Reclaiming the Body: Understanding Arab–American Hybrid Experience Through Affective Attunement

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Abstract
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Reclaiming the Body: Understanding Arab–American Hybrid Experience Through Affective Attunement

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Salma Tariq Shukri
June 2015
Advisor: Dr. Kate Willink
ABSTRACT

Critical intercultural communication (CIC) scholarship on hybridity emphasizes the necessity of examining hybrid performances within their cultural, political, and interpersonal contexts. Though telling, it overlooks a significant piece of the puzzle in understanding hybrid lived experience: how one feels in relation to an interaction, societal structure, or circulating discourse. This dissertation seeks to build an interdisciplinary bridge between CIC and affect theory with the purpose of emphasizing the importance of embodiment in the exploration and interpretation of hybrid performance. To do this, I will draw upon what Manning (2013) terms affective attunement, which accentuates how each lived moment is particular to its historical, interpersonal, sociopolitical and embodied contexts. Furthermore, I develop embodied narratives of location as a complementary methodological counterpart that highlights the necessary inclusion of embodied context in scholarship that examines everyday experience. In this study, I examined the embodied narratives of location of five Arab-American women. My findings mark a critical turning point in liberating formulaic representations of Arab-Americans by putting forth more complex and processual understandings of Arab-American performances as ongoing and embodied. Ultimately, I illuminated how positioning “feeling” as the primary analytical frame moves CIC scholarship toward more unscripted and emergent explorations of experience.
"Surely with every difficulty there is relief. Surely with every difficulty there is relief.” Al-Quran [Sharh, 94:5-6]

I am thankful to God for providing me with guidance while completing this project. I am also thankful for the people in my life who helped keep me grounded and focused.

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CHAPTER ONE

Augmenting the Lens: Introducing an Interdisciplinary Theoretical Model

We are the stories we tell; our words map the spaces of home. Our experiences etch themselves into our faces, the lines of grief and joy becoming sharper with age, our lives are timbered with a resonance underscored by the surprisingly fragile bass note of sorrow. To remain silent is to deny the embodied selves that bear us, rooted stalks into the world: to become complicit in our homelessness. . . My attempts at writing are haunted by the Palestinian and other Arab lives so rarely given media space in human, personal terms. Voices I do not know press upon me, reminding me of the betrayal of silence. But the task of confronting, on both a personal and political level, the outrages of history requires a measure of personal confidence difficult for one schooled in silence. Like other Arab Americans, I have experienced hostility upon speaking out: threatening phone calls, anonymous mail, destruction of property, racist accusations. When I attempt to testify to the lives beyond the brief images of despair or anger flashed across the screen, I stumble over my own wariness of an environment so resistant to acknowledging Arab concerns, grievances, homelessness.
I used to introduce myself as “half Palestinian, half American,” moving in and out of these dual identities with the same rapidity and surreptitious fear with which I still tuck my Palestine map necklace inside my clothing when I wish to avoid confrontation, or pull it out when I am weary of avoidance. Though I now insist on the facets of my identity as integrally interrelation, my articulation of selfhood against this landscape of homelessness is a matter of constant negotiation and renegotiation.

—“Beyond Silence” by Lisa Suhair Majaj

In response to globalization, an increasing number of individuals have traversed oceans seeking more secure and stable lifestyles (Hall, 2007). Many individuals and families have migrated, and continue to migrate, for economic, educational, social, or political ends (Hall, 2007). Conquergood (2002) claims, “[T]he movement and multiple migrations of people is sometimes voluntary, but often economically propelled and politically coerced” (p. 145). Individuals who have made different countries their new homes create hyphenated identities—they become hybrids as they both retain and adopt cultural values and behaviors from multiple cultures. These individuals take on many various identifying labels, such as global nomads (Ahmed, 1999; Chambers, 1994; Malkki, 1992; Wise, 2000), migrants (Ahmed, 1999), Third Culture Kids (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001), or cultural hybrids (Anzaldúa, 1987; Bhabha, 1994; Calafell, 2004; Cheng, 2008; Hall, 1990, 2007; Hao, 2012; Lee, 2006; Marcu, 2012; Moreman, 2008; Pieterse, 1994; 2001; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Young, 2009). They characterize themselves as individuals who associate with several cultures. Of these migrant groups, many Arab families have migrated to the United States for economic, social, or political ends. Over

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1 Personal narrative extracted from Unrooted Childhoods (Eidse & Sichel, 2004, pp. 269-270)
time, by marriage, or by birth, immigrants and their children are granted citizenship creating Arab-American\textsuperscript{2} hyphenated identities: they become cultural hybrids. Currently, there are about 3.5 million Americans of Arab origins in the United States (Arab American Institute).\textsuperscript{3}

The disciplines of psychology, political science, sociology, and ethnic studies have developed bodies of literature on Arab-American experiences in relation to discrimination and self-esteem (Moradi & Hasan, 2004; Poinsett, 2011), political discourse and representation (Merskin, 2004; Tamer, 2010), and how Arab-Americans reformulate their collective identities and engage in various patterns of assimilation (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Nagel & Staeheli, 2004, 2005; Youssef, 2008). However, Arab-Americans remain largely under-investigated within critical intercultural communication (CIC) with the exception of Witteborn’s (2004, 2007, 2008) work that examines Arab-American collective experience.

Arab-Americans operate within a tumultuous sociopolitical climate in the United States as a result of tenuous relations between the U.S. and various Arab countries (Witteborn, 2007). A critical intercultural examination would enrich literature on Arab-Americans by elucidating the ways in which cultural intermixing has complicated everyday understandings and performances of these individuals. In specific, a critical communicative lens would shed light on how Arab-Americans navigate multiple cultural scripts as they negotiate spaces of belonging, or homespaces, amidst discourses of

\textsuperscript{2} For the purpose of this study, Arab-Americans will be defined by those decedents of over 22 Arabic-speaking countries in Southwest Asia and Northern Africa including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (Arab American Institute).

\textsuperscript{3} Retrieved from http://www.aaiusa.org/pages/demographics/
nationhood that work to govern performances of national identity. For hybrids, such discourses present themselves as minefields wherein the wrong performance may result in social exclusion from either culture within which they associate (MacDonald, 2010). For instance, behaviors deemed more Western may prompt the Arab community to question the commitment of an Arab-American to their values and lifestyles, and traditionally collective Arab practices may position the Arab-American as an outsider among U.S. Americans. As though this terrain is not difficult enough, Arab-Americans are faced with an additional complex obstacle: that of making sense of a state of being wherein their two primary cultural identities are politically polarized. As such, Arab-Americans are often conflicted about how to perform their hybrid identities and cultivate spaces of belonging as they navigate between performances of assimilation, rebellion, and so forth.

In her work unveiling the complexities of Arab-American identity, Witteborn (2004, 2007, 2008) examines collective Arab identity within this community. She situates Arab-American performance as socio-politically and discursively enacted. She states that Arab-Americans “constitute who they are by positioning themselves in discursive practices and sociopolitical structures and by confirming, challenging, and transforming them” (Witteborn, 2008, p. 206). Witteborn (2007) highlights the ways sociopolitical and interpersonal contexts shape and inform Arab-American performance, positioning Arab-American hybrids as “sociocultural identities” (p. 557). However, though Arab-Americans operate within similar ideologically and politically governing structures, they respond to their experiences in varied manners. What accounts for this difference in
performance? Is a sociopolitical and interpersonal exploration analytically sufficient to interpret the nuances of Arab-American experience?

CIC scholarship on hybridity emphasizes the necessity of examining hybrid performances within their cultural, political, and interpersonal contexts as a result the fluidity and contingency of hybridity (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002; Hall, 1990; Halualani, 2008; Shome & Hedge, 2002; Young, 2009). I believe that a macro (i.e., sociopolitical) and micro (i.e., interpersonal) based examination makes the focal point of hybrid performance the cultural, political, and historical contexts without attending to the ways in which these contexts inform the reacting and performing body. Though telling, they overlook a significant piece of the puzzle in understanding Arab-American lived experience. As this dissertation will show, what is missing is insight made possible by using an affective lens: how one feels in relation to an interaction, societal structure, or circulating discourse. I seek to articulate an often-overlooked element in the exploration of hybridity, performance, and belonging: feeling. Everyday performance, after all, is not enacted in formulaic form, but is felt and lived. It is my purpose to elevate the body—which often goes understated—and include it in critical explorations of performance. Though feeling is not the only orienting factor, I will argue that it is the one that underlies hybrid experience, positioning it as the relational link between sociopolitical, cultural, and interpersonal discourses and emergent performance (Protevi, 2009). I will focus on feeling in my project in an effort to emphasize its critical importance within the discipline.

This dissertation seeks to build an interdisciplinary bridge between CIC and affect theory with the purpose of emphasizing the importance of embodiment in the exploration
and interpretation of hybrid performance. I first briefly survey the current scholarship within CIC and performance studies in regards to the body to set the stage for the need for an embodied approach. I then position affect literature as a synergistic and natural extension to the disciplines of communication and performance studies. Though this task presents itself as a tall order, I believe it one that is necessary. Considering the ways in which globalization has complicated notions of identity and belonging, scholars need to move toward interdisciplinary forms of inquiry in an effort to achieve depth of investigation and interpretation. This project suggests one such alliance and utilizes an interdisciplinary approach that joins critical intercultural scholarship with affect philosophy. In doing so, this move adds dimensional depth to exploring the ways in which individuals communicatively and performatively make sense of and enact their identities.

Drawing upon affect scholarship within critical intercultural communication presents us with a means to better understand the inherently affective communicative negotiations of performance and belonging, and in turn, to better understand social behavior (Magat, 1999). It provides scholars with a deeply contextual and theoretical foundation that equip them to investigate the underlying affect that influence participant experiences and help them interpret these social behaviors in a more meaningful way. In addition to social implications, an interdisciplinary lens also provides insight to unveil the political implications of hybrid experience. How a cultural hybrid affectively understands and performs their identities will ultimately inform the ways in which he or she will participate within his or her communities. Stewart (2007) states, “There is a politics to being/feeling connected (or not), to impacts that are shared (or not), to energies spent
worrying or scheming (or not), to affective contagion, and to all the forms of attunement and attachment” (p. 16). Cultural hybrids perform their identities in response to social attachments and detachments from various groups, which are affective in nature.

To assemble an affective lens to CIC, I will draw upon what Manning (2013) terms affective attunement. Affective attunement draws attention to resonant embodied feelings that emerge in response to events and experiences and informs how individuals position their bodies in relation to everyday events. Placing affective attunement as a central component of hybrid examination unveils avenues to better understand how hybrids make sense of their experiences in their everyday. Where Manning (2013) states, “Affective attunement is key to interpersonal belonging” (p. 7), an emphasis on affective attunement presents scholars with a means of understanding the ways in which the local and structural contexts resonate and inform hybrid experiences, performances, and feelings of belonging as they navigate their way through discourses of belonging, homespace, and nationhood.

I will apply this theoretical understanding in my examination of Arab-American experience. As stated, Arab-Americans find themselves in fluctuating, tenuous sociopolitical landscapes within the United States, therefore continuously (re)negotiating their performances and spaces of belonging as they affectively attune to these multilayered contexts. In other words, Arab-American performance is greatly based on the embodied ways they react to people, discourses, events, and environments. Affective attunement allows for an examination of Arab-American performance wherein the locus of analysis shifts from one that is externally contextual to one that examines the ways in which those contexts impact the body. Examining Arab-American experience through a
lens of affective attunement, I believe I can better capture the unspoken yet felt nuances of how hybrids understand their identities and make sense of home in response to everyday social experiences in a society embedded within an often hostile political environment.

**Summoning Synergy: Harnessing the Feelings that Guide Us Home**

Affective attunement is the notion that individuals relationally orient themselves to spaces, encounters, events, histories, futures, and other selves in a corporeal manner through feeling⁴ (Manning, 2013). It occurs within relational moments, wherein individuals align their bodies vis-à-vis the ways in which shifting sociopolitical, cultural, and interpersonal contexts corporeally register and move their bodies (Protevi, 2009). During a moment of occurrence, “[a] charge passes through the body and lingers for a little while as an irritation, confusion, judgment, thrill, or musing” (Stewart, 2007, p. 39), and a performance emerges in response. It speaks to the necessity of attending to the body, situating feeling as the catalyst for performance. Stewart (2007) highlights the role that feeling plays, stating, “It will shift people’s life trajectories in some small way, change them by literally changing their course for a minute or a day” (Stewart, 2007, p.

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⁴ Affect scholars make a definitional distinction between the terms emotion and affect where emotion is that which is linguistically representable and affect resides in the realm of the ineffable (Bondi, 2005). Protevi (2009) makes the boundary between emotion and affect more permeable and moves away from a dualistic framework wherein affect and emotion are positioned as binaries by acknowledging the ways in which affect and emotion weave in and out of each other. He states,

In some cases, situations are well in hand, and affects collapse into emotions having something of a representative function: they show us how things actually are and how they will evolve . . . In some other cases, the situation exceeds our ability to make sense of it; affect extends beyond the body’s ability to emotionally represent the situation; we are overwhelmed and thrown off-kilter. Here we are at the limit of faculty of sensibility: these situations cannot be sensed from an actualized point of view of recognition and common sense (‘it makes no sense’), but can only be felt [emphasis added]. (p. 54)

Protevi employs a more fluid use of these terms with an emphasis on feeling as the common denominator.
The corporeal ways in which our experiences register upon our bodies are those that provide meaning to our experiences (Stewart, 2007) and yet often go understudied.

Affective attunement is the way we make sense of everyday experience from a perspective that accepts and positions the body as a necessary source of knowledge and interpretation (Manning, 2013). How an individual feels informs how they respond to their experiences. For example, how an individual might feel will determine whether they speak out, remain silent, rebel, or conform. Through a lens of affective attunement, I explore the ways in which feeling consequentially underlies Arab-American hybrid performances as they negotiate their complex hybrid identities in various sociopolitical and interpersonal contexts in their everyday. As will be elaborated upon in more depth, hybrids are positioned in between various cultural discourses of nationhood that govern belonging through normative and unified performances. Drawing from multiple cultural scripts, hybrids often find themselves marginalized within their respective communities (Ahmed, 1999; Anthias, 2002; Malkki, 1992; Walker, 2011)—they do not quite fit in. Maneuvering their performances in an effort to cultivate and maintain spaces of belonging thus becomes a consistent struggle of the utmost importance among hybrids. I believe that examining hybrid experiences through a lens of affective attunement can more effectively reveal the ways in which such struggles resonate within their bodies and inform their everyday performances.

Hybrids’ conceptualizations of home and homespaces\(^5\) have “direct and indirect implications for daily life and how they perceive and interpret it” (Magat, 1999, p. 121). Feelings of belonging or non-belonging affect how they perform their identities within

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\(^5\) I will use the terms home, homespace, and belonging interchangeably. See hooks (1990).
interpersonal, social, and political settings. Feeling like an outsider, for instance, may fuel a hybrid to perform in more assimilatory ways in regards to the cultural community they are seeking a sense of belonging with (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). An Arab-American, for example, may try to anglicize his or her Arabic name, or adopt a new name, in an effort to make a smoother transition into U.S. American communities. Feelings of non-belonging may also incite more rebellious performances wherein a hybrid intentionally and deliberately performs in ways that highlight and celebrate their difference (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). For example, an Arab-American may intentionally choose an Arabic song as his or her ringtone while living in the U.S. to maintain a sense of connection with his or her cultural heritage. What causes one individual to performatively work toward conforming to U.S. ways of being in one moment and another to performatively resist assimilation in another? Whereas a thorough examination of the sociopolitical and interpersonal contexts can provide insight on external factors surrounding hybrid performances, such an examination does not specifically illustrate the ways in which these contexts cause a body to react. Whereas certain experiences may bring up feelings of shame in one individual, they may elicit feelings of defiance in another. In this dissertation, I argue that exploring the underlying affective dimension in hybrid experience is integral to further a more comprehensive, fair, and nuanced understanding of these performances. In particular, understanding the unspoken affective subtleties of how hybrids make sense of where they belong—spaces of identification and acceptance—can add unique and important knowledge to hybridity literature.

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6 This is an act also known as reactive ethnicity. See (Rumbaut, 2008).
It is my goal to argue for the inclusion of the theoretical framework of affective attunement within CIC scholarship, and in hybridity studies in specific. I believe that an embodied conceptual lens presents itself as a natural extension to a discipline that examines communicative aspects of everyday performances. To establish this synergistic connection, I first review the existing literature on hybridity and belonging. I then articulate the ways in which a theoretical lens of affective attunement enhances hybridity research within critical intercultural communication. Finally, I speak to how this lens can help scholars better understand the complex embodied struggles of individuals that help make up the understudied Arab-American community.

Theorizing the (Hybrid) Body: A Literature Review

Hybridity\(^7\), as I use it in this project, is the state of consciously associating with more than one national culture. It is theorized as an in-between state that is neither here nor there, but in the intersecting space between cultures (Bhabha, 1994; Yep, 2002). Where globalization facilitated the transfer of information, it also eased and encouraged the mobility of people in a parallel fashion. The increased movement of people across cultural and geographical boundaries paved the road for cultures to come face to face more frequently, and often times, more permanently through migration. This intermixing was bound to have an effect on cultural identity (Halualani, 2008). Globalization has resulted in the hybridization of identities wherein individuals have found themselves situated in between practices, values, languages, and lifestyles of two or more cultures (Anzaldúa, 1987; Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 2000; Halualani, 2008; Moreman, 2008; Witteborn, 2008).

\(^7\) Though hybridity can span across a number of identity markers, I use the term to refer to transnational and diasporic populations.
2007, 2008). These individuals consider themselves to have multiple cultural identities and homes, where “home” refers to a space of belonging (hooks, 1990). Hybridity is becoming increasingly commonplace. Over the past few decades, the United States has been a beacon for migrants, who make up about 13% of the population. These individuals navigate culturally ethnic identities alongside an acquired U.S. American identity.

Straddling multiple cultures, hybrids assume performances from multiple cultural scripts between which there is fluid movement (Hall, 2000; Pieterse, 1994, 2001). This positions them in an in-between location, or what Bhabha (1994) coins as a “third space.” Located in this third space, hybrids are “neither the One . . . nor the Other . . . but something else besides” [original emphasis], which contests the terms and territories of both” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 41). What this quote clearly exemplifies is a condition that the majority of hybrids know all too well—they do not fully belong in either culture but reside on the margins of both. Hybrids are generally viewed as culturally illegitimate, inauthentic, and impure in regards to cultural discourses of belonging (Anthias, 2002; Anzaldúa, 1987; Chambers, 1994; MacDonald, 2010; Pieterse, 2001). The notion of home as an affective and relational space of acceptance and belonging (hooks, 1990) thus presents itself as a struggle that most hybrids grapple with in terms of their everyday performances as they move between their respective communities.

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8 According to the Migration Policy Institute, “[n]early 41 million immigrants lived in the United States in 2012”.

9 I recognize that the term “American” encompasses all people who identify as citizens of the North, Central, and South America. However, this dissertation focuses on hybrid individuals who identify as Arab and U.S. American. For the sake of brevity and fluidity in reading, I will use the term “America/n” to refer to U.S. Americans in specific.
When understood discursively, home is a governing structure that dictates normative behavior wherein adhering to conformed notions of performance secures a sense of belonging, and all other performances run the risk of positioning individuals as outsiders (Ahmed, 1999; Malkki, 1992; Mallet, 2004; St. Pierre, 2008). “For people whose performances fall short of perfect citizenship, homeplace…is an ideology with hands that mold people’s performances and hold the power to welcome them in or shove them out” (MacDonald, 2010, p. 34). Drawing from multiple cultural scripts, hybrid performances often defy normative behaviors and threaten established ways of being (Chambers, 1994; MacDonald, 2010). As a result, hybrids often find themselves in a state of chronic homelessness (Walker, 2011), exponentially heightening a need for finding acceptance. Yearning for “home,” thus, reveals itself as a catalyst for hybrid performance (Ben-Yoseph, 2005; Hart & Ben-Yoseph, 2005; Teerling, 2011).

Critical intercultural communication (CIC) scholars have taken great interest in exploring hybridity to gain insight into the factors that inform the construction and performance of these dynamic identities as they negotiate spaces of belonging amidst states of multiplicity (Calafell, 2004; Cheng, 2008; Durham, 2004; Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002; Hall, 2000; Herakova, 2009; Lee, 2006; Malkki, 1992; Moreman, 2008; Nakayama, 1997; Pieterse, 1994, 2001; Yep, 2002). Most critical explorations of hybridity have examined experiences within interpersonal and sociopolitical contexts (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002; Durham, 2004; Halualani, 2008). They interpret the ways in which diasporic hybrid bodies position themselves in relation to social, political, and historical circulating discourses. Durham (2004), for example, articulates South Asian-American female experiences by exploring how adolescent girls understand and
express their sexuality in response to conflicting cultural discourses. Durham situates her analysis by exploring the tensions amidst strict traditional cultural and familial expectations and Western media hypersexualization of the female body. This study highlights the complex interplay between “the global and the local” (p. 156) in the creation of emergent hybrid “new ethnicities.” Though this study presents the ways in which sociopolitical, cultural, and interpersonal factors inform performance, what this study does not do is bring to the fore the ways in which these forces resonate within the bodies of these South Asian-American participants.

Though intersections of the global and local undeniably impact hybridity, there remains an unexplored point of analysis through which we can better interpret hybrid experiences. How is the body implicated in the emergence of these new ethnicities? By bringing feelings to the forefront of analysis, scholars can engage in another plane of meaning-making: embodied meaning. Without an understanding of whether the emergent hybrid performances of Durham’s (2004) South Asian-American participants were informed by feelings such as anger, shame, sadness, pride, etc., a somewhat formulaic and general understanding of South Asian experiences emerges that constricts the interpretation of their performance to the micro and macro contexts. Most research in critical intercultural communication focuses on the communication practices of hybrid identity by examining the power dynamics resulting from the interplay of sociopolitical structures and local performances (Durham, 2004; Halualani, 2008; Witteborn, 2007) as opposed to uncovering the undeniable value that an embodied and visceral examination brings forth.
Halualani (2008) has contended in the past that “there is a communicative aspect to . . . diasporic experiences not fully examined in the field” (p. 6), and argued for a more dynamic understanding of immigrant adaptation experiences that move beyond geographical and national analyses. Her work made room for more fluid understandings based on the interplay of the historical, cultural, and political. I take on a similar approach by bringing to light another communicative element that has been overlooked within the field of intercultural communication. Though communication scholars have done an exemplary job of exploring hybrid identity, and the micro and macro contexts are telling of how hybrid performances may emerge and be enacted, I assert that attending to embodiment in interpreting hybrid experiences helps shed theoretical and analytical light on the ways in which feelings inform performances.

Articulating the relationship between feeling and emergent performance is significant because performance cannot be stripped from the body that enacts it. In fact, it is nearly impossible to speak to experience and performance without implicating feeling, as noted by Bakhtin (1993):

Everything that is actually experienced is experienced as something given and as something-yet-to-be-determined, is *intonated* [emphasis added], has an *emotional-volitional tone* [emphasis added], and enters into an *effective* [emphasis added] relationship to me within the unity of the ongoing event encompassing us. (p. 33)

The affective component is central to experience; all experience is underlined by an “emotional-volitional tone.” The inclusion of embodiment as a key contextual factor hence requires an understanding of the ways in which ideological discourses and interpersonal interactions resonate within the body. “Our bodies are our only means of knowing the world; our experience is given to us through our bodies. We inhabit the
material world, we live in [original emphasis] it and are not observers of [original emphasis] it” (Cromby, 2012, p. 101). To undertake an embodied analytical approach, the body becomes the key site of understanding.

It is the relationship between macro and micro contexts and the ways in which they implicate, position, and resonate within bodies that produce performances (Protevi, 2009). That is not to say that the topic of embodiment has not been broached in communication research. There are a number of scholars that have heralded the inclusion of the body within their work both ontologically and epistemologically, especially within the field of performance studies (Alexander, 2005; Calafell, 2005, 2012; Conquergood, 1991; Madison, 1993; Pollock, 1999, 2013; Willink, 2010). Pollock (1999), for example, sets up birth narratives as an alternative mode of knowing in a medicalized environment where cold, hard, scientific knowledge dominates. In drawing attention to the body, these scholars have also turned to performative methodologies, arguing that poetry, autoethnography, and performative ethnography can articulate the affective components within experience (Calafell, 2004, 2005; Cavanagh, 2013; Faulkner, 2005, 2007; Hurtado, 2003; Madison, 1993; Ono, 1997; Pollock, 1998a, 1998b; Spry, 2001). In fact, scholars examining their own hybrid bodies have flocked to performative methodologies in an effort to convey the felt struggles within their own experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987; Calafell, 2004, 2005; Moreman, 2009; Nakayama, 1997; Ono, 1997). Though these scholars have made an effort to make experience more palpable, few have clearly articulated the key role that embodiment plays in relation to performance.

For the purpose of my research, I must nod to one performance scholar in particular who goes beyond arguing for the inclusion of the body in research and makes a
significant move to position embodiment at the center of performance. In her recent book, *Acts of Activism*, Madison (2010) emphasizes “affective energy” as that which “inspires” performance (p. 5). She articulates embodiment as a form of “knowledge that literally moves [original emphasis] our musculature and the rhythms of our breath and heart, as corporeal knowledge conjoins cognition through enfleshment knowledge” (p. 7). Like Madison, I work toward “embrac[ing] a metaphysical vocabulary such as energy and affect” (Madison, 2010, p. 5) through a lens of affective attunement (Manning, 2013). This move integrates the body into intercultural and hybridity research. With Madison’s work as a point of departure, I carry forth the argument that feeling underlies all performance, especially that of hybrids as they affectively navigate their bodies amidst discourses of nationhood and belonging that persistently position them on the margins.

**Affective Attunement and Hybrid Performance**

Affective attunement is a lens that brings attention to the notion that feeling is the relational link between an individual and their environment. Feeling is the basis through which individuals engage with the world. Individuals viscerally sense, and react to, sociopolitical and interpersonal contexts in their everyday performances (Richardson-Ngwenya, 2014). In other words, affective attunement speaks directly to the manner in which feeling initiates performance through relational movement.

Like a live wire, the subject channels what’s going on around it in the process of its own self-composition. Formed by the coagulation of intensities, surfaces, sensations, perceptions, and expressions, it’s a thing composed of encounters and the spaces and events it traverses or inhabits. Things happen. The self moves to react, often pulling itself someplace it didn’t exactly intend to go. (Stewart, 2007, p. 79)
To undertake explorations of hybrid everyday experience through a critical and affective lens requires the conceptualization of performance as an embodied relational process (Richardson-Ngwenya, 2014). Performance is a relational occurrence where “the body never acts alone” (Manning, 2013, p. 108). Therefore, in attempting to explore the ways in which hybrids perform in their everyday as they negotiate spaces of belonging, we should be asking what that performance is in relation to and what feeling informs that performance.

Hybrids operate within environments wherein circulating cultural discourses position hybrids as outsiders (Ben-Yoseph, 2005; Chambers, 1994; Walker, 2011). The relationship between these discourses and affect is central to this dissertation because home and belonging, after all, are notions that can only register on an affective level (Ahmed, 1999; Ben-Yoseph, 2005; Eidse & Sichel, 2004; Hart & Ben-Yoseph, 2005; hooks, 1990; Mallet, 2004; Massumi, 2002; Nakagawa, 1997; St. Pierre, 2008; Teerling, 2011; Wise, 2000; Yep, 2002). They cannot be understood holistically outside of an affective frame. Belonging is an affective resonance that determines acceptance, validation, and/or rejection. “[W]hat attaches us, what connects us [original emphasis] to this place or that place, to this other or that other is also what we find most touching; it is what makes us feel [emphasis added]” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 28). At its most basic quality, home is palpable—it is felt and lived. One cannot be at home unless one feels at home. Therefore, in engaging with discourses that always view “cultural fragmentation and mobility with horror” (Chambers, 1994, p. 71), hybrids are often unable to secure a feeling of belonging and are overcome with feelings of chronic homelessness (Malkki, 1992).
This affective rupture resulting from feelings of non-belonging provides the grounds with which to argue that hybrids, in particular, are caught in a heightened process of affective attunement as they look to locate acceptance and belonging. Hybrids affectively attune and perform in relation to the surging feelings they embody as they internalize ideological and national discourses of belonging and viscerally respond to the local context in terms of their immediate interaction. Feeling discomfort, fear, or insecurity—or acceptance, tolerance, and comfort—within a social exchange indubitably influences the performance of a hybrid negotiating feelings of belonging or alienation. For example, feeling fear works to create social distance as it “align[s] bodily and social space” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 70). Feeling disgust also bears weight on social interactions and spaces of belonging. Ahmed (2004) notes, “Disgust . . . operates as a contact zone; it is about how things come into contact with other things” (p. 87). Affective attunement is thus central to exploring these nuances as a means to better understand hybrid performance in ways that explain the feelings that may fuel hybrids to performatively adopt the culture of the host country, retain the culture of their home country, or perform any other behavior in between at various times and locations.

Critical examinations of hybrid performance with an emphasis on affective attunement recognize the interpersonal, social, and political implications of embodied performance. “Affect indicates that living bodies…do not negotiate their worlds solely—or even for the most part—by representing to themselves the features of the world, but by feeling [emphasis added] what they can and cannot do in a particular situation” (Protevi, 2009, p. 48). Such an approach brings to the surface how feeling informs performance in the everyday. The resonant embodied feeling within an experience is the performative
link between individual, experience, and environment. “[I]t is through the body that social and material forces most intimately constitute experience” (Cromby, 2012, p. 95).

Attending to the bodily resonances to explore hybrid performance can work to illustrate the ways in which feeling informs performance. In addition, an attention to embodiment takes steps toward ensuring a more rich and thorough exploration of social, political, and embodied implications of the hybrid condition.

