

LIVING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF
DISPLACEMENT, HEALTH, PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AND
THE SEARCH FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS AMONG IRAQI
REFUGEES IN EGYPT

by

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For Iraqi refugees in Egypt

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AUC: American University in Cairo

CMRS: Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies

DHS: Department of Homeland Security

IDSC: Information and Decision Support Center

IOM: International Organization for Migration

ISF: Iraqi Security Forces

PRM: Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, U.S. Department of State

RSD: Refugee Status Determination

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USRAP: United States Refugee Admissions Program

Living an Uncertain Future: An Ethnography of Displacement, Health, Psychosocial Well-being and the Search for Durable Solutions among Iraqi Refugees in Egypt

Abstract

by

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This dissertation examines the effects of prolonged urban displacement on the self-identified health and psycho-social well-being of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. In addition, this study considers the ways in which refugees seek to mitigate the effects of displacement through interactions with institutions and policies. Within this, I focus on the process of seeking third-country resettlement and the implications and effects of this process for psycho-social well-being. Using a mixed-methods approach, this dissertation draws on field research with Iraqi refugees that includes participant observation, person-centered interviews with refugees (n=110), interviews with service providers and archival research. This study has three main aims: (1) to take a person-centered view of the refugee resettlement process and foreground health and psycho-social well-being in that inquiry; (2) to look at ways in which people attempt to manage states of insecurity; uncertainty and liminality and implications for their health; and (3) to document the situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt – who have been almost ignored in the discussion of Iraqi forced migration in the region. A key finding of this dissertation is the

conceptualization of asylum in Egypt in terms of instability, an uncertain or insecure context in which one's life trajectory has been disrupted. Drawing on Iraqi refugees' accounts, I argue that instability is a main cause of suffering and affliction, which is described by Iraqis in terms of their *hala nufsia*, or psychological situation. A person-centered approach to the resettlement-seeking process illustrates ways in which health and well-being are implicated in refugees' experiences of interactions with institutions. The experience of being in an uncertain or insecure state, as well as the process of trying to address this instability, for example through seeking resettlement, has implications for the health and well-being of refugees that relate to experiences of war trauma and persecution, but which are not directly attributable to them. Instead there is a more complex, processual and relational world that affects refugees' health in exile. This experience-centered perspective on displacement has theoretical implications related to subjectivity, presentation and experience of suffering, and culture and mental health.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the aftermath of the U.S. led invasion of Iraq and the sectarian violence and unrest that followed, more than four million Iraqis were displaced from their homes (UNHCR, 2009a). About half were displaced within Iraq while more than two million became refugees, mostly in countries in the region such as Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon. More than seven years from the beginning of the Iraq war, many Iraqis remain in contexts of uncertain urban displacement in the Middle East and North Africa. This dissertation considers the implications of prolonged urban displacement for the self-identified health and psychosocial well-being of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, and investigates ways in which refugees seek to mitigate these effects through interactions with institutions and policies. Within this context, I focus on the process of seeking third-country resettlement and the implications of this process for psycho-social well-being. I juxtapose refugees' conceptions of solutions to the problem of instability in Egypt with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' framework of "durable solutions" to refugee situations.

Through an ethnographic exploration of Iraqi refugees' experiences of instability in Egypt, I consider the effects of conditions of urban displacement in countries of first asylum for refugees' health and well-being. Drawing on data from participant observation, interviews with refugees and service providers, refugee testimonies as well as archival research, I describe Iraqi refugees' conditions in Egypt, discuss implications for their well-being, and consider ways in which refugees seek to resolve conditions of instability, with an emphasis on the process of seeking third-country resettlement. This

dissertation argues that the experience of being in an unstable state of asylum, in conjunction with the process of trying to address it, for example through seeking resettlement, has implications for the health and well-being of refugees that relate to experiences of war trauma and persecution, but which are not directly attributable to them. Instead, refugees' suffering, and their efforts to address this suffering, is best understood in terms of refugees' narratives which include both expressions of suffering related to conditions of insecurity and instability as well as moral claims about their right to re-establish their lives. This dissertation seeks to move away from regimented models of stages of forced migration and associated harms to instead describe a more complex, processual and relational 'world' that affects refugees' health in exile.

Objectives and Research Questions

This dissertation has three main objectives:

Objective One: To take a person-centered view of the refugee resettlement process, and particularly foreground health and psycho-social well-being in that inquiry, with theoretical implications related to subjectivity, presentation and experience of suffering.

This objective is associated with three main research questions:

- 1) How do Iraqi refugees experience and negotiate the process of seeking third-country resettlement?
- 2) What, if any, are the implications of this process for refugees' health, well-being and subjectivities?

- 3) How does policy and practice related to resettlement impact, or not, the lives of Iraqi refugees in Egypt?

A combination of data from participant observation, interviews with refugees and service providers, redacted refugee testimonies and archival research will be used in order to address this objective.

Objective Two: To consider ways in which people attempt to manage states of insecurity; uncertainty and liminality and implications for their health.

This objective has three main questions:

- 1) In a liminal urban context where barriers exist to integration, return to Iraq is seen as impossible, and resettlement is unlikely, how do refugees negotiate the uncertainty of daily life in Cairo?
- 2) What are the implications of this uncertainty, if any, for self-identified mental health and well-being?
- 3) How does uncertainty figure in the narratives of Iraqi refugees? Is uncertainty a salient theme in accounts of life before migration, life during migration, and/or life in Cairo?

In order to understand Iraqi refugees' experiences of living with uncertainty or insecurity, I draw on data from interviews and participant observation. Where appropriate, perspectives from service providers will also be considered.

Objective Three: to document the situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt – who have been almost ignored in the discussion of Iraqi forced migration in the region.

This objective is associated with the following two research questions:

- 1) What are the circumstances of urban displacement for Iraqi refugees in Egypt?
- 2) How do these conditions affect refugees' health, well-being and daily lives?

Data from participant observation, refugee interviews, service provider interviews, and a review of published information on Iraqi refugees inform this objective.

Taken together, these three objectives make up a portrait of exile in Egypt for many Iraqi refugees. In order to achieve these objectives, I draw on data from refugees' accounts, interviews with service providers, and a review of the policy and academic literature on these subjects.

Significance

This dissertation is informed by, and builds on, three themes in the literature in medical anthropology and related fields. First, I draw on a recent body of literature that investigates the politics and practice of asylum, with particular emphasis on the role of medicine in this milieu. Second, I build on studies on displacement and recovery from conflict and violence, particularly in transnational contexts. Finally, I engage with theoretical perspectives in anthropology that seek to understand the relationship between the individual and culture through inquiry grounded in subjective experience.

From the point of view of medical anthropology and psychological anthropology, this dissertation contributes to recent studies of the politics of asylum. In particular, it builds on studies that have considered the role of psychiatry and medicine in refugee adjudication and humanitarian practice (Fassin & d' Halluin, 2007; Kirmayer, 2003). Increasingly, scholars have critiqued the move away from the legitimacy of asylum as a category and a move towards victim-based services in which refugees' suffering is only recognized when it is mediated and verified by medical professionals. Studies that have explored these issues have critiqued the reification of trauma as proof of persecution and violence, and the ascendancy of PTSD as a diagnosis at the expense of other afflictions and modes of distress. In response, some scholars and practitioners have focused on 'psychosocial well-being' as a reaction against what Fassin and Rechtman (2009) term the "empire of trauma".

Much of the work that has engaged in the critique of mental health and psychiatry in refugee adjudication and humanitarian practice has done so at the level of discourse. Others have considered these issues from the perspectives of the medical and mental health professionals increasingly called on to provide, or judge, such bodily and psychic evidence of persecution (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Kirmayer, 2003; McKinney, 2007; Rousseau, Crépeau, Foxen, & Houle, 2002). My dissertation builds on and adds to this body of literature by engaging with the themes of this literature while foregrounding the experiences of refugees themselves. My work advances such studies through a close emphasis not only on discourse, bureaucratic processes, or practitioners, but on the subjective experiences of refugees themselves as they interact with such institutions and policies.

By focusing on subjectivity, health and well-being in these contexts, this dissertation contributes to scholarship within anthropology and fields such as refugee and migration studies on topics including recovery from violence, displacement and the implications of policies and practices of refugee management for the health, well-being and identities of refugees themselves. In addition, my dissertation, as a study of refugees, many of whom are in the act of seeking third-country resettlement, contributes to debates about globalization and transnationalism by shining a light on some of the ambiguities and paradoxes of humanitarianism, asylum and international institutions.

Theoretically, this dissertation draws on work by scholars in medical anthropology and beyond who have considered subjectivity, as inner states and affective processes that reflect lived experiences, especially within spaces of transition and cultural change – what Biehl, Good and Kleinman (2007) call “moments of crisis and states of exception.” I am also influenced by work on violence and subjectivity in medical anthropology especially notions of making and re-making worlds in the context of recovery from violence (Das, Kleinman, Lock, Ramphela, & Reynolds, 2001; Das, Kleinman, Ramphela, & Reynolds, 2000). Because insecurity and uncertainty figured prominently in the data, this dissertation draws on James’ recent theorizing relating to “neomodern insecurity”, which she describes as efforts and technologies to define belonging and otherness in contexts of risk, uncertainty and anxiety (James, 2009). I build on ideas of insecurity and anxiety in anthropology and social and cultural theory in an effort to understand conditions of displacement for Iraqi refugees and asylum and resettlement practices and policies.

Practical Significance – Forced Migration

By the end of 2010, the UNHCR reported that its “population of concern” was 43.7 million forced migrants worldwide, the largest number in fifteen years (UNHCR, 2011a). This number includes not just refugees but also asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and some other categories of forced migrants. Taken together, Afghan and Iraqi refugees make up about half of refugees under UNHCR’s protection. In addition, nearly half of all forced migrants today are displaced not in camps but in urban environments. As an urban refugee population in the Global South, Iraqi refugees in Egypt make up part of a growing global phenomenon.

Despite the fact that most refugees are displaced to nearby or neighboring countries, forced migration is a global issue. In many ways, displacement is one lens that allows us to think about the ways in which transnational processes and global asymmetries affect people’s lives. The solutions to displacement that are proposed and implemented are an example of the complexities and contradictions of discourse and practice in refugee situations. For example, voluntary repatriation is by far the most advocated durable solution to forced migrations, despite the fact that for some refugees, return can never be an option. Voluntary repatriations of refugees reached a low in 2010, suggesting that problems in countries of origin continue to prevent refugees from returning home. In the 2010 Global Report, High Commissioner Antonio Guterres stated:

What we’re seeing is worrying unfairness in the international protection paradigm. Fears about supposed floods of refugees in industrialized countries are being vastly overblown or mistakenly conflated with issues of migration. Meanwhile it’s poorer countries that are left having to pick up the burden (UNHCR, 2011a, p. 6)

This quote illustrates one of the paradoxes of forced migration today. While asylum has increasingly become de-legitimized in “industrialized” countries, and discourses about “floods” of refugees circulate, the vast majority of refugees are actually located in countries in the Global South. Poorer countries hosted 82% of the world’s refugees, and 18% of the total refugees resided in what the United Nations terms the 50 Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Among the countries with the largest refugee populations, Germany, with 579,000 refugees, was the only representative from Europe, North America, or Australia (UNHCR, 2009b).

The twentieth century was dubbed the “century of the refugee” and it seems unlikely, so far, that the twenty first century will be much different (Colson, 2003). With increasing populations of refugees and other forced migrants, displacement has increased in significance as both an area of academic research and of broad global concern. Parallel to the increase in the number of forced migrants on a global scale has been the growth of forced migration as a legitimate academic field of inquiry in a variety of academic disciplines and its growth as a discipline in its own right (Black, 2001).

Although global refugee movements are often described using words such as flood, influx, torrent, wave or stream, these terms are more reflective of a fear of outsiders than they are of the reality of forced migration (Turner, 1995, p. 171). In fact, internally displaced people outnumber those displaced outside of home countries, and of those who are displaced outside of their country of origin, a vast majority remain in the countries of the Global South, as the statistics above demonstrate. Most refugees are displaced to neighboring countries, or those within the same region as their country of origin. Of those who seek asylum in countries of Europe, North America and Australia,

only a tiny minority are granted asylum as states increasingly place heavy restrictions on the ways in which people can arrive (Turner, 1995). In addition, one important fact is often overlooked in discussions about the ubiquity of migration, whether voluntary or involuntary. That is, the majority of people stay home. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the ‘immobility paradox’ and refers to the fact that actual migration patterns contradict purely economic theories of “Rational Man” decision making (Lewellen, 2002). That is, most people choose not to migrate, even when migration may appear to be beneficial from an outsider’s point of view.

Despite the information presented above, much research on refugees, especially that on health and well-being, takes place in resettlement countries. Less research considers the health and well-being of refugees in countries of first asylum in the Global South, as does this project. Even fewer studies focus on refugees in urban settings in countries of first asylum as opposed to those who are housed in refugee camps. As an exploration of the social life and well-being of refugees in a country of first asylum, this dissertation has the potential to contribute to both academic and policy debates about forced migration, by contributing to an area of study where more work is needed. Second, while much research has been done on the outcomes of resettled refugees, almost no research has looked at the process of seeking resettlement from a country of first asylum, especially not from the perspective of refugees themselves. Resettlement does not only affect those who are successfully resettled, but has implications for those who try and fail, as well as those refugees who are either not interested or not eligible. This dissertation seeks to address these issues through an experience-near exploration of the

process of seeking resettlement and implications of this process for health and well-being.

Outline of Chapters

In this chapter, I introduce the research aims and describe the significance of the project. In Chapter 2: Literature review, I provide an outline of relevant literature in anthropology and other disciplines on issues related to this project as well as outline this project's theoretical orientation. Three primary bodies of literature are reviewed in relation to the dissertation: 1) the anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA); 2) refugees and forced migration; and 3) refugee mental health. I then situate this project in theory drawn from medical and psychological anthropology. In Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework, I situate this work in theoretical work in medical anthropology and associated fields. In Chapter 4: Background, I provide context on the issues relevant to this project by discussing Iraqi refugees in the MENA region and reviewing the limited information available about Iraqi refugees in Egypt. In this chapter, I also introduce my field site. In Chapter 5: Methods, I describe the data collection and analysis procedures which I used in this project. In addition, I describe the basic demographic characteristics of the sample of Iraqi refugees. Chapter 6: Life in Egypt, sets the scene for analyses to come by presenting a picture of life in urban asylum for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. It begins with an analysis of Iraqis' reasons for fleeing to Egypt as well as some details about their time of arrival and mode of travel. It then discusses aspects of daily life in Egypt for Iraqi refugees including employment, education, family and social life. In this chapter, I aim to address Next, data from these different domains of daily life are brought together under

the organizing theme of instability as a way of characterizing the experience of life in Egypt. Chapter 7: Psychosocial Well-Being, draws loosely on Kleinman's (1980) explanatory model framework to discuss the attributed causes, manifestations and effects of a poor psychological situation, or *hala nufsia*, for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Instability of life in Egypt again emerges as both an attributed cause of psychological suffering and as an effect of manifestations of problems with one's psychological suffering. In Chapter 8: Resettlement, I discuss Iraqi refugees' efforts to seek a durable solution to instability in Egypt with a focus on the experience of seeking third country resettlement. In this chapter, I identify two key sites of paradox related to resettlement that have implication for health and psychosocial well-being: 1) the paradox of vulnerability; and 2) the paradox of instability in the resettlement seeking process. Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusion completes the dissertation with a discussion of themes across chapters and some final conclusions about the health and psychosocial well-being of Iraqi refugees in Egypt.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa is a large and diverse region that has been the subject of considerable scholarship in anthropology and other disciplines. For the purpose of this dissertation, I focus primarily on anthropological scholarship that has considered issues of identity, space and place in this region, topics that are directly relevant to this study. In other sections, I will discuss literature related more specifically to forced migration and mental health in the region. In terms of definitions, I follow Lindholm's (2002) description of the traditional anthropological 'culture area' demarcation of the Middle East to include North Africa (the Maghreb), The Middle East (Arabia), and Iran (Persia). Some authors include Central Asia in their accounts (2002). While some scholars choose to focus on the 'Arab world' as a way to limit their inquiries (Abu-Lughod, 1989), I find that it creates a false picture of ethnic uniformity in a region marked by considerable diversity. In this dissertation, I will alternately use the term 'Middle East' and 'Middle East and North Africa (or MENA)' to refer to the Middle East and North Africa region.

Early Work on the Middle East and North Africa

Early anthropological work on the Middle East focused primarily on issues related to tribalism and nomadism, as well as to relations between the tribe and the state. Al-Wardi, the pre-eminent Iraqi sociologist, argued that nomadism and the state were necessarily in conflict with one another in Iraqi society (Al-Wardi, 1965). For Al-Wardi, tribes and nomadism were a complex, cultural response to the desert environment. Drawing theoretically on the Culture and Personality school in anthropology, Al-Wardi elaborated several “cultural traits” associated with Bedouin culture, including conquest, tribal spirit, raid, manliness and generosity. In addition to Al-Wardi’s work, other early anthropological studies of tribalism in the Middle East emphasized ecological adaptation to the environment and relations to the state as key themes in social and cultural organization (Digard, 1973, 1987). In the case of Digard’s (1973) work on the Bakhtiari of Iran, Marxist theory provided a developmental approach to conceptualizing social organization and the distribution of resources, as well as the relations between the tribe and the state.

Place and identity are particularly tied together in another approach to understanding tribalism in the Middle East, segmentation theory. Segmentation constructs the types of events and conduct possible in society. As such, segmentation describes the notions of person, loyalty, and honor. It also explains the relations of associated groups to one another. An example which illustrates the ways in which segmented groups are associated is that of violence among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, as analyzed by Peters (1967). At the closest level of association (tertiary), groups are mostly

corporate, and homicide within one is unthinkable as the group is expected to act as “one body.” At the next level, homicide between groups is settled through the payment of “blood money” to avoid disruptive long term feuds. At higher levels of associations, groups may be less interested in settling disputes as they are less tied to one another. This ecological explanation for group organization is tied to settlement, affiliation and social identity. However, it is somewhat unsatisfying in its emphasis on ecology and prescriptive behavior divorced from actual social action. More recently, anthropologists have argued that emic understandings of social organization are more useful, particularly given the actual complexity of social relations.

Segmentation has often been understood in terms of adaptation to particular ecologies. Despite critique of segmentation theory, some anthropologists argue that it accurately represents segmentary societies (Gellner, 1983). However, different models of association and affiliation have also been discussed. For example, segmentation has been understood as a type of political rhetoric that aims to mediate conflict (Caton, 1987). Anthropologists have also noted the ways in which affiliation may be discussed in one way and practiced in another. Some have approached this to argue that segmentation is an ideology, while others have emphasized the pragmatic nature of such associations (Eickelman, 2002). For example, patrilineal kinship relations may have less to do with genealogy than with actions, behavior and affiliations, such that one who acts like kin then is treated as kin. Others, such as Rosen (Rosen, 1979), prefer not to use the segmentation model at all, arguing that individuals instead construct ties out of ideas of origin, locality and relatedness. While the importance of the tribe in the Middle East remains a question of debate, recent work in Iraq suggests that in the absence of a strong

state, tribes come to have renewed meaning for Iraqis who, without a state apparatus to protect them, may come to rely on ties of kinship as a means of protection (Al-Mohammad, 2010).

The relationship between tribe and state has been extensively discussed in anthropology (Caton, 1990; Eickelman, 2002; Khoury & Kostiner, 1990). However, anthropologists have in the past, made the critique that insufficient attention has been paid to the nation-state in the Middle East. A historical bias in anthropology against the study of complex societies (Appadurai, 1986) had led to some neglect of the Middle East in early anthropological theorizing (Abu-Lughod, 1989). However, as the discipline has changed and expanded its notion of “the field”, the Middle East has made significant contributions to the anthropology of complex societies and to the broader discipline (Eickelman, 2002).

In the 1970s, it was still possible to argue that anthropological studies were not theoretically interesting to those whose research interests were not located within the region (Abu-Lughod, 1989). This is emphatically no longer the case, with the contributions, based in the region, of such major theorists as Bourdieu, Geertz, Abu-Lughod and others. Other major theoretical contributions, such as Wikan’s emphasis on the everyday lives and emic understandings of participants (Wikan, 1980, 1991, 1996), Early’s (Bowen & Early, 2002; Early, 1993) use of narrative and performativity far ahead of their theoretical moment in anthropology and the reflexive approach of Rabinow (1975, 1977, 1995) and Crapanzano (1985), among others cannot be ignored.

Space and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa

When speaking about space and identity in the Middle East, I would be remiss not to begin with a brief discussion of Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, and its implications for how we understand the ethnographic other. *Orientalism* remains a key text for the ways in which it demonstrated how 'our' understanding of the Other reveals much about us. Said remarked that knowledge of the Orient "has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world (Said, 1978, p. 12)". In its simultaneous construction of a subject and a distant object, Orientalism must be understood in terms of spatial relations. It indicates a "spatial relativization of the West in a world which ceases to be its own projection or mirror image (Featherstone, 1995, p. 12)". According to Featherstone, works such as *Orientalism* emerged as a result of two processes; first, the ways in which more people are crossing borders and have multiple affiliations which question taken for granted stereotypes; and second, because there has been a shift in the global balance of power away from 'the West' such that it can no longer avoid listening to the other, or assume that the other is at an earlier stage of development.

Said notes that the Orient has thus helped to define 'the West' as an opposite idea, personality, image and experience (Said, 1978). As such, Orientalism has three main, interconnected meanings. The first is as an academic discipline that constructs knowledge about the Orient. The second is a particular style of thought that is based on a distinction, both epistemological and ontological, between the Orient and the Occident. Third, Orientalism is a discourse in the Foucauldian sense; it 'deals' with the Orient by making

statements about it, teaching about it, describing it, ruling it and settling it (Said, 1978).

As such, Orientalism is about the domination of the Orient by the Occident through what Said calls *positional* authority, which dictates the relationships between the Orient and Occident.

As a text and an idea, Orientalism has been provocative both in and outside of anthropology. The idea of the Orient as an underground, aberrant, or surrogate self has been important to anthropologists re-conceptualizing disciplinary ideas of the self and other. As Abu-Lughod (1989) notes, Orientalism has also been useful in deconstructing the role of anthropology's relationship to colonialism, particularly as it relates to geopolitical ideas of distance and difference. Further, Said, in demonstrating the ways in which the Orient is a construct, opened a dialogue on the ways in which constructs of the other are tied up in power relations. However, Orientalism has also portrayed the 'Orient' as a passive victim of discourse – an understanding that is in itself totalizing.

Bourdieu's approach to understanding the relations between actors and structures in the Middle East was specifically structural and concerned with power in social relations. Instead of reading and interpretation, Bourdieu was concerned with 'practice' and the ways in which it is structured by 'habitus', a concept which refers to the dispositions and representations which structure practice. Although more structural than his later work, Bourdieu's description of a Kabyle house in Algeria presents theoretically interesting perspectives on space and identity. Bourdieu analyses the space of the house in terms of dichotomies of inside/outside, dark/light, male/female. The structure of the house is seen as a microcosmic representation of the structures of opposition of the Berber world. Women are associated with the inside of the house, while the outside of the

house is the domain of the men. One particularly interesting example of the intersection of these categories is in the ritual, performed by the mother, on the seventh day after she gives birth to a son (Bourdieu [1971] 2003:137). The ritual, performed to ensure the son's courage, involves the woman entering the outside, or male, realm. In a characteristically 'male' movement, she strides from the inside of the house, across the threshold, and "simulates a fight with the first boy she meets". Bourdieu provides this example to illustrate the importance of the house's physical structure in the social lives of the Kabyle. It is also interesting with respect to the performative aspect of male and female identity in the context of gendered space.

However, Bourdieu can be criticized for presenting the actors of having little awareness, or agency, in the face of all these structures. Influenced by Marx, and in particular the mystifying potential of ideology, Bourdieu ultimately attributes the structures of Berber society to economics (Abu-Lughod 1989). In addition, there is little room for contradiction or subversion in Bourdieu's presentation of the Kabyle house as 'typical' and representative of Berber society. These concerns can be balanced by an exploration of more textual and interpretive approaches.

Experiential and Reflexive Approaches

Abu-Lughod is one of the foremost experts on the anthropology of the Middle East. Her work has been instrumental in understanding such diverse subjects as poetry, gender roles, the media, power and resistance and feminism. She has also written reflexively about her experiences of fieldwork and theorized about the utility of the concept of culture (Abu-Lughod 1988). In *Veiled Sentiments*, Abu-Lughod (1986)

analyzed the poetics and politics of Bedouin women's poetry among the Awlad 'Ali tribe in Egypt. Although she would later re-examine her findings (Abu-Lughod 1990), she argued that women's poetry was a semi-public way in which women could resist male domination. She later expanded on this to consider ways in which Bedouin women constructed alternative forms of power through private practices (Abu-Lughod 1990). Her work has been instrumental for understanding both women's changing roles in society and for theorizing new ways of understanding Muslim women. Her later work, primarily on Egyptian television and the reconfiguration of national identities and selves (Abu-Lughod 2000; 2005), will be discussed in more detail below.

The anthropology of the Middle East has also had important implications for ideas of reflexivity. In particular, the work of Crapanzano and Rabinow has addressed issues of the self and other, fieldwork and ethnography, and the fragmentation of anthropologists. This turn in anthropological theorizing led to a focus on personal experiences, communication, representation and the construction of inter-subjective meanings. It also led to a particularly searching critique of the relationship between the anthropologist and their object of study. Of relevance to issues of identity, culture and place are the ways in which reflexive approaches reject identities as expressions of larger social structures. Instead, as person-centered approaches are adopted, the ethnographic sample could be based on in-depth analysis of a single informant. In addition, reflexivity demands that the anthropologist explicitly address the ways in which the ethnographic encounter has implications not just for the object of study, but for the subjectivity of the anthropologist as well. Finally, concerns with representing the ethnographic other were also important in

this reflexive turn which led to explicit discussions of the actual production of the ethnographic text.

In his *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, Rabinow (1977) embraced the textual, hermeneutic approach of fieldwork in a personal account of his ethnographic fieldwork. In this early text, Rabinow follows Geertz's interpretive approach but also focuses on communication and the development of meaning between the anthropologist and their object of study. He explores the experience of the ethnographic encounter between the anthropological subject and object, and draws a distinction between the ways in which the object of study presents themselves to the anthropologist and their actual experiences.

A person-centered, reflexive approach to anthropology is illustrated in Crapanzano's (1980) account of his relationship with a Moroccan research participant and friend in his book *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan*. In this book, Crapanzano aims to engage with Tuhami's psychic world, as he recounts the ways in which Tuhami tried to deal with his psychological turmoil through private identification with a female demon. Two aspects of this intensely personal work are interesting from the perspective of culture and identity. First, Tuhami, through his relationship with the demon, confronts anthropological assumptions about the autonomous self, the distinction between self and other and the distinction between male and female. Perhaps more importantly, however, was Crapanzano's internal struggle with his relationship with his informant and the anthropological act of (self) representation. In his attempt to portray the ambivalence of his relations with his participant, he moves away from both a Freudian perspective of the psyche and a more anthropological perspective of identity located in social organization

and culture (Lindholm 2007). This perspective, while useful for thinking about the construction of the self, makes the actual practice of anthropology difficult. Crapanzano's uncompromising emphasis on things which cannot be said or felt makes measurement difficult, if not impossible. In addition, few anthropologists may wish to bear the self-consciousness necessary to undertake such work. While Crapanzano's book is theoretically interesting for its discussion of the dialogic self, it presents a depressing and futile picture of future anthropological work.

The reflexive turn in anthropology, exemplified by these two works, represents a discipline starting to take into account the unequal geopolitical relations that in many ways are tied up with the anthropological project. As Abu-Lughod (1989) points out, however, that reflexive anthropologists could have gone further to take into account gender, ethnicity and current global power relations. These concerns would be taken up by other theorists who also felt less paralyzed by the limitations of anthropology as a discipline.

Gendered Approaches

Gender is the "cultural interpretation of perceived physical, anatomical, or developmental differences between males and females; although gender elaborates on biological attributes, it is culturally constructed" (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). In anthropology, gender has primarily been understood in terms of sexually specific behavior patterns, symbolic representations and power relations. The role of space and place has received somewhat less uniform consideration with respect to gender identities. Gendered spaces, according to Low and Lawrence Zúñiga (2003), are places that are used

to construct gender identity, locations with culturally-relevant gendered meanings, sites of gendered practices, or settings in which asymmetrical power relations are produced and reproduced. In the anthropology of gendered spaces, domestic spaces such as the house have been the most frequently considered. Massey (1994) notes that this may be because women are more frequently either in, or confined to, the home, while men have a wider range of free spatial mobility.

In the Muslim Middle East and North Africa, this has certainly been the case, with women's worlds largely the purview of female ethnographers. In some strongly sex-segregated communities, women's and men's worlds rarely intersect, except through the ties of close kinship and marriage. The connections between domestic spaces and gender identities have been well considered in anthropology. In the symbolic realm, anthropologists have noted how the form and structure of domestic spaces correspond to gender cosmologies and the daily practices of the sexes. For example, Bourdieu's (2003[1971]) structural study of a Berber house in Algeria demonstrates the ways in which space is literally and conceptually structured as male and/or female. In Bourdieu's structural analysis, the organization of the house is a metaphor for the gendered, symbolic, organization of the universe. Gendered spatial differences, among other asymmetries, have led anthropologists and other scholars to debate the meaning of such differences for gender identity, roles, authority and value. The assumption is that such gendered divisions have larger implications for social relationships, structures, ideologies and identities. Some argue that women's relegation to the domestic sphere in contrast with men's roles in the public sphere, are evidence of women's subordination (Rosaldo

1974). More recent work has increasingly considered the nuances of women's roles in society (Eickelman 2002).

Academically, women were spatially segregated from men in much of the literature on the Middle East until recently. Until the 1970s, women were often considered to be of limited scholarly interest, and part of a "private" "world apart" (Eickelman 2002). In the 1970s, however, literature about Middle Eastern women began to be published (Fernea & Bezirgan 1977). In 1989, Abu-Lughod critiqued the anthropological body of work on women in the Middle East as being theoretically underdeveloped (Abu-Lughod 1989). She attributed this partly to a neocolonial desire to see what goes on "behind the veil". At the same time, she argued that an effort to challenge stereotypes about Middle Eastern women may in fact be becoming a trope that stifles the literature.

However, work on women in the Middle East has made important contributions to anthropology. First, studies of women's lives from their perspectives have been essential in demonstrating the vitality of women, not just in the feminine sphere, but in all of society (Abu-Lughod 1986;; Early 1993;; Fernea 1968;; Wikan 1980;; 1996;; [1982]1991). This has included studies that focus on traditional domestic activities such as child rearing and the family (Joseph 1999;; Shalinsky 1980) but also women's participation in political, religious and other 'public' activities (Joseph 1983;; Mahmood 2005;; Peteet 1991;; Rasmussen 2005). Studies of childhood gender socialization provide a framework for understanding the meanings and values attributed to the genders (Shalinsky 1980). Increasingly, such works take power relations explicitly into consideration, sometimes as they relate to identity and place. A particularly relevant

example is Kanaaneh's (2002) *Birthing the Nation*, in which she analyses the importance of population and reproduction in constructing the nation-state and national identities. She demonstrates the ways in which what she terms "political arithmetic" and reproductive discourses inscribe women's (and men's) bodies in the demographic effort to define the nation. She writes about how Palestinian women's reproductive strategies are explicitly about demographic and national identity: women either explain the choice to have small families as a strategy to raise educated children with the chance to be leaders of a Palestinian state, or they explain the choice to have large families in the context of the numbers needed to make a successful claim for nationhood (Kanaaneh 2002).

Newer perspectives on identity often present them as processes, or standpoints, that involve some self-direction and agency (Holland et al 1998). Gender identity in the Middle East is no exception. However, such formulations can be paradoxical, as Mahmood (2005) demonstrates in her study of women's participation in the Islamic Revival movement in Egypt. Mahmood argues that her work poses a challenge to feminist anthropology in that it represents women taking an active role in the public sphere while the idioms which they use to enter that sphere are those associated with their subordination to men. This creates a situation in which it becomes necessary to develop a conception of agency that is not tied to notions of progressive politics that associate freedom and liberty with the rational subject. Mahmood emphasizes that moving away from ideas of humanist agency does not orientalize her informants. Instead she is quick to point out the widespread social changes that the women's piety movement is accomplishing. This argument poses challenges to feminist theory, where many see

women's participation in Islamic revival or increased veiling as 'contrary to women's interests' and perhaps representative of false consciousness or another type of deception.

Anthropologists writing from a feminist viewpoint have critiqued earlier anthropological work on the Middle East as having a masculine bias. An illustrative example is the value of honor, long argued to be a concept uniquely representative of Middle Eastern culture. Honor, while foundational, has been discussed as an attribute almost exclusively held by men. Women are often completely absent from the discourse on honor, or if mentioned at all, are discussed as objects which men must defend, protect or control to maintain their honor. In her study of the Awlad 'Ali Bedouins, Abu-Lughod argues that honor is the moral ideal for both men and women. For women, honor, not shame, is expressed through the enactment of modesty (Abu-Lughod 1986). This dialectical relationship between honor and shame holds rhetorical importance but may not be enacted through daily practice in the ways one would expect. Wikan ([1982]1991) writes of the ways in which women in Oman, while conscious of the concepts of honor and shame, strive not to speak of them in daily life to avoid the creation of shame itself. For Wikan, the lack of use of the word shame emerged from an understanding that in order to have honor, one must honor others. In addition, Wikan demonstrates how women, as actors, occasionally choose to risk shame for the possibility of gaining honor. She further noted that honor may indeed have two types of meanings. First is honor, which is imagined as an ideal-type integrity, which can be ruined by a single moral failure. The second is more pragmatic, and refers to the actual value of the person, including personal characteristics such as being kindhearted or hard-working. Wikan's

portrayal of honor represents women as pragmatic actors who negotiate everyday social relations in a multitude of different ways.

Globalization, Transnationalism and the Middle East

According to Geertz, the idea of origins is part of a pervading obsession with categorizing people on the basis that “a person’s provenance pervades his identity (Geertz 1979:142).” This can be demonstrated linguistically through the concept of *nisba*, a grammatical formation whereby the Arabic language is morphologically altered to express a person’s relation to somewhere or something. This can refer to religion, kinship, nationality or place (among others), and Geertz noted that in his experience in Morocco, people were much more likely to know someone’s provenance than their occupation, personal character, or where they currently live. Therefore, culture, identity and space/place is an appropriate conceptual combination in the anthropology of the Middle East and an important grounding to an investigation of migration, subjectivity and health. Questions of identity and space/place are particularly interesting in the Middle East because of a pervasive tension between unity and division that touches on cultural, national, ethnic and religious identities, among others. The postmodern idea of identity as situational, fragmented and contradictory (Grossberg 1996) could perhaps be illustrated by the disjuncture between ideals of pan-Arab identity and the fragmentation which better characterizes the Middle East (Barakat 1993). For Barakat, the process of nationalization of many Arab countries after colonization has involved the revival of Arab cultural heritage as well. However, as a result, the dilemma of reconciling plurality and unity constitutes an integral part of the definition of Arab identity. In this framework, Arab

identity is based primarily on common language, culture, sociopolitical experiences, economic interests, collective memory of place and history. Yet it is not an identity that exists in isolation. Instead it can be thought of, with reference to globalization and transnationalism, in terms of pluralities, linkages and disjunctures.

Linkages, such as those wrought by Arab nationalism, are salient in shaping identity, allocating mutual responsibility and hence informing understandings of space/place (Shami 1996). However, a focus on linkages and in particular a unified notion of globalization may obscure the importance of regional and national differences and disjunctures. Despite this, various contentions emerge as a result of transnationalism, such as: the waning of national sentiments and boundaries; the retrenchment of state power and the rise of ethnonationalism; cultural hybridity brought about by population movement; unexpected combinations and juxtapositions of media consumptions; cultural and religious fundamentalisms. Below I present some ethnographic work on the Middle East that addresses themes of changing notions of space and identity in the context of globalization and transnationalism.

Arab nationalism, or Al-‘uruba, is a term with many meanings, including Arabness, a way of being Arab, cultural authenticity, a set of responsibilities and rights that comes with being Arab. “It expresses an identity that is reinforced or violated or challenged or ignored by various events. However contingent and informed by *realpolitik* particular political positions and statements may be, there is a constant reference to a universe of discourse which is identified as ‘Arab’ (Shami 1996).” However, this discourse must constantly be reinvented as it is constantly threatened and reshaped by events. As such, each Arab state is seen a transient, incomplete and local part of the wider

Arab natural/national state (Hopkins & Ibrahim 1997).” This tension between regional and national identities is important in understanding the many ways in which identities are constructed in the Middle East.

An additional site of unity and disjuncture is what can be referred to as the geography of Islam. Islam has always been thought of as a trans-border, transnational phenomenon, embodied in the idea of the ummah or ‘Islamic community’ (Lindholm 1996). Yet the ummah, thought to include all Muslims in theory (and even non human spirits such as jinn), can be redefined in specific situations to include and exclude. Certain aspects of Islam, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca, for example, have heightened abilities to create feelings of imagined community. In the geography of Islam, transnationalism is not new – instead the ummah can be understood as a domain of interpenetrations and diversity based on the circulation of goods, people and ideas (Shami 1996).

Increasingly, media is being analyzed as a means to understand the construction of identities in the Middle East. Abu-Lughod (2000; 2005), in her studies of Egyptian television, considers the ways in which television is implicated in the construction of new kinds of selves. Through the production and dissemination of local political ideologies and through the construction of interiorities of narrative and emotion, television in Egypt is involved in a project of high modernity. Interestingly, Abu-Lughod argues that television is involved in producing somewhat contradictory modern selves through an emphasis on the nation, an ambivalent secularism, and a rejection of individualism with an emphasis on community and family.

The transnational movement of people through migration is also important to the study of the Middle East. In some Gulf countries, 'native' populations are very small and up to 70% of populations are made up of expatriate labor, both skilled and unskilled (Al-Rasheed 2005). Similarly, the oil boom of the 1970s has led to rapid social change such that Arab Gulf states are nearly unrecognizable from thirty years ago. The consummate example of such a transnational city, Dubai, represents the ways in which the oil economy, national projects and global cultural processes intersect. Marchal (2005) characterizes Dubai as a 'global city' based on three factors, heterogeneity, polycentrism, and social and economic polarization. Heterogeneity refers to the ways in which cultural and demographic diversity are a crucial organizing factor in Dubai, with a foreign workforce of more than 90%. Polycentrism refers to the ways in which the spatial morphology of the global city has been altered to construct city regions with multiple centers. In addition, social and economic polarization refers to the ways in which the gap between wealthy and poor has increased such that youth, in particular, are facing increasing economic inequalities in the global city. Larger regional disparities in wealth and power create further tensions of unity and division around the concept of Arab nationalism.

In this context, travel and tourism are also important. Wynn (2007) conducted an ethnography of Gulf Arab and Western tourists to Egypt and found that their differing views of Egypt revealed as much about the tourists as it did of their destination. Wynn rejects older notions of tourism as a threat to cultural authenticity, and instead considers how Western and Arab travel have contributed to Egyptian national identity and vice versa.

“Arabs and Westerners don’t see the same Egypt. What they see is influenced by their own culture, language, religion, history and politics. These different imaginations of Egypt have in turn shaped Egypt’s own view of itself, creating overlapping layers of identity: Egypt as the land of the pharaohs, pyramids, and mummies, but also Egypt as the center of Arab cinema, Arab music, and belly dancing. Centuries of transnational exchanges have produced layers of imaginations of Egypt (Wynn 2007)”

These processes of identity-making demonstrate the ways in which transnational processes are not new to the Middle East, although their pace has certainly accelerated. In a context where unity and disjuncture are so salient, it is perhaps not surprising that transnationalism and globalization are useful lenses with which to frame inquiry. The anthropology of the Middle East has contributed to the theoretical importance of space and place in the negotiation of cultural identity, while simultaneously being informed by theorizing in the broader discipline as a whole.

The Anthropology of Forced Migration

Anthropologists have made significant contributions to our understanding of refugee situations and of the phenomenon of forced migration more broadly. There has been some debate as to how, if at all, studies of refugees fit into the broader category of migration. While some researchers focus exclusively on the specific conditions of refugees, others do not find it problematic to lump many types of travelers and displaced peoples together as “migrants”. For some, that refugees are a legal category of people seeking protection as a result of persecution in their country of origin justifies their consideration separately from other migrants, while others focus more on the fact of the

movement of people itself. In the section that follows, I first define key terms of discussion for this dissertation, forced migration and refugees. I then briefly discuss migration theory in anthropology before providing a more focused picture of the anthropology of forced migration.

Defining Forced Migration

Defining types of migration can be a difficult and imprecise task. While definitions are practically and legally necessary, the borders between categories are often fuzzy and indistinct. Some scholars have argued that the processes of globalization have intensified the difficulties inherent in classifying migrants as either voluntary or involuntary (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002). In any case, it can be difficult to differentiate forced migrants or refugees from those who cross borders for other reasons and there are often social, political and economic reasons for defining migrants in one way or another. These definitions are often hotly contested, as illustrated in Peteet's (1995) study of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Palestinians in Lebanon resist the label "refugee" and instead refer to themselves as "returners". This lexicon can be seen as resistance to the characterization of their situation by the local, national and international communities and as a refusal of the status of refugees, who could, in theory, be resettled somewhere other than in Palestine. However, Peteet noted how Palestinians also had to accept refugee status when it came to matters of survival in the camps. In order to receive rations, education and assistance, Palestinians had to have cards from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which affirmed their refugee status. This example of the

ambivalence of migrant definitions illustrates the perilous and contradictory territory in which such definitions are ascribed. Anthropological concepts of etic and emic are of some use here, but as we see in the example above, even emic definitions of migrants are contested and subject to cultural, social and political revision. Below, I briefly define two key terms related to this study: forced migration and refugees.

Forced Migration:

Forced migration refers to a broad category that encompasses a variety of forces of expulsion in contrast to those who migrate freely and voluntarily, often in search of a better life (Eastmond, 1997). Central to this definition is that all forced migration occurs within the context of power relations, often in the context of overt domination and violence (Eastmond, 1997). Other terms used include dislocation, exile and displacement among others. Displacement, according to Bammer (1994, p. xi), is defined as “the separation of people from their native culture, through physical dislocation (as in refugees, migrants, exiles or expatriates) or the colonizing imposition of a foreign culture”. In this dissertation, I will primarily rely on the terms ‘forced migration’ and ‘displacement’ because they are the most commonly used general terms in the field today.

Scholarship on forced migration is a broad body of work encompassing refugee studies, displacement, and diaspora studies. The relationship of these various fields to one another is subject to debate (Hathaway, 2007), as are the relations between forced migration and other types of migration or development studies (Richmond, 1988). While there are shared theoretical and methodological concerns between forced migration

studies and migration studies more generally, those who wish to view forced migrants as 'just another type of migrant' risk ignoring the fundamental differences between them (S. Shami, 1996). Celebrations of a globalized 'world of movement' ignore the violence which engenders forced migration. In addition, Peteet (2005, p. 24) argues that refugees are conceptually different from migrants in that refugees are usually displaced by large scale, organized violence often perpetrated by the state or paramilitary forces, while migrants often move because of poverty, marginalization, or the pursuit of new opportunities. Refugees are defined, and given status by, international law. Refugees are also an object of intervention by international aid organizations and are thus implicated in discourses and debates about humanitarianism. While migrants usually retain citizenship until or unless they apply for naturalization elsewhere, refugees are both inside and outside the nation state: their states of origin have usually excluded them, and they must seek asylum elsewhere.

Some anthropologists disagree and argue that alternative concepts should be used, or that forced migrants should not be differentiated from other types of migration (Malkki, 1995a; Omidian, 1996). For example, in addition to her previous work on migration which differentiated migration based on mobility patterns (Gonzalez, 1961), Gonzalez has more recently written about what she terms "conflict migration" to describe migration motivated by violent conflict in the place of origin (González, 1992). Gonzalez argues that although migrants fleeing conflict leave for different reasons than other migrants, their existence in the host society is similar to that of other migrants. She also argues that it is not easy to separate political from economic reasons for migration and that multiple motivations for migration may exist simultaneously.

Regardless of one's perspective on the validity of these debates, overlap between forced migration and migration studies does exist in that both raise issues of displacement, cultural bricolage, and identity (Peteet, 2005). In addition, most migration is a complex, not easily disentangled response to global and local situations in which religious, social, economic and political factors are inextricably intertwined (Richmond, 1988). Forced migration has been divided into a number of categories designed to illustrate different types of migration. These categories, while originating in refugee practice and policy, have been taken up in much anthropological and other academic scholarship. This borrowing of terms has been critiqued by some (Indra, 1999; Malkki, 1995a), although given the need for anthropologists and other academics to communicate with policy makers and practitioners in this highly applied field (Black, 2001), it is not clear that these critiques are productive.

Refugees

Despite its definition in international law, achieving consensus on the meaning of the term 'refugee' is a difficult and controversial task, which is perhaps not surprising for a concept that has so many political and legal implications. Not all forced migrants are refugees, and not all who might qualify for refugee status are given it. The 'everyday' notion of refugee that connotes populations and individuals escaping from war or natural disasters is much broader than the highly specific, somewhat counter-intuitive, legal definition of a refugee (A. Good, 2007). Under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, refugees are people who have a "well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." Recent anthropological studies have

been conducted on the ways in which these terms are operationalized in the world of international and asylum law (A. Good, 2007). Yet in other forms of ‘everyday’ speech, the term refugee holds meanings for forced migrants themselves as they re-appropriate the term in many ways, from insult to term of endearment, and for host communities, who may use the term to distinguish forced migrants as an ‘other’ (Chatty & Hundt, 2005; Loizos, 1981; Peteet, 2005).

The concept of ‘the refugee’ in international law emerged in response to mass displacements in Europe following the Second World War. An additional outcome of the 1951 Convention was the development of the academic field of Refugee Studies (Black, 2001). The definition of a refugee is controversial in academic, policy and practice circles. While the Convention definition sets out criteria, the meanings of these criteria are determined by nations, often on a case by case basis. What constitutes a “well-founded” fear of persecution? Who makes up a “particular social group”? The refugee law literature is replete with cases and articles debating the interpretation of the various aspects of the Convention, an area ripe for anthropological inquiry with which anthropologists have only recently begun to engage (A. Good, 2007). Critiques of refugee status include the necessity for persecution to be proven on an individual level. In contexts of civil war, refugee status is often denied because violence is too generalized and not targeted specifically enough at the refugee to qualify as persecution (Goodwin-Gill, 1996). Similarly, the Convention does not apply to those displaced within their countries. It also does not grant refugee status on the basis of forced migration resulting from natural or human-made disasters, development projects or other types of displacement not attributable to violence or discrimination (Cernea, 1996).

Anthropologists have contributed to the debate about how to define refugees, usually favoring a broader, contextualized and emic definition. Notably, anthropologists have defined 'refugeeness' as a process of becoming rather than a onetime set of events bounded in time and space (Petee, 1995, p. 171). The critique of the refugee concept, which has occurred in many disciplines, has also been important in anthropology. Much research, policy and practice on refugees shares the underlying premise that refugees are necessarily "a problem". While displacement certainly is a problem, Malkki (1995b) critiques the literature on refugees that locate the problem not in the violence from which refugees fled, but in the refugees themselves. She connects this tendency to locate problems within the figure of the refugee with another tendency, that which universalizes the refugee, the 'refugee experience', or the 'refugee mentality'. One of anthropology's main contributions to the study of refugees has been to question assumptions about refugees as an undifferentiated group.

Migration theory in anthropology and in the social sciences more broadly has not been characterized by the development of one single encompassing theory (Portes, 1997). Migration has been categorized in many ways and changes in models often accompany theoretical shifts in thinking about how and why people move. Below I illustrate some of the key ways in which anthropologists have theorized migration with particular emphasis on how current processes of migration contribute to anthropological research and theory on globalization. This is by no means a thorough review of the vast literature in anthropology and elsewhere on migration. Instead, it is intended to set the scene for an understanding of the importance of forced migration in anthropological thought.

Early Anthropological Perspectives on Migration

Early typologies of migration were often simple, descriptive and lacking in explanatory power (Richmond, 1988). Among these included several early models that characterized societies as types, often within a social evolutionary framework, or that aimed to classify migration, for example as ‘voluntary’ or ‘involuntary’ (Price, 1969). Voluntary migration referred to economic migrants who chose to travel either for a period of time or permanently, and involuntary migration designated such forced migrants as slaves, those fleeing war and other political pressures. Richmond (1988), among others, argue that the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration is too simplistic to capture the complexity of human mobility.

Anthropologists began to approach the topic of migration in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Brettell, 2000). Before this period, although anthropologists occasionally noted the presence of migration, they rarely considered it for serious analysis. The emphasis on functional theories of human culture before the 1960s, and the accompanying notion that cultures were “sedentary”, or rooted to a specific locale (Malkki, 1995a), limited anthropological work on migration relative to some other social sciences. By the 1960s, however, anthropologists had begun to move away from theories of functionalism and began to embrace migration as a valid focus of study. This change in focus followed increasing trends of migration from rural environments to cities, particularly among the populations anthropologists traditionally studied in Oceania, Africa, Latin America and Caribbean (Brettell, 2000). Early research mostly considered the migration of peasants into urban areas using a stage-migration model (Mangin, 1970).

According to this model, each generation would become successively more urbanized. Contributions from this perspective included a focus on ways in which people adapted to their new environments and studies that laid the foundation for thinking about social networks as opposed to individuals (Lewellen, 2002). These unidirectional models of migration also laid the foundation for more complex theorizing about migration in the 1970s.

From the 1970s onwards, anthropological studies of migration gained in complexity and also in the breadth of populations of study (Brettell, 2000). In addition to considering migration from the countryside to the city, international migration was increasingly studied beginning in the early 1980s (Lewellen, 2002). Brettell (2000), in her discussion of anthropological perspectives on migration, describes anthropology's unique contribution to migration studies. First, she notes that anthropologists, by virtue of their interest in place, tend to consider the impact of migration on places of origin and host societies rather than look more broadly at global flows of migration. Second, she argues that anthropology's interest in culture has led particularly to an interest in how migration articulates with cultural change, social organization, adaptation, ethnicity and identity. Anthropological approaches to theorizing migration will be discussed in more detail below.

Developing conceptual models of migration is challenging because the complexity and variability of processes of migration makes generalization difficult. Yet, it is also difficult to classify migration because of overlap that exists between categories, such as between local, global or transnational migration (Lewellen, 2002). However, some conceptual models which are of use have been devised. One such model, devised

by Gonzalez (1961) to describe migratory wage labor in the Caribbean, identified migration as “seasonal,” “temporary non-seasonal,” “recurrent,” “continuous,” and “permanent.” While this typology is most relevant to migratory wage labor, it provides some helpful parameters for defining other types of migration as well. However this approach is limited by its lack of specificity. For example, temporary migration could span a whole range of experiences and time periods, while permanent migrants could have wide variability in terms of their relationships to their place of origin (Lewellen, 2002). Another model looks at causal, motivational aspects of migration (Van Hear, 1998). According to this model, researchers investigate the:

- 1) Root causes – Underlying factors such as colonial, postcolonial ties, close contiguity
- 2) Proximate causes – Such as economic downturn, ecological devastation, long-term political turmoil
- 3) Precipitating causes – Immediate causes such as loss of a job, warfare, or a flood
- 4) Intervening factors – that constrain, facilitate, or accelerate migration, eg. networks, transportation, supportive organizations

Methods that consider the motivations for migration mirror the definitions used in policy and practice discourses about migration that distinguish economic migrants from political, development-induced and other migrants. As we will see below, while there is overlap between migrants who move for various reasons, refugees and other forced migrants are significantly different from other migrants in specific ways. However, motivation is problematic as a defining tool because the individual motives of the migrant are often only one among many factors that influence migration. For example, of the many people who may experience organized violence, only a few successfully flee. A

complex analysis that goes beyond motivation is necessary to understand why some migrate and others do not. A more holistic typology, by Held et al (1999), looks at the following variables:

- 1) Extensity (how far?)
- 2) Intensity (how many?)
- 3) Velocity (how long does it take to get from place to place and how long the stay?)
- 4) Impact (on host and sending societies)
- 5) Infrastructures (of transportation and communication)
- 6) Institutions (that direct and maintain labor markets and migratory flows)
- 7) Social class (who goes?)

This model combines features of the models above to provide a more nuanced picture of migration. These models reflect changing ideas of migration within anthropology that can also be explored by investigating the underlying theories that influence studies of migration at a particular time.

Anthropological studies of migration have been characterized as classic, modern and emergent (Lewellen, 2002). Classic studies of migration, dominant in the 1960s, were characterized by push and pull factors that either drove rural peoples out of the countryside or attracted them to cities. Once in the cities, migrants would assimilate to the dominant culture, perhaps in a generation or two. Modern approaches are characterized by neo-Marxist models that focus on structural inequalities that draw people from less to more developed regions. Finally, emergent studies of migration move away from the classic and modern by rejecting general theories and by considering

instead the particularities and complexities of specific migrations. With the turn towards emergence, anthropologists have looked towards concepts such as transnationalism, diaspora, multiculturalism, social movements and refugees or forced migration. Below, I briefly discuss theoretical perspectives that have accompanied the shift between classic, modern and emergent, drawing primarily on the work of Kearney (1986), who argues that migration theory in anthropology has accompanied development theory through three key phases: modernization, dependency and articulation.

Migration and Modernization Theory

Modernization theory, dominant in anthropological conceptions of migration until the mid 1970s, is based on a model that posits a unilineal evolution from traditional to modern, with an underlying belief in the superiority of industrialization and technology, education, entrepreneurialism and democracy (Kearney, 1986; Lewellen, 2002). Modernization theory was, as Kearney notes, the culmination of the Victorian ideal of ‘development’. This perspective, associated in anthropology with an equilibrium model (Brettell, 2000), envisioned migration as a means by which this evolution towards modernization could be accelerated. Peasants would travel from the countryside to the urban centers, find work, and send back remittances and ‘modern values’ which would in turn develop the rural areas. This model depended on the Rational Man model, in which individuals were understood to be calculating costs and benefits of various options before choosing that which was most beneficial (Lewellen, 2002). Motives for migration were push and pull – the attractions of the city as a pull with the lack of opportunity and land in villages as a push (Brettell, 2000).

