Capstone: Tradition in Motion: DABKEH!
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Reflection Paper
Tradition In Motion: DABKEH!

Introduction

This Capstone, Tradition in Motion: DABKEH! (TIM) is an online collection of documentation of dabkeh dancers (*dabbikah*) based in the West Bank, Palestine and Brooklyn, New York. TIM provides a platform to share the voices of these practitioners, a framework to explore issues fundamental to cultural sustainability, and to highlight dabkeh's multiplicity of meanings, and dynamism.

Edited videos of interviews with dabbikah and accompanying materials are organized on the Tumblr platform, traditioninmotion.tumblr.com, to highlight important themes which reoccur throughout the narratives. Supporting and linked media is on additional platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube). Media footage is drawn from fieldwork conducted in Beit Sahour, the occupied West Bank (2009) and New York City (2012). Additional footage in Brooklyn, NY (2015) was recorded with the help of City Lore's Documentation Institute.

Dabkeh is a music and dance social tradition of the Levant area (Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Syria) of the Middle East. It is performed socially at celebrations, in stage choreographies by troupes, and even in street protests. Dabkeh is rooted in village folk traditions, performed in lines and circles, with rhythmic stomping and syncopated foot patterns. It is also one of the most popular and beloved dances performed by Arab Americans, not solely by those of Levantine descent, at social gatherings, festivals and political events.

Considering the misrepresentations and racism facing Palestinians and Arab Americans, TIM provides an alternative voice which values tradition, art and self-expression. It provides a platform for Arab re-presentation of themselves as artists, tradition bearers, dancers, and creators, in contrast to mass media's depictions of them as terrorists, chauvinists, and mysterious backwards-looking exotic figures. Traditional cultural knowledge and practices of dabkeh (dance, music, community) are at risk in part due to migration, exile, and marginalization through discrimination or overt occupation of Palestinian territories.

In the years following September 11th, and again currently, due to upheaval in the region and to phenomena related to Daesh (ISIS); Arab Americans and Muslims are facing increased discrimination and erosion of their civil and cultural rights in America and abroad. The pressures of surveillance of Arab American communities, and everyday prejudices combine with the common stresses of immigration to undo family, community and traditional culture.

TIM looks at dabkeh as a cultural antidote to this undoing. It explores dabkeh as a dynamic and vital element of traditional culture and of everyday life, danced not only in social gatherings but

also as a public statement of protest and identity. "[B]ecause "how a people are represented is how they are treated" (Hall, 1998, p. 27), the act of representation is also an act of material consequences" (Madison 2012, 196). TIM collocutors speak of dabkeh as an affirmation of their existence as Palestinians, as Arabs, as bearers of culture and tradition. TIM's sharing of Arab American and Palestinian experiences of a beloved dance tradition, is a small step in sustaining their culture, their self-representation and sharing it with a wider audience.

***Methodology*:**

Stage One: Fieldwork / Documentation

TIM evolved through different stages and types of methodology. The first stage, begun in 2009, consisted of fieldwork and documentation in Beit Sahour, Palestine and New York City. While I was able to spend only two weeks in Beit Sahour, during this time I sought out dabkeh troupe dancers and directors for interviews and was hosted by a Palestinian family working in cultural tourism through The Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies.

Most fieldwork in NYC was conducted to develop public folk arts programming, dating back to 2005, but in particular for a 2012 festival I curated entitled, "*So You Think You Can Dabkeh".* This documentation consists of video recordings of interviews, performances and demonstrations with dabkeh dancers and singers, as well as some still images. This past summer (2015), I participated in City Lore's Documentary Institute and was able to complete additional documentation of dabbikah in Brooklyn.

As many of these interviews were conducted with the goal of preparing public folk programming, they consist of personal narrative and topical interviews (Madison 2012, 28). We covered basic life history information, and topics related to their practice, learning, and technique of performing dabkeh as well as its relation to gender, identity, values, and sense of ethnic and national belonging in diaspora. In most cases I was not able to conduct follow-up interviews, especially with interlocutors in Beit Sahour, as I was there for such an abbreviated time. However, I did spend time conversing and socializing with them, attending practices, and learning steps whenever possible. My researcher role was much more than that of a participant-observer: in this short time, I was learning about the political situation, its effects on social and cultural life, and well-being, and about the role dabkeh played in dabbikah's lives. I was questioning, conversing and doing lots of listening with engaged partners in the field, in line with Conquergood's ideas on method:

> *This rethinking of ethnography as primarily about speaking and listening, instead of observing, has challenged the visualist bias of positivism with talk about voices, utterances, intonations, multivocality. Sight and observation go with space, and the spatial practices of division, separation, compartmentalization, and surveillance* (2006, 355).

In retrospect, interviews were in line with a public ethnography approach- with the ultimate goal of sharing ethnographic material in public folk arts programming, and ultimately on social media through TIM. "The true definition of public ethnography hinges on the measure of its communicative success (Adler and Adler, 2008; Gans, 2010; Tedlock, 2005; Vaughan, 2005). Essentially if the outcomes of ethnographic research are brought to the attention of a nonacademic audience, then that particular study can be said to be a public ethnography." (Vannini and Mosher 2013, 392).

With many of my NYC contacts I was able to develop relationships over time: I included them in public programming, attended practices, conducted interviews, socialized, was invited to their houses, and even performed with them. Upon writing the proposal for this Capstone I described this long term fieldwork as participant-observation. But now, having been introduced to performance studies methods by ethnomusicologist Shayna Silverstein, the theories of co-performance and co-activity more accurately describe my method. Ethnographer Dwight Conquergood suggests that participant-observation's emphasis on "observation" slants toward distancing and objectifying interlocutors. D. Soyini Madison (2012, 186) summarizes his viewpoint:

> As Conquergood (1982b) states, "The power dynamic of the research situation changes when the ethnographer moves from the gaze to the distance and detached observer to the intimate involvement and engagement of 'coactivity' or co-performance" (pp.12-13). Dialogical performance means one is a coperformer rather than a participant-observer. It is to live in the embodied engagement of radical empiricism, to honor the aural/oral sounds that incorporate rather than gaze over.

For example, in preparing for performances and producing dabkeh programs with Ramzi Edlibi, I learned new dabkeh combinations and how steps fit with synchopated counts. When I organized and participated in dabkeh workshops with Khlood Zanta and the leaders of Freedom Dabkeh Troupe, my body began to better absorb the flow and steps of NYC youths' social dabkeh. Instead of being in the position of the interviewer, asking questions and soliciting information, I was in the position of listener, and learner. "It is the dialogical relationship with others, this ongoing liveliness and resistance to finality that resists the connotation of timelessness commonly described as "the ethnographic present," that has haunted traditional ethnography" (Madison 2012, 11). My embodied and dialogical relationship with participants, helped contribute to a more ethical representation of interviewees.

Stage Two: Data Organization and Analysis

A major stage of the Capstone involved reviewing and analyzing documentation. I reviewed more than 250 files of video, stills and audio which date back to 2007. I consulted with digital strategist, Anna Mulé, and experimented with various methods of organizing and labeling material (spreadsheets, Google sheets and forms, iPhoto). In the end, I used Apple's photo organizing software, Photos. This allowed me to import files directly to Final Cut Pro and to identify files by keywords of artists' names and emerging themes such as "gender" or "technique". When time allowed, I also added descriptions which attached to the file as meta-data, and are shared in other programs such as video editing software and Flickr.

Simultaneously, and in preparation for the review and analysis of the documentation, I read several sources related to Arab-world and Middle Eastern dance, Palestinian song and dance traditions and resistance, and ethics and ethnographic methods. As I read, I organized my notes into potential themes and used keywords which might correspond with emerging themes from documentation. D. Soyini Madison refers to this process as "grouping": "The process of grouping is not only about putting similar categories together; the very selections and act of grouping are creating a point of view or statement; .. You must consider factors of analysis, presentation, readership and audience that may alter and guide your "clumps" (2012, 44).

Another key step in preparing documentation for editing and eventual sharing was creating logs and transcripts. This facilitated laying out narrations in the video editing process and identifying recurring themes. Documentarian Pamela Sporn, instructor at City Lore's Documentary Institute, also stressed this step, and its usefulness in the editing process. I entered longer transcripts into a spreadsheet which allowed me to easily label sections of the narrative with themes and annotate possible B-roll (photos, video). I also uploaded logs and transcripts to the *Resources* (http://traditioninmotion.tumblr.com/tagged/resources) section of TIM's Tumblr site.

Categories identified in readings and interviews informed my creation of a website outline indicating thematic pages for organizing posts. These themes were: *identity, gender, technique and aesthetics, resistance* and *cultural sustainability.* Discussion with my advisor/readers, and the underlying concepts of public ethnography (Vannini and Moscher 2013) and indigenous methodologies (Kovach 2010; Porsanger 2004) helped me determine which themes were most appropriate for a broad audience, while reflective of reoccurring motifs in narrations. For example, although I initially wanted to subsume the category of *resistance* under that of *cultural sustainability,* (as cultural resistance is often a struggle of cultural sustainability) I decided to sort media posts more simply. *Resistance* applies solely to obvious forms of resistance against occupation in the West Bank or racism in the United States; *cultural sustainability* shows posts that illustrate the passing on of the form or characteristics of dabkeh and point to its qualities of innovation and preservation of tradition.

