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**Refugees Don't Drink Wine, But Gay Men Should:
Exploring the Intersections of Refugeehood, Sexuality and Nationality
among Gay Syrian Refugees in Lebanon**

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To Papa and Scarlett,
and a celebration of your lives

Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of self-identified gay Syrian men in Lebanon, all of whom have either registered or have expressed a desire to register with the UNHCR. The empirical data, which was collected through semi-structured interviews with five men during the autumn of 2014 in Beirut, questions what it means to be simultaneously gay, Syrian, and a refugee in Lebanon in the current climate. This research queries how the men intersectionally interact with various regimes of power which routinely identify them - mainly the Lebanese state, the wider Lebanese society, and the UNHCR refugee procedure. Oscillating between the local and the global, this thesis employs a theoretical framework which challenges how the figure of the refugee interacts with techniques of identification and processes of power, and accounts for the various ways in which the participants appropriate such processes to understand their position in the social world. In doing so, it highlights how the intersectional constructs of sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood play into varying systems of oppression and resistance, and argues how queerness and migration are more widely implicated within practices of exclusion which shape the route towards social justice in a Middle Eastern context.

Key words: Syria, Lebanon, Refugeehood, (Homo)Sexuality, Intersectionality, Identification

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Introduction

The date is October 24 2014. We meet at the UNHCR office in Beirut. With the sun shining and the summer heat still upon us, Ahmed appears very optimistic about his upcoming resettlement interview. We had met the previous day to discuss the interview, the types of questions the UNHCR staff member would be likely to ask, the timings, and the general process. ‘How should I dress for the interview?’ he asks. ‘Like myself? Or should I try and dress more ‘straight’?’ he continues. ‘Dress as you feel comfortable’, I reply.

Ahmed arrives the following day in his ‘less straight’ outfit - a black and white striped top, black jeans, a black-peaked beret, and mirrored sunglasses. We enter the portable waiting room, find the only two chairs available and take them. ‘Have you seen the film the Holiday? This area – Surrey – looks so beautiful’ Ahmed remarks. ‘Do you think Britain would be a good country for me?’ he continues. ‘I want to live in a country where I can be myself’.

My response does not come instantly. How do I tell Ahmed about my life without speaking of privileged identities? Worried about what impression my delayed response may give, I reply with the Arabic saviour to classical British needs for diplomacy through rhetorical statements – ‘Inshallah’.

Ahmed’s number is called and we walk through to the courtyard of makeshift interview cabins surrounding a marquee-shaded waiting area. The whole structure screams temporality. The interviewer approaches us. ‘Who are you?’ she asks me in Arabic. ‘I am here representing Ahmed’, I reply. ‘What’s your nationality?’ she questions in a rather brazen manner. ‘I am British’. ‘British British? Or half British half Syrian?’ she queries. I answer in an equally shameless tone, ‘I am 100 percent British’. ‘But you speak Arabic’ she states. ‘Yes I do’ (and I have the impending student loan receipt to prove it to you I think to myself). The interviewer leaves with my passport and returns ten minutes later. ‘Follow me to the interview room’ she says to us both, this time with a hint of compassion.

The three hour interview is both gruelling and grilling. Ahmed is challenged with questions in which judgments, perceptions and (in)visible markers of truth compete in the arena for recognition and sanctification. *When did you first find out you were gay? What do you think would happen to you if you were to return to Syria? What are you most worried about in Lebanon? Have you faced any specific problems since being here?* Ahmed speaks at length of how he led a persecuted life in Syria, the verbal threats and physical acts of violence

made against him in Lebanon, and the suffering he continuously endures due to a society which excludes him and a country which legally banishes him.

Upon my return home, I begin to contextualise the day's events. In doing so, I find myself contemplating a plethora of unanswered issues. *Why did Ahmed decide to dress in his 'less straight' outfit? Why would my being half Syrian be problematic? What were Ahmed's accounts of persecution a true reflection of?* I realise the common thread to my queries is not that of privileged identities but one built upon the logics of identification; a reflection of the multitude of categorisation techniques where relational circumstances intersectionally interact with systems of power, and where individual choices contend with a 'divide and rule' partiality which funds social disparities. For example, my British nationality was, in that moment, only not problematic because it was seen as completely 'detached' from any marked connection to Syria. Had I been identified as half Syrian, my chance to accompany Ahmed may have been forfeited. Ahmed's recognised status as 'full' Syrian was conversely unproblematic and in fact constituted a fundamental legitimated foundation of his refugee claim. Had he have held dual nationality, or even held a nationality which was considered less worthy at the time on the world stage, he would be facing a different set of challenges. Additionally, my sexuality was of no value throughout the process, yet how Ahmed was perceived and identified through his presentation and performance of his sexuality within that specific timeframe was crucial to securing his future. Outside the protective walls of the UN however and within local society, Ahmed's immediate future and safety is secured by downplaying his non-conforming sexuality, by being alternatively identified, and by dressing 'more straight', and equally less Syrian.

As a SOGI¹ Syrian refugee in Lebanon, Ahmad along with many others² like him face double societal and legal discrimination on account of their unwelcomed national and sexual identifications. Within the confines of the UN however, it is the results of such techniques of identification for example, along with how Ahmed presents them, which allow him to

¹ SOGI is the commonly used acronym for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity when speaking of LGBTIQ refugees claiming refugee status for persecution of the fear thereof on these grounds. I use SOGI as opposed to the alternative acronym for two reasons. Firstly, the term LGBTIQ (and its variants) is not an accurate acronym for this thesis as the research does not cover or intend to represent the whole non-heterosexual continuum, for which its adherents face unique challenges and experiences. Secondly, SOGI is used to emphasize the understanding between refugeehood and sexuality in the eyes of UNHCR, and my thesis takes into account the importance of the refugee resettlement process as an institution in which processes of power and identification take shape.

² Heartland Alliance International (2014) estimate there are around 50,000 LGBT Syrians in Lebanon (8). Although quantifying social constructs such as sexuality is understood as problematic, not least because not all LGBT refugees are SOGI refugees, it nonetheless demonstrates the numerical significance of such discrimination.

successfully proceed through the refugee system. The way in which identification processes take shape are therefore complex for SOGI Syrian refugees, operating on multiple societal, institutional, and intersectional levels with varying a priori logics and complex consequences. In order to explore the realities of SOGI Syrian refugees in Lebanon, I pose the research questions:

- 1. How do gay Syrian refugees in Lebanon interact with various forms and regimes of power which routinely identify them?*
- 2. In what ways do the intersections of refugeehood, sexuality, and nationality affect how the men understand their positions in the social world?*
- 3. How do such intersections play into regimes of oppression and resistance?*

1.1 Research Purpose

This thesis primarily sheds light into what it means to be intersectionally gay, Syrian, and a refugee in Lebanon today. It explores the various contexts in which multifaceted self-understandings and techniques of identification take place along these intersections, for men who have either registered or expressed a desire to register with UNHCR, claiming refugee status and resettlement either wholly or partially on the grounds of sexual orientation persecution or the fear thereof. From the individual level to the supranational interferences, this research endeavours to comprehend the realities of the various legal and social boundaries that my participants intersectionally face, the extent to which they have an impact on the men's situations, and their ensuing reactions.

Amidst theorising human rights and queerness, and questioning globalisation and mobility, this thesis secondly analyses the shifting relations of power, and the regimes of oppression and resistance that exist and interconnect on both a local and global scale from my informants' perspectives. It simultaneously questions our preconceptions about gay refugees in Lebanon and counters dominant discourses which present such individuals within a culture of victimisation and helplessness. By highlighting the men's hopes alongside their fears, and their realities alongside their dreams, this study shifts the narratives towards a position of individuality and creativity.

This thesis finally endures to bring queer and migration scholarship into further dialogue and to question what happens when we place queerness at the centre of migration analysis from a Middle Eastern perspective. It offers an enquiry into the overlooked conjunctures between queer and displacement in the context of the current Syrian crisis from

an academic standpoint, and seeks to raise awareness surrounding national and international responses to differing refugee population needs.

1.2 Disposition

This thesis begins with a socio-historical context of the perceptions and reception of Syrians and refugees in Lebanon. Highlighting the anti-Syrian sentiments that grew out of Syria's occupation of Lebanon in addition to the turbulent Palestinian refugee experience, I argue that such a basis offers insights into the social and legal boundaries facing Syrians in Lebanon today. Then, I move to briefly discuss the international community's pitiful response to the Syrian question in Lebanon.

Following an intersectional approach, the literature review discusses how literature on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, queerness in Beirut, and queer and forced migration in a Middle Eastern context has failed to draw the necessary connections between the various fields. Despite important advancements in knowledge, particularly in the case of critical literature on sexual identities in Beirut which succinctly assesses the capabilities of the sexually marginalized to develop a sense of selfhood, there remain important untouched bridging grounds to connect presently disparate literature. This thesis helps to build some of those bridges.

The theoretical foundation for this research builds upon Agamben's conceptualization of the relation between the refugee and the sovereign state, and argues that we need to engage with the place and capabilities of the individual if we are to disrupt unilateral processes and structures of power. Beyond the borders of the state, I query the tensions and opportunities that exist and result from the operations of a global human rights regime within the boundaries of an intersectionally exclusionary Lebanese state. Then, I highlight how attending to the processual elements of identification techniques rather than the reifying concept of identity is vital to understanding how in relation to the concept of recognition, sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood are social constructs that truly play into regimes of oppression and resistance. Maintaining a queer mind-set throughout, I finally posit how we can theorise the various ways in which practices of human exclusion operate through local, homonational, and global understandings of vulnerability, and how this shapes the ways in which various lives are maintained.

The section on methodology explains the stages through which the data for analysis was collected. Commenting on the reasons for the various methodological choices, I describe some of the challenges I faced and continue to encounter as a researcher when approaching

this field. Of particular interest is section 5.4, *Reliability and Validity*, which problematises how terminology related to sexuality were culturally and linguistically contextual, and the implications this brought about for data interpretation in relation to my own assumptions and biases.

In the findings section, I thematically present the data I collected from my participants' interviews. I first profile the five men to gain an understanding of their backgrounds and current situations, before moving to cover the six identified themes which mark the participants' lived experiences from pre-migration to present day. The themes are *Movement and Mobility*, *Hope and (Perceptions of) The Future*, *Fear and Safety*, *Discrimination*, *Appearances and (Mis)Recognition*, and *Acceptance and Belonging*. All six themes display the intersectional reasonings and realities of what it means to be simultaneously Syrian, gay, and a refugee in present-day Lebanon.

For the analysis, I divide the chapter into three main headings. In *Sustained Hierarchies of Oppression*, I account for the ways in which various forces of power intersectionally and routinely identify my respondents, and how such techniques of identification can lead to hierarchies of oppression. I end by highlighting how Agamben's panopticism renders his theory blind to imagining how the act of moving across borders allows for a subjective and active comparative experience of oppression. In *Shifting Power Relations: Techniques of Resistance which Challenge*, I demonstrate how my informants resist and appropriate such identification techniques. Highlighting how power relations intersectionally shift, I argue that my informants challenge how we conceive of what it means to be a gay Syrian refugee in Lebanon, and how global ideas link with local realities to form complex understandings of the self. In *Qualifying Lives: A Vulnerable Framework for Justice*, I analyse how the men's narratives can act as microcosmic examples to question the wider implications of queerness and migration within practices of exclusion. Importantly, I show how the exclusionary recognition process is reproduced by the men, and offer insights into how new ways of organizing bodies can take shape.

Following the conclusion, this thesis ends by suggesting future directions for academic study, based on a realisation of the theoretical limitations and the questions they themselves generate. For example, I argue that the extent to which queerness and migration are implicated along the route towards social justice requires a new strand of theoretical thought which displaces the refugee from the centre of the narrative, to explore alternative locations where ripple effects of tensions can be felt, such as within the Lebanese queer society.

Context

The Syrian crisis continues. Since the protests in Dera'a called for the fall of the Assad regime in March 2011, over 2.6 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries (Disaster Emergency Committee 2015). Of those, over 1 million of them migrated to Lebanon. Records show that over 1.15 million Syrians have registered with the UNHCR, with another 12,000 awaiting registration.³

2.1 A Socio-Historical Background to Syrian-Lebanese Relations

The situation of Syrians in Lebanon today has an important socio-historical basis. The reception of Syrians in Lebanon contemporarily stems, in part, from the Syrian occupation of Lebanon, the Palestinian experience in the context of the Lebanese civil war, and Lebanese spatio-temporal understandings of movement.

During the occupation years (1976-2005), Lebanese society paid heavily from Damascus led economic exploitation, imposed Syrian superiority, and political corruption (Pipes 2000, 21-22). Anti-Syrian sentiments grew throughout the three decades and culminated in the Cedar Revolution of March 14, 2005. Catapulted into action as a result of the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, the revolutionaries, who saw the Syrian regime as partly responsible for the assassination, called for complete Syrian withdrawal (Geukjian 2014, 525-26). Since the withdrawal in 2005, Lebanese-Syrian relations have continued to be tense. Following the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, tensions have been mirrored in conflicting sectarian Lebanese idea(l)s about their neighbour's future. For example, Tripoli has witnessed a revival of deadly fighting between its Sunni and Alawite communities, and Hezbollah affiliated areas have been frequently attacked in response to the party's support of the Assad regime.

Lebanese sectarian divides were simultaneously a catalyst for, a fuel during, and a result of the sixteen-year Lebanese civil war (1975-1991), and were interconnected with the response to the Palestinian refugee experience in Lebanon. For example, Lebanon's demographic particularities and confessional politics were seen as a part justification for the exclusion of Palestinian refugees from Lebanese society (MacQueen and Baxter 2014, 64). Additionally, the Palestinian experience has in some measure tarred Lebanese understandings

³ These statistics do not account for the unestimatable numbers of undocumented migrants, the vast number of Syrians already established in Lebanon since before the war and have made Lebanon their home, nor other notable groups of refugees such as the Palestinians and Iraqis who resided in Syria before the crisis.

of refuge in the national context. The establishment of refugee camps were predicated within a time frame of temporality (Ibid. 54), where Palestinians were foreseen as short-term guests during a forthcoming solution to the Palestinian question. The inception of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in the 1960's saw the beginning of clashes between Palestinian assertiveness and Lebanese sovereignty over the camps, which acted as a pre-cursor to the civil war, and has since contributed difficulties in the strive towards national unity, security, and peace (Ibid. 54).

