conflict.

The four individuals of these case studies were categorized using this framework to provide an illustration of its applicability (see Table 6). Two individuals understood their biculturalism by assimilating the two identities, one configured a confederacy of identifications, and another experienced a dissonant identity configuration. None of the participants in this study suppressed or rejected one of their cultures. As seen by these configurations of the four case studies, the participants who saw their identities as being in conflict, either in the confederacy or dissonance configuration, were non-Christian and identified as being non-White.

Table 6

Cases Organized Around Schachter's Identity Configuration Processes

Participant	Process
Amir	Assimilated Configuration
Yasmine	Assimilated Configuration
Mohammad	Confederacy of Identifications
Laila	Thrill of Dissonance

Amir (Assimilated Configuration)

Amir is a 24 year-old Egyptian-American Christian man. He was raised in Egypt until age 8 and subsequently moved to the United States, where he now resides as a student at a university with a large Arab-American population. He speaks both English and Arabic. Both of his parents spent over thirty years in Egypt; his mother is unemployed, and his father works for the United States Post Office. Amir identified his race as being “Arab-American,” and he expressed little identity conflict, reporting that his bicultural identity was instead harmonious, blended, and assimilated.

Amir’s assimilated identity first emerged in his quantitative results. On the harmony versus conflict subscale, he scored a 4.64, above the mean of the sample. His higher score represents a tendency to view his identity as harmonious, as opposed to conflicting. He scored similarly on the blendedness versus compartmentalization subscale with a 4.78, indicating high blendedness, again above the sample mean.

How Amir made sense of and pieced together his identity came out strongly throughout his interview. First, he expressed that he had not experienced discrimination in the United States:

Here in America, they don’t really judge pretty much, so I never had a problem of where I’m from, or what religion I am, or this and that, so it’s all just put together.

From this description, Amir claimed that his person freedom from discrimination indicates that the United States is devoid of inequity. As a Christian Arab-American, Amir hints to how his religion may be a factor in him not facing discrimination. Of his mother, he said:

She’s a Christian—it’s not like she got harassed, and she wasn’t wearing a hijab.

By bringing up his mother's religious identity as a Christian, and the fact that she does not wear a hijab, as some Muslim women choose to wear, Amir suggests that religion may be a buffer in discrimination that allows him to have less identity conflict.

Nevertheless, later on in the interview, Amir expressed that he did face difficulty for his heritage sometimes. He describes this difficulty as relating to his name, where people do not think his name is really Arabic-sounding. Additionally, he expressed that he certainly deals with more difficulty than other Americans, not of Arab descent, do not. In fact, although Amir expressed repeatedly that he feels part of the mainstream in the United States, he used the phrase "regular American" to speak of non-Arab-Americans, separating himself from mainstream.

Overall Amir expressed that his Arab-American identity did not cause him tension. He claimed that this is due to a personal skill of understanding both cultures:

I'm American, and I can't forget that I came from Egypt, so I've mastered both cultures into one, and I've kind of made it seem like they're compatible...

Therefore, to Amir, being Arab-American is not a point of identity conflict, particularly due to his ability to configure his two identities by assimilation.

Amir's artwork reflected this lack of identity conflict. He depicted himself holding a flag in the air and smiling, a national symbol of pride and nationalism. Specifically, the flag was blended between the colors and designs of the Egyptian and American flags. This representation of a hybrid flag reflected no identity conflict and was congruent with Amir's interview, showing a continuity among his responses.

Yasmine (Assimilated Configuration)

Yasmine is an 18 year-old Lebanese-American woman. Similar to Amir, Yasmine was born and raised in her country of origin until the age of 7 when her family relocated to the United

States. She attends the same university as Amir. She also speaks both English and Arabic, as well as elementary French. Her mother spent 28 years in Lebanon and is now a regional coordinator, whereas her father spent 38 years in Lebanon and now works as a senior producer at a television station. Both of her parents are Christian, and she was raised in and currently practices Christianity. When asked how she labels her race, Yasmine identified herself as “Caucasian.”

On the quantitative scales, Yasmine scored above the mean for harmony versus conflict at 3.50, yet below the mean at 3.78 for blendedness versus compartmentalization. Her results indicated that she views her biculturalism as being fairly harmonious and fairly blended, congruent with Schachter’s description of an assimilated identity configuration, which she fit.

In her qualitative interview, which echoed these quantitative results, Yasmine viewed her identity as being compatible, due to her reasoning that the United States is a mixture of cultures. Similar to Amir, she also expressed how, because she personally felt included in American society, the United States is generally inclusive to all. Nevertheless, she expressed frustration that some people in the United States do not know where Lebanon is. Additionally, similar to Amir’s annoyance at his name being perceived as not being Arabic-sounding, Yasmine expressed frustration at people not expecting her as an Arab-American to be Christian, perhaps due to the historical, especially recent, conflation of the Arab and Muslim identity:

For me, I’m not supposed to be Christian if I’m from the Middle East. People call me a liar—I’ve been called a liar, like ‘whoa, you can’t be Christian AND Arab. It doesn’t make sense!’

Yet, as quoted before, when I asked Yasmine about whether she felt her identity was split between the Arab and the American, she shared that the back-and-forth that comes with being from two countries, the United States and Lebanon:

I think when I'm in Lebanon, people think of me as the outsider, and then sometimes when I'm here I feel like an outsider. So I think it's more of a situational thing.

However, she described this stress as being common for all bicultural individuals, regardless of which two cultures they identify as a part of.

It's not because I'm Arab. It's because I'm different.

This response is perhaps linked to Yasmine's self-reported separation from American racism.

The situation in the United States, in terms of racism and stuff like that, it's not negatively affecting me, but in the long term, it's going to affect me positively and it's like okay right now.

Throughout the interview, she emphasized that her bicultural identity privileged her compared not only to other minority individuals, but also White Americans, explaining that as a trilingual student familiar with more than one culture, she is advantaged:

Don't you think that's going to give me an advantage over a White person that doesn't know?

Therefore, Yasmine overall reported her experience as an Arab-American as generally positive and integrated.

Similar to Amir, Yasmine's artwork exhibited representations of hybridity. She depicted a Thanksgiving dinner scene with both classic American Thanksgiving foods (such as turkey) and traditional Lebanese foods (such as shawarma). These cultural symbols represented a blended identity through food, reenacting Yasmine's previously reported feelings of identity integration and thus a lack of conflict.