Stage Three: Establishing Online Platforms, Video Editing and Sharing Media

Setting up Social Media Accounts

This stage of TIM focuses on the technological side of setting up online platforms, creating a Tumblr site, and editing videos, meshed with my ethical and ethnographic research concerns. I obtained funding through the New York Folklore Society (NYFS) Mentoring and Professional Development program to consult with digital strategist and folklorist Anna Mulé. She advised me on digital management, and web development. I developed the title: Tradition In Motion: DABKEH! and this became TIM's username and principal social media tag. In total, I used Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Tumblr to share TIM media, with Tumblr being the main platform for curating and showcasing material. I chose these platforms for their media-specific functionalities, audiences, presence of participating dabbikah, and features for networking, discussion and curating material. In some cases, I abandoned one platform for another: I gave up Flickr and went with Instagram based on artist and audience presence, interactivity and ease of sharing and linking with existing platforms. I will expand on my choices and the purpose of each social media platform in the Analysis section below.

Tumblr : Choosing a "Theme"

After reviewing various web platforms such as Wix and Wordpress, Anna and I decided that Tumblr would best suit my purposes. It is not as challenging for my novice web skills, has many social media functions of sharing and engaging within Tumblr, as well as with other social media sites such as Facebook. After a few weeks of using Tumblr with a free theme (organizational blogging framework), I purchased a theme called Titan which provided additional levels of categorization and organization of the site. It also provides timely and free tech support.

Titan's features helped me create a blog which had more of the look of a standard website, with pages and headers, while still taking advantage of Tumblr's social media functions, tagging system and search functionality. Titan's "tags collection" feature enables to create individual pages and a navigation bar based on post tags. Once I tag posts according to their narrative themes, and Titan's settings automatically sorts them to individual theme pages such as *gender* or *technique*. It also allows for cross-posting (i.e *gender* and *technique*) if a post is relevant to more than one category.

Titan's "stickies" function allows me to make descriptive posts which remain at the top of each thematic page. Posts which I indicate as "sticky" serve as explanatory labels to each page and theme. Titan also features a "highlights" tag function which allows a post to be twice as wide as others; this is helpful in differentiating the descriptive labels at the top of each page from the posts.

In general, Tumblr's tags function similarly to Instagram's and Facebook's tagging systems: they indicate content and other identifying items. They can be seen while viewing the post and identify the post in web searches. In this way, I'm able to indicate content or narration topics other than the main themes I've identified. For example, a region of Palestine (*shamaal*), a traditional instrument (*mijwiz*), or a specific step (*wahed wa nos*).

Video Editing

Editing video into short narrative segments is a fundamental step in my sharing and curation of the voices of practitioners. As I was only familiar with the very basics of editing and video, I enrolled in City Lore's Documentary Institute which takes an "activist approach to cultural documentation"[1]. The course included Final Cut Pro software which made editing much easier. I learned the basics of storytelling through editing techniques. My new knowledge made editing was much more time consuming than I had understood it at the beginning of the project, when my standards were lower. Because much the footage taken prior to the Documentary Institute was of poor sound and audio quality, and it was difficult to obtain b-roll (video and photos to lay on top of the edited narration), the process took longer and these earlier pieces are less polished than the pieces I produced at the Institute.

The Institute also gave me permission and the confidence to edit and shape each excerpt to create something which would be both of interest to viewers, and that interviewees would want to share. This changed my more non-interventionist approach which I had learned (in part due to lack of editing knowledge), in my experience in public folk arts programming. Documentation didn't need to be polished, the content of a "talking-head" was worthy enough. The Institute affirmed my role as a cultural activist in producing documentation and the opportunities a visual media like video offer to present a medium like dance. Editing a video that is compelling while representing its subject ethically is in line with a critical ethnography approach: "Throughout the process.. keep in mind what it is that you, as a critical ethnographer, want to contribute or change for the cause of social justice" (Madison 2012, 24).

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[1] City Lore. 2016. Accessed January 20. http://citylore.org/documentary-institute-2015/

I also understood that partnering with the interviewees as much as possible was integral to the process and in reaching my goals of sharing dabbikah's layered experiences and views. Pursuing what Vannini and Mosher refer to as participatory research methods

> *requires a change in stance for researchers, from being an observer and an expert that takes away data to write one's own interpretation and papers about the community, to being a participatory researcher who works with local people to understand and address issues identified by the people. This leads to results that are directly applicable and useful to the public for addressing the problems at hand* (Israel et al., 2005; Minkler and Wallerstein, 2008).

Although I had signed release forms for all documentation, and had obtained IRB approval for the project, I contacted all interviewees when I began to work with their footage, and obtained feedback and approval on all segments of the process, from transcripts, logs, my interpretation of the material and b-roll.   I will expand on this section of the collaborative process in the Analysis section below.

Media Sharing

Publishing the media online was the last stage of my method of sharing dabbikah's perspectives, and a jumping off point for engaging with audiences and participants. Once I edit segments and obtain approval and feedback from the interviewee, I upload the videos to YouTube. YouTube acts as TIM's video library. On YouTube, I write descriptive titles highlighting interviewees and topics, enter appropriate tags, and a description of the excerpt and along with contextual and thematic information. Audiences can access all the videos directly on TIM's YouTube channel, where they can make comments, like and share the video. From YouTube, I share the videos onto Tumblr, sometimes elaborating on the description to highlight certain elements.   I also link the post to any other relevant posts, such as an artist bio, tag it in the appropriate tag collection, and add any other descriptive tags. From Tumblr, I share posts to my personal Facebook page, and then to TIM's Facebook page, in the hopes that this will drive traffic back to Tumblr. For each interviewee or video, I share one or two posts to Instagram.

I hope to make different audiences aware of the project by cross posting. The Instagram posts are all 15 seconds and under in length, or still images. They act as teasers in most cases and link up with artists who are already using Instagram (such as Freedom Dabkeh Group, Danyah Jaber, Khlood Zanta and others, especially younger participants). As the project continues, I will use Instagram to share snippets of videos that are not edited into longer narratives, and for participants for whom I have mostly photographs.

In addition to media, I added other elements to Tumblr: an *About* page and *Resources* page to lend further context and scholarly information to the site. The *About* page gives viewers background on the purpose and content of the project, and briefly positions myself as a researcher/dancer. The *Resources* page consists of logs and transcripts of interviews, along with a project bibliography and a few posts of quotes from literature, specifically on method and theory. Overall, it provides opportunities for further research for visitors. Again, the editing and uploading of transcripts was done in consultation with participants, following ethical guidelines brought up in my Oral History course with Linda Shopes, as well as principles of critical ethnography, indigenous methodologies and public ethnography. Additional quotes from TIM's

bibliography are posted under thematic tag collections to frame the videoed narratives and bring additional perspectives and context to the dabbikah's stories.

Devising strategies for sharing of media slowed down this stage. Along the way, I had many technological questions and Anna helped me find the most efficient solutions. For example, Tumblr doesn't lend itself to posting long documents such as transcripts. Instead, I decided to upload publicly viewable documents on a Google Drive, and link those to Tumblr. On the Tumblr post itself, I include the basic description of the transcript and few excerpts. If the viewer desires more information, he or she can then click on the link to open the complete document. I also had to devise a workflow for Instagram, which is designed for use as a mobile phone app. I had initially hoped to upload batches of photos using computer software such as Gramblr. However, because of Instagram's features and methods of building audience, uploading unique posts straight from my mobile phone works best. This meant I had to to find a streamlined way to get video excerpts and photos from my computer onto my phone. The most efficient method is sending media through my computer's *Air Drop* to download to my phone, and uploading it from there.

Stage Four: Measures of Progress and Success

An evaluation of TIM's success is based on the goals, rational and ethical frameworks laid out in my original Capstone proposal. I accomplished my basic objective of freeing the documentation housed in my private computer, to the public. In addition, the following objectives of the project were met:
-To plan and implement a documentation project from initial documentation to publishing online
-To undertake documentation
-To review, edit, organize and curate documentation
-To become more knowledgeable of the tradition of dabkeh in Arab / Arab American communities and its context
-To become familiar with literature / sources on Arab traditions, dabkeh, and culture and identity in the Middle East and in diaspora (specifically in NYC)

However, the qualitative objectives below, also outlined in my proposal, were more meaningful to TIM's overall success:
-To implement ethical representation of interviewees through documentation
-To use a web platform as a tool for cultural sustainability of a cultural tradition
-To use social media as a tool for soliciting interviewees/ participant input

See the Analysis section of this paper for further evaluation of these goals.

Another measure of success, or progress as the project continues to live and grow on social media, is audience reach and engagement. This can be measured to a degree by the the "likes", comments, "reblogs", "notes" and "shares" that these platforms offer. In addition, the Tradition in Motion Facebook page, Tumblr and YouTube are linked with analytics tools which measure quantifiable data such as number of visits, views and give information on the audience background.

