

Spring 4-24-2015

# Improving U.S. State Department Cultural Exchanges with the Middle East: A Case Study Comparison of Iraq and Jordan

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## Recommended Citation

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# Improving U.S. State Department Cultural Exchanges with the Middle East: A Case Study Comparison of Iraq and Jordan

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April 22, 2015

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## Abstract

The U.S. State Department conducts cultural exchanges with the purpose of encouraging participants to instigate changes in their home countries. Despite extensive efforts by programs to measure their impact on participants, these effects are only indirect correlates or background variables for the ultimate goal of direct action. This thesis explores the impact of State Department cultural exchanges with the Middle East by drawing on eight interviews with exchange administrators of numerous programs in Iraq and Jordan. The case studies of Iraq and Jordan allow more careful scrutiny of the types of factors, both internal and external to programs, that affect the impact of participants. I find that exchanges effectively target and select opinion leaders, bring together participants from across the Middle East, conduct measurement of their programs' impact on participants, produce leaders with positive impressions of the U.S., and enable participants to enact small initiatives in their home countries. However, ultimately external factors, such as security in the case of Iraq, definitively limit participant impact.

## Introduction

The U.S. State Department, politicians, and scholars agree that cultural exchange programs<sup>1</sup> foster positive results. Public authorities in particular often cite cultural exchange's many benefits, from national security to the generalized claim of fostering cross-cultural understanding to specific statistics on how programs increase the likelihood of future employment.<sup>2</sup> Though some scholars take a critical stance on such programs, few, if any, conclude that the negative effects of these exchanges outweigh their positive effects. The plethora of cultural exchange programs reflects this positive assessment. Programs operate in

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<sup>1</sup> Here cultural exchange programs are defined as any program in which the participant travels to a foreign country with the primary goal to learn more about that country or be educated within that country. Such programs include study abroad, professional exchanges, leadership training, etc.

<sup>2</sup> IES Abroad, "Career Benefits of Study Abroad."

both private and public spheres, and have proliferated in recent U.S. policy.<sup>3</sup> In the Middle East, an enhanced role for cultural exchange began with Iraq during the Iraq War, and since then has become a main U.S. soft power approach.<sup>4</sup> Even in Middle Eastern countries where U.S. relations are already favorable, such as Jordan, exchanges are a major tool. This approach exemplifies an outgrowth of the confidence that enabling Middle Easterners to visit the U.S. can help participants foster internal solutions to structural issues in their home countries. Advocates additionally argue that exchanges provide a path to enact change the U.S. desires without being interventionist, and are far less expensive investments than military engagement.

Yet significant questions remain concerning the impact of cultural exchanges, particularly problems of definition and measurement. Few, if any, of the claims about exchanges have been considered in a broader perspective. Often each program will analyze itself, but no large study has compiled the broader results of all government exchange efforts in a country or region. Most academic analyses focus on measuring a specific program aim, such as leadership, and therefore limit the scope of their analysis to that trait instead of considering the broader impacts a program may have. Simply, the circular reasoning of expecting a goal, measuring for it, and then producing results reinforces the same loop.<sup>5</sup> This macro level analysis examines shared issues and benefits across programs, enabling a view of cultural exchanges as a whole that can contribute to better shaping and improving results. If cultural exchanges are indeed successful tools of inducing change, then understanding how they work and what results they produce is critical to improving U.S. foreign policy.

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<sup>3</sup> Stewart, "The Greater Middle East and Reform," 405-406.

<sup>4</sup> Salime, "Securing The Market, Pacifying Civil Society, Empowering Women," 725.

<sup>5</sup> For example, a program goal may be for its participants to be leaders. If a program selects for participants with leadership qualities, trains the participants in leadership, and then measures leadership ability when the program is complete, the fact that participants are found to have leadership ability is unsurprising.

This thesis examines the impact of State Department cultural exchanges with the Middle East, specifically investigating programs run between the U.S. and Iraq and the U.S. and Jordan. The body of programs analyzed consists of all State Department exchanges available to Iraq, as defined by those listed on the U.S. Embassy of Baghdad website,<sup>6</sup> and their counterparts in Jordan. These are divided into categories based on their distributor: Fulbright, Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), Study of the United States Institutes (SUSI), International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), and Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP). With Jordan, the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, no longer available to Iraqis but still open to Jordanians, substitutes for IYLEP (an Iraqi only program) in this analysis.

This investigation finds that the strong effects of State Department exchanges include targeting and selecting opinion leaders, bringing together participants from across the Middle East, conducting measurement of their programs' impact on participants, producing leaders with positive impressions of the U.S., and enabling participants to enact small initiatives in their home countries. These effects do not seem to largely match the ultimate purpose of all State Department exchanges: for the participant to instigate change in his or her home country. Program efforts focus on the participant, and success is primarily measured both qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of how the participant is impacted. Yet a program's efficacy in impacting a participant is only an indirect correlate or background variable for the ultimate purpose of direct action and social change. However, not achieving a specific project does not mean nothing was achieved by the program. The individual impact of participants can manifest through other means. Echoing studies in the past, administrators stated that participants will provide greater value through their longer-term impact than through their short-term solutions.

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<sup>6</sup> Exchanges analyzed are those listed on the U.S. Embassy of Baghdad website as of 2014; throughout the research period of this paper (2013-2015) these same exchanges have remained on the Baghdad Embassy page.

Yet ideally, a participant's own projects create personal initiative in the participant; the ultimate lesson enables participants to realize their independent agency to pursue their own empowerment.

When comparing Iraqi and Jordanian exchanges with the U.S., programs have similar impact when participants are in the U.S. both in how participants are impacted and what participants intend to impact upon their return. However, the two countries exhibit categorical differences in pre- and post-program operation that have a definitive influence on participant impact. Essentially, Iraqi and Jordanian exchanges are fundamentally different in their impact because of their vastly different security situations. Security is an insignificant concern for exchanges between the U.S. and Jordan, but impacts almost all aspects of cultural exchange between the U.S. and Iraq. The impact of Iraqi alumni upon return is largely limited to immeasurable impact that cannot be attributed publically to the U.S., and potential impact that may or may not have a chance to manifest later when conditions are more suitable to alumni projects. These findings do not necessarily make one location "better" for exchanges than the other; they merely show that there is a significant difference in type of impact.

To elaborate on these findings, the following analysis proceeds in three main sections. Section one outlines the history of cultural exchanges in the U.S. and their evolution with foreign policy, with a focus on the Middle East. This lays the groundwork for the type of exchange feedback desired and its measurement, and also outlines the debates about measurement and purpose in the field of cultural exchange. Section two draws on interviews with exchange program administrators in order to examine specific cases to understand the impact of programs and various influences on that impact. The final section analyzes interview findings on the

effects of programs, evaluates these effects in terms of program purpose, and elucidates their significance to future exchange efforts in the Middle East.

## **A History of U.S. Government Cultural Exchange Purpose and Measurement**

### **Exchanges of the 1950s-1990s**

The evolution of U.S. involvement with cultural exchanges has followed the direction of U.S. foreign policy. As a result, the connotation of the term “cultural exchange” has changed over time. Initial programs during the 1940s and 1950s might be more accurately described as “cultural impression” as they focused on bringing foreign visitors to the U.S. and impressing them with American values. Gradually, programs evolved into “cultural experience” initiatives, in which participants who visited the U.S. were to participate in U.S. life, and U.S. citizens were to travel abroad to improve foreign practices to match those in the U.S. Programs now aim to provide “cultural engagement” in which mutual learning results from foreign visitors who not only participate in the community they live in, but also teach this community. Despite this progression towards more mutual exchanges, the promotion of American values has remained remarkably consistent in exchanges throughout their implementation. The U.S. has yet to reach true “cultural exchange” in which programs facilitate an even sharing of cultures not only between foreign participants coming to the U.S. and American citizens, but also American participants traveling abroad and foreign cultures. Yet still the term “cultural exchange” encompasses all programs in which foreign visitors travel to the U.S., or American visitors travel abroad, to learn about the host culture for a designated time period.

Before World War II, cultural exchange was largely a private sector endeavor.<sup>7</sup> The Fulbright program, the first major exchange effort in the United States, was established in 1946, initiating a joint effort between the U.S. and host countries through executive agreements and binational commissions.<sup>8</sup> This directly tied the government to cultural exchange, laying the groundwork for future programs. Soon the U.S. moved in the direction of seeing exchanges as a political tool. In 1948, the Smith-Mundt Act officially integrated exchanges as a foreign policy mechanism.<sup>9</sup> The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) started just a few years later, designed to expose foreign leaders to their counterparts in the U.S.<sup>10</sup> Already within the first few years of State Department cultural exchanges, programs were seen as a mechanism of foreign relations.

During the same period, the charter of the United Nations was approved by the U.S., indicating a new, more globally focused age for foreign policy.<sup>11</sup> Truman's Point Four enabled a focus on exchanges.<sup>12</sup> U.S. foreign policy began to focus largely on international cultures, reflected in acts such as joining the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as enacting continued legislation for cultural exchange.<sup>13</sup> The Office of Information and Cultural Affairs also developed in the Department of State during this decade, intended to spread American culture and government policies.<sup>14</sup>

Universities soon became a key facilitator in the exchange process, and during periods of heightened interest in national security the U.S. government asked institutions to accept more

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<sup>7</sup> Bu, "Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War," 394–395.

<sup>8</sup> Vogel, "The Making of the Fulbright Program," 11, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Bu, "Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War," 411–412.

<sup>10</sup> Krause and Van Evera, "Public Diplomacy," 111.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey, "Legislative Origins of the Fulbright Program," 41–47; Woods, "Fulbright Internationalism," 25.

<sup>12</sup> Bu, "Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War," 394–395.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Lindsay, "Integrating International Education and Public Diplomacy," 425–426.

foreign students.<sup>15</sup> Though these students were not necessarily participants in a specific exchange program, their acceptance to American universities was seen in similar light as programmatic cultural exchanges: as a political tool of foreign exposure to American ideals. However, this caused conflict to arise between universities and the government: government goals were for foreign students to affect short-term foreign policy,<sup>16</sup> while university goals were to provide foreign students with a long-term education. This conflict of purpose would be a recurring tension throughout exchange history, oftentimes blurring the line between education and foreign policy.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately there was no real impact of this disagreement, save for the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act, which created two advisory commissions on exchanges for the Secretary of State: the Division of Libraries and Institutes (used for information dissemination and propaganda) and the Division of International Exchange of Persons (used for educational exchange).<sup>18</sup>

A second issue was that despite government support for international exchange, services were not adequate for the increasing foreign student demand. Essentially, Congress could not be relied upon to appropriate funds for bettering educational programs.<sup>19</sup> This need allowed for foundations and other private sector organizations to step in and fill the funding void.<sup>20</sup> The private sector not only helped fund programs, but also projected the semblance of exchange

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<sup>15</sup> Bu, "Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War," 398.

<sup>16</sup> This policy was typically aimed at improving relations with another country for specific aims, namely security concerns. For example, "the Fulbright Program and the IVLP were greatly expanded in the Netherlands during the 1980s in response to the high level of resistance among the Dutch public against the placement of cruise missiles on Dutch soil," (Scott-Smith, "Mapping the Undefinable," 181) and "during the early 1980s, the decision to modernize NATO's nuclear forces, which involved the placement of cruise and Pershing missiles at U.S. air force bases in Western Europe, was met with an uprising of popular protest in Britain, West Germany, and the Netherlands. In this period, the IVLP was applied strategically to ensure that members of the close-knit security policy-making community in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense were given time to associate with their American counterparts outside of official diplomatic channels," (Ibid. 188).

<sup>17</sup> Bu, "Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War," 410.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 413-414.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 402-403.

neutrality. However, this neutrality was not entirely genuine, as the State Department still screened those involved with its programs and exerted heavy influence through foreign policy.

Yet despite a general lack of funding, the U.S. government made serious efforts towards structuring exchanges. In the period just after the Fulbright program was founded, the U.S. government asked for restructuring of the two main institutions running exchanges, which obliged, and additionally founded a third organization.<sup>21</sup> This coalition arose just before Truman's 1950 Campaign of Truth.<sup>22</sup> The National Security Council had just included educational exchanges within the category of programs for national defense, priming them for use in the new campaign to enable "the international propagation of the democratic creed."<sup>23</sup> To this end, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was founded in 1952, intended to spread pro-American information abroad.<sup>24</sup>

Soon after they were established, exchanges came under scrutiny. Studies began to reveal that exchanges did not produce quite the idealistic results expected. The *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* dedicated several volumes to discussing exchange programs and exchange students.<sup>25</sup> Its first volume, published in 1954, challenged what, and even if, soft power influence was gained through exchanges. The State Department and academics also made

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 398–400.

