Childhood and play ‘in-between’: Young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees’ play following armed conflict and forced displacement to the northern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon

Sandra Marie El Gemayel

UCL, Institute of Education

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
'I, Sandra Marie El Gemayel, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

Signed: Sandra Marie El Gemayel, December 2019
Abstract

Armed conflict and displacement have immeasurably harmful effects on children and their families. They constrain children’s opportunities to play, to learn through play, and for their unique potential to flourish. Nonetheless, there is a lack of in-depth research conducted into how conflict and displacement affect young refugee children’s play and experiences of childhood in different host environments.

Through ethnographic case studies of four young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees in a northern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, this thesis presents unique insights into the children’s family lives, their play and the violations of their rights in Lebanon. Underpinned by Froebelian principles of the integrity of childhood in its own right, the thesis theorises how the concept of ‘childhood’ is being constructed in Lebanon during the global refugee crisis. It identifies possible ways to improve play opportunities for refugee children who are living ‘temporarily’ in the northern suburbs of Beirut, arguing that they are in a state of ‘in between-ness’. The study follows a ‘day in the life’ methodology with four Iraqi and Syrian case study refugee children (4-8 years old) and their families, supplemented by questionnaire data from Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese adults (n=100), semi-structured interviews with professionals working with refugee children in Lebanon, and an observation in a school for refugee children in Beirut’s Northern suburbs.

Findings point to continuing children’s rights infringements in Lebanon, including poverty, limited access to physical, emotional and mental healthcare, poor living conditions, child labour, poor quality education and/or no school attendance, family separation and the destruction of communities. With lifelines falling short of ensuring children’s basic rights, contradictions between child and refugee policies, tensions between diverse organisations and the Lebanese government, and with limited access to play resources, growing fears and increased parental surveillance, particularly with regard to girls, children’s play and embodied experiences are being restricted. However, despite many hardships, play endures, providing children with a means to escape from their current liminal state through media, transformation and imagination.
Impact statement

This Froebel Trust funded thesis addresses the lack of in-depth research into the childhoods and play of young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. This study is particularly significant as Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, half of whom are children, and as play, which has innumerable benefits, is arguably crucial for refugee children who have witnessed and experienced unimaginable atrocities. This study has begun to fill a gap in the research, exploring the dangerous consequences that direct exposure to conflict and forced displacement, misalignment of international, national and local policies, and lack of legal status and long-term planning have had on young children’s rights, on their childhood experiences and on their play.

The thesis introduces a new combination of theories to shed light on the data generated through fieldwork, bringing together complementary conceptualisations of childhood, play and human rights, creating interdisciplinary dialogue between them, and constructing a wide lens through which to study the three major and directly interlinked themes of childhood, play, and conflict and displacement. This is a unique approach to studying the childhoods and play of child refugees, which could inform and underpin further research into this area. Moreover, this research adopted and adapted a day in the life approach to meet the specific aims of this study within a complex context, by supplementing the day in the life methodology with participatory methods to explore young children’s perspectives. This approach proved highly valuable for studying lives in flux while recognising children as experts in their own lives.

Regarding ethical considerations, the creation and introduction of a ‘colouring-in cartoon picture book’ sought to advance researchers’ approaches to obtaining young children’s informed assent by depicting every step of the research process in an engaging, accessible and age-appropriate manner. Moreover, the introduction of simple yet effective and culturally relevant means of gaining children’s ongoing assent through ‘thumbs-up’ and ‘thumbs-down’ signs could be replicated when conducting future research with young children.

Beyond the world of academia, this thesis has potential to inform international and national policies, and to re-examine education, child protection, and personal status laws in Lebanon, that both directly and indirectly affect children’s rights, including their rights to education and to play, tackling important issues such as legal status, early marriage, child labour and corporal punishment. By including Iraqi and Syrian refugees, this study aims to bring the attention of organisations and the international community back to ‘forgotten’ Iraqi refugees who, due to the scale of the Syrian crisis, see themselves as having been pushed to the side-lines of policy and research.

Finally, this thesis proposes concrete suggestions to improve the lives of young Iraqi and Syrian children in Lebanon. These include facilitating legal residency of refugees in Lebanon, ratifying the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, providing refugees with opportunities to maintain
livelihoods and to form communities, and making play and high quality educational opportunities freely available and accessible to all children in Lebanon.
# Table of contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 3

Impact statement .................................................................................................................................. 5

List of figures .......................................................................................................................................... 12

List of tables ........................................................................................................................................... 14

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................................. 15

Reference map ....................................................................................................................................... 21

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 23
  
  * Aims and research questions .................................................................................................................. 24
  
  * Background ......................................................................................................................................... 25
  
  * Thesis structure ................................................................................................................................. 27

Chapter 1  Literature review ................................................................................................................... 29
  
  1.1  Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 29
  
  1.2  Childhood ..................................................................................................................................... 30
      1.2.1  Froebelian principles ............................................................................................................... 30
      1.2.2  New sociology of childhood ..................................................................................................... 32
      1.2.3  Constructions of childhood in Lebanon and the Middle East .................................................. 33
  