As TIM progressed, I realized that including the participants in the process, as much as possible, and producing a quality "product" which represented them in a way that they agreed with was my most significant concern. Although I lost production time by editing a piece which in the end, a participant chose not to use, or transliterating words which were cut from logs and narratives, the process successfully aligned with the code of ethics as outlined by the American Anthropological Association and summarized by D. Soyini Madison: "The primary responsibility is to those studied (people, places, materials, and those with whom you work. This responsibility supersedes the goal of knowledge, completion of the project... In addition, researchers must make every effort to ensure that their work does not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of those with whom they work" (2012, 129).

Literature/Resource Review

TIM's [bibliography](#) lists a variety of sources related to ethnographic methods, Arab and Middle Eastern studies, Arab Americans (particularly post 9-11), Dance Studies, dabkeh and Palestinian traditions. Below I've thematically highlighted works which most influenced TIM.

Theory, Method and Ethics

Ethnographic method and theory has evolved in the past decades, especially with the rise of Performance Studies. My main training in method came as a Cultural Anthropology undergrad ('98) and focused on participant observation and positionality. The following sources introduced new theoretical frameworks to my work such as co-performance and embodiment, (Madison 2012; Conquergood 2006), ethical strategies emphasizing partnership with participants, valuing a shift from academic audiences to the wider public and concepts like researcher as activist. Madison's "Critical Ethnography" in particular summarizes many issues around method, ethics, and the value of performance in research. These ideas gave me permission to participate in the process as both a researcher and dancer of dabkeh, as a "co-performer".

In professional public arts programming situations, I've been told that art isn't political, or that my pursuing my interest in Palestinian culture would set me back professionally. At times, audience reaction to presenting Palestinian and Arab American dabkeh dancers underscored the racism and marginalization they faced as I was often called upon to explain and justify their participation in programming. These references below also gave me permission to be invested in the social justice struggles of the dabbikah, as Madison reminds researchers, "[t]hroughout the process.. keep in mind what it is that you, as a critical ethnographer, want to contribute or change for the cause of social justice. The formulation of your research question serves as an articulation of what it is you want to do and why" (2012, 24).

Conquergood, Dwight. 2006. "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics". In T*he Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*. Edited by Hamera, Judith and D. Soyini Madison, 347-350. Washington D.C,: Sage Publications. Originally published in Conquergood, Dwight. 1991. "Rethinking Ethnography." Communications Monographs 58.2: 179-194.

Kovach, Margaret. 2010. *Indigenous Methodologies : Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Buffalo. University of Toronto Press.

Madison, D. Soyini. 2012. *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. Washington D.C, Sage Publications.

Madison, D. Soyini. 2006. "Dwight Conquergood's, "Rethinking Ethnography"." *In The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*. Edited by Hamera, Judith and D. Soyini Madison, 347-350. Washington D.C,: Sage Publications

Porsanger, Jelena. 2004. "An Essay About Indigenous Methodology." Paper presented at doctoral seminar, University of Tromsø, March, 25. Munin Open Research Archive, The Arctic University of Norway, http://munin.uit.no/bitstream/handle/10037/906/article.pdf?sequence=1

Vannini, Phillip and Heather Mosher, editors. 2013. *Qualitative Research: Special Issue on Public Ethnography*. 13 (4) August.

Dance Studies

The following Dance Studies sources provided concepts that underscore characteristics and themes of dabkeh which I had previously observed, and helped make explicit ideas which emerged in dabbikah narrations. Shay reinforces distinctions in types of dance transmission, representation (concert dance versus social dance) and their relation to power. For Shay, the naming of a dance "folk dance" implies the power of representation of an entire community, people or nation (2005, 2). Whereas Vissicaro calls into question our culturally biased use of terminology and categories, (2004, 114) suggesting that the use of the term "dance" may be a misnomer and cultural imposition. This is the case in dabkeh, which is distinguished from "dance" in Arabic. Dance scholar Nicholas Rowe elaborates: "Recognized in language as more than just an appendage word to dance, one does not dance *dabkeh,* one *yadbeks.* …. This linguistic distinction crucially allows it to not be considered a style of *rasqa*, but a separate activity subject to a different set or moral values" (2010, 11) Vissicaro also introduces concepts of "high and low contexting"(2004, 127) and a "contained" or "extended" dance event (2004, 138) which situate dabkeh in a new light for me. Both authors emphasize the importance of the embodied researcher and embodied knowledge, "From the moment an individual begins dancing, changes happen as he or she embodies experiences and ideas. Embodiment is a way of providing material form to abstract or intangible concepts.   Through dance, the physical space of a human body gives shape or structure to concepts, like world view and cultural knowledge. … Dance makes the invisible, visible." (Vissicaro 2004, 100)   This situates dabkeh (and dance) as a method of cultural sustainability, not just an expression of it.

Vissicaro, Pegge. 2004. *Studying Dance Cultures around the World: An Introduction to Multicultural Dance Education*. Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing

Shay, Anthony, editor. 2005. *Choreographic Politics : State Folk Dance Companies, Representation, and Power*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Dabkeh

The following sources on dabkeh provided me with in-depth cultural insight into the complex aesthetic traditions and "high context" relationships performed in dabkeh. Many of my

observations from years of fieldwork and narrative themes were illuminated through these readings. McDonald's video archive provided wonderful visual information and the archive's system of tagging and identifying "moments" and "events" in the footage influenced the organization and description of my documentation. Although my interest in researching and understanding dabkeh began in the early 2000s, I hadn't found a thorough written source on the subject until Rowe's work was published in 2010. His archival and historic research on Palestinian dabkeh and the beginnings of presentational dabkeh dance in the region provided me with the historical framework I had been searching for.

Kanaaneh, Moslih, Stig-Magnus Thorsen, and David McDonald, editors. *Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and Resistance since 1900*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press

McDonald, David. 2005. "Music and Nationalism among Palestinians in Amman, Jordan (2003-2005)". Ethnographic field video in *Evia Digital Archive : Ethnographic Video for Instruction & Analysis*, Indiana University; University of Michagan. www.eviada.org, accessed December 29, 2015.

McDonald, David. 2013. *My Voice is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Performance of Palestinian Resistance*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Rowe, Nicholas. 2010. *Raising Dust : A Cultural History of Dance in Palestine*. New York. I.B. Tauris; Distributed in the United States by Palgrave Macmillan.

Arab / Middle Eastern Studies

I found *The Arab Avant-Garde* to be a refreshing shift from the perspective of public programming of folk and traditional arts on culturally and regionally specific genres and folk arts. I was reminded of the importance of considering the layered dance between innovation to tradition (as Freedom Dabkeh group articulates) while avoiding typical Orientalist binaries of Arab-Western, traditional-modern.

Burkhalter, Thomas, Kay Dickinson, Benjamin J. Harbert, editors. 2013. *The Arab Avant-Garde : Music, Politics, Modernity*. Middletown. Wesleyan University Press.

Analysis of Data, Process and Strategies

This section asses my strategies and methods of research, as well as the success of online platforms and efforts to share dabbikah's voices, explore issues fundamental to cultural sustainability, and highlight dabkeh's multiplicity of meanings, and dynamism. Throughout my analysis, I refer to ethical frameworks put forth in sources on critical ethnography (Madison) , public ethnography (Vannini and Mosher) and indigenous methods (Porsanger).

Fieldwork

As I described in the *Methodologies* section of this paper, most fieldwork was conducted prior to TIM's beginnings in 2015.   Although the documentation often covers important issues and unearthed the project's themes, there were technological, time and methodological limitations.

My most basic limitations was poor recording equipment and skills. West Bank documentation was conducted before I began Goucher's Master's in Cultural Sustainability (MACS) program. Although I had the professional skills in documentation for preparation of public folklore programming, the video and audio quality necessary for public viewing is lacking. In the meantime, I've improved my documentation skills through MACS coursework, City Lore's Documentation Institute and the NYFS mentorship with Media Folk.

Time limitations also restricted possibilities for in-depth fieldwork with individual dabbik and extended "co-activity". Two weeks in Beit Sahour, with a day trip to Ramallah to meet with El Funoun Popular Dance Troupe was hardly enough. While in New York, I connected and worked with participants over extended periods of time, in most cases. However, programming deadlines usually resulted in one-off interviews with almost all dabbikah.   Follow-up interviews would have allowed for deeper exploration of historical and thematic issues and fuller participation of dabbikah in the process of shaping the research content.

In the future, conscious of power relations and ethical concerns in formulating my research and the beginnings of documentation, I would more fully include dabbikah in the process. Indigenous methodology scholar L. T. Smith (1999) encourages the researcher to ask: "Whose research is this?" and "Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?" (Porsanger, 113).   Ideally, dabbikah themselves could participate as fieldworkers and researchers in the process.

Data Organization/ Analysis

Video Editing and Sharing

Although I wasn't able to fully involve dabbikah in the process of documentation, I made sure to allow for participation in the video editing and sharing stage of TIM. This was a step in reaching my proposed objective of ethical representation of interviewees in documentation. Considering time limitations, I strived to be "a participatory researcher who works with local people to understand and address issues identified by the people. This leads to results that are directly applicable and useful to the public…" (Vannini and Mosher 2013: 398). I contact interviewees to tell them about the project, obtain their willing participation, and then lay out a basic narrative video. After uploading a rough cut to a private link in YouTube, I ask for feedback, and any complementary images or video for b-roll.   I also suggest they upload video comments on YouTube, or that we work together to annotate moments of the YouTube videos (inserting links, comments). Alternatively I suggest they comment directly on any YouTube or social media posting with updates or more in depth information if they wish. I ask for feedback and approval on any item I post relating to a dabbik, such as a bio or log.