The two pre-existing institutions were the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the Young Men's Christian Association Committee on Friendly Relations among Foreign Students (YMCA CFRFS), and the new institution was named the National Association for Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA, now the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs). IIE acted as the administration for government, university, private, and business exchanges. CFRFS oversaw foreign student personal life including settling, entry, community programs, social life, spirituality, and employment. NAFSA aided in foreign student processing and advising.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Lindsay, "Integrating International Education and Public Diplomacy," 425–426.

The USIA specifically combatted USSR propaganda (Snow, "International Exchanges and the U.S. Image," 199).

<sup>25</sup> Snow, "International Exchanges and the U.S. Image," 199.

The *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* published several volumes on this topic: volume 295 "America through Foreign Eyes" (1954); volume 335 "The Rising Demand for International Education" (1961); volume 424: "International Exchange of Persons: A Reassessment" (1976); and volume 491: "The Fulbright Experience and Academic Exchanges" (1987).

attempts to measure exchange impact throughout the 1950s, most studies concluding that impact measurement was difficult.<sup>26</sup> Location and resource differences contributed to the unpredictability and complexity of exchange impact. Simply, exchanges were so varied that their results could not be summarily lumped together.

However, one useful takeaway from these early studies revealed that U.S. propaganda was seen negatively by participants and was generally without impact.<sup>27</sup> In addition, exchanges were found to be most useful in reconfirming already existing participant opinions of the U.S. instead of making them more positive. Yet over-appreciation of American culture also held drawbacks; upon return, there was the potential for participants to be rejected as too American.<sup>28</sup> Twenty-four subsequent studies in later years still could not provide results regarding the success of programs, but did identify program traits that facilitated cultural understanding.<sup>29</sup> In short, early studies on exchanges found that programs maintained country relationships, but did not better them.

In the 1960s, the idea that foreign students were a means of disseminating positivity about the U.S. generally stopped appearing in academia.<sup>30</sup> In fact, as practice of program evaluation improved, results became less supportive.<sup>31</sup> Academic analysis within a second

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<sup>26</sup> O'Mara, "The Uses of the Foreign Student," 596–597. Scott-Smith, "Mapping the Undefinable," 178–179. One commentary on the time remarks: "Moving beyond the more rarefied environs of the Fulbright Program, the lived experience of foreign study was less uniformly positive. The early postwar years had produced scant survey evidence about the life of the foreign student and the uses of foreign student programs; the IIE reflected that 'it is perhaps characteristic of us as a nation that we have thrown ourselves wholeheartedly into such an enormous venture without ever having subjected it to critical scrutiny.' By the mid-1950s analyses ranging from governmental reports to graduate dissertations had begun to fill the gap, and their findings revealed a state of play that was as diverse and uneven as the higher education landscape itself."

<sup>27</sup> Scott-Smith, "Mapping the Undefinable," 178–179.

<sup>28</sup> Snow, "International Exchanges and the U.S. Image," 205.

<sup>29</sup> Scott-Smith, "Mapping the Undefinable," 180.

These traits included: "stated purpose and duration of the exchange, the extent of cultural difference between and expectations of grantee and host, and the context of diplomatic relations between the respective countries."

<sup>30</sup> O'Mara, "The Uses of the Foreign Student," 598.

<sup>31</sup> Snow, "International Exchanges and the U.S. Image," 208.

edition of the *Annals* exemplified such critical evaluation.<sup>32</sup> Criticism of programs within academia developed into a period norm.

Impact was not the only aspect of exchanges faulted; their goals were also questioned. Despite exchange variety, often their program goals seemed to suggest both a specific path for participants to follow and an expected positive attitude that participants were desired to exhibit post-exchange.<sup>33</sup> These goals were problematic, as they implied a strong political aim and lack of personal choice in exchanges.

Yet despite criticisms and lack of supporting evidence, the pursuit of exchanges in the government sector continued unabated in the Cold War era.<sup>34</sup> Foreign participants were intended to learn American morals and democracy in the U.S.; American participants were intended to spread American morals and democracy abroad.<sup>35</sup> In 1960, the U.S. hosted over twice as many foreign students as any other country.<sup>36</sup> In 1961, the Fulbright-Hays Act expanded the Fulbright program to include seventy additional countries, and the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act established the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).<sup>37</sup> These acts coincided with the height of the Cold War.<sup>38</sup> The State Department specifically stated that it did not want cultural exchanges to continue with the pre-WWII private definition of goodwill exchanges, but rather reinvent exchanges a means of enacting foreign policy. Following this

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>33</sup> Scott-Smith, "Mapping the Undefinable," 178–179.

<sup>34</sup> Blanck, "Scholars across the Seas: The American-Scandinavian Foundation and the Sweden-America Foundation in the Trans-Atlantic Exchange of Knowledge."

<sup>35</sup> O'Mara, "The Uses of the Foreign Student," 592; Bu, "Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War," 396.

<sup>36</sup> O'Mara, "The Uses of the Foreign Student," 593–594.

About 58,000 students were hosted in total, predominately of Asian and non-Eastern bloc European nationality.

<sup>37</sup> Snow, "International Exchanges and the U.S. Image"; "History and Mission of ECA."

<sup>38</sup> Bu, "Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War," 397.

trend, “Educational and Cultural Affairs” was officially coined as the fourth dimension of foreign policy in 1964.<sup>39</sup>

Public diplomacy was institutionalized in the Stanton Commission Report, which helped merge the ECA and the USIA to “encompass information, propaganda, education, and culture as parts of public diplomacy.”<sup>40</sup> This had heavy implications for the Fulbright program, which from 1948-1978 had been funded by the ECA, and now was funded by the ECA under USIA. By 1987, after less than 15 years of exchange history, Fulbright members taught in almost every USSR republic.<sup>41</sup> Some even credit exchanges between the U.S. and USSR as having helped cause the disintegration of the USSR, due to the program’s contributions towards opening and exposure to new ideas.<sup>42</sup> The U.S. government was spending about \$1 billion per year on international exchanges and training programs.<sup>43</sup> The Fulbright program flourished, and measurements of its success caused many evaluations of cultural exchange to overlook the past failures of other exchange programs.<sup>44</sup> Scholarships for students to study in the U.S. at both at the secondary and university education levels were given in an attempt to counter USSR educational exchanges; other countermeasures included IIE founding of additional programs in

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<sup>39</sup> Lindsay, “Integrating International Education and Public Diplomacy,” 423.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 426–429.

<sup>41</sup> Issawi, “Economic and Social Foundations of Democracy in the Middle East,” 407.

<sup>42</sup> Atkinson, “Does Soft Power Matter?,” 3.

For example: “Former KGB1 General Oleg Kalugin, who spent a year as an exchange student... noted the importance of such programs in undermining the ideational basis of the Soviet communist system: “Exchanges were a Trojan Horse in the Soviet Union. They played a tremendous role in the erosion of the Soviet system. They opened up a closed society. They greatly influenced younger people who saw the world with more open eyes, and they kept infecting more and more people over the years.” ”

<sup>43</sup> Lambert, “Durable Academic Linkages Overseas,” 140–142.

<sup>44</sup> O’Mara, “The Uses of the Foreign Student,” 596–597.

One 1963 study was particularly supportive, and had multiple accounts of how the Fulbright was “cultivating and exporting an elite class of enlightened scholar-leaders who returned home with a positive view of the United States and a willingness to evangelize about the advantages of American culture and democratic governance. A survey of nearly 3,000 former Fulbright grantees found that ‘testimony is overwhelming from all sources that the program as a whole is effective’.”

Asia and increased pressure on American universities to accept foreign students.<sup>45</sup> One academic analysis on the period noted that, “The term ‘educational exchange’ became so inclusive that some scholars regarded it as a synonym for cultural relations in postwar America.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Exchanges with Middle East in the Modern Era: 1990s-present**

The most recent push for cultural exchange came from the Bush administration. Just after 9/11, U.S. government policies became more restrictive towards foreign students.<sup>47</sup> With the 9/11 attack having been perpetrated by U.S.-educated foreigners, there was a sudden acknowledgement that the government scarcely monitored foreign students, resulting in ramped up security and hostility.<sup>48</sup> The number of foreign students and scholars in the U.S. dropped for the first time since 1971. Educational institutions complained that such policies were contrary to an open society.<sup>49</sup> However, at the same time the Bush administration emphasized “critical exchanges” in the Middle East for national security, diplomacy, and strategy driven by the idea that “coercion—hard power—is absolutely necessary for a democracy to defeat terrorism. But at times, attraction—soft power—is the most critical component.”<sup>50</sup> Though from 2000 to 2008 there was a constant budget increase for the ECA’s cultural exchange programs, a June 2007 report of the Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) stated, “The U.S. government should continue its recent trend of increasing funding for critical exchange programs, perhaps the single most effective public diplomacy tool of the last fifty years.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Issawi, “Economic and Social Foundations of Democracy in the Middle East,” 407.

<sup>46</sup> Bu, “Educational Exchange and Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War,” 393.

<sup>47</sup> Snow, “International Exchanges and the U.S. Image,” 213.

<sup>48</sup> O’Mara, “The Uses of the Foreign Student,” 605.

<sup>49</sup> Snow, “International Exchanges and the U.S. Image,” 213.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Coutu, “Smart Power,” 56.

<sup>51</sup> Snow, “International Exchanges and the U.S. Image,” 213.

These new exchanges were result-driven. Though in the past, “narratives and personal essays” dominated exchange measurement, in new programs it “is not enough to say that exchanges make a difference if one cannot document and measure the change.”<sup>52</sup> This has resulted in a new movement towards quantitative data.

Democracy promotion lay at the heart of the Bush administration’s approach to foreign policy in the region.<sup>53</sup> The strategy was born from the diagnosis that the Middle East had a “democracy deficit,” which analysts cited as the most common reason for the attack on the Twin Towers, extremism, and anti-Americanism in the region.<sup>54</sup> In addition, this “lack of political freedom thwarted peace, prosperity, and modernity.”<sup>55</sup> Bush’s broad definition of the Middle East as an area lacking democracy enabled his foreign policy strategy for reform to be applied broadly.<sup>56</sup> Part of this democracy promotion was pursued through cultural exchanges to reach the larger public in the Middle East.

As millions of dollars flowed into the new U.S. public diplomacy campaign aimed at the Middle East, various projects began. The plan was that: “Study tours will bring Arabs to the United States to expose them to American democratic institutions and practices. Fellowships and English-language study programs will help Arabs build personal links with Americans and provide useful ‘tools’ for the modern (democratic) global community,” for which “the State Department will provide up to \$10 million in 2003 [with the intent to seek additional funding in the future] for new projects in ‘civil society and the rule of law’ across the Arab world... These funds are to come from the new Middle East Partnership Initiative [MEPI], which will also

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>53</sup> Hawthorne, “Can the United States Promote Democracy in the Middle East?” 21. This approach altered former policy efforts in the Middle East which concentrated predominately on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, oil, and stabilizing regimes for fear of radical Islam.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Stewart, “The Greater Middle East and Reform in the Bush Administration’s Ideological Imagination.”

provide assistance for economic and educational reform.”<sup>57</sup> Democracy promotion was not a single initiative, but a movement of three main parts: 1) military intervention 2) projects created from policy (such as MEPI) and 3) public diplomacy.<sup>58</sup>

Cultural exchange, falling in both the second and third of the above categories, was just one of the main aspects of soft power Bush used. Within the \$400 million budget for eleven main public diplomacy programs, three were cultural exchange programs.<sup>59</sup> International exchanges and language trainings were the most successful, though their small size and low funding limited impact. Exchanges “widely recognized as successful” such as Fulbright and IVLP were included in the increased efforts focusing on the Middle East and expanded in the region.<sup>60</sup> Both Fulbright and IVLP were highly regarded due to their influence in improving foreign opinion of the U.S., according to those overseeing the programs.<sup>61</sup> Two additional programs were founded specifically to foster exchanges in the region: The Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, and MEPI.<sup>62</sup> MEPI started in 2002, and acted as oversight for small programs in the region. YES started in 2003, and accepted teens from Muslim countries for short learning experiences in the U.S.

Though democracy promotion abroad was not a new idea,<sup>63</sup> multiple academics, experts, and practitioners were doubtful about the potential of a U.S. endeavor to successfully promote democracy even before these plans were put into place. First, there was not a basis of support.

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<sup>57</sup> Hawthorne, “Can the United States Promote Democracy in the Middle East?,” 23.

