The Arabic Hour: Understanding Arab-American Media Activism and Community-Based Media

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the Boston-based community access television program the Arabic Hour. For 37 years the Arabic Hour has produced television programs that have aired first on cable television, then on public access television, and now on the Internet. This thesis contextualizes the Arabic Hour within Arab-American history as well as the history of community-based, ethnic, and activist medias. Through approaches of participatory action research, as well as semi-structured interviews with members of the volunteer production staff, guests, and one funder of the show, this thesis discerns how the Arabic Hour was (un)able to build political power and community empowerment, while also presenting conclusions on Arab-American transnational identity formation, journalistic approaches of alternative media, and the alternative approach of "for them, by us" ethnic media.

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I. Introduction

The Arabic Hour: An Arab-American Institution

For over 37 years the Arabic Hour, based in the Boston area, has produced English-language television programs focusing on Middle East politics, the question of Palestine, U.S. foreign policy, and Arab-American culture. Airing on cable television, public access television, and on the Internet, the Arabic Hour was broadcast throughout New England, including all of Rhode Island, parts of Maine, and Massachusetts before becoming more widely accessible online. For a period the program also aired in other cities throughout the country, like San Francisco, Washington, and Detroit.

Started in 1982 as a half-hour program appended to an Indian-American program, titled "Asian Entertainment," the Arabic Hour quickly became a one-hour program focusing exclusively on Arab-American issues and current events in the Middle East. In producing media on these topics, the Arabic Hour has consistently been a voice of criticality and scholarship; guests on the show have included Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Ilan Pappe, Moustafa Bayoumi, and others similarly known for both the quality of their scholarship and their dedication to political engagement. For decades, led by Professor Emerita Elaine Hagopian, interviews on the program have been conducted with scholarly rigor, delving deeply into issues that are typically only touched on by mainstream media sources.

As a result, the Arabic Hour archives are filled with interviews, event coverage, and documentaries that constitute, as one interviewee told me, "the

whole Arab American existence," an impressive and noteworthy feat for a humble community access television program. The Arabic Hour began production in the bedroom of a Roxbury home, before moving production to an incomplete Roxbury building, which in 1994 the Boston Globe described as "a barn with no running water."[1] For the last seven years, however, the show has been produced at Arts at the Armory, a community arts center in Somerville, MA owned by Joseph and Nabil Sater, two Boston-area Lebanese-American businessmen and financial supporters of the show. Through the decades the show has changed not just location, but form and content. Still, the show has always been, and continues to be, a critical and alternative voice on the Middle East and issues of concern to Arab-Americans. This thesis project, in the spirit of Foucault's analysis of subjugated knowledges, seeks to lift up the Arabic Hour while asserting that the program, and others of its kind, is not only worthy of study, but also essential to the study of alternative media and Arab-American public culture.[2]

Researching the Arabic Hour

This thesis is in part inspired by these early experiences and observations at the Arabic Hour, and designed to investigate questions that will help to

[1] Betsy Q.M. Tong, "Arabic Hour finds its niche," *Boston Globe* (Boston, MA), Feb. 13, 1994.

[2] Michel Foucault, in his "Two Lectures," refers to subjugated knowledges as, in one sense, "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (1980, 82). This thesis project is based on the fundamental assertion that community access television programs like the Arabic Hour constitute, as Foucault says of subjugated knowledges, "historical contents that have been buried and disguised" (1980, 81). This thesis in part seeks to uncover and make more accessible these histories.

contextualize the Arabic Hour within Arab-American history as well as the history of community-based media. The research questions guiding this thesis are:

- What key moments in politics, history, and/or personal political consciousness led to the founding of the Arabic Hour and individuals' involvement in the Arabic Hour?
- What is the role/mission of the Arabic Hour and how has it changed over time?
- How do producers, guests of and donors to the Arabic Hour understand the show as political cultural production at different times?
- What various articulations of Arab and Arab-American identities appear on the program through time? What political implications do these representations hold?
- Has the Arabic Hour helped the Arab-American community of New England to build political power and community empowerment, if political power is understood to be the ability to influence decision-making, to set the political agenda, and influence thoughts, desires, and ideologies of others (Lukes 1974); and community empowerment is understood as learning to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire 1970; 19)?

I investigated these research questions primarily through semi-structured interviews with Arabic Hour production staff, guests, and funders. (In many cases these roles are blurred, for example staff that familiarized themselves with the show as guests, or founding staff members who also significantly funded the show.) In addition to these interviews, I also draw on my own observations and analysis of Arabic Hour programming that comes from participatory action research co-constructing the Arabic Hour digital archive and reviewing archival materials.

The first chapter offers a brief history of Arab-American identity, cultural production, and media production, tying the Arabic Hour to a longer history of Arab-American life. The second chapter will briefly review the literature on community, ethnic, and activist medias, helping to explain the form, content, and

journalistic approach of the Arabic Hour within a larger context of alternative media. The third chapter discusses at greater length the methods and research approaches utilized in this thesis. The fourth chapter offers a review of the Arabic Hour program drawing on the show's nascent and incomplete digital archive, focusing on each segment of the Arabic Hour program and drawing a composite sketch of a typical program, to hopefully simulate the experience of watching the program. The fifth chapter provides discussion and analysis of semi-structured interviews, relying heavily on interviewees' own words to tell the story of the Arabic Hour. Finally, the sixth chapter concludes with a discussion of findings on the Arabic Hour, including observations on Arab-American transnational identity formation; the goals and motivations of ethnic, community-based media like the Arabic Hour; the political power of the Arabic Hour; and the "emancipatory potential" of media production like the Arabic Hour (Howley 2009). First, however, I will tell a brief narrative story that places myself into my research, explaining how I came to study this topic, while also making clear how these inclinations might affect my study.

Arriving at the Arabic Hour (in More Ways Than One)

Last May I took the 88 Bus down Highland Avenue toward Arts at the Armory truly not knowing what to expect. What I did know: I was on my way to a community arts center I was vaguely familiar with and in which the Arabic Hour has its studio; I would meet Nabih and Toufic there, two Arabic Hour volunteers, one of whom (Nabih) I had emailed with before and spoken with on the phone briefly; and that by the end of the meeting I would have both the knowledge and

the necessary materials to digitize VHS tapes, converting analog video to digital files, in the comfort of my home. Beyond that, my knowledge was limited to conjecture and speculation.

This thesis project took shape as a result of my participation in the digital archiving project underway at the Arabic Hour, and facilitated by Tufts professor Thomas Abowd with the help of Tufts students. As a Tufts University Summer Scholar, I worked for three months, mostly in my bedroom with frequent Saturday visits to the Arabic Hour studio, digitizing tapes and assisting with show production when needed. Over the course of that summer, I was able to digitize 20-25 programs every week, over 280 in total, adding to the tapes that had already been digitized by the Arabic Hour volunteers and past Tufts student volunteers. These programs span from 1982 to 2010, nearly 30 years of local and global history captured by the Arabic Hour.

As I approached the Arabic Hour studio for the first time, however, I didn't know much about the program, or even how to find it. In the back of the Arts at the Armory basement, as far as possible from the Armory entrance, behind an unmarked door, I finally found the Arabic Hour studio. Nabih Hakim, a white-haired, middle-aged Lebanese-American man, as gregarious as he is affable, met me at the door. With him was Toufic Tannous, a younger immigrant from Lebanon who has lived in the United States since 2008. I shook Nabih's outstretched hand as he greeted me: "Keefak? How are you? It's nice to meet you," before exchanging greetings with Toufic as well. Nabih asks, "Do you speak any Arabic? Shway?" a little bit? "No, not really," I say.

My grandfather came from Lebanon in 1920. He was a young boy then, and after a short stint in New York City, his family made its way to Vicksburg, Mississippi, where most of my Lebanese family resides to this day. My grandfather went on to become a successful anesthesiologist, assimilating into Birmingham, Alabama high society, marrying a white woman of Cuban-German mixed ancestry, and gaining entry, though not without difficulty, to a southern country club. He was a very successful man, who like many Lebanese immigrants in the South, managed to assimilate into whiteness. He was Alfred, not Fareed, and his brothers became Shouphi and Touphi rather than Shafik and Tawfik. Still, at home, they maintained elements of their culture mixed with white Southern society. But one example: My great aunt's cookbook, *Waddad's Kitchen: Lebanese Zest and Southern Best,* which offers recipes for grape leaves and "kibbeh footballs" alongside casseroles.

Though my father never heard his father speak Arabic until they visited Lebanon for the first time as a family in 1974, he did study Arabic in graduate school, is a Middle East expert, an editor for an Arab world English-language newspaper, and professor of international negotiation specializing in the Middle East who has published educational texts on numerous Middle Eastern countries. Fareed became Alfred, but his descendants did not lose touch with their cedar roots.

I took a seat in the sitting area so we could talk and get to know each other. But first, as always, Nabih took orders: "Coffee or tea?" Toufic and I always take coffee, black. This first time was no different. Perhaps Toufic prefers

the taste. I take mine black because I don't trust the cream left to coagulate in the mini fridge in the studio. The sitting area is a simple small area of the open studio, with a black sofa, basic wooden table, and a few unremarkable chairs. Across from the sofa against the opposite wall is the kitchenette, if it could even be called that: an electric kettle, coffeemaker, coffee accouterment, and whatever snack is available that day: cookies, bananas, strawberries, or danishes; whatever Nabih has gathered on his way to the studio from his home in Norwood, MA, a suburb with a significant Lebanese population. In the previous Arabic Hour studio in West Roxbury in Boston, there was a full kitchen used by Yvonne Homsy for the cooking segment of the show. But money got tight and the show had to downsize, first splitting the West Roxbury studio in half with another group, and then moving to the cheaper studio in Somerville.

Across from the sitting area and next to the door is a large metal desk, covered with random bits of papers, booklets, and equipment: a monograph co-edited by scholar and volunteer Elaine Hagopian titled *The Arab Americans: Studies in Assimilation* next to an unused VCR and pamphlets from the funeral of Naseer Aruri, a professor at UMass Dartmouth and Arabic Hour volunteer who passed away in 2015. Later that afternoon, I sat at this desk next to Toufic as he showed me how to perform the process of digitizing a VHS tape, taking ample screenshots in order to quickly put together a rough tutorial for me to consult later.

But first we got to know each other over coffee. As became the custom, Nabih did most of the talking. Nabih, who came to Boston from Lebanon in the

early 1980s, has been a volunteer on the show since 1982. When I interview others they describe Nabih as a "hero" a "pillar" and "amazing." By day he works as a software engineer, but on many Saturdays he can be found at the Arabic Hour studio.

Nabih always has plenty to share. While performing tasks in the studio he seems to get easily distracted by philosophical musings, oscillating between practical advice for performing tasks in the studio and existential advice for moving through the world. He loves to counsel youth with knowing irony, spending hours sharing his wisdom, life experience, and an appropriate Chinese proverb (that he is quick to remind me is in every culture): "Young man if you don't listen to your elders you'll hurt yourself," before taking another approach, advising me, "But you have to question everything. Its true you will hurt yourself if you don't listen to your elders, but if you don't question stuff you will limit yourself. You will live in the past. You will have a narrow view!"

As I spent the summer becoming familiar with the Arabic Hour and its staff, Nabih would usually offer me rides home on his way back to Norwood. During our time in the studio as well as these short, ten to fifteen minute drives, I became familiar with his history, his stories, and his beliefs. Once, as we drove home, I asked Nabih a question informally that I would later ask again as part of this thesis: "Why did you become involved in the Arabic Hour?" His response surprised me: "The 1982 invasion of Lebanon." At the time I failed to see how the Israeli invasion of Lebanon inspired a young Lebanese man living in the United States to volunteer for a community access television show. Since then, as I've

continued my research, I've come to understand this thinking, and hopefully this thesis will be able to contextualize and historicize for others why some Arab-Americans, some of whom consider themselves activists, have engaged in media and cultural production as an act of resistance, empowerment, activism, and/or cultural survival. This response not only surprised me, but was also one moment, perceivable only in hindsight, that shaped the course of this research project by introducing me to different approaches to media production, different understandings of truth, and different understandings of activism.

When I left the studio that first day, I was expecting a summer of mindlessly digitizing tapes while preparing to write a master's thesis on another topic of interest to me. I hadn't seen the show yet, but Professor Abowd had told me a bit about it, emphasizing important cultural artifacts like lectures given by Edward Said and Noam Chomsky. Still, I was highly skeptical. For me (I was born in 1994), my knowledge of community access television comes from *Wayne's World*! As a medium, I knew nothing of its radical roots (which I hopefully explain well in chapter two), and saw it as a sleepy if not dead medium mostly filled with amateurish and asinine programming. This show, the Arabic Hour, I assumed was no different.

Interestingly, Nabih, the longest involved volunteer on the program admitted to me when I interviewed him that the first time he viewed the program he hated it ("I didn't like it at all! I didn't know anybody – I just watched it one time. I didn't like it. I liked the songs. I didn't like anything else"). Still, I felt a responsibility to my faculty advisor and the volunteer staff of the program to

engage fully in the work of digitizing tapes. I also felt responsible to other Arab-Americans who were attempting to amplify our voices and tell the story of the Palestinian people. I'm grateful that I felt this responsibility, because as I watched the programs and participated in the studio, I began to comprehend the importance of the Arabic Hour.

Now, I understand the Arabic Hour for what I think it is: a low-budget community access television show that through 37 years has interviewed nearly all prominent Palestinian activists, Arab-American leaders, and Boston-based (and many beyond) scholars of the Middle East, in doing so amassing an immense archive of cultural documents that in sum constitute, as one of my interviewees said, "the whole Arab American experience." As an Arab-American, I can see where the mission of the Arabic Hour intersected with my own interests, beliefs, and goals, and I wanted to produce a project that amplified the Arabic Hour, not just through the archive, but also through a text that would historicize and contextualize the show.

Viewing the tapes has been an education for me, yet equally precious was the time spent in the studio. Three times I joined Nabih and Toufic to tape the show. The first time, Nabih invited me to a taping as well as my professor and advisor Thomas Abowd, informing us via email, "This sat *[sic]*, you'll be part of the live audience or part of the technical team." The live audience that day consisted of Professor Abowd, while the technical team consisted of Toufic and me. We arrived 30 minutes beforehand to help Nabih set up. Inevitably, the shooting still started late.

When the time came for the interview Elaine and the guest sauntered over to the set. Nabih and Toufic confirmed that we were ready to go and I took my position performing a task that I had the skillset for: operating the clicker. The clicker switches between the two cameras in operation. Nabih explained to me the the guidelines for operating the clicker: the camera should not stay on the same person for more than 30 seconds. If the interviewee is talking for a long time, switch to the other camera for four or five seconds to show the interviewer, before returning to the interviewee. Try to predict the conversation so that the switches are natural. The task isn't too hard, but I was afraid I would make a catastrophic mistake. While he operated the main camera, Nabih would periodically raise his hand behind him and toward me, making a sign in the air to say, "Now, switch cameras!" I did and he gave me a thumb up.

I felt like I did pretty good job and in that moment I felt I was truly making myself of use to the Arabic Hour. The program had provided quite a bit to me: access to unreleased archival materials, resources that benefitted my own education and research ambitions, and influence on my own personal development as an Arab-American. The last time I was in the studio I tentatively and timidly explained to Nabih my thesis. As I began to explain the project to him, I started by saying that I was interested in examining the Arabic Hour in the context of alternative media, especially in ethnic communities like the Arab-American community. That was as far as I got. He immediately interjected: "Nah – the human community! It's for the human community!" With this in mind, I hope this research inquiry will provide knowledge for the Arab-American

community about an important community institution, but also knowledge for the "human community" on the emancipatory potential of media production and the use of community media in community organizing.

II. Historical Context and Background: Arab-American Identity and Media

The Arabic Hour exists within a long history of Arab-American life and cultural production. In this chapter I briefly describe the contested history of Arab-American identity, before turning to the history of Arab-American media production. This chapter will contextualize the Arabic Hour within a long history of Arab-American media dating to the Pen League of the 1920s.

Arab-American Identity

The history of Arab people in North America is as old, if not older, than the history of the United States. Notable emigration from the Middle East to the United States, however, did not begin in earnest until the mid-1880s, and significant chain migration began in 1887 (Naff 1993). Syrian-Lebanese immigrants who settled in New England in the late 19th century and early 20th century established the foundations of what is today the Arab-American community of New England, which has always been a small ethnic community. According to American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) research published in 1992, the New England Arab-American population – defined as Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine – was estimated at 210,000 out of a total population of nearly 10 million. The report further specifies "Approximately 60 percent of the Arab-American community in New England is second generation, 30 percent third and fourth generation. The remaining 10 percent consists of recent immigrants," showing

that the community at this time, two years after the founding of the Arabic Hour, was heavily inclined towards the descendants of Christian Syrian-Lebanese immigrants (Zogby 1984, 108).

While people of Arab descent have long resided in the United States, they have not necessarily always identified as Arab or Arab-American. Many scholars point to family, town of origin, and religious sect as primary identities of early immigrants before the construction of Arab-American identity (Hitti 1924; Kayal and Kayal 1975; Haddad 1994; Hooglund 1987). Other scholars see the rise of Arab nationalism as well as political Zionism in the Middle East as important factors in the formation of Arab-American identity and consciousness (Haddad 1994; Shakir 1997; Hagopian 1969; Aruri 2007). More specifically, the existing literature in Arab American studies focuses heavily on the Israeli victory in the 1967 War and its implications for identity formation in Arabic-speaking people and their descendants in the United States. Scholars like Yvonnne Haddad and Ernest McCarus go as far as to suggest that the 1967 War and its aftermath "gave birth to the Arab American identity," implying that this identity did not exist in any way previously (Haddad 1994, 61; McCarus 1994, 2).