This process is time consuming, and resulted in me processing far fewer videos than I had planned. Yet this participatory editing is an integral part of increasing TIM's ownership and value among dabbikah and as a documentation project generally. In some cases, what slows the process down is my lack of b-roll. Although all interviewees want to be well represented, they may not have had the time or resources to participate (finding related b-roll images, or adding additional comments/ updates).

In some cases, interviewees don't feel justly represented in the footage, and I work with them to produce a final product they were happy with. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the first videos I edited and posted were those of Freedom Dabka Group- with higher quality footage, filmed with professional cameras and with plenty of b-roll. The other participants weren't as lucky. For example, Danyah Jaber wasn't happy with her presentation and the background; I proposed a follow-up interview. Instead, she accepted the video excerpts with my edits. Initially, when I filmed and edited my interview Salma Habib in 2010, she was in agreement with publicizing all sections, but in the past five years, her views have evolved. We cut out sections of the video and transcript. Fortunately, Salma and her mother's dabkeh troupe have several images on Facebook which I culled (with permission) and used as b-roll to cover the edits. In the end, Salma's remarks to me illustrate that such collaboration is worthwhile:

> *Hi Nicole, I'm so sorry for the delayed response. …I watched the clips and it all looks good. I can't thank you enough for your hard work and desire to present this in the best way!*
> *Is it ok if I share those clips on Facebook?*
>
> *Regards,*
> *Salma*
> (Salma Habib, e-mail to author, Oct. 11, 2015)

Hazem Bannoura's interview segments took an especially long time. Hazem was very receptive to the project, and emailed me writing me, "Thank you for doing this for Palestine". However, my 2009 video footage was limited in content and quality. He gave me feedback on the excerpts on technique and teaching (https://youtu.be/LSO3ZWxm1Bs) and his interpretation of Zarifatoul (https://youtu.be/CJtYFsPCxqE) - which mainly concerned transliteration. But simple corrections took time due to editing, exporting, uploading footage, and repeating the process to edit a letter or two. Unfortunately, Hazem wasn't able to access b-roll to produce a more visually appealing piece. After spending more than a week editing a segment of his footage on occupation and resistance, I had to scrap it. Hazem felt that he hadn't been clear in speaking about such sensitive topics. For example, in his interview he said that he couldn't travel freely to Israel, but failed to specify that Israel had restricted his travel within the West Bank as well. Without the possibility of a follow up interview, Hazem decided that it was best not to publish it.

With Freedom Dabka Group (FDG) and Ramzi Edlibi, the editing process was collaborative and straightforward. I had a variety of high quality footage of FDG as well as a lengthy interview with FDG's leader, Amer. Amer quickly approved all video excerpts I sent him, and wrote that he was very happy with the project. They were almost too eager to participate in the process: when I sent them a rough cut of an excerpt to view, they shared it on social media accounts, and it had amassed few hundred views by the time it came to my attention (A Facebook friend who is a dancer and researcher shared it and tagged me in the video). As to be expected, " [e]thnographers sacrifice some level of control in exchange for the advantages that come with this form of collaborative community-based methods" (Vannini and Mosher 2013, 398). Ramzi was equally enthusiastic about the process. Our interview discussed historical information from his early adulthood in Lebanon and the US. I specifically asked Ramzi to search for b-roll relevant to his narrative; although few images worked with the excerpt footage, Ramzi provided me with a dozen images related to his dabkeh career from the 70s - 90s. He was also inspired to share many of these photos which he had found specifically for TIM, on his Facebook page,

engaging with many of with his Facebook friends in the US and Levant. In an email to me (Dec. 26, 2015) he kindly offered:

> *I have a lot of Dabkeh photos from different places and time. do you want them with a notes about them.?*
> *I love your work please feel free.*
> *R*

In this case, the participatory process of editing led to Ramzi's own research into his personal archives.

Development of Themes

Creating and curating themes was a substantial part the process of TIM and impacts the viewer's reception and understanding of dabkeh and dabbikah's experience. In line with participatory ethnological methods, dabbikah feedback is a key element of curation and organization of data. As Jelena Porsanger advises "to use appropriate language and form in order to communicate research results back to the people, etc. Reporting back is one of the most important imperatives of indigenous research" (2004, 112). As mentioned in the Methodology section of this paper, I developed themes based on common narratives in dabbikah's interviews, my experience as a presenter, dancer and researcher of dabkeh over the years, and sources read.   Ideally, I would have shared my chosen themes to dabbikah, and asked for feedback. In addition, I would have also liked to have asked the interviewee to review their log/transcript and comment on my association of specific segments with themes. However, this was not realistic because of time constraints. I also felt that I might be asking too much, overwhelming interviewees with emails soliciting b-roll, feedback on videos, updated bios and more. Engaging participants at this level could be the case of a longer-term project, having identified a few dabbik who have time and can meet in person. This could be a possibility for future TIM research.

Overall, the themes that I chose reflected the content of the narrations and fit with the project's public ethnography goals. As I view dabkeh through the lens of cultural sustainability- it serves as an overarching theme related to the other themes of *gender*, *identity*, *resistance*, *aesthetics and technique* and as its own theme, highlighting narrative excerpts that specifically addressed the issue of passing on the genre. The themes aim to tease out dabbikah's explicitly voiced values, narratives and embodied knowledge.

Identity

The category of *identity* speaks to dabbikah's sense of belonging; and refers to both the context of diaspora and the "homeland". Interviewees referred to feelings of being Arab, Palestinian, Arab American, and *fellahi* (villager). Salma Habib says dabkeh "is part of us, we can't let it go" and speaks of the "pride" associated with the dabkeh (https://youtu.be/JHyD2Jnpx7I). She ties dabkeh to her roots, whether she's living in Haifa or the US:

> *I think that dancing, maintaining that folklore, maintaining that dabkeh, maybe developing it in some ways, but maintaining that core, has a lot to do with our pride as Palestinians, and as Arabs in general. For me, when I'm on stage and I'm doing dabkeh, I feel very proud, and I feel that I'm part of some type of an organization or movement that maintains the folklore, maintains our roots, this is where we belong.* (https://youtu.be/fZQ5LFrgbrQ)

For other dabbikah, such as Danyah Jaber, who grew up as second generation Palestinian-Americans, dabkeh is a cultural obligation. Her father believes it's Danyah's duty to express her Palestinian pride and identity through dabkeh: "[Dabkeh's] our culture, that's us. You're Palestinian, you have to know it, you have to do it… It really is part of Palestinian identity and about Arab identity." Dabbik Amer Abdelrasoul and many of his Freedom Dabka Group teammates have grown up both in the occupied West Bank and Brooklyn. Amer suggests that he identifies in part as fellahi (villager), of the Palestinian village tradition when he says, "I always loved dabcha, I say dabcha, because because I'm more fellahi. We just say dabcha. In proper Arabic it is dabkah" (http://bit.ly/1NjQlz3) In addition to his connection with Palestine, and his family village via dabkeh, Amer speaks of a connection and feeling of belonging in "brotherhood" when dancing in the dabkeh line with his fellow team members:

> *When you have a uniformity, between twenty, thirty, forty, maybe 500 men, you're bringing a lot of men together to brotherhood. You feel happy, when you look to the guy to the right of you, and look to the guy to the left of you, it's bringing joy, you know, That's why it's respected and people love to do it, and we love to do it. We have a very special relationship, my team. You know, we're like brothers. … it's because you know, we dance together, we do something that we love together. When a whole village, does it together, and they see someone that's really into it, a really good dabbik or really good lawih that's really into it, to them, he's going into something beyond something simple. (http://bit.ly/1NjQlz3)*

This sense of identity and belonging as a member of a larger community is engendered in part from the embodied feeling of dancing dabkeh in synchrony. Perhaps he's alluding to a feeling of togetherness, unity and belonging when he describes going "beyond" through dabkeh.

Cultural Sustainability

The theme of *cultural sustainability* emerges in many of the dabbikah's interviews. Although the *cultural sustainability* page on Tumblr highlights the transmission of dabkeh, it is also a larger framework for thematic articulations of *gender*, *aesthetics*, *identity* and *resistance* as dabbikah evoke values that are sustained through the practice of dabkeh. Moreover, the theme draws attention to the form of dabkeh: a highly dynamic traditional dance. It connects dabbikah in the line, demands innovation and virtuosity; embodying cultural sustainability across generations and migrations.

Narrators touch on issues of how dabkeh is taught and learned; in what context; the significance of cultural sustainability of dabkeh for second generation Arab Americans living in NYC and that of young Palestinians growing up in the occupied West Bank.   Ramzi Edlibi brings up the important role of the institutionalization of dabkeh in transmission and cultural sustainability: he first learned dabkeh from legendary dance instructor Wadea Jarrar who drew on her observations of traditional dance in the field (and fields) of Palestinian villagers, and her formal training in dance in Europe. This formal and stage training gave him opportunities and inspiration to learn the traditional social dance in rural settings (video: (https://youtu.be/t6NHcpSfV3A) and transcript: (http://bit.ly/1mgUIjv).