<sup>58</sup> Dalacoura, “US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East Since 11 September 2001,” 963–965.

<sup>59</sup> Krause and Van Evera, “Public Diplomacy,” 109.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

According to this oversight, “U.S. Foreign Service officers have consistently reported that exchange programs are ‘one of the most effective means to influence opinion abroad. In particular, U.S. ambassadors rate the IVLP as the most useful of all public diplomacy tools available to them.’ The experience of other countries confirms these judgments.”

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>63</sup> Academics pegged the Middle East as not having democracy as early as 1956, blamed on reasons ranged from cultural issues to lack of development (Issawi 1956). Democracy promotion has also been used to justify exchanges throughout U.S. history.

Though Bush's national security justifications for exchanges were similar to those of the Cold War era, Bush's exchanges were more difficult to sell because Americans did not show united support of intervention.<sup>64</sup> Development history in the region was also unfavorable for Bush's plan. From 1991-2001, the U.S. had spent \$250 million in an attempt to reform the Middle East's judiciary and human rights with little success.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, many scholars pointed to the larger issue that, "democratic transitions mainly are driven by complex internal factors, with outside forces having a secondary impact at best."<sup>66</sup> They argued that if true regime change is to happen, it needs to happen from within and not from an intervening program. Though cultural exchange could enable individual citizens to enact change from within, some participant countries like Iraq already had significant external intervention, potentially thwarting internal progress. The strong U.S. association with democracy implementation backfired; liberalism in the Middle East was hurt by democracy promotion because liberal thought and democracy was associated with the U.S., resulting in liberals being seen as American empathizers.<sup>67</sup>

Also, the main arm of U.S. democracy promotion in the region, MEPI, had significant problems. The program was underfunded, had few achievements, and worked best in the least politically significant areas of Middle East.<sup>68</sup> When democracy was pursued, it was only pursued in countries where the U.S. believed the democracy would be beneficial to its own interests.<sup>69</sup> The most significant contribution of MEPI was creating a debate within the Middle East about reform, not instigating reform itself. Additional worries regarding Bush's exchange plans with

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<sup>64</sup> Snow, "International Exchanges and the U.S. Image," 216.

<sup>65</sup> Hawthorne, "Can the United States Promote Democracy in the Middle East?," 21-22.

This failure can be attributed to the fact that the political environment in the Middle East had not been receptive to these efforts, and the U.S. government had not backed up its program.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>67</sup> Dalacoura, "US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East Since 11 September 2001," 978.

<sup>68</sup> Krause and Van Evera, "Public Diplomacy," 111.

<sup>69</sup> Dalacoura, "US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East Since 11 September 2001," 966-978.

the Middle East included that there may not be the stability necessary for democracy, externally imposed democracy may not be welcomed, and surrounding countries may be wary of the new government.<sup>70</sup> Simply, Bush's democracy promotion attempts, as those of the past, could not wash away U.S. foreign policy.

Another issue was that often soft power democracy efforts were pursued in tandem with hard security goals. This resulted in soft power democracy promotion being forgotten when hard power security goals were reached. In a similar vein, parallel U.S. efforts and policies pursued in the name of fighting terrorism often stifled true democratic promotion; for security, rights that should have been allowed in democracies were curtailed both in U.S. foreign and domestic operations.

The critical factor, analysts offer, is knowing the target culture, as exchanges focus on the re-entry of participants post-exchange.<sup>71</sup> Lack of re-entry support does not arise from lack of program desire for follow-up, but rather lack of funding: "Exchange advocates and exchange scholars are being asked to do more with less—demonstrably prove that exchanges enhance national security, promote U.S. values, and improve the U.S. image in the world—but to do so on a shoestring budget."<sup>72</sup> The U.S. government's verbal support still does not translate to substantial financial support. Due to this lack of funding, it is more difficult for programs to assess themselves.<sup>73</sup> Again, despite government rhetoric that supports exchanges in the name of security, no substantial government funding is being lent to such efforts.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Hawthorne, "Can the United States Promote Democracy in the Middle East?," 23.

<sup>71</sup> Snow, "International Exchanges and the U.S. Image," 218.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 219.

This need was recently recognized by the U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, which stated: "The U.S. is engaged in an international struggle of ideas and ideologies, which requires a more extensive, sophisticated use of communications and public diplomacy programs to gain support for U.S. policies abroad. To effectively wage this struggle, public diplomacy must be treated —along with defense,

Just as in the past, current academic studies often show a lack of substantial evidence regarding the measurable benefits of exchanges. Some scholars have noted that exchanges can only have long-term impact, and are not short-term solutions.<sup>75</sup> In addition, overall, there are too many variables to independently measure to get a good sense of impact.<sup>76</sup> Even State Department-run programs have issues within their evaluation; most are predominantly qualitative.<sup>77</sup>

Though the definitive impact cannot be measured, certain lessons emerging from the past and confirmed in the present have established exchange guidelines: 1) context is critical; exchanges have different impacts in different countries and different sectors, though their highest impact is in education and media 2) scale is important; it is better to have smaller programs with significant impact 3) do not project politics in exchanges; the less political intent is projected the greater the political impact 4) strong opinion leaders should participate; those who can make the most impact upon return should be targeted and 5) participants should form personal relationships with Americans; closer relationships often result in increased participant satisfaction.<sup>78</sup>

As in the past, a lack of substantial evidence has not hindered scholars, politicians, and soft power advocates from claiming that exchanges have a substantial impact. Many believe that educational exchanges are useful means to spread American ideals.<sup>79</sup> Others have not stopped trying to measure the impact of exchanges, with varied results. The issue with measuring impact today is no longer the lack of an attempt to measure, but instead that attempts do not necessarily

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homeland security and intelligence –as a national security priority in terms of resources. We must continue to significantly increase funding for all public diplomacy and strategic communication programs, but specifically, we need urgent funding for priority programs such as people-to-people exchanges.”

<sup>75</sup> Scott-Smith, “Mapping the Undefinable,” 178–179.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 189–191.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 189–191; Atkinson, “Does Soft Power Matter?”

<sup>79</sup> Atkinson, “Does Soft Power Matter?”

translate into actual measurement. And yet progress cannot be certain without some form of measurement. A second problem with measurement is still the diversity of exchanges, participants, and situations. As seen through the history of government policy, cultural exchanges are grouped under one large term, yet in practice are a diverse body of initiatives with different foci. Measurement must be contextualized for significance.

Considering the evolution of cultural exchange, certain themes emerge. Primarily, there has been a consistent disagreement about the purpose of exchanges, divided by whether they should have predominately political or educational motives. Within this issue is the commonplace implementation of exchanges as a means of international security, despite the lack of academic evidence supporting this approach. There are actually a substantial number of studies throughout the history of cultural exchange that reject the ability of cultural exchanges to have significant impact on foreign relations, yet these reports have been regularly ignored by a government that consistently pursues exchanges for the same national security justifications used in the Cold War. Contrarily, new studies have suggested exchanges may have political impact, made more likely if they fulfill certain guidelines. The argument debating the impact of exchanges illustrates how complex and diverse the exchange field is. Yet to relinquish the challenge of measuring impact is ultimately unhelpful, as such lack of approach only leads to an unknown conclusion. The following section attempts to meet this challenge by endeavoring to better understand the impact of cultural exchange programs between Jordanians and Iraqis and the U.S.

## Interview Results

### Method

The following section draws on eight interviews with cultural exchange administrators of State Department programs run between the U.S. and Iraq and/or the U.S. and Jordan. Interviews were collected from administrators currently active in the field, and cover six program distributors: Fulbright, Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), Study of the United States Institutes (SUSI), International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP), and Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program. Selection was conducted by contacting each program under these distributors through email, using addresses on both the State Department website and each program website.<sup>80</sup> Additional contacts were then made through snowball sampling. Interview questions both directly and indirectly discussed the impact of exchange programs. After all interviews were transcribed, individual quotes were pooled into categories, from which various themes emerged.<sup>81</sup>

The case studies of Iraq and Jordan were chosen because Iraqis and Jordanians often participate in the same cohort in State Department exchanges and because they are among the best and worst case scenarios for cultural exchange environments in the Middle East. Though geographic neighbors, aspects such as security, economics, government, religious composition, and many other factors differ markedly between Jordan and Iraq. Contrasted with Iraq, Jordan has been a long-time ally of the U.S., exhibits an extremely positive and friendly atmosphere towards Americans, and has consistently been stable. Conversely, Iraq and the U.S.'s relationship has been historically rocky, currently even association with the U.S. can get one

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<sup>80</sup> For a table containing all State Department cultural exchange programs, as well as additional information on these programs, see Table 2 in the appendix. Some administrators were contacted via their personal emails because the general program email was not responsive, or because the country embassy offered the email.

<sup>81</sup> Two of the eight interviews could not be recorded due to participant preference, and therefore notes were taken instead of transcription.

killed in Iraq, and Iraq's recent history has been marked with instability. In other words, if U.S. cultural exchanges can succeed in the Middle East, they will likely succeed in Jordan, and if exchanges can fail in the Middle East, they will likely fail in Iraq.

### **Background Information on Programs**

To provide background about the programs discussed in the following interviews, basic attributes of each program were condensed in Table 1. The program information provided applies to both Iraqi and Jordanian students, except IYLEP and YES, the former of which only applies to Iraqis, and the latter of which only applies to Jordanians. Interviewees are given the labels A-H to protect confidentiality, and all interviewees are referred to as "he," although several were female. Most of the general material on each program was gained online from program and related government websites, though some data was collected through program administrators. For a table containing all State Department cultural exchange programs, as well as additional information on the programs listed, see Table 2 in the appendix.

**Table 1: Summary Information on Program Administrators Interviewed**

| <b>Interview</b> | <b>Program Title</b>              | <b>Participant Type</b>                                 | <b>Length</b>    | <b>Type of Grouping</b>                                    | <b>Goals</b>   | <b>Years of Operation</b> | <b>Administrator Perspective</b> |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|---|------------------|--|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A                | Fulbright Foreign Student Program | students and professionals with undergraduate education | 2 years          | individuals  | study in U.S. to gain a master's degree  | 2004-present              | AMIDEAST in Iraq                 |
| B                | IYLEP for High School             | teens ages 15-18  | 4 weeks          | 127 high school Iraqis, 10 high school Americans           | travel across U.S., foster civic development, leadership, cross-cultural communication | 2007-present              | World Learning in U.S.           |
| C                | IVLP                              | U.S. Embassy nominated leaders                          | 3 weeks (varies) | varies   | connect to U.S. counterparts to create relationships to support U.S. policy goals      | post-2001-present         | IVLP in U.S.                     |
| D                | MEPI Student Leaders Program      | undergraduates ages 18-24                               | 6 weeks          | group of ~120 students from Middle East and North Africa   | develop leadership and civic activism skills, create mutual understanding              | 2004-present              | University of Georgetown in U.S. |
| E                | SUSI for Student Leaders          | undergraduate leaders ages 18-25                        | 5 weeks          | group of students from Libya, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt | understand U.S., improve leadership  | 2010-present              | St. Mary's College in U.S.       |
| F                | Multiple in Jordan                | various   | various          | various  | various  | various                   | U.S. Embassy in Jordan           |
| G                | Multiple in Jordan                | various   | various          | various  | various  | various                   | U.S. Embassy in Jordan           |
| H                | YES                               | high school students ages 15-18.5                       | 1 year           | group of 20 Jordanian students                             | attend school in U.S., leadership training, mutual cultural education                  | 2002-present              | AMIDEAST in Jordan               |

## Analysis of Interviews

The purpose of these interviews is to understand the impact of cultural exchange programs between Jordan and the U.S. and Iraq and the U.S. Eight main themes emerged from

these interviews: funding, advertisement, selection, participant struggles, explicit impact measurement, impact on the participant, impact of the participant, security, and alumni network. I discuss these themes in order of program progression, from input to program operations to output. However, it is critical to understand that these themes do not flow linearly in operation but rather form a web of interrelationships in which each affects the others.

## **Funding**

Everything begins, it seems, with funding. As a recurring theme in interviews, the need for expanded funding led to three main limits for programs: operational limitations, a lack of American participants, and staff burnout.

Programs are limited at their most basic level, operations, by insufficient funding from their government sources. For example, IYLEP is mainly funded by the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, but also received money from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). However, an IYLEP administrator mentioned the program had experienced funding issues in the past and consistently needed more grants to continue (B). An IVLP administrator gave reason for why finding funding in the State Department is difficult for cultural exchanges: “we don’t have enough money, and we’ll never have enough money. And it’s really hard to explain to Americans why their tax dollars should go to towards these sort of things” (C). Ultimately, tax dollars fund State Department cultural exchanges, and spending taxes on foreigners is a difficult sell. However, this funding is critical to the quality of exchanges; the same administrator believed that the IVLP experience could be improved by longer programs and workshops. He also explained that the program’s main limitations are its needs for more resources and funding.