  1.3  Children’s rights ............................................................................................................................ 39
      1.3.1  Lebanon and the UNCRC ......................................................................................................... 41
      1.3.2  UNCRC, Lebanese policies and ‘temporarily displaced’ persons .............................................. 42
      1.3.3  Violations of refugee children’s rights ......................................................................................... 46
      1.3.4  Refugee children’s right to education ........................................................................................ 49
  
  1.4  Play ............................................................................................................................................... 52
      1.4.1  Definition, value and purpose of play ......................................................................................... 53
      1.4.2  Sociocultural theories of play ................................................................................................... 55
      1.4.3  Factors that negatively affect play, and play as recovery .......................................................... 59
  
  1.5  Liminality ....................................................................................................................................... 62
      1.5.1  Liminality and childhood ......................................................................................................... 63
      1.5.2  Liminality and play .................................................................................................................... 67
  
  1.6  Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 71
Chapter 2 Methodology ......................................................... 75

2.1 Introduction ....................................................................................... 75

2.2 Research questions ........................................................................... 75

2.3 Research design ................................................................................. 77
  2.3.1 Case study .................................................................................... 78
  2.3.2 ‘Day in the life’ approach (DITL) ....................................................... 79

2.4 Research settings and participants ...................................................... 80
  2.4.1 Questionnaire settings and participants: Dispensary ......................... 80
  2.4.2 Case study settings and participants .................................................. 84
  2.4.3 School observation ......................................................................... 86
  2.4.4 Interviews with local professionals ................................................... 86

2.5 Data collection methods ................................................................... 87
  2.5.1 Questionnaire .............................................................................. 88
  2.5.2 Case studies: Day in the life (DITL) .................................................. 89
  2.5.3 Interviews with professionals .......................................................... 98
  2.5.4 Observation in a school .................................................................. 98
  2.5.5 Field notes ..................................................................................... 98
  2.5.6 Research diary ............................................................................. 99
  2.5.7 Documents .................................................................................. 99

2.6 Ethics ............................................................................................... 99
  2.6.1 Consent/assent ............................................................................ 99
  2.6.2 Working with vulnerable participants .............................................. 101
  2.6.3 Anonymity and confidentiality ........................................................ 101
  2.6.4 Risk to participants and/or researcher .............................................. 103
  2.6.5 Main beneficiaries ....................................................................... 103

2.7 Validity and reliability ..................................................................... 104
  2.7.1 Validity ..................................................................................... 104
  2.7.2 Reliability ................................................................................... 106

2.8 Representing and analysing data ....................................................... 106
  2.8.1 Transcribing voice and video data .................................................. 106
  2.8.2 Translating the data .................................................................... 107
  2.8.3 Analysis ..................................................................................... 108

2.9 Reflexivity ....................................................................................... 109

2.10 Conclusion .................................................................................... 111
Chapter 3  War and displacement: From pre-liminal to liminal ......................... 113

3.1  Introduction ....................................................................................................... 113

3.2  Child profiles .................................................................................................... 114
    3.2.1  Kefa case study profile ............................................................................ 114
    3.2.2  Maria case study profile ......................................................................... 118
    3.2.3  Ahmed case study profile ....................................................................... 121
    3.2.4  Muna case study profile ......................................................................... 127

3.3  Questionnaire respondents’ experience of armed conflict ......................... 131
    3.3.1  Questionnaire respondents’ demographic data ...................................... 131
    3.3.2  Date of entry into Lebanon ...................................................................... 132
    3.3.3  Reasons for leaving their home country ............................................... 133
    3.3.4  Experience of internal displacement ....................................................... 137

3.4  Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 137

Chapter 4  Child refugees’ lives in Lebanon: Continuing children’s rights infringements 139

4.1  Children living in poverty ............................................................................... 140
    4.1.1  Children’s physical and mental health and access to healthcare ............ 140
    4.1.2  Poor living conditions ............................................................................ 143
    4.1.3  High rent and low-paid work ................................................................ 147
    4.1.4  Child labour, exploitation and abuse ....................................................... 148

4.2  Early marriage .................................................................................................. 153

4.3  Education .......................................................................................................... 153

4.4  Family separation: A double-edged sword ................................................... 158
    4.4.1  Family members torn apart through physical separation ...................... 158
    4.4.2  Families holding together but in conflict due to cohabiting confined spaces .... 160

4.5  Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 161

Chapter 5  Play ‘in-between’ and the great escape .............................................. 163

5.1  Introduction ....................................................................................................... 163

5.2  Limiting children’s play: Resources, fear and surveillance ......................... 164
    5.2.1  Participant perspectives on play .............................................................. 164
    5.2.2  Play resources: A dual deficit ................................................................. 165
    5.2.3  Fear, play and children’s ‘fragile resilience’ ............................................ 187
    5.2.4  Freedom, surveillance, power and play .................................................... 191
5.3  Play, boundaries and liminality ................................................................. 197
5.3.1 Embodied experiences ........................................................................... 197
5.3.2 Escaping liminality through media, transformation and imagination ....... 204
5.4  Cultural heritage and identity in play themes, dance, songs, language and rhymes ......... 214
  5.4.1 Weddings, music and dance ................................................................. 215
  5.4.2 Rhymes, songs and hand games ........................................................... 219
5.5  Conclusion ............................................................................................... 221