**Revealing the Affective Link: Arab-American Affective Attunement**

As explained earlier, Arab-Americans are often met with discomfort due to their hybrid status that positions them as fragmented identities. In addition, Arab-American hybrids are also frequently met with misunderstanding and fear in response to the cultural and sociopolitical discourses that represent the Arab identity as fearsome and threatening in today’s political world (Ajroush & Jamal, 2007; Awad, 2010; Merskin, 2004; Tamer, 2010; Witteborn, 2004, 2007, 2008). Arab-Americans find themselves in fluctuating tenuous sociopolitical landscapes within the United States. Arab-Americans have generally experienced stigmatization in the U.S. society due to political tensions, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the attacks on the World Trade Center in September of 2001, and the subsequent global War on Terror (Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Such perceptions have led to acts of discrimination against Arab ethnic groups in society such as the resistance to the construction of mosques in both New York and Murfreesboro, TN, in late 2010, and the burning of the Quran in 2011 by Terry Jones, Pastor of the Dove World Outreach Center (Peyser, 2010). In societies that discursively and politically resist their assumed cultural and religious practices, performing hybrid identities presents itself as an obstacle for Arab-Americans. Having laid the theoretical
groundwork for examining hybridity through an affective lens, I now show how this theoretical lens applies to Arab-Americans.

Considering the tenuous relations between the U.S. and various Arab countries, Arab-Americans are situated in an in-between location where their two identities are politically polarized. Thus, in addition to these two identities presenting themselves as a point of rupture in the larger cultural discourse, Arab-American identity pushes this point of rupture even further as a result of political discourses that pit these identities against one another. Therefore, it is important to consider the ways in which Arab-Americans perform and cultivate spaces of belonging in between multiple cultures, as well as in an environment that is politically hostile toward them. Considering this strained environment, it is without doubt that performance has a significant relationally embodied dimension that illuminates how Arab-Americans processually move through the world as they affectively attune to these multilayered contexts. In other words, I examine how Arab-American performance is based on emergent feelings in relation to people, discourses, events, and environments that Arab-Americans engage with.

As expressed in the opening narrative, Majaj demonstrates the ways in which feeling shapes Arab-American hybrid everyday performance. As a reminder, she states:

I used to introduce myself as “half Palestinian, half American,” moving in and out of these dual identities with the same rapidity and surreptitious fear with which I still tuck my Palestine map necklace inside my clothing when I wish to avoid confrontation, or pull it out when I am weary of avoidance. Though I now insist on the facets of my identity as integrally interrelation, my articulation of selfhood against this landscape of homelessness is a matter of constant negotiation and renegotiation (in Eidse, 2004, p. 270)
This excerpt illuminates the undeniable link between feelings and hybrid performance. Majaj’s awareness of her difference, her multiplicity, and her homelessness has caused her to remain attentive to her everyday performances. As evident in her narrative, this attentiveness is not only that solely directed to sociocultural and interpersonal context but to her embodied context (e.g., fear, apathy, etc.) as she negotiates notions of home.

To undertake this project, I have developed a multi-contextual epistemological approach termed *embodied narratives of location* (ENOL). Elaborated upon in Chapter Two, ENOL is based on narrative and specifically calls upon the need to give attention to the affective resonances that underlie participants’ narrated performances in relation to micro and macro contexts in an effort to better understand how embodiment informs performance and belonging. Embodied narratives of location prove necessary and highlight how “[a]ttention to emotions allows us to address the question of how subjects become invested [original emphasis] in particular structures” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12). Such a context-specific method nods to the nuanced, and important, function that affective attunement plays in bridging the embodied with the social and political contexts through performance. I use qualitative interviews to elicit contextualized narratives from Arab-American participants. I then present these narratives in the form of poetic transcription in an effort to pay tribute to the feelings at the time of narration—the hesitancies, the pauses, and the non-verbal nuances. These narratives will be collected and interpreted in an effort to explore Arab-American10 lived experience within the discipline of

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10 In invoking representational terminology, I do not do so to uphold prescriptive labels but to examine how individuals feel in relation to structures of power that govern belonging. I seek to bring light to the ways in which ideological discourses of nationhood that preach singularity, authenticity, and exclusivity, and that are disseminated through identity categories, work to affectively impact hybrid everyday performances; I examine how these representational structures affect individuals and inform their behavior
communication. They will also serve to uphold the importance of an interdisciplinary approach that examines the affective components of Arab-American lived experiences.

**Significance of Study**

I make two large contributions to the communication discipline. On a theoretical level, I make the claim that examining hybrid experiences through an affective lens augments the field of CIC. It does so through the production of a synergistic ontological approach that explores how corporeal dimensions inform the ways in which hybrid bodies move in relation to structural and interpersonal discourses, interactions, and experiences. I also make a methodological contribution in that I forefront qualitative story-based methods as tools with which to explore experiences of identity performance and belonging. I expand upon this agreed-upon use of narrative by proposing embodied narratives of location as a means of purposefully interrogating the affective dimension within these experiences. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, embodied narratives of location work to highlight affective attunement at play in participant narration of everyday experience. In an effort to ensure that Arab-American bodies are not treated as abstract objects moving between local and structural contexts, it becomes incumbent to utilize a method that explores the underlying affective catalysts for performance. After all, we cannot give meaning to the performances of Arab-Americans if we do not understand how feeling propels and enriches the occurrences.

(Chen, 2012). Therefore, to understand how a self-identifying Arab-American locates him or herself in relation to these structures of identity and governance, I need to invoke the identity categories of “Arab” and “American” to articulate the role these discursive constructions play in informing my participant’s everyday performances.
Finally, this research project seeks to validate the experiences of members of the Arab-American community by drawing attention to the underlying affect that informs their communicative practices. In providing them with an opportunity to voice their feelings and the ways in which embodied contexts have shaped their lives, I empower these individuals and allow them to heal as they make sense of their experiences (Baxter, Norwood, Asbury, Jannusch, & Scharp, 2012; Willink, 2010). This project will ideally motivate other scholars in the discipline to engage with a line of inquiry that pertains to the Arab-American population in specific—a population that is in desperate need of humanization, informed academic and social representation, and understanding in our current sociopolitical environment. Outside of Witteborn (2004, 2007, 2008), the experiences of this group continue to be under-investigated within intercultural communication.

Though this work targets individuals with specific identity classifications (Arab-Americans), it does not make a solid connection between this identity and affect per se. I chose hybrid identities to examine because, as will be further explained, I believe they may have an innate tendency to be more hyper-aware of these moments of affective attunement. Furthermore, I chose Arab-Americans because of the aforementioned

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11 This dissertation is specific to the Arab-American hybrid population. However, I find it necessary to clarify that both affective attunement as a theoretical framework and embodied narratives of location as its complementary method are not reserved for Arab-Americans, or cultural hybrids at large. A partnered use of affective attunement and embodied narratives of location can be used to examine all lived experience. I believe that such an approach would be most beneficial for those whom lack representation in scholarly literature, but potentially most beneficial for members of communities that are represented negatively in media and popular culture as a means of humanizing their experiences. For instance, affectively exploring the lives of members of the homeless community through embodied narratives of location can offer a deeper understanding of the everyday lives of a marginalized group that is often stereotyped and marginalized.
political, social, and therefore affective, tensions faced by members of this community. In addition, the Arab-American community is the community that I have both access to and a vested interest in. However, this work does not limit its results to Arab-American hybrid performances, but highlights affective attunement at play through them.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

In this chapter, I laid the theoretical foundation and rationale for an interdisciplinary examination of how affective resonances inform Arab-American everyday experience through the lens of affective attunement. I argued for how equipping critical intercultural communication with an affective lens allows for a more insightful examination of hybrid performance. I foregrounded feeling and relationality as central to my theoretical and analytic frame. In Chapter Two, I make an argument for the development of a multi-contextualized narrative methodology, *embodied narratives of location* (ENOL), that calls for the inclusion of the embodied context as a central component to understanding emergent performance. Chapter Two also fully details my methodological approach by explicating my research process and, more specifically, my data collection, poetic transcription, and analysis processes.

In chapters three through seven, I analyze critical and performative moments for five participants through a lens of affective attunement. In approaching my results and analysis sections, I chose the five participants that shared their experiences in most detail and those that were able to engage more openly with the topics being discussed. I dedicated a chapter to each individual. My dissertation is structured this way to interpret the embodied narratives of location elicited from my participants in a fair and contextualized manner, comprehensively taking into account their historical,
sociopolitical, local, and embodied contexts. To do so, I needed to ensure that I did not resort to thematic analysis that would implicitly generalize performances and feelings that are unique to my participants and the contexts of their experiences. These individual chapters highlight the role that that affect plays in informing Arab-American hybrid performance and the ways in which an attention to affective attunement can enhance CIC scholarship.

Interspersed between these chapters are two bridge interludes that serve to elevate theoretical themes that advance the theory of affective attunement. These bridges draw upon examples from my participant chapters to more complexly illuminate theoretical undercurrents tied to affective attunement. In the first bridge, I introduce the notion of activist philosophy as a conceptual framework that undergirds the theory of affective attunement and positions all events and phenomena to be in a state of perpetual movement. This interlude explores the notion of habits and how they relate to activist philosophy and affective attunement. The second bridge explores the relationship between affective attunement and language both in the recalled experiences of my interviewees and during the interview itself.

Chapter Eight makes a final theoretical move to advance the theoretical framework of affective attunement by highlighting three primary theoretical notions that are central for my interdisciplinary approach. This chapter also presents the contributions of the project to the discipline of communication studies at large.
CHAPTER TWO

Contextualizing the Body Through Story: *Embodied Narratives of Location (ENOL)*

[Stories reveal truths about human experience.]

--Catherine Kohler Riessman, 2008

We are the stories we tell; our words map the spaces of home.

--in Eidse & Sichel, 2004

As a critical intercultural scholar interested in exploring Arab-American hybrid everyday experiences, I rely on narrative methodologies. “[N]arrative accounts by actors are often the most accessible for social researchers who are interested in the ways individuals understand and interpret their place in the world and are of particular interest to scholars of collective imaginings around belonging” (Anthias, 2002, pp. 498-499). Through narrative interviewing, I elicit “thick description[s]” of experience (Geertz, 1973) situated in context. However, not all contexts are revealed, drawn upon, or solicited through narrative. Some narratives shed light on sociopolitical discourses; others may draw upon and help illuminate an immediate local context; and others may elucidate both. In this study examining the ways in which hybrid bodies perform in their everyday through an affective lens, I sought a context-specific narrative methodology that attends
to context across three dimensions: the sociopolitical (i.e., the macro), the interpersonal (i.e., the micro), and the embodied (i.e., the affective). In turning to extant narrative methodologies, I did not find a method that clearly emphasized the embodied component. What I did find was Anthias’ (2001, 2002) work on narratives of location. Drawing upon two key principles in affect scholarship, temporality and relationality, narratives of location presents itself as a methodology that interprets each experience as one that is situational and once-occurring. Inspired by Anthias, I was drawn to the method of narratives of location because it gives strong attention to the location and positionality of a performance at a specific moment. Drawing from this scholarship, I have developed an emergent methodology that I refer to as embodied narratives of location (ENOL). ENOL works to examine identity as a process of relational performances that are informed by structural, local, and felt contexts.

Experiences are generally situated within structural and local contexts (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002); however, what remains missing is the embodied context that gives these other contexts life, meaning, and movement. Focusing on feeling as the common denominator between emotion and affect (Protevi, 2009), it is feeling that I drew upon when developing ENOL. Feeling and affective attunement are located in the body: they are embodied. The locus of performance is felt in response to, and in relation to, the surrounding contexts. Like Stewart (2007), “My effort here is not to finally ‘know’ them [the feelings]—to collect them into a good enough story of what’s going on—but to fashion some form of address that is adequate to their form; to find something to say about ordinary affects” (p. 4). My goal in developing this methodology is not simply to uncover affect or identify feelings as they emerge within experience (even though I ask
participants about them), but to hone in on the ways in which feelings affect us and move us through affective attunement—the notion that bodies orient themselves to individuals, objects, discourses, and environments in response to feelings that emerge in relation to these contexts. An attention to affective attunement provides us with a deep contextual theoretical foundation that equips us to investigate the underlying feelings that influence hybrid experiences.

In this chapter, I argue for the necessary development of my method, embodied narratives of location. ENOL builds off of CIC narrative methodologies through the addition of an affective lens with which to examine the embodied dimension of hybrid experiences. I believe that ENOL is an epistemological complement to my theoretical framework that allows me to examine communicative and embodied aspects of hybrid everyday performances. To provide the relevant background for my methodology, I first review extant literature on narrative-based methods in relation to identity and belonging, as well as existing literature on the significance of context in hybridity studies in CIC. I then explicate the relationship between narrative, context, and ENOL. I show how embodied narratives of location can contribute to CIC scholarship through narratives that illuminate the affective context of experience. I also illustrate how this method works to help me enrich the level of analysis of Arab-American experience through its emphasis on feeling. In doing so, I look to position embodied narratives of location as a fitting method with which to more deeply understand the complex embodied struggles members of the Arab-American community. Finally, I detail the particulars of my study, including data collection, recruitment, and analysis.
Following the Storyline Home: How Narrative UNCovers Experiences of Identity and Belonging

Narrative-based methods allow for rich and comprehensive descriptions that help us make sense of lived experience. Narratives have thus been found to be central to understanding identity and experience (Langellier, 1999; Witteborn, 2008). Because of its ability to give voice to experiences of identity and home, narrative has found a home in communication and performance studies as an epistemological tool for exploring the performance of “socially marginal, disparaged, or ignored groups or for individuals with ‘spoiled identities’” (Langellier, 1999, p. 134). It includes and validates the experiences of marginalized communities as they articulate their experiences and resist master narratives (Langellier, 1999). In conjunction with empowering silenced voices, narrative also works toward healing these communities (Baxter et al., 2012; Willink, 2010). It provides a space for making sense of grief and pain (Pollock, 2013; Willink, 2010); there is a “catharsis of disclosure” that reduces traces of chaos left behind by an experience (Baxter et al., 2012). Consequently, narrative—used inclusively and ethically—stands out as one of the most heavily relied upon methods among communication scholars in the study of hybrid identity (Calafell, 2004; Halualani, 2008; Hao, 2012; Langellier, 1989, 1999, 2010; Mitra, 2012; Moreman, 2008, 2009; Nakayama, 1997; Ono, 1997; Witteborn, 2007, 2008; Young, 2009).

Though extant scholarship on narrative-based methods has stressed the necessity of examining micro, and macro, and even temporally specific relational context to better understand the ways in which hybrids create, resist, and/or negotiate spaces of belonging, what remains unarticulated is an emphasis on the role that affective context plays. The
method of embodied narratives of location is not a critique of narrative-based methods, nor is it an act to identify their limitations. Rather, ENOL is a suggested catalyst for epistemological growth in that it may enrich narrative-based accounts through an intentional and necessary inclusion of the affective component as embodied narratives of location are collected.

This is not to say that narrative-based methods exclude affect and emotion. Quite the contrary, story-based methods provide room for affective context. After all, as Pelias (2005) states, “With lived experience, there is no separation between mind and body, objective and subjective, cognitive and affective” (p. 418). Narrative-based methods such as autoethnography, for example, allow for affective inquiry (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autoethnography is “a felt-text” (Spry, 2001, p. 714). Calafell (2004) relies on narrative to express the “loss” experienced by diasporic individuals. Similarly, Hao (2009) explores how he negotiates spaces of “comfort” and “discomfort” while performing Asianness in the classroom. Ono (1997) uses personal narrative to illustrate the tensions of negotiating multiple voices by referencing affective memories that helped shape his current hybrid voice. In addition, Willink (2010) notes that personal narratives allow for real stories of pain to come forth that cannot be told through other means—they “speak to and through the burn of grief, pain, and memory” (p. 208). Clearly, narrative-based methods engage with affect and emotion. Even narratives of location engage with several levels of exploration—“structural, cultural, and personal” (Anthias, 2002, p. 499)—hinting at a more internal and embodied dimension; however, Anthias (2002) does not clearly link the ‘personal’ to the affective. I argue that though story-based methods often allude to the affective context, they do not explicitly
investigate affect and embodiment as factors central to the experienced event. Scholars have not decidedly positioned the affective dimension as a necessary component in interpreting experience, but rather privilege the global and local contexts while assuming an implicit affective element. Thus, the need for embodied narratives of location arises. After all, “If we acknowledge that our senses are irreducible from what we encounter then this has repercussions on how we shape our research practices” (Swirski, 2013, p. 349). Embodied narratives of location work to reflect a level of attentiveness to this component, and work to include affective data as necessary in the collection and interpretation processes in an effort to fully make sense of the experience being examined.

Elevating “Context:” Interpreting Performance & Liberating Identity

In the examination of identity, performance, and belonging, narratives are heavily dependent on relational context (Conquergood 1991; Riessman, 2008). Critical intercultural scholars who examine hybridity have made a notable move toward epistemological frameworks based in context on both the micro (i.e., local) and macro (i.e., structural) levels (Cheng, 2008; Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002; Durham, 2004; Hall, 2000; Pieterse, 1994; Young, 2009). Critical intercultural scholars Halualani, Fassett, Morrison, and Dodge (2006) note, “[N]arratives are formed by the intersection between the generality of the structure and the particularity of experience” (pp. 74-75). Drzewiecka and Halualani (2002) urge an examination of the cultural and structural dimensions that inform a performance. Similarly, Shome and Hedge (2002) state that identity “has to be studied at the intersection of global and local forces, and at the level of the cultural and political” (p. 187) in an effort to understand the nuances that inform the
emerging performances. Not only is context important, but imperative to stitch a narrative together.

In exploring hybrid performance as contingent and fluid, a deeper level of contextualization becomes integral. Hybrids move fluidly between cultural performances depending on the situation, suggesting that each performance requires its own contextualization to capture the relevant information needed to make sense of hybrid performances at the moment of their emergence. After all, as Hall (1990) notes, a performance emerges “from a particular place and time [emphasis added]” (p. 222). In order to explore the time and place of hybrid performance, Anthias (2001, 2002) introduces an approach termed narratives of location to examine issues surrounding identity and belonging with an emphasis on the temporal and locational context. Narratives of location situate a performance in interplay with its immediate contexts “a specific point in time and space” (Anthias, 2002, p. 498)—the emphasis here being on location and positionality at each specific moment. “[I]f identity is situational, then surely the situational facets are the ones to analyse [sic] in tandem with outcomes” (Anthias, 2002, p. 496). For example, Anthias (2002) shows the situational nature of hybrid identity among Cypriot youths, and the ways in which they alter their identification based on each specific experience through narratives of location. Narratives of location hone in on a particular event and explore the factors that may or may not have influenced the performance of the individual.

So the question that poses itself, then, is: Why do we need another method? What remains unaccounted for in narratives of location? I argue that though narratives of location urge a heightened level of contextualization, they do not clearly call for the
inclusion of embodied contexts that provide an additional level of insight in interpreting hybrid everyday performances. In developing the method of embodied narratives of location, I demonstrate how an additional layer of data collection and analysis only work to strengthen narrative methodologies through a more comprehensive contextualized analysis with the hope that “this move to particularity will advance the level of our analysis” (Warren, 2008, p. 300). Not only does ENOL account for exploring hybrid performance in relation to dynamically shifting contexts, it also serves to remind scholars and readers alike to see those enacting the performances as human as opposed to scripted abstract beings. This additional layer that I propose as worthy of exploration is the affective/embodied dimension.

**Turning to the Body: Embodied Narratives of Location**

An embodied narrative of location is a story-based method that extends narrative methodology and explicitly calls out for a multi-contextual analysis of the lived experience being narrated. Embodied narratives of location elicit a reflection on experiences with dedicated attention given to the way performance results from the interplay of local and sociopolitical contexts with embodied affective resonances. ENOL validates the claim that “[t]he interplay of our senses, creativity, and politics can richly inform research assemblages and welcomes new expressions of the ways in which we engage with data” (Swirski, 2013, p. 350). Thus, the contribution that embodied narratives of location makes is that it elevates the status of the affective context so that it is both theoretically and analytically accounted for alongside the micro and macro contexts.
In her book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed (2004) asks the important question: “What do emotions do [emphasis added]” (p. 4)? Following Ahmed, I assert that feelings inform performance. Through ENOL, I propose that the affective dimension is not separate from micro or macro contexts and the ways in which they motivate performance. Rather, it is what moves a body and motivates a performance in relation to historical, political, and social discourses and local contexts (Protevi, 2009). To demonstrate this claim, I draw attention to the ways in which sociopolitical circulating discourses impact our everyday performances through affect. Through ideologies that “imply” normative values in terms of cultural ideals of beauty, for instance, individuals feel confidence or shame in their everyday in relation to these discourses. Similarly, ideological discourses of nationhood affect individuals to feel belonging, acceptance, or exclusion. “There is a politics to being/feeling connected (or not), to impacts that are shared (or not), to energies spent worrying or scheming (or not), to affective contagion, and to all the forms of attunement and attachment” (Stewart, 2007, p. 16). How an individual feels informs how they perform and participate in their communities. Therefore, an “[a]ttention to emotions allows us to address the question of how subjects become invested [original emphasis] in particular structures” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12). The impact that feeling has on performance is not limited to the macro level, but translates over into the micro level where interpersonal interactions between individuals also affect how an individual feels and performs. Therefore, in an effort to better understand what motivates everyday hybrid performance, it becomes necessary to examine how the micro and macro contexts resonate affectively within an individual.
Hybrids operate in societies that uphold cultural discourses that elevate notions of purity and authenticity (Ahmed, 1999, 2004; Anthias, 2001; Chambers, 1994). These discourses teach individuals to fear the fragmentation and hybridization of identities (Ahmed, 1999, 2004; Anthias, 2001; Chambers, 1994). In other words, hybrid identities are discursively deemed as threatening. As such hybrids are often met (on a local scale) with fear and a lack of understanding, with judgment and exclusion. For example, many Arab-American hybrids are made to feel as though they are not “Arab” or “American” enough (or even “too American” or “too Arab”) by their communities. These distinctions come about as a result of both the discursive understanding—as well as the interpersonal interactions—that suggest that there is a right and expected way to be “Arab” or “American.” Deviations from cultural scripts (being “too American” or not “American enough”) can often push hybrids to the margins of their communities, resulting in their social ostracization as well as possible feelings of homelessness, confusion, and loss (Walker, 2011). They may move hybrids to feel fear; they may move others to feel shame; they move others to feel defiance. ENOL thus illuminates these affective contexts that underlie everyday performances in an effort to enrich the level of analysis in examining the ways in which hybrids engage with and invest in their communities, as well as to contribute to CIC literature on hybridity.

In sum, embodied narratives of location explicitly demand the critical examination and analysis of three main components: (1) an individual’s lived experiences at a specific time and location (the local context); (2) their positionality in relation to structural discourses (the sociopolitical context); and (3) the affective and/or emotional intensities that propel emergent performance through affective attunement (the embodied
context). ENOL speaks to the interpersonal complexities as well as the broader cultural and political intersections within society at large through an emphasis on embodiment.

In developing this method, and illustrating its potential, I am not suggesting that it displace the efforts of previous critical scholarship but that it acts to pave the road toward an enriched epistemological direction. It is my belief that this move allows me to explore hybrid identity performance through more critical and comprehensive examination with an intentional and necessary inclusion of the local, structural, and affective components that inform the event.

**Embodying Experience: An Arab-American Study**

As noted in this dissertation, Arab-American hybrids find themselves in complex affective landscapes as a result of their hybrid status in addition to the cultural and sociopolitical discourses that negatively represent the Arab identity (Ajroush & Jamal, 2007; Awad, 2010; Merskin, 2004; Tamer, 2010; Witteborn, 2004, 2007, 2008). Arab-Americans find themselves engaging in fluctuating and tenuous sociopolitical landscapes and interpersonal interactions within the United States. They continuously (re)negotiate spaces of belonging and relational “homes” as they affectively orient themselves in relation to these multilayered contexts (Ahmed, 2004; Protevi, 2009). Therefore, to better interpret the everyday experiences of Arab-Americans it is incumbent to explore this process of affective orientation, or affective attunement.

Guided by the theoretical framework of affective attunement (Manning, 2009, 2013), I examine the ways in which the social, political, and corporeal resonate and move an Arab-American hybrid through ENOL. Without examining or investigating the feelings that move hybrids to act, or react, one way over another, we risk missing data.
that helps us interpret the experience, or worse, making assumptions based on our own sense-making practices that attempt to put together the macro and the micro cohesively. Therefore, it becomes incumbent to utilize a method that explores the underlying affective catalysts for performance. After all, we cannot give meaning to the performances of Arab-Americans if we do not understand the feelings that propel, react to, and explain the occurrence.

Theoretically, I refer to the affective dimension in my research as the force that propels a hybrid to enact a certain performance in relation to his or her surroundings: “[i]t is the intensities or impulses that originate outside of awareness but nevertheless structure activity” (Cromby, 2012, p. 92). Methodologically, to capture these intensities and impulses, I asked Arab-American participants to reflect on moments when they either consciously or unconsciously negotiated their multiple identities and notions of belonging. I encouraged them to reflect on critical moments when the topics of identity and home/belonging were most prevalent or salient to them and to describe the events surrounding the experience. I probed to elicit the sociopolitical and local contexts. I then further inquired into what they felt in those moments. Finally, I asked my participants what they did in response to that interactive moment. Through these questions, I was not attempting to identify the emotion or affective force at play; rather, I sought to bring attention to occurrences of affective attunement to emphasize the connection between the somatic and the social (Protevi, 2009). I sought to show the importance of feeling in everyday hybrid performances. In attending to these affective variances by asking about feelings, emotions, and how hybrids are affectively attuning, I was able to identify and
pursue the exploration of these embodied nuances to add a deeper level of understanding to Arab-American hybrid performances and belonging.

**Data Collection**

Participants. For the purposes of this research project, I interviewed eight self-identifying Arab-Americans who are currently living, or spent the majority of their lives living, in the United States. This number of participants allowed for the necessary level of contextual depth elicited through embodied narratives of location as my participants reflected on their everyday experiences. Since there are no definitive criteria for what an Arab-American *is*, what was key for me in this selection process was that the participants self-identified as an Arab-American themselves. All of my participants but one were American citizens of Arab descent; one was a U.S. resident (i.e., green card holder). Some were dual citizens with both American citizenship and Middle-Eastern citizenship. My participants were from Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Iraq, and Egypt. My participants were all women between the ages of 25 and 40. ¹² Participants’ occupations varied from students, receptionists, business owners, and stay-at-home parents. All of my participants

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¹² All of my participants were Muslim women. Their demographics are relatively homogenous in terms of gender, religion, class, and English fluency. Though my participants illuminated a variety of everyday embodied performances, I believe that much can still be learned about Arab-American everyday performance in the U.S. across more intersectional lines. Future research can elicit embodied narratives of location from a more diverse group of Arab-Americans. These experiences can shed light on the ways in which bodies affectively engage with various structures of power, including religion, gender, class, language, etc. For instance, a self-identifying Christian Arab-American could work to uncover different relational contexts, affects, and performances thereby adding to the literature regarding Arab-Americans that is in need of diversification. Such an initiative can expand and enrich CIC scholarship regarding Arab-American experiences, provide Arab-Americans with opportunities to voice their experiences, and humanize the Arab-American experience through personal and evocative narratives. Such research can work to counter stereotyped and essentialized representations of Arab-Americans that circulate within media and circulating sociopolitical discourses.
have lived in the United States for a great portion of their lives,\textsuperscript{13} and some have experienced living in, and traveling to, their respective Arab homelands at various points in their lives.

**Recruitment.** As a self-identifying Arab hybrid, I have close relationships with individuals within the Arab-American community. Through the relationships I have built, I have developed rapport and a sense of kinship with members of the community during my time living in the United States. Therefore, I used purposive sampling, a nonrandom sampling method that focuses on recruiting specific members of the intended community (Merrigan & Huston, 2009). I contacted Arab-American acquaintances via email, explained the purpose of my study, and asked for their participation. Though I initially attempted to elicit participation from five male and five female identifying Arab-Americans, I received apologies or silence from all of my male participants. I then contacted more female Arab-Americans who agreed to participate in my study until I secured eight participants. My participants were promised confidentiality\textsuperscript{14} and access to the results of my project, should they want them, to ensure proper representation.

**Interviews.** This project was based largely on eight in-depth interviews and several journal entries. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), “The ability of the qualitative interview to go deeply and broadly into subjective realities has earned it a place as one of the preeminent methods in communication studies” (p. 172). To be more specific, I conducted narrative interviews that were based on the storytelling of everyday

\textsuperscript{13} All of my participants have expressed that they do not have access to a large Arab community in the U.S.; however, it would be telling to elicit embodied narratives of location from Arabs that have a strong affiliation to diasporic Arab communities in the U.S. to better understand how affectively attuning to a stronger Arab presence may inform their performances.

\textsuperscript{14} Confidentiality for my participants is required in accordance with the Institutional Review Board.
life experiences (Kvale, 2007; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). “The stories are often told in relation to cultural discourses of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other politicized identities” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 181). Therefore, considering the purpose of my research project in drawing out contextual depth during an event, narrative interviewing presents itself as the appropriate method to elicit embodied narratives of location. Narrative interviews are interested in entire stories as opposed to parts of stories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). I asked my interviewees for contextual detail in terms of the event and how they were feeling at the time to capture their embodied narratives of location. During these interviews, I asked my interviewees to reflect on experiences as I took on the role of a listener (Kvale, 2007). Through interviews, I gave my participants the space to speak to the contexts relevant to their experiences, as well as their feelings, in a way that was true for them.

Generally speaking, interviews are dialogic performances (Baxter, 2011; Langellier, 1989; Willink, 2010). “It takes time—and the commitment of two or more people working together—for an interview to reach its full potential” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 172). As such, it was important for me to share the purpose of my study with my participants. As Lindlof and Taylor (2011) note, an interview may be more likely to meet the goals of the research if it is a project “in which the researcher and the participant are mutually invested” (p. 187). I explained to my participants my personal investment in this work: to better provide Arab-Americans a voice with which to articulate their experiences and to help establish an environment of safety, trust, and compassion for the interview.