Funding levels also limit American counterpart participation. One American college, St. Mary’s (IN), found a way to include Americans in SUSI without State Department funding

through offering the program as a six credit class to its students (E). One SUSI administrator saw this inclusion as not just a class, but an opportunity for the American students, who the administrator believed were as “equally transformed” by the program as the foreign participants (E). By giving incentive for American students to pay their own way, St. Mary’s creates a path for Americans to take part and therefore increases the effectiveness of programs. However, inclusion is not possible in all programs. For example, the IYLEP program, which formerly accepted equal numbers of Iraqi and American participants, was altered by ECA funding desires in 2014. Since then, American students have become a minority party to the exchange, despite the stated preference of one of the program managers (B). This administrator noted that the IYLEP program is unique for World Learning<sup>82</sup> specifically because it includes Americans instead of just foreign students, and saw this practice as overwhelmingly positive. He strongly desired to include more American students in the program, commenting that “It’s so apparent how this program affects their [American participants’] trajectory” (B). Involving American peers not only enhances the idea of a mutual exchange, but also could potentially improve the learning experience of foreign participants in the program. A MEPI administrator looking at a partner institution sought such an improvement in Georgetown’s program, so that American students could walk “side by side” with Iraqis (D). But, he continued, “The State Department will not fund the participation of Americans. So what Benedictine [University] does is they’ve actually set up a class for the Americans and the university gives the students credit for participating in the program. That’s just not gunna happen here in Georgetown” (D). Clearly not all universities can enable American student participation, even if participating in the same program. The location of a program therefore heavily affects participant experience and their

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<sup>82</sup> The international nonprofit that IYLEP operates under. IVLP is administered by a variety of other organizations as well.

ultimate impact. Because the State Department rarely funds the participation of Americans in its cultural exchange programs, the beneficial presence of American peers is not guaranteed to all programs.

Unfortunately, insufficient funding also often leads to burnout among the staff of cultural exchange programs. For one administrator the problem is that,

It's a ton of work, it's a huge amount of work. So as a director you have issues about staff burnout. And again, because they [staff] love it, they just go way way way above and beyond the limit. They take them [the participants] wherever they need at all hours of the night and they tend to just really get sort of attached and involved. And they're with them forever so they're just exhausted. So as a director, I would sort of say the intensity, while magical in some ways, is a real challenge, especially for the summer, when normally, as a university institution, that's your refresh time. We don't have any refresh time anymore.  
(E)

This interviewee continued to explain that not all original SUSI host universities reapplied because some believed the program was too much work. Even one of the institutions that was applying again had substantial turnover in program employees, which may have been a result of burnout. Another administrator felt similarly about the intensity of managing cultural exchanges. He explained that managing a program was a full-time job, as the entire process (from advertising to student return) takes a full year (H). The incredible effort put into managing programs puts immense responsibility on a limited number of people, as every step is involved. Even before recruitment actually begins, program administrators are already working intensely, both physically visiting schools and spreading the word in different mediums such as newspapers and Facebook pages.

The small teams running cultural exchanges enable continuity of management, but have drawbacks, primarily the limited resources available to alumni. As life hits participants after their return home, other priorities and responsibilities make it difficult to pursue the improvement

projects their programs train them to implement (B). The return situation for both Jordanian and Iraqi alumni is “a challenge in any case with resources” (E), according to one administrator, and a second added that the lack of resources limits support that the program can offer to alumni:

[Alumni] are always looking for ways to communicate with the embassy. And it’s always been so hard, because... it’s not like that the embassy doesn’t want to communicate with them [alumni], it’s just that there’s [not] actually someone who can coordinate this communication, or organize this communication... there are a lot of other employees working on cultural exchange programs and on cultural affairs but each one of them is taking care of a certain number of programs or certain number of issues, and they can’t just start working on this, because working on this takes a lot of time. (G)

Because programs are so involved, the return impact of participants is inhibited. More funding would enable support for participants upon their return which better positions participants in their home countries to make impact. Increased funding would relieve small teams from handling so many facets of such large projects.

Funding is at the heart of what can be accomplished. While the State Department has continued its exchange efforts, program funding levels have made it difficult to follow through with participants and maintain program strength.

### **Advertisement**

How exchange programs are advertised to potential participants speaks to both the type of participant programs intend to attract and the type of participant attracted. Often, the embassy finds participants that are alike due to alumni spreading word to friends. Administrators frequently mentioned how useful alumni were in recruiting, as their experiences impress fellow students and encourage them to participate. When alumni speak without government oversight, their testimony is more believable and original presence (F). Alumni have also been hired for recruiting efforts in areas of the country that are more difficult for administrators to reach, since diversity is an important program goal (B). To this end, IYLEP places four staff in the field for

visits to various high schools and local organizations. However, achieving diversity is difficult as participants most often come from major cities, which are more conducive to recruiting efforts (A). Baghdad and Erbil are the locations of the U.S. embassy and one of its consulates in Iraq respectively, showing that advertisement may de facto target Iraqis physically in the region. Alumni can help advertise programs to their peers, but a direct effort has to be made to spread word of exchange programs outside those who naturally come in contact with U.S. efforts.

Outside of human contact, program advertisement includes television, radio, and social media (A). For applicants actively seeking information, embassies hold open house events, enable office visits, and respond to email and phone questions. However applicants learn about exchanges, internet access dominates the application process. The application process for every State Department exchange is solely available online.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, many of the resources available to potential applicants—Facebook, Skype, email—are also internet based. By using the internet as the primary medium for distributing information about cultural exchanges, programs target a specific type of applicant. Applicants with consistent internet access have a strong advantage. As about 7.1% of Iraqis and 41% of Jordanians were internet users in 2013, this is the minority population of both countries.<sup>84</sup> Though it is possible for potential applicants to learn of the programs via another medium such as newspapers, it would be difficult to impossible for them to fill out the actual application without internet. Additionally, applicants must be familiar enough with English to navigate advertisements, application pages, and the application itself. One administrator believed that the English prerequisite in almost all programs limited the “right

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<sup>83</sup> The one exception is IVLP, for which there is no application. Participants are nominated by U.S. government employees, then vetted and chosen by a selection committee typically headed by the Ambassador or Deputy Chief of Mission (C).

<sup>84</sup> International Telecommunications Union, “Statistics.”

kind of people” from applying (F).<sup>85</sup> His clear dislike of the selectivity English imposes showed a personal desire to include participants of all classes. However, the internet requirement and English skills of most programs indicates an exchange program preference (whether unintentional or intentional) towards the upper class.

Visiting the U.S. embassy in Jordan or Iraq is an option for potential participants who hear of the program but do not have the resources to access the application. Often, embassies take efforts to be open to those interested and make them themselves easily available. However, visits to the embassy are frequently not possible due to association, security, and class. First, mere association with the U.S. embassies can be dangerous, as in the case of Iraq, leading to a lack of visitors. The active role of embassies in exchanges places the programs as clearly aligned with the U.S. government; not only is applying dangerous, but taking part in the program is also risky. Second, embassy security in both Iraq and Jordan limits how open both locations can actually be. For 2014, the Fulbright program in Iraq had to change its interview tactics: “In the past years the interviews were done in the Embassy in Baghdad, but this year, we had to do it over Skype due to the security situation and the difficulty of getting into the International Zone in which the Embassy is located” (A). Third, the time and knowledge that the embassy is open to receiving potential applicants is limited by both location and class. Travel to the embassy takes both time and money that not every Iraqi or Jordanian may have. These limitations to visiting the embassy reinforce the upper class bias created by the dominance of internet access as the method of application.

Ultimately cultural exchange advertisement targets the upper class, but targeting such a specific group is not necessarily negative. The focus of exchange programs is on impact; by

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<sup>85</sup> This administrator seeks earlier and increased English language support, which may be feasible because such support is already given on a small scale.

setting up participants to fit a certain mold, perhaps programs target those who will not only be most heavily impacted by the program, but also already have the resources and social sway to enact the most impact upon their return.

## **Selection**

The selection of participants reinforces many of the same issues with advertisement of programs: targeted participants often share certain qualities that enable them to make a more powerful impact. For example, English skills are critical to the selection process. English skills are particularly important when evaluating applicants, and most have to pass an English test and interview (A). In addition, English language ability is seen as a major benefit of programs, showing how input biases output; all students must have superior English skills going into the program, then improve upon those skills in the U.S., making their English seem all the more impressive when coming out of the program (H). Selection in all programs but IVLP favors English skills so heavily that competency in the language is essentially a requirement.

In addition to targeting participants with superior English ability, the “typical” Iraqi or Jordanian targeted by exchanges is far from average. Almost all programs stated that they targeted exemplary rising leaders. Interviews described typical participants as positive, funny, engaging, brilliant (B), and needing to have good grades (H). Though these are obviously not selectively traits of the upper class, it is easier to identify these characteristics in participants who have officials advocating for them. One administrator described the struggle with the Jordanian government and other powerful locals pressuring the State Department to bend rules for elite Jordanians (F). Other administrators claimed that their programs did not capitulate to these pressures. This situation has improved, however, as program efforts improve at reaching the underserved, though even those “underserved” clearly had some access to the resources

necessary meet the competitive, selective criteria of programs. In other words, participants are not selected to be representative of a country, but are selected to represent the country.

Furthermore, the selection of participants is not conducted by a centralized body, resulting in significant variability in the caliber of participants. Often selection boils down to individual personalities of diplomats (C). Yet allowing different embassies to handle selection instead of a centralized body can lead to issues. Participant quality varies between countries due to the different personnel in embassy posts.

Though differences between embassies results in differences in participant caliber, this variability is contained within the traits of superior English skills and exemplary personalities, and therefore programs produce only limited diversity within their participant groups.

### **Participant Struggles**

Though the participants chosen are those best suited to experience cultural exchanges, participants still often find programs challenging. One issue is that despite the intensive selection process, not all participants understand the purpose of cultural exchange. For example, in the twelve years of YES operation, two students have been kicked out of the program and sent home from the U.S. due to misbehavior (H). Though the reasons behind these dismissals were unclear, one administrator stated that drinking and sexual activity were red flags to program administrators, and if students engaged in such behavior they were immediately sent home. The administrator believed these participant problems arose from the misbelief that American culture was defined by these behaviors, and that despite pre-departure orientation to the contrary, the young teens in the YES program can be especially susceptible to these stereotypes of American culture. This acting out could also have been a result of participants not taking the program seriously and seeing it as a vacation instead of cultural exchange. Another administrator agreed

that not every Jordanian that applied to programs understood their purpose; many saw programs as a means of getting to the U.S. for technical training or with the intention of migrating. This, however, is a misinterpretation, as the administrator explained all State Department exchanges are designed to invest in a participant's home country and global problems. All programs have a two year component, requiring participants to stay in their home country upon return specifically to combat potential participant emigration. Yet despite the design of exchange programs, which reinforces impact as the purpose of exchanges, at times exchange intent is ignored by its participants.

Even if the program purpose is understood, the challenge of interacting with other program participants can make the experience difficult. In exchanges including several Middle Eastern countries, there is a significant national diversity. One administrator noted that for IYLEP, oftentimes exchange program participation is the first time many Iraqis travel outside of their home countries (B). Within Jordan travel is also uncommon, with limited movement within the region or between cities. Even for those participants accustomed to traveling, it would be extremely rare to substantially interact with another nationality. In this way, oftentimes programs expose participants who would never have otherwise met, let alone work together. Differences manifest both in participant interaction and participant preparation for the program (D). Though from a mutual region of the world, it is clear not all students share the same background. An administrator explained that differences between students do not always cause tension: "They have a real strong bonding with each other. And even though they're all from the Middle East [and] North Africa, there are a lot of differences between their countries, and the specific situations in their countries. So they have a huge sort of bonding experience there," (E). Though a diverse body of participants does not necessarily mean participants will not get along, different

interpretations of culture, particularly concerning contentious issues in religion, can be a complication within programs. The same administrator also mentioned that, at times, contention between students needed to be addressed:

Ramadan also brings up a lot of tensions between them too. Some of them, they have different views on what it means to be observant. And they can be really harsh on each other about it. So this year we brought in an imam to talk about it and we also brought in one of our faculty members to talk about religious tolerance and intra-religious tolerance. What it means to sort of respectfully, to disagree about each other's views, because that has just been an interesting challenge from time to time. (E)

The same administrator also noted that for women, whether to wear the hijab or not while in the U.S. was also a contentious issue between participants (E). Country differences also lead to a relationship between quality of student and nationality. In the view of one administrator, participants from Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine were typically more Western and had an easier time fitting in U.S. culture compared to participants from other Middle Eastern countries (D). The administrator continued that Gulf students experienced greater culture shock, while Jordan was a mixture between the Levant and the Gulf. Participants from across the Middle East meeting through exchange programs provides an opportunity to connect and learn but also a heightened potential for a diversity of opinions that challenges participants.