Chapter 6  Lifelines ......................................................................................... 223
6.1  Introduction ............................................................................................... 223
6.2  UNHCR ..................................................................................................... 224
6.3  The contribution of other international and national organisations ......... 229
6.4  The Church ............................................................................................... 231
6.5  Lebanese policies ...................................................................................... 233
6.6  Conclusion ............................................................................................... 234

Chapter 7  Discussion and conclusion .......................................................... 237
7.1  Introduction ............................................................................................... 237
7.2  How armed conflict and displacement affect childhood in Beirut’s northern suburbs ...... 238
  7.2.1 Barriers, liminality and the invisible child ........................................... 238
  7.2.2 The child at the heart of the family ..................................................... 241
  7.2.3 Gender, safety and freedom ................................................................. 245
  7.2.4 Education ............................................................................................ 248
7.3  How armed conflict, displacement and reshaped constructions of childhood affect children’s play opportunities and constructions of play in Beirut’s northern suburbs ........... 251
  7.3.1 Refugee children’s play opportunities in Lebanon ................................ 251
  7.3.2 Constructions of play in Lebanon ....................................................... 255
7.4  Ways of improving refugee children’s play opportunities in Beirut’s northern suburbs ....... 260
7.5  Study limitations ....................................................................................... 264
7.6  Implications and future recommendations for research ......................... 268
7.7  Final comments ........................................................................................ 271

References ..................................................................................................... 273

Appendix A: Link between methods and RQs .............................................. 307
Appendix B: Unsuccessful recruitment attempts .......................................................... 308
Appendix C: Overview table of methods ...................................................................... 309
Appendix D: Pilot questionnaire .................................................................................. 310
Appendix E: Final questionnaire .................................................................................. 315
Appendix F: Interview questions .................................................................................. 320
Appendix G: Information sheet adults ........................................................................ 327
Appendix H: Colouring-in cartoon picturebooks ...................................................... 330
Appendix I: Consent form for adults ........................................................................... 338
Appendix J: Case study information sheet .................................................................. 340
Appendix K: Linking theory and data .......................................................................... 341
Appendix L: Description of final themes and subthemes .............................................. 342
Appendix M: Questionnaire participants’ demographic information ....................... 344
Appendix N: Questionnaire respondents who attended university by nationality and gender .................................................................................................................. 351
Appendix O: UNHCR 2017 partners .......................................................................... 352
List of figures