Recent scholarship, however, complicates the notion that Arab-American identity was first significantly articulated as a result of the political occurrences of 1967. In *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship,* Hani Bawardi uncovers the history of Arab-American political organizations between 1915 and 1950 to show how Arab-American identity was articulated well before the 1967 War and even before the Second World War. The

foreshadowing of Arab-American identity is even visible in the histories unearthed by Alixa Naff, whose landmark study *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* generally tends towards historicizing Arab assimilation in the U.S. narrative of the melting pot. Naff acknowledges that in the context of challenges to identity (such as the Dow decision described below) the Charleston Society vowed to "fight to the death to defend the rights and honor of all who speak Arabic and are born under Asian skies," a strikingly political and Pan-Arab affirmation in 1914 (Naff 1993, 256). It is safe to assume Arab-American identity existed well before the 1967 War, and as Bawardi suggests, before World War II.

While Syrian-Lebanese were initially considered Caucasian based on an 1899 Bureau of Immigration decision, in 1910 immigrants from the Eastern Mediterranean were reclassified as "Asiatic" (Naff 1993, 253). At that time, to become a naturalized citizen of the United States one had to legally prove one's Whiteness, making the classification as "Asiatic" controversial and worrying in the Syrian-Lebanese community. In the case of *Dow v. The United States* in 1915, the Supreme Court ruled that George Dow, from Syria, was white, entitling him and other Syrians to citizenship (Lopez 1996). Still, immigration acts enforced exclusion of immigrants from the Arab world for decades. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 lowered the Syrian-Lebanese quota for immigrants to 882 and just three years later, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, known as the Quota Act, decreased the quota to 100 migrants annually (Kayal and Kayal 1975, 68).

The in-flux racialization of Syrian-Lebanese Americans, both during the period of exclusion and in other moments in history, contributes to the sense of "white but not quite" that many Arab-Americans have described (Naber 2000). Sarah Gualtieri considers the relationship between Syrian-Lebanese and whiteness as "uneven and contested," noting that Syrian-Lebanese have been both victims of racism and allies to other people of color, while also participants in white supremacy, proving their whiteness to gain privileges and capital (2009, 11). Tehranian refers to this as a "Faustian pact with whiteness – both as an unconscious response to and strategic tactic against the forces of racism" (2008, 1201). Naber considers Arab American racial identity as ambiguous and invisible (Naber 2000), relying on paradoxes that invisibilize Arab-American identity, and racialize Arab American subjects as both white and non-white. After September 11th, 2011, however, many have noted how Arab-Americans have become highly visible (Cainkar 2009; Bayoumi 2009), shifting "from model minority to problem minority" (Naber 2012; 25).

While assimilation and acculturation occurred, new immigrants and political events in the Middle East have also led to "deassimilation" (Naber 2012). Naff attributes this to "political and economic events" that "reactivated Arab immigration and an interest in Arab culture" (1993, 330). Much of this increased political consciousness and organizational growth occurred in the wake of the 1967 War, which Pennock notes, "many Arab Americans remember…as marking a critical turning point for the Arab diaspora" (2017; 33). The 1967 War was the impetus for the founding of the Association of Arab American University

Graduates (AAUG), an anti-colonial, anti-imperial organization influenced by both Palestinian nationalism and radical left movements in the United States. AAUG President and Arabic Hour interviewer Naseer Aruri noted that before 1967 for many assimilated Arab Americans "the community's identity was organized on a common denominator of nationalism based more on cuisine than on politics and the rich Arab cultural legacy," but that "The June war had changed all that" (2007, 35-36). In addition to the AAUG, the more moderate National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) was founded in 1972 as a lobbying organization inspired by the 1967 War to change U.S. policy and public opinion; the Palestine Human Rights Campaign (PHRC), started as a committee of AAUG, formed in 1978 to advocate for the Palestinian people using a human rights framework (Pennock 2017, 219); and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) was founded in 1980 to tackle issues of Arab civil rights and discrimination toward Arabs in the United States.

Arab-American deassimilation, political consciousness, and political organizing can also be contextualized within the Left movements and ethnic revival of the 1960s and 1970s. Matthew Frye Jacobson in *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* considers white ethnic revival a response to the language of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Lisa Suhair Majaj, in the context of Arab-America, acknowledges "The Civil Rights and Black Power movements opened new spaces for immigrant and ethnic literary voices more generally" (Suhair Majaj 2008, 2). As a result, some third- and fourth-generation descendants have embraced elements of Arab cultures in

forming their own social and political identities, or found themselves inhabiting racialized identities as a result of political events in the Middle East and the United States.

New waves of immigrants arriving first in the 1960s, as well as political events of the 1990s, like the second intifada, the First Gulf War, and the Iraq sanctions, also influenced new articulations of Arabness in the United States (Naber 2012). In many ways U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, Zionism and Israeli government policy, and racialized discourses surrounding international terrorisms have at least partially informed the ethnic and racial identities of many Syrian-Lebanese descendants, as well as Arabs and Arab Americans of other ancestries, today. Of course, September 11th, 2001 was also a waypoint in Arab American experiences and histories. Many scholars have noted 9/11 as a moment that changed Arab and Muslim American identity formations (Bayoumi 2009; Pickens 2014; Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 2009; Cainkar 2004; Naber 2006), while also acknowledging that anti-Arab racism, demonization of Muslims, and the infringement of civil liberties existed well before 9/11 (Hagopian 2004). The next section will focus on Arab-American media production from the early 20th century until the present day.

Arab-American Media

The Arabic Hour exists within a long history of Arab-American cultural life and media production. In early 20th century New York City, home to the largest community of Syrian-Lebanese immigrants, Arab-American newspapers and literary circles thrived. The famous Pen League, known as *al-Mahjar*, or "the

diaspora," was founded in 1916 and included famous Arab writers like Gibran Khalil Gibran and Mikhail Naimy. These writers bridged Eastern and Western literary traditions, writing in both Arabic and English to produce hybrid works. Lisa Suhair Majaj writes,

> "Such invocation of western literary models suggested not only an attempt to bridge worlds, but a certain anxiety as well. Indeed, Arab-American literature of this period often reflected a strong need to prove oneself worthy in the U.S. context… In particular, they stressed their Christian identity, their geographical origin in the 'Holy Land,' and their 'spirituality,' employing biblical rhetoric and religious parallels in their attempt to engage American readers and familiarize the 'exotic'" (2008, 2).

Many of the Pen League writers referred to by Suhair Majaj, and in particular Gibran and Naimy, are considered among the most important Arabic writers of the 20th century.

While the Pen League was at its apex in the 1920s, the *mahjar* press of New York was thriving too. In fact many of these newspapers were also literary training grounds for Arab writers like Khalil Gibran. Henry Melki's comprehensive review of the early Arab-American press includes study of 10 Arab-American newspapers written in Arabic (with the exception of Syrian World) and founded between 1892 and 1929, specifically in regards to Arab-American literary production (1972). Melki argues that these newspapers constitute "the cradle of the modern school of literature in the Arab world"

(1972,12). They also served as community media that discussed politics, culture, and immigrant life in the United States.

Kawkab Amrika, the first Arabic newspaper in the United States, was founded in 1892 (Majaj 2008). Many others would follow including Al Hoda, Al Bayan, Meraat al-Gharb, and Syrian World, an English language publication (1993). The Mokarzel brothers, Naoum and Salloum, provided particularly important journalistic contributions to Arabic-speaking Americans, as the founders, publishers, and editors of *Al-Hoda* and *Syrian World* (Suleiman 1999). Naoum was "an unswerving Lebanese nationalist," and Salloum, young enough to be his brother's son, disagreed with Naoum on the need to retain Arabic language among the second-generation (Suleiman 1999, 72).

In fact, Suleiman argues that Salloum Mokarzel founded the *Syrian World* in part to reach both Arab-Americans and the general population, an approach quite similar to the Arabic Hour. As Suleiman writes,

> "Salloum cared deeply about his community and devoted his professional career to helping his people adjust to life in the United States. This necessitated (1) that Americans be educated to develop a more positive image o the Arabic-speaking community, and (2) that the community be made to realize that America was its permanent home. At the same time, however, the community needed to keep in touch with its former homeland so as not to forget its roots. In attempting to accomplish these objectives, Salloum founded…*The Syrian World*, in which he simultaneously addressed both audiences, ie. The American public

generally and the Syrian community in particular, especially the youth who were born and raised in America" (1999, 79-80).

In this thesis I will argue that this approach to *mahjar* English language newspapers shows striking similarities to what I call the "for them, by us" model of media utilized by the Arabic Hour.

In addition to literary writing, these early Syrian-Lebanese-American newspapers contained debates over Arab nationalism and Ottomanism, as well as debates over Syrian nationalism and Americanization. The *mahjar* press covered the "Asian controversy" pertaining to Syrian racialization and citizenship; political events in the Arabic-speaking community, such as the 1905 New York Riot and the lynching of a Syrian store owner in Lake City, Florida; discussion of the "language crisis," among second-generation Arab-Americans; and discussions of traditionalism, assimilation, and Americanization, frequently turning to discussion of miscegenation and marriage (Naff 1993; Gualtieri 2009). The *mahjar* press also at times discussed discrimination, particularly in the *Syrian World* after Dr. Michael Shadid submitted a letter titled "Syria for the Syrians," encouraging migration back to Syria in part due to discrimination in the United States, kicking off a fervent debate in the community and on the pages of the *Syrian World* (Gualtieri, 209). Women's issues were also discussed, most significantly by Afifa Karam, who was the editor/director of women's issues for *Al-Hoda* as well as the founder of *Al-Alam An-Nisa'* (Women's World) (Naff 1993).

While less research attention has been given to Arab-American radio production, there is evidence of numerous Arab-American radio programs before the advent of Arab-American television. Doumato tells of Rhode Islander Charles Slamon, who started in 1947 the second Arabic language radio show in the United States, "Songs of Syria." From 1968 to 1974 Slamon continued to produce the weekly show live under the name "Music of the Near East," eventually handing off the reins to Thomas Sabbagh in 1982 (Doumato 1985). Boston too had a radio program that played Arabic music and shared community news in the 1980s, as well as "Middle East Insights," which was sponsored by the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA), and according to Evelyn Shakir, held "in-depth interviews with people from the Arab world or from the Arab-American community" (1985, 44). Boston also had the show "Voice of Lebanon," created in 1974 to build community bonds and teach Arab-Americans about their heritage (Tayash 1988). And today, This Week in Palestine, founded by Sherif Fam, focuses on news and analysis pertaining to Palestine and airs in the Boston area.

Arab-American television, the topic of this thesis, has received less research attention. Tayash documented eight cable programs and two WGPR programs in the Detroit Metropolitan area, also noting programs broadcast by foreign governments, such as "The Arab Voice", an Iraqi government program in the 1980s (1988). Of course Al Jazeera, owned by the government of Qatar, is watched and read online by many Americans, and from 2013 to 2016 was broadcast as Al Jazeera America (AJAM) in the United States. Channels like AJAM, however, are owned in the Arab world and are meant to compete with

news channels like CNN, CBS, and MSNBC, making them distinct from Arab-American television produced at the community level in the United States like the Arabic Hour.

Today, Arab America TV provides live streaming programs online. Arab America is, like the Arabic Hour, produced in the United States outside mass media channels. The mission of Arab America TV is

> "bringing the latest news, culture, entertainment, and events of the Arab American community and the Arab World, bridging the gap of prejudice directed at Arab Americans (in the diaspora) living outside of their homeland. Finally, Arab America TV is an educational resource channel for all Americans who are interested to learn about Arab American heritage and culture" (Curtis 2017).

Like radio, television is often a more accessible form of media than print. Television is also a family-oriented form of media, which, due to the cultural and educational background of Arabs and Arab-Americans, leads Tayash to believe that it is the most important form of mass communication for Arab-American communities (1988).

While many scholars have studied mass media depictions of Arab- and Muslim Americans, little research has been done on Arab-American produced media. This study seeks to modestly reduce this gap, while acknowledging a few works that have already begun to do so. Kaufer and Al-Maliki study Dearborn-based *Arab American News* and its response to the events of 9/11, showing how it sought separation from the dominant culture (2009). Schumann analyzes one

Arab-American magazine, *Al-Hewar* (Dialogue), based in Washington, DC and published in English and Arabic. He focuses on diasporic communication and the articulation of the Arab diaspora in the United States, acknowledging that for Arab-Americans, "public communication [is] crucial to the 'empowerment' of their community" (2004, 308). Neither of these studies, however, focuses on Arab-American community-based television, a gap in the existing literature.

Understanding Arab-American identity formation and media production has influenced the research questions of this assignment, and is necessary for fully historicizing and contextualizing the Arabic Hour within Arab-American history. The next chapter will discuss the literature on community, ethnic, and activist medias.

III. Community, Ethnic, and Activist Medias: A Review of the Literature

Community Media

While the Internet has given the Arabic Hour global reach, it remains a community-based program that has long documented Arab-American life and culture in New England. This section reviews the literature on community media and provides a brief history of community access television in the United States. These theoretical concepts and frameworks will be useful in analyzing the Arabic Hour and, in particular, its ability to create community empowerment.

Theory and Practice of Community Media

There is some difficulty in theorizing community media, in part because the notion of community itself is a contested term (DeFillipis et al 2010), made more difficult in the digital age when community can be created across distance with online tools. Community media is often referred to as alternative media, with alterity understood in relation to mainstream media (Howley 2005; Fuller 2007; Howley 2009; Carpentier & Scifo 2010; Carpentier et al. 2003). As Carpentier and Servaes note, however, alternative is a relational term, and any media can in fact be alternative within a social context (2003). Community media's alterity and antagonistic positioning to mainstream media has been noted both in form and content (Howley 2005; Carpentier & Scifo 2010), though some scholars note that community media often attempts to mirror forms utilized by mainstream media

(Hamilton 2000) or offer experimental forms that mainstream media later recuperates (Carpentier et al. 2003).

Still, the "antagonist" (Carpentier 2005) positioning of alternative media in relation to mainstream media is one useful theoretical approach to understanding community media (Carpentier et al. 2003). Herman and Chomsky have discussed the way in which mainstream media fulfills a propaganda function through the creation of "manufactured consent" (1988), and others have noted how mainstream media has strayed from a public service model to a market/profit-oriented entertainment model (Saeed 2009; Carpentier et al. 2003; Fuller 2007). With this in mind, community media can act as a non-commercial third media sector or voice in relation to the state and corporate media (Carpentier & Scifo 2010; Carpentier et al. 2003; Servaes 1999). In opposition to mainstream media, community media can offer a different approach to journalistic professionalism, disrupting "the codes and conventions associated with contemporary journalistic practice" (Howley 2005).

In addition to being alternative and/or antagonistic to mainstream media, community media is theorized by Howley as "dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity" (2005, 2). Community media as democratizing media is a common perspective (Saeed 2009; Howley 2005; Fuller 2007; Carpentier & Scifo 2010). Fuller acknowledges how community media, characterized by democracy and participation, can "empower people rather than treat them as passive consumers," which has been referred to as the

"emancipatory potential" of community media (Howley 2009). The emancipatory potential of community media comes at least in part from the opportunity it gives for self-representation, particularly for marginal groups subject to media racisms (Howley 2009; Carpentier & Scifo 2010). Howley believes community media "provide resources and opportunities for marginalized groups to tell their own stories, in their own voices, and using their own distinctive idioms" (2009, 5). While much of the community media scholarship focuses on media of the marginalized, and politically left or radical media, it is essential to acknowledge that community media as a form and medium is politically neutral, and also utilized by those of other political creeds. An absolutist interpretation of free speech and expression must also acknowledge that community media can be (and has been) used to air hate speech, genocidal language, and fascistic programming.

While numerous models of community media exist, Fuller's list of community media characteristics identified by Maslog is particularly useful (2007):

1. Owned and controlled by people in the community;
2. Usually smaller and low-cost;
3. Provides interactive two-way communication;
4. Nonprofit and autonomous, therefore, noncommercial;
5. Has limited coverage or reach;
6. Utilizes appropriate, indigenous materials and resources;
7. Reflects community needs and interests;
8. Its programs or content support community development

While all eight of these characteristics may not apply to all enumerations of community media, they are useful for understanding the Arabic Hour, and likely other community access television shows.

While the Arabic Hour is not necessarily antagonistically positioned vis-a-vis the mainstream media, it certainly is, as Carpentier and Scifo note (2010), alternative to the mainstream media, while also appropriating forms utilized by the mainstream, such as commercial breaks and a news segment modeled after the PBS nightly news. While the show throughout the years has at times included commercials, these have only been of local mostly Arab-owned businesses, and the Arabic Hour has remained a non-commercial program that refuses to accept funding from sources external to the community. While the form of the show has at times mimicked mainstream media, the approach to journalistic practice pursued by the volunteer staff has shown disruption of mainstream codes and conventions (Howley 2005). Further, the emancipatory potential of community media, as well as its potential for self-representation is seen in the volunteer staff's belief in the show's goal of "telling our stories ourselves."

