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Syrian Refugees as a Hybridizing Force in the Jordanian Society

Barkuzar Dubbati

Introduction

This chapter examines the sociocultural impact of the influx of Syrian refugees to Jordan. Several studies have examined the economic and political effects of the sudden and colossal demographic presence of Syrian refugees in Jordan. However, little attention has been given to its sociocultural impact. The neglect of this aspect can be attributed to the supposition that there is proximity between the dominant cultures of the refugees and their new host country that does not warrant investigation into any cultural consequences. This chapter argues the opposite and starts from the assumption that cultures are political compositions and their perception and reproduction rely on political needs rather than cultural and social realities.

Homi Bhabha (1994) has theorized that the cultural hybrid troubles the cultural differences that have created it. For example, an Anglo-Indian individual presents an opportunity to question the stability of the cultural binary opposition of British/Indian that created the hybrid who represents a living example of the blurry differences between cultures. Bhabha turns the binary on its ear and starts with the two ends of the binary (British vs. Indian) and melds them into the hybrid who hybridizes both. Instead of the outcome of cultural perception being difference, it becomes ambivalence. One criticism of Bhabha's deconstruction of the binary is that it presupposes difference before it questions it. It establishes the stability of difference (between being British or Indian) before it destabilizes it.

This study does not join in the criticism but exploits it. What if the binary opposition is created by the hybrid rather than deconstructed by it? If cultural differences between Jordanians, on the one hand, and Syrians, on the other, were not visible or noticeable when they were neighboring nations but have become striking and even threatening when Syrians have been relocated to Jordanian cities, then can't one argue that the hybrid has created the binary (Jordanian vs. Syrian) when the socioeconomic needs emerged? This study looks into the effects of refugees' resettlement in Jordan

on Jordanians' cultural perceptions of the refugees as either different/Other or a hybridizing force. It will observe changes to the representation of Syrian refugees, attitudes toward refugees, and any reconceptualization of difference. The research examined consists of a quantitative analysis of two surveys, one among Jordanians and a second among Syrian refugees.

Theories on Cultural Hybridity

Since the publication of Bhabha's seminal work *The Location of Culture* in 1994, the conceptualization of the cultural hybrid has taken center stage in debates in the postcolonial field, representation studies, race studies, and transcultural and transnational fields. His reconceptualization of Frantz Fanon's black man's performance of inferiority into a performance of a hybridizing force has reinvigorated the discourse over the ways in which colonizers and colonized identities interact and the hierarchy of power that this interaction destabilizes. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Fanon introduces the "negro" who perfects a performance of whiteness to conceal his black identity. By "acting white," the black man recreates an identity as a space in which he renounces his black identity and puts on a white mask. Fanon employs the mask as a metaphor not only of concealment but also of self-deception on the part of the black man and the white French society. The deception is that by speaking white man's language, desiring white women, and acquiring knowledge institutionalized by the white man, the black man has finally become white. Fanon argues that the black man's integration into white society is not just a masquerade but a farce revealed by a young white child pointing at the black man and exclaiming, "Look at the nigger!" (113). The masquerade for Fanon ends there as the masks fall and the curtains are drawn on a play performed by the black man with the white mask and performed on him by a white society that has misled him into believing that negritude can be unperformed. This moment of realization is what DuBois (1903) and Gilroy (1993) describe as the double consciousness of the racial Other who view themselves through their own internal perception of the self and the external gaze of a hegemonic society built on a binary opposition of which the racial Other is one end.

Bhabha, however, reads the black man's performance as an indication of the failure of the stability of the racial identity rather than the failure of the black man's white performance. Whereas Fanon sees in the white mask a confirmation of the white gaze's ultimate power in constructing the identity of the black Other and the latter's internalization of his racial inferiority, Bhabha reimagines this performance as a destabilizing force that renders both the binary and the binarizing "pure" identities of black and white as ambivalent. For Bhabha, what the black man with the white mask achieves is the creation of a "third space," which

makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. [The intervention of the third space]

quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People.

(54)

The third-ness of the hybrid as neither one identity nor its Other, but both allows the hybrid to function as a force that denaturalizes the binary of self/Other, blurs the difference between the two ends of the binary and deems the homogeneity of identities and the discourse of power that constructs it as false, irrelevant, and self-contradictory. If the Other is the creation of the self, it is inseparable from it, as both Lacan (1977) and Said (1978) underline in their theorization of the interdependency of the construction of the binarized self and Other identities. Lacan argues that the ego is formed through the binary opposition of presence and absence in which the self is present through its absence in the Other, and the Other's presence is constructed through the absence of the self in it. In his debunking of Orientalism as a science, Said reveals that Orientalists constructed the Orient as an Other for a homogeneous West. The Orient in their discourse is silent but also fictional; however, if the identity of the homogenous and essentialized West relies on a fictional Orient, then both are fictional and constructed. This interdependency of identity construction, though, is meant to weaken the Orient as the projection of the West's otherness, it empowers the Other in making it indispensable in the process of the creation of the ego and the Western self. The instability of the identity of the Other renders the identity of the self unstable as well, which is the "equation" that Bhabha uses to represent the hybrid and hybridity as an empowering force. His theorization of the creation of the hybrid moves the debate from regarding it as a site of erasure of the identity of the Other, the colonized, or the indigenous and toward reconceptualizing it as a site in which the hybrid negotiates rather than negates its mixed identity. Thus, negotiation becomes a form of interrogation of the discourse of identity (43) rather than an acceptance of construction of identity by the colonial power.

Other writers have highlighted the importance of the hybrid within the emergent transnational and globalization discourses. Kraidy (2008) deems hybridity as "the cultural logic of globalization" and denies its celebration as evidence of "posthegemonic" times (148). Smith and Leavy (2008) view hybridity in a globalized world as an inevitability and a "benefit" (4). They recognize the hybrid's unique location as

simultaneously members of the community and not members of the community. The stranger is one new identity that might emerge by combining two identities that were previously discrete and now overlap. They are not seen as individuals, but as a particular type that is a combination of the stranger's identity and the local identity. One resolution to the problem of having two identities, or being identified by types and labels, is to create a new identity. It is the hybrid identity that includes a local and global identity form, merged to create the hybrid identity.