However, empirical evidence identified problems with modernization theory and its associations with migration. For example by the 1960s it became clear that moving to the cities did not necessarily lead to the psychological changes which had been expected in the rural migrant. In fact, migrants were not integrated into urban life but were instead marginalized in slums, shantytowns and informal economies. In addition, migration to the cities failed to have the hoped-for developing effect on the countryside. The model of the migrant as 'Rational Man' was also debunked as researchers saw that decision making was made by families and kin networks as well as individuals and that sometimes constraints such as social roles or relations were so limiting that it was hard to say whether individual choice occurred at all. Evidence suggested that urbanization was occurring without "development" (Kearney, 1986).

Migration and Dependency Theory

Dependency theory is in many respects an opposite perspective to modernization theories of migration and represents a neo-Marxist critique of the work that came before it (Kearney, 1986). Researchers who employed dependency theory (Frank, 1967) changed the focus from development to underdevelopment (Lewellen, 2002) and from migration to cities to processes of out-migration. Underdevelopment is understood as something created and maintained by the processes of modernization. These theorists argued that rural areas were being drained of labor and raw materials through a process of internal colonialism. Dependency theory took a broad, macro historical perspective in which relationships between core and periphery were crucial to understanding migration. Lewellen (2002) notes that the macro-perspectives of dependency theory were difficult for anthropologists to actually measure and observe. While useful as a critique,

dependency theory was limited in its practical utility for anthropologists. Dependency theory was the precursor to world systems theory, a model of globalization that looked at movements of labor and capital from periphery to core (Wallerstein, 1974).

Migration and Articulation Theory

According to Kearney (1995), articulation theory is the primary successor to dependency theories of migration and development. While also originating from a Marxist perspective, articulation theory recognizes the existence of noncapitalist modes of production that exist in conjunction with capitalism. Articulation theory posits that influence is thus a process of articulation, in which various systems come together and affect one another. This theoretical perspective thus rejects the unilinear orientation of both modernization theory and dependency theory. Instead, articulation favors a more historical perspective. In studies of migration, researchers using a model of articulation define and describe the many relationships between various dimensions of the migrant system.

Diaspora

The notion of diaspora has been particularly important in anthropological theorizing of transnationalism and globalization. According to Lavie and Swedenberg, diaspora “refers to the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that migrants, exiles and refugees have to places – their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with “back home” (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996, p. 14). Clifford (1994, p. 308) describes diasporic migrants as having “collective homes away from home”, while Gilroy (1993) argues that diasporic identities are constructed through the

process of breaking boundaries and challenging fixed notions of identity that result in what he terms a “double consciousness”.

Diaspora, a concept used in many disciplines with many meanings, is difficult to define. Lewellen notes that a common theme is identity formation centered around a homeland that has emotional meaning to the people in the diaspora (Lewellen, 2002). Traditionally, the term diaspora invoked a forced dispersal of people who longed for a lost home, but this definition has been broadened in recent years to be more inclusive. Always in a state of flux, diasporas can range from traumatic rending apart of communities to comfortable, settled networks. Within forced migration, ethnographies have been written about the Tibetan (Frechette, 2002), Tamil (McDowell, 1996), and Sudanese diasporas (El Sharmani, 2007) among others and have covered topics ranging from transnational families to international assistance.

New Perspectives in Migration Theory

The past 20 years have been one of renewed vigor for migration theory in anthropology and other disciplines (Brettell & Hollifield, 2000). As anthropologists wrestle with concepts such as globalization, transnationalism, identity construction, gender, ethnicity, power relations, space and place, migration research is increasingly possible and relevant. Identity has been an expanding area of study in the recent anthropology of migration. New perspectives on ethnicity and migration have explored such issues as the fluidity of ethnic identity in contexts of transnationalism (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Rouse, 1995) and the nexus of race and ethnicity, particularly in contexts of resettlement (Brettell, 2000). Gender identity has

also increasingly become a zone of theory in migration studies (Salih, 2003).

Transnationalism and globalization have been particularly fruitful areas of inquiry, and I will discuss them in more detail below.

Globalization, Transnationalism and International Migration

Anthropological scholarship on human movement grew significantly during the 1990s, a period in which concerns about processes of globalization began to command anthropological attention (Peteet, 2005, p. 48). Among these processes were new forms of global capitalism marked by deregulation and the decline in state control of capital, changing forms of transnational governance, rapid and accessible technological innovation, re-framing of cultural artifacts, and a dizzying increase in human mobility (Harvey, 1989). While global flows of people have been posited as one of the defining aspects of globalization, it is important to note the ubiquity of human migration throughout human history. While current migration is certainly a phenomenon of global concern, we cannot disregard the massive historical movements of people in the past, from the migration of humans out of Africa to the labor-based migration of the Industrial Revolution (Lewellen, 2002). However, migration in the age of globalization seems to be qualitatively and quantitatively different. Among these differences are: a seemingly greater diversification of types, motives and networks; the phenomenon of individuals shifting from one type of migration to another over a lifetime (Shuval, 2000); more extensive migration but less migration from South to North; less cost and time involved in transportation from place to place; cheap, instant global communications; the development of new, specialized types of migrants. In addition, globalization and

transnationalism have been particularly fruitful theoretical perspectives from which to understand migration.

Although they overlap, most authors distinguish between the concepts of globalization and transnationalism. Kearney (1995) argues that globalization refers to processes that are usually decentered from the nation state and transnationalism refers to processes that are anchored in, yet simultaneously transcend, the nation state. In anthropological theory, transnationalism has posited migrants as hybrid beings who challenge and re-define traditional associations between culture, identity and place (Clifford, 1997). Transnational migrants are seen as those who engage in social, cultural, economic and political practices that span national boundaries. For some theorists, transnationalism, thus construed, is a challenge to the power of the nation state (A. Appadurai, 1990, 1996). For Appadurai, the new cultural global economy cannot be explained through models of push and pull, center and periphery, or surplus and deficit. Instead, it must be understood as a “complex, overlapping, disjunctive order (1996, p. 296)” made up of global cultural flows of people, commodities, ideas, images, and money. In this context, competing ideas of nationalism serve to challenge the state and diminish it.

While some have prophesied the death of the nation state under globalization, others argue just the opposite (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002) and reaffirm the importance of the nation state in a globalizing world. Other theorists argue that transnationalism has not diminished the state, particularly in the context of migration, because the state has adapted to new global processes to retain power over movements of people and some regulatory control over other types of flows (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1999; Salih,

2003). Far from being diminished, states retain an important role in the production of migration, particularly displacement, and in the determination of belonging and not-belonging, through concepts such as citizenship. With policies that determine entry, residency, citizenship and conditions of life such as education, work and health care, states, and their borders, remain central to the understanding of many kinds of migration from refugees and migrant workers to international students or high-powered transnational executives (Petee, 2005).

Emerging from the globalization and transnationalism literature, a new movement in the social sciences towards theorizing space and place has been particularly relevant to studies of forced migration. This body of scholarship moves away from conceptualizing place in terms of rootedness and instead considers the many, contested meanings of space and place (Feld & Basso, 1996; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, 1997; Low & Lawrence-Zúniga, 2003; Massey, 1994; Turton, 2005). For anthropologists, the compression of space in globalization has been accompanied by re-invigoration of the importance of place for identity formation. This emphasis on place has, in many ways, been a corrective to notions of globalization that focus on global processes at the expense of local worlds. Anthropologists have been instrumental in ensuring the presence of the person and locality in theories of globalization, by positing the local as a site of intersection for local and global processes. Forced migration has been important in providing an analytic site in which to build such theories. For example, forced migration has been an important piece of evidence to problematize notions, prevalent in the 1990s, that the state is in decline in a globalized world. In response, theories of transnationalism are one way, particularly

relevant to migration, in which anthropologists have tried to understand complex relations between global, national and local processes.

Transnational Migration

Transnationalism is one of the most recent and most vital perspectives used to understand migration (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992; Portes, 2003; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). A transnational theory of migration is a departure from the conceptualization of migration as uprooting from the 'home' society followed by (often painful) incorporation and eventual assimilation in a new society (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). In addition, often unilinear early migration theories implicitly assumed that migrants could only maintain ties with one place. Theories of transnationalism moved migration theory in a new direction that more closely reflected the ethnographic data. For example, Rouse's (1991) concept of 'transnational migratory circuits' took into account the simultaneous engagement and disengagement with multiple places that had been observed among migrants. In the 1990s, anthropologists began to theorize international migrants to Europe and North America not as immigrants but as 'transmigrants' (Glick-Schiller et al., 1995). Transmigrants are "immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation state (Glick-Schiller et al., 1995, p. 48)". Borders can be more than geographical locations and can include identities, cultural forms and social practices that occur in borderlands and produce them. These relations to multiple places and borders are important for the formation of identities.

Al-Ali and Koser (2002) list three contributions that a transnational perspective can make to our understanding of global migration: 1) it can draw our attention to processes which, while not new, have previously been ignored or neglected; 2) it can draw our attention to processes and practices which have taken on new and different forms through their interaction with processes of globalization; and 3) that there are some truly 'new' phenomena associated with transnational migration which require investigation. Al-Ali and Koser characterize past international migration research as focusing either on the process of migration or the effects of migration, particularly on host societies. An emphasis on transnationalism, they say, allows us to consider migrants not as anomalies, but as part of an increasingly globalized world in which linkages across geographical space generate new social forms, political challenges and cultural resources. New and changing processes as a result of globalization include issues such as changing technologies that have expanded the possibilities for communication with implications for migrants' social relations and identities. For example, kin structures have changed as a result of such technologies, and remittances to family have grown substantially. Finally, three possibilities for new types of transnational migration emerge for Al-Ali and Koser – these are that states are beginning to reconsider traditional notions of citizenship and sovereignty, that migrants are developing new forms of identity neither rooted in the place of origin nor in the place of destination and third, that transnationalism involves a reconceptualization of 'place' or 'locality'.

This last point, that transnationalism involves a reconceptualization of place, is paradoxical. While anthropologists have written critically about the isomorphism of space and place in an effort to 'deterritorialize' theory (Malkki, 1992), others have noted

that migrants themselves are deeply attached to place and insist on identities that are 'rooted' (Peteet, 2005). The identities of migrants, voluntary or involuntary, are profoundly shaped by reference and connection to places of origin, places of residence, and the boundaries and travel between them. One of the contributions of studies of migration, particularly forced migration, has been to provide context and challenge to anthropology's historical assumption of the connections between culture, identity and place, through studies of forced migrants who demonstrate the fragility of connections between people and place and also their enduring power.

As a zone of theory and an ethnographic subject, human mobility and displacement have been influenced by underlying anthropological concerns related to processes of globalization. Among these have been the nature and influence of the nation-state and new conceptions of citizenship and belonging (Ong, 2003), explorations of the relationship of identity to place (Peteet 2005), critique of the assumption of the isomorphism of culture, space and place (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992), and a critique of the concept of culture (Abu-Lughod, 2006; Hannerz, 1993). This foundation in migration theory will be useful for the discussion to follow; however, it is important to be critical when applying concepts from migration theory to forced migrants. For example, theories of 'transnational migration' may not apply in some cases to refugees and other forced migrants, whose 'homes' may be sites of ongoing conflict or may in other ways be inaccessible to the forced migrant.

The Study of Refugees and Forced Migrants within Anthropology

The study of refugees and other forced migrants is an increasingly large field of study within anthropology (Colson, 2003). In addition, anthropologists have played a seminal role in the founding of the multidisciplinary field of refugee studies and studies of forced migration more broadly. The voices and perspectives of anthropologists continue to hold significant sway in academic and non-academic debates about forced migration. Given the ubiquity of migration, forced and otherwise, in human history, the field of anthropology was late to consider human movement as an important area of study. Colson (2003) notes that it is strange that anthropologists largely ignored displacement, given that many of the populations that were of interest to early anthropologists, such as Native Americans and many populations in Africa, were subject to significant involuntary and voluntary migration. Theoretical perspectives, such as structural functionalism, and methodologies, such as ethnographic fieldwork in a single locale, contributed to an emphasis on communities as bounded, stable wholes. Anthropologists began to seriously investigate migration in the 1950s. However, while anthropologists have been criticized for coming late to the study of involuntary (and voluntary) migration, anthropological concepts, developed in earlier studies, were usefully applied to later studies of forced migration. Among these fruitful concepts are social roles, social networks, hierarchy, boundary creation and maintenance and rites of passage (Colson, 2003). I will discuss the application of anthropological concepts of rites of passage and liminality to refugees in more detail below. Perhaps because of its relative newness, no broad theoretical perspective has emerged to encompass studies of forced migration within anthropology (Lewellen, 2002, p. 172). Instead, research within

anthropology on involuntary migration presents interesting new directions that have the potential to contribute to the discipline as a whole. Indeed, given the ubiquity of forced migration and the currency of the questions it raises, some scholars have gone so far to suggest that the future directions of the field of anthropology will reflect the critical questions asked in the study of forced migration (Fuglerud, 1999). Below, I will briefly outline research on forced migration and refugees as an area of study within anthropology.

Early research on forced migration emphasized stage theories of displacement. In his study of post-partition refugees in India, Keller (1975) posited that the refugee experience could be modeled as a series of stages. These stages were 1) the perception of a threat; 2) the decision to escape; 3) flight; 4) reaching the safety of a camp and settling in; 5) resettlement; 6) adjustment and acculturation. This desire to discuss forced migration in terms of stages is also evidenced more recently by Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good and Kleinman (1996) in their study of world mental health. In their description of the refugee experience, the authors divide experience into four phases: 1) pre-flight; 2) flight and separation; 3) asylum/reception; and 4) resettlement. While these phases may be analytically useful, they are far from generalizable to all cases of forced migration. In addition, the experience of each phase may be drastically different from population to population, depending on circumstances of forced migration. Malkki (1995a, p. 508) critiques stage models as being too functional and for implying that refugees necessarily come from a stable, sedentary 'home' society to which they will return. The model that refugees flee as a result of a single, traumatic incident does not conform to much documented refugee experience, where many flee as a result of a "long history of

complex interactions involving colonialism, forced migrations, past wars, and oppressive government policies (Lewellen, 2002, p. 180).” This long chain of processes may not be easily visible once people become refugees.

Current research on forced migration reflects the diversity of the field. Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1996) write that there are three main anthropological approaches to the study of refugees: analytic, organizational and interventionist. The analytic approach is more of a classical anthropological method, and involves interviews and observation with refugees themselves. The organizational method focuses on policy issues, including the structures and operations of organizations and agencies. The organizational approach places the anthropologist in a position between agencies and refugees, with the possibility that the anthropologist could act as a culture broker. An interventionist approach is one that is drawn from applied anthropology, with the fundamental goal of helping refugees. In practice, these approaches are often combined in studies of forced migration.

In a recent article in the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Colson (2007, p. 321) enumerated some recent topics of interest for forced migration scholars including genocide, the relationship between displaced persons and hosts, medical encounters between asylum seekers and clinicians, the use of traditional medicines by refugees, psychological and social effects of forced migration on children, gender relations in forced migration, diet and food distribution in refugee camps, legislation and policy on refugees, the effects of state policies on refugees, humanitarian organizations and aid, interethnic relations, the meaning of place in a world of movement and many others. This wide range of topics is brought together by a common interest in forced migration. In addition, forced migration is a particularly fruitful field in which to explore such topics.

Theoretically, anthropologists began to think differently about boundaries and other core concepts and these theoretical changes have cast forced migration in a new light. As structure gave way to process and stability to fluidity, refugees and other involuntary migrants became more visible in anthropology (Lewellen, 2002). As their settings change, refugees are involved in a constant process of redefinition and recreation. The need to recreate themselves legally, culturally and materially, among others, is one of the defining features of forced migration.

Ethnographic studies have been one of anthropologists' greatest contributions to our understanding of forced migration. Despite the relatively recent development of interest in issues of displacement, ethnographic research has covered a wide range of topics in forced migration, many of which have been, or continue to be, under-researched. Among these include internally displaced people (Evans, 2007), the livelihoods of forced migrants (Grabska, 2006), forced migration and human rights (Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005), the provision of humanitarian aid (B. Harrell-Bond, 1986; B. Harrell-Bond, Voutira, & Leopold, 1992; Hyndman, 2000), suffering (Coker, 2004; Davis, 1992), health and well-being (Becker, Beyene, & Ken, 2000a; Muecke, 1983), relationships with host societies (Essed, Frerks, & Schrijvers, 2005), identity politics (Fuglerud, 1999), trust (Daniel & Knudsen, 1995), emotion (Jenkins, 1991), resistance (Peteet, 1995; Tapp, 1988), and refugee policy and law, among many more. Ethnographies have contributed significant long-term perspectives on forced migration which have enriched our understanding of the outcomes of displacement over time (Loizos, 2008). In addition, the studies mentioned above have spanned the globe and are

beginning to form a corrective to the traditional bias towards resettlement countries (in North America, Europe and Australia), in the literature.

Some authors have argued that the study of refugees and other forced migrants requires anthropologists to reconceptualize both concepts and methodologies, such as fieldwork (Lewellen, 2002). For some refugees, as people on the move, change occurs so rapidly that it can be difficult for anthropologists to study it fast enough. On the other hand, research with resettled refugees or those in protracted refugee situations may call for extended periods of fieldwork. No one methodology could capture the complexity of processes of forced migration (Colson, 2007). Indeed, the multi-disciplinarity of forced migration as a field results in research that employs multiple theories and methods.

Among the challenges to forced migration research include sampling and ethics. In refugee camps or centers, where the entire population is known, it is possible to use random sampling techniques to reasonably good effect. However, among self-settled populations, particularly in times of flux, conflict, or when forced migrants lack legal status, sampling can be a challenge (Silove, 1999). Populations may be widely dispersed, largely unknown, or both. Asylum-seekers, for example, can be particularly difficult to recruit because of their uncertain status. The ethics of forced migration research are particularly challenging because refugees, who flee from violence, persecution, political upheaval or starvation, are at great risk for psychological and emotional distress, socioeconomic marginalization and the loss of social support systems (R. Desjarlais et al., 1996). Additionally, refugees tend to have less political rights than people who are citizens of a nation state (Leaning, 2001). While research with forced migrants has specific challenges, it is also a site for the explorations of novel methodologies.

Anthropologists have also been instrumental in the critique of forced migration. Malkki (1995a) argued forcefully that refugees do not represent a valid field of study within anthropology because of the diversity of their experiences and circumstances. Following this critique, all refugees share is their status under international law. Other anthropologists have similarly wrestled with differentiating refugees from other migrants (González, 1992). Another critique of refugee studies as a field is its reliance on etic concepts emanating from policy and law (Malkki, 1995a). Nonetheless, displacement and human mobility emerged as a major anthropological zone of theory and ethnography at the end of the twentieth century (Peteet, 2005).

Forced Migration in the Middle East

Globally, the Middle East has more forced migrants than any other region in the world today. Of the total number of refugees, the Middle East and North Africa Region is host to more than a quarter of the global total (UNHCR, 2009b). The two largest refugee populations in 2007 were displaced Afghans and Iraqis, and the countries hosting them, notably Syria, Iran and Jordan were at the top of the list of countries with the largest refugee populations. Omidian (1996) argues that in the context of Central Asia and the Middle East, the difference between refugee and immigrant is rather spurious because of the ubiquity of conflict in recent years. Indeed, the legacy of conflict in the recent history of the Middle East has almost assured the ubiquity of experiences of forced migration.

While the political and economic aspects of displacement in the Middle East have been well-documented (Shami, 1994), forced migration in the Middle East cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of the world and from global relations of power.

Global processes are implicated in the production of flows of migrants, and moreover, in their representation and ability to achieve asylum. For example, Omidian (1996) notes that during the cold war, Afghan refugees were recognized by the United States as having fought against an invading force, the USSR. As a result, they were granted refugee status and allowed to settle in the US. She contrasts the treatment of Afghans with the Palestinian refugees, who despite being similarly displaced and having lost rights to land they once owned, are often not recognized as refugees in the United States. However, Shami (1996) notes that in discussions of global relationships in forced migration, processes of regionalism sometimes get lost. She argues for attention to be paid to the roles of nationalism, pan-Arab sentiment, and religion in understanding forced migration in the Middle East.

A substantial body of research has developed on forced migration in the Middle East and North Africa. In particular, the presence of a strong Refugee Studies Program at the American University in Cairo has supported many studies both in Egypt and the region more broadly. Significant research has been conducted with refugee communities in Egypt, including Sudanese, Palestinian, Eritrean, Somali and Liberian communities among others (Ainsworth, 2007; Coker, 2004, 2005; Coker & et al., 2003; El-Abed, 2005; e.g. Grabska, 2006). These studies contribute to our understanding of the lives of refugees in the Global South, and in particular, the lives of refugees settled in urban environments, about which not enough is known (Evans, 2007). A group of studies on the livelihoods of various groups of refugees living in Cairo is interesting for the similarities and differences it found between Somali, Palestinian and Sudanese refugees, thereby illustrating the diversity of experiences for refugees in Cairo (Al Sharmani 2003; El Abed

2003; Grabska 2005). However, there were some common findings that applied to multiple refugee populations. For example, while refugees in Egypt are permitted to live among local populations, many live on the margins of society. Most refugees live in the urban contexts of Cairo and Alexandria (Grabska 2006b). Egypt does not have refugee camps, and as a result, refugees may become invisible in poorer urban suburbs (Al Sharmani 2004). Marginalized and on the edge of Egyptian society, resettlement presents the best hope for the resumption of life and livelihoods for refugees struggling with difficult daily survival in Cairo (Grabska 2006a). Some interesting work has been conducted on the health of refugees in the urban environment of Cairo. For example, Coker (2004a) demonstrated the ways in which experiences of illness and experiences of displacement were inseparable in her study of the bodily metaphors used by Sudanese refugees in Cairo. In a study of the perceived needs of 500 African refugees in Cairo, medical care was listed as the first priority followed by assistance with food, schooling and UNHCR Case preparation (Briant & Kennedy, 2004). Studies have considered the availability of services to refugees in Cairo, including health care, health education (Coker, et al. 2003), and legal aid (Kagan, 2006). These studies have focused mostly on African refugees in Egypt, primarily Sudanese and Somali.

Outside of Egypt, considerable research has focused on the experiences of Palestinian refugees in various countries in the region (Chatty & Hundt, 2005; Peteet, 1995, 2005). Studies have also explored the policies and treatment of refugees and other migrants in countries such as Jordan (De Bel-Air, 2007), Yemen (De Regt, 2007), and Syria among others (Dorai, 2007). The region is of particular interest because of the demographic dynamics of forced migration. For example, in countries such as Jordan and

Lebanon, refugees make up a large percentage of the population, as do migrant guest workers in the countries of the Arab gulf (Chatty & Hundt, 2005). More research into the lived experience of refugees in this region would supplement existing policy and international relations literature.

Research has been conducted with Middle Eastern forced migrant populations in countries of resettlement, although relatively little of it has dealt with the lived experiences of displaced peoples (Inhorn, 2006; Shoeb, Weinstein, & Halpern, 2007). Shoeb and colleagues' (2007) study of trauma among Iraqi refugees in Dearborn, Michigan illuminated the importance of religious faith as a protective factor against suffering and psychological distress. Other studies have looked at the reception of migrants and their experiences of resettlement (Shadid, 1991). Omidian (1996) studied refugees' perceptions of their situation and found that in Iranian and Palestinian communities in the United States, many moved back and forth between the concepts of refugee and immigrant when describing themselves. Other studies have explored concepts of well-being (Vasey 2006) and risk (Savy & Sawyer, 2008) among Iraqi refugees. Despite these studies, research on forced migration in the Middle East does not yet mirror the extent and importance of forced migration in the region.

Forced Migration, Health and Psychosocial Well-Being

The twentieth century saw a massive growth in the number and intensity of armed conflict, especially within the borders of nation-states, and has taken a particularly heavy toll on civilian populations in terms of mortality, morbidity, social upheaval and

dislocation (Boyden & de Berry, 2004). Upheaval and massive disruption, such as war and displacement, lead to social disturbance as well as distress in the body (Becker, Beyene, & Ken, 2000a). Medical anthropologists have made major contributions to understanding the ways in which violence and suffering affect individuals and communities (Das et al., 2000; Hinton, 2002; Jenkins, 1998; Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997)

The effects of displacement as a result of violence include physical, mental and social disruptions (Henry, 2006). Indeed, the power of violence and suffering lie in their abilities to break apart interconnections and communities, leaving survivors struggling to recreate meaning in a changed world (Das et al., 2001). Anthropologists have studied how people displaced by violence seek to make meaning in this context. Becker, for example, observed that Cambodian refugees struggled to reorder and make sense of what they described as two separate lives, connected by often painful memories (Becker, Beyene, & Ken, 2000b). Given the impossibility of truly conveying experience, especially in cases where experience may have been horrific, anthropologists have tried to find ways to study such collective, but also profoundly intimate experiences. Narrative has been used as a way to understand survivors' embodied experiences of violence and displacement (Becker, Beyene, & Ken, 2000b; Henry, 2006; Jenkins, 1991) as have approaches that emphasize subjectivity (Das et al., 2000).

The process of recovery from violence is also important in the context of displacement. Henry (2006) argues that the body is a tool which survivors can use both to express their experiences of violence and to move beyond them. In his discussion of the effects of torture and other state violence on refugees, Turner (1995) notes the diversity

of responses that exist. He further noted how experiences of survival from violence can, in some cases lead to growth, but that in most cases outcomes are more mixed and problematic. Recovery from organized violence necessitates approaches that address the ways in which such violence breaks down social relations of trust and support.

Forced Migration and Health

Researchers have tried to tease out the relationship between migration and health but this has proven to be difficult. In the case of forced migration, however, the health effects have been easier to document. Refugees and other forced migrants suffer from health problems including chest, back and stomach pain, psychological disorders, heart disease, hypertension, tuberculosis, diabetes and nutritional problems, among others (Ainsworth, 2007; van Deusen, 1982). Before the 1980s, refugee health and humanitarian aid were primarily understood in terms of basic material necessities such as food, water and basic care but recently, refugee health has also been understood in terms of psychological trauma and psychosocial well-being (Ingleby, 2005). Research has demonstrated that refugees are vulnerable to a variety of health problems because of factors including poor living conditions, lack of access to health care, stressors related to the refugee experience, conflict between health beliefs in place of origin and displacement, and lack of financial resources for food and medicines (Coker & et al., 2003).

In times of social upheaval and war, health is threatened through limited access to health services, disruption to infrastructure, disturbances in the food supply and problems

with shelter in addition to injuries and trauma sustained from violence (Desjarlais et al., 1996; Sidel & Levy, 2003; World Health Organization, 2002). In complex emergencies, infectious disease rates typically increase. However, in contexts of asylum, forced migrants may be stigmatized for 'bringing' infectious diseases to a host country and measures such as screening or quarantine are often called for in an effort to exclude 'outsiders' . With respect to HIV/AIDS, complex and protracted refugee situations can affect infection rates, challenge the treatment of those living with the disease and affect prevention efforts, by for example, inability to access family planning supplies in a refugee camp (Schreck, 2000). However, the relationship between forced migration and infectious diseases is extremely complex, as the example of HIV demonstrates. In some cases, refugees have lower rates of HIV than host populations, but are nonetheless blamed by host populations for 'bringing' HIV with them and spreading it (Roberts, 2004). In the case of forced migration, health becomes a marker for inclusion and exclusion, with implications for the health and treatment of forced migrant populations.

The Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-Being of Refugees

Much of the literature on refugees and other forced migrants focuses on the psychological effects of displacement, particularly in terms of trauma, and on coping strategies (Ahmad, 1992; Mollica, 1990). However, the relationship between mental health status and experiences associated with forced migration is one of considerable debate and controversy, partly because of its political salience and also, as Jenkins (1991) notes, because of the primacy of the biochemical over experience in our understanding of health and illness. The inclusion of PTSD in the DSM-III in 1980, and its subsequent, yet

delayed, acknowledgement of the suffering of war veterans, is just one example of the political salience of disease categories. In addition to those who might seek to minimize the psychological effects of violence and displacement for political reasons, there are also mixed data to contend with, and those who criticize a tendency to assume pathology as a characteristic of 'refugeeness' (Malkki, 1992).

Migration does not necessarily lead to poor mental health (Desjarlais et al., 1996). Instead, a number of forces and processes, including traumatic events, housing conditions, and others can threaten psychological well-being. Desjarlais et al (1996, p. 136) identify three key factors which influence a migrants well-being. These are: 1) adaptation to the changes wrought by migration; 2) the environment in which the migrant resides; and 3) whether the migrant can live a meaningful, productive and culturally integrated life. Most research on the health of forced migrants has considered the direct effects of violence on health. Some other, less discussed factors associated with threats to forced migrants' health include the disruption of civil society and social relationships, flight and separation from one's homeland (Desjarlais et al., 1996).

A focus on PTSD has led to an insufficient exploration of co-morbidity among populations affected by violence and displacement. PTSD is often associated with other disorders such as depression, anxiety, somatoform disorders, dissociative disorders, or substance abuse (Silove & Kinzie, 2001). Research demonstrates that depressive disorders, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder are prevalent in refugee populations (Westermeyer, 1988) and that refugees have high levels of stress as well as other problems that affect their quality of life (Lipson, 1991). Reported rates of PTSD vary widely in refugee populations, with the lowest rates observed in epidemiological studies,

higher rates in studies employing convenience samples, and the highest rates being observed in clinic populations (Silove & Kinzie, 2001). Despite the substantial attention paid to trauma in the literature, higher incidence of depressive disorders have been found in some displaced populations (Silove & Kinzie, 2001).

Somatization, or the cultural patterning of psychological and social disorders into physical idioms of distress (Helman, 2001), is widely observed in displaced populations (Lin, Carter, & Kleinman, 1985). Refugees have been shown to have higher rates of somatization than immigrants in some cases (Lin et al., 1985). Given cultural differences in lay and professional disease classifications globally (Gaines, 1992a; Kleinman, 1980), it is perhaps not surprising that clinical encounters and diagnosis is an issue of concern in the health of forced migrants. Western diagnostic criteria are overwhelmingly used to assess the health of displaced populations (Chatty & Hundt, 2005), although these are increasingly being validated for major forced migrant groups. The use of such standardized instruments, both for diagnosis and also for indices of concepts such as stress, well-being, or self esteem, may be inconsistent with local and indigenous classifications of health and ill health.

Exposure to trauma is the most consistent predictor of psychiatric disorder among such populations (Silove & Kinzie, 2001). Other factors, such as social environment, living conditions, pre-existing vulnerabilities and demographic factors affect mental health. In contexts of resettlement, insecurity, low socio-economic status, unemployment and other post-migration stressors are associated with increased and prolonged psychopathology. Insufficient research has been conducted into ways in which the mental health of forced migrants could be improved. Silove argued that in some cases,

policies that ensure family re-unification may be more effective in promoting mental health than psychosocial counseling. Among young adult Burmese refugees, Buddhist values of self-confidence and camaraderie were protective against psychological disorder (Allden et al., 1996). Religion has been shown to have protective effects in some cases, as have political and ideological commitment (Desjarlais et al., 1996). Social linkages and support have also been shown to be important. In one study with Iraqi refugees, poor social support was found to be more predictive of poor mental health than was a history of torture (Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998a). Social and personal factors mediate the risks for ill health among forced migrants in various contexts. In terms of scholarship, work that considers the mental health of forced migrants from a more holistic perspective is increasingly available (Ahearn, 2000).

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework – Culture, Mental Health and Experience in Contexts of Uncertainty

In this chapter, I set out the theoretical foundations on which I draw for this dissertation. In this project, I draw on a range of theoretical perspectives which together influence the primary perspective of this study, which I describe as culture, mental health and experience in contexts of uncertainty. As I will describe below, this study thus builds on a number of interconnected theoretical trajectories in anthropology. First, I will discuss approaches to subjective experience in medical and psychological anthropology, and consider how such perspectives have been applied to contexts of suffering and recovery from violence. Next, I consider subjectivity and suffering in contexts of uncertainty and insecurity, including a discussion of the use of the concept of liminality to describe the sensation of being ‘betwixt and between’ experienced by some refugees. Finally, I ground discussion of culture and mental health in a review of ethnopsychological and ethnopsychiatric work in the Middle East. This review, combined with a discussion of idioms of distress, forms the groundwork for later analyses of Iraqi refugees’ idioms of suffering and well-being.

This study takes as its starting point the importance of understanding individuals in cultural context, and in this it is indebted to a legacy of scholarship in psychological anthropology that has emphasized the relationships between culture and the individual (Bateson, 1936; Benedict, 1934; Mead, 1928; Sapir, 1949). It then draws on more recent scholarship in medical and psychological anthropology that emphasizes both

“experience-near” perspectives, and analyses of issues that matter most to the people anthropologists study (Kleinman, 1997, 2006; Throop, 2010). Drawing on work on social suffering and subjectivity, this study does not seek to separate affliction or illness from the political, social and cultural context in which it is produced. However, this study in some ways seeks to engage both experiential and representational approaches as, while it is a study of how people suffer and make meaning in a context of instability, it also situates these processes within the national and international realm of asylum and resettlement policy and practice. It is a study that seeks to understand how people experience and negotiate such institutional and bureaucratic processes in a context of instability and what, if any, are the implications for health, well-being and subjectivity. In order to achieve this purpose, this dissertation draws on an assemblage of a number of different theoretical perspectives in anthropology, especially those that emphasize subjective experience, suffering and states of insecurity and crisis

Experience-near approaches in medical and psychological anthropology

Linger (2005) broadly divides recent scholarship in cultural and psychological anthropology according to two perspectives, which he calls representational (or public) and experiential (or personal). These approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, yet represent an idealized, simplified portrayal of themes within the discipline. Representational perspectives are taken up by anthropologists whose focus is primarily on symbol and discourse, taking as their objects of study shared performances, rituals, documents and other representations. Experiential approaches focus much more on the personal than the public, considering such topics as mental processes, ways of being, personal agency, and the immediacy of individual experience. While this dissertation

draws heavily on experiential approaches that call for a person-centered approach, it also seeks to, as Linger puts it “grapple with the inherent tension (2005, p. 186)” at the intersection of both perspectives.

Geertz wrote of the distinction between “experience-distant” and “experience-near” approaches as a fundamental analytical and theoretical question for anthropologists:

An experience-near concept is, roughly, one which an individual - a patient, a subject, in our case an informant - might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one which various types of specialists - an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist - employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims. "Love" in an experience-near concept; "object cathexis" is an experience-distant one. "Social stratification," or perhaps for most peoples in the world even "religion" (and certainly, "religious system") are experience-distant; "caste" or "nirvana" are experience-near, at least for Hindus and Buddhists. (Geertz, 1974, p. 28)

For Geertz, “experience-near” and “experience-distant” approaches were not mutually exclusive, but were to be combined in such a way as to create a locally-salient portrayal of life without being overly confined by the particulars in an ethnographic context.

The turn to an emphasis on experience marks a turn away from primarily structural or symbolic perspectives towards one in which the focus of inquiry is the way in which individuals live in, perceive, and express culture. Since experience is inherently individual, the relationship between experience and its expressions is crucial for anthropologists, since experience can only be interpreted through expressions and representations. Bruner describes the relationship between experience and expression as:

dialogic and dialectical, for experience structures expressions, in that we understand other people and their expressions on the basis of our own experience

and self-understanding. But expressions also structure experience, in that dominant narratives of a historical era, important rituals and festivals, and classic works of art define and illuminate inner experience (Bruner, 1986, p. 6).

For Bruner, there is a temporal aspect to experience, as experience is something that one “goes through” and then tells about or expresses. Bruner (1986) distinguishes between life as it is lived, life as it is experienced and life as it is told, while recognizing that any expression of experience is always necessarily partial. An emphasis on experience is predicated on the idea of an active subject, since the subject is actively involved in constructing a self-referential representation of their lived experience, often through interactions with others.

Experiential approaches encompass a range of scholarship in psychological anthropology, including cognitive, phenomenological, humanistic and other approaches, many of which do not necessarily agree, but which do support the importance of subjective experience. (e.g. Strauss & Quinn, 1997). In medical anthropology, emphasis on experience has often focused on the relationship between “an illness, the person, and that person’s lived world (Jenkins & Barrett, 2004, p. 16).” More recently, medical anthropologists have turned to approaches that focus on subjective experience, especially during times of crisis and uncertainty (e.g. Biehl et al., 2007). Good and colleagues see the turn to subjectivity as an indication of a move away from earlier efforts to understand experience towards one in which the political valences of inner processes are inescapable and the interplay between the subject and subjection is a focus of analysis. They write:

Subjectivity denotes a new attention to hierarchy, violence, and subtle modes of internalized anxieties that link subjection and subjectivity, and an urgent sense of the importance of linking national and global economic and political processes to the most intimate forms of everyday experience. It places the political at the heart

of the psychological and the psychological at the heart of the political (B. Good, DelVecchio Good, Hyde, & Pinto, 2008, p. 3).

While an emphasis on experience does not necessarily imply a turn away from the social and cultural, Desjarlais (1997) cautions that experience itself is socially and culturally constituted. He raises two specific concerns about experience as an analytic category: epistemic, or how we come to know of and about experience; and ontic, or what we assume experience to be. Desjarlais is critical of some anthropologists who, he argues, take a too romantic or sentimental approach to experience by asserting that experience provides authenticity, richness and veracity in contrast to structural, “experience-distant” models. By according authenticity to “experience”, we lose the ability to question data and its construction, as well as the status of experience itself. As Desjarlais writes:

The problem with taking experience as a uniquely authentic domain of life – as the first and last court of appeal – is that we risk losing the opportunity to question both the social production of that domain and the practices that define its use (Desjarlais, 1997, p. 12).

By contrast, Desjarlais does seek to question the construction of the domain of experience and argues that it is a historically and culturally constituted process predicated on certain ways of being in the world (Desjarlais, 1997, p. 13).” Specifically, the idea of experience as an interior felt process undergone in response to some phenomena is predicated on a particular notion of an agentive, unitary and inward-looking self that has its historical roots in a tradition of European thought dating to the 16th century. Desjarlais’ critique of the idea of experience, and the importance of hermeneutics in deciphering it for the purposes of anthropology, are worth keeping in mind, especially given the historical and

geographical specificity of ideas such as the importance of narrative, interpretation, and personal transformation which are often understood to make up the stuff of experience.

Suffering and subjectivity in states of crisis and uncertainty

In *Writing at the Margin*, Kleinman (1997) seeks to recast suffering, broadly and inclusively construed, as interpersonal or intersubjective experience. Elsewhere, Kleinman argues that suffering, as a concept, defies dichotomies between representational and experiential approaches. He writes that suffering “includes the individual level but also transcends it as cultural representation, as transpersonal experience, and as the embodiment of collective memory. That is to say, one can speak of suffering as being social (Kleinman, 1997, pp. 316–317).” In some ways, ideas of social suffering act as a bridge between person-centered concepts of experience and more structural issues of political violence, injustice and insecurity. When Kleinman (2006) exhorts us to study what is “most at stake” for our research participants, he speaks to the intersection of the personal and the political, economic and moral. Violence, displacement and other forms of crisis are often portrayed in the media and in some scholarship as discrete episodes of “humanitarian emergency” or “disaster”. Yet as Davis (1992) has pointed out, such events, and the suffering that is associated with them, are part of the continuum of normal human experience, and emerge from ongoing, often seemingly banal aspects of society, culture and history. Therefore an anthropology that focuses on lived experience in everyday contexts is not necessarily in contradiction with one that investigates sites of crisis and moments of uncertainty and insecurity.

Exile and experiences of liminality

Liminality, the condition of being “betwixt and between” initially used to describe the condition of being between social states in the context of rites of passage (Turner, 1967; Van Gennep, 1960), has frequently been applied to describe the experiences of refugees and other forced migrants (Becker, Beyene, & Ken, 2000a; Griffiths, 1997). According to Turner, liminality is an interstructural, transitional stage in the process of moving from one social state to another. States, as opposed to statuses, have a number of different possible meanings for Turner (1987), including profession, state in the life course, and emotional or psychological states. Liminality occurs when a person, in the context of ritual, leaves one state and exists in a marginal context between states before being reconciled or re-incorporated into the new state. During the liminal period, participants are divested of the trappings associated with the previous state but have not yet acquired those of the new. They are invisible, marginal, ambiguous, paradoxical and imbued with creative potential.

Although originally applied to rites of small scale societies, liminality has been applied to forced migrants in a number of different ways. Generally, liminality is invoked to describe the “in-betweenness” of the experience of exile and the ways in which, at least initially, refugees have left places of origin but have not yet been “incorporated” into the place of asylum. Malkki (1995b) draws on liminality and Douglas’ (1966) observation that what is unclear is often considered unclean to explain the ways in which refugees are sometimes regarded by others as polluting. Malkki critiqued the academic

literature as portraying refugees as “structurally invisible” in the sense that problems were attributed to them.

Liminality has also been used to describe refugees’ experiences of uncertainty or disruption in exile (Becker, Beyene, & Ken, 2000a). In Becker and colleagues’ study of resettled Khmer refugees in the United States, refugees understood resettlement as liminal both as an expression of the profound uncertainty of their lives and as a strategy of resisting a difficult and unsatisfactory present by rendering it temporary. Mortland (1987) investigated how the structure and practice of refugee camps can contribute to refugees’ experiences of liminality, which she associated with powerlessness and dependency. Other scholars have considered how experiences of displacement affect liminality associated with rites of passage, such as the transition between childhood and adulthood (Hampshire et al., 2008; S. Turner, 2004). Griffiths (1997) considered how in contexts of diaspora, liminality may be limited in its explanatory power given the hybridity of globalized identities among refugee groups.

More broadly, considerations of liminality and displacement evoke concerns about the effects of uncertainty, disruption and marginalization on people, especially people who have suffered conflict and forced migration. Recently, anthropologists have sought to characterize climates of violence, uncertainty and instability and to understand their institutional, discursive and subjective aspects. Such inquiries draw into question received assumptions about humanitarian efforts, and necessitate a re-examination of forms of social and political power. Recent anthropological work in post-conflict settings and in contexts of asylum focus not only on the experience of suffering, but on the ways in which suffering is performed, adjudicated and represented.

James (2004), in her work in Haiti, writes about how Haitians who had been victims of political violence sought to have their suffering ‘recognized’ through the use of accepted discourses of trauma and the effects of this process on their subjective and intersubjective experiences of pain. Using the concept of “neomodern insecurity” James seeks to show how in the post-Cold War era, familiar concerns about security have been reconfigured with new technologies of intervention, or techniques of power in the Foucauldian sense. James expresses concern about how, through processes of recognition, the experience of suffering is alienated from the subject and transformed into what she terms the “trauma portfolio” – or the documentation that verifies suffering and accords recognition, status and benefits to “victims” and “survivors” (James, 2004). One of the dangers associated with re-casting sufferers as “victims” is that it can be understood as a process of othering.

In his work on the politics of asylum and undocumented foreigners in France, Fassin (2001) writes of the development of what he calls the “biopolitics of otherness”. The biopolitics of otherness refers to the inscription of discourses of immigration and asylum onto the body as the legitimacy of asylum as a category is increasingly eroded, and humanitarianism becomes one of the only remaining legitimate means of according status to asylum-seekers. Fassin writes:

In the case of undocumented foreigners, as all other possibilities of getting a residence permit were progressively restrained by successive legislation, health and illness have increasingly become the most legitimate ground for awarding legal status from the point of view of both the state authorities and lawyers and advocates of the immigrants' cause. In the same way, while civil and political rights have been increasingly eroded by repeated modifications of the law and by unmonitored administrative practices, the widely recognized legal right to health care has hardly been challenged, even by the most conservative participants in the immigration debate. The *suffering body* has imposed its own legitimacy where

other grounds for recognition were increasingly brought into question (Fassin, 2001, p. 3).

For Fassin, two discourses of the body are at play in this context; the racialized body, which defines undocumented foreigners in terms of their otherness and illegitimacy, and the suffering body, which emphasizes humanitarian and moral responsibilities, and which is increasingly accorded value. However, as James (2004) notes, humanitarian recognition of human suffering is often portrayed not in terms of rights, but as a gift, with all the attendant meanings associated with gift-giving. The suffering body is not necessarily accorded legitimacy; instead, it must be recognized as such by professionals.

In contrast to other contexts such as truth and reconciliation commissions (Ross, 2001) and testimony therapy (Weine, 2006) for example, the words of a refugee or asylum-seeker are judged in an adversarial environment. In cases of the adjudication of refugees, asylum-seekers and others seeking status, the question is less about how to make one's pain understood by a potentially sympathetic listener. In refugee contexts, a refugees' words or testimony are often held to be suspect, which is paradoxical since a refugees' testimony is often the primary means of evidence available for adjudicating a claim. As Fassin and others (Fassin & d' Halluin, 2007; Fassin & Rechtman, 2009) have noted, suffering inscribed on the body and legitimized by medical and mental health professionals, especially through discourses of the 'psychic traces' of trauma, are increasingly supplanting refugees' testimonies as evidence of persecution, suffering and humanitarian need. This dissertation seeks to build on this body of work by considering subjective experience and suffering in the insecure context of uncertain asylum. As part of this project, I consider local idioms of suffering, and the ways in which they are

transformed in particular contexts. In order to provide a framework for this inquiry, the next section reviews the literature on ethnopsychology, mental health and culture in the Middle East.

Ethnopsychology and Ethnopsychiatry in the Middle East and North Africa

As White (1992) remarks, people almost everywhere engage in talk about selves, feelings, motivation and other aspects of subjective experience. The ubiquity of such talk reinforces the notion that ethnopsychology, which can be glossed as indigenous modes of constituting selves, persons and experience, is an important domain of inquiry for anthropologists interested in understanding subjective experience. While older models of ethnopsychology focused on constructs of individual psychology and personality, newer perspectives do not typically ground conceptual models within the individual, but instead consider the relationships and processes that join cognitive, social, and institutional forces.

While ethnopsychology is concerned with normal, non-pathological aspects of psychology, the self and the person in local perspective, the field of ethnopsychiatry investigates local understandings of mental illness and the cultural systems charged with treating mental illness. As Gaines (1992b) has pointed out, all psychiatric systems, whether folk or professional, can be understood as ethnopsychiatries, since all are equally grounded in culture. In the section that follows, I briefly review work on ethnopsychology and ethnopsychiatry in cultures of the Muslim Arab Middle East. The

Middle East and North Africa is an area of religious and ethnic diversity, however I primarily focus on Muslim Arabs here because the vast majority of the study sample were Muslim Arabs. There is also significant diversity in customs, beliefs, and practices among Muslim Arabs. In addition, the Middle East and North Africa region has undergone rapid cultural change in recent years, the implications of which for mental health are not well understood. Since this dissertation is concerned with psycho-social well-being and subjective experience, I review work on both normal and pathological concepts of the self and psyche in the Middle East and North Africa.

Although ethnopsychology as a domain of study has sometimes been controversial, one of the main contributions of ethnopsychological studies are the ways in which they investigate the cultural dimensions of categories such as emotion, personality, and psychology, among others. Recent studies of ethnopsychology have considered how local psychologies are transformed in the context of global processes, and, in some cases, can act as mediators of globalization (Anderson-Fye, 2003). The Middle East and North Africa region is one of great ethnic, cultural, social and religious diversity. Even among members of a specific ethnocultural group, great variation exists, and so any account of ethnopsychology in the region must necessarily be one that recognizes the multiple, and changing, ethnopsychologies that exist. Early studies of the 'Arab mind' portrayed a simplistic, and sometimes demeaning, portrait of cultural psychology in the region. Newer approaches have focused on correcting such depictions by emphasizing diversity, variability and change. Taking into account changes in perspective in the discipline over time, ethnopsychological studies of populations in the Middle East and North Africa have identified several broad themes. The first is a collective orientation which in particular

emphasizes the family. A second theme, particularly relevant for cultural psychiatry, is the emphasis on God and, in negative cases, on the devil as opposed to personal responsibility.

An important theme is the emphasis on the collective over the individual that has been identified in a number of different populations in the MENA region (Al-Krenawi, 1999). The individual is understood as embedded in a collective, the most important unit of which is the family. Also drawing on affiliations based on kinship, the larger entity of the tribe may be important for social identity (Al-Krenawi, 1999). As a result, interdependence may be more accepted and one's appearance in front of others is important (Okasha, 1999). This has implications for mental health and well-being as guilt, one symptom of depressive disorders, has limited salience for populations that are more affiliative. Instead, shame becomes an important factor. Recent cultural and social changes have limited the practice of extended families residing together and it is now more likely that a household is made up of a nuclear family. However, affiliation and interdependence continue to be the norm, as networks of nuclear families engage in mutual support, including in the realm of decision-making related to mental health care (El-Islam 2008). The importance of the family has implications for mental health care. For example, Arab patients are frequently accompanied by family members when they present for treatment, which necessarily has implications for the relationship between the patient and the therapist/physician. Second, it is considered shameful in many cases to provide treatment for a disabled child or elder outside of the home and for this reason, residential care may be avoided (Okasha, 1999).

A second theme, related to the first, is an emphasis on superhuman forces, such as God, the devil, or destiny, and their role in human behavior. El-Islam (1982), in his discussion of Arab cultural psychiatry, notes the linguistic affinity between the devil and worrying thoughts, both of which can be denoted by the Arabic word *wiswas*. He argues that negative thoughts, behaviors, and impulses are all attributed not to the person themselves, but to the devil. Conversely, the ubiquitous sayings, or attitudes, of *insha'Allah*, *masha'Allah*, and *alhumdulilah*, provide just three examples of the ways in which the power of Allah is invoked to explain almost any aspect of life in Islamic societies. *Insha'Allah*, which literally means “God willing” has many practical meanings in daily life, and especially expresses the hope that something will occur. This phrase generally invokes the sentiment that events and actions occur only if God permits. *Masha'Allah* means “what God wills” and is an expression used to acknowledge accomplishments or other joyous events or circumstances, such as the birth of a child. While celebratory, this expression also invokes the Islamic idea that all accomplishments or other positive occurrences are due to the will of Allah. *Masha'Allah* is also interesting from the perspective of ethnopsychiatry because it is sometimes used as a preventive measure against the evil eye, which will be discussed more below. *Alhumdulilah*, an expression meaning “praise to God” or “thank God” is a common response to a number of questions, including to inquiries about one’s health or well-being. It too reminds of the power of Allah in determining the conditions of human life. A further illustration of this idea is Crapanzano’s (1973) caution when speaking of a healing cult in Morocco whose practices draw on power, or *Baraka*, from God, that to speak of the role of religion in healing is nonsensical in a context in which the omniscience of God infuses all aspects of

daily life, including healing. While Crapanzano's work also illustrates that healing may not be based solely on religious precepts, the idea that God's will is omnipresent is incontrovertible.

As will be discussed in greater detail in this dissertation, the concept of the person in Islam is a holistic one. The term for the self, or psyche, in Arabic is *el-nafs*, a term which denotes different aspects of human existence, variously body, behavior/conduct, and affect (Okasha, 1999). This holistic notion of the human suggests that the Greek notion of mind-body dichotomy does not necessarily apply to this population. However, linguistic analyses suggest that, despite the identification of the heart as a site of understanding and learning in the Quran, in everyday language the intellect (*3aql*) is understood to be the site of thought, while the heart is considered to be the location of the emotions and personality characteristics such as virtue (Maalej, 2008). As will be discussed below, cultural change has implications for understandings of the self and the person, however concepts of the holistic, communal self, and the importance of religious and superhuman forces are important to everyday life as well as ideas of health and illness in the region.

Mental Health and Illness

The Arab Middle East and North Africa has a long, documented history of conceiving of, and treating, mental illness.¹ The earliest psychiatric hospital in the world

¹ For an extended historical perspective, see Okasha (1999) for a discussion of mental illness in the Pharaonic and Islamic periods. In particular, Okasha presents information from papyri that identify a syndrome not unlike hysteria long before Hippocrates coined the term.

was established in Baghdad in the year 705, closely followed by one in Cairo in 800 and Damascus in 1270 (Youssef, Youssef, & Denning, 1996). Currently, some countries in the MENA region have developed national strategies for addressing mental health that emphasize deinstitutionalization and the provision of care in the community. For example, from 1991-1996 Egypt implemented the National Mental Health Program, which emphasized the decentralization of mental health care, the provision of primary care services in community settings, and the formation of mental health “teams” made up of a variety of health care professionals. Traditional, religious and folk healing are also employed in the treatment of mental illness. For example, in the Egyptian context, it has been estimated that about 60% of patients first approach traditional or religious healers before they seek biomedical psychiatric treatment (Okasha, 1999).

In Arab cultures, traditional beliefs, especially those related to the supernatural, are an important part of local understandings of mental illness and its treatment. In many cases, traditional beliefs and religious ideas intermingle and co-exist and multiple traditional notions about what constitutes mental illness may exist simultaneously. Supernatural agents and forces, such as the *djinn*, the devil, the evil eye and sorcery are sometimes thought to be the cause of mental illness (El-Islam, 1982). For example, a commonly used term in Arabic for insanity, *majnoon*², is linguistically derived from the word *djinn*.³ In the Koran, the *djinn* are supernatural spirits who are not necessarily good or bad. Some are considered to be believers while others may be more negative.

² *Majnoon* is commonly used to refer to people who are considered mad, insane, or psychotic. The term appears several times in the Koran. Okasha suggests that the term's use in that text, in combination with common usage, suggests some ambivalence towards the term since in the Koran the Prophets tend to be perceived as *majnoon* when they approached people with their message.

³ The word “*Djinn*” in Arabic has a number of overlapping meanings, including “shelter, screen, shield, paradise, embryo and madness (Okasha, 1999, p. 920).”

However, they are more closely tied to humans than higher spirits such as the Angels, and can take on human or animal states. Possession by *djinn* is one local explanation for mental illness, although it is not always identified as such. A person possessed by *djinn* may engage in bizarre behaviors of which they claim to be unaware (El-Islam, 1982). They are not typically held responsible for these behaviors which are attributed to the *djinn*. The relationship between possession and mental illness in the anthropological literature is a long and controversial one, and the tendency towards instrumental and medicalized views of possession has been subjected to critique (Boddy, 1994; Csordas, 1987). While recognizing that possession and possession cults may sometimes be best understood in religious or social terms, I will focus more specifically here on their importance in ethnopsychiatry in the Middle East.

