STUDIO EXPLORATION OF THE CUSTOMS IN JORDANIAN CULTURE

TRANSFORMING CULTURAL MISCONCEPTION INTO CULTURAL APPRECIATION IN THE US

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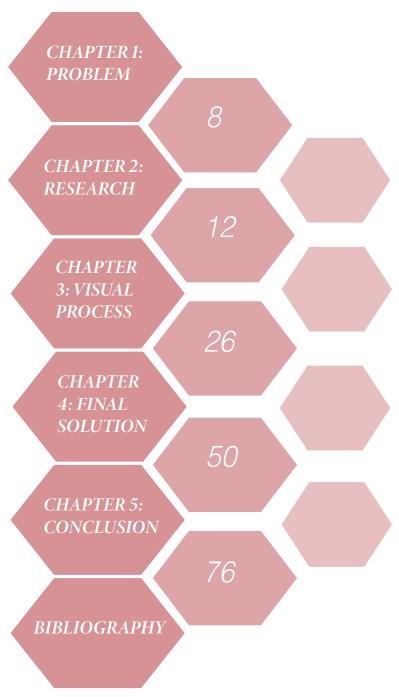
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ABSTRACT

The following research investigates Jordanian customs in an attempt to inform Western individuals about how cultural norms reflect the values that underlie the thought process and behavior of this people group. Through this process, the researcher intends to help people shatter misconceptions that stem from a lack of exposure to Arab culture. Due to the lack of intercultural experiences and understanding of Arabs within the US, there is a barrier of cognition between individuals of Middle Eastern and Western culture. Not only is there a lack of cultural exposure, but also an abundance of negative television and media coverage, leaving people with a negative impression of Arabs. The subsequent literature review presents preliminary research on the intrinsic facets of culture, and its pertinence to human interaction. The review accentuates scholarly sources of extended research, exhibiting a thorough study of understanding Jordanian culture and its importance through analyzing religion, values, and customs. Jordanian culture is one rich in language, generosity, community, obedience, and family bonds.

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The subsequent literature review presents preliminary research on the intrinsic facets of culture, its pertinence to human inter-action. The review accentuates scholarly sources of extended research, exhibiting a thorough study of understanding Jorda-nian culture and its importance througwh analyzing religion, value, and customs.

Introduction

The categorization of the use of the word "Arab" is extended to all 17 Arabic speaking countries, regardless of the different dialects. Though customs and values are predominately similar, they do vary from region to region. For the purpose of this study, the term "Arab" will be used to primarily reference those that live in or are from Jordan and have been raised with and uphold Jordanian customs and values. Additionally, those that are exempted from this study are Arabs that have modernized and do not hold the values and traditional customs of Jordanian culture.

About Jordan

Beginning this Journey, it is important that you are provided with some background information on the country itself. Jordan WestJordan is home to the Petra, one of the 7 Wonders of the World, also known as the Pink City. Jordan's location is most commonly known by westerners as being adjacent to Israel. Jordan is a small country with a land area less than that of Hungary, measuring at 96,000 km2, and with a population less than that of Finland, surpassing four million. Amman, the country's capital's elevation is 800m, resulting in the country's pleasant summers and occasional snow in the winter. The western edge of the country is the Jordan Valley, with sub-sea level elevation providing the country with a year-round growing season. Much of the land is seen as an uninhabitable desert with limited natural resources. As a result, the majority of the population is crowded into a narrow strip of highlands that run from Syria to Saudi Arabia (Honey 134).

Additionally, it is crucial to know a little about Jordan's history and the development and changes that have occurred to make up this beautiful and unique country. Modern Jordan was established after it took control of part of Palestine known as the West Bank during the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948. As a result, its official name was established as the "Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" and it tremendously increased its population. In another war over the West Bank, Israel regained control of the West Bank and in-turn, once again significantly increased Jordan's population, doubling it with Palestinian refugees within a single year. For that

reason, there are an overwhelming number of Palestinians that make up the Jordanian population (Honey 134).

Next, it is important to know that the country is still ruled by a Monarchy, a royal family that is loved and respected by its people. The monarchy began with King Abdulla, who established the country and its official name. He was followed by his son, King Hussein, who is the world's longest continually-ruling head of government. He was responsible for successfully personalizing the identity of the country, putting his visage, flag, and anthem before the people in a continuing array (Honey 135). The current ruler, his son, King Abdullah II, has successfully made peace with all of Jordan's surrounding neighbors, as well as an alliance with the United States. Due to this fact, Jordan has become a neutral territory in the Middle East. Currently, it is a safe haven for many Iraqi and Syrian refugees. However, the country's generosity did not come without repercussions. Due to the new increase of population and the restricted space of the small country, the cost of living has risen. This has had an affect on the people's way of life in the area of customs and cultural norms.

Thesis Problem

Jordan is a beautiful country, yet one that is easily overlooked. Amongst other countries represented in the US, the melting pot of the world, Arabs are a minority, especially Jordanians. Unfortunately, due to the little exposure Jordan gets, as well as being a country in the Middle East with a dominant Islamic population, it is easily stereotyped with the popular misconceptions of Arabs. In addition to the lack of intercultural experiences and understanding of Arabs within the US, there is a barrier of cognition between individuals of Middle Eastern and Western culture. Not only is there a lack of cultural exposure, but also an abundance of negative television and media exposure leaving people with a negative impression of Arabs.

Thesis Objective

The thesis topic investigates Jordanian customs, in an attempt to inform Western individuals about how cultural norms reflect the values that underly the thought process and behavior of this people group. Through this process, the researcher intends to help people shatter misconceptions that stem from lack of exposure to Arab culture by

using a positive voice to inform and educate individuals on the people and the culture through studio exploration, in order to bridge the gap of cultural ignorance and enhance communication and community.

The following research informs the thesis, which is a visual exploration, that provides a platform for those residing in the US to appreciate and understand Jordanian culture. This study not only seeks to generate an appreciation of Arabs; it also explores the effects and benefits of understanding another culture.

Research Questions and Overview

Throughout this study, a thorough analysis of the customs and cultural norms will be identified in an effort to give the audience an understanding and appreciation of the Jordanian culture. To understand the Jordanian culture, the aspects of what makes up a culture must be identified and explored. The following chapters will expand upon this concept and unfold the essence of the Jordanian people. The subsequent analysis answers the following questions; what makes up a culture, why it is important to experience other cultures, is there is a deficiency of cultural exposure within the US—and if so, why, why it is difficult for a traveler to connect to a foreign culture—how customs influence an individual, what common misconceptions and stereotypes there are of Arabs, and finally, where Arab misconceptions are generated. The study begins by defining culture, then the importance of culture addressing openness and interculturalism, as well as travel in the US. The study proceeds in evaluating the religion of the country and addressing stereotypes. The following chapters analyze the values and customs of the Jordanian people by identifying principles and behaviors, as well as practices of communication.

This thesis endeavor was inspired by my own experience as a Christian, Jordanian Palestinian first-generation American. Growing up in the United States while being raised in a traditional Arab household has had its pros and cons. While evoking an appreciation and pride for my culture, my traditional upbringing has left me misunderstood by my peers and western society.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH

A comprehensive analysis of research on the intrinsic facets of culture and its pertinence to human interaction. The review accentuates scholarly sources of extended research, exhibiting a thorough study of understanding Jordanian culture and its importance through analyzing religion, value, and customs.