Community Access Television

The impetus for community access television came mostly from participatory social movements and video collectives in the early 1960s (Marcus & Stein 1996; Howley 2005), as well as the Canadian Challenge for Change program, which inspired organizations like the Alternative Media Center in New York City (Engelman 1996). Raindance Corporation, whose Michael Shamberg

wrote the *Guerrilla Television* manifesto, is considered one important video collective that reached modest success, as seen by their documentary programming appearing on NBC. As Boyle argues, "*Guerrilla Television* asserted that no alternative cultural vision could succeed without its own alternative information structure, not just alternative content pumped across the existing system" (1997, 32).

While the roots of community access are in social movements on the political left, typified by *Guerrilla Television*, early community access experimentation with citizen's journalism was quite diverse, if at times mundane. In 1971 WGBH-TV in Boston created a half-hour regular program, called *Catch 44*, for community access. The groups that utilized the program were diverse, including "the Socialist Workers' Party to the Neponset Valley Young Republicans, from the South End Tenants' Action Council to the Komitas Armenian Choral Society and the Great Boston Kite Festival" (Engelman 1996, 221). In a case study of public access in New Rochelle, New York, Janes recounts some of the typical programming:

> Programs like 'Side-by-side Obesity" was provided information concerning nutrition and exercise. "The Vital Years" was designed for a growing population of senior citizens. "Community Youth Forum" and "Social Security and You" provided information concerning social services available in the community. "The Bible in Plain English" and "The Star Power Gospel Hour" offered inspirational religious programming. Instructional programs like "Contemporary Health Issues," "The Computer Show," or "Guitar, Guitar, Guitar" provided an opportunity for college credit, job training, or just plain entertainment (1987, 22).

Still, much of community access was deeply political and connected to the American left. Howley argues that the Alternative Media Center, which was the "focal point of the community television movement in the United States," worked to "raise the consciousness of local individuals and groups and promote political action by fostering a critical dialogue within and between community members" (2005, 122-213). Other noteworthy programs include Deep Dish Television Network (DDTV), Paper Tiger Television, and "Alternative Views." Marcus and Stein cite DDTV as "The first radical media project to regularly use access television as a national resource for progressive programming" (1996, 83). Founded by the New York-based Paper Tiger Television collective, DDTV used satellite technology to distribute programming to access stations throughout the country. One such program was the Gulf Crisis TV Project (GCTV), which produced anti-war programming for national audiences, and after the Gulf War, produced content on anti-Arab racism (Marcus & Stein 1996). "Alternative Views," founded in 1978 as a project of Austin Community Television in Texas, has produced interviews with notable activists like Stokley Carmichael and aired raw footage that would have been censured by network television, like the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. In a review of seven political access programs, including DDTV, Paper Tiger Television, Free Speech TV, and Alternative Views, Laura Stein argues that such programs create "democratic talk" by allowing marginalized voices to create political communication (1998).

Unfortunately, it is difficult to know how many people engage in such "democratic talk." The question of community access television viewership

remains under-researched, as do questions pertaining to the relevancy of community access television in the digital age. Though they do not address ethnic media and fail to include racial/ethnic demographic information, Jacobs and Yousman show that in a limited study area, 58.2% of viewers had watched community access television within the last week (1999). Chen et al. analyze community access television viewership, focusing on questions of class, race, and gender in the digital age. Through a random sample survey of Austin, Texas residents the researchers found that White Americans were far less likely to watch public access television than African and Latino Americans. Interestingly, Chen et al. also note that "public access television has not been eclipsed by online content sharing platforms" and that "public access television remains relevant for underprivileged populations" (2013, 278). Still, more research is needed to discern the reach of community access, particularly in the digital age.

Ethnic Media

This section provides a review of the literature on ethnic media. The Arabic Hour can be understood as both community-based and ethnic media. Much of the literature on ethnic media is useful in understanding the Arabic Hour. In Chapter seven, drawing on this literature review, I will discuss the Arabic Hour as ethnic media in greater depth.

Ethnic Media Theory & Practice

Ethnic media spans a wide range of medium, journalistic approaches, levels of professionalism, and relationships to mainstream media. At its most

basic, Matsaganis et al. define ethnic media as "media produced *for* a particular ethnic community," though not necessarily *by* members of that ethnic group (2010, 5). Other scholars, however, note ethnic media's potential dual functions of reaching both members of a particular ethnic group as well as other audiences (Riggins 1992; Viswanath & Arora 2000). Some scholars refer to minority ethnic media to emphasize the positionality in relation to the dominant culture of those whose media is considered "ethnic" (Riggins 1992; Deuze 2006; Husband 2005). Additionally, other more precise descriptors, such as exilic media and diasporic media are used to describe specific ethnic medias (Naficy 1993; Shumann 2004). Other terms might also be used in concert with ethnic media, like immigrant media (Matsaganis et al.), or indigenous media, which is typically considered as part of ethnic media (Riggins 1992; Deuze 2006; Rennie & Fennerstone 2008; Husband 2005).

Ethnic media can often be understood as a form of local or community media (Matsaganis et al 2011), though the scale of "local" is not without complexity and complication, particularly for transnational ethnic and diasporic communities (Lin & Song 2006;). Lin and Song use Kim et al.'s concept of "geo-ethnicity" acknowledges how "the interaction between ethnicity and location, or geo-ethnicity, produces a unique effect on immigrants' communication behavior and neighborhood engagement" (2006). Appadurai notes that the concept of "locality" is "primarily relational and contextual" and related to "the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity and the relativity of contexts" (1995). In a globalized world of capital, information, and human flows,

translocality might offer greater explanatory power in understanding some ethnic media such as the Arabic Hour, a program with a political scope that spans continents, and which attracts in part an immigrant audience and volunteer base whose lived experience does as well.

Ethnic media can fulfill numerous functions for an ethnic community. Generally, ethnic media is accepted to function as a form of collective cultural survival and individual ethnic identity construction (Riggins 1992; Jeffres 2000; Shi 2009; Shi 2010). Often, cultural survival includes linguistic survival, though this is not necessarily true, as seen by the Arabic Hour, an English-language program. Ethnic identity, understood not as immutable, but as a largely constructed subjectivity, is fluid, changing, and context responsive. The construction of ethnic communities as "imagined communities" (Anderson 1989) is perhaps most evident in diasporic ethnic medias (Shi 2005), but all ethnic communities can be understood as "imagined."

Many scholars attribute additional functions to ethnic media. Subervi-Vélez notes the dual nature of ethnic media as potentially assimilatory as well as pluralistic (1986). While ethnic media can function as a form of cultural survival, ethnic presses have historically functioned to inform members of an ethnic community of dominant cultural practices in a new society, or encourage assimilation or acculturation, as seen in the debates over Syrian nationalism and Americanization in the Syrian language press of New York City in the 1920s (Naff 1993). Viswanath and Arora theorize ethnic media from a sociological functional-conflict perspective as having numerous functions: social control and

cultural transmission functions, through the selective production of culture and information; assimilatory function by providing information to members of the ethnic group that facilitate assimilation and/or producing culture that performs patriotism and integration to the dominant culture; community sentinel function to warn the community of threats; and community booster function through the production of positive portrayals of members of the ethnic group (2000). Of course, ethnic media also provides entertainment, allowing members of an ethnic group enjoyment (Shi 2010), or in regards to diasporic and exilic peoples, the fulfillment of "epistefilic desire" through moving images and sound of the homeland (Nacify 1993).

Ethnic media does not exist in a silo, but in a greater media landscape, often with an alternative or oppositional position vis-á-vis mainstream or dominant culture media (Riggins 1992; Viswanath & Arora 2000; Deuze 2006; Heitner 2013). Deuze considers the participatory culture of ethnic media as a form of citizen's media created in resistance to mainstream media (2006). While some scholars consider ethnic media to be a form of alternative media, Husband notes that for many consumers of ethnic media, "they are not alternative media…they *are* the media" (Husband 2006). Shi's study of Chinese-American media importantly considers alterity as a relative and relational term, noting how ethnic media might be alternative in questioning racism of the dominant culture, but not gender, class, or other forms of oppression (Shi 2009). In a study of radical Black television from 1968 through the 1980s, Heitner historicizes "black public-affairs

television" as a response to "Jim Crow TV," the racism of mainstream media (2013).

The relation between ethnic media and mainstream media is often described using the language of the Habermassian public sphere (1991). Ethnic media can be understood as a "counterpublic," defined by Warner as "formed by their conflict with the norms and contexts of their cultural environment, and this context of domination inevitably entails distortion" (2002). Asen explains,

> "As conceptual models of the public sphere have moved toward multiplicity, 'counterpublic' has emerged as a critical term to signify that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants" (2000).

The alterity of ethnic media vis-á-vis mainstream media is theorized as the relationship between (subaltern) counterpublic and public spheres.

Finally, it is essential to note the practices and ethics of ethnic media, which often differ from the (ethnic) biases institutionalized and normalized through the standards of mainstream media practices. In discussing the Boston-based "black public affairs" show *Say Brother*, Heitner notes that while discussing an upcoming Black Power convention in Philadelphia, reporter Jacqueline Banks's "reading is overtly polished and follows some of the conventions of television news, [but] the news she reads does not pretend to objectivity: *Say Brother* takes a position on the events she recounts." In fact, Banks ends up "practically commanding viewers to get on the bus and go to the conference" (2013, 65). This queering of objectivity, reminiscent of Boyle's description of the ethics of guerilla television as "subjective and involved", is

evident in other ethnic media television shows as well (Naficy 1993). In addition to following different journalistic ethics, producers of ethnic media might be non-professional. Husband considers ethnic media spaces as "communities of practice" in which professional training follows different norms that offer "explicit interrogation of normative media values and the construction of professionalism" (2005, 477). Ethnic media, understood as such, is also a set of alterity media practices existing in relation to dominant norms and ethics of journalism.

Activist Media

Some community organizers see media production as a tool for community organizing and empowerment. As in many aspects of community organizing, the literature lags behind practice when it comes to media and organizing. This section will discuss some of the various approaches to community organizing and the ways in which media can be used as a tool in these efforts.

Media Production in Community Organizing and Empowerment

A multiplicity of models and definitions exist in the theory and practice of community organizing. Marshall Ganz, who organized with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the United Farm Workers, defines the work of organizers as such: "Organizers identify, recruit and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community. Organizers challenge people to act on behalf of shared values and interest" (2002,

16). Perhaps the United State's most famous community organizer, President Barack Obama, defined community organizing while he was working as an organizer in Chicago in the power-based terms of Saul Alinsky:

> In theory, community organizing provides a way to merge various strategies for neighborhood empowerment. Organizing begins with the premise that (1) the problems facing inner-city communities do not result from a lack of effective solutions, but from a lack of power to implement these solutions; (2) that the only way for communities to build long-term power is by organizing people and money around a common vision; and (3) that a viable organization can only be achieved if a broadly based indigenous leadership — and not one or two charismatic leaders — can knit together the diverse interests of their local institutions (Obama 1988, 41).

Smock outlines five models in her typology of community organizing models: power-based, community building, civic, women-centered, and transformative organizing (2004). For the purpose of this study, both power-based organizing and transformative organizing are useful frameworks. Power-based organizing reflects the theory of change of Saul Alinsky, who's *Rules for Radicals* is a foundational text for power-based organizers. Miller and Schutz define Alinsky's model as bringing "powerless and relatively powerless people together in solidarity to defend and advance their interests and values" (2015, 2). Not all models, however, focus on how the relatively powerless can wager with the more powerful. Smock explains transformative organizing, drawing on Freire's concept of *conscientização* or critical consciousness:

> "Transformative organizations use popular education and reflection to foster the development of critical consciousness among urban residents and to develop an alternative vision for society. Viewing their work within the context of an overarching social justice movement, the organizations aim to build the ideological foundations within the neighborhood for the development of a broad-based movement for change" (29-30).

Transformative organizing differs from power-based organizing in its valuing of process as a tool of community empowerment and a goal in and of itself, while power-based organizing is more likely to see process as a means of building power to wage current or future battles with the more powerful.

Community empowerment is often discussed as a goal and purpose of community organizing (Dreier 1996; Speer & Hughey 1995). Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* defines the concept of conscientização, or critical consciousness, as learning to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against he oppressive elements of reality" (1970, 19). Freire's theory of community empowerment has been used in studies of community and radical media (Higgins 1999; Downing 2000) and offers a theoretical framework for understanding and discerning community empowerment as a result of the Arabic Hour.

Considering community empowerment and community media necessitates analysis not just of the political content of community access television, outlined above, but also the production process, which can provide community empowerment to those involved (Guo 2015; Higgins 1999). In addition to the process of creating media, Higgins points to video pedagogy as a form of political activity noting that "video education is essentially a political activity" (1991, 26), or as Legrande and Vargas say a "pedagogical exercise for social change" (2001, 77). Both the teaching of video media and the process of producing access television can serve as empowering processes.

While there is little work on the theory or practice of applying television or community access media production to community organizing work, the Highlander Research and Education Center in rural Tennessee, originally known as the Highlander Folk School and founded by civil rights activist Myles Horton, integrated video production into organizing work at the behest of Ted Carpenter and later John Giventa (and over the reservations of Horton) (Boyle 1997). In Australia, the Sydney-based United Muslim Women Association (UMWA), which began to offer media skills workshops to Muslim women after September 11th, 2001, has led to some participants becoming engaged in the production of alternative media (Dreher 2010). Much more research is needed on the application of community media to community organizing.

Understanding all three types of media covered here – community, ethnic, and activist medias – has been of use to me in analyzing and contextualizing the Arabic Hour. In Chapters VI and VII, in which I share findings from interviews and offer concluding analysis of the Arabic Hour, I will return to some of the theories, frameworks, and ideas presented in this chapter, in order to better understand the Arabic Hour and contribute to the literature on community, ethnic, and activist medias.

IV. Methods and Research Approaches

The research methods and approaches that have been selected are essential to this study; these methods and approaches are means of attempting answers to research questions, but also ends in and of themselves. The process of research offers benefits to both researchers and community partners, and the methods and approaches selected encourage co-production and co-learning, creating a generative and intentional research process. These methods and approaches have also been selected with attention to the approaches to journalism and knowledge production observed at the Arabic Hour and found in other organizations that produce participatory or community-based (ethnic) media. This relatively innovative approach to community-based action research at the intersection of media studies acknowledges that the production work of a community partner often includes an implicit methodology related to knowledge or cultural production. Scholar-researchers can integrate the community partner's methodologies and approaches to knowledge production into their work.

As a project involving the *co*-production of knowledge, both researchers and community partner have influenced the course of this research, choosing research priorities that not only benefit the researcher, but also the community partner. Both the archiving process and this thesis research are envisioned as tools of use to the community partner, the Arabic Hour. This chapter discusses the specificities of these methods and research approaches used and the reasons for their selection in attempting to answer the following research questions:

- What key moments in politics, history, and/or personal political consciousness led to the founding of the Arabic Hour and individuals' involvement in the Arabic Hour?

- What is the role/mission of the Arabic Hour and how has it changed over time?

- How do producers, guests of and donors to the Arabic Hour understand the show as political cultural production at different times?

- What various articulations of Arab and Arab-American identities appear on the program through time? What political implications do these representations hold?

- Has the Arabic Hour helped the Arab-American community of New England to build political power and community empowerment, if political power is understood to be the ability to influence decision-making, to set the political agenda, and influence thoughts, desires, and ideologies of others (Lukes 1974); and community empowerment is understood as learning to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire 1970, 19)?

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research is praxis-based, fully immersive, and democratizing. Participatory action research seeks to change self and society and to create sustainable change. As defined by Reason and Bradbury, action research is

> a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (2001, 1)

This project integrates participatory action research that includes co-learning and the co-production of knowledge between those in academia and those in communities. Rather than research done "in" community, this research is done "with" community. Action research often draws on the teachings of Paulo Freire, most notably his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and his concept of critical consciousness. These approaches can also be interpreted as responses to post-structuralist critiques of academia as disconnected from local knowledges (Foucault 1980).

I spent several months engaged in participatory action research at the Arabic Hour during the process of digital archiving. This work included attending tapings in the studio, as well as performing maintenance and administrative work on days when there were no scheduled tapings. During recordings of the program I would operate the clicker for the cameras, changing from one camera to the next as well, as well as helping with technical tasks to the best of my ability. By immersing myself in the work of the Arabic Hour, while also archiving its content and studying the program, my research interests changed. I initially intended to analyze content of the Arabic Hour before and after September 11th, 2001. It became apparent, however, that it was much more useful to the community partner to digitize older material in danger of becoming damaged beyond recognition. As such, the research scope of this thesis was shaped to some extent democratically in conversation with the community partner. I also trained future Arabic Hour digital archive volunteers as part of this thesis research. In doing so I

helped to create sustainability at the Arabic Hour that lasts potentially after the completion of this research project.

