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A STUDY OF BODY SCENT AS A SOCIAL IDENTIFIER
AMONG MEMBERS OF THE ARABIC CULTURE

by

Mia M. Wilson

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A task of this magnitude would have never been accomplished without the aid of several individuals. I would like to acknowledge my entire family for their support and steady encouragement during the various phases of my thesis. This work is a reflection of each and every one of you. To my mom and dad, this would have never been accomplished without the both of you by my side, avidly praying for me, and giving me enlightening words of encouragement each and every day.

Second, I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Western Michigan University: Dr. Linda Dannison, department chair, for encouraging me to write a thesis for my graduate studies; Dr. Marlene Breu, my wonderful thesis advisor, for keeping me on track and continuously encouraging me to achieve; Dr. Karen Blaisure and Dr. Angela Moe (Department of Sociology), my diligent committee members, for their outstanding help with editing and giving me the right “recipes” for an excellent thesis.

I would like to say thank you to my friends and sorority sisters for always showing a sincere concern about my studies, praying with me, and wishing for the best.

Last, to my aunt Elizabeth “Tiny” Ross, this thesis is dedicated in loving memory of you!

Mia M. Wilson

A STUDY OF BODY SCENT AS A SOCIAL IDENTIFIER AMONG MEMBERS OF THE ARABIC CULTURE

Mia M. Wilson, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2008

Body scent plays a major factor in how individuals interact with one another. While Americans have their own perception of what is “proper” body scent, they still remain uninformed about the various ways body scent is used to deliver social messages and form interpersonal relationships within other cultures. With many immigrants continuing to move to the United States (Frey, 2004), American societies need to become educated on other cultures’ social aspects of body scent to avoid alienation of foreign communities. This qualitative research study explores how individuals of the Saudi Arabian culture use body scent as a social identifier to create relationships, identify groups, and accept or reject individuals. A convenience sample of 20 Saudi Arabian students from Western Michigan University was used to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Thirteen Saudi males and seven Saudi females were asked questions relating to their “lived experiences” with the use of body scent. Eleven categories (central themes) emerged during data analysis. The study’s findings suggest a significant need for Americans to become aware of cultural differences involving the use of body scent to eliminate segregation and develop an appreciation of the differences.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scientists know the sense of smell plays a major factor in humans' everyday life and how they communicate and interact with each other. Odors influence mood, social attraction, and individual preferences. Societies associate all interactions, activities and thoughts in life with an odor even though the brain process may not be recognized. An individual who loses the sense of smell can often become depressed (Wilkie, 1995). Olfactory memories and emotions prompted by smell last longer and fade less quickly as compared to the other five senses (Jacob, 2005). Scents may also evoke positive or negative memories and emotions, whether they are applied or natural to the body (Breu, 2007). Scents in general have a powerful effect on human thought and behavior (Wilkie, 1995).

Americans label a scent as "something with a nice smell" and an odor as "something with a bad smell." Americans tend to associate positively with body scents that appeal to them. Humans use all of their senses in daily interaction, compared to dogs, who rely on smell more than any other sense (Wilkie, 1995). Dogs use body scents as a way to identify their owner. Although individuals do not consciously notice their use of scent, these same tactics are used to form everyday relationships and impressions of other individuals (Settle, Sommerville, McCormick, & Broom, 1994). "We are constantly emitting and perceiving odors, smelling and being smelled; and these odours play important roles in virtually every area of social

interaction: eating and drinking, health, the home, therapy, stress reduction, religion, industry, transport, class and ethnic relations and personal care” (Synnott, 1991, p. 437). Breu (2007) explained, “Humans are leaky chemical units, emitting their characteristic scents into body supplements and the atmosphere” (p. 62).

Body scents are signs of different cultures, diets, and beliefs (Largey & Watson, 1972). Culture plays a major part in determining what smells are pleasant and unpleasant to individuals (Wilkie, 1995). One example is certain spices, which may smell normal to an individual within a given culture, but could make a tourist gag (Wilkie, 1995). Breu (2007) explained that the physiology of smell is the same for all people, but there are distinct cross cultural differences in the ways people think or behave related to natural or artificial scents emitted from the body and body supplements. While no one wants to smell malodorous, cultures have their own perception of what natural body odors secreted from the pores are pleasant or malodorous. Individuals learn through their cultural teachings what is appropriate dress, appropriate use of body smell (natural and applied scents), and what are appropriate methods of removing malodorous body odor (Breu, 2007).

This study investigates how people of the Saudi Arabian culture, currently living in the United States, use body scents as a social identifier to create relationships, maintain group identity, and accept or reject individuals. Twenty semi-structured interviews were held with 13 Saudi male and seven Saudi female students of Western Michigan University. The students were completing their last year of study in the CELCIS (Career English Language Center for International Students) program, which aids in the further development of the English language for all

international students. The CELCIS (Career English Language Center for International Students) program resides within Western Michigan University's English department and is designed as a program that international students can complete before entering English courses required for their major.

Significance of Study

Of the five senses, smell is under researched in terms of its uses in everyday relationships (Synnott, 1991). Very little literature and sociohistory have been published on the topic, specifically on the peoples of Southeast Asia. Scholars have focused on western societies and studied anthropological accounts of Brazil, Ethiopia, and elsewhere, but insufficient attention has been given to other areas' "smell cultures" (Low, 2005). Textile and apparel scholars have also noted that very little attention has been given to scent within all cultures as it relates to the various categories of dress (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1992). But smell plays a big factor in everyday dress applied to the body. In fact, Classen, Howes and Synnott (1994) stated "smelling an article of clothing belonging to a person will often give a much stronger impression of that person's presence than seeing the piece of clothing would" (p.116).

By investigating other cultures' uses of body scents and odors, a better understanding of cultural uniqueness and distinctiveness amongst one another can be developed. Jenner (2000) stated the next step in research is to understand the various ways in which smells are configured by, and underpin cultures. Jenner suggested that gaining this understanding will aid in Americans' awareness of the extent to which

sensorial interactions shape their everyday life experiences (Jenner, 2000, as cited in Low, 2005). Jenner explained that people need to focus their attention towards exploring the cultural meanings of particular odors in specific locations or within particular discourses. Forming interpersonal relationships is a part of every life and if scent is a factor in this behavior, Americans need to be aware of other's cultural practices to not single out international immigrants. Americans need to find something positive from the differences in foreigners distinctive body scent instead of making judgments that may lead to social exclusion.

Smith (2002) was curious as to why Americans are so obsessed with their "perfumed" scent. He expressed how Americans have scrubbed off everything that makes us distinct as a member of the same species. Over the years, Americans have scrubbed off their "true" identities and perfumed themselves with a false one (Smith, 2002). Odors are signs of different cultures and beliefs. If all people smelled the same, what else would draw us closer to other individuals than their looks? Would that be enough to keep a person attracted to another "emotionally?" Every person, race, and class has different characteristics. This study will add to the body of knowledge regarding various ways scent is used cross-culturally.

Need and Benefit of the Research

American culture continues to become more diversified. The need for this research comes from Americans' lack of knowledge regarding the various uses of body scent within other cultures. Other countries study American culture and history, while American school systems do not focus on learning other cultural differences

and practices. Body scent, along with language, dress and religion, is one of the many elements Americans need to understand in order to accept diversity. Without the knowledge of why a foreigner practices certain scent customs, Americans may alienate a foreigner for having inappropriate body odor. A greater understanding and knowledge of why different cultures use or refrain from using certain products will help Americans understand foreigner's differences and respect the meanings behind their practices.

This research will benefit the Arabic culture and the Saudi student community at Western Michigan University. It will also contribute information specifically to American students, to help them better understand how to form relationships and accept Arabic (Saudi Arabian) cultural differences. The number of immigrants moving to the United States continues to rise, with a 30 percent population increase in legal immigrants between 1995 - 2005 (Preston, 2007). The percentage increase of Arabic students enrolled at Western Michigan University was 101.3 percent from Spring 2003 - Spring 2008 (80 students Spring 2005, and 161 students Spring 2008) and a percentage increase of Saudi Arabian students enrolled at Western Michigan University was 625 percent from Spring 2005 - Spring 2008 (16 students Spring 2005, and 116 students Spring 2008). Greater awareness of other cultural practices will help American students avoid segregation and move towards acceptance and appreciation of the differences. After completion of the study, the results will be reported to the CELCIS (Career English Language Center for International Students) at Western Michigan University. Since most of the teachers and staff in this department are Americans, the findings may aid in helping to strengthen the student

and teacher relationship. Teachers will be able to understand cross-cultural differences in the use of body scents rather than avoiding the issue.

Hannigan (1995) suggested a main issue facing foreigners from another culture is the difference in attitude demonstrated by various societies about odors, particularly body odor and personal hygiene. Hannigan has ten years experience in working as a Foreign Student Advisor at a US college. Many times he was called upon to address the issue with students from overseas, who were identified as having offensive body odor (Hannigan, 1995). Hannigan stated, while Americans notice the difference in body odors of foreigners, white westerners traveling abroad are surprised to learn they are perceived as “foul-smelling.” While cultural norms, values and traditions mark what is acceptable to say, how close to stand to someone, and how long to maintain eye contact, there are fewer universal rules for odor.

Hannigan’s research suggested the topic of body odor may have a place in the pre-departure orientation of US students and other sojourners who plan to study or work abroad (Hannigan, 1995). Foreigners are likely to experience different views and attitudes towards body scent while traveling abroad. Hannigan explains that foreigners may experience a range of responses, from becoming the object of comments to eventually not “fitting in” when following their practiced cultural uses of body scent. Hannigan concluded that body odor (malodor) has a different significance for different people. “It is a difficult subject to mediate; however, by having an understanding of the psychosocial and cultural factors involved, it may be possible to ease the conflict between persons” (Hannigan, 1995, p.503). This

research will aid in helping to close the gap between Americans and the Arabians where body scent may be a factor in forming interpersonal relationships.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter Two is divided into three sections. The first section is a review of literature on uses of scent. The second section gives a brief history of the Saudi Arabian culture, including factors that shaped it, from religion to family traditions passed along from generation to generation. The third section covers the theoretical framework for this study.

Individuals' Use of Scent

Americans tend to avoid or distance themselves from odors that are not appealing and move towards odors that appeal. What researchers know about individuals' use of scent is that the way they accept and reject certain odors is also the same method used in accepting and rejecting relationships with others (Largey & Watson, 1972). Smell is the only sense that is directly linked to the brain, which enables the body to immediately place olfactory stimuli into a person's emotional and memory centers (Jacob, 2005). Odors are also used in association with separation and distinction of race and social classes. Additionally, odors are associated with recognition of others, influencing initial impressions of individuals, and personal attraction (Largey & Watson, 1972). The following literature will review the term "odor" and how it has been used in each of the mentioned areas.

Webster's Dictionary (1997) defines odor as: "a smell; a sensation that occurs when the sense of smell is stimulated." In this study the words *odor* and *scent* are used interchangeably. "Body odor" is used to refer to a pungent scent coming from an individual's body. "Applied body scents" refers to products that enhance an individual's body smell (e.g. lotions, perfumes, oils). "International perfume" refers to products of mass global distribution (e.g. perfumes and household freshener products). "Natural body scent" is used to refer to the smell that an individual's body produces naturally without the use of any products.

Additionally, the use of the term *Arab* or phrase *Arabic community* in this study refers to the total Arabic population. This population includes individuals that reside within and outside of Saudi Arabia. Use of the general term *Arab* refers to individuals who reside in other countries or areas, but who also relate to the Arab world and culture for this study.

Humans produce a characteristic odor in the air around them that reflects their diet and/or health, age, sex, occupation, race (Le Guerer, 1992). "The body emits smells from its natural scent, from clothing such as leather and textiles, from odors that permeate those supplements, from fragrances that we add in products applied to the hair, skin or inside the mouth, and from products placed on the body for the very purpose of masking or preventing body odors" (Breu, 2007, p. 1). Le Guerer stated, "It can be argued that because of the physiology of the olfactory apparatus, the most direct and profound impression we can have of another is his (or her) smell" (p. 23).