The Lebanese themselves add a further dimension to the relation between migration and spatio-temporal realities. As a nation-affiliated group, the Lebanese have constituted the largest numbers of Middle Eastern emigrants since the mid-nineteenth century. As a result of such continued mass emigration, or as a precursor to it, the Cedar 'homeland' is for many Lebanese not their preferred site of permanent settlement (Abdelhady 2008, 57-58). Whilst this is more the case for those who left rather than those who stayed, it nevertheless highlights how the idea of movement remains predominant in the context of Lebanon. In other words, Lebanese histories of movement have forged specific spatio-temporal understandings of presence and permanence within Lebanon.

2.2 Lebanon and the International Community: The Realities of Responses

Such a socio-historical context sheds light on the reception of Syrian refugees in Lebanon today. Indeed, whilst the troubled Lebanese-Syrian historical relations have forged framed perceptions of Syrian infiltration and exploitation in Lebanon, the Palestinian experience cemented the 'problem' of refugee communities within Lebanese national discourse and memory. Elsewhere, Lebanese migration histories have rendered the homeland as a temporal space place in which awareness of mobility is formed. Such explanations highlight (yet do not justify) Lebanon's treatment of Syrian refugees, whose current realities are manifested for example in temporary border closures, precarious protection plans, and increasing societal hostility which is deemed "obvious" (Dahi 2014, 11). Additionally, they help to understand Lebanese legal decisions to not sign the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees for example, which equally have an impact on the experiences of Syrian refugees in Lebanon today.

The realities are not simply one-sided however and Lebanon has been duly praised for her response to the Syrian crisis, having "displayed remarkable solidarity towards the refugee population" (Zetter and Ruaudel 2014, 8), considering the unprecedented influx of people and the unanticipated continuation of the neighbouring conflict. For example, vast numbers of

host communities, especially in the North, continue to house their Syrian neighbours and provide real humanitarian relief. Nevertheless, the combination of economic hardship, political instability, rates of unemployment, a scarcity of basic resources, and sociohistorical specificities have meant that many Syrian refugees in Lebanon are living in vulnerable and precarious conditions.

The UNHCR has been similarly overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis and the numbers of the displaced. With recent budget cuts of up to sixty percent, the ability of the UN to provide anything beyond short-term aid and respite is somewhat understandable. Additionally, traditional third countries of resettlement such as those in Western Europe are battling against populist right-wing parties and politics which negatively frame immigration discourses and help fuel certain perceptions of the Middle East through a distorted projection of Islam and religious fanaticism.

Consequently, the response of world leaders to the Syrian crisis has been “pitiful” (Amnesty International 2014), with failures to offer protection to the most vulnerable having catastrophic consequences for Syrians and the neighbouring host countries. Moreover, the UNHCR resettlement scheme has had to filter Syrian refugees according to criteria laid out by resettlement countries, with set targets and boundaries. As a result, only 79,180 places for resettlement have been made since 2013 worldwide (UNHCR 2015), many of which operate along narratives of extreme vulnerability where sanctified bodies interconnect with liberation discourses, which permits LGBT persons, lone women suffering from gendered and sexual violence, and high-profile political activists cases to take precedence in the procedure.

Literature Review

3.1 Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

In the wake of the Syrian crisis, literature on Syrian refugees has continued to expand. From a regional perspective, much research has commented upon the impact of the influx of Syrians on the host nations, and immediate humanitarian concerns of the refugees. In the case of Lebanon, this has particularly been in response to political and economic concerns, as well as to humanitarian vulnerabilities.

Politically speaking, much of the literature focuses on the historical and current political instability in Lebanon and places the Syrian refugee within its corresponding contemporary context. For example, MacQueen and Baxter (2014) contrast the Palestinian experience with that of the Syrian one, and argue that the Syrian refugee crisis, through a historical mapping, has become a national concern rather than just a political one (67). They highlight how the Syrian presence, in contrast to the Palestinian refugees, is forcing political factions to unite to some extent in order to counter fundamentalist breeding, and that the politicization of the refugee question has taken on a national solidarity aspect (Ibid. 68).

From an economic standpoint, we are able to grasp a sense of how the Lebanese monetary challenges are coping with the influx of Syrians since the crisis in 2011. As Dahi (2014) recognizes, Lebanese economic precariousness and its traditional consequences are enfolded within a national fear of refugee integration and of a protracted stay which has forced a curbing of development spending (12-13). As a result, he warns his readers that inaction on an economic front will have serious implications for both host and refugee communities.

Elsewhere, some literature looks closely at the basic humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Benage et al. 2015; Saroufim et al. 2014; El-Khatib et al. 2013), which pertain in the large part to access to health services, shelter, and food, and which fall under the medical academic umbrella. For example, El-Khatib et al. note how current responses are inadequate, and that Lebanon as a host government is struggling to engage with healthcare needs (2013, 2).

Much current literature is therefore engaged with immediate needs of refugee communities and responses to the refugee crisis, highlighting the consequences of the overwhelming numbers of refugees in the context of national difficulties. Such research is understandable, as it mirrors initial preoccupations of national and international bodies to

provide effective short-term relief to the refugee population and ease the burden on national governments. Nevertheless, it caters primarily to conflict resolution and healthcare audiences, and vast sociological research on the subjective experiences of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is lacking. It is important to note that this contrasts to some extent with research in the context of Jordan and Turkey, although this also remains limited. Jordan and Turkey differ from Lebanon in that Lebanon has not responded to Syrian refugees' needs through state sanctified encampment (Loveless 2013, 66-68), and much sociological literature on refugees in general, and on Syrian refugees also, is both focused on those within the camp boundaries, and confined to psycho-sociological and education-sociological studies (Arabachi et al. 2014; Jabbar and Zaza, 2014).

Of notable exception is the Forced Migration Review (2014, vol.47), whose recent collection of articles on the Syrian crisis begins to offer dialogue into the subjective conditions and situations of Syrians in Lebanon. Yet, the articles are not only limited in scope and analysis, but also homogenise the refugee population, and allow little room for individuality to take centre stage. Again, generalisations are explicable, given the domination of international reports and recommendations which seek to find general trends and solutions to current problems. Despite that, almost no literature on Syrian refugees which brings findings down from the macro generalisations to the micro individualities exists.

3.2 Locating Queerness in Beirut

Opposed to the limited literature on Syrian refugees with its subjective experience lacking, scholarly research on (homo)sexuality in the Lebanese context is better documented from an individual perspective.

Most recently, Sofian Merabet (2014), author of *Queer Beirut*, provides a groundbreaking ethnographic study of gay life in Beirut which highlights how queer space becomes produced and appropriated, and how contrasting identities are formed within a homosexual sphere (see Introduction). Interestingly, Merabet marks how sexual difference falls into and out of constructions of norms, and complicates how queer identities are formed through an engagement with global processes of gender idea(l)s (Ibid. 3). Importantly, he sheds light on how identification techniques and marginalisation practices within the context of sexuality operate via the perceived presence of a structural danger generated by a Lebanese prolonged experience of war and conflict (Ibid. 154). Merabet's study successfully problematises shifting power relations against the appropriation of space and the performance of queer identity, moving between the individual, local, and global level. That said, his

ethnographic analysis relies heavily on using the city of Beirut as an urban stage upon which the complexities of sexual identity in the modern Middle East are formulated and performed. In other words, the study provides little insight into the institutions of power which are important spheres of influence for the refugees, such as the UNHCR, in addition to the alternative relationships they form with state bodies due to being non-citizens.

Elsewhere, literature on queer identities in Beirut has successfully delineated how dissident sexualities have been able to grow within the confines of the city. Indeed, we grasp how the post-civil-war spatio-temporal context has allowed for sexual diversity to become visible (Gagné 2012, 122). Moreover, the quest for control and normalization through practices of vilification based on the performance of gender and how it equates to perceived notions of sexuality is recognised as part of a larger process of globalization of queer cultures and identities (Ibid. 123). Put differently, universally influential perceptions of the relationship between masculinity and dissident sexualities have, in conjunction with colonial laws and postcolonial practices, connected with local idea(l)s to form conventions of sexual and gendered acceptance and rejection, as well as resistance to them.

Furthermore, research has preoccupied itself with the tensions that exist between religion (specifically Islam) and sexuality in a Middle Eastern context. Such literature is helpful, in that it begins to expose the importance of recognising intersectional orientations when we talk of sexuality. For example, Erica Li Lundqvist's PhD dissertation (2013), entitled *Gayted Communities: Marginalized Sexualities in Lebanon*, speaks of how differing orientations allows for an exploration of "complex identification processes that sometimes intersect but at times also disconnect" (214). Indeed, important insights into processes of marginalisation have allowed for a succinct questioning of the extent to which social categories are truly stable (Ibid. 224). Nevertheless, similar literature focuses heavily on the processes of 'coming out' and the reconciliation of the individuals' sexuality with some other aspect of their lives (in these cases, religion). What such literature offers therefore is very intricate 'coming-of-age' stories where the subjects' desire for social stability operates within the boundaries of the nation-state. For refugees however, their multi-faceted self-understandings are more generally formed and negotiated outside the limits of the state.

The strength of exploratory critical literature of sexual identities in Beirut and the wider Middle East lies therefore in its abilities to succinctly assess the capabilities of the sexually oppressed to develop selfhood by appropriating seemingly unnegotiable localities, such as the societal conventions of gendered and sexual acceptance (Gagné 2012, 134). Yet, scholarly research on questions of sexuality in the region is far too often confined to coming-

of-age narratives based on desire, love, ‘deviant’ sexual practices and reconciliation, when they are not alternatively being directly defined through Western neo-colonial practices of state condemnation of a lack of sexual political rights (Massad 2007, Chapter 3). In turn, that body of literature largely favours discourses of tensions which often pit the individual against the larger society along intra-national lines (including the vast activist literature) which fails to account for the complexities that afflict and interact with those who cross national borders.

3.3 Queer and Forced Migration Literature in a Middle Eastern Context

In order to build necessary bridges along contextual lines from intersectional perspectives we can turn to queer migration literature in general and specifically that body of literature which operates with a Middle Eastern paradigm in mind. Unfortunately the overwhelming majority of existing literature, perhaps unsurprisingly, functions either within the confines of the West or as activist reports.

Much literature which explores how sexuality, queerness, and migration come together highlights the problematic nature of sexuality-descriptive terminology. As Murray (2014) puts it, categories such as gay or lesbian are “privileged terms inscribed through the bureaucratic and legal machinery of the refugee system” (135). Such terms function as efforts at normalization and control to which refugees must conform if they are to improve their chances of resettlement. As our neoliberal world leaves no room for fluidity and hybridity (Kimmel and Cheryl 2012, 1087), the refugee determination process is therefore based on static and normative Western definitions which are not always translatable. Indeed, the exclusionary nature of deciding who merits resettlement and who does not is based largely on sovereign state policies rather than the prominence of something more global, where the state acts as the normative discursive agent, defining what counts (Ibid. 1088). That said, current literature has also stressed how the nation-state and refugee determination process work within the confines of an imagined gay globality where universalised sexual identity categories have now become the norm (Lee and Brotman 2011, 247).

In regards to literature within a Middle Eastern context, narratives are mainly highlighted from Western perspectives. In other words, research has been conducted from the subjectivities and representations of individuals of Middle Eastern origin who have managed to migrate out of the region, and find ‘refuge’ in the West (Lee and Brotman 2011; Jordan 2010; Jenicek, Lee and Wong 2009). In Canada for example, literature importantly problematizes SOGI refugee claims in relation to global and Western institutions and configures how relations of power operate across regional boundaries and play into systems

of dominance, whilst cross-referencing issues of xenophobia and racism in the context of forced migration (Lee and Brotman, 269-70). Valuable as it is, this already established body of research functions from a particular vantage point, whose conclusions speak of success stories and do not adequately suit the positionalities of sexual identity claiming refugees who are still within the Middle East.

Another body of literature remains dominated by organizational reports, independent studies, and international recommendations (Heartland Alliance International 2014; ORAM 2012; ORAM 2011). One such example is the Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration, known as ORAM, which focuses exclusively on LGBTI concerns of those who cross international borders; an organization which grew out of a concern for sexual and gender-based refugee safety in the Middle East. In a recent published survey (2012) concerning NGO attitude towards LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers, ORAM stated in their key findings that in comparison to Western counterparts, “Middle East[ern] ... negative views about the morality of same-sex relations ... raises questions about the extent to which such beliefs will impede the creation of LGBTI-safe environments” (3). Such statements not only vilify the Middle East as a region incapable of transformation, but similarly homogenise the entire area. Moreover, the dichotomisation of the moral-oriented West and the immoral (Middle) East plays into Orientalist discourses which dangerously reify boundaries between power/knowledge production and East/West which we know to be no longer legitimate.

In turn, the separation of areas based on morality favours a liberation narrative which shuns the East and adorns the West. Queer migration scholarship must tread carefully, for its goal should take heed to not overwhelmingly promote a liberationist narrative (Lee and Brotman 2011, 267). As Luibhéid (2005) warns us, “the majority of accounts of queer migration tend to remain organized around a narrative of movement from repression to freedom, or a heroic journey undertaken in search of liberation” (xxv). Indeed, the adoption of such a liberationist narrative runs the risk of appropriation and reinscription of national myths which feed into enlightenment discourses (Luibhéid 2014, 1038).

My aim is not to dispute the findings, or to suggest methodological flaws in studies such as ORAM’s. Rather, it is to recognise that research requires a multidimensional perspective which mirrors the multifaceted subjectivities of such individuals. As we move into the age of visible queer migration, the lack of such an offering runs the risk of over-generalisation when faced with a topic where social injustice overflows and clouds judgment. We must remain aware of how representations of narratives can reinscribe such unjust hierarchies, and seek to academically transform and shift the literature from such processes

by attending to the variety of power dynamics at play, by critically engaging with the theoretical arguments in the analysis of the findings.

My research thus offers a new dimension in regards to the liberationist narrative of queer migration and the processes of identification. It reads concepts of liberation and modernity through the lens of a “cautionary hopefulness” (Manalansan 2005, 157), creating alternative routes despite the weight of Western institutions and practices. Not only does it challenge the repression/liberation binary, my research also problematises conceptions of agency as located only in search of such liberation. Offering a contestation of agency in place, within the confines of institutional power and a sense of temporality, I highlight the simultaneous power and oppression processes experienced by my informants and their hesitations towards seeing the west as their liberator. By meeting at critical junctures of the global and the local, and of sexual, (trans)national and refugee self and external understandings, this thesis remains contextually-based to simultaneously explore the trials and triumphs that the lives of the individuals encompass, in addition to how they affect our own conceptualisations of existing social structures, discourses and practices.