Archival Methods

Archival methods are defined as "the locating, evaluating, and systematic interpretation and analysis of sources found in the archives" (Corti 2003, 21). Like many archives, those of the Arabic Hour are a "product of sedimentation," in that they have been eroded by nature, time, and human (in)action (Corti 2003, 22). While early stages of this project have involved the accumulation of archival materials, the bulk of the work has pertained to tertiary sedimentation, the "sorting…and arrangement of materials after arrival at an archive" (Hill, 17). The methodological literature is slim on archival methods and some scholars see methodological training and strategies in many disciplines as insufficient for working in the archives (Bearman 1989; Ferreira-Buckley 1999; L'Eplattenier 2009). As a participatory action research project, the creation of the Arabic Hour digital archive has benefited from both the work of experts and non-experts with varying levels of methodological training and archival familiarity. The positions of expert and non-expert are relational and in flux. The process of creating a digital archive is multi-tiered and complex, involving a multitude of tasks, some of which place the scholar-researcher as expert, while others place members of the community partner as experts.

This thesis project includes the accumulation and appraisal of archival resources as part of the co-production of the Arabic Hour digital archives. Arabic

Hour materials include VHS tapes, CDs, Hi-8 tapes, and digital video files. As part of the digitization process, I converted VHS tapes into digital AVI files. I completed this process by connecting a VCR to a computer and using Pinnacle video editing software. Each tape is converted to a digital file after it runs its course. At that point, I would appraise the quality of the video file and discern whether any audiovisual blemishes were due to the quality of the VHS tape or a failure of the digitization process. If the latter, I would conduct the process again after troubleshooting. Finally, I would collect metadata on each segment of an episode.

The coding schema used for categorizing and appraising Arabic Hour video materials was devised through the work of the researcher, previous student researchers, and members of the Arabic Hour staff in order to collect metadata on each digitized episode of the program (see figure 1). This procedure facilitates the uploading of videos and metadata to a keyword searchable database, which will eventually be a complete archive of the program. For each episode the airing date, program host, video length, and name of any interviewers and interviewees is recorded (see figure 2 for an example). If the episode includes an event, the location of the event, sponsors of the event, and a summary of the event are recorded. Each segment of the show is also recorded, for example, music, book review, news, storytelling, and cooking segments. Quality notes are also included, as some video materials have audiovisual problems that must be noted.

Observation

Ethnographic participant observation "combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance" (Fetterman 1998, 34-35). As a participatory action research project, the professional distance between researchers and observed is notably lessened. This research has benefited from ethnographic observation, but an ethnographic observation inspired by the ethic of guerrilla television, to shoot "from within the crowd, subjective and involved" (Boyle 1992, 71). For this thesis project, I observed the Arabic Hour volunteers during participation in show tapings; interactions between guests and hosts off-the-record; and informal conversations with volunteers, guests, and hosts.

Field	Presence
Date	Should always Exist
Program Host	Should always Exist
Video Length	Should always Exist
Interview Count	Number of interviews: 0, 1, and 2
Event	Y if it an event, N otherwise
AH Presentation	Y if it an documentery, story, etc. N otherwise
Cooking	Y if there's a cooking segmet, N otherwise
Music	Y if music exists, N otherwise.
Book reviews	Y if music exists, N otherwise.
News	Y if music exists, N otherwise.
Story	Y if story exists, N otherwise.
Event Location, title, sponsers, s	Should Exist if its an Event
Interviewer #1, Title #1, Keyword	Exist if Interview Count > 0. (Guest #2.1 is conditional)
Interviewer #2, Title #2, Keyword	Exist if Interview Count > 1. (Guest #2.2 is conditional)
Quality	Should always Exist. (Good, Decent, Bad)
Quality Notes	Should Exist if Quality is not Good.
Tape UID	Should always Exist
Drive 1 S#	Should always Exist
Drive 2 S#	Should always Exist
Chef, Dish Recipie, Dish Type, I	Should Exist if Cooking is Y.
Presentation Title, Presentation	Should Exist if AH Presentation, Book reviews, or News is set to Y.

Figure 1. Coding schema for Arabic Hour digitization process.

Date	Program Host	Video Length	Interview Count	Event	AH Presentation	Cooking	Music	Book reviews	News
1991_12_01	Marty Moone	30 min		Y	N	N	Y	N	N
1991_12_08	Marty Moone	30 min		N	Y	N	Y	N	N
1991_12_15	Marty Moone	30 min		N	Y	Y	Y	N	N

Location	Event Sponsor	Title	Description	Key Words	Interviewer #1	Description #1	Guest #1.1	Guest #2.1	Start_End_Segm	Interviewer #2
St. George Churc	Nicholas G. Beram	Veteran's Asso	Coverage of the	Arab America - Arab Americans - Boston - New England - Veterans - Thomas Barbar - Thomas Elias - Young Arab Ameri						
Studio			Airing of a docum	Boston - New England - Syrian - Lebanese - Immigration - Migration - Immigrants - Diaspora - Arab America - Arab Amer						
Studio			Marty Moone inte	AABA - American	Marty Moone		George Sabbag			

Description #2	Guest #2.1	Guest #2.2	Start_End_Segm	Start/End Time	Quality	Quality Notes	Tape UID	Drive 1 S#	Drive 2 S#
ans					Good		VHS	AH1	
an Community - History					Good		VHS	AH1	
					Good		VHS	AH1	

Figure 2. An example of metadata collected for three archived Arabic Hour episodes.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews, however, provide the bulk of qualitative data in this thesis. These interviews are in-depth, yet open-ended and generally interpretive. These interviews also take on an emancipatory approach inspired by the work of Paulo Freire, in which, as Edwards and Holland say, "control [is] in the hands of the people who are living the research topic, rather than researchers. Members of the social group whose lives and circumstances form the subject of the research are viewed as co-constructors of knowledge and validators of claims to knowledge" (2013, 20). This allows for respondents to be participants who tell their own life stories and narratives, in a dialogical, co-creation process with the researcher, rather than subjects who are studied by the researcher. I allowed interviewees to speak at length without interruption, responding to the questions I asked, but also sharing information that they found important to verbalize. These interviews also incorporated elements of oral history methodologies, namely, the envisioning of the task of the interviewer as, in part, facilitator of memory and recollection (Richie 2003, 154).

Interviewees were selected to represent three groups: producers of, guests on, and donors to the Arabic Hour (see figure 3 for list of interviewees). It is worth noting the overlap between these groups, such as producers of the show who also gave generously through the years and guests on the program that later became interviewers and hosts of the show. Producers of the show were selected based on their long-term commitment to the program and their acquaintance with the researcher. Guests to the program were selected based on a systematic review

of the existing digital archive to determine the most frequent guests to the program. Additional guests were included to represent groups that appeared frequently on the show, such as local Arab-American youth. Finally, donors were chosen from a review of advertisements and sponsorships that appeared on Arabic Hour episodes. These donors were chosen based on the researcher's belief of their high profile in the Boston community and because they were known to still be living in the region.

Name	Relationship to AH	Micro-biography
Elaine Hagopian	Producer	Professor Emeritus and founding member of the Arabic Hour.
Nabih Hakim	Producer	Has worked on the production staff since 1982/1983.
Mike Haidar	Producer/Donor	Founding member of the Arabic Hour staff.
Toufic Tannous	Producer	Current member of the production staff.
Ramy Arnaout	Guest	Appeared as a young person on the Arabic Hour.
Lisa Suhair Majaj	Guest/Producer	Palestinian-American poet and scholar.
Susan Akram	Guest	Law professor at BU.
Nabil Sater Habib	Donor	Co-owner of the Middle East in Cambridge.
Joseph Sater Habib	Donor	Co-owner of the Middle East in Cambridge.
Nancy Murray	Guest	Boston activist and former director of the ACLU of MA.

Figure 3. List of interviewees

In an attempt to answer the research questions of this thesis, interviewees were asked a series of questions as well as follow-up question and questions of clarification. Volunteer production staff members were asked to speak to their experience with the program and to answer the following questions:

- Why to the best of your knowledge was the Arabic Hour created?
- How did you come to be involved with the Arabic Hour?
- What did you see as the goals/mission of the Arabic Hour?
- Do you think the goals/mission changed over time?
- Why did you think the Arabic Hour was important, and has the understanding of its importance changed for you over time?
- Has the Arabic Hour been personally empowering to be apart of?
- Has the Arabic Hour helped the Arab-American community build power?
- How would you describe the Arab-American community of Boston and/or New England?

Funders of the Arabic Hour were asked the following questions:

- How did you find out about the Arabic Hour?
- What in particular made you decide to fund the Arabic Hour?
- Did you see the show as being a political project at any point? Did you see your funding of the program as a political act?
- Did people in the community talk about the Arabic Hour? Were there times when they talked about it more?
- Why did you decide to run commercials on the Arabic Hour? Was it to support the program primarily, or to reach an audience of customers?
- Do you believe you received business as a result of commercials on the Arabic Hour? Were there times when you noticed this more?
- Did you watch the Arabic Hour? Was the show important to you, and if so when has it been?

Guests to the program were asked the following questions:

- When were you a guest on the Arabic Hour?
- What were your impressions of the Arabic Hour as a guest?
- Why did you decide to go on the Arabic Hour?
- What did you understand the Arabic Hour's mission and did your understanding ever change?
- How did you understand the relationship between the Arabic Hour and AAUG?
- How did you understand the Arabic Hour's position in relation to mainstream and other alternative sources of media?
- Do you believe the Arabic Hour helped build political power in the Arab-American community? Are there any moments when you believe the show had this effect?

For interviewees whose participation fit into multiple groups, they were asked all pertinent, non-overlapping questions from both lists. Based on the researcher's hypothesized connection between the Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) and the Arabic Hour, the following questions were asked to interviewees who were members of the AAUG, primarily past AAUG president Dr. Elaine Hagopian:

- How do you understand the role of the Arabic Hour in relation to AAUG?
- Was the Arabic Hour considered a project of AAUG?
- How aware were members of AAUG of the Arabic Hour?
- Was the Arabic Hour ever formally discussed by AAUG at annual conferences or other programming?

Autoethnography

In qualitative research, autoethnography has emerged as a means of exploring social, cultural, and political understandings of the world while inserting the researcher's own reflexivity, subject position, and lived experience into the process of research and writing. Reed-Danahy notes that autoethnography is a "postmodern ethnography," both in its breach with modernist understandings of the ethnographer's objective position as well as the autobiographer as a limited and cohesive self (Reed-Danahy 1997). Ellis, Adams, and Bochner see autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience…Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product" (2011, 1). Scholars note that numerous names are used for methods and approaches that can be understood as autoethnography (Reed-Danahy 1997; Ellis and Bochner 2000), including autobiographical ethnography, native ethnography, narrative ethnography, experimental ethnography, or postmodern ethnography. These different types speak to how autoethnographies differ in terms of emphasis; some emphasize process, while others emphasize self or culture more (Ellis and Bochner 2000; Ellis et al. 2011).

I have chosen to use elements of autoethnography in the introduction to this thesis in order to place myself into the research, explain the process of this research, and give color and texture to this thesis project. Autoethnography relies on hindsight, memories, and epiphanies (Ellis et al. 2011). I relied on scant field

notes, but mostly my own recollection, memories, and journals from my involvement in the project and the process of this thesis.

Limitations

Through the years, a multitude of people have been involved in the production of the Arabic Hour, numerous businesses have supported the show financially, and dozens of guests have appeared on the program. These interviews will not be able to incorporate all perspectives of those who have been involved in the program in these three key ways. Additionally, viewers of the show will not be interviewed, a possibility for future research. While the digitization of the Arabic Hour archival materials is currently underway, not all materials will be digitized in time for inclusion in the research conducted for this thesis. Large swaths of Arabic Hour programming are yet to be made accessible for examination by the researcher. The eventual completion of the digitization process will hopefully allow future study that can incorporate the analysis of more source material.

V. "The Whole Arab American Existence": Watching *The Arabic Hour*

The following is an outline of the main segments of the Arabic Hour that have appeared on episodes of the program through 37 years of production: music, interviews, event coverage, films, the Arab News Round Up, the Arabic Kitchen with Yvonne Homsey, and advertisements from community businesses. The discussion of each segment will include examples, visual analysis, and examination of how the segment has changed throughout time. Taken together, the segments that have appeared on the show throughout the decades constitute, as one volunteer put it, "the whole Arab American existence in a way," covering not just news and community events, but also literature, cooking and music.

Music

Nearly every episode of the Arabic Hour before the 2010s includes music. Musical segments often open the show, appearing after a brief introduction from the host, or serve as breaks between longer segments, such as interviews or coverage of events. The host typically introduces the video, which is either a live performance, music video, or in the case of some artists like Fairuz, an excerpt of a film.

As long-time volunteer Nabih Hakim admits, "The music library isn't really good at all. We keep repeating whatever we get from overseas." Still, the music library consists of well-known Middle Eastern musicians that are likely popular among viewers in the Arab-American community. Elaine Hagopian notes

that descendants of the early Lebanese-Syrian immigrants, the old community, were "very assimilated [yet] they loved Arabic music. But that was about all that remained of them being Arab." The musical segments have sought to appeal to these viewers, while also offering a glimpse of Arab culture to non-Arab Americans. By offering entertainment in the form of music and dance, the producers consciously have tried to draw in community members to receive political messages. As Mike Haidar explains, "on the one hand we would entertain, on the other we would feed them some counter information." Music and dace, of course, is not absent of politics in and of itself, and often contains political messages. The depiction of Palestinian folk traditions, such as dabke, for example, has political implications as an indigenous cultural practice in the context of settler-colonialism and globalization.

Figure 1. Logos of the Arabic Hour throughout the years

Figure 2. (From top left) Dabke dance troupe from the West Bank, Egyptian songstress Oum Kalthoum, and Iraqi oud-player Naseer Shamma

Much of the music library consists of Lebanese popular singers, such as Tony Hanna, Assi El Helani, Samira Tawfik, and perhaps most famous outside of the Arab world, Fairuz. Of course, Egyptian songstress Umm Kulthum, perhaps the most important Arabic-language singer of the 20th century, is also a staple on the music segment of the show, as is Iraqi oud-player Naseer Shamma. Cheb Khaled, an Algerian musician who performs Algerian raï music, also adds to the diversity of Arab music shown on the program. Occasionally the musical segment consists of a live performance taped by the Arabic Hour volunteer staff in the Boston area, such as a performance of William Nakleh and the Middle East Orchestra and Chorus at Enunciation Church Hall, or a performance of the

Combined Choir of the Antiochian Orthodox Churches of New England for an episode commemorating Christmas. Occasionally this segment of the show contains dance performances, like dabke dance from the West Bank of Palestine, or the Stars of the East and Friends dance troupe.[3]

Interview

The main portion of nearly all episodes is either an interview in the Arabic Hour studio, or coverage of an event outside of the studio. The interview segment consists of a one-on-one interview, roundtable discussions, or loose conversations between three or more people. In the 2010s, the interview segment has typically taken up must of the program, and usually has consisted of a nearly one-hour long interview conducted by Professor Elaine Hagopian. In years past, however, the interview segment was shorter, taking up merely half or one-fourth of the program. Still, the interview has typically been a central focus of the program designed for deep investigation and scholarly analysis of political and cultural issues and topics. Souad Dajani, who volunteered on the show and conducted interviews, noted the contrast between this experience and having been interviewed on mainstream media sources, saying,

> "I've been invited on some TV show or something like that and it would always be frustrating because the kind of questions they'd ask and the kind of limited time and the way they would frame things – they would basically answer something and then move on and not go in any direction that wasn't what they wanted. Being on the Arabic Hour we were free to ask whatever we wanted and probe and go into much more depth than we could in mainstream media outlets."

[3] Dabke is a Levantine folk dance performed in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine.

On the Arabic Hour, deep analysis of the issues is expected and encouraged by the form of the interview, ranging from a quarter of an hour to even two hours, appearing on back-to-back episodes.

Visually, the interview portion occasionally includes images or slides brought by the interviewee or integrated by the volunteer staff during post-production. Otherwise, the interview is visually uninterrupted. Two cameras have typically been employed, allowing for one to focus on the interviewee and the other on the interviewer. The cameraperson occasionally utilizes zoom in and zoom out to capture a shot of all participants, or to focus on one speaker. The camera work is at times inexpertly done; some shots are unbalanced, the set is often setup imperfectly, and zooming in is often wobbly and shaky. As Linda Simon, who volunteered on the Arabic Hour after working for NBC explains, "the producers and engineers said, 'Good we got the interview,' and I thought 'the camera isn't right and the camera shook and why did we have that prop on the table. We didn't need that thing to distract us on the table.' I would often say, 'Can we do that again? And can we move the chairs closer?' People didn't realize you have to practically be sitting on top of each other for TV."

Even with these frequent technical imperfections, the interview segment has captured noteworthy conversations with activists, scholars, politicians, journalists, writers, filmmakers, and community leaders. While most of the shows guests are Arab or Arab-American, many are not; in particular, Jewish activists, nearly all of whom are critical of Zionism, appear on the program in great numbers. While many guests come from "over here," there are also many guests

visiting or calling in from "over there," whether from Lebanon, Palestine, or elsewhere in the Middle East. The following is an incomplete though elucidating schema, separated into overlapping categories, of guests who have appeared on the interview section of the program. These categories are by nature somewhat reductive, though hopefully helpful for grasping the vastness of the Arabic Hour's output. Of course, many of those interviewed are scholar-activists, activist-filmmakers, or activist-writers and do not fit neatly into the proposed categorization. Still, these categories help to understand the wealth of knowledge and experience depicted on the Arabic Hour over 37 years of production.