Helen Keller was deemed "the world's most famous nose." She reported that her nose helped her learn much about people and their professions (Keller, 1908, as

cited in Synnott, 1991). “Adults generally emit a distinct ‘person-scent’; this is more than a ‘smell-print’, but is unique to each individual like a finger print” (Synnott, 1991, p. 442). Synnott (1991) explains, “Odour is many things: a boundary-marker, a status symbol, a distance-maintainer, an impression management technique, a school’s joke or protest, and a danger signal- but it is above all a statement of who one is” (p. 438).

America’s Demand for Controlled Body Odor

Throughout North America, intense shame surrounds smelling bad. Education USA (2005) stated that Americans usually consider the odors that the human body naturally produces (e.g. perspiration or breath) to be unpleasant. Additionally, individuals’ clothing should not emit bodily odors (Education USA, 2005). Smelling bad is identified as being non-human and having the character of other animal species (Klein, 1995). In America, success has no smell and everyone dreams of being odor free (Klein, 1995).

According to Le Guerer (1992) individuals who reject their body odor are denying their existence. Largey and Watson (1972) explained that to establish and maintain social acceptance, individuals engaged in two practices: deodorizing and odorizing. Deodorizing entails the removal of socially discreditable odors through such activities as washing, gargling, cleansing of teeth, and a particular concern for removal of perspiration. Deodorizing is associated with “health” and “cleanliness”

while odorizing is associated with “being fresh” and having a “pleasant smell” to others (Largey & Watson, 1972).

It is a dominant characteristic in American society to smell fresh, but there are many perceptions of what fresh really is. Klein (1995) explained that the scent industry is a five billion dollar market that tries to capture the sense of a “fresh smell” in the perfumes that are sold, but the variety of what is “fresh” ranges from peppery, mint, to pine scents. Although there is not one scent that denotes “fresh,” Americans are continuing to purchase the various scent products. Klein suggested fresh odor depends on your and other individuals’ tastes.

The demand for control of body odor has occurred in several types of situations, particularly in the enforced intimacy of heterosexual office work (Wax, 1965). Wax explained that in the office, people live with one another in close proximity for more of their waking hours than they do with their families. He suggested this minimizing of human odors may be interpreted as part of the attempt to minimize the physical being and emphasize the social role and office.

Individuals rarely find their body scent to be offensive; only that of another is usually noticed (Klein, 1995). Klein stated, “Perhaps it is the American taboo on death that makes us hate the smell of any strong odors” (p. 5). Research states any time an individual encounters a dark or intense smell it immediately reminds them of either their animality or their mortality (Klein, 1995). An individual who smells bad or deviates from the olfactory norm is sometimes looked at as being faulty or defective physically, emotionally, or mentally (Synnott, 1991). Le Guerer (1992) also suggested that the notion of sin is associated with bad odor. The following sections

will investigate how scent can be used to enhance individual's memories, associate with others, and its uses during cultural rituals.

Scent and Memories

Children encounter certain odors that enhance their emotional thoughts of a memory in the future. Proust (1913) emotionally described in his book, *Swann's Way*, how he could remember sitting in his mother's kitchen and smelling her teacake and soggy cookies in the oven. He remembered the event so vividly due to the aromas he encountered. Psychologists call this experience the Proust Phenomenon and recent studies have replicated this experience. Crenson (1996) found odors and flavorful scents to have a huge impact on peoples' memories. In fact, memories related to a scent tend to be more vivid and emotional than those remembered by sight, sound or tastes (Crenson, 1996).

Herz (1995) concluded, following a series of studies of the five senses, that smell has the highest potential for stimulating emotional memories (as cited in Crenson, 1996). One of her experiments detailed several subjects viewing sixteen different paintings. Eight of the paintings were viewed while smelling an odor and eight others while just thinking of an odor. At the completion, they were asked to go home. They were then asked to return in two days and Herz, with her colleagues, presented each subject with the odors they had smelled previously or with the words of smells they had thought of while viewing the paintings. The subjects were then asked to identify the paintings that went with that odor and write a brief description. The results showed the smells did not actually help the subjects remember the

paintings but the smells helped them to describe the emotional content of the painting. Herz suggested individuals' emotions might be different towards objects or ideas if they did not have the sense of smell (Herz, 1995, as cited in Crenson, 1996).

Scent Used as a Form of Acceptance

Odors play a major part in accepting others. This action begins at birth with the acceptance of the mother's body scent. Experiments have demonstrated mothers can recognize the bodily odor of their child as early as the second day following childbirth. The child itself is capable of identifying the odor of its mother's bosom from the third day (Le Guerer, 1992). Le Guerer explained "pleasant" maternal odors have a soothing power and are essential to the nursling's emotional and intellectual development.

The role odor plays in the mother-offspring relationship is also evident in forming interpersonal relationships. Pierce, Cohen and Ulrich (2004) investigated the impact of odors on interpersonal relationships. The study used 258 students, 122 men and 136 women, and asked them to smell bottles that held androstenone (found in male sweat) in one and amyl acetate (known to be a pleasant odor) in the other. The participants smelled the bottles and completed questionnaires rating how often they come in contact with this smell, on a Likert type scale. The participants were then asked how adversely the smell affected them, on a Likert type scale.

Results suggested individuals who were sensitive to androstenone reported using odor as a means to reject interpersonal relationships more than individuals that were not as sensitive to the substance. Participants who perceived androstenone as

extremely unpleasant reported, more often, using odors in both positive and negative contexts. There was an increase in responsivity to intense odors such as androstenone compared to pleasant-smelling amyl acetate, which was associated with a greater tendency to use odors in a positive manner (Pierce et al., 2004). Their findings suggested that individuals who differed in sensitivity to androstenone would also differ in how they form interpersonal relationships using odor as a means.

In the end, Pierce et al. (2004) hypothesized that “other qualitative differences in olfactory responsivity may have similar effects on interpersonal judgments and ratings” (p. 18). The researchers stated that odorants structurally or perceptually similar to androstenone could be studied for corresponding social implications. They also concluded that any other compounds demonstrating these same behaviors might also affect interpersonal judgments and ratings. Further, they suggested that studying odors and their roles in social relationships may show how individuals vary in their use of scents in forming relationships, and remind us that even individuals who live and reside in the same areas still travel in different olfactory environments. Their statement is relevant to how people form relationships in conjunction with body scent and how this should be considered in future cultural studies.

Nineteenth-century physician, Auguste Galopin, first discovered how socioprofessional sources are an essential element in one’s choice of partner. Most working-class marriages occur between two individuals of the same profession. Galopin stated that reasoning behind this phenomenon is that the woman’s scent tends to harmonize with the man’s (Galopin, 1886, as cited in Le Guerer, 1992). He used examples such as hairdressers falling in love with perfumers, the draper’s assistant

with the department-store salesgirl, and maids marrying other maids or domestic servants who smell of the same job. Due to the individuals in these professions working around and carrying the same scents on their bodies as their coworkers, the “common scent” they are accustomed to smelling daily attracts the other. The scent of the individual pleases their coworkers and drives other professions away (Galopin, 1886, as cited in Le Guerer, 1992).

Scent Used as a Form of Rejection

Research suggested a distinctive odor that represents an individual’s membership in a group and serves to promote that group’s cohesion can also keep others away and lead to alienation (Le Guerer, 1992). Le Guerer (1992) stated that “odor thus becomes an instrument and justification for, or the sign of a racial, social, and in the end, moral rejection” (p.27). Individuals with odors that do not appeal to others are referred to as the “skunk” from the sociological standpoint. Sociologists Largey and Watson (1972) explained what individuals tend to do if confronted by a “skunk”:

If we encounter an individual skunk (e.g. a person with bad breath), it is commonly accepted that we may step back from the person as to prevent further violation of our sense of smell. Usually we mentally label such a person, and we may extend our discreditation by informing others that the person has a problem. Strangely enough, the person himself is seldom directly confronted about his problem because of the embarrassment it would cause the dishonored self to embarrass the dishonoring one. (p. 316)

In 1912, Georg Simmel, one of the few sociologists who studied body scent, wrote the races were prevented from coming together because of olfactory intolerance

(Simmel, 1912, as cited in Le Guerer, 1992). In 1890, garlic reflected anti-Semitism in Poland when Germans felt Jews had the body odor of garlic and should stay in their own cities (Prus, 1890, as cited in Le Guerer, 1992). The odor was believed to miraculously disappear upon conversion and baptism into the Christian faith (Golding, 1938; Klineberg, 1935, as cited in Largey & Watson, 1972). Georg Simmel also wrote how it would appear impossible for the “Negro” ever to be accepted into high society in North America because of his bodily odor. American whites may have spoken of the “stench of nigger,” suggesting that it arises necessarily from a failure to bathe and follow “decent human standards,” and because they “live like pigs” (Faulkner, 1948; Dollard, 1957; Brink & Harris, 1969, as cited in Largey & Watson, 1972). Dollard felt that to counter racist notions about themselves, American blacks developed a tendency to wear exaggerated amounts of perfume, thereby only reinforcing white prejudices. Whites could then argue that blacks really do stink because they wear so much perfume (Dollard, 1957, as cited in Le Guerer, 1992).

Odors also create walls between different sectors of society. Odors connected to certain professions have sometimes led to rejection. One case was ancient France with all its tanners, curriers, fellmongers, and tallow chandlers trades, which entailed malodorous processes. However, the distaste was extended to the lower class as a whole (Le Guerer, 1992). Largey and Watson (1972) explained class prejudices are supported by imputations that those of lower classes are “foul- smelling” and must be avoided if one is sensitive to such odors.

Largey and Watson (1972) further discussed factors related to smell and socio-economic classes. They explained that males in the labor class associate the

smell of cologne on a male with effeminacy (e.g. he “smells nice” or “pretty”). It would be rare to find a steel worker who dabbed himself with cologne before going off to work and a white-collar worker may be heard expressing a separation towards those who emit a “stinky sweat” or those who “smell like a farmer,” who is looked at as being dirty and unclean (Largey & Watson, 1972). A white-collar worker’s before work ritual would most likely include odorizing himself with cologne (Largey & Watson, 1972).

Women have also been singled out as a result of body odor. In the Middle Ages, a statement such as “she smells like a whore,” was an implication that a heavily perfumed woman was likely to be promiscuous (Largey & Watson, 1972). Research also shows that advertisers are continuing to create a social conscious that “bad breath,” “ugly perspiration,” or the “feminine odor” are signs of a woman who does not care about her character (Largey & Watson, 1972).

Scent Used Within Cultural Rituals

At the end of the nineteenth century, British sociologist Herbert Spenser (1899) described the greeting rituals of such ethnic groups as Eskimos, Samoans, Maoris, and Filipinos. He found that within all of these ethnic groups the sense of smell played a predominant role (as cited in Le Guerier, 1992). Spenser explained how members of those groups rub noses or sniff each other’s faces in recognition. This nonverbal communication is also a means of gaining group identification and cohesion. The use of scent in cultural rituals was also prevalent within the Arabic

culture. However, an understanding of the use of the term *Arab* in prior studies must precede this discussion.

In the literature, the term Arab was used without indication of the area of the Arabian Peninsula being studied. Many of the researchers cite Hall (1966) for his years of fieldwork on the Arabs, but his works were also general in stating that his findings were developed from travels to the Middle East. Therefore, I am using the term *Arab*, but there is no reference to the Saudis being included in the following findings.

Arabs tend to make more use of scent and touch than Americans (Hall, 1966, as cited in Synnott, 1991). This statement is supported by the Arab's custom of blowing in one's interlocutor's face. Hall (1966) explained that to smell a friend's breath is not only nice, but is also considered desirable (as cited in Synnott, 1991). It is considered an insult to avoid the other person's breath (Catelan, n.d., as cited in Le Guerer, 1992). In contrast, Americans are taught to not breathe in other individuals' faces. This action may further lead to an American communicating shame to the Arabs while trying to be polite during conversations (Hall, 1966, as cited in Synnott, 1991).