Interviews involve relational work and require a deep level of trust and rapport to be established (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). These meetings are not simply sessions of data
collection, but “involves a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 2). These relationships are reciprocal and work to create a safe environment wherein personal stories are shared. The researcher often needs to allow him- or herself to be vulnerable alongside their participants. Rubin and Rubin (1995) affirm this by stating, “You are not asking someone to tell you what you won’t share with them” (p. 37). I could not have asked people to be vulnerable with their stories if I was unable to do the same. This quality becomes even more significant when engaging in qualitative interviewing with participants from marginalized communities about topics of a personal nature. Therefore, as a self-identifying member of the community, I recounted my own experiences with my participants as grounds to promote understanding, comfort, and rapport with my participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). I found that these interactions took on the form of co-performative witnessing (Conquergood, 2002; Madison, 2010), “feeling, sensing, being, and doing witness” (Madison, 2007, p. 829) with my interviewees whom I spoke “with” and not “to” (Madison, 2007, p. 828). The interview sessions were ones of mutual narration, reflection, and sense-making.

Considering the emphasis on the element of affect for this project, this section would be incomplete if I did not speak to the affective nature of the interviews. Affect informs the research process itself (Bennet, 2009; Ezzy, 2010; Holland, 2007; Swirski, 2013), where “emotional and evaluative framing of the research will produce different forms of knowledge” (Ezzy, 2010, p. 169). Interviewing as a method of inquiry is an embodied emotional performance where presence, engagement, and attentiveness all shape the structure, style, and feel of an interview (Ezzy, 2010). It is the responsibility of the researcher to be attentive to these emotional dimensions in his or her methodology as
it will influence the level of disclosure and comfort while collecting data. With this in mind, I was aware that the interview would only have been as successful as the environment that I created. I conducted my interviews by being attentive and emotionally present (Bennett, 2009; Owens, 2006). All research—especially interviews seeking to elicit embodied narratives of location—demands that the researcher be emotionally present; it requires empathic and attentive listening.

All of my interviews took place between August and September 2014 after receiving approval from the Internal Review Board. I conducted two pilot interviews with hybrid individuals who identified with the Arab culture and British culture. After assessing the quality of my interview questions with these individuals, I scheduled the official interviews to be used for my dissertation. Five interviews were conducted in person in a private location of the participant’s choice to provide them with a comfortable environment to share their experiences, as well as to avoid any distractions from interrupting the flow of conversation. We met at libraries, participants’ homes, and restaurants. In addition, three interviews took place over Skype because meeting in person was not possible due to geographical distance. I reviewed the purpose of the project and the consent form with each of my participants, ensured them that confidentiality measures were in place, and reminded them that they could withdraw at any time from this study. Each interview lasted between 1-2 hours. There was some time both before and after the interview spent asking about families, careers, and health. Arab culture and social etiquette are based on collectivism (Obeidat, Shannak, Masa’deh, & Al-Jarrah, 2012) as it is a culture where relationship-building, and conflict-avoidance, and the concept of “face” are very significant. These shared moments were necessary to
display respect and gratitude for my participants, validate them as individuals versus research-subjects, and to engage in shared cultural values.

Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed by an external service, Transcript Divas. Hand-written notes taken during the interview complemented the transcribed interviews and accounted for my thoughts, follow-up questions, and key moments worthy of more exploration. I also kept hand-written notes regarding noticeable non-verbal gestures (e.g., crossing arms, lighting cigarettes, looking away, impassioned hand waving, etc.). The notes helped record “subtle, fleeting meanings as they emerge[d]” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 172). I also kept a personal journal to keep track of my immediate reactions and thoughts after each interview to account for critical thoughts and primary feelings attached to each interview and interviewee. In addition, this journal worked to capture my own subjectivity within the research process and any revelatory moments (Trigger, Forsey, & Muerk, 2012)—subjective researcher experiences that prove informative during the interpretation process—that emerged. During the interviews, some narratives and feelings shared by my interviewees triggered me to reflect on my own memories of my participants, as well as my own experiences with hybridity. As such, my journal proved instrumental in my analysis.

The questions I used in my interviews were geared toward having participants reflect on moments of affective attunement in relation to hybrid identity and belonging (see Appendix B). I asked my participants to share vivid experiences of times they were

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15 I believe that future research can also make use of video recordings of interviews to observe bodily reactions in-the-moment to more effectively interpret moments of affective attunement occurring during the interview.
conscious of their hybrid identities, in addition to reporting times when they consciously negotiated notions of home. I first asked them to describe the experience in as much detail as they could remember in an effort to situate the experience within the contexts that speak to the immediate interaction as well as the larger sociopolitical environment. I then asked more specifically for them to reflect on how that moment resonated within them—I asked them how they felt in those moments, and how those feelings led them to react. I then inquired into how much they thought those feelings influenced their overall emergent performance in that experience. These questions proved to be efficient in collecting data about a) the actual occurrence, b) the affective resonances that emerged in my interviewees’ narratives and through the performance of their narration, and c) my interviewees’ own reflections on the role that affect plays in their lives.

I used an open-ended approach when gathering data to allow for an “open and inductive epistemological orientation” (Trigger, Forsey, & Muerk, 2012, p. 516) based in the relational moments of the interview. I asked my participants questions that were open-ended, hoping to invite them to reflect on their experiences and feelings. In other words, I asked them to share embodied narratives of location. These questions worked to identify “key narrative moments” (Langellier, 2010) that highlighted critical moments with high moments of affective attunement in relation to identity negotiation and performance and/or notions of home and belonging. I also asked additional questions for elaboration and more detail to ensure clarity in understanding and interpretation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Finally, though my semi-structured interview schedule guided the interview, I remained open to new directions that arose for the interview session with the knowledge that “qualitative interviewing design is flexible, iterative, and continuous”
(Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43). Interviewing, after all, is both a reflexive process (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) and a dynamic interplay (Corey, 1996). Each interview unfolded differently with the knowledge that the “content of the interview. . . changes to match what the individual interviewee knows [emphasis added] and feels [emphasis added]” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 6). I thus remained attentive to my participants’ narratives and feelings during the interviews and let them guide the interview when needed.

Upon receiving the transcribed interviews from the transcription service, I reviewed each interview while listening to the audio-recorded file. I corrected the words that were not transcribed correctly. I further inserted and translated words that were spoken in Arabic during the interview. I also proceeded to change all of the names mentioned in the interview, including the names of my interviewees. After completing all of these tasks in my initial inspection of the interviews, I listened to each interview again with an ear attentive to pauses, as well as shifts in intonation and volume in my participants’ embodied narratives of location. Through audio playback, I listened to the interviews “so as to hear the meaning [original emphasis] of what is being said” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 7). This was done to indicate points of reference for the poetic transcription of my data in a manner that paralleled my participants’ narrations. For the purposes of my study, I utilized poetic transcription in an effort to present my participants’ embodied narratives of location in ways that resonated with the readers. I believe that poetic transcription more clearly illuminated affect in the presentation of my results, more clearly depicting moments of affective attunement.

**Poetic Transcription.** The goal of this project was to elicit depth and richness in exploring affective moments of hybrid performance. It is for these reasons that I turned to
Poetic transcription as a performative epistemological vehicle that came the closest to translating embodied feelings onto a page (Madison, 1993). Poetic transcription is a means of presenting interview data that allows the text to evoke—it is “embodied presentation” (Faulkner, 2007, p. 222). It is defined as the “creation of poemlike compositions from the words of interviewees” (Glesne, 1997, p. 202). In presenting the interview data the way it was spoken, the text evokes and includes the “words actually said and to the nonverbal cues that indicate emphasis and emotional tone” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 7). Through poetic transcription, the “words are alive with sounds that condition their meanings” (Madison, 1993, p. 217), allowing the reader to affectively engage with the experience. For “when poetic transcription moves into the realm of poetry, readers also enter into the feeling [original emphasis]” (Glesne, 1997, p. 218). In choosing this form of transcription, it was my goal to animate moments of affective attunement so that they may be understood through feeling.

I approached transcribing poetically through the guidance of Glesne (1997) who explains her process as follows,

> [P]oetic transcription demanded a less-ordered structure . . . I was not only trying to make sense of data but also attempting to use [my participant’s] words to convey the emotions that the interviews evoked in me. To better do so, I gave myself the liberty to repeat her words, to drop or add word endings (ing, s, ly), and to occasionally change verb tenses (would be became am) (p. 206)

Both Madison (1993) and Glesne (1997) practice poetic license and use line brakes, repetition, and italicization. I attempted to stay as close to the narrator’s original telling as I could while also practicing poetic license to work toward sharing the feelings that the narratives evoked as I arranged the transcribed text of the interviews (Prendergast, 2006).
Poetic transcription is a layered process that grants ownership of the narrative and the words to the participant (Calafell, 2004) that is filtered through the researcher (Glesne, 1997). What results is a “third voice that is neither the interviewee’s not the researcher’s but is a combination of both” (Glesne, 1997, p. 206). In arranging my data through poetic transcription, I relied on my interviewees’ narration to guide the process while also taking liberties to ensure that the text evoked in ways that rang true to the narrations.

Poetic transcription requires more than visually reorganizing interview excerpts—it necessitates a thoughtful and focused way to validate the experiences of the interviewee and presenting the reader with a way to more closely live and feel that experience while reading it (Faulkner, 2007). Poetic transcription works to humanize the narrator through presenting their spoken word on paper by capturing his or her narrative while simultaneously acknowledging their status as “socio-historical being[s]” (Madison, 1993, p. 217). In doing so, it elevates the status of narrators from simple participants to living, performing, and feeling individuals that affectively perform within historical, social, and political contexts.

**Journals.** At the completion of each interview, I asked my interviewees to volunteer and keep a journal for a week (see Appendix B). This was an optional commitment with the objective of providing my participants another avenue to provide more detail on their narrated experiences, to reflect on previous experiences that may not have occurred to them at the time of the interview, or to articulate a lived experience that took place after the interview (Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002). Furthermore, I also provided the option to journal to allow my participants to reflect on and write about emotional or conflicting experiences that they may have felt was too face-threatening to share in
person. Out of my eight participants, five of them emailed me journal entries that either elaborated upon a narrative they had shared during the interview or shared a different experience that they had remembered. Some journal entries were sent in a week after the interview where others were sent in months after the interview.

Journaling also provides an additional benefit that surpasses the sharing of stories through written form. Journaling has been proven to help individuals learn more about themselves and to cognitively and emotionally process their experiences (Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002). The process of sharing embodied narratives of location can be an emotional process. The narrative performance results in its own affective response. That is the nature of affect; it emerges in relation to contexts and cannot be accounted for in advance. This characteristic can thus leave narrators unable to prepare for the feelings that may arise in the interview ahead of time, making narration risky. Langellier (1999) states, “When a narrator embodies identity and experience – there is always danger and risk” (p. 129). However, in offering my participants an avenue to process these emotions through written disclosure, the journals provided those that volunteered to journal an opportunity to pursue emotional growth or catharsis through gaining a greater understanding of their experiences (King, 2003; Pachankis & Goldfried, 2010; Utley & Garza, 2011).

Data Analysis & Researcher Reflexivity

I followed in the steps of Langellier (2010) who “excerpted and transcribed key narrative moments and examined them more closely for how they create[d] and negotiate[d] her [interviewee’s] identity” (p. 71). In my analysis, I honed in on key narrative moments of affective attunement and examined the relevant contexts with an
emphasis on the embodied affective dimensions. I took heed of Madison’s (2010) well-articulated goals of analysis:

The researcher’s analysis serves as a magnifying lens or, better, a house of mirrors, to enlarge, amplify, and refigure the small details and the taken-for-granted . . . Analysis helps us pay closer attention. This means that the researcher’s analysis employs theory in order to defend the complexity and dignity of the multiple truths and paradoxes below the surface but holding the surface in place. (pp. 170-171)

Through analyzing *embodied narratives of location*, I emphasized the ways in which underlying affective resonances influenced the performances of my participants. In approaching these narratives through the embodied theoretical and analytical frame of affective attunement, I magnified the small, taken-for-granted, and often under-investigated affective nuances that underlie performance. I located critical moments in my participants’ narratives as illustrative examples by “employ[ing] theory in order to defend the complexity and dignity of the multiple truths and paradoxes below the surface but holding the surface in place” (Madison, 2010, p. 171). I examined the relevant contexts surrounding these experiences, with an emphasis on the embodied affective dimensions. I also highlighted these experiences as illustrative examples of affective attunement, revealing the importance of attending to embodiment in conversations surrounding performance, identity, and belonging. I furthermore stressed that embodiment is a context we can no longer take for granted in hybridity studies.

I sought to implement methodological rigor within this project by attending to “the ways in which emotions are implicated in the research process” (Holland, 2007, p. 195). Prior to conducting my interviews, I intentionally reflected upon the emotions that I
had that may have impacted the interviewing sessions and/or the questions I wanted to ask with the understanding that,

The aim is not to pretend that the researcher does not have preexisting theoretical ideas or emotional responses related to the research topic. Rather, the aim is to engage theory and emotions reflexively so as to best hear or listen to what the research participants are saying. (Ezzy, 2010, p. 167)

As an Arab hybrid myself, I was already personally invested in this project and recorded my thoughts and feelings in a journal through the research process to account for them and the ways in which they may have influenced my interpretation of my participants’ experiences. My journal informed my analytic process. I used my self-reflexive notes about the interview process to help bring overlooked performative moments forward in my analysis.

In my attempts to remain reflexive about my role as the researcher, I tried to pay heed to several factors that may have influenced the interviews. First, as the interviewer, I recognized that I retained the power within the interview process. Though many interviewers try to neutralize power imbalances by positioning interviewees as co-participants who have access to the results prior to publication, it would have been unethical of me to lose sight of the fact that the interpretation process sat in my hands (Kvale, 2006). This being said, I still provided interviewees access to my interpretations to ensure proper representation of their experiences and to validate my analyses through member-checking (Suter, 2010). This was especially important to me as a means of ensuring that I did not speak for others (Alcoff, 1991). I explained to them that the meaning-making process was one that was dialogic and that I would rely on them to help me understand their experiences. It is my hope that this allowed them to approach the act
of narrating their experiences with less hesitancy and more candor, as well as with a level of investment that paralleled my own.

Secondly, I was attentive to the fact that stories shared during interviews were not objective on behalf of the interviewee. Interviewees may be prone to exaggerating or repressing during interview sessions (Kvale, 2007; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). However, as Denzin (2001) elucidates, “[R]eflexive interviews, as performance texts, seek the truth of life’s fictions, the spirit of truth that resides in life experiences, in fables, proverbs, where nothing is explained, but everything is evoked” (p. 33). Therefore, even if exaggeration or repression is present in the narration, the “spirit of truth” in the form of meaning and affective resonances emerge through the performance of the telling. Furthermore, the very fact that I recruited members within my own community may have led my participants to try to say what they thought I wanted to hear. I found that this was the case with some of my participants, especially initially. In an effort to avoid having my interviewees try to please me, I respectfully asked for more detail. As the interview continued and my participants gained more comfort in my investment in their experiences, I felt my participants speak to their experiences more genuinely.

In this project, an emphasis on context and affect in my analysis ensured that I refrained from relying on assumptions—or personal projections as a self-identifying Arab hybrid—to make sense of Arab-American experiences. In doing so, I “resist[ed] reducing [hybrid] cultural identity to pregiven, static, and essentialized categories of ethnicity, race, religion, gender, and class” (Langellier, 2010, p. 72). Such work demanded that I, as the researcher, be rigorous in my interpretation and analysis to make sure I elevated my
hybrid participants to voice their embodied experiences through poetic transcription so that the text evoked the feelings they shared.

**Setting up the Study**

The methodological framework of ENOL works to emphasize the necessity of a contextual approach, and argues for the inclusion of embodied context as indispensable in examinations of performance. Calling for the exploration of embodied context takes into account the ways in which a body affectively attunes to its local and sociopolitical contexts. For the purposes of this project, this method works toward highlighting the significance of affective attunement among hybrid experiences in a manner that validates the ways in which the hybrids’ feelings resonate within them and influence the ways in which they negotiate their identities as they continually yearn for and/or cultivate spaces of belonging.

Warren (2008) states, “What I propose is needed in communication studies research, specifically the research in the site of culture, identity, and difference, is a more careful and nuanced point of analysis” (p. 304). The goal of embodied narratives of location, thus, is twofold: (1) it presents itself as a method with a more careful and nuanced point of analysis that is based in context as called upon by scholars of identity across disciplines, highlighting the situational, contingent, and processual nature of performance; and (2) it brings attention to, and necessitates the examination of, the often overlooked embodied affective context that inform performance in conjunction with the local and structural dimensions that most scholars already attend to. I present my analysis in the following five “mini-chapters.” These chapters will contextualize critical
moments for each of the selected five interviewees, and reveal the ways in which affective attunement informs their performances.
CHAPTER THREE

Mariam: “At No Point Am I Both Simultaneously”

I walked into a busy local food establishment in the “trendy” part of Denver. It’s a British-American grab-and-go concept restaurant. I sat on the second chair by the door waiting for Mariam, my interviewee. Two groups of customers were asking about ingredients and ordering their meals. They were talking to my curly-haired interviewee. She sported baggy boyfriend-style jeans and a grungy Bruce Springsteen t-shirt with a large American flag serving as the backdrop for the American rock legend. She conversed with her customers in a strong American accent, explaining the motivation behind this store: the store that she owns. The first group left. The second couple had been in before. They greeted my participant, whom they called “Mary,” and ordered without inquiries. After paying, they thanked Mariam and told her they would be back soon. Mariam smiled at me, and called an employee from the back to take her place. As soon as we walked out the door she engaged in some small talk in a hushed tone, switching over to the Arabic language. We walked around the corner and sat on a bench. She pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lit one up, telling me she was ready.
Mariam is a self-identifying Arab-American. Originally from Palestine, Mariam has lived in both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, occasionally travelling to the West Bank of Palestine to visit extended family that continue to live there. I asked Mariam to share her first thoughts about what being an Arab-American has meant for her to start the interview. She thought about that question a little bit and then began describing her hybridity as an internal battle of fragmentation.

My struggles as an Arab-American have always been internal rather than external.

It's not the easiest thing in the world.

It's tough being from multiple cultures,

it's tough feeling torn between ways of being

and places

and locations.

Being an Arab and being an American…

if I were to try and separate them, in my mind, it's sort of like two ends of the spectrum.

One is very liberal,

and very independent,

and very much about building your own life,

whereas again, almost at the polar opposite, you’ve got Arabs,

which is a lot about family,

and not being alone,

and not doing it on your own.
And like the ethics and the morals are all very different.

And that’s sort of again, the internal struggle rather than external struggle.

I feel like I have to work on [being an Arab-American] every day, understanding what it means to me,

what decisions I want to make,

what part of myself I’m gonna pull on to make a choice,

because they are very separate.

At no point inside me have they become one.

I can hyphenate Arab-American,

I can say Arab-American,

But there are moments where I'm just Arab...

and moments where I'm just American.

At no point am I both simultaneously.

It's very difficult.

In this excerpt, Mariam spoke to how she moves fluidly between two very distinct cultural performances depending on the situation she found herself in. What prompts Mariam to shift between performances? What does she orient her performances around? Why might she conceptualize her cultural performances as divorced from one another? How have Mariam’s experiences affectively informed her understanding of herself? And how do these feelings shape her performances today?

To interpret Mariam’s everyday experiences requires a deep consideration of embodiment. I asked Mariam to share experiences that shaped how she understood her hybridity. She provided me with contextualized experiences of critical moments that
stood out as significant to her: events of a space, time, and location. She shared experiences from childhood to adulthood, in different geographical locations and across various interpersonal scenarios. Stewart (2007) states,

The affective subject is a collection of trajectories and circuits. You can recognize it through fragments of past moments glimpsed unsteadily in the light of the present like the flickering light of a candle. Or project it onto some track to follow. (p. 59)

A lot can be understood about an individual through an exploration of “fragments of past moments.” With an emphasis on embodied narratives of location, I asked Mariam to reflect not only on the circumstances of the events she wished to share, but also on the feelings that continued to linger upon her body carrying these experiences with her. In documenting these events, and examining them in relation to one another, I started to interpret moments of Mariam’s everyday experiences. I probed for the often overlooked element: feeling. Affectively-charged experiences in the past are ones that imprint themselves on our bodies, their rhythms of affective intensities quivering beneath the surface informing our everyday performances. As will be seen in this chapter, Mariam’s embodied narratives illuminated nuances of Mariam’s everyday experiences in a way that would have been overlooked through an analysis that did not take her body into account, treating her experiences with the integrity they deserved.

Mariam was born and raised in the U.S. She lived with her maternal family who “had already been in America for a generation and they had already very much embraced the American side of them” (Personal communication, August 13, 2014). In becoming “American,” Mariam learned to value independence, ambition, and individualism. That is not to reduce “Americanness” to these characteristics but to speak to the perspective
through which Mariam makes sense of her performances. In deconstructing “Vermontness,” Stewart (2007) describes this form of categorization:

> It is a potential mapping of disparate and incommensurate qualities that do not simply “add up” but instead link complexly, in difference and through sheer repetition and not through the enclosures of identity, similarity, or meaning, or through the logic of code . . . Disparate things come together differently in each instance, and yet the repetition itself leaves a residue like a track or a habit—the making of a live cliché. (p. 30)

What comes together under the term “American” transcends a list of traits; however, Mariam invokes the term American to signify what it *feels* like for her to orient her performances in a way that granted her a sense of belonging with those that upheld an American lifestyle: a live cliché. Mariam taught herself a high level of mastery of the English language. In her interpersonal interactions, she learned how to clearly articulate her personal needs with a level of assertiveness and individualism. She went to a public school, lived in the suburbs, and played little league baseball. Furthermore, she took on the Anglicized name “Mary.” Orienting herself to her environment, Mariam gained recognition and praise from her family members that embraced a U.S. lifestyle and the American community at large by assimilating to, and performing in accordance to, U.S. cultural expectations. The positive reinforcement that Mariam received in school, in her family, and in her community motivated her to enact assimilatory performances with a sense of pride. Mariam also frequently embodied confidence in receiving approval for performing these cultural scripts. As such, she continued to habitually perform “Americanness.” She continued to “become” American. She pushed herself in ways that would provide her with more praise—introducing herself as Mary, as well as excelling in school (in the English language), extracurricular activities, and sports.
While growing up, Mariam and her nuclear family visited her paternal family a handful of times in the Middle East. At the mention of her paternal family, I noticed Mariam visibly cringe. She crossed one arm around herself and lit another cigarette as if she re-embodied the feelings that had been imprinted on her from those experiences. Mariam explained that her paternal family was the side of her family “that hadn't immigrated to the U.S. and were still very Arab, barely any of them could speak any English” (Personal communication, August 13, 2014). Affectively attuning to a new relational and cultural context during these visits, Mariam had to orient herself to a different sociocultural, geographical, and economic landscape.

According to Mariam, Palestinians living in the West Bank have very meager jobs in simple trades and, often times, can barely make ends meet. As a result of the Palestinian-Israeli political tensions, there is no supporting economic infrastructure. To get by, large families rely heavily on immigrant family members to support them from abroad. In this case, Mariam’s father was the U.S. immigrant breadwinner that supported his entire extended family in the West Bank. Mariam and her family’s class and geographical privilege worked to highlight Mariam’s differences. Mariam’s paternal family treated Mariam as wealthy and uprooted and incapable of sympathizing with the Palestinian cause. In addition to the economic and geographical contexts, Mariam explained that she also felt like she did not belong in relation to cultural and religious codes. Palestine is a more conservative society than Mariam was familiar with. Women dressed more modestly and did not interact very much with men. Gender roles were very pronounced, where men went to work and then socialized at cafes at night and women completed the household chores (Journal, February 21, 2015).
In this cultural and geographical context, Mariam was expected to carry herself a little differently. For instance, she was expected to speak Arabic and to be able to recite parts of the Quran\textsuperscript{16} whereas she could not do either.

[T]hey didn’t like me very much.

They thought I was a snob,

they thought that I didn’t speak because I thought that I was better than them,

but realistically…

I didn’t speak because I was embarrassed of how broken my Arabic was.\textsuperscript{17}

Having spent several years feeling pride in her pursuance and mastery of the English language, Mariam suddenly found herself embodying shame in regards to the same performances while engaging with her Arab family members in a Middle Eastern context. Her shame pushed her to remain silent when she was more habitually outspoken and opinionated. While visiting her paternal family she was also expected to be more aware of her gender, yet this was another avenue wherein Mariam had trouble “becoming” Arab. Mariam was very much a tomboy. She walked around in baggy clothes and baseball caps. Instead of spending her days at home helping with kitchen and house work, she was habitually very independent and assertive, pushing to play football with the boys in the yard and go out to cafes with her dad at night. Though her parents supported these actions, her paternal family members did not approve. All of these differences positioned

\textsuperscript{16} Holy book in Islamic religious tradition.

\textsuperscript{17} (Personal communication, August 13, 2014)
her as an outsider: her socioeconomic status, gender performance, linguistic performance, and religious knowledge (Journal, February 21, 2015).

Considering that she spent years building herself up in a very specific way, in an “American” way, Mariam found herself in a situation where she was made to feel shame in the very characteristics she was proud of.

Growing up… like, I didn’t feel shame.

I was independently very proud of even, like, my smallest achievements…

or what choices I was making as an individual.

or what I was doing with my academic career…

or, whatever it was that I was doing.

But once we started interacting with this larger collective,

when you have things, like, aunts and uncles and cousins that are just sort of… looking at you with almost

… disgust,

like, you start to question yourself.

And there is doubt,

there was a lot of doubt

Like… “Am I doing things right? Am I too American?”

The interactions that Mariam had with her paternal family members rattled her confidence, resonating deeply within her on a corporeal level. The affective resonances that Mariam embodied at the time of these past events are ones that continue to reverberate within her today as an adult. They came off in her narration through the choice of her words, where the word like “marks an affective overflow in speech . . . [It]
linguistically gesture[s] to the feeling tone of the moment” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 34). They came off in her non-verbal gestures, in how she closed herself up and lit cigarette after cigarette as she looked off in the distance, remembering. Mariam, very simply, was made fun of and excluded by her aunts, uncles, and cousins. They shunned her because she was not feminine enough and spoke the “wrong” language (Journal, February 21, 2015). They mistook her shameful silence as arrogance. Instead of embracing her as kin, or trying to engage with her, or teach her to find pride in her other culture, Mariam was left feeling alienated and marginalized every time she visited the West Bank in Palestine.

Occurrences of exclusion with her paternal family were only compounded when she moved to Saudi Arabia with her family as a teenager. Her independence and self-assertiveness worked to disparage her in relation to this new context. In Saudi Arabia where gender segregation is regarded even more strictly than Palestine, Mariam grew resentful of not being able to go to the park or play in the streets as a teenage girl. She was agitated with the fact that women were not allowed to drive in the country, and that she and her mom would have to wait for her dad to drive them everywhere. In school, she was treated like a foreigner as she was barely able to speak, read, or write in Arabic and did not know very much about the Islamic religion (Journal, February 21, 2015). These events did not come and go unnoticed, but were experienced through high levels of frustration, confusion, and anger that imprinted upon Mariam’s body. These affects are often unexplored in CIC; however, “[t]heir significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible” (Stewart, 2007, p. 3). Mariam’s multiple experiences of rejection and exclusion to which she attuned to on an affective
level, affected her thoughts, feelings, and performances. Once she linked the Arab culture as a source of negative affective resonances, Mariam pushed away all other potential affects that could inform a particular moment of “Arabness” (Massumi, 2002). These affective intensities propelled her into rejecting the Arab culture and all that is related to it.

[When] I was younger, there was just sort of a lot of um… rebellion in the attitude.

And like… sort of, like, a take charge,

*I'm* gonna be whoever I *wanna* be,

Like, “You want me to *be* the bad American?

I'll *be* the bad American.

I'll say “*dude,*”

and I'll flaunt whatever it is that [I have] in front of you.

So… I think there was a lot of *rebellion*…

and a lot of *rejection* of the Arab part of me.

I mean, at least until, like, probably my early-to-mid twenties, the only part of me that was Arab was what was visible of me, rather than the way that I could speak

or write

or read

or interact with the world.

Or even, like, sort of, like, my social skills were very American rather than they were very Arab.
Mariam started sharing this narrative with a lot of fervor, scowling as she relived the challenge and the rebellion that fueled her as a child. Feeling pushed away by her family members and those she interacted with when she first moved to Saudi Arabia as a result of being “too American,” Mariam angrily pushed back through the same characteristics that set her apart. “You want me to be the bad American? I’ll be the bad American.” Finding it difficult to locate acceptance as a “Westernized” Arab, Mariam embodied vulnerability which was covered up with anger. This anger pushed Mariam to perform rebellion and to perform in the only way she knew how with confidence. Affectively attuning to discourses of singularity and nationhood, Mariam found strength in performing “Mary.” As Mary, she refused to engage with the Arab values, language, and practices.

When I first met Mariam, she introduced herself to me as Mary. All of our mutual friends called her Mary, even the Arabs that could easily pronounce her actual name. I refused to do so though, telling her that I preferred her Arabic name. For me at the time, I remember viewing assimilation as a disingenuous and fake performance that Arabs would enact to appear more “open-minded” and “unique” in the strict and traditional context of Saudi Arabia. I remember telling Mariam how she should have felt pride in her Arabic name and culture, and I just as clearly remember how upset she used to get at me. “Even my mom calls me Mary,” was her justification; but my response to her remained the same: “I am going to call you Mariam. I will never call you anything but Mariam.” Without the insight, at the time, into her insecurity in claiming an identity that was hybrid, I made a superficial assumption about her desire to “act cool” with her Anglicized label. I did not understand the affective pain that rippled through her body over the course
of her childhood, the criticism, rejection, and humiliation that she faced for not performing authentic “Arabness.” Nor did I recognize that it was her past experiences that caused her to reject her Arab background, and deny her Arab heritage as much as she was trying to. I, on the other hand, was trying to maintain my ties to the Arab world while living abroad. I was internally struggling with trying to claim both parts of my hybrid identity, scared to one day find myself feeling disconnected from either one. Prompted by different feelings, and attuning to different relational factors on an affective level, Mariam and I both performed differently.