Mohammad (Confederacy of Identifications)

Mohammad is a 23 year-old Iraqi-American student, but his family has Iranian lineage. He grew up with the Islamic religion as a prominent part of his identity and with both English and Arabic as his native languages, along with a little Farsi. His mother is a full-time parent, and his father is a *shaikh*, or minister. Mohammad identified his race as “Middle Eastern.”

Mohammad scored above the mean for both subscales, at 3.91 for the first and 4.78 for the second. His quantitative results thus indicated that he felt a high sense of harmony and blendedness, especially in comparison to this sample. Mohammad scored .62 above the mean for the first scale and .31 above the second. Therefore, he felt his identity was more harmonious than it was blended, suggesting that although he views his identity as being somewhat in between blendedness and compartmentalization, he still viewed it as harmonious. This reflected his confederacy of identifications configuration and was reiterated throughout the other measures.

Although of a different religion from the two Christian individuals described above, Mohammad claimed that his identity was not a huge source of tension, which aligned with his quantitative responses. After asking him about whether he ever felt split in his identity, he responded that it depended on the situation:

...well, it depends on really who I'm with at the time...but I don't find it hard at all to alternate between the two cultures.

As we could see from his interview, he felt there was a back-and-forth of being bicultural that he had to navigate. Nevertheless, although he reported that he sometimes feels split between the two, this did not cause him tension:

I find it pretty easy to balance the two in a way where it works.

Similarly, when I asked him whether the Islamophobia in American society today affected him

negatively, he said that it did not because he was skilled at blending in, implying that his individual skills shielded him from the structural dynamic. This contributed to Mohammad not feeling like he was an outsider. He explained that in high school in the United States, he blended in well:

I mean, like I said, I went to high school here in America and had a bunch of high school buddies, and we all hung out and did a bunch of stuff, and a lot of multicultural people were there and we kind of put aside our cultural differences and just hung out and were friends, and we realized that we are all humans in the end. We all like the same things. We all listen to the same music, regardless of our cultures.

Again, Mohammad expressed that his bicultural identity was not difficult for him to negotiate because he (and his friends) were able to feel individually accepted and perhaps assimilate. Throughout the interview, Mohammad insisted that his identity was not one of conflict. As mentioned before, Mohammad responded that he had never been discriminated against in his life, adding that the reason was because he blended in so well and because people did not know he was Arab. Also, by explaining that he was immune from discrimination because others did not know he was Arab implies that if he were seen as Arab more, he would face discrimination. Additionally, though he claimed not to have experienced discrimination, he told a story later on in the interview where his father was directly discriminated against for his religion, Islam, which is often conflated with Arabness. Nevertheless, when in the demographics questionnaire he was asked where he primarily spent his childhood, he wrote “home (U.S.A.)” indicating that he felt at home in the United States, perhaps related to his low perception of discrimination. Overall, Mohammad insisted that his identity was not difficult to manage, yet he

did not see his identity as an assimilated or integrated one. It was thus more inclined to fit with a confederacy of multiple identities that he could exchange as desired.

In Mohammad's artwork, he depicted himself standing with five different thought bubbles. Two had religious symbols in them, the Kaaba and a Shi'a mosque. Two other thought bubbles had cultural symbols, one that represented Iraq (a hookah) and one that represented the United States (a cheeseburger). The last thought bubble showed a national symbol that represented only one of his cultures, the American flag. Therefore, although culturally, Mohammad represented both the Iraqi and the American, nationally, he represented the American only.

Laila (Thrill of Dissonance)

Laila was the oldest participant at age 33, meaning that she was a college undergraduate at the time of 9/11. Her mother, a homemaker, is of Palestinian descent, and her father, a physician, is of Syrian descent. However, she described herself as feeling more culturally Palestinian than either Syrian or American. Religiously, she identified as being spiritually atheist, yet politically Muslim, and described her race as being something she is still figuring out. She primarily spent her childhood in the United States, yet completed her high school education in Jordan. Laila speaks both English and Arabic.

Laila's quantitative results indicated a sense of identity conflict, regardless of her sense of identity blendedness. She scored below the mean at 2.72 for harmony versus conflict, leaning more toward conflict, and only slightly below the mean for blendedness versus compartmentalization, still at the high score of 4.11. Therefore, although she felt like she had a blended hyphenated identity, it was a source of conflict, reflecting her thrill of dissonance configuration.

These sentiments of identity conflict were confirmed in our interview. As mentioned before, Laila emphasized her negative experiences with discrimination, for both her religious and cultural identity. She described the American environment as contentious and unaccepting of her:

At the end of the day, if I'm not accepted. It doesn't matter what I feel.

Laila stressed how her environment contributed to how she visualized her identity. Her struggle is due to structural concerns, not just individual experiences, unlike other participants; nevertheless, she had internalized these structural concerns.

As mentioned before, Laila expressed that she does not feel emotionally connected to the United States as her home, that she has citizenship, but it does not make her feel welcome or accepted, hinting at her identity conflict,

I don't personally think that I can be both [Arab and American] 'cause I'm not.

She described this as particularly difficult after 9/11. Her experience as a bicultural Arab-American was something that made her feel split:

I can't be fully myself. I can't be who I need to be.

Laila also addressed her intersectional identity as a Palestinian and as a woman, saying both contributed to her feelings of identity conflict:

Both of those identities are not easy, separately. I think being a woman anywhere is a unique experience and challenging in a number of ways, as is being a Palestinian, and I think when you put them together, it makes me more hardened—to me it means struggle, both of those things. So I live my life primarily in a state of struggle, but in a positive struggle: a struggle for the better, a struggle for awareness.

Here we can see the sense in which this “positive struggle” is a source of motivation and education for her. Still, she reported that this conflict causes her a lot of discomfort and distress:

...but yeah, it causes it a lot. Yeah, quite a bit actually. I'm just used to it, I think.

Here, Laila's internalization of the anti-Arab American environment emerged once again.

Nevertheless, Laila ended her interview emphasizing that her struggle has contributed to her artwork and her creativity:

My work is creative, my soul is creative, everything about me is creative. I definitely attribute that to the struggle. So there's a positive side to it. So without that push and pull, without those really almost-traumatic experiences adding up over the years—that's the source. That's where the power comes from to create. And if I didn't have that, I don't know that I would be able to visualize or fantasize about a different type of world and to move in that direction with the stuff that I make or come up with—it just wouldn't be there. It's the wellspring. So that source might only be there because of something very difficult and traumatic, but that source is exactly—that trauma is exactly what feeds the creativity, which is what feeds my being, my existence. And so, I have to attribute that positive output of creativity to my struggle.