Defining Culture

In definition, "culture" is a multifaceted concept that is a part of every individual. These facets include structured patterns of behaviors, beliefs, traditions, symbols and practices by which humans communicate. Moreover, they perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life (Yudice). The essence of the culture one adapts becomes a part of the individual. Robert Logan takes this concept a step further in his article "The Co-Evolution of Culture and Language," when he asserts that "the specific form of the modern mind has been determined largely by culture…" He goes on to add that "…culture is patterns for behavior not patterns of behavior" (251). To clarify, people do not dictate the cultural behaviors; rather, the culture dictates people's behaviors. To further

understand this concept, behavior in and of itself needs to be analyzed. Culture is not something people build, but rather happens organically and naturally.

Noga Magen-Nagar and Miri Shonfeld in the article "Attitudes, Openness to Multiculturalism, and Integration of Online Collaborative Learning," state that "according to Aizen's Planned Behavior Theory, attitude affects behavior through the process of planned decision-making… the theory assumes that behavior is an indirect result of information or relevant behavioral beliefs towards the behavior, so that each of the influential factors is derived from behavioral beliefs" (3). What a culture views as acceptable and unacceptable will influence the individual's belief of right and wrong; moreover, it will influence their perception and attitude, ultimately affecting their decision making. This is critical to understand when interacting with individuals of different cultural. What is socially acceptable in one culture may be considered insulting in another. This thesis will concentrate on these core concepts to educate and people in order to bridge the gap of cultural ignorance and enhance communication and community.

An additional facet of culture to analyze is socio-cultural symbolism, which pertains to a "group seeking to identify itself in an articulate way." Likewise, it is recognition in terms of selected qualities or characteristics which are immanent in the norm system of the group. Furthermore, "group identification coupled with rejection of deviant individuals is an all-important factor (Munch 15). In deduction, culture is a combination of values, principles, and beliefs which influence behaviors, which in turn establishes a norm of patterns and actions sustained by a people group and imposed by society through acceptance.

Importance of Cultural Awareness

Openness and Interculturalism

Cultural awareness is significant in the interactions of young maturing adolescents, they develop their sense of cultural and social identity. Al-Hazza, author of Bridging a Cultural Divide with Literature about Arabs and Arab-Americans, asserts that an interplay of race, ethnicity, and religion affect identity development and may especially be difficult for students who are minorities and immigrants. In order to establish an ethnic solidarity, they must be able to merge their native or traditional cultures with a new or majority culture (4). The stage of emerging adolescents is difficult in and of itself; however, being a minority in it makes it all the more difficult. Establishing a sense of identity in a culture that is foriegn and seeking to be understood has an effect on the individual, and having teachers and students who are educated and understanding about their culture can have a beneficial impact on the student, their education, and the establishment of their social identity.

Moreover, educating with openness and impartiality in diverse classrooms, enhances interpersonal relations and social skills and reduce frustrating situations. Instigating interaction and collaboration on an intellectual level to a solve a problem enriches the education experience, as well as multiethnic relations and community. In contrast, if there is discourse and individuals are unable to connect, the students may be unable to generate high-quality collective knowledge and communicate clearly with each other. Moreover, it may result in misunderstandings, which

leads to ineffective learning, lack of motivation, dissatisfaction, and decline in achievements (Magen, pg. 9). Additionally, from an academic standpoint, diversity enlists principles such as tolerance, respect, and teamwork (Kimmel 61).

Additionally, intercultural communication is essential to the growth of society and for fostering community. Ernest Luke McClees, Jr. defines Intercultural communication in his article "Intercultural Learning Perspectives of World Language Educators in Kentucky," as "interactions by people who do not share the same social enculturation, ethnic background, nationality, occupation, and gender, age, or sexual preference." The term has also been defined as what takes place when people from different cultures interact on an interpersonal level, both at home and abroad (McClees 8). Interculturalism is often used interchangeably with cross-culturalism. Cross culturalism, however, is most appropriately used when comparing different cultures. Intercultural interactions are an inevitability in the US, due to its heavily diverse population. This being the case, "[s]tudents who grow their knowledge and abilities of appropriate intercultural interactions will find better pos-sible employment outcomes and better un-derstanding of their fellow humans as well" (McClees 1). Being interculturally competent and able to interact with people of different ethnicities with impartiality is beneficial to everyone involved. Other benefits that can be reaped through strong intercultural competence are increased "empathy toward others, cultural knowledge, self-confidence, and one's own cultural identity" (McClees2-3,5).

Furthermore, cultural awareness can also hold substantial weight at the collegiate level. For example, the article "Racial Attitudes of University Faculty Members: Does Interracial Contact Matter?" analyzes a study of the racial attitudes of white faculty. It demonstrates how people with fewer varied racial interactions differ from those with greater interracial contact. Additionally, the article shows how greater interracial interactions create a positive impact on climate race relations. For instance, The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the number of ethnic minority students enrolled in universities has increased, yet the 79 percent of degree-granting full-time faculty at post-secondary institutions are self-identified as white (Gleditsch 104). Bridging the gap of

understanding between faculty and students can elevate learning and communication.

Travel in the US

One method of bridging the gap of understanding between cultures is to travel. However, through evaluation of the diversity in the United States and the amount of travel US citizens participate in, there is an obvious deficiency that is presented. The US is one of the most diverse countries in the world; nonetheless, a myriad of people have not experienced cultures outside their own. Greenblat and Gagnon, authors of Temporary Strangers: Travel and Tourism from a Sociological Perspective, through their study show a deficiency of cultural exposure within the US. For instance, in Greenblat and Gagnon's study, a division is shown between "those who enjoy foreign travel and those who cannot be persuaded to leave the United Sates. In 1965 slightly over 7 percent of the United States population traveled outside over of the United States, with approximately 6 percent travelling in the rest of the world" (93). The results show a shockingly low number; however, in a later study in the "1970s, it was reported that 52% of the adult population of the United States have never traveled more than 200 miles from home, and three-fifths have spent a night in a hotel or motel" (Greenblat & Gagnon 92).

There are many factors that play a role in the lack of personal travel within the US. One factor is due to the lack of financial resources to finance a trip outside the US. Secondly, fear is a factor that hinders people from traveling, whether it is for their health and safety, or fear of being duped, the unordinary, and all the unknown variables. Thirdly, a deterrent to travel is providential ignorance, in which people are not sure where to go, as well as preference for the ordinary (Greenblat & Gagnon 93).

To further investigate travel and its significance to an individual, it is imperative to define what it means to travel and be a traveler. According to Greenblat and Gagnon, travel is to venture to territory that is geographically, socially, and culturally unfamiliar. The degree of unfamiliarity varies for the individual and differs in environments. Moreover, travelers are considered "temporary strangers who have chosen to enter geographically, socially, and culturally unfamiliar territory and who confront problems of making it sufficiently fa-

miliar to them that it can be managed" (91). The previous assertion is significant in that the thesis will focus on the dimensions of traveling and incorporate providing a similar experience through art.

For the traveler, there is often difficulty connecting to the culture. Catharine Mee the author of GUIDING, talks about the difficulty of traveling in other cultures, particularly on one's own. In this book, the experience is articulated as "To set out into this vast country alone, blind, deaf and dumb, is still today a tricky undertaking that often results in failure and bitterness" (Mee 33). To elaborate, venturing into a new place in which the environment is unfamiliar, the language is not comprehended, and the customs are dissimilar can make engaging with and navigating the country difficult and discouraging. Furthermore, to truly experience another culture, there needs to be an understanding of the core values that dictates the people's actions and way of life. Siddall asserts that "[t]he art of learning fundamental common values is perhaps the greatest gain of travel for those who wish to live at ease among their fellows. Travel helps to create a healthy society" (317).