After graduating from high school, Mariam—or Mary—went off to college in the U.S. For the next four years, she assimilated as best as she could into U.S. culture as Mary. Performing independence and self-actualization, Mary found confidence and less self-doubt. After receiving two degrees, Mary returned to Saudi Arabia and began to reassesses her understanding of herself. Not wanting to relive moments of ridicule and humiliation in attempting to perform cultural practices (such as speaking in Arabic), Mariam held strong onto her performance as Mary. This was aided by the fact that she was able to draw confidence from the privileges that her American identity and Americanized performances afforded her in Saudi Arabia: mainly, fiscal and professional achievements. She relied on her success in this domain to feel good about herself in a very individualized sense, and to combat the shame that she felt in a collective sense because of how her differences worked to set her apart.

In Saudi Arabia specifically, where I lived and worked for most of my life in terms of the Middle East, what you get paid pretty much is based on your passport.
And I've got an *American* passport.

And I can have a Saudi woman, or another Arab woman…

a Lebanese woman,

an Egyptian woman,

it doesn’t really matter,

who's just as qualified *if not more* qualified than I am.

And she would probably be making a fourth of the basic salary that I'd be making… and that’s by virtue of the American passport, right?

So in that sense I was privileged.

Like, sometimes I would get hired without anybody actually interviewing me or meeting me.

I wish I didn’t care about having a home or who I was.

But unfortunately I *have to care* and want to be part of the majority.

[And so...] independent Mary has built herself…

I *chose* the nickname Mary.

I *chose* Mary.

I *chose* her.

I *chose* what she was good at,

I *chose what* she studied and *what* she worked at.

There is more control because I am on my own. It is individualistic and it is independent.

Mariam regained confidence in herself in “becoming” Mary and by orienting to the larger global context. Feeling as though the Arab culture rejected her, she rejected the Arab
culture herself, and with that, her hybridity. “Becoming” Mary promised to reward her with more opportunities, security, and salaries as she was perceived as being more educated and competent. She enacted a simpler singular understanding of her self that aligned with larger sociopolitical, fiscal, and linguistic structures imbued with more global capital. Her performances were primarily shaped in accordance with U.S. values that are privileged in a global context such as independence, ambition, determination, and self-actualization. Going by the name Mary and possessing a high level of English fluency helped her to not only succeed, but also to find confidence in her performances once again in relation to discourses of professionalism and individualism.

After working in an adult professional environment that exposed her to a more diverse group of Arabs for several months, Mariam found that her experiences were remarkably different than those that she had with her paternal family. Her Arab co-workers did not criticize her; their interactions did not push her to feel shame and non-belonging through judgment and exclusion. Mariam began to grapple with her Arabness for the first time.

It's very hard to feel things like shame on your own.

Shame happens in a group.

And it’s the same with regret.

It's the same with a lot of feelings that need to be…instigated by others in order for it to be born in you and for you to be able to do something about it.

I [realized] I have access to this entire language that is gorgeous and beautiful…
the language of my religion,

and the language of wonderful scholars and wonderful people.

And I've had the opportunity to learn it and I've chosen not to.

And so there was a lot of shame in some of the choices that I once was proud of.

And there was a lot of… confusion about what motivated those choices in the first place.

Like, “What makes English better?

*What* makes my education better than something else?”

I had a cousin that was just as bright as I was, doing just as well in school, but she was just doing it in Arabic.

Did that mean that she was lesser than me?

And then there was a little bit of jealousy,

Like… “I want to be able to do that in Arabic.”

If I was in my cousin's class, then I'd be at the bottom because I couldn't even read our assignments.

I have Arab parents…

that are both highly educated

and have multiple degrees

and have had incredible careers

that could have probably taught me a lot.

But I chose not to pursue that.

And you question those decisions…
and you honestly don’t feel very smart and you do feel pretty stupid.

And that propelled me to…

in a very independent way, to want to better myself;

and in a very collectivist way, to want to be a more accepted part of this group.

This narrative reveals a shift in Mariam’s understanding of herself as she began to feel differently about herself and her actions. Affectively attuning to interactions with her Arab coworkers that made her feel welcome and embraced, she felt more viscerally inclined to want to perform “Arabness.” In this context, Mariam’s performances resulted in a different affective resonance. This resonance impacted the trajectory of Mariam’s life, resulting in her questioning her strict commitment to “Americanness” (Massumi, 2002; Stewart, 2007). The pride that Mariam once used to feel in her performances as “Mary” was replaced by confusion, regret, guilt, and jealousy in this new relational context. The shame that Mariam felt in previous interactions with Arabs shifted from one that was destructive to one that was constructive. The affect moved her toward a new performative emergence, opening up different potential performances (Massumi, 2002). With this new community, the shame pushed her to “want to be a more accepted part of [her new] group;” it pushed her to want to “become” Arab.

Affect operates on a palpable dimension. It is a “connecting force” in that it “is both a catalyst for connection and rupture: it is transformative in that it can break open socialities, and it is connective through the new relations and worlds it compels” (Kanngieser, 2012, p. 282). The ways in which Mariam corporeally oriented to these new professional and interpersonal contexts, the affect that emerged from these relational
events, pushed Mariam to yearn for connection. No longer affectively associating her Arab culture with vulnerable and uncomfortable spaces, Mariam finally felt a desire to engage in Arab practices and to undo the erasure of Mariam.

Those collectivist experiences, with people that I did care about, sort of made me second guess my rejection of the Arab part of Arab-American. I started reading newspapers at work in Arabic.

I'd ask my coworkers to teach me how to speak.

I got my mom to help me a lot.

I chose to make friends that were Arab, whereas I used to… sort of try and avoid that as much as possible.

And so I think with age and wisdom, came… a flip in what I was rejecting and what I wasn’t.

As is clear in her narrative, Mariam’s performances “flipped.” She went from rejecting the Arab culture to trying to fully immerse herself into it. Yearning to find acceptance in this new context, Mariam experienced an embodied relational shift that affected her performances.

Having been her friend for close to a decade, I was able to witness this flip, to her “becoming” Mariam. Early in our friendship, I remember that performances related with the Arab world made her feel vulnerable. “Mary” used to refuse to cook Arabic food or to have anyone see her dressed in a Palestinian cultural garb given to her by her mother. She also refused to speak to me in Arabic. Her body, an archive of resonant feelings of vulnerability and insecurity linked to memories of family members humiliating her upon making mistakes whilst speaking Arabic, viscerally rejected the act of speaking in
Arabic. “I don’t know how to,” “You’ll make fun of me,” and “I’m not very good” were the affectively propelled reasons she would give me. Only after living in Saudi Arabia for a few years and immersing herself into this new-found community amongst her colleagues did she finally speak to me in Arabic.

Mariam’s habit of preferring “Americanness” over “Arabness” as a safety measure began to shift when she also felt safe in performing “Arabness.” Mariam started to find pride in being Arab, in being Palestinian, and in being Mariam. These feelings pushed her to perform in ways that her own mind could not make sense of, highlighting affect’s pre-cognitive characteristic (Bondi, 2005; Cromby, 2012; Madison, 2010; Massumi, 2002). I remember her sharing with me moments of when she surprised herself at work by saying words that she did not even think that she knew. “It just came out. I must have heard it on the news or something.” Affectively attuning to environments and individuals that provided her with support and encouragement, Mariam felt comfortable to performatively explore this side of herself.

As a result of her experiences, Mariam found herself not only wanting to “become” and perform “Arabness” but to do it well. Affectively attuning to discourses of nationhood, Mariam tries to locate a sense of comfort by adhering to notions of conformity and singularity. She currently conceptualizes the Arab and American cultures at “two ends of the spectrum” where she is either performing one or the other, as evident in the opening narrative. Mariam finds comfort conceptualizing her hybridity as disconnected performances of Mariam and Mary that she has the power to control. “I think the reason that I'm doing that… is because I wanna have control and that’s… in those situations specifically, I wanna have control over who I am” (Personal
communication, August 13, 2014). Through control, she believes she can manage the fluctuating feelings that she as a hybrid encounters.

My sense of my own identity, and my sense of home, have become so fragmented that it's impossible to sort of pinpoint any one thing, and it is constantly a negotiation.

My feelings want something steady and stable.

Mariam wants to control how she is feeling through distinct performances of “Arabness” and “Americanness.” She instinctively performs in ways that she believes will guarantee that she feels pride, joy, security, and belonging. Wanting to avoid feeling different, and knowing what that feels like on a corporeal and visceral level from past and present experiences, Mariam tries to draw upon performances of Mary and Mariam depending on the context where “[a]t no point [is she] both simultaneously.”

As Mariam’s narratives illustrate and as her body reveals, everyday performances cannot be consciously controlled as much as one may try. This chapter has worked to identify moments where feelings prompted performances, even had Mariam’s logic tried to steer her in a different direction. Though one might attribute the difference in her performances to a mere cultural contextualization, I argue that it is more. I assert that Mariam’s performances emerged as the result of affective attunement. A lens of cultural attunement is one that attempts to explain, or even predict, performance on the basis on an orientation to external cultural norms, traits, or expectations (i.e. in the Arab world, Mariam will without doubt perform in a way that meets cultural expectations because it is expected of her). A lens of affective attunement, on the other hand, emphasizes the ways in which performance is not only logical but visceral, emanating from the feelings that
emerge as a result of the relational event that occurs between external contexts and the individual. Affective attunement makes the move from abstract disembodied cause-and-effect assumptions to embodied ones that emphasize the ways in which individuals corporeally engage with their contexts. Through affective attunement, we view the body as a medium that is in relational motion with shifting contexts, including but not limited to the cultural and interpersonal (Manning, 2009, 2013). Mariam speaks to the pervasiveness and power of feeling, and the way in which it comes into play in her everyday.

You can walk into the local Denver eatery that Mariam owns at any time of the day and meet her. She will most probably be dressed in comfortable baggy pants and some sort of graphic t-shirt or sweater. She will greet you politely and will want to represent her professional self well, talking in a very strong American accent. You may wonder where she is from. You may wonder who she is. The existing intercultural scholarship may tell you that she is an Arab-American who has assimilated to U.S. culture in response to the pressures of political, social, and structural contexts—her clothes, accent, and general performance indicate as much. However, her embodied narratives of location unveil a deep and complex layer of affects that propel even more complicated everyday performances in Mariam’s life. These performances are not distinctly driven by the desire to fit the mold of what an Arab or an American is, but what they become and feel in an embodied sense in response to shifting sociopolitical, cultural, and interpersonal experiences. Taking the time to explore the embodied dimension of Mariam’s past and present experiences, I show what CIC scholarship has to gain from assembling an affective lens through which to understand hybrid everyday performance.
The insights gained in this analysis could otherwise be lost in a sea of generalizations and normative assumptions that overlook the body. Without understanding how these underlying feelings resonated within Mariam’s body and informed her everyday performances and “becomings,” my analysis would lack interpretive clarity.
CHAPTER FOUR

Tahani: “I Wish I Wasn’t Different”

I set up my laptop on my desk and called Tahani on Skype. The call dropped twice before we secured a stable connection. In an effort to maintain a stable connection and avoid our call from dropping again, we resorted to an audio call on Skype so I was unable to see her. Considering the level of vulnerability asked of my participants for this dissertation project, I believe that an audio call helped create a sense of anonymity and allowed her to make herself more vulnerable while privately expressing her feelings and hardships. We began our interview with a lot of small talk, catching up on the many years that had passed since last we met. Since I had last spoken to Tahani, she had graduated from college, moved to a different state, and started working for a financial institution. I had started, and almost completed, a Ph.D. program. Tahani and I first met in 2006 at a mutual Arab-American friend’s house in Colorado. It was a big gathering, with over twenty Arabs from the community coming together for home-cooked meals to remind us of home. Since that first meeting, we had crossed paths a few more times but always in big groups, never having the chance to develop an intimate personal relationship.
Tahani, born to Iraqi parents, was born in Kuwait before the first Gulf War. Her father was also born in Kuwait as a result of the civil unrest created by Saddam Hussein’s reign. The unjust ruler seized her grandfather’s lands, pushing her family out. Both of her parents did not grow up in Iraq because Saddam “made it into a third world country” (Personal communication, September 29, 2014). When she was less than a year old, she moved to Baghdad with her parents for three years before they decided that they did not want to raise a family under Saddam’s regime. She and her family migrated to Jordan in the hopes of building a better life for themselves. However, as Iraqi immigrants in Jordan, her father was not able to secure financially stable employment. After a couple of years, they began to survey other options such as Canada and the U.S., both of which were not taking in Iraqi immigrants. They finally applied for visas to Australia and New Zealand “because they [knew] both of those countries speak English.” They lived in New Zealand for six years and were granted citizenship, which opened a lot of doors for them. As New Zealanders, they were able to apply for work positions in the United States where both of Tahani’s grandparents resided. Her father obtained a work visa and they moved to California for several years before settling in Colorado. Having lived in so many different locations, Tahani identifies as an Arab-American that is overcome by a general sense of uprootedness.

Um yeah… so something that I've really struggled with is just never feeling like I've been able to define home, because part of me has, like, this sympathy...

and this connection,

to the Middle East and to Iraq specifically.
Because that's where my family’s from.

And then the other part of me doesn't really understand what it's like to live there. And so I can't…

it's not really fair to say that that’s really home.

Like, we left Baghdad when I was so young that I have absolutely no…

Like, I remember little bits of it and whatever comes to mind.

Um, and I'll have, like, little flashbacks.

But it's never … it's not, like, vivid details of, like, walking down the street or going from this place to this place.

And it’s … it's hard to explain that to people.

And then I'm not that person who grew up my entire … or spent my entire life in Colorado,

or [say that] my family’s from there or any of that stuff.

And so …

and I've moved so much that I don't really have a “home” home.

So that's definitely been something that's really interesting…

or that's been difficult.

Part of it is you're, like, an outsider from an entire group of people who are from the same place that you're from.

And then you're, like, an outsider because you're an immigrant.

So you're always the one that came from somewhere else.
I feel like anytime the question of home comes up, that's definitely a prominent moment where I feel really disconnected.

I feel disconnected from, honestly, both cultures.¹⁸

In describing her fragmented childhood, Tahani clearly articulated affective tensions that informed her everyday performances and understandings of self through a lens of belonging. Belonging, in and of itself, is an affective resonance (Ahmed, 1999; Ben-Yoseph, 2005; hooks, 1990; Mallet, 2004; Massumi, 2002; St. Pierre, 2008; Teerling, 2011; Wise, 2000). “Home [original emphasis] connotes an emotional place—somewhere where you truly belong” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p. 124). Tahani has a strong attachment to both Arab and U.S. cultures. The affective bond is one that she holds dear. However, she also feels as though she does not truly belong to either one, causing her a sense of affective dissonance that registers as insecurity, uncertainty, and non-belonging. She feels disconnected from both cultures as a result of feeling that she deviated from the cultural script of citizenship and belonging in both locations.

Affectively attuning to prominent discourses about nationhood that are grounded in the belief that geographical rootedness implies that one is authentically indigenous to their land, nation, and culture (Malkki, 1992), Tahani’s migrant roots have caused her to feel a strong tie to cultures that she simultaneously feels she cannot claim as her own.

Estranged from their parents’ home culture and disconnected from their host culture, [hybrids] proceed through the world identified as chronic outsiders . . . longing, in each new home, to establish connection, yet fearful of becoming too attached. The result is a cultural changeling, alienated from self and aloof from others. (Eidse & Sichel, 2004, p. 81)

¹⁸ (Personal communication, September 29, 2014)
In her narrative, Tahani made a distinction between herself and other Iraqis whose backgrounds are firmly rooted both culturally and historically in a country she has only visited as a baby. Feeling insecure and confused about her strong sympathy and longing for the Middle East, Tahani also felt as though she could not claim Iraq as one of her homes. Unable to speak to lived experiences that root her in Iraq from a firsthand point of view, she stated that “it’s not really fair to say that that’s really home.” She felt as though her differences resulting from her migration stripped her from rooting herself in an Iraqi cultural identity. Furthermore, Tahani did not see her identity as an American citizen as rooted in the U.S. in a way that was substantial enough to firmly ground her since she was naturalized as an adult. Her experiences result in her feeling more different than alike in relation to her U.S. community. Walker (2011) suggests that Tahani’s feelings of non-belonging are increasingly more common among hybrids as they attempt to locate spaces of belonging in societies that continue to uphold singular discourses of nationhood.

The much acclaimed possibility of ‘belonging everywhere’ is, on closer inspection, only available to the optimistic, the fortunate, or the imaginative. More common is the reality of non-belonging, or not fully belonging, or not fully belonging anywhere, or, more positively, belonging partially in a range of contexts. (p. 175)

Not knowing what nation or culture to ground herself in, Tahani feels lost between worlds: she “[does] not really have a ‘home’ home.” She is thus overcome with feelings of non-belonging everywhere, with her differences always positioning her as the immigrant and the outsider.

Tahani’s insecurities emerged during the interview (Ellingson, 2012). The performance of narration is one that emerges relationally and is affectively charged (Bondi, 2005; Denzin, 2001; Ezzy, 2010; Gilles, Harden, Johnson, Reavey, Strange, &
Willig, 2004). In being asked to recall critical moments when she negotiated her identity, Tahani made herself and her feelings vulnerable to me. I was able to sense the familiar feeling of insecurity that laced her narratives. The moments that stood out to her, the moments that she shared, were those that fore-fronted her differences and her feelings of homelessness. In other words, the experiences Tahani shared in her interview were ones that deeply imprinted the notion of difference upon her, making her hyperaware of that which kept her on the fringes of her communities. Though Tahani’s life trajectory was complicated by reasons outside of her control (e.g. political unrest and fiscal security), feelings of uncertainty reverberated within her as she worked to understand herself and her differences in relation to shifting contexts and situations. Through attention to affective attunement and embodied narratives of location, Tahani’s feelings, as well as their significance in relation to her performances, are more deeply explored.

Tahani has long struggled with her differences. As a cultural hybrid, she has a history of feeling estranged in her cultural contexts. It was in New Zealand that Tahani first began to feel like she did not belong while making sense of her self in relation to her classmates.

I think something that was really hard for me when I first started school was…

So when I started school in New Zealand I didn't look like everyone else there.

I went to some grammar school where everyone looks … where, honestly, everyone was blonde and blue-eyed.

And they were all very, um, Caucasian looking.
And I was the one with, like, curly black hair.

And, um, big brown eyes.

And I didn't really fit in.

And I kinda felt it at a young age.

And that was one of the things that … that was something that was, like, really difficult for me to overcome.

And when I moved to Colorado it was the exact same thing.

*Mm-hmm*.

And then just feeling different, just feeling like I looked different, so, like… even now, like, regardless of what I do to make my hair straight, like, it’s just not …

it’s just *not* meant to be straight.

And that's just … that's just how it is.

But just, like, thinking about that…

Growing up in middle school where I was, like, trying every product on the face of the planet to, like, make my hair cooperate.

*Mm-hmm.*

Compared to, like, people who I went to school with,

where their hair just, like,

fell straight,

---

19 For the sake of brevity and fluidity in reading the interview as dialogic, I use italics to indicate my, the interviewer’s, questions and comments. My interviewees’ narratives are in standard font and are poetically transcribed. The italics in my interviewees’ sections indicate an emphasis on their part.
and it wasn't a frizzy mess when they woke up every day.

Mh-hmm.

[And] in New Zealand we actually had, like, Bible study classes during the week.

Um, and I would … I get dismissed from those 'cause my mom would write a letter explaining why I shouldn't be part of the Bible study class. And I would, like, go take another random class for that hour when they could discuss the Bible.

And I remember, like, hearing about things, like, Santa Claus or, um, any religious holidays that we don't celebrate and not really understanding why.

And so from a really young age my mom was always like,

“Okay, that’s their religion,

and that’s their belief.

We don't believe this.

This is what we believe happened.

And this is what our religion says,”

So I remember those kind of conversations growing up.

And the other thing is it was, like,

we’re different and we never will eat pork.

And the pork is a really, really big thing in New Zealand – and sausage.

So, um, similar to, like, a luau that you would have in Hawaii where they roast, like, a hog or something –
There's, like, a traditional Maori dish where that's what they do. They'll create, like, a pit in the dirt and, like, roast meat in there. And so I, like, remember going to those kind of things as a kid and being like,

“No, I don't eat pork.”

“What?”

“Because God told me not to.”

And so, like, growing up in a society that some things that were really not happening in our culture or our religion, being so, like, prevalent and around you,

I think it forced my parents to have conversations with me earlier. And my mom would be like,

“Here are other things where we’re different, and different is good.

And we’re living our life this way by choice.”

But I think it does have an effect on your self-esteem a little bit,

and it has an effect on your perception of yourself, where you realize that you're different and you realize that you're not fitting that same kind of mold.

I think it just has to do with, like, growing up and dealing with self-confidence issues.

Um, but I think the fact that I moved so much and that I didn't blend in quite as much as I wanted to really had an effect on that.
From a young age, Tahani affectively attuned to sociocultural and interpersonal situations that left her feeling different. In learning how to navigate those differences, she engaged in conversations with her parents about the values and traditions that set them apart from the cultures they were immersed in. Tahani faced the reality that she did not practice the same faith by being excused from Bible study class, not participating in Christmas events, and not experiencing significant cultural events where pork is the main course. Tahani also realized that she did not quite look like everyone else with her curly black hair and big brown eyes. Feeling as though she had more control over her appearance than her religion, she began to, and still does, straighten her hair in an effort to fit in and make her differences less noticeable. These performances were motivated by feelings of non-belonging and non-conformity.

Even though she adopted the notion that different is not always bad, feelings of uncertainty resonated deeply within Tahani. Affectively attuning to discourses of conformity, Tahani knew she did not fit the “same kind of mold” and that she “did not blend in quite as much as [she] wanted.” She found it very difficult to feel accepted and recognized by those closest to her.

Something that, um, something that I've really struggled with is I don't feel like I have a lot of Arab friends.

And, um, I have, like, a few,

but I don't have any people that I am, like, very, very close to.

And so the people that I'm really close to are, like, Americans.

And that's great.

There are … a lot of them are really understanding,
but it's still not the same.

It’s not the same as people that have gone through the same struggles as you have

or people that are the same heritage or the same religion.

And so that's another point where,

when I hang out with them, I kind of feel like there’s always this feeling of,

I'm actually the outsider.

And I'm actually the one who's different.

And I don't think different is bad,

but I think when you grow up in the U.S., you don't want to be different.

You want to blend in as much as everyone else.

And that's really hard when you … there's, like, no way for you to blend.

[So] it's almost, like, “How much do I still want to fit in?”

And, “How much do I still want to be part of whatever group I'm with?”

And I think the hardest part is …

so there’s that side of me.

And then the other side of me is, like, extremely proud of my heritage

and extremely proud of where my family came from

and how far my parents have come and things like that.

And so it's a weird … it’s, like, an internal conflict that I have with myself.
In this excerpt, Tahani spoke to the affective desire to want to belong, and the ways in which such feelings informed her performances. Like Mary Wertsch (2004) who states that “[a] sense of belonging is [a hybrid’s] single greatest need and [a hybrid’s] single greatest quest” (in Eidse & Sichel, p. 130), Tahani’s everyday performances are motivated by her desire to procure a sense of belonging. She stated that she asks herself, “How much do I still want to fit in?” Affectively attuning to her context in the U.S. where “you don’t want to be different” affectively fueled her desire to minimize her differences. Tahani therefore sometimes tried to assimilate to blend in. Affectively attuning to other situations wherein she was overcome with feelings of ancestral pride, Tahani tried to uphold Arab cultural practices and beliefs. As she expressed in this narrative, Tahani continually finds herself in a cycle where she fluctuates very strongly between assimilation and pride depending on her embodied context as she affectively attunes to different contexts.

This affective tension of feeling pulled between two cultures was very prominent in Tahani’s interview. The role of feelings is made more visible through an emphasis on embodied narratives of location and affective attunement. For instance, in this next embodied narrative of location, Tahani highlights her uncertainty and the ways it operates in her everyday.

*Mm-hmm. So um, like, can you I guess think of the moment when – I don't know – can you think of the moment that sort of triggered, um, some of these—?*

Yeah. So for example, so my … all my friends are Americans, um, or most of my really close friends out here are Americans.
And so, like, on Fridays or Saturdays we’ll go hang out at a bar, or we’ll go out,
and it's, like, it's weird, because I feel like I shouldn't be in those situations 'cause I don't drink.

And … but I'm still there,
and then still around people like that.

And I don't think …

and I want to spend time with my friends,

and I want to go to parties,

and I want to go to places that I'm invited.

But at the same time I feel really, really out of place,

and I really feel like I'm trying sooo hard to just fit in to where
they want me to fit in.

And I always go home, and I'm kind of, like,

“Well, I feel like that was just a really bad decision on my front,”
or, like, “Why am I behaving that way when I know I shouldn't be going to bars or, like, putting myself in situations like that?”

And so it's a weird …

it's, like, a conflict that I feel like I consistently have with myself.  

Right, especially ... yeah, and especially when—when religion starts to get involved...

Right, and then you get almost, like
... a guilt...

*Mm-hmm.*

Where you're, like, “I didn't really do anything bad, but I probably shouldn't have spent my time there.”

And, like, my parents *know* when I'm going out.

And they know when I'm going to, like, bars or doing whatever.

But at the same time it’s, it's not even about them as much anymore as my own, like... moral dilemmas.

Speaking about several experiences that are held together by the shared feeling of dissonance, Tahani explained the difficulties she habitually faced in negotiating her social circle in a manner that could not have been explored outside of an affective lens. Affectively attuning to her social circle in the U.S., and wanting to secure a sense of belonging with them, Tahani often agrees to going to spaces where alcohol is the primary socializing tool even though she does not drink. Wanting to quell her feelings of marginalization, she often “[tries] soooo hard to fit in where they want [her] to fit in.”

However, after long nights of socializing at a bar, Tahani sometimes finds herself back at her apartment affectively attuning to a different cultural code: one tied to her religion and Arab cultural expectations. At the junction of desiring belonging and desiring to uphold her religious values, Tahani is stricken with guilt and confusion. As is evident in her narrative, Tahani frequently experiences what could be described as an affective dissonance that causes her to question her performances and embody a deep level of uncertainty. Though on a superficial level many would consider this a simple everyday
social experience, the affective nuances that overwhelm Tahani in such a situation is telling of the difficulties that Tahani faces as an Arab-American hybrid.

Struggling to find a way to balance out her feelings toward both of her cultures, Tahani spoke about moments where she tried to integrate herself into Arab and Muslim circles in the U.S.; however, she revealed that her differences work to set her apart and further her feelings of alienation.

And it’s weird because I try to … I try hard to, like, go to–

I don't know – events where there are going to be a lot of Muslims around or, um, places where I can feel, like, a little bit more comfortable.

But it’s hard because I won't be, like, of the same culture as a lot of the people there.

And so they'll have, like, a different background than me.

Like, you have slight differences, but enough differences with, like, food or, like, customs that it is still a difference.

So I'll be like, “Oh, I'm from Iraq,”

and they’re like, “Oh, okay…”

Like, and then you have, like … you're on the same grounds in regards to religion.

But there’ll be, like, situations where I'm the only one who, like, doesn't wear hijab.

…And it's not… it's not like those things are really big

But they… or you almost become, like, an outsider again.
Tahani has tried to seek out communities that might have more in common with her in an effort to feel comfortable and confident in her interactions. However, in affectively attuning to her interactions with members from the Muslim and Arab community, Tahani felt even more insecure in being unable to connect with them. These relational occurrences only worked to highlight her differences once more and result in the magnification of her feelings of non-belonging.

Tahani explained that she was able to manage her hybridity with more grace as a child. Though her differences as an Arab were prominent since childhood, they were not as politically charged as they have become since 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Iraq. Growing up in the U.S. during and after these political events, Tahani experienced blatant discrimination from her peers. These events shook her, and shifted her performances in her everyday dramatically.

Did you have, like, um, specific moments where, um, talking about your ... you know, like, your, uh, multicultural background...?

Yeah, so when I was younger it was, like, the first …

it was, like, within the first, like, three minutes of someone meeting me I would just tell people everything about myself.

I think I'm still a really confident person, but I'm a little bit more guarded now.

Uh-huh.

So when I was growing up, and when we first moved to the U.S., umm…

September 11th happened.

And that—that changed a lot of things.
Um, it changed a lot of things because people's perception of the Arab world went from *absolutely nothing*,
to seeing people on TV, like, burning American flags and just …
and having their country be attacked from allegedly Al Qaeda,
or whoever else was involved in those situations.

*Right.*

And so going from people not really knowing where you came from and not even really understanding where, like, New Zealand was – to people having [this] perception of you and, like, your …

Going from *that*... to having, like, a *target* on your forehead

is, like, a very *big* jump.

And that's when I first started experiencing, um … I didn't even know what it was, but now when I look back on it I’m, like, they were explicitly being racist towards me…because they found out where I came from.

… So that was around middle school.

And then when I went to high school I was still …
it didn't bother me that people had that perception of me, even when I told them where I came from.

And when I got into high school, um, and I continued doing that.

I was … it was, like, the first thing that I told anyone.

Like, “Where are you from?”

And I would, like, list off,
“This is where my family is from. Like, this is where I've lived.”

*Mm-hmm.*

And them, um… this situation happened to me when I was a freshman in high school and this, like …

This was the point where I realized that I probably *shouldn't* be telling everyone my life story within the first five minutes of meeting them.

Um… I met this girl who went to a different middle school than I did. So I didn't *know* her.

And I introduced myself.

This was actually in California 'cause I started high school in California.

I introduced myself, and she was like,

“Oh, you have a weird name.”