Figure 1.1: Study’s theoretical model ........................................................................................................ 74
Figure 2.1: Map of Lebanon depicting level of safety according to area (retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/lebanon) ....................................................................................... 81
Figure 2.2: Areas I visited for fieldwork .................................................................................................. 81
Figure 2.3: Waiting area in dispensary .................................................................................................... 82
Figure 3.1: Map of Nineveh Plains, Erbil, Duhok and Mosul in Iraq ......................................................... 115
Figure 3.2: Plan of Kefa’s apartment ...................................................................................................... 117
Figure 3.3: Plan of Maria’s apartment .................................................................................................... 120
Figure 3.4: Map of the Idlib district in Syria ........................................................................................ 122
Figure 3.5: Ahmed’s (6.5 years old) drawing ......................................................................................... 123
Figure 3.6: Ahmed’s block construction of buildings in Syria ................................................................. 124
Figure 3.7: Plan of Ahmed’s apartment .................................................................................................. 126
Figure 3.8: Muna’s drawing of her grandmother’s house in Syria ............................................................ 128
Figure 3.9: Plan of Muna’s apartment .................................................................................................... 131
Figure 3.10: Questionnaire respondents’ year of entry into Lebanon ...................................................... 132
Figure 4.1: Type of accommodation according to nationality ................................................................. 144
Figure 4.2: Total number of people living in the same accommodation .................................................. 144
Figure 4.3: Total number of people living together according to type of accommodation .................. 145
Figure 4.4: Percentage of respondents living with people other than spouse and children according to nationality .................................................................................................................. 145
Figure 4.5: Monthly household income according to nationality ........................................................ 148
Figure 4.6: Maria’s drawing of a house ................................................................................................. 151
Figure 4.7: Number of questionnaire respondents who have children below 18 years according to nationality .......................................................................................................................... 154
Figure 4.8: Tables and chairs in classroom ........................................................................................... 156
Figure 4.9: White board in classroom ................................................................................................... 156
Figure 5.1: Number of questionnaire respondents who claim their children do not play according to nationality .......................................................................................................................... 165
Figure 5.2: Kefa’s block construction of ‘my father’s head’ ................................................................... 166
Figure 5.3: Case study children playing with their siblings ...................................................................... 166
Figure 5.4: Omar and Bilal playing ......................................................................................................... 167
Figure 5.5: Play opportunities created by Muna’s father ....................................................................... 168
Figure 5.6: Kefa playing with his brother and female cousin, photo taken by Lia (mother) using Kefa’s disposable camera ................................................................................................................ 170
Figure 5.7: Ahmed proudly holding up the container of ‘water bullets’ ................................................... 171
Figure 5.8: Photographs by Kefa using disposable camera ..................................................................... 173
Figure 5.9: Photographs by Ahmed using disposable camera ................................................................. 174
Figure 5.10: Kefa behind the camera as his brother and cousin play on the balcony .............................................. 174
Figure 5.11: Photographs by Maria using disposable camera .................................................................................. 175
Figure 5.12: Images from Iraqi school .................................................................................................................. 177
Figure 5.13: Kefa’s construction of a slide .............................................................................................................. 178
Figure 5.14: Maria’s photograph of church parking lot ............................................................................................. 179
Figure 5.15: Additional toys in Kefa’s house ........................................................................................................... 181
Figure 5.16: Ahmed scooping out the fish with the rod on his belt ........................................................................... 181
Figure 5.17: Ahmed playing on the ladders .............................................................................................................. 182
Figure 5.18: All four case study children watching YouTube clips, cartoons or episodes on smartphone ..................... 183
Figure 5.19: Styrofoam ball ........................................................................................................................................ 185
Figure 5.20: Boys playing football with plastic bottle ............................................................................................... 185
Figure 5.21: Skipping rope in School ...................................................................................................................... 186
Figure 5.22: Kefa and the fireworks ....................................................................................................................... 190
Figure 5.23: Muna playing with ‘Marble Run’ blocks ............................................................................................... 196
Figure 5.24: Maria reaching for the ‘flag’ ................................................................................................................ 199
Figure 5.25: Ahmed’s indoor play .......................................................................................................................... 200
Figure 5.26: Ahmed prancing around and swinging his arms in the garden ............................................................. 201
Figure 5.27: Kefa sitting on balcony ledge ............................................................................................................. 203
Figure 5.28: Ahmed jumping from armchair to couch ............................................................................................... 204
Figure 5.29: Kefa’s drawing of a boat ...................................................................................................................... 205
Figure 5.30: Kefa, his brother and his neighbours building a road and driving ......................................................... 206
Figure 5.31: Muna playing with figurine, blocks, and containers ............................................................................... 208
Figure 5.32: Ahmed playing with bandage and toy gun ........................................................................................... 210
Figure 5.33: Muna on smartphone and TV ................................................................................................................ 212
Figure 5.34: Maria playing Doctor Mania ................................................................................................................ 213
Figure 5.35: Maria, Gerges and neighbours playing Bride and Groom ..................................................................... 216
Figure 5.36: Ahmed dancing to ‘Yomma elhobb yomma’ ......................................................................................... 218
Figure 5.37: Maria, Gerges and neighbours playing hand games on balcony ............................................................. 219
Figure 7.1: Safety-Danger vs Freedom-Constraint ................................................................................................. 246
Figure 7.2: Model of study findings in light of conceptual framework ....................................................................... 266
## List of tables

Table 2.1: Final Questionnaire Data Collection Schedule - Before amendment .......................... 84  
Table 2.2: Final Questionnaire Data Collection Schedule - After amendment .......................... 84  
Table 2.3: Case Study Participants .................................................................................................. 86  
Table 2.4: A day in the life approach stages (see Gillen & Cameron, 2010) adapted to this study ... 91  
Table 3.1: Kefa case study profile .................................................................................................. 114  
Table 3.2: Maria case study profile ............................................................................................... 118  
Table 3.3: Ahmed case study profile .............................................................................................. 121  
Table 3.4: Muna case study profile ............................................................................................... 127  
Table 5.1: Case Study Children's Toys ........................................................................................... 180
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Froebel Trust for funding this PhD research, for offering crucial and continuous support throughout this study and for providing me with unforgettable opportunities to disseminate my findings and to learn from other Froebelians around the world. I would also like to thank UCL for awarding me the Overseas Research Scholarship, allowing me the incredible opportunity to pursue this study.

I am immensely grateful to my primary supervisor Professor Rosie Flewitt who recognised the importance of this research and who has been encouraging, pushing, guiding, and supporting me since day one. Her expertise, insight and vision were indispensable to this study, and her commitment to me and to this research cannot be overemphasised. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Phil Jones, my secondary supervisor, who pushed me to think beyond the boundaries, who broadened my criticality, and who went above and beyond to advise and support me throughout this journey.

I wish to thank Dr Rachel Rosen and Dr Lynn Ang for their expert advice and helpful suggestions in my upgrade examination. I would also like to express my very great appreciation to Christopher El Gemayel for lending me his time and expertise to help design the visual models presented in this study.

A big thank you to all my friends who stood by me and accompanied me throughout my PhD journey. I would like to thank my partner, Dr Esteban Damiani, for his endless encouragement, advice, help, and kindness. I am very lucky to have such a loving person in my life. I am also extremely grateful to my parents Andre and Brid, and my siblings Myriam, Orla, Patrick and Christopher, for their unending support, for joining me in countless brainstorming sessions, and for always being there for me.