Furthermore, cultural awareness about Jordanians is significant, because not many travel to the Middle East due to means or safety, and Jordanians who have migrated to the US have compiled in concentrated areas. Additionally, over half of Arab-Americans live in just five states: California, New York, Michigan, Florida, and New Jersey, making the majority exposure of Arab culture limited. (Kulczycki 465). In summation, cross cultural experiences are lacking within the US, and citizens and communities can benefit by breaking through those barriers of ignorance. Finally, this is what the product of this investigation into this research is hoping to accomplish through art.

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Religion

To begin, religion holds a dominant role in understanding the Jordanian culture, due to the common association of Arabs with religion. Moreover, religion is tied to values and

beliefs, which in turn influence behavior, and on a majority level, become the accepted norm of practices and customs.

Many misconceptions of Arabs stem from religious associations and stereotypes. One stereotype is that all Arabs are Muslims. However, there is a vast variety of customs, traditions, dialects, and religious practices that span the far-ranging 17 Arab speaking countries. Despite the common assumptions, and the mass majority of Arabs who follow Islam, there is a significant population of Arab Christians that many are unaware of in Western society (Al-Hazzan 6). According to Paolo Maggiolini, there is a influencial Christian community in Jordan, one that holds certain social and economic weight in the country. Moreover, research shows that "Christians in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan now make up 2.2 percent of the total population (30,000 Catholics; 20,000 Protestants; 90,000 Greek-Orthodox; less than 1,000 belonging to other Christian churches)" (37). According to Luisa K. Gandolfo, the Christians in Jordan deserve more than passing nod, since they play a significant role as they "transcend the boundaries of ethnic, religious, and national identity within Jordanian society," specifically

in areas such as Karak, Madaba, Salt, and Amman. Jordan is noted for having a majority mixed-faith Palestinian community, estimated to comprise 60% of the population, providing a rich and varied tapestry of cultures and faiths as a result of being a transit country in the past (437- 438).

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Another stereotype is that all Muslims are violent. However, "In Jordan…the Islamic movement has not only been predominantly peaceful and non-violent, but also defended the state against challenges by radical ideologies" (Moaddel 528). Throughout the decades, Muslims and Christians have coexisted peacefully in Jordan, and seamlessly within communities. Furthermore, not all Muslims are Arab. Particularly within the US, out of the 1.2 million Muslims, it is estimated that only 460,000 are Arab, while the rest fall under black Muslims, Iranians, Turks, Pakistanis, and Indians (Kulczycki 462). However, due to the harsh stereotypes made

about their culture, when Arabs migrated to the US, they assimilated into what they perceived to be mainstream American culture in a seamless transition, masking their ethnicity for fear of prejudice. Many went as far as Americanizing their names. Unfortunately, this did not eliminate prejudice, especially for Muslims more so after 9/11, as they were still viewed suspiciously by the mainstream and in the public eye (Kulczycki 459-461).

Where do these Arab misconceptions have their genesis? According to Jack G. Shaheen, Hollywood has projected negative images of Arabs and Muslims for over a century perpetuating stereotypes and vilifying a people group. "Based on the study of more than 900 films, it shows how moviegoers are led to believe that all Arabs are Muslims and all Muslims are Arabs. The moviemakers' distorted lenses have shown Arabs as heartless, brutal, uncivilized, religious fanatics through common depictions of Arabs kidnapping or raping a fair maiden; expressing hatred against the Jews and Christians; and demonstrating a love for wealth and power" (171). Misconceptions have generated not only through casting Arabs in a negative light, but also the repetition of a negative persona in visual media over the years has become the dominate form of exposure for the American people.

A key indicator for a Jordanian's religious affiliation and family reputation is tied to the family name and due to the small population and the tightly-knit communities in Jordan, family names are easily-recognized and identified. Specifically, Christians and Muslims do not intermarry. The Christians marry the Christians and the Muslims marry the Muslims. Especially with the Christian's significantly smaller population, families are well connected through churches and social groups and are more often than not connected even distantly through marriage. "In Jordanian society, the influence of religion, kinship, and paternalism on most aspects of one's life is obvious. Religion is included in the Jordanian passports and identification cards and is considered a form of identification. For Jordanians, one's own entity and identity is intertwined with his/her religious affiliation. Unlike most other cultures, embracing a religion (commonly the religion of one's ancestors) is an obligation, not a preference" (AL-ALI 694). This being the case, there are many that follow the practices of

the religion as duty and are not devoted to it as their own. However, if one interracially marries and does not carry the Arab parent's last name, identification of these things are not apparent and one becomes more difficult to identify.

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Additionally, being that the predominate religion is Islam and the minority is Christianity, both of which are conservative, the country itself is very conservative overall. That being the case, woman have to be particularly cautious about wearing modest attire in an effort not to give themselves and their family a bad reputation. Among Jordanian woman, attire is tied to religion. For instance, Muslim woman wear a dilug, which is often accompanied by a head scarf. "In concert with the national valorization of tribal culture, the marked wearing of dilug by young women has become a symbol of tribal identity and, by extension, of Jordanian identity" (30).

Values

According to "The Arab Americans and the Middle East" article, a survey of 251 Junior and Senior students more than half classified Arabs a Dessert people. Additionally, a survey of Canadian social science textbooks and teacher's attitudes characterized Arabs as wild, uncivilized, nomadic, backward, disorganized (Jacqueline & Ismael 395). Contrary to the perception of these studies, Arabs are indeed a civilized, well-mannered, kind hearted, hospitable, and highly-educated people group.

Family

In the Arab culture, Family is held in the highest regard. "It is within the family that certain behaviors are learned, and basic attitudes are developed." These behaviors and attitudes are developed from birth. 'It is argued that infants get significant cultural cues from their parents who reinforce behaviors consistent with the existing cultural forms and norms. The notion that children grasp cultural indicators "as inevitably as they acquire language is a generally accepted assumption." The cultural impact of behaviors

and attitudes from a young age influences the cognitive development and behavior of the child as they mature. For instance, girls are treated very differently than boys, being groomed to be caretakers from an early age. As a result, girls learn to solve problems on their own early on and tend to reach self-reliant maturity before their male siblings (Sidani & Thornberry 40-41).

Family in Jordan also an essential part of Arabs' social functioning; in Arab culture, Family is ultimate goal. From a young age, children are brought up with the mentality to be good wives/husbands and mothers/fathers first and foremost, and especially for woman, being successful in that is more than enough (Sidani & Thornberry 40). It is only recently, with the current economic state, that both men and woman have needed to work to support the high cost of living. This is especially true because of the number of children they need to provide for, as Jordan has one of the highest fertility rates in the world. In 1991, according to the journal article "Planning in Jordan: Coping with Uncertainty" by Honey, Rex, and Wilson, the total fertility rate per woman was 5.6 children and just twelve years earlier, it was 6.9 children

(135). Their lives are dedicated to their children and teaching them to be dedicated to theirs in a continuous cycle.

Obedience

An example of fundamental principles, instilled from a young age, within the family influencing behavior and customs are obedience and social conformity. Sidani and Thornberry assert that "[v]irtues of obedience, submission, yielding, compliance, and conformity are encouraged. A good child is the one "who listens to the word" of parents and other authority figures. Values of dissent, questioning, and critical inquiry are seen as signs of insubordination and lack of respect, and these are greatly discouraged." Moreover, the obedience focused on the father is particularly emphasized in the Arab culture, recognizing their authority and considering them a figure who cannot be questioned (40-41). The values and behaviors of obedience are expected for the duration in which the family members are dependent on the family. In Jordan, this is extended until marriage, due to the high cost of living and that tight knit community and family dynamic. To express independence from under the parent's authority beforehand can be interpreted as a

sign of rebellion and is looked down upon in Jordanian families and society. Likewise, if a woman becomes divorced or widowed, she returns to her family unless she has a son old enough to look after her. "At an older age, the eldest son is the person most responsible for his parents" and his siblings until they get married and after in the event that their sister is left without a man in the home" (41).