In sum, current literature offers insightful directions for this research yet its lack of intersectional enquiries demonstrates how it simply scratches at the surface of the topic-in-hand. This thesis seeks to fill gaps and offer bridging ground to connect presently disparate literature. Specifically, it goes against the grain of literature on Syrian refugees by offering subjective narratives which move between the macro and micro (and mezzo) perspectives. Moreover, it adds to literature on sexualities in Lebanon by configuring the place of the refugee within the debates of social structures, normalities and possibilities. Finally, it provides a unique Middle Eastern context for questioning issues of power production and resistance, which remains a much needed perspective in related social science literature.

Theoretical Perspectives

4.1 The Refugee and the Sovereign

The figure of the refugee has been conceptually understood as problematic for our current nation-state world system. Most influentially theorised by Giorgio Agamben, the refugee is troublesome, voire intolerable, as s/he upsets state legitimacy and exposes the fictions of sovereign power.

Theoretically concerned with the life of (hu)man, Agamben (1998) recognises that in the classical world, *zoē* represented man's minimal state of being (which he shares with animals and plants alike) which, in contrast to *bios*, did not denote a particular way in which to live (1). Building upon Aristotle, Agamben (2007) suggests that the integration of our biological life into the polis - the Greek foundation of our modern political sphere - created a certain, and qualified, way of living - *bios* - which in turn excluded *zoē* and living in its basic form, known as bare life (5-6).

In our contemporary political world, the act, or art, of exclusion operates within both nodes of sovereign and biopolitical power and, contrary to Foucault, points to the axes along which the two converge (Agamben 1998, 6). Agamben believes that modern biopolitical control (exerted by nation-states) produces bare life by excluding the subject and thereby relegating that subject to the state of exception. Such a process reintroduces the power of the sovereign as a legitimate source of control, as the act of exclusion maintains and favours sovereignty in relation to bare life, which is "presupposed as nonrelational" (Ibid. 110). Put differently, s/he who is banned by the sovereign becomes the bearer of bare life (the *homo sacer*), and their banishment creates the state of exception; a state in which one remains outside the law and protection of the sovereign. In our modern nation-state era, s/he who is excluded is the non-citizen, the bearer of an alternative (or non-)nationality, the **refugee**. In other words, the *homo sacer* is s/he who has no right to protection and inclusion within our citizen-centered world.

The peculiarity of the relation is how the *homo sacer*'s expulsion from the community actually links the *homo sacer* with the sovereign (Ibid. 110). Sovereignty's intolerance for the refugee originates from the fact that the *homo sacer*, or the refugee, perturbs nation-state legitimacy as s/he highlights how the nation-state fails to provide protection to those who are not considered citizens. The refugee acts therefore as the antagonist to the sovereign, whose potential to threaten it gains momentum from its place within the excluded site. Alternatively

said, the longer the refugee remains within the boundaries of a nation-state, and the longer that nation-state does not provide protection to him/her, the more obvious it becomes that the current sovereign-centered system of power and protection is flawed.

In turn, we must ask what exactly is being excluded. Is it always the refugee as a body, or does the act rather develop towards a banning of the refugee's potentiality to disrupt? As Agamben argues, potentiality is created and preserved as a result of being banned. Posited between inclusion and exclusion, potentiality remains banned, as it is potentiality which has the ability to become actual or real. Interpretively, the refugee becomes able to disrupt sovereign legitimacy after being banned, but to keep him/her from realising this disruption, it is in the sovereign state's interest to keep him/her outside the citizen-centered body.

To consider the status of the potential in its spatio-temporal contexts, we need to look to Michel de Certeau's theory of tactics (1998) in order to suitably attend to the micro forces of individual actors in the face of supposed sovereign panopticism. As he explains, the tactics of the weak "must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of proprietary powers. It poaches in them" (37). As de Certeau highlights, tactics are grounded in the manipulation and diversion of places and spaces as a reaction to the presence or absence of spatial relationships. To link de Certeau and Agamben together, the refugee has the potential to capitalise on his/her exclusion from sovereign power and protection by finding the cracks within the spaces that they were never allowed to be part of, to ultimately produce "unexpected results" (Ibid. 30). In other words, the refugee can use his/her exclusion to his/her advantage, despite sovereign efforts to stall them.⁴

To contextualise, this thesis questions how SOGI claiming Syrian refugees are simultaneously excluded and included within the boundaries of Lebanese sovereignty, how they poach within the political, and how they tactically challenge the powers of the sovereign. To move beyond Agamben, we must query how the intersections of sexuality and nationality trouble the relationship between the refugee, potentiality and the sovereign, how such a

⁴ The writings of Michel Foucault have been influential in the construction of this study's theoretical framework. Indeed, the works of both Agamben and de Certeau as cited were drawn out of Foucault's ideas surrounding power trajectories, the state, and the individual. That said, Foucault himself does not feature as a theorist for analytical reflection here. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, I consciously aimed to disengage my readers from directly associating the concept of power with Foucault in the reading of this thesis. This is targeted at reflecting the thesis' intention of generating new theoretical debates in light of the findings. Whilst a later in-depth discussion with Foucault's insights would also be merited in this regard, it was felt that a centring on Foucault would blind this generation to an extent, because of that very connection between the name and the notion. Related to this is the second justification; that of critique. Both Agamben and de Certeau build on Foucault's work via a critique of his earlier writings, and this thesis seeks to employ critique as a tool for academic production. It is believed that this is a justified example and starting point for achieving such a goal.

consideration highlights which facets of subjective understandings are excluded and which are not, and in which contexts.

4.2 Beyond the State: The Global Perspective

If the refugee is banned by the sovereign, the homo sacer does not benefit from state protection in the traditional manner that an included body - a citizen - would. The rights of the refugee are not therefore enshrined within national sovereign law but, rather, beyond the borders of the state. Indeed, ‘international’ human rights offer an insight into how sovereignty can be made to “answer to universal principles of justice” (Lechte and Newman 2013, vii). Yet, the formal separation of national sovereignty from a global regime of human justice, and an understanding that the latter prevails over the former, is paradoxical.

As Arendt (1973) explains, the introduction of such a global regime was a proposed universal solution to guarantee the rights of man; to make sure that refugees receive the protection they need and deserve when no political (read sovereign) community was willing to protect such rights (297). Yet, whether the international regime can always ‘overthrow’ the desires and trajectories of the national sovereign is questionable. Contextually, the operations of UNHCR as a global regime of human rights - which for example protects wo/men regardless of sexual orientation - acting within the boundaries of the Lebanese state which criminalises homosexuality⁵ represents what Lechte and Newman (2013) call “a fundamental and perhaps irreconcilable tension between the principle of national sovereignty and that of human rights” (vii). Indeed, we must question the extent to which global regimes interact with (Lebanese) national discourses, in what contexts they paradoxically strengthen sovereign borders (Taylor 2013, 133), and how such practices affect the experiences of gay Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Is the lack of domestic legislation on addressing the needs of refugees in Lebanon an obstacle or opportunity for negotiation in a global context? Does the criminalization of homosexual acts render Lebanon a site of struggle or one of bargaining for this group of individuals during the refugee process?

Similarly, how do the individuals construct their self-understandings on individual, national, and global levels when we understand that social life is not always limited to sovereign boundaries (Levitt and Schiller 2007, 168)? Put differently, what is the result when “globalisation provides a framework for the [...] [multiple] routes through which an identity

⁵ Whilst Lebanese law does not prohibit homosexuality as such, law 534 of the Lebanese penal code states that unnatural sexual intercourse is punishable by up to one year imprisonment. Such an ambiguous law has allowed for arrests and detentions on any persons of perceived LGBTIQ origin to be legitimised. For a further insight into the law and its implications in the context of Lebanese LGBT activism, see Makarem 2011.

can be understood and negotiated” (Abdelhady 2011, 127)? In what ways does the framework of globalisation act as a mechanism through which intersectional struggles are altered in the contexts of gay Syrian refugees in Lebanon?

4.3 Surpassing Identity: Identification Techniques within a Queer Framework

To speak of gay Syrian refugees requires us to question categorical conceptualisations of sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood as social constructs. Whilst much theoretical consumption has problematized identity as a concept, this thesis seeks to move beyond such limiting debates to understand how the three aforementioned intersections are troubling techniques of identification. Such explanations allow for a queer perspective to be legitimately employed, which opens the theoretical debate to identifying and analysing signifying practices of identification as representatives of power production.

Rather than emphasising the naturalness and fixed position of identity categories as a way to demonstrate how structures of oppression operate, Judith Butler (1999) underscores how highlighting identity as a performance and a process allows for agency and possibility to be born and gain momentum (187). Simultaneously, performativity attends more closely to the multifaceted aspect of identity formation, whose realities are fluid and resist reification. By focusing on the idea of performance and process, we can trouble how we understand the origins of identity formation, contest and displace them, break down the nature of identities which are “seemingly seamless” (Ibid. 179), and expose the temporalities and situations within which they are made.

Unfortunately, Butler arguably falls into her own trap by unabatingly employing the rubric of identity; a term which turns back towards such reifying discourses which Butler ultimately seeks to resist. If we are to adequately analyse social constructs such as sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood and question how they truly play into regimes of oppression and resistance, we need to move away from identity and towards identifications, whose active and processual connotations allow us to avoid reproducing unjust reifications, and whose effects are central to social life (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 14). Analysing techniques of identification legitimises a true queer perspective, as it renders questions of social constructs continually open and contestable (Seidman 1997, 93).

Furthermore, a queer theoretical framework pushes us towards the politics of signification (Ibid. 132), and towards asking how such intersectional social constructs are tied to signifying practices of identification which seemingly represent forces of power. To identify such forces requires us to consider exactly which signifying practices are important

for the men in my study, and how their narratives expose the territory within which such practices become realities. In turn, the focus on the operations of identification rather than identity allows for a more complex understanding of how such social practices repress differences and function as techniques of organising bodies and knowledge (Ibid. 93-94).

4.4 Recognition as a Technique of Control

One such example of how power processes are enacted relates to the concept of recognition. Building upon Charles Taylor (1994), we can suggest that signifying practices of identification are related to the extent to which the self is either correctly or incorrectly recognised by the other, if at all, and how the techniques involved in one's recognition can result in oppression or an imprisonment within a "reduced form of being" (25). Such identification techniques often lead to internalisation, wherein those who are (mis/)recognised then reappropriate how they are wrongfully identified internally which then renders them as actors in their own oppression (Ibid. 26). Yet we must question how similar processes and results operate from an intersectional perspective. For example, how is misrecognition distributed across the various intersections? Are the men equally recognised as gay, Syrian and a refugee? To what extent are certain recognition practices contextually based, and how do the various intersections ensuingly interact? Are such practices reappropriated, and if so, how do they play into regimes of social ordering?

To speak of reappropriation brings us around to the question of complicity. If my participants both adapt and adopt processes of identification, are they in turn contributing to the existing repressive social structures which shaped them initially, and therefore complicit within them? Do they also act as intersectional oppressors, or do their multifaceted self-understandings play into efforts at resistance? Following Luibhéid (2014), this research seeks to complicate how complicity leads to how "normativities get produced and circulated at multiple scales, in ways that reinforce [...] inequality" (1036). Contextually speaking, we must question how varying contexts reveal the extent to which the men participate in similar techniques themselves through compliance, representation, and reproduction which function in turn as efforts of normalisation and control.

As Nancy Fraser (2003) explains, the focus on recognition has displaced to some extent the need for redistribution (8). Yet if we are to actualise the potential for social justice, we need to bring them both into a comprehensive framework (Ibid. 93). Whilst redistribution supposedly seeks to solve inequality through difference-blind inclusion, recognition looks to counter injustice through understanding how difference and exclusion operate. To posit them

as a dichotomy is however threatening, as the path beyond recognition will reach a dead end if redistribution is not incorporated at some stage. To problematize, when we analyse techniques of identification and relations of power through a theoretical understanding of recognition, we need to question where the limits of recognition are, where redistribution is being compromised in the process in regards to complicity, and what the resulting impact on the route to justice may be.

In an effort to understand how a more just political community can function, Judith Butler (2004) composites recognition with vulnerability, where she questions how some lives qualify for recognition over others, and what logics of exclusion are operating to render certain lives more vulnerable than others (38). Indeed, we must contextually query how institutional systems of recognition which produce certain knowledges, such as the practices of the UNHCR refugee system, allow for “lives to be supported and maintained differently” (Ibid. 32), and the impact that such projects of maintenance and non-maintenance have on the wider social order.

4.5 Critiquing Positionalities: The Question of Homonationalism

Such grand narratives of equality and just societies require a theoretical regrounding within the perspectives of my informants. Otherwise, theory runs the risk of unintentionally imposing subjective perspectives on the Other’s experiences via a lack of empirical evidence. Critiquing Butler and Agamben in a similar fashion, Malini Schueller (2009) argues that both theorists fail to sufficiently account for how the potential of appropriation can result in further global inequality. Specifically, she posits that the conceptualisation of global positionalities solicits the presence of the imperial, and we must attend more closely to the processes, and effects, of how certain localisms can become everyone’s universal realities (250).

In a related fashion to Schueller, Jasbir Puar (2007) conceives how such processes which link the local (or the national), the global, and the imperial have been shaped in our scholarly age, where sexuality has become a normative construct for regularisation and control. In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Puar speaks of the rise of homonationalism; a theoretical concept which recognises how queerness and queer subjects are being progressively tied to nation-state discourses and political projects (xii). According to Puar, homonationalism operates as a means of nation-state and nation-population exclusion which reinscribes traditional hierarchies of global dominance, wherein the sanctification of gay rights is enfolded into a narrative of national allegiance. Such a narrative produces the ‘exceptional’ nation-states, such as the U.S. and Western Europe, in

contrast to those of sexual oppression, such as the generalised Muslim world. Furthermore, Puar's work highlights how the sexuality discourse in a seemingly global context is in fact a method for appropriation on the part of the West, thus reiterating Schueller's earlier concerns.

Indeed, we need to recognise how homonationalism is a method of judgment and selection which marks certain bodies as worthy of protection by exceptional nation-states (Puar 2013, 337). Whilst similar to Butler's argument of certain lives which qualify, Puar's argument allows us to more accurately identify with projects of neo-imperialism based around the construct of sexuality. In turn, we can then challenge our conceptions of exclusion and ask who truly becomes a vehicle in the process which leads to "the expulsion of other populations" (Ibid. 337). In context, we can ask how my participants, as individuals with a resettlement-claiming "golden case" (Shakhsari, 2014, 1001), understand their own positionalities by considering how they relate to projects of homonationalism. Moreover, what is the result of homonationalist identifications and adoptions within the contexts of the men's attempts to leave Lebanon? To relate back to the research questions, how does homonationalist contextually operate through sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood as a method for informing regimes of oppression and resistance?