Zar cults, although not Islamic, make up part of the moral universe in many majority-Muslim countries, including Sudan, Egypt, Yemen, Iran and other countries in the Middle East. *Zar*, a typically female-centered possession cult, has different forms depending on the location. Different types of afflictions can be addressed through the ritual healing of a *zar* cult, including for example mental and social problems in Egypt (Sengers, 2003), or fertility problems in Northern Sudan (Boddy, 1989). Another example of ritual healing, especially of demon-possession, is the *Hamadsha* in Morocco as described by Crapanzano (1973). The *Hamadsha* draw on mystical strands of Islam such as Sufism as well the Moroccan tradition of saints. Their healing rituals are characterized by dance, trance and ritual harm including cutting oneself with knives. Afflicted individuals suffering from various types of affliction including psychosis and

depression seek assistance from the *Hamadsha*. Crapanzano writes of the *Hamadsha* as being primarily therapeutic in their intent and practice.

Not all supernatural forces that are implicated in illness result in possession, as in two cases found throughout the region, sorcery and the evil eye. The evil eye and sorcery, although both involve humans inflicting harm on others by supernatural means, have some important distinctions. In instances of sorcery, a person summons spirits to harm someone else. The evil eye, a concept found in many cultures and locales around the world, is not necessarily associated with sorcery. While sorcery involves knowingly harming another, the evil eye can be evoked inadvertently, from someone who bears the victim no ill will. Envy is the primary cause of the evil eye, and an envying person can accidentally and unknowingly cause the affliction of a person of whom they are jealous. Both are understood to be potential causes of mental illness and misfortune more generally.

In Iraq more specifically, conceptions of mental illness are based on a combination of traditional beliefs and superstitions, religious ideas, and biomedical perspectives. Common beliefs related to mental illness are held by diverse religious and ethnic groups within Iraq, and the region more broadly, which suggests the pagan roots of some concepts of mental illness such as the evil eye (Shoeb, Weinstein, & Mollica, 2007). While conceptions and treatment of mental illness cannot be reduced entirely to Islam, the role of religion in social and medical life in this region is important. For example, the concept of fate or destiny is a central one in Islam, and the idea that mental illness is a result of God's will is one example of its centrality (Murad & Gordon, 2002). Mental illness in Iraq is highly stigmatized and typically only people who suffer from

psychosis or severe developmental delay are classified as mentally ill. Being labeled mentally ill can have negative social implications for a patient and their family. In some cases, mental illness in the family can result in a family's children being deemed unmarriageable (Shoeb, Weinstein, & Mollica, 2007). The social implications of mental illness may be one reason for significant somatic presentation among this population. Below I briefly describe the literature on idioms of distress as an entrée into locally salient modes of expressing psychological affliction among Iraqi refugees.

Idioms of Distress

Idioms of distress refer to the variety of locally-salient ways in which people who are members of particular social or cultural groups convey or express affliction (Nichter, 1981). Nichter called for:

viewing ethnopsychiatric phenomena as idioms of distress underscored by symbolic and affective associations which take on contextual meaning in relation to particular stressors, the availability and social ramifications of engaging alternative expressive modes, and the communicative power of these modes given intervening variables and the responsiveness of concerned others (Nichter, 1981, p. 379).

Idioms of distress are thus best understood as relational expressive modes that emerge in social and cultural context. While cross-cultural studies of idioms of distress have illustrated the wide cultural variability in the experience and expression of affliction, as well as illuminated the cultural nature of our own, taken for granted, idioms. However, in addition to considering the form and content of idioms of distress, anthropologists have sought to understand why certain idioms emerge in specific contexts (Nichter, 2010). For

example, in circumstances where more open expression of dissent is not possible, they can allow people to express protest against social or political injustice (Nichter, 1981). Idioms of distress may also emerge as a byproduct of the introduction of new diagnostic categories or medical technologies (Nichter, 2010). Idioms of distress are also changing over time, and, at any point in time, people may be negotiating between past, present, and future idioms.

There are a number of different types of idioms of distress, including conditions that meet biomedical criteria for psychiatric disorder, cultural illness syndromes, and religious or supernatural afflictions (Hinton & Lewis-Fernández, 2010). Idioms of distress can be episodic afflictions or more long-term, ongoing, conditions. They can be behavioral, somatic, psychological, spiritual, supernatural or some combination of these. Despite their differences, all idioms of distress are individual or collective means of expressing distress that vary across cultures and draw on locally-salient themes, metaphors, traditions and symbols for their meaning. Some idioms of distress that have been well-developed in the literature include *ataques de nervios* among Caribbean-Latino populations (Guarnaccia, DeLaCanela, & Carrillo, 1989; Guarnaccia, Rivera, Franco, & Neighbors, 1996), *dhatu* loss in South Asia (Nichter, 1981; Obeyesekere, 1976; Trollope-Kumar, 2001), *khyâl* attacks among Cambodian refugees (Hinton, Pich, Marques, Nickerson, & Pollack, 2010). As Hinton and Lewis-Fernández (2010) note, idioms of distress are a taken-for-granted part of everyday realities of health, wellness and illness. As such, they fit into the networks and systems of symptom recognition, etiologies, ethnopathology, remedy and care-seeking in a particular context.

In the Middle East and North Africa, a number of idioms of distress have been described in the literature. Early work on mental illness in the region argued that Middle Eastern patients tended to express psychological afflictions, especially affective disorders, somatically as opposed to through idioms of depressed or altered mood (Bazzoui, 1970). Somatic as opposed to affective presentations of symptoms have been noted in many contexts in the Middle East and North Africa. In a study of depression in Egypt, Okasha and colleagues (1994) found that Egyptians often emphasized symptoms such as agitation and somatic presentations but did not experience sensations of guilt or reproach. Several reasons have been articulated for somatic idioms of distress in this population. First, in a context where mental illness may be highly stigmatized and poorly understood, somatic presentations may be emphasized over affective ones. In addition, somatic presentations may allow a patient to access care of some type, whereas affective presentations may be thought of as something that a person must just bear or handle through non-medical means (Okasha, 1999). In general, the extent of somatization says something about the preference given to physical suffering over psychological complaints.

Very little research exists on idioms of distress in Iraqi populations. Recent efforts to adapt the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire for use by Iraqi refugees included the collection of life histories of Iraqi refugees in Dearborn, Michigan who had fled prior to 2003 (Shoeb, Weinstein, & Mollica, 2007). Several key idioms of distress were identified by Shoeb et al (2007, pp. 456–457). Because of their direct relevance to the topic of this dissertation, I briefly summarize the five primary idioms described by Shoeb and colleagues below:

1. *Dayeg*: Refers to feelings associated with problems of daily living or uprootedness and can include symptoms such as tiredness, sleep problems, boredom, problems concentrating or taking initiative, rumination, and somatic complaints.
2. *Qalbak maqboud*: Literally refers to the idea that the heart *qalb*, is being squeezed, or crushed. Shoeb et al do not associate this term with somatization per se, but instead interpret *qalbak maqboud* as an expression of affect in which the experience of one's heart being squeezed relates to feelings of sadness, dysphoria or anxiety.
3. *Asabi*: In Arabic, *asab* means “nerves” and the idiom of *asabi* refers to feelings of nervousness and irritability which can result in irritability or lack of patience in interpersonal relationships.
4. *Nafsaak Deeyega* or *Makhnouk*: These two expressions relate to tensions associated with different kinds of suffering and may sometimes be expressions of panic. *Nafsaak Deeyega* refers to shortness of breath and difficulty breathing associated caused by the chest being constricted as a result of negative feelings. *Makhnouk* refers to a choking feeling.
5. *Nafseetak ta'abana*: el-nafs is a term that has multiple meanings, but generally denotes the psyche or self. This phrase literally means that the soul is tired and Shoeb et al note that it is associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression.

The idioms described above are interesting because they illustrate some of the themes present in the literature on ethnopsychology in the region. Specifically, they suggest a holistic notion of the person who is embedded in, and constituted through relations with

others. The idioms evoke embodied suffering in which somatic and psychological complaints are embedded in life experiences and conditions. These idioms suggest that social and cultural factors and contexts, including that of exile, have specific implications for the understanding and definition of idioms of distress in this population.

Social and Cultural Factors that Impact Mental Illness

Recent conflict in the Middle East and North Africa have led to a significant body of clinical and epidemiological research on the mental health impacts of violence, torture and other traumatic experiences on populations from and in this region. In particular, these studies have focused on the incidence of PTSD in war-affected civilian populations and forced migrants. Some research has considered social and cultural factors that either contributed to, or was protective against, psychopathology. Loss of social networks and separation from family were important factors that seemed to contribute to vulnerability to psychiatric disorder (Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998b; Karam et al., 1998). Protective factors included religious faith, political commitment, and being psychologically prepared for torture (Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998b; Karam et al., 1998; Shoeb, Weinstein, & Halpern, 2007).

Non-violent social change has also been implicated in changing notions of mental health and illness. Rapid cultural change has also been associated with changes in mental illness among Arab populations. El-Islam (2008) has documented how in the Arabian Gulf, increased educational and employment opportunities for women have led to the disappearance of a culture-bound syndrome that, in the past, had afflicted unmarried and infertile women. Change in illness categories and experience as a result of social

transformation suggests that the changes associated with forced migration may also have implications for concepts of mental illness and well-being. This dissertation, as a study of suffering and well-being in particular contexts of personal and cultural change, will contribute to the literature on the experience and expression of mental health and illness in the Middle East and North Africa.

Chapter 4: Background

Introduction

This chapter provides context for the analytic chapters which follow. In it, I draw on academic, NGO/INGO, government and media sources to provide a limited introduction into the conditions that led Iraqi refugees to flee their country as well as to place Iraqi refugees in Egypt in the context of Iraqi forced migration in the Middle East. Events described in this chapter, as well as estimates of casualties, refugee populations and other key figures of interest, are often highly controversial and sites of vigorous debate. These controversies highlight how in Iraq, violence and forced migration are inherently and intensely political. Well-meaning Iraqi informants urged me to “not even go there”; however any discussion of the situation of Iraqis in Egypt demands an understanding of the reasons for their flight. In this chapter, I first provide some background on the circumstances in Iraq which, among other effects, caused millions of Iraqis to flee their homes. Second, I situate the current “Iraqi refugee crisis”, which has now been ongoing for more than six years, in the context of forced migration from Iraq more generally. The millions of Iraqis who fled their country prior to 2003, while not directly part of this story, are different from and connected to the most recent Iraqi refugees in a number of relevant ways. While different in demographic composition and political affiliations, earlier Iraqi refugees make up part of the transnational networks of current Iraqi refugees, and have to some degree influenced their settlement patterns.

Third, I turn to the “Iraqi refugee crisis” as a regional phenomenon in the Middle East. Syria and Jordan have hosted the vast majority of Iraqi refugees, many more than Egypt. I briefly discuss Iraqi refugees in the region in order to situate Iraqi refugees in Egypt in this larger story. Finally, I turn to Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Here, I briefly discuss some basic characteristics of the Iraqi refugee population in Egypt and review existing research on the topic.

Background on the Situation in Iraq

In this section, I provide a brief, and somewhat cursory, background into the most recent conflict in Iraq. In addition, I provide a limited discussion of some of the key events and processes in the last few decades. There are two main reasons for this historical sketch. First, I provide information on Iraq since 2003 in order to present the acute events and set of circumstances which led Iraqis to flee their country in the millions. Second, recent historical events figure prominently in some of the narratives that will be presented in this dissertation; many of the Iraqis with whom I spoke had lived through, at a minimum, the Iraq-Iran war, the first Gulf war and the twelve years of economic sanctions as well as the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the violence and upheaval that followed. In their narratives, as in reality, these events are connected and form part of a larger narrative of exile and coping. For many Iraqis, political unrest and war have been themes not only of the last decade, but of much of their lives. These experiences of violence and insecurity, and the ways in which people cope with and adapt to them, are a major part of this dissertation. This section aims to provide some background as to why the Iraqis who participated in this study chose to leave Iraq, why they are unable to return, and how events in Iraq continue to have importance for their lives.

The 2003 U.S./U.K. invasion led to civil strife in Iraq which continues to this day and which formed the impetus for the mass forced migration which is the focus of this study. The specific details of this violence remain contested and complex, and are far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Often referred to as ‘sectarian violence’, this strife drew on ancient narratives of the rift between Sunni and Shi’a Islam that emerged after the death of the Prophet Mohammed.⁴ However, to portray Sunni and Shi’a Muslims as inherently divided or in conflict risks glossing over the diverse range of positions and identifications in Iraq as well as the many examples of connection and interrelationship that existed in Iraq prior to 2003. Although Shi’a Muslims and other minorities were oppressed under Saddam Hussein’s regime, mixed marriages, mixed neighborhoods, and diversity in the government bureaucracy and the military are all evidence of points of connection between religious sects and ethnicities. One aspect of the destructive power of the violence that emerged following the 2003 invasion was in the way in which it highlighted differences, crystallized identities and destroyed spaces of commonality among Iraq’s diverse population.

After the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, the absence of a strong state and a climate of insecurity further encouraged Iraqis to turn to other groupings, including tribal, sectarian, ethnic and regional allegiances in order to provide security and protection (Al-Mohammad, 2010; Boyle, 2009). This built on patterns of allegiance under the previous

⁴ The split between Sunni and Shi’a Islam occurred 29 years after the Prophet’s death in 632 AD with the murder of the Caliph Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed. In the quest to determine who should lead the *Umma*, or Islamic community, one faction argued that Muslims should follow the descendents of the Prophet. This group was known as the *Shi’at Ali*, meaning the partisans of Ali. A rival group from Mohammed’s tribe took the caliphate, and others who were disgruntled by this turn of events joined the Shi’a. For centuries, relations between Sunni and Shi’a Muslims have been more or less peaceful, with many historical and modern leaders calling for Muslim ecumenism. There is great diversity of practice and belief within sects.

regime in which the stifling of political opposition was such that Iraqis identified with religious, tribal and ethnic leaders for authority separate from that of the state. However, in a climate of fear and uncertainty, this plurality of groups led to great insecurity. In 2005, the number of militias, insurgent groups, tribal groups and criminal gangs carrying out attacks exceeded one hundred (Filkins, 2008). At the same time as the military, police and other organs of the state were disbanded, weapons and ammunition became widely available in the marketplace, leading to well-armed civilians and militias and the absence of governmental authority (Sahlins, 2011). Further adding to insecurity, the police and army were often infiltrated by militias, while militias and gangs wore official uniforms of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

In many cases, the ‘official’ forces of the police, security forces and army joined the violence. In 2006, each one of Iraq’s government ministries had a ‘facilities protection force’ (Sahlins, 2011). The Ministry of Interior (MOI) was the most feared example. Following the fall of the regime, Shi’i parties and militias, such as the Mahdi army and the Badr Organization battled to control the intelligence and security organization. Infamous for secret prisons under Saddam Hussein, the MOI continued to operate secret detention centers where detainees, mostly Sunnis, were tortured (Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), 2007). The line between state and non-state perpetration of violence was often blurry.

Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the United States and its allies, armed groups of insurgents, mostly Sunni Muslims, fought back against the occupying forces. In 2004, a relatively small number of Iraqis began to flee the country, mostly in response to attacks by insurgent groups and kidnappings (Amos, 2010). Beginning in 2005 and

reaching its peak in 2006-2007, Iraq was overtaken by sectarian, political and criminal violence. This violence was notable in that civilians were the primary targets (Boyle, 2009). In February 2006, the bombing by Al Qaeda of the Al Askariya mosque in Samarra, a holy site in Shi'a Islam, was followed by attacks on Sunnis. In these retributive assaults, Sunnis were often forced to flee their homes. It was during this period that the majority of Iraqi refugees, 50% of whom are estimated to be Sunni, fled the country.

Violence took many forms, including kidnapping, murder, arbitrary detention and torture. Terrorist groups conducted larger attacks, such as suicide and car bombings, designed to have a large impact. Houses and businesses were also blown up. Arbitrary arrests, 'disappearing' of people, detention in secret prisons occurred. More random and sporadic violence, including random killings and drive-by shootings occurred in the context of specific and targeted attacks, including death threats, extortion, kidnapping and murder. Entire neighborhoods were intimidated through displays of violence, including tactics such as leaving dead bodies in the street for residents to see. Violence was not evenly distributed throughout the country. Baghdad was the site of the most violence and unrest (Boyle, 2009). In Baghdad, most minorities who had lived in mixed neighborhoods had been forced to flee, reshaping the geography of the city along sectarian lines (Riera & Harper, 2007). This 'sectarian cleansing' occurred to some extent in other cities as well (Boyle, 2009). Americans have been complicit in this violence, and in many cases been part of it, including private contractors and the American military (Sahlins, 2011). This includes standoffs between insurgent groups and coalition forces as

well as the imprisonment of Iraqis in terrible conditions, the most visible example of which was Abu Ghraib, and includes random killings

Civilian casualties in Iraq have been sporadically documented and often contested. According to the Iraq Body Count project, which documents actual reported civilian deaths, some 101,366 – 110,719 civilians have been killed since the conflict began in 2003 (Iraq Body Count, 2011). Levels of civilian casualties far outnumber that necessary to categorize the violence as a civil war, although analysts and policymakers have often been reluctant to do so (Fearon, 2007). In addition to casualties, a large number of Iraqis were injured and wounded, although this number is not counted. It can be estimated that about five to seven times more individuals were wounded than killed.

Sahlins has referred to post-2003 violence in Iraq as a “postmodern state of nature (Sahlins, 2011, p. 26)” because of its seemingly ‘all against all’ pervasiveness and because of the ways in which global and national identities have been merged with intimately local antagonisms. This interconnection between the global and the local was not only confined to the role of the U.S./U.K. invasion in sparking local conflict. In the battle for influence that followed, regional powers, such as Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia, pursued their interests by supporting their co-religionists in Iraq (Sahlins, 2011). Non-state actors as well, including members of terrorist organizations previously absent in Iraq and foreign fighters seeking to join the insurgency against the Americans, travelled to Iraq to engage in battle (Amos, 2010). As global and national concerns acted on Iraq, so too the events in Iraq acted on the region and the world as concerns about sectarian tensions and militant Islam were reinforced throughout the region and the world.

The recent forced migration of millions of Iraqis is just one consequence of violent conflict in Iraq which has exacted a heavy toll, mostly on the civilian population. Although the situation in Iraq is arguably improving, violence is still a feature of daily life for many Iraqis. Violence has implications far beyond the toll in terms of morbidity and mortality as it disrupts livelihoods, social relations and even the physical landscape of the country. The Brookings Institution's *Iraq Index* (O'Hanlon & Livingston, 2011) tracks a range of security and development indicators in order to document the reconstruction of the country. As of 2009, the most recent year for which data was available, only 45% of the population had access to potable water; 50% had regular access to electricity; 50% had adequate housing and 30% had access to health services.

Levels of violence have declined in recent years, and mass population movements seem to have stopped. However, events such as the church bombings in December of 2010, which led Iraqi Christians, especially in Baghdad and Mosul, to flee, demonstrate that the country is not yet safe (International Rescue Committee, 2011). Internally displaced persons and those refugees who do return live in neighborhoods divided on sectarian lines, where security, both economic and physical, are difficult to attain. Political stability is also an issue. Following the 2010 elections, a political crisis emerged when a government could not be formed. Although this has now been resolved, the election and its aftermath are an illustration of the fragile political situation in the country, one which many Iraqis find troubling (UNHCR, 2011b). These reasons, among others, explain why many Iraqi refugees find it difficult to return to Iraq, even when conditions in asylum are undesirable.

Periods of Iraqi Forced Migration

Iraqi forced migration since the 2003 invasion has often been referred to in the media and other accounts as “the Iraqi refugee crisis”. The more than 2 million refugees and 2.5 million internally displaced persons certainly supports the urgency in this claim. Iraqi forced migration since 2003 represents the largest episode of forced migration in the Middle East (Fagan, 2007). In 2007, it was estimated that at least one out of every eight Iraqis was displaced, either inside or outside Iraq (Riera & Harper, 2007). The conflict-induced displacement since 2003 is certainly the largest episode of forced migration experienced in and from Iraq (Fagan, 2007). However, Iraqis have been leaving, and returning to, Iraq for years for a variety of reasons and this history of migration has implications for current Iraqi refugees as well as for Iraq and the region as a whole.

Historically, Iraqis left their country for a range of reasons, many of which blur the boundaries between forced and voluntary migration. In the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of Iraq’s Jewish population left the country as a result of mixed push and pull factors, including persecution at home and the opportunity to settle in Israel. During the time of Saddam Hussein’s regime, especially during the 1990s, political dissidents and members of religious and ethnic minority groups, especially Shi’a and Kurds, left Iraq. In particular, large numbers of Shi’i and Kurdish Iraqis fled the country following the failed uprisings in 1991 after the first Gulf War (Russell, 1992). It is estimated that about five million Iraqis left the country during Saddam Hussein’s rule, but this migration happened more slowly, over decades (Amos, 2010). Many travelled to countries in the region such

as Syria, Jordan and Iran. Existing relationships and experiences of displacement have influenced more recent Iraqi forced migration.

This period was also marked by large numbers of foreign workers travelling to Iraq for work, some of whom lived in the country for many years. In the 1980s, at least 1.3 million migrants travelled to Iraq for work or to fight in the Iraq-Iran war (Russell, 1992). About 70% of these migrants were Egyptians. When the situation in Iraq deteriorated at the beginning of the first Gulf War, many of these migrants fled the country. As will be discussed in greater detail later in the dissertation, the experiences of living and working in Iraq during the 1980s continue to influence many Egyptians' understanding of Iraq as well as their interactions with Iraqi refugees in Egypt.

An extended Iraqi diaspora has developed as a result of the substantial migration out of the country. Long-standing Iraqi communities exist especially in neighboring countries but also in Europe and North America. The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime encouraged some in the diaspora to return to Iraq. Approximately 350,000 exiles returned to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein, mostly from 2003-2005 (Riera & Harper, 2007), at about the same time that other Iraqis were beginning to flee the country.

Iraqi refugees who have left their country since 2003 are in some respects different than those who emigrated in the past. About 60% of the Iraqi refugees in the Middle East are Sunni Arabs, 15% are Christians, with smaller numbers of Shi'a, Kurds, Mandeans and Yazidis (Amos, 2010). Many Iraqi refugees worked in professions and/or the government in Iraq. The country has experienced a profound brain drain as a result of violence and forced migration. Academics, artists, lawyers, physicians, government

employees, military or police personnel were actively targeted by terrorist or criminal groups (Boyle, 2009). To provide just one relevant illustration, about 34,000 physicians were registered in Iraq at the time of the 2003 war. It is estimated that about 20,000 of that number have left the country, some 2000 have been murdered and 250 have been kidnapped (O'Hanlon & Livingston, 2011).

The UNHCR estimates that about 1.5 million Iraqis are internally displaced as a result of the recent conflict. These Iraqis fled for many of the same reasons as refugees, yet for a number of reasons remained within the borders of Iraq. Few have been able to return to their homes, often because of security concerns (International Rescue Committee, 2011). The plight of internally displaced Iraqis is one which merits wide attention. Many live in desperate conditions and lack access to social services, security, and opportunities for livelihoods. The Iraqi government has yet to develop a comprehensive strategy for assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) (International Rescue Committee, 2011). While the conditions of displaced persons inside Iraq are beyond the scope of this study, their experiences are immediately relevant for refugees since many who fled are unable to return to their previous place of residence and risk becoming internally displaced if they go back to Iraq. In addition, regional governments, as well as some European countries, have recently begun deporting Iraqi refugees, many to areas considered unsafe by UNHCR (International Rescue Committee, 2011). These deportees, in addition to many returned refugees, are at risk for internal displacement.

Iraqi Refugees in the Middle East

Some two million⁵ Iraqi refugees have fled to countries in the region, most notably Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, the Gulf States and Iran. Iraqi displacement in the region is sometimes compared with the Palestinian exodus in 1948, although the former is actually larger in terms of numbers displaced. Until the most recent forced migration of Iraqis, the flight of the Palestinians, and their subsequent, ongoing encampment in countries in the region, was the largest and most significant episode of forced migration in the modern Middle East. In the region, the term ‘refugee’ is often implicitly assumed to mean Palestinian (Fagan, 2007). In addition, countries that now host large Iraqi refugee populations, such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, also host Palestinian refugees, many of whom have now been displaced for about three generations.

The conditions of the Palestinian refugees, who have been displaced indefinitely, has influenced policy and practice in the states that host Iraqi refugees in the region. Neither Syria nor Jordan are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention and both define Iraqis not as ‘refugees’ but as ‘guests’⁶. This designation is related to governments’ fears that refugees might stay indefinitely and seeks to ensure that Iraqis, unlike the Palestinians, will not be allowed to establish indefinite residency (Ferris, 2007). The desire to think of Iraqi refugees as ‘guests’ is also ideological, since governments are loathe to consider the situation in Iraq to be as problematic and lengthy as that facing the

⁵ It is important to note that all population estimates provided in this chapter are approximations, as no accurate numbers of Iraqi refugees are available for any country in the region.

⁶ In the region, only Egypt, Iran and Yemen have signed the Refugee Convention.

Palestinians. In addition to legal and ideological implications, the legacy of the Palestinian refugees in the region affects the ways in which regional governments have responded practically to Iraqi refugees. Unlike the Palestinian refugees, who were mostly housed in camps, many of which continue to persist to this day, most Iraqi refugees live in urban environments.

Political and economic concerns have also influenced how countries in the region have responded to the displacement of Iraqis. The situation in Iraq has had profound implications for the region, most of which are beyond the scope of this paper. However, some of these implications directly affect the lives of Iraqis living in exile in the region. Among these are concerns about security held by regional governments who see post-2003 Iraq as a place where religious and ethnic extremism could grow and perhaps spread (Fagan, 2007). Concerns about security threats as well as religious and sectarian differences have led to entry restrictions and other limitations for Iraqi refugees. Policies implemented by states had regional implications for forced migration. For example, Iraqi migration to Syria and Lebanon increased after Jordan imposed entry restrictions at its borders (Fargues, El-Masry, Sadek, & Shaban, 2008).

I will briefly discuss the situation of Iraqis in Syria and Jordan, the two countries which host the largest number of Iraqi refugees. Syria hosts the largest number of Iraqi refugees in the region. Although the exact number of Iraqi refugees in Syria is unknown, the population has been estimated at 1.2-1.6 million people (Fagan, 2007). Initially, Iraqis could enter Syria and were provided with a three month entry permit. However, after 2007 the Syrian government threatened to close the border and imposed severe visa

restrictions. In general, the Iraqis who fled to Syria tended to be poorer than those who travelled instead to Jordan (Fagan, 2007).

Jordan hosts some 700,000-800,000 Iraqi refugees, the majority of whom live in Amman, the capital (Fagan, 2007). Iraqis could typically enter Jordan as “temporary guests” and receive a 3-6 month renewable entrance permit. Wealthy Iraqis could also enter on investment visas or by depositing at least \$150,000 in a bank account in Jordan. When Iraqis started to flee to Jordan in large numbers in 2005, they were allowed three months residency without the right to work. However, in November 2006, Jordan began to restrict entry to Iraqis in a number of ways, such as restricting the entry of single Iraqi men between 17-35 years old, mandating pre-arrival visas, and allowing only those Iraqis with “G Passports”⁷ to enter (Fargues et al., 2008). Iraqis in Jordan have been accused of being wealthy while simultaneously being accused of being a drain on the country’s resources.

Iraqi refugees have experienced some similarity in conditions in the various countries of asylum in the Middle East. Most host countries, including Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon introduced measures to restrict the entry of Iraqis in response to increased numbers of Iraqis seeking refuge in their countries. Reports suggest that in most countries in the region, Iraqis are simultaneously assumed to be wealthy and a drain on the host country’s resources (Fargues et al., 2008). In most situations, Iraqi refugees are urban refugees, living in major cities in the region. A key similarity in the conditions

⁷ Iraqi passports have gone through a number of iterations over the years, including A, G, S, M, N, H (and maybe K) series. The A series is the newest and has been in production since 2010. The G series, which has been issued since 2006, is accepted by most countries (Government of Canada, 2006). Due to fewer security features and concerns about their manufacture and distribution, other series of passports may not be accepted for travel to some countries.

for Iraqi refugees in the Middle East is the experience of living lives ‘on hold’. Countries in the region have allowed Iraqi refugees to enter and live within their borders, yet because of limited legal status, precarious livelihoods, and the ongoing instability of the situation in Iraq, Iraqis are unable to build sustainable lives in exile. The experience of life in limbo is one of the key themes of this dissertation and will be returned to at some length.

International responses to Iraqi forced migration have been mixed. As discussed above, regional governments, such as Jordan and Syria, have allowed large numbers of Iraqi refugees to seek refuge in their countries, yet typically these refugees cannot access stable residency or gain work permits. Humanitarian aid and assistance have been provided primarily by international organizations, modestly funded by Western donors (Fagan, 2007). Traditional resettlement countries have accepted increased numbers of Iraqis for resettlement, yet these numbers remain low. In 2009, UNHCR reported that of the more than 80,000 vulnerable cases it had referred to countries for resettlement, less than half had actually been resettled. This suggests that even for the few that are accepted for resettlement, the process takes an extended period of time.

Since 2007, the UNHCR has assisted some 3000 Iraqis to return to their country from countries of asylum, although the UNHCR does not encourage return to Iraq (UN News Service, 2010). In 2010, a UNHCR survey found that the majority of Iraqi refugees who had returned to Baghdad regretted their decision to go back. Among the main reasons cited for this regret were insecurity, economic hardship and a lack of basic services (UN News Service, 2010). Many who had returned reported being forced to do

so because they could no longer afford to live in asylum, not because they felt that the situation in Iraq had improved.

Iraqi Refugees in Egypt

In the section that follows, I briefly describe the available information on the situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Estimates vary as to the number of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, and have ranged from 10,000 to 150,000 (Fargues et al., 2008; Yoshikawa, 2007). No reliable estimate of the Iraqi refugee population has yet been made. The majority of Iraqi refugees in Egypt live in the greater Cairo area, especially suburbs such as 6th of October City and Nasr City. The majority of Iraqi refugees fled to Egypt as a family unit, rather than as individuals (Fargues et al., 2008). However, separation between at least some family members has occurred in many cases.

Many Iraqi refugees entered Egypt on a one-month tourist visa. Most entered before late 2007 when the Egyptian government stopped issuing visas to Iraqis, thereby making it extremely difficult for Iraqis to enter the country. Once Iraqis arrived in Egypt, they were expected to register with the Ministry of Interior within ten days (Fargues et al., 2008). Egypt, unlike Syria or Jordan, is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, although the country has entered reservations to a number of articles, including those that provide access to public relief, public education, rationing and the right to work (Badawy, 2009). Egypt is also a signatory to the 1969 OAU (Organization of African Unity) Convention on refugees. A 1954 Memorandum of Understanding between the Egyptian Government and UNHCR determined that UNHCR, not the Egyptian Government, has the responsibility for conducting refugee status determination (RSD) in the country.

In order to be recognized as refugees, Iraqis could register at the UNHCR. Circumstances in Iraq were deemed sufficient to justify providing Iraqis seeking asylum with 'prima facie' status. With this status, Iraqis who registered at the UNHCR were provided with a yellow card, which serves as documentary proof of their asylum-seeker status, without having to first undergo a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interview. In this regard, Iraqis differed from other refugee populations in Egypt.⁸ Once registered at UNHCR, refugees had access to some services which were offered by UNHCR implementing partners.

In 2008, the Iraqi government began an initiative through which they sought to encourage Iraqi refugees in Egypt to return to Iraq. Iraqi families were offered free transportation by airplane and a million Iraqi dinars (about \$850 U.S.) if they returned. In 2008, about 940 Iraqis participated in this program and left Egypt on government-funded airplanes (Minnick & Nashaat, 2009). News media reported that 1,700 Iraqis left Egypt in February 2011 as part of a government-sponsored evacuation in response to unrest during Egypt's revolution (Agence France-Presse, 2011).

Very little research has been conducted on Iraqi refugees in Egypt. In 2008, the Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC) conducted a statistical survey of 1004 Iraqi refugee households in Egypt (Fargues et al., 2008). This study was unable to rely on random sampling measures and as such, cannot be seen to be representative of the population of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. However, the investigators

⁸ Asylum-seekers from other countries would follow a more lengthy and difficult process to gain refugee status. First, they would register at UNHCR. They would then undergo a Refugee Status Determination Process, which

conducted the survey with 1004 Iraqis, making this the largest study yet conducted with Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Another strength of the project is that it included Iraqi refugees who met the 1951 Convention definition for refugee status regardless of whether or not they were registered with the UNHCR.

The CMRS/IDSC study provided some important demographic and social information on the circumstances of Iraqi refugees living in Egypt. They found a demographic distribution among Iraqi refugee households that included both genders and covered the range of the life-span, reflecting both the indiscriminate nature of persecution in Iraq and the tendency of families to migrate as a unit. The majority of the Iraqi refugees who participated in this study were Sunni Muslims who identified as Arabs. The study identified a variety of reasons for leaving Iraq, many of which were mixed or overlapping. The primary reported reasons for flight were general security concerns, direct threats, and ethnic tensions. The researchers also found that Iraqi refugees had no immediate plans to leave the country. From the sample, only 77 of the 1004 refugee respondents said that they planned to leave Egypt in the near future. Of these, only four had been accepted for resettlement abroad.

Minnick and Nashaat conducted an exploratory qualitative study on perceptions of resettlement and repatriation among Iraqi refugees in Egypt. The study was based on a small sample of 29 Iraqis, with data drawn from three focus groups, yet nonetheless raised some interesting issues worthy of further study. Participants in the study reported that they were forced to stay in Egypt, despite less than ideal conditions, because they perceived that it was impossible for them to return to Iraq and they perceived few opportunities to travel elsewhere. However, many suggested that they might be forced to

return to Iraq sometime in the future, most often because of dwindling financial resources. This study also provided important information about whether or not Iraqi refugees might consider returning to Iraq, and under what conditions return would be feasible and acceptable. The vast majority of the study participants stated that return to Iraq is currently impossible, but only two, the only Iraqi Christians in the study, felt that it would never be possible to return.

Another interesting theme that emerged in this study was discussion of rumor surrounding resettlement and repatriation. About return to Iraq, Minnick and Nashaat write:

Those who knew other Iraqis who had returned, said that most regretted it and tried to leave Iraq a second time. It was commonly mentioned that once you return to Iraq, you must close your UNHCR file and you cannot leave Iraq for five years after that date because of a stamp in your passport. Some mentioned that there are ways to get around this, in particular by getting a second passport. Others mentioned that once one leaves Egypt, it is impossible to return because the Egyptian authorities put the returnee's name on a list at the airport. It is important to mention here that many of these beliefs about returning to Iraq that were expressed by the participants are not substantiated by any evidence, but seem to be rumors that have spread among the Iraqi communities residing in Cairo (Minnick & Nashaat, 2009, p. 9)."

This quote is interesting because it highlights the lack of information available to Iraqi refugees, and the way in which rumor circulates as people seek information. A lack of access to information and its effects is a recurring theme in this dissertation, so Minnick and Nashaat's finding is of particular interest.

This brief discussion of Iraqi refugees in Egypt highlights the lack of available research on the topic. Although the numbers of Iraqi refugees in Egypt are much smaller than those in Syria or Jordan, the topic nonetheless is deserving of attention. Egypt's

status as a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention suggest that the legal situation of Iraqis in Egypt is likely different than in other countries in the region. In addition, Iraqis who fled to Egypt may be different than those who travelled to Syria or Jordan.

Fieldsite

My primary field site in Cairo was an NGO that provides legal and psychosocial services to refugees. From this site, my work radiated outwards to include other sites of importance to my topic. I spent time in the homes, businesses and neighborhoods of Iraqis in Egypt. I visited organizations that provide a range of services to refugees, as well as their community events. Below I describe my main field site, the Resettlement Legal Aid Project, and other sites of participant observation in more detail.

The Resettlement Legal Aid Project

The primary field site for this research was the Resettlement Legal Aid Project (RLAP), a small organization which makes up part of St. Andrew's Refugee Services in downtown Cairo. RLAP was initially founded as an informal organization by Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond in 2006 as a response to an influx of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. At the time, Dr. Harrell-Bond, an influential anthropologist who has been instrumental in the development of the field of refugee and forced migration studies, worked with a small group of legal interns to advocate for and assist Iraqi refugees. Over time, the organization became known as the Iraqi Information Office. Dr. Harrell-Bond left Egypt in 2009 and the office was moved from her apartment to the grounds of St. Andrew's

Refugee Services. It was then directed by Jeffrey Hancuff. In 2009, the Office decided to broaden its services from Iraqis exclusively to include refugees of other nationalities. The Office was then renamed the Resettlement Legal Aid Project. At the time that I joined RLAP in the summer of 2009, the office had expanded its purview to include both legal and psychosocial services.

RLAP was an ideal field site because it was the only organization in Cairo that focused primarily on serving Iraqi refugees. Although RLAP had begun to include refugees of other nationalities, at the time I began my fieldwork, the clientele remained about 80% Iraqi. Iraqi refugees had been extremely limited in their ability to form organizations by the Egyptian Government, and previous attempts by Iraqis to form Community Based Organizations (CBOs) had led to the forcible closure of the organization as well as arrest and detention of its leaders. By virtue of its location in the apartment of a well-respected foreign professor, and later inside the walls of a church, RLAP had remained relatively unmolested although the specter of security involvement was always present.

RLAP's focus on advocacy around resettlement was an additional reason for choosing it as a field site. While the organization provides many services in addition to legal advocacy, it is the only organization that has taken on resettlement as its main area of service. Policies and practices had created more resettlement opportunities for Iraqi refugees than for other refugee groups in Egypt. With these opportunities, however, came unexamined anxieties which form one part of this research study. For this reason, RLAP was an ideal location for the research.

During my time at RLAP, I volunteered in both the legal and psychosocial departments. In the legal department, I worked individually with both Iraqi and Sudanese refugees who were seeking legal advocacy. I wrote testimonies and appeals, completed applications, followed up on cases, prepared clients for interviews, and helped out in a number of other areas. In the psychosocial department, I assisted in the formation and implementation of an Iraqi youth group. In addition to my volunteer work, I did some of the interviews in available office space and also conducted naturalistic observations. Most other interviews and observations were conducted in sites in greater Cairo.

Cairo, Egypt

Cairo, Egypt's capital and the largest urban area in Africa (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010) is a chaotic, teeming metropolis with an urban area that spills out from the downtown core in all directions out across the desert into suburbs and new cities. References to Egypt's pharaonic past coexist with crumbling colonial architecture, shiny western franchise stores and restaurants, and half-finished makeshift structures. It is a city of tremendous diversity and contradiction – a joy and a struggle to live in for its residents and for visitors.

The majority of Iraqi refugees in Egypt live in three main areas, 6 October City, Nasr City and Giza. I spent time in all three of these locations and conducted interviews with refugees from each of these areas. In an effort to include Iraqis who might not live in the main enclaves, and who might therefore be different from other Iraqis, I sought out a small number of research participants from other parts of Egypt including Alexandria,

Port Said, and Sharkiya. When participants were willing and it was possible, I travelled to visit respondents in their homes. Interviews in homes nearly always seemed to be the most productive. In their homes, research participants were comfortable and became my hosts in a way which rendered them benevolently powerful and made me seem less threatening. Home visits allowed for observation of living conditions, family dynamics and other aspects of daily life which I could not have understood from in-office interviews. I got to play with children, receive advice and offers of cooking lessons, and was able to visit with refugees whose disabilities or health problems might otherwise have prohibited our meeting. Home visits even provided me with the opportunity to experience the grueling traffic of Cairo, a reality which refugees who often lived in outlying suburbs had to cope with on a regular basis.

In general, I tried as much as possible to experience the parts of Egypt in which Iraqi refugees had sought asylum. This Iraqi-centric position means that I am limited in my ability to write about interactions between Egyptians and Iraqis, although I did pay close attention when I had the opportunity to observe social interactions between Egyptians and Iraqis. In this respect, I know only half the story. However, my aim in this dissertation is to focus on the experiences of Iraqi refugees as they navigate life in exile in Egypt. Social relations between Egyptians and Iraqis form an important aspect of this study, but for the purposes of this project, I draw on my observations of Iraqis experiences and the accounts of Iraqi refugees themselves.

Entering the Field

I had been to Cairo many times before I returned for fieldwork. My father, originally born in a village in the Nile Delta, had moved with his family to Cairo before immigrating to Canada in the 1960s in order to study for his PhD. We had visited my large and wonderful extended family many times when I was a child. However, I had never visited alone, nor had we ever stayed for extended periods. Growing up, I had always been interested in my Egyptian heritage, but was keenly aware that I had a limited understanding of what that meant from a linguistic, social, cultural and religious perspective. The complications of conducting fieldwork in a location where one has roots is a topic that other anthropologists have dealt with extensively elsewhere. In Egypt, I often felt that I was neither completely Egyptian nor completely Canadian and that these identity issues had implications for my research. At times, this role proved to be challenging, such as when my aunt insisted that I be accompanied, for my own safety, to my first day at RLAP by my sixteen year old cousin – hardly contributing to the competent professional image I hoped to project! I also found it difficult to integrate into expat circles, which often included the service providers I hoped to know, as I was simply not allowed to stay out late in the evening and could not participate in the activities that others did. As fieldwork progressed, my family's expectation that I live as an 'Egyptian girl' began to create difficulties for my research. I wanted to spend evenings visiting with Iraqi families, and often found myself arriving home unacceptably late. On the other hand, there were also many benefits to my 'halfie' status, not least of which were a greater understanding of my father's culture which had ethnographic value as I had the opportunity to spend time with Egyptians and to participate in important holidays

and events which I might otherwise not have experienced. Having the opportunity to spend time with Egyptians and Iraqis gave me insight both into the social milieu in which the Iraqi respondents found themselves and also into the relationships between Iraqis and Egyptians in Egypt.

Chapter 5: Methods

This study has three main aims: (1) to take a person-centered view of the refugee resettlement process, and particularly foreground health and psycho-social well-being in that inquiry; (2) theoretically, to look at ways in which people attempt to manage states of insecurity; uncertainty and liminality and implications for their health; and (3) to document the situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. In order to address these aims, I employed a range of methods in a cross-sectional ethnographic study design, although participant observation throughout the duration of fieldwork provided a limited longitudinal perspective into the experiences of a number of key informants. I conducted fieldwork in Egypt both within a small non-governmental organization (NGO) in Cairo, Egypt and in a range of other community settings.

Methodology

As an investigation of mental health and subjectivity in particular social and cultural contexts, this study draws on person-centered ethnography as its primary methodology. In LeVine's (1982) formulation of person-centered ethnography, the approach provides a framework for anthropologists wishing to understand the ways that sociocultural milieus and processes influence, and are influenced by, subjective experience and psychology. LeVine identified three main social and cultural arenas in which person-centered data should be collected and compared: 1) routine interpersonal encounters; 2) public occasions; and 3) autobiographical discourse (LeVine, 1999, p. 23).

In this study, I sought to address these multiple arenas by observing social interactions, attending community events, and listening to people's accounts. Taken together, data from multiple contexts can provide a more nuanced account of the experience and expression of the phenomena of interest.

With its emphasis on the role of the individual in context, person-centered ethnography is, by definition, experience-near (Hollan, 1997). Hollan (1997, p. 220) writes: "an effort is made to represent human behavior and subjective experience from the point of view of the acting, intending and attentive subject, to actively explore the emotional saliency and motivational force of cultural beliefs and symbols." While I draw on person-centered ethnography's emphasis on individual experience, I do so with some caution given the importance of family as an organizing concept among the Iraqi refugees with whom I worked. However, arguably more important to person-centered approaches is the emphasis on seeking to understand phenomena from the perspective of the experiencing subject, however imperfectly given the limitations of an "outsider" ethnographer. In studies of cross-cultural mental health, taking such an approach involves considering the suffering that underlies concepts and labels such as psychiatric disorders (Hollan, 1997). For this reason, I chose to focus on locally-identified concepts of well-being and suffering as opposed to using psychiatric diagnostic measures.

A close attention to subjectivity does not preclude comparative analysis or theory-building, but instead provides it with a firm grounding in the lives of the people anthropologists study (Hollan, 2001). In this study, I sought to apply the person-centered framework to as many of the study procedures as possible, including study design, data collection and analysis. As the goal of the dissertation is to understand subjective

experience and well-being in contexts of urban displacement and through institutional processes, a person-centered approach was most appropriate and useful for the goals of the project.

Study Procedures

In order to allow for triangulation of data, I collected mixed-methods data from a variety of sources. In addition to participant observation, I conducted interviews with two key populations: 1) Iraqi refugees; and 2) service providers who were involved in various aspects of refugee assistance and administration in Egypt. I also drew on archival research, including a review of international refugee law and policy. In addition to policy, I sought out published information on refugee services whenever available. Finally, I was able to access a sample of redacted refugee legal testimonies, which provided supplemental information. These additional sources of data were useful for assessing threats to validity in the data from interviews and participant observation (Maxwell, 2004). Below I describe my methods in detail and present the demographic composition of the sample of Iraqi refugees.

Sampling Procedures

Estimates of the number of Iraqi refugees in Egypt have ranged over time from 7,500 to 150,000. While no accurate count exists, the range reflects not only change over time, but also differences in the ways in which refugees are counted, and the difficulty of counting a somewhat hidden population (This has been addressed to some extent in

Fargues et al., 2008). In order to be officially recognized as refugees in Egypt, Iraqis must be registered with UNHCR. However, there are likely many Iraqis in the country who are not registered yet who nonetheless meet the legal definition of a refugee. For those who do not register at UNHCR, tourist visas, student visas and investment visas are ways of gaining and maintaining residency in Egypt.⁹ Not only do Iraqis in Egypt gain residency in a variety of ways that makes counting them difficult, but the population has also changed in size as refugees leave Egypt either to return to Iraq, or to travel to other countries. While migration out of Egypt is limited, migration into Egypt for Iraqis has been curtailed due to the Egyptian government's decision in 2007 to begin refusing visas to Iraqis. These issues will all be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters but I mention them here to illustrate some of the difficulties associated with characterizing the population of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, and thereby, with gaining a representative sample.

Representative sampling of Iraqi refugees in Egypt was also hampered by the tenuous security situation in which Iraqi refugees live. Throughout my research, the need to be aware of security concerns was a consistently limiting factor – from interactions with organizations, to interactions with refugees themselves. A climate of insecurity, among other factors, made it somewhat difficult to find and contact Iraqi refugees.

RLAP kept a client record database of names and phone numbers which I had initially hoped would provide me with a sampling frame that would allow for probability sampling. However, I quickly ran into problems that rendered this plan unfeasible. The high mobility of the population meant that many of the clients might no longer be in

⁹ In Chapter five and eight I will discuss residency issues in more details, including refugees' expressed reasons for seeking one type of residency over another and the implications of different types of residency.

Egypt. Rapid turnover of phone numbers further complicated matters. Perhaps most importantly, my research assistants informed me that Iraqi refugees were unlikely to respond positively to an unsolicited telephone call asking for personal information. I recalled from my pilot work that many of the threats that Iraqis had received had come by telephone. This, combined with a generally unstable security situation for refugees in Egypt, convinced me that this sampling frame was unlikely to work. In addition, the RLAP client database only included Iraqis who had sought the organization's services, and I also hoped to include Iraqis who were not clients, especially those Iraqis who were not interested in resettlement.

Because of the limitations I faced in characterizing, identifying and accessing the desired study population, I chose to use a purposive sampling design to gain representation of the variation of the Iraqi population in Egypt. For the ethnographic interviews, I sought approximately equal representation of males and females, variation across the (adult) life course, variation in place of residence, a range of residency statuses, and a range of participation in resettlement programs. I drew on my key informants' contacts, RLAP clientele, and respondents' contacts.

Service providers were selected purposively in order to get representation from a range of types of organization. I expressly sought to include both providers who worked with refugees on a daily basis and those who were involved with refugee work at the programmatic or policy level. In addition, I sought out health care providers, mental health practitioners, social and psychosocial workers, legal advocates and administrators. I conducted interviews with 10 such service providers, all of whom were based in Cairo.

Recruitment

Refugee participants were recruited either face-to-face, by telephone, or, rarely, by email. I explained the nature of the study to possible respondents and invited them to participate. In order to be included in the study, Iraqi refugee participants had to be over the age of 18 and willing and able to consent to participate in the research. They also needed to meet the criteria of a refugee according to the United Nations Refugee Convention¹⁰. However, refugees did not need to be registered with UNHCR in order to participate. Refugees under the age of 18 were excluded as were those refugees with disabilities that would prevent them from being able to consent to research. In all cases, I provided potential respondents with a consent form, and also read the details of the consent form to them. Participants signed their consent to participate in the research project.

Service providers were recruited in the following way. Based on pilot fieldwork and on contacts with people in the field, I identified a list of refugee service organizations in Egypt. Some organizations did not provide direct services to Iraqi refugees, and were eliminated for that reason. From there, I sought to interview at least one service provider from each of the key organizations. Any employee, volunteer or paid, of an organization that provided direct services to Iraqi refugees in Egypt was eligible to participate. Service providers were recruited primarily by email or face to face. Due to difficulties of time and

¹⁰ While this was part of the inclusion criteria, I did not assess it prior to the interview. At the time that I was doing my fieldwork, the UNHCR continued to give prima facie refugee status to all Iraqi registrants from the central and southern governorates of Iraq. This meant that the UNHCR had determined that any Iraqi who had fled their country likely would meet the Convention definition of a refugee. As a result, I too assumed that most Iraqis in Egypt met the legal definition of a refugee and did not employ an intensive screening mechanism before interviews. Had a participant not been a refugee, I would have excluded them, but all participants met the definition of a refugee and therefore this was not an issue.

access, I was unable to interview service providers from all organizations. In some cases, I had the opportunity to interview more than one service provider from an organization.

It is difficult to determine the refusal rate for the refugee participants in this study. Prior to beginning data collection, I had been warned that Iraqi refugees were experiencing ‘interviewing fatigue’ from journalists and researchers and that I should expect that many people would not want to participate in the research. On the contrary, I discovered that Iraqi refugees were surprisingly willing to speak with me. At RLAP, in the community and in their homes, I found Iraqi refugees in Egypt to be incredibly welcoming and gracious hosts. Perhaps this is not surprising in a culture that so highly values hospitality, but I regularly felt humbled by the generosity and kindness expressed to me by research participants, who took me into their homes, helped me to navigate community events, and shared their time with me. Respondents mentioned a number of reasons for participating in the research, including as a way to tell their story, an ambition that the information might be used to help their community, and an expression of their support for educational and intellectual endeavors, including the education of a somewhat bumbling PhD student from the United States.

Only twice did participants expressly decide not to participate in the research. In several other cases, refugees may have chosen not to participate in a more subtle way by repeatedly postponing or rescheduling interviews. I tried to follow up several times with potential participants, however, in some cases an interview never became possible, and in these cases I inferred that the refugee was politely declining to participate in the research. While I recognize that the refugees who chose not to participate may have been different than those who did, I felt that respect for the privacy of this population whose security

was at risk in many ways outweighed my desire to speak to as many people as I could. In one case, I excluded a refugee from the research for ethical reasons. This particular man had been seeking services from RLAP and, during the informed consent process, seemed to view the research process as a means to access services more quickly. Because I never felt comfortable that he understood the purpose of the interview, I chose not to proceed with it and instead suggested he consider the regular procedure for accessing services.

Service providers were more difficult to recruit. There is a fairly well-developed network of organizations which work with refugees in Egypt and identifying potential respondents was not difficult. However, I found that many service providers were reluctant to speak with me because of fears that they might get in trouble with their employers. In addition, service providers were extremely busy and often had trouble finding time to meet with me. Managers and directors were often unattainable, not responding to requests for interviews.

Data Collection

Participant Observation

I conducted participant observation in order to address all three research aims, namely, to understand refugees' experiences of displacement in Egypt, their health and well-being, and the resettlement-seeking process. Throughout the period of fieldwork I visited areas of Egypt that were important to Iraqi refugees, including homes, businesses, organizations and neighborhoods. I also attended community, cultural and refugee service-oriented events. I sat in on workshops and community events, learned Iraqi games, tried to learn to cook Iraqi food, and attempted, with limited success, some Iraqi

dances. I also spent a lot of time conducting naturalistic observations in which I simply observed what was going on around me. Observations were regularly written up as fieldnotes and my reflections and preliminary analytic ideas were documented as analytic memos.

In my role as a legal and psychosocial intern at RLAP I learned many things about the refugee system in Egypt, the legal work of the organization and its clients, and the resettlement process. In this experience I learned firsthand what it is like to work intensively with a client for an extended period of time. I learned how to write a testimony, how to prepare a client for an interview, and how to advocate for a client in need of services. I also witnessed the elation that refugees and advocates felt when they were approved for resettlement, the crushing despair that they felt when they were refused and, most often, the sense of uncertainty or insecurity at almost every other stage in the process. I worked not only with Iraqi refugees but also with Sudanese refugees who had been in Egypt for much longer and had a much different set of experiences, needs and concerns. The experience of working with RLAP taught me many things about refugee life in Egypt, service provision, and the process of resettlement that I could not have learned otherwise. In this dissertation, I draw on these experiences as captured in fieldnotes and memos, however I do not include any information from clients who did not expressly consent to participate in the research.

Refugee Interviews

I conducted semi-structured, person-centered interviews with 110 Iraqi refugees. The goal of the interviews was to elicit refugees' own interpretations of their lives in

Egypt, their health and well-being, and their interactions with refugee institutions and policies. Interviews were conducted in the participant's language of choice, either Arabic or English. In the majority of Arabic-language interviews, I worked with an interpreter as I was not sufficiently proficient in the Iraqi dialect. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I was able to conduct some interviews in Iraqi Arabic without the aid of an interpreter. Participant preference guided the interview location. In most cases, interviews were conducted in either the RLAP office or the participant's home. Occasionally, by mutual agreement, we conducted interviews in other locations, such as coffee shops. Interviews ranged considerably in length, with the shortest being 45 minutes, and the longest lasting nearly three hours. Interviews conducted in homes often took even longer, as these interviews often took on the characteristics of a visit, involving tea and general discussion before and after the interview itself. If the respondent was willing, interviews were audio-recorded.

The interview guide focused on three main areas: life in Egypt; health and psychosocial well-being; and engagement with organizations and the refugee system. I also collected information about coping methods and hopes for the future. When appropriate, I sought to understand the participant's experiences with the process of seeking resettlement.

Service Provider Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten service providers in order to gain a better understanding of the institutional landscape which Iraqi refugees were navigating and to understand service providers' perspectives on the research questions. These

interviews were also conducted in the participant's language of choice, with the use of an interpreter when necessary and when the respondent agreed. We conducted the service provider interviews in a range of locations including the RLAP office and community spots such as coffee shops. As a measure of service providers' general discomfort with research, only one invited me to their office for the interview. Service provider interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. The rest all specifically requested a more neutral location. Interviews were audio-recorded if participants agreed.