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Community

Another facet that displays the value of the Jordanian culture is community. Due to the geographical dynamic, high cost of living, and the people's generous and hospitable spirit, there is a very tight knit community in Jordan. It varies from that of America, where families and friends can go years without seeing or speaking to one another. In Jordan, many families live in house near each other or even above each other. Homes in

Jordan are built from stone in close proximity to one another, with flat roof tops to allow for another home to be built. Furthermore, the flat roofs allow for late night gatherings in which they build the community and interpersonal relations. For that reason, when Arabs migrate to America and are cut off from the abundant sense of community, many are left feeling lone. According Kulczycki and Labo, authors of Deepening the Melting Pot: Arab-Americans at the Turn of the Century assert that "[i]mmigrants tend to cluster with those of similar background for social, psychological, and economic support, with residential dispersion increasing among subsequent generations (465). Community and social interaction have a significant impact on an individual, and for that reason, many are drawn to regions in which they can connect, resulting in select regions with a high concentration of Arabs.

Education

There is a misconception that Arabs do not like their woman educated. However, Jordanians also put a high value on Education and not just for men, but also for women, especially in today's day and age, with Jordan's

economy requiring both men and woman to bring in an income to sustain themselves. "The country has a sizable cadre of well-educated people, especially in engineering fields" (Honey 135). Not only does this hold true in Jordan, but also for Arabs in the United States, who brought it with them. According to Kulczycki and Arun, "In 1990 within the US Arab-Americans obtained higher levels of education than Americans. Studies show that 40% of native-born and 43% of foreign-born Arab-American men achieved a college or professional degree, while only 24% of all American men obtained them. In regard to the woman's education in the United States 35% of the native born and 26% of the Arab woman born overseas achieved at minimum a college degree, and US woman only 21% (446).

Customs

The customs of the Jordanian culture, for the purpose of this thesis, will be broken down based on key characteristics, such as language, hospitality, and greetings.

Language

Arab scholars classified people by their most defining character trait: for the Greeks, it was their intellect; the Chinese, their hands; the Indians, their imagination; and the Arabs, their tongue. The Arab language is one of eloquence and beauty, rich in vocabulary, images, smiles, unusual metaphors, and ornate expressions (Almaney 11). For example, a common Arab proverb that is told to children by their parents is: "Azah habbebak assal ma telhaso kollo," which is translated in English to, "If your friend is honey don't lick it all." To clarify, it is about not taking advantage of someone who loves you or someone who is being nice to you. This is especially prevalent in such a generous culture. Another example of Arabs' eloquent use of language is the common phrase "Aa-la rasi", which translates to "on my head." This phase is used to convey courtesy and respect for someone, i.e., when you hold a person in high regard. It is most commonly used as a response when asked for something by a person they respect. Lastly, another Arab proverb that demonstrates the language's unique expressions is "Al tikrar biallem il hmar (By repetition,

even the donkey learns)." This Arab proverb encapsulates how effective repetition can be when it comes to education: how we learn by repeating an exercise over and over again until we can respond almost reflexively (171). The donkey is a common word used in the Arab language for insults, metaphors, and saying.

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Furthermore, the Arabic language is passionate and full of expression. Due to the "endless rules of inflection and changing vowels and consonants as well as the ubiquitous accent marks of Arabic, the simple act of reading or speaking in Arabic involves numerous voice changes, accompanied by emotional and physiological changes." Likewise, when speaking a foreign language, those vocal changes carry over and the Arab speaker may not even be aware of it. This being the case can undoubtedly bring misunderstandings such as thinking an Arab is excited, angry, or affectionate when they are not, due to their manner of speaking (Almaney 12).

"As hosts, the Arabs are entirely charming, and the generosity of their hospitality is almost unlimited. They are a people who like to please, and who are always warm hearted and more than cordial to their guests" (12).

Hospitality & Generosity

Another outstanding trait of Arabs is hospitality. According to Adnan Almaney, "As hosts, the Arabs are entirely charming, and the generosity of their hospitality is almost unlimited. They are a people who like to please, and who are always warm hearted and more than cordial to their guests" (12). Arabs are well known for being generous with their portions in an effort to guarantee the satisfaction of their guest. A sign of hospitality, especially with the Bedouins in Jordan, is the traditional bitter coffee served in a tiny cup no bigger than a pinky finger (Layne 27). To refuse hospitality or leave a plate unfinished is received as an insult. Hospitality is one of the most impactful character traits of Arabs, leaving a lasting impression.
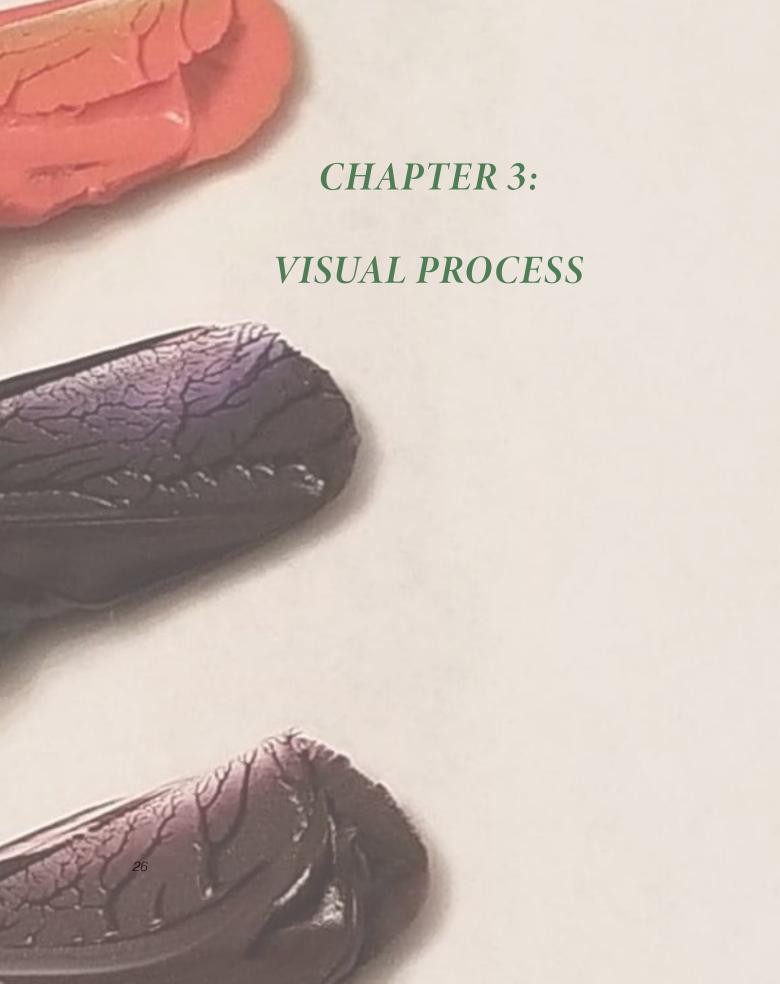
The Jordanian coffee is also used in engagement customs. When agreeing on a marriage, the elders (traditionally men) of the two families come together and are served coffee. Those that drink the coffee accept the union and if someone does not, then that signifies that they do not approve of the marriage.