Finally, I am particularly grateful to each and every person who participated in this study and/or who acted as a gatekeeper to participants. I would like to offer my special and heartfelt thanks to the four case study children and their families who opened up to me, who gave me insight into their lives, and who allowed me into their play worlds. This study would not have been possible without them.
Dedicated to Kefa, Maria, Ahmed, Muna and their families
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronyms</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Educational Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRDP</td>
<td>Centre for Educational Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DITL</td>
<td>Day in the Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECEC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPPE</td>
<td>Effective Provision of Pre-School Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCO</td>
<td>Foreign and Commonwealth Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoL</td>
<td>Government of Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOE</td>
<td>Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFC</td>
<td>Local Faith Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEHE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFE</td>
<td>Non Formal Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLG</td>
<td>No Lost Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIO</td>
<td>Peace Research Institute in Oslo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td>Reaching All Children with Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Street Based Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender-Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCL</td>
<td>University College London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARON</td>
<td>Vulnerability Assessment of Refugees of Other Nationalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VASyR</td>
<td>Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In 2016, almost 357 million children around the world were living in conflict-affected areas, with 165 million living in 'high intensity conflict zones' (Bahgat et al., 2018, np). According to the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) report, 39% of children in the Middle East were living in a conflict zone, making it the region with the highest share of children exposed to armed conflict relative to its total population size in the world. This is in large part due to the emergence and progression of armed conflict in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. Research has shown that children’s exposure to conflict is not limited to being caught in the crossfire between armed groups but entails the systematic and purposeful targeting of children (Kirollos et al., 2018). Children exposed to conflict are killed and maimed, they are recruited as child soldiers, exposed to sexual violence and abduction, and their schools and homes are deliberately bombed (Kirollos et al., 2018).

Armed conflict has consequently resulted in record-high rates of forced displacement across the world. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2019c), 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide by the end of 2018, up from 43.3 million people in 2009. This increase was mainly a result of the war in Syria but was also caused by other conflicts including that in Iraq. Of the 70.8 million forcibly displaced, 41.3 million were internally displaced, 25.9 million were refugees, and 3.5 million were asylum seekers. Children constituted almost half of the refugee population worldwide. Moreover, over 50% of refugees across the world today live in urban settings. While this trend varies from region to region, urban settlement is prevalent in the Middle East, with over 90% of Syrian refugees, including men, women and children, estimated to be living in urban settings alongside local communities and other more settled and newly displaced refugees (Wilkinson & Ager, 2017).

Children’s individual childhoods are unique and complex, shaped by the diversity of their experiences and the intersection of multiple advantaged and/or disadvantaged demographics, and how these play out in different contexts. That being said, armed conflict and displacement have immeasurable effects on children and their families. They disturb and alter children’s childhood experiences, strip children of their rights, and constrain children’s opportunities to play, to learn and recover through play, and for their unique potential to flourish. Nonetheless, there is a lack of in-depth research conducted into how armed conflict and displacement affect young refugee children’s play and experiences of childhood in different host environments. Addressing the need for in-depth understandings of young refugee children’s experiences and perspectives, this Froebel Trust funded PhD thesis explores how young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s play is affected by their experiences of armed conflict and displacement to the northern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon.
Aims and research questions

The aim of this PhD thesis was to investigate how armed conflict and displacement affected the childhoods and play of young Iraqi and Syrian children who were living as ‘temporarily displaced’ (Government of Lebanon [GoL] & United Nations [UN], 2019, p.4) persons in Beirut’s northern suburbs, and to identify ways in which children’s opportunities for play might be improved. In line with this aim, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How are the childhoods of young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees affected by armed conflict and their forced displacement to Beirut’s northern suburbs?

RQ2: How are the young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees’ opportunities to play and constructions of play affected by their experiences of armed conflict and forced displacement in Beirut’s northern suburbs?

RQ3: How might young refugee children’s play opportunities be improved in Beirut’s northern suburbs?

Rights as set out in human rights declarations are referred to as being ‘universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated’ (United Nations, 1993). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989) recognises the phase of childhood as one distinct from adulthood, highlighting, among other universal rights, children’s right to play (Article 31). However, as some critics of the UNCRC have argued, childhood is experienced differently by children around the world as the concept of childhood is a social construction influenced by factors such as religion, socioeconomic status, culture and values (Fearn & Howard, 2012). With children constituting over half of the refugee population in Lebanon, their experience of childhood is both unique and complex. Nonetheless, no in-depth research has been conducted into the consequences of armed conflict, violence and displacement for the ways childhood is constructed and experienced by refugee children in Lebanon, or for refugee children’s play. Through in-depth case studies of young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children and their families living in the northern suburbs of Beirut, the study sought to theorise how childhoods are being constructed in Lebanon during the current global refugee crisis, to gain unique insights into children’s opportunities to play and constructions of play, and to identify possible ways to improve refugee children’s play opportunities in Lebanon.

1 Throughout this thesis, the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘temporarily displaced’ are used interchangeably, drawing on one of many points of tension between GoL and UN (Janmyr, 2018), which this study has found to both directly and indirectly impact on the childhoods and play of child refugees in Lebanon.
Background

Iraq, Lebanon and Syria are countries with rich and complex histories and high levels of religious and ethnic diversity. As such, this section presents a summary overview of the more recent events that unfolded in Iraq and Syria that led to the influx of around 1.5 million refugees into Lebanon.