And I was like, “Thanks.”

She was like, “Where are you *from*?”

So I told her.

And this was in 2003, and this was right after the U.S. invaded Iraq.

*Mm-hmm.*

Um and she just, like, *completely stopped* talking to me.

And it was weird because she was friends with, like, a big group of my friends that I had known from middle school.

And it was, like, a really, really awkward situation.
And then, like, maybe, like, a week later or something, someone came up to me and was like,

“Oh, like, don't ever talk to Melanie again.”

And I was, like, “Okay, why?”

And then, um, she was like,

“Oh well 'cause she really hates you because you're a fucking Iraqi.”

And I was, like, absolutely appalled—

_Oh my God._

… that anyone could _hate_ me and not even _know_ me.

And it was, like, a really, really …

it was, like, something that I, like, _still_ remember.

And I remember going home and, like, crying and being _really, really_ upset about it.

Um and that was, like, a really big…

…it was, like, a big shock.

And then kind of scaling it back a little bit for the rest of high school because people were…

So in high school I kind of, like, toned it back and, um, and didn't really…

and then I had moved halfway through high school from California to Colorado.

So when I got to Colorado people were like,

“Oh where are you from? Where are you from?”
And I would just say, “California,”

and just end it there.

Um and then I got into college and I met a lot of really, really cool people that are, um… a little bit more worldly.

And I was really honest with them, and I was really comfortable in my own skin.

And I would just flat out tell people where I was from again.

And it wasn't a big deal.

Um, and then graduated college, moved out here [to California], and then I just kind of realized that not everyone deserves to know that much about you.

So I went through a phase where –

I think I'm still in this phase –

where the first time someone asks me where I'm from, I won't actually say.

Um and then if they, like, really push for,

“Well, what language is your name in?”

I’ll say something like “Lebanese,”

because everyone here knows what Lebanese food is,

and they're very comfortable with that idea.

And they are not as, um, they're not as judgmental when you say something like that.
And having [lived] in so many places I can almost … like, the first thing that I tell people now when they ask is,

“Well I'm from Colorado.”

And that’s kind of … that's where I tried to close the conversation but –

It’s almost, like … I don't think I've even, like, said this out loud.

Like, I've talked to my sister about this, but it's almost like …

it's almost embarrassing that I feel the need to, like,

change that so many different times.

Like, it kind of makes me a little sad 'cause my grandpa’s still alive,

and I think if I ever told him that story where I had to, like,

pretend,

like, pretend I was from somewhere else,

I think he'd be, like, a little disappointed.

Like I said…part of me is really, really proud of that, and I could sit here and give you, like, an entire history of Iraq,

and then the other part of me is, like, “Don’t tell anyone because they won't actually understand the things that you have to say. “

And it's a really… it's, like, a really…

it's a little depressing to feel like you can't be as honest with people as they are when they meet you.

And it's not even being honest with, like, a complete stranger.
It's almost like being honest with yourself.

In this rather lengthy but evocative narrative, Tahani revealed a critical moment that affectively resonated with her very deeply, shaping her performances and fueling her uncertainty as a hybrid. Before ever experiencing outright discrimination for being Arab in a post-9/11 world, Tahani was very transparent with her hybrid and migratory background. She embodied confidence. Though she might have felt different at times, she did not feel attacked for, nor did she negatively internalize, her difference. As a teenager, her Arab lineage became colored by the political events that “changed a lot of things,” mainly people’s perception of the Middle East. Therefore, in the middle of Tahani’s teenage years, she went from being someone whom people could not “place” to the enemy with “a target on [her] forehead.” Like Nakagawa (1990), she became “an American with the face of the enemy” (p. 398). So long as she was not aware of the racism directed toward her, so long as she affectively attuned to what she relationally and affectively understood as safe spaces, Tahani continued to perform in a way that was open and honest about her background.

This excerpt revealed the moment wherein Tahani’s confidence began to waver, and strong affective intensities shook her perceptions and performances. She was completely shocked by her first experience of blatant racism. The pain and depth of her hurt reverberated in her voice in narrating this experience during the interview. Affectively attuning to an occurrence of discrimination that left her feeling extremely vulnerable, humiliated, and different, Tahani began to shift her performances of disclosure in subsequent interpersonal situations. She learned that claiming Iraq as her homeland was tricky considering the political tensions between Iraq and the U.S. These
feelings motivated her to “tone it back” for the remainder of her high school experience. Affectively attuning to social situations that called upon her to identify where she was from, Tahani was more moved to protect herself than to share her background as a result of her feelings. She started to identify as a Californian, still wearing the scars of the traumatic experience on her body.

On the other hand, the very same excerpt also speaks to the ways in which performance, though habitual at times, is not scripted but informed by feeling (Manning, 2013; Richardson-Ngwenya, 2014). When Tahani started college, she began to affectively attune to a much different relational environment. She found herself around people whom she identified as “worldly” and started to feel safe again in her interactions with them. Her habits changed once more upon moving back to California after graduation where her context changed once more. Affectively attuning to relational spaces, contexts, and interactions, Tahani changes the ways in which she identifies based on how she feels at the moment. Her movement between performing various identities is representative of Wise’s (2000) articulation of identity. He states, “There is no fixed self, only the habit of looking for one” (p. 303). Trying various identities on in different situations, Tahani consistently tries to find the one that fits best, the one that feels best. However, with her consistent shifting between feelings and cultural identifications, Tahani expresses that she cannot find a sense of peace and feels embarrassed that she changes her answer so often. In addition, she is also overcome with shame in the fact that she, more often than not, “pretends [she] was from somewhere else.” At the end of the day, Tahani feels disingenuous in the way that she performs, in the identities that she “becomes.” Feeling alone as she navigates her hybrid performances in a case-by-case
manner while affectively attuning to larger discourses about nationhood and belonging, Tahani’s feelings of uprootedness are exacerbated.

As Tahani reflected upon her experiences, she found solace in the stories that I shared with her about my experiences. I told Tahani about how, while growing up, I felt like an outsider in all social and cultural spheres that I was a part of. Having spent several years in the U.S. as a child while my parents completed their higher education, I felt too American for the Saudi friends that I made when I moved back home. Moving back to the United States in pursuance of my own higher education, I felt like a foreigner, an international student, an other. In an effort to put my insecurities to rest, I started to tell people who asked me where I was from that I was from Colorado even though I have very little history here. I felt as though with each story that Tahani shared, she was feeling more and more alone. This pushed me to share my own embodied narratives of location as a reminder to her that what motivated my dissertation project was the same feeling of uprootedness that she herself continued to speak of. I believe this helped her feel more validated in her narratives. She stated, “[T]hat feeling of just, like, doing this by yourself is hard, and knowing that there are other people – it-it’s… it almost helps you justify that you're not that crazy” (Personal communication, September 29, 2014). She affectively attuned to my openness by repositioning me as a confidant, and not just an interviewer. I believe this helped her reflect on her feelings more as she shared more and more stories.

Toward the end of the interview, Tahani began to confide in me as a friend. Having built a deep level of trust between us through experiential and affective commonalities, Tahani began to look to me for answers about how to put the uncertainty
to rest. After sharing many stories about how her experiences as a hybrid had left her consistently feeling as though she would never quite fit in, even when she tried to, Tahani shifted her perspective from one that was historical to one that was more present and future-oriented.

And I have moments where I feel so…

like, I almost have … I have moments where I …

Do you ever feel like you want to be someone different?

And I haven’t felt that way in a really, really long time.

But I get those moments randomly where I’m like,

“Oh, things would just be so much easier if I didn’t look like this, or if I wasn’t who I am,

or if I wasn’t different for once.”

And it’s, like… it’s a really… it’s, like, a really, really uncomfortable…

almost, like, a personal racism.

And it’s, um, it’s really hard.

And then I go through phases where I just wish I wasn’t Arab,

and I wish I didn’t have this kind of a background or…

and I just feel really, really disconnected.

And I just don’t want to talk to anyone who’s Arab or who’s, like, me, and I feel really distant from my family and from anyone that used to know me,

like, the real me.
And then I will try to fix that by watching, like… so, like, during Ramadan I still watch Arab soap operas and I’m, like, “No, like, we’re… we’re pretty cool. Like, I appreciate this.” And I still go through phases where I, like…

I still really, like, Arabic music.

And I really, like, Iraqi music.

And I feel so comfortable when I hear it or when I hear anyone with, like, an Iraqi dialect. I feel really safe.

But it’s almost, like, a constant back and forth. And whenever I feel like,

“Okay, I finally have it figured out, and I’m finally safe, and I’m finally okay with everything, and I’m not going to do this again — where I have to, like, go back and forth — it just … it, like, comes at me again.

And I don’t know why I bend to that pressure. And I’m, like,

“Oh I don’t feel good about myself,”

or “Oh, I wish I wasn’t different.”

And so it’s just, I hope it’s something that ends,
and I hope it’s a struggle that I overcome.
It’s … it's emotionally exhausting. It's trying to figure out what's gonna…
It's almost like I'm just trying to find some kind of, like…

stability,

or some kind of, like, constant…

that I can just lean on and I’m going to be okay.

And I'm just not … I can't find it.

Tahani’s feelings of non-belonging and uprootedness have caused her to shift dramatically between performatively embracing her hybridity and rejecting it. As seen from her embodied narratives of location, Tahani’s differences are reinscribed through her experiences, writing feelings of marginalization and uncertainty on her body. Affectively attuning to the various ways in which her hybridity has positioned her on the margins of her communities in various scenarios, Tahani shared with me that she sometimes wished she were someone different, someone who was simpler, someone who was less hybrid. During these moments, she created distance between herself and anyone that may tie her to the Arab world. However, after some time, she affectively attuned to her own performances of rejection that resulted in her feeling ashamed of herself. In one scenario, she explained that she had heard someone speak in an Iraqi dialect which caused her to feel safe and at home. In response, she tried to “fix” her attempts at assimilation by performing “Arabness” because “[p]erformance, if nothing else, can bring us home” (MacDonald, 2010, p. 29). She watched Arabic soap operas and listened to Arabic music to balance out her feelings of guilt at relinquishing her Arab culture and creating distance with her family. Wrestling with her conflicting desire to feel rooted
through a single Western identity and her desire to maintain a connection to her Middle Eastern culture, Tahani once again found herself wrestling with affective dissonance. Each time Tahani shifted her performances, her “becomings,” in response to her feelings, she did so with the hope that she might be able to ground herself and find a sense of stability. However, because affective attunement and “becoming” are both infinite processes that never resolve themselves (Chambers, 1994; Massumi, 2002, 2009), Tahani’s feelings will also remain in movement (Ahmed, 2004).

An external critical intercultural communicative lens may undertake Tahani as the quintessential hybrid subject. Her experiences strongly support extant hybridity literature in that she resides in a liminal location, a borderland between cultures, a third space where she her everyday negotiations are characterized by “contingency, indeterminacy, and conflict” (Gilroy, 1997, p. 334). Her performances shift in various contexts; however, what is missing from this interpretation is recognizing that the source of contingency and conflict is embodiment. The embodied narratives of location that Tahani shared in regards to how she had chosen to disclose her background in various contexts foreground feeling as a key determining factor in her performances.

In highlighting embodiment, this chapter illustrates how Tahani’s performances of assimilating into U.S. culture, finding pride in her Arab lineage, and retreating into herself as a result of embodying personal racism are hinged upon how she affectively attunes at the time. Orienting herself in relation to diverse contexts incites different feelings, and thus result in varied performances. Tahani rejects, defends, hides, announces, fears, and takes pride in her hybridity, moving between various performances based on how she feels in each situation. She has experienced everything between
shamefully desiring full assimilation to her U.S. cultural identity at the expense of the rejection of her Arab cultural identity and exhibiting unshakeable pride in her Arab culture, history, and ancestry. These performances are inconsistent as she moves fluidly between them amidst shifting and similar contexts. Therefore, they can only truly be made sense of through an exploration of Tahani’s moments of affective attunement. Furthermore, it is only through an affective theoretical, methodological, and analytical lens that I have been able to humanize Tahani’s internal struggle, and allow her experiences to evoke the affective dissonance that reverberates within her.
Identity, Rhythm, and Habit: A Theoretical Interlude

A core element that is central to the work of affect philosophers is the principle that each act, each event, is one that is once-occurring and singular (Chambers, 1994; Manning, 2009, 2013; Massumi, 2002, 2009, 2011; Wise, 2000). Undergirding this principle is the notion that all phenomena must be understood to be in a state of perpetual relational movement, where everything “always begins in movement and never stops moving” (Manning, 2013, p. 74). An event cannot take place in the same way again because the contexts that caused it to emerge as such are not still—they are active, re-composing new relational encounters in an indeterminate fashion (Manning, 2009; Massumi, 2002; Stewart, 2007). This understanding was coined by Massumi (2002) as activist philosophy.

Activist philosophy upholds that events “can be repeated, reactivated, it can rearise, but always anew” (Massumi, 2009, p. 9). In terms of scholarship that examines everyday performance of individuals that identify with a specific culture, this principle would suggest that each performance is one that is unique, never to occur again. It puts the body in a perpetual state of “becoming” (Manning, 2013), challenging representational frameworks that uphold notions of culture and identity that “pin” prescribed performances to a person (Massumi, 2002). Chambers (1994) asserts, “We are no longer dealing with closure . . .
but with the perpetual opening up and interrogation of categories, and their constant relocation beyond presumed borders and limits” (p. 85). Under this framework, each performance is unique as a body “becomes” in an indeterminate fashion with each passing relational moment, stripping “culture” and “identity” from their prescriptive power.

Adopting an approach that employs processuality, how can critical intercultural scholars explore “Arab-American” hybrid performances, for instance, without reinstating static notions of “culture” and “identity”? In other words, how can I refer to “Arab” and “American” cultures as representational labels while theorizing, collecting, and analyzing data under this framework? How can I analyze Mariam’s recurring embodied performance of “Americanness” as once-occurring relational moments? How can I speak to Tahani’s repetitive resistance to share her background without risking falling into essentializing practices that pin specific performances to her? How can we adopt a perspective of indeterminacy and processuality while still falling back on representational language? How can I make sense of critical moments in Mariam and Tahani’s lives in relation to their past experiences without negating the notion that their performances are in a perpetual state of “becoming”?

The answers to these questions lie in rhythms and patterns. Though affect scholars view each event as once-occurring, they also see these events as held together by rhythm (Manning, 2009; Stewart, 2007; Wise, 2000). Culture, in this case, is not a static state, but a living performance that is held together by its patterns. Wise (2000) asserts, “Cultures are held together by their rhythms, the collection of resonances, the aggregate of meanings, texts, and practices that they make resonate to that particular rhythm or frequency” (p. 306). Whereas events are always “becoming,” they “become” in tune with the rhythm
that a culture is formed around. With this understanding, cultures are not static, but are
dynamic in patterned, non-chaotic ways (Wise, 2000).

Applying this understanding to individuals, we find that what holds an identity
together is habit. Habits are unconscious and embodied behaviors that are seemingly
repetitive. Though always “becoming” in a manner that is unique to its emergence, an
individual’s performances are held together by their affective rhythm. Mariam’s habitual
performances of “Americanness,” her reliance on the English language as well as her
performances of assertiveness and independence, are each unique in every performance
but held together by a sense of pride. However, affectively attuning to her new-found
Arab community, this habit broke. Mariam began to feel shame in her “Americanness”
and she began to question herself. She felt a change in rhythm, and she began to secure a
sense of confidence through a different habitual performance: “Arabness.” Her feelings
motivated her to apply herself differently. For example, she began to learn Arabic and use
her given name, Mariam. As she revealed in her interview, she shifts between various
cultural performances based on the situation and how she feels.

Similarly, Tahani had a tendency to openly disclose her cultural background upon
first meeting other people until she affectively attuned to an occurrence of a different
affective rhythm, one of hatred, that resulted in her feeling extremely vulnerable and
insecure. This embodied experience pushed Tahani to think twice about how she
introduced herself to others. These performances are always once-occurring in that they
never unfold in the same way twice as a result of shifting contexts. Wise (2000) asserts
that though habit entails repetition, “we do not mimic the rhythm, repeat it note for note,
pulse for pulse . . . because at the heart of repetition is difference” (p. 304). She has
identified as Californian, Coloradan, Lebanese in different scenarios. Though she “became” in each moment, these patterned “becomings” are held together by her embodied desire to protect herself from feelings of being discrimination. Through Mariam and Tahani’s embodied narratives of location, my interviewees’ illuminated the rhythms that gave coherence to their “identities.” In their narratives, they also reflected upon specific moments and events that shifted these rhythms in a palpable manner, resulting in new emergent performances that deviated from habit. Through an affective lens that foregrounds processuality, rhythm, and difference we “slow the quick jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique long enough” (Stewart, 2007, p. 4) and begin to understand what performances we can expect from them and not what we should.

Habits, thus, underlie our understanding of identity. Wise (2000) states, “Our identity . . . is comprised of habits” (Wise, 2000, p. 303). These habits speak to patterned behavior around a shared affective resonance that is worth examining while still remaining open to alternative performances that may emerge. This perspective is similar to Butler’s (1990) notion of performativity that suggests identity is the result of socialized patterns of behavior that imply a repetition of performance without pre-determining it. To elucidate how habit does not signify “same-ness” but “similar” once-occurrences, I turn to Manning (2009). She relies on a dance metaphor to highlight the ways in which performances that may seem habitual and scripted are actually affective and relational movements. These performances never happen twice in the same way, are always located in the body, and are always relational.
Having both danced for many years, we embody dance, a pastness of movement that allows dance-already-danced to move through us. This is not a learning by heart. It is not a choreography. It is improvising with the already-felt. It is associated to a deep feeling of becoming-ground that we nurture as we continue to learn how to walk. (p. 30)

As Mariam and Tahani “became” habitually, they did so in a manner where they were “improvising with the already-felt” (the resonant rhythm) while “continu[ing] to learn how to walk” (activist philosophy). Though they developed habits, each performance emerged anew and to no particularly determined end. Their habits told them “how to keep [their] balance as [they] take one step after another” (Manning, 2009, p. 14).

Activist philosophy, thus, highlights the performative dimension of identity in that identity is not seen as stable but as continuously materializing. It positions the body as always processually emergent where the performance of identity is seen as unscripted, always new, and co-constituted through in relation to how the individual affectively attunes in the performative relational moment. Affective attunement is a thus a theoretical framework that explores the ways in which bodies negotiate shifting contexts and ideological discourses surrounding identity and belonging, wherein each performance is informed by how individuals affectively attune to their contexts.

This critical and affective lens contextualizes performances in a manner that emphasizes relationality, processuality, and embodiment of experience without reinscribing essentialism of identities. Following Stewart (2007), my attention to affective attunement is an “effort to approach the intensities of the ordinary through a close ethnographic attention to pressure points and forms of attention and detachment” (p. 5). Affective attunement takes the level of analysis one dimension deeper by interpreting the rhythmic resonance that “gives affective tonality to experience”
(Manning, 2009, p. 9). In the case of habitual performances, an analysis utilizing affective attunement accounts for the repetition of performance without expecting its predetermination. Affective attunement articulates the point of similarity, which is a shared rhythm to which a body affectively attunes. It also emphasizes the unique emergence of each performance as an act of becoming as an individual affectively attunes to the continuously changing relational context they are positioned within, even if it is habitual. Finally, it leaves room for potential new performances to emerge outside of habit in response to the ways in which an individual affectively attunes to the situation where “everything depends on the feel of an atmosphere and the angle of arrival” (Stewart, 2007, p. 340). Though the contexts may be similar, an individual’s feelings may motivate them to perform differently.
CHAPTER FIVE

Jood: “I Am Jood. That’s My Label”

Jood lives in a small suburban area. I passed by rows of houses and parked by the house with the “big green Chevy truck” that Jood told me to look out for. I rang the bell and was greeted by a white and golden Husky-Golden retriever and two cats at the door. Jood, curly-haired and olive-skinned, made her way to the door. She pulled her excited dog off of me, embracing me in a strong hug. Jood and I have been friends since we were children in Saudi Arabia, making her a prime candidate for my study. Though she is older than me by several years, the parallels in our lives have helped us develop a strong bond. We had both spent multiple years during our childhood in the U.S. before moving back to Saudi Arabia during our early teenage years. We moved to the United States at different times as adults. I had gotten married and moved to Colorado to complete my undergraduate degree. I then stayed here and continued pursuing my graduate education. She moved to the U.S. several years after me and started taking classes in the pursuance of her own degree. After completing only one semester at her university, she married an American who was enlisted in the U.S. Military and dropped out of college. She has since then been naturalized as a U.S. citizen and is now a Saudi-American military wife.
With all of the similarities that Jood and I share in terms of our experiences, there are also significant performative differences in terms of how we navigate our everyday experiences and our hybridity. The variances in terms of our performances are the result of our bodies affectively attuning to contexts differently. In a general sense, Jood has developed a tendency to go through her everyday experiences projecting apathy and disengagement. She frequently comes off as stand-offish and cold, and has a habit of avoiding talking about issues that require vulnerability on her part. On several occasions, I have tried to talk to Jood about various experiences that left me feeling confused and overwhelmed. In those moments, she responded to me by telling me that I was overthinking it, or that it did not matter, or that I should just not think about it. Recently, she sent me a picture message with an image of a man holding his hand up confidently with the following text: “I tripped and fell into some feelings . . . I’m okay now. I brushed that shit off.” Though humorous at face value, the message that she sent me is but one illustration of Jood’s “hardened” performances that can be more understood in a more complex fashion through a lens of affective attunement. An affective examination, as will be shown, enquires into the feelings that reverberate through Jood in relation to her experiences and the ways in which those feelings inform her behavior.

The interview started and I asked Jood to reflect on some of her experiences as an Arab-American in the United States. Initially, she responded superficially and performed in a manner that depicted a hesitancy and resistance to be vulnerable. She shared several very brief stories about how she was aware of her hybrid identity while socializing with other Americans who, on separate occasions, inadvertently began talking about Islam and the Arab culture in misinformed, stereotypical, and negative ways. When I asked her
what she did in those moments, she said she “did not really care” and “did not give a
shit.” Jood hesitated to engage with affectively-laden experiences, instead preferring to
both embody and project apathy or indifference through abrupt and curt responses toward
the experiences themselves as well as within our interview.

Affectively attuning to her performance myself, I realized that I needed to make
myself more vulnerable since I was asking her to do the same. I began to share more of
my experiences with her to create a safe space, reflecting in detail on moments where I
felt unsure and lost in my hybridity. I talked to her about how I felt that very few people
could relate to my feelings and the difficulties of feeling like I could not meet cultural
expectations regardless of what I did. As the interview went on, I felt her begin to let her
guard down and allow herself to engage with the subject matter on a more personal and
affective level. She began to share more, evoke more, and open herself up more. Jood
saw how much I valued her feelings and experiences, and she began to affectively attune
to the interview differently. She began to embody confidence in the safe space that we
were creating together, and she finally let me in by sharing more contextualized stories.

As she opened up, Jood shared critical occurrences that affectively resonated
within her. To affectively interpret Jood’s present day performances, one must make
sense of the ways in which various experiences build upon each other in an affective
fashion with the understanding that affects are not contained within each event, but
continue to course through the body across events (Stewart, 2007). Through Jood’s
embodied narratives of location, I was able to begin interpreting Jood’s everyday
experiences through an affective lens. I probed into her experiences, asking her to
describe the what, who, where, and when in addition to how she remembered feeling at
the time. In the interview and my subsequent analysis, I was guided by questions that I hoped an affective lens might uncover: What accounts for Jood’s hardened exterior, and how might I better understand this performance through a lens of embodiment? What role do affective resonances play in informing the ways in which Jood carries herself in her everyday? Why does Jood habitually try to maintain an apathetic front? This chapter works to provide some insight into the ways in which affective nuances shape Jood’s performances.

Jood was born in Saudi Arabia and moved to the U.S. at the age of six with her family. After having been immersed in the U.S. for the next seven years, she moved back to Saudi Arabia as a teenager. This dramatic cultural shift that occurred during her formative years was instrumental in shaping Jood’s understanding of her self. Jood identified the year of the move as the time when she first started to negotiate her hybridity.

It really started when we left here [the U.S.] for me.

I mean, when we moved back to Saudi…definitely trying to fit in.

But you can’t.

Like, you’re an outsider,

and everyone made you feel like you’re an outsider.

_Can you talk about…_

Like, like… they were always calling me, “Oh…the American,” you know?

In school, it was like everyone just thought I was weird,
or I was trying to be American, even though I wasn’t tryyyyyyying to do anything.

I’m just being myself…

But it was so out of their cultural norm that I was deviant to that society.

I just – I didn’t fit in.

Especially – I don’t know if it had anything to do with – just –

my English was better, you know.

Or I had an American accent.

Or just that I viewed things differently than them. But a lot of people took offense to it, too.

A lot of people were very intimidated by me.

The first day of school it happened within – like, after the first class.

I got pulled into class, you know, and class had already started.

I was introduced, you know, sat down…whatever.

After the class ended, two girls came up to me and they were like,

“Where are you from?”

And I was like – at that time, obviously I didn’t have my citizenship yet, my American citizenship yet.

I was just like, “I’m Saudi.”

It was like, “No you’re not.”

I’m talking to them back in English, because English was predominantly my, my – stronger language than Arabic.

I was like, “What do you mean ‘I’m not?’”
It was like, “Why are you trying to be all American?”

You know, and then they just left me at that.

So what did you do?

I just froze.

Like, I was quiet.

It was… it was my first encounter of—–I guess, discrimination.

Making me feel like, you know … “You’re a lie.”

How, how did that make you feel?

I was scared.

Like, I was scared, because… like, I’ve never had this before.

No one’s ever talked to me like that before… or made me doubt myself.

Like, that was the first time in my life that I was just like,

“Whoa. Like, what do you, what do you mean?”

In her narrative, Jood explained that it was when she moved back to Saudi Arabia that she began to cultivate an awareness of her hybridity. In other words, she was affected by it. In this moment, Jood’s use of (fluent) English positioned her as “a lie” among her peers as a result of her hybridity; this performance stood in the way of her “becoming” Arab. Her hybridity suggested “violated, broken roots,” which in turn “signal[ed] an ailing cultural identity and a damaged nationality” (Malkki, 1992, p. 34). Affectively attuning to this relational and discursive moment, Jood’s body froze up out of fear and confusion. The affects that reverberated within her caused her to seize up in shock,

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20 (Personal communication, August 24, 2014)
leaving her unable to respond to the girls that questioned her authenticity. Jood felt a
sense of heightened insecurity, self-doubt, and alienation.

A cursory examination of this moment might draw a general connection between
discrimination and apathy; however, such a superficial interpretation might risk
trivializing the fear and the insecurity that fuel her desire to protect herself. This
connection between feeling and performance is telling in the sense that, for instance, if
Jood felt anger instead of sadness and insecurity, she may have performed rebellion and
expressed combativeness. I believe that what Jood felt in relation to this event was a
major catalyst for habitual performances that reflect detachment, apathy, and the
hardening of her outer shell as she navigated her hybridity amidst discourses of
singularity and conformity. After all, “[t]hese scenes have an afterlife; it isn’t like you
can put a stop to them” (Stewart, 2007, p. 68). Experiences that questioned the legitimacy
of her cultural identity made her question the legitimacy of her own cultural and national
identity.

As the interview continued to unfold, Jood reflected upon a critical event that took
place between herself and her parents that affectively resonated within her and shaped her
performances until this current day. In trying to guide and advise her on how to find
inclusion, Jood’s parents encouraged her to act in ways that did not call attention to
herself and her differences. However, in affectively attuning to these interactions, Jood
did not find comfort and security. These experiences furthered her feelings of alienation.
Ahmed (2010) explains that alienation occurs when individuals “[do] not find the objects
that promise happiness to be quite so promising” (p. 39). In Jood’s case at the time, the
object that promised happiness on a cultural level was enacting conformity, an act that
she corporeally and affectively rejected. Jood responded to the experience of being advised by her parents on how to better adapt by feeling as though she was not good enough as is. Jood reflected back on this occurrence in her interview with tears running down her face and lumps in her throat.

I hate to say it, but even in my own house and my own room and my own…

I just – I didn’t feel like … I

…belonged.

I have to watch what I say,

or watch what I do,

or tiptoe,

or I don’t know what,

or whatever.

I just can’t be myself.

You know why?

I’ll tell you why.

Because as much as I love my mom and dad, it was the constant trying to change me to fit into that society.

Most of the time that’s what me and Mama had originally fought about, all the time.

“Elsom3a [Your reputation],”

“What are people going to say?,”

“That’s just how it’s done.”

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Why?

Why is it just, “That’s how it’s done?”

I don’t want to do it…

I don’t. want. to do it.

“You have to do it.”

Why?

“Because it’s expected.”

It was just … It was always trying to change me.

Stop trying to change me!

Though this experience took place over fifteen years ago, it deeply affected her on an embodied level and continues to reverberate within her today. After Jood narrated this experience, she broke down and cried for a few moments before collecting herself again to continue on with the interview. In this narrative, Jood shared that she was asked to mask her differences and conform to the Arab community by those closest to her. Not only did Jood find herself excluded from social circles in school, she also found herself feeling unaccepted by her own parents. Jood affectively attuned to this experience by embodying even more self-doubt and insecurity. Feeling criticized in many social spheres, Jood began to protect her feelings by performing in a fashion that masked her vulnerability. The affective resonances that reverberated within her as a result of her experiences translated into the building of her outer shell.

As her friend, I remember Jood waiting for the day that she would be able to move back to the U.S. where she last felt more like herself. She believed that in the U.S., her feelings of alienation would subside. It was what she held onto for many years.
However, upon moving back to the United States as an adult, Jood found that she was unable to locate a sense of belonging. The discourses of nationhood that pushed her to the margins in Saudi Arabia were the discourses of nationhood that she found in the U.S. Regardless of geographical location, most nations adhere to discourses of conformity in determining citizens from non-citizens (MacDonald, 2010). Therefore, in affectively attuning to U.S. circulating cultural expectations of normative behavior in her new context, Jood felt as though she was unable to “become” American.