It is also customary when visiting someone for the first time to honor a guest with Jordan's national dish, Mancef, especially when visiting a Bedouin, that being their specialty. The dish consists of a hard, heavily salted ball of yogurt that is watered down and boiled into a liquid, and is then served with lamb over sticky rice set on paper thin sheets of pita bread and topped with toasted pine nuts and almonds. The traditional way of eating it is to have everyone gathered around the large dish with one hand behind the back and the other rolling the food into a ball to eat (Layne 27).

Greetings

Additionally, the customary greeting for Arabs varies depending on region anywhere from two to four kisses on the cheek, some

times more depending on the Arab's region of origin. However, the minimum standard greeting in Jordanian custom is two, one on each cheek. (Al-Hazza 6). The exception to this custom is young adult girls greeting similar age boys, as well as woman greeting men they do not know. To hold to the customary greeting when first entering a room is a sign of respect and being raised right, bringing honor to one's family name. This custom holds so much weight that families have been separated and torn apart over a family member not being properly greeted by another.

CHAPTER 3:

VISUAL PROCESS

Inspiration

My inspiration for developing the thesis mission of breaking negative Arab stereotypes is derived from being a first-generation Arab-American. Growing up in a traditional Arab household in America without knowing other Arabs outside my family left me feeling misunderstood. The memory engrained in my brain from middle school reminds me how little so many in the US know about Arabs, and especially Jordanians. When I was in middle school, I had a classmate figure out that I was an Arab and start calling me a terrorist. I would like to say people became much more understanding as I grew up, but unfortunately, I cannot.

Through a series of interviews, conducted with approval from the IRB, I asked 4 American acquaintances over the age of 18 if they knew where Jordan is, and not a single one answered yes. I followed up by asking what they knew about Jordan, and all the answers consisted of something similar to "I don't know much," and one participant even said it was the first time they had heard of it. This allowed me to see just how uneducated about Arab culture western society was. It does not help that the little information that is communicated is negative, leaving western society with a misconception about Arabs. Narrowing down the focus to the country of Jordan, from which my heritage originates, created a perfect opportunity to share the beauty of my culture and break through the narrow perceptions of society with shared customs and values that transcend the borders of Jordan to all Arabs.

Medium

The next step was deciding on a medium and what surface the work would be painted on. Glass became the surface of choice, due to its transparent quality, as it reinforces the goal of the thesis by allowing others to see into a culture. The paint medium chosen for use on the glass was oil paint, because it allows the paint to be worked on for a longer period time without drying, as well as offering smooth, rich, and flexible variety of color mixtures. Oil also has a refined quality to it that was felt to be more appropriate to represent the rich eloquence of the Jordanian culture. Additionally, acrylic was ruled out because of the plasticity that occurs when it dries, allowing the paint to peel right off, whereas oil has

more grip on the surface of the glass. Furthermore, oil on glass has yet to find its place in the market and is not commonly done. This also reinforces the purpose of reaching the western world, by offering something new to catch people's attention. The fact that oil painting on glass is so new, resources and information about the process and techniques are slim to none. That being the case, the process has been very experimental.

When beginning a painting application, the first thing to consider is the color palette. I began with a small palette with my primary colors, plus burnt sienna and white. Then, using a palette knife, I created my color mixtures and transferred them onto another palette, creating a base for my color scheme to

further manipulate the mixtures. The palettes I used are homemade by simply using a sheet of glass with artist's tape along the edges. This is great for easy clean up and more space and is inexpensive. When it came time to save the paint for later, I could simply cover the glass with cling wrap.

Glass

When working on glass, there are many factors to consider, such as the type and thickness of the glass. Working on glass did not come without its complications. Initially, working on picture frame glass worked well for applying the paint. However, when trying to apply freestanding bolts to mount the glass, it could not withstand the pressure of the drill. I made many attempts, using a carbide drill bit specifically designed for drilling into glass. I researched and used different methods to drill into the glass, such as drilling over cardboard. The method, however, that worked the best was pouring water over the surface continually while drilling. Though I managed to drill a hole in the glass, it was too thin and temperamental to maintain consistency to

drill holes in the three other corners. Through research, I discovered that one should never use tempered glass when drilling, and that in order to maintain the integrity of the glass while drilling, glass under 1/8 inches should not be used. Addionally, depending on whether the glass has smoothed edges, the edges can be relatively sharp. Some tips for dealing with sharp-edged glass include applying artist's tape over the edges to make handling easier, or using gloves. It is also very helpful to use a drawing board with clips that can secure the glass while painting. A benefit to working on glass is that transferring a sketch is very easy. If drawn to scale, one can simply place the drawing underneath the glass and paint over it as a guide. Also, fixing mistakes is also very easy, as one can simply wipe or scrape off the paint and it comes off clean. In order to achieve an opaque design on glass, one must apply multiple layers of paint and weight for the paint to dry in between layers. Paint usually takes one to two days to dry, depending on how thin the paint is; if it is very thick, it may take longer. The initial layer provides the grip for the following

layers.

Another factor to consider when working on glass is the background or environment in which the work will be displayed. The transparency of the glass allows the painting to adopt the background or whatever surface or color is placed behind it. It is important to consider because it affects color harmony and contrast. Additionally, when applying oil paint to the glass, it is important to consider what side of the glass you would like to face your audience. How you would like to display the painting will determine whether the last layer will show. If you decide to flip the painting, as I did, it gives the painting a glossy appearance and keeps it protected from the outside. This also means, however, that the first layer of paint that is applied to the glass will be what is displayed.

Process

Beginning with the ideation for the research, I began my work with writing a list of words that define Jordanian culture and customs.

Then, I tore off from that list, expanding upon a few key terms. Then, the words were broken down further to identify what words or symbols could be used to describe them. Next came visualizing those ideas and putting them together as thumbnail sketches. The most effective sketches were then selected and further refined. The next step was taking reference photos to work from and drawing the final design to scale on tracing paper. The tracing paper was then put underneath the glass and used as a guide when applying the oil paint to the glass.

Framing

While going through this process, deciding on the framing was one of the most difficult aspects. Initially, I wanted to use stand off bolts. However, the complication with that is the gallery the work will be displayed in does not allow for any holes to be made in the wall. For that reason, I considering giving each piece a wood backing to be drilled into. The complication stemming from that was the glass was too thin to drill into. Though framing is often the last thing considered to avoid these complications, consider the framing before beginning buying glass or painting. Oftentimes, it is easiest to find the frame you like and use the glass from within it. It only gets more complicated if any tampering needs to be done to the glass. After many trial and errors to discover these factors, I was fortunate enough to find frames that use bolts and already have holes in the glass. The size varied from that of my original design, but with a few adjustments, they were able to accommodate them.
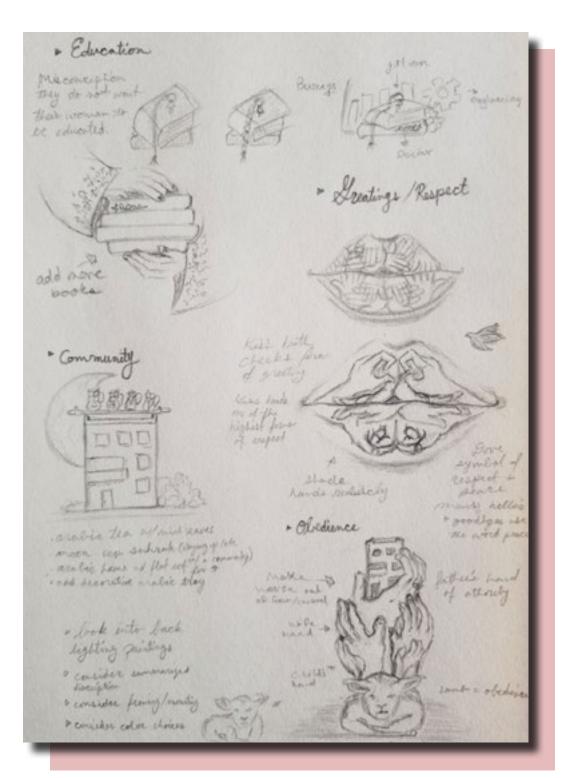
Other factors to consider when it comes to framing include whether or not you would like the wall to show through. If so, then it needs to be backless; however, if you do, then the material used for the background and how it is implemented need to be considered. When creating a frameless background with stand-off bolts, I used a smooth hardboard that was cut larger than the glass for ease of handling, and I was also able to use spray paint for its desired color. However, something thicker is recommended, due to the need to drill into them. I found that with the thin smoothed hardwood that the nail would stick out the back.