Iraqi conflict, religious minorities and displacement

Iraq has been involved in numerous wars over recent decades including the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. In 2003, the US-led coalition that invaded Iraq led to years of unrest and warfare in the country, and the withdrawal of US troops in 2011 led to further instability and violence (Fawcett, 2013; Oehring, 2017). After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Islamic fundamentalist groups emerged leading to a surge of violence against Iraqi minorities including Christians, Yazidis and Mandaeans (Hanish, 2008; Oehring, 2017). Iraqi Christians became targets of attacks, bombings, kidnapping and rape. This prompted many Christians who were living in the Southern cities to flee to predominantly Christian provinces in Northern Iraq or to leave the country (Hanish, 2008). The number of Christians living in Iraq decreased from 1.4 million in 1987 to around 600,000 in 2006, and around 75% of Christians fled Baghdad due to religious persecution (Hanish, 2008).

The emergence of ISIS led to further persecution of Christians and other minorities in Iraq. Following the invasion of Fallujah and Ramadi (Oehring, 2017), ISIS advanced across Northern Iraq taking over the cities of Mosul and Tikrit in June 2014, and the districts of Sinjar, Tel Afar, and Hamdaniya and Tel Keyf in Iraq’s Nineveh Plains in August 2014 (Dulz, 2016). This led to the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of Christians, Yazidis, Shabak, Shiite Turkmen, Sunni Kurds and Sunni Arabs (Dulz, 2016). Christians who remained in areas captured by ISIS were given three choices: Convert to Islam, pay the jizya (tax taken in the past by Muslim authorities from non-Muslims), or die (Erb, 2014).

Iraqis have been taking refuge in Lebanon since the 1990s (Sassoon, 2009), with their number increasing dramatically after the 2003 invasion (Ghattas et al., 2014). An estimated 50,000 Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers (from here on referred to as refugees) were living in Lebanon as of the first half of 2007, but decreased to around 6,000 in 2013. Some of those who left Lebanon were resettled to third countries such as the US and Canada, and others returned to Iraq (Chatty & Mansour, 2011). Since 2014, Lebanon has witnessed a new surge in the number of Iraqi refugees, reaching over 11,000 in 2014 and continuing to increase to over 18,000 in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019a, 2019b). A number of Iraqis have been displaced twice, once to Syria and a second time to Lebanon (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016b).

Syrian conflict and displacement

The Syrian war began in 2011 when anti-government protests in Syria, part of the wider Arab Spring uprising, were met with violence by the Syrian government. This led to the emergence of a
civil war between the Syrian government and opposition groups, each backed by their supporters. Over subsequent years, the conflict has grown and evolved into a complex war, involving multiple factions including ISIS (‘Islamic State of Iraq and Syria’, also known as the ‘Islamic State-IS’, the ‘Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-ISIL’, and ‘Daesh’) and other major international players (Phillips, 2016). Since its onset in 2011, the war in Syria has claimed the lives of an estimated 560,000 people as of December 2018 (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2018), and has led to the forced displacement of over half of Syria’s population (World Bank, 2017), with over 5.6 million registered as refugees and over 6 million people internally displaced (‘Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)’, n.d.).

Conflict in Syria has resulted in the influx of around 1.5 million Syrian refugees into neighbouring Lebanon, including 950,334 UNHCR-registered refugees as of November 30, 2018 (GoL & UN, 2019). It has also led to the influx of 28,800 Palestinian refugees from Syria, adding to the pre-existing 180,000 Palestinians who already resided in camps across Lebanon (GoL & UN, 2019), and the return of 35,000 Lebanese who lived in Syria (OCHA, 2016). Although a large number of Palestinian child refugees reside in Lebanon and their constructions of childhood and play have been greatly influenced by historical and present events, by politics and by their personal experiences, this study focuses solely on Syrian and Iraqi refugee children in Lebanon.

**Lebanon and the refugee crisis**

As a result of the displacement of Iraqis and Syrians into Lebanon, Lebanon, which is not a State party to the UN 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol (UNHCR, 2015a), has become the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world (Danish Refugee Council, 2016). Children below the age of 18 years constitute over half of Lebanon’s refugee population (GoL & UN, 2019). Consequently, public services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, which were already strained prior to the influx of refugees into Lebanon, have become overstretched, leading local, national and international organisations and GoL to take initiatives to try fill the gaps in provision. However, these initiatives have fallen short of meeting even the most basic needs of many Iraqi, Syrian, and Lebanese children and adults who are struggling to survive in Lebanon (UNHCR et al., 2018).