In sum, the theoretical basis for this thesis provides a framework which allows for an analysis into how gay Syrian refugees in Lebanon are interacting with various forms and regimes of power which routinely identify them. By engaging with Agamben and de Certeau, I aim to question the extent to which such individuals' situations problematize the relation between the homo sacer and the sovereign. In dialogue with Butler and others, I will also query how sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood operate as intersectional social constructs that overlap with techniques of identification and categorisation, and how, in reference to Taylor and Fraser, such intersections play into contextual and varying regimes of oppression and resistance. Moving between the individual, local, national, and global sectors of society, I will posit how subjective experiences, understandings, and actions inform and contest sources of knowledge production and practices of human exclusion through institutions such as the Lebanese state, the local society, and the UNHCR refugee procedure. Maintaining a queer mindset (Seidman), I remain committed to resisting currently accepted processes of stratification which result in reification, by theoretically questioning how concepts such as homonationalism (Puar) can be used as a method to understand recognition and acceptance appropriately within the context of Middle Eastern migration.

Methodology

5.1 Design of the study

This thesis combines narrative research and phenomenology as a qualitative design method, which guides the data collection to reflect the project's complex undertones. Narrative research allows me to capture the subjective experiences and positionalities of the individuals through their lived and told stories (Creswell 2007, 54), which further allows for both a contextual and comparative analysis to take shape. The narrative approach, which takes root in the "construction of the self via the reconstruction of one's past" (McLean and Pasupathi 2012, 11), permits me to examine the men's distinctive lives, and is important to counter current homogenising and reifying literature.

The narrative research is complemented by a phenomenological approach. Understood as a method which "describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell 2007, 57), it differs from a narrative lens in that its premise relies on researching commonalities. As such, it is suitable for grasping how the men experience certain phenomenon such as the crossing of borders and their interactions with the refugee determination process, and how these processes are intersectionally interpreted.

5.2 Participant Selection

The process of participant selection takes Robinson's (2014) four-point approach to qualitative sampling (26). Firstly the sample universe, which consists of gay-identifying Syrian men in Lebanon who had either registered or expressed a desire to register with UNHCR, claiming refugee status and resettlement either wholly or partially on the grounds of sexual orientation persecution or the fear thereof, is defined and delineated. This homogenises the group to a certain extent, which allows the analysis to remain contextual, and renders any conclusions confined to the individual experiences (Ibid. 27).

The size of the sample is secondly idiographic rather than nomothetic, allowing for an in-depth analysis with locatable voices to take shape (Ibid. 29). Whilst it is understood that the nomothetic and idiographic division is not always clear-cut (see Robinson 2011), the specificities attached to the explored intersections of this study render it idiographic in nature. Appropriately, the target population size is small, between three to five participants.

Thirdly, non-probability sampling is the adopted strategy for this study. As Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006) note, such sampling methods are employed when a sampling frame

is either lacking or a probability approach is deemed unfitting (165), which resonates well with this research. The pool from which participants are selected is through the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling represents a method of selection based on recommendations from participants of suitable acquaintances. Such a technique is appropriate when the nature of the topic is sensitive or involves any sense of illegality (Robinson 2014, 37), which is the case in this study.

Fourthly, sourcing the sample takes a classic snowball sampling route, through establishing connections with sources which hold potential pools of participants. After being introduced to three participants, one of my participants then becomes my informant, who sources my third and fifth participants from his friendship group.

5.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Both narrative research and phenomenology use interviews as a primary form of data collection. It should be noted that the interview guide is merely this and that the questions are flexible, adaptable, and erasable depending on each individual participant's responses and the progression of the interview.

This semi-structured interview method allows for the interview to feel more like a conversation (Hermanowicz 2002, 482-83), in order to allow my participants to feel comfortable and to give them the opportunity to express their answers in a meaningful way. By letting the conversation flow rather than employing a rigid and mechanical interview style, in addition to using techniques of probing and listening, my participant becomes the driving force behind the interview and individually steers it. Simultaneously however, it is recognised that the interviews are structured to a degree, informed by the literature and research questions, which is necessary to extrapolating as much useful data as possible.

The interview questions were intentionally chosen to generate a conversation based around the three intersections of nationality, sexuality, and refugeehood within the experiences of the men's lives. It should be noted however that there is a lack of direct questions which engage with nationality, whereas the other two themes are evidently evoked. Upon reviewing the literature prior to constructing the interview guide, it became apparent that nationality as a concept was not as academically problematic or contested in comparison to sexuality and refugeehood. Indeed, I went into the field with the understanding that whilst my sample universe of participants were to be gay-identifying Syrian men in Lebanon who had either registered or expressed a desire to register with UNHCR, claiming refugee status and resettlement either wholly or partially on the grounds of sexual orientation persecution or

the fear thereof, the men's Syrianness forms part of their genealogy to an extent which the other two intersections do not. Practically speaking, I was basing my interview guide on the knowledge that, in the context of the UNHCR for example, the men's ability to show that they are Syrian would be much less of a difficult process than their ability to 'prove' their sexuality or their qualification as a refugee deserving resettlement. As a result, the concept of Syrianness becomes the most implicit of the three themes, and does not require the same level of active engagement during the interview questions, yet its lived experience grows naturally out of questions such as *Who are the most important people in your life?* and *Is there any situation in which you would consider returning to Syria?*

The interview guide can be found on page 69.

5.4 Reliability and Validity

Due to the small number of participants in this study, methods to ensure reliability and validity take shape via an identification and solution method to potential threats. The main threats I identify are researcher bias and translation errors which relate to "how observations are described and interpreted" (Lewis 2009, 9).

Researcher bias can affect the results of the study as the researcher's positionality and assumptions may shape how the data is represented and analysed. To counter such a threat it is necessary to recognise my own biases. As a Western non-heterosexual researcher, my individual experiences relating to acceptance, stability and mobility may conflict with the realities of my participants, where my assumptions may render me inattentive to participants' self-understandings. For example, my employment of terms such as 'gay' and 'queer' in their theoretical but particularly in their analytical forms may at times reflect my own descriptions rather than those of my participants. They may pertain more closely to my own involvement and participation within a Western-influenced global gay culture which affects the lives of my respondents differently, and their use therefore reproduces such processes of socio-cultural influence. In turn, they may suffocate the production of new and more appropriate self-generated terms, which would allow for a different analysis to flourish.

Elsewhere, I recognise the effect that the project as a continual process has on my writing. Since the initial interviews for example, I have developed a budding friendship with two of my participants. Such relationships are a natural consequence of conducting a study which deals with sensitive data, such as mine. The trust that has been built between my informants and myself has allowed us to stay in contact until and beyond the time of writing. Such friendships can be beneficial, as they allow me to interpret the data with a greater

degree of subjective accuracy. That said, I lose in turn a level of objectivity which can distort the researcher's interpretation of the data and the secondary reading of my data. For example, my friendships may hinder me from presenting the data in an accurately scientific manner. I may be cautious to talk about my friends in theoretical terms, as such analyses can often seem impersonal and abstract to the point where the respondents cannot recognise themselves within the study. Elsewhere, I risk subconsciously equating certain participants with theories of injustice, such as complicity and reappropriation of oppression, rather than those whom I am close to; drawing unequal comparisons and parallels between my participants who suffer equally unjust discrimination and hardship. Yet by understanding my own position I am able to constantly reevaluate my interaction with my participants and the data throughout the process. Indeed, where caution of abstractness is concerned, the level of subjectivity I have obtained throughout this study means I strive to constantly ground theory into practice and reality, which reflects the object of similar social science research. As such, I always explain my theories in terms of my informants' experiences.

Tied into this are errors in translation. As terminology related to sexuality for example takes on specific cultural and linguistic meanings, my assumptions about the transferability of terms such as 'gay' and 'LGBT' are challenged. For the two interviews conducted in Arabic, the flexibility of the interview guide allows me to adopt the terms used by the participants themselves. This 'backseat' approach ensures that the data collection is an active collaboration between the researcher and the participant, countering the obstacles to sound narrative data collection, and allowing the subjective experience to be more fully explored. Furthermore, it accounts for phenomenology's issue of bracketing, which requires researchers to take a fresh perspective by putting aside their own views before dealing with the experiences of others (Creswell 2007, 60). For example, *مثلي* or *mithlī* (literally meaning 'like me' or 'the same as me', but widely understood as 'gay' or 'homosexual') and *ميل* or *muyūl* (the plural of *ميل* or *mail* meaning 'inclination(s)', 'deviation(s)', 'disposition(s)', or 'desire(s)' but can also mean 'sexual orientation') are used by the men. Elsewhere, they speak of *الجيو* or *al-jaww* (literally 'the air' or 'the atmosphere' but meaning 'the gay scene') to speak of gay life in Beirut and *أنا هاك* or 'anā haik' (a Levantine expression meaning 'I am like this') to avoid always using the aforementioned terms when speaking of their sexuality in the context of family and friends (e.g. 'They don't know I am like this'). Interestingly, the men also use the English word 'gay' quite interchangeably. For the transcriptions, I always use the most identifiable English terms, but take note of how the meanings differ, the contexts in which

they are used, and how my interpretations of them are Western-influenced. Wherever meaningful, I keep the Arabic word in transliteration form when transcribing the respondents' narratives.

In interview questions relating to the UNHCR, and whether the men know that the UN consider LGBT persons specifically at risk for example, I transliterate the term literally, in order to reflect how the refugee system categorises the men. One of the respondents did not know what the term meant. Rather than this hindering the data collection and interpretation, this study takes the alternative viewpoint that the lack of universal application and translation actually "open[s] the door to new and unexpected possibilities for research inquiry" (Jagosh and Boudreau 2009, 110). The lack of ability to understand and translate terms which are inscribed upon the individuals by UNHCR for example has a meaning in terms of identification and power relations which are to be analysed.

The decision to conduct two interviews in Arabic and the other three in English was a consequence of the employed snowball sampling method. One of the source pools for participants was based on a formal agreement between a Lebanese organization and myself, through which I was introduced to two participants separately. The second source pool grew out of more informal interactions with the local population where I met one participant who introduced me to the final two men. The formal nature of the former created a situation where Arabic was the language which provided a more comfortable atmosphere for interviewing, in comparison to the latter where English became dominant. Related in part to the knowledge of English of the five participants, English was preferred by the friends of my 'snowball' informant and the informant himself as there was already a pre-established feeling of trust which was not apparent with those conducted in Arabic. Whilst neither language was imposed during any of the interviews, such happenings reflect how, in this study, first- and second-language use closely relates to the way in which connections with informants are established. Additionally, the interviews in Arabic were conducted in safe spaces whilst the others took place in settings such as cafes, bars, and homes; again a reflection of the way in which I came into contact with the five men. Such differences in the interactional processes have important methodological consequences. For example, whilst the interviews in Arabic allows those participants to express themselves freely in their native language, I as the researcher must similarly adapt to the flow of the interview which can prove difficult when the language is not my own. During one interview, some questions had to be repeated and comments had to be clarified to ensure accuracy of comprehension. This process hindered the flow of the conversation at times, which may have caused the participant to alter the words he

was using or have impacted on the overall progression of the interview. Conversely, the informal settings of the three interviews in English meant that the semi-structured nature of the interview guide was more loosely followed, and sometimes conversations ran off-topic. For conducting scientific research, a lack of focus during time-restrained interviews can mean that important data becomes lost or simply unsaid. For both examples, I run the risk of not reaching a complete saturation point of the data. In turn, this may impact on my ability to accurately compare the experiences of the five men, meaning that my findings and analysis may be based upon semi-distorted comparisons. I recognize that this was my first interaction with the field, and my ability to control who became part of my study was superseded at times by my novice status. That said, I keep in mind such implications during the data comparison.

5.5 Transcription and Analysis

Analysis of the five interviews takes root in the recording and transcription of the interviews. Recording the interviews allows for a more relaxed and informal interview to take place in addition to maintaining accuracy. Transcription is recognised as the first step of analysis as it is seen as “a process that is theoretical, selective, interpretive, and representational” (Davidson 2009, 37), which can affect the reading of the data.

Transcription favours a more *denaturalised* approach where accuracy favours substance over detail.⁶ It is my belief that involuntary vocalisations and stutters for example represent a process of remembering which renders them less important than the actual words that are said. Nevertheless, some naturalised transcription techniques such as emphasis are retained, as this is considered vital to understanding relations of power and resistance in the varying contexts.

The main analysis takes place via an establishment of main themes. Initially, I read through the five transcripts and highlighted responses which relate to one of three a priori social constructs: those of refugeehood, sexuality, and nationality. Following Ryan and Bernard (2003), I then metacode the multitude of responses to discover new themes (99). This process is based on a semantic analysis of word co-occurrence where I sort the quotes into categories where common words and concepts are found. I then cross-examine the categories and arrange both inter-categories according to a logical progression and sort intra-categories by marking differences and similarities among the five respondents based in part

⁶ For an introduction to the naturalised and denaturalised debate in transcription, see Oliver, Serovich and Mason 2005

on the three a priori categories. Finally, the metacoded categories and word co-occurrence procedure provide me with the final identified themes, they being: *Movement and Mobility, Hope and (Perceptions of) The Future, Fear and Safety, Discrimination, Appearances and (Mis)Recognition, and Acceptance and Belonging.*

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Gay Syrian refugees in Lebanon represent a category of individuals who repeatedly live in precarious conditions within an often intolerant community and constitute a vulnerable minority group. Accordingly, I recognise the main ethical concerns of the study to be confidentiality and anonymity, legality, and deception.⁷

Confidentiality and anonymity are of utmost importance in this study. Although not overwhelmingly common, the limited legal protection for refugees in Lebanon means they are for example still liable for arrest and potential deportation (see Aranki and Kalis 2014). For non-heterosexual identifying persons, article 534 of the Lebanese penal code punishes ‘unnatural sexual intercourse’ and is routinely used to “target persons with non-conforming sexuality or gender identity, through the violation of privacy and by denial of basic human rights” (Helem 2014, see ‘about us’). As social tensions increase between the host Lebanese community and Syrian refugees of late, and social tolerance of non-heterosexuality remains unresolved, SOGI refugees face real daily struggles and threats. Participants are therefore ensured that any details which may lead to them being personally identified are not disclosed within this thesis. Pseudonyms are employed for example. Such ‘simple’ anonymisation techniques are not always sufficient and it arises on occasions that the individuality of the refugees’ stories requires omitting data to ensure participant protection, but not to the point of analysis distortion.