Laila's ability to transform her struggle to creativity was highly visible in her artwork. Before drawing, Laila made a preliminary sketch with notes of her expected design. In these notes, she wrote words that she wanted to inspire and incorporate within her artwork: other, unique experience, acceptance, rejection, ignorance, solidarity, minority, and community. In her actual artwork, Laila was the only participant whose artwork was completely abstract and representative in a way that was detached from religious, cultural, or national symbols. In the drawing, she is represented as one color separated by what she described as an invisible barrier. On the other side of this barrier were other colors that represented American mainstream society,

all connected and representing multiple colors. All in all, her artwork represented her as an outsider unable to feel a sense of belonging within the mainstream, reinforcing her identity conflict among the other measures. Yet by allowing this tension to generate an abstract and original work of art, it demonstrated in a concrete manner how she puts the “thrill of dissonance” to work in her creative processes. Overall, Laila had the most difficulty in negotiating her Arab-American identity, which affected her sense of identity conflict and psychological tension.

Discussion

This study explored how Arab-Americans navigate and negotiate their bicultural identity in a historically negative, hostile, and Orientalist environment and society. To my knowledge, little research has been conducted on the psychological tensions of Arab-American identity; this project on biculturalism thus attempted to focus specifically on it. The experiences of Arab-Americans, while sharing some common themes of bicultural identity, are also distinctive from any other bicultural group of hyphenated individuals in the United States at this time. Therefore, contextualizing this research in the Arab-American experience allowed this project to bring new information about this underrepresented community to identity psychology.

In addition, using a mixed methods research design added more layers and dimensions to the research. Because identity is an ongoing, self-designed process, rather than a predetermined destination, having a mixed methods approach allowed me to see the nuances of bicultural identity. First, incorporating qualitative analyses into the study complemented the quantitative data collected in the survey, offering the participants another platform to voice their experiences. In addition, integrating artwork into the study allowed for a synthesizing and creative visual dimension to the data.

Identity is not a simplified narrative. There are multiple ways to identify the self, and pieces of the self can be in contradiction. This thesis chose to examine Arab-American identity post-9/11 as a way to examine identity formation in general. Participants expressed different levels of identity conflict, shown in the variation across the three measures and in representation of three of Schachter's four configurations. The results of this study support the view that identity is negotiated in multiple ways that do not lend themselves to one single integrated picture (such as one Arab-American identity model). Although these Arab-American individuals expressed many similar ideas and experiences within the study, their various paths to identity formation show the diversity of experiences within the community. Additionally, it shows how the participants who identify as non-Christian and non-White more often perceived their bicultural identity as being in conflict, exhibiting how both race and religion are factors that affect one's sense of identity.

The thematic model that emerged from the collected data also shows how Arab-Americans make sense of their biculturalism in three layers: locating themselves within a greater external context, internalizing their environment, and constructing an idea of home between their external and internal selves. These three pieces of the model are all ways to see how identity is multifaceted as opposed to being a unitary entity. Additionally, the variation within the three layers of the model demonstrates the different identity experience for each participant in the study. Therefore, the mixed methodology allowed me to see the various levels of identity and personality, as well as how this multifaceted sense of self played out.

Overall, the findings indicate a large variation of identity perception and sense of self within the Arab-American community. The variation in quantitative data, qualitative data, and in Schachter's configurations show how pieces of identity get put together in different ways. For example, out of the four case studies, three configurations were represented, showing the wildly

diverse arrangements of self within the small subsample. Similarly, unlike the relative homogeneity within the responses to the blendedness/compartmentalization subscale, for the harmony/conflict subscale, there were scores along the continuum, indicating a variation within the sample of how participants viewed their Arab-American identity overall. Furthermore, the qualitative data, which emerged from both the interviews and the artwork, echoed similar variations within the sample. Whereas some participants expressed low discrimination and psychological tension, others saw their senses of self as being fragmented and a source of internal and external conflict.

This variation of responses within the sample shows the diverse Arab-American experiences that exist along a spectrum. It supports the idea that religion and race contribute to the diversity of identity experiences represented within the sample. Although the sample was quite small and not representative of all Arab-Americans, the results of this study show meaningful divergence across measures and themes. Therefore, we can see how Arab-Americans experience their bicultural identities in an array of ways. It is thus important not to assume there is a singular Arab-American experience.

These conclusions mimic postmodernist identity theory about universal theories of identity. We cannot view all hyphenated individuals or bicultural individuals as a single collective. As seen within the results of this study, external environments and experiences of discrimination and otherness affect one's internal sense of identity. In other words, larger societal, historical, and political contexts affect one's individual psychology. Thus, we cannot view all bicultural individuals with the same identity framework; we cannot view Arab-Americans in the same way that we view Swedish-Americans or Chinese-Americans. Because one's cultural context affects one's sense of self, in order to learn about her identity, we must

first have a nuanced understanding of that culture's specific historical-political context, rather than imposing one "universal" theoretical framework of identity to implement across cultures.

Additionally, there is diversity of identity and multiplicity of voices even within the Arab-American community. As mentioned before, the "Arab" identity falsely homogenizes cultures with much religious, national, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. Furthermore, not only does one's cultural context affect his sense of identity, but other identities intersect with one's biculturalism as well. Due to the variation in gender, self-perceived race, nationality, and religion, there was even more variation in responses of overall identity experience. This diversity of responses highlights the inaccuracy of homogenizing identity experiences, either within or among communities. Similarly, we cannot speak about Arab-Americans in a broad way, as there are powerful variations within the community, as suggested by the data of this sample.

Therefore, the results of the study point to there being no singular Arab-American experience.

Postmodernist themes about identity were also specifically evident in several interviews. For example, Laila's interview, along with her responses within the other measures, hinted to the postmodernist theories that have outlined how many individuals living in a postcolonial diaspora may feel psychologically fragmented, leaving individuals devoid of a sense of belonging between the two cultures. Contextualizing the participants within their cultural-specific framework was thus the most truthful and nuanced way to view their identity negotiations.