When trying to use a classic frame, a type of mat board is best. Mat board is preferred
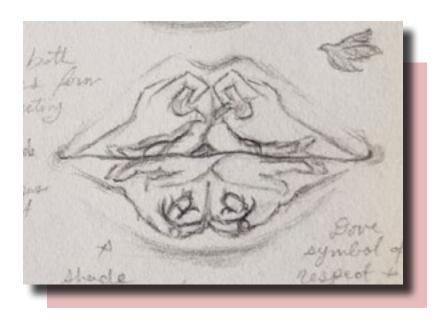
because it holds its shape and has a sleek rich quality to the color. Paper that is thinner tends to bow and not hold its place. My frame was a floating frame with a small amount of space that fits a thin sheet of paper, for which I tried to be resourceful and use the placeholder cardboard that came with it and simply spray paint it to the desired background color. I was inclined to go with this option, because I did not want a material that would bow out slightly and not lay directly onto the glass. However, in order to maintain professionalism and have a rich finished look for the background, I went with a black mat board to match the frame. The distance of the material to the glass does impact the design. If the material is directly placed behind the glass, it will allow all the strokes and texture of the paint to show through. The further the material from the glass, the softer the paint appears.

- Thesis
  - Brainstorming
    - Symbols for:
      - language
      - generosity
      - community
      - obedience
      - family bonds
      - rich
      - misconceptions
      - red
      - green
      - black
      - religion
      - Christians
      - muslims
      - Jordan
      - identity
      - negative
      - marriage
      - obligation
      - duty
      - manner
      - educated
      - civilized
      - well-mannered
      - family
      - expensive
      - independence
      - rebellion
      - submission

      - fertility
      - home
      - greetings
      - metaphor
      - elegant/ornate
      - friend
      - elders
      - authority
      - proverb
      - donkey
      - honey
      - education
      - repetition
      - head
      - passionate
      - expressive
      - warm-hearted
      - hospitality
      - Coffee — lace, cup
      - food
      - plate
      - insulted
      - engagement
      - approval
      - Mansef
      - kisses
      - honor
      - significance
      - values
      - principles
      - beliefs
      - social

[Language]
- mouth
- tongue
- metaphors
- rich — gold, purple
- elegant
- flattering
- religious — muslim ☾ / Christians — cross, crucifix, ✝
  - eyes
  - head
  - donkey — tail & ears of donkey
  - honey — honey comb, honey syrup
  - lion — courage, youth
  - compliments — Exp — hand / flowers / eyes / moon
  - respect — kissing hand
  - expressive
  - greeting — kiss, lips, hand,
  - proverbs
  - passionate — light red
  - similes — include compliments

[Flag of Jordan]
- black band — Arab Abbasid dynasty (Asia)
- white band — Umayyad dynasty (origin & powerful future)
- green band — Fatimid dynasty
- crimson triangle — Hashemite dynasty (Arab struggle for freedom)
- seven pointed islamic star — 7 verses of Surat Al-fatiha
  - 7 points — 1) faith in one God   the first sura in the Holy Quran
    2) humility
    3) humanity
    4) national spirit
    5) virtue
    6) social justice
    7) aspiration

[Education / Educated]
- cap (grad)
- diploma scroll
- books
- color blue represents intelligence

[Hospitality]
- food
- coffee
- mansef

▶ Education

Misconception
They do not want
their woman to
be educated.

Beverage

girl icon

↓
Engineering
Doctor

add more
books

▶ Greetings / Respect

Kiss both
cheeks form
of greeting

Kiss back
one of the
highest form
of respect

▶ Community

Dove
symbol of
respect &
peace
many hellos
▶ goodbyes use
the word peace

A
Shake
hands exclusively

· arabic tea w/ mint leaves
· moon cup sehrah (staying up late)
· arabic home w/ flat roof w/ a comm?dy)
· add decorative arabic rug

▶ Obedience

father's hand
of authority

Make
mosque out
of foreground

wife
hand

▶ look into back
lighting painting

▷ consider summarized
descriptor

▷ consider framing/matting

▷ consider color choices

Child's
hand

lamb = obedience

both
and form
...ting

shade

Dove
symbol of
respect

▸Religion

▸ Family is the Goal

▸ Languag
- if your friend is honey
don't lick them all at once

Don't take
advantage of
people

Greetings/Respect   Religion

▶ Education

misconception
they do not want
their woman to
be educated.

add more
books

▶ Community

· arabic tea w/ mint leaves
· moon rep. suhrah (staying up
· arabic home ... that ... w/ a ...

44

46

شوارب صليبة ربضي كواليت ...
عقلة حجازين عقلة خوري صناع بيبي
طنوس عباسي أزرعي بركت ...
حلّة كواليت مقطش كرام عماري ...
أبو شرايحة سابا دبابنة بطارسة
جدعون نافع نفاع تادرس
مدانات حوراني حدادين
حنا فرام شنودي ديابس مثيني
مدانات حوراني حدادين حضوة
كرادشة هلبة عقلة طول

48

CHAPTER 4: FINAL SOLUTION

The visual solution to the problem of the stereotyping of Arabs is to informs western individuals about the core values and customs of Jordanian culture through oil paintings on glass. Art provides a visual that can attract people's attention. The artwork attracts people's attention through the unique material combination of oil paint and glass, as well as the unusual conceptual compositions and visual aesthetics. The following paintings were inspired and designed based on the research, as well as several IRB-approved interviews of four Jordanians.