During the interview process, three participants disclose information which renders them in breach of one or more Lebanese laws. It is then questioned whether I as the researcher have an obligation to report such information to the corresponding responsible bodies or not. Whilst I maintain a moral compass regarding law-breaking, confidentiality remains essential to the study. It is understood that, given the nature of the topic, the study would be impossible to conduct without confidentiality being ensured. Furthermore, I believe that issues of illegality are a result of discriminatory laws and an inescapable product of

⁷ These are recognised common ethical issues in social research, highlighted by Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006, 160).

inequalities and biases that exist within the Lebanese penal code, which legitimises the favouring of confidentiality over legality issues.

Deception was only employed in relation to the Lebanese authorities. Were they to have uncovered the research topic, I may not have been permitted to carry out the research. As such, I did not disclose the main purpose of my stay in Lebanon and offered alternative reasons. Ethically speaking, as the project takes the principle of readdressing human inequality as a founding principle, the benefits that the study may provide is believed to strictly outweigh the costs that deception carried.

5.7 A Note on Intersectionality

As the reading of this thesis has thus far expressed, the concept of intersectionality has been central to both shaping its initial direction and to being a tool of analysis. Whilst intersectionality theoretically offers a path along which analysis takes into account the practices, realities, and ramifications of multi-dimensional connected patterns of power upon the active subject (Yuval-Davis 2011, 5), my commitment to the concept lies within its methodological implications.

As Christensen and Jenson (2012) state, intersectionality questions how we can methodologically examine varying patterns of social distinction (111). Indeed, we must ask *how* to produce knowledge about multiple social facets without appropriating them and sterilising the research. The inclusion of everyday life acts as a tool to avoid such an outcome, and is injected into the methodology of the data collection. Its logic lies in the understanding of everyday life as a melting pot in which interlinking social categories come together through actions and experiences. For example, interview questions such as “Describe a typical day for you” and “Tell me about your interactions with the UN” allow for a natural representation of intersectionality to be explained, in addition to an indirect questioning of social categories without forcefully reinscribing them upon participants (Ibid. 118). Such departures are vital to extrapolating sound yet complex data.

Findings

6.1 Profiling the Participants

The participants involved in this study are five Syrian males living in Beirut, aged between 25 and 30 years old. All five men self-identify as gay. Three of the men originate from Damascus whilst one was born and raised in Latakia and the fifth comes from Kobane.

Kareem, my first interviewee, can only be described as a gentle giant; a man both wise beyond his years and yet uncomfortably trapped within his present reality. Growing up in a conservative Muslim family and area in Syria, Kareem never truly felt at ease throughout his younger years. Consistently playing the ‘straight character’ in a never-ending Greek-style tragedy, Kareem’s unhappiness only burgeoned to outweigh his already physical robustness. His desire to move to Lebanon was motivated in part by the opportunity to discover a more accepting community, yet the act was ultimately predicated on the need to find a job. In 2009, at twenty years old, Kareem moved to the outer suburbs of Beirut, and was working on and off in jobs which never justly reflected his poetic personality. Between 2009 and 2011, Kareem would go back and forth between Lebanon and Syria, yet with the outbreak of the civil war, it was no longer safe for him to travel.

Kareem has made a life-of-sorts for himself in Lebanon, yet he still finds it impossible to reconcile his inner feelings with the outer social world he encounters. His daily schedule sees him move from home to work to home, and repeat. Kareem feels as though he does not fit the gay stereotype, and even if he wished to, his economic capital would not allow him to access the relevant social circles. One of his favourite pastimes is to chat with his friend over the phone, and talk of simple pleasures such as the smell of morning coffee. I was one of the first people that Kareem ever confided in about his ‘way of life’, and I owe him great respect for this. At the time of the interview, Kareem had not yet registered at the UNHCR, but felt that now he was reaching a time where he could trust others to help improve his future life.

Mustapha is my second interviewee, but more importantly, he is a great friend. Mustapha is inspiring. His past is easily the most traumatising and yet he is the most optimistic and happiest man I met in Beirut. Whilst growing up, Mustapha had a privileged life. He moved to Lebanon in 2008 to primarily study, but also to discover gay life in Beirut. Mustapha used to move quite freely between Lebanon and Syria, visiting family in the holidays. Yet the war changed everything for him. His family are still in Damascus. They are doing well, yet he worries for their safety every day.

Mustapha is currently working in Beirut, yet his status as a Syrian means he is often subjected to verbal discrimination and made to carry out demeaning tasks in the office. Although currently living on the floor of a friend's apartment, Mustapha likes nothing better than to dance his weekends away. Mustapha speaks impeccable English, and remembers one of his happiest moments in Beirut when he showed his mother and sister around the city when they came over for his graduation. He hopes that he will soon be able to start a new life in Europe, as the situation in Lebanon becomes more threatening for him every day.

Mustapha and I are still in regular contact, and we speak about life in Beirut and his resettlement process. Most recently, Mustapha had his second resettlement interview and is now waiting for an embassy to call him for his final meeting before being approved to leave Lebanon. Whilst overwhelmed that things are moving forward, not knowing which country will call him is proving to be an emotional wait.

Kamal is certainly the most 'untraditional' of my participants. I met him through Mustapha, and his interview took place in his European boyfriend's duplex apartment, over single malt whiskey. A well-presented, fashionable and humble yet outspoken individual, Kamal had a fantastic upbringing in Syria. He came to Lebanon in 2005 to attend University, and is currently working as a freelance consultant, yet his stigmatised nationality means he enjoys little to no job security. Kamal has been laid-off before, and had to give up his apartment as he could no longer afford the rent, and the possibilities of this happening again are fast becoming probabilities.

Kamal was keen to speak of travel, art, and the finer points of life. He has a great relationship with his family who are still in Latakia, and he speaks to them frequently. Kamal adores his parents, but knows that they would not approve of his way of life, and so he has not disclosed to them his relationship status. Kamal's brother is currently in the U.S., and he would love to join him, if he cannot get to Berlin or Scandinavia first. Kamal has had a second interview with the UN, yet he is not overly confident that this will materialise into any real prospects for him. Ever the determined character, Kamal always speaks of leaving Lebanon through alternative means, despite an educated and informed understanding of the dangers this presents. An eternal dreamer with an intelligible head upon his shoulders, Kamal recognises how Lebanon is not a safe place for him as a Syrian, or as a gay man, and understands that his superficial outward appearance does not reflect his constant feelings of fear and worry.

Irfan is completely different. A slim, bearded, budding architect, his free spirit outlook converges with his existentialist inquisitions which have inspired his life

philosophies to a visible, tattooed degree. Irfan grew up in Damascus amidst divorced parents and a family of PhD attainers. Spending much of his adolescence with his grandmother, Irfan would travel to Beirut every summer to be with his mother who was working in the city. March 2011 marked the middle point of Irfan's undergraduate degree in Damascus, and he continued to finish his studies there until the early months of 2014. As an intellectual activist during the revolution, Irfan was twice detained and persecuted by Syrian authorities. Yet this did not mark the beginning of Irfan's troubled relationship with state sanctioned power, since he was firstly arrested and beat up in Lebanon for kissing another man in a car.

Since moving to Beirut in 2014, Irfan has been living mainly with his mother. He buries himself with work as a freelance photographer and an inspiring event-coordinator, raising awareness about Syrian refugees and the general situation in his country. Irfan has been heavily affected by what has happened to him and the atrocities being committed in Syria. He dreams of living the open road and of involving himself in festival set designs for a living. Yet he is completely stuck in Lebanon. He has tried several times to get visas for countries which are interested in his work and inviting him to come, but to no avail. Irfan feels that Syrians in Lebanon are highly discriminated against, both socially and legally. He has not enlisted himself with the UNHCR, out of a hope that his work will provide him with more enduring possibilities to leave the region. The reality, however, has prompted him to finally consider registering.

Tareq is my final interviewee. An extremely softly spoken individual, Tareq possesses an unrivalled kindness and human inspired disposition. His upbringing was shaped by his love of education and his passion for the Arabic language and Arab culture. Tareq describes his childhood as normal, despite having some troubles with a young neighbour who found out that he was gay and threatened to tell the local community.

Following the outbreak of the troubles in 2011, Tareq kept a low profile and continued his education whilst simultaneously working in a clothes shop. Once he finished his degree in literature, Tareq's military service date was imminent. Concurrently, it became spatially challenging for him to move around as a gay man, and his life became engulfed by the increasingly violent war. As a result, Tareq made the choice to move to southern Beirut in August 2014, where he has since lived with his uncle. Tareq only disclosed to his family that he left because of his conscription date, and told them nothing of his motivations to discover a more sexually diverse tolerant Lebanon.

Since being in Beirut, Tareq lives in constant fear as both a Syrian and a gay individual. Lebanon was nothing like he had imagined it, and he has found no opportunities

to work nor to a more open society. He suffers much verbal harassment for the way he looks and therefore confines himself to his uncle's house. Tareq has registered with the UNHCR in Beirut but he is becoming increasingly frustrated and fearful with every day that passes with no response. He hopes to begin a new life in a country where he can enjoy his personal freedom without being constantly judged.

6.2 Movement and Mobility

The decision to move from one's country of origin is rarely based on one single factor. Similarly, the reasons and motivations for the move to Lebanon for my five participants were varied and multifaceted. Whilst Kareem came to primarily find work and Mustapha and Kamal arrived for educational purposes, Tareq explains his reasons were based on a combination of the Syrian war, his sexuality, and his impending military service. Indeed, all five men offered multiple motivations, yet they all shared a desire to discover a Lebanon of blended financial, educational, and sexuality-based opportunities.

Whether the men arrived before or after March 2011 seemed to impact little on their choice of Lebanon over other possibilities of where to move. Just as Kareem who moved in 2009 stated: 'I came to Lebanon because it was the closest thing. I mean I understand the language, I know how everything works, that's it', so Tareq who arrived in July 2014 similarly said: 'Lebanon was the closest, [...] I don't know anything about Turkey, and I never went to Jordan before. I thought Lebanon would be the best opportunity for me'.

Where movement before and during the first three years of the war was generally unproblematic for my respondents, mobility became much more limited in the most recent period for those in both Syria and Lebanon. As Irfan notes of his struggle to leave Syria in 2013: 'I had to finish my university [...]. After the first time I got detained in Damascus I was trying to move my University to Lebanon, or to anywhere else but [...] I couldn't do it'. Once across the border in 2014, the longevity and impact of the neighbouring war provided little respite for Irfan's and others' ability to move. As he notes: 'I wanted to do my masters, there was supposed to be a scholarship. *Kamaan* I was supposed to go to India. [...] It's impossible to get a visa to any place. It's like you're stuck. You know that feeling? Like *khalas*'.⁸

All of the men in my study continue to feel trapped and unable to either return to Syria or to leave Lebanon. Nonetheless, their desperation at times becomes a source of

⁸ *Kamaan* is the Arabic word for 'also'. *Khalas* can have multiple, contextually dependent meanings. Generally translated as 'enough' as in 'That's enough' or 'No more', here it means 'finished' or 'It's over'.

determination which spurs them to regain mobility in the future. As Kamal sums it up: ‘[F]or my old days I’m gonna be fucked if I stay in Lebanon. So I must find a solution not to stay in this country’.

6.3 Hope and (Perceptions of) the Future

The men’s understandings of the future are constructed therefore upon an acknowledgement of the realities they face in Lebanon against their perceptions of a future life elsewhere. As Kareem tells us:

Here there is no future for me. There is no future for me here at all. If today I worked, tomorrow I get sacked, then tomorrow there is no food. [...] I want to live in a country, like the Scandinavian countries, where I know that I am building for my future.

Scandinavia is often perceived as the ‘perfect’ destination, not only in reference to job security but, as Kamal understands it:

All the governmental stuff, all the beautiful laws, all the good things. [...] In terms of everything in life, Scandinavia is fucking Scandinavia, it’s the best. [...] I know that LGBT rights, or human rights in Scandinavia is much much much different than here. [...] They’re almost saints!

Indeed most of my participants, like Kamal, compare their present reality with their intended future from multiple angles, be that the reality of being ‘a homosexual who has no future in Lebanon’ or that ‘[t]here is no future for a Syrian in Lebanon’ as Mustapha makes simultaneously clear.

My informants’ perceptions of the future and how to render it an actuality are tied concurrently to the UNHCR and to the feeling of hope. Yet, there are conflicting views on the abilities of the organisation to aid them in their search for a new beginning. Whilst Irfan would encourage others to go to the UN because there were no other solutions, Mustapha asserts that the UN can do nothing for the Syrian people. Kamal on the other hand holds more ambiguous views about the UNHCR capacities to assist, and is neither ‘hopeless nor hopeful’, but rather somewhere in between.

All five men had previously felt that Lebanon was a country of opportunities and new beginnings. Yet, with the protracted war and the increasingly precarious situations that Syrians in Lebanon were facing, such understandings have been tainted. As Tareq describes it:

The best moment was when I left Syria. [...] I was very happy when I first came. But since then things have changed. [...] In my head there was safety, there was stability, there were opportunities, but no. I thought I would be welcomed, but no.

6.4 Fear and Safety

Safety is therefore a key concern for all the men. Many of my participants feel unsafe in Lebanon and are living in fear. Their fears are multiple, and range from the possibility of the overspill of the war and the frequent raids on gay establishments in Beirut, to the ever increasing reports of hostilities against Syrians from Lebanese communities. For Tareq, the lack of safety is so insurmountable that he is rethinking his options:

I thought that there was a sort of personal freedom in Lebanon. [...] I thought about Syria. I can do more in Syria. There is more freedom, more safety, there are job opportunities. Here in some ways it is the opposite. [...] I thought it would be different but it's the same. The same fear, the same worries.

In some cases, safety is made relative, and in turn compared to the situations of other Syrian refugees. Indeed, the men set themselves apart from their fellow compatriots by emphasizing how their 'safeties' differ. For Mustapha and Kamal for example, their fears and safety are not necessarily based on financial or even human reasoning, but rather on a logic of *sexual safety*.

The intersections of sexuality, fear and safety are also spoken of in conjunction with the UNHCR resettlement process. Whilst all five men recognise the importance of stating their sexuality during their appointments and interviews, the actual act of doing so is not so easy. In Kareem's experience: 'I knew I could find ease, protection, and security [at the UNHCR]. I was scared to register before. I wanted to, and I tried, but I was scared. [...] Talking about this subject at the UN. No, it didn't sit well with me'.

6.5 Discrimination

The feelings of fear and concerns over personal safety for all my participants are often directly correlated to acts of discrimination they have faced throughout their lives. In Syria, all five men have faced some level of actual or threatened verbal or physical abuse because of their sexual orientation. The actors of such abuse range from family members to the local community to the national security forces.