Participants from within the same country can also differ. This is particularly evident in the case of Iraq, where both Kurdish and Arab students flow into programs. One administrator explained that these two groups did not only differ ethnically, but also in level of preparation: "My experience has been that the Kurdish students are more positive, more engaged, than the Arab students. Perhaps more academically prepared" (D). A second administrator also remarked upon the marked differences between Iraq's regions, using the example of a one SUSI group which included three Iraqis from one ethnic group and one Iraqi from another. The program

required these four participants to work together on a project proposal for Iraq, which proved difficult:

The [three] women... they would not introduce themselves as Iraqi, and they spoke a different language. And actually, this poor one [from the second ethnic group] felt kind of left out. Because they were doing things as a delegation [group], they were doing their action plan and stuff, and the three women would speak their language and Aisha,<sup>86</sup> who was not, that was an issue. ...And it was a challenge about what they were going to do when they got home too, because they lived in different areas and again, with conditions there being difficult, how would they work across the country? (E)

Now, after the participants returned, the administrator noted that, “They’re still writing each other, and they’re talking about what’s going on. But I don’t know that they have been able to follow up on the specific plans...” (E). For programs in which participants from the same country are expected to work together, both cultural and geographic differences can be particularly difficult to overcome both in the conducive atmosphere of the United States and upon return.

Yet oftentimes external barriers are not a participant’s most significant struggle. Even the best intentioned of participants with the most favorable experience must overcome their own idealism. This idealism often arises within the projects participants develop in the U.S.; many programs envision individual and group projects as a way of producing an impact, and incorporate the development of these projects into their design. This fosters individual and group initiatives as the programs progress, and often programs culminate in these projects. Yet administrators specifically commented on the fact that often participant plans are unrealistic:

Students are very... idealistic despite coming from countries where they may have limited freedoms, where there may be conflict, where there may be war, where there may be areas of extreme poverty, they remain very optimistic. In my assessment sometimes, too optimistic... [they want to] go home and do great things in their home countries and change the world. [And we used to ask them to] come up with a plan, something that you

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<sup>86</sup> Pseudonym

can do to support your community, or to engage your community. Well you know, they're young people. They don't have any experience with community organization or project management or organizational management or organizational development. So you're kind of asking them to do something that's a little bit above and beyond what they're prepared to do. Plus most of them are in school. ...So they don't have a lot of time. ...So it's almost like asking a first year engineering student to design a space ship... After their first semester designing a spaceship, most of them can't. And even if they could, they don't have the time to build it. ...We do see a frustration with the students. (D)

Participants in the MEPI program were so consistently unrealistic that the program stopped funding their plans. To expect students who are so newly introduced to civic action planning to come up with a coordinated plan in just a few weeks is unrealistic. In short, the program's unrealistic expectations only exacerbated the unrealistic expectations of its participants. One administrator suggested that before making large plans, participants should learn from and work for another organization upon return to get experience, then a few years later potentially implement their own idea. One of the SUSI programs takes a different approach; it hosts a yearly competition for the best project between country delegations. In a second competition, only one chosen project is funded:

A lot of our students are not very realistic with their action plans. ...[And we take that] into account in deciding our prize, [it] is one of the reasons the Jordanians won, we thought theirs was more doable. A lot of these are ambitious... So I guess I'm saying it's not even. Definitely individuals keep posting about the successes in ways that make me think it's not all going flat, that there is real change. But their group projects are not always realistic. So I think we've seen more, probably, results on the individual level, and what they tell us they've gone on to do. (E)

Idealism may hurt the ability of participants to enact the large projects their programs groom them for, but can also inspire participants to do other projects that create impact.

All told, these challenges are not insurmountable, and many participants make friends across cultural barriers and overcome tensions. In addition, not achieving the ultimate goal of a

program, i.e. a culminating project, does not mean nothing was achieved by the program. The individual impact of participants can manifest through other means.

### **Explicit Impact Measurement**

Cultural exchange programs collect impact data in a variety of forms. One of these is hard data, the quantitative measurement of certain skills learned in a program or changes in belief over time in a participant. Several of the programs interviewed collected hard data to measure the impact of their program on participants, with the idea that this data is a somewhat measurable mechanism of measurement. For example, IYLEP uses the Kirkpatrick Model for evaluation<sup>87</sup> as its main resource, which includes three questionnaires for participants: a baseline before coming to the U.S., a questionnaire upon return to Iraq, and a six month follow-up (with a potential yearly follow up) (B). Several other programs shared similar approaches to collecting impact data. Though this seems like an adequate method to measure impact on the administrative side, this model gives no impetus for participants to fulfill their impact goals upon return except moral obligation. Follow-up at six months and later depends on factors outside of program control by assuming that participants can be contacted (i.e. they maintain the same email address) and that participants will respond to program contact. Just because a program has an objective measurement system does not mean that system is successful in collecting that data. However, pre- and post-tests do guarantee some form of short-term impact measurement, and longer-term measurement is attempted.

However, objective measurement was not inherent in many exchange programs. One administrator recounted recent attention paid to improving measurement when the MEPI program was merged organizationally with the Near East Affairs Bureau: “there was a lot of

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<sup>87</sup> A model that evaluates four methods of learning, designed for measuring the impact of training.

reflection and a lot of evaluation and a lot of prodding, ...[In the past we had] a very, very casual assessment of many of these factors. Because the students participated actively in the program and presented a presentation, one hundred percent demonstrated that they had an increased level” (D). New oversight for MEPI meant a new direction for measuring impact that was less assumptive and more direct. Now each of the three MEPI program goals are measured through specific tests. Goal one, “to increase participant’s leadership and problem solving skills,” is measured via the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory, a psychiatric measure to score leadership pre- and post-program (D). Goal two, “participant commitment to engage and civic activism increases,” requires participants to attend a conference six months after their program’s end to present progress in their community projects (D). Goal three, “participants’ understanding of civic responsibility and the role of civil society increases,” is measured through a pre- and post-general civics test (D). However, even seemingly concrete quantification practices are not entirely reliable. After this year, the MEPI program learned that several of its participants had cheated on the civics pretest; some looked up answers online despite being asked to answer using only personal knowledge. Next year, to rectify this problem, an interviewee said the test would be proctored and administered upon arrival to the U.S. instead of being given online to participants in their home country. Impact measurement evolves over time in response to oversight and experience in the field.

The SUSI program’s impact measurement also progressed over time. One administrator explained that at St. Mary’s, the program altered its initial impact measurement (focus groups) because the approach was too work-intensive (E). Current assessment combines both open-ended student reflection and quantitative surveys. Retrospective personal growth, open-ended, “customer satisfaction” reflection on the program itself, and journaling all fall into the category

of open-ended impact documentation; pre- and post-global perspectives tests and national identity tests fit the category of quantitative data (E). SUSI's example shows that both open-ended data and data from tests can both contribute to measuring impact.

Yet though SUSI's quantitative tests showed positive results, what seemed to impress one of its administrators the most was neither participant test results nor their official reflections, but rather their Facebook posts (E). He observed that often participants' Facebooks praised the SUSI program's impact on themselves and exemplified that impact through posting personal achievements: "[Both participant evaluations and personal Facebook posts are] very clear that it [SUSI] is an enormous impact on themselves, their identities, and their hopes and plans, and their feeling of being equipped to do things" (E). Another administrator seemed to agree that the impact programs made on their participants was more important than the impact participants themselves made (C). This shift in importance was emphasized in part due to the difficult nature of impact measurement. The administrator spoke to this issue by bringing up survey fatigue:

So you get to a point where people are filling out surveys that they're not really filling out, they're just checking boxes, and so it's a constant thing that we're looking at: how better to assess the impact of the program other than kind of anecdotal evidence. And it's very hard with a program like this. Much of what they do is, you know, it's kind of, their opinions are very subjective to their own experience. You know, but what I think is very very successful is how drastically changed everyone's perceptions are of the United States because they've really seen it for themselves. (C)

The impact this administrator is most confident in, how participants are affected outside of specific skills, is the impact the program does not necessarily measure or explicitly set out to achieve, though administrators repeatedly praised the change programs created in individuals as a major positive impact. Though when considering quantitative data and impact analysis this idea of immeasurable positive impact may at first appear problematic, one administrator explained that the quantification of results was not always necessary (B). He believed that illustrating

impact had more power than quantifying it. He explained that experiences could be moving, as success stories can be inspirational and therefore go further than numbers, especially for Congress (the target audience for funding approval), showing a political (and resulting monetary) incentive to shape programs to a particular type of assessment.

Indeed, administrators can provide copious amounts of soft data. This more general, subjective tracking was not necessarily quantified, but still highly valued, sought after, and labeled by programs as a useful form of measurement. In most cases, soft data came from participants self-reporting their feelings and accomplishments. As one interviewee explained, “It’s a short period of time, it’s five weeks... So it’s more them telling us what a huge impact it’s had, and how they’ve gone on to feel like they could get involved in organizations they hadn’t been, or run for offices they hadn’t” (E). Administrators had specific examples of what they saw as the increased efficacy of program participants: “I’ve had women scientists who are really leaders in their field and as a result of their program they’ve applied for grants and gotten money to do their research and work with people at the Smithsonian and all these other great places,” (C).

I think that would be too narrow to look at that [successfully implemented projects] as the only implementation of the learning and the leadership skills because... change in them is bubbling up in a lot of different ways, which may be a little harder to quantify right upon doing your five year follow-up... it’s impressive how long they’ve come when somebody posts something they did that is real and tangible. ...I do see them taking action, and that doesn’t have to be on this action plan. ...I think their life-long contributions are going to be a lot more important and impactful than that one action plan idea. ...And I don’t expect to see it all in the first six months. (E)

Embassies write newsletters and we’ll hear about somebody getting promoted. And you know, it’s hard to tell sometimes if it’s directly... a result of an IV[LP] program. And you know one thing that our program likes to talk about is people who’ve gone on to become heads of state who’ve been in our program, and although that’s great and interesting, you can’t really say that they became a head of state as a direct correlation of being on an

IV[LP] program. But they were well-selected, obviously, because they are future leaders.  
(C)

Promotions, personal projects, activism, and any personal successes are essentially categorized as a program success. This does not mean that the program necessarily caused that success; rather, programs are successful because their participants go on to be successful. Whether the participant was predisposed to make change or taught to make change is less important than the fact that he or she makes change. In this way, soft data does not necessarily reflect the impact of a program, but rather the impact of a participant (who could have been impacted by the program). It is reasonable to believe a participant would have been impacted somehow by a program from the sheer act of taking part in it, but that does not mean the program directs all latter participant actions. However, programs can reasonably claim to have somehow affected those actions through the merit of affecting their actor.

In order for personal impact to be made known by programs, participants must have a venue to self-report accomplishments. Fulbright answers this need for loose tracking by keeping in contact with alumni and hosting alumni events (A). Other programs have administrators meet with participants individually both pre- and post-program (F). One administrator familiar with participating in many of these meetings explained that they were a good means of measuring impact on the participant, and a majority of participants feel that the cultural exchange changed their life (F). Enabling participants to share their personal accomplishments after a program ends enables the scope of impact measurement to widen in both breadth and depth.

Cultural exchange programs have moved toward quantitative measurement, but this has been hard to achieve for both internal and external reasons, so programs emphasize qualitative and individual level measurement. Program success is primarily measured both qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of how the participant is impacted. Each program's fundamental

assumption is that impact on the participant will translate to the participant impacting their home country.

### **Impact on the Participant**

Certain themes underlie how programs desire to impact their participants, raising the question of if impact on the individual is considered a program success. Yet not all change in participants is, or can be, tracked. Experiences are as various and unique as participants.

Numerous factors contribute to how the participants themselves change during and after program participation. Several administrators acknowledged this diversity, one commenting that: “I think that the issue is that you really can’t say that there is a typical participant,” (D). This interviewee listed locational, cultural, economic, and environmental factors differentiating participants.