Two-Plates (Suhtain)

This piece displays one of the most dominant characteristics of Jordanians and that is Hospitality/Generosity as expressed in my research, as well as through conducted interviews with Jordanians. For example, when the Jordanian participants were asked, "What are the core values of your culture?" the results were unanimous: all answered Hospitality. The interviews also revealed that a customary form of hospitality is serving guests the traditional coffee. In my research, Adnan Almaney asserted that "[a]s hosts, the Arabs are entirely charming, and the generosity of their hospitality is almost unlimited" (12). For that reason, the traditional coffee cups are rendered with coffee overflowing from them. Serving guest food or fruit was also expressed to be customary; and to have a guest and not offer them anything to eat or drink is considered shameful. To simply offer a little is not enough; rather, Jordanians offer in abundance, always seeking to fill an empty plate. Additionally, an interviewed Jordanian participant stated, when someone finishes eating, they say: "suhtain," which translates to "two-plates", meaning to "wish double health from the food on their lives." This concept is illustrated by having two coffee cups on top of each other overflowing with coffee onto a plate with coffee beans set on top of a basket of fruit overflowing out of it. The composition has the coffee cups as the focal point, as the line of vision carries from the flowing of the coffee down to the overflowing of the fruit. The color scheme is warm to symbolize the warm and hospitable nature of the culture.
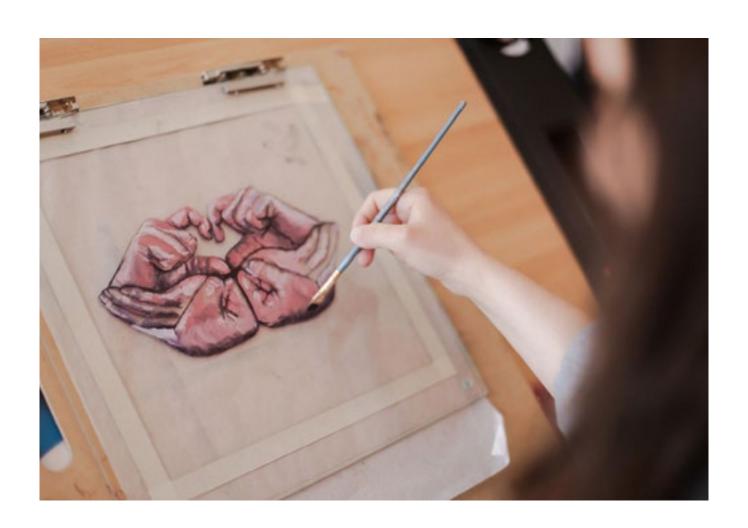
52

Greetings (Salem)

This painting supports the thesis by providing a visual solution to communicate the common everyday greeting customs of the Jordanian culture. Greetings are a significant part of the Jordanian culture, signifying respect. The piece represents greetings by illustrating hands in the shape of lips. The hands are in colors that are associated with lips or lipstick. Lips are used in association with the research and Jordanian interviews that affirm that it is customary in Jordan to greet close friends and family with a kiss on both cheeks. The lips are comprised of hands in the shape of a heart, representing love, then into hands facing outwards, representing peace, and then connected fists, representing conflict. There is also a dove in the right-hand corner, where a classic beauty mark would be, to represent peace. Peace is a word commonly used in Jordanian greetings and goodbyes. For example, Salam AL akum, which translates to Peace be upon you. Ma Salama is the Arabic word for goodbye, which translates to Peace

be with you. To not greet someone is to start conflict. Families have been torn apart and will not speak to each other because they have felt disrespected by someone not greeting them. The focal point of the lips is formed by the negative space of the hands in the center of the hands, forming a heart. The dove in the corner draws attention because of its soft white color, but it points the viewer back to the center of the composition.

STUDIO EXPLORATION OF THE CUSTOMS IN JORDANIAN CULTURE: TRANSFORMING CULTURAL MISCONCEPTION INTO CULTURAL APPRECIATION IN THE US

Family is the Gold

This painting represents the value put on family. The painting displays family as the goal. It is rendered on a mirror to symbolize Identity. From a young age, as indicated in the research, Jordanians are taught that family is everything. No matter what profession one chooses to pursue, they are first and foremost a mother or father, husband or wife, brother or sister (Sidani & Thornberry 40). The value placed on family is further displayed in a Jordanian interview, in which the participant was asked: What are the core values of your culture? And they proceeded by replying "Family is number one." The composition is rendered to have what looks like a golden family, representing them as a prize or an end goal. The golden family is placed in the center of the traditional men's headdress, symbolizing the center of the Jordanian culture. The painting is cast in a cool light, with a few warmer tones being brought out in the scarf in the foreground, leading the eye up to the figures as the focal point. The composition holds a traditional symmetrical style, reinforcing the concept of a traditional family structure.

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Identity

This piece breaks the misconception that all Arabs are Muslim and all Muslims are Arab. As previously stated in the research, "Despite the common assumptions, and the mass majority of Arabs who follow Islam, there is a significant population of Arab Christians that many are unaware of in Western society" (Al-Hazzan 6). Though in Jordan Christians are a minority, they hold a significant role in the community and are influential. For that reason, the Christian symbol in Arabic, "noon", and the Islamic crescent morphed with the Jordanian flag's seven-pointed star, rather than the Islamic five-pointed star, are both illustrated side by side to represent that people of both religions live in harmony together in Jordan. The Christian symbol is painted in gold to represent Heaven and Jesus Christ. Behind the two symbols on a separate panel are last names, with Christian last names behind the Christian symbol and Muslim last names behind the Islamic symbol. The names are painted in the colors of the Jordanian flag to represent the country of Jordan. Additionally, the names are included in the background to symbolize how last names are tied to one's identity and religion. The connection of the Jordanian last name, religion, and identity are evident in the research and interviews. For example, when asked, "In your culture, is there significance in family names?" the Jordanian participant replied: "The family name will give you your identity…because it has your heritage tied to it. You can tell by the family name is someone is a Christian or Muslim and where they come from and where their family lived before." The research further states that, Religion is included in the Jordanian passports and identification cards and is considered a form of identification" (AL-ALI 694).

Obedience

Obedience is a critical aspect of a Jordanian home and is highly valued in society. Emphasis on obedience is expressed in the research, which states that "[v]irtues of obedience, submission, yielding, compliance, and conformity are encouraged" (Sidani & Thornberry 40-41). The concept of obedience is illustrated through a lamb at the base, to represent submission and obedience. Above the lamb are hands supporting each other, and at the top is the mother's hand and finally, the father's hand, holding an Arab home with a secure grip. The hands show the structure of a Jordanian household and that the father is at the head of the household and the child must be obedient and abide by the rules as long as they live in the parent's home. Furthermore, in an Arab home, moving before marriage is seen as a sign of rebellion. The color choices used for this piece are fairly neutral, with the white lambs, and the soft pink and reddish tones soften the hands leading up to the brown house. The lamb gains the viewers' attention and leads the eye upwards, with the hands to the home placed as the focal point at the top in a type of triangle composition.
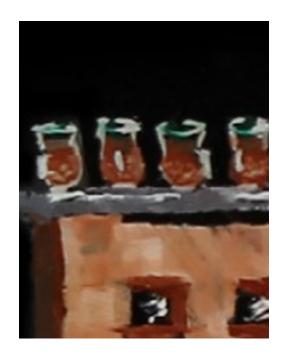
Honey