Such accounts however are not the men's main focus, despite an affirmation of how traumatising such occurrences continue to be. Rather, the men describe incidents of discrimination in Lebanon as being of greater concern to them. Whilst the perpetrators of such acts are similarly on the micro, mezzo and macro societal levels as in Syria, the men are now facing double discrimination of account of being both Syrian and homosexual. As Kamal describes it:

Lebanon [...] is very bipolar. I have those friends that are very cool about me being Syrian but sometimes you might just ride in a taxi and the driver would offend Syrians [...] or someone would joke about Syrians. [...] But it was because of my sexuality that I was [directly] discriminated against [here in Lebanon]. Now I make sure not to tell everyone.

Indeed, all five men acknowledge the difficulty of being both non-heterosexual and Syrian in the current Lebanese climate. For Irfan, the discrimination he faces as both gay and Syrian in Lebanon is inextricably tied into the (un)realities of rights and the legal system. As he explains:

I was kissing a guy in the car and I saw seven army guys holding their phones recording. Shit. They started hitting me but not the other guy, he was European. [...] I was arrested and imprisoned here in Beirut for being gay, but I was beat up for being Syrian. [...] LGBT means nothing in this country, especially with this flexible law they have. [...] Being a UN refugee gives you more rights than being Syrian.

For others, discrimination is less physically threatening and publicly evident, yet obvious nonetheless. In Mustapha's experience of his interaction with Lebanese men on networking sites for men interested in meeting other men, he notes: 'I get this [discrimination] on [this

site]. ‘Why don’t you put the dollar sign [to signal prostitution]?’ they say. It came to me from people who are very educated. Lebanese who have been abroad or whatever’.

For some participants, discrimination is also recognised in its positive sense. Mustapha for example explains that he mentioned that he was gay when he first went to the UN to register as a refugee. When he told the employee this, he was given an early appointment. As he acknowledges, speaking of himself and other LGBT refugees: ‘[W]e’re more privileged than others’. Yet, the link between privilege and sexuality in the context of the UNHCR refugee process is not always straightforward. As Mustapha continues to note, positive discrimination and privilege are only beneficial for the initial interview. After which, the same rules do not always apply:

When it comes to the UN I don’t think it’s **always** a privilege to be gay. I have friends, gay friends, who applied two years ago and they never got a reply or a call or anything. Whatever they say about LGBT comes first at the UN, no. I don’t think it’s true, it’s bullshit.

6.6 Appearances and (Mis)Recognition

For discrimination to achieve any momentum, recognition has to play a part in the process. How the five men in my study are recognised is intertwined with how the men appear. For many, this plays out at face value. As Mustapha explained:

A citizen, who sees me sitting having wine, won’t think I’m a refugee. [...] It’s stereotyping. [...] I’m not begging for an interview or just to get in [to the UNHCR]. [...] A gay guy would take care of his appearance even if he doesn’t have a penny. [...] I guess that’s why [the guard] didn’t treat me as bad as the others.

Regarding the UNHCR interviews and refugee process, several of my participants recognise the importance of not just appearance but also other markers of identification. As Mustapha continues:

The UN system is corrupted. [...] The way you look, it affects your interview, the way you talk, your confidence, the way you speak, the tonality. Everything. [...]

People react to the appearance, to the background, to the languages, to the culture. [...] This is how you sculpture; this is how you shape a refugee.

As Kamal explains, the extent of the influence of the UN upon how Syrian refugees appear extends beyond the interview process: ‘If the UN is going to help the average Syrian person to travel and live abroad they’re going to have to spend much more on them and invest much more in them to become what they should be like in terms of studies, languages, jobs, experiences’.

Outside of the UN process and within the wider society, several of the men explain how they become identifiable as Syrian by their accents. Irfan notes for example that during his daily interactions with shop owners and taxi drivers, he is often identified as Syrian by the way he asks for goods or by how he gives directions. As a result, he tries to speak in a Lebanese accent to blend in with the rest of society.

Often, the men develop techniques of self-exposure which are contextually dependent. For Kamal, such bargaining tactics are employed in relation to his non-conforming sexuality, which evokes a sense of optionality. As he highlights: I know who to choose, who to tell. I am openly gay. I think that if I meet the wrong people or if I sense that they are not open-minded enough I wouldn’t say anything about my sexuality. [...] So it’s optional’.

In most cases, the ability for others to recognise and identify the men is built upon a self-recognition of one’s own being. All five men affirm that they are gay, and confirm that their sexual orientation continues to provide a troubling source of conflict when speaking of both recognition by others and self-identification. As Irfan clarifies, his self-identification as gay at one time engulfed his entire being: ‘There was a point in my life when my sexuality was [...] I’m gay, this is it. Everything I do - the way I dress, the way I think. It was because I am gay. It was the whole picture [for me]’. For Kareem however, the ability to self-recognise as gay is plagued by how he appeared to others:

I feel like there is something wrong inside of me. [...] I used to have relationships just so I could be like [my friends]. To the rest of them, I was straight. In the end, I began to feel that I was lying. [...] People don’t know me. I’m an actor. I can’t tell them. Even the people with whom I live, I cannot tell them that *anā haik* (I am like ‘this’), that I am *mithlī* (gay), that I feel this inside.

Elsewhere, there are often disparities between how the men are identified and how they self-identify. Two of the participants for example did not understand the term LGBT, despite the fact that the UNHCR had identified and labelled them as such. For Irfan, his self-labelling seems to defy categorisation:

What advice would you give to someone in the same situation as you? Which situation? As a refugee? Whichever situation you consider yourself to be in. As a gay refugee you mean? That depends. Is that how you see yourself? No. So how do you see your situation? Sad.

Recognition also takes place on a third level. As previously commented upon, the men situationally compare themselves with other Syrian refugees. As Tareq makes clear, his situation differs from the ‘standard’ refugee situation because he has two major problems – his sexuality and his military service – facing him. This puts him in a worse off situation than many others.

Despite such distinctions, the men quite clearly identify themselves and other Syrians in Lebanon within the context of humanity and *humanness*. Such recognition is formed on dual levels. Firstly on the level of rights, as Irfan notes: ‘You know what’s the value of human rights, [but] we don’t. Especially the people who lived war and detention. It’s like, you live this life and you’re nothing, you’re a number, your existence is nothing.’ Secondly, the identification of being human takes place at its most basic level. In the words of Tareq: ‘I wish people would accept others for who they are, for their situations. Yes you’ve been in war, yes you’ve fled from a crisis, but you’re still a person’.

6.7 Acceptance and Belonging

The extent to which recognition is both achieved and sanctified for all my informants is contingent upon the concept of acceptance. For all five men, their sexual orientation provided and continues to provide a source of discomfort when it comes to acceptance. For Kareem, acceptance, tied both to family status and to societal moral understandings of right and wrong, is a practical impossibility:

My family is well-known. Everyone in the area knows them. They would reject my family if they knew. [...] Even if the war ended, I can’t go back. There is a bigger problem. My area [in Syria] is religious. They reject everything. If I killed

someone or if I committed a crime, maybe I would be forgiven, but not for [being gay]. For this, I am always wrong.

Such recognitions of the origins of a lack of acceptance leads to a deeper discussion surrounding the notions of fault and blame. As Irfan notes:

After a time it was ‘khalas I’m gay’. It’s my sexuality, it doesn’t have to govern. I’m more than that, it’s a minor thing. This is the problem in this society. If you’re gay, you’re gay. [People think] you have to dress in a certain way, you have to talk in a certain way, you have to do certain things. It’s because there is no awareness about this. It’s not normal.

Acceptance therefore often interconnects ideas about blame with a nation-wide lack of sexually diverse understandings. All five men distinctly recognise that it is the inability of society to accept them for who they are which is at fault, which often led to self-acceptance. As one participant notes: ‘I went to a shrink and [...] I got electric shocked. [...] He was [making] me watch straight porn [...]. This is an experience I will never forget. [...] But nothing changed, I’m still a fag (laughs). [...] I’m very proud of who I am now. I’m totally gay’.

That said, the extent to which the men in my study are always proud of their sexuality is sometimes contextually compromised. For example, the conditions placed upon them as SOGI refugees by the UNHCR means that they have to explain their sexuality to the local staff, which as Tareq explains, floods feelings of pride and acceptance with uncertainty and rejection:

It’s very hard to tell someone in an organisation like the UN about your *muyūl* (sexuality), I didn’t know they cared. [...] I was scared, because I knew I had to say I was gay. I wasn’t ready to share this information. [...] I didn’t feel comfortable with this. I was so scared that they wouldn’t believe me, or that they would reject me.

Where acceptance is often understood as reliant upon appearances and recognition, so acceptance and pride are linked with sense of belonging. For the majority of the men, their

sense of pride does not always correlate with where they felt that they belonged. Often, there is a divergence between the two concepts.

Pride and belonging are habitually conflated notions because of their seeming compatibility. Yet as my informants explain, this is not the general rule of thumb. Such occurrences commonly take place at the national level, where national identity both intertwines and conflicts with a sense of belonging. As Kamal puts it:

I wouldn't want to go back to Syria because I don't belong there. It has to do with my sexuality but it's not forcefully my sexuality. [...] I'm proud of being Syrian but to me it's over. I'm a citizen of the world. I belong to the world. I don't belong to one country.

When asked whether they would ever return to Syria in the future, all of the men in my study flatly responded that they would not. Even if the circumstances altered, none of my respondents would ever consider returning there to live out their futures. Their sense of national belonging is grounded within a reality of suitability, which is sequentially trumped by the attractions of a global identity. As Irfan so poignantly concludes:

Given the way I think, the way I see things, I know that Syria and Lebanon or no country in this region is suitable for me to live in. [...] I always tell my friends they should leave the region, it's not the right place for us. [...] I consider myself as a new age hippy. I don't see myself as belonging to this land or this country. I'm a human being and I'm a citizen of this Earth, and I should have the right to go wherever I want.

Analysis

7.1 Sustained Hierarchies of Oppression

The men's narratives expose the various structures and institutions with which they interact on a daily basis. Bodies such as the Lebanese state, the UNHCR, and the wider Lebanese society act as regimes of power which have varying effects upon my informants. Contingent upon the ways in which they intersectionally and routinely identify the men, the techniques of identification such bodies adopt can lead, in part, to sustained hierarchies of oppression.

One of the most influential actors complicit within processes of oppression is the Lebanese state. Such processes take place along all three intersections of sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood. We can speak of legal boundaries, where for example discriminatory laws against 'unnatural' sexual activity take mould and action as police raids on gay establishments. The men in my study live in fear of the legal repercussions they face were they to be spatio-temporally unfortunate. Understood in theoretical terms, the police raids are a manifest form of state power, the employment and practice of which is based on the principle of recognition. As the men in my study make clear, their fears are directly associated to being recognised as gay, rather than being Syrian or a refugee. In this case, recognition does not necessarily operate intersectionally. Rather, such techniques of identification point to efforts of state control which are contextually-dependent. They highlight the way in which sexuality becomes identifiable and sequentially managed - through the forged and seemingly inseparable connection between performance and place. Indeed, state recognition leads to the categorisation and condemnation of a certain 'type' of sexuality based on spatial association, and where state laws do not, at least in the first instance, differentiate between citizens and non-citizens.

Other state efforts to oppress and exclude are more difficult to theoretically analyse. For example, both Kareem and Kamal express deep concern about their abilities to hold on to their respective jobs. Indeed, their lack of job security demonstrates the challenges they face as non-Lebanese citizens to access a just employment market. That said, it remains unclear to what extent such a lack of employment rights is based on the men being recognised as Syrian or as refugees by the state. In line with Seidman and Brubaker, Kareem's and Kamal's employment difficulties expose how techniques of identification are both processual and active. Both men have witnessed change in the job market since their arrival in Lebanon and have been subjected to increasing employment vulnerability and discrimination. Understood

from the angle of identification, such processes of oppression are functioning within a fluid time-frame, thereby rendering constructs such as nationality and refugeehood unstable. Whilst the men's identification as Syrian was less problematic when they first arrived, the onset of the war has caused a shift in how the men are now recognised. As Seidman highlights, state practices of identification alter and adjust according to the politics of signification. As such, constructs such as nationality and refugeehood have become intertwined, to the point where it is now indiscernible to determine where the significance lies. That being said, it importantly demonstrates the theoretical logic behind how signifying practices of identification feed into intersectional processes of oppression.

More importantly, we must look at how such oppression is also hierarchically constructed, and how it traverses boundaries. Noting Irfan's experience of being arrested for being gay yet beat up for being Syrian suggests that to speak only of one-dimensional legal boundaries does not suffice. Rather, we must attend to the processes through which the sovereign reintroduces itself as a legitimate power.

Agamben's theoretical stance offers important insights into how the refugee and the non-citizen are imagined by the sovereign. For Irfan, his exclusion from the state based on his recognised status as a non-citizen strips him of any state protection, thereby reducing him to bare life. In agreement with Agamben, Irfan's non-relation to the state then renders him within a state of exception where the art of abandonment allows for a reintroduction of sovereign power, asserted through the act of physical beating. Whilst Irfan's experience can be somewhat neatly applied over Agamben's notion of the *homo sacer*, his theory falls short of traceability when the relation between the refugee and the sovereign becomes displaced and blurred. For example, the analogical 'bare life to sovereign' relationship does not allow us to succinctly analyse how sovereign state laws on sexuality feed into systems of oppression where non-citizens are concerned. Based upon a differentiation between citizen and non-citizen, Agamben's theory separates the protected former from the abandoned latter. He implicitly offers different logics and results for those who are included within the state's sphere and those who are not, as if sovereign power functioned along two distinct trajectories. Yet, the criminalisation of 'homosexuality' extends to citizens, non-citizens, and refugees alike, and the law does not differentiate between them, as Agamben's theory would have it.

With that in mind, how is it then possible to conceive why Irfan and his partner were treated differently? As non-citizens they should both be subject to similar experiences of abandonment and the reintroduction of sovereign power, in Agamben's eyes. Yet this was not the case. Indeed, Agamben falls short at explaining how the state represents an identifying

force that treats all those who it banishes for being non-citizens (un)equally. In other words, Agamben's emphasis on sovereign power overshadows the extent of the influence of the ever-changing socio-historical reception of Syrians in Lebanon for the men in my study, which can provide a more-rounded explanation for Irfan's persecution. The socio-historical implications and the spatio-temporal realities which affect and reflect the fluidity and changeability of my informant's experiences with hierarchies of oppression are not considered by Agamben. The concept of the relation between bare life and sovereign power therefore provides only a partial explanation of the link between the two. When less clean-cut realities such as territorially-bound laws and social perceptions are introduced into the equation, the trajectory of unilateral power becomes displaced and redistributed.