At this time of crisis in Lebanon, this study homes in on the lives of two young Iraqi Christian and two young Syrian Muslim child refugees living in the predominantly Christian northern suburbs of Beirut, focussing on how direct exposure to conflict and displacement, disparity between international and national legislation, tensions between organisations and GoL, policy structures, inequality and the violation of children’s rights have pushed children and their families into a state of liminality, or ‘in-between-ness’, shaping their childhoods and their play. Rather than focusing on the types of play that children engage in (e.g. Hughes, 2006), this thesis explores restrictions on play, constructions of play, and how play can provide an escape from liminality (Turner, 1969). Moreover,
recognising that play is a main activity in childhood, and acknowledging the indispensable and holistic benefits that play offers young children, particularly those who have faced unimaginable atrocities, instability and insecurity, the break-up of family and community, and have been forced to leave school, a key goal of the study is to identify ways in which the conditions for refugee children’s play might be improved in Lebanon.

**Thesis structure**

The thesis opens with Chapter 1, the literature review, where concepts and theories including Froebelian Principles (Bruce, 2012a; Froebel, 1887), the new sociology of childhood (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Qvortrup, 2009), children’s rights (UN, 1989), Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Turner’s theory of liminality (Turner, 1969) are brought together to form a conceptual framework, providing a lens through which to study the three major interlinked themes of ‘Childhood’, ‘Play’ and ‘Conflict and Displacement’. A critical overview of the literature addresses some key elements related to discourses around childhood in a Middle Eastern context and among refugee populations, the situation of children’s rights in Lebanon, and the importance of play in times of adversity and liminality.

Chapter 2 details the study’s methodological framework, including the study’s research design, data collection methods, and its approach to data analysis. Case studies were conducted with two Syrian and two Iraqi young child refugees and their families living in the Northern suburbs of Beirut/Mount Lebanon, supplemented by observations in a school for Iraqi children, interviews with three professionals who work with refugees in Lebanon and 100 questionnaires from Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese respondents. Ethical issues are discussed in detail, including issues of gaining consent, working with vulnerable participants and young children, and maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

The study’s findings are presented in Chapters 3 to 6. Chapter 3 presents detailed profiles of the four case study children and their families, and demographic data of the questionnaire respondents, giving participants’ accounts of their reasons for leaving their home countries and their experiences of conflict and displacement. Chapter 4 picks up from the previous chapter and reports on the continuing violations of children’s rights even after seeking refuge in Lebanon. These include living in poverty, family separation, early marriage, and lack of high quality education. Chapter 5 looks into ‘temporarily displaced’ children’s right to play in Lebanon, unpicking multiple aspects of their play including access to play resources, the ways in which fear and surveillance limit children’s play opportunities, and gendered trends and expectations in play. The chapter explores children’s embodied play, their use of play and imagination to escape from their liminal state, and the interplay of their past experiences, cultural heritage and identity in play. Chapter 6 provides respondents’ personal accounts of how local, national and international organisations and the GoL have provided or failed to provide them with necessary lifelines, and how tensions between organisations and
discrepancies between policy and practice have detrimental impacts on young refugee children’s rights, including their rights to play and to education.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, draws the main findings together and discusses them in light of the study’s research design and conceptual framework. The chapter provides answers to the study’s three research questions. It first discusses how barriers, such as armed conflict, GoL policies, altered family structures, gender expectations, and lack of respect towards children’s rights were found to reinforce refugee children’s liminality and shape their childhood experiences. It then discusses how children’s experiences of conflict and displacement combined with government policies, their irregular status, poverty, fear, and high levels of surveillance in Lebanon have led to severe limitations on Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s play opportunities and have reshaped how children’s play is constructed in Lebanon. Ways of improving children’s play opportunities in Lebanon are proposed, and a conceptual model that brings all aspects of this study together is presented. The thesis concludes by considering the study’s limitations, implications, recommendations and by offering some final comments.
Chapter 1 Literature review

1.1 Introduction

The conceptual framework, as Maxwell defines it, is ‘the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research’ (2013, p.39). It ‘explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, variables, or constructs—and the presumed relationships among them’ (Miles et al., 2014, p. 20).

While an existing theory may illuminate and draw one’s attention to certain events and relationships in data, other areas may be overlooked since ‘no theory can illuminate everything’ (Maxwell, 2005, p.43). With that in mind, and seeing as this study tackles three major themes that are directly interlinked (Childhood, Play, and War and Displacement), I have brought different theories together to help illuminate aspects of the study ‘that might otherwise go unnoticed’ (Maxwell, 2005, p.43), and in so doing, have provoked interdisciplinary dialogue that offers new conceptualisations of the lives of young refugee children.