Living here [in the U.S.] had, had, had left its imprint on me,

and that’s why coming back was such a relief.

Like, I felt like, “Okay. Like, this is …

It’s kind of like my people… but not my people, at the same time.

You know, this is familiar to me.

This is what I know.

This is a society that I know.

But not 100% either,

because I mean, there’s the cultural imprint that’s left by family and all that stuff too.

So you know, you’re trying to merge both of them to make it work for yourself.

Orienting herself to this new context, Jood continued to feel fragmented as a result of her hybridity. She saw herself as similar to “neither the One…nor the Other…but something else besides [original emphasis], which contests the terms and territories of both” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 41). Migrating to the U.S. did not offer Jood peace or confidence in
terms of navigating her difference. Just as Jood found herself unable to “become” Saudi, even under tremendous pressure, she also found herself unable to “become” American.

Jood reflected upon an interaction that magnified her difference, resulting in feelings of alienation with her U.S. community. This moment was one when Jood had missedpoke in English and found herself feeling vulnerable and at risk for feeling marginalized as a hybrid.

I mean, I don’t – there – there are – I mean…
I don’t think I’ve ever like fully felt like I was American.
Like, I always – I always joke around, and – you know, like with my friends and whatever, and just be like,

“Excuse me, I’m the foreigner here.”
You know, they joke about – maybe I’ve mispronounced something, or, or misused a phrase, like, I said it wrong, or whatever.
I was just like,

“Yeah, whatever. I’m a foreigner.
Like … brush it off.
Let it go.
I’m a foreigner.”

Um, but I don’t think I’ve ever felt, like, American American.
Affectively attuning to an interpersonal interaction when she was caught off guard by having misspoken or misused an American phrase, Jood embodied feelings of inadequacy at “becoming” American. Her visceral reaction was to claim her foreignness, her
hybridity, and her feelings of alienation through humor so as to counter the feeling of not meeting “American” expectations while preserving her integrity.

Jood also spoke to experiences that she had with other Arabs in a U.S. context. Feeling pulled between a larger U.S. context and smaller interpersonal Arab interaction, Jood expressed feeling torn as she tried to negotiate how to perform.

I sometimes see Saudi women in the commissary, and every time there’s this yearning.

I feel it,

*Here* [pointing to her chest],

but I just – I, I can’t.

I can’t –

I, I *can’t* do it.

*What happens in those moments?*

I try to smile, you know?

*I smile* at them.

And then there’s a part of me that’s just like—“Just, just say, Assalamu Alaikum” and walk on by.”

But I can’t.

*I freeze.*

Like, it just doesn’t happen.

I just walk on by.

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21 Arabic greeting meaning “peace be upon you.”
And I’m like, “Shit. Maybe I should have said something. Damn it. I don’t know.”

Because I don’t want questions.

I don’t want judgment.

And then I feel frustrated… because I mean,

It’s like… like I said – like,

I want that –

I, I – I didn’t come here to completely, like. wipe out that part of my life.

It’s a part of me… you know?

But I’m, I’m having such a hard time finding it that there’s this longing, this yearning.

But, I mean, it just – it hurts sometimes.

It’s just – it’s frustrating.

I mean, like, I don’t know what to do.

*What do you think would happen if you spoke to them?*

I mean, it could – it’s 50/50. It can go both ways.

But I’m – I’m more scared of the negative, that it stops me.

I mean, being judged,

or being like, you know, like, asked questions,

or I don’t know what.

Like, I’m just – that it just, it just stops me from doing it.

I mean, that was the problem I had I Saudi…

People were judging me before they got to know me.
In this narrative, Jood described a moment when she found herself in the vicinity of other Saudi women. She was overwhelmed with a desire to connect with them. She felt the urge to introduce herself. Her body yearned to connect and to speak in Arabic because she barely gets the opportunity to do that in her Western context. However, her body responded differently. Her body affectively attuned to the threat of feeling alienated, and it seized up in that moment. Massumi (2010) speaks to the affective nature of threats:

> Threat is from the future. It is what might come next... we can never be done with it. Even if a clear and present danger materializes in the present, it is still not over. There is always the nagging potential of the next after being even worse... The uncertainty of the potential next is never consumed in any given context. There is always a remainder of uncertainty, an unconsummated surplus of danger. (p. 53)

Overcome by a multitude of feelings, Jood’s body responded to the uncertainty of the event in this relational moment by choosing distance. Even though the interaction could have gone “50/50,” Jood was moved by the embodied need to protect herself from a vulnerable situation where she might have felt judged when what she was seeking was connection and validation. As such, Jood followed her gut instinct and walked away. As is evident in her narrative, Jood’s performance is not one that was cognitively and confidently decided upon as is clear when she states, “Maybe I should have said something... I don’t know.” Rather, Jood listened to her body that led her away from these women, and she just “walk[ed] on by.”

Jood does not always walk away from other Arabs though. As affect scholars remind us, performances are not static; they are prompted by affects that emerge from within the relational moment (Manning, 2009, 2013; Massumi, 2002). Though habits do form, an affective lens works to highlight how the body can break free from a habit based
on how they affectively attune to their contexts. In her interview, Jood shared one other moment wherein she approached a Lebanese Arab man and his father and introduced herself as a fellow Arab.

I was at the store, and there was a guy and his father speaking in Arabic.

It was Lebanese, you know?

And I stalked them a little bit.

And I was debating in my head:

“Do I say something?

Do I not say something?

Do I say something?

Do I not say something?”

It’s like, “Oh my God, I haven’t heard Arabic in soooo long,” you know?

And, and I think – I – like,

I went up and down a few aisles, and I’m just like sitting there, and you know?

Trying to like, I guess, find courage or decide on what I want to do, and, and eventually I just, I, I…

I walked up to them.

I’m like, I’m like, um … I’m like, I’m like, you know…

“Are you Lebanese?”

And they’re like, “Yeah.”

And I’m just like,

“Yeah, you know.
Hi.

I’m Jood, you know…

I’m from Saudi.”

I don’t know – and then we just started talking a little bit.

Having lived in the Middle East for many years, Jood understood the cultural nuances between the countries in the region. Whereas Saudi Arabia is religiously and culturally strict, Lebanon is less traditionally conservative than Saudi Arabia. Lebanon, as a culture, does not have dress-codes or gender segregation. In fact, Lebanon is understood as a more “Westernized” Arab culture amongst other Middle Easterners—hybrid in its own sense. Having heard the dialect of Arabic being spoken by these two men and identifying it as Lebanese, Jood’s concerns over being judged were minimized enough to the point wherein her yearning to connect overcame her hesitancy to socialize. Ahmed (2010) speaks to affective attunement when she states: “To be affected by something is to evaluate that thing. Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn toward things” (p. 31). Affectively attuning to the cultural background of these individuals, Jood’s body turned to them. She felt a little more confident that her hybridity would not work to alienate her among them.

In response to deeply visceral and archived affects like fear, insecurity, sadness, anger, and alienation, Jood performed in a way that allowed her to distance herself from those affects or from relational interactions that could trigger those affects.

Awayness might help establish the edges of our horizon; in rejecting the proximity of certain objects, we define the places that we know we do not wish to go, the things we do not wish to have, touch, taste, hear, feel, see, those things we do not want to keep within reach. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 32)
In stepping away from others because she fears she might find rejection or criticism, Jood habitually performs apathy to place distance between herself and feelings of alienation. Jood’s relentless need to avoid feelings of alienation by rejecting conformity has pushed her to transcend identification labels. Feeling not “Arab” or “American” enough in various contexts has resulted in Jood’s active resistance to conform. Her resistance to conform to both Saudi and American cultural expectations manifested itself performatively as a rejection of labels. This performance was not one that she reflected upon retrospectively, but one that emerged through the process of the interview.

*Can you just tell me in a general sense the first few thoughts that come to mind about what being an Arab-American in the United States has meant for you?*

Uh … I don’t really identify as an Arab-American.

Like, I’m just… kind of… a person in this society, if that makes sense.

Like … Like, I don’t *label* myself as an Arab-American.

I mean,

I know that I’m not 100% American.

I’m a U.S. citizen, but like – I mean…

I don’t *identify* myself as an Arab-American.

Like I’m an *immigrant* who came here and became a U.S. citizen, so I’m just –

I’m part of this society as an individual who isn’t 100% American.

It’s just – it’s that label. That label just kills me.

*What about the label upsets, or kills you?*

Like, I just – I, I feel like it’s inaccurate.
I don’t feel like that label does it justice.
I mean … for me, there’s no label that adequately fits what I feel.
I mean, just the label itself doesn’t do it justice.

It doesn’t fit.

I don’t feel like it fits my situation, or how I feel about it.

Just the term or the label “Arab-American” is very mi7addad. It’s very …

Limited.

… limited.

I don’t feel like that – like that, just that term applies to me.

I’m just – I’m here.

I’m Jood.

That’s who I am. That’s my label.

Jood.

That’s my name.

And it feels better. It’s less stressful on me.

When I approached Jood about my dissertation project on Arab-Americans, she jumped at the opportunity to participate. With a general understanding that she was both Arab and American in her own way, Jood had warned me that she probably had “too much to say.” However, during the interview, Jood affectively attuned to my asking of her to reflect upon her experiences as an Arab-American by pushing back against the term. She responded very viscerally to the label. As with my other participants, the affective overflow in Jood’s narration is evident in the use of words such as “like” and “I mean” (Manning & Massumi, 2014). Upon probing a little deeper, Jood revealed that the term
Arab-American is one that she found limiting in that it implied belonging in both cultures. It implied an ability to “become” both Arab and American. However, as a cultural hybrid whose body habitually affectively attunes to cultural and interpersonal discourses of conformity and singularity with resistance and self-preservation, Jood perceived the label of “Arab-American” to be one that dismissed her experiences. It did not “adequately fit what [she felt].” Jood claimed that she found labels limiting, that they did not speak to her experiences as a hybrid. The term “Arab-American,” even though it implies multiplicity and fluidity, is still one that made feel Jood confined to cultural expectations. She performatively rejected the term, indicating that she preferred to defy all expectations and to go by only one label: her name. In this moment of the interview, claiming nothing but her name proved itself to be “less stressful on her” as the only expectation she needed to meet in this regard was that of being herself.

The performance of denying herself any form of cultural attachment and embodying a nomadic mindset is one that is clearly motivated by an affective resonance. Hybridity scholars speak to how some hybrids give up a sense of connection to any one country as a means of empowering themselves.

Nomadic children [or hybrids] often have difficulty adhering to national identities as they are understood because their experiences go beyond the boundaries of definition. They “often feel as though they are citizens of the world and must grow to define home for themselves. They belong everywhere and nowhere – they are ‘other’ wherever they find themselves.” (Eidse & Sichel, 2004, pp. 1-2)

In response to fluctuating affects, hybrids often feel more comfortable claiming a global citizenship as a way of enacting agency over their sense of rootlessness (Ahmed, 1999; Chambers, 1994; Eidse & Sichel, 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). They have
“relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity” (Braidotti in Ahmed, 1999, p. 336). Having affectively attuned to an experience that suggested a hint of conformity, that of labeling during in the interview, Jood took on the position of transcendence where she expressed that she laid claim to no culture or nation. This performance of defiance is one that is held together by rhythms of loneliness, misunderstandings, and uprootedness.

Sometimes it’s like, “Okay, sooo … Who am I?,

*What* am I doing here?

*Where* am I *supposed* to go?"

I’m just kind of … *floating around.*

I’m looking for something to fall back on,

and you’d think that your identity would *help you* figure out where you *belong* or *what to do*, and whatever;

but because I’m just *all over the place*, I don’t know where to go.

I’m just kind of bouncing back and forth between all the different things, the different aspects of my culture, my – part of who I am and whatever.

That’s why – you know the plaque in the hallway?

I forgot what it says right now, about maybe, “Don’t try to fit in, you’re made to like stand out” or something?

Kate got that for me, because one time when we were talking, I was like, “I don’t feel like I *fit in* anywhere.”

And she was like, “Stop. Stop trying to *fit in*. You’re meant to *stand out.*”

And I just feel despair…I cry a lot.

And then I metaphorically slap myself *in the face* and be like,
“Get over it. It doesn’t matter.

_It. doesn’t. matter._

It doesn’t matter _where_ you’re from, _who_ you are.

Just get over it.”

You know? But I mean, every now and then, you get sucked back into it a little bit. But then, it’s just like, _slap_ yourself in the face again.

“Get over it.”

But, I mean, it’s not all the time, because I always have this wall up, because I don’t like dealing with feelings and emotions.

Like, if I’m going to sit here and cry like this every single day, I’d never get anything done.

And I guess maybe that’s why a lot of times I come off as this cold bitch.

It’s just draining.

It’s exhausting.

In this narrative, Jood reflected upon an experience when she performed in a way that was non-habitual. She affectively attuned to discourses of nationhood and, instead of performing apathy and defiance, she tried to locate a place for herself. In doing so, she found herself unable to conform to the identity labels that are meant to guide individuals. Affectively attuning to this moment, Jood was overcome with a lot of despair causing her to cry and question herself. In the embodied narrative of location, Jood fell back into habit by performatively telling herself to “get over it.” As is evident in the narrative, this habit of telling herself to “get over it” is one that she resorts to when she affectively attunes to situations that cause her to question herself.
Upon sharing that she felt as though she did not fit in anywhere with her friend, Kate then responded by encouraging Jood to relinquish ties with identity labels and to transcend cultural expectations to avoid feelings of non-belonging. Ahmed (1999) states, “[T]he subject who has chosen to be homeless . . . is certainly a subject who is privileged, and someone for whom having or not having a home does not affect their ability to occupy a given space” (p. 335). One can see that Jood’s performance of claiming only her name, and her performance of telling herself to “get over it,” emerges in response to fluctuating feelings. Through transcendence, Jood attempts to liberate herself from the affective resonances that push her to painfully navigate her differences and her hybridity amidst discourses of nationhood and singularity. She attempts to ground herself in liminality and transcendence as an act of claiming agency over her understanding of self. Jood spoke to this performance in an illustrative example wherein she chose to lay claim to neither country nor nation as she embodied transcendence and self-protection.

I intentionally try to get people to just know me first before any of this identity stuff comes out to play.

You know, even when people generally, like, ask me where I’m from,

I tend to avoid it.

What – how do you do that?

Like for example, When Christopher and I are together, I just let him say, “Tennessee,” and I just kind of . . .

veer off,

because I don’t want people to automatically have an impression of me,

a predisposed impression, without knowing me first.
In this interaction, Jood affectively attuned to being asked where she was from, feeling pressured to claim a cultural identity or label. Stewart (2007) affirms, “Ordinary affect is a surging, a rubbing, a connection of some kind that has an impact . . . [It’s] about bodies literally affecting one another and generating intensities” (p. 128). During this experience, the “surging” and “rubbing” in this relational moment generated intensities that Jood felt and reacted to. Affectively attuning to these intensities, she performed transcendence through silence. In her own way, Jood resisted being placed in a limited box that positioned her as Arab, American, or Arab-American.

Sitling in her house and watching her interact with her husband, I saw Jood performatively transcend cultural expectation. In the three hours I spent with her after our interview session was over, I noticed how Jood oft used Arabic terms of endearment with her American spouse while also primarily speaking in English. She also frequently used Arabic cultural and religious ritualistic phrases with him, even though he does not speak Arabic. Instead of saying “bless you” after he sneezed, for example, she said “yerhamuk Allah.” In addition, her house smelled like oud, a fragrance that reminds Jood of her father. She has a copper lantern hanging from her ceiling that was given to her by her grandmother. Jood also has old wooden Whiskey boxes that she bought with her husband at a garage sale, and Norman Rockwell paintings that they inherited from his grandparents. These artifacts may at first seem like a means of Jood balancing out her cultures through representational artifacts; however, through an affective lens, we can

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22 Yer7amak Allah translates over to “God bless you.”

23 Oud, also known as Agarwood, is extracted from the Aquilaria tree. It can be burned and used as incense or applied in oil form as fragrance.
better understand that these objects are ones that she chose to display because of their affective significance. They are objects that connect her to people and memories, objects that matter more to her than mere cultural representation. Though she may choose to transcend cultural identification, she continues to hold on to familial and collective affiliations.

An external critical intercultural communicative analysis might have painted Jood as an inherently defiant individual as a result of her performances of rebellion, resistance of norms, and transcendence. In addition, the ways in which she initially participated in the interview makes Jood seem uninterested and emotionally shallow. However, an embodied analysis was able to look beyond the hardened exterior and explore the relational occurrences that underlie such an easily misunderstood exterior. Furthermore, it was able to interpretively make the distinction between performances of anarchistic defiance and self-protection.

Through Jood’s embodied narratives of location, and by asking Jood to share critical moments that shaped her understanding of herself, I was able to uncover an affective thread that helps in interpreting her performances. Jood’s embodied narratives of location revealed that Jood’s habitual performances emanated from a history of experiences that affectively imprinted themselves upon Jood’s body. Feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, and alienation in multiple contexts moved her body to perform self-protection by distancing herself from relational moments that might conjure painful affects. For instance, an affective interpretation of Jood’s habit to transcend adds a layer of interpretive depth and gives voice to the fact that this performance is not because Jood does not want to identify as an Arab, American, or Arab-American but that the act of
identifying is one that is often too affectively-laden for her. Identifying as anything other than her name results in Jood affectively attuning to discourses of conformity that more often than not serve to highlight her hybridity and elicit feelings of alienation. Experiences that bring up feelings of insecurity and inadequacy in realizing cultural expectations prompt Jood to protect herself through apathy and transcendence. This deeper understanding, this humanization, of Jood’s everyday performances is made possible only through an affective lens.
CHAPTER SIX

Layan: “I’m Not 50/50. I’m 100/100”

Sitting at my desk, I smiled at the screen of my laptop as Layan’s image appeared. Layan, having just recently moved to the Middle East, agreed to participate in our interview over Skype. She moved to Saudi Arabia with her Saudi husband where he believed he would have better opportunities to find a job while she completed her graduate education remotely. She called me from the same room she had routinely called me from over the past few months: her living room. I first met Layan thirteen years ago in Saudi Arabia. We met in a dim restaurant at the encouragement of a mutual friend.

Having lived between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia at different points in our lives, we were both trying to forge a space for our hybrid selves in the traditionally conservative society of Riyadh and sought refuge in other like-minded people. We spent the next three years in Saudi Arabia having many discussions about identity before finding ourselves in the same M.A. program in the U.S. Drawn to the space that academia provides to explore experience and identity, we both worked through many difficult individual, interpersonal, cultural, and political complexities in the pursuit of not just a degree, but answers for who we were in relation to the world. To this day, we spend hours on the phone talking about
scholars, our research, and negotiating day-to-day experiences as hybrids. Our last phone call is still clear in my head. “I can’t really talk to a lot of people about this,” she said before sharing her frustrations that arose from a recent interaction she had with her Saudi parents-in-law who had recently criticized her choice of clothing.

Layan is now a 33-year-old Saudi-American graduate student working on her second Master’s degree. Unlike my other participants, Layan is not an Arab-American hybrid as a result of cultural immersion or immigration. Born to a Saudi father and an American mother, Layan was officially and legitimately a citizen of both countries at birth. She and her family visited the U.S. every summer while growing up. Layan was born and raised in Saudi Arabia in a household that upheld both Saudi and American values and lifestyles.

My mom was American.

She passed away when I was a teenager.

And my, my, my, my, my, my dad’s Saudi….

So it’s never not… there was never a moment where I wasn’t conscious of who I was, and how I navigated space.

Yeah… I think there was always a rumble of identities underneath.

You know our parents really just wanted us to take the best of both worlds,

and that’s actually always… I just really wanted to internalize that.
And so, in my life, I think I make my point of taking the best of both worlds.²⁴

Layan’s experiences with navigating her hybridity have always been ever-present. In fact, she expressed that she does not remember a time when she was not aware of the tensions of being drawn between and toward several cultures. Her parents worked to help her and her siblings ease into their hybridity, encouraging them to take the best of both worlds. As present and invested role models from each culture, Layan’s parents acted as supportive mentors who consistently offered her support as she navigated various interpersonal interactions while growing up.

Sadly, Layan’s mother passed away when Layan was thirteen; however, her father continued to raise Layan and her siblings with the same openness to “taking the best of both worlds” as they transitioned into adulthood. The environment in which Layan grew up in proved crucial to Layan’s confidence in embracing multiple cultural scripts and practices. How do Layan’s affective ties to her parents inform her everyday performances? How do affective resonances from Layan’s past experiences, sociopolitical discourses, and interpersonal interactions shape her performances? How does Layan negotiate “taking the best of both worlds” in a world that operates around singular notions of identity? What does she affectively attune to? What habitual performances has she developed, and what have they developed in relation to? Through an analysis of Layan’s embodied narratives of location, I hope to better understand the answers to some of these questions.

²⁴ (Personal communication, September 7, 2014)
As a hybrid child living in the Middle East, Layan struggled with a lot of discrimination. Visibly Arab-looking with an olive-skinned complexion, dark black hair, and Arab features, Layan spoke fluent English and spent a lot of time with children from the Western community in Saudi Arabia—the community that her mother was a part of. She stated, “Americans always want to tell you you’re not enough of an American, and Arabs do plenty of that, too, actually, in their own ways.” Though some Arabs discriminated against her, she was much more integrated into the Western community as a result of her mother’s affiliation. It was in the Western social context that Layan experienced one of her most painful encounters with discrimination.

Yeah, well… Yeah, what happened was,

Growing up…so, when my mom was still alive,

I remember, I remember…oh God, this is a painful one.

This is pretty humiliating.

But, this is typical of how I feel like I’m socially awkward my whole life.

So, when my mom was alive, it was just before she was, she was, when she was alive,

I had these friends who were, um…so, they were European,

They were, they were Irish, I believe.

And, they were two sisters.

And, I used to – I used to go hang out with them, and my mom let me spend… do sleep overs with them. And, I could go spend the night.

And, one time there was a sleep-over, and as far as I knew I was the only brown girl in the room.
That’s my memory.

I’m pretty sure that’s true,

So I don’t know how I got, how I even infiltrated this group.

But, like white expats living in Saudi…

And I fell asleep, and I had no idea, but they, um, put shaving cream on my face.

and, um, I guess they had a, had a blast, like, laughing at me and stuff.

And, I found out later when I woke up.

And, I was totally the butt of everybody’s joke, you know?

And, I was totally made fun of.

Um, and, wow,

    talk about painful, you know?

I think, within that there’s this level of, “I’m not like the rest of these girls,” you know?

Like, I was hanging out, playing with these white girls, because my mom was the expat, who had expat friends.

    But, I was the butt of their joke. You know?

So, and I, I think that that’s pretty… I think that probably a lot of people of color… and I think it’s probably a pretty common experience,

    but, man, does it hurt.

Like, just talking about it is emotional, you know.

It just, it get me kind of teary…and like,

oh, I can’t believe I’m sharing such an embarrassing story,
but it was really humiliating,

it felt really humiliating,

So, so, um, I think, so, from a very young age, what I’m saying, is that I
did feel discrimination, despite the fact that I had a white mom.

Layan shared this very difficult experience during the interview and it left her in tears. Though this experience occurred over two decades ago, the traumatic event imprinted itself on her body and emerged in the retelling and reliving of this moment. Affectively attuning to acts of discrimination perpetuated by those she thought were her friends, Layan felt singled out. She felt herself being marginalized as a result of her hybridity. However, even though Layan was bullied and had cause to question her understanding of herself, she found acknowledgement and validation of the very same characteristics that singled her out through the support offered to her by her parents. Furthermore, though Layan recalled several moments of discrimination, she also expressed being sheltered from discrimination by her mom. Layan states, “[S]he [her mom] probably sheltered me from the discrimination of being, a, a, a brown American, you know?” Therefore, her parents nurtured within her a sense of pride and confidence in who she was, enabling her to rise above moments of discrimination by drawing on her sense of self.

The support that Layan received from her parents, and their encouragement to “take the best of both worlds,” helped Layan develop into a strong, outspoken, opinionated, and confident woman. Layan shared several experiences wherein she performed in ways that emphasized her hybridity as a coming together of two whole cultures. For instance, Layan shared a narrative that took place during the time leading up to President Barack Obama’s second election. In recalling the experience, Layan
expressed that she was heavily invested in playing a part in the re-election of President Barack Obama. Taking part in this election, “becoming” American and performing “Americanness” at this point in time, was her way of aligning herself with a significant political moment in U.S. history. However, as her embodied narrative of location will show, Layan’s “Americanness” was called into question as a result of her hybridity.

I consider myself an American.

Like, in, in, within, deep within me, um, I guess –

…I vote.

I find voting really important, and I have strong opinions on it.

It doesn’t mean that I actually always vote…but I do vote when it’s somebody I can believe in.

So I’m proud of my vote for Obama, despite the fact that the Arab world still doesn’t appreciate him.

Because I actually think,

    as an American citizen,

he did amazing things for us,

    for, for people, for, you know, the American population.

Either way, I vote,

    and either way, I know I’m an American,

    and I do totally get dismissed.

Because once people find out that I wasn’t born in the States,

that I’m not reeeeeally an American, even though I was –

I inherited my citizenship,
that just totally dismissed it.

“Well, you’re not *reeeeally* an American.

You’re like, an ‘other.’”

And they *don’t get* that I’m *not* naturalized,

They *don’t get* that, you know?

They *don’t get* that.

They *don’t get* that it was an *inherited* identity.

Um, so, I get it, I get it from Americans all the time.

And I remember when I was *here* [Saudi Arabia]… ‘cause I voted for

Obama overseas.

And, I remember when I was *here* it was like,

“Are you voting?”

I’m like, “*Hell yeah! I’m voting!*”

Like, “What the *hell*?”

Like, “I’m an *American*.”

Like, “I’m *voting*.”

Like, to me, voting is really important.

And, and this election it meant a lot to me, because I felt like it was

claiming a part of my identity in a big way.

I think a lot of my American identity is, um, how I align my politics in the

US. Like, with a certain group,

and that makes me feel like I’m an American in that group.
In her telling, I sensed her vulnerability and her angst at being asked whether she would vote. Layan’s voice got louder. She spoke a little faster. Her tone was one of defiance. I sensed the frustration emanating from Layan as she relived the moment. She spoke with a lot of assertiveness, claiming her inherited identity that is affectively tied to her mother, to justify her “Americanness.” Considering the fact that a big part of her identity is tied to her mother, whom she lost at a young age, Layan finds security in rooting herself in her mother’s cultural heritage. This is especially important for Layan when she negotiates interactions that make her feel as though she needs to justify her claim to her American identity.

In this narrative, Layan affectively attuned to the question, “Are you voting?,” by feeling belittled and insulted. She felt as though her “Americanness” was being called into question; that her “Saudi-ness” made it so that she had no stake in voting for the next U.S. American president. She felt as though she needed to validate her Americanness to the other American who posed the question to her. Her immediate visceral response was to defend her claim, “‘Hell yeah! I’m voting!’ Like, ‘What the hell?’ Like, ‘I’m an American. Like, ‘I’m voting.’” She passionately renounced the insinuation that being “Saudi” somehow made her less “American.”

In another one of her most evocative narratives, Layan recalled a moment wherein she felt pushed to defend her hybrid identity as one that was whole and intact. She described a recent moment that she shared with her Saudi mother-in-law that occurred sometime over the past year as she was attempting to settle into her new location in the Middle East.
My [Saudi] mother-in-law, for example, she once said this to me and it cracked me up. She was like:

“You are very Saudi. You were raised here, and you were raised with your aunts, and your mom died when you were young, so you were very Saudi.”

And, I said,

“I am very Saudi. Thank you,” you know?

“But, you know what?

I am very American, too.

I am 100% Saudi, I am 100% American.”

She was trying to, like, say “You’re worthy of being married to my son, because you’re Saudi enough,” you know?

And it was just an unconscious thing that she was saying, and I was like,

“Oh, oh, back up lady.

You know what?

You’re right.

I’m totally very Saudi.

Thank you for admitting that, and appreciating that.

And guess what?

I’m also 100% an American.”

Like, I feel like I’m not 50/50. I’m 100/100.

Like, and that’s just… I don’t know if that’s my way of handling it, but that’s my way of like –
I embrace both fully, is what I would say.

So it’s not like you can tell me who I am and who I’m not.

*I’m 100/100.*

This is how I view myself. I view myself as 100% both.”

In this occurrence, Layan’s mother-in-law was praising Layan’s “Saudiness” and her worthiness to be a partner to her son. Whereas Layan could have affectively attuned to this comment by feeling confidence and acceptance and performing gratitude, Layan instead affectively attuned to this comment by feeling angry and performing defiance.

Having just moved back to the Middle East after living in the U.S. for over a decade, and having been praised on her “Arabness” by her mother-in-law in this Arab context, Layan immediately responded with a firm assertiveness to maintain her connection to her “Americanness.” In other words, Layan’s visceral instinct in this moment was to protect the part of her that was seemingly ignored: her American lineage.

Layan, unlike my other participants, feels rooted in her hybridity. Her hybridity does not work to fragment, divide, or pull her apart; her hybridity is what holds her together. Having been raised to take the both of best worlds, and having a parent from each culture, Layan has never understood herself as anything but an Arab-American. Feeling confident to claim that she is 100% Saudi and 100% American is no small feat. Most hybrids are characterized by feelings of chronic homelessness and fragmentation (Walker, 2011). The security and validation she received from her family fuels her firm claim to a holistic hybrid identity and emanates very clearly from her performances of being unwilling to compromise on her perception and understanding of herself. In completing her narrative, she stated,
I think the most important part of that, was that I actually embraced what was internally happening inside me.

And, I stood up for myself.

Like, this is how I want to be viewed.

This is how I articulate myself, and my identity.

I embrace both fully.