Furthermore, throughout the responses, many participants expressed positives of being Arab-American. First, all 14 participants expressed a sense of pride in their bicultural identity, regardless of their experiences of discrimination, perceptions of identity conflict, and reports of internal and external struggle. One of the positives expressed was also the acquisition of language skills. For example, all but one participant were at least somewhat fluent in the Arabic

language, along with English. Some participants even knew a third language, such as French or Farsi. Another positive to Arab-American identity the participants expressed was a knowledge of politics within and around the Middle East. Having a personal connection to the region allowed many to feel personally invested in and educated about in issues within it. Also, one participant expressed that his cultural background provided him with certain etiquettes and senses of morality and social values. As evident in their pieces of artwork, most participants expressed that their dual identity provided them with creativity. For example, many reported that their Arab culture allowed them to explore music, food, dance, art, and fashion. Lastly, almost all participants mentioned that they loved their Arab-American identity because it allowed them to have a more expansive understanding of and empathy for people of other cultures and to meet other people. For example, many said that their Arab heritage linked them to other Arabs, as well as other immigrants in general. These participants expressed how they were thus allowed to relate to other people due to their experiences with two cultures, making them feel understood. Therefore, their dual identity provided them a sense of solidarity, open-mindedness, mental flexibility, and connected them to people across nations and regions. Overall, although reports within the media and even within this study often portray Arabs, within their own countries as well as within the diaspora, in a negative light, this study was also able to emphasize the positives of Arab-American identity as well.

When considering the results, it is important to note that there were limitations to this study. As mentioned before, there were a few qualitative concerns that left me potentially biased as a researcher. For example, my identity as a fellow Arab-American, particularly of Lebanese descent, as a Druze individual, and as a woman subjected to me to a level of bias that may have skewed the interviews and my overall interactions with the participants. Similarly, having

researched the history and background of Arab-Americans, having known a few of the participants prior to the study, and covering material that many may find controversial, uncomfortable, or emotionally relevant added another layer of bias, as well as the fear of confidentiality and anonymity, along with the pressure to appear socially desirable. As mentioned before, although these potential biases could have posed risks of limiting the scope of responses, participants seemed to answer genuinely without signs of skewing their results.

Another limitation was related to the qualitative interviews. Many of the words chosen within the interview questions were ambiguous, and the participants often asked for clarity. For example, when asking whether they viewed their identity as being incompatible, a few participants asked whether I meant incompatible to themselves or to others. In addition, when asking whether participants felt they had faced discrimination, many were unsure what kind of discrimination I mean. Some saw discrimination as being limited to slurs and hate crimes, while others also saw microaggressions and structural racism and institutionalized policies as discriminatory as well. These ambiguities led participants to be more confused about the questions and could have affected their answers. However, once I clarified precisely what each question was inquiring, all participants seemed to understand.

Finally, there was limitation in the sample size and diversity of the study. Although the sample was fairly heterogeneous, the research conclusions were only guided by the data of 14 participants. In terms of socioeconomic class, all of my participants were middle or upper class, and in terms of nationality, 15 Arabic-speaking countries were not represented in my study. Including more class, national, and gender diversity would also offer a multiplicity of voices to have a more accurately representative sample.

Therefore, in a future study, I would strongly recommend and suggest the inclusion of more participants with more diverse experiences and intersecting identities to make the study more all-encompassing and generalizable. In terms of moving this research forward, it would be valuable to share these findings in a way that directly affects actual Arab-American communities, such as in an outreach or counseling program, which would act as a support group to help individuals address concerns about discrimination and inclusion. Research on underrepresented and understudied populations like Arab-Americans can also help educate many individuals who were previously unaware of the specific, contextualized experiences of minority groups. Similarly, given the hostile environment surrounding Arab-Americans today, spreading awareness and promoting social activism and community organizing would also allow scholarly research on the community to directly affect the population.

Overall, this study examined what it means to reconcile the tension of hyphenated identities and what it means to live on the hyphen between Arab and American. It illustrated the variety of Arab-American experiences, both challenging and positive, that come together to create a heterogeneous population that reflect many different identities and voices. I would encourage more research to be conducted on the particular experiences of Arab-Americans. All the participants seemed to feel a sense of gratitude when being asked about their identity and especially when feeling understood in their experiences; incorporating multicultural research like this project into mainstream education and scholarship would allow these feelings of being accepted to become more prominent. Additionally, research that incorporates politics and policies may mobilize individuals to engage in social activism to enhance the lives of Arab-Americans living in the diaspora.

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*Appendix A***Bicultural Identity Integration Scale—Version 2 (BIIS-2), Que-Lam Huynh and Verónica Benet-Martínez**

Instructions to be given to respondents: (Note: these can be adapted depending on the needs of the researcher and the cultural groups targeted –e.g., text in italics).

As an immigrant/ethnic minority/international student/expatriate living in the U.S., you have been exposed to at least TWO cultures: your own heritage or ethnic culture (for example, Japanese, Mexican, Kenyan, Armenian) and the mainstream, dominant American culture. Thus, you could be described as a bicultural or multicultural individual.

The experience of having and managing two cultures (or more) is different for everybody, and we are interested in YOUR PARTICULAR EXPERIENCE.

Please use the scale below to rate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number. Please rate all statements, even if they seem redundant to you. Try to avoid using “Not sure” if possible.

Before you begin responding to the items below, please take a moment to fill in all of the blank spaces with your heritage or ethnic culture. You must complete all of these blank spaces before responding to the items.

Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Not Sure (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5)

In general, how much does each of the following statements describe YOUR experience as a bicultural individual?

BICULTURAL HARMONY VS. CONFLICT ITEMS

1. I find it easy to harmonize Arab and American cultures.
2. I rarely feel conflicted about being bicultural.
3. I find it easy to balance both Arab and American cultures.
4. I do not feel trapped between the Arab and American cultures.
5. I feel that Arab and American cultures are complementary
6. I feel torn between Arab and American cultures.
7. I feel that Arab and American cultural orientations are incompatible.
8. Being bicultural means having two cultural forces pulling on me at the same time.

9. I feel conflicted between the Arab and American ways of doing things.

10. I feel like someone moving between two cultures.

11. I feel caught between the Arab and American cultures.

BICULTURAL BLENDEDNESS VS. COMPARTMENTALIZATION ITEMS

12. I cannot ignore the Arab or American side of me.

13. I feel Arab and American at the same time.

14. I relate better to a combined Arab-American culture than to Arab or American culture alone.

15. I feel Arab-American.

16. I feel part of a combined culture that is a mixture of Arab and American.

17. I find it difficult to combine Arab and American cultures.

18. I do not blend my Arab and American cultures.

19. I feel just like an Arab who lives in North America (that is, I do not feel “Arab-American”).

20. I keep Arab and American cultures separate in my life (that is, I don’t mix them).

Scoring instructions:

1. To calculate Harmony vs. Conflict subscale scores:

a. The Harmony items are # 1-5; the Conflict items are # 6-11 b. Reverse score the Conflict items. Add Harmony and Conflict items. Divide the total by 11 to get subscale score

2. To calculate Blendedness vs. Compartmentalization subscale scores:

a. The Blendedness items are # 12-16; the Compartmentalization items are # 17-20 b. Reverse score the Compartmentalization items. Add Blendedness and Compartmentalization items. Divide the total by 9 to get subscale score

Note: The Harmony and Blendedness subscales of the BIIS-2 (and BIIS-1) should be treated as independent components. Thus, one should NOT calculate a total BII score by combining scores from these two subscales.