Activists

The Arabic Hour has always been a space for Palestinian activists and Palestine solidarity activists to discuss their work. Nancy Murray, a local activist who has hosted many Palestinian activists in Boston notes, "It was so hard getting the media to take any interest in these visitors…I would always arrange for them to interview with This Week in Palestine [radio program] and go into the Arabic Hour set, and that would somehow make people feel that it was really worth their time." Palestinian activists on the show include Dr. Eyad Sarraj of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program and Commissioner of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights; Noura Erakat, a Palestinian-American legal scholar and human rights lawyer; Dr. Samah Jabr, a Palestinian psychiatrist working in Jericho and Ramallah; and Omar Barghouti, a leader of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Many other Palestine solidarity activists have appeared on the program, often after having visited the region. For example, Khury Petersen Smith, an author of the Black For Palestine statement of solidarity with Palestine was on the show after participating in a Viva-Palestina USA delegation to Gaza. Local activists Jeff Klein and Tom Arabia also reported back on this delegation in 2009. Nancy Murray, who has travelled to the West Bank and Gaza many times, is another frequent guest and interviewer capable of giving first-hand accounts of conditions in the region. These report backs provide crucial media production in the United States on conditions in the Gaza Strip. As Nancy Murray notes, "toward the end of my involvement with [the Arabic Hour], with Gaza virtually locked down and very few people having access to Gaza, I was one of those who did because of various reasons to do with my longstanding work I've been doing with organizations there. I could get in from time to time. [The Arabic Hour] was one of the very few ways of getting out news on the Gaza Strip, which is really very tragic. Gaza is being isolated physically, but so isolated in terms of being able to hear what is happening there."

A significant number of these activists are non-Arab Jewish-Americans. For example, Howard Lenow, a founding member of American Jews for a Just Peace, as well as Dr. Alice Rothchild, who authored *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: Stories of Jewish and Palestinian Trauma and Resilience*. The inclusion of these voices shows the program's fervent diligence to sharing counter-narratives on the Middle East, whether they came from Arab voices, or other voices.

While the majority of activists to appear on the program have been Palestinian or Palestine solidarity activists, there have been others. Arab-American activists focused on Arab-American civil rights also appear on the program in significant numbers; the President of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Dr. Hala Maksoud and other leaders of the ADC, both nationally and in Massachusetts, have appeared on the show. Anti-war activists like Medea Benjamin, the founder of CodePink Women for Peace and Global Exchange, also have appeared on the program.

Figure 2. Dr. Nancy Murray and Dr. Alice Rothchild, two Boston-based activists and frequent guests on the Arabic Hour

Figure 3. Dr. Jack Shaheen and Professor Noam Chomsky

Scholars

The richness of scholarship in Boston, buoyed by anchor institutions like Harvard and MIT, has allowed the Arabic Hour to host leaders in a range of

academic fields through the years. This has allowed for exclusive interviews with Noam Chomsky, interviews in the studio with Professor Duncan Kennedy of Harvard Law School on international law in Israel/Palestine, and interviews with North African expert Dr. Hugh Roberts. Other scholars visiting Boston for lectures, panels, or conferences often appear on interviews; Moustafa Bayoumi spoke on his book *How Does it Feel to be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America*, Dr. Jack Shaheen has appeared numerous times to discuss his studies of Arabs in U.S. media, and Dr. Michael Suleiman, a key founder of the field of Arab-American studies, appeared on the show to discuss his research in 1990.

The show has also played host to visiting scholars from the region, typically pursuing studies at Harvard University. For example, Nimer Sultany, a Palestinian citizen of Israel and doctoral candidate at Harvard Law School appeared on the show to discuss Palestinian rights in Israel in 2009, and Rima Merhi, a visiting scholar at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard appeared on the show to discuss Lebanese politics in 2010.

Community Leaders

Community leaders from local cultural, religious, and linguistic organizations have appeared on the show to discuss their work too. Gheed Amara Itani, a founder of Center for Arabic Culture (CAC) and Farrah Haidar, the executive director of CAC, have been on the show to discuss the work of their organization in the local Arab-American community. Local reverends, imams, and other religious leaders have also appeared on the program, as have visiting religious leaders such as Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Tripoli Elis Kurban in

1982 and the Very Rev. Elias Khoury, Bishop of South Lebanon's Antiochian Orthodox Church in 2000. Other community leaders include George Sabbag, President of the American Arab Benevolent Association, and John Makhoul, President of the American University of Beirut Alumni Network of Boston, both of whom appeared on the show in 1991. In addition to these established community leaders, panels of young Arab-Americans, moderated by Professor Elaine Hagopian, periodically appeared on the program between 1996 and 2000. These rising leaders discuss their Arab roots, identity formation, and future academic or career plans.

Politicians

Though interviews with politicians are rare, the show has played host to candidates for elected office, local politicians of Arab background, foreign politicians, and even national candidates for elected office. Cambridge city council member Nadeem Mazen, the first Muslim council member, appeared on the show in 2016 to discuss his political trajectory and local politics. Azmi Bishara, a Palestinian-Israeli member of Knesset and Ali Osseiran, a member of the Lebanese parliament, appeared on the program separately in 2000, while Clovis Maksoud, the Arab League Ambassador to the United States, was on the show in 1990. Former U.S. Ambassador Andrew Kilgore appeared on the program in 1982, and Dr. Riad Tabbarah, the Lebanese Ambassador to the United States and Saud Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States, appeared on the program in 1993 and 1982 respectively. Perhaps most significantly, Ralph

Nader, the Green Party presidential candidate in 1992, 1996, and 2000, appeared as a guest of the program in 2008. Nader is Arab-American, of Lebanese descent.

Journalists

In addition to activists who have returned from the region, journalists who have worked professionally in the Middle East provide valuable insight on the Arabic Hour. Hisham Melhem of the Lebanese newspaper As-Safir who was a guest of the program in 2000 and Lamis Andoni, a one-time Christian Science Monitor correspondent in Palestine and guest of the program in 1994, offer perspectives that are often not heard in mainstream U.S. media. Other journalists to appear on the show include Muriel Mirak Weissbah who wrote *Through the Wall of Fire: Armenia, Iraq, Palestine – from Wrath to Reconciliation*, and Ghassan Bishara, who was Washington correspondent for Al Fajr, an East Jerusalem-based newspaper, in 2009 and 2017 respectively. Victoria Brittain, a British journalist with the Guardian, also appeared on the show to discuss her work covering Guantanamo and her book *Shadow Lives: The Forgotten Women in the War on Terror* in 2013.

Filmmakers and Writers

From time to time the Arabic Hour has played host to Arab and Arab-American writers and filmmakers. Professor Amahl Bishara and Nidal Al-Azraq discussed their film "Degrees of Incarceration" in 2012 and Hicham Kayed a Palestinian filmmaker based in Lebanon presented on his film "Neither Here Nor There" in 2008. During the same year, Jocelyn Ajami, a member of the Arabic

Hour volunteer staff, was also interviewed to discuss her film "Postcard from Lebanon," which program volunteer Nabih Hakim helped to edit. Non-Arab filmmakers have also appeared on the show, like Jean Marie Offenbacher, who was on the show to discuss her film "Tea on the Axis of Evil" in 2009.

In addition to filmmakers, many notable Arab-American writers have appeared on the Arabic Hour. Nathalie Handal, Lisa Majaj, and Naomi Shihab Nye have all been interviewed on the program, in addition to reading excerpts of their poetry and prose. Writers from the region, such as Lebanese novelist Nazik Yared who was a guest in 2001, have also appeared on the show. These guests are disproportionately women.

Figure 4. Dr. Edward Said and Ali Abunimah

Event Coverage

Most episodes that do not include an interview or presentation in the Arabic Hour studio instead offer coverage of an event outside of the studio. These events are typically in the Boston area, though the Arabic Hour has covered events elsewhere in New England as well as in Washington, DC. Many are local conferences, forums, lectures, and panels at area universities and other scholarly institutions. Other events are community gatherings celebrating local churches,

students, leaders, or institutions. Finally, some episodes contain coverage of protests. Event coverage is almost always conducted with just one camera, offering visually uninterrupted video of the event with occasional use of zoom in and zoom out. The quality is decidedly low budget, lacking the visual acuity and forethought of network television event coverage. The form differs too: events are typically covered in their entirety, at times appearing over the course of numerous episodes if spanning more than an hour. The following is a list of types of event coverage, similar to that offered for categories of interviews.

Academic Events

For 37 years, the Arabic Hour has selectively covered events on the Middle East, Arab America, and U.S. foreign policy at area universities like Harvard, MIT, Tufts, Brandeis, Lesley, Boston University, Northeastern, and others. Many of these events are lectures: Pulitzer-prize winning journalist and minister Chris Hedges delivering a lecture at Bowdoin College in 2009; Noam Chomsky delivering a talk at MIT titled "The War on Gaza" in 2009; Palestinian historian Dr. Walid Khalidi speaking at MIT in 1996; Dr. Norman Finkelstein speaking on Israel/Palestine at Tufts in 2010; and Dr. Nancy Murray delivering the lecture titled "The Dynamics of Resistance: The Apartheid Analogy in Israel/Palestine" at the University of Vermont in 2008. Others are panel events, roundtables, or day(s)-long conferences. For example, the celebration of the life of Howard Zinn in 2010, a workshop titled "Practical Politics for Arab Americans, An Arab American Empowerment Workshop" in 2007, the Arab Women Achievements and Challenges conference at MIT in 1997, and WAM!

2008 Women, Action and the Media convention. One notable event is the Trans-Arab Research Institute's Right of Return conference at Boston University in 2000, featuring talks by Roger Owen, Edward Said, Ilan Pappe, and Noam Chomsky. Elaine Hagopian believes this conference to be the first in the United States to address the issue of Palestinian right of return.

In addition to academics, these events feature talks by journalists and activists. Prominent journalists like Anthony Shadid and Ali Abunimah have both given lectures covered by the show in 2009 and 2001 respectively. Palestinian activists like Issa Amro, from Youth Against Settlements and Open Shuhada Street, and Iyad Burnat, of the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall, have also given numerous talks covered by the Arabic Hour. Omar Barghouti, a founding member and leader of the BDS movement, as well as leading Palestinian intellectuals like Dinna Buttu and Hanan Ashrawi have also appeared on the show numerous times, typically when in the Boston area to deliver lectures.

While many of these events are related to Israel and Palestine, some are not. For example, coverage of the Veterans for Peace 25th annual convention in Portland, Maine in 2010 or noteworthy coverage of a Ralph Nader campaign rally in Boston featuring Winona LaDuke, Howard Zinn, Michael Moore, and Mel King in 2000. Occasionally the show documents local exhibits related to the Middle East, such as one organized by the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Human Rights in 2001. Other times the Arabic Hour covers literary events, such as a celebration of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish at Harvard in 2008 or a Poetry for Palestine reading at Harvard featuring Mona Fayad and Lisa Suhair

Majaj in 2000. A commemoration of the 100th birthday of Khalil Gibran at the Boston Public Library in 1983 is one early example of event coverage that appeared on the Arabic Hour.

Community

As a community television program devoted in part to capturing community life, the Arabic Hour has documented dozens of community events through the decades. These range from esoteric and niche gatherings, like the American Lebanese Engineering Society Annual Dinner in 2007, to religious gatherings like the groundbreaking of the New England Islamic Center in Sharon, Massachusetts in 1993, to civic events like the Institute of Boston's inaugural New Citizens Award ceremony for new citizens in 2000, to scholarship events like those hosted by the Syrian-Lebanese Women's Club of Greater Boston or Nicholas G Beram Veteran's Association for young Arab-American students.

Local organizations like the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee of Massachusetts (ADC-MA), Syrian Club of Boston, and Syrian-Lebanese Women's Club of Greater Boston, often held community banquets or *haflis* covered by the Arabic Hour. One such event, a benefit dinner for Lebanon in 1996, was held by the American Druze Society, ADC-Boston, Save Lebanon Inc., and the Syrian Club of Boston. Religious events, like a Ramadan iftar at MIT in 1996, also appear sparingly on the show, as do celebrations of local religious institutions, such as the 60th anniversary celebration of St. Theresa's Maronite Church in Brockton in 1993.

The Arabic Hour also hosted celebrations for the community, such as the Arabic Hour Father's Day Hafli, Arabic Hour New Year's Hafli, and Arabic Hour anniversary haflis. Many of these events, like the 25th anniversary hafli and 2007 Spring hafli, were captured on video and later appeared on the show, cultural documents of the Arabic Hour that then became part of the Arabic Hour archive itself. The 25th anniversary hafli at the Regent Theatre in Arlington, Massachusetts featured Arab-American comedians Dean Obeidallah and Rami Khalil and was shown on the Arabic Hour and sold on tapes to community members. Perhaps the most popular and requested tape of a program, however, according to volunteer Linda Simon, was of a benefit fashion show of traditional dress from different Arab countries in the early 1980s. Simon recounts, "Queen Noor [of Jordan] showed up as the patron of the women's organization and we filmed the whole show and I don't know how many phone calls we got asking for copies of that tape. That's what people wanted."

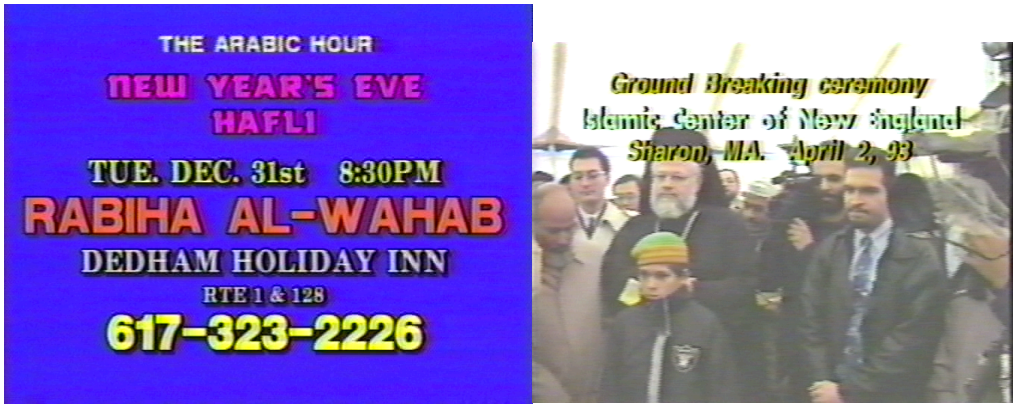

Figure 5. An advertisement for the Arabic Hour New Year's Eve Hafli and coverage of the ground breaking ceremony of the Islamic Center of New England

Protests

Although relatively rare, the Arabic Hour has at times aired video footage of protests, both in Boston and beyond. A Boston rally against the Gaza incursion in 2009 is one such recent example. Members of the Arabic Hour volunteer staff also travelled to Washington, DC in 2000 to document the Right of Return Rally in Freedom Park and Lafayette Park, which featured interviews, performances, and speeches with speakers and attendees of the event. Most recently, the Arabic Hour captured footage of a protest against ISIS by the Syrian American Forum in February 2015 outside City Hall in Boston. One young Arabic Hour volunteer recalled that his first experiences with the program came from going to protests against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006. As he remembered, "we used to go to demonstrations to stop the war and the Arabic Hour was almost at every event to videotape and create videos on what was going on and trying to cover everything." In addition to protests related to Palestinian human rights and political occurrences in the Middle East, the Arabic Hour staff has also documented the National Day of Mourning in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Held each year on Thanksgiving, the Day of Mourning is organized by the United American Indians of New England (UAINE) to disrupt colonial narratives of Thanksgiving and remember and commemorate the genocide of indigenous peoples and the theft of their land. The Arabic Hour's documentation of the Day of Mourning intimates reflection upon Arab-Americans' position on colonized indigenous land as well as connection between indigenous struggles against settler-colonialism in North America and Palestinian struggles against settler-colonialism.

Figure 6. Syrian American Forum protest against ISIS in 2015

Films

Some episodes contain portions or complete airings of documentary as well as art films. Some of these documentary films clearly have non-Arab audiences in mind, such as "Introduction to the Arab World," and "The Enchanting Land," both introductory videos about the Arab world. Others, like "Arabs in America," address Arab-American history, largely unknown to non-Arabs as well as many Americans of Arab descent, or in the case of "Planet of the Arabs" by Jackie Salloum and "Hot Towels" by Amr El-Bayoumi, anti-Arab racism and discrimination. Some documentary films engage with current and historical events. In the months after the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982, the Arabic Hour aired a tribute to those who died. The program also aired "Kuneitra: Death of a City," a documentary about the Israeli destruction of the Syrian city of Kuneitra.

Many documentary films that appear on the program are shown courtesy of Alternative Focus. Alternative Focus is a non-profit public media producer and distributor with the stated goal of "offering to the public media that provides

balance to existing coverage of Middle East and related issues" ("Who We Are" 2004). Of the numerous Alternative Focus videos that the Arabic Hour has used, many focus on the Palestinian people and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as "Salt of the Earth: The Wall," about the Israeli separation barrier or Apartheid wall; "Voices of a Generation: Remi Kanazi," about Palestinian-American poet Remi Kanazi; "Return of the General's Son," about Israeli activist Miko Peled; and "Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: Strategic Actions for Justice," about the Palestinian-initiated BDS movement. Other Alternative Focus documentaries aired on the Arabic Hour focus on Bush administration torture policies ("American Inquisition"), the Arab Spring in Egypt ("Egypt: Revolution in Motion"), and issues of religious freedom for Muslim-Americans ("Minarets in Temecula").