This is a significant analytical moment when Layan’s assertive and outspoken performance illuminates the role of affect in a clear fashion. Within the context of the Middle East, confronting and correcting an elder is culturally frowned upon. Face saving is critical to the maintenance of relationships in a culture that has been built on prioritizing family and family members (Obeidat, Shannak, Masa‘deh, & Al-Jarrah, 2012). I neither state this lightly nor do I seek to make large generalizations about the Arab culture. Instead, I point to “rhythms, the collection of resonances, the aggregate of meanings, texts, and practices” (Wise, 2000, p. 306) that hold a culture together (as discussed in the first theoretical interlude). In doing so, I look to highlight the significance of embodiment through drawing a distinction between cultural attunement and affective attunement. As a Saudi who has grown up in Saudi and understands Saudi culture, Layan may have performed in a much more subdued manner in addressing her mother-in-law. However, as a result of her affective attunement, Layan’s pride and confidence in her hybridity pushed her to defy cultural code and assert to her mother-in-law that she was more than just Saudi; she was American too.

Furthermore, being praised for seemingly “becoming” Saudi enough for Layan implied that there was an inherent value in being able to overcome the hybridity that she
inherited from her parents. The justifications given by her mother-in-law—losing her mother, living in Saudi Arabia, and being raised by her Saudi aunts after the death of her mother—served as the grounds through which her mother-in-law was able to accept Layan as a full and authentic Saudi. Affectively attuning to the implication that losing her mother worked to help Layan “overcome” her fragmentation as a hybrid, Layan wholeheartedly and defiantly declared her hybridity through which she asserted she was 100% Saudi and 100% American. Through her performance, Layan looked to affirm the notion that “becoming” one cultural identity did not equate to the denial of “becoming” another. Layan was “not 50/50. [She was] 100/100.”

Layan’s assertive claim to both of her identities was evident not only in her narratives of location, but also emerged during our interview when Layan visibly reacted to one of the questions that I asked her.

*What are the first few thoughts that come to mind about what being an Arab-American in the US has meant to you?*

Oh. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa..

Ok. I didn’t expect it to be that obvious, but first of all,

I’m not an Arab-American.

I’m a *Saudi-American,*

which means 9/11.

Like the first thing that comes up, the first thing you said was like “Arab-American,”

and I was like no,

I’m not.
I’m Saudi American.

That means I’m a 9/11 expression,

* a moment of communication,

* a human being in communicated-form

that lives and breathes and understands the reality,

the consequences,

the pain of 9/11 on a whole other level.

I’m not *just* an Arab-American, I’m a *Saudi-American*.

I’m *of* the people that flew into the building *of* the people that I am also a part

of.

You know, my mom was raised in Long Island, New York.

For me… I’m clearly *of* both lands colliding.

That’s the first thing that comes to mind:

I’m *not just* an Arab-American.

I’m *a Saudi-American*… which means 9/11 in my head.

And I just remember that moment… the moments are back very vividly.

I was back in the States when it happened, and it’s just an unforgettable part

of who I am,

what my identity is,

how I see myself.

It’s really hard for me to envision life before 9/11 as my Arab-American

identity.
It doesn’t mean I didn’t have a strong identity, it’s just that I’m so colored by the event of 9/11 on my body,

and how it transpired,

and what happened,

and what I chose to do,

and how I navigated space at that moment in time in the US.

There is an external war that I can put as a poster for my identity that would argue, almost dictate, that there’s a war within me.

Even if that’s not true.

The external world reminds you that that should be true.

I mean, it might not be necessarily a war… but when it’s blasting on TV, and when there’s like a few day straight with, like, whole buildings…

having screens of shots of these buildings falling apart, you know…

Internally, you might be more put together, but you kind of have to fall apart, because the external world tells you, you gotta fall apart,

like who you are is at war with itself.

Even if it’s not how you feel internally it becomes how the world wants to make sure you feel.

Like, everybody Saudi-American, and every Arab-American, knows those questions of like,

“Well, you’re really very brown or you’re really …”

You always get those awkward questions that we all know.
Upon asking an open-ended question about her experiences as an Arab-American in the U.S., I sensed Layan’s determination to be directly associated to both the Saudi and the U.S. cultures. Similar to the way she responded to the other experiences that she shared, Layan felt moved by a strong pride in both her identities to perform in a way that assertively laid claim to a Saudi-American identity. Layan affectively attuned to the term “Arab-American” upon my saying it. Stating, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa,” her visceral reaction was to immediately stop the conversation to explicitly declare the label that she felt best described her embodied experiences: Saudi-American. Fueled by a confident and assertive force that caused her to derail the interview, Layan worked to ensure that I spoke to both of her identities in a way that respected her affective claim to belonging.

Claiming a Saudi-American identity was affectively tied to the events of 9/11 for Layan. As a Saudi-American, 9/11 presented itself as a moment in history wherein Layan’s two cultures collided on a global stage. Immediately after 9/11, the media was saturated with the visual images of the buildings collapsing and news of lost family members and rescue workers. The world was also inundated by representations in Hollywood and persistent news reports that position the Arab as the “enemy” and/or the “other.” Layan was living in the U.S. at the time of 9/11. She found herself in a political landscape that resulted in a severe backlash against Arabs and Muslims. During a time when a large majority of Arabs and Muslims feared for their safety, Layan wanted her affiliation to both the Saudi and American cultures to be prominent and visible. She neither attempted to “pass” as American nor tried to adopt a more general “Arab-American” label. Layan is affectively drawn the labels of “Saudi” and “American” as a result of the connection they have to her family. They bring forth feelings of security,
belonging and validation. Layan claimed both parts of her as equal regardless and almost in spite of dangerous political tensions. In this excerpt, Layan showed how the media and the sociopolitical environment were not simply external factors that shaped her logical understandings of her relational self, but embodied ones that painted how she understood herself, performed herself (with me and others), and felt about herself.

Most critical intercultural literature suggests that hybrids are positioned in a liminal space in between two cultures, a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) that is neither one nor the other. Such a perspective insinuates a sense of fragmentation and uprootedness. However, an embodied analysis uncovers that Layan does not reside in-between. In fact what was most salient about Layan’s interview was her bold demeanor and unwillingness to compromise her affective connection to both cultures. She understands her sense of self as one that is firmly rooted in the Saudi and the American cultures, not as fractions of 100% but as in-tact “becomings” of both. Whereas many hybrids tend to conceptualize their multiplicity through a lens of fragmentation in response to larger discourses (Anthias, 2002; Chambers, 1994; Hall, 2000; Nakayama, 1997), Layan’s affective connection to both of her identities has pushed her to build a sense of self that is firmly grounded in two worlds as opposed to a liminal space that resides in between them. With this motivating her performances, the moments that Layan could remember in response to my questions were ones she challenged this notion of fragmentation. Through embodied narratives of location, I engaged in a deeper analytical exploration that used embodiment as its point of departure to illuminate the intricate nuances that shaped Layan’s everyday performances and unveiled the ways in which she, unlike my other participants, did not affectively find herself on the borders of her cultures but at their junction.
Language, Labels, and Reactions: A Theoretical Interlude

Affective attunement undertakes a mode of inquiry that emphasizes the interpretation of an occurrence through an examination of the affective resonances in relation to the contexts impacting an individual at any given moment. The theoretical lens of attunement examines felt shifts of energy that move an individual in a moment of relational movement (Manning, 2009, 2013). In the analyses of my interviewees’ embodied narratives of location, they spoke of moments when they felt emotions such as shame, fear, pride, and confidence in relation to various sociopolitical and interpersonal contexts. They reflected upon how their feelings propelled them to adopt a variety of habitual performances such as detachment or “Americanness.” They also shared moments that spoke to how their feelings fueled them to perform in non-habitual ways as their bodies attuned to different affective rhythms, such as when Jood overcame her hesitancy and introduced herself to other Arabs in the commissary. However, as a critical researcher, I did not limit my attention and analyses of affective attunement to the embodied narratives of location provided by my interviewees; I approached each interview with the understanding that the act of narrating is itself a relational performance.
(Ellingson, 2012; Ezzy, 2010; Holland, 2007; Swirski, 2013) that is informed by affective attunement.

In remaining attentive to locating moments of affective attunement during my interviews, I noticed how some of my participants affectively attuned to language being used. I attended to the ways in which certain words resonated on an affective level within my interviewees, shifting their performances in bodily and felt ways. For instance, upon asking Layan to speak to her experiences as an “Arab-American,” she responded in a very visceral manner with a strong tone to the words that I had chosen to describe her. Her body immediately rejected this terminology as the words resonated within her on an affective level. She stated, “Whoa, whoa, whoa… first of all, I’m not an Arab-American” and assertively noted that she identified as a Saudi-American, where she was 100% Saudi and 100% American. Her instinctive reaction illustrated a moment of attunement to the affective potency carried within naming (Chen, 2012). Jood also responded to the term “Arab-American” with hesitancy for very different reasons. She claimed, “Uh… I don’t really identify as an Arab-American. Like, I’m just kind of a person in this society, if that makes sense.” Having affectively attuned to the label used in the interview, Jood appeared confused, looked away, and tried to distance herself from the label in a manner that was embodied and felt. In response to a series of probing questions, Jood began to cognitively reflect on this performance and articulate her understanding of her rejection of the term. Through her embodied narratives of location, specifically when she shared her overall rejection of identification labels to avoid feelings of potential alienation, I was able to understand the embodied response I witnessed more deeply.
The way that language is capable of affectively inducing an immediate, embodied reaction in my interviewees reveals the affective potency of language (Chen, 2012). Language, in this sense, should be understood as a relational factor that individuals affectively attune to as they attempt to make sense of their experiences relative to circulating discourses and ideologies, as another context that augments the affective tonality of a relational experience. Chen (2012) invokes the term “animacy” to refer to the affective tonality that underlie words and provide them with meaning. He affirms, “Words more than signify; they affect and effect. Whether read or heard, they complexly pulse through bodies (live or dead), rendering their effects in feeling and active response” (p. 54). Massumi (2002) also sheds light upon the affective registers of language through the term “connectibility,” stating, “A concept is defined less by its semantic content than by the regularities of connection that have been established between it and other concepts . . . [a] concept carries a certain residue of activity” (p. 20). He claims that this residue is the affective rhythm that language carries based on the ways concepts have been used and applied; it is an affective resonance underlying concepts that animate people and objects in relational movement. Words can be understood through a lens of relationality: they hold very little meaning if the affective resonance that animates them is stripped or denied (Chen, 2012; Manning, 2013; Massumi, 2002). Even more significant to this dissertation, language can, and should, be understood through a lens of affective attunement that examines the ways in which language animates bodies and moves them through the affective tonality that is carried through language (Chen, 2012; Manning, 2009; Massumi, 2002).
My emphasis on affect and affective attunement helped me remain more attentive to these moments as they emerged during my interviews. Witnessing my interviewees’ embodied reactions to my, and their, words supports this understanding that language is not simply an assemblage of words, and words are not empty conceptual signifiers. They are both more complex: they are affectively-charged vessels. Employing a critical and affective lens, Chen (2012) notes, “Language users use animacy hierarchies to manipulate, affirm, and shift the ontologies that matter the world” (Chen, 2012, p. 42). Ideological discourses of nationhood circulate through language that promote conformity and singularity. This language is more likely to evoke a sense of comfort and belonging. Language that suggests transgression (for example, hybridity), on the other hand, has a tendency to evoke a sense of fear, shame, and non-belonging (Chambers, 1997; Malkki, 1992). These concepts are not inherently imbued with such meaning but are given these meanings through the affective tonality carried in the terms.

To illustrate this point, when asked where one is from, an individual that can provide a simple answer often feels more stable and rooted than the individual that has a more complex background (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Hybrids that move between several cultural performances and lack a simple answer to the question “Where are you from?” can find themselves feeling homeless, restless, and rootless as they attune to language’s affective underpinnings. In a world that elevates ideologies of belonging, conformity, sameness, and predictability, language stemming from these circulating ideologies animates hybrid bodies by making them feel shame in their deviation/non-conformity. Hearing that they are “not Arab enough” or “not American enough,” in the
case of Arab-Americans, as a result of their hybridity is not simply a linguistic statement but one that resonates affectively.

In relation to language, both Jood and Layan affectively attuned to the term “Arab-Americans” in their interviews. They had an embodied reaction to it, as evident in their performance during the interview. For Jood, the term “Arab-American” is one that confines her and does not parallel her experiences in a manner that feels comfortable to her. Layan, on the other hand denies fragmentation. She asserts, through language, that she is whole in regards to her Saudi and American identities in an effort to ward off the affective tonality that is carried within terminology that suggests fragmentation. These moments within the interview reveal that language is “an extra component of the experience of articulation, not its final form” (Manning, 2009, p. 215); it is a relational factor that individuals affectively attune to as they attempt to make sense of their experiences in relation to circulating discourses and ideologies. It is another context that augments the affective tonality of an experience.

Considering the value this dissertation places on affective attunement, it is critical to recognize the deep affective undercurrents carried within words, labels, and seemingly innocuous phrases. Language is neither neutral nor static, but it reverberates viscerally with affective rhythms that affect individuals. Manning (2009) states, “To denude language of its affective tonality is to suggest that language only makes sense through the syntax of words” (p. 227). Consequently, while bringing affective attunement into the fold of hybrid analysis, it is not enough to simply explore my interviewee’s embodied
narratives of location, but to thoughtfully investigate the performance of sharing such affectively charged narratives.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Nawal: “I Am Kind Of Lost”

I drove to Nawal’s house nestled in the suburbs for her interview. She lives quite a distance away from me in a quaint, quiet, and isolated apartment complex with a spectacular view of the mountain range. I climbed up the stairs to her apartment and knocked on the door. Olive-skinned with dark brown, shoulder-length hair, Nawal has very prominent Arabic features. She was dressed in a house thobe\(^\text{25}\) when she greeted me at the door. “\textit{Ahlain, keif \textcircled{7}alik}\(^\text{26}\)? \textit{Wa7ashteen}.” She gave me a big hug and let me in.

“Where are your kids?” I asked her. “I take them to an Arabic class once a week. I met a lady at the mosque who teaches Arabic, and I don’t think I’m doing a good job on my own. So I take them there,” she responded. Nawal has been struggling with teaching her children to speak in Arabic. Immersed in an environment with very little Arab presence, Nawal often shares with me how she finds herself alone in her attempts to maintain, and pass on, parts of her cultural practices. Married to Michael, an American, the dominant language spoken at home is English. Furthermore, her children just started to go to a

\(^{25}\) Long ankle-length dress common in the Middle East.

\(^{26}\) “Hello, how are you? We have missed you.”
public school and have mainly American friends. Though they understand her when she speaks in Arabic, Nawal’s children always respond to her in English and do not feel compelled to learn another language that only she speaks.

I took off my shoes and entered the living room. There was a plate of Arabic cookies on the table in the living room and tea brewing in the kitchen. I had been to her apartment many times before, but took more interest in it this visit. At first glance, her apartment appeared very simple in terms of style. One couch and two love-seats, all cream-colored, surrounded a dark wooden table and facing the TV. As I entered the living room, I noticed a large bookcase filled from top to bottom with family pictures. Faces of men donning the shimagh and women wearing colorful clothing and the hijab looked back at anyone sitting in the living room. There were also a number of items from the Middle East: a Quran, a bottle of oud, a silver tea set, two Arabic coffee sets, and two decorative sheathed Arab swords. To the American eye, they would appear to be souvenirs. For Nawal, these items are mementos: symbolic keepsakes through which she injects parts of her other culture into her American home. Through the placement of these items, items to which she had a strong affective connection to, she was creating a hybrid homespace (Wise, 2000). These items made her feel at-home in her home in the U.S.

Nawal, unlike my other interviewees, came into her hybrid status as an adult. She is a Saudi Arabian national that moved to the United States 8 years ago after marrying Michael. She is not a U.S. resident and mother to two American children. Having lived in Saudi Arabia until less than a decade ago, Nawal is still affectively negotiating her new-found hybridity. She states, “I still consider myself an Arab who came to the States”

\[27\] Middle Eastern head dress for men.
(Personal communication, August 15, 2014). While adjusting to her new location, being married to an American, and raising her children, Nawal has desperately tried to hold onto her Arab ways while living abroad. She also consistently talks about wanting to move back to Saudi Arabia. Regardless of her efforts, however, Nawal also feels herself slowly integrating out of Saudi Arabian culture. Unable to afford traveling often with her two children, Nawal sometimes goes two years without visiting Saudi Arabia. Distanced from her culture, from worldviews and experiences similar to her own, and from Arabic dialogue in her day-to-day, Nawal stated in her interview that she now feels out of place when she goes home.

When I go back home, I feel I’m more American.

I’m very cautious about what people would think about me…

which is really horrible.

Like, last time when I went…

“Oh, she’s just married to an American.

Oh yeah, she’s just living in America.”

So they give me that look or that feeling, like,

“Yes, it’s okay if you’re not well-dressed

or you’re acting this way or that way,”

You know?

I don’t feel like I belong here…

but I don’t feel like I belong there.

And it hit me hard when I was back home last summer, where for the first two months, I was crying the whoooole time.
I was missing home so much that when I went there,

I felt like I was lost.

I felt very depressed.

I used to call my husband every day and cry.

It was a horrible feeling.

So I feel like I don’t belong anywhere.

I can’t say I’m American,

I can’t say I’m an Arab.

Umm.. so, yeah.

I am kind of lost.

And it’s been eight years now.28

During our interview, I felt the rawness and novelty of her struggles. Whereas I struggled to make sense of my own hybridity from a very young age, Nawal came into hers in her thirties. To face non-belonging and rootlessness for the first time after a lifetime of feeling established with her family, her career as a speech therapist, and her community whom she had built from childhood, is a lot for her to carry on her shoulders. Nawal broke into tearful sobs as she embodied the pain of her homelessness. In comparison to my other participants, Nawal’s feelings of homelessness are still fresh and cut deeply. During past visits with Nawal, I was frequently engulfed with her feelings of sadness and latent resentment as she talked to me about how she was struggling with being here in the United States. She often refered to Saudi Arabia as her salvation, as the location where she believed she would once again feel complete. However, as evident in her narrative,

28 (Personal communication, August 15, 2014)
Nawal’s most recent trip back to her homeland did not alleviate her feelings of homelessness. It exacerbated them. Moreman (2008) reminds us of the tensions and pains that come with hybridity as “its acceptance and/or recognition cannot always be conjured upon command” (p. 99). In Nawal’s narrative, this pain is clear. Expecting to feel accepted and embraced upon returning to Saudi Arabia, Nawal was both disappointed and deeply saddened by how out of place she felt.

To interpret Nawal’s experiences as an Arab-American who is struggling with locating spaces of belonging and a sense of rootedness requires an affective lens. Ahmed (2000) asserts, “The question of home and being at home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect: being-at-home is a matter of how one feels or how one might fail to feel [original emphasis]” (p. 89) In her recent trip to Saudi Arabia, Nawal began to grapple with how her hybridity affects her belonging. She was attentive to how she no longer fit easily into Saudi culture. She no longer felt “at home.” Ahmed (1999) states, “The narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no home” (p. 330) Having migrated to the U.S. and committed her life to an American husband and Saudi-American children, the notion of home is no longer one that is simple for Nawal. She must negotiate having multiple homes, as well as having no homes, because she no longer feels at home anywhere.

As she articulated, Nawal affectively attuned to interactions wherein she was “excused” for dressing or acting out of script due to her “American” status, Nawal was engulfed with a deep sense of loss and homelessness. “Oh, she’s just married to an American. Oh yeah, she’s just living in America,” were statements that made her feel as though she was no longer accepted as a Saudi. Now, living between two worlds where
she belongs to neither, Nawal affectively fights against a state of hybridity that she is also forced to accept for her family’s well-being, stability, and comfort. To add to this complexity, she is also faced with what it may mean for her children to be a part of two cultures. What is the affective cost of accepting her hybridity for Nawal? Does her performative integration of another culture suggest her gradual disconnection from the first? What does Nawal affectively attune to in her everyday experiences? And how do these feelings shape her performances? Answering these questions will unveil a complex understanding of Nawal’s experiences as will be illuminated through her embodied narratives of location.

In her narrative, Nawal expressed that she worried about the imbalance between U.S. and Saudi influences on her children’s upbringing. As the only present Arab role model for her children, Nawal is protective over her children’s upbringing. She wants to raise them in a way that integrates Arab values and practices alongside those that they will pick up from their U.S. culture. However, she shared how she struggles with keeping that balance.

When it comes to raising my kids, I feel like I have to bring them up in the Arab…or Arabic way where they have—I don't know what they call them—the old values of treating the elders well, and to respect the sunnah.29 You know, stuff like that.

I feel like the Arab—the way I was raised in Saudi Arabia—becomes very strong when I see my kids disrespecting their dad.

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29 The teachings of the Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him.
Or, you know, in America it wouldn’t be disrespectful the way he [her son] talks to his dad or does things; but to me, 

as an Arab, 

it would really offend me.

It makes me want them to raise them in the way I was raised.

As this narrative clearly illustrates, Nawal is very invested in raising her children in a manner similar to her own upbringing. Highlighting Islamic and Arab practices, Nawal has worked to expose her children to a day-to-day lifestyle that adheres closely to the one she was raised with. During one of my previous visits, Nawal asked me to speak to her children in Arabic and to reinforce some of the Arabic practices she was trying to instill in them. At the door, we practiced saying “Assalamu Alaikum,” the Arabic greeting, paired with a customary kiss on each cheek. During another visit, Nawal asked me to not respond to her daughter until she addressed me with the culturally appropriate title of “Khala Salma” as a means of teaching her to communicate respectfully with her elders. Only when referring to me with that label was I allowed to engage with her. With all of her efforts to pass down her culture, Nawal expressed that the challenge that presented itself to her comes when the values that she wants to nurture within her children do not “fit” in a U.S. context. As Nawal mentioned in her excerpt, “[I]n America, [her son’s form of communication] wouldn’t be disrespectful.” Affectively attuning to experiences where she sees U.S. values take priority over her Arab values, Nawal is prompted to want

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30 Arabic greeting, translated to “peace be upon you.”

31 Arabic for “Aunti Salma.”
to raise her children “in the way [she] was raised.” To better interpret her everyday performances, I asked Nawal to reflect upon a specific event.

*Um-hmm, is there specific experience that you're thinking about?*

A few comes in mind…

Like, with my kids…

When my son Saleh, for example, thinks it's okay for him to put his feet up against someone's face—especially his parents.

Or if he talks back to his dad.

My husband doesn't see anything wrong with it, but I see it.

Or um, he talks back to his dad.

And I say “his dad” because he knows he can't do it with me, since my husband is American.

And my husband doesn't see anything wrong with it, but I see it.

As an example, last week we went to the hospital and there was only one chair for the patient's escort to sit on.

And right away my son sat on it,

and he thought that he has a right to sit…

and his dad was standing the whole time.

If we did that at home, my mom would yell at me.

She would punish me,

because you have to respect the elders.

You let your dad, or your parent, or whoever's older to sit first, and then you find a place to sit for yourself.
Michael didn’t see anything wrong with it.

It really bothered me the whole time I was at the appointment.

I couldn't say anything to my son at that time, but I wanted to show Saleh that that's wrong.

But I can't discipline him because in America there's nothing wrong with it,

where in the Arab world it is a big thing.

I had to wait until we got into the car and I talked to him about it,

but I don't think he understood what I was saying.

I'm trying to tell him how his grandmom taught me how to respect these things, and the values and all that.

But I don't think he understands.

My son—he is still too young.

He doesn’t understand.

In this occurrence, Nawal initially felt a strong affective urge to discipline her son.

Worried that her children may grow up without knowledge or an appreciation of Arab culture, she was propelled to teach her son the principle of honoring elders and giving up one’s seat for them. However, she also affectively attuned to her environment and held back, recognizing that Saleh’s behavior did not cross the lines of what was considered disrespectful in many U.S. contexts. Knowing that “in America there's nothing wrong with it” and that “Michael didn’t see anything wrong with it,” Nawal did not want to embarrass her son or herself by performing a different cultural script in this public space.

Affective attunement, after all, occurs when the body is in co-motion with its
environment (Manning & Massumi, 2014). Nawal’s “movement was a performed analysis of the field’s composition” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 10). Acting in a way that did not marginalize or embarrass her family in this sociocultural and interpersonal context, she performed silence until she was in the privacy of her own car.

In moments such as these, Nawal finds herself subject to many affects, some of them competing, some of them uncomfortable, and some of them painful. This moment quintessentially represents the way she feels towards her hybridity. Though she wants to preserve her singular Arab cultural performances for both herself and her children’s sake, Nawal finds herself often times embracing her hybridity and performing in response to her conflicting affects so as to ease social interactions for her family. This embodied narrative of location parallels Nawal’s personal struggles and feelings of loss. Ultimately, Nawal habitually prioritizes her family as she negotiates her newfound hybridity amidst feelings of being overwhelmed, conflicted, and deprived.

Married to an American and mother to two beautiful Saudi-American children, Nawal is deeply committed to her family and trying to make it work in America. She tries to put her family first and perform in ways that will ease their daily experiences. She finds herself affectively attuning to her family and her environment, feeling the urgency to protect rather than threaten her family. Devoted to their well-being, her feelings frequently urge her to perform in this manner, even when she is uncomfortable with such performances, for the sake of not embarrassing and/or marginalizing her family. In other words, her body moves her to assimilate and adopt U.S. practices that she otherwise would not choose. Ono (1997) reflects on how hybrid voices and performances of hybridity are “constrained by social norms” (p. 123). He states that hybrids must work to
orient themselves to the expectations of the dominant society. Like Ono, Nawal feels as though she is more often than not performing in a manner that does not come naturally to her. For example, Nawal does not believe in celebrating Halloween through costumes and trick-or-treating. She believes they go against her religious and cultural values. However, Nawal bought her children costumes so that they could partake in the Halloween party at school. Even though she was battling against feelings of fear and sadness that she might be encouraging a U.S. cultural practice that goes against her own, Nawal affectively reacted to wanting to see her children happy and fitting into their community. Recognizing that her children are cultural hybrids whom she hopes can secure a sense of belonging amidst their friends, her protective instinct affectively encouraged her to allow her children to engage in this ritual.

To counter-act these feelings of loss, silencing, and constraint, Nawal tries to find different avenues to integrate her Arabic food, rituals, and practices with her family. She looks to create a sense of home where home “[is] not the space itself . . . but the way of inhabiting [the space]” (Boym in Wise, 2000, p. 299). This is especially true during significant annual Arab holidays. However, this also presents itself as a space of tension because as Nawal shared, she found that she was not only constrained in terms of the dominant social norms outside of her home, but she was also constrained by interpersonal familial norms within her home.

It's a struggle because I try to bring back all those stuff from home here, but my husband's American.

He doesn't…
For example, the simplest thing is in Ramadan\textsuperscript{32}.

We [Arabs] break our fast with soup and some kind of pastries…

sambusas or anything.

My husband doesn't like that.

He wants \textit{regular food}, like dinner food, every single day that we have in the year.

To me, it doesn't bring the sense of Ramadan for some reason.

My house doesn't smell like Ramadan.

You now in Ramadan the house smells like fried food, pastries, coffee..

We don't drink coffee here.

There is also family gatherings, noise.

It’s just so quiet [here].

I like to have people over all the time.

My husband’s ok with it, but not all the time.

If I have a guest [over] every single day, I wouldn’t mind.

My husband’s kind of iffy about it.

He likes it sometimes, but not all the time.

That’s a struggle for me.

My kids, now that they're almost six and four and a half, they understand a little bit more.

\textsuperscript{32} Ramadan is a holy month in the Islamic (Hijri) calendar where Muslims practice fasting, withholding from water, food, smoking, and sexual intercourse, from sunrise to sunset.
So they know about fasting; they know about some of the tradition like *zamzam*\(^{33}\) and drinkable yoghurts and stuff like that.

But it kinda breaks my heart that they’re being raised in a country where they’re *not going to be like me*.

They’re going to be different.

And they're missing out on family values: having cousins around, and having all that fun that *I* used to have.

I feel like I'm struggling to bring here what I had back home.

Wanting to be a good wife on an interpersonal level while also orienting herself to the larger context that she was operating within, the ways in which Nawal performs at home are ones that cater to Michael’s habits. Performance after all is relational, and relational movement is affective (Manning, 2009). As Nawal affectively attunes to her family, and she performs in relation to them, she often feels the need to compromise her own values and practices, even during the extremely significant month of Ramadan. In the Middle East, Ramadan as a religious and social observance is integral to our culture and communities. Families and communities come together during this month as the habit of breaking one’s fast is always done in a collective fashion. People work for half-days, going home early to cook, rest, and prepare for the night. Big gatherings are the norm every night during this month, as families and friends come together to eat specific dishes that are common mainly during this month. It is a month that promotes the remembrance of God and community.

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33 Water from an Islamically-significant well in Mecca.
As an Arab and Muslim myself, I know the difficulties of practicing Ramadan in the U.S. It is the hardest time to be away from family and loved ones as they all gather together, dressed in their finest clothes, to break their fast. When Ramadan occurs while Nawal and I are both in Colorado, she invites me over about once a week. We are lucky if we get to spend four nights together during the month due to work schedules that do not recognize or value Ramadan like they do in Saudi Arabia. Considering that Saudi expectations in Ramadan are to spend every day with family and friends, our infrequent visits makes for severe feelings of loneliness and homesickness especially considering the very small Arab community in the region.

When Nawal has people over, Michael is a lot more open to more traditional meals to accommodate the guests. Nawal is thus able to recreate a sense of home in these moments. However, when Nawal and Michael break their fast alone on the other nights, Michael takes home away from Nawal by asking her to abstain from the scents, tastes, and memories of the month by cooking “regular food, like dinner food.” Her husband does not try to incorporate more of her cultural practices in their household, and therefore inadvertently strips her of a space that she can feel comfortable being herself. Nawal does not always accommodate Michael, affectively attuning to each event differently. “Every event is relational . . . we cannot know in advance what an event can do, any more than we can know what a body can do” (Manning, 2009, p. 41). More often than not, though, she does give in and cook the food that her family desires so as to not be overcome with feelings of guilt or selfishness. As such, Nawal faces loneliness and a feeling of perpetual otherness, even in her own house.