Hall (1966) also found that Arabs do not try to eliminate all of their body's odors. They use and improve these odors while building human relationships, unlike Americans who practice deodorizing and perfuming daily rituals (as cited in Synnott, 1991). Arabs use cleansing rituals, which are designed to abolish symbolically the "differentness" of the foreigner, who their culture refers to as "he who stinks" (Le Guerer, 1992). Research also points out that, in Arabic marriages, the families often

take great care to smell the girl, and will reject her if she “does not smell nice” (Hall, 1966, as cited in Largey & Watson, 1972). Priests have also claimed to be able to perceive whether a woman is a virgin by her odor (Ellis, 1928, as cited in Largey & Watson, 1972).

With the sense of smell found to be used in so many ways from past literature, the intent of this study is to add to the literature regarding scent by focusing on a specific cultural group, the Saudi Arabian student at Western Michigan University. While scent has been used in various ways within past societies, more can be learned about present day foreign societies and how these methods are related to dress as a whole.

Brief History of the Saudi Arabian Culture

Evidence of habitation on the Arabian Peninsula dates back to prehistoric times (Lipsky, 1959). This area drew in people from Africa, Asia and Europe with its accessibility, but escaped subjection to persuasive outside control and the intrusion of other's powers (The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the United States of America, 1993). Escaping subjection to outside control allowed for the Saudi culture to remain rich and have little influence of other cultural practices. Arabs look upon Saudi Arabia as their ancestral home or the point of origin of the Arab “race” (Lipsky, 1959). Lipsky explained that the small amounts of ethnic minorities who settled in Saudi Arabia are those who entered the country on Islamic pilgrimages or during the expansion of their oil industry.

The Saudi culture, rich with history and traditions, has been greatly shaped by its Islamic heritage. The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the United States of America (1993) explained that older generations of Saudis were not as willing to reject their Islamic heritage in favor of a foreign philosophy. Saudi Arabia is known for playing a historical role as an ancient trade center and foundation for many traditions. The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia (2006) explains that over the past decades the Saudi society has experienced tremendous development. Today, the younger generations of Saudis have adapted their values and traditions (e.g. their customs, hospitality, and style of dress) to the modern world.

Religion

The introduction of Islam in the 7th century AD further defined the region's culture. Within a century of its birth in the Arabian Peninsula, Islam had spread west to the Atlantic Ocean and east to India and China. This spread brought a dynamic period of great learning in culture, science, mathematics, philosophy and the arts known as the Islamic "Golden Age" (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2006).

For the past 14 centuries, Muslim pilgrims from around the world travel to holy sites in the cities of Mecca and Medina, which further enriches the region's culture. The pilgrimage occurs every year and should be performed at least once in the lifetime of an individual who practices the religion. Individuals from past pilgrimages brought ivory from Africa and carpets from the East, and took local goods back to their homelands, with the result of expanding the Islamic religion (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2006).

Arabic Traditions

Arab traditions play an important role in Saudi life. When the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formed in 1932, King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman was noted for dedicating himself to preserving Arab traditions and culture, and his sons and successors vowed to do the same (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2007). Age-old traditions have evolved over the millennia and are highly regarded. Generosity and hospitality are two traditions, which every Saudi family offers to strangers, friends, and family. The simplest expression of hospitality is coffee – its preparation alone is an intricate cultural tradition, and it is often served in small cups along with dates and sweets (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2007). Another gesture of hospitality is the burning of incense to welcome guests. Individuals' clothing in the ancient world, and even today in some parts of the Middle East, is infused with fragrance by placing garments over a source of incense (Classen et al., 1994).

The Middle East has a strong emphasis on fragrances. Collective perfuming was an important part of entertaining and impressing the mass of individuals and establishing group cohesiveness in the ancient world. The uses of fragrant smoke, incense, or liquid scents continue to be a well-known practice by Middle Easterners today (Classen et al., 1994). Stores are devoted to the sale of fragrant oils for both men and women and stock traditional decorated small glass perfume bottles for holding the oils (Hall, 1966).

Thus scent is recognized and used heavily in Arabic culture. Saudi Arabians are cognizant of scent and its place in human interaction. Scents are expressed and appreciated within Saudi culture. While most of the references noted in the literature

review are speaking of the Arabic culture in general, it should be noted that the ritual findings are not necessarily associated with the Saudi Arabian people, who predominately follow Muslim practices of cleansing. Some of the general Arabic greeting and marital rituals mentioned came from Jewish and Christian practices, which are not applicable to Saudi culture. There was a need for this research to be included within the literature review in supporting previous statements of how religion has shaped the overall Arabic culture and created different social uses of scent within each religion practiced. It is important to note that since different religious practices have shaped Arabic traditions regarding scent, this same pattern should also be apparent within Saudi Islamic population.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework used to guide this study comes from the classification system for types of dress and their properties (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992), where odor is used as a “property” in the system. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) defined dress as “an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings” (p. 15). “Dress is what people do to their bodies to maintain, manage, and alter appearance, therefore dress is a behavior” (Damhorst, 1999, p.2). Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) explained that dress is not just clothing that is applied to the body. They detailed in their model those three-dimensional objects that enclose and envelop the body in other ways. Dress includes a wide array of supplements and attachments to the body

such as: make-up, piercing, masks, shoes, and headdresses/ wigs/ hair extensions. Dress also includes applications to the body such as: chemicals, heat and light to change color (e.g. tanning), texture (e.g. straight or curled hair), odor (e.g. perfumes, deodorants, oils, and lotions), facial treatments, tattoos, scarification and branding (Damhorst, 1999). Dress expresses relationships; determines how individuals approach, avoid or act towards one another; reflects an individual's self-esteem; and expresses personal values and values within the society where an individual lives (Damhorst, 1999). Understanding the functions of dress helps individuals relate to other cultures, facilitate interactions with others, and reflect upon and understand themselves (Damhorst, 1999).

Classification System for Types of Dress and Their Properties

The classification system for types of dress and their properties (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992) is a table comprised of two categories, "Properties" and "Types of Dress." (See Table 1.) The table is completed by taking the "Properties" of dress and listing various ways "Types of Dress" (body modifications or body supplements) can be displayed by an individual. The following are examples of "Types of Dress" (body modifications a, b, c, and f.) for the property "Odor": a. hair- natural hair odor can be transformed by the use of scented shampoo, b. skin- natural skin odor can be transformed by the use of perfume, c. nails- natural nail odor can be transformed by the use of scented nail polish, f. breath- natural breath can be transformed by the use of flavored toothpaste or mouthwash. The method of

combining “Properties” with “Types of Dress” is repeated until all the areas (letters) of the table are complete.

The Classification System for Types of Dress and Their Properties was used to inform the questions for this study. The “Types of Dress” included in the chart helped in forming the questions not only on scents that would be applied to the skin but also to the hair, mouth (teeth) and clothing. For example Area III of the questionnaire looked at the participants’ Uses of Applied Body Scent Versus Natural Body Scent. Questions such as: “Name the various Applied Body Scents (e.g. perfumes, lotions, oils, soaps, shampoos, breath enhancers, etc.) that you use on a daily basis” and “What other cleansing objects or utensils do you use, which are native to your home country (e.g. different forms of a toothbrush, cleansing cloths, etc.)?” researched items a. hair, b. skin, e. teeth, and f. teeth within the body modifications section under “Types of Dress” of the chart. Use of scents on body supplements such as clothing articles was also researched through questions such as “List other ways that scents (e.g. perfumes, oils, incense burners, air sprays, etc.) are used in welcoming or accepting guest into your home.” This area researched applied body scents, also including scents that are infused into the air of the participants surrounding, which would fragrance their clothing.

This grounding framework allowed for the property of odor to be researched as it relates to dress. Using this theoretical framework will support the notions that scholars have made about how odor is a significant component to a culture’s form of dress. This chapter discussed the theoretical framework which guided the study. Chapter three will discuss the methodological framework used to conduct this study.

Table 1

Classification System for Types of Dress and Their Properties

Types of Dress**	Properties							
	Color	Volume & Proportion	Shape & Structure	Surface Design	Texture	Odor	Taste	Sound
Body Modifications								
Transformations of								
a. Hair								
b. Skin								
c. Nails								
d. Muscular/ skeletal system								
e. Teeth								
f. Breath								
Body Supplements								
Enclosures								
a. Wrapped								
b. Suspended								
c. Pre-shaped								
d. Combinations of ab,ac,bc,abc								
Attachments to Body								
a. Inserted								
b. Clipped								
c. Adhered								
Attachments to Body Enclosures								
a. Inserted								
b. Clipped								
c. Adhered								
Hand-Held Objects								
a. By self								
b. By other								

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Source: Roach-Higgins, M. E., & Eicher, J. B. (1992). Definition and classification of dress: Implications for analysis of gender roles. In R. Barnes and J. Richer (Eds.), *Dress and gender: Making and meaning*, 8-28. Reprinted by permission of Berg Publishers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to explore how people of the Saudi Arabian culture, currently living in the United States, use body scent as a social identifier to create relationships, maintain group identity, and accept or reject individuals. The study consisted of 20 semi-structured interviews with male and female Saudi students of Western Michigan University's campus. A university sample was ideal for this study due to the increase in international students on college campuses and American students having daily interaction with them in classes, on campuses, and within college towns. The subjects were given the interview questions before the interviews took place to help with clarification of the questions being asked. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to place minimal parameters on discussion in order to extract the lived experiences of the subjects in regards to scent. Therefore interviews were not restricted to questionnaire questions as new areas of body scent experiences were disclosed. Participants were allowed to speak freely and were only interrupted if clarification of a statement was needed. The study design and questionnaire was approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) at Western Michigan University. (See appendix item A.)

An advisor for students of the Arabic community at Western Michigan University stated that the students tend to express a desire to speak about their

cultural practices. He suggested the students are usually delighted when someone takes an interest in studying their culture, and will willingly share information.

Research Method

This was a qualitative research study which used phenomenology to gain insight into socio-cultural uses of scent. Phenomenology has been used effectively within the social sciences because of its focus on individuals' lived experiences. Phenomenology offers a descriptive, reflective, interpretive, and engaging mode of inquiry from which a researcher can gain an individual's "personal experience" of a subject (van Manen, 1990). Morse and Richards (2002) explained "experience is considered to be an individual's perceptions of his or her presence in the world at the moment when things, truths, or values are constituted" (p.44). There are four essential guides in phenomenology research: temporality (lived time), spatiality (lived space), corporeality (lived body), and relationality or communality (lived human relation) (van Manen, 1990). People are understood in their context by their tie to the world (Morse & Richards, 2002). Relationships to things, people, events, and situations affect an individual's behavior (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Areas of the Saudi culture's daily routine of applying body scent, encounters with other's body scent, and how it is used socially or to identity with others were explored during questioning. All of the areas of questioning looked at the lived experiences of the participants related to scent. A phenomenological method of study

was imperative in finding the richest data from the Saudi participants about their everyday and practiced life experiences and episodes involving body scent.

Phenomenology Methods Used in Social Science Research

While the use of phenomenological methods to research body scent is just emerging in the field of Family and Consumer Sciences, it has been used in the sociology field for studying how individuals experience everyday phenomena and how the experiences are structured (Wolff, 1999). Although Wolff's research is not in the Family and Consumer Science field, his social science research was included due to the in-depth information and process given on how to handle qualitative data using phenomenological methods of study. Wolff's elaboration of how to conduct the methodological schema of description- reduction- interpretation provided the structure for this study.