Refugee Testimonies

Following my arrival in Egypt, I was informed by the Director of RLAP that a number of previous clients had consented to allow their information to be used, anonymously, for research purposes. This provided me with the opportunity to access de-identified refugee testimonies from clients who had agreed to have their stories included in research. Since these testimonies contained much of the information that I was seeking from the follow-up interviews, but came without the risk of any harm to the participant, I chose to alter the design of the research to incorporate an analysis of these testimonies.

I selected 45 cases for analysis of the testimonies and associated de-identified files. Cases were eligible to be included if they belonged to an Iraqi refugee who had provided their consent to have their files be used for research purposes. Cases were drawn from the more than four years of the organization's operation, and so were not all uniform, reflecting changes in the organization as well as in the different working styles of legal advocates. Cases were de-identified and the files redacted. While I draw on the testimonies to inform my analysis of the resettlement-seeking process, I was unable to

conduct a full content analysis of the testimonies for this dissertation and will complete this as part of a related future project.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analyses of the data were guided by research questions but conducted differently for each type of data collected as appropriate. The data were then triangulated to maximize validity. Throughout the course of the fieldwork, I regularly wrote fieldnotes and maintained analytic memos. Daily fieldnotes were more observational in nature, while analytic memos recorded emerging themes and theories during the data collection period (Maxwell, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Fieldnotes and memos were entered into Microsoft Word and later into Atlas.ti (Muhr, 2010).

Following data collection, recorded interviews were transcribed with the assistance of three transcriptionists: two anthropology graduate students and one professional who was also a native speaker of Iraqi Arabic. Because participants were provided with the choice of conducting their interview in Arabic or English, as well as whether or not they would like to use an interpreter, the interviews were conducted in Arabic, English, or a mix of Arabic and English. When necessary, interviews were translated into English for analysis. I reviewed and corrected all transcriptions and native speakers of Iraqi Arabic spot-checked the interpretation. During the transcription process, I wrote additional analytic memos and took notes on specific interviews. Interview transcripts, including refugee and service provider interviews, were entered into Atlas.ti for analysis.

Due to the small sample size, service provider interviews were analyzed for description of services and to provide a counterpoint to published information and refugee descriptions. In a few cases, service providers were also Iraqi refugees who worked in refugee service organizations; when this is the case, I have noted it in the text.

For refugee participants, demographic data and other categorical variables such as educational level, profession, city of current residence, and city of origin were analyzed using basic summary statistics. For refugee interviews and fieldnotes from participant observation, the analysis process included the following steps:

1. Initial coding using a modified grounded theory approach in which a priori and emergent themes were coded.
2. The development of a codebook to address the research questions and its systematic application to the interview transcripts and fieldnotes.
3. Analysis of coded data to both compare responses across main categories and to develop a processual model of the process of seeking resettlement.
4. Theory building to develop a person-centered theory of the process of seeking refugee resettlement, as well as to theorize the relationships between unsettled urban asylum, the process of seeking resettlement, and health and psychosocial well-being.

A number of strategies were employed throughout these steps to address possible threats to validity. These included the triangulation of multiple data sources, searching for discrepant data, and considering the existing literature (Maxwell, 2004).

Initial coding

The development of codes followed a modified grounded theory approach. I chose this approach because I wanted to pay attention to themes that emerged from the data, but also wanted to look specifically at certain themes drawn from the research questions. I began with a list of codes drawn from the research questions and ordered according to the research aims. In addition, I developed codes based on themes that emerged inductively from the data using a process of open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1963). The identification of themes was guided by Bernard and Ryan's (2009) suggestions for finding themes in qualitative data, which include looking for repetition, indigenous typologies and categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data and theory-related material (see also: Ryan & Bernard, 2003, pp. 88–94).

Development of codebook

The extended list of codes was then synthesized and reduced using axial coding and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1963; A. C. Strauss & Corbin, 1998) in order to develop the codebook. The list of codes and their application to the interview data were checked by a second researcher to ensure that the codes were being applied to the data appropriately. Codes were applied systematically to the interview transcripts and field notes. Data was coded for both the presence of themes and their absence, in order to identify data that would not fit the model.

Analyzing coded data

The next step was to draw on the themes identified during coding and to conduct cross-case and within-case analyses (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to both compare responses across main categories salient to the research questions, such as resettlement status and health status, as well as to develop a processual model of the process of seeking resettlement. In this step, I grouped themes across the data from the refugee interviews, service provider interviews, and participant observation to develop models which would enable me to answer the research questions. Negative case analysis was used to ensure that cases which did not fit the model would be considered.

Building theory

In this final stage, I considered and juxtaposed data as well as the analyses in order to develop a person-centered model of refugee resettlement that foregrounds refugees' experiences but also includes perspectives from service providers and data from participant observation. In addition, I drew on the analyses thus far to theorize the relationships between unsettled urban asylum, the process of seeking resettlement, and the health and well-being of refugees. The provisional theory was checked against data and refined in an iterative manner until saturation was achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1963). Taken together, these steps make up the analysis of the refugee data. These analyses were considered in the context of the literature as well as archival research on refugee policy and practice.

Ethics

The research protocol was approved by the Case Western Reserve University Institutional Review Board. RLAP, and its parent organization, St. Andrew's Refugee Services, reviewed the research protocol prior to my travel and issued me a letter of invitation. Following my arrival in Cairo, I shared the details of the research, including interview guides, with the leadership at RLAP. All respondents gave their informed consent to participate in the research.

Sample Characteristics

The characteristics of the refugee participants are presented in Table 1. I conducted person-centered interviews with 110 Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Women made up about 43% of the sample (n=47) and men made up the remaining 57% (n=63). The average age of interview participants was 41.3 years. The youngest participant was 19 and the oldest was 70. I attempted to interview participants from across the life span, excluding children under the age of 18, and this was achieved. The average family size in Egypt was 4.1 people (range 1-10), although family size changed over time as members came, left, were born or passed away.

The vast majority of the research participants self-identified as Muslim Arabs from Baghdad. However, there are some caveats associated with this definition. Because of the sectarian nature of the conflict in Iraq, I had been warned that Muslim participants might resist being forced to identify as either Sunni or Shi'a. As a result, I chose to simply ask participants their religion in an open-ended way. The fact that the vast majority of participants made a point of simply answering "Muslim" supported this

decision, as did exchanges with participants that suggested that by not asking these questions, I created a more open ‘safe’ environment for the interview. More than one participant said something along the lines of “they (read – journalists, researchers, westerners) always ask about Sunni - Shi’a”, or complained that foreign interlocutors focused excessively on sectarianism. Some participants did choose to identify as either Sunni or Shi’a, and this is reflected in the data.

The vast majority of participants were well-educated, professional Iraqis from Baghdad. While it is possible that this could reflect some bias in the sample, I believe that it is likely to be representative of the general population of Iraqis in Egypt. As will be discussed more in the next chapter, middle class, educated Iraqis may have been more likely to afford to travel to Egypt, which, although the cost of living is cheaper, would have required a bigger initial expenditure of money to buy plane tickets. In addition, Iraqis who had held positions in the previous government, police or military may have had both the resources to travel and the incentive to seek a destination farther away than Syria or Jordan, both of which host large Iraqi refugee populations and share a land border with Iraq.

There may be several explanations for why the vast majority of participants were from Baghdad. First, as Iraq’s most populous city, it was also the site of some of the worst sectarian violence, in which large numbers of people, including most of the participants in this study, were displaced. Second, as the capital city, it was home to large numbers of well-educated middle class government employees who could afford to travel to Egypt. Third, the proximity of Baghdad International Airport, the largest airport in the

country, may have made travel to Egypt more accessible to people in Baghdad than in other parts of the country, particularly during times of conflict.

Of the sample, 66.4% either had achieved, or were completing, post-secondary education. This percentage refers to the highest level of education completed, and thus does not capture the fact that many participants, especially younger Iraqis, were still engaged in their studies. Eight participants (7.3%) had completed less than a high school education and 27 (24.5%) had graduated from secondary school. Twenty-five participants (22.7%) had completed a diploma, which typically consists of two years of post-secondary study in Iraq. Thirty-nine (35.5%) had completed a bachelor's degree and nine (8.2%) had some kind of post-graduate education.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Refugee Sample

Variable	N=110
Gender n (%)	Female 47 (43%) Male 63 (57%)
Age Mean (range)	41.3 (19-70)
Religion n (%)	Muslim 97 (88.2%) Sunni Muslim 7 (6.4%) Sh'ia Muslim 1 (0.9%) Christian 1 (0.9%) Half Christian, half Muslim 1 (0.9%) No response 3 (2.7%)
Ethnicity n (%)	Arab 96 (87.2%) Chaldean 1 (0.9%) Kurdish 2 (1.8%) Palestinian 1 (0.9%) Turkoman 1 (0.9%) Mixed 3 (2.7%) Other 6 (5.5%)
Family size (number of members) Mean (range)	4.1 (1-10)
City of Residence in Egypt n (%)	6 th of October (Shaikh Zayed) City 55 (50%) Nasr City 22 (20%) Giza 12 (10.9%) Maadi 7 (6.4%) Alexandria area 6 (5.5%) Other 4 (3.6%) Unknown 4 (3.6%)
Place of Origin in Iraq n (%)	Baghdad 95 (86.4%) Ninawa 6 (5.5%) Diyala 3 (2.7%) Al-Basrah 1 (0.9%) Unknown 5 (4.5%)
Education level n (%)	Less than high school 8 (7.3%) High school 27 (24.5%) Diploma 25 (22.7%) Bachelor's degree 39 (35.5%) Post-graduate degree 9 (8.2%) No response 2 (1.8%)

CHAPTER 6: Life in Egypt

Introduction

This chapter establishes the setting by describing the general circumstances and living conditions of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Drawing on data from interviews and participant observation, I present aspects of Iraqis' lives in Egypt that will be relevant to analyses in later chapters. Iraqis regularly identified conditions of asylum in Egypt as causing suffering and motivating their efforts to seek settlement elsewhere. In interviews, Iraqis frequently referred to Egypt as a "temporary place" in which their lives were "on hold". This chapter presents data to show the conditions of life in Egypt which contribute to its conception as a temporary place.

I begin by discussing Iraqi refugees' experiences of travel and their reasons for choosing to come to Egypt. This is important because participants who fled Iraq and sought asylum at particular times may be different in terms of characteristics or experiences. Certainly, this population is different from the majority of Iraqi refugees who fled their country after the 2003 invasion and subsequent violence since the vast majority of Iraqis fled, not to Egypt, but rather to Syria and Jordan. In order to further understand the process of flight from Iraq, I asked participants their reasons for travel to Egypt, and especially why they had traveled to Egypt instead of another country of asylum. In addition, I present data on the multiple ways in which participants gained

information about Egypt before they traveled. For some, violence and persecution meant that they had to leave the country immediately and Egypt was the only available destination at the moment of flight. For others, also escaping from threats and violence, travel to Egypt was the result of a process of some negotiation. In this chapter, I discuss a range of ways in which participants gained information about Egypt and other possible countries of asylum as well as their reports about how, in a context of constrained choices, they came to decide to come to Egypt.

This chapter then moves from arrival in Egypt to consider aspects of daily life in Egypt. In interviews, I sought to gain an experience-near account of participants' lives, and so asked them how they would describe their daily lives in Egypt. For this question, I provided relatively few prompts and almost no parameters, as I was interested in seeing what aspects of daily life were spontaneously offered by participants. Many chose to characterize their daily lives in terms of feeling or emotion, especially "bored," "tired," "sad" "uncomfortable" or, occasionally, "comfortable". Others recounted specific problems or positive aspects of life in Egypt, while some presented activities. To supplement this data, I also collected more specific information about a range of aspects of life in Egypt, including activities, living conditions, education and employment. Finally, I discuss change in standard of living and status as these were issues that recurred repeatedly in participants' narratives, both explicitly and implicitly.

Family was consistently one of the most important issues for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Discussions of family suffused discussions of almost any topic in interviews or more informal discussions. Education, employment, health, the future, and other topics of importance were almost always related back to the family. For example, when I asked

participants about their future, the answers invariably involved the family. For parents, the future was often discussed in terms of their children's future lives, especially their education. For younger participants, questions of the future raised issues of the families that they hoped to have. For this reason, I discuss the family in length. First, I present data on family size and composition in Egypt. I then discuss the importance of family as a major theme in participants' narratives. In addition, I discuss changes in family dynamics wrought by conditions of exile in Egypt.

Social life, as with many other issues, was often understood in terms of the family. For the purposes of analysis, I discuss social life here in a separate section, although in some ways it is closely related to the preceding section. In this section, I consider social life from two perspectives, in terms of personal relationships between individuals and families, and in terms of larger issues of social integration and relations between Iraqis and Egyptians. First, I consider friends and relations, as well as social activities. Next, I discuss relations between Iraqis in Egypt. Finally, I discuss relations between Iraqis and Egyptians. For this, I draw exclusively on Iraqis' accounts, as well as my own observations, and as a result this analysis is necessarily partial. However, in this chapter, I am interested in Iraqis' perceptions of their relations with Egyptians, as they relate to their experiences of life in Egypt.

Finally, I turn to the larger theme of the chapter, which is the feeling of instability and uncertainty that Iraqis associate with life in Egypt. Drawing on participants' accounts, I define instability and discuss it in relation to experiences of past insecurity in Iraq. In particular, the temporal dimensions of instability as a sort of existential anxiety about the future will be considered. These discussions of life in Egypt, and the instability

associated with it, will form the basis for subsequent chapters on health and the process of seeking resettlement.

Travel to Egypt and Arrival

Date of arrival to Egypt

Nearly half of the total study participants arrived in Egypt during the second half of 2006. In 2007, the Egyptian Government began to restrict entry visas for Iraqis, which may explain the sudden decline in entry numbers. In the sample, arrival dates ranged from 2001-2009.¹¹ However, the participants at both extremes of this date range were unusual. Table 2 illustrates the range and frequency of arrival dates. In situations when participants came to Egypt, left, and then returned, I have included the most recent mentioned arrival. Multiple dates of arrival occurred in some cases. For example, some participants came to Egypt for a short period of time to determine whether or not it was a suitable place for their family to live, before returning to bring their family with them.

It is not surprising that the majority of participants arrived in Egypt during 2006-2007 when sectarian violence in Iraq was at its height. Participants who came earlier may have been specifically threatened because of associations with the previous government or military, or may have been in Egypt for another reason and stayed on when return to Iraq became impossible. Following 2007, the conditions in Iraq improved somewhat, but Iraqis continued to experience violence and forced migration. However, after 2007 it

¹¹ The participant who came to Egypt in 2001 was not excluded because he met the criteria of a refugee as he was afraid of suffering persecution if he returned to his country. Despite being somewhat different from other participants, this participant, who was a Palestinian – Iraqi, was included because as a Palestinian-Iraqi, he was more vulnerable in some ways than other participants and also represented an important demographic of Iraqi society.

became much harder to enter Egypt, which also explains the drop in arrivals. Iraqis who were able to enter after 2007 likely were enrolled in Egyptian educational institutions, or had found another way to get an expensive and elusive visa. When asked about their date of arrival in Egypt, participants' responses varied in terms of detail. Many participants were able, without looking at any documentation, to provide the day, month and year of their arrival in Egypt, while a very small number found it difficult to remember at all. The speed with which participants were able to produce important dates such as these suggests the salience of this travel and also perhaps reflects the fact that such dates must routinely be provided when participants seek residency, refugee status, or resettlement.

Table 2: date of arrival in Egypt

Date of Arrival	Number of Participants	Percentage
Before 2003	1	1%
2003	1	1%
2004	2	2%
January – June 2005	1 + 3 = 4	4%
July – December 2005	5 + 13 = 18	16%
January – June 2006	1 + 7 = 8	7%
July – December 2006	6 + 48 = 54	49%
January – June 2007	2	2%
July – December 2007	5	5%
2008	3	3%
2009	2	2%
Unknown	10	9%
Total	110	100%

Mode of travel

The means by which participants travelled to Egypt and the routes that they took seemed to depend on expediency, cost, and available modes of travel. Many flew directly from the Baghdad Airport to the Cairo International Airport, with an approximate flying

time of 2.5 hours. Others noted that at the time when they fled, planes were not flying from Baghdad to Cairo, so they were forced to travel first to Syria or Jordan, transfer, and then fly on to Cairo. Transfers in Syria or Jordan ranged from hours to months, as refugees sometimes had to wait for visas or chose to visit relatives or test the living situation in Syria or Jordan before travelling on to Cairo. Some participants took the much more arduous and lengthy journey of traveling over land to Jordan and then departing from Aqaba to travel to Egypt by sea, while others made the journey by land.

Reason for travel to Egypt

Participants articulated a number of reasons for their flight to Egypt. Three main types of reasons were mentioned; (1) the situation in Iraq which impelled participants to flee regardless of destination; (2) reasons why Egypt was a more appropriate destination than other countries such as Syria or Jordan; and (3) reasons for choosing Egypt independent of other countries of asylum. In most cases, some combination of these three reasons was cited. Taken together, these reasons provide a picture of why Iraqis chose to flee to Egypt.

“It is not for us to choose”: Persecution and insecurity as determinants of flight

First, Iraqis who came to Egypt were overwhelmingly fleeing persecution, instability and insecurity in their own country. Many participants spoke in general and specific terms about the violence they experienced in Iraq. They mentioned death threats, murders, kidnapping, detention, torture, home invasions, and generalized violence and insecurity. They also mentioned other aspects of insecurity and war that made their lives difficult including changes in the country, the loss of their jobs and livelihoods, lack of

services and facilities as well as political instability. For example, one participant, a 42 year old man, reported that he and his family fled in response to a kidnapping threat: “We came to Egypt because we were kicked out of our home - if we had not left we would have been killed - because of Sunni - Shi’a problems. They were going to kidnap my son so I left. (Participant #44: 42 year old Muslim Arab man)” Personal threats or threats to a family member were frequently the impetus for leaving Iraq. One participant, a former police officer in his forties, explained to me how he was targeted in Iraq because of his work with the police force. He had received a death threat and as a result had decided to flee the country. The decision to come to Egypt was not understood by this participant as being a choice: “I came here because I fled from danger because they threatened us, tried to kill us because we were police. So it is not for us to choose. (Participant 43: 42 year old Muslim Arab male)” For this participant, and others, travel to Egypt was not about choosing to come to Egypt, but about escaping from the situation in Iraq. Others spoke of how generalized violence and insecurity led them to flee the country.

In most cases, participants spoke of feeling the need to flee the country in order to protect themselves and their families. Another participant explained how she wanted to escape from Iraq by any means, and that at the time that she decided to flee, Egypt was the only place to which she was able to gain entrance.

I didn’t like to come to Egypt, I just wanted to go out from Iraq by any means. Because my life there was so so so difficult. And because the things that I saw in Iraq and I witnessed a lot of mess and killing and violence so I just decided that it’s impossible for me to stay in Iraq forever. So at that time I just wanted to go out from Iraq, so I thought that in any place it will be better there for me even if it will be Sudan. So I was working at the, I was working at the Egyptian embassy, I was working in the Egyptian embassy and it was easier for me to get the visa to Egypt, so I applied, and, and, so I applied to the Egyptian visa and at that time the Egyptian visa was hard to get but, they just empathized with my, sympathized

with my situation because my husband had been killed in Iraq, and they gave me the visa. (Participant #36: 34 year old Kurdish Muslim woman)

This participant later said “I didn’t want to come to Egypt, but there was no other country I could go to” and “it’s not my choice, it was the only choice that I had.” These statements, which echo those of the police officer above, illustrate how participants who were forced to flee suddenly because of violence or a threat to their lives were constrained, both in terms of their decision to flee Iraq and in terms of their destination.

“In Egypt the place is better”: Egypt as preferable to other possible countries of asylum

For others, Egypt was preferable in comparison with other countries of asylum to which they might have fled, most notably Syria and Jordan. A number of primary reasons were frequently cited for choosing Egypt over Syria and Jordan including cost of living, security, and feelings of comfort with the people. These reasons were sometimes cited together. Egypt was frequently referred to as “cheap” in comparison to Syria and Jordan, especially with respect to aspects of the cost of living, such as rent. For example, a 47 year old woman reported that she chose to come to Egypt because “I heard that Egypt is cheaper than Syria (*balad ghahees, ma’a deen*¹²). I thought I might find a job here” (Participant # 07 47 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman). Economic concerns were frequently cited by participants. In particular, the cost of housing was frequently mentioned as a consideration: “Housing in Syria is very expensive and it’s very crowded

¹² “an inexpensive country, with religion” This quote emphasizes the importance of the perceived cultural and religious commonalities between Egypt and Iraq for Iraqi refugees, in addition to the relatively affordable cost of living.

and there is a lot of Iraqis and it is a small area and you can see a lot of people. In Egypt the place is better and you will pay 25% of the amount that you would pay in Syria.”

(Participant #33: 44 year old Muslim Arab man). For this participant, economic considerations as well as concerns related to the large population of Iraqis in Syria made Egypt a preferable place to seek asylum.

Participants often mentioned that they had perceived Egypt to be more secure than Syria or Jordan. Sometimes Egypt was explicitly referred to as “safe”, however more frequently participants referred to how Syria, especially, was “close to Iraq”, and “full of Iraqis”. For example, a 49 year old woman explained her decision to travel to Egypt with her husband and son in the following way: “Syria is too close. We went to Syria first but didn’t feel safe because it was too close and there were Iraqi activities. So we went back to Iraq. And came here.” (Participant #69: 49 year old Muslim Arab woman). In the quote above, the connection between Syria’s proximity to Iraq and the danger of “Iraqi activities” is made explicitly by the participant.

Many participants who had been threatened in Iraq, especially those who had held military or government posts under the Saddam Hussein regime, or those who had worked with the Americans in Iraq in some way, had been threatened and targeted specifically by name. The operation of militias in neighboring countries, or the threat of their operation, seemed to have been an important consideration for Iraqis who decided to flee further to Egypt. Interestingly, while the problem associated with the “closeness” of Syria was mentioned explicitly by the woman quoted above, many more participants simply referred to Syria vaguely as being “too close” or “too crowded” with Iraqis, or conversely, noted that Egypt was safer because it was farther away from Iraq. One

woman articulated in more detail a concern, voiced by many others, that there were too many Iraqis in Syria.

Syria, there are so many Iraqis there. Maybe there will be a war there with the Americans. There are so many Iraqis there. Wherever there are many Iraqis, there's a problem. It's possible to make war with them. Because the U.S. says that there's always maybe a war. And Jordan is too expensive. We heard that Egypt is cheaper than other countries. (Participant #8: 40 year old Muslim Arab woman).

The idea, as illustrated by the quote above, that “wherever there are many Iraqis, there's a problem” was repeated by other participants in different ways. This sentiment recurred frequently in the research and reflected an ambivalence towards other Iraqis perhaps emerging as a result of sectarian divisions and the uncertainty that characterized violence in Iraq following the 2003 invasion. On the one hand, participants expressed reluctance to live in an area with many Iraqis, however they also frequently lamented the loss of the company of other Iraqis as well as aspects of life, such as food, that reminded them of home, many of which would presumably be easier to access in countries such as Syria or Jordan, which are closer to Iraq and have larger Iraqi populations. However, statements such as that made by the woman above are a commentary on both her personal decision of where to flee as well as her appraisal of larger geo-political relations. In general, the sentiment that there are too many Iraqis in Syria may also be related to the socioeconomic status of many of the Iraqis who fled to Syria as compared to those who chose to come to Egypt instead. Concerns about crowding and militia or gang activity in Syria, as well as concerns about violence more generally were one expressed reason why Iraqis chose to travel to Egypt instead.

As can be seen in the quotes above, many participants travelled to Egypt for a number of reasons, which together made up the rationale for flight from Iraq to Egypt. While some participants, as mentioned above, fled Iraq in haste because of violence or threat and did not feel that they had a choice of destination, others took a range of comparative factors into consideration before deciding to flee to Egypt as can be seen in the quote below:

Everything was closed or difficult. Jordan gives strict conditions for people to enter. You can get a visa to go to the US more easily than in Jordan. Turkey it is easier to go to but the living there is difficult because of the high standard of living. Staying in Egypt because I could get the visa, and the living was possible and the course at (university). When I see these factors I see that staying in Egypt is the better solution. (Participant #1: 32 year old Muslim mixed-ethnicity woman).

The woman quoted above came to Egypt for a number of reasons. She had been a human rights advocate in Iraq, and had been forced to flee because of perceived associations with the American Forces. Although she fled because of a direct threat to her life, she nonetheless considered her options before deciding to come to Egypt. In the end, the combination of an educational opportunity, availability of visa, and living conditions influenced this woman's decision to travel to Egypt. The quote above is interesting because it demonstrates that even though Iraqis fled danger and persecution, they nonetheless took a number of factors into account in their decision to flee to Egypt. Among these were factors beyond refugees' control, such as entry conditions or difficulties of getting visas. As in the quote above, refugees were restricted in terms of

where they could travel. In addition, refugees considered opportunities for living such as ideas about education, employment, and cost of living as part of their decision making. These constraints and opportunities influenced whether or not refugees fled to Egypt or to another country in the region.

Although it was mentioned relatively rarely by participants, it is worth noting that some participants said that they had chosen to come to Egypt because they perceived the services or options for resettlement to a third country to be better there than in Syria or Jordan. One female participant told me that, among other reasons for her choice to come to Egypt, she believed that the UNHCR was better in Egypt than in Syria or Jordan. Another participant articulated the reason for his travel to Egypt even more explicitly as being related to resettlement. When I asked why he had decided to flee to Egypt, he answered:

P: To apply to migration to - to apply for resettlement to United States. Because in Syria, there is many Iraqi people. About 1 million and more. Here, is, Iraqi people is less than in Syria. So I have a chance, to accept me.

N: I understand. So in Syria you felt like it was more difficult because there were so many people.

P: Yes.

I: And now, what do you feel? Do you feel it is easier here in Egypt or do you feel the same?

P: Yes, it's easier. (Participant #21: 47 year old Muslim, Arab man)

This participant, who was indeed in the resettlement process, had initially fled Iraq and traveled to Syria. He was eligible to be resettled to the United States because of a family member who had worked with the American Forces, but felt that he would have a better

chance of being recognized for resettlement if he came to Egypt. As a result, he chose to relocate his family to Cairo and to apply for resettlement from there. Although rare, explicit discussion about service provision or third-country resettlement opportunities as a motivation for choosing one place of asylum over another is interesting, as it demonstrates both the value that refugees place on these programs and also that these participants do not see settlement in countries of first asylum, such as Egypt, as a possibility.

Aspects of Egypt that made it a suitable place of asylum

Some participants chose to flee to Egypt for reasons that were not comparative with other countries in the region, but instead reflected some aspect of Egypt that influenced their choice of where to flee. Among these reasons included those who travelled to Egypt initially for education or tourism and then chose to stay when they realized they were unable to return to Iraq. Others travelled to Egypt to join friends or relatives who were already living in Egypt. Some had traveled to Egypt in the past and had an idea of the country from previous experience, while others gleaned ideas from popular television and classic Arabic movies, overwhelmingly filmed in Egypt.

There was an assumed association between Egypt and Iraq for many participants who felt that people in Egypt would be similar to people in Iraq, especially in terms of religion, ethnicity and culture. Egypt's population is predominantly Sunni and Arab, a fact which may have been comforting for the many Sunni Arabs who fled Iraq and came to Egypt. In addition, Egypt has long been a producer of popular culture for the region, perhaps lending some familiarity for Iraqis. The millions of Egyptian migrant workers

who had lived and worked in Iraq during the 1980s provided additional exposure to Egyptians for Iraqis, and a few participants explicitly mentioned having asked Egyptians in Iraq about the country before deciding to travel to Egypt.

Some participants reported that they fled to Egypt to join family members, friends or acquaintances who were already here, such as one woman who reported: “My husband’s family and my family were here, so we did not have anyone left in Iraq, so we decided to come here with our parents” (Participant #34: 32 year old Muslim Arab woman). Family could be a reason for choosing to come to Egypt as well as a source of information about conditions in Egypt and opportunities for work or education.

Participants decided to flee to Egypt as opposed to other countries based on information largely gleaned before they arrived. In a few cases, as in the quote before, participants traveled to Egypt to determine whether or not it was an appropriate place for their family to seek asylum. In the segment of conversation below, a man explains how he and his wife decided to travel to Egypt alone to determine whether Egypt was suitable for his family. After spending some time in the country, he and his wife returned to Iraq and brought their children with them to Egypt.

N: Why did you decide to come to Egypt as opposed to another country?

P: I came to Egypt another time and saw that the prices here to live are very cheap.

N: So you had been to Egypt before?

P: I came to Egypt in the same year, 2006. In August. And I lived here one month and then returned to Baghdad. To see how I can live here, and prices. And I saw that the prices are very cheap. And I returned and I decided to take my family and live here with them.

N: So you decided to check first.

P: Yes. I checked first. I checked everything and I decided to live here.
(Participant #11: 47 year old Muslim Arab man).

Being able to travel to Egypt in advance, to determine if living there was feasible was relatively rare, yet it did sometimes occur. Others drew on the experiences of friends, families and acquaintances. Some had contacts who had fled to Egypt before them, while others based their decision on personal knowledge of Egypt when they had traveled for other reasons. “My father came to Egypt in 70s, a long time ago, so he liked Egypt so he said if we have to leave Iraq, let’s go to Egypt. (Participant #23: 20 year old Muslim Arab male)” Like this young man’s father, many older Iraqis had had the opportunity to travel abroad, and Egypt was a popular destination for both education and tourism.

Before they arrived in Egypt, Iraqis had certain expectations for how their lives in exile would be. However, once in Egypt, expectations did not always match their experiences. Perhaps the most significant way in which exile in Egypt did not match refugees’ expectations was in its duration. Many noted that they had anticipated staying in Egypt only a short period of time. In most cases, Iraqis had hoped that the situation would improve in Iraq and they would be able to return home. There were Iraqis, however, who did not believe that they would ever be able to return to their country. The unexpected length of their stay influenced Iraqis’ appraisals of life in Egypt. For example, while refugees may have expected life in Egypt to be ‘cheap’ and had initially found that the cost of living was significantly less than in Iraq, after a period of years, many Iraqis had spent so significantly of their savings that they no longer considered

Egypt to be cheap, but rather expensive. Other aspects of life in Egypt, such as ideas about employment in Egypt, ideas about Egyptian people, or expectations of refugee services were different than Iraqis had hoped.

To summarize, the majority of Iraqi refugees in this study fled from Iraq to Egypt in 2006-2007. They fled in a variety of ways, mostly depending on what modes of travel were available at the time. Iraqi refugees fled to Egypt for a number of reasons, including persecution and insecurity in Iraq, evaluations of conditions in Egypt as compared to other possible countries of asylum, and perceptions or expectations of life in Egypt. In most cases, reasons for flight were based on a combination of these factors. At the time that I met them, most Iraqi refugees had been living in asylum in Egypt for at least four years. This period of time had allowed them the opportunity to reflect on their expectations for flight in Egypt and the realities of their life in asylum. In the next section, I discuss Iraqi refugees' characterizations of their daily lives in Egypt.

Daily Life in Egypt

In the interviews, I asked participants to describe their daily lives in Egypt. Because I was interested in employing an experience-near approach, I chose this general, open-ended question as a means of understanding what aspects of daily life participants found most important. Many participants chose to first characterize their daily lives using an adjective that expressed feeling, or an emotion state. For example, "boring" and "tired" were frequently mentioned by participants, such as this man's description of his daily life: "It's boring. It's repeating. Everything is repeating every day. No work. No

Job. My wife, as you see, is sick. (Participant #47: 32 year old Muslim Arab Man).” The notion that life in Egypt was characterized primarily as boring was repeated by many participants. Variations on the idea of ‘boring’ were also prevalent, including words such as ‘repeating’, ‘routine’, ‘blank’ and ‘inert’. For example, a Chaldean woman referred to her daily life in the following terms: “Bored. Which means that I don’t have stability. Every day we are waiting for the life (to) return. When it will come. My stability is no, there is no stability, I’m tired.” (Participant #51: 45 year old woman Christian Chaldean woman). For this participant, her characterization of life in Egypt as “bored” was defined as lacking stability. She then went on to say that she was “waiting for life to return”, indicating that for her, life in Egypt was no life at all.

The theme of time in Egypt not being “life” but instead a period of time in which Iraqi refugees waited for life to return was recurrent in interviews and participant observation. In this way, life in Egypt had not met participants’ expectations, as they had hoped that their period of time in exile would be short and that there would be opportunities to re-establish their lives. For many, the idea that life was “boring” or “repeating” related to the fact that activities and relationships, such as work, education, or family relationships, which previously made up the “stuff” of life, were not available or were severely curtailed in Egypt. In addition, most Iraqis did not see Egypt as a possible place of permanent settlement, and as a result, waited for it to be over so that they could resume their lives. Characterized as an indeterminate period of waiting, daily life in Egypt became boring and repetitive as some refugees sought to spend their days in what many saw as a period of transit.

This idea that existence in Egypt was not truly ‘living’ was mentioned by other participants as well. For example, the woman quoted below referred to her life as ‘routine’ and then went on, as in the quote above, to equate it with not really having a life:

A routine life. There is no life in it. I love work, I love being social, I love social activities. In Egypt, everything is isolated. I have no friends. ... neighbors. I can't do tourism, or go anywhere because of the economic situation. I just bring things for my children and cook. I just go to the market to buy food. Only shopping. The mall. (Participant #7: 47 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman).

The participant quoted above spoke about how her life did not have life in it. From this quote, life in Egypt seemed to the participant to be stripped down to the bare essentials, the ‘routine’ of buying food and cooking for the children. For this participant, work and social life, especially friends and neighbors, constituted the real stuff of life. The idea that life in Egypt was not, and could not be, a real life was one which emerged frequently in participant narratives. The lack of stability, caused by uncertain residency, lack of work, loss of social connections, and other problems of life in Egypt, resulted for many participants in a life that was boring, routine, not a life at all. Participants reported experiencing suffering as a result of this life, which, when compared to their previous lives, lacked so much.

Another expression used frequently by Iraqis in Egypt to describe their daily life was “tired”. The idea of being ‘psychologically tired’ will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but here I draw attention to the aspects of daily life which Iraqi refugees associated with tiredness. For example, the participant below spoke of how her daily life was tired and how it was difficult for her to manage as a result:

Egypt is very beautiful for tourism. But not for Iraqi people. We are very tired here. We can manage our day difficultly, because I keep on thinking from the time I wake up, until I sleep. I cannot put any aims in my mind for myself or for my children. In fact I feel lost. (Participant #34: 34 year old Muslim Arab woman).

Although she does not talk explicitly about instability as others do, this participant speaks about how she is unable to make any goals or plans for herself or her family. She also reported spending the majority of her day thinking and worrying about the future.

Some participants reported being comfortable or 'normal' in Egypt, although this was comparatively rare. For example, one participant, a man in his forties, described his daily life in the following way: "The life here is comfortable. But there is one problem. Our economic situation has become low. Because in Iraq, the style is different. (Participant #11: 47 year old Muslim Arab man)." This man, whose daughter had been kidnapped in Iraq, generally expressed gratitude about being in an environment where he and his family were safe. Participants frequently noted that the main benefit of life in Egypt, and for many, the reason they decided to stay despite hardship, was safety. The participant above identifies his economic situation as his main problem in Egypt. A few participants identified daily life in Egypt as better than daily life in Iraq. Again, safety was the primary reason given for this statement. For a small number of participants, usually men who had managed to find work in their field in Egypt, life in Egypt afforded certain opportunities that life in Iraq could not. For example, a young man who had found a job as an engineer in an Egyptian company explained his daily life in Egypt by comparing it to Iraq:

When I make a comparison between my daily life here in Egypt and in Iraq. Eh, my day in Egypt is more than—much more than good, much more good than Iraq cause I have the ability to move—to uh—to work, to make everything I want—I need. But in Iraq, I was surrounded, I could not do everything. I have uh boundaries, I could not lift it—I—I feel uhm, (*moqabil* unclear 18:01), surrounded. I, uh—I don't have one hundred percent flexibility or don't have one hundred percent ability to do everything what I want. Okay. Cause you know this is not your environment. This is a strange place for you. And in Iraq you have your friends, you had your dearests, you have your neighbors, if you need everything you can get to them—here we are alone. We feel that we are strange here ehmm...but it's more than—it's good more than Iraq. Ehm, eh I have aims and I have a goals. But I could not reach to it here in Egypt. I need more flexibility, I need more of the freedom to do it. Even the Egyptians here, ehm, they could not get their aims or their—goals. If we took uhm an example. Eh, an engineer—an Egyptian engineer. You know that *sunnet al hayat* ehm our aim is to study—finish your studies, started work, then you start to ehm make your life or build your life. Eh, here in Egypt, we don't have this choice. Ehmm...an Egyptian engineer want to build his life, he could not do this here in Egypt. He's enforced to get out—out of Egypt in a country like Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain every—anything of that places. Start working in order to get uh enough money that uh makes him able to build his life. Okay, did you know—get—did you get my point, which is ehm, I could live here, but I could not reach to my goal. Okay? That is the boundaries of the—the chain that rounds (sic) me. (Participant #14: 25 year old Sunni Muslim Arab man).

I include this lengthy quote here because it is an example of the ambivalence that many Iraqis expressed about life in Egypt. Initially, this young man spoke about how life in Egypt was much better than Iraq. He spoke about how his ability to live his life had been constrained in Iraq, how the unsafe situation in Iraq had surrounded him with boundaries. However, as he spoke about feeling 'surrounded' in Iraq, he transitioned, almost seamlessly, into speaking about the boundaries that constrain his life in Egypt. He spoke about how Egypt is not his country and how he is separated from friends, relatives, and neighbors. He also spoke about how, although he had been able to find work in Egypt, he was unable to reach his goals. He noted how Egyptians were also unable to reach their goals in the country and had to travel to other countries in the region for work. He

concluded that although he was able to live in Egypt, and for him it was better than life in Iraq at the moment, he was constrained and unable to live the life to which he aspired. In general, responses to the question about daily life in Egypt were either predominantly negative or ambivalent. Below I discuss specific aspects of daily life in Egypt that were salient to participants, beginning with employment.

Employment in Egypt

The majority of the Iraqis who participated in the research were not employed in Egypt. Refugees have struggled to find employment in Egypt, and those who do find work often do so in the informal economy. When Egypt ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, it entered a reservation on the rights of refugees to work in the country. While in theory, refugees can work with government approval, in practice it is rare for refugees to have work permits and to find places of employment willing to do the extra work necessary to hire ‘foreigners’ legally. As a result, many refugees work in the informal economy, doing temporary, often menial jobs. For Iraqi refugees, many of whom are highly educated and who had held positions of high status in Iraq, taking on such work involves additional challenges.

Most Iraqi refugees reported a period of time in Egypt in which they had looked for work. Many reported being turned away by employers who were either unable, or not willing, to hire foreigners. For example, one woman described her lengthy job hunt:

Another reason is working. I would go to the mall or places looking for jobs and right away they said you are not Egyptian, you are not married to an Egyptian we cannot hire you. And Egypt is a country that needs to hire its own people. Actually, I understand that if they need to hire someone else, an Egyptian, not me,

regardless of qualifications. (Participant #01: 32 year old Muslim, mixed ethnicity woman).

This woman, who had eventually found part-time work in an organization working with refugees recounted her lengthy job search. She, like many others, expressed some empathy for Egyptian employers and employees by noting that Egypt was a country with high unemployment in which Egyptians were lucky to find jobs. During our interview she recounted how she had begun looking for work “from the first day (Participant #01)” in Egypt. She referred to her job as “the best thing that has happened to me in Egypt. Without this job I would commit suicide (Participant #01).” Working in organizations that provide services to refugees was one way in which Iraqis could find employment. However, this work was often part time and semi-volunteer as a result of the extremely limited budgets of some of these organizations. Other Iraqis worked in the informal sector, doing jobs unrelated to their qualifications and the positions they had held in Iraq. For example, one woman swore me to secrecy about the fact that her husband, who had held a high-powered job in Baghdad, was now working as a driver. Some Iraqis managed to open businesses, which provided them with more dignified employment over which they had more control. However, entrepreneurship in Egypt also came with its challenges, including threats from security forces and police as well as problems with landlords, business associates and customers. A small number of the Iraqis who participated in this study were able to find jobs in their area of expertise, on which they could support their families. However, for most Iraqis, and Egyptians, salaries were low. Many Iraqis experienced a profound drop in their standard of living, one which

employment in Egypt could not redress. However, for most Iraqis in Egypt, employment was simply not available.

Iraqi refugees in Egypt expressed a great desire for work. Many were highly educated and had held positions of great responsibility in Iraq. Having income and being able to support one's family was a major motivating factor for desiring work, but it was not the only one. Participants also desired work for the purpose that it would bring to their lives, for how it would occupy their time and allow them to use their skills. A 48 year old man who had been a businessman in Iraq, and who was involved in some part-time entrepreneurship in Egypt spoke of employment in the following way:

This is what I want because (a) person without work has no value in the life. When I lived in Alex (Alexandria) for a year, even when I eat my food I don't taste it. Because it is not my work. (Participant #44: 48 year old Muslim Arab man).

This participant, who worked informally one day a week, argued that work gave meaning to life. He was unhappy about only working part time, and wished for a more stable job which would allow him to support his family. Other participants echoed similar statements when they invoked local idioms about work and idleness in their narratives:

Before I worked in the office, you don't have a life. For (a) human being, we say that if he doesn't work he is not living. Here in Egypt they have a saying: the hand that doesn't work is dirty. You complete your personality with your work, you feel you are active, especially in our age, without work you are nothing. You are only counting days and even if you are capable from your pension to live, but work will make you feel active, be with people, feel like you are doing something. (Participant #77: 52 year old Muslim Arab man)

Drawing on sayings that equate idleness with dirtiness and work with living, this participant speaks of how, even if one doesn't require the income to live, work brings value and meaning to life. Being unable to work was one of the main hardships of life in Egypt for Iraqi refugees. In their narratives as well as in their actions, many Iraqis expressed the sentiment that purposeful activity was necessary for well-being.

In the absence of being able to work, many Iraqis sought to fill their time with other sorts of activities. Some volunteered in organizations assisting refugees, or took on paid jobs that offered marginal income, less for the small amount of money they provided than for something to do. Others sought to build their skills and remain busy by taking courses in a wide range of subjects. Some enrolled in formal programs at universities and institutes and worked towards degrees and diplomas. Others took courses in a wide range of subjects including language classes and computer classes. As one participant, a woman in her forties, noted:

The Iraqis here don't have work. They are getting certificates and experience. Most of the Iraqis here have a lot of certificates. They are well-educated. But there are no opportunities to work and we don't feel that we have a future here. (Participant #09: 50 year old Muslim Arab woman).

Like the woman quoted above, a number of the research participants used their time in Egypt building skills and experience as well as earning certifications. Given that most participants felt that there was no chance of gaining stable employment in Egypt, many participants were seeking to improve themselves for possible futures elsewhere.

Income

Given the difficulties in finding employment, as well as the poor salaries available for informal work, few Iraqi refugees in Egypt supported themselves entirely from their work in Egypt. Instead, participants relied on income from a number of sources, which together supported their lives in Egypt. Among the most common sources of income were savings, remittances from relatives in Iraq and other countries, money from the rent or sale of property in Iraq, and retirement pensions. Some Iraqi refugees with demonstrated financial need received financial assistance from NGOs such as Caritas. An important feature of these sources of income is that many were temporary, or finite, and would be depleted over time.

Participants expressed considerable anxiety about either the current or future availability of income in Egypt. Especially as their stay in Egypt became longer than they had expected, Iraqis began to worry about how they would sustain themselves and their families in the future. For example, one young woman described how her family's income had changed over time in Egypt:

Caritas gives us 400 pounds¹³ each month and this is going to the rent because our apartment's rent is 400 pounds. When we came here we had some money, from Iraq and we spent it in the first and second year. After that, my mother sold all her gold and jewelry. Now there are so many problems about that. (Participant #112: 19 year old Muslim Arab woman)

This family was receiving social assistance because of their lack of income, however the young woman noted that the assistance only covered their rent, and was not sufficient to cover any of the family's other expenses. The phenomenon of women selling their gold was frequently mentioned by participants as an indicator of severe financial hardship.

¹³ Egypt's currency is the pound, denoted here as either "pounds" or "LE". At the time of the research, the exchange rate was approximately 5.5 pounds to each U.S. dollar.

Iraqi women traditionally receive gold from their husbands when they are married. This gold, and any subsequent gifts of jewelry, are traditionally the woman's wealth, and belong to her alone as a last resort in case of financial problems. Many Iraqi women work and receive a salary, yet the assertion, as made by the participant above, that a woman has had to sell her gold is an expression of great financial misfortune.

I interviewed Iraqis who had varied levels of financial stability in Egypt. However, with very few exceptions, all participants expressed worries about their economic situation. I conducted interviews with a homeless Iraqi man who discussed with concern his uncertainty about where he would sleep that evening. I also interviewed a woman who told me that in Iraq, she had never worried about hunger or shelter, but that in Egypt, food was a real and pressing concern. This particular woman was being provided with informal income assistance from more well-off Iraqi refugees who were aware of her particularly difficult situation.

On the other extreme, I also sat in stylish, well-appointed flats with families who, despite their display of material wealth, nonetheless worried about what would happen when the money ran out. Some participants noted how when they first came to Egypt, they had anticipated that their stay would be short, and as a result, they had spent money freely, on education, living expenses, and entertainment. However, they had become increasingly frugal as the time in Egypt dragged on and savings were depleted. For example, I interviewed one family in their apartment in Cairo, who were in many ways typical of the sample. In Baghdad, the father had been a successful businessman and his wife had worked in the government. Before they had fled the country, they had been able to sell their family house and bring the money with them, as savings, to Egypt:

N: What is your primary source of income? You said you sold the house in Iraq and now the money is running out. Is your income mostly from the house you sold in Iraq?

Wife: No

Husband: You are asking from where the money is coming?

N: Yes

Wife: No. Half of it.

Husband: No, it's not the same amount. Because we sold this house in Iraq and brought the whole amount of money here and we spent it for 5 years. It's the 6th now.

A: there's a part of this money that I spent on my operation. It was a big operation. (Participant #09 and Participant #113: 56 year old Muslim Arab man and 50 year old Muslim Arab woman).

This family had been living for nearly six years on the income from their home in Baghdad. In the second year, they had had an unexpected family medical emergency and the father had an operation which consumed a large amount of their savings. While the family had clearly been somewhat well-off to be able to live in relative comfort for five years and to be able to afford their medical expenses, this income was nonetheless finite. Even though this family did their best to live frugally, the knowledge that the money would eventually run out was troubling to them, as it was to others. While some Iraqis were well-off financially when compared to other refugee groups, and even in comparison to some Egyptians, many had nonetheless experienced a significant decrease in standard of living which they found distressing. Because they were mostly not permitted to work in Egypt, Iraqi refugees often lived from finite, temporary or insecure sources of income such as savings, remittances, retirement pensions from Iraq, rent from properties in Iraq, and financial assistance from UNHCR or NGOs.

While some Iraqi refugees were able to come to Egypt with their savings, the inability to work or access money from other sources soon led many to exhaust, or fear exhausting, their savings. In 2009-2010, retired Iraqis were able to access retirement pensions from Iraq but lived in fear of a proposed law that would make it mandatory for Iraqis to appear in person in Iraq in order to receive their pensions.¹⁴ The lack of financial resources directly affected refugees' ability to access health care and also affected children's education, housing, transportation, food and almost all other aspects of daily life. Some refugees were receiving small stipends from Caritas, however the stipends were short-term and refugees expressed considerable anxiety about the end of the assistance. Others received remittances from relatives abroad, although many with relatives abroad received small amounts of assistance or none at all. Many refugees also expressed discomfort with receiving assistance, although they acknowledged it was necessary.

Living Conditions in Egypt compared to Living Conditions in Iraq

One of the most important factors affecting many participants' living conditions was their financial situation. NGO staff and other refugee service providers sometimes considered Iraqi refugees to be wealthy, especially in comparison to other refugee groups in Egypt. While it is true that the majority of the Iraqis interviewed for this project came from financially comfortable, middle class or even affluent, socioeconomic situations in Iraq, this was not always the case. Some Iraqi refugees were truly destitute in Egypt, and

¹⁴ Some participants speculated that the introduction of this policy was a means of forcing refugees to return to Iraq. While this was not independently verified, it is not inconceivable since the Iraqi government has for some years been employing a number of different tactics to 'encourage' refugees to return to the country. This policy shift may have large implications given the millions of Iraqis living in exile abroad.

although it was relatively rare, homelessness, precarious housing and poverty were observed among the Iraqi refugee population. Financial concerns had led to a significant decrease in standard of living for many Iraqi refugees, particularly those who had exhausted their savings and did not have a source of income.

In order to gain an understanding of participants daily lives in Egypt, I asked participants to describe their living conditions, with an emphasis on the basic necessities of daily life such as food, shelter and transportation. I also asked them how these living conditions compared to their living conditions in Iraq, in order to understand what, if any, were the changes that refugees had experienced in the basic aspects of daily life. Generally, Iraqi refugees painted a consistent picture of a decrease in the quality of living conditions. While there were some aspects of life in Egypt that participants appreciated compared to Iraq, such as safety and security, they generally spoke of the aspects of their daily lives that were missing in Egypt.

Participants repeatedly contrasted life in Egypt with life in Iraq. Frequently, when I asked about the differences, participants would exclaim that the change was “between the earth and the sky” an Iraqi idiom used to describe two things which are not at all alike. For example, a 41 year old woman from Baghdad responded to my questions in the following way:

N: Is it, is it a very big change for you then, from the way that you used to have the daily life in Iraq?

P: Of course!

P: The difference between the sky and the earth.

P: The living condition and the level, the level of living and from the family we came with the situation and now we are in different situation.

N: How are, how are your living conditions here and how are they different from your living conditions in Iraq?

P: My husband was working and he has company. I own a home, cars, money, (gold), family. I was a queen of my time. Now, it's on extreme opposite. We sold the home, we spent the money, we sold the house. And now I am at the level of begging.

N: Sorry I know that some of these questions might be a little hard, so if there's anything that's hard and you want to take a break or...

P: We used to talk about (the difficulty), and in spite of how much we are proud, but we do have to face the truth.(Participant #41: Muslim Arabic woman).

This woman, whose husband had been a businessman in Iraq, spoke of how her status had declined from being a “queen of my time” to feeling that she was at the “level of begging.” This feeling of a drastic decline in status and living conditions was mentioned by a number of participants. Many, like the participant quoted above, had owned homes and cars in Iraq. They had felt secure, surrounded by family and neighbors. Although this woman was not literally a beggar but lived with her family in a flat in a middle class suburb of Cairo, she expressed the feeling of loss of status and financial stability as being at the “level of begging.” From the vantage point of its loss, her previous conditions in Iraq were portrayed in terms that were purely positive. In addition, the reduction in status and standard of living was an affront to her pride and dignity, which she expressed through the analogy of going from queen to beggar.

Matters of living conditions were strongly related to feelings of pride. Iraqis regularly made sharp contrast between life in Egypt and life in Iraq, as though to ensure that I understood that they had not always been refugees. Many participants shared stories of how their conditions in Iraq had been far superior to their living conditions in Egypt.

As many participants had held good jobs in Iraq, they had been living in much more comfortable conditions, even with wars and years of economic sanctions. In Iraq, I was told regularly, people did not live in apartments, as all but the super-rich do in Cairo. In Iraq, most people lived in houses, often with gardens. These houses were sometimes owned by the nuclear family, but in other cases, people either lived in part of a larger home that housed extended family, or in some cases, lived nearby or adjacent to relatives such as parents, brothers or sisters. This was the case for the man below who explained to me how living conditions had changed in Egypt.

Normally, we Iraqis let's say 90% used to live in villas, each villa has a small garden. When you live in an apartment, you feel, not like you are put in a cage, but you are not free to do what you want. Say in Iraq when I wake at this time, say I take a nap, I go outside and water the trees, the lawn, try to plant some flowers. You have your own garden you can spend some time with it. Especially in our age you will feel comfortable. Here you are stuck in the apartment. I think that's why the Egyptians spend a lot of time in cafes to not be stuck in four walls. But in Iraq we sit outside in the garden, and we have pets that are outside, but can't bring them into the house because don't have their shots. (Participant #77: 52 year old Muslim Arab man).

This man described not only how living conditions differed between Iraq and Egypt, but also how these changes made him feel. While most participants were from urban Baghdad, they stressed that city life in Baghdad was significantly different than in Egypt. In addition to differences in housing, they described differences in food, weather, customs and laws. In general, the higher standard of living that participants had enjoyed in Iraq was associated with larger living spaces, better food and medicines, and more financial resources. In Iraq, education, health care and food were subsidized by the

government. As a result, some participants found that despite a lower cost of living, they had more expenses in Egypt than they had in Iraq:

In my home in Iraq, I don't pay anything. There is no rent- we own it. We have (a) car. Our salary is just for fun. When I came here, medication, transportation, rent, everything, everything. With my salary and his salary, it's very difficult to pay for everything with my salary, his salary, it's not enough. Here we have extra things to pay for. In Iraq, when people have chronic diseases, they just have papers, and they just go to a public medical store and they will have all their drugs freely. And even they gave him (her husband) a device for digitally monitoring his diabetes. And he was registered in the Diabetes Institute - they give them everything, supplements, drugs, free from the government. (Participant #18: 65 year old Muslim Arab woman).

This quote, from a 65 year old woman from Mosul who was in Egypt with her husband, illustrates how some Iraqi refugees had more challenges accessing aspects of daily living in Egypt than in Iraq. Notably, she and her husband were both retired, so when she speaks of salary, above, she is referring to their retirement pensions, which they received from Iraq. In her 60s, she had owned everything that she needed to live in Iraq, and was able to spend her retirement pension as she desired. In Egypt, she found herself with significant additional expenses including rent, medication, and transportation. She was concerned that their pensions were not sufficient to cover these additional expenses. In addition, she contrasted the level of services available to citizens in Iraq with the lack of available services in Egypt for them as refugees. In this quote, her representation of Iraq was ultimately quite nostalgic.