The language of the Jordanian people is like honey rich and sweet. The language is also filled with unusual metaphors and similes, as expressed in the research (Almaney 11). To convey the unusual metaphors and ornate expressions of Jordanian culture, a common Jordanian saying was illustrated. "Azah habbebak assal ma telhaso kollo." The common saying was one I would hear quite often growing up, which is translated in English to, "If your friend is honey don't lick it all." To clarify, it is talking about not taking advantage of someone who loves you or someone who is being nice to you. This saying is represented in my artwork as a skull with a honeycomb for a brain, with a bee sucking out all of the honey. Though a skull is not a typical representation in Jordanian culture, it is effective to reach a western audience that is accustomed to skull symbols. The colors of the piece show warm shadows and the pale yellows of the skull, with the richer yellow for the honeycomb leading to the even richer warm color of the bee. The honey is represented in gold, showing the person's energy and treasure being sucked out of them.
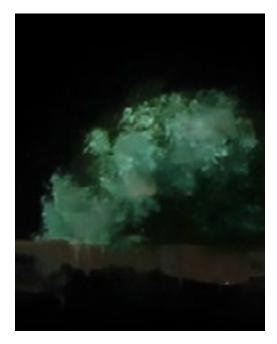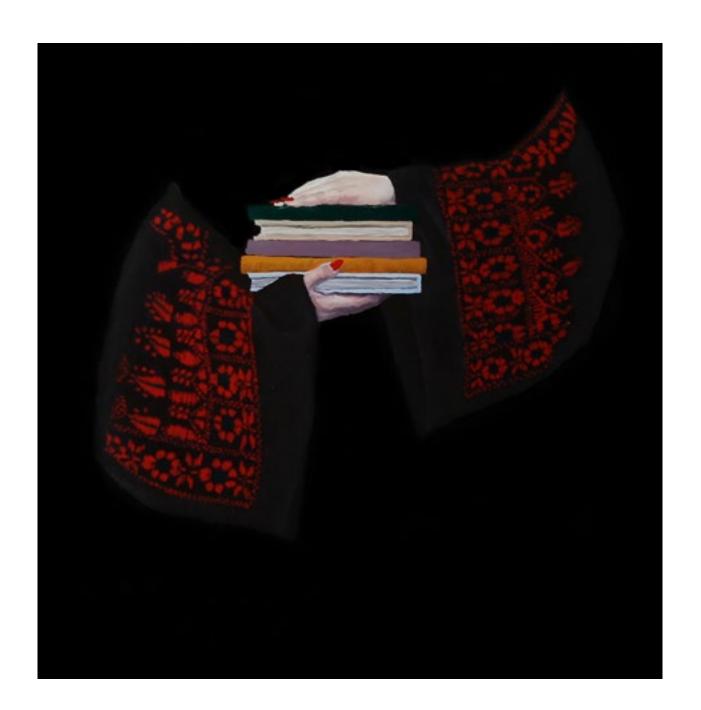
Community

Community in Jordan is very tightly-knit. As mentioned by a Jordanian participant in an interview, when asked: "What are some common everyday customs?" more than one replied, joining local people and visiting neighbors for a cup of coffee or tea. It is also customary to stay up late on the flat roof tops and commune together; this is also known as a "Suhrah". This is illustrated by a Jordanian house with a tea tray on top, with the moon behind it to symbolize communing together with tea through late hours. The color of the house and the tea is warm, showing the vibrant life and community inside, while being offset by the cooler colors of the mood and the bushes displaying the gleam of the late night.

Education

Education is highly valued in Jordanian culture and not only for men, but also for women, especially amongst Christians. As demonstrated in a study done in 1990, US Arab-Americans, both men and women, obtained higher levels of education than Americans. Not only is this value on education relevant within the US, but also in Jordan, due to the high cost of living that creates a necessity for both men and women to work. This breaks the stereotype that Arabs do not like women to be educated. This is displayed through a woman's hand holding books. The traditional Jordanian woman's attire pattern is placed on the sleeves from the hands to represent both women and the country of Jordan. The colors of the books also hold significance, as each book color represent a field of study that is considered prestigious and honorable in Jordanian culture. The green represents Medicine, as becoming a doctor is the greatest accomplishment one can achieve in a Jordanian family. The beige book represents business and accounting. The purple book symbolizes law, the orange represents engineering, and the pale blue represents education. The orange book is the longest because
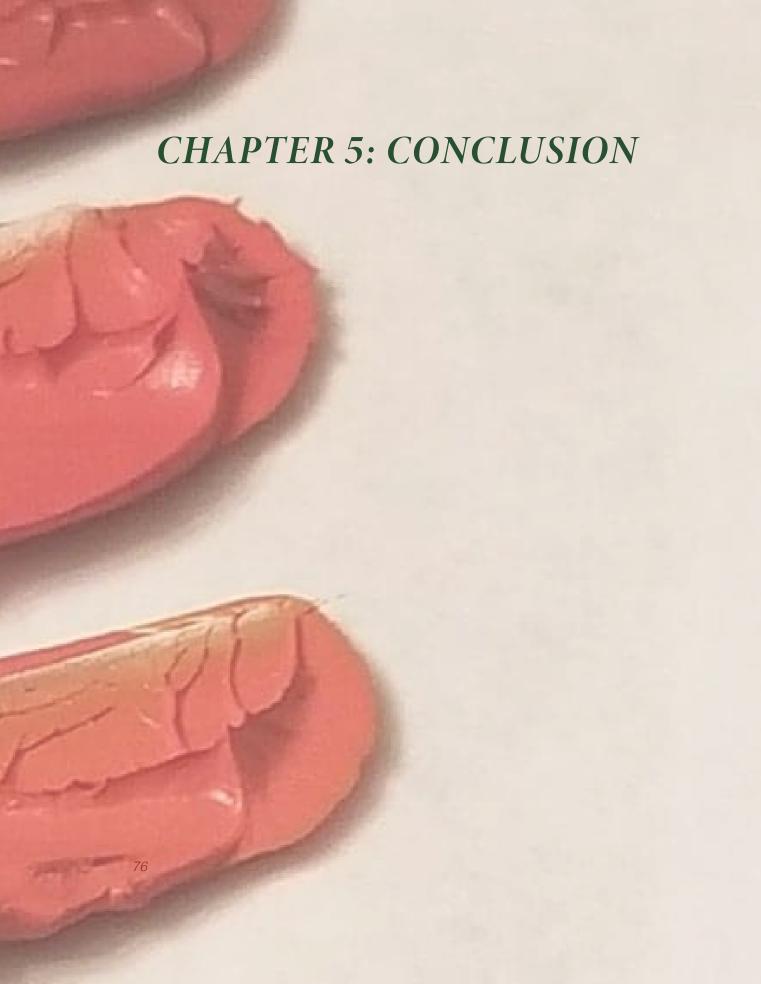
it is the most prevalent among Jordanians. As noted in the research, "The country has a sizable cadre of well-educated people, especially in engineering fields" (Honey 135). The composition shows the books as the focal point and the sleeve of the clothing frames it, guiding the viewer's eye from one side to the other.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, culture is a combination of values, principles, and beliefs that influence behaviors, which establish a norm of patterns and actions sustained by a people group and imposed by society through acceptance. It is through understanding a culture's religion, values, and customs that a person can experience cultural appreciation. Exposure to and appreciation of Arab culture is lacking within the US and its citizens, due to issues of means and safety, among other reasons. In addition to the limited knowledge American people have about Arabs, the impression they are given from the media is often negative. The negative stigma, as well as lack of knowledge and experience, is evident through IRB-approved interviews conducted with Americans over the age of 18.Communities can benefit by breaking through misconceptions and stereotypes and gaining an understanding and appreciation of a vilified people group. Through visual illustrations via oil paint on glass, one can see into the Jordanian culture, appreciating its rich language, hospitality, community, obedience, religion, greetings, education, and family bonds. The conceptual illustrations are inspired by a series of IRB-approved interviews conducted with Jordanian participants over the age of 18. The eight paintings on glass are the core values and customs that encompass the culture. However, moving forward, I would like to expand upon the series. Some areas in which I would expand the series would be in the area of language, an entire series could be made of just Jordanian sayings. Additionally, there are a lot of traditional Jordanian pre-engagement, engagement, and wedding customs that I would like to illustrate. The next steps for my thesis consist of reaching out to Christian Arab organizations, such NEXTGEN, to share my work and reach more people and spread cultural appreciation. Furthermore, I am looking to share my thesis work with schools and institutions for educational purposes, especially during times like "Global Emphasis Week" and National Heritage Month, which for Arabs is in April. As a Certified Art teacher k-12, as on the collegiate level, I will be able to send my work to teachers and school systems I know and have worked with.

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