Wolff (1999) used the method of phenomenology to research in-church worship and then compared how people experience worship in-church with worship via television. The study used the methodological schema of description- reduction- interpretation (Lanigan, 1988, as cited in Wolff, 1999). Wolff explains that description refers to the transcribed interviews, reduction refers to thematizations, and interpretation refers to the researcher's hermeneutic reflections of the study. Wolff (1999) explained that description is taken through "phenomenological reduction" by discovering emergent themes in the description of phenomena found within transcription. Wolff looked for clusters (e.g. groups of highly similar entities) of

statements which could be placed into a category (central theme). The example given was the central theme of “Church Unity,” under which the clusters (general themes) of “blending,” “bringing together” and “experience of oneness” were placed.

Almagor (1990) used phenomenological methods to research odor sensations of two tribal societies in Africa: the Dassanetch of Southwest Ethiopia and the Herero of Northwest Botswana. The study consisted of interviews and field observations. Almagor suggested that a phenomenological basis was needed to research odor sensations. Phenomenological methods of research were used to study two facets that concerned odor: “incompatibility between the idiosyncratic meaning which an individual accords to various odors and the social norms concerning typical odors” and “limitations on expressing one’s odorous experiences in social interaction” (p. 255). A starting point for researching scent using phenomenology methods, according to Almagor, was “handling some of the difficulties in studying the individual’s perceptions and experiences with odors” by investigating two areas: “*public resources* (the conventional meaning of scent shared within societies) and *private* (personal views on olfactory experiences)” (p. 255). By using a phenomenological method of study, Almagor was able to capture how individuals used scent in their daily lives and how distinctive odors could trigger vivid memories of previous and past events. These events are found to be experienced differently by all individuals involved.

Low (2005) also used phenomenological methods of study to research individuals’ uses of body scent. Low conducted fieldwork in Singapore researching

the culture's thoughts and uses of body scent. Narrative interviews along with breaching experiments and participative observation were performed. The narrative interviews lasted between 60 to 75 minutes. Interview questions were left opened-ended to encourage a flow of narration from the participants. After each interview, the data was reorganized by forming conceptual categories (central themes) from the clusters (general themes) that emerged. Last, evidence (recurring general themes), from which each category (central theme) emerged, was used to illustrate the concept. This process allowed for theories to be extrapolated about Singapore's views towards body scent.

A second study conducted by Low (2006) investigated individuals' reaction to bodily odors and maintenance of acceptable bodily scents to facilitate social interaction. Narrative interviews were conducted with twelve respondents. Each interview was transcribed after completion. Reorganization of the data obtained was accomplished by forming conceptual categories (central themes) from the information received. The categories (central themes) formed were: "Links between Olfaction," "Personhood," "Mortality" and "Techniques for Accomplishing an Ideal Olfactory Image." Low explained that such categories (central themes) were formed through the respondents' accounts of particular episodes related to body odor such as: "being acquainted with people whom they think have body odors," "talking about their cleaning and odorizing routines before stepping out of the house," "and revealing how they would handle a situation whereby they were confronted with people who smell or if they themselves were told they emitted unpleasant smells," among others.

These studies indicate phenomenology has been successfully used in researching individuals' lives and their olfactory experiences. From this respect, phenomenological methods of study were used to conduct interviews and perform data analysis for this study. An understanding of how individuals within cultures use scent in their everyday lives or through experiences are vital elements to investigate when learning the various ways body scents can be used as a social identifier to: create relationships, maintain group identity, and accept or reject individuals. Individuals within various cultures use scent in a variety of ways; no culture will view scent in the same manner. The studies cited suggest phenomenology research methods are successful in researching individuals' body scent uses in different cultures. Thus, phenomenological methodology was used to conduct this study.

Sample Selection

For this study, The International Student Services Department was contacted to find the approximate number of Arabic students who attend Western Michigan University. The largest populations of Arabic students are enrolled in the CELCIS (Career English Language Center for International Students) program. Saudi Arabian students had the largest overall population of the Arabic community, with approximately 79 students in the fall of 2007. Thus, the Saudi Arabian student community was chosen for the study.

Twenty Saudi Arabian students from the CELCIS (Career English Language Center for International Students) program's population pool, ages 18-25, were

recruited for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These students were selected from the third and forth level classes of the CELCIS (Career English Language for International Students) program to gain individuals with a higher proficiency of the English language. According to CELCIS (Career English Language for International Students), the average age range of Arabic students in the program is 18-21. To include the maximum number of potential participants at Western Michigan University, the age range was expanded to 18-25.

The Saudi Arabian Student Liaison within the CELCIS (Career English Language for International Students) office helped in informing the CELCIS (Career English Language for International Students) instructors about the study. He also informed the Saudi male students about the study in their monthly meeting and asked for as many students to volunteer as possible. The female students were informed about the study through a female spokesperson for the female Saudi students at the liaison's request. Having the female inside contact created an advantage for me to gain contact with the Saudi woman who seemed to be more reserved. Having inside contacts, (the Saudi Student Liaison) aided in the students feeling comfortable about participating in the study.

The liaison, a Saudi Arabian graduate student, also served as an informant by giving valuable preliminary information in understanding terminology and cultural practices associated with scent. Having this advantage presented a chance to rework questions for better understanding of what was being asked or add questions that would give great detail and benefit the research. I was also able to reassure myself that wording within the questions would not be offensive to the participants by having

the liaison review the entire questionnaire. The liaison addressed Arabic terms and meanings that may have been revealed in the participants' responses for the study such as *wudu*, *ghusl* and *miswak*. (Arabic terms addressed in Chapter Four.) He also provided spelling for the Arabic terms.

Memos were sent to all CELCIS (Career English Language for International Students) instructors, asking them to mention the study in their classes. The instructors collected 29 email addresses of students who wanted to learn more about the study. Those students were emailed and asked to provide their phone numbers if they expressed a desire to learn more about the study. A meeting date was set for interested students to pick up a copy of the questionnaire and review the consent form. (See appendix item C.) A follow-up phone call was made to the students to set up an interview time if they still wished to participant in the study. Thirteen males and seven females agreed to participate.

Instrumentation

A list of questions was used to guide the students in speaking about various body scent practices in their culture. These questions were formed to capture the lived experiences associated with social relationships. The questions addressed four areas: Individual's Daily Routine of Dress, Individual's Perception of Applied Body Scents Verses Natural Scents, Culture's Social Uses and Identifiers With Body Scent, and Willingness to Adapt to Other Cultures' Practices of the Use and Appliances of Body Scent. (See appendix item B.)

The first section, 'Individual Daily Routine of Dress' covered such questions as what is your daily step by step routine for getting dressed in the morning? This section attempted to learn what percentage of students include toiletries such as perfume, cologne, deodorant, or body spray as a daily ritual in everyday dress. The second section, 'Individual Perception of Applied Body Odor', addressed the student's feelings or thoughts on the uses of toiletries such as: perfume, cologne, deodorant, or body spray in everyday dress. This section aimed to reveal their individual feelings on body scents, if they have adapted to other practices regarding scent, or not fully accepted their own cultural practices. The third section, 'Their Culture's Social Uses and Identifiers With Body Scent', collected information on how scent is used in forming/avoiding relationships, greeting rituals, showing signs of power and dominance, showing respect to others by experiencing their scent, and forming groups or social classes. This section of data collection provided information to further educate American individuals on the Saudi Arabian's different cultural uses of body scent and how body scents are used within their interpersonal relationships. The last section, 'Their Willingness to Adapt to Other Cultures' Practices of the Use and Appliances of Body Scent', provided information on how much they attempt to continue their cultural practices while living in America. It also examined acceptance of any other cultural dress practices of body scent while living in their country.

As the interviews went along, additional questions were added to gain more detailed information on the participants' lived experiences. The additional questioning also aided in researching new areas of scent that were disclosed during early interviews. For example, a male participant disclosed that within the Islamic

religion it is wrong to not accept a gift of perfume from another individual. I then added the questions: “If someone offers you a gift of perfume or asks you to try some of their perfume, what would be the proper gesture related to your religion?” and “What would be your response if you knew that the scent being offered was not appealing to you?” to look for commonality in this response. Additionally, a female participant revealed various ways scents were used for child birth rituals. From this explanation, an additional question was asked, “Describe various ways body scent has been used within your culture during childbirth,” to the remaining female interviewees.

During questioning, if I found that the participants were not providing detailed information regarding a subject, I would then use scenarios to gain a richer understanding and observe if situations may be handled differently under altered circumstances. For example, in Area III of the questionnaire, participants were asked “Describe two times when you experienced another individual’s pleasant and unpleasant body scent within or outside of your country,” which participants originally mentioned close friends or family members as examples and being able to confront the individuals about their unpleasant body scent. I then formed two scenarios: “Explain what would be your course of action if you had to work on a class group project and one of your group members had an unpleasant body scent” and “If you were a manager of a company and one of your employees informs you that a co-worker has an unpleasant body scent and it is affecting the work of their fellow co-workers, how would you handle the situation?” The scenarios gave the opportunity to observe if the participants’ course of action would change when handling unpleasant

body scent with friends and family compared to strangers. These areas of additional questioning were decisive factors in why the interviews were semi-structured and not restricted to the questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedure

Interviews were conducted in the CELCIS (Career English Language for International Students) office conference room. An attempt was made to build rapport with each participant before the interview questioning began, by holding a conversation asking general questions about the participant such as: “What’s your major?” “How long have you been living in the United States?” “What do you like to do to have fun?” Each participant was also given the chance to ask any questions concerning the study, my major and areas of interest or my college life experiences. The consent form (See appendix item C) was read verbatim to the students and administered for their signing and dating before the interview began. Questions were read from the interview guide to the participants while they followed along with an additional copy. All participants were asked the same questions to get their male and female perspectives on the use of body scent within their culture. Each interview was audio-taped and lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Each interview was transcribed at its completion by a contracted transcriber. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

There was evidence that rapport was developed with the participants. Female participants seemed withdraw in the beginning of the interview but warmed up after their being able to ask me questions they had about the study and learning that I had

researched some of their traditions. The male participants were open to conversation and questioning. At the conclusion of the interviews, several female participants asked me to smell their various traditional perfumes and applied them to my skin to gain my opinion of the fragrances. The male participants asked if I felt Saudi traditional perfumes were strong and if there was a distinctive difference in the international colognes American men predominantly use. Both sexes addressed questions which suggested their concerns in wanting to fit in with American practices regarding applied body scents. Further evidence of rapport having been developed was shown by several of the participants inviting me to their homes for dinner and having a desire to converse and get to know me better. I was also asked to accompany one of the female participants shopping at the local mall and was given traditional Saudi Arabian perfumed wood pieces (*oud*), used for burning, as gifts by several of the participants.

Participants' Demographics

All of the participants were between the ages of 18-25. All of the participants practiced Islam and indentified with being Muslim. Female participants were veiled. It was revealed during questioning that of the seven female participants only two were not married, compared to three of the male participants being married. The length of time participants had attended Western Michigan University ranged from six months to two years. One of the females stated she was from a less conservative

area of Saudi Arabia where Islamic practices were not followed intensely but were still highly regarded and viewed as being correct.

Data Analysis Procedure

This phenomenological study used the methodological schema of description-reduction- interpretation (Lanigan, 1988; Wolff, 1999). Each transcription was analyzed question by question for repetitive statements given by each group of participants. All of the repetitive words and statements were highlighted within the transcription for reorganization and coding of the clusters (general themes). By looking over each cluster (general theme), categories (central themes) were formed, under which each cluster (general theme) could be categorized for each area of questioning (Wolff, 1999; Low, 2005; 2006). For example, under Area I of questioning, ‘Individual’s Daily Routine of Dress,’ the clusters (general themes) of “daily use of applied body scents”, “daily cleansing”, and “cleansing after physical activities” were categorized (central themes) under “General Practices of Cleansing.” This process continued for each area of questioning once the clusters were identified within transcription. Clusters were formed if 50 percent or more of the male responses (five out of ten) and female responses (four out of 7), within the analysis of separate genders, were recurring. All data that formed clusters were still included in the findings but were not placed into a category (central theme). All information regarding scent given by the participants that did not repeat still qualified as data and was included.