(4)

Pieterse (2001) underlines that hybridity is “to culture what deconstruction is to discourse: transcending binary categories” (238), while Bakhtin (1981) identifies two kinds of hybridity: unintentional/organic, which occurs naturally when cultures integrate, and a second type that is intentional and conscious.

Criticism of Bhabha's Theory of Hybridity

Bhabha's use of hybridity and hybridization has met its share of criticism. Friedman (1997) regards Bhabha's theorization of hybridity as elitist. The power to negotiate and interrogate is exclusive to elite intellectuals who have the luxury of engrossing themselves in the discursive negotiation of the hybridity of identity. Less privileged groups, such as workers or racially profiled immigrants, are less likely to be inclined to see the empowering aspect of their hybridized identity or to be in a position to negotiate or interrogate it. Bhabha's focus is on the enunciation of hybridity, which locates the discussion of the diversity of cultures within discourse and discursive production rather than tangible realities, such as actual discrimination. However, the assumption that negotiating discourse is a “privilege” is the cause of the discriminatory realities of the migrant, who Friedman argues is locked out of the debate. Realities cannot exist outside of discourse, or what Bhabha calls the enunciation of identities. Kraidy (2008) is also critical of the celebration of hybridity as an empowering force while neglecting its central role in legitimizing globalization's commodification of transculturation. He does not view the hybrid as the destabilizing factor of structured binary opposition of power/powerless, dominating/dominated, but rather as an instrument used by those in power to commodify the transcultural impact of the hybridization of the homogeneity of cultures.

Another aspect of criticism made against Bhabha's theory of hybridity is the assumption of purity that precedes the creation of the hybrid (Young 1995; Friedman 1997). The hybrid destabilizes the difference within a binary opposition and multiplies the possibilities of difference and similarities. However, critics of hybridity theory argue that hybridization starts from the assumption that cultures are distinctly different before being hybridized. Black and white are seen as purely different and are then hybridized by the hybrid, which blurs the boundaries between the two.

If the binary opposition divides the self and Other through the dichotomy of presence and absence as suggested by Lacan, then the hybrid's merging of the two becomes a pool mirror image of the pyramid and not a disruption of it (Figure 9.1). Other critiques question the whole idea of the assumption of purity, suggesting that colonial cultures were never essentialist to begin with (Young 1995) and that hybridity theory emerges as only a discursive response to essentialism. Hybridity theory responds that regardless of whether cultures have always been mixed, in colonialist discourse, conceptualization of reality overpowers its factuality. For instance, in a racist discourse in the United States, white and black are represented as distinctly different identities, even if in reality, centuries of miscegenation under the system of slavery has rendered neither race pure.

Figure 9.1 The binary opposition of Self/Other according to colonial discourse, Bhabha's hybridity theory, and its critics.

This study does not engage in either side of the discursive argument on the validity of the hybrid as a hybridizing force or as an affirmation of the assumption of purity and difference. It rather builds on this debate to suggest a third but interrelated structure at whose center is the hybrid. Looking at Figure 9.1 with the three models—colonialist discourse, hybridity theory, and critique of the hybridity theory—I propose the emergence of a fourth structure in which a hybrid is created in order to split a homogenous culture (Levant culture) or similar cultures (Jordanian, Syrian) into binary cultures (Jordanian vs. Syrian cultures). Syrian presence in Jordan, thus, is reconceptualized as a form of hybridity that entails an othering of Syrians and Syrian culture as different from their host culture, a distinction that was not prevalent before the eruption of the conflict in Syria in 2011. As Syrians' presence in Jordan becomes increasingly visible and conceived as visibly threatening as a result of the sharp rise in the numbers of refugees and the density of their location in some Jordanian governorates, cities, and towns, an alteration of the collective perception of Syrians emerges in order to preserve the host culture by distinguishing it from the "invading" culture.

Therefore, another factor to consider besides the demographic changes is the public discourse that accompanied the relocation of Syrians into Jordan. Media representation and construction of the nature of the Syrian refugees' stay in Jordan play an important role in seeing Syrians as a threat. Bhabha reminds us that "culture only emerges as a problem, or a problematic, at the point at which there is a loss of meaning in the contestation and articulation of everyday life, between classes, genders, races, nations" (50). Whereas the hybrid is used to destabilize the hegemonic culture's production of knowledge about the othered culture, in my examination of the case of Syrians in Jordan, I argue that the Syrian-as-hybrid is invoked to render Syrians as Other rather than to destabilize the difference between Jordan and Syrian cultures. Looking at Syrians as hybrid by location (living in Jordan) or as children of Syrian-Jordanian marriages recreates the binary opposition from bottom to top (Figure 9.2) and locates Syrians and Jordanians at opposite sides of the binary. It is

Figure 9.2 Bhabha's hybridity in reverse.

Bhabha's hybrid model but read in reverse, where the starting point is homogeneity rather than binarist difference, and the end result is the binary.

The Quantitative Study

Two different surveys were distributed among two samples of Jordanians and Syrians.¹ The surveys were randomly distributed based on the controlled variable of location. They were conducted as part of interviews during which respondents answered survey questions, and their answers were entered by the researcher. Additionally, some discussions or comments made by respondents during the interviews were recorded and used to frame the analysis of the survey results. Most questions aimed to capture respondents' perceptions of Syrians rather than test their knowledge of actual facts. Sociocultural impacts and identities are based on subjective knowledge, which is often influenced by economic and political realities. This study aims to explore the Jordanian respondents' attitudes and perception of the cultural difference of Syrians after their relocation to Jordan. The Syrian survey is used only to explain the context and results of the Jordanian sample survey; it is not analyzed extensively as an independent survey, and only responses related to the Jordanian survey results were selected for inclusion.