In a similar vein, Hazem Bannoura demonstrates the repertoire that is taught in Al Ghad Al Jedid troupe in Beit Sahour. In his case, instructor Mary Qumseieh taught Hazem and other members, who later taught newer dancers the same repertoire, building new choreographies. Hazem didn't learn dabkeh in the traditional social manner. He explained this by referring to the

degradation of the economy in occupied Palestine. As professional city-folk, his parents had many opportunities for work and travel abroad - and didn't practice dabkeh. Restricted from traveling within his homeland and Israel, compounded with a choked economy, Hazem felt there was nothing else to do but dabkeh at the local youth center. (Because video documentation of Hazem isn't of a contiguous interview, but broken up into short excerpts and casual conversations, I didn't produce a transcript or log.) Salma Habib contrasts the social in-community learning of dabkeh in the US with the learning in Palestine, which in her experience, has occurred in formal troupes. Salma didn't expound on the causes of this but mentioned that "there's a lot of… socio-economic factors and political factors that govern all that" (https://youtu.be/JHyD2Jnpx7I).

Danyah Jaber's narrative excerpts spoke of the cultural obligation of learning to dabkeh from her first generation Palestinian-American father (https://youtu.be/_Gr9d-C6akU) and how as a college student, she began a formal study of stage repertoire steps. While she danced her father's dabkeh at Palestinian-American weddings to express her identity as a Palestinian, performing presentational dabkeh with her college team for fellow (outsider) students had an educational and relational-building purpose. Danyah also points out that dabkeh technique- from the basic two step and kick to complicated rhythmical patterns, and the possibility of personal expression make dabkeh a dynamic dance of cultural sustainability and intergenerational connection. "It is a folk dance and it is from the past, our grandparents and great-grandparents used to dance to it… but ..now we're in the present day…they could change it up now.. it makes people want to do it" (https://youtu.be/_Gr9d-C6akU; https://youtu.be/Mz6-_Na7djE).

Amer of FDG addresses more subtle issues of sustainability such as the importance of music, community relationships reinforced through dabkeh, and the relationship between innovation and tradition embodied in dabkeh. In one clip, Amer talks of the difficulty of sustaining the tradition of improvisational live wind instrument playing in the US, and the spread of the electronic *org* (keyboard). But he also demonstrates Freedom Dabka Group's versatility, as they perform their dabkeh with the skill and love needed to sustain a tradition- whether to org, recorded music with high energy synthesized *mijwiz* sections, or improvising along side a touring Palestinian mijwiz player (https://youtu.be/Yt6dmykQOcQ). In another excerpt, he demonstrates how he and his team continues the tradition of *wahed wa nos* from his mother's village, Shafaat. Wahed wa nos dabkeh is another example of cultural sustainability across generations and diaspora as FDG innovates dynamic new combinations, within the wahed wa nos tradition (https://youtu.be/J9pkeXXz3_k). Amer also points out how *shamaliyya* dabkeh, popular in social participatory settings, provides structure, yet calls for demonstrations of virtuosity through improvisation, as long as the dabbikah remain in sync. Not only may the dabbikah innovate steps, as the leader of the line will do, but the musician (known as *sha'ar* or poet) will improvise, and respond to the dabbikah's steps and patterns. These characteristics of shammaliya underscore dabkeh's role as a dance of cultural sustainability- embodying both dynamism and traditionally, community values and relations in Palestinian and other Levantine and Arab diasporic cultures (https://youtu.be/w9MU37181c0).

Resistance

This theme highlights narrative excerpts which convey *resistance*. At times this is a more subtle form of counterhegemonic resistance toward oppressive narratives and contexts in the US and

Palestine/Israel.   Simply affirming one's existence as Palestinian, Palestinian-American or Arab/ Arab-American is a form of resistance in today's political climate. Salma Habib explains:

> *For me, when I'm on stage and I'm doing dabkeh, I feel … this is where we belong. This in itself is an act of, "I exist, I'm here, and you'll never be able to erase me and my existence." Art has always been a way of fighting terror, fighting violence and fighting the occupation and all that. Instead of carrying a rifle and going and fighting in the field, you would do that and you would teach it to your kids and the younger generations. I think that's something to be admired and cherished….(https://youtu.be/fZQ5LFrgbrQ).*

Hazem Bannoura talks about how dabkeh, traditionally a joyful, celebratory dance has evolved in its stage presentations to express resistance and sadness in the face of the colonization of his homeland: "We dance sad songs, about the situation, how Palestinians suffer from the occupation" (https://youtu.be/CJtYFsPCxqE.) In the same excerpt we hear Hazem interpret the Levantine folk song "Ya Zarif At-tul", which speaks of a mans journey away from his homeland and how his loved ones pleads with him to stay. Here is a typical translation of one of the versus:

> *O, zareef eT-Tool* stop so I can tell you*
> *You are going abroad and your country is better for you*
> *I am afraid you will get established there*
> *And find someone else and forget me*
> *(*One of an elegant height).*
> *(http://www.barghouti.com/folklore/songs/zareef.html)*

For Hazem, and other Palestinians, the lyrics evoke the exile and exodus of the Palestinians following 1948, known as the Nakba: "When the Nakba happened many people left their houses and went to Jordan, to Lebanon. He sings for them, 'Where are you going? You left your house? No, stay in it!'" (https://youtu.be/CJtYFsPCxqE). The act of telling and dancing their story of exile, occupation and living in diaspora is an act of resistance, of telling a counter narrative to the dominant narratives told by American and Israeli mass media.

I have several other examples which fit under the theme of *resistance*, especially from Palestinian and Palestinian-American dabbikah such as Danyah Jaber, Sheren Attal (Brooklyn), Riham Barghouti (Brooklyn) and Noora Baker (Ramallah). I haven't yet edited and uploaded these interviews but have inserted links to the Riham's unlisted video below. Riham, who danced with El Funoun Palestinian Dance Troupe in Ramallah, and is a founding member of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) relates dabkeh directly to cultural resistance. In this short clip (https://youtu.be/QRyVUQUFQaw) she describes how dabkeh was part of from her "constant attempt to exert our very existance" while growing up in Brooklyn, and a "form of cultural resistance". Here, Riham alludes to dabkeh as "reaffirming her …existence as a Palestinian"; and describes how El Funoun's dabkeh performance was recognized "as a political vehicle of resistance" by company members and the State of Israel (https://youtu.be/-K-EiLYFVA4). Although there are cases of dabkeh being performed in actual protest- by the NYC-based Columbia Dabkeh Brigade, for example, and YouTube video of Palestinian youth performing a dabkeh line while facing off with Israeli soldiers, I don't have examples of these on video. I look forward to continuing editing videos from my collection (in partnership with artists) and adding to this category on Tumblr.

Gender

The theme of *gender* highlights various ways gendered categories and values are sustain and shifted through dabkeh. In his paper, "Dancing Belonging: Contesting Dabkeh in the Jordan Valley, Jordan", Mauro Van Aken writes about the direct connection between dabkeh and gender: "The agency of the body in ritual performances remains highly political. …it challenges and creates tension around accepted cultural ideas and practices of gender roles to which ideas of belonging and social borders are linked…" (2006, 220). Some TIM artists describe how traditional roles of female/male are reinforced through traditional social dabkeh, and others, how presentational stage dabkeh has shifted gender roles and created a more equitable space for female dabbikah. Author Stig-Magnus Thorsen writes on gender and resistance in Palestinian music and dance:

> We can perceive here how the meaning of music shifts.   In the villages the dabke dance is part and parcel of folklore.   If used in a rebellious situation, new connotations will appear. That has happened with the dance.   It is no longer only folklore, but now it is also charged with political meanings. It has been converted to show dance where men and women take part. The art of resistance creates new functions where both the artistic form and the content become transformed…(2013, 169)

Based on TIM dabbikah's narratives, Thorsen's analysis seems overly simplistic, removing any gender negotiations from village settings, and opposing urban and rural. However, the author does speak to issues of gender and context with which many TIM dabbikah concur. For example, Amer of Freedom Dabkeh Group relates:

> In our culture, we would probably never mix groups, you'd never find women dancing with the men in any wedding or event, unless it's only, it's private, in the house, with exclusive family members, brothers, sisters, mothers. But in a big occasion, wedding parties that involve the community, different villages, neighbors even, they would always have it separate. That stage act would never happen. It would never be… You would never see that in any village. But Palestinians still do like it. It's a nice show, very pleasing to the eyes, but at the same time, it doesn't follow the steps of how dabkeh should be performed. (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QWIP7dRdhE3CtEeqqmzNzZGW8-ePmMZ7OjhZ5GcYW4U/edit?usp=sharing)

Amer's narration distinguishes between the "stage show" of performative dabkeh, which may suggest different roles and characteristics for men and women, and the reality of gender in village dabkeh.

Sex-segregation of dabkeh and prescribed gender roles as Amer describes is similar to what Danyah Jaber relates in her experience of dabkeh for the "majority" of Palestinian-American weddings in Brooklyn:

> Dabkeh for the women is, probably, what they would say, more n'aim or is softer than the men dabkeh. And it's just the regular two-step-kick…. But the dabkeh for the zlam, for the men, is totally different because they really get into it.. and they stomp, and the ladies, you really don't have all that stomping….(https://youtu.be/_bcG1zu4IoY).