Another administrator restated the idea that a participant’s impact depends fully on the participant; there is no one version of a success story (B). The differences in program impact on each participant emerge from both internal factors, such as personality, and external factors, such as one’s environment. The administrator explained that the location of the program itself impacted the resources available and how participants are received (D). For example, the reception of participants in Washington D.C. is far different from the reception of the same participants in Madison, Wisconsin; whereas participants were immediately accepted and uninteresting in the capital, in Madison they became the center of attention and intrigue (D).

However, all participants are supposed to be affected in some specific ways by programs. A primary expectation is that participants will become leaders through their exchanges. This is not the bestowal of new skills—as previously stated, participants are selected for being leaders—but the enhancement of pre-existing leadership ability. Leadership and program impact on the participant were consistently tied throughout administrator interviews. Every administrator that

spoke on the subject believed that participant leadership skills increased directly in response to the exchange. One administrator said, “The program is to really build a cadre of young emerging leaders who have the knowledge and skills to participate actively in the development of their communities and countries. And I think that’s there, and I think that’s really the goal both in what it’s pitched as and what the goal really does” (D). The idea, it seems, is that participation gives participants a vocabulary and concrete vision of what civic leadership means: “[Impact is] the whole point, obviously. And they are selected for leadership potential. Their interest and their potential in leadership... Their journal entries and reposts and testimonials... are eloquent about what a transformative experience it [the exchange] is. And some of that is obviously our curriculum. It’s a curriculum and program kind of thing,” (E). Program focus on leadership is illustrated through the skillset participants are expected to learn. Though these skills may not explicitly be “leadership,” they contribute to what it means to be a leader. Many administrators commented on skillsets relating to leadership that their programs taught participants. Secondary leadership skills are easy proxies to advertise and create goals from because they all fall within the already successful umbrella of leadership enhancement. The idea that participants are selected, trained, and tracked for leadership creates a self-reinforcing goal ensuring that programs produce leaders.

Another means of intended impact on participants is the goal of further educating them about the U.S. This impression is not designed to be positive or ideal, but rather more accurately represent the U.S. in its reality. As one administrator put it, “We’re looking to give people a [personal] perspective of the United States, a view for themselves,” (C). Another administrator, a former State Department exchange participant, commented about how his own views of the U.S. changed: “I think it changed my perception, or my ideas or my thoughts about the American

community for the best, because it's not like that I really had some negative ideas, it's just, it was wrong, you know what I mean? You think to yourself, 'This is what it is,' and then you go there and realize 'Oh, it's not like that,' just because someone told me it is," (G). A third administrator defined programs as successful if participants came away with an enhanced view of American culture, people, and policymaking (F). The idea is for participants to understand that many issues, i.e. corruption, are not limited to the Middle East, and are also problems for the U.S. Yet despite championing the lack of required positivity, administrators explained that the overwhelming majority of participants returned with a view of the U.S. that was positive overall. Therefore, though programs desire that their participants learn more about the reality of the U.S. in a genuine manner that does not promote idealism, participants typically come away from the experience with positive impressions.

In some cases, positive feelings towards the U.S. can be a hindrance to participants, as such favor may affect their feeling toward returning home. One administrator personally experienced an emotionally challenging re-assimilation and reverse culture shock:

It can change you. It doesn't have to change you a lot—it doesn't necessarily change you a lot—but still. You start changing your habits, your daily life pattern... So you start expecting to have these things, and for me, whenever I expressed my frustration about a certain issue, people start criticizing me for that, actually. Saying, like, "You've been to the U.S. nine or ten months now, and now you're an American?" (G)

This interviewee additionally found that reverse culture-shock inhibited his ability to carry out the projects he wanted to implement upon return:

And when you notice that these things that exist in the U.S. are actually better than what you had in your own country, and it would be great if you can have it in your own country... you start looking for a change. ...[But] the social factor, which is people around you, I think it's the most important factor that prevents you from changing, because whenever you try to do something people start criticizing you and start blocking you. ...It frustrates you a lot, and ...it's going to keep happening. It actually happens to me every day... in every little thing that I do. Yeah, I mean, I knew that it was going to

be bad, but I didn't think it was going to be that bad. ...So sometimes it makes you stop from doing this stuff just because you don't want to hear people talking about you. (G)

This interviewee felt he had to constantly combat the system and culture to attempt his own change. By comparison, another Jordanian administrator encountered no instances with participants being harassed upon return (H). However, he did note that some civic activities such as community service and fundraising were not recognized in Jordan, which could be disheartening for those seeking to enact change. The same administrator also saw problems arise with students who returned "too Americanized," an issue which the administrator defined as the most negative part of exchange. Being too American included alterations such as piercings and brightly colored hair, which cause conflict between the participants and their parents. Participants wanting to act more liberally than they had before the exchange sometimes asked the YES program to intercede for them in parental arguments (which of course it could not). Difficulty in re-assimilation further complicates the ability of participants to impact their society, as attempts at impact can become emotionally exhausting and culturally frustrating.

### **Impact of the Participant**

Often participants are the conduit of program impact on others and on society as a whole. For example, the impact participants made on the Americans they encountered was a common theme across programs. There seems to be a strong sense of understanding exchanged between foreign participants and Americans involved with the program which can extend beyond program goals and into close relationships. An administrator portrayed this American-participant interaction as one of the greatest exchange program benefits, as it lines up with one of the main goals of cultural exchange: mutual understanding (A). The administrator also used this understanding to define program success: "The success is first measured by the impact each of the participants leave about the Iraqi people in the communities they live in during their study

period in the USA” (A). Yet Fulbright attempts no significant measurement of the impact on Americans encountered in the program.<sup>88</sup> Another administrator agreed upon the importance of American-participant relationships:

Well, I think, I think that when I see a really good exchange, it’s a true exchange. So that not only are we bringing people here to teach them about the United States, but we’re bringing them here to teach Americans about what’s really going on in their country. And so for me the most profound experiences are the ones where they really connect and they do things together in the future as result of their discussions and conversations. (C)

These administrators portray mutual understanding as a sustainable change that affects both individuals and communities. Specific examples of this result, particularly those regarding Americans who had close interactions with participants, were often discussed by administrators. A third interviewee depicted the especially tight bond between participants and their host families: “The host families who do it love love love these women, stay in touch with them, fall in love with them, thank us thank us for the opportunity to get to know them” (E). Not only do such experiences create friendships, but also combat cultural misinformation regarding both the U.S. and Middle East. According to each administrator interviewed, the Americans who engage with these Iraqis and Jordanians greatly enjoy the experience. Therefore, the impact participants make on Americans while in the U.S. does reinforce the fundamental denotation of a cultural exchange being an actual exchange of mutual understanding and genuine friendship.

The impact participants make upon return to their home country is the most significant goal of cultural exchanges. As discussed earlier, implementing return projects is part of many programs. SUSI at St. Mary’s requires an action plan to be presented at the end of its exchange and chooses one project to fund each year (E). The YES program also has a budget for students

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<sup>88</sup> Though Fulbright does ask participants to provide the number of Americans interacted with in various aspects of the program, this is not a measurement of impact, but rather an inexact scope of possible impact. Also, it focuses on participants instead of questioning the Americans the participants interacted with, and therefore the quality of interaction remains unknown.

to spend upon their return, yet does not invest in projects for a specific subgroup but rather initiatives and trainings that include its entire cohort (H). In IYLEP, impact manifests in local group initiatives, some of which are sustained through various program generations (B). In this way, there is some variation in how program administrators envision program impact. However, the purpose of cultural exchanges is not specific project completion, but rather a larger fundamental change in the participant country (F). Skills participants learn are intended to address an underlying issue in their country, not just provide a superficial solution.

Both passive and active impacts of the participant are important results of cultural exchanges. Passive impact, how a participant affects others, particularly Americans, can enable mutual exchange. And not only is a participant a representative of their country when they visit the U.S., that participant also represents the U.S. upon his or her return. Active impact in which participants enact specific projects in their home country exemplifies this representation. Additionally, both program and individual projects of participants work to improve a participant's country, the purpose of cultural exchange.

## Security

Unfortunately, security<sup>89</sup> in the Middle East is a defining limit on the potential contributions of participants. Security is an insignificant concern for exchanges between the U.S. and Jordan, but it impacts all aspects of cultural exchange between the U.S. and Iraq. First, program recruitment and selection is limited, as noted above. Second, at times the most likely participants to be chosen in the case of Iraq are those who are already at risk because of their high profile in society. Third, the situation at home can impact a participant's time abroad because their family and loved ones are at risk. Fourth, upon return security concerns may make it difficult to implement plans. Fifth, some plans are not implemented at all because the situation

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<sup>89</sup> In this section, security refers to only physical, personal security.

is deemed too dangerous for a participant to return to, or a participant does return but is killed. The lack of security in Iraq has a massive influence limiting or even preventing the impact participants can make.

As explained earlier, security may limit operational processes such as recruitment and selection of participants. One MEPI administrator believed that the program's recruitment in some countries would soon stop altogether due to extreme security concerns limiting the ability of embassies to work (D). An embassy cannot recruit and sponsor participants if it is operating on minimal staff or not there at all, basic operational necessities that security inhibits. By limiting recruitment and selection, security worries already begin to inhibit some programs, particularly those in Iraq.

Participants are also inherently at risk. For programs such as IVLP, for which participants cannot apply but are hand selected by embassies, those most likely to be chosen are already at risk because of their high profile in society. However, the problem of association is applicable to all programs; by taking part in a U.S. program, the participant puts themselves at increased risk by associating with the U.S. The IVLP program is especially careful about this association:

“For our region [the Middle East], we're particularly sensitive to the fact that some people do not want it public knowledge that they've gone on a program sponsored by the United States government. I think it's very sensitive. So we ask each and every individual if we can reach out to them again in the future before we do any such thing. Because we understand the consequences.” (C)

The consequences of U.S. association are increased threat risk, which in the extreme could make one a target for assassination.

A participant's program time abroad is still affected by the security situation at home. Even if the participant is not physically in Iraq or Jordan, emotionally they remain with their family and friends. Such a situation may not only preoccupy participants with worry about their

countries, but also affect how they act and experience the exchange in the U.S., especially if the U.S. government is thought to be involved in creating the issues at home. In 2014, the Gaza War and increasing violence in Iraq was a trying experience for women in one of the SUSI programs, according to one of its administrators: “They were getting emails all the time, especially the Iraqis and the Jordanians, about so and so’s aunt being bombed, so and so’s cousin being shot. And texts. It was very, very distressing” (E).

The security situation in the home country also obviously affects the ability of participants to make their desired impact upon return. Oftentimes administrators alluded to this reality in Iraq without naming it, skirting around the idea through the statement that different participants make different impacts depending on their personalities and locations. Some agreed outright that security concerns limited the impact participants could make. One administrator explained that not only did security limit participant attempts at impact, it also limited U.S. government efforts to facilitate that impact (A). For Iraqis, at times the security situation is so dire that impact cannot be made in Iraq because return cannot happen. Travel to the U.S. becomes refuge in the U.S. Though not a problem for Jordanian participants, this was a recurring issue for Iraqis. One administrator explained that this is a particular problem for the Fulbright program in Iraq (A). Though participant return is a program requirement, “several participants don’t come back” and “there is no penalty on those who do not come back except that we do not provide them with their Fulbright certificates” (A). Another administrator also expressed that there had been worry this recent summer about getting the Iraqi participants home (E). A third administrator offered numerous situations in which participants were unable to return home, particularly those from Syria, Libya, and Iraq, due to civil conflict (D). The administrator explained that these unreturning participants do not always stay in the U.S., but may travel to

family members outside of their home country. However, any lack of return directly counters the stated purpose of programs: for participants to return to their home countries and make impact.

Without participant return, impact on the home country is little to none.

The desire for Iraqi participants to remain in the U.S. seems understandable in light of some programs' experience with participant assassinations. Most administrators were very attuned to this issue, and portrayed it as relatively common. One knew of multiple threats, including one that occurred just recently: "One of the young men who was at Benedictine University who just went back to Erbil had his life threatened because he was in the program"

(D). Another described instances of outright killings:

"We understand the consequences [of being contacted by the U.S. embassy]. And we've had many visitors who have been assassinated and killed for various reasons. Again, there's no direct correlation between coming on our program and getting assassinated any more than becoming head of state and coming on our program. But at the same time we certainly understand the difficulties." (C)

Security is an external factor that plays a defining role in determining exchange impact. Unfortunately, exchanges are extremely limited in the actions they can take to mitigate this worry; at best, programs can allow participants to not return, which prevents participant impact.