The show also has aired portions of films by independent filmmakers from the region, like Lebanese filmmaker Assad Fouladkar's "Kyrie Eleison" (God Have Mercy), Palestinian filmmaker Mai Masri's "Children of Shatila" and "Frontiers of Dreams and Fears," and Omar Naim's "Grand Theatre: A Tale of Beirut." Arabic Hour volunteer Jocelyn Ajami produced one such film, "Postcard from Lebanon," which appeared on the program.

Perhaps most striking is footage of Palestinian popular resistance that has appeared on the Arabic Hour. The program has broadcast video from Bil'in, El-Walaja, and elsewhere in the West Bank, depicting non-violent resistance to Israeli settlers and the occupation forces. Such videos disrupt narratives of violent Palestinian terrorism, and show a reality of organized, non-violent resistance to

colonial occupation. As such, these videos depict Palestinian daily resistance in ways unavailable through mainstream media sources.

Arab News Round Up

The Arab News Round Up was a short, ten-minute segment that appeared on the show between 1982 and the early 1990s. At the time, a weekly round up of news on the Middle East, U.S. foreign policy, and pertinent domestic affairs remained timely and engaging. As Nabih Hakim recounts of that time period, "If you heard a piece of news that is three days old you feel good. 'Hey this is fresh news.' So at that time I remember I knew people who used to go to Harvard Square once a week to buy Arabic newspapers to know what's going on." The Arab News Round Up adequately met the need for news at that time, though its format eventually became inadequate for the dissemination of timely news.

Figure 7. The Arab News Round Up discussion of the Reagan administration

Visually, the Arab News Round Up took cues from network television nightly news broadcasts. The simple shot included an attractive, well-dressed

anchor sitting at a desk or standing with a crisp blue background. The anchor would typically read from paper in front of her; teleprompter technology was likely prohibitively expensive for the Arabic Hour at the time. In the upper right-hand corner images would be added in post-production to correspond to the news being discussed. Occasionally video would be integrated into the newscast in post-production. Otherwise, the news report would be complemented by just images. One newscaster was Anisa Mehdi, who went on to a successful career as a film director and journalist, with work appearing on PBS, ABC, CBS, and National Geographic.

Figure 8. Yvonne Homsey in the Arabic Hour kitchen

The Arabic Kitchen with Yvonne Homsey

The cooking segment of the show was in fact one of the most popular among viewers of the program between 1982 and 2000. Nabih Hakim recalls that "the cooking segment was unbelievably successful. In the early days we had lots of inquiries. We sold a cookbook – the chef [did]. We sold a lot. Close to like

1,000 at that time is a lot." The cookbook, titled *Arabic Cooking In America*, was written by the Arabic Hour chef, Yvonne Homsey, and co-published with Evelyn Menconi, another Arabic Hour regular volunteer.

A typical cooking segment would run ten minutes and generally cover one recipe, such as knafeh, kibbeh, or mujadara. Homsey was clearly aware of her non-Arab audience, referring to ingredients in ways understandable to those with little familiarity with Arab culture or cooking. At times she appears to intentionally be addressing a non-Arab audience, explaining, "this is clarified butter, which we call *samneh*," differentiating her and her people from those who are consuming the show. Much as the title of her cookbook suggests, Homsey's segment depicts Levantine food as it is cooked in the United States. Homsey herself shows this cultural hybridity and syncretism, with a distinctly New England accent (spatula becomes spatul*er,* for example) as well as a command of Arabic, ending each segment with a hearty *sahateen,* Arabic for *bon appetit.*

Advertisements

Although in no way central to the program, many episodes did include brief commercial messages from area businesses, most of which were Arab or Arab-American owned. While The Arabic Hour is a public access community program, not a commercial program, for a period of time it did include advertisements from local businesses that supported the show financially. Today these advertisements provide glimpses of quotidian life, ephemera of Arab-American Boston in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as evidence of the community business support for the program. Among those businesses that supported the

show were The Middle East Restaurant and Nightclub, Lebanese Grocery Store, Near East Bakery, East West Imports, Shahrazad Restaurant, Algiers Coffee Shop, Salloum Arabic English Translation, and Friends in Travel.

Figure 9. Advertisement for Lebanese Grocery Store in West Roxbury, MA

Conclusion

Taken together, these various segments make up the components of a typical episode. All are designed not only appeal to Arab-Americans, but to the general public, seeking to, as one interviewee says, "normalize" Arab-Americans. In chapter seven I will discuss at greater length the Arabic Hour's approach to alternative media, as well as the program's intention of reaching non-Arab audiences, which I call "for them, by us" media. In the following chapter, those involved with the Arabic Hour will speak for themselves, sharing their perspectives on the intention behind various segments, intended audiences, and success at achieving goals.

VI. "To Tell Our Stories Ourselves": Findings from Interviews

This chapter seeks to more rigorously present findings from semi-structured interviews with Arabic Hour guests, volunteers, and funders, portions of which have already enriched preceding chapters. These interviews, as well as content analysis of the show, elucidate findings pertinent to the proposed research questions of this thesis. Findings from interviews will be discussed as they pertain to this thesis's five main research questions.

Founding Influences

What key moments in politics, history, and/or personal political consciousness led to the founding of the Arabic Hour and individuals' involvement in the Arabic Hour?

Interviewees pointed to prior activism and advocacy; political events in modern Middle East history, particularly in Palestine and Lebanon; and political consciousness of media bias and Arab (-American) invisibility as reasons for founding or becoming involved in the Arabic Hour.

The (Abbreviated) Founding Story

Mike Haidar, a founding member of the Arabic Hour, and a pillar of the show to this day, considers the founding of the Arabic Hour to be but one occurrence in a trajectory of activism. In 1973 Mike came to the United States from Lebanon to study at Northeastern University in Boston. Mike recalled the activism he was engaged in at Northeastern, saying, "Prior to [the Arabic Hour],

at Northeastern we were very active in the community. The activism was there. We were doing the work by broadcasting, but not on a TV station. We were broadcasting by being a mouthpiece talking to people, organizing, getting the community together." During this period Mike and others founded the Syrian Club of Boston. Evelyn Shakir writes, "The Syrian Club of Boston works closely with these students and engages in a variety of other activities – they hold classes in Arabic, for instance, and are the moving force behind 'The Arabic Hour' television show – all aimed at heightening the community's consciousness of its ethnic identity" (Shakir 1984, 47). Mike described the work of the Syrian Club of Boston as, in part, a "PR campaign" to build bridges between Arab students and American students and professors by holding *haflis*, hosting *dabke* performances, and distributing flyers about Palestine. As Mike says, "on one hand we would entertain, on the other we would feed them some counter information," an approach that applied to the Arabic Hour as well.

After graduating from Northeastern, Mike Haidar and Elias Aoude founded the Arabic Hour to continue their activism, advocacy, and community involvement. Mike remembers, "Elias knew an Indian woman…[She] had a half hour Indian show. She felt if she could entice us or introduce us – we take half an hour, she takes half an hour – she gets a discount." For this reason, the first episodes of the Arabic Hour are introduced as "Asian Entertainment," half of an hour-long program that also included an Indian-American community program. Within a year, the Arabic Hour entered a direct agreement to produce its own hour-long program. The success of this program was due in part to Mike and

Elias' connections to the community as a result of their previous activism at Northeastern and with the Syrian Club of Boston. As Mike said, "We didn't just get into the TV show as unknowns. People knew who we were." This prior activism not only seems essential to Mike's personal political education, but also to the success of the program in the community.

Key Political Moments

Each individual interviewed offered unique stories of personal political consciousness raising and inspiration for involvement in the Arabic Hour. Volunteers from three different generations, however, considered key political moments that factored significantly in their personal political transformation and desire to be involved with the Arabic Hour: the 1967 June War, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the 2006 South Lebanon War.

Elaine Hagopian grew up in Cambridge, MA becoming aware of politics in part due to her father, an Arab nationalist who had emigrated from Syria. Elaine was a founding member of the Arab-American University Graduates, founded in the wake of the 1967 War. Elaine writes in the Arab Studies Quarterly on the founding of the AAUG: "As soon as the war broke out, I began looking for an organization in the Boston area concerned with justice in the Middle East…I was outraged by the war and the anti-Arab racism that came pouring out of television, print media and radio. I was looking for something on a national scale, better informed and definitely more active…Subsequently, the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) was founded in Chicago in October 1967" (Hagopian 2007, 57-58).

In relation to her involvement in the Arabic Hour, Elaine offered similar commentary, telling me, "We were driven by the '67 war and then the '82 war on Lebanon. We were driven. It was highly motivating…Media was seen as a way to vent and get out your message, to counter what you saw on TV. I remember in '67 after the war there was just hatred and racism pouring out of the TV against the Arab community and a lot of our people were harassed. " Though the program was founded nearly 15 years after the 1967 War, Elaine attributed the political consciousness and motivation to this political moment, saying, "We had a whole group of people, especially people highly motivated from the '67 war who wanted to do this." The 1967 War resulted in the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula and is seen as a watershed moment in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and in Arab-American identity formation.[4]

Nabih Hakim, who was born in Lebanon and immigrated to the United States for university, attributed his involvement as a volunteer at the Arabic Hour to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982: "You feel like you need to do something, but I'm a pacifist. So I never maintain ideas that have a gun in it. Not in Lebanon, not anywhere." Nabih in fact did not like the Arabic Hour the first time he saw it. After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, however, he wanted to contribute in some way, and found his place at the Arabic Hour through a friend. As Nabih remembers, "I didn't hate [the Arabic Hour], but I didn't say, 'Wow, ok good I want to joint them.' Then the invasion of Lebanon happened. I was young

[4] The 1967 War and Arab-American identity formation is discussed more extensively in chapter two.

and actually it had a big impact. If I'm honest to you, it was horrifying to me at that time…I was looking for a place where you can contribute - you have limited energies and you want to spend them in a way you approve of – and a friend who was really an A student was volunteering at the Arabic Hour." Nabih is now the longest serving volunteer with the program.

Toufic Tannous became familiar with the Arabic Hour from seeing their coverage of demonstrations against the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. "In 2006 there was a war between Lebanon and Israeli, and that's where I got engage a lot in the community, where we used to go to demonstrations to stop the war and the Arabic Hour was almost at every event to videotape and create videos on what was going on. That's how I got to know more about the Arabic Hour." At this point Toufic was just visiting the United States over the summers while completing high school in Lebanon. When he immigrated to the Untied States to study at university he decided to become involved in the program.

"You Can't Help to Want to Contribute on Some Level"

Through the decades, the Arabic Hour has hosted many interviewees repeatedly, some of whom have also become interviewers and hosts of the program. Suad Dajani, for example, recalls being invited to the show by Elaine Hagopian or activists she was acquainted with after writing a book, *Eyes Without Country: Searching for a Palestinian Strategy of Liberation*. Later, Suad helped to program a fundraiser for either the 20th or 25th anniversary of the Arabic Hour,

posted articles to the Arabic Hour website, and became a frequent host and interviewer in 2006.

Jocelyn Ajami first appeared on the program after being interviewed on a short film she produced titled *Jihad*. After this, Jocelyn was involved as a volunteer on the show for four years. "I think as an interviewee you see the depth to which questions are treated and you see a public service is being offered to the public. So, basically you just want to give back, because you know in many ways they are the only people doing that...You can't help to want to contribute on some level."

"The news…didn't tell the whole story"

Volunteer Nabih Hakim imparted many stories to me about his childhood in Lebanon and his trips home after having immigrated to the United States. As he says, "There are tons of sad stories I want to mention, but tons and tons of really good stories, really good stories!" These stories, however, were not often depicted in imaginings of the Middle East. Nabih acknowledges, "The news and the media networks, some people felt, didn't tell the whole story." As a result Nabih felt a need to tell his own stories and those of his people, not just those of misery, but also those of positivity, prosperity, and culture. Nabih explains, "For me, I feel like I had a duty just to share what I witnessed growing up. It was unbelievable. Even though I know it was a narrow view. I was fortunate I saw nothing but beauty, kindness, caring, unbelievably unselfish."

Stories spill out eagerly from Nabih: visiting Beirut in 1983 during the Lebanese Civil War and being surprised by the rampant positivity ("Lebanese are crazy drivers – except in 1983. I've never seen politeness driving and people dress up really nice as if they say, 'we might die tomorrow. I don't care. Let's do our best'"); attempting to deliver a letter and money to the family of a friend in a city he did not know well ("I don't know anybody in Tripoli. Zero. I swear to you I got goosebumps when I stepped on the street and I asked a person where is so and so and then the effort they put to help you out"); or the story of a worker who showed up to work the same day a shell hit his home ("He said, 'Thank god the corner of the house was hit, lucky for us we were in the living room at that time. We were not in the bedroom and…yeah, it's ok!"). These stories, seemingly unrelated to the Arabic Hour, in fact point to a common motivation for being involved in the Arabic Hour: a desire to "tell our stories ourselves."

Role and Mission

What is the role/mission of the Arabic Hour and how has it changed over time?

Many of those interviewed suggested a dual mission of the Arabic Hour: reaching the Arab-American community in order to build empowered community and educate about issues of importance to Arab-Americans; and reaching a broader U.S. audience in order to educate non-Arabs about issues of importance to Arab-Americans.

"To Tell Our Stories Ourselves"

Many volunteers at the Arabic Hour as well as guests to the program saw

the mission of the Arabic Hour as telling alternative stories in response to hegemonic media coverage of the Middle East and Arab-Americans. As Nabih's stories show, there was a desire to tell stories of the Middle East and Arab America from an Arab perspective. As Mike Haidar says, "We felt compelled to do something because the media is so biased and so pro-Israeli and the portrayal of our peoples was so terrible." As a result of media depictions Mike believed that "people know very little about our people." Suad Dajani agrees, noting that "there wasn't much of an Arab voice in the hegemonic media at that time." Nabih Hakim too believes that "the news and the media networks, some people felt, didn't tell the whole story." Susan Akram also points out that the show brought "news of what was happening in the Middle East that people couldn't get through the hegemonic media."

The show not only emphasized the production of knowledge about the Middle East and Arab America by those from these communities, but the pursuit of this goal with intellectual integrity and a degree of scholarship and veracity. A younger volunteer, Toufic Tannous, puts the goal of the show like this: "There is only one goal and mission: to carry the true story of what's going on." Toufic returned to the idea of the pursuit of truth throughout my interview with him, emphasizing that the program does not produce propaganda ("it doesn't have any propaganda and that's what makes it a great place"). Elaine Hagopian agrees, noting that the show was largely produced by academics: "We tried to insist on first rate critical stuff, not propaganda. Propaganda doesn't work. It stinks."

Linda Simon, like many volunteers, believes the show to have a high

degree of intellectual integrity. She also notes, however, that "if it means we left out some other things that was inevitable. Everybody else was leaving out us." Pursuing truthful knowledge production did not mean including every perspective under the sun, but simply pursuing with integrity the production of knowledge from an Arab-American collective subjectivity.

F.T.B.U (For Them By Us)[5]

Founding member Mike Haidar emphasizes that the Arabic Hour was not in fact designed with just an Arab-American population in mind. As Mike says, "the very critical element was that this media was done and aimed not to preach to the converts." As such, the show was always produced in English. "That really in many ways made the mission hard," Mike goes on to say. "If the show was entertaining to the Arabic communities that have left home and came here and are looking for a feeling of a hafli, they would support it, because it does something for them. But to do something on their behalf, not for them, is a different story."

Mike makes clear that the Arabic Hour did not have as its mission the creation of separatist media for Arabs and Arab-Americans as a result of a hegemonic media sphere characterized by anti-Arab racism, but rather to create media that would counteract hegemonic media racism by reaching both non-Arabs and Arabs. Rather than following a "for us, by us" approach to media production, Mike is putting forth a community media model of "for them, by us."

[5] For Us By Us (FUBU) is an American clothing brand owned by Daymond John. The title acknowledges that the clothing brand is a line of streetwear made by black people for black people. Scholars like Priscilla McCutcheon have applied the term to areas outside of fashion, such as community food security (McCutcheon 2011).

As Suad Dajani says, the goal was to "bring the perspectives and voices and issues and people who would not be covered in the hegemonic to an audience of both Arab Americans and to non-Arabs." In Mike's account, however, bringing Arab perspectives to non-Arabs was the more important mission.

"A Forum to Bring the Community Together"

The Arabic Hour did, however, attempt to build bridges in the Arab-American community, bringing together the "old community" (those who descend from early Syrian-Lebanese immigrants) and the "new community" (many of whom came to the United States to study from a range of countries in the Middle East, though still mainly the Levant). Mike Haidar explains that in addition to teaching Americans about Arab peoples and their culture, "The other thing that was missing was a link between the community and the students. When I say community I mean the churches, the mosque. The established American community has in many ways melted into the American fabric." The Arabic Hour was an attempt to connect these two communities, which shared Arab culture and heritage, but had divergent experiences.