The Samples

The Jordanian survey was distributed to a stratified random sample of 192 Jordanians with a response rate of 100 percent. The sample was not meant to be representative of Jordanian society but was used as an instrument to detect and analyze trends emerging from the sample's answers. Though not representative, the sample mimics the demographic distributions related to the density of the Syrian population in Jordan. There was one controlled variable, as the surveys were distributed equally among three regions based on the density of Syrian presence. Region 1 is high density and consists of the cities of Mafraq and Irbid. Region 2 is medium density and consists of Zarqa and selected neighborhoods of Amman. Region 3 is low density and consists of Ma'an and selected neighborhoods of Amman. To determine the number of Syrians living in Jordan and their demographic distribution, I relied on the results of a 2015 national census conducted by the Jordanian Department of Statistics, which released the results

in 2016. Amman was included in both Region 2 and Region 3 because of the density of Syrians relative to the general population (42 percent of the overall population), its size as the largest city in Jordan, and the variety of its residents' income.² The sample from Amman constituted 37.5 percent of the overall Jordanian sample, which is comparable to both the density of Syrians in the Jordanian population (37 percent) and the Syrian population (34 percent) in the capital. The Ammani sample was larger because of the diversity of income unique to the capital. It was difficult to find a sizable sample of high-income respondents in other governorates selected for this study because of the lower income levels there. In Amman, I was able to include a random sample of high-income respondents. The income division in the sample taken from other governorates was middle and low incomes only (Table 9.1).

Figure 9.3 shows the distribution of the percentage of the density of Syrian population in the governorates of the selected cities for the study and their geographic distribution.

Table 9.1 The distribution of the sample based on density and income.

		Regions			Total
		High density	Middle density	Low density	
Income (JD)	–350	31	26	26	83
	350–600	33	26	26	85
	600+	0	12	12	24
Total		64	64	64	192

Figure 9.3 Percentages of Syrians out of the overall population in the selected cities (2015 national census).

The selection of these regions was also motivated by a desire to cover northern, midland, and southern parts of Jordan with their distinct diversities; northern governorates are more proximate to Syria, the midland is more urban, and the southern region is closer to Saudi Arabia, and the Bedouin culture is more dominant there.

The regional and income variables were selected to allow the study to examine whether economic concerns are really the contributors to hostilities toward Syrians. The first variable is the density of the Syrian population in Jordanian governorates, which was selected to explore any differences between the responses of Jordanians who have actual and daily interpersonal contact with Syrians and those who have less frequent daily contact with them and may base their perceptions on public discourse rather than actual interaction with Syrians. Additionally, regions with high densities of Syrian populations might feel more threatened, which can be translated into the cultural hybridization of Syrians. This study attempted to determine if there were significant differences in attitudes based on regions and the different degrees of Syrian visibility in them to test the theory that economic challenges posed by the refugees were the central cause for their alienation by the host communities.

A major concern for Jordanians has been the economic impact of Syrians' relocation to Jordan. Numerous studies show Jordanians' disdain for Syrians over job and housing competition. Sampling Jordanians of different income levels was meant to determine if there was a difference between actual and perceived economic impact of refugees on Jordanians' living standards and whether the ways in which Jordanians' reaction to the Syrian presence might have been influenced by their economic status and income.

Other uncontrolled variables are examined as shown in Table 9.2:

As for the Syrian sample, it was randomly selected among 121 Syrians residing in Mafraq and Irbid (Region 1) and Amman (Region 2), which was the controlled variable. Only Syrians living among Jordanians were included in the study, and refugees in camps were excluded as their contact with Jordanians is minimal and controlled, which does not benefit the aim of this study.

Table 9.2 Other variables in the study.

Variables	Type	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	102	53
	Male	90	47
Employment	Employed	83	47
	Unemployed	92	53
Familial relations with Syrians	Have Syrian in-laws/relatives	40	21
	No Syrian relatives or in-laws	153	79

The Syrian Presence in Jordan

The number of Syrians entering and living in Jordan is continuously changing as the political and security situation in Syria develops. The information and figures presented in this section were compiled in the months of April and May of 2017. They were collected from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through the Jordanian Syrian Refugees Affairs Department.³ Other figures related to the number of marriages between Jordanians and non-Jordanians have been collected from the Department of the Supreme Justice in Jordan.

According to the general census conducted in 2015, 31 percent of the population in Jordan was non-Jordanian. Almost half of those were Syrians (Table 9.3) and 34 percent of them lived in Amman.

According to UNHCR figures accessed on May 31, 2017, there were around 660,000 Syrians registered as refugees in Jordan, 21 percent of whom lived in refugee camps while the rest lived in cities and villages among Jordanians. These numbers do not represent the overall population of Syrians in Jordan, since only half of them registered as refugees, which is not mandatory. The largest number of Syrians in Jordan came from the border city of Daraa (Table 9.4). The distribution of the places of origin for the refugees reflects their hometowns' war and conflict situation. For example, there were more refugees from Daraa, Homs, rural Damascus, and Aleppo than from Damascus, which was relatively calmer than those regions. Geographic proximity is not a determining factor for refugees seeking asylum in Jordan; for instance, more Syrians from Aleppo, one of the most northern cities in Syria, have sought refuge in Jordan than have Syrians from Damascus and its suburbs, which are much closer.

As for the number of Syrian refugees according to their year of arrival, 2013 and 2012 witnessed the largest influx, as indicated in Table 9.5.

In terms of gender and age, around 51 percent of the refugees were female, 29 percent were aged eighteen to thirty-five, and 15.5 percent were infants (newborns through age four).

Table 9.3 The distribution of population in Jordan based on nationality.

Nationality	Number (in millions)	Percentage
Jordanian	6,613,587	69
Syrian	1,265,514	13
Egyptian	636,270	7
Palestinian	634,182	7
Iraqi	130,911	1
Other	251,248	3
Total	9,531,712	100

Source: The Jordanian Department of Statistics.

Table 9.4 The distribution of Syrians in Jordan based on place of origin.

Place of Origin	Number	Percentage
Daraa	276,114	42
Homs	104,954	16
Rural Damascus	78,388	12
Aleppo	67,319	10
Damascus	49,254	7
Other	84,125	13

Source: UNHCR.

Table 9.5 The numbers of Syrians in Jordan based on their year of arrival.

Arrival		
Year	Number	Percentage
Pre-2011	33,189	5
2011	22,555	3.4
2012	170,012	25.8
2013	292,261	44.3
2014	80,345	12.2
2015	33,325	5
2016	44,001	6.7
2017	7021 ^a	1.1

Source: UNHCR.