However, Danyah also describes how female students fully participate in the dabkeh troupe and classes at her college. She sees Arab-American women students as more "passionate" about dabkeh,"it's their way to go out and be like, 'Oh, you see, I know our culture as well…' Danyah posits that the girls may know dabkeh better than the guys

> here in America, because they actually want to go to and learn it. Rather than the guys who, most of them came from overseas, they came from Palestine, came from Lebanon or Syria and they learned it while they were growing up. Here, if you didn't learn it while you were growing up, you went to class, and you actually wanted to learn how to do it (https://youtu.be/_bcG1zu4IoY).

Although dabkeh may reinforce certain masculine-gendered characteristics for men in certain contexts of social dance, Danyah contrasts this with women's space and freedom in more formally taught presentational dabkeh.

However, this not always the case and participatory vernacular dabkeh presents opportunities for gender negotiation and embodying gender outside of the stereotypical male/ female role. Dabbikah Khlood Zanta speaks of this and says she's know for dancing "like a guy" at parties. I will be sure to add Khlood's interview to TIM in the near future.

Historically, stage troupes like El Funoun, based in Ramallah, purposely put women alongside men in the stage dabkeh line. From its beginnings, women had a role in choreography and troupe direction, and the company broadened female dancers repertoire to include male and female gendered movements. (Riham speaks to this in the following clip: https://youtu.be/F_wClEQ-n_8.) Similarly, Ramzi talks about his formal dabkeh classes in Lebanon as a unique opportunity for young men and women to "gather in one place" and dance together (https://youtu.be/t6NHcpSfV3A). In this excerpt (https://youtu.be/5N4jNk-hvPs) Salma Habib describes her mother's struggle to challenge traditional expectations for woman in performing arts when establishing the Salma Dancing Group in Haifa. Ferial Khshaiboon worked to dismantle stereotypes facing women dancers, establishing a respectful image for women as performer. She went against social conventions by creating a mixed-gender company, and choreographing dabkeh for female and male dancers together. Salma also addresses some of the innovations of dabkeh technique related to gender, such as adapting some of the more "masculine" social dabkeh movements for women performers.

Technique and Aesthetics

The *technique and aesthetics* theme highlights steps and form in presentational dabkeh, participatory dabkeh, and the complex layered relationships and cultural rules performed in the traditional dabkeh of Freedom Dabkeh Group. Ramzi, Danyah, Salma and Hazem all speak to the formality of technique of dabkeh taught by an instructor, in a class, for performance. Salma and Ramzi speak to dabkeh's evolution for stage: floor patterns, theatrical interpretations and changes in steps and styles. Hazem specifically mentions that leg needs to be held at a right angle to begin "wahed wa nos" (https://youtu.be/LSO3ZWxm1Bs) and both Hazem and Danyah describes how the head should be held up.

However, Danyah emphasizes the space for personal interpretation and improvement as a dabbik in social dance. She points out that social dabkeh technique in the same line, ranges from the very "accessible" basic two-step and kick, to complicated rhythmic patterns. This make dabkeh a dynamic dance of cultural sustainability and intergenerational connection, as one learns by doing, from starting at the middle or back of the line, and advancing to the front. "It is a folk dance and it is from the past, our grandparents and great-grandparents used to dance to it… but ..now we're in the present day…they could change it up now.. it makes people want to do it" (https://youtu.be/Mz6-_Na7djE).

Amer Abdelrasoul brought up more subtle cultural "rules" and relationships which are expected and performed in traditional dabkeh, reiterating concepts treated by Mcdonald (2013) and Van Aken (2006). Freedom Dabka Group's technique and aesthetics are different then other

presentational groups I've observed. Amer told me that he learned from participating in social events in his mother's village in Palestine, and in a cousin's troupe back in Brooklyn. I would call it a vernacular presentational style of dabkeh- meaning that it's learned in tradition- from family and in community, at social events and troupes. Other presentational groups are in line with more Westernized performance styles (mixed gender Lebanese and Palestinian troupes in keeping with the precedent of Caracalla and El Funoun, who both refer to themselves as "dance" companies, and not dabkeh troupes). FDG's dabkeh includes improvisation, spontaneous traditional responses to changes in the music played by live musicians when possible, and following the instantaneous commands of the leader or *lawih.* In various excerpts tagged as *technique and aesthetic*s, Amer describes the styles, music, and relationship between dabbikah and the music/ musicians of traditional dabkeh's such as *shamaliyya* and *wahed wa nos*. (While Hazem, who learned dabkeh through a dabkeh trainer, and had little social dabkeh experience growing up refers to *wahed wa nos* as a step, and not as a dabkeh style.) Amer and Mohammad of FDG advise that wahed wa nos should be danced more calmly than other styles, with "no hypeness", and must be played with the wind instrument shababe (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9pkeXXz3_k).   In another excerpt, Amer points out how shamaliyya dabkeh provides structure, yet calls for demonstrations of virtuosity through improvisation, as long as the dabbikah remain in sync. Not only may the dabbikah innovate steps, as the leader of the line will do, but the musician (known as *sha'ar* or poet) will improvise, and respond to the dabbikah's steps and patterns (https://youtu.be/w9MU37181c0). Amer specifies that "each dabkeh has its own rules" such as "respect for the singer or the musician"(https://youtu.be/w9MU37181c0). Within the framework of traditionality, they also allow themselves room for personalization, and have signature FDG steps (i.e instead of kicking with the left as is traditionally done, on a half count they switch feet and then kick with the right).

Overall, the themes are an important tool in the curation of material, but could be refined. They serve the purpose of organizing the data, revealing a variety of perspectives on dabkeh, and reflecting topics that dabbikah discussed. They also organized narratives through a lens of cultural sustainability and help fulfill TIM's goals of reflecting the complexity and dynamism of dabkeh, while sharing dabbikah's voices. However, in keeping with participatory methods such as public ethnography, "[t]he process of connecting with the lay public starts early in the research process, and may include involving participants or communities in selecting the focus of the research, …or participating at some level in analyzing data and interpreting the findings of the research" (Vannini and Mosher 2013, 397). My own learning and participant-ownership of the project and therefore benefits reaped would have been greater if dabbikah had a role in identifying themes and categorization of videos on tumblr. Unfortunately , that was unrealistic considering the Capstone's timeline and participants' schedules. Perhaps other more culturally appropriate categories, or categories of particular interest to the participants would have emerged.

Most themes did reflect topics specifically mentioned in the narratives, and specific values or content being sustained through preservation and innovation. However, the *cultural sustainability* tag collection held more posts than other categories and addressed a very wide range of subtopics- from the form and characteristics of dabkeh, to its embodied knowledge and its transmission. Further evaluation of the "cultural sustainability" theme could result in more specific sub-themes - perhaps one focusing on transmission (how dabkeh is sustained), and another on characteristics of dabkeh that make it sustainable (dynamism and interplay between

innovation and tradition). Fortunately, Titan's tag collection function is a good framework for the easy creation of new themes, and for tagging posts with multiple themes, to highlight dabkeh's multiplicity of meanings. With this framework in place, I can continue reviewing and editing documentation, filling out the themes which have fewer posts, or retag posts to create additional themes.

In the footage I've already reviewed, new excerpts could be made on topics which may prove to be educational as themes on their own. For example, Ramzi Edlibi talks a great deal about the feel of traditional participatory dabkeh, versus its showy Western-influenced stage version. This topic brings up issues of representation, class, embodied knowledge and dabkeh transmission and participation in urban and rural areas. Amer Abdelrasoul brought up a fascinating issue of the social role of the dabkeh group at weddings and other celebrations in "bringing joy"; the social obligation of the troupe to the wedding guests and hosts:

> *The essence of dabkeh - the whole vibe, the whole appreciation, because when you do dabkeh at a wedding, when you do a zeffah at the wedding, you're really helping, giving joy to the groom and bride and the family, let's sharek, (participate)… wa jibna (and we brought). Get up! Let's help them, let's show them that we're involved, we want to be involved in your wedding (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QWIP7dRdhE3CtEeqqmzNzZGW8-ePmMZ7OjhZ5GcYW4U/edit?usp=sharing)*

Similarly, in footage of "Firqat al-Riif Rural Wedding Dabke Performance", ethnomusicologist David McDonald describes the "job, [of the dabkeh troupe] in this capacity is to help structure a participatory environment where wedding guests collectively sing and dance" (2005, https://media.eviada.org/eviadasb/displaysegment.html?id=14-S2123&videoPlayer=SWF). Amer Abdelrasoul is one of the few dabbikah I've met, of all my interviewees, who has this in-depth cultural and embodied knowledge of the vernacular living culture of dabkeh in his maternal village in the West Bank, and in Brooklyn. Reviewing existing footage with him, and conducting follow up interviews would surely yield more information and themes I haven't thought of.