By following the methodological schema of description-reduction-interpretation for conducting phenomenological research, I was able to successfully have the interviews transcribed, develop thematizations through “phenomenological reduction,” and deliver my reflections on the study based on the participants’ responses. The following will illustrate the results of my thematization process following transcription.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This section will give results from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with 13 Saudi Arabian males and seven Saudi Arabian females on their uses of body scent within the Arabic culture. Results are given by the section area of questioning in order of the interview questionnaire. (See appendix item B.) The Arabic terms used within this chapter were originally stated and defined by the Saudi Arabian Student Liaison. The terms were also used by the participants during the interview process and will, therefore, be defined for clarification in the following results.

Arabic Terms

During the interview process, both male and female participants used the term “perfume” to refer to male and female Arabic traditional and international perfumes. The first term, *oud*, is the Arabic traditional perfume. There are two forms of *oud*, liquid or wood pieces used for burning, that are common to the Saudi Arabian culture. The liquid form is thick oil that is usually placed on the wrist, neck and behind the ears. The wood *oud* is burned in a ceramic burner using charcoal to generate heat. The quality and price of the *oud* varies by the strength of its scent. Expensive forms of *oud* can range from five hundred to one thousand dollars.

The second term, *miswak*, was explained as the root of a tree that is used for cleansing the teeth and refreshing the breath. The *miswak* is the root of an arak tree, *Salvadora Persica*, also known as the “toothbrush tree” (Ghaleb & al-Jarady, 2007). A group of dentists at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia studied the *miswak* and its benefits towards oral hygiene. The study found that the *miswak* has a total of 19 natural substances believed to benefit dental health. It contains a number of natural antiseptics that kill harmful microorganisms in the mouth, tannic acids that protect the gums from disease, and aromatic oils that increase salivation (Ghaleb & al-Jarady, 2007). The *miswak* was found to fight plaque, gum line recession, tooth wear, gingivitis, and periodontal pocket depths while also removing stains and calculus buildup (Ghaleb & al-Jarady, 2007). The *miswak* was noted for being able to reach areas in between the teeth that a traditional toothbrush could not (Ghaleb & al-Jarady, 2007).

The third term, *ghusl*, is the ceremonial bath that is performed after sexual intercourse and after the completion of female menstruation. The term means, “full cleansing” of the entire body. This requirement comes by instruction of the Quran by the Prophet Mohammed. Both sexes explained the cleansing is performed by cleaning the right side of their bodies first using their left hand and followed with the left side using the right hand. Until *ghusl* is performed following intercourse, both sexes are not allowed to pray. Women also have to complete *ghusl* after the completion of their menstrual cycle before they can begin daily prayer again. While in their menstrual cycle, a woman is not permitted to pray by instruction of the Quran by the Prophet Muhammad.

The fourth term, *wudu*, is the cleansing performed by both sexes before each prayer, five times daily. The term means, “partial cleansing” of the body. This cleansing is done by the instruction of the Quran by the Prophet Mohammed. One’s hands, arms, mouth, nostrils, face, head and feet must be clean before individuals begin each prayer.

EmergEd Themes

-Clarification of Definitions

Male Results:

For the definition of the term “odor,” the men defined the term using the words “scent” and “smell.” For the definition of the term scent, the men defined the term using the word “smell.” Most of the male participants explained that within the Arabic language only one term is used for the term “scent.” The context in which the term is used in conversation determines if it is a negative or positive smell. All of the male participants agreed their culture would define the terms “odor” and “scent” as they did in the interviews.

Female Results:

For the definition of the term “odor,” the females defined the term using the word “smell.” For the definition of the term scent, the females defined the term also using the word “smell.” The female participants also explained that within the Arabic language only one term is used for the term “scent.” The context in which the term is used in conversation determines if it is a negative or positive smell. All of the female

participants agreed their culture would define the terms odor and scent as they did in the interviews.

-Area I

In Area I, **‘Individual’s Daily Routine of Dress,’** two categories (central themes) emerged: “General Practices of Cleansing” and “Religious Practices of Cleansing.”

Male Results:

Under “General Practices of Cleansing,” four recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. The first was the listing of daily morning activities. Those activities included using the restroom, taking a shower, applying lotion, deodorant, and perfume, and last putting on their clothing. The second was the men preferred to use applied body scents (e.g. lotion, perfume, oils) to having only their natural body scent. Third, the men stated they took at least one shower a day, which physically cleansed their entire body. The fourth explained the necessary physical activities that would result in cleansing after completion. Those included playing sports, working outside in the hot and humid Saudi Arabian temperatures, and any other physical activities that would cause them to perspire.

Under “Religious Practices of Cleansing,” three recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. The first explained the cleansing for religious prayer (*wudu*), which occurs five times daily. Areas of the hands, arms, mouth, nostrils, face, head and feet are cleansed. One male participant explained:

Usually I take shower in the morning and sometimes it depends, I take shower at night. However, since I am a Muslim man, I have to pray five times a day and be clean, so I should wash five times a day before prayer. The arms, the face, the ears, the hands, the hair, your nose, your mouth, and your feet have to be clean. This is called *wudu* in Arabic.

Second, the men stated that due to their Muslim religious practices, it is required that the entire body be immediately cleansed (*ghusl*) following sexual intercourse. The third was the act of using water for cleansing after use of the bathroom. Many of the men stated it was difficult adapting to not having the water already provided in public restrooms for cleansing. They explained a water source is provided in each bathroom stall for cleansing in Saudi Arabia. Most of the men stated they have adapted to using bathroom tissue while using public restrooms, since living in the United States, but would immediately cleanse themselves with water once they returned to their homes.

Female Results:

Under “General Practices of Cleansing,” four recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. The first was the listing of daily morning activities. Those activities included using the restroom, cooking breakfast, taking a shower, applying lotion, deodorant, light body spray, and last putting on their clothing. The second was the females preferred to use applied body scents (e.g. lotion, perfume, oils) to having only their natural body scent. The women explained they can only wear perfume while being in the presence of other women or in their homes around their husband or brothers. In following the Quran, no woman is to show her beauty to an “outside” male. The male cousin of a female cannot smell any perfume on her as well, due to marriage being allowed for these relatives. Body scent

was explained as being a part of the woman's beauty. Most of the women stated they used a lightly scented lotion or body spray that was not noticeable. One female participant explained:

Yes, it is bad, if a woman wears perfume around men. I would use lotions and stuff like that but in my religion it is a big sin to have perfumes on around men. Sometimes when a woman have on too much, another woman smell her, and do not talk to her. Men too, if she smell strong, a man won't walk by her. The man like the more natural smell. If a woman have on too much, they think she is over or dirty. Like, too much make up. Too much perfume, she is too much. They don't like that. Like if I go to friend's I would not expect to see her brother or husband. I'll just see her and might be her friend, but not a man. Not a male in the house. I would not expect that.

Third, the females stated they, on average, take at least two showers a day, which physically cleansed their entire body. The fourth explained the necessary physical activities that would result in cleansing after completion. Those included cooking, exercising, working outside, and any other physical activities that would cause them to perspire.

Under "Religious Practices of Cleansing," three recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. The first explained cleansing for religious prayer (*wudu*), which occurs five times daily. Areas of the hands, arms, mouth, nostrils, face, head and feet are cleansed. Second, the females stated that due to their Muslim religious practices, it is required that the entire body be immediately cleansed (*ghusl*) following sexual intercourse with their husbands and after the completion of the menstrual cycle. The third was the act of using water for cleansing after use of the bathroom. All of the women explained they carried a small water bottle with them, while outside their homes, for cleansing after bathroom use. Some

of the women with children admitted to using their child's diaper wipes for cleansing when they do not have water. One female participant's response explained:

I use the toilet and when I finish we need to clean with water. I wash my face and brush my teeth. And then say good morning to my husband. For me, I take a shower usually two times a day or three times a day. But if not need more, I don't take one, then I still take one depending on what is happening outside. And then okay, we have in our religion some days we should um take a shower. The name of the shower is Arabic. It's *ghusl*. *G-h-u-s-l*. Okay, um we do that after having sex. And um...and Friday because it's a Holy day. Um in this shower we just do like we start with the head and then we wash our right part of body and then the left part of the body. And that's all.

-Area II

In Area II, '**Individual's Perception of Applied Body Scents versus Natural Body Scent**,' two categories (central themes) emerged: "Traditional Use of Applied Body Scent" and "International Use of Applied Body Scent."

Male Results:

Under "Traditional Uses of Applied Body Scent," four recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. The first was the male's use of both liquid and wood forms of Arabic traditional perfume (*oud*). The second was the males explaining that since living in the United States, many of them only use the liquid *oud* during holidays (*Ramadan*) and Arabic gatherings. Many of the men explained that since moving to United States, they have altered their use of both forms of *oud*. The reasons given were "fear of Americans not liking the smell," "good quality not being available for purchase in the United States," and "there being few Arabic gatherings for them to attend in the United States." There was also a traditional deodorant that two of the men admitted to using while living in the United

States. The third was the practice of the males removing bodily hair every forty days. Those areas included the armpit, pubic area, and trimming the hair on their face and head. This practice of hair removal and length of time between removals was by instruction of the Quran by the Prophet Mohammed. Due to hair holding odor, these areas should be kept clean and free of hair. One male participant explained:

My head hair every three weeks from barber shop. And the underarms and private area every Friday. The religion said that it is recommended to remove the hair every five days. But if I keep it longer than 40 days, it is a major sin.

The fourth was the use of the *miswak* for cleaning of the teeth. All of the males admitted to using it, but explained that this product was hard to find in the United States. The men stated they stock up on the *miswaks* when they visit Saudi Arabia or have family send supplies. The *miswak* was noted for being used widely during holidays (*Ramadan*) to freshen the breath during fasting. The men illustrated that they carry the *miswak* in their mouths (e.g. like a toothpick) and continuously chew on the stick throughout the day. When not in use, the men generally keep the *miswak* in their shirt or pants pocket.

Under the “International Uses of Applied Body Scent,” two recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. First, the men stated they enjoy wearing both traditional and international perfumes. The second was the similarity in international brands of products used. Common brands mentioned included: Perfume- *Hugo Boss* and *Armani*, soap- *Axe Body Wash* and *Dove*, deodorant- *Axe Body Spray* and *Degree* and toothpaste- *Crest*. Three of the men admitted to not using deodorant. One male explained he did not use it for allergic complications with the product and

the others felt no need for its use in the United States. With temperatures not reaching very high, compared to Saudi Arabia, this resulted in lower perspiration levels for them. One male participant's use of body scent explained:

Perfumes, I use both international and traditional. Traditional we call oud. Lots of kind of oud. And international I like a lot like Hugo Boss, Christian Dior, Black Coat Armani, and Givenchy. I use my traditional when we have a at home celebration with our family and friends back home. Otherwise I use international if I go anywhere else. Yes. We also use traditional for holidays. I use my traditional here in the US last year for Ramadan. Um...I have also both traditional and international deodorant. Powder once a month. For soap international. Teeth international.

Female Results:

Under "Traditional Uses of Applied Body Scent," five recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. The first was the female's use of both liquid and wood forms of Arabic traditional perfume (*oud*). Second, the females stated they usually use traditional perfume (liquid oud) only during special occasions or holidays (Ramadan), and this practice had not been altered since moving to the United States. The third was the practice of removing bodily hair every forty days. Those areas included the armpit, pubic area, and legs. This practice of hair removal and length of time between removals was by instruction of the Quran by the Prophet Mohammed. Due to hair holding odor, these areas should be maintained clean and free of hair. The fourth was the use of an Arabic traditional sugar and water blend for removal of leg hair. This product was stated to leave the skin softer, compared to shaving, by also removing dead skin. A female participant explained the product as:

I shave it, or use sugar and water, but it is so thick you just apply and peel off. The woman can make at home Underarms, bikini area, usually we should remove hair. This leaves the skin smoother and is more natural. The sugar here is not as good quality as at home. It has crystals, and is thinner than at home. If I have a wedding, or something, I shave all my body hair.