^a In the period between March 15 and May 31, 2017, 4577 Syrians have entered Jordan, at the rate of around fifty-eight people per day.

Analysis of the Jordanian Sample Survey Results

The majority of the respondents stated that they have not lived outside Jordan for more than six months (81 percent), have never visited Syria (67 percent), have not had any Syrian relatives or in-laws (80 percent), or have not had any interpersonal contact with Syrians before the conflict (62 percent). Of those who have had previous contact with Syrians, 84 percent believed that Syrians who lived in Jordan before the crisis were different from those who have come to Jordan after the crisis. They characterized the differences as primarily economic and secondarily as social, while cultural difference came a distant third. Respondents from Zarqa were the exception, as they ranked social differences first and economic differences second. The majority of the sample also indicated that their knowledge of Syrian culture before the crisis was basic, as half the sample rated their knowledge to be neutral or average while

Table 9.6 Sources of knowledge about Syrians before and after the Syrian crisis.

Sources of knowledge about Syrians before the crisis				Sources of knowledge about Syrians after the crisis		
Overall rank	Item	Score	Total respondents	Item	Score	Total respondents
1	What people say	787	193	Contact with them	832	181
2	Syrian TV drama	775	187	What people say	761	193
3	Contact with them	425	100	Social media	678	192
4	Books	366	126	Syrian TV drama	83	36
5	Other	51	25	Books	49	28

only 10 percent described their knowledge as very good to excellent. This changed after the influx of refugees into Jordan, as 44 percent of the respondents now rated their knowledge of Syrian culture as very good to excellent, and only 3 percent said their knowledge was nil or very weak. While respondents' source of knowledge of Syrian culture before the crisis was mainly non-interpersonal, this changed after the crisis, as the majority of respondents said they formed their opinions of Syrians on interactions with them (Table 9.6). Reliance on Syrian TV drama as a source of knowledge was strong before the crisis (ranked second), but it dropped to fourth after the crisis.

An analysis of the general results without looking at specific variables indicates that the general reaction of Jordanians toward Syrians' presence in their neighborhoods, towns, and cities was overwhelmingly negative. Their responses to questions related to perception of Syrian culture, its influence on Jordanian culture, and their presence in Jordan were negative. Sixty-eight percent of the sample described the Syrian presence in their country as very negative, while only 1.5 percent rated it as positive or very positive. When asked if they thought that the Syrian culture enriched the Jordanian culture, a majority of 92 percent rejected the idea completely. In response to a question about the effect of the Syrian culture on the Jordanian culture, the majority of respondents either negated the existence of any influence or labeled it as negative (Figure 9.4).

Even though a good majority of over 50 percent asserted that the Syrian presence has had no cultural effect on them, subsequent responses undermine this assertion. For example, 81 percent of those who denied the cultural effect said that Syrians had an impact on cuisine and the food industry in Jordan, and 46 percent of them said that Syrians affected them intellectually (thoughts and thinking). Answers to these questions were not required, and there was an "other" option to use to avoid stating any of these influences (Figure 9.5).

Figure 9.4 Effect of Syrian culture on Jordanian culture.

Figure 9.5 Areas of Syrian influence in Jordan.

Syrians' Influence on Marriage

Those who said that the Syrian culture had a negative or mostly negative effect expressed a major concern over their influence on local marriage habits and traditions and what they perceived as the growing trend of intermarriages between Jordanians and Syrians. When asked to name their concerns over Syrian presence, the words “marriage” and “norms and customs” were most frequently mentioned and “dialect”

and “morality” to a lesser extent. The words “change” and “liberal” also featured in the sample’s answers. Before discussing the sample’s responses to questions on Syrians’ influence on marriage, it is pertinent to compare facts with perception. Jordanians have often expressed concern over the rise of the number of marriages between Jordanians and Syrians following the 2011 crisis in Syria. Tables 9.7 and 9.8 compare the numbers and percentages of marriages between Jordanians and Syrians before and after the crisis. In the period of 2004–10, marriages between Jordanian men and Syrian women averaged 248 per year, with the highest number of marriages occurring in 2007. On average, marriage to Syrian women accounted for 11 percent of all marriages between Jordanian men and non-Jordanian women. For the same period, Jordanian women’s marriages to Syrian men averaged 183 marriages per year, which was 6 percent of all their marriages to non-Jordanians. After the crisis, a natural increase of marriages took place, which accompanied the atypical growth of the Syrian population in Jordan since 2011. During the period of 2011–16, marriages between Jordanian men and Syrian women averaged 1030 per year, which was an average of 28 percent of all marriages to non-Jordanian women. The highest number of marriages occurred in 2015. For Jordanian women, the average number of marriages with Syrian men was 569 per year, which accounted for 15 percent of all marriages to non-Jordanian men. The year 2016 saw the highest number of marriages between Jordanian women and Syrian men.

The overall percentage of Jordanian-Syrian marriages for the period of 2004–10 was 0.7 percent of all marriages registered. After the crisis, the percentage increased to only 2 percent of all marriages in Jordan, which was still not a threatening increase considering that Syrians comprised 13 percent of the overall population. On the other hand, the Palestinian population in Jordan was half the Syrian population, yet they accounted for half of the registered marriages between Jordanians and non-Jordanians in Jordan. In view of the widespread fear among Jordanians of the possibility of establishing an “alternative homeland” for Palestinians in Jordan, one expected them to be more wary of the high number of marriages between Jordanians and Palestinians, posing a problem of nationalizing Palestinians; however, the survey results showed no concerns when it came to marrying Palestinians. In fact, when asked to indicate

Table 9.7 The number of Jordanian-Syrian marriages between 2004 and 2010.

Jordanian-Syrian marriages statistics before crisis							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Jordanian males	267	264	189	292	254	290	184
	10%	10.50%	10%	11.50%	13%	13%	10%
Jordanian females	196	188	186	179	162	225	146
	6%	5%	7%	7%	6%	8%	6%
Overall number of marriages between Jordanians and non-Jordanians	5630	5979	4532	5096	4553	4989	4252

Source: The Jordanian Supreme Judge Department.