### **Alumni Network**

Alumni associations play many roles in continuing program impact. They can help with recruitment, provide resources to alumni, and maintain contact, all of which helps to aid and track participant progress. Associations take different forms in different countries and different programs, being as expansive as a well-developed network that includes multiple State Department programs or as limited as an initiative in early stages of development. It is clear the

stronger the alumni network the greater the potential to foster a successful environment for participant impact.

The return atmosphere of a home country is partially defined by the alumni network in that country. Though not all programs have alumni associations, those that do implement them for a variety of purposes. Generally, administrators saw alumni programs as overwhelmingly positive, as they foster the connection between the State Department and alums, which enables the State Department a means of sustained connection and follow-up, and the alums a means of connection with each other and the U.S. as well as potential resources to implement their own projects. Existing alumni organizations have multiple duties and a variety of forms, but each aims to help participants expand their impact. The IVLP alumni association is global and connects IVLP participants from various countries, participants from other State Department exchanges, and American interlocutors of various programs through the ECA alumni association (C). But not all alumni programs follow the model of total integration of all programs. In Iraq, alumni programs are either individual, such as that of IYLEP, group, such as Fulbright and other related associations, or at times have a strong online presence, such as SUSI. This mixture of different types of associations shows the diversity of different programs.

Alumni networks have the potential to answer many of the aspects of programs that cannot be addressed by the programs themselves. For example, such networks allow a means for alumni to support each other and ensuring continued connection to the program and between alumni (A). Essentially, alumni networks can help to provide the resources (support, training, money, connection, etc.) that alumni need to enable their continued impact.

However, as previously stated, not all programs have alumni networks. The summer of 2014, the U.S. Embassy in Jordan was busy trying to create its own alumni network for

Jordanian exchange program alumni (G). The initiative had been previously pursued, but had always fallen through (for reasons not provided); the newest attempt was intended as an avenue to connect the embassy to alumni across programs in Jordan. This project arose partially in response to the request of alumnus themselves, who wanted a means of continued connection to the embassy and the resources it could provide. Jordan's example shows that not all programs share in the clear benefit of alumni networks.

### **Analyzing Cultural Exchanges with Iraq and Jordan**

Though program intent does drive exchanges to an extent, it does not entirely determine their impact. Leaving aside the intent of exchanges for now (with a promise to return later), let us examine their impact. This thesis promised to explore the impact State Department cultural exchanges with the Middle East, or in other words: what are these cultural exchanges effective at?

Cultural exchanges are not effective at being adequately funded. The need for renewed funding leads to four main program limitations: operational limitations, a lack of American participants, staff burnout, and weakened support for alumni. As in the past, private organizations such as World Learning contribute some monetary support to exchanges, but programs depend heavily on government funding, which tends to vary greatly in level with leadership and priority changes. Services have never been, and are still not, adequate for exchanges.

Cultural exchanges are effective at targeting and selecting opinion leaders, or those participants in the upper class who are situated to have the most impact. By selecting for participants who fit a certain mold, programs target those who will not only be most heavily impacted by the program, but also already have the resources and social sway to enact the most

impact upon their return. This approach is consistent with the suggestion of many academics to involve powerful participants in exchanges. Participants are likely to be powerful socially and economically, and have a powerful personality, all traits that set them up for creating significant impact upon return.

Cultural exchanges are not effective at including participants of a similar caliber. Though participants are selected for superior English skills and exemplary character, differences in the ways that embassies select participants result in differences in the quality of the participants selected.

Cultural exchanges are effective at bringing together participants from across the Middle East. This mingling within programs produces mixed results, however, challenges that arise from resulting tensions are not insurmountable, and many participants make friends across cultural barriers and overcome tensions. However, this may depend on the country of the participant; though Jordanians seemed to get along well, Arab and Kurdish Iraqis experienced several issues that hindered working together in the U.S., problems that were only exacerbated when they returned to Iraq.

Cultural exchanges are not effective at assuring that participants complete their culminating projects. This is partially due to participants' idealism, which often results in unrealistic projects. To this point, perhaps programs should better temper their participants' plans. Additionally, though project completion is a requirement of many exchanges, there is no enforcement mechanism to ensure that projects are actually pursued upon return home. However, not achieving a specific project does not mean nothing was achieved by the program. The individual impact of participants can manifest through other means. Echoing studies in the past,

administrators stated that participants will provide greater value through their longer-term impact than through their short-term solutions.

Cultural exchanges are effective at conducting measurement of their programs' impact on participants through a variety of means, but not effective at applying a standard assessment technique. The mechanisms of evaluating cultural exchanges have moved toward quantitative measurement, but this has been hard to achieve for both internal and external reasons, so programs emphasize qualitative and individual level measurement. Program success is primarily measured both qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of how the participant is impacted. However, the emphasis on quantitative data in recent years continues to increase, so that more "tangible" results, aka data, can be produced. Yet each State Department program measures impact in a distinct manner, making it difficult to compare programs. At the same time, it is understood that programs are different, and therefore may require different approaches to impact measurement.

Cultural exchanges are effective at producing leaders with positive impressions of the U.S. Participants are selected, trained, and tracked for leadership, which creates a self-reinforcing goal ensuring that programs produce leaders. Similarly, though the vast majority of participants come away from exchanges with a positive impression of U.S., past studies have hinted that those selected for these programs already have a positive impression, and had this clarified instead of changed.

Cultural exchanges are not effective at preparing participants for re-assimilation. Both positive impressions of the U.S. and U.S. attachment can complicate the ability of participants to impact their society, as attempts at impact can become emotionally exhausting and culturally

frustrating. Accusations of a person being “too-Americanized,” even in Jordan, decrease the impact of participants within their culture.

Cultural exchanges are moderately effective at enabling friendships between participants and Americans. Personal links and a strong sense of understanding are natural side-effects of participant exposure to Americans involved with the program. American peer involvement is valuable in that it enables Americans to be exposed to participants for long periods of time, creating increased cultural understanding in the Americans, and therefore increased tolerance within the U.S. Also, as former studies have shown, a closer relationship with Americans increases participant satisfaction with the program and creates a better experience (and therefore likely increases the positivity of the participant towards both the program and U.S.) In this way, American involvement allows exchange to be more mutual, a goal of many programs. Currently, however, this sharing of cultures is uneven, as spreading Americans values is a program focus, while spreading foreign values is a side effect. In addition, as previously stated, the participation of American peers is not funded in most programs.

Cultural exchanges are effective at enabling the participant to enact small initiatives in their home countries. Group, program, and individual participant projects work to improve a participant’s country. Though some programs require involvement in group projects, many participants act on their own initiative.

Cultural exchanges are moderately effective at protecting the security of their participants. Security is an insignificant concern for exchanges between the U.S. and Jordan, but impacts all aspects of cultural exchange between the U.S. and Iraq. However, exchanges are aware of this issue and allow participants to not return, mitigating the security worry but not answering the worry that the exchange had no concrete result for the participant’s home country.

Cultural exchanges are also moderately effective at providing alumni associations to their former participants; once established, these associations are immensely effective. Alumni associations play many roles in continuing program impact. They can help with recruitment, provide resources to alumni, and maintain contact, all of which helps to aid and track participant progress. It is clear the stronger the alumni network the greater the potential to foster a successful environment for participant impact. By focusing on re-entry after the exchange, programs answer the historical need for cultural support. Iraq has much higher effectiveness on this front than Jordan; Iraq has many established networks, whereas Jordan was still working on an overarching office in 2014.

To briefly summarize, the strong effects of cultural exchange include targeting and selecting opinion leaders, bringing together participants from across the Middle East, conducting measurement of their programs' impact on participants, producing leaders with positive impressions of the U.S., and enabling participants to enact small initiatives in their home countries. Moderate effects of cultural exchange are enabling friendships between participants and Americans, protecting the security of their participants, and providing alumni associations to their former participants. Exchanges are weak in receiving consistent and adequate funds, including participants of a similar caliber, assuring that participants complete their culminating projects, and preparing participants for re-assimilation.

Do the results of cultural exchanges match their intent? Though the concept of intent is tricky to define, in this context it will be broadly considered as the theme that underlay every interview collected: the ultimate purpose of all State Department exchanges is for the participant to instigate change in his or her home country. Though goals such as participant skills and cross-cultural communication are important to programs, and though achieving just one of these goals

may make a program successful, enabling change abroad is the foundational purpose of State Department exchange programs, and will therefore be used to gauge whether results match intent. Other goals may not necessarily be secondary to the purpose of a specific program, but because other goals vary on an exchange by exchange basis, programs will be evaluated in terms of their unifying purpose. In addition, many other goals fall within the general realm of country betterment.

Considering the effects of cultural exchange, program efforts focus on the participant. Any personal success of the participant is considered a success of the program. Each program assumes impact on the participant will result in the participant impacting their home country. However, a program's efficacy in impacting a participant is only an indirect correlate or background variable for the ultimate purpose of direct action and social change. This raises the question of whether impact on the individual should be the central goal and marker of program success.

Though a variety of means are used to measure the impact of exchanges, measurement mechanisms all focus on the participant instead of his or her impact. Program success is primarily measured both qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of how the participant is impacted. It seems that both cultural exchange effect and its impact measurement focus on what little can be measured in an exchange: change in the participant. Though this is not the ultimate success, it is at least a marker on the path to success, though this marker is no guarantee that in-country betterment will occur.

Here it is useful to ponder what type of foreign betterment exchanges are intended to enable. According to academic and government literature, exchanges still meet their old definitions: political tools and mechanisms of foreign relations. It is very clear that exchanges are

political: the manner in which they are framed by the government, how their funding reflects government priorities, the clear, direct involvement of embassies, and their U.S. association make them obvious projects of the U.S. government. In addition, programs mix Middle Eastern elites, acting as preparation for these elites to gain experience in international relations and connect with each other. It also seems likely that exchanges are still mechanisms of U.S. cultural relations with foreign countries such as Iraq, where few Americans travel. If so, perhaps an increased emphasis should be placed on the cultural part of exchanges. But if programs are political players in a foreign field, are exchanges a means of promoting individual political initiatives, or deep-rooted political change?

This question leads to the role of democracy promotion within State Department cultural exchanges. Clearly, it would be false to claim that all participant projects pursue democracy, or even any political agenda. Many participants do not have a larger political aim. But the role these participants play in enacting these projects may have political significance. As previously stated, change in the participant does not necessarily translate to change in the home country, and yet programs focus on measuring change within the participant. Perhaps this measurement occurs because programs want the participant to enact change in their home country not through projects, but rather through inspiring movement. Ideally, a participant's own projects create personal initiative in the participant; the ultimate lesson enables participants to realize their independent agency to pursue their own empowerment. And this realization could spark pursuit of or defense for democracy.

Neither current exchanges nor the current administration are as vocal about democracy promotion. In fact, the concept now carries a stigma (relating to Bush and failed Middle Eastern foreign policy) that makes it almost taboo to speak of. Many exchange administrators would

deny that the purpose of exchanges is to promote democracy. Yet this subtle potential remains. If participants are expected to better their countries, spreading democracy seems to be the ideal betterment from the U.S. State Department perspective. Participants provide a means of sparking democracy from within, a potentially more successful tactic than imposed democracy. And in addition to benefitting a country, democracy would also hopefully align the country more toward U.S. interests. However, the same issues complicating democracy promotion that existed in the past, including U.S. government association and lack of stability, still hinder modern efforts. And it is clear recent cultural exchange efforts have not caused democracy to suddenly spread across the Middle East. Yet perhaps this is an unfair assessment; many administrators illustrated that participant impact blossoms over time. Therefore, perhaps little over a decade of expanded cultural exchange efforts between the U.S. and Middle East is not enough time for such impact to happen.

Alternatively, perhaps the grandiose idea of democracy promotion is no longer the purpose of exchanges, especially considering democracies in countries such as Jordan and Iraq are unlikely to be favorable to the U.S. Instead, the focus could be on participant projects. Independent personal successes of participants do benefit their home countries, and therefore also benefit international relations in a small way, much like small grants of natural, subtle, directed foreign aid. Lesser victories than democracy are still victories, and still count as change abroad. In addition, internal actors may instigate more palatable change than direct U.S. intervention; for example, a native, participant initiative to improve women's rights is likely to be seen more favorably than blatant intervention by an American project. But is the role of programs to spark this change, or continually feed it? Certainly, exchanges seem to spark this change, or perhaps more accurately, add fuel to an already burning fire. Yet programs' budget,

resource, and staff limitations have shown that they do not have the capacity to continually feed the fire of participant initiatives; the best programs can offer are alumni networks which allow participants the potential to further empower themselves. If this is the case, then exchanges are perhaps more educational tools than political tools.