Alpha coefficients reported in Huynh & Benet-Martínez (2010): Cultural harmony = .86, Cultural blendedness = .81 (N= 1049 multi-ethnic biculturals)

Appendix B

Identity Maps Coding Sheet (Artwork Coding)

Please use this rating scale for the “Certainty” ratings: 1 (Quite uncertain), 2 (Uncertain), 3 (Certain), 4 (Quite certain).

Issues	Rater 1	Rater 2	Agreed Code
1. Metacategorization a. Certainty of categorization			
2. location of a. Map of U.S./America b. Map of country of origin c. Family d. Friends/peers e. School/education			
3. Identity labels a. Religious (Muslim, Christian, etc.) b. Ethnic identity/country of origin c. U.S./American d. Hyphenated e. Family/relation (son, daughter)			
4. Use of symbols a. Religious (Allah/God, Jesus, Qur’an, Bible, Crescent, Cross, Hijab, etc.) b. National (flag, map, language) c. Secular (peace, ying-yang)			
5. Discrimination/surveillance a. External to community b. Within community			
6. Emotions a. Frustration b. Stress c. Anger			

d. Sadness e. Contentment f. Pride			
7. Responses/reactions a. Struggle b. Resistance c. Education d. Political activism e. Prayer			

Appendix C

Informed Consent

I hereby consent to participate in a psychology research study conducted by Janan Shouhayib as part of her honors thesis supervised by Professor Jefferson Singer, a faculty member in the psychology department, as well as the dean of the college, at Connecticut College. I understand that this research will involve partaking in a survey about my bicultural Arab-American identity, participating in a scheduled, recording interview conducted in person, as well as creating a piece of artwork that reflects my identity. I understand that the questions I will answer will be related to my cultural identity, the potential difficulty of maintaining both, as well the positivity and benefits it has provided me. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes to answer. Although I understand that the direct benefits of this research to society are not known, I have been told that I may learn more about my own identity.

I understand that I may decline to answer questions I wish and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I also understand that all information given to Janan will be confidential. Similarly, while quotations of our interview may be used in published research, no individual identifiers will indicate my identity in order to ensure confidentiality.

I understand that my interview will be recorded to allow Janan to reference this interview when analyzing the results. The recordings will be private, digital recordings and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

I have been told that Janan can be contacted at jshouhay@conncoll.edu for any questions I may have about the intentions and procedures of this study.

If this study raises questions or concerns for me about my identity negotiation, I understand that Counseling Services can be reached at (860) 439-4587 for Connecticut College students or at www.ulifeline.org for other college students.

I consent to the recording of my interview, acknowledging that it will be kept confidential and destroyed at the end of this study. In order to keep my responses confidential, I have been told that the researcher will use an identification code number (last four digits of cell phone number and first three letters of middle name) to match my interview responses with my artwork and questionnaire.

I consent to the publication of the study results as long as the identities of all participants are protected. I understand that this research will be approved by the Connecticut College Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB). Concerns about any aspect of this study may be addressed to Audrey Zakriski, chairperson of the Connecticut College IRB (at alzak@conncoll.edu).

By clicking on the link below, I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age, and that I have read these explanations and assurances and voluntarily consent to participate in this study about Arab-American identity.

By clicking on the link below, I also consent to the audio recording of my interview, with knowledge that it will be kept private and subsequently destroyed at the end of the study.

Appendix D

Debriefing form

Thank you for participating in this research dealing with Arab-American identity. As an Arab-American individual myself, I am interested in studying the consequences, both positive and negative, that having an Arab-American identity provides, especially post-9/11. Although there has been research conducted on Arab-Americans, this research is unique in its examination of the benefits of having such a bicultural identity, as well as incorporating pieces of artwork. The goal of this study is to explore the real life experiences of Arab-American individuals after the events of 9/11.

During this study, you were asked to answer questions regarding your identity, which may have caused you distress. If you are feeling any distress, please contact the Student Counseling Service Center at Connecticut College at (860) 439-4587. If you are at another school, please visit www.ulifeline.org, where you can find information for student counseling services at your school.

If you are interested in this topic and want to read literature in this area, please contact Janan Shouhayib (jshouhay@conncoll.edu) or Jefferson Singer (jasin@conncoll.edu). Additionally, you can contact the chair of the IRB, Audrey Zakriski (alzak@conncoll.edu), if you have any questions or concerns about the manner in which this study was conducted.

Listed below are a few sources you may want to consult to learn more about this topic:

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*, xxi-291. Pantheon Books: New York, New York.

Sirin, S. R., & Fine, M. (2008). *Muslim American youth: Understanding hyphenated identities through multiple methods*, xii-200. New York: New York University Press.

Winerman, L. (2006). Reaching out to Muslim and Arab Americans. *American Psychological Association*, 39. Retrieved from www.apa.org/monitor/oct06/reaching.aspx