Table 9.8 The number of Jordanian-Syrian marriages between 2010 and 2016.

Jordanian-Syrian marriages statistics after crisis						
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Jordanian males	270	495	1182	1389	1431	1412
	11%	19%	32%	34%	35.50%	36%
Jordanian females	155	280	499	791	795	895
	6%	10%	13%	19%	19.50%	23%
Overall number of marriages between Jordanians and non-Jordanians	4996	5475	7488	8137	8084	7805

Source: The Jordanian Supreme Judge Department.

Figure 9.6 Numbers of marriages between Jordanian and Syrians between 2004 and 2016.

their degree of acceptance and rejection of marriages with Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, and non-Arabs whose religion was similar to that of the respondent, the majority of the sample—whether they were Jordanian or Palestinian-Jordanian—viewed marriage with Palestinians quite favorably while looked at the other marriages quite negatively. In fact, the degree of their rejection of marriages with non-Arabs was similar to their rejection of Syrian marital partners, even though one expected them to find Syrians to be more culturally compatible than non-Arabs. This suggests that fear over changing marriage values was based on a desire to alienate Syrians rather than on concerns based on tangible realities. Looking at Figure 9.6, one notices that even though there was a spike in the number of marriages between Jordanians and Syrians after the crisis, it fell far below the overall number of marriages between Jordanians and other non-Jordanians.

Table 9.9 Views on Syrian marriage customs.

		Syrian marriage customs are						Total
		Very similar (percent)	Somewhat similar (percent)	Neutral	Little different	Somewhat different (percent)	Very different (percent)	
Opinion on marriage with Syrians	Positive	7 (11)	7 (11)	7	8	19 (30)	15 (24)	63
	Negative	5 (4)	12 (9)	16	11	41 (32)	44 (34)	129
	Total	12	19	23	19	60	59	192

In answering questions related to the issue of marriage, a third of the sample said Syrian marriage customs were very different from Jordanians', and a 10 percent said they were quite similar (Table 9.9). However, those who already had a negative opinion of marriage with Syrians were more likely to see them as different. A higher majority of 66 percent of them thought Syrian marriage customs were very different compared to a smaller percentage of 54 percent of those who held a positive opinion of marriage with Syrians. More of those who had a positive opinion (22 percent) thought marriage customs were somewhat similar to very similar compared to only 13 percent of those who had a negative opinion. Additionally, 68 percent of those who had a positive opinion of marriage with Syrians said they would accept their sons marrying a Syrian woman while only 12 percent of those who had a negative opinion said yes. When asked if they would accept their daughters marrying a Syrian man, most of the respondents on both sides said no, but with a significant difference of 88 percent of those who have negative opinions to 56 percent of a positive opinion. Consequently, it may be argued that the perception of difference was decided on the bias of opinion rather than actual difference.

Gender was also a factor when determining the degree of negative attitudes toward marrying Syrians. Female respondents were more opposed to it, with 73 percent of them describing such a marriage as negative compared to 61 percent of male respondents who were of the same opinion. This was consistent with how female respondents were more likely (53 percent) than male respondents (45 percent) to find Syrians to be socially different. This gender disparity was clearest in Region 1 (high Syrian population density; Table 9.10). Male respondents there were evenly divided in their position on marriage with Syrians, while females in the same region were decidedly against it (72 percent). It is also interesting that in Regions 2 and 3 (middle and low density, respectively), opinions were stronger against marriage with Syrians. The strongest rejection of marriage with Syrians was expressed by Region 2 respondents, and the least objection of 61 percent was in Region 1, which had the highest density Syrians. This suggests that demographic threats are not necessarily the determining factor on how the sample felt toward Syrians' integration into Jordanian society through marriage.

Table 9.10 Views on Jordanian-Syrian marriage based on region and gender.

Region			Marriage with Syrians		Total
			Positive	Negative (percent)	
High density	Gender	Female	9	23 (72)	32
		Male	16	16 (50)	32
	Total		25	39 (61)	64
Middle density	Gender	Female	9	27 (75)	36
		Male	9	19 (68)	28
	Total		18	46 (72)	64
Low density	Gender	Female	10	25 (71)	35
		Male	10	19 (66)	29
	Total		20	44 (69)	64
Total	Gender	Female	28	75 (73)	103
		Male	35	54 (61)	89
	Total		63	129 (67)	192

Region 3 consisted not only of low-density areas where Syrian visibility is minimal but also included a high-income community whose livelihood is least threatened by Syrians; in fact, the Syrian presence might have enhanced their lifestyle with the availability of Syrian delicacies and fashion trends. Looking at Table 9.11, one notices that there was no difference in opinion regarding the idea of marriage with Syrians across income. High-income respondents were as negative in their opinion as low-income respondents. The lack of significant impact of density of Syrian population and Jordanian income on diversifying respondents' opinions suggests that viewing Syrians as a sociocultural Other by rejecting marriage with them was not based on a threat of demographic and social invasion or economic competition but rather on perceptual threats created by a general climate of resistance to Syrians' influence and presence.

These cross-tabulated comparisons, coupled with the general concern over marriage, suggest that the preconceptions people already had about Syrian-

Table 9.11 Views on marriage with Syrians based on income and gender.

Income			Marriage with Syrians		Total
			Positive	Negative (percent)	
-350	Gender	Female	16	37 (70)	53
		Male	12	18 (60)	30
	Total		28	55 (66)	83
350-600	Gender	Female	8	26 (76)	34
		Male	19	32 (63)	51
	Total		27	58 (68)	85
601+	Gender	Female	4	12 (75)	16
		Male	4	4 (50)	8
	Total		8	16 (67)	24

Jordanian marriages were the significant factor that influenced the view of the degree of difference between Jordanian and Syrian marriage customs. The fear over the Syrianization of the Jordanian family informed how likely Jordanian respondents were to see customs as different. This begs the question of whether those customs are really different or if their difference is manufactured to justify the rejection of intermarriages with Syrians.