This was not always the case, however, as participants also discussed their experiences in Iraq in times of war and under sanctions, when food and medicine were expensive and unavailable. In particular, access to electricity, gas and other resources

were difficult in Iraq but not in Egypt. Physical safety was also an advantage to living in Egypt as compared to Iraq. The retired woman quoted above later mentioned some of the ways in which living conditions in Egypt were better than in Iraq:

Here it's much better. At least I feel safe, and electricity - light. You can't find it in Iraq - light and safety. *Haji* (her husband) all the time is running after oil and benzene just to provide for the car and generator, which is frustrating. (Participant #18: 65 year old Muslim Arab woman).

For some participants, a combination of all these factors characterized their comparisons of life in Egypt and Iraq. In general, Iraqi refugees felt that living conditions in Egypt were significantly different than in Iraq. This is interesting given that many had chosen to travel to Egypt based on perceived affinities or similarities between Egypt and Iraq, or Egyptians and Iraqis. This was clearly expressed by this participant:

No comparison. Even my living conditions in Iraq are not so high. Nearer to poor than rich. They (her family) did not live in such good conditions, except when I started to go to work. My salary and stipend helped to raise the living conditions of my family. We were not so rich, but it was better there. I think it is because you are in your home, it is different than living in your uncle's home. It is different to eat in your home than in the uncle's home. Even though he is your uncle, and you are related. (Participant #1: 32 year old Muslim mixed ethnicity woman).

This woman speaks about Egypt and Iraq using the metaphor of kinship. For her, Egypt is like an uncle's home – there is a level of comfort and familiarity because it is the home of a relative, but it is still definitely not your own home. In general, Iraqis reported significant differences in living conditions between Egypt and Iraq. While safety and access to some resources such as electricity, gasoline and water were improved in Egypt,

other aspects of daily living, such as housing, transportation, food and access to services were decreased.

Education

Education was frequently articulated by the participants in this study as their biggest priority and most significant problem in Egypt. It was also frequently mentioned as a primary motivating factor in family decision-making. Some participants claimed that they chose to travel to Egypt partly because they knew that their children could attend good quality universities while in exile. When asked about their future, participants frequently stated, as their primary goal and desire, that their children complete their education. For Iraqi refugee youth, education was also a high priority. Many had had their studies disrupted by war and instability in Iraq, or by financial hardship in Egypt.

Iraqi refugees are not permitted to attend public schools or universities in Egypt. As a result, parents who wish their children to receive an accredited education must send their children to private schools or universities, many of which charge expensive tuition fees. At first glance, there is a lot of assistance available to support Iraqis' education in Egypt. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has provided Iraqi refugees with financial assistance for school fees for a number of years. This assistance is available for elementary, intermediate and secondary school. Iraqi lute player and philanthropist Nassir Shamma has also recently provided Iraqi refugees with tuition assistance. Since no assistance was available to help with university fees, Nassir Shamma began to provide partial assistance for those as well. However, despite this assistance, education remained

cost-prohibitive for many Iraqis, and not all were able to access assistance programs. There were also a number of other challenges related to education for Iraqis in Egypt.

While Egypt is known to have well-respected universities, Iraqis expressed concerns about primary, intermediate and secondary education in Egypt. Among the most commonly mentioned problems was the structure of Egyptian education. Egyptian students must take, and pass, extensive examinations in order to complete their schooling and go to university. In order to excel at these exams, families in Egypt typically must hire private tutors who prepare their children for the examinations. Often these private tutors are teachers from the students' schools. A frequent complaint of Iraqis in Egypt was that students were not actually taught in school – in addition to paying tuition fees, Iraqis then had to also pay private tutors to instruct their children. This system was a radical departure for Iraqis since in Iraq, education is free and parents do not need to hire private tutors.

The following exchange, which I reproduce in detail below, occurred during an interview when a 41 year old mother of three children attempted to explain the Egyptian education system to me.

N: Are they (your children) studying now?

P: Yes.

N: How are their studies going?

P: *Zifit*¹⁵

[laughter]

N: I understand *zifit*. My dad says *zifit* all the time.

¹⁵ *Zifit* literally means tar in Arabic, and is a strong way of saying that something is very bad or ugly.

P: Bad. Very bad.

N: How- Why? What is the thing that makes it bad?

P: There is no study here. All the responsibilities are on the family, and the private lessons. If you have motivation to, achieve very good things, you have to pay a lot of money. And we have to, we have as a family to take care of this. It's not the school. It is like just the name that they are in school and studying. There is no real studying.

N: So the problem is the educational, the way they do the educational system here?

P: Everything is tired. Teachers are very tired and they don't teach, and the school is very, very limited.

P: No study, no study, so that the teacher could have private lessons, so it's making money.

P: In a class they teach in some way and when they came to home and you pay them money they will teach in another way.

N: But you also have to pay them money for them to go to the schools as well, right, if they go to the private schools?

P: The, the, the schools are expensive and they, it's not allowed for them to have access to public schools.

N: Just for, I'm just, just for my information. Do they need the private tutors at all, all ages? Like your youngest son _____, does he also need private tutors or is it the older, the older children?

P: No, if something they need, that's basic, I help them. Language, French, But with (inaudible) math, after the change in the system, I have, I have to put a private tutor for them. The science subjects, chemistry, physics. I don't usually. But simple things I can help her with. And sometimes her father. Or their father.
(Participant #41: 41 year old Muslim Arab woman)

This extended dialogue illustrates several challenges related to education for Iraqi refugee families in Egypt. The first is cost. In addition to paying tuition and supplies, parents must pay for private tutors who, in many cases, were the same teachers that their children had in school during the day. Parents who were unable to afford to pay tutors had to try to teach their children themselves, and some reported being reprimanded by teachers at

school for not hiring tutors. Iraqi parents were also concerned about the quality of the educational system in Egypt, and whether the curriculum was appropriate. Some expressed regret that their children would not learn the Iraqi curriculum and would therefore learn Egyptian history, for example, instead of Iraqi history. As another aspect of financial instability, parents were also concerned about whether they would be able to continue to support their children's education in the future.

Disrupted education

Disrupted education was a main concern for Iraqi refugee families. In general, Iraqis did whatever they possibly could to support their children's education. Sometimes this meant sacrificing other important things to pay for tuition, private tutors, and other school fees. In some cases, parents spoke to me of selling their gold, or not buying food, in order to ensure their children remained in school. The mother who, above, had explained to me about the difficulty of needing private tutors, went on to explain to me about the financial hardship of paying for her children's education, and how it was nonetheless her main priority:

N: That's really hard for a lot of, a lot of Iraqi families, it's this having to pay for the school and then on top of that the tutors.

P: It's hard! Hard. It costs us a lot of money and there is no real effort in the school. All the efforts should be by the family.

P: I promise you sometimes I don't buy foods to pay for the teachers.

P: Their educational level is more important for me, they are, they have a very good education but I, I don't let, I don't want to sacrifice by this. I want sacrifice by other things.

N: Right, because the education is so useful, important?

P: Yes.

N: Would you say it's the most important thing or is there something more important?

P: Yes, for us as the parents, me and their father, I am ready to give up everything for them to just finish their school in a very high way and yes, I understand, and it's already we start sacrificing there, by everything, it's not just talking.
(Participant #41: 41 year old Muslim Arab woman)

Although this mother was frustrated by the education system in Egypt, she was willing to sacrifice other aspects of her family's life to maintain her children's educational level. In addition, it was not sufficient for her children to simply be in school, this mother wanted to provide her children with the opportunity to excel educationally. While this mother, who stated that she sometimes prioritized school expenses over food, may have been an extreme example, many other participants similarly considered education to be their highest priority.

In some cases though, parents were simply unable to maintain their children's education, a phenomenon that caused great distress for many. Often, cost was the factor that prohibited children or adolescents from attending school. For example, a father of four daughters spoke to me about how his eldest daughter, who had graduated from high school, was unable to go to university because he was unable to afford the tuition fees:

P: And the biggest daughter wants to enter the college, but she can't. Because there is no money for her from the organization...

...

P: And I decided for her to stay at home.

N: So your oldest daughter has finished high school but she cannot go to college right now?

P: Yes, yes. And she has depression and psychological problems (*halatha nufsia*) because she is staying at home. She always went to school and all her friends are going to college. (Participant #11: 47 year old Muslim Arab man).

In this interview, the father expressed how he had made the decision that his daughter would not attend college, but that he had been unable to do otherwise since there was no available assistance to help with university tuition. He expressed concern that she was developing psychological problems as a result of being unable to attend college, yet although he tried to find alternative activities for her to fill her time, he noted that she nonetheless was suffering from depression and other issues. The quote above demonstrates the burden on the family, including on the student, when a child or adolescent is forced to withdraw from school.

Cost was not the only factor that disrupted the education of participants and their families. In another interview with a father in a Cairo suburb, bureaucracy and the challenge of navigating governmental systems as a foreigner were the main problems which disrupted children's education. Of this father's three children, all were studying except one daughter:

All are in the school, except one which is (name). She had a problem because of the age. She was in the 3rd year going to the 4th year. So they said if you want to put her in, she needs documents. When I brought the documents they did not accept it. So she had to do the literacy test (*fasal al wahad*). And they said that the literacy test is not available for non-Egyptians. They told me that I have to leave her until she is 16 when she will get the test. The main educational center for the governorate told us that we should have left her in Iraq if we cared about educating her so much. And that we do not have the right to educate her because we are Iraqi. Two are studying *menaza*¹⁶ in home. We have private tutors, 75 LE for 3 lessons each week/child because they have exams coming soon. (Participant #15: 40 year old Muslim Arab man).

¹⁶ Menaza is a program for home-schooling in which children do not attend schools but study at home and take the tests necessary to receive educational certifications. Some Iraqi parents chose for their children to study *menaza*, usually because it was less expensive than paying tuition fees for private schools.

This man's daughter was unable to enter school because they did not have the proper educational reports to document her level. However, even when her father procured the reports, the Educational Office did not accept it. It seemed as though a confrontation occurred between the father and the Officer at the Educational Office, however it did not become clear exactly what had happened during our interview. From the father's report of his experience, his daughter was kept out of school at least partly because she was Iraqi. Other Iraqis also mentioned not having the correct reports as a reason that a child might be prohibited from attending school, such as one woman who spoke of her younger sister's education:

My sister has four years now she is not in school. We don't have money for her school and we didn't bring any of her reports from Baghdad. Every day I think about this... my mother, my sister.... (Participant #03: 33 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman).

This young woman's youngest sister should have been in high school yet the family was unable to produce the correct reports to allow her to attend the school, a condition that took a psychological toll on the participant, who reported thinking frequently of her sister's condition.

Although severe problems were reported only occasionally during the research, Iraqi children and adolescents may have experienced difficulties interacting with Egyptian students in school. This was not the experience of all students, as some had many Egyptian friends and were excelling in their grades. Some parents and young adults reported difficulties integrating into schools because of problems with classmates,

differences in curriculum, or other problems. In one case, these problems became sufficiently severe that the child was removed from school entirely. An elder sister explained her parents' decision to withdraw her brother from school:

This last year he left school because he is Iraqi and they think he is a Shi'a person. And Egyptians don't like Shi'a. They think they don't believe in God. They don't understand what is the meaning of Shi'a. Because (name), he loves shi'a. He's sunni, he's sunni. But he loves Shi'a, he did not allow anyone to speak about them. So they hit him and they said bad words to him. (Participant #112: 19 year old Muslim Arab woman)

In this case, the boy was removed from school after having an interaction with Egyptian students who abused him because he was identifying with Shi'a Islam. Egypt is a majority Sunni Muslim country, and many Egyptians do not have a clear understanding of Shi'a Islam. Adult Shi'a participants reported experiencing discrimination in Egypt, so it is perhaps not surprising that this also occurred in school. This issue will be discussed in more detail when I present data related to Iraqi refugees' experiences with Egyptians, however I mention it here as an example of a non-cost related factor that influenced whether or not a child was able to attend school. Although it was not mentioned as a reason for withdrawal, parents sometimes also complained of teachers' behavior towards their children, with problems ranging from unfairness to corporal punishment. In one interview, a family discussed how their daughter was being regularly beaten by her teachers. They spoke of how they had initially felt that they might have been the only ones experiencing such treatment, only to discover through discussion with other Iraqis that this was a common complaint of Iraqi students and parents. This issue was mentioned to me directly only a couple of times, however and so I cannot comment on the frequency with which it occurred.

Parents and siblings were not the only ones who expressed concern over the disruption of schooling in Egypt. Young adults, many who had been living in Egypt for a number of years at the time of their interview were also concerned about their education being disrupted. For example, one young man, who had completed the first year of high school in Iraq and was not studying in Egypt, repeatedly raised the issue of education in our interview. When I asked him about his favorite activities in Iraq, he responded in the following way:

P: The two things I enjoyed the most in Iraq before I came here is my studies, and playing football with my friends.

N: Can I ask why you stopped your studies?

P: Because here the cost of education is very expensive. Even if I finish high school, I can never attend university here, it's too expensive.

N: Did you try to do high school here? I tried to study from home, doing the type of home education called *menaza*, but it didn't work because I needed private teachers. And I didn't have money for them. So it didn't work because I don't have money for them.

P: I would love to finish my studies, but I don't have the facilities to finish my studies. (Participant #23: 20 year old Muslim Arab man).

This young man had tried and failed to complete his studies in Egypt but was unable to do so because of the cost. He found that the specter of future education costs, i.e. university, kept him from trying to complete his secondary education. However, he had tried to complete his high school in Egypt. He had enrolled in *menaza* an educational program where the student studies from home, does not attend school, but then takes the exams. However, he noted that he could not succeed at *menaza* because he was unable to

hire private tutors to assist him. Doing *menaza* was a strategy employed by a number of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Because it did not involve going to school, *menaza* cost less, and was therefore more accessible.

Occasionally, parents who were anticipating being resettled or returning to Iraq made strategic choices to keep their children out of school. For Iraqis who expected to be resettled, life in Egypt took on an even more temporary nature. Since they were uncertain when they might travel, parents and students sometimes avoided paying tuition fees since they wanted to save their limited resources for use in building a new life in resettlement. In addition, many hoped they would travel relatively soon and did not want to pay tuition only to have to pull their children out of schools before the year had been completed. A father, who had been accepted for resettlement to the United States, talked with me about how neither of his two sons was in school.

N: Are your boys studying right now?

P: No.

N: What level are they? Have they finished high school or are they still...?

P: H____ finished high school but the cost of the universities are too much. So he still wait. And I thought it's easier, they go to a University in Florida. O____ in secondary school but in Egypt, he's not in the study.

N: When you're 17 he's, one more year left in secondary or...?

P: Honestly, he finished his intermediate school and he, when we were in Syria he failed to past the year and then here in Egypt, it's costly.

Although this father was a bit reluctant to mention that his son had experienced educational difficulties in Syria, he repeatedly emphasized the cost of Education in Egypt and his hopes that his sons would continue their education in the United States after

resettlement. Another young man, who was also waiting to be resettled, similarly described putting his education on hold. He had graduated with his bachelor's degree and hoped to study for a master's degree. Yet because of his impending travel, he and his family had decided he would wait and start his graduate education in the United States:

N: Are you studying right now?

P: No, no. But I am taking courses.

N: What courses are you taking?

P: For communication skills, AUC. Also ICDL (International Computer Driving License) in Russian center. Many courses GSM Global system mobile in my university, my department, center.

N: Are you taking a break from your studies? So you graduated in February, but you are waiting to take the master's in the US?

P: In USA. I want to start now. But I am waiting for my trip, my travel. So I see I will be late for the master's. The master's has already started there, right?

N: Yeah (Participant #06: 23 year old Muslim Arab man)

Like some Iraqis who, when unable to find jobs, took courses and worked towards certifications, this young man was pursuing other types of education since he was not pursuing graduate education in Egypt.

In general, education was of great importance to Iraqi refugees in Egypt of all ages. For many, education was the most significant issue for them in Egypt. Since Iraqis were not allowed to attend public schools, and because of additional costs such as those related to private tutors, education was a significant expense. Other challenges to accessing education were mentioned by Iraqis, including not having the appropriate

reports, and integration problems in the schools. As a result of these challenges, some Iraqis were unable to access education, while others worried that they might not be able to access schooling in the future. Disrupted education, as well as concerns about the quality of education, were among the most identified problems of life in Egypt for Iraqi refugees.

Data on the socioeconomic status, education and lifestyle of Iraqi refugees in Egypt present a heterogeneous picture that has, as its main commonality, an experience of difference and loss. Relative deprivation has been employed to explain seeming incongruity between subjective feelings of content or discontent and material circumstances (Carrillo, Corning, Dennehy, & Crosby, 2011). According to Aberle, relative deprivation can be defined as “a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectation and actuality, or between legitimate expectation and anticipated actuality, or both (Aberle, 1966, p. 323).” Thinking in terms of relative deprivation allows the possibility that people’s experiences of satisfaction and reactions to material circumstances may be discordant with what outsiders might expect. Subjective experience and social comparison are both important factors in relative deprivation, as what a person has experienced at another time, or expects to experience in the future, and what others have or do not have seems to influence present satisfaction (Aberle, 1962).

In the context of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, relative deprivation is one theoretical explanation for feelings of dissatisfaction and instability. While I overheard service providers referring to Iraqis as “five star refugees” because of their relative social prosperity when compared to other refugee populations in Egypt, such as Sudanese refugees, many Iraqis expressed dissatisfaction with their circumstances. Relative

deprivation, with its emphasis on change and expectations can provide a partial explanation for these discrepancies. Educated Iraqis from Baghdad, many of whom had held comfortable jobs or owned private businesses, had enjoyed a higher standard of living in Iraq than they did in Egypt. Second, many had not anticipated that their stay in Egypt would become protracted. Believing that they would not stay in Egypt more than a year, many Iraqis spent more freely during their initial period of displacement. However as their exile became lengthier and resources declined, Iraqi refugees were forced to deal with decreasing financial security. In addition, Iraqis often spoke of their well-being in terms of a family trajectory in which the future of their children in terms of education and employment was most important and most at risk in Egypt. In this case, deprivation was associated with the disruption of future expectations and hopes. Relative deprivation is therefore useful for explaining how dissatisfaction can arise in contexts in which the world deviates from one's subjective experience or expectation of how it "should" be. However, it is equally important to note here, as a caveat, the heterogeneity of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. While some Iraqis were indeed "living better than (some) Egyptians" as some providers and Egyptians charged, others lived on limited incomes or suffered severe financial hardship. I interviewed several (3) Iraqi refugees who either were, or had been at one time, homeless, and others who reported severe financial insecurity. Discussion of relative deprivation is in no way meant to trivialize the privations of those suffering from 'absolute' deprivation, but instead as a means to document the change in socio-economic status that almost all Iraqi refugees experienced in terms that capture their experiences of difference and loss.

Family Life in Exile

Family size

The average number of family members in the sample at the time of arrival in Egypt was 4.1 people. Some participants were alone, while the largest family size consisted of 10 people. As perhaps might be expected for a prolonged period of exile, household size in Egypt was somewhat fluid. In general, participants traveled with the nuclear family and the family unit remained together in Egypt. However, in some cases family members did not come to Egypt and remained in Iraq, usually in cases where an adult child was married and had their own family in Iraq or when a family member had work or study that they were unable or unwilling to leave. In some cases, these individuals planned to join their family later in Egypt. Over time, increasingly strict visa regulations made it impossible for some individuals to rejoin their family. Elderly parents, adult siblings and other relatives sometimes made up part of the household. In some cases, participants were part of a network of relatives where adult siblings or other relatives also had nuclear families of their own. In rare cases, participants who did not have family in Egypt lived with friends or roommates.

Some family members who had come to Egypt decided, after a period of time, to leave. Some returned to Iraq for work or study. Of these, remaining family members in Egypt told me that their relatives had often not returned to Iraq because the situation in Iraq had improved, but because the situation in Egypt had become intolerable, for

economic or social reasons. Because of the lengthy period of exile, family size was also affected by additions from marriages and births as well as loss due to divorce and death.

Importance of the family

Family was central to all aspects of participants' narratives. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of the family in their response to questions on a wide range of topics. In interviews, I asked participants about their favorite activities in Iraq. In response to this question, family was mentioned repeatedly. For example, when I asked a 49 year old woman whom I interviewed one afternoon in the RLAP office, she answered this question with, among other things, "family togetherness." She then went on to explain in more detail:

My husband, the father of the family, hasn't seen his son in five years so now when he hears his voice on the phone he just cries a lot. Iraqi families didn't use to live apart from each other. So that's why we went to meet in Lebanon. For Iraqis, the family is so important. And my son can't come here. He can't get the visa and even if he could it would be so expensive. 1700 dollars. So that's why we met in Lebanon. (Participant #69: 49 year old Muslim Arab woman)

Several aspects of this quote highlight the importance of family for Iraqi refugees and were shared with other participants. First, she speaks about how family separation is a cause of suffering, especially for her husband who is brought to tears by missing of his son who is still in Iraq. She notes that "Iraqi families didn't use to live apart from each other", a sentiment that is shared by other participants. Finally, she speaks about how she had traveled to Lebanon in order to meet her son, since he could not come to Egypt and they were unable to return to Iraq.

These themes came up repeatedly in the interviews and are just some of the ways that participants articulated the importance of the family. Participants of all ages emphasized the importance of the family. For example, a 19 year old young man identified family as the thing that he had enjoyed most in Iraq:

I had something there that made my life much better, in Iraq. I had many cousins. Boys and girls both. And our house as I told you was close to my grandpa's house. So we used to hang out. And it was really cool. (Participant #05: 19 year old Muslim Arab man).

Another young man spoke about how building his own family was his most important priority in life. He spoke of how, in addition to continuing his education, he hoped to build a family quickly once he was resettled:

I want family fast. My family all living together. My mom always says that until (after) we arrive there for two or three months, she will bring to me a wife. My brother also. Sit together, because we are family together. And we have one kitchen, one dining room together. And she told me that if I have studies, good, if work, but all in the same state. (Participant #06: 23 year old Sunni Muslim Arab man).

This young man was waiting to be resettled to the United States, and talked to me about how he hoped his life would be there. His hopes for the future demonstrate the importance of family for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. For this young man, both building his own family, as well as living together with his parents and brother, were his primary goals. Being together and sharing space with the family were highly desirable. This emphasis on family recurred frequently throughout fieldwork, and brings into relief the

significance of changes in family size and family separation for Iraqis in Egypt. For those family members who were together in Egypt, life in Egypt also had implications for family dynamics.

Family dynamics

In addition to changes in family size as a result of exile, participants often spoke of changes in family dynamics brought on by life in Egypt. In general, participants spoke of how life in Egypt altered customary roles and disrupted relationships within the family. Men who had been accustomed to working long hours in Iraq and to being the primary financial provider in the family, found themselves suffering in Egypt as they were unable to work and began to spend significantly more time in the home. One man, who had held an important government position in Iraq, spoke about how, of the members of his family, his life had changed most drastically in Egypt:

P: I am the one in our family who most feels like I am a stranger in this country because I always did many things in my country like visit my relatives, work, and go to market. In Baghdad, the children used to go to school and return from school. Here, the same thing. My wife, is a housewife, and she cooks, and she cleans. The same job here. But the father? Is the most... (pauses).

N: So your life has changed the most here.

P: Yes. In my family here. But I try not to let my family see so that they don't worry.

N: Why don't you want to show it to your family?

P: Because I work all the time to make them happy. (Participant #11: 47 year old Muslim Arab man)

This man's status, daily life, and well-being had been radically altered in exile in Egypt. He attributed an increased sense of feeling like a "stranger" to these shifts. However, he

also described how he attempted to retain his role as provider and protector of the family by trying to hide his dismay at his new circumstances from his wife and daughters. Other men similarly spoke of taking pressure onto themselves to avoid allowing their families to feel the difficulties of life in exile. One man, a successful businessman in Iraq, responded to my question about his living conditions in the following way:

P: With this question, I want to mention something. The stress and the pressure on me and on the other people leading families. Because we made them used to a certain style of living in Iraq. The pressure is on us. I don't want them to feel the pressure of the style of living. I sold one of my farms in Iraq because I don't want them to feel the I don't want them to be out of study. My cousin wants to go to the college, so we give her the money to go to college and don't let her feel different.

I: so there is pressure, but it didn't change?

P: No, I try to keep it the same, but it changed. (Participant #22: 39 year old Sunni Muslim Arab man).

This man was somewhat remarkable because he had managed to open and operate a relatively successful business in Egypt, a small, neighborhood shop. The business, which he owned with another Iraqi, supported both their families. However, he worked seven days a week for extended hours and had negotiations and difficulties with employees, the landlord and the authorities. In the quote above he discussed the pressure he felt to maintain his family in the style of living to which they had been accustomed in Iraq.

While men spoke of their desire to shield wives and children from changing socioeconomic status in Egypt, women and children reported being aware of changes in family dynamics. Women spoke to me of how their husbands were unhappy to be at home without work, and how this change in the family caused problems at home that

were not only related to socioeconomic status. Adolescent and young adult children also spoke of the way in which changes in the family affected them. For example, one 19 year old man, whose parents both suffered from health problems, spoke of how his life had changed with his father, mother, and brother all at home. He recounted how the change, in combination with their ailing health and well-being, was altering roles in his family. He said:

P: I think I'm the only stable one in the family. Maybe I am.

N: How does it feel to feel like the stable one in the family?

P: It's really tiring. It's really tired to be the only one. My father is also sometimes shouting and fighting. But not because of his nerve system. But that's a habit in my family. His father used to be like that. My father is not the problem in the house anymore. My brother is the problem in the house now. So I think I'm the one who has to take control.

N: That's a lot of responsibility.

P: Yeah. A lot of responsibility. But I have my mother. (Participant #5: 19 year old Muslim Arab man).

This young man, a full-time student, felt responsible for his family. Themes of responsibility within the family were repeated by different family members, who reported that when one family member was suffering, the family suffered together. Family members also reported taking on additional responsibilities to support struggling members, or implementing strategies to support the family. A mother spoke to me about how the difficulties of life in Egypt had affected relationships in her family. She also explained how she sought to combat change in the family by promoting family activities and seeking to provide support to her daughters.

When we have this challenge, the relationship between the family becomes weak. Every one of the children takes their spoon, eats, and goes to their room. But I don't accept that. So, I grouped us all together and we watch TV together, eat together, we play Playstation together. I make friends with my daughters to help them with their problems. I say, I'm your friend, not your mother - what do you dislike about me? I try to take them away from their problems. Sometimes I find my daughter N_____ crying alone, or M_____, the same thing. (Participant #7: 47 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman).

She spoke of how the family members had become isolated from one another in Egypt, and how she made use of a range of strategies to encourage them to deal with problems together. Later in our interview, she went on to say "Before the war, we were a beautiful family and we had so much fun, laughing. But after the war, everything is different and changing." The war in Iraq, and subsequent exile in Egypt, were responsible for radical changes in the family for this participant.

The family was an underlying theme that emerged in the data. As the primary unit of social organization, almost every issue mentioned by Iraqi refugees in Egypt was a family issue. Most Iraqis came to Egypt with their nuclear family, but in some cases other relatives accompanied participants, and in other cases participants came alone. Refugees discussed how life in Egypt affected the family in a number of ways. Family separation occurred at the time of flight when some members of the family had to be left behind in Iraq, or when they fled to other countries. In Iraq, the extended family is an important source of community, support and protection, and the absence of parents, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles was keenly felt as a source of suffering by many participants in the study. In Egypt, additional changes in family composition occurred if members returned to Iraq, were resettled, traveled elsewhere for work, or died. Whenever it was

mentioned, family separation was uniformly defined as a source of hardship. Among families in Egypt, life in exile led to changes in family dynamics that were troubling for many participants. Among these, perhaps the most mentioned was the problem of men being unable to work in Egypt and feeling as though their roles as father, husband and provider were compromised as a result. In general, life in Egypt posed challenges for Iraqis in terms of the family, and, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, in terms of social life in general.

Social Life

Outside of the family, social life in Egypt can be divided into two categories: relations with Egyptians and relations with other Iraqis. The first category relates to the question of social integration and, combined with the information about other aspects of life in Egypt, helps to answer questions about whether or not Iraqis could achieve “local integration” in Egypt. The second category relates to the question of whether or not there is a “community” of Iraqis in Egypt. Neither of these questions have a definitive answer, yet in both cases, problems of social relationships exist. Although individual Iraqis have excellent relationships with both Egyptians and Iraqis, I would not characterize either set of relations as forming any type of cohesive community.

Social relations with Egyptians

Although some Iraqis reported having good relations with Egyptians, others reported having either limited relations with Egyptians or experiencing specific problems

with Egyptians. In most cases, a feeling of difference, or being a stranger, pervaded Iraqis' accounts of interactions with Egyptians. In their narratives, Iraqis spoke of not feeling "at home" in Egypt or with Egyptians, as a function of different culture and traditions. Some mentioned similarities between Egyptians and Iraqis, such as religion, shared ethnicity and other aspects of culture, but some reported feeling "different" even with such similarities. For example, one woman who reported not feeling comfortable described the situation in the following way:

P: No, of course not. This is not, this is not my home. And, the culture and tradition here is very different from the culture and tradition in Iraq and I didn't feel home anymore. I don't feel home.

N: why not?

P: First my financial situation not helping.

P: It's yes, it's an Islamic, Arabic country, but the tradition and culture is hugely different from our tradition and cultures.

P: In Iraq the people will share each other in sad and happy moments. Here, they don't share, and I stay in my home, during the *Eid*¹⁷ I stayed in my home, no one came and knocked on my door and asked how I am and tell me *Eid Mubarak* or anything like that. It's different.

P: Here I didn't, didn't have, I didn't have a lot of friends. And I didn't find a lot of network of relationship while in Iraq I had different friends from different groups, from different people. I had Arabic Sunni, I had Arabic Shi'I, I had Kurdish people, and we lived and we didn't ask these questions and we didn't know about these things and we lived in very comfortable and trusting each other so much and...

P: Here you find people different from the people and the traditions and the habits are different from the traditions in our home. We are not comfortable here.

N: In what way are the traditions and habits different here?

P: Like neighbors, It's so easy in Iraq to go and knock on your neighbor's door and ask her a certain question. I don't usually go to anyone here but one of the times I needed the key for the front door of the building and I went and I knocked the door of my neighbor and they didn't, they didn't answer me and when I

¹⁷ "Eid" literally means 'festival' and refers to major holidays in the Middle East. "Eid Mubarak" is a traditional greeting for such holidays. The two most major Muslim Eids are the Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, and the Eid al Adha, which celebrates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to God.

knocked it again they were so mad at me and they told “why you are knocking on our door?” and they made me feel very, very, very, very bad from this.

P: But we are Iraqis, we are of the same tradition and culture and place.
(Participant #36: 34 year old Kurdish Muslim woman)

In the above exchange, a number of themes related to social relations in Egypt emerge. One is the nostalgic remembrance of social relations in Iraq as characterized by harmony, sharing and support. It is especially notable that this participant, and others, spoke about how she had friends from different religious sects and ethnicities in Iraq, portraying essentially a harmonious portrait of diversity in the country. She does not mention religious and ethnic divisions that have emerged at various periods in Iraq’s history, most relevantly after the U.S. invasion and occupation. Instead, she paints a picture of an essentially “Iraqi” national identity in which “we didn’t know about these things and we lived in very comfortable and trusting each other...”. Although she identifies Egypt as a Muslim, Arab country, she notes that the traditions and culture are different. Twice in the exchange she contrasts relations between neighbors in Iraq with those in Egypt, mentioning how her neighbors treated her poorly by not showing care and wishing her *Eid Mubarak* and by responding angrily when she knocked on their door to borrow a key. Also notable in this bit of dialogue is the expression of loneliness. This woman is unhappy that she has been unable to make friends in Egypt and that people do not show her care, especially during the *Eid*, when care to others is an expected part of the holidays as well as celebration. Themes of difference, loneliness and isolation were present in other interviews, as was a nostalgic portrayal of social relations in Iraq.

Iraqis reported some instances of misunderstanding and abuse at the hands of Egyptians. Acts of overt racism or violence were relatively rare, especially when compared to the experiences of African refugees in Egypt, who often experienced open discrimination and violence. This may have been because Iraqis were usually able to blend in physically in ways that African refugees could not. In addition, when Iraqis were identified as different, they were often confused with wealthy tourists from the Arabian Gulf.¹⁸ While this did not lead to overt mistreatment, it did have its own problems, as explained by one woman:

P: When they see that you are a stranger they think that you are a tourist, that you are a tourist. And they they just put a lot of money on us, they don't understand that we are, we are, we are escaped from our country and we don't have any, any, any money and this is also one of the things that we can't go out from the home because of this.

N: So that happens a lot, that people are trying to charge you more when they see that you're a foreigner?

P: Any place I will go they will, they will charge me more money. Any place, for anything that I will do, would cost me more money. When they see my accent is not Egyptian, they will try to put more money for me.

P: And one of the times when I was walking on the Nile, they, I ask about *hummus shaab*¹⁹, So he said that it's five Egyptian pounds for the cup, so I didn't believe them because it's, that's too much, so I went and asked the people who are there, who are eating it, and I asked them how (much did) it's cost you, how much it costs you, and they said it's just one. Only one Egyptian pound. See how much it's a huge difference between one and five. (Participant #36: 34 year old Muslim Kurdish woman).

While this example, which recounts a disagreement over the price of a small cup of chickpeas, may seem minor, its themes were echoed by other Iraqis when talking of purchases ranging from taxi rides to the purchase or rent of apartments. In this example,

¹⁸ While this confusion caused problems for Iraqis, it was usually that they were charged more for goods and services, a relatively minor problem when compared with the racial epithets and episodes of violence reported by African refugees.

¹⁹ Chickpeas with lemon, a street food often sold in small cups to pedestrians walking along the Nile.

the woman notes that the magnitude of the difference is crucial. The vendor attempted to charge her five times the price because he identified her as foreign. Importantly, she remarks that Egyptians do not understand that she is a refugee, but see her only as a foreigner, and potentially as a comparatively wealthy tourist. That Egyptians did not understand that Iraqis were refugees was a theme mentioned repeatedly by Iraqi refugees. This particular woman was suffering from acute financial difficulties in Egypt and therefore the inflated price of the chickpeas was important to her, especially as a symbol of a kind of injustice. She mentions that she doesn't have "any money" and that she does not like to go out of the house, especially for any kind of leisure, because she knows she will be mistaken for a tourist and expected to pay higher prices. Egypt is a common tourist destination for wealthy Arabs from the Gulf, and as a result it is perhaps not surprising that Egyptians might not be able to distinguish an Iraqi refugee from a tourist. However, the result of these interactions, given the financial instability of many Iraqi refugees in Egypt, was a fear of trusting Egyptians who they worried would exploit that trust for material gain. One woman explained these concerns:

No. [sighs]. All the relations here are for something. Some, most of the time it ends by cheating. When they see that I, we are Iraqi, and they understand that the Iraqis has money, and they want to use this money. Yes, they used us, and they stolen money from us a lot. And me, me, twice I had people that they robbed me. Like they took money from me, under the name of friendship. (Participant #41: 41 year old Muslim Arab woman).

This woman rejected the idea of establishing relationships with Egyptians because of the fear that she would be "used" financially, and that her money would be stolen. She recounts that this has happened to her twice. In addition, she notes that this theft, unlike

the anonymous transaction between vendor and customer described by the woman quoted before her, was committed by people she had imagined were her friends. The idea that relationships with Egyptians were “for something” was repeated by many participants, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Service providers noted that some Iraqi refugees did have greater financial security than many Egyptians. This asymmetry, and the incongruence between Egyptian and Iraqi perceptions of Iraqis’ financial situation in Egypt, led to problems for refugees and service providers alike. Refugees, as described above, struggled to get fair prices in the context of what they perceived to be very real financial insecurity. Service providers, some of whom were Egyptians, struggled with how to deal with refugees whose previous standard of living had been higher than that of many Egyptians. It is also worth noting that, while there was certainly a lot of observed truth to the fact that Iraqis were charged higher prices than Egyptians, some complaints about this treatment also invoked negative stereotypes about Egyptians as untrustworthy or cheaters.

While it was relatively rare, some participants reported being the target of open discrimination from Egyptians. Most commonly, this took the form of questioning about sectarian issues, the war and the Saddam Hussein regime. However, other insults were more generally xenophobic:

Sometimes we hear some words from other people. Like Egyptians. Why did you come here? You will bring us war, just like you did. You are making the prices really high, you make the prices really high. Sometimes when I get in line for bread they tell me - go back to your country why did you come here? (Participant #2: 45 year old Muslim Arab woman).

This woman reported experiencing accusations that she, as an Iraqi, was responsible for rising rent and other costs in Egypt. Such discourses were much more prevalent during my pilot fieldwork in 2007-2008, when I heard them regularly from Iraqis and Egyptians alike. In 2009-2010, these discourses were rarer; however, the same underlying charge of economic asymmetry remained. In addition to accusations of causing increased prices, the quote above identifies general mistrust of difference and the accusation that Iraqis might bring war to Egypt. The quote above presents some of the worst experiences with discrimination faced by Iraqis in Egypt. More often, subtle and insidious feelings of difference caused by higher prices and differential treatment were cited as problems with relations with Egyptians.

Many Iraqis reported not building relations with Egyptians at all, largely because of the reasons mentioned above. Difference, or being “strangers” was often cited, as in this quote from a woman. “I did not have contact with Egyptians. I am afraid from them. They are strangers. I am afraid from their problems. Because we are strangers.” (Participant #08: 40 year old Muslim Arab woman). This quote is interesting because the participant identifies both Egyptians and Iraqis as “strangers”, highlighting the difference between them. Moreover she goes on to say that she is afraid of Egyptians and does not have relationships with them as a result. Fear was mentioned by a number of Iraqis as a reason for not engaging in relationships with Egyptians.

Not all relations between Iraqis and Egyptians were problematic or discriminatory. While less frequent than accounts of negative, or at best distant, relations

between Iraqis and Egyptians, many participants reported having Egyptian friends, neighbors and colleagues with whom they had excellent relationships. However, negative perceptions of Egyptians often also crept into these accounts. For example, a young college student and I had the following exchange:

N: Was Egypt not the way you expected it to be?

P: Yeah. I expected it to be more Iraqi.

N: In what way?

P: First thing, the people always try to rob you, people always use you. But I managed to find good friends here, really good friends. I'm okay now. But I don't mind leaving. Really.

N: Are most of your friends here Egyptian?

P: Yeah. Egyptian. (Participant #05: 19 year old Muslim Arab man).

I include this exchange because I initially found it to be remarkable that this young man had expected Egypt to be more "Iraqi". However, I understood him, like many other Iraqis, to have imagined that life in Egypt – a Muslim, Arab country with a long history of civilization, just like Iraq – to be similar to the life that they had experienced in Iraq. However, life in Egypt had turned out to be different, and one way in which it was identified to be so was in this young man's characterization of Egyptian people. However, he ends this bit of discussion by telling me that most of his friends are Egyptian, and by characterizing them as "really good friends." Later in our interview, he went on to tell me more about how his friends understood little about what it meant to be Iraqi, and about the conflict in Iraq. He reported enjoying teaching them about his experiences and the suffering of Iraqis generally and remarked that he felt satisfaction when his Egyptian friends began to understand what he had been through. A 33 year old

woman spoke even more positively about her relations with Egyptians. She stated that she had decided to flee to Egypt instead of Jordan specifically because of the Egyptian people. She said: “The Egyptian people. They are kind, they are simple. In Jordan they make you feel as a stranger. Here they don’t make you feel that.” (Participant #25: 33 year old Muslim Arab woman). This quote is particularly interesting because this woman’s response is essentially opposite to that of many other Iraqis when she implied that Egyptian people did not make her feel like a stranger. This particular woman had suffered an accident and reported that during her convalescence, Egyptian neighbors had come to visit her and offered their help. Interestingly, this experience is in direct contrast with others, who reported negative experiences with Egyptians and cited a lack of friendliness or assistance from neighbors.

In general, relations between Iraqis and Egyptians were mixed. The nature of this study is such that I interviewed only Iraqi refugees and as a result, the Egyptian perspective is conspicuously missing from this account. However, Iraqis’ accounts highlight some areas of concern. Iraqis report being made to feel different in Egypt in a number of ways, including being treated like foreigners, not refugees, being taken advantage of financially, and being the targets of open discrimination. Iraqis also express some stereotypes of Egyptians in which they accuse Egyptians, in general, of cheating or theft. As a result of negative perceptions and experiences, some Iraqis reported avoiding relationships with Egyptians altogether. Others expressed some general stereotypes about differences between Egyptians and Iraqis but reported engaging in social relations with some Egyptians. Finally, some Iraqis presented only positive portrayals of Egyptians. In

general, most Iraqis expressed some measure of understanding for the difficulties of life in Egypt for Egyptians as well as refugees, yet relations with Egyptians were nonetheless limited.

Social relations between Iraqis

The notion of a national or ethnic community of refugees in the country of asylum is often taken for granted. I frequently heard policymakers and practitioners speak of the “Iraqi refugee community” as well as communities of other refugee groups in Egypt. Yet I wanted to more fully understand what, if any, was the nature of this community. In this section, I discuss the relations between Iraqi refugees in Egypt who are not related by kin ties, except perhaps those based very loosely on tribal affiliations and places of origin. While service providers, refugees and my observations suggested that other refugee groups, such as Sudanese refugees, had formed relatively strong communities in Egypt, Iraqi refugees had not to the same degree. This assessment is based on the lack, at the time, of any community-based organizations specifically for Iraqis, limited Iraqi-focused events, and on Iraqi refugees’ own reflections on the situation of Iraqis in Egypt.

There were, however, some events, such as weddings, and musical events attended primarily by Iraqis that hinted at affiliations based on Iraqi-ness. In addition, some Iraqi businesses existed in areas with large Iraqi populations, and these were frequented by Iraqis. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to visit or see Iraqi restaurants, cafes, shops, a bakery and an ice-cream shop, all of which were owned and operated by Iraqis, serving a largely Iraqi clientele. Iraqi national identity was proudly on

display in these businesses and in Iraqi homes, as well as on people's bodies. Many Iraqi women wore gold necklaces around their necks, from which hung a golden charm in the shape of the map of Iraq. Bracelets, headbands, t-shirts and other accessories were emblazoned with the Iraqi flag. In homes, small Iraqi flags were prominently displayed in homes and Iraqi TV channels regularly played in the background during interviews. Despite their mistrust of the Iraqi government, Iraqis engaged with the state in some ways, approaching the embassy when necessary and voting in the elections held on March 7, 2010²⁰.

Yet despite proud displays of Iraqi national identity, I observed that many Iraqis were reluctant to socialize with one another. There are several reasons which may go towards explaining this observation, most of which relate to the instability of life in Egypt. First, Iraqis reported having made attempts to socialize only to have their efforts shut down by the Egyptian government. Second, legacies of sectarian conflict may have made Iraqi refugees in Egypt reluctant to make new associations with Iraqis whose backgrounds, affiliations and motivations were unknown to them. Third, Iraqis' perceptions of life in Egypt as temporary may have led to them not cultivating relationships which they anticipated would be terminated when they left Egypt.

The lack of organized Iraqi activities was primarily attributed to conditions of insecurity in Egypt. Iraqis reported that the Egyptian government security forces responded with suspicion whenever Iraqis congregated in any noticeable fashion. Some participants noted that when they first arrived in Egypt, they had organized celebrations,

²⁰ The March 7, 2010 Elections were the second parliamentary elections since Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003.

trips and picnics on an informal basis for Iraqis, but that they had been told by the security forces to stop such activities. Iraqis' efforts to build community-based organizations met with similar fates. As one man noted:

There is no organization special for Iraqi refugees. There is for Sudanese, there is Somali. Just for Iraqis, no. When they made this office, Barbara, they made it just for Iraqis. But after that, the government here did (follow us). Because when they make a special organization just for us it would be more helpful. (Participant #11: 47 year old Muslim Arab man).

RLAP, previously named the Iraqi Information Office, had originally provided legal services only to Iraqis. As the only organization just for Iraqi refugees in Egypt, it had been in a sense “adopted” as a community based organization for Iraqis, even though it was primarily a legal aid office. However, in 2009 RLAP had expanded services to provide legal aid to all refugee groups and although their clientele remained primarily Iraqi, the organization lost some of its’ “Iraqiness”. The idea mentioned in this quote that the government did not support services for Iraqi refugees was somewhat borne out by experiences at RLAP and information conveyed to me about previous efforts to establish an Iraqi community-based organization in Egypt which were promptly squelched by the government. The fear of having activities and organizations shut down by the Egyptian government created an atmosphere of fear, mistrust and suspicion among some Iraqis. This sense manifested as a heightened sense of awareness and increased care and vigilance. It is not entirely clear to me why the Egyptian government chose to target Iraqi refugees, although I hypothesize that regional paranoia associated with religious sectarianism may have played a part. In reality, not all social activities were curtailed;

Iraqis still met, socialized and did activities together. However, for some refugees, there was a sense that socializing with other Iraqis could put one in danger.

Fear of sectarianism and associations with conflict in Iraq also played a part in Iraqis' social relations with one another. I noticed that Iraqis often referred to sectarian divisions euphemistically and were reluctant to discuss them. However, when I asked Iraqis about their social relations with one another, the answers were often steeped in mistrust and fear. For example, I asked one young man, who had indicated his dissatisfaction with his social life in Egypt, what could be done to improve social relations between Iraqis. He replied:

I don't want to make a social uh activities with Iraqi families because (of) those problems I told you about and ehm especially the Iraqis who are out of Iraq and sometimes the-they make troubles or make ehm...yeah they make troubles so, I want to be away from them in order to be away from their troubles. So I don't think we need social activities between them because I don't know-I don't want them ahh-I don't want them-I don't want these social activities. (Participant #14: 25 year old Sunni Muslim Arab man).

Although this young man euphemistically refers to "troubles" he is emphatic in his insistence that he wants nothing to do with other Iraqi refugees. He later mentions that he knows one or two families well, and is willing to socialize with them. However, he was unwilling to be put in situations where he might come into contact with Iraqis he did not know. A 41 year old woman who I interviewed articulated similar ideas. She told me that "social integration" in Egypt was difficult, and reported not having relationships with other Iraqis. She spoke of how social relations in Egypt were different than in Iraq, and made the following statement:

Iraqis, between Iraqis, they should just wash their hearts. They reached, they reached the level where the people are too upset about each other even if they don't know it. They are (as) jealous. If someone go to the United States, if someone buy something there is a jealous factor. It's not the relationship, it's not good, as to usual. ...Okay, if someone wants to improve the situation. First we should wash our hearts, and, and then we should lighten our brain by information. It's not difficult but there is no real information. And sometimes if you, if we can build lovely relationships here maybe we can live better than even Baghdad. (Participant #41: 41 year old Muslim Arab woman).

In this statement, this woman speaks about how Iraqis in Egypt are upset and jealous from one another. She states that Iraqis should “wash their hearts” in order to improve relationships and their lives in Egypt. She notes resettlement as one of the factors causing jealousy among Iraqi refugees and points out that relationships between Iraqis are not as they would “usually” be in Iraq.

Finally, Iraqis' perceptions of life in Egypt as temporary or transitory combined with their unstable situation may have further contributed to limiting social relationships between Iraqis. For example, one man described his social relations in the following way:

We don't have people coming to the apartment. We don't have the same kind of social life here in Egypt we don't integrate with the neighbors in the same way. We have no relatives here. We do not have friendships that are really friendships. ... Even the fact of relationships here will be superficial because all the people here living in temporary situation, so it will be a superficial relationship. (Participant #33: 40 year old Muslim Arab man).

This man, who had been in the resettlement process for several years but still did not know when he would leave Egypt, spoke of how he did not have real friends in Egypt. He mentioned that the ‘temporary situation’ of life in Egypt would limit friendships to a superficial level. Other participants stated that because they conceived of life in Egypt as

temporary, they did not seek to build relationships. One woman said: “There are some groups of Iraqis (that) make some meetings, travel, eating, picnics. For me, I want just to go out, to leave Egypt.” (Participant #03: 33 year old Sunni Muslim woman). As was discussed in the section on daily life, some Iraqis, such as this woman, did not conceive of life in Egypt as really “living”. For this woman, Egypt was a place of transit, and not a place for socializing. Her efforts were focused on finding a way out of Egypt in order to build her life elsewhere.

Some Iraqis reported having many Iraqi friends and acquaintances. However, these refugees were the exception. Participant observation suggested that people were known to one another, but that many relationships were at the level of acquaintance. People socialized with extended families if they were present in Egypt, or with a small number of close friends. Some Iraqis were more isolated and actively avoided making relationships with Egyptians or Iraqis. Fear of recurrence of the problems in Iraq and of security problems in Egypt kept some Iraqis from associating with one another. The instability of life in Egypt further limited Iraqi refugees’ social relations, as did their conception of life in Egypt as a temporary place.

From Iraq to Egypt: Insecurity to Instability

All of the important concerns related to life in Egypt discussed above, can be related to a broad theme of instability in Egypt. Whether talking about residency, employment, education or their social life, Iraqi refugees identified the uncertainty of

their lives in exile, and in particular, worry for the future, as the primary cause of their suffering. Instability was present in a large number of domains of everyday life in Egypt and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, was connected to suffering and poor psychosocial well-being.

For Iraqi refugees, suffering was understood as a continuum, encompassing experiences in Iraq as well as experiences of life in asylum in Egypt. While in Iraq, conditions had been life threateningly insecure, in Egypt, existential anxiety about the future as well as the denial of basic rights and an uncertain present all contributed to instability. Iraqi refugees reflected this continuum in their narratives. For example, one woman spoke of the relationship between conditions in Iraq and in Egypt in the following way: “It is the change is that different kind of problem. We were insecure in Iraq and now we are not stable. So it’s about how we feel and think about it more than about how we manage it.” (Participant #51: 45 year old Christian Chaldean woman). In her comparison, this woman contrasts insecurity in Iraq with instability in Egypt. For this participant, in Iraq she lived a certain kind of middle class life which, she argues, had not changed much, in a material sense, in Egypt. What had changed, however, was the way she thought and felt about her life, which had been transformed from insecurity to instability.

Instability, unlike insecurity, does not denote an emergency, crisis situation. It connotes a different kind of suffering, one which is slower and less acute but no less difficult to deal with. I spoke to one woman about the differences in life between Iraq and Egypt:

P: In Iraq, it was definitely better. For our home, we were also renting it, but it was a home - we paid by the month and he (her husband) was able to work. There is something shared between Iraq and here, which is instability. We didn't feel stable.

N: So you didn't feel stable in Iraq?

P: No. All the wars. Where is the stability?

N: Was it a different sort of instability than the instability here?

P: In Iraq, we were in a panic situation. The wars, the blockade. Here, everything is available. But the instability comes from the frustration of not working, the expensive rent, everything is expensive.

While this woman spoke of both life in Iraq and in Egypt as unstable, she described conditions in Iraq as a "panic situation." In Egypt, there was not the urgency of wartime suffering as in Iraq, but instead it was the distant future that remained constantly in question.

Anxiety about the future was an important aspect of instability in Egypt for Iraqi refugees. A middle-aged Iraqi man expressed concerns for the future in terms of residency.

The problem is you have no future. Most Iraqis fear the matter of residency. One of the things we are afraid of is one day, as the Africans now, they will say you have a closed file and if you don't have residency you will be kicked out. So where would we go, you see what I mean? (Participant #77: 52 year old Muslim Arab man)

In this quote, the man compared the situation of Iraqis to that of African, especially Sudanese refugees in Egypt. Since UNHCR stopped conducting refugee status

determination with Sudanese refugees, a large number of Sudanese in Egypt have been without legal status. This man feared that at some point, the UNHCR would cease to recognize Iraqis as refugees and he would lose his ability to stay in Egypt. Iraqis in Egypt generally do not have the opportunity to establish permanent residency, and the possible loss of this residency contributed to Iraqi refugees' anxiety about their unknown future.

When they left Iraq, most Iraqis did not anticipate settling in Egypt for a long period of time. They were further prevented from imagining Egypt as a place of permanent settlement because of residency restrictions and policies that prevent them from working, assembling freely, and accessing public education. Despite historical, political and cultural ties between the two countries, many Iraqis spoke of feeling like 'strangers' in Egypt. In addition to disincentives to settle permanently in Egypt, Iraqis also faced incentives to leave Egypt, including third-country resettlement programs. Resettlement, while providing a much-needed durable solution to a small minority of Iraqis, contributed to feelings of instability because of the complicated and lengthy nature of the process, which could last months or years. Many Iraqi refugees desired resettlement, but the resettlement process itself could be challenging and destabilizing. Information about a refugees' resettlement case was not easily attained, and some refugees expressed confusion and anxiety about whether or not they were in the process of being resettled and when or if they would travel.

The perception that life in Egypt was temporary contributed to Iraqi refugees' decision-making as they sought to make use of limited resources as best they could. Some participants pulled their children out of school because they believed they were about to be resettled and wanted to save the tuition money for necessary expenses in their

country of resettlement. However, as the process dragged on longer than they had expected and their children remained out of school, these parents reported that their children were suffering from social isolation and other psychosocial effects. Other Iraqis reported that they were afraid to spend money in Egypt, as they were afraid to exhaust limited resources and wanted to ensure that they had money saved in case of future contingencies. One woman described how uncertainty had led to her life being essentially 'on hold'.

The financial situation has become worse and we are nearly bankrupt. Waiting for travelling and starting new life. Going back to the country is impossible. And my brother is unemployed. They are adults and the people in their age they are married and they have a family. My sister has four years now that she is not in school. We don't have money for her school and we didn't bring any of her reports from Baghdad. Every day I think about this... my mother, my sister.... (Participant #03: 33 year old Sunni Muslim woman).

This woman and her family were an example of how instability, as a kind of liminality, resulted in Iraqis' experiencing life in Egypt as a period between a former life and an uncertain, future life. For Janna, the expected trajectory of life, including such events as education, marriage, and starting a family were all disrupted in Egypt. These disruptions weighed heavily on Janna, who reported worrying about her family and their future on a daily basis.

The implications of instability can also be seen in Iraqis' accounts of how they negotiated what they perceived as a 'temporary life' in Egypt. For example, I interviewed the man mentioned above (Participant #77) in his apartment in a suburb of Cairo in 2010. He recounted how, when he and his family had traveled to Egypt in 2006, he had resisted buying furniture for their apartment. For him, life in Egypt was temporary, and an

expenditure of money on furniture was unnecessary. His wife however, had insisted that they furnish the apartment properly, not with ‘temporary furniture’. In our interview, he told me that although the purchase of furniture had cost money, the “loss is a little money but it made me feel better because it felt like we had not had such a reduction in standard of living. It felt more like home.” (Participant #77:52 year old Muslim Arab man) He and his wife’s decision to purchase furniture had the implication that they did not feel the loss of home and status as much as they might have otherwise. This presents a converse example to those Iraqis who were not able or did not choose to mitigate aspects of the ‘temporary life’ in Egypt.