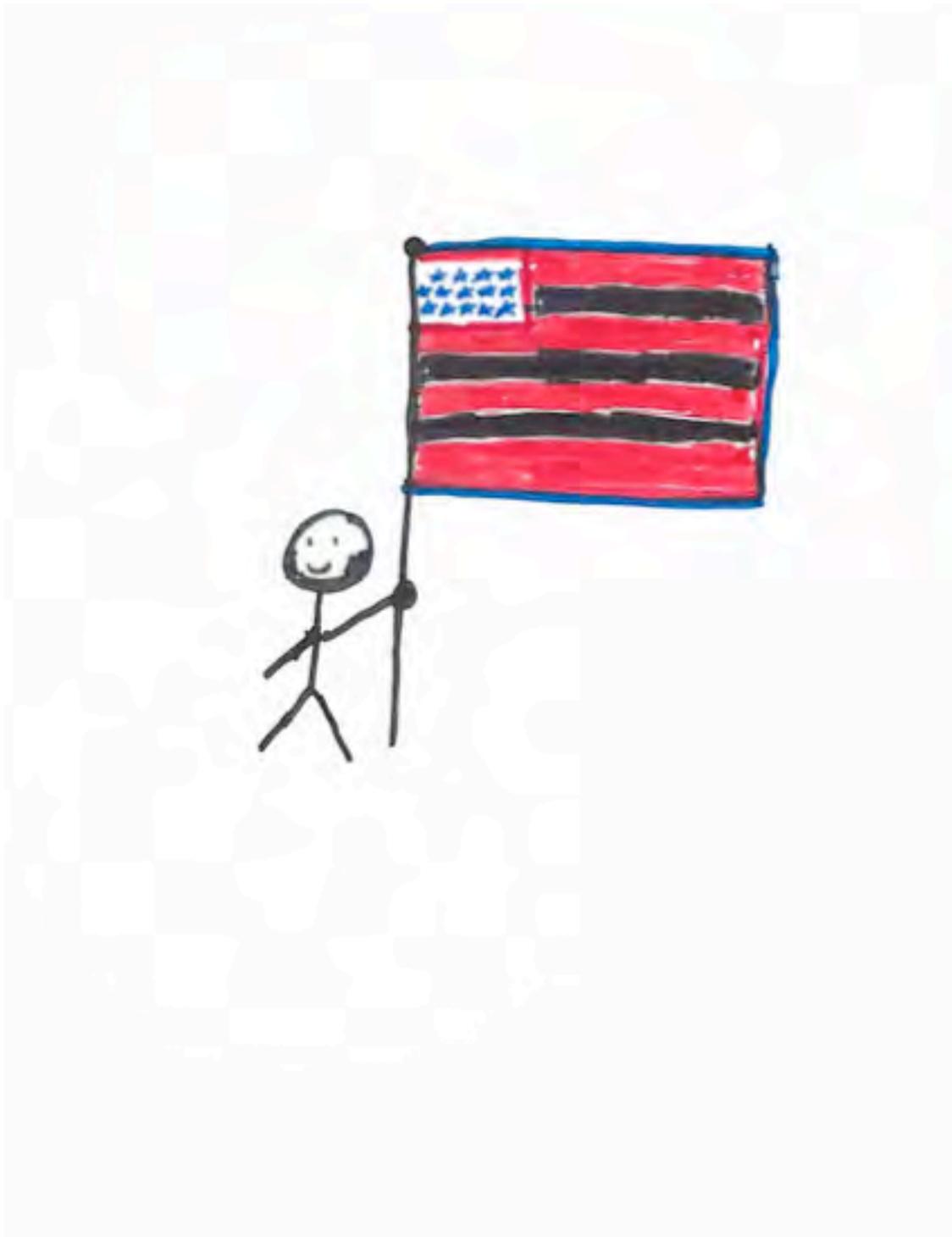
Appendix E

Akram's Artwork



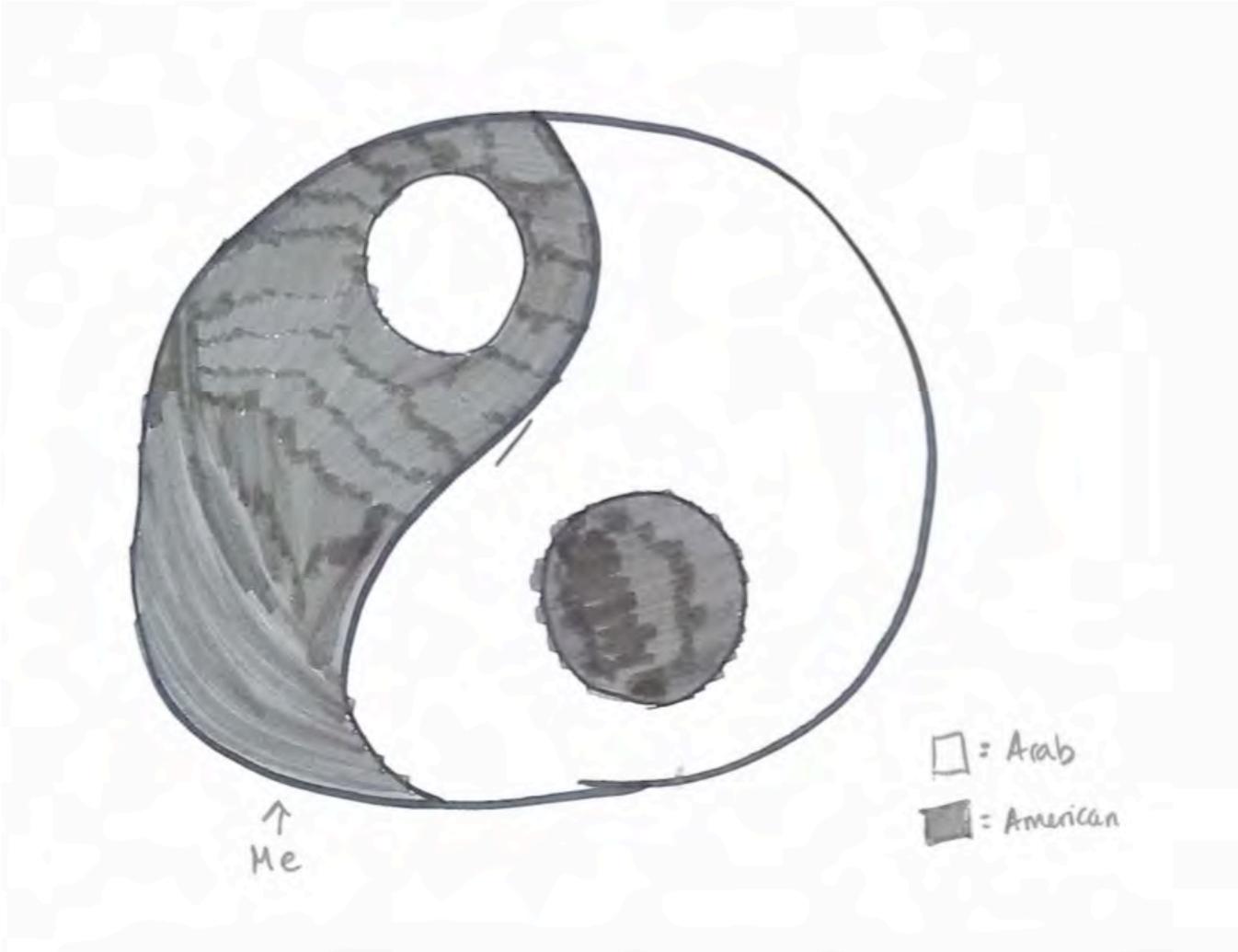
Appendix F

Amir's Artwork



Appendix G

Dalal's Artwork



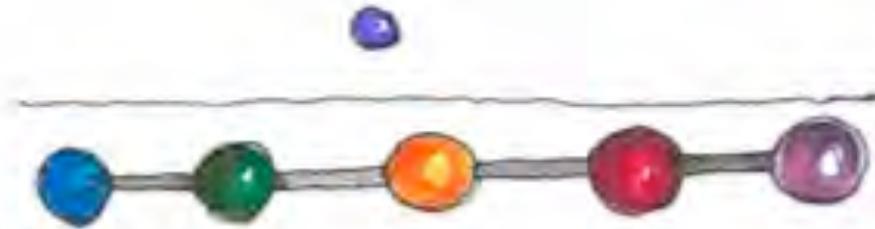
Appendix H