Moreover, Agamben's failure to account for diversity in power trajectories renders his theory unintelligible for explaining how intersectional hierarchies of oppression operate on multiple levels of society. In Mustapha's social world for example, the discrimination he faces on gay networking sites for being Syrian exposes how the art of exclusion operates within already citizen-excluded circles. Said differently, Agamben's concept of the ban reaches further than his idea realises, to the point where the art of banning and exclusion becomes appropriated by multiple actors as opposed to just the panoptic state, and whose effects can be witnessed in varying sectors of Lebanese society. His unified and unilateral emphasis on state power not only therefore dismisses hierarchical banning altogether by the very nature of the terms. Additionally, his theory does not account for how processes of oppression filter down through society to produce discourses of tension which are found on the unattended-to micro level, as Mustapha's experience demonstrates.

Moving from the micro to the macro and away from state power as such, my participants' narratives highlight how the UNHCR also operates in terms of hierarchical oppression, this time on a supranational scale. Many of the men in my study show how they see the UN as a provider for regaining mobility. As Irfan makes clear, the international refugee system offers often the only legitimate source of opportunity for movement. The sheer number of the displaced has overwhelmed the organisation which embodies the main legitimate avenue for resettlement, and in turn has fed the hopes and disappointments of my informants. That being said, such facts fail to explain how the international system paradoxically oppresses movement. For men such as Kareem and Kamal, the Scandinavian countries are a haven for human rights and equal opportunities, as well as being countries open for resettlement. For them, they do not differentiate between Sweden, Denmark, and Norway at the level of the sovereign for example, and do not see why the UNHCR would

heed them in settling in any of these countries. Within the context of globalisation, my informants' relative blindness to differentiation is dually drawn out of ever-growing international movements of LGBT acceptance and a UNHCR commitment to enshrining such acceptance on a global scale through the refugee resettlement process. The global setting within which such narratives are constructed however mask how these international trends are in reality acts embedded within the borders of the sovereign, and conceals how the UNHCR is a mere mediator in this process. As part of the larger UN body, the UNHCR reflects our world on a global scale through the lens of movement. Yet in the make-shift interview room in Beirut the UN interviewer can do no more than, once a refugee's file is approved for resettlement, match personal profiles with country ones. If a certain country decides against resettlement, the file is then passed on, and the UNHCR has little room for persuasion. In other words, the UNHCR acts as a global mediator for national causes; an ironic state of play which fails to be accurately relayed to those individuals who must patiently wait for the call to embassy interview, without knowing which country has decided to dial. As Taylor tells us, the UN as a global regime paradoxically strengthens sovereign borders. Indeed, the façade of a global regime which embellishes the idea of movement as an ultimate goal opens the brief window of borderless opportunity for the men in my study, offering the chance at free mobility. Whether the opportunity is granted or not is of less importance. Rather, what is important to highlight is how, when the window is shut, it is the sovereign who locks it and holds on to the key. In other words, the introduction of the global regime to guarantee the rights of man, as Arendt points out, only realises its potential for a short time, before our nation-state system pushes it aside. For my informants, the UNHCR therefore oppresses mobility by presenting it as something which it can never fully promise the preservation of.

My informants' narratives also demonstrate how the UN oppresses sexual difference. As Kareem and Tareq mention, they are uncomfortable with the idea of talking about their sexuality in formal interviews. The men's agitations are not simply a result of the challenges they have faced in the past confronting the subject. Rather, their worries attest to the inappropriate terms and labels which are placed upon them. Neither of the two men knew the signification of the acronym LGBT when asked during their interviews, and there was no mention in any of the narratives of the term SOGI. Yet this is how the men are identified by the UNHCR. It sets the criteria against which their applications will be processed, and marks their file indefinitely. As Murray and others highlight, such terms represent static Western definitions which are employed by the refugee system to reflect the rigidity of our

neoliberal world. As such, Kareem and Tareq must successfully conform to these Western discourses if they to proceed through the system. Universalised they may be, the acronyms are nevertheless of Western origin, and my informants' disillusionment from them represents how such 'globalities' are being forced upon local realities. In other words, the men's narratives offer ground upon which liberationist understandings through the frame of queer migration must be treated with caution, and where their enduring challenges should be seen as a product of the tensions that exist between the interactions of the global with the national.

Such tensions exist elsewhere. For example, my informants know that during their interviews they have to speak of issues which, on the street outside the interview window, are both illegal and socially taboo. The men must demonstrate how they are banned by the sovereignty of Lebanon, and how their state of exception differs to others', before they are reprimanded back into the society they were just forced to condemn. In agreement with Lechte and Newman, such identifying practices underscore the irreconcilable tensions that exist between the sovereign and the global. Forced to operate within the confines of the sovereign state, the global system which is meant to promote equality ends up recreating hierarchies of difference.

An attention on hierarchies of difference and oppression within the context of Lebanon is geographically limiting as it does not tell us how oppression and exclusion are sustained across borders. Most importantly, it leads us to question how the men interact with regimes of power such as the Lebanese state and the UNHCR when we consider how their sexuality was oppressed in Syria also. Not all of the men in the study came to Lebanon because of the war, yet all of them were motivated in part by the search for a city more tolerant of their sexuality. Common stories of sexual orientation persecution in Syria were experiences that the men harboured on their backs as they crossed international borders. They brought those oppressions with them, hoping to be rid of them but instead found this not to be possible. Conversely, in cases there were further, more damaging intersectional processes of oppression. Tareq's claim that he faced less persecution in Syria than he now faces in Lebanon underlines how Agamben's theory does not equip us with the adequate theoretical tools to analyse the ways in which migration and sexuality come into dialogue in a Middle Eastern context. His drawing of unilateral power trajectories fails to account for sustained oppression and banning. In turn, his panopticism renders his theory blind to imagining how the act of moving across borders allows for a subjective and active comparative experience of oppression.

7.2 Shifting Power Relations: Techniques of Resistance which Challenge

Through their interactions with regimes of power such as the Lebanese state, the wider Lebanese society and the UNHCR, the men's narratives demonstrate more than just uninterrupted processes of oppression. Simultaneously, they expose the ways in which the men as individual actors resist and appropriate such identification techniques, which in turn highlights how power relations intersectionally shift.

As Agamben's theory does not allow for a succinct discussion around the appropriation of power from the individual position, de Certeau's stance on how micro forces are usurped by individual actors more accurately describes the daily realities of the men in my study. Mustapha's claim to changing his accent to fit in with Lebanese society, and how drinking wine displaces his 'Syrianness' in their eyes, demonstrates how he diverts and manipulates power to tactically use his ungiven space to produce unexpected results. His self-understood position as a gay, Syrian refugee in Lebanon means he has been met with an absence of proper spatial relationships since being in the country. Especially since the onset of the war, he has witnessed an increasing lack of equal access to life in Lebanese society. It is this very lack of a proper, defined, and equally recognised place in society which has provided him with the potential for creativity, in turn pushing him to locate the cracks in the proverbial brick wall and tactically challenge that level of inequality which often seems insurmountable. Furthermore, it highlights how in conjunction with Butler and others, performativity can alter the ways in which the men are identified. It exemplifies the link between performativity and power production and manipulation, whilst concurrently demonstrating how identification is processual and, along with social constructs, always contextual.

Elsewhere, we can consider how optionality functions as a technique for resistance. Kamal's decision to let people know when he is gay and when he is not demonstrates how his lack of a defined space offers a mobility which allows for an unexpected result – optionality – to become manifest. That said, de Certeau's theory comes up short in offering a thorough explanation for my informant's abilities to gain tactical ground. Whilst his focus on diversion and appropriation is fitting, it is unable to account for two important phenomena which influence such reactions – liminality and privilege. Kamal's narrative speaks to an ambiguity and uncertainty which reflects his status as a refugee. His position as someone who remains in-between, especially in regards to his interaction with the UN refugee process, exposes him to the very concept of optionality. Whether the options (for movement or employment prospects for example) are accessible or not is of limited importance. Rather, the value lies in

how his position as liminal evokes the influential sense of optionality which in turn allows him to reappropriate oppressive techniques of identification. Secondly, de Certeau's theory rests heavily on the dichotomy between the 'strong' and the 'weak'. Indeed, the term reappropriation suggests a process where capitalisation always comes from the resources of the Other, and fails to highlight the role that privilege plays in the procedure. As men, my informants benefit from living in a male-dominated society in a way that others – women – do not. For example, the action of changing accents is dependent on my participants' abilities to routinely and semi-freely interact with the Lebanese in the first place; suggestive of a situated privilege that women may be unable to capitalise on. The concept of privilege in this context should be read neither as an effort to reinforce gender stereotypes, nor one aimed at the belittling of systematic oppression. Instead, it should be seen to highlight the relation that exists between oppression, privilege, and optionality which de Certeau's theory does not account for; offering a further dimension to the power and resistance paradigm which more accurately reflects the complexities of my informants' narratives and daily lives.

In turn, we must question where privilege and optionality become compromised, and when it is in my informants' interests for it to be so. The men's narratives show that resistance of sexual identification is not always possible. Within the context of the global human rights regime, my participants must assert how their situation legitimates protection and how they fit pre-determined categories. In theoretical terms, the narratives pertain to how resistance, or rather the appropriation of oppression, relates to exclusion which is in fact informed by inclusion. For instance, Lebanese sovereign exclusion pushes for a global intervention and inclusion, where the ability to poach within a state of exception creates an opportunity for mobility. Empirically, whilst the criminalisation of homosexuality can function as a method for biopolitical state control, and simultaneously reifies social constructs as categories for identification, it concurrently operates as a wager for the appropriation of power which the men can use to their situated advantage. In line with Agamben, the exclusionary nature of the ban paradoxically maintains the relation between the sovereign and the refugee, and offers a place for the refugee to constantly remain within the political. Seen differently, the technique of appropriating oppression marks how state discourses of control are challenged, and how the men navigate repressive systems to tailor them to suit their own needs.

Moving forward, we need to ask therefore to what extent the men truly resist the local in favour of the global. Kamal's pride in his being Syrian may suggest that the local is not always forfeited. In other words, Kamal's national self-understanding is not resisted.

Nevertheless, such self-identifications are placed within a global context, where Kamal sees himself as belonging to the world. Along with the other four men in my study, he staunchly states that he will never go back to Syria to take up permanent residence. Functioning in part with but not solely related to his sexuality, Kamal's future and stability, and his willingness to be accepted, is made beyond state boundaries which cannot be appropriately understood within the given theoretical borders. Alternatively said, resistance functions not just in relation to a specific state such as Lebanon or Syria, but rather exceeds the concept of sovereign borders altogether. As highlighted by Gagné and Lee and Brotman for example, my informants' use of universalised terms such as 'gay' and 'fag' demonstrate how national belongings are influenced by global sexualities in order to resist. The way in which Irfan's sexuality was first engulfing but then became a side issue highlights how a global culture of accepting difference and individuality becomes the larger frame within which the men understand themselves, and how they draw upon their state of exception from current homosexual global trends. Rather than emphasizing oppressive identification techniques as an effect of a sovereign need for assertion through biopolitical control, globalisation instead displaces the power of the local to become the framework through which self-understandings are negotiated. By bringing the global in line with sexuality into the analytical process, my participants' narratives underline where current literature fails to comprehend how narratives of migration complexly feed into discourses and realities of queerness and sexuality in our global age. Remaining within the realm of complexity, it furthermore reveals how identification of sexuality is intricate, and cannot be systematically marked upon a piece of paper in the same ways that nationality or refugeehood can be, and in the case of the men, routinely is. Speaking to intersectionality, we understand how globalisation affects the way in which sexuality is perceived to a comparable extent with nationality and refugeehood. The (un)traceability and adaptability of sexuality lends itself more clearly to influences of globalisation and local resistance, whereas nationality and refugeeness are more sufficiently contained by national and sovereign ideas when spoken of in the context of identification.

Academically imbued, the act of resisting identification techniques also challenges currently taken-for-granted concepts. Particularly, when we consider how Irfan was reluctant to describe his situation within any of the pre-determined labels, we gain a sense of how the men are challenging how we understand who constitutes a refugee. Focusing on mobility in the first instance the men's narratives, through their various decisions about when to move and when to register with the UN, speak to how people become refugees when they take the decision to do so themselves. Indeed, Mustapha and Kamal who had been residing in

Lebanon before the crisis did not claim refugee status as the war broke out, but rather actively altered their status when it suited them.

For Irfan, we understand that by appropriating techniques of identification a true queer perspective is legitimately employed. Seeing his situation not in terms of his position as a Gay Syrian refugee but rather as ‘sad’, Irfan resists stratification and reification which in turn renders constructs such as sexuality, nationality and refugeehood wholly and constantly open to individual interpretation. Becoming a refugee should not be seen as solely the result of techniques of categorisation by various actors, whereby the idea of being forced to cross an international border, and the act of doing so, necessitates a recognised and sanctified status change. Rather, appropriating a refugee self-understanding is a far more complex process which is predicated on a vast array of tactical choices linking global ideas with local actualities. In turn, it highlights how queerness configures into the equation, and how it operates as a framework for resistance.

In terms of current and biased literature, such analyses highlight how the men are challenging nation-wide (and international) perceptions of what it means to be a refugee and Syrian in Lebanon today, and how they appropriate seemingly unnegotiable localities. Concurrently, and most importantly, they point to individual acts and tactics which instil a sense of agency and activeness within generalising discourses, shifting away from the overarching victimhood image and therefore challenging currently sustained discourses.

7.3 Qualifying Lives: A Vulnerable Framework for Justice

As we recognise how the five men’s experiences of interacting with identifying regimes of power feed into simultaneous discourses of intersectional oppression and resistance, it is important to further problematize how oppression and resistance are intersectionally understood beyond these relational boundaries. Alternatively said, my informants’ narratives can act as microcosmic examples to question how queerness and migration are more widely implicated within current discourses and practices of exclusion which shape the route towards social justice.

From an international perspective, we can question how the UNHCR refugee process represents a practice of exclusion through the lens of the potential. As Agamben notes, it is not just the body which is excluded (and thus included) through the art of banning but it is also the notion of potentiality which similarly suffers. Preserved within a state of exception, it is one’s potential which is maintained, objectified and regulated, before it results in bodily exclusion or inclusion. As Mustapha and others recognise, telling the UN that you are gay

when you register can ‘fast track’ your application to qualify for an early appointment. Qualification is based on an assessment of risk, where the UN identification process hierarchizes applications not simply according to concrete past vulnerabilities, but more importantly through a recognition of the potential to be vulnerable in the future. For gay Syrian men in Lebanon, the discriminatory laws and general social attitudes act as a wager for movement. For the global refugee process, (the) potential (of vulnerability) becomes the site upon which concrete bodies either qualify for resettlement or are excluded because of it.