In this chapter, I presented data about Iraqi refugees’ lives in exile in Egypt. In addition to data about their arrival and reason for travelling to Egypt, I have characterized asylum in Egypt as being essentially “unstable”, a set of conditions that leads to suffering for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Many aspects of Iraqis’ lives in Egypt including family life, employment, education and social life are, to varying degrees, marked by a lack of stability. Instability, while not posing an immediate threat to life in most cases, creates existential anxiety about the future that is manifested in a number of ways, as will be discussed in the next chapter. An additional characteristic of instability is that it constructs life in Egypt as a prolonged liminal period between a past life and a future, unknown life. The difficulties of conceiving of that future life and the constraints that limit Iraqis’ efforts to pursue it are among the causes of suffering for Iraqi refugees. Declining status and standard of living further contribute to concerns about uncertainty for Iraqis. Taken together, it is perhaps not surprising that some Iraqi refugees in Egypt do not refer to their lives in Egypt as “living” but as a problem to be solved, or as a

station on the way to another life. The unknowability of that other life is a potential cause of psychological suffering that will be discussed in detail in the chapter that follows.

Chapter 7: Instability and *Hala Nufsia*: Psychosocial well-being among Iraqi refugees in Egypt

When I asked Iraqi refugees about their health, many responded that their health was fine, but their psychological situation or “*hala nufsia*” was not. Recognizing the problematic nature of this distinction, I had arbitrarily separated questions about health and psychological well-being in the interview guide as I had anticipated that participants might not spontaneously offer information about their mental health or well-being because of literature and anecdotal evidence about stigma associated with mental illness in the Middle East (Al-Krenawi & Graham J.R., 2000). On the contrary, participants regularly volunteered this information, especially when I asked about health. For Iraqi refugees in Egypt, health and psychosocial well-being were intimately connected, and both were associated with conditions of unstable exile in Egypt.

Table 3 provides a brief overview of the average number of afflictions reported by interviewees. I asked each interviewee about their health and also about the health of their family members, and about their psychological situation, *hala nufsia*, and that of their family members. Each interviewee reported an average of 1.5 health issues and 2.0 psychological problems, although quite a few reported none (37% health, and 11% *hala nufsia*). Health problems tended to include medical concerns including hypertension, heart conditions, and diabetes but also included more generalized pain and suffering including back pain and headaches. Participants themselves articulated the connection

between their *hala nufsia* and other aspects of health and well-being, often noting that their psychological situation “made them sick” or exacerbated existing conditions. Problems identified as being part of *hala nufsia* were also sometimes described in medical and/or somatic terms, although emotions, such as tired (*ta’aban*), nervous, and angry as well as qualitative terms, such as bad or difficult, predominated. A complete list of responses to questions about participants’ health and *hala nufsia* is available in **appendices c and d**.

Table 3: Health and psychological (*hala nufsia*) issues for Iraqi refugees

Average number of health or psychological issues, per interview and per family*	
Type of complaint	Mean number of complaints (range)
Health (per interviewee)	1.5 (0-8)
Health (per family)	3.17 (0-14)
<i>Hala nufsia</i> (per interviewee)	2.0 (0-8)
<i>Hala nufsia</i> (per family)	3.4 (0-14)

*as reported by primary interviewee.

The term “*hala nufsia*” was often used to refer to psychological suffering or mental illness, likely as a means of softening any potential shame associated with mental illness. Iraqi words such as *mukhabil/a*, meaning “crazy”, or even “*mareed nufsi*”, the more polite term for mental illness, were never mentioned by participants when referring to themselves or others. Perhaps it is not surprising that the term *mukhabil*, with its pejorative and insulting connotations, was not used, since participants were usually speaking about themselves or family members. However, even in cases of severe mental illness, such as psychotic disorders, the term “*mareed nufsi*” was not mentioned. Instead,

participants referred to “*hala nufsia*” or to other more euphemistic ways of discussing sickness, such as “*ta’ab*” or fatigue as ways of talking about psychological or emotional suffering. *Hala nufsia* in Arabic literally means “psychological situation” or “psychological case”. The Arabic word *al nufs*, literally means “the self” but carries additional meanings associated with personhood, existence and the soul.²¹ Here, *nufs* is transformed here into an adjective to describe the psychological well-being or lack thereof, of a particular person. Rarely, and in extreme conditions, participants used the term “*mu tabya3*”, which literally means “not natural”, or “not normal” to describe someone’s afflictions. As will be discussed in more detail below, this expression was associated with concerns that someone was changing, or no longer being themselves. This expression, used in circumstances of significant distress or disorder, is similar to *hala nufsia* in the allusions to the self or person.

That *hala nufsia* was frequently invoked in response to my questioning about health supports the idea that it fit into the realm of health and illness for Iraqis. Yet *hala nufsia* was applied to a range of conditions ranging from diagnosed mental illness to emotional distress to inchoate suffering. It often co-occurred with words such as “*ta’aban*” or tired, as well as bored, anxious and worried, among others. Iraqis’ use of the term *hala nufsia* maps fairly well onto the concept of psycho-social well-being. However, in this chapter, I will use the term psychological situation, a literal translation

²¹ A key informant explained the meaning of “*al nufs*” in Arabic as being the “part of the soul that allows one to exist in the world” and explained that the word has this specialized meaning in classic Arab literature. However, in vernacular Arabic, it sometimes means just “self” or “person”. In Egypt, Iraqis who spoke English often translated “*hala nufsia*” as “psychological situation”, as I do here, but these other connotations are important to Iraqi ethnopsychology.

of *hala nufsia*, in an attempt to accurately reflect the ways in which Iraqi refugees spoke about their mental health and psychological and emotional well-being.

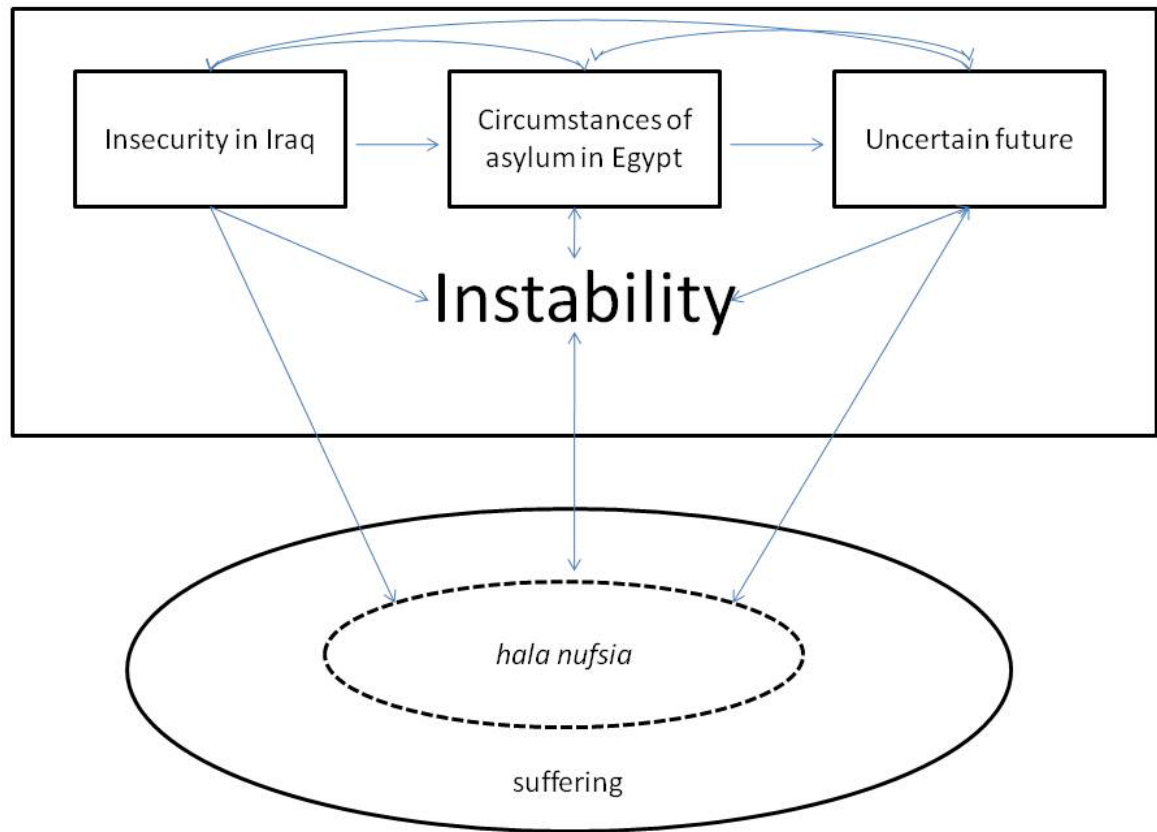
In order to understand how to situate health and well-being in the context of first asylum in Egypt and also in the resettlement process, I first sought to explore how Iraqi refugees in Egypt understand and describe their health and well-being. Of interest here are both emic characterizations of health, illness and well-being as well as local understandings of professional categorizations of disease which in this case include bureaucratic constructions of refugees' vulnerability. Taken together, these concepts make up the explanatory model of illness, a model for the local meanings of a condition and the ways in which people come to understand it (Kleinman, 1980; Weiss, 1997). This chapter takes guidance from the explanatory model framework to describe how unstable conditions of exile in Egypt were experienced in the idiom of poor *hala nufsia*, which resulted in additional suffering and occasionally in other health conditions.

While *hala nufsia* is not a discrete illness, but instead a term that refers to a range of experiences of psychological, emotional and social suffering, I nonetheless take guidance from the explanatory model framework in order to understand and elaborate local conceptions of mental health and well-being. The explanatory model was developed with the specific goal of allowing physicians to understand patients' concepts and experiences of illness and as such Kleinman's original formulation is not entirely appropriate to this purpose. However, I draw on the model for understanding Iraqi refugees' understandings of the causes of their psychological suffering, its manifestation and the ways in which it is experienced, its severity, origin and course, and ways of addressing the problem.

For Iraqi refugees in Egypt, a primary cause of poor or abnormal *hala nufsia* can be found in the condition of instability. **Figure 1** demonstrates the model of interrelationships between instability and *hala nufsia* which form the basis for this chapter. To briefly describe the model, instability represents a complex set of conditions made up of past elements of insecurity in Iraq, present conditions and circumstances of asylum in Egypt, and the uncertainty associated with the future. While I have delineated these three elements of instability as separate, each of them acts on the other to influence the experience of overall instability for Iraqi refugees. To provide one example, perceptions of worsening security concerns in Iraq increase concerns about the future by limiting the possibility of return while also affecting conditions in Egypt through a number of means, such as creating anxiety about family members still in Iraq, raising concerns about property or other potential sources of income in Iraq, and contributing to feelings of *ghorba*, or strangeness. Therefore, all three elements may affect one another, although they do not all need to be acting at once. Second, any one of these elements, or the condition of instability as a cumulative whole, may influence a refugee's well-being by leading to suffering or a poor psychological situation, or *hala nufsia*. The border between suffering and *hala nufsia* is permeable because not all forms of suffering are associated with having an abnormal or problematic *hala nufsia*, and because *hala nufsia* can be associated with other types of suffering. Bidirectional arrows between instability and its elements and *hala nufsia* demonstrate that while conditions of instability lead to suffering and poor *hala nufsia*, the manifestations of *hala nufsia* reinforce experiences of instability in Egypt and may lead to other kinds of afflictions as well. Below I elaborate the idiom of *hala nufsia* and discuss Iraqi refugees' accounts of its prevalence,

manifestations and etiology before returning to the idea of instability as the underlying explanation for the psychological suffering of Iraqi refugees in Egypt.

Figure 1: Model of interrelationships between instability and psychological suffering



The Prevalence of Poor *Hala Nufsia*

A number of participants reported being in good health only to also immediately note that their psychological situation was not good at all. Suffering from problems which affected their *hala nufsia* was an issue identified by the majority of Iraqi refugee participants. Iraqi refugees who did suffer from serious health problems and disabilities also identified their psychological situation as one of their primary problems in Egypt. For some participants, their psychological situation was the biggest problem that they

faced in Egypt. Yasser, a young man who suffered from a spinal deformity was probably the most striking example of the importance of psychological suffering. Because of his medical condition, Yasser was unable to work. His father had developed cancer and had left for Syria in order to be able to access treatment and as a result, Yasser and his brother were living in an apartment with two other young Iraqi men in similar circumstances. Because of financial difficulties, Yasser had been forced to abandon his studies, which he longed to resume. However, when I asked Yasser what his biggest concern in Egypt was, he said that his main problem was his psychological situation:

N: If you had to choose one thing what would you say is the most important issue in Egypt?

P: My psychological situation, more than my medical condition. There is nothing that could make me feel like I am living like a normal human being. It's the same place, the same bed, the same apartment every day. Sometimes I feel seriously like I'm in prison. (Participant #23: Yasser, 20 year old Muslim Arab man).

While the total narrative of Yasser's interview raises a litany of problems including health, employment, education, and family problems, when asked specifically, Yasser identified his poor psychological condition as his most important problem. There were Iraqi refugees who did not report experiencing any psychosocial problems in Egypt, although these were by far the minority in this study. Some chose to speak of their family's well-being and resisted my efforts to inquire about their personal well-being. Others requested that I not ask them to speak about this, since they found it too painful to discuss, a request that I respected. A few reported that their psychosocial well-being was fine, good or simply not an issue. Some provided limited information about their psychosocial well-being possibly because of a reluctance to talk about personal matters with a stranger and the potentially stigmatizing nature of mental health problems in Iraq.

However, as discussed above, the formulation of *hala nufsia*, or psychological situation, may have provided a sufficiently de-medicalized label to a range of psychosocial problems, discussed in more detail below, to allow participants to express their suffering in a socially acceptable and understandable way.

That the majority of participants reported experiencing psychological problems or suffering in Egypt is in no way meant to suggest that Iraqi refugees in Egypt are primarily a disabled, victimized, or suffering population. As will be discussed further later in the dissertation, Iraqi refugees in Egypt, despite considerable suffering and many obstacles, draw on a range of strategies in order to manage their lives in Egypt. Speaking of one's *hala nufsia*, as an idiom of distress, is one way in which Iraqi refugees in Egypt can express the suffering which they are experiencing as well as situate this suffering within the broader social and political circumstances which have led to their displacement and which render asylum in Egypt untenable.

Manifestation and Effects of Poor *Hala Nufsia*

When participants spoke about their psychological situation, they most commonly initially used an adjective to describe it, such as “bad”, “difficult”, “not good”, “not comfortable” “tired”. For example, a 52 year old woman, referring to herself and her family said, “We have a black psychological situation and it is getting worse” (Participant #68: 52 year old Muslim Arab woman). This woman, who had experienced a profound decrease in standard of living in Egypt, referred to her psychological situation as “black”, an expression in Arabic that signifies that something is extremely bad.

In terms of these evaluative statements about psychological well-being, tired, or *ta'aban*, in particular, was used frequently by participants. Tiredness is an expression that carries multiple meanings in Arabic, including both fatigue and illness. It also carries the connotation of being overwhelmed as in the situation of Iraqis in Egypt, the experience of being fatigued by the amount of effort necessary to bear the difficult circumstances of life in exile. "Tired" came up repeatedly during the fieldwork as an adjective that described psychological situation as well as to describe the ways in which a bad psychological situation affected a person. For example, a 34 year old woman named Sara described her psychological situation in the following way: "My psychological situation is very, very tired. It's very, very difficult. It's very difficult for me to live." (Participant #36: Sara, 34 year old Muslim Kurdish woman). The use of *ta'aban* as one effect of a poor psychological situation will be discussed in more detail below. Rarely, participants described their emotional and psychological situation in positive terms, using words such as 'good'. Wafa, a woman who I interviewed in her home in Giza, a suburb of Cairo, provided an example of this:

N: How is your emotional and psychological health here in Egypt?

P: (pause) Good. You know, it's good. But when I think that here, when I think, that I don't know what's going to happen in the future and I don't have a future here... then, I don't like it. When I think that, that I don't like it. So sometimes I, I just, I just focus OK for today, I'm living today, I have to live it for my children. Whatever happens tomorrow, it's in the hands of God. (Participant #25: Wafa, 33 year old Muslim Arab woman)

Wafa's statement, while initially positive, demonstrates some of the negative themes related to life in Egypt mentioned by other Iraqi refugees. Her initial response to my question about her well-being is positive, yet she also mentions things which cause her

worry. Perhaps what differentiates Wafa from other respondents is the way in which she focuses on ways which she manages the difficulties of feeling that she does not have a future. Wafa's husband was not with her in Egypt, and her need to support her children may have encouraged her to take a more positive perspective on the situation. In the quote above, Wafa presents two specific strategies that she employed to manage the difficulties of having an uncertain future: focusing on the present by "living today" and believing in destiny, by allowing the future to be in God's hands. I will discuss strategies that Iraqi refugees used to manage instability in Egypt later in this chapter, but I present Wafa and her mostly positive evaluation of her psychological situation as a discrepant case.

While evaluative statements such as those described above expressed the valence and to some extent, the degree of psychological suffering, they do not provide much information about how psychological suffering was actually experienced by Iraqi refugees in Egypt. In order to understand more about the specific ways in which the psychological situation was a problem for Iraqis in Egypt, I spoke to refugees about how their *hala nufsia* affected them. There were a range of answers to this question, which are divided into nine main categories (see **Table 3**); 1) anxiety; 2) sadness; 3) lack of comfort; 4) anger; 5) isolation; 6) sleep disruptions; 7) somatic presentation; and 8) nervous breakdown; and 9) cognitive effects. I developed these categories by coding for direct answers to the question "how does your psychological situation affect you?" as well as coding the interview narratives for any additional discussion of effects of *hala nufsia*. The resulting codes were sorted according to similarity and difference into the nine categories. Many participants reported experiencing effects from multiple

categories. The data presented below will demonstrate the ways in which multiple categories are present in narratives, although I have separated them in **Table 4** for the sake of clarity. While the categories are therefore not mutually exclusive, I constructed these categories as a means of demonstrating the range of effects reported by participants.

Table 4: How does your psychological situation affect you?

Manifestations ²²	Examples from the data	Illustrative quotes
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking all the time - Worry - nervous - Fear - Stress - Tension 	"I felt worried about my life, about the future of my family. So we were worried all the time. We were nervous all the time." (Participant #09)
Sadness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crying - Depression - sad memories 	"sometimes I'm crying, sometimes I used to cry. And it's very difficult life" (Participant #36)
Lack of comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boredom - Tiredness - Feeling trapped - Pressure - Feeling strange (<i>ghorba</i>) 	"we have not been comfortable psychologically at all. Our night we can't feel it and our day we can't taste it." (Participant #18)
Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yelling - Fighting - Hitting wife or children - Feeling angry 	"I get angry all the time , yell at my kids, hit them sometimes." (Participant #67).
Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stay at home - Don't contact people - Fear of people 	"I only stayed at home. I don't contact anyone. I didn't know anyone. I didn't want to see anyone." (Participant #09)
Sleep disturbances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of sleep - Insomnia - Excessive sleep - Sleeping during the day, being awake at night - Bad dreams 	"First, I don't sleep well, at all. Two hours for the night is very good." (Participant #41)
Somatic presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hypoglycemia - Hypertension - Hypotension - Fainting - Headaches - Stomach problems - Enuresis - Vision problems 	"She is suffering from continuous headache... because of psychological reasons." (Participant #50)
Nervous breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Episode of psychological symptoms - Periodic and severe psychological problem 	"Before one year I had a mental breakdown." (Participant #51)
Cognitive effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forgets things - Repeats things 	"difficulty remembering things. What can we do? She repeats things, twice, three times. Sometimes doing salad, and then doing the salad. Sometimes washing the dishes three times." (Participant #24)

²² These categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, participants may have experienced aspects of different categories, such as sadness and anxiety, at the same time.

Anxiety

Anxiety was the most commonly invoked of the manifestations of *hala nufsia*. Participants frequently reported “thinking all the time”, “worrying” and feeling “stressed”, “anxious” and “nervous”, all of which to some extent can be understood as variations on a theme related to anxiety. Of all the categories, anxiety is most closely tied to the notion of the future, as participants worried primarily about things such as where they would be, what they would do, what would happen to them. Past experiences and present circumstances influenced anxiety, but typically it was focused on the future, especially aspects of the future that were considered to be uncertain or unknown. For example, Yasser, the young man with the spinal cord defect, described his psychological situation as follows:

I sleep very little. And most of the time I spend thinking. And all my thinking is worry. Are we going to stay the same situation? What are we going to do? Since I can't go back to my home country, it's impossible? Because our life is at risk there, they will kill us, and I cannot go back - so what can I do? (Participant #23: Yasser, 20 year old Muslim Arab man).

For Yasser, thinking and worry were the aspects of his *hala nufsia* that he found most troubling. Thinking about how he could change the present and what the future would hold were a cause of suffering for Yasser. Among the aspects that were most problematic was the recurrent, repeated nature of this worry. Yasser, and others, spent considerable amounts of time worrying and thinking, specifically because no solution presented itself. Because the worry was about existentially important matters, and because no satisfactory solution seemed available, worry and thinking were defined as problematic by

participants. Recurrent and persistent anxiety about the future was mentioned by many participants as both a cause and an expression of their psychological situation. For example, another participant stated: “Emotional, psychological situation is not good because we are thinking all the time, what we can do, what we are doing for the future? (Participant #83: 37 year old Muslim Arab man).” This quote by a man somewhat older than Yasser, in quite different circumstances, illustrates the commonality and salience of the experience of anxiety, especially about the future, for Iraqi refugees in Egypt.

In addition to worry, fear was a major component of the anxiety category. Fear was most often invoked when participants spoke about their children and related to anxiety in the way that it was embodied through vigilance, worry and nervousness. Fear was often related to traumatic experiences witnessed or suffered in Iraq, but could also relate to experiences and conditions in Egypt. Zahra, who was the mother of two small children, spoke about fear as the way her children, especially her son, experienced their *hala nufsia*. I visited Zahra in her small flat in a suburb of Cairo. During our interview, she told me of how her husband had left her in Egypt, leaving her alone with two small children whom she struggled to care for with few resources. She spoke to me about how her son was afraid because of the violence that he had witnessed in Iraq, including a kidnapping attempt, and because of the pain of losing his father:

Also in Baghdad he saw in the street, people used their guns and he saw it (and) he is afraid of everything. He is afraid to leave the house. If you look at night, under his pillow, he puts knives under it. And he tells me that I daily pray that no one will take me from you. He is afraid to lose me and his father. (Participant #34: Zahra, 34 year old Muslim Arab woman).

In this quote, Zahra speaks of how her son's fear is a result of experiences in Iraq and of losing his father in Egypt. His fear manifested several behaviors aimed at preventing harm to himself and his family, including avoiding leaving the house, keeping knives under his pillow as a means of self-defense, and praying that he will not lose his mother. Later in the interview, when we were speaking of her family's health, Zahra returned to the theme of fear, stating that her son was "very afraid of people and from communicating with people." She went on to state that he suffered from nocturnal enuresis which she attributed to his experiences in Iraq, especially the attempted kidnapping.

The range of emotions and behavior associated with the category of anxiety were among the most commonly mentioned manifestations of problematic *hala nufsia* by Iraqi refugees. Throughout the fieldwork, I noticed that participants used a large number of terms associated with anxiety, including "worry", "thinking all the time", "stressed", "nervous", "afraid" and "tense" among others. Moreover, this anxiety became problematic for Iraqis because of its intensity and frequency, as well as its duration. As will be discussed in greater detail below, the personal, social and political causes of this anxiety, and the lack of available ways to address these attributed causes, contributed to the chronic nature of anxiety for Iraqis in Egypt.

Sadness

Many participants mentioned sadness as a primary way in which their psychological situation affected them. Some participants spoke of crying, feeling sad, thinking sad thoughts or depression. Depression, as a way of talking about one's

psychological suffering, did not always refer to a mental illness, although there were some participants who had been diagnosed with depression by a physician. The majority spoke of feeling depressed, as did one 49 year old woman who explained her family's psychological situation entirely in terms of sadness:

My son crying all the time, every day when he remembers Iraq. (My) husband feeling depressed here in Egypt... (pause). It is something heavy and difficult for my husband when my son asks him for money. (Participant #69: 49 year old Muslim Arab woman).

In this quote, this woman, who was in Egypt with her husband and son, did not speak of herself but instead focused on the well-being of her family. She reported that her son and husband were both feeling sad in Egypt. She attributes her son's sadness to missing Iraq, and for her husband, sadness seems to be a result of a combination of reasons, including financial situation, family separation, and change of status which emerged throughout her narrative.

Other participants spoke of their personal feelings of sadness and depression. For example, one young man spoke about his psychological situation as being:

Maybe depressed you can call it like this. I was thinking I would finish my study and maybe work with my education stuff. But it didn't happen. Not diagnosed - just the feeling. If I sit alone I feel it, but I try to keep busy and not think about it. (Participant #82: 19 year old Muslim Arab man)

This young man, who had completed one year of college before being forced to drop out of university because of financial reasons, spoke of having the feeling of depression. His disappointment about having his studies disrupted, with the implications that he will not

be able to pursue the future he had imagined led to him feeling depressed, although he reported trying to avoid thinking about it. Sadness or depression, expressed through feeling sad, crying or thinking sad thoughts was mentioned often when Iraqi refugees described their psychological suffering. Sadness was associated with conditions related to life in Egypt but also with feelings of loss related to Iraq. More specific sentiments related to exile, such as feelings of being a stranger, or being uncomfortable in Egypt, are described below.

Lack of comfort

Participants frequently spoke of not “feeling comfortable” psychologically, especially in Egypt. Feelings of discomfort were operationalized primarily as feelings related to life in Egypt especially fatigue, boredom, feeling pressured, feeling trapped, and feeling like a stranger. These sentiments were often specifically related to the experience of living in exile as a refugee. For example, Saleh, a 39 year old man, responded in the following way when I asked him about his health:

I am really psychologically tired. I was something there and now I am another thing. In Iraq, I didn't care about what I will do tomorrow. If something will happen, I have a father, brother and a whole community there that can support me. Here, if something will happen, I just worry about what will happen for my children. Who will care? (Participant #22: Saleh, 39 year old Sunni Muslim Arab man).

Saleh's answer was interesting because in many ways, he is an example of what organizations and practitioners would point to as a 'successful' refugee. Since arriving in Egypt, Saleh had managed to establish a successful business with another Iraqi refugee, the profits of which were supporting both of their families. Saleh and his partner hired

Egyptian workers in their store, and in this way were contributing to Egyptian society. Yet Saleh's narrative illustrates that despite having established a business, he nonetheless felt "psychologically tired". Even though he was a shop owner in Egypt, he had suffered a significant decrease in standard of living from Iraq. Moreover, his quotation demonstrates that in addition to being financially stable in Iraq, Saleh had status – he "was something there". In Egypt, Saleh's identity had changed and he had become "another thing". Along with this change came a feeling of being estranged from Iraqi society and adrift in a new society where old positions and connections were no longer relevant. Saleh feared that without his family and community to support him, he might be unable to support his children. For him, "psychological tiredness" was not only a cause of the long hours he worked in the shop, but also a result of loss of status, feeling like a stranger in his new environment, and the pressure of his many efforts to provide himself and his family with the stability to which they were accustomed. When I asked Saleh, in our interview, what his biggest problem is in Egypt, he responded "*Al ghorba*" (Participant #22: Saleh). *Ghorba*, the feeling of being strange brought on by exile, is implicit in his discussion of psychological tiredness above. These feelings of strangeness and pressure summed up the idea of lack of comfort which was articulated by many participants and often attributed to aspects of life in Egypt.

Anger

Anger as a manifestation of a difficult psychological situation was an emotion most often associated with men, either by themselves or by wives and children. Returning again to Saleh's narrative, anger was identified as a manifestation of his psychological suffering.

N: How does it affect you?

P: Anxiety, all the time. Angry. I get frustrated so quickly. I see it clearly when I am dealing with workers in my shop. I get angry so quickly. I am tense all the time. I clearly see a change in myself. I was so calm when I was living in my home country. But here I feel that all my responses are over. Sometimes the people, yes, do mistake - yes, one of the workers made a mistake, did something wrong. But my response is over. I feel that I am over-responding to the things I don't have to do all the anger, and yelling. And when I sit by myself I feel that I am doing a mistake. And say why am I doing all of these things? And I ask for an apology from my worker because my response was overdoing it.

N: have you been able to talk to anyone about the way you're feeling?

P: You mean in a professional way?

N: Yes, or friends, people in the community?

P: Just my wife. I just complain to my wife. And sometimes the anger goes to my wife. She's the one who is taking it and then I apologize. (Participant #22: Saleh, 39 year old Sunni Muslim man).

Again Saleh's narrative emphasizes themes of self change and the way in which exile in Cairo has negative effects on his well-being. He provides a self-aware and self-critical account of how his suffering manifests in anger at his workers and his wife. He attributed his anger to a change in his ability to manage difficulties as a result of his psychological situation. Saleh also draws on the theme of anxiety in the quoted passage above, although it is secondary to anger as a primary manifestation of his suffering.

Isolation

Feelings of isolation or behavioral withdrawal were often mentioned in narratives. Social isolation, separation and lack of community are problems of life in Egypt that were discussed in the preceding chapter and although there is some overlap, are not necessarily equivalent to the phenomenon of psychological isolation mentioned here. In this section, I only refer to isolation as it was mentioned by participants as a sign of

psychological problems in themselves or a family member. For example, Iman referred to how when she first arrived in Egypt, her *hala nufsia* was very bad, and she withdrew from social contact. She said: “I only stayed at home. I don’t contact anyone. I didn’t know anyone. I didn’t want to see anyone.” (Participant #09: Iman, 50 year old Muslim Arab woman. On the surface this quote appears to refer to social isolation in general, however, within the narrative it is embedded in a larger discussion of psychological well-being in which Iman also speaks of depression, worry and nervousness. In addition, she notes how at this time she was not in fact alone, but instead she and her family were receiving regular visits from relatives and other guests at that time. Iman went on to explain. “Many, many people come with (read: to) us. But me? Stay... no change. I was depressed. I felt tired and nervous, nervous. Because I had more problems (Participant #09: Iman, 50 year old Muslim Arab woman).” For Iman, the company of friends and relatives could not address her suffering, which she related to problems in Iraq and her worry about her family’s future. Although she was not physically alone, she felt isolated and apart, and used this language, as well as that of anxiety and depression, to express her suffering.

Sleep Disturbances

Problems with sleep were frequently mentioned as evidence of psychological problems by Iraqi refugees. A range of different types of sleep disturbance was mentioned, including insomnia, difficulties sleeping, excessive sleeping, bad dreams, and disrupted sleep patterns such as sleeping during the day and staying awake all night. Nocturnal enuresis, or bed-wetting, was mentioned by parents as a concern about their children. While this could technically be considered a sleep disorder, I have included it

under somatic presentations since that most clearly matches the ways that participants spoke of it and the type of assistance which they sought. Sleep disorders were reported by men and women, and in participants of all ages.

Inability to sleep was perhaps the most frequently mentioned of the sleep disturbances. A 41 year old woman, Yasmeen, described her psychological situation in the following way:

First, I don't sleep well, at all. Two hours for the night is very good. Affect me all the time, nervous and stressed. And it reflects on my children, directly. An-, anything that they do wrong, even sometimes when they don't do any, real things wrong, I will get so tense. 24 hours, sad, cry. (Participant #41: Yasmeen, 41 year old Muslim Arab woman).

In the quote above, Yasmeen first lists sleep disturbances and specifically difficulty sleeping, as a problem related to her psychological well-being. However, she then goes on to list a number of other manifestations, including anxiety, sadness, and possibly anger. Yasmeen reported experiencing a number of health conditions, including her psychological problems, all of which had begun in Egypt.

For some participants, sleep disorders took the form of too much sleep. In this case, difficult conditions in Egypt, especially boredom and a lack of things to do, were responsible for excessive sleeping. A mother of five children spoke to me about her concerns about her children's psychological situation. She said, "I have a problem with each one of my children." (Participant #07: 47 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman). Among these problems, she mentioned that her children, because they had nothing to do in Egypt, spent too much time sleeping.

To spend the time anyway, so they spend their time in bed because there is nothing to do. Sleeping, sleeping. Sometimes they talk to me saying they want to learn swimming, football, sports at a club. But I don't have the money for them to join a club. (Participant #07: 47 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman).

She spoke of how her children asked her to allow them to go to a club in order to do activities, but how she did not have the financial resources for them to go. In Egypt, there are few public parks and areas for recreation, and instead people join and attend a number of clubs, in which there is space for recreation, sports, and socializing. However admission to a club costs money, and for this woman, money was not available for these things. As a result, she lamented that her children were not able to do activities and as a result they were spending their time in bed.

Disturbed sleep also came in the form of bad dreams. Nightmares and bad dreams were reported occasionally by adults speaking of their own psychological situation and also by parents, referring to their children. For example, Abu Khaled, when I asked him about his psychosocial well-being answered me in the following way:

I try not to think about the matter. But sometimes you feel hurt inside. Sometimes dreams come to me. For instance, the incident where I was shot. It happened in 2003 and since then it has happened twice as if I was in the car, and other dreams. I didn't have medical checks because I am trying to ignore this matter but maybe I need high service from psychosocial or psychological services but I am trying to ignore this matter. (Participant #77: Abu Khaled, 52 year old Muslim Arab man).

Abu Khaled referred to how he occasionally had dreams about an experience in Iraq during the war in which he was shot. Interestingly, he both began and ended the quote with assertions that he was trying to avoid thinking about his psychological situation, but despite his efforts, he nonetheless sometimes was troubled by dreams. These dreams

made him concerned that something was wrong and that he might be in need of psychosocial or psychological services. In general, disturbed sleep was identified by Iraqi refugees as problematic, and as a manifestation of poor psychological well-being.

Somatic Presentations

When I asked participants about their health, many described corporeal, somatic afflictions. A number of participants then went on to explain these illnesses in terms of the expression of their psychological suffering. Still others may not have seen their psychological situation as the sole cause of their illness, but reported that psychological suffering exacerbated pre-existing medical conditions. I include both of these sets of explanations, and any explanation in which physical manifestations or afflictions are explained as the expression of psychological suffering, as somatic presentations.

False distinctions between the mind and body have been widely criticized and it is not my intention here to reify the mind body dichotomy by separating bodily presentations from psychological symptoms. To do so would also not be true to the data, since when I asked participants about their health, they routinely spoke of bodily, psychological and experiential aspects of health, and when I asked participants about their psychological and emotional health, they sometimes spoke of corporeal afflictions. In this section, I attempt to deal with the attributed connections between emotional and psychological suffering and bodily affliction as expressed by Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Iraqis in Egypt did not attribute any, or even most, of their medical problems to psychological suffering, and those afflictions are excluded from this section. It is also worth noting that medical practitioners, psychosocial workers and other service providers

sometimes explained Iraqis' physical complaints as psychological, even if the refugee themselves did not see them in this way. In this section, I primarily focus on refugees' own evaluations of the physical manifestations of personal and social suffering.

Participants mentioned a range of bodily symptoms and conditions which they attributed to their poor *hala nufsia* in Egypt. Amongst these were changes in blood pressure, heart problems, hypoglycemia, fainting, headaches, digestive problems, nocturnal enuresis and problems with vision. For example, a 42 year old woman who I interviewed in her home in Giza was adamant that her psychological situation was adversely affecting her physical health. She blamed conditions in Egypt and the anxiety associated with these conditions for her poor health, especially her hypertension. She said: "Whenever I have a bad psychological situation my blood pressure goes up, it is like an on/off switch." (Participant #80: 42 year old Muslim Arab Woman). Other participants also stated that their psychological situation had health implications, such as a young man, Mohamed, who reported no health problems, but expressed considerable concern about his father's health. I include a rather lengthy exchange from our interview here because it illustrates how Mohamed conceptualized his father's high blood pressure and fainting as expressions of his psychological condition:

P: My father has high blood pressure and has gone to the hospital many times in the last four years. Also sometimes he passes out. He can hear you. When he passes out he can hear you, but he can't do anything. He's just paralyzed.

N: How long has that been happening?

P: Since Iraq. Since we were in Iraq when he had some psychological issues. So this happened because of these psychological issues. So we try to wake him up every time. Thirty minutes of trying.

N: So he just loses consciousness?

P: Yeah, loses consciousness.

N: Has he been to the doctor?

P: Yeah. But the doctor - no one can find out what really it is.

N: That's puzzling. I wonder. Did the doctor say it is because of his psychological situation?

P: Yeah. Psychological situation. Because of what he has seen in Iraq, I think. He has seen much more than I did. Our medical record, my family's medical record is really, really huge, surgeries, many many surgeries, really I can't remember.

N: Many things?

P: Many things.

N: You also mentioned his high blood pressure. Is that from Iraq, or...?

P: Yeah, from Iraq. But it was less in Iraq. After we left, he was so close to his mother. He was really close to her. She was... And his brother worked in the government office. He was the director there. So we were afraid of those people. those important people... and he was really worried about Until now. He is trying to bring her to Egypt. He's worried about his mom. I think that's the main reason. (Participant #05: Mohamed, 19 year old Muslim Arab man).

Mohamed reports not knowing why his father occasionally faints and speaks of how his family attempts to deal with this problem. Since attempts to seek health care had neither resulted in a diagnosis or in effective treatment, Mohamed and his family sought to manage the condition, especially through their efforts to revive him after he had fainted and become temporarily "paralyzed". Mohamed explains the fainting episodes as a result of what his father had seen in Iraq, referring elliptically to traumatic experiences that frightened and worried his father. When speaking of his father's high blood pressure, which had worsened in Egypt, he again related it to his father's psychological situation, drawing on worries about family situation and fears related to the situation in Iraq.

While some participants saw their psychological situations, or those of their family members, as the cause of physical symptoms, others noted that psychological well-being had effects on pre-existing medical conditions. For example, in addition to speaking of her own suffering, Yasmeen spoke to me about her concerns about her children, especially her son who suffered from attacks of low blood sugar. During our interview when I asked her about her health, she included psychological situation in her list of things that affected health adversely. In general terms, she said that “the psychological situation also affects the health” (Participant #41: Yasmeen, 41 year old Muslim Arab woman). Later in the interview, she discussed this issue in more detail with specific reference to one of her sons:

The girl and the boy they are well, thank god. The middle one, thirteen years old, he has a medical condition with hypoglycemia diagnosed in Iraq before a long time ago. It's one of the very very very weird, weird things. It's very weird that he has a, attacks of hypoglycemia. That there is no, there is no reason for it. One of the mysterious, like, things that happened that nobody, and the only conditions that he has multiple comas, hypoglycemic coma, and you just give him water and sugar and these things...

and sought medical treatment in Iraq a lot and here also with Caritas and we seek different kinds of help, medical help. And one of the doctors told me that he has to remove part of his spleen but I am not willing to do this here. And it is SO related to his psychological situation. In Iraq, during the war, it could get worse. Here in Egypt, it sometimes gets worse when he is, he doesn't feel well. And sometimes he is well but now his condition is, is fluctuating all the time. Sometimes he is very tired and these things and sometimes he's... normal and sometimes he is very tired. (Participant #41: Yasmeen, Muslim Arab woman)

For Yasmeen, her son's hypoglycemia was not caused by his psychological condition, but instead was related to it. When he felt psychologically well, the attacks of hypoglycemia were less frequent, but when he felt poorly, his condition got worse. Yasmeen did not

know why her son suffered from attacks of hypoglycemia and described it as a “mystery”. The condition had originated in Iraq and continued in Egypt. Part of Yasmeen’s argument for why the condition was related to her son’s psychological situation was that under conditions of stress, such as during the war in Iraq, the attacks worsened. In Egypt, she described his condition as “fluctuating” – sometimes he was okay and other times not.

Nervous Breakdown

Having a nervous breakdown was mentioned relatively infrequently by participants, perhaps because of the severity associated with this phenomenon. However, it warrants its own category both because of the attributed severity of such breakdowns by participants, and because of the ways in which they did not seem to fit with other explanations of *hala nufsia*, many of which were more chronic and less severe. By contrast, nervous breakdowns were acute, severe episodes in which a number of severe psychological symptoms were exhibited. In the few instances where nervous breakdowns were mentioned, they were always a cause for seeking formal health care, either from a general physician, hospital, or a psychiatrist.

For example, Janna, a woman in her 30s, recounted to me how her adolescent sister had suffered from a nervous breakdown in Egypt:

And in February she got a nervous breakdown at 5 am in the morning started crying, crying, crying and then laughing, laughing, laughing. The doctor gave her medicine to help her to sleep. And she took the medicine, only half of it, not the whole medicine and she started to say things that were And we felt she is not in the world with us, she was in a different world. So I took her and tried to give her some psychological support. So I took her to a salon to get her a new haircut and to buy new clothes and to visit new places. (Participant #03: Janna, 33 year old Sunni Muslim woman).

Janna attributed her sister's nervous breakdown at least partly to her experiences in Iraq, where she had witnessed killing and kidnapping. Janna's sister had developed hypertension in Iraq at the age of thirteen, a fact that Janna attributed to the trauma she had witnessed during the war. The nervous breakdown, which occurred in Egypt, was a particularly severe example of her sister's ongoing psychological suffering. At the time that we spoke, Janna reported that her sister was doing better. Notably, although Janna's sister's symptoms led the family to seek medical treatment, the perceived side effects of the medication, which Janna reported as having "felt she is not in the world with us, she was in a different world", led the family to decide to discontinue her sister's treatment and to try instead to support her using non-medical techniques, such as getting her a haircut, new clothes, or changing her environment. Janna reported that these efforts had been somewhat successful, although at the time that I visited her family in their home the family continued to voice some concerns about her sister's well-being.

Cognitive effects

Cognitive effects of a negative psychological situation were rarely reported by participants. However, one man, Abu Tarek, described his wife's psychological situation in terms of cognitive problems. He reported how his wife had become forgetful and how she would complete tasks, such as making salad, multiple times without remembering that she had already completed it. He described her situation in this way:

P: the most thing now is uh... difficulty remembering things. What can we do? She repeats things, twice, three times. Sometimes doing salad, and then doing the salad. Sometimes washing the dishes three times.

N: And doesn't remember that she (did it-did them) (interpreter interprets) (how long has she been) (unclear 29:49)?

P: At about the time we came here in 2007 two of her uncles, Doctor _____ and Doctor _____, both of them were killed in Iraq. So she-after that time she start to develop these things. (Participant #24: Abu Tarek, 60 year old Muslim Arab man)

Abu Tarek had previously approached the RLAP office seeking assistance for his wife's psychological situation, and the RLAP staff had suggested he take her to the Nadeem Center for psychiatric treatment. However, he reported that she refused to go, saying "I don't have anything". Despite this, they had contacted a friend who was a doctor in Iraq about the problem, and he had suggested that she take a particular medication, which Abu Tarek described as a "kind of anti-depressant". When I asked if the medication was helping his wife, he reported that no, it only made her sleep. The decision of Abu Tarek and his wife to consult a physician friend for his wife's psychological problem as opposed to seeking care from a psychiatrist in Egypt was not uncommon. Other participants reported consulting friends or family members who were doctors, sometimes over the phone, about their health and psychosocial well-being. Among the reasons for this include the high education level of Iraqi refugees which meant that many people knew doctors; contacting a physician within the family or social network may have carried less stigma than visiting an Egyptian psychiatrist; some Iraqi refugees expressed mistrust of Egyptian doctors; and attending a private hospital or clinic cost money. The wide range of available medications in Egyptian pharmacies meant that Iraqis could follow the medication recommendations of relatives or friends fairly easily.

Abu Tarek described his wife's symptoms as "forgetting" and "repeating" which are more cognitive and less affective or circumstantial than other perceived

manifestations of psychological suffering. Without a diagnosis or more information, it is hard to know more about Abu Tarek's wife's condition. However, he firmly associated her symptoms with her psychological situation, and the fact that the physician friend "prescribed" an anti-depressant, justifies its inclusion here.

Gendered Dimensions of Health and *Hala Nufsia*

Experiences of displacement in Egypt varied somewhat in terms of gender, as discussed in the previous chapter. I was therefore interested in understanding whether experiences of health and well-being varied according to gender as well. In the section above, I drew on interview transcripts and participant observation to categorize participants' expressions of *hala nufsia*. In this section, I look specifically at men's and women's responses to interview questions about their health and *hala nufsia*. Here I draw only on participants' responses about their personal health and well-being, and do not include their discussion of their family members' circumstances. Comparing men's and women's accounts of their health and psychological concerns illuminates gender similarities and differences in suffering among Iraqis in Egypt.

Table 5 illustrates some general results related to health and *hala nufsia* according to gender. Women in the sample were more likely than men to report health concerns, with 73% of women reporting at least one health concern, compared to 57% of men. Women also were more likely to report more health concerns, with an average of two concerns per woman, compared to an average of one concern per man. In terms of *hala nufsia*, 93% of women identified some negative concern with their well-being compared to 82% of men. In general, women expressed personal concerns more readily than men.

There was a large variation of responses to my questions about *hala nufsia*. Men (n=63) provided 35 unique responses to this question and women (n=47) provided 30 (although some of these responses are interrelated, see the appendices for a list of responses). Responses ranged in type, including evaluative (normal, fine, no problem, bad, difficult, terrible), affective (tired, sad, angry, nervous, stressed), medicalized (depression, PTSD, need a psychiatrist), and behavioral/action-related (eat a lot, cry, sleep too much, sleep not enough, think or worry). The response most frequently evoked by both men and women was *ta'aban*, meaning tiredness or fatigue, with 37% of respondents mentioning it from each gender. This is perhaps not a surprising finding as the idiom of *ta'aban* evokes both psychological fatigue and has connotations of sickness, or being unwell. Participants who spoke of their *hala nufsia* in medical terms and those who did not could both use *ta'aban* to describe their situation. For women, feeling stressed (23%) and worrying (20%), were the next two most mentioned specific complaints, with 23% of women providing more general responses related to the bad or difficult conditions of their *hala nufsia*. Twenty-three percent of men also described their *hala nufsia* in general, qualitative and negative terms. However, the next most commonly provided response for men was that they had no problem with their *hala nufsia* (18%). This was followed by thinking or worrying, *tafkir*, (16%), and depression (16%). Depression was the most mentioned “medicalized” response by participants, with 16% of men and 10% of women reporting either suffering from depression or being depressed. In some cases, participants had been diagnosed with depression, while in other cases respondents made use of the medical language of depression to describe their condition. In general, the repeated evocation of certain feelings and behaviors, most notably

ta'aban, stressed, *tafkir*, angry, nervous, depressed and sad indicated similarities in the manifestations of *hala nufsia* among men and women. However, that women were more likely to report suffering than men, and more likely to report more kinds, or instances, of affliction, suggests differences in the ways in which men and women experience and express suffering in this context.

Table 5: Health and Hala Nufsia, by gender

	Men	Women
Avg. # of health concerns/person	1.02	2.07
Avg. # of <i>hala nufsia</i> concerns/person	1.98	2.10
% with no health complaints	43%	27%
% with no complaints related to <i>hala nufsia</i>	18%	7%
Total number of unique listed <i>hala nufsia</i> concerns by gender (variation)	35	30

Table 6: Most common responses to question about *hala nufsia*, by gender

Women (n=47)	Percent (%)	Men (n=63)	Percent (%)
Tired (<i>ta'aban</i>)	37	Tired (<i>ta'aban</i>)	37
Stressed	23	Bad/not good/difficult	23
Bad/not good/difficult	23	None	18
Thinking, worrying (<i>tafkir</i>)	20	Thinking, worrying (<i>tafkir</i>)	16
Angry	13	Depressed/ion	16
Nervous	10	Stressed	14
Sad	10	Angry	11
Depressed/ion	10	Nervous	9
Insomnia	10	Insomnia	9

Perceived Causes of Poor *Hala Nufsia*

The descriptions of the *hala nufsia* of Iraqi refugees in Egypt provided above begin to provide glimpses into refugees' notions of the etiology of psychological suffering in exile. Iraqi refugees attributed their psychological suffering to a number of causes, many of which were associated with place. One critique of much of the literature on the mental health of refugees, especially that which focuses on trauma, is the emphasis on traumatic experience in the country of origin prior to flight. Interviews with Iraqi refugees about their mental health and well-being demonstrate that while place is salient to experiences of poor mental health, conditions in the country of first asylum were given at least as much attention in narratives by Iraqi refugees as trauma in Iraq. Moreover, the causes of psychological suffering, although they regularly invoked space, were not confined by it. Instead, experiences in both Iraq and Egypt combined to affect refugees' *hala nufsia*. This interplay could occur in a number of ways. In some situations experiences in Iraq could have caused psychological suffering which continued in Egypt, an explanation which more or less corresponds to the trauma model. In other cases, circumstances in Egypt were the primary cause of a poor psychological situation. Social circumstances in Egypt could exacerbate or mitigate the sequelae of traumatic events experienced in Iraq. Finally, in some cases, events in Iraq which occurred even after a refugee had fled to Egypt were considered to be the cause of psychological problems. In these cases, a refugees' presence in Egypt was often included in the explanation for the psychological suffering.

Some participants invoked traumatic experiences in Iraq as the cause of their poor psychological situation in Egypt. In these cases, suffering was focused primarily on past

experience and problems with one's psychological situation were understood as being the result of these prior experiences. Ahmed's description of his daughter's eye condition is an example of how events in Iraq were perceived as the cause of psychological suffering. In Iraq, Ahmed's youngest daughter, who had been four years old at the time, was kidnapped by a militia while playing in front of their house. Ahmed's eldest daughter had been watching her little sister at the time and had witnessed the abduction but been unable to stop it. Ahmed described to me how his daughter's experience in Iraq had affected her health and psychological situation:

My elder daughter witnessed my youngest daughter's kidnapping in Iraq. She was shouting and crying. She has (problems) In her eyes. She was hurt (inaudible). Now she wears glasses. So now she does not see very well. (Participant #11: Ahmed, 47 year old Muslim Arab man).

Ahmed reported how witnessing the traumatic event of her sister's kidnapping caused his daughter to develop eye problems which continue to this day. The event had immediate consequences for his daughter's eyesight which, even with the eventual safe return of her little sister, did not improve. I include this example not only as an illustration of the ways in which events in Iraq were seen as the cause of health and psychological problems, but also as an example of the bodily ways in which traumatic events were experienced and expressed by Iraqi refugees in Egypt.

Parents were frequently concerned about how experiences in Iraq had affected the mental health of their children. Suzanne spoke to me about how her daughters were depressed and also afraid as a result of experiences in Iraq. She explained the fear in the following way:

The situation in Iraq. Always there was threatening and shouting. So my daughters are afraid of anything. They are afraid when someone knocks on the door. N_____, the 10 year old, she wets the bed while she's sleeping. She is always afraid. (Participant #07: Suzanne, 47 year old Muslim Arab woman).

Suzanne reported that her daughters' fear had originated in Iraq during the war, but that it persisted in Egypt. Her daughter who suffered from nocturnal enuresis also developed the problem in Iraq but continued to wet the bed in Egypt. Despite efforts to seek psychiatric care for her daughters, Suzanne reported that they had refused to go to the psychiatrist, although her 10 year old daughter had seen a physician because of bed-wetting. Although Suzanne reported difficult conditions in Egypt when speaking of other aspects of her life, she attributed her daughters' fear and sadness exclusively to experiences in Iraq.

For some participants, conditions in Iraq and in Egypt were both implicated as causes of psychological suffering. After fleeing to Egypt, many Iraqi refugees continued to feel the effects of the ongoing conflict in their country, with the additional dimension of their distance from Iraq. For example, some participants fled to Egypt and later learned that family members who had remained behind had been killed. Others, who were forced to leave their homes, discovered that their homes had been entered and occupied by others, leaving them without a place to which they could return. These events, although in Iraq, were experienced differently because of the additional dimension of distance. Participants reported suffering because they were physically safe while they worried about the safety of family members left behind in Iraq. For those whose family had experienced a traumatic event in Iraq while they were in Egypt, there was the additional

difficulty of not having access to information, not being able to help, and not being near family members during a time of crisis.

I interviewed Hassan in his home, a sunny and well-appointed apartment that he shared with his family. When I asked him about his health, he immediately chose to focus on his emotional and psychological well-being, and shared the following story:

P: Ehm..Our health is good, thank God. Eh, we wake up in good health and everything is good. But let's talk about the emotional side or our feelings. Eh-our emotional uhm ou-ou-our feelings are not very good. For two reasons. That I have a-a sister she's still in Iraq, actually she's right now in Syria, but she was in Iraq with uh, we were forced to leave her and her husband there. She is married and has a husband and (they) have a little child. Uh, we forced to leave her and when we came here to-to Egypt eh our father is passed away eh...that big distance between us and her make eh...some troubles with my mother. It make her eh sad, uh her feelings-a-a broken heart. Even my sister, she was away from us and her father is fall down... unexpectedly. Our father was uh, uh his age was fifty-two years (N: fifty-two) uh and he had good health and he have ev-he was good. Uh, suddenly he fall down so it's a-a big shock was to us and to our family-to his-to my uncles, to my uh aunts, to my, *chisme* uh so it's-it was a big shock to us. Uhm, it was harmful-harmful to us. And, after that, uh accident uhm, uh, my-my sister's husband was arrested in Baghdad by uh militias. He went through a checkpoint and it was a militia's checkpoint, they arrested him for eight months and, they-they tortured him, they beat him, they destroy his ehm, ehm destroyed him. They beat him in-in his eye, in his head. They were calling my sister and threatened her: "If you do not pay to us we will kill your-your uh-your uh husband". They torture him and torture her, but uh, *yanni* thanks God, we thanks God we able to get him out from there and before a-before *sha'ar ramadan* August, in August and he eh finished his paper and move on to Syria.

In the quote above, Hassan recounted his family's experiences in the year before our interview which he blamed for having negative implications for his emotional well-being. Notably, Hassan's discussion of well-being is entirely based in his family as he relates family separation to his mother's broken heart; his father's death in Egypt and his sister's

and other relatives' forced absence during that period; and finally his sister's husband's kidnapping in Iraq. These significant events, all of which caused suffering, are framed by his presence in Egypt and the way in which exile has impacted these events. Of this extremely difficult year, Hassan remarks that it "destroyed us." A subsequent quote from Hassan's narrative further illustrates how the dynamics of exile affected his psychological situation. About the kidnapping of his sister's husband, Hassan spoke about how he tried to communicate with aunts and uncles in Iraq to gain as much information as he could, and to share his feelings with them, because:

Cause I don't have anything to do. I mean they called us-your your uh sister husband are arrested-what can I do. What can I do. Al-all the things that I can-I can do-I can s-sit down here and eh imagine what-what will happen. I d-I could not do anything. (Participant #14: Hassan)

Hassan spoke of how his sister's husband's kidnapping would have been difficult regardless but how the additional difficulty of being away, especially when they had not wanted to leave his sister behind in the first place, caused him suffering. In the quote above, Hassan speaks of powerlessness and lack of control, phenomena related to his presence in Egypt, as the cause of his suffering in addition to the pain of the kidnapping itself.