George's Artwork



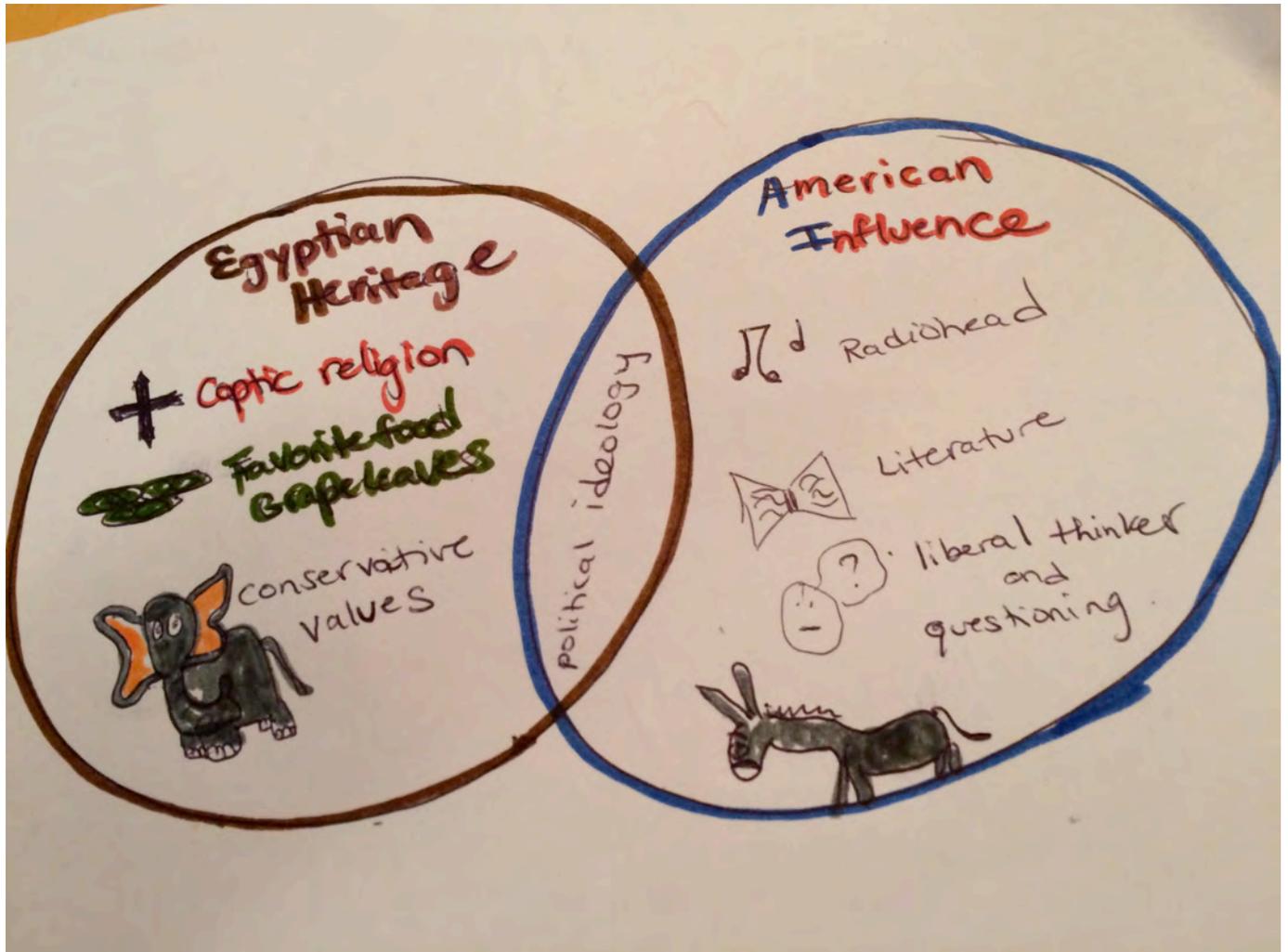
Appendix I

Laila's Artwork



Appendix J

Mariam's Artwork



Appendix K

Maya's Artwork



Appendix L

Mohammad's Artwork



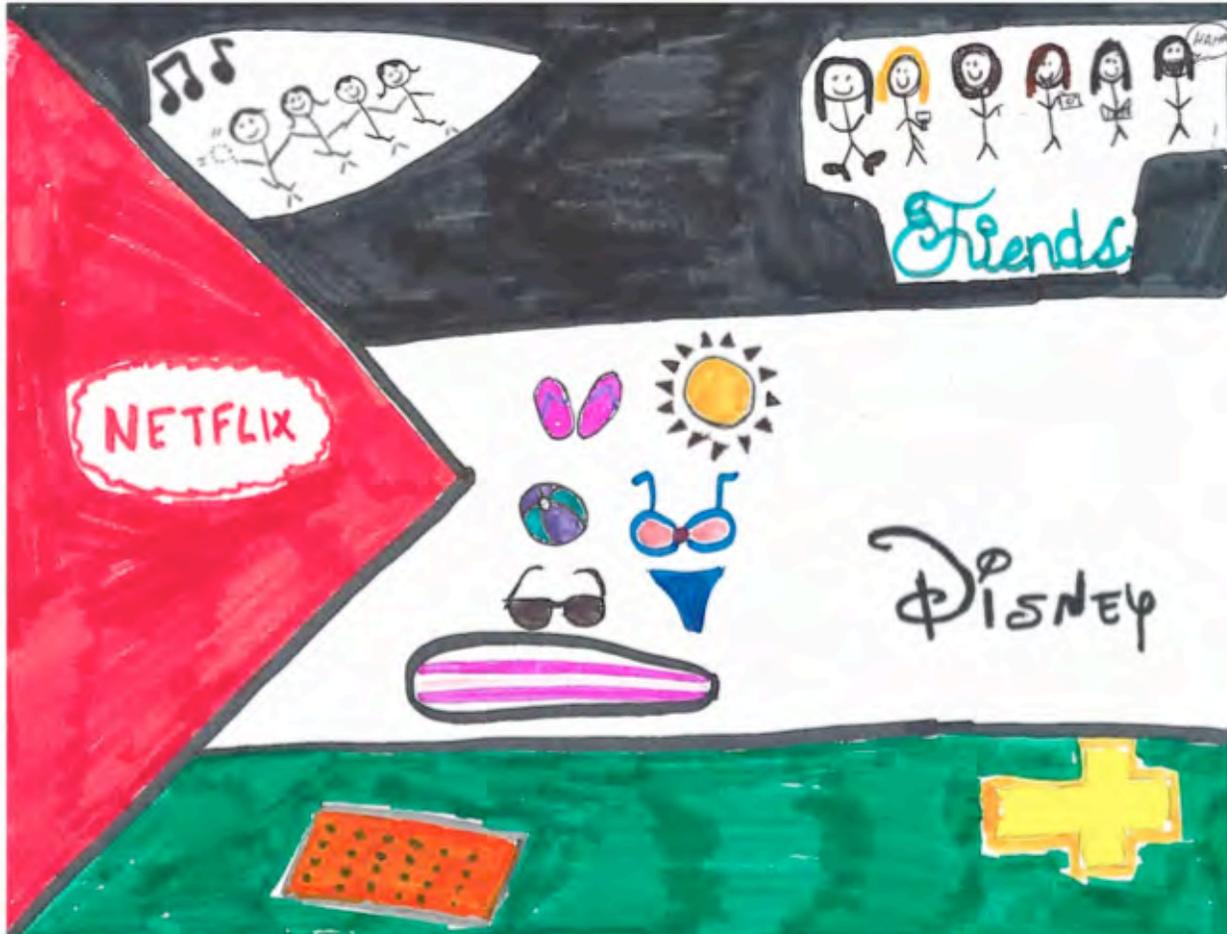