The sample's responses also suggest a consistent trend in alienating attitudes toward Syrians focused on cultural estrangement. When asked about the causes of Syrian underage marriages, unlike media reports that suggest that Syrian families are forced to do this as a result of economic hardships, respondents identified the causes as social traditions and norms (ranked first) over economic causes (ranked second). The majority of the sample believed that Syrians marry off their underage daughters in adherence to social norms and traditions rather than because of poverty. In the next question, the respondents predominantly (97 percent) expressed opposition to underage marriage. Read in juxtaposition, Jordanian respondents attributed the phenomenon of underage marriage among Syrians to social reasons while simultaneously rejecting the norm as unacceptable, which indicates a form of condemnation of a social norm and relocating it outside Jordanian culture and the current economic hardships Syrians face.

Coupling the consistent sense of threat the Jordanian sample has expressed toward Syrians' influence on marriage habits, trends, and norms in Jordan with the rejection of Jordanian-Syrian marriages, one sees a tendency to use family structures as a tool of othering and alienating Syrians and justifying the desire to remove them from Jordanian towns and cities. A clear trend emerges when cross-tabulating answers to questions regarding marriage with answers to the question of whether they wished to see Syrians leave their neighborhood or city. Those who held a negative opinion of Jordanian-Syrian marriages were more likely to express the wish to see them leave (83 percent) than those who were not opposed to this kind of marriage (57 percent). An overwhelming majority of 84 percent of those who opposed their sons' marriage to Syrian women wished Syrians to leave, compared to the smaller majority of 53 percent of those who approved their sons' marriage to Syrian women yet still wanted them to leave. On the other hand, a majority of 57 percent of those who said they would agree to their daughters' marrying Syrians said they did not want Syrians to leave their neighborhood, which is an exception to the trend in responses. This might be due to the acceptance of the Syrian son-in-law in the Jordanian family mirroring a larger acceptance of them within the nationalist family.

Another significant factor that influenced the Jordanian sample's responses to this question was whether they have Syrian relatives. Those who did indicate that they had Syrian relatives or in-laws were more divided in their response to this question, even if a majority said they wanted Syrians to leave (51 percent), while those who did not have Syrian relatives or in-laws overwhelmingly said they wanted them to leave (80 percent). This subgroup of respondents did not differ in their general negative responses toward Syrians from other subgroups, as the majority of them described Syrian culture as different and the impact of Syrian culture as negative even though they have Syrian relatives and in-laws. Surprisingly, the majority of them said that their view of Syrians had changed after the crisis, and an astonishing majority of 87.5 percent said the change was negative. One expected that their opinion of Syrians would have been influenced by their interpersonal and interfamilial relations with them rather than the impact of political changes. The only exception was in response to their evaluation of marriage with Syrians; since they already had Syrian relatives or in-laws, 59 percent of them described it as positive, 61.5 percent said they would agree to their sons' marrying Syrian women, but 61.5 percent opposed their daughters' marrying Syrians.

Answers Based on Regions

This section examines the responses based on their place of residence. The sample was divided based on a controlled variable of regions of Syrian population density. In response to the question of how they evaluated the impact of the Syrian presence in Jordan, the majority of respondents across the three regions called it very negative (Table 9.12).

As shown in the table, the different degrees of the density of Syrians in the five regions chosen for this study had a minimal impact on the negative view that Jordanians in the sample held against Syrians. Seventy percent of those living in

Table 9.12 Views on Syrian presence based on region.

		In your opinion the Syrian presence in Jordan is ...						Total
City/Density		Very negative (percent)	Negative	Neutral (percent)	Positive	Very positive	Excellent	
Amman	Middle density	26 (72)	4	5	1	0	0	36
	Low density	21 (58)	5	9	1	0	0	36
	Total	47 (65)	9	12 (17)	2	0	0	72
Zarqa	Middle density	21 (75)	3	2	0	1	1	28
Irbid	High density	22 (69)	3	4	3	0	0	32
Ma'raq	High density	23 (72)	3	5	1	0	0	32
Ma'an	Low density	20 (71)	4	3	0	0	1	28
Total	High density	45 (70)	6	9	4	0	0	64
	Middle density	47 (73)	7	7	1	1	1	64
	Low density	41 (64)	9	12 (19)	1	0	1	64
	Total	133 (69)	22	28	6	1	2	192

regions with high densities of Syrians expressed very negative views of their presence, which is a lower percentage than those living in middle-density regions who expressed the same opinion (73 percent). A slightly but not significantly lower percentage of 69 percent of respondents who lived in low-density regions said the Syrian presence was very negative. This indicates that neither fears over jobs or economic opportunities nor great exposure to Syrians and Syrian culture were determining factors in how Jordanians in the sample evaluated the impact of Syrians among them. The negative perception is based on preconception and not on actual experiences.

When asked about their opinion of intermarriages with Syrians, respondents across the three regions opposed it, with the exception of those living in Irbid. A majority of 56 percent expressed a favorable opinion on the subject. However, all respondents consistently opposed their children's marrying Syrians. Regarding issues of difference, only respondents in low-density regions differed significantly from respondents in other regions when they expressed their opinion about Syrians' social difference. While respondents of the other two regions of high (58 percent) and middle density

(53 percent) rated Syrians' social difference as high, only 37.5 percent of respondents in low-density regions shared the same opinion. Their opinions were more diverse, with 19 percent saying Syrians were not socially different and 17 percent expressing a neutral view on the subject.

A high 66 percent of respondents from Mafraq and 50 percent from Irbid found Syrians to be socially different (which meant 58 percent of Region 1 were of the same opinion). This is noteworthy because this region is one of the closest to Syria geographically and culturally, where they have so many social commonalities with residents of the Syrian city of Daraa, sharing similar dialects and cuisine, intermarrying, and many having the same family name. Only Zarqa residents showed a majority (61 percent) who shared the same opinion as residents of Mafraq and Irbid about Syrian social difference. On the other hand, only 39 percent of respondents from Ma'an found Syrians to be socially different, even though in the study, it is the most southern city, the farthest from Syria, has the lowest per capita density of Syrians, and is the most different socioculturally from Syria. Amman also had a low percentage of those who thought Syrians were socially different, which might be attributable to its status as the capital with a diverse social structure.