Another place-related cause of psychological problems was feelings of loss and separation from Iraq. These themes are included in Hassan's narrative above, especially when he speaks of how his mother developed a "broken heart" when the family was forced to leave his sister behind in Iraq. The pain of missing Iraq was mentioned as a cause of psychological problems by several participants. Yasmeen, who above spoke of

her nervousness, anxiety, and sadness, attributed her psychological situation to missing Iraq when she said: “For the situation now, from where I started now when, and for my family, my mother. Four years I didn’t see my country, my family, my mother. That’s very difficult. (Participant #41: Yasmeen, Muslim Arab woman). For Yasmeen, separation from country and family were the primary cause of her suffering. This theme was echoed by other participants. As in Yasmeen’s case, separation from family members was one of the most-mentioned causes of suffering. Kamal told me that his health was fine but that his wife was not well. He explained to me that she had suffered from a back problem, headache, and a stomach problem for three years before explaining that he attributed all these issues to her *hala nufsia*. As I began to inquire about what, if anything, the family did to manage these afflictions, Kamal interjected that “yes, it is because of the death of her father” (Participant #50: Kamal, 42 year old Muslim Arab man). Kamal then went on to explain that since they had fled to Egypt, his wife had been suffering from separation from her family. This suffering had been exacerbated by the death of his wife’s father in Iraq, which had occurred about two years before our interview. Separation from family in Egypt was an important cause of suffering for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. In addition to family, participants reported missing Iraq itself, including their homes, jobs, friends, and other aspects of their lives before they had fled.

Most Iraqi refugees pointed to aspects of exile in Egypt as the cause of their psychological suffering. Change in living conditions, lack of work opportunities, lack of educational opportunities, social isolation, and other aspects of daily life in Egypt were seen by Iraqi refugees as insults to their psychological well-being. A 52 year old woman told me “My husband is feeling depressed because he is not working” (Participant #68:

52 year old Muslim Arab woman), while Yasmeen said “at least you can imagine that your husband in front of you without work is, is suffering.” (Participant #41: Yasmeen, 41 year old Muslim Arab woman). Not being able to work was an often mentioned example of Iraqi refugees’ inability to exercise their rights in Egypt, and was also presented as a cause of poor *hala nufsia* for people, especially men, who had held careers in Iraq. In addition to decrease in status and socioeconomic status, not being able to work created problems for men who found themselves sitting at home with nothing to do, such as an engineer who was unemployed in Egypt and who explained his psychological situation in the following way: “we feel something depressive because of, free, a lot of free time and there is no stability in life.” (Participant #21: 47 year old Muslim Arab man).

For some, the disjuncture between expectations of how their life should be and the reality of life in Egypt was a cause of psychological suffering, such as the young man whose studies had been disrupted and who articulated his suffering in the following way: “Maybe depressed you can call it like this. I was thinking I would finish my study and maybe work with my education stuff. But it didn’t happen.” (Participant #82: 19 year old Muslim Arab man). This young man had not necessarily expected that flight from Iraq would force him to interrupt his studies. However, his family’s financial situation had forced him to drop out of university. A mother spoke in similar terms: “Dreams and expectations are much different than reality. I thought my son would be in college, doing a Master’s (degree). Never in an institute. And now he is in an institute. Now we are thinking about money, not about education.” (Participant #68: 49 year old Muslim Arab woman). She had imagined that her son would attend university, complete his studies and

go on to graduate school. Again, financial difficulties had forced her to alter her expectations about her children's' future. Her son had not been forced to abandon his studies outright, but was studying for a diploma in an institute, which, although not equivalent to a university, was nonetheless a form of post-secondary education. While some might see her son's study at an institute as a positive outcome, for this mother it represents a significant decrease in her educational expectations for her children. For these participants, as for others, the disjuncture between expectations and the reality of life in Egypt was a cause of psychological distress. Incongruity between expectations and reality is an aspect of life that refugees found particularly destabilizing, and which made up larger conditions of instability in exile, with implications for health and psychosocial well-being.

“Instability is Making us Tired”: Instability as a Cause of Poor Hala Nufsia

The instability of life in Egypt was an important source of suffering for Iraqi refugees and was considered to be a cause of ill health and psychological suffering by many. A number of factors contributed to the instability of life in Egypt. Instability, as an instance of what Kleinman, Das and Lock (1997) would call social suffering, can be understood as a form of suffering in which the personal and the political intersect. Iraqi refugees reported experiencing suffering on an intimately personal level when they described how they could not work, how they missed their families, and how they felt depressed or anxious as a result of conditions in Egypt. Yet this personal and familial suffering was inseparable from social, political and institutional conditions and processes. Conditions in Iraq, circumstances in Egypt, and interactions with governments, NGOs

and other organizations all contributed to Iraqis' experiences of instability. Among the factors that affected Iraqis' perceptions of their health and well-being included the impermeability of borders which limited their freedom of movement, their inability to exercise basic human rights in Egypt, and violence and insecurity in Iraq.

Participants referred to instability and its effects on health in a number of ways. Drawing on the data, I define instability as an unsettling state of being in which the usual contingency/uncertainty of human life is rendered more problematic because of disruption and disjuncture in the ability to conceive of or anticipate the future in ways previously available. This disruption is due to forces which the subject cannot control, but against which she nonetheless struggles. Instability, as a concept, is future oriented and temporal in nature. In contrast to insecurity, which identifies a more pressing state of crisis or potential emergency, instability is not necessarily associated with imminent threats of bodily harm or death. Instability is more chronic, and less unpredictable, but nonetheless creates a climate of pervasive uncertainty with real implications for subjectivity, health and well-being. For Iraqi refugees in Egypt, instability is the product of having six months' residency on their UNHCR yellow card, and the lingering knowledge that at any point, the UNHCR could decide that conditions are safe in Iraq and cancel their refugee status, rendering them deportable. Instability also emerges from the slow realization over time that what one thought was to be a temporary period of exile has stretched to years with no end in sight. Instability comes from the slow decline of savings that renders a once-wealthy family poor, and the experience of living with the knowledge that financial savings are finite and will eventually completely run out. Instability also emerges in the knowledge that once one's children graduate from

university it will be impossible for them to work in their field in Egypt. The contingency and uncertainty of life in Egypt, and the deprivations and difficulties associated with it, characterized instability for Iraqi refugees.

Instability rendered life necessarily problematic with implications for health and psychosocial well-being. For example, towards the end of an interview, Salam said: “It’s like at the end, I need a solution.” (Participant #47: Salam, 32 year old Shi’a Muslim Arab man). This characterization of life in Egypt as a problem was implicit in the way many Iraqi refugees spoke about their experiences. Salam’s situation in Egypt was incredibly difficult, with a severely mentally ill wife, a sick child, and no stable job, yet his quote suggests some amount of hope. Ultimately, Salam seeks a solution to his problems, a solution which he later describes as “stability”.

The experience of instability was identified by participants as a major cause of psychological suffering. Paradoxically, Iraqi refugees’ efforts to achieve stability may have also contributed to the negative consequences of instability since refugees reported that efforts to solve their problems, many of which were ultimately unsuccessful, further contributed to their distress. Instability was frequently made up of a number of different conditions, all of which combined to create an overwhelming and stressful reality for Iraqi refugees:

We just, we got ourselves in a transit situation. No stable. We can’t plan for our future. We don’t know how to deal with different situations. It’s getting worse in Iraq and we can’t go back. And here the job and work is very difficult. And our age is going (getting older) and our children is getting older, and this is stressful. (Participant #50: Kamal, 42 year old Muslim Arab man).

In the above quote, Kamal speaks explicitly about instability. He talks about its effects, including how it makes him feel stressed and how he is unable to plan for the future or to deal with different challenges in his daily life. Kamal also isolates different conditions which contribute to his feelings of instability including the situation in Iraq, his inability to work in Egypt, and the passage of time. Temporality is central to Kamal's description of instability. He defined life in Egypt as a "transit situation", a condition which does not match with the passage of time as he and his family age but their circumstances remain the same. Ultimately, Kamal's stress comes both from the inability of he and his family to follow the trajectory that he had expected, and also from his inability to develop a new, satisfactory narrative for he and his family to pursue. Like Kamal, other Iraqi refugees reported feeling stressed and tired by their efforts to solve the problems of their lives in Egypt.

Conditions in Egypt had caused most Iraqis to interrupt their expected life trajectory. Careers were ended arbitrarily when participants had to flee and could not find work in Egypt. Education was disrupted for students whose families could not afford to pay for private schools or universities. Young people had difficulties getting married since Iraqis in Egypt were quite isolated and a suitable bride or groom might be hard to find. At least one young married couple told me that they had decided not to have children yet since they did not have the financial resources to support them in Egypt. People found themselves burdened with consuming caregiver roles as the usual mechanisms of support for elderly or disabled relatives were not available in Egypt. Throughout all these forms of disruption, Iraqi refugees in Egypt struggled and managed

in a number of ways. Weddings happened, children were born, and disabled people were cared for. Yet the extra challenges associated with managing such life events and processes in difficult conditions imposed costs, which participants often referred to as psychological and emotional.

The ubiquity of *ta'ab* or tiredness, fatigue, in Iraqi refugees' narratives speaks to the problem of instability. Instability made planning for the future impossible, and made dealing with problems in the present challenging. Iraqi refugees reported feeling tired or fatigued from the amount of effort necessary to deal with life in Egypt, as well as the work necessary to try to conceive of a future for themselves and their families. Tiredness also came from efforts to control a situation which in many ways they were unable to influence. In Janna's narrative, tiredness, instability, disruption and psychosocial well-being all intersected when I asked her about her life in Egypt:

P: Very tired.

P: Because of the health condition of my mother. The financial situation has become much worse and we are nearly bankrupt. (We are) waiting for travelling and starting (a) new life. Going back to the country is impossible. And my brother is unemployed. They are adults and the people in their age they are married and they have a family. My sister has four years now she is not in school. We don't have money for her school and we didn't bring any of her reports from Baghdad. Every day I think about this... my mother, my sister....

I: You are talking about the suffering of others, what about you?

P: It's true, I forget myself. When I graduated I was 58 (kg) my weight, and now I am 85 (kg). When I am sad and frustrated, I am getting fat. (giggling). This makes me sad because I don't give myself any care. And I am tired because I studied and graduated and I don't have any work. I like to work. I like to move, go. This tired me. Instability and un-settled down (sic) - this also tired me. (Participant #03: Janna 33 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman).

This quote from Janna, in which she initially speaks only of her family and only after prompting considers herself, demonstrates the many facets of instability for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Janna's first response to my question was to tell me she is tired. She then goes on to explain why she is tired: her mother's health, their financial situation, waiting for resettlement, being unable to return to Iraq, unemployment for both she and her brother, her sister's disrupted education, her weight. Perhaps it is not surprising, given these many problems, that Janna speaks of "instability and (being) un-settled down" in Egypt and that she describes herself as tired, frustrated and sad. For Janna and her siblings, life in Egypt is one of disruption, especially related to work and education. These concerns preoccupied Janna, who reported thinking about her family's problems every day. Not only were the circumstances of Janna's instability a cause of suffering but she reported that thinking, worrying and caring about her family's instabilities affected her emotionally and psychologically. Other participants spoke more explicitly about the connection between instability and their psychological situation. Salam's wife, Tabarak, who suffered from diagnosed mental illness in Egypt, refused to answer my questions about what she thought the future might hold. She told me:

I don't know. I don't have an idea about this. I don't think in this way because thinking in this way made me suffer and sick (*ta'ab*) in that way. I pray for the God and I'm living my day, because thinking of the future all the time is making me sick. (Participant #66: Tabarak, 32 year old Muslim Arab woman).

Tabarak noted that thinking of the future was the cause of her suffering and her sickness. She told me that in order to manage her illness, she had decided not to think of the future and to live each day and leave the future to God. Earlier in our interview, she had told me that instability was her biggest problem in Egypt and had identified stability as her

primary desire. In an interview, Salam also identified the importance of stability in the context of exile in Egypt:

I think it is getting hard, this country. It's hurting me. I don't sleep in the night. I feel it's very hard, especially this last year. It's like, it's like, it's very, very bad. I feel I, I am going to join her in the same situation, I want to feel stable so I can support her in this situation, support my daughter. It's not possible that I will lose my control and everything else. (Participant #47: Salam, 32 year old Shi'a Muslim Arab man).

In this quote, Salam speaks of his suffering but ultimately focuses on his desire for stability as a means to support his wife and daughter. He starts to say that his situation is becoming more difficult and that he fears that he will join his wife “in the same situation”, meaning that he fears that he too might develop mental illness as a result of their condition in Egypt. He equates this with losing control and asserts that it is impossible for him to do so since he must care for his wife and daughter.

For many Iraqi refugees, unstable conditions of asylum in Egypt were a cause of suffering and poor health. Instability, related to difficult conditions which disrupted their imagined life trajectory and made the future difficult to conceptualize, led to tiredness, worry, sadness and other psychological and cognitive/emotional problems. In addition, refugees' responses to these problems, especially worry and “thinking too much” became an additional source of suffering for some refugees. While psychological and emotional suffering was a major concern of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, refugees did pursue strategies to manage both their suffering and its perceived underlying causes, especially instability.

Chapter 8: Seeking Resettlement

Introduction

Fieldwork in Egypt identified instability as an underlying theme which characterized a range of conditions associated with urban asylum in Egypt. Iraqi refugees' inability to exercise basic human rights combined with a decline in socioeconomic status and other social problems contributed to their inability to consider Egypt as a potential site for long-term settlement. Instead, Egypt was primarily understood as a "temporary situation." However, as asylum in Egypt stretched on for years, living in a temporary situation became increasingly problematic. Contributing to instability was Iraqi refugees' struggle to conceive of, and pursue, their future. This struggle was experienced in a number of embodied ways associated with psychological suffering, including worry, tiredness, depression, anger, and somatic expressions of distress. As a means of addressing this suffering, Iraqis pursued a number of strategies to address instability in their lives. One such strategy is the pursuit of third country resettlement, the subject of this chapter. I argue that while refugees often sought resettlement as a means of constructing a new life out of a context of instability, the process of seeking resettlement itself can be extremely destabilizing. Two paradoxes of the refugee resettlement process in particular are considered here; 1) the paradox of discourses of vulnerability in resettlement and 2) the paradox of instability in the

resettlement process itself. In order to achieve these aims, this chapter seeks to take a person-centered approach to the refugee resettlement process.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) typically identifies third-country resettlement as a last resort for the most vulnerable refugees whose protection cannot be ensured in the country of first asylum. However, refugees themselves may desire resettlement as a means to rebuild their lives following persecution, violence and displacement, especially when conditions in the country of first asylum are unstable or insecure, as has been demonstrated in previous chapters. For the Iraqis with whom I worked, the process of seeking resettlement is an arduous, adversarial one in which refugees must bear witness to persecution in their country of origin and to vulnerability in their place of asylum. Refugees must demonstrate individual need for resettlement while simultaneously navigating local, national and global structures, which often seek to impose alternative discourses of personhood on refugees. I argue that the process of seeking resettlement illuminates tensions related to the making and unmaking of subjectivities in a particular context of change that straddles the boundaries between forced and voluntary transnational migration. Paying attention to the subjective experience of the resettlement-seeking process sheds light on relationships between the individual and social life in a context where experience, identities and evidence are contested. With the decline in the legitimacy of asylum as a category and increasing numbers of refugees in urban and encamped conditions in countries of first asylum in the Global South, opportunities for resettlement, however rare, provide real and imagined benefits and opportunities for refugees. While only a few refugees are ever resettled,

many more pursue resettlement and are affected by the process in some way. In addition, UNHCR's emphasis on vulnerability in resettlement means that those going through the resettlement process are those that are recognized to be the most in need of protection. For these reasons, attention must be paid to the process of seeking resettlement, both in terms of the experiences of refugees and in terms of the discourses associated with resettlement as a global, international and national policy and practice.

In this chapter, I consider issues related to the process of seeking resettlement for Iraqi refugees living in Egypt. Not all the refugees with whom I spoke in Egypt were seeking resettlement, although many were actively involved in the process. Of those who did wish to be resettled, participants were at a wide range of stages within the process; some had travel dates in the near future while others may have been ineligible for resettlement but nonetheless actively sought to be considered. In this dissertation, I define the process of seeking resettlement in a way that privileges the refugee's perspective and for that reason I include the accounts of those refugees who are trying to be resettled to another country, regardless of their acceptance into a resettlement program. For the purposes of capturing variation among the Iraqi refugee population, I also include data from those refugees who had no desire to be resettled and were not actively seeking resettlement. From participant observation and interview data, themes emerged about the process of seeking resettlement and its effects on self-identified health, well-being and subjectivity. Two main issues related to the resettlement process are discussed in this chapter: 1) the paradox of vulnerability; and 2) insecurity and uncertainty as liminality.

‘Durable solutions’

Anthropologists, such as Malkki (1995a), have been instrumental in turning a critical eye to the ways in which bureaucratic formulations are involved in framing debates about forced migration. Resettlement is one such formulation that, while referred to frequently in academic and policy literature, is rarely interrogated or explored through ethnographic data. In this chapter, I consider the subjective experience of seeking resettlement for refugees and the implications of this process for subjectivity, health and well-being. Unlike asylum, which is a right under international law for those who meet the legal definition of a refugee, resettlement is an option for only a few. Resettlement is the third and least-used of the United Nations’ three durable solutions for refugee situations. The other two durable solutions are voluntary repatriation and local integration in the country of first asylum. Resettlement is offered often on a case-by-case basis to refugees who are especially vulnerable and in need of protection or who meet specific program criteria. However, refugee resettlement policy and practice is contradictory in that it attempts to combine humanitarian goals with what has been argued is an increasingly state-centered approach (Aleinikoff, 1995). These two emphases, one explicit and the other largely implicit, influence refugees’ experiences of negotiating the process of seeking resettlement.

UNHCR has identified three ‘durable solutions’ to refugee situations: local integration in the country of first asylum, voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, and third-country resettlement (Van Hear, 2002). Voluntary repatriation is clearly

distinguished from refoulment, when a refugee is returned to their country of origin against their will. Voluntary repatriation is often held up as the ideal solution to forced migration, but is complicated by a number of issues, including questions such as who decides when a situation in the country of origin improves. Local integration was understood originally in the framework of eventual naturalization of refugees but in practice is often conceptualized in a human rights framework that emphasizes individual rights such as rights to employment, residency, assembly and access to services such as health care and education. Third country resettlement is largely understood by the UNHCR and other institutions as a last resort solution for individual refugees who have serious protection needs that render the other two durable solutions, integration and voluntary repatriation, impossible. In circumstances of massive forced migration, countries such as the United States have implemented mass refugee resettlement programs as a way of ‘sharing the burden’ of large populations of forced migrants. In response to the massive forced migration of Iraqi refugees in the Middle East and North Africa, both types of resettlement programs have been implemented.

Refugees’ ideas about solutions to problems of forced migration do not necessarily correspond to those put forward by the UNHCR or other decision-makers. However, for the purposes of clarity, I will briefly situate Iraqi refugees in Egypt in the context of ‘durable solutions’. As demonstrated in the chapter on Life in Egypt, local integration is not a possibility for the majority of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. For many, return to Iraq would be an ideal solution, yet as many participants noted, Iraq now is a

significantly changed place from the country which they once called home.²³ Some Iraqi refugees spoke of this change as the reason they were unable to return to Iraq, such as one father who stated that: “And now our children are asking all the time why don’t we go back to Iraq. They imagine they will live in the same situation there they don’t understand that it has changed. (Participant #33: 40 year old Muslim Arab man). The idea that Iraq had changed, as well as more immediate concerns that it was still dangerous, prevented some Iraqi refugees from viewing return as an option. For example, one young man told me how he would never be able to return to Iraq:

P: And we don’t want to get back to Iraq.

N: So, it’s not-it’s not safer now in Iraq for you still--

P: Even for uh - twenty years (from now). It will not be good. Even uh thirty years came, 30, 31,32,33...I see it like that, yanni, when I left it I know it would-it would-it would never get back as it was. (Participant #25 year old Sunni Muslim Arab man).

This young man insists that he can never go back to Iraq because it will not be safe for himself and his family. For some, such as this young man, recent threats or violence experienced by family members or friends supported their conviction that Iraq was not safe for them. While some had decided that they could never return to Iraq, other participants saw it as their “last chance”:

P: I have decided. If resettlement will not work? I will go back to Iraq. I can’t resist any more in Egypt. The pressure on me is too much. Financially and psychologically.

²³ For a journalistic discussion of these issues, especially how Iraq has changed following the U.S. led invasion and sectarian violence, as well as implications of these changes for the Middle East and North Africa Region, see Amos (Amos, 2010).

N: do you think it is safe for you to go back?

P: No. it's not safe at all. It's our destiny. If it was safe, we would have gone back a long period of time ago. But now we are using our last chance. (Participant #22: Sunni Muslim Arab man).

This man spoke of how, if he was unable to be resettled, he would return to Iraq. For him, life in Egypt was so unbearable that return to Iraq, however insecure, was preferable. The idea that Iraq was unsafe but that return was necessary since life in Egypt was unsustainable, was repeated several times in the data. While most Iraqis reported that Iraq was unsafe for them to return, they also reported knowing Iraqis who had done so. Some participants had returned to Iraq for short periods of time in order to visit relatives, conduct business, or attend to other personal or work matters. These trips did not seem to be an indication on the part of participants that they could re-establish lives in Iraq, but seemed instead to be somewhat calculated risks based on a perceived need to return temporarily. For most Iraqi refugees who participated in this study, neither local integration nor voluntary repatriation was considered to be an option. The remainder of this chapter considers the third durable solution, resettlement.

Twenty four nation-states²⁴ participate in refugee resettlement programs, although a number of these accept an extremely limited number of refugees under specific circumstances (UNHCR, 2010). In 2009, the United States accepted 80,000 refugees for

²⁴ Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Uruguay, United States of America.

resettlement, the largest number of any resettlement country. However, UNHCR estimates that only 10% of refugees who require resettlement actually receive it. By Feb. 2009, the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) had admitted nearly 20,000 Iraqi refugees to the United States. The number of refugees admitted is a small fraction of the total number referred for resettlement, reflecting the length of the process and the possibility for a refugee to be excluded at various stages.

While much has been written about resettlement policy and practice, almost no research has been conducted on refugees' experiences of resettlement. In order to understand the implications of the process of seeking resettlement for refugees, it is useful to understand the basic process of seeking resettlement for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. At the time that I conducted my fieldwork, Iraqi refugees in Egypt could be resettled in several ways. First, Egypt is a processing site for the 'Direct Access Program'²⁵, an initiative created through the Kennedy Act of 2007 which allows Iraqi refugees with U.S. affiliations²⁶ to apply directly to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) instead of requiring a referral from the UNHCR or US embassy (Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, US Department of State, 2009). This program is referred to as 'Direct Access' because eligible refugees may approach the United States Government's overseas processing entity, the International Organization for Migration

²⁵ The other main site is Amman, Jordan. Iraqis may also apply for the Direct Access Program from inside Iraq, although processing from Baghdad has been limited.

²⁶ The categories of Iraqis eligible for the Direct Access Program are 1) Iraqis who worked as full-time interpreters/translators for the U.S. Government (USG) in Iraq or the Multinational Forces in Iraq; 2) Iraqis who were directly employed by the USG; 3) Iraqis who were employed by an organization directly associated with the USG in Iraq and whose association can be shown through a contract or other document; 4) Iraqis who were employed by U.S.-based media organization or NGO; 5) certain direct relatives of people who fit in the above four categories; and 6) certain direct relatives of citizens or permanent residents of the United States. The veracity of these associations is initially verified by the overseas processing entity, the IOM, in Egypt, Jordan or Iraq.

(IOM), directly, instead of needing to be referred by the UNHCR. Second, Iraqis can be resettled through UNHCR referral on the basis of humanitarian need. In rare cases, Iraqi refugees may also be eligible for resettlement to other countries through specific programs on the basis of family associations or other criteria. In general, however, the first two categories are more common and will be discussed in greater detail here.

From the perspective of the refugee, the process of seeking resettlement was an arduous and lengthy one, as illustrated in **Figure 2**. If a refugee had direct connections to the United States, they could approach the IOM directly through the ‘Direct Access Program’ and essentially skip the step of UNHCR referral. For refugees without U.S. Connections, UNHCR referral necessitated several steps. First, a refugee had to register with UNHCR. Iraqi refugees were given *prima facie*²⁷ recognition of their refugee status by the UNHCR and so did not need to prove that they met the legal definition of a refugee as laid out in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol until they were being considered for resettlement. UNHCR referral usually involved at least three interviews, one for registration, one for RSD, and one for referral. These interviews were often months apart. Interviews typically took an entire day as refugees were told to arrive before the office opened and then stayed until their interview was complete. Refugees waited in line to be admitted, and then waited again for their turn in the open courtyard or under a shelter. Interviews varied dramatically in length, as did the reported kindness and attention of the officers. Often, refugees were not told the specific purpose or aim of their

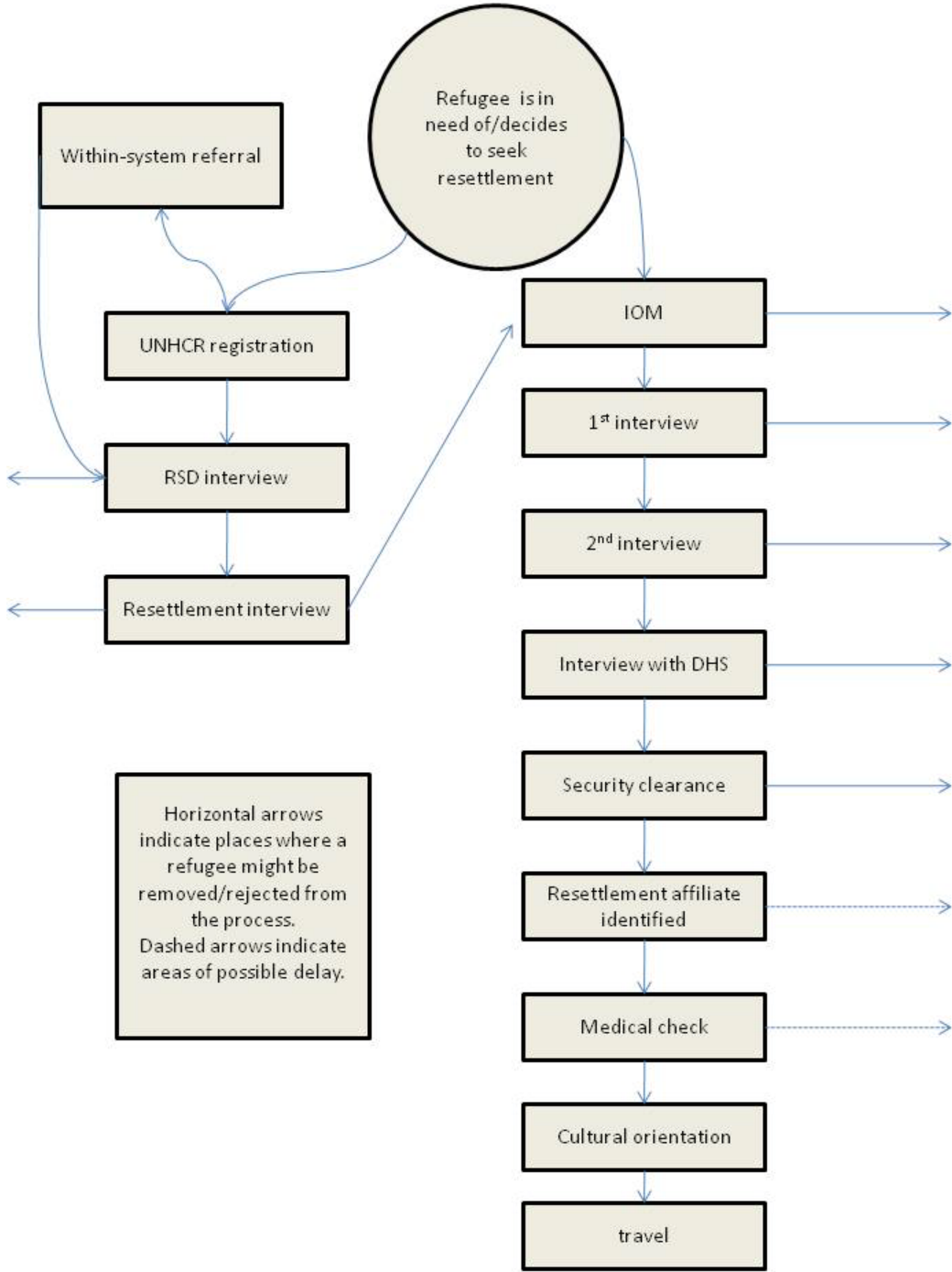
²⁷ Prima facie status is granted in cases where refugees are coming from a condition, such as the conflict in Iraq, in which the situation is so poor that it is more likely than not that persecution occurred and also when refugee flows are massive enough that they exceed the capacity of the UNHCR to process RSD individually. Typically, refugees must go through RSD individually and prove that they personally meet the legal definition of a refugee, as defined by either the 1951 Refugee Convention (and its 1967 Protocol), or another convention, such as the 1969 OAU Convention in the case of Egypt. Prima facie allows for the designation of refugee status, usually temporarily, to groups of forced migrants.

interview before they went, and sometimes remained unsure of the purpose at the interview's completion. Despite having, in theory, the right to have legal counsel present during interviews, this seemed to be rarely achieved in practice.

If a refugee was deemed to be in need of resettlement, the UNHCR would make a referral to a resettlement country. The choice of resettlement country was not done locally in the UNHCR office in Cairo, but sent to a regional office in Beirut. If a refugee was referred to the United States, their case was then transferred to the IOM and if the referral were to another country, such as Canada, the case was transferred to the country embassy. For US resettlement, UNHCR referrals and Direct Access cases followed approximately the same procedure from this point in the process forward. Refugees would have two interviews with the IOM, and then would have a third and usually final interview with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officers. The DHS officers are deployed regionally and travel from country conducting interviews and determining eligibility for resettlement to the U.S. They would arrive in Cairo several times a year and set up shop for a short period, interviewing large numbers of refugees and issuing acceptances and rejections. Following this interview, a period of months might pass before a refugee found out whether or not they had been accepted. If rejected, the refugee had the opportunity to appeal. If accepted, a refugee would then be subjected to security checks and medical checks. A resettlement affiliate in the United States would then accept the refugee, at which point their destination state would be determined. Finally, they would attend cultural orientation and receive a travel date. The entire process was indeterminate in length and little information was provided to the refugee along the way, as will be discussed in later sections of this chapter when I draw on refugees' narratives

of the resettlement process to illustrate the implications of seeking resettlement.

Figure 2: The process of seeking resettlement to the United States



Introduction to Paradoxes of the Resettlement Process: Lubna's Story

In a small room in the refugee legal aid clinic in Cairo, Lubna was talking with me about what she had termed the “continuity of her paralysis.” Lubna’s feeling of ‘paralysis’ had begun in Baghdad as a result of widespread insecurity and fear during the war. A young, vibrant woman who had been involved in organizations promoting the rights of women in her country, she told me, “I had so many ideas and activities I wanted to do, but I was paralyzed. Maybe I would want to do something, like work for women’s rights, but then there would be an explosion, or no electricity.” She spoke eloquently of paralysis as if it was a circle enclosing her and preventing her from acting and living. Direct and continued threats to her life led Lubna and her family to decide that she should flee the country, travelling to Egypt and remaining there if possible, for her safety. What I found remarkable about Lubna’s story was the way in which she argued that her paralysis had continued in asylum in Egypt. While physically Lubna was safe from the risk of death threats and explosions, the feeling of paralysis continued to follow her in Egypt and had led her to successfully seek resettlement to the United States in an effort to escape from its grip. She told me that although she was aware that life in the United States would be difficult, she anticipated it would be better than either Egypt or Iraq. When I asked her about her future, Lubna said:

Maybe there is a secret in America. I know that my life will not be easy there – that there will be obstacles or challenges, and that I will have to invent ways to overcome them. But I think the paralysis will leave. They call it the country of freedom, so I cannot be paralyzed there (Participant #01: Lubna, 32 year old Muslim mixed ethnicity woman).

As a single young Iraqi refugee woman in the process of being resettled from Cairo to the United States, Lubna was looking forward to building her life elsewhere, in ‘America’. However, as the resettlement process stretched on from weeks, to months and was now approaching a year, Lubna’s feelings of anxiety were mounting and she spoke increasingly of what she had termed her “paralysis”. She told me:

Because I am so obsessed with the idea of travelling, with the idea of being able to build my life...this is making me paralyzed, it makes the idea of getting out of here the main idea in my head, the dominating idea that is controlling me. You can’t imagine life with this waiting (Participant #01: Lubna, 32 year old Muslim mixed ethnicity woman).

Lubna’s story is illustrative of the main findings discussed in this chapter, specifically, that the process of seeking resettlement, while holding out the prospect of rebuilding a fractured life in a new, better place, also presented paradoxes and ambiguity for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Among these sites of paradox include:

1. Contradictions exist in humanitarian resettlement between institutional expectations of vulnerability and refugees’ conceptions of vulnerability and their efforts to recover from violence.
2. Seeking resettlement is simultaneously a means of escape from a liminal, insecure life in asylum and a process in which refugees experience insecurity and suffering.

Below I discuss each of these sites of paradox and contradiction in turn, with attention paid to the ways in which these sites illuminate crucial themes related to refugees’ psychosocial well-being in prolonged urban asylum and the process of seeking resettlement. First, I turn briefly to a discussion of Iraqi refugees’ desire for resettlement.

Refugees’ Desire for Resettlement

In participant observation in the legal aid clinic and in the homes of Iraqi refugees, as well as in the narratives that emerged in ethnographic interviews, third-country resettlement was inescapably present. While there are Iraqi refugees who do not desire and are not seeking third-country resettlement, the vast majority of the participants in this study were. Those participants who rejected resettlement entirely were few. Only three of the 110 interview participants expressed no interest in resettlement. However, this figure represents an obvious bias in the research, since my primary field site and place of recruitment was an NGO legal aid clinic that, among other services, provided assistance to refugees who were interested in applying for third-country resettlement. Throughout the course of my fieldwork, however, I made an effort to speak with Iraqis who were not seeking resettlement, including those who, despite having fled persecution in Iraq, had not registered with the UNHCR and were therefore not recognized as refugees. Among these Iraqis, some had less knowledge of the resettlement process yet still expressed a longing to travel outside of Egypt. Despite some instances of rejection and some of wholehearted acceptance, mixed feelings and ambivalence about the resettlement process were most commonly expressed in the interviews and observed in participant observation.

Perhaps the desire for resettlement is not surprising given the confluence of factors that characterize Iraqi forced migration at this particular juncture in time and place. Egypt, and Cairo in particular, has been imagined as a 'gateway to resettlement' by some refugees, likely because of the presence of UNHCR offices with a sizeable resettlement program and the existence of private sponsorship programs from other resettlement countries (Grabska, 2006). For Iraqi refugees in particular, the Direct Access

Program provides increased opportunity for resettlement, and an increased awareness of resettlement in general. By 2009-2010, the Direct Access Program had been in operation for nearly three years and Iraqi refugees who were still in asylum in Egypt had seen many acquaintances travel to the United States and to other countries through UNHCR-referred resettlement. However, despite circumstances in which programs allow for larger numbers of refugees to be accepted for resettlement²⁸, the average number of refugees who are actually resettled is quite low, less than one percent overall. The existence of the 'Direct Access Program' has led to increased opportunities for resettlement for Iraqi refugees, with estimates suggesting that about ten percent of Iraqis being resettled. Even with this higher percentage, many more Iraqis desire resettlement than are deemed eligible.

Although the UNHCR's durable solutions are often conceived of as either distinct entities or as separate parts of a cyclical process of forced migration, analysis of refugee resettlement demonstrates that in the practical exigencies of life in exile, durable solutions and indeed categories of migration such as forced or voluntary may become blurred (Van Hear, 2002). For participants in this study, refugee resettlement was simultaneously an escape from an insecure life in exile, as described in previous sections, and an opportunity to ensure their children's education, receive needed health care, or achieve other aspects of a stable life. In their desire to both seek protection from the difficulties of life in Egypt and to achieve a better life, Iraqi refugees were not alone among other refugee groups in Cairo. For example, Currie (2007) documented how desire

²⁸ Such as under the Direct Access Program or, for an historical example, under the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese refugees that was adopted in 1989 to address the large numbers of 'boat people' fleeing from Vietnam and Laos.

to be resettled and engagement in refugee status determination (RSD) and resettlement procedures influenced marriage and reproductive practices among Sudanese refugees in Egypt. Sudanese refugees, like Iraqi refugees, find life in Egypt to be challenging because of their marginalization in society and the suppression of their legal, socio-economic and political rights. In a particularly tragic and well-documented case, nearly three thousand Sudanese refugees, including men, women and children, staged a sit-in protest outside of the UNHCR offices in Cairo in 2005. Their principal demand was that since they could not return to Sudan and could not integrate into Egyptian society, they should be considered for resettlement to a western²⁹ country. After three months of protest, on December 30, 2005, five thousand Egyptian riot police stormed the sit-in and forcibly disbanded it. Twenty-seven people were killed and many more were wounded. At the time of my fieldwork, opportunities for Sudanese refugees to be resettled remained extremely limited and only those who qualified for humanitarian resettlement through the UNHCR or private sponsorship were considered. While conditions for Iraqi refugees in Egypt are much different than those of refugees of other nationalities, relative deprivation, social marginalization, and limitation of human rights are common themes of suffering that render resettlement an attractive option.

In interviews and participant observation, Iraqi refugees articulated their reasons for seeking resettlement in ambivalent terms. On one hand, some participants expressed a fervent desire for resettlement in which life in the west took on an almost mythological

²⁹ This terminology is problematic, signifying a whole 'west' in opposition to the rest of the world, an issue that has been taken up extensively by others. In this chapter, I will use the terms 'west' and 'western' to reflect the words used by participants. Interestingly, Iraqis often refer to "European countries", meaning by this Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. I use western here to avoid confusion for readers, but the countries designated are the same.

cast. Others either rejected resettlement outright or portrayed it, echoing UNHCR's position, as an option of last resort when no other opportunities for permanent settlement were available. Most views of resettlement fit somewhere in the middle. The idea that resettlement represented "starting a new life" illustrates this middle position and was expressed by many of the participants. Among the aspects of the new life that were valued by participants were education, health care, employment, respect and dignity. Education was by far the most mentioned of the anticipated benefits of resettlement, with parents often portraying resettlement as a means to facilitate their children's education and, by extension, their future.

This desire for resettlement as a means to escape the difficulties of life in Egypt and to have the opportunity to build their future elsewhere was recurrent in the interview narratives to different degrees. For example, Janna, a woman in her thirties who was in the process of being resettled with her family because of her mother's medical situation, spoke of her future exclusively in terms of resettlement and the benefits that it would bring to her family and herself:

If God wills it, we will go to the U.S. and for my family there will be a future. The only thing we think of now is the resettlement. My brother will get a job, my sister will be in school, my mother [will have treatment], and I will marry an American man (laughs) (Participant #03: Janna, 33 year old Sunni Muslim Arab woman).

Janna desired resettlement for the opportunities it could provide her family and herself. She spoke of her own desire to return to her education and to see her family settled. At the time of this interview, Janna's family had been accepted by the USRAP and was waiting to receive their security clearance. Longing for a better life in the west was not

expressed only by refugees who were actively engaged in the resettlement process. Zahra, who had not pursued resettlement in any way, similarly dreamed of how life would be if she and her family were to settle elsewhere when I asked her about her hopes for the future.

I don't want to be here or in the Arab world: I feel their problems. I want a place where children wake up and go to schools without being afraid. I want a good future for them.

When you go to another place as a refugee, I think you will be able to do many things for them, from when you step on the plane until they go to college. Because people there respect us, respect human beings (Participant #34: Zahra, Muslim Arab woman).

Zahra, who had two small children and had been abandoned by her husband, was particularly pessimistic about life in the Arab world. However, the topic of resettlement, and refugees' imaginations of how their life would be in the west often led to general comparisons between the 'west' and the Arab homeland (*al watan al arabi*). Others spoke explicitly of resettlement as a loss, or a sacrifice. Maher, a man in his forties who had been a successful businessman in Iraq, sought resettlement because his son suffered from a growth disorder that had severely stunted his growth and development, rendering him, at fifteen years of age, the size of a six year old. Throughout our interview, he spoke of how resettlement was necessary for his son's urgent medical condition, but expressed no particular interest in living in the United States. Instead, he would have vastly preferred to return to Iraq, if it were safe for him to do so:

We are thanking God, we are living. It is all about memories, and the lost countries, and television. You know that Iraqis will cry if they hear a song that reminds them of their country. We lost family, our country, our friends, the most important things.... (Participant #33: Maher, 40 year old Muslim Arab man).

For Maher, resettlement was primarily a means of seeking treatment for his son's medical condition, since the family did not have the money to do the necessary surgeries in Egypt, nor were they confident in the ability of the Egyptian medical system to provide them with appropriate and effective care. Maher did not see resettlement as an opportunity to improve his own life but as the only way to provide his son with necessary medical care.

Resettlement ... because we do not have money to pay the operation and if we do the operation we do not have the money for the care, the facilities, the physiotherapy. We sacrificed all, because we want to treat him. All the family sacrificed because we want to help him (Participant #33: Maher, 40 year old Muslim Arab man).

While Maher's reason for seeking resettlement matches with the UNHCR resettlement criteria, not all participants articulated their desire, or perceived need for resettlement in these terms. Some refugees took on, to a greater or lesser degree, the language and criteria of UNHCR resettlement policy, while others explicitly rejected notions of vulnerability as justifications for resettlement.

The Paradox of Vulnerability in the Refugee Resettlement Process

In UNHCR publications, resettlement is cast as an option for only the most vulnerable refugees, as determined by UNHCR and resettlement countries, to be offered only to a few who meet specific criteria. This contrasts sharply with observations in Cairo, where almost all of the refugees in my sample articulated a desire to achieve resettlement based on their inability to return home safely, or to integrate into Egyptian society. One type of resettlement, that which is used by the UNHCR and is based on

notions of humanitarian need, will be discussed in this section. UNHCR resettlement criteria, which emphasize vulnerability and protection needs as eligibility for third-country resettlement, provide an example of what Fassin (2001) refers to as the 'biopolitics of otherness.' In a global context where resettlement is increasingly limited, borders are increasingly closed and the legitimacy of asylum as a category is increasingly challenged, resettlement on humanitarian grounds replaces political asylum with asylum based on medical, psychological and humanitarian criteria. For refugees in uncertain, insecure asylum in the global south, resettlement based on humanitarian grounds is one of the only legal channels available for permanent settlement. Yet in order to be considered for resettlement, refugees must meet specific criteria of vulnerability and convince UNHCR and country officials that they are both credible and truly in need of protection.

In my observations and from refugees' accounts, I noticed that third-country resettlement was perceived by refugee service providers and other gatekeepers of resettlement as an opportunity for refugees, reflecting that resettlement is understood not as a right under international law. Instead, service providers and officials must determine which refugees are priorities for resettlement on the basis of which are most vulnerable and in need of protection. UNHCR has created a framework for determining resettlement as the appropriate solution in which refugees must fit into at least one of eight criteria of vulnerability or protection needs to be considered. The criteria include: 1) legal and physical protection needs; 2) survivors of violence and torture; 3) medical needs; 4) women-at-risk; 5) family reunification; 6) children and adolescents; 7) older refugees; and 8) refugees without local integration prospects (United Nations High Commissioner

for Refugees (UNHCR), 2004). A brief survey of reasons for resettlement in the sample of refugee testimonies demonstrates that certain of these categories, especially 2) survivors of violence and torture and 3) medical needs are more frequently evoked.

Table 7: Frequency of reasons for resettlement from a sample of 37 refugee legal testimonies

Resettlement Criteria	Number of testimonies evoking criteria (N=37)*	Percentage of testimonies evoking criteria (%)
Legal and Physical Protection Needs	6	16
Survivors of Violence and Torture	16	43
Medical Needs	20	54
Women-at-Risk	3	8
Family Reunification	1	3
Children and Adolescents	0	0
Older Refugees	1	3
Work with United States in Iraq	11	30
No Clear Criteria	1	3

***Some testimonies argue for more than one resettlement criteria. For example, 10 testimonies evoked both medical needs and survivors of violence and torture as reasons for requesting resettlement.**

I will focus below on survivors of violence and torture and medical needs because they are both theoretically more relevant to this dissertation and also are more often invoked in the Iraqi context in Cairo. In both cases, reports from physicians, or from other medical personnel in locations where doctors are not available, are necessary to establish the veracity of a refugee's claim to vulnerability and the severity of their affliction. A refugee's account of violence and torture is rarely enough. Physical evidence, represented by scars on the body or documented by a physician's report is necessary. In the case of psychological disturbance, a psychiatrist's report provides the link between the refugee's account of persecution and the resulting psychiatric disorder that forms the basis of their claim for resettlement. Yet nearly all participants in my sample reported experiencing

violence and/or torture, and most reported at least one serious health problem in the family, as discussed in the previous chapter. Despite this, resettlement is available to only a small number of refugees. In this context, how is vulnerability defined by refugees themselves as they seek resettlement and how do refugee presentations of vulnerability articulate with institutional expectations for vulnerability?

In arguing for resettlement, refugees identified themselves as vulnerable on their own terms, both identifying with and challenging the UNHCR criteria. Urgency and severity, as well as available resources in resettlement countries, must come into play when officials decide whether or not to recommend a refugee for resettlement. Yet, as one participant, who was both a refugee and a service provider for other refugees noted:

In Iraq, we say work makes you tired in two ways, physically and mentally. Physically, you will heal from it. Mentally, you keep thinking and even if you rest for 24 hours, it keeps happening. Here there is no future and this makes people tired. The people who passed away suddenly here in Egypt, they were thinking and tired, and it is because of lack of control of future. The strange future is a very difficult thing for people. It makes you tired. People are thinking ‘what will happen to us? Will they kick us out of Egypt?’ and other matters, over and over. But UNHCR is not thinking of this. [They just think] ‘just what is an urgent case? This is not an urgent case.’ But what is an urgent case? No one leaves his country for four years for fun. And it is not just that. Over four years I have spent 50,000 US dollars for my children’s education here [in Egypt]. In Iraq, education is free. If I could be in my country, I could be not spending any of this money. If you are not returning back, taking advantage of free education in your country, then you cannot go back. If this continues it has a psychological effect on the refugees (Participant #77).

The question of “But what is an urgent case?” is relevant here as urgency is defined in a way that is accepted by officials, namely, that corresponds to policy and practice

guidelines and that is supported by evidence, in most cases expert evidence such as a medical or psychiatric diagnosis. Participants sometimes articulated vulnerability in terms of psychiatric diagnosis, such as one family where all the members had been diagnosed with PTSD, but more often, participants spoke of fear, violence, their inability to live in Egypt, and their inability to return to Iraq safely. As discussed in earlier sections, many participants characterized their suffering in terms of being ‘homeless’ or having an ‘uncertain future’. One participant argued that this condition of uncertainty was ‘beyond life threatening’, language that articulated with UNHCR criteria of vulnerability in terms of severity, but that does not fit with the criteria in terms of concept.

One Iraqi refugee man, who I will call Nasser, described retrospectively to me his process of engagement with UNHCR in his quest to seek resettlement. His experience is one example of a larger process in which Iraqis had to, in many cases extremely reluctantly, learn to live as, and present themselves as, refugees through such practices as, for example, standing in long lines to receive services, having to accept financial assistance from others, or learning about the refugee system in Egypt. Many explicitly rejected the idea of themselves as refugees, and some even chose not to register with the UNHCR at all. Others registered only when they absolutely needed to, as a result of financial problems, medical crisis, or a desire for resettlement. Many Iraqis described an unfolding process of engagement with refugee services and organizations in Egypt. For example, Nasser, whose young daughter was very sick with an ear condition, spoke about how he did not initially realize that he should have mentioned his daughter’s illness in his first interview with UNHCR.

We went to UNHCR but I didn't know what to say or what to do there. I was very confused. There are a lot of things that they did not ask me about and so I did not tell them. They only asked me basic information and they asked me if I was Sunni or Shi'a. They did not ask me why I left Iraq or about my health or my family's health (Nasser).

Nasser's account narrated how over time, as his daughter's health got worse and he began to learn about the refugee system, his behavior towards UNHCR changed. While initially he was confused by the system, he came to realize that his daughter's health was, in fact, something about which UNHCR should have known, and which might have made a difference in his case, particularly for resettlement. He also learned that he could be referred for health services. Nasser then recounted how he went back and forth between the clinic and UNHCR for three weeks in an effort to get health care for his daughter:

On my third visit to UNHCR in the middle of February they told me that my name was not on the list and instructed me to fill out an application form. I was very upset because my daughter's ear had been producing discharge again. I started yelling: 'I am a refugee! I fled my country and I need urgent medical help!' (Nasser).

Interestingly, when he began to use the language of UNHCR policy, specifically speaking about 'urgent medical help', Nasser finally received assistance and the referral he needed to access care for his daughter. However, in other cases, refugees whose vulnerability was immediately apparent did not receive services, demonstrating that developing an understanding of refugee policy and practice was not sufficient to ensure care or consideration for resettlement.

Other refugees had much less success in convincing UNHCR despite apparent vulnerability and although they similarly had come to understand how the refugee system functions, suggesting that more is at play in the process than either policies of vulnerability or a refugees' skill in navigating the system. For example, Ahmed, who had lost 95% of his vision and desperately needed both medical care for himself and his family as well as financial help, found himself unable to gain the assistance needed. Despite repeated efforts and clear disability, Ahmed was neither receiving the care he needed nor was he being referred for resettlement. Ahmed's case is interesting because he provides an example of how institutional expectations for vulnerability can be embodied by refugees. As mentioned above, interactions with UNHCR and other refugee institutions can be adversarial, and evidence is often necessary to support refugees' claims. As a result, I found refugees, in interviews and in daily life, sometimes speaking to me about their ability to provide official, expert evidence of their afflictions. For example, Ahmed, when telling me about his other health conditions, qualified them all by speaking of his ability to provide expert proof of his suffering. For example, he said, "I have a slipped disc. Very simple movements can hurt me. I do not have reports to prove it. I have an ulcer but the reports are in Baghdad." Despite having reports to prove several other afflictions, he was unsuccessful at persuading UNHCR to provide him with assistance.

I went to the UNHCR to tell them about my problems here and they took all my reports and all my letters from the doctors and I told them

that I cannot live in Egypt medically or socially. I wanted to give the UNHCR my complaint but they did not want to take it. (Ahmed).

While Ahmed has also learned the language of the refugee system, it had not been as successful for him in terms of his access to services or resettlement. To me, Ahmed appeared much more ‘vulnerable’ according to the UNHCR criteria than Nasser, yet I hypothesize that his extreme vulnerability may have impeded his ability to be recognized as such by UNHCR, perhaps because he was so vulnerable that he was unable to negotiate the resettlement process, or because of janus-faced policies and politics that aim to be both humanitarian and exclusionary.

Drawing on Ahmed again, it is clear that refugees understand that their accounts of their suffering are considered credible only to the extent that they are supported by reports from medical, psychiatric or psychological experts. Nonetheless, a refugee’s narrative and ability to present themselves is also crucial in this context. To illustrate, consider the example of Mohammed, above, who had psychiatric reports to prove his PTSD but was excluded because he was unable to construct a convincing account of his persecution. Extreme vulnerability, as demonstrated by Ahmed, may go ‘too far’ and raise questions about a refugee’s ability to function in a resettlement country, or their potential need for resources and support once resettled.

In this context, where vulnerability is double-edged as both a challenge and a potential resource in a resettlement claim, refugees’ narratives of suffering and trauma

are paradoxically both the most valuable piece of evidence in a refugee's claim, and subject to suspicion on the basis of their 'credibility'. Refugees' narratives of trauma are adjudicated and compared to expert and scientific knowledge, a highly contested process of which refugees themselves are aware. As Good (2007) notes, the absence of medical reports or expert testimony, particularly in cases when a refugee possibly could have procured them (i.e. had the time), can invalidate the credibility of a refugee's claim, essentially denying the validity of their claim to persecution or vulnerability.

Vulnerability, then, is more than simply a condition brought about by exposure to traumatic events or the presence of medical need. In considerations of resettlement, it is a process of negotiation in which refugees engage in interactions with institutions such as the UNHCR in an effort to have their claims to suffering taken seriously. Very little research on this issue exists, but scholars are beginning to explore it, although less from the perspectives of refugees themselves. What is known is that the process of seeking resettlement and asylum for refugees is adversarial and challenging almost everywhere. In Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, Jansen (2008) found that officials who determined refugees' claims felt that nearly all of the refugees who requested resettlement on the basis of insecurity and vulnerability lacked credibility. In some cases, officials argued that refugees would go so far as to inflict trauma on themselves, ranging from simulating or exposing themselves to sexual violence, constructing family separations and stigma, or arranging deportations and abductions. However, these reports, almost exclusively from officials who were gatekeepers of resettlement, may tell us more of the adversarial nature of the resettlement process than it does about the actual incidence or meaning of such

‘cheating’. Daniel and Knudsen (1995) write that, “From its inception the experience of a refugee puts trust on trial. The refugee mistrusts and is mistrusted.” In refugees’ engagement with humanitarian discourses of vulnerability, and in their emic constructions of vulnerability, trust and mistrust are central. My juxtaposition of humanitarian discourses of vulnerability and refugees’ own understandings of vulnerability suggests that increasingly, as trust is on trial, so too, trauma and social suffering are on trial, as refugees seek resettlement in a context where vulnerability is simultaneously challenging, valuable and contested.