The theoretical argument of the potential is not however applicable to any state of exception. Instead, we are faced with a particular state of sexual exception. The general state of exception based on the relation between the homo sacer and the sovereign no longer qualifies for consideration. For the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, there is no hope, as Mustapha makes so painfully clear. For my participants however, their bodily exclusion by the sovereign is then globally understood as potentially vulnerable from a standpoint of sexual equality, and included within the corresponding human rights discourse. What we understand therefore is that certain states of exception are more privileged than others. It is the way in which exclusion is related to privilege that international processes of embodied separation operate, where recognition of vulnerability is separate(d) from acceptance of the potential of vulnerability, with the latter offering the chance to grab that ‘golden ticket’.

Such processes are in turn predicated on recognition as a technique for control, and create hierarchies of lives which postulate some as more worthy than others. When we think of how the men actively differentiated their situation to the plight of other Syrian refugees, we grasp how the men can become complicit within such hierarchies of oppression. Following Luibhéid, the men’s claims that they do not represent the average Syrian refugee demonstrate how the practice of exclusionary recognition is reproduced which in turn reinstalls constructs such as refugeeness with destructive connotations of unworthiness. Built upon a logic of sexual safety at the expense of the national, my informants’ efforts at reappropriation render them complicit within processes of inequality and demonstrate how, paradoxically, structures of oppression are replicated by those who were seen as most initially suffering from them.

By considering how lives qualify through an assessment of their potential and worth, we must consider whose standards of qualification are being adhered to, and what the results of such processes are. Within a homonationalist framework, the men’s narratives of differentiation reinscribe nation-wide prejudices which result in part from Western political

standards of sanctified sexual rights. For example, Irfan's desires to leave a region which is not suitable for him can tend to enlightenment discourses which actively posit the Middle East as a sexually-diverse unsuitable region to live in. On the flip side, Kamal and Kareem's praise for Scandinavia characterise the over-generalised West as a more tolerant and therefore morally advanced society, due to its sanctification of LGBT rights. As gayness becomes a resource rather than a liability, men such as Kamal therefore see the enlightened self as more successful in finding protection, and indeed more worthy of it. In line with Puar, the men are adopting homonationalist discourses deeply grounded in inequality and in turn are actively reinscribing traditional hierarchies of global dominance through a (perhaps unintentional) commitment to national myths. Such understandings highlight where the importance of the Middle Eastern vantage point comes into play, for current literature within its geographical limitations would be unable to account for such subjectivities.

That said, the way in which homonationalism operates as a method of judgment and selection must be more complexly scrutinized, by considering how the homonationalist global plays in local realities. In an effort to consider how discourses of qualification and worth are alternatively understood from a local perspective, Tareq's perception that he is in a worse off position than many others exemplifies in the first instance how recognition is trumping redistribution and how in turn, Western globalities are both locally imposing and dividing. To operate on the basis of vulnerability is inherently damaging for a region such as the Middle East and those who are located within it, as decisions about who is vulnerable and who is not finds its source within Western idea(l)s, and the not-so-global positionalities becomes, through the process of local and individual appropriation, everyone's imposed universal 'realities'.

Secondly and more importantly, homonationalist projects, which are fed through the UNHCR refugee system, create a *desire* for recognition based on vulnerability which further fuels oppressive hierarchies and injustice. By upholding a moral stance towards sexually-diverse rights, the international institutional body creates a homonationalist project of its own. Indeed, the human rights regime has a vested interest in queer bodies, and so it creates a desire to be recognised under this typological umbrella. In doing so, it creates an internal struggle which renders internal redistribution practically impossible and its compromise fractures the route towards social justice. As Fraser warns, the separation of recognition from redistribution is threatening. The refugee system is in itself one of separation along vulnerable lines and so its operations, despite their best intentions, forfeit the possibility of incorporating the latter in with the former. In other words, it becomes seemingly impossible

to uphold a global system of redistributed equality in our current homonationalist nation-state world.

As we question the role of the UNHCR in its international capacities, we must tend to the ways in which the men's interactions with the global institution are further complicating the relation between recognition and redistribution. To an extent, the men's experiences can be analysed through the concept of appropriation whereby globalisation is providing the framework through which seizing protection becomes possible. As earlier expressed, current international trends of accepting homosexuality can be understood as mirroring the practice of widening the protection window for LGBT persons, or better expressed, for SOGI refugees. Global developments in the sanctification of dissident sexualities are then locally appropriated by my informants' situated privilege in regards to their nationality and state of refugeehood. The abilities of my participants to appropriate the protection regime tells us not only how privilege is deeply embedded within the protection process, but also mirrors how sovereignty and global regimes of human rights are not necessarily in tension with one other, but also in dialogue. In turn, we learn how identification techniques act as processes within the larger phenomenon of migration management techniques. Importantly, it tells us about what it means to be recognised as a Syrian forced outside of Syria today, but not necessarily in the figurative tomorrow. Within an analysis of appropriation there should therefore be a constant emphasis on temporality, as channels for wider recognition and redistribution continue to reflect how dominating global patterns of how much worth we attribute to various contexts and aspects of social justice shifts.

Conclusion

The overarching aim and purpose of this thesis is to shed light into what it means to be intersectionally gay, Syrian, and a refugee in Lebanon today. The five men included in the study demonstrate the intersectional complexities of such constructs, as and when they interact with various regimes of power which routinely identify them.

Focusing on the Lebanese state, the UNHCR refugee process, and the local Lebanese population, this thesis explores how oppression and resistance operate through techniques of identification on multiple societal levels, moving between individual appropriation and supranational interference. Specifically, this thesis highlights the various social and legal boundaries that the men face as simultaneously gay, Syrian, and a refugee and the analysis posits that such boundaries, which are based in part on a relational ban of the refugee by the Lebanese state, often hinder the men's self-understandings and result in systems of oppression. Concurrently, data analysed from individual narratives shows that such boundaries can act as negotiation tools in the strive towards regaining mobility through international recognition and acceptance of potential vulnerability, demonstrating how oppressive localities can be intersectionally resisted through tactical choices. In doing so, this study counters currently dominant literature on Syrian refugees by centering theories around the empirical case of the individual and micro perspective.

Subsequently, this thesis explores the various impacts that competing and constructing local and global forces have upon the men's experiences and their ensuing reactions. To speak only of impenetrable borders is, as we know, to champion rigid concepts which neither wholly reflect the reality of construction and negotiation of self-understandings, nor the actual processes of identification. Rather, we must acknowledge the place of globalisation; an appreciation of how a global perspective means that the refugees react and adapt their self-understandings and consequently reshape the global and the local processes of identification themselves. In other words, the data demonstrates how an attendance to the international as well as the intra-national is required to underline the various loci of tensions that exist for those who cross international borders, especially when we wish to consider how queerness becomes enfolded within migration in a Middle Eastern context.

Furthermore, this thesis' commitment to an intersectional exploration of the men's lives within the Middle Eastern setting complicates the ways in which currently accepted labels and concepts are understood. My participants' narratives demonstrate the extent to which concepts such as refugeehood, sexuality, and nationality are not only socially

constructed but also fluid in their various spatio-temporal contexts. Resulting in part from the maintenance of a queer mindset, such constructs are rendered contestable and open. The ways in which employed labels are geographically charged denote specific power processes which play into homonationalist discourses, which in turn result in even more complex hierarchies of oppression. That said, an insistence on the fluidity of such social constructs has shown to be neither true nor always advantageous for the men. Instead, certain concepts have proven to be necessarily constrictive and contextually so, yet not without a questioning of how such a necessitation can result in the reappropriation of oppressive discourses and exclusionary techniques of identification.

Importantly, the thesis demonstrates how we must see through singular facets or faces of oppression and resistance and let intersectionality prove itself by attending to injustice on multiple levels. By looking at alternative ways in which power is concentrated and diffused, the research has cautiously proceeded through the migration to liberation discourse and its reifying Orientalist connotations, and instead champions how alternative routes towards social justice must be contextually grounded. By challenging such discourses, this thesis as a result underlines how new ways of organising bodies can take shape, and how distribution has been compromised by a sustained desire, and need, to be recognised.

8.1 Future Directions

Such conclusions have not been drawn without a querying of where current theoretical arguments are limited. Rather than rearticulate them here, it is more beneficial to suggest the future directions that this research paves the way for, based on the realisation of such limitations and the questions they themselves generate.

Firstly, the advancement of generalised homonationalist projects is itself unjust, as it posits that all queer bodies qualify for protection. Yet this is clearly not the case. If it were, Mustapha's scathing comment about how LGBT comes first at the UN would be unwarranted. Yet the issue should move beyond even the ordering of the refugee population. If we are to question where else the effects of exclusion can be seen, we should also consider the position of local Lebanese 'queer' bodies, and how sexuality disturbs the fallacy that the citizen is more protected than the refugee in a region where diverse sexual rights are neither embodied by the state nor accepted within wider society. Theoretically, the extent to which sexuality or queerness and migration are implicated along the route towards social justice requires a new strand of theoretical thought which displaces the refugee from the centre of the narrative. Such issues undoubtedly play into Lebanese understandings of mobility and

point to where ripple effects of homonationalist discourses can be felt, creating new discourses of tension which need to be further explored.

Secondly, there needs to be a wider discussion surrounding the ways in which global ideas about sexuality are affecting Middle Eastern mobilities in general. For example, a further discussion about how global sexualities are causing shifts in our understandings of concepts which are intrinsically tied to nationalist discourses and nation-state ideas i.e. citizen and refugee, in a region where such discourses have historically differed from those in other areas of the world. We need to question how individuals are relating to the concept of a queer nation, how queerness is becoming more closely tied to patterns of migration, and what effect this has where queerness and migration come into dialogue in a Middle Eastern context. From a consideration of the Syrian crisis, there needs to be an assessment of the impact that the longevity and protraction of the war is having on queer individuals in Lebanon, and how groups such as Islamic State are shaping a securitisation of the sexuality discourse.

Thirdly, this study has touched base with the idea of how the UNHCR acts as a global mediator to strengthening sovereign borders from the viewpoint of protection and appropriation. Whilst this study benefitted from its Middle Eastern field context in numerous ways, it is also limiting in this regard to assess the true effects of the relationship between globalisation and protection. In order for a more succinct discussion, this study would have to continue to follow the men's lives as they hopefully proceed towards successful resettlement. Such a longitudinal aspect would allow us to question what happens once the men are identified by the UNHCR as no longer in need of global protection. For instance, at what point are the strings cut? How and when does globalisation stop becoming the framework through which protection can be called upon and appropriated, if it even does at all?

Most importantly, this thesis recognises both the advantages and limitations of presenting individual narratives as the basis for an in-depth discussion on sexuality, nationality, and refugeehood within the given context. The individual accounts have been of upmost importance to allow for an analysis of commonalities and differences without stretching to the generalizable, as a focus on individuality has dissuaded the conclusions from acting within the dangers of homogenisation and reification. With that in mind, an inability to generalise may be problematic for policy review, as the sheer scale of the crisis requires policies which tend to the needs of those affected in their vast numbers, which is difficult to ascertain on the specificities of this thesis. Yet it is believed that such a predicament mirrors the sheer complexity of the subject matter at hand. If we are to move forward, this thesis must be used as a base study for widening the research to connect the necessary dots on a larger

scale. Such beginnings could take route in interviewing larger numbers of similar participants for example. Elsewhere, there could be an application of class and gender lenses, which are notably lacking here. Such practices would be worthwhile, and would further complicate and release unattended to dimensions of the intersectional conundrum.

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Appendix

Interview Guide English/Arabic

Tell me about yourself and about your background.

احكي لي عن نفسك وعن خلفيتك

What made you decide to come to Lebanon?

ليش قررت تيجي بلبنان؟

What about Beirut specifically?

وببيروت خصوصاً؟

Describe a typical day for you here.

ممكّن توصف يوم عادي لك بلبنان؟

How do you feel here in Lebanon? Who/what makes you feel this way?

كيف تحس بلبنان؟ مين وشو بيؤثر هيدول احساس؟

Tell me about your happiest moment here in Beirut.

احكي لي عن أسعد لحظة بلبنان لك

Where do you hope to go from here?

لوين بدك تروح من هون؟ أو بدك تضل بلبنان؟

What attracts you to this place(s)? *Depending on previous answer

ليش؟ شو هي الأسباب؟

Have your plans changed at all since arriving? Why/ why not?

غيرت مشر عك خلال وقتك بلبنان؟ ليش؟ ليش لا؟

Who are the most important people in your life? (Here/ in Syria/ elsewhere)

مين أهم أشخاص في حياتك؟

Tell me about your contact with them.

احكي لي عن اتصالك بهن

What do they know of your current situation?

شو بيعرفو عن وضعك؟

Is there any situation in which you would consider returning to Syria? Why/why not?

يوجد أي وضع إنت بتفكر بالرجوع إلى سوريا؟ ليش؟ ليش لا؟

What would be your main concern if you were to return?

إذا رجعت إلى سوريا مثلاً، شو أكثر شيء بتقلق به؟

How do you understand your sexuality/gender identity?

كيف بتفهم جنسائيتك أو جندريتك؟

What does the term LGBT mean to you?

شو يعني LGBT لك؟

Tell me about your interaction with the UN.

احكي لي عن التفاعل بينك وبين المفوضية

Were you aware that LGBT persons are recognised as being specifically at risk by the UN?

كنت تعرف إن بنسبة للمفوضية اللاجئيين ال

lgbt خصوصاً بوضع خطير؟

What have been your experiences of the refugee process?

شو احساسك عن عملية اللجوء بشكل عام؟

What situations have affected your experiences of the refugee system?

يوجد أي وضع معين أو حالة معينة تاثرت برأيك عن عملية اللجوء؟

What advice would you give someone in a similar situation to you?

إذا كان شخص ثاني بنفس الوضع كإنت تماماً، عندك نصيح له؟

Would you have done anything differently since arriving in Lebanon, if it were possible?

إذا كان ممكن، فهتغير عملك من وصولك بلبنان؟

What are your feelings about the international community? What about the local community?

شو احساسك عن المجتمع الدولي؟

وعن المجتمع المحلي؟

How do you see your situation vis a vis other Syrian refugees?

كيف بتشوف وضعك حيال اللاجئيين السوريين بشكل عام؟

Tell me about your future.

احكي لي عن مستقبلك