Appendix M

Nabil's Artwork



Appendix N

Nayla's Artwork



Appendix O

Rania's Artwork



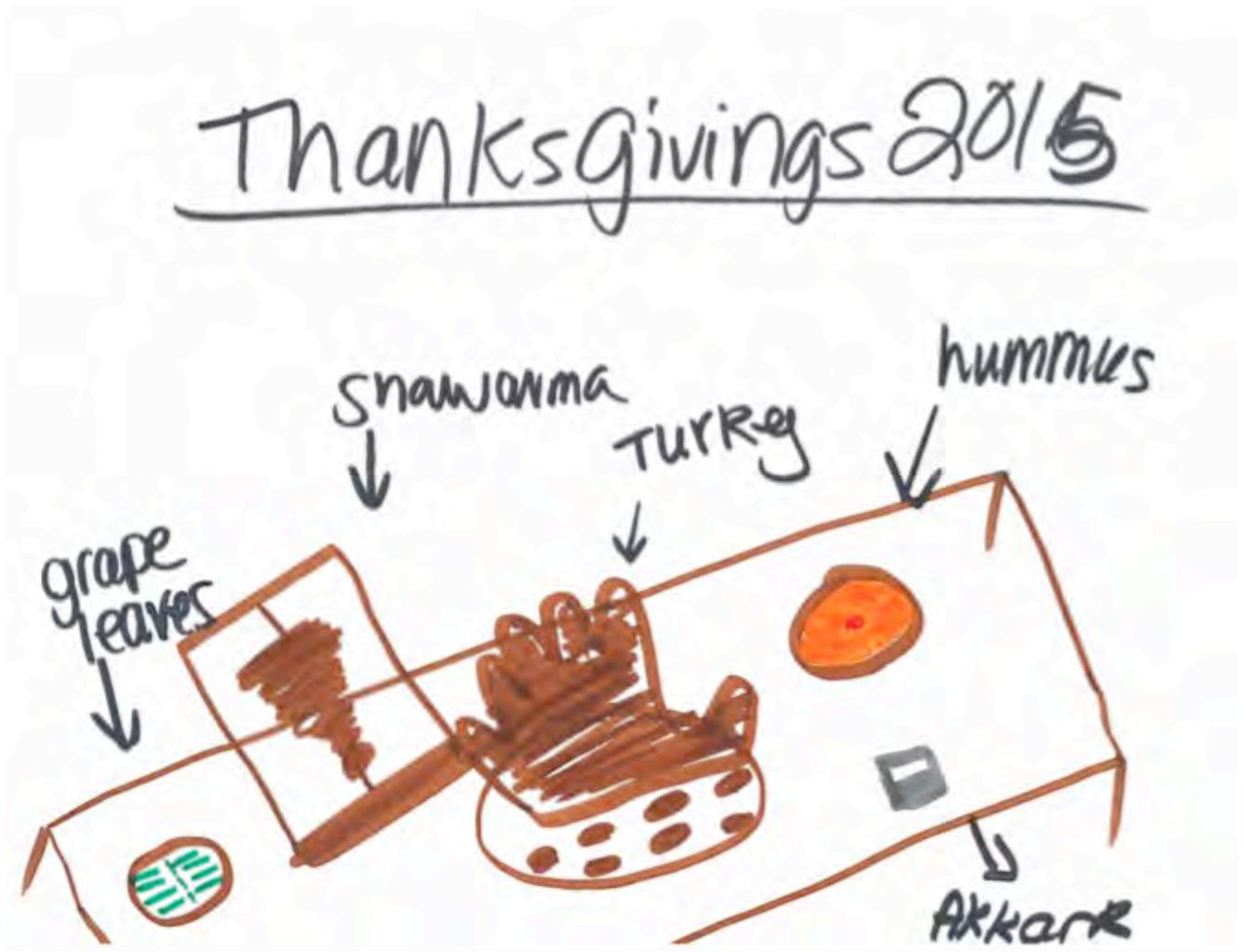
Appendix P

Salma's Artwork



Appendix Q

Yasmine's Artwork



Appendix R

Zahra's Artwork