In doing so, the Arabic Hour functioned as a microcosmic Arab nationalist space; religion and other sectarian divisions were minimized for the sake of Pan-Arab (-American) solidarity. In this context, it is unsurprising that the plight of Palestine was central to the program. Dajani explains, "It brought the community together across all Arab-American nationalities and religion. I think that was a really wonderful and unique part of what it did. There were no sectarian or national divisions as far as I could see. It was about raising issues and

perspectives that are not truly covered here." Haidar recounts that the culture of the Arabic Hour was decidedly secular, to the point that volunteers who had been part of the team for months thought he was Muslim when he is in fact Greek Orthodox. "A couple of girls came and volunteered," Mike remembers. "And after a few months they never knew my family is Christian. They said, 'Oh! We thought your name was Mohammed Haidar and you made yourself Mike! So I said, 'consider that: the fact that you could know me for so long and you never know!" As Mike tells me this story he comments, "We're all volunteering together. We're all working together. Especially when you come from our part of the world – its really so divided."

For some, however, the function of community building was less political and more cultural. Nabil Sater, a local business owner who supported the show, saw the mission simply as "to talk about the community and the people and the culture and all that. This is our, my involvement as a restaurant with the Arabic Hour…its important because they do talk about the culture and the food and all that."

Changes Through Time

The Arabic Hour certainly changed in form throughout time, deemphasizing cultural segments and opting for longer and more scholarly interviews. Susan Akram believes that there was "definitely an expansion into focusing on political activism and the conferences, because initially there wasn't much on conferences and there was certainly no videotaping of entire conferences." Existing archival materials suggest that coverage of entire

conferences increased in the early 90s, perhaps indicating a more scholarly shift, although in the early 80s the Arabic Hour routinely covered AAUG conferences.

The show has also responded to political happenings in the Middle East and changes in media technology. Toufic Tannous notes, "The main focus is still Palestine, but unfortunately there has been Yemen, there has been Syria, which has made the Arabic Hour also cover these issues. They are really important topics to cover, because there are injustices happening in those places as well." The advent of satellite television, as well as television stations like Al Jazeera America, has also affected the Arabic Hour. Susan Akram notes "Other Arabic news sources have become available, because I think definitely Al Jazeera and for some Democracy Now and these other sources that are just as readily available, have superseded most of what the Arabic Hour had, other than the interviews." Today, segments like the Arab News Roundup have become anachronistic, while scholarly interviews can maintain relevancy over time.

Culture and the Political

How do producers, guests of and donors to the Arabic Hour understand the show as political cultural production at different times?

Of those interviewed, there were many understandings of the Arabic Hour's political nature. Some guests on the show who have been engaged in activism and advocacy saw the show as a tool to amplify the work of activists. Others, such as one volunteer who had a career as a journalist, understood journalism to be an inherently political act, and the Arabic Hour to be no exception. Others noted the Arabic Hour's alterity to hegemonic media as

political, while some understood the scholarly information disseminated by the show to be a form of political education in which knowledge, it's production, and it's consumption are all of a decidedly political nature. Still, some chose to depict the show as a cultural endeavor free of politics, interpreting it as an apolitical form of media.

"An Incredibly Useful Microphone"

The Arabic Hour had activist roots. As Haidar recounts of the Arabic Hour founding, "We were activists trying to do something and then the opportunity presented itself to get on the air and we grabbed it and it evolved from there." Haidar sees the show as a form of activism, and of a political nature, noting that "We were politically active before the show. We created the TV program as means of carrying this activism to the next level." Local activists who I interviewed also thought of the program as an amplifying tool for their work. Though the mission or goal of the Arabic Hour as articulated by the staff did not use this language, two frequent guests on the show spoke of it in this way.

Susan Akram first appeared on the Arabic Hour to speak about a campaign she was involved in to pass a resolution in the Cambridge City Council calling for a two-state solution. Akram later appeared on the show to discuss her work as an immigration lawyer specializing in refugee asylum and Palestinian issues. As Susan Akram said, "one of the important messages that I thought all of us had was to inform other activists about all the different aspects of work that was going on." Akram appeared on the show to discuss the secret evidence cases and other litigation work that she was involved in; few members of the community or

activists knew about these issues. As Akram says, "I know that people who didn't know about the secret evidence cases weren't going to read the law review articles we had written about that." When they watched the Arabic Hour, however, "They would realize how important this was to the community, to community organizing, and also to awareness of what was really happening with the targeting of the Arabs and later the Arabs and Muslims in the U.S."

Nancy Murray was a founding member of the New England Network for Justice in Palestine, an activist with the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Human Rights, and the director of the ACLU of Massachusetts. Murray says, "I would always rely on the Arabic Hour for was being able to amplify the voices of various people…So from my perspective the Arabic Hour was an incredibly useful almost like microphone for people to have." From the perspective of activists like Nancy Murray and Susan Akram, the Arabic Hour played the role of microphone, a tool for activists who lacked access to other forms of media.

"All Journalism is a Political Act"

Linda Simon, who had a career as a NBC radio journalist in the Middle East before returning to the Boston area and volunteering with the Arabic Hour, as well as Jocelyn Ajami, an artist and filmmaker who volunteered with the Arabic Hour, both noted the fundamentally political nature of all journalism. Ajami says, "I think that all journalism is a political act. Especially true journalism, because it is the desire to get the truth out there. You can't be completely truthful because you don't always have access to that information, even if you are on the ground, but the attempt to get to the truth is always a

political act." Linda Simon went even further, remarking that "Everything in life is a political act. Certainly [the Arabic Hour] was." Ajami, in considering the Arabic Hour, concluded that the program has been more political than other forms of journalism. "All journalism is a political act," she said, "But with the Arabic Hour, you also have the notion that when certain issues are never being covered its a political act to offer that balance."

Others, however, voiced different opinions. Nancy Murray didn't find the Arabic Hour to be journalism. "I wouldn't say they were particularly journalistic," she said. "It was much more we were trying to get across a message so I was really trying to help people present what I knew were their views." Nabil Sater, a restaurant owner, said, "Our involvement was not for political reason. Just to help a program or show that talked about the culture."

"For Years the Silence Was Deafening"

The Arabic Hour's relationship to hegemonic media, characterized as both alternative and antagonistic, could represent a form of political activism or political media production. Susan Akram believes that the show was "consciously political in getting across information that was not otherwise available for sure and that was very deliberate." This was particularly true in relation to Palestine. Akram acknowledges, "[The Arabic Hour] was also one of probably the only media places for years where you would get to know anything in depth about the Palestinian struggle…For years the silence was deafening." The silence and at times bias in relation to Palestine meant that even including Palestinian voices

constituted a challenge to the normalized biases of he hegemonic order. As Elaine Hagopian too was quick to connect the program's political nature to the issue of Palestine, saying, "For me, I'm very political. For me, the main issue was Palestine." Nancy Murray contextualized the Arabic Hour in relation to the hegemonic media landscape saying, "I think these are the community based organs that we really need given the way that mass media have basically conspire to not feature both sides of this conflict. It was special as far as I was concerned."

The Arabic Hour, however, was not just a voice against the notable silence of mass media on Palestine, but also on other issues related to the Middle East and Arab-America. Susan Akram appeared on the show to discuss the targeting of Arabs and Muslims in the United States, which she describes as "an old story, but I think many people in the Arab community don't really know it." On this and many other relevant issues the Arabic Hour provides an alternative voice to those in hegemonic media.

Articulations of Arabness

What various articulations of Arab and Arab-American identities appear on the program through time? What political implications do these representations hold?

The previous chapter discusses the various guests and perspectives that appeared on the show over the course of 37 years of production. Many of these people and the perspective they provide do not appear in hegemonic media sources. This includes Arab-American intellectuals and academics; Arab and Arab-American writers, most of whom are women; Palestinian activists and

intellectuals; and progressive Jewish-Americans critical of Israeli government actions and political Zionism.

These articulations of Arabness, as well as non-hegemonic, non-Arab perspectives, challenge normative assumptions based in Orientalism, anti-Arab racism, and Islamophobia. Linda Simon believes that part of the goal of the Arabic Hour was "normalizing Arab-Americans." As she explains, "I guess we thought we could have an affect on normalizing – we knew we were normal – but normalizing Arab Americans in other peoples lives." One way to do this was to provide a vast array of Arab voices. "When you think of what we call the Arab world, form the Arabian Gulf to Morocco," Simon says, "Its vast and people look so different and they talk differently and their cuisine and culture and all is different." With this in mind, Simon believes to the Arabic Hour "It was also important that we showed the range of Arab-American opinion and ethnicities. That it wasn't all just one monolith."

Political Power and Community Empowerment

Has the Arabic Hour helped the Arab-American community of New England to build political power and community empowerment, if political power is understood to be the ability to influence decision-making, to set the political agenda, and influence thoughts, desires, and ideologies of others (Lukes 1974); and community empowerment is understood as learning to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire 1970, 19)?

Most of those interviewed who were on the volunteer staff of the Arabic Hour found their participation to be personally empowering. The freedom of inquiry, potential for education, ability to learn about the local community, and

opportunity to produce media are all elements of the emancipatory potential that the Arabic Hour shows. While viewers of the Arabic Hour who were not involved with the show in any other way were not interviewed, some of the volunteers and guests interviewed for this thesis offered opinions on the show's potential for greater community empowerment. Arab-American representation and political education were both seen as potentially empowering effects of the Arabic Hour to those who tuned in.

Few of those interviewed, however, could find direct evidence the show building political power. While some did not believe the show to be successful in this way, others suggested a few ways in which the program may have influenced others in a way that built power: by creating political education necessary for future political action, by consolidating the Arab-American community, and by offering a space for organizing and activism.

The Emancipatory Potential of Community Media Production

The Arabic Hour has allowed interviewers and interviewees to deeply engage with topics, pursuing lines of inquiry of their choosing. This emancipatory inquiry differs from the highly controlled and shallow investigation of many hegemonic media sources. Suad Dajani noted the difference between appearing on the Arabic Hour and other sources of media: "I've been invited on some TV show or something like that and it would always be frustrating because the kind of questions they'd ask and the kind of limited time and the way they would frame things – They would basically answer something and then move on and not go in

any direction that wasn't what they wanted." The Arabic Hour, however, offered emancipatory inquiry: "Being on the Arabic Hour we were free to ask whatever we wanted and probe and go into much more depth than we could in mainstream media outlets." As an interviewer, Dajani says "It felt good to be able to do that, to express oneself, although supposedly this is a free society where you could. But you can't."

From deep inquiry and scholarly investigation, many of those interviewed believe they became more knowledgeable in ways that they identify as empowering. Suad Dajani spoke of her time with the show as a "learning experience"; Jocelyn Ajami said, "I think it was certainly empowering for me, because it gave me access to information and also made me want to know more about certain situations"; and Toufic Tannous remarked, "You are getting all this information. It is something that I care about so it has really empowered me. It is great to be more educated about that issue [Palestine] and what's going on."

Nabih Hakim remembered how important it was for his personal development and education to meet guests that came to the studio when he was first involved in the program as a college student: "At that time if you hear of an ambassador or a secretary of state or an entertainer you assume they are different, but when you see them, talk to them, listen to them, it impacts you positively. You mature." Nabih continues, "So I personally benefited a lot. I was educated about the Middle East: the good and bad." Nabih also remembers the importance of hearing from "progressive Israeli voices." "This really impacted me," he recalls. "You always assume such people exist, but you never met them. So the

Arabic Hour allowed me to meet Ilan Pappé, Hilda Silverman, Sara Roy, Ella Shohat…I benefited a lot." Some of the knowledge produced by the Arabic Hour, however, was much closer to home.

Numerous programs focused on local history. Nabih remembers, "I learned about little Syria…I taped so many interviews talking about this area. So I learned a lot about the history of the community." Elaine Hagopian, who has studied and written about the Arab-American community says, "Most of our people from the old community have no idea of their history – absolutely no idea." Part of this history is government surveillance, racism, and discrimination. As Susan Akram said of anti-Arab racism in the United States, "This is an old story, but I think many people in the Arab community don't really know it."

Some of those involved with the production of the Arabic Hour relayed stories of pride and personal fulfillment. Elaine Hagopian said, "I think I can say with honesty it made me feel like I was doing something meaningful. In my heart of hearts I probably knew it didn't reach the whole world, but I'd say something, it's out there, and it can be used." The suggestion that there could be repercussions for producing the Arabic Hour and the acknowledgment that there was no other show of its kind, made Linda Simon feel prideful for the Arabic Hour. As she recalled, "I was very proud that it was happening at all. People were taking personal risk." Nabih Hakim also recalled how he felt when he attended an Arabic Hour *hafli* with 850 people in attendance. "At that time I felt proud," he said. "I was young. When you see a 20-minute clip you edited on a giant screen and people are watching and enjoying it, you feel great. You feel absolutely

great." Ramy Arnaout, who appeared on the show as a young person felt similarly. "I remember it was my first time I believe on TV," he recalled. "It was a great experience to go to the studio." For Ramy, and likely other young Arab-Americans, being a guest on the Arabic Hour could have been a memorable and lasting experience.

Self-Representation

The Arabic Hour provided self-representation, which could have been empowering to the Arab-American community, but also Arab representation that could have been valuable to non-Arabs. As Jocelyn Ajami notes, "Obviously its helpful to have that representation not only for yourself, but better yet for other people to see," emphasizing again that the Arabic Hour was for an Arab, but also non-Arab viewership. In addition to Arab-American representation, Suad Dajani notes that it may actually have been empowering for Arabs to see non-Arabs who valued issues that were of importance to them: "Maybe in that way it was empowering as well for Arabs to see that non Arabs are interested and committed to the same issues that we may be interested in." For these reasons, self-representation for the Arab community and the broader community, as well as representation of non-Arabs who valued issues of importance to the Arab-American community could have been empowering to the community.

Elaine Hagopian explained how the Arabic Hour might have been empowering due to self-representation: "I think or some of them [community members], a very small number, it was empowering. They were delighted to see

community programs that reflected them. There we are, look at us! Our priest went to Lebanon and gave out humanitarian aid. It was more like it was nice to have a nice vision of themselves." Nancy Murray, a non-Arab participant in the show, also had this impression: "I think [the Arabic Hour's] role was getting people in this country to understand much more than they could through any other media…and number two, building community empowerment." Murray believes that the Arabic Hour did this by balancing "a serious political piece with a cultural piece," which had an empowering effect for the community. "I think it was a great way of making the community feel there was someone who was interested in what they were interested in," she said.

Linda Simon recounted stories of travelling to cover events and meetings of Arab American organizations with cameras stamped with the Arabic Hour name. "I'm sure it was quite a moment for that audience to see and say 'Oh, we have a TV program?'" Simon said. Simply knowing that Arab-America had a voice was an empowering revelation. As Mike Haidar recounts, "People would call us and, 'Please cover our event, we want you to be here.'" The community knew about the Arabic Hour, and knew it to be, as Toufic Tannous says, "A powerful outlet for the other voice, the hidden voice."

Influencing Others to Build Power

Many of those interviewed did not believe the Arabic Hour to have built political power. As Suad Dajani said, "I really don't know. I don't have a sense. I don't know whether it prompted anybody to activism in different ways than they

would have already." Susan Akram, though she believes the show amplified the work of activists, did not see the Arabic Hour as part of that activism, building political power. "I just don't," she said. "And I don't think that was ever the intention." Linda Simon also voiced skepticism saying, "If it did [build political power] I don't think it did it alone," but in concert with Arab-American organizations like the ADC and AAI.

Still, some respondents disagree, like Elaine Hagopian, who noted, "It was clear that we were making an impact." Hagopian bases this assertion on the pushback that the Arabic Hour received. Angry letters, threatening voicemails, and even a successful break-in and theft of Arabic Hour studio gear, show to Hagopian that right-wing Zionist organizations like the Jewish Defense League (JDL) saw the show as a threat.

As Jocelyn Ajami said, "Information and knowledge is always power." In her opinion the Arabic Hour "establishes a knowledge base that is empowering." Nancy Murray offers her own assessment: "Let's put it this way: [knowledge] is not a sufficient category, but it is a necessary category for making political change. Without knowing it you can't possibly advance to the next step, which is creating a way of pressuring politicians to change." The Arabic Hour certainly created a knowledge base of use to those who were working to enact political change through activism and advocacy.

As a physical space for gathering, the Arabic Hour was a useful tool for organizers and activists. Toufic Tannous recalls stories of demonstrations against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon being organized in the Arabic Hour space,

although not as part of the Arabic Hour program. “The Arabic Hour was not organizing,” Toufic explained. “But it was a placeholder for those people to meet and be more effective in collaborating and organizing events. But I don’t think the Arabic Hour was ever involved.” This somewhat sticky distinction between the actual work of activism and the work of media production suggests the closeness that these activities held, but also the notable distinction: while the organizational space was open to community members to plan demonstrations, the Arabic Hour was not an organization that pursued such activism.

Another way in which the Arabic Hour may have built political power was by unifying the Arab-American community. As Suad Dajani said, “It transcended all the other stuff that divides people nowadays in terms of nationally and religion and brought up the issues that are common to most of us.” Nabih also believes that the show succeeded in this respect. “Mike succeeded in bringing the older folks and connected them with the new immigrants,” both through his activism at Northeastern and through the Arabic Hour. As Mike told me, “When you come from our part of the world, it’s really so divided.” In building the Arabic Hour as a Pan-Arab community media space, Haidar attempted to consolidate Arab-American power to influence decision-making. Tangible examples of Arab-American community power leveraged for concrete results, however, remains elusive and, and if extant, likely unrelated, at least directly, to the Arabic Hour.