Media Sharing

The last stage of TIM, and jumping off point for engaging with audiences and participants, is the sharing of the media online. My goals as outlined in my proposal were:
-To use a web platform as a tool for cultural sustainability of a cultural tradition
-To use social media as a tool for soliciting interviewees/ participant input

To a degree, TIM met both objectives by using Tumblr and other platforms to publicly share dabbikah's narratives and knowledge of the cultural tradition of dabkeh, while engaging TIM participants in the process of sharing media. I can't quantifiably measure whether dabkeh was "sustained" by the the Tumblr site, but below I summarize several anecdotes of discussions, reflections, programming and sharing of dabbikah's own archival footage that were spurred by the project overall. Analytical tools such as Google Analytics, Facebook's Insights, and YouTube's Analytics provide quantitative information such as views, demographics, playback locations, and watch time which could also give more information on the success of the online platforms as a tool of cultural sustainability.

Regarding participant engagement of media shared online, the results were mixed. Online engagement has the potential to make up for lack of participation in the initial editing and

thematic development process. I hoped that TIM's social media platforms would be a mechanism for dabbikah to included in the process and in of the answer to the questions posed in best practices of indigenous methodologies: "Who will write it up? How will the results be disseminated" (Porsanger 2004, 113)? As I mentioned in the Methods section, in most cases, I asked interviewees to comment directly on the text, alternatively to send me any comments for inclusion in descriptive texts, or add annotations directly onto the videos. Unfortunately, very few followed through. I also tagged artists on social media whenever possible in the hopes that they would share and engage their own audiences with the material.   In some cases, engagement was direct and obvious and resulted in an educational experience for the public. In others, shared postings had more subtle effects, such as of pride, or awareness of a previously unarticulated aspect of dabkeh.   As Vannini and Mosher suggest, both participants and general public can benefit from engagement with the material:

> *The first group consists of research participants. The people who take part in ethnographic projects can benefit from public ethnography in immediate and practical ways whenever a research study sheds light on a particular social problem or injustice they suffer from, or a phenomenon or lifestyle in which they are invested. The exposure granted by an ethnography that reaches the public domain, or the more practical and hands-on solutions that collaborative and community-based research approaches can achieve, has clear and direct benefits for informants and collaborators. However, even milder forms of impact—such as improved understanding of a social issue, greater awareness of a problematic condition, or deeper knowledge of a particular life world — which ethnographers can secure through publication for broader audiences can make a difference. (2013, 394)*

Below I review the four platforms used to publish material, and engage artists and the general public.

Tumblr

Traditioninmotion.tumblr.com serves as TIM's main platform for curating and showcasing documentation. Tumblr is a convenient online reference for myself and the public as it brings a variety of resources together in one place. It proved useful in two cases recently. I presented TIM to several dance class at Brooklyn Friends high school.I forwarded the teacher the link to the website, and she had her students watch one video from each category and write up any questions they had about dabkeh or the project. They also reviewed the bibliography together. In another case, a Palestinian Arabic friend and teacher asked me to teach dabkeh at a language department gathering at the New School. Although my purpose wasn't to present on dabkeh's significance as a cultural tradition, I was able to show students the website, and a video before the demonstration. This was enough for any interested students to engage further online.

Regarding participant engagement on Tumblr, there was little, if any, I wasn't aware of it. Nearly all of the dabbikah I worked with have profiles on other platforms, not Tumblr. Because I'm new to Tumblr, I didn't have the existing network of connections which I have on accounts such as Facebook and Instagram.

As for the general public audience, most information can be garnered from Google Analytics, which is linked to Tumblr. According to the Google Analytics Report (https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0mTzq2jYtAKYnJFVG9mMTJxSVU/view?usp=sharing) more than 700 users have

visited traditioninmotion.tumblr.com, since I began posting video excerpts in October. Close to 40% are based in the US, and 19% are "not set". The only Arab/ MENA country registered is Egypt. More than 50% of users' language is "not set", followed by 37% whose language is set as English. According to Tumblr's own analytics, TIM has 16 followers, two of whom I know (an Arab American contemporary dancer, and a cultural critic) The rest seem to have an interest in art, music, environmental sustainability, dabkeh, Arab culture, dance, or Islam. In addition to TIM's followers, posts have garnered several "likes" from other users, and a few "reposts" where bloggers share TIM's post to their blog, and add a note. In one post I experimented with directly engaging the public through a question: "What is Dabkeh?" I provided a basic definition and then encouraged visitors to "Share and write what dabkeh means to you below". If public ethnography is defined by engagement, not reach, then my post was successful. "After all, how truly public is an ethnography if it is read by only a handful of readers? On the contrary, size is not everything" (Vannini and Mosher 2013, 392). Tumblr blogger "bigdaddy-yo" who describes herself as a "College Freshmen' reblogged my post and answered:

> *to me, dabkeh is pride. Its me holding on to a piece of my culture that the world is trying to demolish. As a Palestinian(in Brooklyn,NY), I take every chance I can to dabkeh and share my culture with my non-arab friends. To let the world know we still exist. Since 1948 we've been occupied and oppressed, but that hasn't stopped us. Were still standing. Palestine forever! (Dabkehs to that!)*
> *(http://bigdaddy-yo.tumblr.com/post/133704229823/what-is-dabkeh)*

There have also been reposts of quotes from literary sources, and a repost of a video.

It's hard to draw any conclusions from these results, except that a large number of users are based in the US and speak English. The "non-set" languages and countries could include Arabic and Middle Eastern / Arab countries. The majority of users on Tumblr are 18-29 years old (Duggan, 2015). This demographic be useful in connecting with younger Arab-American audiences who are especially passionate about dabkeh.

Facebook

Contrary to Tumblr, Facebook's Tradition In Motion: Dabkeh! page (https://www.facebook.com/traditioninmotion/?fref=ts) has been a source of artist engagement and discussion with "friends" and others. Originally, I hadn't planned on setting up a Facebook page, but began to want to post information related to my research and personal reflections. These posts weren't suited to the more tightly curated presentation of TIM on Tumblr. To Facebook, I post links from Tumblr and Instagram, which made both new audiences and friends aware of the project. I was also able to tag participating artists in the posts, as they all have Facebook accounts, which engaged artists and their networks. In order to share posts to the TIM page, I have to post them directly to my personal page, and share them from there. This also engaged my existing friends' network, leading to "likes", "shares" and comments. Certain artists engaged more with their videos and bios than others. For example, Salma Habib shared her videos onto her mother's Facebook page. Her mother, based in Haifa, is still running the dabkeh/dance troupe featured in the clip. Many of Salma's and her mother's friends commented on and enjoyed the video. Ramzi Edlibi was very engaged with Facebook posts as well; many of our friends commented, shared and "liked" the TIM page due to our postings. Our collaboration in the editing and media sharing process inspired Ramzi to post additional images from his personal archive of his dabkeh days in Lebanon and the US in the 80s and 90s. I also announced some of my queries for b-roll footage. For example, I posted that I was about to give up looking for an image of

dance trainer Wadea Jarrar. Soon after, Ramzi commented with a photo he found of Wadea online, and another "friend" added, "That is great! Their family is still running Rhawda School in Beirut", information that I wouldn't have known otherwise.

Postings about TIM on Facebook led to many instances of online connection around dabkeh, and some evolved into substantial in-person engagement. One friend of a friend messaged me about dabkeh costumes for their nieces, another referred a mother to me, who was looking for dabkeh classes for her children. A student at American University of Beirut sent me information about their inaugural "International Day of Dabkeh" and asked me to spread the word. Dance scholar and friend Meiver de la Cruz shared one of Freedom Dabka Group's posts to Instagram, on her Facebook page, tagging me. (It was actually an unlisted link to a rough cut of their interview excerpt which was supposed to remain private). Made aware of TIM, she also referred a dance teacher at Brooklyn Friends school to me. I ended up setting up a residency for Ramzi at the school, and presenting TIM to her classes. More recently, I've been posting dabkeh related information to my personal page, because I've found they receive more readership their if I can tag people directly.   Lebanese-American dancer and cultural worker "Meesha Dance", Ramzi Edlibi and I have had very fruitful Facebook discussions on the use of counts, stage dabkeh versus participational dabkeh, and the meaning of *Ya Zarif At Toul* to Lebanese (as opposed to Palestinians). This anecdotal evidence points to the benefits of sharing out collaborative research and multiplying the sustainability effect.

Page engagement has been relatively low, but with outreach, it can grow substantially. The Facebook Page's "Insights" function provides basic data on engagement: Since beginning in the end of October, it has 64 likes. Posts have "reached" between 233 and 1 person, and in the last month, 22 people in Palestine and six in Lebanon (although the majority, 150, were based in the US). In the upcoming months, I plan to place a low-cost promotion of the page, and "boost" important posts. I will also systematically invite friends and engage more directly with artists. I'm confident the Facebook platform with prove to be a fruitful tool of engagement, and cultural sustainability around dabkeh.