The fifth was the use of various traditional body creams made of natural ingredients. Three of the woman also mentioned the use of Arabian traditional baby cologne for their infants and toddlers, which is not available for purchase in the United States.

Under the “International Uses of Applied Body Scent,” two recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. First, the females stated they enjoy wearing international brand perfumes over their traditional. Many of the females stated the traditional perfume was too strong. The second was the similarity in international brands of products used. Common brands mentioned included: Soap- *Bath and Body Works* Body Wash, Dove, deodorant- *Lady Speed Stick* and *Secret*, shampoo- *Pantene*, and toothpaste- *Crest*. There was no similarity in the various international perfumes or lotions brands used by the females. One female explained her brands of applied body scents used as:

-Area III

In Area III, ‘**Their Culture’s Social Uses and Identifiers with Body Scent,**’ five categories (central themes) emerged: “Everyday Interaction with Others,” “Wedding Rituals,” “Child Birth Rituals,” “Welcoming Guest into Their Homes,” and “Social Status.”

Male Results:

Under “Everyday Interaction with Others,” five recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. First, the males stated scent is not used to form interpersonal relationships. The second was a similarity in how the participants react to negative body odor. The first response all of the participants gave in regards to how they would handle a person’s negative body odor was to “stay away from the individual.” When asked what would be their action if an individual they had to work with had a negative body odor, the two common responses were, “finish the conversation” or “just tolerate it.” One male participant explained:

Unpleasant scent...um...one time actually here in the United States, I was having a class and one of my classmates was next to me. He had a bad smell and he was asking me a lot of questions. What did the professor say? Can you get me this?...and I brought my notebook and I gave it to him and just said take whatever you need. It takes me out of control when someone has a bad smell. I just wanted him to stop talking to me. I couldn’t tell him.

Eight of the participants stated that if they were a manager and their employees were offended by a coworker’s offensive body odor, and if it was affecting the work of others, they would inform the employee of their problem. All of the males noted that they could only tell a relative or very close friend if they had an offensive body odor, outside of work. Two of the participants stated they would not be able to tell their fathers or grandfathers if they had an offensive body odor due to the level of respect they have for them. Third, the men stated that a man who smells perfumed is viewed as “taking care of himself” and “cares how he smells to others.” Males also agreed that a female should always smell “clean,” but a female that comes around male

nonrelatives perfumed is looked down upon due to her showing her “beauty.” Three of the men stated a woman should always smell nice for her husband.

In my religion if I smell the perfume from any women it is a no. It is very wrong to smell woman’s perfume. My wife is not to be heavily perfumed also. I will choose the perfume for my wife because sometimes I want to smell my wife. She should smell nice for me so I chose perfume for her.

Fourth, the men stated they could ask another male what scent he is wearing but usually would not ask a female. Fifth, the men stated that the Quran explains it is rude not to accept a gift from an individual. If another individual offers them perfume, the polite response would be to accept it, even if they don’t like the scent. If an individual is allergic, he may decline to use the scent.

Under “Wedding Rituals,” three recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. First, the males stated that for their weddings, the groom’s father gives him a very expensive perfume (liquid *oud*) to wear for the engagement and wedding day. The second was the act of the groom giving his bride a bottle of very expensive perfume (liquid *oud*) for her engagement gift. Perfume and jewelry are the common gifts that are given to their brides. The third was the father of the groom burning a very expensive perfumed wood (wood *oud*) at the engagement party and at the wedding reception. All of the participants explained that this is done because weddings are viewed as very special occasions within the Saudi Arabian culture.

Under “Child Birth Rituals,” one recurring general theme (cluster) emerged from the male participants. All of the men stated they did not know of any scent used during or following childbirth.

Under “Welcoming Guest into Their Homes,” three recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. The first was the act of the males burning *oud* (wood) as a sign of “welcome to my home” for guests. The second was the act of offering the guest liquid *oud* after dinner is served. The liquid *oud* releases the food aroma from the guest’s clothing, which is viewed as being an unpleasant body smell within their culture. The men also pass the burning *oud* (wood) around the room for each male to place the smoke under their traditional clothing and headpiece. If the guests are older men, the son of the house owner walks around and holds the ceramic burner for each elder guest to let the smoke penetrate their clothing. This is a sign of respect for the elders. The third was the act of giving the guest a final application of liquid *oud* before exiting the house if they wish to have it. This act signifies wishing for a safe journey. One male participant explained:

Sometimes we have special lunch and special dinner and uh we have special guests. We would use that special wood and burn that when they come into the house. First my father would give it to me and when the man (guest) would come into the house, I would follow him with it and when he is seated I will give it to him and back away. In my culture this is tradition. Some wood is expensive. If the guest only come once a year than we use a more expensive one, if he come once a week we use not expensive one. The elders get higher priorities and the youngest son passes it around the room for them.

Under “Social Status,” four recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. The first was a man being looked at as “rich” or “powerful” if

he smells of expensive perfume (liquid *oud*). Most of the men noted that they could estimate the quality and cost of a man's perfume. Second, the men stated that higher class individuals smell of higher quality perfume and lower classes smell of lower quality perfume. The third was the males mentioning priests and high religious figures wearing the same musk scent of perfume (liquid *oud*) in the mosque. They explained that the scent was strong and very distinctive. The fourth was the burning of wood *oud* in important buildings such as banks and government buildings. Several of the men even experienced wood *oud* burned in the managers' offices as a trusting and warming gesture for individuals who enter:

For example one time I was looking for a job after I graduate from the university. Um, and I went to a company for an interview...um...we start interview in manager's office... it was small. I had to answer the questions politely and I had to ask him questions too about what kind of job I would have. He was burning *oud*, and it helped me to get the job. The smells made me calm and made me feel he was trusting.

Female Results:

Under "Everyday Interaction with Others," five recurring general themes emerged from the female participants. First, the females stated scent is not used to form interpersonal relationships. The women stated that scent is only used socially among other females. Many of them also noted it is very important for the wife to smell "good" for her husband. Scent is just as important as their attire. The second was a similarity in how the participants would react to an individual's negative body odor. The two common responses were to "stay away from the individual" or "do not talk to the person." When asked what would be their action if an individual they had to work with had a negative body odor, the common response was "just tolerate it."

Only three of the participants stated if they were a manager and their employees were offended by a coworker's offensive body odor, and if it was affecting the work of others, they would "indirectly" inform the employee of their problem. "Giving the employee a gift of perfume" or "mentioning that something in the office is not fresh," were the common ideas given for "indirectly" informing the employee. All of the women stated they could not "directly" tell the employee to avoid hurting their feelings. All of the females noted that they could "directly" tell only a relative or very close girlfriend if they had an offensive body odor. Third, the females stated that a perfumed woman is viewed as being "clean," but a female who comes around male nonrelatives perfumed is looked down upon due to her showing her "beauty." Fourth, the females stated they could ask another female what scent she is wearing but would never ask a male unless he was a close relative (e.g. grandfather, father or brother). Fifth, the females stated that the Quran explains it is rude not to accept a gift from an individual. The women explained that they would accept the gift no matter what, and if they did not like the scent it could be given to a friend.

Under "Wedding Rituals," two recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. First, the females stated that for their weddings, the bride's mother or grandmother supplies her with a total line of expensive traditional perfumed products (bubble bath, perfume (liquid *oud*), lotion, powder, shampoo), which all have the same smell. Those products are used together on the bride's wedding day to insure she will have a distinctive and "good" smell for her husband. Several of the women also mentioned a Moroccan bath that is used with steam to soften the skin of the bride. The process was explained as:

We have a special compound for the body, every woman, make it, like a Moroccan bath. They take a shower, with steam, this can take for four days, her skin will be more clean. They leave on for 15 to 30 minutes and they put some creams on the body. The bride have to a traditional smell of the incense. There's a lot of products , but all same smell. Usually the mom gives to her daughter. During an engagement, you do this every week, for a month, up until the wedding... You have it here, like lotion and shampoo, and perfume all same. Is very heavy. Everyone knows that she's the bride. After using, skin is wider, shinier, and smoother.

The second was the females' description of traditional perfume (liquid *oud*), spices, and jewelry given to them by their husbands for their engagement gifts. The women explained the gifts should be very expensive and elaborate for this occasion. One of the female participants explained the engagement as:

For engagement, her husband gives expensive traditional perfumes. He gives expensive bar of oud to burn for the house. He gives gold, jewelry, and diamonds. The gifts should be very expensive. We have very expensive dates and sometimes he gives saffron for her. He gives her the gifts before the wedding at a dinner. My parents and his parents were there. I was so nervous.

Under “Child Birth Rituals,” one recurring general theme (cluster) emerged from the female participants. The women described an herbal healing *oud* (wood) that is burned and is believed to heal a mother's scars after she has given natural birth or had Cesarean section. The mother stands over the smoke of the burning *oud* (wood), and the herbs are believed to tighten her vaginal muscles and heal the incision of the Cesarean section to prevent infection. This act was explained by one of the female participants as:

After you deliver you can take a shower, and it's actually nothing, but they have a belief that she will go back to being a girl, like she never gave birth, if she stand over these wood burnings. Maybe there is not

so much a good smell, but there are certain medicines, for helping a woman fight an infection. We have an idea, if you have a surgery, even for teeth, especially after having baby, we think that she will get infected, if she smell the perfumes, she will not get infected in her surgery area.

The wooden pieces were also noted for being put in a male baby's blanket to aid with the healing of the circumcision. Two of the women mention the act of a pregnant woman smelling traditional perfume (liquid *oud*), so her body can adjust to the smell of other perfumed women being around her and to avoid having an upset stomach when smelling the other women's perfumed scents.

Under "Welcoming Guest into Their Homes," three recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. The first was the act of the females burning *oud* (wood) as a sign of "welcome to my home" for guests. The second was the act of offering the guest liquid *oud* after dinner is served. The liquid *oud* releases the food aroma from the guest's clothing, which is viewed as being an unpleasant body smell within their culture. The women also place the burning *oud* (wood) smoke under their clothing and into the hair of the female guests. The third was the act of giving the guest a last application of liquid *oud* before exiting the house if they wish to have it. This act signifies wishing for a safe journey.

Under "Social Status," two recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. First, the females stated higher class individuals wear more expensive and stronger traditional perfumes (liquid *oud*) compared to the lower class individuals who wear cheaper forms. The second was the use of very expensive perfumes (liquid and wood *oud*) by the princesses; their servants carry their perfumes

with them at all times. When accompanying a princess, her servants hold ceramic burners of *oud* (wood) to make sure the smell around her is always pleasant. The female participants explained that these traditional perfumes (liquid and wood *oud*) are prepared just for the royal families.

-Area IV

In Area IV, '**Willingness to Adapt to Other's Cultures' Practices of the Use and Appliances of Body Scent,**' two categories (central themes) emerged: "Adaptations to Other Cultural Practices" and "Thoughts on Others' Cultural Uses of Scent."

Male Results:

Under "Adaptations to Other Cultural Practices," two recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. First, all of the men stated their use of applied body scent contains more international perfumes since moving to the United States. Two of the men even admitted to using woman's international perfume fragrances. All of the men who admitted to using more traditional perfume (liquid *oud*) while living in Saudi Arabia stated they will increase their use of traditional perfume again upon returning to their country. Many of the men gave the reason that everyone is accustomed to the scent at home. Second, the men admitted to not burning as much *oud* (wood) in the United States as they would while living in Saudi Arabia. Common reasons stated were feeling that Americans like the international products (e.g. candles, air freshener sprays) better than their traditional *oud* (wood) burning and concern about the high price of *oud*. The men named products such as air

freshener spray and scented candles to keep their homes smelling fresh and open to guests. One male participant stated:

Yes, I am more internationalized, because it is more convenient living here in the US. Yes, I have come to like the scented candles, the cinnamon apple, and the air spray.