I’m hoping one day this feeling will come like I feel this is home.
One of my aunts…she's living in California.
She’s been living there for 35 years,
and I think to her,

*that's* home…

and she doesn't want to go back to Saudi.
So I hope I'll get that feeling too, where I feel,

"*Yeah*, I can't live in Saudi.

*This* is my place.

*This* is my place.”

I really *want* that feeling.

Affectively attuning to her environment, her interactions with her husband, and her Arab-American hybrid children, Nawal’s perpetual feelings of rootlessness inform her performances. Motivated by these feelings, Nawal tries to secure a sense of stability and belonging for her self and her family in her everyday as a means of quelling the homelessness.

An external critical intercultural communicative analysis might have interpreted Nawal’s efforts in maintaining her culture to be indicative of one who is rejecting the American culture. However, an embodied analysis provides a more complex reality of her experiences. It illuminates the affective tensions that Nawal embodies as a hybrid.

Feeling the need to accept a dual hybrid lifestyle for the sake of her family, Nawal cannot reject American culture even if she wanted to. In fact, what an affective lens illuminates is the ways in which Nawal enforces hybridity upon herself at the cost of feeling uprooted from the Saudi Arabian culture to provide a sense of stability for her family.
Her immense levels of sadness and loss at feeling restricted in performing Arabness in the U.S., even in her own house, results in a performance of emotional detachment so that she may carry out their wishes.

Nawal’s narratives are heavily affective, emphasizing the ways in which feeling color her experiences. Having migrated to the U.S. as an adult, Nawal offers often overlooked insight into the affective components that make up her migratory experiences. Whereas Mariam worked to mitigate the affective difficulties of feeling like an outsider through embodied assimilation, and Jood fell back on a transcendent state to protect herself from feelings of alienation, Nawal’s narratives speak to very different experiences and affective tensions that she has yet to make sense of. Attention to affective attunement thus proves that one cannot generalize across hybrid experiences. Each event is a unique iteration in time and place that occurs as a single body affectively attunes to historical, local, relational, political and social contexts. Complicated beyond larger political and social contexts, Nawal’s experiences are heavily informed by the affective nuances that go into developing a hybrid understanding during adulthood as an immigrant, a mother, and a wife. Taking the time to explore the affective dimensions of Nawal’s experiences, we attain a deeper understanding of what fuels her everyday performances.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Revealing the Potential: A Concluding Discussion

Since the start of my doctoral career, I sought to explore and give voice to Arab-American hybrid experiences. With this goal in mind, I surveyed literature about hybrid experience as they occurred across racial and national lines. As I progressed in my coursework, I found that I maintained a tendency common in CIC scholarship to thematize, to generalize, and to define. My work celebrated hybridity as a privileged state of cultural transcendence. I also wrote papers that unveiled hybrid homelessness. Guided by a need to support theory by generalizing across the experiences of many, I fell back on group narratives and collective identities that hid experiential differences. And though much is gained from scholarship that explores shared hybrid experience in communication scholarship (Halualani, 2008; Herakova, 2009; Witteborn, 2007, 2008), critical scholars have warned against the over-romanticization of hybrid identity, which disguises the fact that hybridity can provide essentialism another location where it can silently thrive (Anthias, 2001, 2002; Drichel, 2008; Moreman, 2008; Shome & Hedge, 2002; Teerling, 2011). The act of grouping hybrid experience together parallels a stripping of the lived experience. After all, “Generality expresses a point of view
according to which one term may be exchanged or substituted for another” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 1). Generalizations pave the road to essentialism, treating performance, hybrid or otherwise, as unchanging and static possessions (Anthias, 2001, 2002).

In an attempt to avoid these generalizations, my work then took on a new direction as I searched for ontological and epistemological lenses with which to dismantle essentialist frameworks in exploring hybrid experiences. I looked for ways to give voice to living, breathing, and feeling occurrences, each story a unique testimony to be added to the quilt of lived experience. I explored communication literature on hybridity that stemmed from performance studies where scholars shared evocative narratives of experience, hybrid and otherwise (Alexander, 2005; Calafell, 2005, 2012; Conquergood, 1991; Madison, 1993, 2010; Moreman, 2009; Nakayama, 1997; Ono, 1997; Pollock, 1999, 2013; Willink, 2010). I was drawn to the ways in which performance studies include the body.

In performance scholars I found an epistemological home in narrative as method that elicits in-depth, in-the-moment, and contextual experiences. I found that narratives helped in the critical exploration of hybrid experiences by illuminating the layered contexts upon which they drew. Riessman (2008) states, “Stories must always be considered in context [emphasis added] for storytelling occurs at a historical moment with its circulating discourses and power relations” (p. 9). Through narrative’s emphasis on context, I was able to perform research that called for specificity as opposed to generality. Furthermore, narrative suited the purpose fueling my research in that it elevates the voices and experiences of stigmatized and marginalized individuals (Baxter, Norwood, Asbury, Jannusch, & Scharp, 2012; Langellier, 1999). Therefore, in my desire
to examine experiences from the Arab-American community, a population who has received very little scholarly attention in the communication discipline, narrative emerged as the appropriate method with which to build upon.

During the Spring Quarter of 2013, I enrolled in a class that introduced me to affect literature, and many of the concepts learned during this class guided the work I subsequently produced. By immersing myself in affect scholarship, I adopted an interdisciplinary and affective ontological orientation that is now central to my current work. This orientation works toward elevating three main scholarly ambitions that are central to affective scholarship that I wish to uphold: 1) laying the foundation for a framework wherein identity is understood as performance and not as preset constitution by drawing attention to embodiment, (2) enacting a critical approach that accounts for nuances that celebrate each experience as unique, dynamic, and always different; each experience emerges in relation to its own specific time, location, and contexts, and (3) accounting for the processual nature of performance by conceptualizing each experience as an occurrence of relational movement between a body and the contexts that inform its movement: it is “always emergent” (Thrift, 2004, p. 63). Together, these three theoretical notions—embodied performance, difference, and movement—ensure that essentialism is challenged. Employing the framework of affective attunement (Manning, 2009, 2013) as my cornerstone for integrating affect scholarship with CIC, I gave prominence to a new point of focus: hybrid performance as embodied, always emergent, and in continuous relational movement.

In this concluding chapter, I further advance the theoretical contributions of affective attunement to hybridity scholarship through the three theoretical notions of
embodied performance, difference, and movement. I expand on each of these notions, highlighting the importance of each in relation to the examination of hybrid everyday performance. Moreover, I illustrate how these three notions are central to the frameworks of affective attunement and ENOL and how they serve to advance hybrid scholarship. I conclude by highlighting the study’s contributions to CIC scholarship.

Reaping the Benefits: The Theoretical Underpinnings

Embodied Performance

“A body is the how of its emergence, not the what of its form.” (Manning, 2013, p. 17)

Scholars from across disciplines have long argued for the de-centering of identity as a point of departure. Performance as directly linked to identity becomes (pre)scripted and formulaic: the identity one claims defines past, present, and future actions.

To ask a question about identity asks both too much and too little. It asks that a subject has a ready-made story to tell about who they are and where they feel they ‘belong’ and that the migrant or minority subject, in particular, should answer it in terms of a well understood genre about ethnicity as a possessive property. It asks too little because it does not ask about the ways in which the subject is formed within multiplicities (and contradictions) of location and placement. (Anthias, 2002, pp. 494-495)

Through an emphasis on identity as a static descriptive category, critical intercultural communication analysis dismisses the ways in which individuals perform in their everyday in relation to shifting contexts and lived experiences; it dismisses the “multiplicities (and contradictions) of location and placement.” It strips individuals from their agency to perform differently from that which is expected (in relation to their identity label).

To shift toward a more performance-based examination, one must emphasize relationality and embodiment. “Experience is co-constituted by social and material
forces, operating contingently within affect-laden intersubjective encounters, imbued with complex layers of memory and structured by relays of power” (Cromby, 2012, p. 91). Visualizing performance as intersubjective encounters, affective attunement works to de-center identity by examining events and performance as relational and embodied movements (Manning, 2013; Massumi, 2002). Massumi (2002) reminds us that we cannot divorce any experience or performance from affect. It “underlies and accompanies every event, from the exceptional to the quotidian” (p. 36). Adopting the framework of affective attunement, emergent performances are informed by the ways through which a body attunes and reacts to the historical, political, social, local, and embodied contexts.

To examine these contexts, ENOL treats each performance as one that is both embodied and relational through its emphasis on affect and context. Through an intentional inclusion of affective analysis, ENOL highlights the importance of a more comprehensive contextualized analysis with the intention that “this move to particularity will advance the level of our analysis” (Warren, 2008, p. 300). For example, in reflecting upon experiences wherein she socialized with her coworkers at bars, Tahani was able to speak to the affective dissonance she felt between her desire to belong and how her performance of belonging stood at odds with her religion through her embodied narrative of location. Her narratives clearly illustrated the embodied complexities that lay beneath the surface of her everyday performances. Although this dissertation has already underlined the importance of embodied performance, I emphasize that explorations of the hybrid lived experience and belonging must be explored relationally and located within the body of those being studied. To further maintain a focus on performance as opposed
to identity and essentialized representational categories, we must next explore the notion of difference.

**Difference**

“*Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference*” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 55)

The notion of difference is that which ultimately rattles the grasp of essentialism. For occurrences to break free from prescriptive expectations, for the shift to be made from *same* to a new, difference is key (Warren, 2008). In an effort to move away from centering identity and toward examining performances as unscripted and unique, scholars must discern each performance as one that is distinct through an attention to difference and variation. Massumi (2009) affirms the necessity of difference by stating that “the relational event will play out differently every time” (p. 2). Warren (2008) argues for the adherence to an *ontology of difference*. An ontology of difference sets forth that an event should be examined in a manner that actively accounts for *difference* within each experience.

The framework of affective attunement promotes a deep contextualization of performances and occurrences with the understanding that a performance or occurrence never repeats itself exactly. Deleuze (1994) discusses the notion of habit, a seemingly repeated act, to highlight difference. He states, “[H]abit never gives rise to true repetition: sometimes the action changes and is perfected while the intention remains constant; sometimes the action remains the same in different contexts and with different intentions” (p. 5). In this passage, Deleuze explains how difference can emerge through performance, context, or intention. In other words, difference is *always* present and occurs both on an
external and internal level. Therefore, a multi-contextual methodology is needed to attend to difference on various dimensions.

Difference is a central principle in ENOL. ENOL upholds the notion that each performance is one that is unique, stressing the necessity of eliciting data ranging from the macro (sociopolitical/cultural/historical discourses), the micro (local interpersonal interaction), and the embodied (feelings and shifts in intensity) in relation to each performance. ENOL’s heavy emphasis on context accounts for difference on external and internal registers in every occurrence. Stewart (2007) asserts,

Models of thinking that slide over the live surface of difference at work in the ordinary to bottom-line arguments about “bigger” structures and underlying causes obscure the ways in which a reeling present is composed out of heterogeneous and noncoherent singularities. (p. 4).

ENOL thus seeks to draw forth the heterogeneous and noncoherent singularities that underlie Arab-American experience and performance.

In examining the lived experiences of Arab-American hybrids with an emphasis on affective attunement, I positioned hybrid performances as moments of relational performances wherein indeterminate possibilities are possible based on how an individual engages with their context (Manning, 2009; Massumi, 2002). Each interview highlighted my participants’ habitual performative tendencies while also revealing moments in which they broke free from said habits as a result of affectively attuning differently to the contextual factors informing their performance at that specific time and location. For example, Mariam reflected upon feeling pride and strength in habitually performing “Mary” for a great portion of her life; however, she also shared how she shifted her performance as an adult as a result of feeling pride and strength in enacting more Arab
practices in her newfound Arab community. My interviewees each pointed to various external contexts as well as a multitude of affective resonances that informed their performances, allowing for difference in each performance to emerge. They highlighted how there is always a variation, a difference, in emergent performances. It is this quality of difference that suggests movement, as will be discussed in the next section.

**Movement**

“Performance . . . defies root-like metaphorical logics which function ‘by erasing dissimilarity and negating difference,’ replacing them with rhizomatic or metonymic logics that are ‘additive and associative’” (Foust, 2010, p. 21)

Traditionally speaking, identity is treated as a fixed form of representation that is linked to a specific location or nation—it is who a person is and will be (Anthias, 2002). Articulating identity in this way upholds essentialism where essentialism is based on notions of fixity, singularity, and stasis. In other words, essentialism operates within what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) term an *arborescent* framework. An arborescent framework (from *arbor*) analogously derives from trees or roots that seek to reproduce themselves and their logic through redundancy and sameness (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 13). It is a framework that “plots a point, and fixes an order” (p. 7), and operates under the assumption that performance can be scripted. It asks that bodies be still and rigid (Chambers, 1994). As previously mentioned, an examination of hybridity that is centered on identity continues to reinscribe essentialism because it continues to provide inherent descriptive power to essentialized identity labels. Although hybridity challenges the notion of singular identities, “[a] concern with multiple and fragmented identities still suggests that identity might be a possessive property of individuals rather than a process”
(Anthias, 2002, p. 495); it suggests that a hybrid resides in between two essentialized identities (Anthias 2002). In this sense, hybridity is understood through joint *arborescence*. To explore hybrid performance in a manner that is non-essentialist, what is needed is to shift from an arborescent framework to one that is rhizomatic.

A rhizome is characterized by movement. “It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions *in motion* [emphasis added]” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Movement suggests engaging with a perspective of non-closure that has no beginning and no end. It “involves embracing a mode of thought that is destined to be incomplete” (Chambers, 1994, p. 70). There are no plotted points for a rhizome, only continual growth, potential, possibilities, and transformation. It leaves room for the emergence of different unscripted performances.

Critical intercultural scholars have taken strides to challenge essentialism within the discipline (Anthias, 2001, 2002; Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1990, 2000; Sarup, 1996; Warren, 2008; Young, 2009); however, I believe that intercultural scholars have yet to explicitly locate the element that moves conceptualizations of identity and performance toward the rhizomatic. How can we explore hybrid performance in ways that truly challenge essentialism? Where lies the potential for *possibility, ambiguity* and *growth*, for an unexpected act that breaks free from habit (Chambers, 1994; Maalki, 1992)? Why might hybrids experiencing the same event, within the same sociocultural and interpersonal context, react and perform differently? To answer these questions, I have turned to affect literature.

Affective attunement positions affective tonality as “the generative force. . . that moves the event toward its resolution” (Manning, 2013, p. 21). Affective attunement is
rooted in activist philosophy which highlights the ways in which bodies move through the world—and never stop moving—as they continually embody various feelings in relation to their shifting contexts (Manning, 2009, 2013; Massumi, 2002, 2011). For example, when asked where she was from, Tahani altered her answer several times to fit the situation—“Iraqi,” “Californian,” “Coloradan,” or “Lebanese.” She responded with the answer that felt right to her at the time (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Each new experience a body happens upon brings forth its own set of corresponding feelings that animate the interaction.

ENOL works to illuminate movement by comprehensively calling for a multi-contextual analysis. Its focal point is “not bodies as such but relations” (Manning, 2013, p. 77). Through an emphasis on relations and context, it does not ask what but how (Manning, 2013). A focus on the “how” allows us to see and better explore relational movement in embodied narratives of location. For example, through Tahani’s ENOLs, we are able to see her moving from having a tendency to disclose her Arab background at a young age, to not disclosing it after an incident of discrimination in high school, to disclosing it once again in a college setting where she found safety amongst a diverse group of friends. Asking “how” narrowed the interpretive focus to the context with which to better understand what Tahani was performing in relation to, as opposed to simply trying to understand who Tahani was. Together, affective attunement and ENOL ensure that critical scholars undertake explorations and interpretations of hybrid experiences using non-assumptive and non-essentialist approaches.
Expanding the Conversation: Contributions to CIC Research

An interdisciplinary theoretical framework does not displace the efforts of previous critical scholarship but acts to pave the road toward a more enriched scholarly path. Warren (2008) urges scholars to recognize the indispensable contribution of affect scholars such as Deleuze to the critical intercultural communication discipline. He claims that affect scholarship attends to particularities, nuances, and differences within performance and engages in more complex interpretations of lived experience. In fact, he states, “I think that pushing Deleuze into intercultural communication is key” (my emphasis, p. 304). Through my synergistic ontological and epistemological frameworks, I conceptualize performance as embodied relational movement that is always unique, always different. To do this, I highlight feeling as a heuristic device with which to explore the ways in which the affective and performative intersect:

[F]eelings . . . become meaningful within the particularity of specific, lived moments, according to how their intensities, textures, valences and affordances contingently and dynamically suffuse a given experience. This means that we are always interpreting our own ongoing embodied experience, to ourselves as well as to others, and consequently always making sense of it somewhat in retrospect. (Cromby, 2012, p. 93)

A critical examination of hybrid performances with an emphasis on affective attunement treats lived moments as contingent, dynamic, and ongoing. Affective attunement accentuates the specificity of each performance, where each lived moment is particular to its intensities and its textures, to its historical, interpersonal, sociopolitical and embodied contexts. It highlights relationality, difference, and embodied movement. This move necessitates an examination of occurrence over identity; “how” over “what.”

Embodied narratives of location presents itself as a complementary
methodological counterpart that works to capture the “intensities, textures, [and] valences” of each “ongoing embodied experience.” By locating feeling as an essential contextual factor alongside historical, sociocultural, and interpersonal contexts, ENOL provides an epistemological lens with which to interpret habitual and emergent performances as informed by dynamic affective tonalities. Furthermore, ENOL gives scholars a methodological tool to account for their participant’s narrated feelings and performances, and just as significantly, the feelings and performances that emerge between the interviewer and interviewee. Consequently, the interpretive scope expands to include the contexts that can be recorded and analyzed as prompted by the interdisciplinary lens.

As articulated in this chapter, an interdisciplinary approach moves scholarship away from essentializing tendencies, especially when the conversations are centered around notions of identity and culture. Assembling CIC with an affective lens presents itself as an interpretive middle ground between affect scholarship that heavily resists representational structures (Massumi, 2002) and intercultural communication that is heavily based in representational categories. This interdisciplinary approach, such as that utilized in this dissertation, shows how an emphasis on feeling, difference, relationality, and movement offer an alternative means with which to explore categorical structures in relation to everyday performance. It positions representational notions such as “identity” and “culture” not as defining structures that script expected performance but as relational contexts that carry affective tonalities and undercurrents and inform everyday performance. This move does not only contribute to CIC but to affect scholarship as well in that it provides a means to engage with identifiable categories as relational contexts, as
opposed to denouncing them completely. After all, both CIC and affect scholars rely on representational language and thereby must find a way to account for it in a fashion that does not dismiss its affective significance.

There is a general tendency to resort to thematization and generalization in CIC work, especially when researching marginalized communities. This work is not meant to reduce those communities but is driven by a desire to find a way with which to take lived experience and relate it back to the community as a whole with the intention of speaking back against oppressive hegemonic discourses. For example, generalizing across Arab-American experiences from a small number of individual narratives would supersede the affective and experiential differences that this interdisciplinary framework fights to uphold. Affective attunement and ENOL provide scholars with a means through which to understand very important issues, such as home, belonging, and everyday performance, without projecting static expectations onto the collective. In embarking on embodied explorations, a scholar leaves room for learning from insightful and emergent moments of rupture, innovation, and potential.

This move liberates formulaic representations of hybrids, and in this dissertation Arab-Americans in specific. In positioning feeling as a key analytical frame, we can begin to appreciate the unique everyday experiences of individuals as guided by feeling as opposed to the expectations built into essentialist identity categories. This becomes especially important when examining experiences of individuals from communities that face ubiquitous stereotyping across communication outlets, such as Arabs and Arab-Americans. An affective lens serves to humanize members of these communities and provides more diverse and complex understandings of their experiences. Ultimately, in
sharing unique lived experiences, a space can be created wherein stereotypes, static meanings, and discrimination dissolve. It is within this space that empowered individual voices can finally find belonging.
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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Approval Date: July 25, 2014   Valid for Use Through: July 25, 2015

Project Title: Bringing Affect Home: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry Into Hybrid Identity and Home

Principal Investigator: Salma Shukri

Faculty Sponsor: Kate Willink

DU IRB Protocol #: 615235-1

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don’t understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

Invitation to participate in a research study

You are invited to participate in a research study about Arab-American experiences within the United States. The goals of this research are to explore the ways in which emotions influence the ways in which Arab-Americans perform their identities in this sociopolitical climate, as well as to explore the ways in which emotions influence the ways that Arab-Americans cultivate spaces of belonging in the United States.

You are being asked to be in this research study because you have identified yourself as an Arab-American over the age of 18.
**Description of subject involvement**

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to share narratives about your experiences as an Arab-American. These experiences will be directly related to your identity—how you understand yourself—and your understandings of home and belonging—spaces of comfort where you find acceptance and belonging. I will ask questions that are intended to allow you to reflect upon your experiences as an Arab-American living in the United States. This will take about **1-2 hours**.

I would also like to ask for you to volunteer to keep a **week-long** journal of experiences where you reflect on your hybrid identity and/or thoughts about belonging, and how you made sense of these moments. I am interested in the experiences, your feelings, and how you may have dealt with them. This journal is an additional commitment and is completely optional.

Finally, I would like to provide you with access to the finalized version of the analysis section of this project to ensure that I described and interpreted your experiences accurately. It is your choice as to whether you would like to participate in this process or not.

**Possible risks and discomforts**

You may experience some risks related to your participation, even when the researchers are careful to avoid them. These risks may include a strong emotional response in recollecting and trying to make sense of your experience. Should you require any professional care, I have provided you with resources to contact:
DU Health and Counseling Center  
2240 E. Buchtel Blvd  
Denver, CO 80208  
Phone: 303-871-2205  
After hours phone: 303-871-3000  
General email: info@hcc.du.edu

Colorado Department of Human Services Community Mental Health Centers  
3824 W. Princeton Circle  
Denver, CO 80236  
Phone: 303-866-7400

There are no physical, social, legal, or economic risks.

**Possible benefits of the study**

This study is designed for the researcher to learn more about the role of emotions in Arab-American experiences within the United States. It will help me understand how members within this community make sense of their condition in the current sociopolitical environment where Arabs are still relatively stigmatized.

You may benefit from being in this study because it has been proven that participants from marginalized communities often feel validated as they share their experiences. In addition, narrative is recognized as a tool of healing. It provides a space for making sense of strong emotions such as grief and pain.

**Study compensation**

You will not receive any payment for being in the study.

**Study cost**

You will be expected to pay for your own transportation, parking, or child care, if needed. However, I intend to ensure that our meetings are set up to your convenience to accommodate any needs you may have.
Confidentiality, Storage and future use of data

To keep your information safe, I will not ask you to identify yourself by name in the interview process. Upon your approval, the interviews will be audio-recorded. These recordings will be transcribed, and a pseudonym (randomly assigned name) will be assigned to your narratives within the research project to protect your confidentiality. Digital data will be kept as password-protected files on a password-protected computer so that no one can read it. Only I will have access to the audio recordings. During the project, I will retain the recordings on a password-protected computer. These recordings will be erased and destroyed as soon as the project is complete.

Any written data will be kept in a locked office so that no one can have access to it. I would like to retain the confidential transcriptions (with no identifiers) for future research.

Should you choose to read the analysis to ensure that your experiences are described and interpreted accurately, I will need to retain your email address. However, this will be kept in a locked office and will be destroyed immediately after I have confirmed your receipt of the document.

The results from the research may be shared at a meeting. The results from the research may be in published articles. Your individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published.

Who will see my research information?

Although we will do everything we can to keep your records a secret, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
Both the records that identify you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at by others.

- Federal agencies that monitor human subject research
- Human Subject Research Committee

All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

In addition, should you reveal in your interview any information concerning child abuse, homicide, or suicide, I am required by law to share your information with the proper authorities. Additionally, should you be involved in a court order or subpoena, I may not be able to avoid sharing your information with law enforcement officials.

Also, if you tell us something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be physically harmed, we may report that information to the appropriate agencies.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, the information or data you provided will be destroyed. In addition, I will respect your right to refrain from answering any questions you feel uncomfortable responding to.

**Contact Information**

The researcher carrying out this study is Salma Shukri, under the advisement of Dr. Kate Willink. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call Salma Shukri at (720) 252-2110, or Kate Willink at (303) 871-4970.
If the researchers cannot be reached, or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) about; (1) questions, concerns or complaints regarding this study, (2) research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects issues, please contact Tim Sisk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may contact the Office for Research Compliance by emailing du-irb@du.edu, calling 303-871-4050 or in writing (University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121).

Please retain this page for your records. If you agree to participate in this study, sign the next page. Feel free to ask the researcher any remaining questions.
**Agreement to be in this study**

I have read this paper about the study or it was read to me. I understand the possible risks and benefits of this study. I know that being in this study is voluntary. I choose to be in this study: I will retain a copy of this consent form.

- Please initial this box if data from this research may be used for future research.

- Please initial here and provide a valid email (or postal) address if you would like to have access to the final version of this project to ensure accuracy.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________

Print Name: ________________________________

I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview. I understand that these recordings will be transcribed, kept confidential, and used only for the purposes of this study. I understand that the researcher will use pseudonyms to protect my confidentiality.

- I agree to be audio-recorded.

- I do not agree to be audio-recorded.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Introduction

Hi. Thank you so much for agreeing to be a part of this project. Before we begin the interview, I need to ask you to read and sign this form that confirms that you understand my project and its purpose, and that you are willing to volunteer. Please feel free to ask for more clarity about my project or this form before or after you sign it. Also, please remember that you can stop the interview at any time and that you are in control of what you feel comfortable answering.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions that you would like me to answer? Is it ok if I tape record this interview so that I can go back to it to ensure that I am representing your experiences correctly? Thank you. I will now turn on the tape recorder and if you at any time want me to stop recording, please let me know and I will do so.

Body:

I am interested in hearing about your experiences as an Arab-American in the United States. Can you tell me about this in a general sense, just the first few thoughts that come to mind about what being an Arab-American in the United States has meant for you?

Thank you. For my project, I am more specifically interested in two main categories. The first is the topic of identity—how a person defines him or herself, and the second is the topic of home and belonging—or where a person feels the most accepted or
the most comfortable. I think it would help if we started with identity first. Can you tell me:

1. Are there times when you feel particularly Arab?
2. Are there times when you feel particularly American?
   a. Can you give me an example of when?
   b. (probing options: Where can you get a good home cooked meal? What kind of food is that for you? What kind of music do you listen to? etc.)
3. Can you think of a time when you feel sensitive to the fact that you may not really feel like an Arab here?
4. Can you think of a time when you feel sensitive to the fact that you may not really feel like an American here?
   a. Are there times when that’s a really emotional situation for you?
   b. Can you tell me about it?
   c. How did you make sense of those feelings/that experience?
   d. How do you react?
   e. Did those feelings stay with you? Did they affect how you thought about things in later experiences?
5. Can you tell me about a similar experience were you reacted differently?
   a. What do you think was different that time?

Thank you. I would like to move on to the second topic, which is home and belonging. Can you tell me:

1. If you could live anywhere in the world, where would that be?
   a. So is that home to you?
b. (probing questions: But you live here, is this a home too?)

c. Can you tell me how you understand home? What does home mean to you?

d. What are some feelings you associate with home?

2. Can you tell me a story about home?

   a. What makes it home?

   b. How do you feel when you are at home?

   c. How is this different than how you feel when you are in a place you don’t feel you belong or fit in?

   d. (probing questions: What about people?)

3. Can you tell me a story about a moment when you felt out of place?

   a. What made you feel that way?

   b. If you could put a name to some of the feelings you felt at the time, what would they be?

4. Can you think of a time when you felt at place and included in a group or location, and another time when you felt excluded in the same group or location?

   a. What do you think was different that time?

   b. How did you feel in both situations?

5. Is there a connection for you between your identity as an Arab-American and your understanding of home?
General:

1. Do you think that your underlying feelings in these experiences influenced how you enacted your identity?
2. Do you think that your underlying feelings in these experiences influenced how you understood spaces of belonging or notions of home?
3. In general, do you think that feelings influence how you understand your identity?
4. In general, do you think that feelings influence how you make sense of spaces of belonging or notions of home?
5. What advice would you give to someone who is an Arab-American hybrid struggling with some of these issues?
6. Is there anything that I did not ask about that you would like to share with me?

Conclusion:

Thank you so much for your time. This has been really meaning and insightful. I know that sometimes it is hard to think back and remember specific moments or experiences. I would like to ask you to keep a journal for a week in case you remembered an experience you wanted to share, or even in the case that you experienced something after this interview that you think speaks to my project. I would like for you to reflect on your hybrid identity and/or feelings about belonging, how you made sense of these moments, and how your feelings affected your actions over the next week. I am interested in the experiences, your feelings, and how you may have reacted or made sense of what you
experienced and what you felt. I value your time and know that a journal is an added commitment, but I would appreciate it if this is something you would consider. The amount that you write is up to you. You can write in it once or every day. You can even agree to it now and then change your mind right after this meeting, and that would be ok.

- **(If the participant responds with ‘no’):** That is completely ok. Thank you for your time. This has been really helpful, and I appreciate your time.

- **(If the participant respond with ‘yes’):** Thank you very much. There is no pressure for you to write in it, but if you would like to add anything to what you have shared today, please use this as a way to do that. You can send me your entries by email whenever is most convenient for you.

**(To both):** Thank you for your time. I enjoyed talking with you. Please feel free to call me at (720) 252-2110 or email me at salma.shukri@du.edu at any time if you have any questions, concerns, or additional thoughts about the project. Also, please remember that you can still choose to not be a part of the study if you feel uneasy with what you have shared with me. If that is the case, please let me know what you would like me to not include or want to keep private. I will make sure to exclude it from my project. **(To those who agreed to keep a journal: I look forward to receiving your journal entries and including anything you might want to add.)**

Thank you for sharing your stories with me.