Instagram

Instagram has potential to engage new audiences with TIM and directly with artists. I initially began an Instagram account to share images from my dabkeh archive. Instead, for this media-sharing stage of TIM I've focused on filling out the Tumblr site and creating video excerpts. I've used Instagram to highlight posts to the Tumblr site, and potentially drive traffic there. In the future, posting content of young dabbikah in Brooklyn, such as Khlood Zanta, FDG, and all-girls group Nijmat Falestine- who are all active users- will garner lots of engagement. I posted a short clip of Khlood, tagged her on Instagram and shared it with her on Facebook where many of her friends and the public commented and "liked" it. When Freedom Dabka Group posted a link to a rough cut of their interview, with the message, "GO WATCH FDG's INTERVIEW WITH NCIOLE MACOTSIS! LINK IN BIO!! #alhumduliah…"(https://www.instagram.com/p/6QiVbptPlM/?taken-by=freedomdabkagroup), within a few hours their Instagram post had over 200 likes. The unlisted YouTube video had more than 300 views. According to a Pew Institute study of users in the US, "Instagram continues to be popular with non-whites and young adults: 55% of online adults ages 18 to 29 use Instagram, as do 47% of African Americans and 38% of Hispanics" (Duggan: 2015). In the next few months I plan to continue outreach to this

demographic of dabbikah, while uploading images, mostly of Palestinian-based groups of which I have little or no video footage, as well as supplementary materials from my fieldwork in Beit Sahour, such as maps, flyers or CD covers, and contextual photos of dabbikah's neighborhoods, practices etc.

YouTube

Although I had envisioned that YouTube would provide a higher level of engagement in the editing process, it has mostly served as an online video library. The benefits of YouTube are that it videos are easily optimized for search engine function. For example, if I google "dabkeh tradition", Tradition In Motion's YouTube channel appears on the first page of results, as does a TIM video with "dabkeh" in its title. With continued search engine optimization, potentially changing titles to include the term "dabkeh", and linking videos directly on social media, TIM videos can reach more viewers.

Conclusion of Analysis

Overall, my analysis of the data and process of TIM demonstrate that I've established an online framework and method to share documentation in ways that reach the public and are representative of participants' views. The social media platforms and Tumblr structure will continue to reflect layered themes, even as themes evolve; illustrating the multiplicity of meanings of dabkeh, and sharing dabbikah's perspectives.

There is room for improvement in the area of artist engagement. Again, ideally, I would like dabbikah to participate more fully in self-representation, working together, in a more collaborative editing process, and in the identification of themes. I think this element of added dialogue, between myself, the literature and participating dabbikah can increase TIM's significance to insiders as well as to the general public and the field of cultural sustainability. However realistically, it's not likely I'll achieve such a level of participation without funding for the project, related programs and time with artists. Suggesting and requesting online participation via email isn't enough for full engagement.   In addition to technical barriers, most interviewees are very busy despite their passion for dabkeh. Most don't have the luxury to delve so deeply into the process. However, as I mentioned above, I will be spend more time cultivating engagement and relationships through online social media platforms.

It's also important to emphasize the amount of learning that has taken place for me throughout the Capstone process as a public ethnographer using technologies and tools that I was not very familiar with. I had never before developed a workflow for managing, editing and sharing documentation. It was my first time working with Final Cut Pro, as well as platforms such as Tumblr, and sharing documentation on social media. Fortunately, I found resources such as NYFS's mentorship program, CityLore's Documentation Institute, informed and passionate participants, and a knowledgeable and helpful Capstone Committee to help me navigate the stages and challenge of the project. Also unfamiliar methodological perspectives and several in-depth references on dabkeh took time to read, digest and apply.

In the end, I've established a framework and process to continue. In addition to continuing to process more documentation, engaging dabbikah in sharing and uploading related

documentation of their own, there are many other possibilities to add more contextual meaning as the website grows. Particularly a map- perhaps a Google map with annotations, identifying dabbikah, their connection to MENA (if living in the US) and even further identifying sites of dabkeh related to their narrations will add a layer of information and geographical context. I also would like to add statistics, especially on the number of Arab Americans, and Levantine Americans in Brooklyn, in NYC and in the US. I would have to do thorough research to obtain accurate numbers, as there has been a major campaign in the last few years to get Arabic speakers / Arab Americans to participate in the Census. I would also like to add to Tumblr's *resources* page to include blogs, video archives and other online dabkeh sources. Another way the project could go, is to align more with the field of Cultural Sustainability by exploring questions about dabkeh and well-being, embodiment, human connection, community building and social justice.

Conclusion:

Below I summarize how TIM relates to the four questions proposed by the MACs program, which are as follows:

1. How can we work with communities in identifying and nurturing traditions of knowledge and practice that are meaningful and valued by those communities? In other words, how can we help to sustain culture?

2. How can we make a difference in conceptualizing and implementing actions that foster sustainable cultural discourses, practices and processes? In other words, how can we work together in creating the cultures of a sustainable future?

3. How do cultural knowledge and practices contribute to human and ecological wellbeing, and how can these aspects of culture be strengthened? In other words how can we work toward sustaining culture that sustains people and the planet?

4. What ways can culture contribute to peace and social justice, and how can we work effectively with communities in strengthening the capacity of cultural forms and processes to address conflict, increase goodwill, and generate greater understanding within and among cultural groups? In other words, how do we encourage cultural health and equity in a diverse and unequal world?

TIM connects with cultural sustainability because of its method, platform and content.   As outlined in this paper, my approach strives for dialogue, respect and listening. TIM is a platform for amplifying the voices of stakeholders of the cultural tradition, and I'm a facilitator in the process.   The dabkeh itself embodies cultural sustainability, in its form, aesthetics, and function. I'll take the example of Amer Abdelrasoul of Freedom Dabka Group as his interview especially spoke to the four points above.

Dabkeh is alive and prospering in Freedom Dabka Group's world. They have a wide presence on YouTube and in the past few years have become known throughout the US in the Palestinian/ Arab American community- performing at festivals, charity events, weddings and other celebrations. While there isn't a dire need for TIM to show the group or their community of

mostly Palestinian-Americans and other Arab Americans that dabkeh should be valued, there are a variety of ways the TIM's process and platform and contribute to sustaining the culture as enumerated by Vannini and Mosher (2013, 394). Firstly, the research participants themselves can benefit by feeling their traditional knowledge and practice is valued by an outsider. This is especially important as Palestinians-Muslim Arab American young men face discrimination in both homelands: in the US through racist policies and stereotypes, and in the West Bank, through Israeli occupation. In both places, their culture is often demonized, appropriated or unknown to outsiders.

Madison elaborates and confirms that,

> *[t]he constructed meetings of the in-depth interview become performed narrations and performative self-reflections in which the narrator is both the actor and the audience of his own life story and his own interpreted life meanings. It is during these definitional ceremonies that we may come into the fullness of our human capability — … to watch ourselves and enjoy knowing what we know (Myerhoff, 1982). Narrative is both the the joy-filled freedom of expression and a confirmation (2012, 69).*

FDG members can benefit from seeing themselves on video, telling the stories of their own cultural knowledge, embodied knowledge and problems of cultural loss, perhaps described and contextualized in new ways which resonate with them.

Unfortunately this intimate cultural and embodied knowledge of dabbikah that FDG has, is not as widespread as it could be. They know the social and cultural gel, the feel, which Ramzi mentions many times in his interview, which makes participatory social dabkeh a real live force of sustainability. Sharing this knowledge of the complex relationship between tradition and innovation in the dabkeh line, the relationship between the dabbikah, the lawih, and the musicians, and the important social and community purpose of the dabkeh performance at weddings that Amer mentions- of sharing joy and bringing together of the community through dance - could also contribute to cultural sustainability of the tradition. Perhaps viewing the video might inspire a troupe missing out on this feeling and cultural knowledge embedded in dabkeh performance to seek it out. Perhaps it will lead to an academic panel or public program. Perhaps an outsider will begin to value Palestinian, Arab or Arab American culture for the complexity, joy and beauty described and demonstrated by Amer in the videos.

Amer shows that dabkeh, as part of their community practice and culture, fosters "wellbeing" and "sustains people". A social purpose of dakbeh that Amer mentions is "sharek", to share and participate. We are social beings who seek connection. Dabkeh overcomes isolation, as Amer says, through "brotherhood", while still calling for innovation and change within the line. The performance of dabkeh facilitates the coming together of the community in participatory joy. Dancing together, in addition to the feelings of belonging and pride that is dabkeh, sustains people. It is a great logical leap to imply that dabkeh could lead to "ecological wellbeing" or sustain the "planet", however it does bring people together. When we come together, we relate to each other, understand how our actions affect each other, and hear each other's concerns and develop common solutions. Ecological wellbeing can not be achieved in isolation, that's clear.

TIM also reaches a greater public outside of the Arabic speaking/ dabbikah world which could "generate greater understanding" and eventually lead to involvement in the struggle for social

justice and equity. TIM's inclusion in a Brooklyn high school dance program which has no Arab American students and very little knowledge about their Arab American neighbors, culture or religion is just one small example. When the high schoolers saw fellow Brooklynite Mohammad Shalodi on video, jamming on the keyboard, and using common youth slang like "hype", they connected with FDG, and perhaps remained receptive to other information and terms that were new to them- such as *Palestine, Orientalism, occupation, the Levant, and dabkeh*. It's possible that this greater awareness and connection could lead to their own participation in one of the many movements for social justice for Arab Americans, Muslims, Palestinians or other communities of color.

Tradition in Motion: Dabkeh! Online:
    Tumblr: traditioninmotion.tumblr.com
    YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCuSs3nv89Gg-cFEADvYJwBA
    Facebook: www.facebook.com/traditioninmotion
    Instagram: www.instagram.com/traditioninmotion

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