Two of the men stated they have continued to burn *oud* everyday since moving to the United States. Both of the men were older in age (23-25 years old) compared to the other male participants. The two men were also married and had access to higher quality *oud* (wood) from being able to travel home to Saudi Arabia or having family members bring supplies when visiting the United States.

Under “Thoughts on Others’ Cultural Uses of Scent,” two recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the male participants. The first was the dislike of Indian incense burnings. All of the participants admitted the smell from Indian incense was not pleasing to them. Second, the men felt American males were under perfumed or wore no perfume at all. They felt American females were perfumed most of the time. One male participant explained:

I think Americans....here I don’t see a lot of American men use a lot of perfumes to me. I find it weird. It was a shock to me. I think that American men are not as practical...they have more priorities than the work.

Female Results:

Under “Adaptations to Other Cultural Practices,” three recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. First, all of the women stated they preferred the international perfume brands over their traditional perfume (liquid

oud). They explained that while living in Saudi Arabia they used the same international perfume brands and will continue their use once they move back to their country. Several of the women stated mostly older women of their country continue to use the traditional perfume (liquid *oud*) on a daily basis. The younger generations of females enjoy the international perfumes, because they are not as strong. The second was the females admitting to liking the fruity and flowery body splashes and sprays for daily use. The label “Bath and Body Works” was mentioned as a brand preferred by every female participant. One female participant stated:

If I wear international I like light smell like flowers, or fruits. I like the Bath and Body Works. I like the strawberry and jasmine smells. The products are nice. I shop there.

Third, the women have adapted to using more international products, since moving to the United States. They sometimes burn scented candles or use a scented plug-in (e.g. Glade Airwick) to welcome their guests. They also use air fresher spray to freshen their homes on a regular basis.

Under “Thoughts on Others’ Cultural Uses of Scent,” two recurring general themes (clusters) emerged from the female participants. The first was the dislike of Indian incense burnings. One of the female participants explained:

The Indian and some of the African cultures do not appeal to me...the scents that they use. The incense they burn do not smell nice. I don’t like. It make me feel sick.

All of the participants admitted the smell from Indian incense was not pleasing to them. Second, the women felt American males wore no perfume at all. They felt American females were lightly perfumed with fruity body slashes and sprays.

Within this chapter Arabic terms and results of the study were given. The next chapter will discuss the overview of findings for each area, limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and reflections on participants' lived experiences with body scent.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study collected various ways university students of the Saudi Arabian culture, currently living in the United States, use body scents as a social identifier to create relationships, maintain group identity, and accept or reject individuals. Data was collected to reveal the everyday life experiences associated with scent among the Saudi Arabian students (e.g. daily dress, everyday interaction with others, special occasions, and welcoming guest into their homes). This section will give brief conclusions for each area of questioning of the questionnaire. (See appendix item B.)

Overview of Findings

-Area I

Individuals of the Saudi Arabian culture take great care in making sure their bodies are clean and have a pleasant scent. The Saudi Arabians' daily routine of dress maintains a consistent pattern which always includes a full cleansing of the body at least once a day. Perfume is widely used (traditional or international) by both sexes on a daily basis. This finding supports Classen et al. (1994) discussion on the Middle East having a strong emphasis on fragrances. Care is taken in cleansing the body after vigorous activities that may cause them to sweat. Both the Saudi Arabian male and female follow their Muslim rituals of cleansing (*wudu* and *ghusl*) while living in the

United States. This finding supports The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the United States of American's (1993) explanation of how the Saudi culture's rich history and traditions have been greatly shaped by its Islamic heritage

-Area II

The basic applied body scents (e.g. soap, shampoo, lotion, deodorant, perfume and toothpaste) are used by both Saudi Arabian males and females. While many of the Arabic traditional perfumes are preferred and still worn by the males compared to females, both sexes show adaptations to the use of international body scent products while living in the United States. This finding further supports The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia's (2006) discussion of today's younger generations of Saudis having adapted their values and traditions (e.g. their customs, hospitality, and style of dress) to the modern world. Females being restricted from wearing perfume outside of their homes by their religion and the strong smells of the Saudi's traditional perfume may account for the gender differences. Body hair is removed by both Saudi Arabian males and females to avoid odor and maintain cleanliness. Basic cleansing objects (e.g. wash cloths and toothbrushes) are used on a daily basis. Only a few traditional products of natural lotions and hair removal mixtures are still being used by Saudi Arabian females while living in the United States.

-Area III

Body scent does not have sole use in forming interpersonal relationships within the Saudi culture, but negative body scent does have an effect on how other

individuals would interact with the person. This finding supports Synnott's (1991) explanation that an individual who smells bad or deviates from the olfactory norm is sometimes looked at as being faulty or defective physically, emotionally, or mentally. A positive body scent is viewed as being able to tell about the character of an individual in that they take pride in their cleanliness and take care of their bodies. This finding supports the statement of Synnott (1991, p.438) suggesting that "Odour is many things: a boundary-marker, a status symbol, a distance-maintainer, an impression management technique, a school's joke or protest, and a danger signal-but it is above all a statement of who one is." Higher class individuals wear expensive versions of traditional Arabic perfume, which have a stronger smell, compared to lower class individuals who wear lower quality traditional perfumes. Different quality levels of perfumes used among Saudi Arabia's working classes supports Largey and Watson's (1972) and Le Guerier's (1992) discussions on how odors create walls between different sectors of society.

During special ceremonies or occasions (e.g. weddings, childbirths, holidays) traditional Arabic perfumes continue to be worn, respected and held dear by individuals. Traditional Arabic perfumes are also used to welcome guests in their homes, although many of the individuals have adapted to the use of international household deodorizing products. Traditional perfumes are burned to infuse the clothing with pleasant odors upon entering the home and after dinner have been served. The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia (2006) mentioned the Saudi's gesture of hospitality by burning incense to welcome guests. Classen et al. (1994) also described

the act individuals in the Middle East infusing their clothing with the fragrance of burning incense.

-Area IV

Saudi Arabian cultural practices of applying body scents are still followed mostly by the males. Many of the females have adapted the use of other international applied body scent fragrances. While some adaptations have taken place for the Saudi Arabian males and females, many of the adaptations were due to fear of Americans not agreeing with the smell of their traditional scents. The Saudi Arabian males and females expressed feelings of wanting to fit in with American practices of applied and household scents. Therefore, they chose to discontinue use of their cultural products while living in the United States.

Other cultural uses of applied body scents that do not appeal to both the Saudi Arabian male and female are Indian incense burning. Both sexes also feel that the American male is under perfumed or not perfumed at all. This thought may be due to traditional Arabic perfumes being much stronger in scent.

Findings Contribution to the Theoretical Framework

This study revealed the lived experiences of university students of the Saudi Arabian culture, currently living in the United States, in regard to body scents as a social identifier to create relationships, maintain group identity, and accept or reject individuals. Data from the study conform to the theoretical framework presented by

the Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) Classification System of Dress (See Table 1), in which humans modify their bodies as outlined under “Types of Dress.” Odor is one of the properties manipulated to modify the Saudis student’s appearance. This study offered evidence of the use of odor, in terms of the five senses, among which olfactory distinctions are manipulated.

The participants revealed that Saudi individuals present themselves to “maintain, manage, and alter appearance” (Damhorst, 1999) in terms of dress by using the labeled “Types of Dress” of the system and manipulating the “Properties.” In this study, for example, transformations of hair were accomplished by changing the scent with the use of *oud* (wood) vapors. Transformations of the skin occurred with the addition of *oud* in both liquid and wood forms. Transformation of the mouth was accomplished by use of the *miswak* by the males, which cleansed the breath.

Transformations of body supplements by the participants were also revealed within this study. Hand-held objects are items that contribute to a person’s appearance and communication to others by being held by the individual or by a person accompanying the individual (e.g. purse, fan, umbrella, etc.). For example the *miswak* can be classified as a hand-held object, as it is visibly carried in the hands or pockets of men. This visible display suggests Saudi males may be communicating to others their attention to accepted practices of body presentation in regards to proper cleansing. An example of both a hand-held object and transformation of body supplements displayed within the Saudi culture was accomplished by servants of princesses carrying ceramic burners of *oud* (wood) to odorize the princesses’ surroundings with a pleasant scent. This act displays a “presentation of self” (Roach-

Higgins and Eicher, 1992) as opposed to a host passing a ceramic burner to infuse guests with the scent of the burning *oud* (wood). The carrying of the burners is viewed as a part of the princesses' self presentation with a body supplement that is carried by another individual. The passing of the burner is not accomplished for "presentation of self", rather for the guests to infuse their clothing with the fragrance. The scent modifies the clothing and thus the presentation of the guests. Clothing infused with burning *oud* to eliminate food smells after a meal and leave the individual with a pleasant scent further illustrates odor used for body supplement modification. Therefore, behaviors associated with dress for personal presentation and communication with others (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992) is illustrated throughout this study.

Reflections on Participants' Lived Experiences with Body Scent

Based on the responses of the male and female participants of the study, positive body scent is held with high regard by individuals of the Saudi Arabian culture. Not only does smelling positive mean a Saudi male has good hygiene and cares about his body, but smelling of perfume also signifies good character and a trusting spirit. Male responses revealed that a Saudi male who takes pride in himself can be regarded as having pride in his work. Positive body scent's association with males having a trusting character explains why a professional Saudi male perfumes himself before going to work, and makes sure his office smells appealing to other

males who enter. As a result of a Saudi male having pride in himself and his work, he would make a person feel that his “word” can be trusted by others.

Body scent was also found to contribute to the gender role of the Saudi female. To smell “good” is to show your feminine side and beauty to others. The situation that women are not allowed to be perfumed around nonrelated males illustrates the importance of a women having to smell good, and how scent is closely associated with sensuality and being desired. This further explains why it is important for the male to purchase expensive perfumes for his bride to smell appealing but also sensual to him. With perfume being communicated as “feminine seduction,” a heavily perfumed woman who is in the presence of males would be viewed as not respecting herself as a lady and letting “outside” males experience her beauty and femininity.

An individual with negative body odor may not be taken seriously or may be regarded as someone who has to be approached or communicated with cautiously by the Saudi male. Since the study’s findings revealed that Saudi individuals are not comfortable with being direct in telling other individual of their negative body odor, a person may receive incorrect or insufficient information while communicating with others in trying to avoid the offensive smell and end the conversation as quickly as possible. Based on the female responses, a Saudi female would probably not complete tasks to the best of her ability if working with an individual with offensive body odor. Given this situation a Saudi’s woman’s level of work efficiency may be compromised. While the male responses revealed the Saudi male may approach the individual if the body odor is extremely offensive, his work or communication level may be weakened by the offensive odor as well.

The importance of body scent is also shown throughout daily cleansing routines which are originally exposed to children by their parents. Parents are the instructors and managers in making sure their children know and respect the practice of having “proper” body scent. Scent is deeply embedded in the Islamic religion and parents instruct their children in cleansing practices. This reveals that parents are important figures in passing down what is appropriate body scent to their children. While the training starts at a young age, it is also found to continue throughout adulthood. This adult influence was shown by the mother supplying her daughter with all of her applied body scents for the wedding day and the father giving his son an expensive perfume to wear for the occasion as well. This pattern continues during pregnancy and after women give childbirth, with mothers teaching their daughters what perfumes and scents have healing qualities.

This study also revealed that most of the Saudi students were using the same applied body scent brands. With the importance of appropriate body scent being stressed within the Saudi culture, individuals would more than likely communicate what products work best for them to their friends and colleagues just entering a United States university or to individuals who cannot find a certain product they used while in their country. A Saudi individual would most likely trust another Saudi who is currently living in the United States for suggestions on a reputable substitution since the practices of cleansing and having appropriate body scent are commonly shared.

Many of the participants admitted to the use of international fruity and floral scented products (e.g. body sprays and household deodorizing products). With all of

the Saudi Arabian traditional perfumes being made of natural ingredients, this could be the reason why the fruity and flower scented international products appeal to the Saudi student. This reflection was further supported by discovering that none of the participants mentioned manmade scents such as “powder” or “fresh linen” being appealing.