In response to the question of whether they want Syrians to leave their neighborhoods, there was no significant difference across the three regions; the majority of respondents from all regions said they wanted Syrians to leave. Whether living in areas of high, middle, or low density of Syrians, respondents consistently wanted them to leave even when they posed no tangible threat or competition to their livelihood or presence in public spaces. Whether living in Mafraq, where 38 percent of the population is Syrian, or in low-density areas, respondents opposed the Syrian presence. A majority of 86 percent of respondents in Ma'an said they wanted Syrians to leave, even though only 5 percent of the residents there were Syrian. The view of Syrians as the Other that needs to be removed is motivated by perceptual rather than economic reasons. The general sense that Syrians are demographically "invading" the country, which is perpetuated by mainstream and social media, motivates the manufacturing of Syrians as socioculturally different which warrants their departure even from regions where they live in very small numbers.

When asked to describe Syrians in a few words, respondents from high- and middle-density regions tended to use overwhelmingly negative words, while respondents from low-density regions provided mixed words (negative and positive), since they recognized the hardships and ordeals Syrians have faced (Table 9.13). Additionally, most of the negative words they used have social values, which suggests that the negativity Jordanian respondents have toward Syrians was caused by social rather than financial or political interactions with them. For example, absent from the list are words such as "greedy," "beggar," "thief," and "terrorist." Many respondents used the word "Other" (*ghir*), which is the equivalence of the prefix "un/ir" in English as in "uneducated" or "irreligious." However, in a study about othering Syrians as the cultural hybrid, I think it is significant that one of the first words to occur to them when they thought of Syrians is "other." "Little" (*qalil*) is another word that respondents used, mainly in the context of having "little faith/religion"; however, like "Other," it is indicative of respondents' unconscious opinion of Syrians as being "little."

Table 9.13 Words most commonly used by the Jordanian sample to describe Syrians.

Ranking region	1	2	3	4	5
High density	Selfish <i>anani</i>	Hypocrite <i>munafiq</i>	Little (little religion/morals) <i>qalil</i>	Liar <i>kadhab</i>	Poor fellow <i>miskin</i>
Middle density	Selfish <i>anani</i>	Stingy <i>bakhil</i>	Other <i>ghir</i>	Poor fellow <i>miskin</i>	Hypocrite <i>munafiq</i>
Low density	Selfish <i>anani</i>	Oppressed <i>mazlum</i>	Liar <i>kadhab</i>	Other <i>ghir</i>	A fighter <i>mukafih</i>

Income and Employment

More high-income respondents (75 percent) than middle-income (66 percent) and low-income (67 percent) respondents described the Syrian presence as very negative. On the other hand, high-income respondents were less opposed to their sons' marrying Syrians (54 percent) than were middle-income (72 percent) and low-income (72 percent) respondents. A little over half of middle-income respondents (55 percent) found Syrians to be socially different, which is the highest percentage compared to high-income (46 percent) and low-income (45 percent) respondents. A higher percentage of 55 percent of middle-income males than low-income males (33 percent) said they found Syrians to be socially different. Significant differences based on income were few and inconsistent, suggesting that there was not an economic impact on the sample's view of Syrians. It should be expected that in regions where Jordanians' livelihoods were threatened (among middle- and low-income respondents), negativity should be higher. But the results suggest that either there was no difference or that in some cases, high-income respondents—the least vulnerable group—were more negative toward Syrians.

As for employment, almost identical percentages of both employed and unemployed respondents thought the Syrian presence was negative (66 percent and 68 percent, respectively). Even those working in government and military institutions where Syrians cannot compete with them for employment did not differ in their opinions toward Syrians. Fifty-three percent said the Syrian presence was very negative, 47 percent of them said Syrian culture affected Jordanians negatively, 53 percent said marriage with Syrians was negative, 70.5 percent opposed their sons' marriage to Syrians, 76 percent said their views of Syrians had changed after the crisis, and 100 percent said the change was negative. They also thought Syrians' culture and marriage customs were different. Those working in the sales sector, where Syrians pose the greatest threat in terms of job competition, understandably held negative attitudes toward Syrians, with 83 percent saying the Syrian presence is very negative, and of those who said their opinion of Syrians changed after the crisis, 100 percent said the change was negative. However, unlike those with government jobs, respondents were split in their opinion of marriage with Syrians and whether they would support their sons' marrying Syrians. Business

owners who were likely to benefit from the arrival of Syrian laborers were also negative in their views. In response to the question of whether they wanted Syrians to leave, the majority of the respondents, regardless of their employment status and nature of their employment, said yes (Table 9.14). Respondents in sectors where job security was high (government sector) did not differ greatly from those who work in sales sector in their answers to this question. The analysis of the results based on income and employment status suggests that economic factors and job competitions are not the determining factors in shaping opinions of Syrians as a threat or an undesirable alien entity.

Table 9.14 The desire to have Syrians leave Jordan based on employment.

		Do you want Syrians to leave?		Total
		Yes (percent)	No	
Work	Yes	58 (70)	25	83
	No	71 (77)	21	92
	None applicable	13 (81)	3	16
Total		142 (74)	49	191
Government sector		11 (65)	6	17
Sales		8 (67)	4	12
Business owner		22 (76)	7	29
Private sector		7 (58)	5	12
Freelance		14 (87.5)	2	16
Professional		3 (60)	2	5
Housewives		34 (77)	10	44
Retired		5 (71)	2	7
Student		5 (55.5)	4	9
Looking for a job		21 (81)	5	26
Doesn't want to work		6 (100)	0	6