VII. Conclusions

As the journalist A.J. Liebling said, "Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one" (1960, 109). The Arabic Hour, with the 21st century technological equivalents of the printing press, has been able to produce media without the restrictions of government, corporations, or non-profit funding. In doing so, the Arabic Hour has achieved press freedom and cemented a notable place for itself in the history of alternative media, alongside other enterprises like Deep Dish Television Network (DDTV), "Alternative Views," and the shows that make up "black public-affairs television" (Heitner 2013). In 1991, the Nation magazine poetically described public access television, saying, "In the vast Sahara of television broadcasting there are only a few scattered wadis where authentic, alternative, uncommodified, uncensored programming can live" (1991). The Arabic Hour has certainly been one of these alternative wadis.

From interviews with those involved with the Arabic Hour, this thesis shows that participation in the program was often an impetus for further political consciousness raising on issues in the Middle East and of importance to Arabs in the United States. I argue that the Arabic Hour shows the transnational nature of Arab-American identity, before discussing how the Arabic Hour has uniquely produced alternative media with dual audiences. While the show does seek to be a program for Arab-Americans, it also demonstrates an approach that I focus on: "for them, by us" media. This form of alternative media is produced by an ethnic group with the goal of reaching the wider population with the goal of, as one interviewee put it, "normalizing Arabs". I will also discuss the Arabic Hour's

journalistic approach in the context of alternative media before considering whether the Arabic Hour has built political power or community empowerment. Finally, I will conclude with thoughts on the "emancipatory potential" of media production, future research, and the future of the Arabic Hour.

The Arabic Hour and Arab-American Identity

Many scholars in Arab-American studies have researched the racialization of Arabs in the United States; less has been said about the transnational dimension to Arab-American identity after the 1967 War. Naber argues that Arab-Americans are "white but not quite," ambiguous and invisible (Naber 2000), and Gualtieri considers the relationship between Syrian-Lebanese and whiteness as "uneven and contested," noting that Syrian-Lebanese have been both victims of racism and allies to other people of color (2009, 11). Tehranian refers to this as a "Faustian pact with whiteness – both as an unconscious response to and strategic tactic against the forces of racism" (2008, 1201). Other studies have focused on Arab-American racial identity after September 11th, 2001, noting increased visibility and subjectivity to state and vigilante violence (Naber & Jamal 2007; Cainkar 2011; Welch 2006). In addition to academic study, prominent Arab-American poets have long wrestled with Arab-American racialization, such as Laila Halaby in the poem *Browner Shades of White* (1994), and Suheir Hammad in the collection *Born Palestinian, Born Black* (1996).

Scholars, writers, and poets are wise to investigate and explore the position of Arab-Americans in the U.S. racial hierarchy, yet Arab-American

identity is transnational in nature, as the identity formulation has always existed in relation to the Middle East and Arab nationalism. The Arabic Hour shows how "articulations of Arabness", following Nadine Naber's phrase acknowledging the pluralism and hybridity of Arab-American identity, are also influenced by transnational cultural flows (Naber 2012). Appadurai, in considering globalization, identifies five transnational cultural flows, or scapes: technological, ethnic, financial, media, and ideological (1990). The Arabic Hour, as a production of Arab-American public culture, evidences many of these flows. Technological flows allow for interviews with scholars in the Arab world, as well as modest distribution of the program globally; volunteers on the program are immigrants as well as second-, and third-generation Arab-Americans with a particular ethnic culture; the Arabic Hour utilizes and responds to media produced in the United States and the Arab world; and the Arabic Hour is the result of, while also reproducing, ideologies like Arab nationalism. While the Arabic Hour is a decisively Arab-American cultural institution, it is, for these reasons, transnational in nature.

As such, participation in the Arabic Hour can be seen as a transnational activity in Arab-American identity formation. Interviewees pointed to events that occurred in the Middle East like the 1967 War, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the 2006 South Lebanon War as key political and historical events that led to their involvement with the Arabic Hour. Volunteering on the Arabic Hour was, for some, a means of making sense of these events or for benefitting Arab people in the wake of these events, which happened in the Middle East but

were witnessed from their vantage point in the United States. These interviews show that articulations of Arab-American identity continue to be influenced by participation in transnational flows between the Arab world and the United States, not just racialization in the United States and historical memories of the Arab world. Participation in the Arabic Hour by first-, second-, and third-generation Arab-Americans is a transnational activity showing the importance of active participation in ongoing cultural flows between the Arab world and North America to Arab-American identity formation.

The Arabic Hour as Alternative Media

Shooting from Within, Objective and Partisan

The Arabic Hour is alternative media in its antagonistic position vis-a-vis mainstream media (Howley 2005; Fuller 2007), as well as in its form and content (Howley 2005; Carpentier & Scifo 2010). Interviews and event coverage allow for marginalized voices to speak at length without interruption from interviewers, who typically co-construct the interview with the interviewee. The length and depth of interviews and event coverage diverge significantly from mainstream form, as does the content, which includes scholarly and activist perspectives that are not heard in mainstream media. One example: a conference devoted to the Palestinian right of return, which included perspectives from Roger Owen, Edward Said, Ilan Pappe, and Noam Chomsky. This content is not only alternative, but also antagonistic to mainstream media, which is characterized not just by media racism but also compulsory Zionism (Philo and Berry 2004; Ackerman 2001; Peteet 2016).

The Arabic Hour's professional doctrine, however, is perhaps the most notable component of the program's alterity, as well as an underacknowledged topic in the literature on alternative media. The discourse of professionalism in journalism typically includes an "objective" and non-partisan approach (Schudson 2001; Schudson & Anderson 2009), in which objectivity is construed as neutrality and a drive toward a sense of "balance" between various views. Alternative media, however, often relies on different journalistic ethics. Husband considers ethnic media spaces as "communities of practice" in which professional training follows different norms that offer "explicit interrogation of normative media values and the construction of professionalism" (2005, 477). In the context of the Arabic Hour, like some other community access television shows, this is done in a way that resembles the Guerrilla Television manifesto doctrine of "shooting from within…subjective and involved" (Boyle 1992, 71). I find it more precise, however, to describe the Arabic Hour as shooting from within, *objective* and *partisan*.

Of course, the Arabic Hour is "shooting from within," in the sense that it is a show that *self*-represents Arabs and covers the Middle East and Arab America from within the community. More importantly, however, the Arabic Hour "shoots from within" in the sense that there is a high degree of cross-pollination between interviewers and interviewees, producers and participants; the Arabic Hour covers social movements and issues that Arabic Hour community members are involved in. Most participants interviewed for this thesis project were engaged not just in the Arabic Hour, but also activism on the issues the Arabic Hour covered. Mike

Haidar, before founding the Arabic Hour, founded the Syrian Club of Boston; Dr. Nancy Murray directed the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Human Rights; and Elaine Hagopian was president of the Association of Arab American University Graduates, a key Arab-American activist group. In fact, many of the events covered by the program were connected to frequent hosts, contributors, or interviewers. For example, The Arabic Hour typically covered the events of the Trans Arab Research Institute, an organization that Elaine Hagopian and Naseer Aruri were founding members of.

From this position "within," the Arabic Hour produces media that is objective and partisan. As many Arabic Hour volunteers described in interviews, the program always attempted to ascertain the truth with whatever facts were available. As Dr. Hagopian said, the Arabic Hour produces "first rate, critical stuff, not propaganda," with a constant drive towards truth. The show does not, however, strive for neutrality. As Linda Simon said of the Arabic Hour's approach, "if it means we left out some other things that was inevitable. Everybody else was leaving out us." In this sense the show is both objective and partisan in a way that conflicts with mainstream journalistic professional practice, which understands objectivity as neutrality rather than as the attempted appraisal of facts without bias.

This partisan approach acknowledges hegemonic media and assumes that the audience interacts with this media; the Arabic Hour does not find it necessary to share all views, particularly those that are widely available in hegemonic media. This approach justifies what might be seen as a degree of partisanship

typically at odds with journalism's professional doctrine. In doing so, it critiques the doctrine of objectivity as neutrality, acknowledging that what is considered "objective" is often a practice that institutionalizes and normalizes certain biases.

For Them, By Us Media

Unlike some other ethnic media, the Arabic Hour is not necessarily produced just for one ethnic community. While Matsaganis et al. define ethnic media as "media produced *for* a particular ethnic community" (2010, 5), though not necessarily *by* members of that ethnic group, the Arabic Hour shows that ethnic media should in fact be defined more amply, as other scholars have (Riggins 1992; Viswanath & Arora 2000). The definition proposed by Matsaganis et al. fails to capture much of significant Arab-American media, from the Pen League to Arab America TV.

The Arabic Hour produces a form of ethnic media that I define as the "for them, by us" model of media production. Members of an ethnic community produce this media for the *benefit* of their own community, but for *consumption* by a wider audience outside of their ethnic community. As founder Mike Haidar said, "to do something on [Arab-Americans'] behalf, not for them, is a different story," and this is the story of the Arabic Hour, differentiating the program from other ethnic media in community television, such as what Devorah Heitner refers to as "Black public affairs television," which included programs like Chicago's *For Blacks Only*, the name alone acknowledging the intended audience of this program.

The "for them, by us" model of ethnic media production also acknowledges the political nature of the Arabic Hour. The Arabic Hour's attempt to reach non-Arab audiences is a strategy based in anti-racist practice. As Haidar explains, while the Arabic Hour considered the audience the general public, this was a strategy for the benefit of Arab-Americans, unlike Orientalizing depictions of Arabs, which are also consumed by non-Arabs, but as entertainment for their own benefit. Like "back public affairs television," "for them, by us" media exists as a response to mainstream media racism. Heitner argues that "black public affairs television" was in part an effort at "talking back to television," which at the time could be considered "Jim Crow television" (2013). The Arabic Hour is also an effort to "talk back," though in a different way and as a result of a different media racism: anti-Arab, islamophobic, and Orientalist mainstream media, the existence of which is well documented by scholars like Jack Shaheen (1984; 1994; 2003; 2008). "For them, by us" media like the Arabic Hour seeks to fight media racism, interpersonal racism, and systemic racism; self-represent marginalized people; and create anti-racist media for the benefit of the marginalized people, but for consumption by the wider public.

The "for them, by us" approach is notable in the history of alternative and ethnic media, and relevant to much of Arab-American media production besides the Arabic Hour. Suleiman believes that Mokarzel founded *Syrian World,* an English language publication, in part so that "Americans [would] be educated to develop a more positive image of the Arabic-speaking community" (1999, 80). And Arab America TV sees its goal as "bridging the gap of prejudice directed at

Arab Americans" and as "an educational resource channel for all Americans who are interested to learn about Arab American heritage and culture" (Curtis 2017). As a small ethnic community, Arab-Americans have experienced both invisibility and prejudicial hyper-visibility. In response, community members and activists have utilized "for them, by us" media as a tool of anti-racism.

The Arabic Hour's Success, Potential and Limitations

The Emancipatory Potential of Community Media

In examining whether the Arabic Hour has built political power or community empowerment, the limitations of the Arabic Hour become evident. Interviews clearly show the "emancipatory potential" of media production and the ways in which the Arabic Hour was empowering for those involved (Howley 2009). It is not possible, however, to discern whether Arab and Arab-American viewers of the program, or the community at large, found the program to be empowering. Further, in the case of political power, it does not appear that the show directly produced political results in the form of electoral organizing, legislative organizing, or broad-based mobilization. There is no evidence that the Arabic Hour influenced decision-making or changed the political agenda on the scale of the United States, Massachusetts, or Boston.

Still, the emancipatory potential of media production, its ability to bring about consciousness raising, or *conscientização*, is not to be underestimated (Freire 1969). Neither is the remarkable archival significance of the Arabic Hour. The cultural documents produced by the Arabic Hour exist beyond the historical specificity of the moment in which they were produced, and will continue to offer

documentation of Arab America into the future. Future appraisal and analysis of the archive will be necessary after digitalization of all materials is completed. The archive, when widely accessible, promises to create a new form of public access to the Arabic Hour with further emancipatory potential for Arab-Americans and other Americans.

Hopefully this thesis has shown a glimpse into the emancipatory potential of community media, and the potential for community media production to achieve Paulo Freire's idea of *conscientização,* best understood in English as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire 1969, 19). Brought to the Arabic Hour by the experience of key political moments like the 1967 War, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, or the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon in 2006; or by a nascent consciousness of anti-Arab racism, Orientalism, and media bias, participants in the Arabic Hour saw as the program's mission: to tell Arab-American stories by Arab-Americans, to create a forum in which the community could be unified, and to reach non-Arabs in an effort to dispel stereotypes and fight discrimination and racism.

While many of those involved experienced a political education and personal empowerment raising, few saw the show as taking direct, concrete political acts that would influence decision-makers. They did, however, engage in the process of *conscientização*, learning to perceive realities of oppression; the Arabic Hour was a primer for the next step of consciousness raising, praxis: "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire 1984, 36).

Most of those interviewed were also engaged in activism and advocacy. For example, Susan Akram discussed her part in the effort to pass a referendum in Cambridge, MA supporting a two-state solution in Israel/Palestine. Dr. Nancy Murray has travelled to Gaza and the West Bank on over a dozen international and humanitarian delegations. Others pursued similar forms of activism and advocacy. Ultimately, it is fair to conclude based on results of semi-structured interviews that the Arabic Hour did achieve empowerment, or *conscientização*, for *volunteers* on the show. The scope of this research, however, does not allow for study of community empowerment for the greater Arab-American community.

Limitations of Studying the Arabic Hour

This thesis has relied in part on incomplete archival sources of the Arabic Hour. While the Arabic Hour digitalization project is currently underway, it has yet to be completed. Large swaths of the Arabic Hour's history remain on VHS tapes, and in some cases, older formats. This has limited the potential of this project to fully historicize and contextualize the Arabic Hour. Extant and already digitized sources were necessarily preferenced in the formation and analysis of this thesis. Arabic Hour materials that were lost, destroyed, or damaged beyond repair were unavailable for consideration. This, unfortunately, is the nature of archival research. Future research, however, would benefit from a more complete Arabic Hour digital archive.

Second, the inability to measure community access television viewership means it is difficult to discern whether a show like the Arabic Hour was truly popular within a community. While the emancipatory potential of community

media production is measurable through semi-structured interviews with those involved in production, the emancipatory potential of community media *consumption* is much more difficult to ascertain. As a result I have decided to rely on anecdotes and stories as heuristics to convey what I believe to be a notable degree of popularity that the show has held; the number of cookbooks sold, requests for VHS tapes from community members, remarks from church leaders that the show kept people out of the pews, and threats of violence and intimidation from right-wing Zionist organizations all convey some degree of influence and notability of the Arabic Hour. Still, the inability to quantitatively show the popularity of the program through measures of viewership makes it difficult to study the consumption of community media, and skews research towards the study of community and ethnic media production.

Similarly, this thesis has not included interviews with community members whose sole relationship to the show was as viewers. While some of those interviewed first became acquainted with the Arabic Hour by watching it, this thesis was unable to accurately or precisely measure community empowerment among viewers.

Finally, while it is outside the scope of this thesis project, much of the literature on community-based media focuses on and assumes politically left content. Many of the tactics and techniques of producing community media outside mass media production channels, however, are also utilized by right-wing groups, as seen with the rise of Donald Trump, assisted by radio hosts like the conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, once a local radio talk show host who now has a

national following. While this thesis focuses on the Arabic Hour, an Arab-American politically left program, it is worth noting that much of the literature on community-based media fails to capture the ways in which these tools can be utilized by right wing and fascist political movements and actors.

The Future of the Arabic Hour

Nearly every person interviewed, unprompted, expressed hope that the Arabic Hour would continue. The prospect of the Arabic Hour's death clearly distressed many of those who had been involved through the years. Many, however, acknowledged the ways in which the program must change in order to better achieve the mission and goals of the program in a changing media landscape. Moving toward an Arabic Hour for the digital age means embracing online-first production, building relationships with students at area universities, and opening the studio space to those in the Arab-American community of Boston who would like to produce their own media.

Future work on the Arabic Hour must also delve deeper into the impressive archival resources currently being appraised and arranged. This project is the first to analysis the Arabic Hour's vast and growing archives and serves as a roadmap for future investigation. Once complete, this archive will provide more fertile ground for research, not just on Middle East and Arab American politics, culture, and life, but also on community media and empowerment. This archive will allow for a more complete understanding of the Arabic Hour, but also a resource for scholars of Middle East studies, Arab American studies, and media studies.

Finally, in academia work can be done to facilitate the emancipatory potential of community media. Universities and other anchor institutions engaged in community work should consider adding community media to their research and community engagement agendas. University spaces can be opened for community media production and departments such as Tufts UEP that are engaged in community work can bring media production to existing projects and relationships. Students, scholars, and teachers whose work focuses on community development, community participation, and/or community organizing, should also pay greater attention to community media and its potential as a resource for understanding community life and activism.

In terms of research, scholars and practitioners of community work and community organizing should devote greater energy to the emancipatory potential of community media for transformational community organizing, particularly for youth and marginalized populations. At the root of many organizing philosophies, such as those utilized by Marshal Ganz and Barack Obama, are personal stories. Community media allows not just for the individual and collective telling of stories, but also the ability to develop and put into praxis critical consciousness. This thesis seeks to tell the stories of community storytellers, to archive the work of community archivists, and to historically and politically contextualize the work of community historians and political analysts. Ultimately, it is a co-creation calling for more of its kind.

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