Results also revealed that younger generations of Saudi individuals seem to have adapted to international products through modernization in their country. This adaptation may be a result of mass media and globalization. Their usage of international products may have also been increased due to individuals being exposed to other cultures through traveling and from their country slowly being opened to foreigners in recent years. In any case, as a result of the study it appears that the Islamic religion provides a strong foundation for beliefs and practices related to body scent. Islam teaches appropriate cleansing rituals and shapes attributes a Saudi male should hold and the feminine qualities a woman should exude through the uses of appropriate body scent. Without the Islamic influence, the gender roles of both the Saudi male and female would undoubtedly have to be governed by another aspect of culture. What is not known from the study is what effect influences outside the Islamic faith have had on the lived experiences related to body scent. What is clear from this study’s findings is that Saudi students want to integrate with Americans, and were aware that their selections of applied body scents are critical in that process.

In conclusion, this study revealed that literature has been silent in regard to specific ritual practices revealed by participants in the study. Past researchers have mentioned Arabic rituals in their studies (Hall, 1966; Largey & Watson, 1972;

Synnott, 1991; Le Guerier, 1992). However, this study revealed differences regarding ritual uses of scent among members of the Arabic culture, with individuals' religious practices being an influential account for the differences. Therefore, these new findings suggest there is still a need to conduct other cultural studies on uses of body scent to provide Americans with more detailed information to gain a better understanding of the cultural differences.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. An uneven number of male and female participants (13 male and seven female) limits the scope of this study. There could have also been a sampling bias due to the participants all attending the same university and socializing on a consistent basis with one another. Due to the university's close-knit Saudi community, participants' may follow behaviors and product uses of others who are close to them, which would lead to common interview responses. Therefore, the results and overviews of this study cannot be generalized to all Saudi Arabian university students residing in the United States without further studies.

Because of the highly personal nature of the subject, participants may have avoided disclosing information about their experiences with and uses of body scent. Conflicts with my being an "outsider" to their culture and participants' concerns with Americans' views of differences between cultural practices are possible considerations as to why participants may have avoided disclosing information. This

limitation is not a major concern due to the nature of information that was received and evidence of rapport and a high level of comfort being established with participants before and after interviews were conducted.

Further Research

Suggestions for further research would be to conduct this study within a variety of United States universities. A generalization of Saudi Arabian students' uses of body scent can be achieved after several samples from various United States universities support the findings of this study.

Another suggestion for further research would be to study the differences in responses from individuals that have lived in the United States for months (e.g. six months) verses individuals that have lived there for several years (e.g. five years). Results may show differences regarding Saudi students' adaptation to other cultures' use of applied body scents and if their traditional practices are still being performed.

A third suggestion for further research is to follow up with the participants once they returned to Saudi Arabia after completing their studies at United States universities. This process may reveal additional information about their cultural uses of body scent once they are in their home culture, where they are accustomed to living their everyday lives and engaging in everyday activities. This process would allow for further investigation of other cultural practices related to using scents, in response to adaptation while living in the United States, and continued use of scents adapted while in the United States.

Appendix A
HSIRB Approval Letter



Date: February 28, 2007

To: Marlene Breu, Principal Investigator
Mia Wilson, Student Investigator for thesis

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 07-02-03

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "A Study of How the Arabic Culture Uses Body Scent as a Social Identifier" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: February 28, 2008

Appendix B

Interview Questionnaire

Interview Questionnaire

You have been invited to participate in a project that will study the various ways the Arabic culture uses body scent to create relationships, to identify groups, and to accept or reject individuals. This questionnaire will ask you various questions regarding the use of scent in your culture. Scent is referred to as the unique odor of an individual. For example when smelling someone's clothing, you can usually pick out his or her body scent from the garment. First, I am going to define several terms that will appear in the questions: 1. Natural Body Scent- refers to your individual body scent without applying any enhancements such as lotion, perfumes, oils, etc., 2. Applied Body Scents- refers to enhancing your individual body scent with perfumes, lotions, oils, soaps, shampoos, breath enhancers etc., 3. Interpersonal Relationships are defined as the connection between two people, communicative and physical {which includes touch and body language} (Brick, 2005).

-Clarification of Definitions

As Americans, we label a scent as “something with a nice smell” and an odor as “something with a bad smell.” I would first like to gain an understanding of how your culture uses and defines these terms.

1. What is your personal definition of the term odor?
2. How does your culture define/label the term odor?
3. What is your definition of the term scent?
4. How does your culture define/label the term scent?

-Area I. Individual's Daily Routine of Dress

1. What is your step-by-step daily routine of getting dressed for the first time in a day?
2. Do you prefer to use Applied Body Scents or no added scents?
3. How often (number of times) do you cleanse your body in one full day?
4. After what activities (e.g. physical activities) is it necessary for you to immediately cleanse your body?

-Area II. Individual's Perception of Applied Body Scents versus Natural Body Scent.

1. Name the various Applied Body Scents (e.g. perfumes, lotions, oils, soaps, shampoos, breath enhancers, etc.) that you use on a daily basis.
2. Are these the same Applied Scents (e.g. perfumes, lotions, oils, soaps, shampoos, breath enhancers, etc.) that you used while living in your home country?
3. Have you altered /changed your use of Applied Body Scents (e.g. perfumes, lotions, oils, soaps, shampoos, breath enhancers, etc.) use since moving to the U.S.?
4. Are there Applied Body Scents (e.g. perfumes, lotions, oils, soaps, shampoos, breath enhancers, etc.) that you use that are not available for purchase in the United States? If, so list them and include where they are purchased.
5. Do you use Applied Body Scents (e.g. perfumes, lotions, oils, soaps, shampoos, breath enhancers, etc.) that you have purchased from your home country (Saudi Arabia) while currently living in the United States?
6. How often do you remove your body hair? Include the areas of hair removal on your body.
7. What other cleansing objects or utensils do you use, which are native to your home country? (e.g. different forms of a toothbrush, cleansing cloths, etc.)

-Area III. Their Culture's Social Uses and Identifiers With Body Scent (Body scent with or without added scents.)

1. Explain ways in the past or present day that body scent is/has been used to form interpersonal relationships in your culture, such as with family members, friends or strangers.
2. In what ways can/could body scent deter you from forming an interpersonal relationship?

3. Has body scent been used in various ways for rituals (e.g. greetings, marriages, etc.) in your culture? Showing respect to other individuals? Explain.
4. Has body scent been used to show the power or dominance of an individual in your culture? For example, African cultures have reported using natural musk as a sign of strength for men in their culture. Explain.
5. In what ways have you experienced body scent being used “within” or “to form cohesion” in social groups or social classes in your culture?
6. Describe two times when you experienced another individual’s pleasant and unpleasant body scent within or outside of your country.
7. List other ways that scents (e.g. perfumes, oils, incense burners, air sprays, etc.) are used in welcoming or accepting guest into your home.

-Area IV. Willingness to Adapt to Other Cultures’ Practices of the Use and Appliances of Body Scent.

1. Do you still follow your culture’s practice of applying body scent or using your natural body scent while living in the United States? Explain.
2. Have you adapted any other culture’s practices of the use of applied or natural body scent? Explain.
3. Do any other culture’s practices of applied or natural body scent use appeal or not appeal to you? Explain.

Thank You

Appendix C
Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Marlene R. Breu, Ph.D.

Co-Principal or Student Investigator: Mia M. Wilson

Title: A Study of Body Scent as a Social Identifier Among Members of the Arabic Culture

You have been invited to participate in a project that will study the various ways the Arabic culture uses body scent as a social identifier to create relationships, identify groups, and accept or reject individuals. This study will be conducted by Mia M. Wilson, a Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Western Michigan University. Her area of interest in the Textile and Apparel Studies curriculum is the Socio-Psychological Aspects of Dress. Mia has written several papers on the social aspects of body scent from the past to the present within various cultures which include: "The Study of How Body Odor Is Being Used as an Identifier", "Social Behavior related to Body Scent in Past and Present Societies" and "Scent and Memory". Ms. Wilson's first interest in body scent was formed after taking a class on the Socio-Psychological Aspects of Dress and delivering a presentation on the various uses of body scent, and how we learn to associate scents/odors with individuals. Mia will focus her Master's Thesis on the present day social uses of body scent in the Arabic culture. Her mentor is Dr. Marlene Breu, a full-time faculty member in the Department of Family and Consumer Science at Western Michigan University and expert in the Socio-Psychological Aspects of Dress in Turkish cultures.

Your involvement in this study will consist of one 45 minute - 1 hour long semi-structured interview. The questions will address four areas: 1. Your individual daily routine of dress, 2. Your individual perception of applied body scents verses natural scents, 3. Your culture's social uses and identifiers with body scent, and 4. Your willingness to adapt to other cultures' practices of the use and appliances of body scent.

All interviews will be recorded. At any time, you may choose to stop the interview, tape recording, or refuse to answer any questions. You may also refuse to offer any information that you do not want to give. Declining participation in this study WILL NOT affect your grade in a course and no penalties will be given. This study is optional and it is your freedom of choice to participate. All subjects will remain confidential during data analysis and Ms. Wilson's Master's Thesis completion. All students' names will be coded with a number during the interview process. Subjects' names and identity will be shredded from all notes that were taken. Dr. Marlene Breu will lock-up all audio after the completion of data analysis. Dr. Breu will store all recorded notes in a locked file cabinet, during data analysis, in her office with her being the only individual with access. All tapes will be destroyed at the completion of transcription.

All of the information you provide will be used as research towards the completion of Mia M. Wilson's Master's Thesis. While this research will form the basis towards Ms. Wilson's Master's Thesis completion, the benefit is even greater to the Arabic culture and the Arabic student community at Western Michigan University. This research will also contribute information to Americans to help us better understand how to form relationships and accept Arabic cultural differences. This research will help close the gap between Americans and Arabians while forming interpersonal relationships. With many immigrants continuing to move to the US, and the number of Arabic students at Western Michigan University on the rise (80 Summer II 2006; 100+ Fall 2006), we need to become more aware of other cultural practices to avoid segregation and move towards acceptance and appreciation of differences.

If you have any questions, you may contact Dr. Marlene Breu (269) 387-3434, or Mia M. Wilson (269) 345-8463. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research (269) 387-8298 if any questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

Name

Date

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) AS INDICATED BY THE STAMPED DATE AND SIGNATURE OF THE BOARD CHAIR IN THE UPPER RIGHT CORNER. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

Appendix D

Permission to Reprint Classification System for Types of Dress and Their Properties

February 22, 2008

Berg Publishers
1st Floor Angel Court
81 St Clements Street
Oxford OX4 1AW, UK

Dear Berg Publishers:
Attn: Terry Fisher

I would like to request your permission to include a table from the following item in my Master's Thesis:

Eicher, J.B. and M.E. Roach-Higgins. 1992. Definition and classification of dress: Implications for analysis of gender roles, In R. Barnes and J.B. Eicher Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning, pp. 8-28. Oxford: Berg.

My research was done on "A Study of Body Scent being Used as a Social Identifier Among Members of the Arabic Culture". I would like to provide the **Classification System for Types of Dress and Their Properties Table** in my Methodology section to show how odor is defined and labeled as a part of "dress" by Roach-Higgins and Eicher. The source will receive full credit in the manuscript of my thesis.

For your convenience, I am including a space for your signature on the page to indicate your permission for my use of the above-mentioned material. By signing below, you give ProQuest Information and Learning (formerly University Microfilms) the right to supply copies of this material on demand as part of my Master's Thesis. Please attach any other terms and conditions for the proposed use of this item below. If you no longer hold the copyright to this work, please indicate to whom I should direct my request on the bottom of this page and return it to me.

Name Mia M. Wilson Date 27 February, 2008
for Berg Publishers

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Mia M. Wilson
3420 W. Main Street Apt. #16
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
(219) 730-1742

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