Despite these conclusions, both the past and present show that the impact of exchanges cannot be easily summarized. The context of an exchange and the home country defines much of the exchange experience. Therefore, it is useful to compare U.S. cultural exchanges with Iraq and those with Jordan.

This investigation finds that State Department exchange programs where Iraqis and Jordanians visit the U.S. have similar impact when participants are in the U.S. both in how participants are impacted and what participants intend to impact upon their return. However, the two countries exhibit categorical differences in pre- and post-program operation that have a definitive influence on participant impact. Essentially, Iraq and Jordan exchanges are fundamentally different in their impact because of the vastly different security situations. Security is an insignificant concern for exchanges between the U.S. and Jordan, but impacts almost all aspects of cultural exchange between the U.S. and Iraq. The impact of Iraqi alumni upon return is largely limited to immeasurable impact that cannot be attributed publically to the U.S., and potential impact that may or may not have a chance to manifest later when conditions are more suitable to alumni projects.

These findings do not necessarily make one location “better” for exchanges than the other; they merely show that there is a significant difference in type of impact. In Jordan, alumni are better suited to enact projects upon their return than in Iraq. Yet one could argue that the potential impact of having Iraqis who are both favorable to the U.S. and equipped to enact

change in Iraq (which has a significantly greater need for innovation and bettered U.S. relations) is more important than the measured impact of Jordanian projects. Essentially, exchanges in Iraq or Jordan cannot be given the blanket label of being successful or unsuccessful without first defining what “success” means. That question starts an entirely new debate this thesis is not positioned to cover. This approach not only avoids the incorrect and unrealistic dichotomy of completely successful or completely failing programs, but also better explains the nuances that differentiate participant experiences.

## **Conclusion**

Considering the case studies of State Department cultural exchanges between the U.S. and Iraq and the U.S. and Jordan, the strong effects of exchanges include targeting and selecting opinion leaders, bringing together participants from across the Middle East, conducting measurement of their programs’ impact on participants, producing leaders with positive impressions of the U.S., and enabling participants to enact small initiatives in their home countries. Moderate effects of cultural exchange are enabling friendships between participants and Americans, protecting the security of their participants, and providing alumni associations to their former participants. Exchanges are weak in receiving consistent and adequate funds, including participants of a similar caliber, assuring that participants complete their culminating projects, and preparing participants for re-assimilation.

These effects do not seem to match the ultimate purpose of all State Department exchanges: for the participant to instigate change in his or her home country. Program efforts focus on the participant, and success is primarily measured both qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of how the participant is impacted. Yet a program’s efficacy in impacting a participant is only an indirect correlate or background variable for the ultimate purpose of direct action and

social change. It seems that both cultural exchange effect and its impact measurement focus on what little can be measured in an exchange: change in the participant. Though this is not the ultimate success, it is at least a marker on the path to success, though this marker is no guarantee that in-country betterment will occur.

Not achieving a specific project does not mean nothing was achieved by the program. The individual impact of participants can manifest through other means. Echoing studies in the past, administrators stated that participants will provide greater value through their longer-term impact than through their short-term solutions. Yet ideally, a participant's own projects create personal initiative in the participant; the ultimate lesson enables participants to realize their independent agency to pursue their own empowerment.

In this way, exchanges are both political tools and mechanisms for foreign relations. Though many participants do not have a larger political aim, the role these participants play in enacting their projects may have political significance. If participants are expected to better their countries, spreading democracy seems to be the ideal betterment from the U.S. State Department perspective. Participants provide a means of sparking democracy from within, a potentially more successful tactic than imposed democracy. Alternatively, perhaps the grandiose idea of democracy promotion is no longer the purpose of exchanges. Instead, the focus could be on participant projects. Independent personal successes of participants do benefit their home countries, and therefore also benefit international relations in a small way, much like small grants of natural, subtle, directed foreign aid.

Despite these conclusions, both the past and present show that exchanges cannot be easily summarized. The context of an exchange and the home country defines much of the exchange

experience. Therefore, it is useful to compare U.S. cultural exchanges with Iraq and those with Jordan.

This thesis finds that State Department exchange programs where Iraqis and Jordanians visit the U.S. have similar impact when participants are in the U.S. both in how participants are impacted and what participants intend to impact upon their return. However, the two countries exhibit categorical differences in pre- and post-program operation that have a definitive influence on participant impact. Essentially, Iraqi and Jordanian exchanges are fundamentally different in their impact because of their vastly different security situations. Security is an insignificant concern for exchanges between the U.S. and Jordan, but impacts almost all aspects of cultural exchange between the U.S. and Iraq. The impact of Iraqi alumni upon return is largely limited to immeasurable impact that cannot be attributed publically to the U.S., and potential impact that may or may not have a chance to manifest later when conditions are more suitable to alumni projects. These findings do not necessarily make one location “better” for exchanges than the other; they merely show that there is a significant difference in type of impact.

Examining these issues and benefits across programs enables a holistic view of State Department exchanges with the Middle East that contributes several lessons to better shape and improve results. Though this thesis answers what exchanges do, the questions of what they should do, and how to make that happen, are left open. Ultimately, the latter two questions relate to purpose. It is not the place of this thesis to make operational suggestions to specific programs, or even State Department exchanges as a whole. Each exchange is unique, and much like a unified impact measurement system would misrepresent the true variety of impacts resulting from different exchanges, so too would general improvement suggestions obscure the diversity of programs. Instead, improvement is the duty of each individual program. Each exchange must

better delineate for itself the difference between its program's purpose, subsidiary goals, and success in order to clarify its own ultimate aim and measurement of that aim.

Yet the majority of exchange impact cannot be assessed. Administrators repeatedly showed, acknowledged, and accepted this reality, curiously appearing unconcerned. At first this seems contrary to the increased demand for and movement toward quantitative evidence; why attempt to measure the immeasurable? Perhaps this tension is resolved, however, in practice rather than in theory. In theory, quantitative evidence would provide substantiated answers proving certain goals of cultural exchange. But as shown, such expectations are both unrealistic and unmoving. In practice, qualitative evidence, particularly stories, is more meaningful both to program administrators and to politicians voting on how to fund exchanges. This exemplifies the fickle politics of evidence; both "good" program practice and the U.S. government call for data, and so programs pursue data, while both parties actually operate in the emotional realm of personal stories. Though attempts to illustrate program accountability may seem necessary to justify the American tax dollars spent on such programs, the true base of support is founded in the same source as humanitarian aid: human emotion. In this way, exchanges find support in being humanized, which evokes stronger response than any data "proof" could. In short, impact measurement is necessary to keep good face, but not necessary to receive funding or continued government support.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend a special thanks to my advisor, Patrick Schmidt, for offering invaluable help and guidance which aided me throughout the process of formulating, writing, and editing this thesis.

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## Appendix

**Table 2: Summary Information of All State Department Cultural Exchange Programs<sup>90</sup>**

|   | <b>Program Title</b>                               | <b>Participant Type</b>   | <b>Length</b> | <b>Number of Participants</b>      | <b>Goals<sup>91</sup></b>  | <b>Years of Operation</b> |
|---|--|---|---------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| <i>Fulbright Program<sup>92</sup></i>           | Visiting Scholar Program                           | full-time junior faculty with masters or PhD                        | 10 weeks      | 0-30 (Iraqis)<br>1-8 (Jordanians)  | faculty development, international university connections  | 2004-present              |
|   | Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program              | experienced professionals   | 1 year        | 0-6 (Iraqis)<br>0-2 (Jordanians)   | study within profession, professional development of public policy leaders                             | 2004-present              |
|   | Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program | young English teachers aged 21-29                                   | 9 months      | 0 (Iraqis)<br>0-10 (Jordanians)    | better English teaching skills, learn about American culture, short-term Arabic teaching in the U.S    | 2004-present              |
|   | Foreign Student Program                            | students and professionals with undergraduate education             | 2 years       | 1-70 (Iraqis)<br>8-51 (Jordanians) | study in U.S. to gain a master's degree  | 2004-present              |
| <i>Middle East Partnership Institute (MEPI)</i> | Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program             | economically disadvantaged high school students                     | 4 years       | ≈ 50                               | build leadership, attend U.S.-accredited undergraduate university in Middle East, one semester in U.S. | 2007-2011 <sup>93</sup>   |
|   | Leaders for Democracy Fellowship (LDP)             | young activists and reformists with undergraduate degree ages 25-40 | 3 months      | 20-25                              | come to U.S. for training in activism, leadership, and democracy skills, academic coursework           | 2005-present              |

<sup>90</sup> All programs are described as found on the U.S. Baghdad Embassy website (<http://iraq.usembassy.gov/exchangesprograms.html>) in 2015. If different sites had contrary information, the Embassy site's information was used, as it is generally viewed as having the ultimate say.

<sup>91</sup> For specific program goals, see <http://iraq.usembassy.gov/exchangesprograms.html>.

<sup>92</sup> For the Fulbright, years of operation in the table are the most recent years of operation in Iraq. Though the Fulbright has a history in Iraq, it did not operate for a time under U.S. sanctions of Iraq. This also does not mean that Iraqis were necessarily accepted during these years; however, the program was open to them.

<sup>93</sup> Open to Jordanians through 2011.

|   |  |  |          |  |   |                                     |
|---|--|--|----------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
|   | LDP Arabic Program                               | young activists and reformists with undergraduate degrees ages 22-30 | 10 weeks | 20-25  | similar to LDP but hosted in American University in Beirut with no English prerequisite   | 2011-present                        |
|   | Student Leaders Program                          | Undergraduates ages 18-24  | 6 weeks  | ≈ 120  | develop leadership and civic activism skills, create mutual understanding between foreign and American citizens                               | 2004-present                        |
|   | Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship (CELF) | social science academics with masters and aspiring PhD               | 4 months | n/a  | improve how education is taught through improving civic society, democracy, and international standards by program in U.S. university         | 2010-2012                           |
| <i>Study of the United States Institutions (SUSI)</i> | SUSI for Secondary School Educators              | secondary school educators typically ages 30-50                      | 6 weeks  | n/a  | improve curriculum and teaching about U.S. in secondary schools, different theme foci at different universities but all focus on U.S. culture | 2006-2014 (Jordan) <sup>94</sup>    |
|   | SUSI for Scholars                                | post-graduate scholars typically ages 30-50                          | 6 weeks  | n/a  | improve curriculum and teaching about U.S. abroad   | 2001-present (Jordan) <sup>95</sup> |
|   | SUSI for Student Leaders                         | undergraduate leaders ages 18-25                                     | 5 weeks  | n/a  | understand U.S., improve leadership   | 2010-present <sup>96</sup>          |
| <i>Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP)</i>   | IYLEP for High School*                           | teens ages 15-18   | 4 weeks  | 127 high school Iraqis, 10 high school Americans | foster civic development, leadership, cross-cultural communication skills through travel across U.S.  | 2007-present                        |

<sup>94</sup> Stated as “Fulbright School Administrators Program” in 2006, in 2011 changed to current title.

<sup>95</sup> Began under the Fulbright American Studies Institute, in 2008 program title changed to current name.

<sup>96</sup> Started as “The Study of the United States Institutes for Student Leaders on Global Environmental Issues”, changed to “Study of the Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders in Women’s Leadership” in 2013. Additionally, in new 2015 there was a post for “The Study of the U.S. Institute for Student Leaders on Civic Engagement.”

|  |   |                                   |                  |                      |   |                                 |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | IYLEP for Undergraduates*                                     | undergraduates                    | 5 weeks          | 100 undergraduates   | leadership training and academic study at themed universities                     | 2007-present                    |
| <i>Youth Exchange and Study (YES)</i>                  | Youth Exchange and Study (YES)**                              | High school students ages 15-18.5 | 1 year           | 20                   | leadership training, attend high school in U.S., mutual cultural education        | 2002-present                    |
| <i>International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)</i> | International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) <sup>97</sup> | U.S. Embassy nominated leaders    | 3 weeks (varies) | Varies <sup>98</sup> | connect to U.S. counterparts to create relationships supporting U.S. policy goals | Post-2001-present <sup>99</sup> |

\* does not apply to Jordanians

\*\* does not apply to Iraqis

<sup>97</sup> Includes both yearly process and IVLP On Demand, the latter of which is designed for emerging strategic priorities.

<sup>98</sup> Depends on strategic priority; each embassy assigned specific number of spots to fill. In 2014 Jordan had 40.

<sup>99</sup> When commenting on program dates, Administrator C remarked that, “The IVLP is 75 years old but I am not certain of the dates the Iraq program started. Jordan has a long history” (C).