The Paradox of Liminality and Instability in the Resettlement-Seeking Process

For those Iraqi refugees who are eligible for resettlement, the process is fraught with uncertainty and instability, and can last months or years. For many more who cannot integrate into Egyptian society, may not be eligible for resettlement and cannot return to Iraq, the hope to relocate elsewhere may become consuming. More than one research participant remarked, as did Janna, that: “The only thing we think of now is the resettlement (Janna).” The conditions of displacement, marked by the inability to re-establish one’s life and status through a durable solution, has been likened by anthropologists to a form of liminality (Coker, 2004)(Grabska, 2006). Coker (2004), for example, in her study of Sudanese refugees in Cairo, writes that refugees are “transitional beings” caught between the classificatory systems that define societies and create the link between self, place, history and future (V. Turner, 1967).” If life in urban displacement

could be seen as liminal, then surely urban refugees in the process of seeking resettlement, caught between but not fully in any of the UNHCR ‘durable solutions’ must truly be liminal beings. Below I consider the utility of liminality for understanding the ‘transitional’ aspects of prolonged displacement, with an emphasis on the effects of this state on health, well-being and subjectivity, using the example of Iraqi refugees in Egypt who are seeking resettlement.

How can Turner’s ideas of the ‘betwixt and between’ contribute to our understandings of refugees’ experiences of seeking resettlement as a way to address the suffering associated with prolonged urban displacement? In interviews, I found support for the notion that Iraqi refugees were living in a liminal state. When I asked them about their lives, refugees drew on Iraqi proverbs to express their feelings of being caught between impossible or undesirable choices. More than one participant drew on Iraqi idioms to express how they were caught “between the earth and the sky” or “between your enemy and the sea”, both contextually poignant metaphors for the social suffering of being in-between. Liminality, as formulated by Turner (1967) in his elaboration of Van Gennep’s (1960) rites of passage, is an interstructural situation occurring in the transition between different states. In the tribal societies Turner describes, liminality entails the relinquishing of cultural and social ties through trials and tribulations in order to attain the next stage of life. It is in this mid-transformation “fruitful darkness (Turner 1967: 18)” that basic elements of culture are revealed.

The metaphor of uncertain asylum as liminality has its limits, but it is clear that some elements are shared. Iraqi refugees in Egypt certainly perceive themselves to be in mid-transition, in a place ‘betwixt and between’ a past life where they had familiar roles, place and status and a to-be-determined new life, where presumably a new type of state will emerge. This feeling may be exacerbated for refugees engaged in the process of seeking resettlement for a number of different reasons. First, the process of seeking resettlement, especially humanitarian resettlement, is one in which the refugee must build a case to show that life in the place of first asylum is impossible, and poses a threat to their safety, well-being and/or life. The refugee must also demonstrate that they cannot return to Iraq in order to be considered for resettlement. While in some cases, the development of these arguments, which I discuss more in the second part of this chapter and the next, is a simple statement of fact, in all cases, it involves the conscious foregrounding of information that shines a light on the difficult conditions of life in asylum. In a sense, the situation is a feedback loop: the intolerability of life in Egypt encourages refugees to seek resettlement, and the process of seeking resettlement further highlights and encourages rumination on the difficult conditions of life in Egypt. Second, the condition of seeking resettlement necessarily requires that refugees focus some energy on a possible future abroad. Yet until the point of travel, and likely afterwards, aspects of that future remain mysterious and uncertain. This condition of not being settled and yet not travelling is one which was acutely unsettling to the refugees with whom I spoke.

Lubna, whose story opened this chapter, was approved for resettlement to the United States at the time that I met her. In our interview, she spoke of many kinds of suffering – the suffering of being separated from her family, of the threats and violence she had experienced, of the injustices visited on refugees, and of the waiting. Waiting for her resettlement was one kind of suffering that Lubna mentioned repeatedly. At one point in the interview, she told me, “For me, the time has stopped here. For other people, it is moving but for me, it is stopped.” Her feelings of paralysis seemed to be intimately tied up in what seemed to her to be meaningless waiting, imposed on her by the resettlement process, which was delaying her ability to continue her life. Life in Egypt, in this sense, was experienced as outside of the temporal trajectory of Lubna’s life. Marked on one side by a past life in Egypt, and a future life in resettlement, life in Egypt was characterized by waiting and uncertainty.

In the process of seeking resettlement, Iraqi refugees are caught between states, in a way that could well be described as liminal. However, by drawing more intensively on data from participant observation and interviews, there are sites of instability and insecurity where the application of the concept of liminality to Iraqi refugees in the process of seeking resettlement breaks down, and calls for new ways of theorizing transition. I will illustrate these with examples from the data and then begin to theorize ways of thinking about these states of ‘being between’ that do not obscure the fraught and unstable aspects of prolonged urban asylum and the process of seeking resettlement. Three disjunctures between Turner’s portrayal of liminality and the experiences of Iraqi refugees are illustrative of the instability and uncertainty associated with seeking resettlement. First, briefly, we have the question of the period of liminality, which in

Turner's formulation, has a definite end. Second, there is a pedagogical, guided component in liminality in which initiates, or neophytes, learn about the state which they are about to enter, and about society and culture more broadly. Third, liminality in the context of ritual has a productive, reflective aspect. These components may not be present among Iraqi refugees, who largely view their transition as uncertain, insecure and detrimental to their health and well-being.

First, a liminal period should have an end. Liminality is a powerful concept in that it evokes the mystery of how humans move from one state of being to another. However, how do we understand states of being in-between that may never resolve, or, which may only resolve after a lengthy period of time and even then, in an unexpected or undesirable way? For Iraqi refugees in Egypt, what they believed would be a temporary period of exile in Egypt has stretched on for years, up to seven years among some of the participants in my research. Iraqis came to Egypt planning to return to Iraq when the situation improved or to travel onwards yet found themselves stuck in limbo in Egypt when return to Iraq remained impossible and resettlement elusive. A liminal period ought not to be indeterminate in length, but relies on some form of reincorporation. Yet the Iraqis with whom I spoke overwhelmingly characterized their existence in Egypt as 'temporary' even when they had been living in the country for years, as Sara had spoken about her 'paralysis' so other participants spoke about the detrimental effect on their health and well-being of having an uncertain, unstable future.

A sense of uncertainty and instability was perpetuated by the indeterminate length of the resettlement process. The length of the resettlement process, from first application to travel, ranged from a period of about six months, in emergency cases, to years. The

resettlement process, while having some commonalities, is different for each case, and depends on a wide array of factors. Iraqi refugees with whom I spoke frequently complained not only about the waiting, but about the indeterminacy of the wait. Because the process involves many steps, people, agencies and even countries, there is no way for a refugee to know how long the process will take for them. In addition, a lack of information around the process in general encourages rumor, speculation and anxiety. In general, a recurring theme in the resettlement process was the paucity of information available to refugees and the ways in which this lack of information was disruptive and a cause of suffering.

Second, a liminal period, according to Turner, should have a pedagogical, guided aspect. The resettlement process, which involves many interviews at different agencies, a security check, medical checks, assignment to a state and a resettlement affiliate organization, cultural orientation and finally travel, takes an indeterminate period of time and can be derailed by unexpected and unexplained problems at any stage, leading to a general climate of insecurity and anxiety around the process. The situation is worse for refugees who desire resettlement but are ineligible as they are outside of the process entirely, and are rarely rejected outright. There is a lack of information provided to refugees, who wait anxiously at each stage for updates into their cases. For example, once a refugee has been approved for resettlement, the security checks necessary for a refugee to come to the United States go through a number of different agencies including the Department of Homeland Security, the CIA and FBI and while these measures are important for maintaining the security of the country, are confusing and disorienting to refugees. In some extreme cases, refugees can wait years for a security check to be

approved, only to hear nothing at all, in which case they cannot be resettled and there is no possibility of appeal. In other cases, some family members may receive their security checks earlier than others, leading to different times of travel and family separation. To illustrate, one man who participated in my research, Abu Khaled, had, after months of waiting, received his approval and security clearance. Believing he was about to travel, he began to prepare by selling his furniture and seeking to rent his flat. For some reason never disclosed to him, a problem occurred and the overseas processing entity (OPE), the International Organization for Migration, could not provide him with a travel date. His eldest daughter, on a separate file because she was over 21 years of age, was provided with a date and had to travel to the US alone, causing tremendous anxiety in the family. Months passed, and although Abu Khaled checked with the agency daily by phone and visited the agency on a weekly basis, no answer came. When I visited him and his family in their empty apartment, I saw the palpable strain on his face as he tried to understand when he would finally be able to travel and begin the process of rebuilding his life. Each time we spoke about their daughter, now in the United States, both Abu Khaled and his wife, with tears in their eyes, spoke of their worry of being separated from their daughter and their anxiety about not knowing when the family would be reunited.

In his efforts to make decisions and prepare for his new life in a climate where information was simply not available, Abu Khaled was not a particularly exceptional case. More than one family with whom I spoke had pulled children out of school in anticipation of travelling, believing that the significant but necessary expenses of private school tuition, private tutors, books and materials, could be better used after travel,

especially since in at least one case the family had believed they would be travelling before the semester could be completed. However, as travel did not come, and the children were out of school, parents worried to me about the psychosocial effects on their children who, they reported, were becoming socially isolated, depressed and falling behind in their studies. Other participants reported delaying medical treatment, avoiding spending money, and generally doing their best to cope with living in an environment of contingency where transition had no definite end in sight and where the process of seeking resettlement was largely out of their control.

Further examples illustrate the lack of information available to refugees whose inquiries were often ignored, who were sometimes rejected from programs without notification or explanation and whose airplane tickets were changed at the last minute, sometimes on the day of travel. Perhaps the most visually stark example of the lack of information in this process was shown to me by a young Iraqi man, Saif, whose family had been rejected for resettlement following their interview with the Department of Homeland Security. After participants meet with the DHS, they receive a written Notice of Ineligibility in which they are either accepted for resettlement to the United States, pending security clearance, or rejected. If a refugee is rejected, they have one opportunity to file a request for an appeal. The appeal is usually based on a refugees' recollection of the interview (since legal representatives are not permitted to attend interviews and transcripts or notes are not provided) and on the stated reasons for rejection on the Notice of Ineligibility. On the Notice, there is a checklist of nine reasons for denial, and the Officer checks off those that apply. The ninth and final reason for rejection is "Other" in

which case some lines are provided for the Officer to write in the particular reason for the refugee's rejection. In Saif's family's case, the final reason "Other" had been checked, but the lines left blank, rendering the reason for rejection a mystery and making grounds for an appeal unclear. Saif described receiving the Notice as "a shock. A total shock (Saif)" for his family. At the time that I interviewed him, his family had sent an appeal about nine months prior but had heard no response.

Returning to Lubna's story provides another unsettling example of the decidedly non-guided aspects of the resettlement process. A couple of months after I interviewed her, Lubna's travel date finally came and she happily left Egypt for the United States. Before she left, she had talked about how she was travelling to the Washington, DC area where she had a relative who was expecting her. She had contacted the resettlement affiliate organization in DC and everything seemed to be in order. She had attended several days of cultural orientation and received tickets for the first portions of her flight. Friends accompanied her to the airport where IOM representatives who handed her a bag of information and she joyfully set off. The next morning, in Cairo, I was at the legal aid clinic when we received a panicked phone call from Sara, who, it turned out, had been deposited not in Washington DC as she had expected, but in Tampa Bay, Florida. Her assignment had been changed, and no one had bothered to notify her until her plane landed in the US. Alone and in a strange country, separated from the relative who she had expected would help ease her transition to American life, Lubna was terrified and profoundly upset. After some time, it became clear that there was a shortage of refugee housing available in the Washington, DC area, and Tampa had been able to accommodate

Lubna sooner. While the change may have therefore been reasonable, the fact that Sara was not informed of it turned what was already a momentous life change into a crisis. Unable to leave Florida without risking the loss of her benefits, Lubna had months of unhappiness before eventually making her own way to DC.

Stories such as those of Lubna, Abu Khaled and Saif demonstrate the lack of information available to refugees in the resettlement process. In Saif's case, this lack of information can be traced, at least initially, to the DHS Officer who, for whatever reason, did not provide the family with a reason for their rejection. In other cases, a lack of transparency was present throughout the process, suggesting that across the institutions involved in the refugee resettlement process there is at minimum, a lack of attention to the effects of these processes on the well-being of refugees and at maximum, an effort to provide minimal information to refugees. Regardless of motive, the effects of the lack of information in the resettlement process are detrimental to the well-being of refugees. Resettlement, no matter how longed-for, represents a tremendous change for refugees, one which requires that refugees quit jobs, sell or otherwise get rid of housing and possessions, say goodbye to friends and family, and prepare for life in a new country where nearly every aspect of life may be different. The lack of information available to refugees implies that the importance of this change is not taken seriously in refugee resettlement policy or practice. Data such as that presented above, which show the suffering and psychosocial effects associated with the lack of information available to refugees in the resettlement process moves us away from notions of liminality, with their expectation of a pedagogical imperative, into a darker place of instability.

Finally, liminality according to Turner, has a productive, reflective aspect, in which what he terms the ‘basic building blocks of culture’ are illuminated. On this point, analyses of my data are somewhat ambiguous. There is no shortage of reflexivity going on among Iraqi refugees as they wait in transition. In fact, participants regularly told me, as did Abu Khaled,

that they were ‘thinking too much’. The unknown next state of refugees’ lives necessitated significant reflecting, but is this reflection productive? While in some cases, the answer may be yes, I point to the recurrent examples of suffering and ill health that I encountered in my fieldwork to say that in many cases, a transitory period of the type that refugees in Egypt are experiencing has detrimental effects for well-being. ‘Thinking too much’ was an idiom of distress and a signifier of suffering in a context of being ‘betwixt and between’ where thinking represented both recurrent or chronic worry and the fact that refugees in this state felt that they could only think, not act. As Lubna spoke of her paralysis, so too did others in my sample. Every stage of the process of seeking resettlement involved stress, lack of control and potential suffering.

Typically, participants mentioned travelling hours in traffic on crowded mini-buses for interviews at the UNHCR or other agencies, sometimes without knowing the purpose of the interview. Once there, participants waited for the entire day, sometimes outside, to be interviewed about their experiences in Iraq and life in Egypt. Participants sometimes reported interviewers who were kind and friendly but just as often they spoke of interviewers who were aggressive, adversarial or insulting. These interviews are

particularly challenging for refugees who have been traumatized by experiences in Iraq or who have serious medical conditions or disabilities. For instance, one participant, Mohammed, reported that his family had been rejected for resettlement because he was simply unable to speak of his kidnapping or torture in Iraq during the interview. Neither his psychiatric reports that clearly indicated his diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), nor the fact that the family had been referred by the UNHCR for resettlement specifically because of Mohammed's experiences of torture and his subsequent psychiatric disorder and disability had an effect on the outcome of the interview. The interviewer refused to allow Mohammed's wife to recount the events, insisting instead that he tell the story of his persecution. Mohammed was unable to do so, and the family was rejected. In my interview with this family, who knew me reasonably well and wanted to tell me about their experiences seeking resettlement, I watched as Mohammed, a normally eloquent and cheerful man, struggled to verbalize what had happened in the interview, became increasingly anxious, and finally gave up. Seeing Mohammed's inability to recount a narrative related to his persecution in a much less threatening context than a resettlement interview, was a powerful demonstration of the challenges of expressing violence and suffering in an environment where so much is at stake.

Participants mentioned a surprising array of types of suffering associated with the process of seeking resettlement in addition to the stresses of the interview itself. Participants mentioned not being able to sleep for days before or after interviews, being paralyzed by anxiety, fighting with family members, and in a few cases, taking up drinking or smoking to help them handle the stress. Yet at the same time, some participants also spoke of resettlement as their greatest hope for the future. Many spoke

to me, as Sara did, of how they hoped or imagined that life would improve after resettlement. Resettlement represented a way of escaping the insecurity of Cairo, of providing a future for children, of moving to a safe place. However, the process of actually seeking to be resettled was sometimes fraught with uncertainty and suffering.

Anthropologists and others have often spoken of how refugees are liminal, transitional beings who may exist outside of classifications, especially those based on nationality. Liminality in this work can signify marginality, or in some cases can be idealized as an example of deterritorialization. Iraqi refugees in Egypt seeking resettlement were indeed ‘betwixt and between’, identifying themselves as in a transitional, temporary state. However, as this state of transition stretched on indefinitely and eluded refugees’ efforts to resolve it, liminality seemed to have limited explanatory power. Far from being guided, productive and having a defined end, the state in which Iraqi refugees find themselves is characterized by indeterminacy, instability, suffering and a lack of information.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Summary of Main Findings

This dissertation used a mixed-methods approach to understand the experiences of urban displacement in a country of first asylum in the Global South. As such, it is a study of an increasingly common phenomenon in settings of post-conflict forced migration. However, this ethnographic study of the experiences of Iraqi refugees in Egypt draws on Iraqis' accounts of uncertain asylum in Egypt and the implications of instability for their health and well-being, and in this it is grounded in the particular experience of Iraqi refugees at a specific time and space. This study documented the experiences of Iraqis who fled their country in response to the widespread violence and instability that emerged after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. They left behind homes and family members and travelled to Egypt for what they hoped would be a temporary period of exile before they could either return to Iraq or begin a new life elsewhere. However, at the time of my fieldwork, the supposed 'temporary period' had lasted about five years or more, and for many refugees, there was no solution in sight. While a period of five years may seem relatively inconsequential when compared to the multiple generations of displacement experienced by some refugees in protracted situations, it was nonetheless highly significant, and extremely disruptive, in the lives of the Iraqis who participated in this study. In this dissertation, I elaborated on the experiences associated with this period of exile, and argued that instability associated with exile had implications for health and

well-being. I also considered one particular way in which Iraqi refugees seek to cope with the instability of life in Egypt, through the process of seeking resettlement.

Instability is an organizing concept which emerged from the data on exile in Egypt as well as the resettlement process. The varied ways in which experiences of instability relate to displacement, psychosocial well-being and resettlement forms one of the main findings of the study. In this context, instability is defined as an unsettling state of being in which the usual contingency/uncertainty of human life is rendered more problematic because of disruption and disjuncture in the ability to conceive of or anticipate the future in ways previously available. While instability engages with the uncertainty that is an ever-present feature of human life, it occurs when taken-for-granted aspects of that life are disrupted, thus breaking the imagined narrative arc of a life story. For Iraqi refugees in Egypt, instability occurred when they were caught between a former life which they were unable to re-establish and a future life with uncertain, unknown contours. In my dissertation data, Iraqi refugees referred to this state when they argued that life in Egypt was not a life at all, but a problem to be solved. The disruption associated with instability is due to forces which the subject is unable to control, such as war, displacement, and the violation of human rights. For Iraqi refugees, these “forces” were made up of aspects of insecurity in Iraq, their difficult circumstances of asylum in Egypt, and their unknown future. However, in this context of lack of control, the subject nonetheless is agentive. I saw this constrained agency daily with Iraqi refugees in Egypt, who regularly and actively pursued strategies, such as third country resettlement, that they hoped would end their instability in Egypt.

Life in Egypt

One of the objectives of the study was to understand the conditions and circumstances of displacement in Egypt for Iraqi refugees, with an emphasis on refugees' subjective experiences of forced migration. For Iraqi refugees, aspects of their exile in Egypt contributed to their experiences of instability. Iraqis had fled to Egypt as a result of persecution, violence and insecurity in Iraq and many Iraqi refugees had directly experienced violence or death threats prior to their flight. Those Iraqis who came to Egypt did so out of a combination of restrictions and constraints which limited their abilities to flee elsewhere, and perceived opportunities or benefits which led them to choose Egypt over other potential countries of asylum. These expectations of life in Egypt were not always concordant with reality. While some Iraqis reported contentment with exile in Egypt, most had experienced hardship and loss. Among the main advantages of Egypt was its safety, especially as a refuge from the insecurity of life in Iraq. However, in Egypt most Iraqis were unable to exercise basic human rights such as the right to work, access to education and health care and freedom of assembly. In addition, Iraqis experienced separation from family, friends and home, social isolation, unstable residency, and feelings of difference or "strangeness". In interviews, Iraqis described these problems as contributing to feelings of instability which some identified as part of a continuum of suffering originating in Iraq and continuing in Egypt.

Instability was experienced as a kind of liminality, in which asylum in Egypt was understood as a period between a former life and an uncertain, future life. However, as

asylum in Egypt was prolonged, Iraqi refugees' expected life trajectories, including education, career, marriage, and starting a family were disrupted. These disruptions, which characterize the experience of instability, caused significant suffering for Iraqi refugees. Other causes of instability included a decline in standard of living and status experienced by most Iraqis in Egypt. Even though some Iraqis were well-off when compared to other refugee populations in Egypt and some groups of Egyptians, they nonetheless felt the decline in their standard of living as an insult and a source of suffering. Perhaps even more concerning was the anxiety that came from living off of finite or uncertain sources of income such as savings or remittances from relatives abroad in the absence of available employment or other sources of support. Iraqis also reported the loss of familiar mechanisms of support and protection, such as kin networks, as being a source of instability in Egypt. While not all Iraqis were isolated, many reported being unable or unwilling to form relationships with Egyptians or other Iraqis. Expressed reasons for this unwillingness were often based on sentiments of anxiety or nervousness about others. These and other aspects of life in exile in Egypt were identified as the cause of psychological suffering for Iraqi refugees.

Psychosocial Well-Being

A second, interrelated objective of this dissertation was to understand the implications of uncertain asylum for refugees' health and to draw on this case study to understand the psychosocial implications of uncertainty and insecurity. In interviews, Iraqi refugees repeatedly identified instability as a cause of psychological suffering. Change in living conditions, lack of work opportunities, lack of educational opportunities, social isolation, and other aspects of unstable daily life in Egypt were seen

by Iraqi refugees as insults to their psychosocial well-being, as were experiences of insecurity in Iraq and the condition of “living an uncertain future”. Iraqi refugees spoke of the ways in which instability affected their health using the idiom of *hala nufsia*. Literally meaning “psychological situation”, but involving allusions to the self and the part of one’s soul that allows the person to exist in the world, *hala nufsia* was a non-stigmatizing, understandable way in which Iraqi refugees could speak about their psychological suffering and, in some cases, about diagnosed mental illness. Problems with one’s *hala nufsia* were mentioned by many participants and made up an important theme of the research. *Hala nufsia* could be expressed in a number of ways, including: (1) anxiety; (2) sadness; (3) anger; (4) lack of comfort; (5) isolation; (6) sleep disturbances; (7) somatic presentations; (8) nervous breakdown; and (9) cognitive effects. Iraqi refugees attributed problems with their psychological well-being to a number of causes, but instability was foremost among them. In order to address instability, Iraqi refugees pursued a number of strategies, one of which was engaging in the process of seeking resettlement.

Resettlement

The final aim of this project was to conduct a person-centered ethnography of the refugee resettlement process, in order to understand how, if at all, the process affects well-being and subjectivity. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has identified three “durable solutions” to refugee situations: local integration, voluntary repatriation, and resettlement. Almost never during my fieldwork did I hear Iraqi refugees speak about Egypt as a place of potential permanent settlement, or even of long-term residence. The conditions of life in Egypt were such that settling in Egypt was actively

and implicitly discouraged, and Iraqi refugees frequently referred to life in Egypt using words such as “temporary” or “transit”. From the point of view of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, local integration was not an option. Return to Iraq was often portrayed in a similar manner. Some Iraqis vowed never to return to the country where they had suffered so much and still perceived themselves to be in danger. Another reason for refusing to return was the perception that Iraq had changed and was no longer the home that they remembered. Some participants, however, stated that they would return to Iraq if no other opportunity presented itself, because life in Egypt was unsustainable. In this context, return was hardly “voluntary” but was understood as a “last chance” and an evaluation of risks related to insecurity in Iraq compared to instability in Egypt. Despite the fact that only a small percentage of refugees are ever resettled, many Iraqis in Egypt pursued third-country resettlement as a means of addressing the instability of life in Egypt. While service providers sometimes cast a suspicious gaze at refugees who they perceived as “pursuing” resettlement, many Iraqi refugees saw resettlement as a way out of having to choose between the insecurity of life in Iraq and the instability of life in Egypt.

However, participant observation and interview data illustrated two key paradoxes in the process of seeking resettlement for Iraqi refugees in Egypt. The first was the paradox of vulnerability. The UNHCR understands resettlement not as a right for refugees but as a scarce resource to be distributed among only a few of the total refugees. Drawing on discourses of humanitarianism and refugee “protection” UNHCR prioritizes the most vulnerable refugees to refer to resettlement in countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia. Refugees who meet certain resettlement criteria, such as those with severe medical needs, survivors of violence and torture, those with physical

and legal protection needs in asylum, women at risk, unaccompanied minors, and the elderly are more likely to be resettled. In order to be considered for resettlement, refugees must present and have their vulnerability recognized by various authorities. These conditions raise the paradox of vulnerability in several ways. First, in a context of instability where resettlement is a valued opportunity, refugees are caught between needing to present vulnerability in order to be considered for resettlement and the desire to recover, manage and survive in difficult and prolonged conditions of asylum. Second, the lengthiness and arduousness of the resettlement process itself poses risks to refugees, especially those that are particularly vulnerable. Here I think of the rare but shocking case I witnessed of a refugee with serious medical conditions who died while waiting on a USCIS appeal, as well as the more mundane, but nonetheless real, pain of a man being resettled as a survivor of violence and torture with severe PTSD forced to tell his kidnapping story over and over again in the many interviews necessary for resettlement. While this is beyond the scope of this dissertation, a second site of paradox associated with vulnerability in resettlement is that while vulnerable refugees are referred for resettlement, UNHCR has no mechanism to ensure that these refugees actually receive the medical care, rehabilitative support, and assistance they need to ensure that vulnerability does not persist or worsen in resettlement.

The second major site of paradox in the resettlement process was the paradox of instability. As mentioned above, Iraqi refugees sought to be resettled as a means of ending their conditions of instability in Egypt and beginning a new life. However, the process of seeking resettlement was itself destabilizing for many refugees. Iraqis found the process to be difficult to manage and anxiety-provoking. A lack of information, both

from organizations and governments themselves, and from other refugees led to a climate where rumor and secrecy co-existed. Lack of information combined with the lengthy resettlement process which could last from months to years was a source of stress for Iraqi refugees, as were adversarial interviews in which refugees had the burden of attempting to prove their claim to vulnerability and refugee status. Refugees reported experiencing a number of psychological and physical symptoms of distress associated with the process of seeking resettlement. Refugees also reported feelings of elation and happiness when they were accepted for resettlement, as well as some concern about what life in resettlement would be like. A major finding was that the process of seeking resettlement had emotional and psychological implications for refugees, regardless of whether or not they were accepted for resettlement. While refugees sought resettlement as a means of addressing the uncertainty and instability of their lives in exile, the resettlement process itself as well as the prospect of being resettled opened up additional, though different, kinds of uncertainty and instability.

Summary of Contributions

This dissertation makes several contributions to anthropology and to broad discussions about refugee mental health, forced migration and the Middle East and North Africa. By elaborating the condition of instability in asylum, the dissertation contributes to our understanding of people's experience in contexts of uncertainty and disruption. Instability is not a unique concern to Iraqi refugees, or even to refugees in general. However, as the legitimacy of the concept of asylum declines and more and more

refugees remain for longer periods of time in countries of first asylum in the global south, these concerns may become more applicable to larger and larger groups of people. In contrast to insecurity, which identifies a more pressing state of crisis or potential emergency, instability is not necessarily associated with imminent threats of bodily harm or death. Instability is more chronic, and less unpredictable, but nonetheless creates a climate of pervasive uncertainty with real implications for subjectivity, health and well-being. A second contribution is the discussion of the effects of instability on the psychosocial well-being of Iraqi refugees, and the more specific discussion of the idiom of *hala nufsia*. By providing a person-centered account of refugee resettlement, this dissertation draws attention to the implications of engaging in the resettlement process and also raises some issues about the ways in which people navigate national and international institutions and bureaucracies. Discussions of vulnerability and instability in the resettlement process contribute to literature in medical and psychological anthropology on testimony, evidence and mental health in refugee adjudication. Finally, this dissertation provides an experience-near account of the circumstances of Iraqi refugees in Egypt, whose conditions have often been neglected in favor of the larger populations of Iraqi refugees in countries such as Syria and Jordan.

Strengths and Limitations

Several factors and conditions limit the extent to which the results of this study can be generalized to other populations. There is no reliable estimate of the number of Iraqi refugees in Egypt. Although UNHCR counts registered refugees, some Iraqis

choose not to register with the UNHCR, and therefore exact numbers are unknown. The population is also mobile, with people being resettled, returning to Iraq, and moving elsewhere. In addition, many Iraqis experienced great insecurity in Egypt, and for this reason were somewhat reticent about being 'visible'. For these reasons, random sampling was not possible, and the results of this study cannot be generalized to all Iraqis in Egypt.

Despite the sampling limitations, the large size of the sample is a strength of this study. I was fortunate to meet and interview Iraqis of all ages, genders, education levels, and circumstances, which allowed for variation in the data. By the end of data collection, interview responses began to be more familiar, suggesting theoretical saturation had been reached (H.R. Bernard, 2006). The large sample size also allowed me to interview refugees who had a range of levels of involvement with refugee organizations as well as refugees at different stages in the resettlement process. Since initial privacy, security and logistical concerns had precluded a systematic longitudinal study design, this larger cross-sectional perspective provided insight into different stages of the process.

Although by the end of my fieldwork I had become somewhat proficient in Iraqi Arabic, for many of my interviews, I made use of interpreters. I was fortunate to work with capable and patient interpreters, however there is always the possibility that having another person in the room influenced interview answers, or that there may have been errors in interpretation. Despite these limitations, the interpreters were also a strength of this study. They were invaluable for sharing a wealth of knowledge, including, but not limited to, pointing out the multiple meanings of Iraqi idioms, explaining the social geography of Baghdad neighborhoods, and knowing the right things to say in emotionally difficult circumstances.

In my efforts to understand the subjective experience of suffering and well-being, I encouraged participants to share their afflictions and conditions in their own words. This is a strength of the study in that it provides us with an experience-near look at an Iraqi ethnopsychology of displacement which would not have been possible had I relied on biomedical measures of mental illness. Second, my approach allowed for a nuanced approach in which non-pathologized states of being, such as instability, could emerge in the data. At the same time, this approach lent itself to a certain heterogeneity of the data. Depending on their education level and contact with the health care system, Iraqis described their health in somewhat different terms, an interesting finding in itself. However, by not using any biomedical measures of mental health or illness, I am unable to compare local idioms to disease categories. The importance of medical reports and treatment in the resettlement process suggests that using a biomedical measure in tandem with more experience-near data collection methods would be useful in follow-up studies.

Much of the resettlement process is closed and obscured, even to those who participate directly in it. Conducting research on closed and bureaucratic processes is a challenge, and the difficulties of this task limit the results of this study. In an ideal situation, I would have been able to observe resettlement interviews, as opposed to hearing about them retrospectively from refugees. Unfortunately, these observations were not possible. In many of these interviews, refugees are not permitted to have legal representation, much less have a researcher sit in. As a result, the findings are somewhat limited in that I am reliant on what refugees were able to remember after these emotionally-charged events, and on what they chose to tell me. I sought to remedy this issue as much as possible by interviewing a sample of service providers, but this strategy

also proved somewhat challenging and had its own limitations. Had I been able to observe more of the resettlement process first-hand, I would have been able to provide my observations as an additional source of data in conjunction with refugee and service provider accounts, which would have improved reliability and validity of the study. However, refugees' accounts, with full awareness of the limitations of retrospective recounting of events, are appropriate data for this study given the project's emphasis on refugees' subjective experiences, and provide an experience-near perspective into uncertain urban displacement and resettlement.

Research Implications

Below I discuss implications of this study for anthropology, forced migration studies, and global mental health.

Implications for anthropological theory

This project contributed to anthropological efforts to understand the self in contexts of conflict, change and uncertainty, as well as theorizing about subjective experience, health and well-being. This paper draws on, and contributes to, work on the experience and expression of suffering, in particular efforts by anthropologists to understand pain and affliction at the limits of our abilities to communicate (Das et al., 2001; Kirmayer, 2003; Kleinman & Kleinman, n.d.; Kleinman, Das, et al., 1997; Throop, 2010). By focusing on the implications of uncertainty, displacement and suffering for subjectivity, this project contributes to this body of scholarship. In addition, the project's concern with local idioms of affliction and well-being, such as *hala nufsia*, contributes to our understanding of mental health in particular cultural contexts and social

circumstances (Desjarlais et al., 1996; Hinton & Lewis-Fernández, 2011; Kleinman & Good, 1986; Kirmayer, 1989; Lewis-Fernández & Diaz, 2002).

A second contribution to anthropology is the situation of *hala nufsia* in the institutional landscape of the resettlement-seeking process in Cairo. By looking at how well-being and subjectivity are altered in specific institutional processes, this project contributes to our understanding of how individuals interact with institutions. The resettlement process in Cairo is simultaneously local, transnational and global, providing us with insight into the ways in which people conceive of and imagine their lives across space and time. In addition, the importance of medicine, especially psychiatry, in the resettlement process builds on work on the institutionalization and naturalization of ‘expert’ knowledge (Carr, 2010), especially in the areas of asylum (Fassin, 2001; Fassin & d’ Halluin, 2007). I argue that what counts as knowledge, or evidence of suffering, is ambiguous and shifting in the complicated and complex social and cultural field that is the process of seeking resettlement. Expert and official acceptance or rejection of certain kinds of expressions of suffering have important implications for refugees’ subjectivities as past experience and future statuses are re-made in the context of seeking resettlement.

Implications for forced migration studies

Nearly half of the world’s refugees live, not in camps, but rather in urban areas of the Global South (UNHCR, 2011a). While scholars in forced migration studies have long recognized this fact, the iconic image of refugees remains that of the refugee camp. This project contributes to the literature on urban displacement by documenting and theorizing experiences of instability and considering their implications for refugee health. In

addition, this study is relatively unique for its emphasis on the experiential and health implications of the resettlement process. Finally, as mentioned in the Background chapter, research has focused more on the larger populations of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan to the exclusion of Iraqis in Egypt. This study provides in-depth data on Iraqi refugees in Egypt which contributes to our understanding of forced migration in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Implications for global mental health

With the ubiquity of migration, displacement and conflict, the mental health effects of forced migration are a topic of concern for global mental health. In much of the literature, refugee mental health has been understood primarily in terms of response to traumatic events in the country of origin prior to flight, or in terms of acculturation in contexts of settlement. Relatively little research has taken into account the interrelationships between these arenas, or considered mental health in terms of the way it fits into refugees' lives and subjective experiences in social and cultural context. In recent years, academic, policy and practice approaches to refugee mental health have come under critique from a number of different perspectives. Scholars in a range of disciplines have advocated for approaches to refugee mental health that take into account the multiple events and contexts which affect refugees' health (Hollifield et al., 2002; Porter & Haslam, 2005). In addition, researchers have argued against an over-reliance on biomedical diagnoses, especially posttraumatic stress disorder, at the exclusion of other diagnoses and modalities of suffering. Finally, critiques have been leveled against approaches that portray refugees as passive victims in favor of newer perspectives that are attuned to the ways in which refugees resist and respond to experiences and hardships

(Watters, 2001). This study takes up the proposals made by scholars in medicine and public health by using anthropological theory and methods to take refugees' experiences of psychological suffering and well-being as a starting point for analysis. By drawing on local idioms of distress in particular cultural and institutional contexts, this project contributes to our understanding of the ways in which refugees negotiate and experience displacement.

Future Directions for Research

The findings from this project raise a number of areas for further research. For Iraqi refugees and other refugee groups in Egypt, conditions in the country have likely changed as a result of the 2011 Revolution. Anecdotal reports from Iraqis in Egypt at the time of the Revolution suggested that one of the primary advantages of asylum in Egypt, safety from insecurity, had been threatened by the protests and changes that have followed. In a rapidly changing country and region, many issues remain unaddressed about the future of Iraqi refugees in Egypt and in the region more broadly. In addition, this dissertation touched on, but did not systematically address, issues of repatriation for Iraqi refugees. Since few refugees are actually resettled, and Iraqi refugees do not foresee a long-term future in Egypt, questions of repatriation as well as of possible travel to other countries in the region should be addressed.

This dissertation highlighted issues related to the mental health and psycho-social well-being of refugees, especially in contexts of first asylum in the Global South. What, if any, are the implications for local idioms of distress and the experience of suffering for refugees who are resettled on the basis of their vulnerability? Do these categorizations

have lasting effects for refugees' subjectivities? What are the long-term outcomes for "vulnerable refugees" who are resettled, and how do such outcomes compare with those who may have similar vulnerability but are not resettled? Broadly, this dissertation raises a number of questions related to discourses surrounding refugee resettlement and the ways in which refugees navigate and experience institutions and policies. Some might argue that because of its scarcity, refugee resettlement is less worthy of research than say, the millions of refugees warehoused in camps, or those who eventually return home. While all these areas of research represent worthy pursuits, I advocate for more studies that consider the process of refugee resettlement for two reasons. First, UNHCR's emphasis on vulnerability in resettlement highlights issues not only about how such vulnerability is constructed, recognized, and embodied, but also raises questions about how suffering and ill refugees are treated. Second, with the decline in the legitimacy of asylum, resettlement is one of the only legitimized ways in which refugees can move from the Global South to wealthier countries. Given the difficulties associated with asylum in many contexts in the Global South, refugee resettlement is a way in which (a few) refugees are able to gain long-term residency leading to naturalization and permanent settlement. Studies of the resettlement process that link contexts of unstable asylum in the Global South with resettlement policies and programs have the potential to highlight the international issues associated with refugee situations and may have policy implications related to countries of first asylum, resettlement, and potential alternative 'durable solutions'.

Appendix A: Interview Guides

Interview Guide for Providers (N=10):

Because the providers will come from organizations that provide a wide variety of services to refugees (eg. Health, social assistance, legal aid), I cannot provide exact questions. Below I provide the domains of interest and sample questions under each. Prompts will vary as appropriate, however the interviews will only relate to publically available information about the organization and its programs/policies.

Domains

1) Occupation of interviewee:

Sample questions: What are your general job responsibilities?

 What kind of training is necessary for this type of work?

 What do you do in a typical day?

2) Type of organization:

Sample questions: What kind of services does your organization provide to refugees?

 What are the main objectives of your organization?

3) Clientele:

Sample question: How would you describe the refugee clientele whom you serve?

Sample prompts: How many clients do you serve in a day (month, year)?

 What are the countries of origin of your clients?

4) Health and psychosocial well-being of Iraqi refugees in Egypt:

Sample questions: What are the main health issues of Iraqi refugees in Egypt?

 How do the health issues that Iraqi refugees face compare to those of other refugee populations?

 How would you describe the psychological situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt?

5) The social situation of Iraqi refugees in Egypt:

Sample questions: How do you think Iraqi refugees experience their
interactions with your organization?

 What do you think are the most important issues facing
Iraqi refugees in Egypt?

 What do you think Iraqi refugees would say their most
important concerns are?

 How do you think the social situation of Iraqi refugees in
Egypt compares to that of other refugees?

Sample Interview Guide for Refugee Participants (N=110): Assessing perceived health, psychological well-being and life in Cairo of Iraqi refugees

Note: this interview guide will be modified based on results from key informant interviews and early participant observation.

Demographic Questions:

Gender:

Age:

Religious affiliation:

Ethnicity

Languages spoken:

City of current residence:

City of origin:

Highest attained level of education:

Profession:

Life in Cairo:

1. When did you arrive in Egypt?
2. How did you come to Egypt?
3. Why did you choose to flee to Egypt (as opposed to other places)?
4. How would you describe your daily life in Egypt?
 - a. Are you employed in Egypt?
 - b. What is your primary source of income?
 - c. Do you have access to health care?
 - d. Are your children in school (if appropriate)?
 - e. What are your living conditions in Egypt?

5. How do you cope with the challenges of life in Egypt?
6. What are the health issues that you and your family have experienced as Iraqi refugees in Egypt?
7. How has living in Cairo affected your health and the health of your family?
8. What services and organizations for refugees have you visited or used in Cairo?
 - a. What was your experience with each institution like?
9. What has been your experience of seeking health care in Cairo?
10. What do you hope for the future for you and your family?
 - a. How realistic do you think your hopes are?
 - b. What needs to happen for you to be able to achieve these hopes?
11. Are you engaged in the process of seeking resettlement?
 - a. At what stage are you in the process of seeking resettlement?
 - b. How has the process of seeking resettlement been for you?
1. Since coming to Cairo, have you been asked to give an account of your experiences of displacement and life in Cairo?

If yes:

- a. What was it like to give such an account?
 - i. Follow up probes include:
 1. Where did you give it?
 2. How many times?
 3. Who was present?
 4. How did they react?
 5. How did you feel?

Appendix B: Codebook

Codebook for Iraqi refugee interviews

Demographic Variables				
Number	Code	Description	Includes*	Excludes*
1.0	Gender – male	Participant gender		
1.1	Gender – female	Participant gender		
2.0	Age	In years		
3.0	Religion – Muslim	Self-identified		
3.1	Religion – Muslim Sunni	Self-identified		
3.2	Religion – Muslim Shi’a	Self-identified		
3.3	Religion – Christian	Self-identified		
3.4	Religion – Other	Self-identified	Any religion other than Muslim and Christian	
4.0	Ethnicity – Arab	Self-identified		
4.1	Ethnicity – Kurdish	Self-identified		
4.2	Ethnicity – Mixed	Self-identified	People who say ‘mixed’ and those who list more than one	
4.3	Ethnicity – Other	Self-identified	“Iraqi”	
5.0	Cresidence – 6 th of October	City of current residence in Egypt	6 th of October and Sheikh Zaid	
5.1	Cresidence – Nasr City	City of current residence in Egypt		
5.2	Cresidence – Giza	City of current residence in Egypt		
5.3	Cresidence – Alexandria	City of current residence in Egypt		
5.4	Cresidence - Other	City of current residence in Egypt		
6.0	Origin – Baghdad	City of origin in Iraq		
6.1	Origin – Mosul	City of origin in		

		Iraq		
6.2	Origin - Other	City of origin in Iraq		
7.0	Ed level – below high school	Highest level of education attained	Partial high school or less	Other people’s education
7.1	Ed level – high school	Highest level of education attained	High school grad	Other people’s education
7.2	Ed level - diploma	Highest level of education attained	Diploma grad	Other people’s education
7.3	Ed level – undergraduate	Highest level of education attained	Undergrad degree, includes bachelors, medicine	Other people’s education
7.4	Ed level – graduate	Highest level of education attained	Masters or PhD	Other people’s education
8.0	Profession	Interviewee’s self-identified profession	Primary occupation, can include student, housewife, none	Temporary work, work in Egypt unrelated to occupation
Displacement and life in Egypt				
Number	Code	Description	Includes*	Excludes*
9.0	Date of Arrival in Egypt	Date when participant arrived in Egypt – when multiple dates of arrival, this is noted	Month and year	Any travel to Egypt not related to displacement
9.1	Means of travel to Egypt	How participant initially came to Egypt	Includes, mode of transportation and details of transits, length of time, etc.	Subsequent travel after initial arrival
9.2	Reason for travel to Egypt	Why participant chose to come to Egypt	any self-identified reason for travel to Egypt	Reasons attributed by others to participant
9.3	Other countries - experiences	Personal experiences in other countries in the region	Includes earlier or subsequent travel to Jordan, Syria, etc.	Does not include travel in the distant past to countries unrelated to Iraqi forced migration
9.4	Other countries – compared to Egypt	General comparisons of the situation for Iraqi refugees in other	Explicit or implicit comparisons with Egypt, can be based on	Discussion of countries unrelated to Iraqi forced migration, or resettlement countries

		countries in the region	hearsay	
10.0	Companions in Egypt	Who accompanied participant to Egypt	Family members, relatives	Friends or acquaintances who travelled at about the same time
11.0	Life in Egypt – daily life	Answers to the question about daily life in Egypt	Answers to the question about daily life in Egypt, esp. discussion of activities, schedules	Aspects of daily life that fall under other codes better, not answers to daily life question
11.1	Life in Egypt - expectations	How did participants expect life in Egypt to be? Is it that way?	Any discussion about prior expectations related to life in Egypt and how those expectations were met, or not	General descriptions of circumstances
11.2	Life in Egypt - suffering	Negative things in Egypt that cause participants to feel bad. Problems	Anything explicitly (or heavily implicitly) identified by participants as a cause of suffering for self or family	Suffering not felt or caused in Egypt;
11.3	Life in Egypt - positive	Converse of 11.2 – positive things in Egypt	Anything positive about life in Egypt that has a bearing on self or family	Good things that do not affect participant or family
11.4	Life in Egypt – self change	Discussions of whether or how the self has changed as a person living in Egypt	Anything the participant identifies as being a change in themselves in Egypt	Status change, except as directly related to the self
11.5	Life in Egypt - time	temporality in descriptions of life in Egypt	Discussions of time, temporality, periods, etc.	Nothing related to what time it is.
11.6	Life in Egypt - security	Discussions of the secure or insecure nature/aspects	Can be incidents, feelings, states.	not financial security

		of life in Egypt		
12.0	Employment in Egypt	Any discussion of work in Egypt	Can include type of work, work conditions, etc	Employment in other countries
13.0	Economic situation	General discussion of a participant's economic status or condition in Egypt	Can include standard of living, discussions of decreased savings, and other aspects of economic situation in Egypt	Does not include income or employment
13.1	Income	Primary source of income in Egypt	Retirement pension, savings, salary, remittances, assistance, etc.	Any income not relevant to life in Egypt
14.0	Education schooling	Participant or family member's education	Any level of education	Not educational level, not schooling in Iraq except as it relates to situation in Egypt
15.0	Family	Discussion about the family in Egypt	Any discussion where family is of primary importance	Does not include where family is mentioned but not key topic
15.1	Family - size	How many members make up the family in Egypt	Numbers, can also include change in numbers if applicable	
15.2	Family - dynamics	How the relationships within the family are in Egypt	Descriptions of family relationships and dynamics	Relations between family members not in Egypt
16.0	Social life – non-family	Discussion of social relations with friends, acquaintances	Friends, acquaintances	Social interactions with people not identified as friends or acquaintances, e.g. shopkeepers
16.1	Social life - family	Social activities done with the family	Visiting, outings, holidays, activities done for recreation	Routine aspects of family life or social life with non-family members
16.2	Social life – relations with Egyptians	Any social interactions with Egyptians	Can include general statements as	Relations with non-Egyptians

			well as personal experiences	
16.3	Social life – relations with Iraqis	Relations and interactions with other Iraqis	Iraqi community, Iraqi friends, Iraqi acquaintances	Family members
16.4	Social life – transnational networks	Relations and interactions that span borders	Friends, relatives in other countries	Relatives, friends in Egypt
16.5	Social life - frequency	Frequency of social activities	Number of social activities per week or month	Any activities not considered social
17.0	Living conditions – Egypt	Basic aspects of daily life	Food, shelter, transportation etc	Those covered by other codes/questions, e.g. employment
17.1	Living conditions – Egypt vs. Iraq	Comparison of daily life in Egypt with Iraq	Food, shelter, transportation, daily life	Those covered by other codes/questions, e.g. employment
18.0	Social Status	Personal evaluation of one's social status and positioning	Especially as changed from Iraq to Egypt	Economic situation except when specifically related to prestige, respect, status, etc.
19.0	Residency status	How participant gains residency in Egypt	e.g. refugee status, investment visa, etc.	
20.0	Uncertainty	Discussions of feelings of uncertainty	Explicit discussions of uncertainty, instability, insecurity	
21.0	Future	Participant's discussion of the future		
22.0	Service use	Use of services	Any refugee-related service use	Not private businesses
22.1	Service use - UNHCR	Use, or attempted use of UNHCR	Includes registration, seeking help	Non UNHCR service use
Health and psychosocial well-being				
Number	Code	Description	Includes*	Excludes*
23.0	Health			
23.1	Health – issues	Types of problems or issues identified by participants	diseases, syndromes and other conditions mentioned	General feeling states e.g. “not well”

23.2	Health - family	Health issues experienced by family members	The health of family members in Egypt	Health of family members in other locations
23.3	Health – family effects	Effects of family health issues on participant	Caregiving responsibilities and other such effects, again limited to family in Egypt	effects of health conditions from family members outside of Egypt
22.4	Health – personal	Health issues experienced by participant	Any mention of health related to the personal experiences of the interviewee	Anything health-related but not personally experienced
23.5	Health – etiology	What caused a health concern	Any explanation, medical or otherwise, for health situation	Effects, manifestations, course
23.6	Health – origin/course	The course of illness and where the illness originated	Whether health concern started in Egypt or Iraq, how long it has lasted	Discussions of <i>what</i> caused illness
24.0	Psych situation			
24.1	Psych situation – family	Psychological well-being of family members	Includes evaluative statements, afflictions	Personal psychological status
24.2	Psych situation - personal	Personal psychological well-being	Includes evaluative statements, afflictions	Does not include family status
24.3	Psych situation – effects	How does the psych situation affect the person?	Could be personal, family, or general. Refers to effects on life, work, school, etc.	Does not include symptoms/manifestations
24.4	Psych situation – support	Support and caregiving for psych situation	Family support, friend support, psych and emotional support	Does not include biomedical treatment
24.5	Psych situation - etiology	Perceived cause of psychological affliction	Any attributed cause	Effects, manifestations, course

24.6	Psych situation – course/origin	The course of affliction and where it originated	Personally attributed- whether concern started in Egypt, Iraq, duration	etiology
24.7	Psych situation - manifestation	Explicit discussion of how psych situation manifests –	symptoms, signs	General effects
25.0	Emotion – ghorba (strangeness)	All emotion codes are in vivo codes drawing on participants' own emotion descriptions	Code each incidence of the emotion term	Implicit emotional valences; descriptions of emotion not related to the research questions
25.1	Emotion – loneliness	See above	See above	See above
25.2	Emotion – paralysis	See above		
25.3	Emotion – tired	See above		
25.4	Emotion – bored	See above		
25.5	Emotion - sad	See above		
25.6	Emotion - comfortable	See above		
26.0	Health care	health care seeking and use	Personal, family or general accounts of health care in Egypt – health care can include formal and informal treatment	Health care in Iraq, except when related to current afflictions and/or to health care in Egypt
27.0	Mental health care	Mental health care seeking and use	Psychiatric treatment, psychological therapy, psycho-social intervention, informal mental health care, health care sought for psych ailments	Mental health care sought in Iraq, except when related to current suffering or health care in Egypt
28.0	Coping	Coping with suffering and hardship	Any coping mechanism mentioned by participants	Medical treatment

Resettlement				
Number	Code	Description	Includes*	Excludes*
29.0	Resettlement			
29.1	Resettlement – information	Related to getting and distributing information in the resettlement process	Information from organizations, friends, rumours, as well as missing information	Anything about resettlement that does not explicitly reference the content or transmission of information about the process
29.2	Resettlement – process	Information about the steps and stages of the resettlement process	Refugees experiences of going through the process, their knowledge and understanding of the process	Evaluative expressions about resettlement in general
29.3	Resettlement – presentation	Self presentation and representation in the resettlement process	Any description of how refugees present themselves to authorities in the pursuit of resettlement	Media representations
29.4	Resettlement – reason	Why a participant may be eligible for resettlement	Resettlement criteria, explicit or implicit	Participants not in the resettlement process
29.5	Resettlement – institutions, organizations	The roles of institutions and organizations in the resettlement process	UNHCR, IOM, state governments, NGOs	
29.6	Resettlement - desire	Participants' expressed desire for resettlement	Anything that indicates whether, or not, refugees desire resettlement, and to what extent	Reasons for seeking resettlement
29.7	Resettlement – effects	Perceived effects of resettlement and the resettlement process	Any kind of perceived effect of resettlement	
29.8	Resettlement – medical/psych	Medical and psychological aspects of the	Effects of resettlement on well-being and	

		resettlement process	health,	
Iraq				
30.0	Experiences during war			
31.0	Missing or loss Iraq			
31.1	Life in Iraq			
31.2	Iraq - connections			
31.3	Iraq - return			
31.4	Iraq – change			
31.5	Home, sense of place			
32.0	Exile			

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria have not been elaborated in some cases where the criteria are straight forward (e.g. gender, age).

Appendix C: Self-Identified Health Conditions of Iraqi Refugees

Self-Identified Health Conditions of Primary Interviewee*	
Condition	Percent
Hypertension	18%
Heart condition	10%
Diabetes	11%
Knee problems	8%
Colon problems	3%
Cancer	2%
Pancreatitis	2%
Thyroid problem	8%
Weight gain	3%
Injury from war, violence	8%
Back pain	10%
Tooth pain	3%
Other pain	5%
Ulcers	2%
Liver problem	2%
Kidney problem	5%
Dermatological condition	3%
Congenital deformity	5%
Other injury	5%
Gallbladder problem	5%
Medical complications	3%
Migraines/headaches	10%
Asthma	3%
Weight loss	2%
Gynecological condition	7%
Anemia	5%
Arthritis	3%
Vision problem	7%
Tonsillitis	2%
Increased uric acid	2%
Low blood pressure	2%
None mentioned	37%

*Conditions identified based primarily on participants' own words. This includes only those conditions affecting the interviewee and does not include conditions afflicting other family members. This does not include non-pathologized psychological suffering or mental illness.

Appendix D: Self-Identified problems with *hala nufsia* for Iraqi refugees

Self-Identified Psychological Afflictions/Issues of Interviewees	
Condition	Percent
Tired (<i>ta'aban</i>)	27%
Bored (<i>mumilla</i>)	1%
Nervous	9%
Thinking, worrying (<i>tafkir</i>)	18%
Angry	12%
Sad	7%
Paralyzed, jailed	1%
Scared, afraid	3%
Frustrated	3%
Stressed	16%
Suffocated	1%
Under pressure	3%
"many problems"	1%
None mentioned	11%
Bad/not good/difficult	22%
"Totally destroyed"	1%
"Below zero"	1%
Lack of control	1%
Lack of purpose	1%
Suicide attempt/plan/ideation	3%
Insomnia/not sleeping	9%
Sleeping too much	4%
Socially isolated/withdrawing	5%
Psychological diabetes	1%
Tense	5%
Depression	14%
PTSD	3%
Psychosis, psychotic features	1%
Family/relationship problems	4%
Seeking psychiatric care (no specific affliction mentioned) or believes needs care	4%
Pain	1%
Eat a lot	4%
Weight loss	3%
cries	3%
changed	2%
Loss/homesickness	3%
loneliness	2%

unstable	2%
Mental breakdown	2%
Uncomfortable (<i>mu murtah</i>)	2%
Hopeless	2%
Bad dreams	2%

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