Implications of Findings

Reading the results of the survey distributed among Jordanians in juxtaposition with the results of the survey distributed among Syrians raises several pertinent questions regarding the hybridization of Syrians' identity as the Other. Whereas the Jordanian sample expressed an overwhelmingly negative attitude toward the Syrian presence and the possibility of their integration into society through marriage and their cultural influence on the Jordanian society, Syrians surveyed expressed a vastly positive opinion of their lives in Jordan. A great majority of 92 percent of the Syrian sample said they wanted to obtain Jordanian citizenship, even though according to Jordanian law they would have to rescind their Syrian citizenship in exchange. When asked if their opinion of Jordanians has changed after the crisis, 59 percent said it did not change, and 33 percent said it became positive or somewhat positive. Only 8 percent said it became negative and blamed it on Jordanians' treatment and the Syrian crisis. Unlike Jordanians who opposed marriage with Syrians, 62 percent of the Syrian sample approved of marriage with Jordanians, 92 percent said they would approve their sons' marriage with Jordanians, and 84 percent said they would consent to their daughters' marrying Jordanians. The latter percentage presents a jarring contrast with Jordanians' position on the subject. This can be interpreted as indicative of Jordanians' resistance to the integration of Syrians through their daughters, while Syrians showed a significant interest in integration through marriage. In an Arab culture that expects wives' mobility to be tied to their husbands', Syrians' acceptance of their daughters' and consequently the whole family's permanent resettlement in Jordan shows their willingness to adapt to life there not as refugees but as citizens.⁴ The majority (59 percent) said Jordanian and Syrian cultures are not different, and 61 percent expressed a desire to stay in Jordan, which is a significant result for this study. It represents a possible context for Jordanians' negative response.

Based on the results of the two surveys, this study argues that the hostility Jordanians feel toward Syrians is motivated by the fear that Syrians are permanently resettling in their country and that there might be a possibility of nationalizing them. Many Jordanian respondents while answering the survey questions made a side comment in which they contrasted Syrians with Egyptians who live and work here. They said in praising Egyptians, "*Ma kunna nhis fihum*," which literally translates as "we never felt their presence." They made the same comment when comparing Syrians who were living in Jordan before the eruption of the crisis and those who came afterwards. The choice of phrasing is quite telling. "Never feeling" the presence of someone indicates invisibility. Egyptian workers' and pre-crisis Syrians' invisible sociocultural status maintained their place as guests with a temporary presence that poses no challenge to the dominant culture. The post-crisis Syrians do not act like guests, and the Syrian sample's responses to the survey questions support this hypothesis that the connection they are forging with Jordan is one of an alternative homeland. When asked if they agreed with the statement that Jordan has become their new home, 93 percent said they agreed completely and only 3 percent disagreed. When asked if they felt they belong in/to Jordan, 82 percent said yes. They ranked Jordan's significance to them as first "a place to live in," then "neighbors to live next to," while "a place to work"

came last. Again, this shows that for the Syrian sample, Jordan is not only a source of livelihood but also a community.

Reading the two surveys' results as providing a comprehensive understanding of the Othering of Syrians in Jordan allows us to look at economic factors such as job competition not as a determining cause but as a pretext for the hybridization of Syrians and their culture. The surveys' questions intended to scratch the surface of the public discourse over Jordanian-Syrian relations and the causes of the growing negative feelings among Jordanians toward Syrians. The surveys' central result showed that regardless of the distribution of the Syrian presence in Jordan—whether in Mafraq, where over a third of the population is Syrian, or in the wealthy neighborhood of Abdoun in Amman, where the Syrian presence is minimal—the negative attitude was the same and was motivated by the fear of Syrian sociocultural integration into Jordanian society, an integration that was also apparent in Syrians' responses to the second survey.

However, it is significant to note that even though the majority of the Jordanian sample expressed negative feelings toward Syrians and their presence in Jordan, this attitude has not had an impact on the way Syrians in the sample feel toward their lives in Jordan. The Syrian respondents described their lives in Jordan as overwhelmingly positive, particularly praising human rights, dignity, and freedom of expression as qualities of life they most appreciated. When asked if they encountered any harassment—physical, verbal, or sexual—a majority of the respondents said they had not encountered any. This suggests that the general resentment Jordanians feel toward the Syrian presence is either not translated into action or has not had an impact on how Syrians feel toward Jordan or their lives there. Whereas Jordanians in the study felt that Syrians had become increasingly different, particularly socioculturally, the surveyed Syrians felt that they were becoming more “at home.”

Concluding Remarks

This study aimed to examine the transformation of the Jordanian perception and representation of Syrians from seeing them as Arab brethren to perceiving them as a cultural hybrid. Following their displacement to Jordan, Syrians and their culture have been alienated and othered by their Jordanian hosts, who have felt threatened by their presence. As shown by the surveys' results, by transforming Syrians into a site of difference, Jordanians inadvertently create a binary opposition that distances them from Syrians and their customs, which before the crisis and the mass movement of Syrians into Jordan were not viewed as being foreign. Concerns over marriage and changes to Jordanian family structure betray territorial fears as economic and political concerns are manifested as sociocultural estrangement of Syrians. Since the family is the microcosm of the nation, the desire to protect it reflects a deeper sense of political insecurity.

However, this binarization of the Syrian and Jordanian cultures does not have to be deemed as only a form of xenophobia and an ultra-nationalism that is prone to breeding hatred and prejudice. There is always the possibility of returning to Bhabha's hybrid

as a tool of empowerment. Seeing Syrians as cultural hybrids could push Jordanians further into a cultural exclusivity of identity but might also initiate a debate over the potentials of diversifying the Jordanian culture and all its cultural manifestations. This has to begin with the admission that Syrians are culturally different, and that in itself is an opportunity for an empowering diversification of the Jordanian social norms, cultural tendencies, and trade. The counter approach to growing anti-Syrian sentiments within the Jordanian society has been to retreat into the fiction of pan-Arabism and to erase cultural differences that are seen as divisive. The other approach, however, can be to embrace this difference and translate it into an acceptance of the sociocultural difference that Syrians can bring. Creating Syrians as the hybrid can open opportunities to allow influence into what seems to be a culturally homogenous Jordanian society.

Notes

- 1 The surveys were conducted in 2017.
- 2 Since Syrians living outside camps have freedom of movement, it was difficult to get statistics on their distribution within cities. Therefore, my determination of the distribution of Syrians in Amman's neighborhoods was based on estimate and visibility.
- 3 The Jordanian Syrian Refugees Affairs Department uses UNHCR's refugees statistics
- 4 Jordanian nationalization laws allow non-Jordanian women married to Jordanian men to acquire a Jordanian passport after five years of marriage. Jordanian women cannot pass their nationalities to their husbands or children.

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