Froebelian Principles such as the integrity of childhood in its own right lie at the core of this study and constitute a weaving thread that binds other theories together. With Froebelian Principles in mind, this chapter studies childhood in the Middle East through the lens of the new sociology of childhood, which moves away from deficit understandings of children and childhood, and highlights debates and issues around childhood as a culturally specific, historically situated and socially constructed phenomenon (James & Prout, 1997). This chapter explores two dominant discourses of childhood in the Middle East about childhood determined by gender and by power relations within the family, focusing particularly on how these discourses play out in Lebanon. The chapter provides a critical overview of the UN CRC (United Nations, 1989) and its implementation in the Lebanese context, paying attention to the infringement of refugee children’s rights in Lebanon, including their right to education. Play theories are then considered, focusing on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1930, 1966, 1978, 1986). The chapter discusses diverse sociocultural features that shape and impact on children’s play including parents’ views on play, gender, relationships with adults and peers, and the child’s environment, focusing specifically on factors that negatively affect play. In the final section, Turner’s (1967, 1969, 1974, 1982) theory of liminality is used to shed light on the childhoods and play of ‘temporarily displaced’ children in Lebanon. This lens offers insights into how ‘displaced’, ‘invisible’ and ‘polluting’ children’s play unfolds in a liminal time and space, how play promotes the exercise of power, and how experiences of armed conflict and displacement have direct consequences for children’s embodied experiences. This literature review presents a unique approach to studying the play and childhoods of young children, particularly those in refugee situations, and underpins diverse aspects of the study’s findings in the chapters to come. A visual representation of how the multiple interweaving elements from theory, topical research, and empirical data come together is presented in the thesis final chapter.
1.2 Childhood

This section begins by creating dialogue between Froebelian Principles and the new sociology of childhood, forming a lens through which to engage critically with the literature on childhood in the Middle East. It goes on to discuss literature about how childhoods, particularly in Lebanon, are determined by tightly intertwined discourses and practices about gender, family and power relationships.

1.2.1 Froebelian principles

Froebelian principles, which promote the integrity of childhood in its own right, sit at the core of this study. Before elaborating, it is crucial to acknowledge that Froebel's values emanate from a different era and cultural context to present-day issues in the Middle East. However desirable or enduring Froebelian ideals may be, they were generated in and remain embedded in context-specific ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1980, p.131). The principles that I engage with in this study are those that emerged from revisionists, a group of Froebelians who were open to critiques of Froebelian orthodoxy, critiques that were based on changing understandings of childhood and child development (Brehony, 2000a, 2000b). This review engages with aspects of Froebelian principles that are most relevant to this study, such as the integrity of childhood in its own right, the unique capacity of each child, the indispensable benefits of play for children, the relationship between the child and the environment, and the protection of children from harm and abuse (Bruce, 2012a). The thesis therefore adds to a body of research that provides insight into the applicability of Froebelian theories to contemporary debates.

For Froebel, the integrity of childhood should be recognised in its own right - as a phase of life at the time in which it is being experienced, rather than as a phase in preparation for adulthood. Froebel focuses on the whole and the unity within each child (physical and mental health, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs) and between the child and his/her environment (Froebel, 1887), with the family being ‘at the heart of the educational process in the Froebelian tradition’ (Bruce, 2012b, p.20). Bruce (2012a) develops this idea and interprets Froebel's theories within the ever-changing and complex contexts of today’s modern world. She notes that keeping in mind the existence of contextual ‘truths’ (see Foucault, 1980), the way people think about family life has changed, for example the family is no longer considered to be a standard entity but instead is diverse and varied, with different patterns emerging in diverse communities and regions of the world. This is especially pertinent when considering children who have been separated from their families because of armed conflict and displacement, raising questions as to how these children's family structures have changed, and how these changes affect children's childhoods and play. Although ‘[n]o two families are the same, or have ever been the same’ (Bruce, 2012b, p.17), Froebel's key principles are still relevant today, and have deep resonance in a Middle Eastern context where family plays an important role in many aspects of daily life.
Froebel views all associations and relationships which a human being establishes as formative (Lilley, 1967). Therefore, the quality of interactions between children and adults are thought to be crucial, as is the provision of necessary means for each child's development. Froebel insists that since the early stages of development are the most crucial, then the first relationships a child forms are the most influential, and the bonds formed during early development are critical for the child's future growth and development, arguing that these bonds must persist as children cannot be raised in isolation from their community. Bruce (2012a) argues that parents need support and encouragement, which will empower them to raise their children, and that without this support, the act of parenting is a lonely and worrying task. She adds that respectful interactions between the family and the community are essential for the child and form a supportive and positive network for children in addition to a safe environment for their development, with schools being an important aspect of a child's community.

One model that has been widely used to visualise the relationship between the child and the environment is Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979), which considers how children develop as they interact with the multiple environmental systems that surround them. Bronfenbrenner suggests that the ecological environment is composed of ‘nested structures’ that fit into each other, with the individual at the centre of the microsystem (the environment with which the child directly interacts such as family, school or peers), the mesosystem (the inter-relationships between these microsystems), the exosystem (the settings in which the child is not a direct participant but which nonetheless have an impact on or are impacted by the child such as the parents’ work, governmental structures), and the macrosystem (the cultural context). Bronfenbrenner later added the chronosystem, in which time and consequent change affect the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1986a, 1986b).

Although Bronfenbrenner's theory has been widely adopted by developmental psychologists and other social scientists, it has also been widely critiqued for not reflecting the dynamism of how the different ‘nested structures’ intersect (Neal & Neal, 2013). As culture in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model is located in the macrosystem, Rogoff (2003) argues that the theory ‘raises questions about treating individual and cultural processes as separate entities’ (p.44), when culture, as Markus and Kitayama explain 'is not separate from the individual [but] is a product of human activity’ (2010, p.423). Therefore, suggestions have been made to turn this model into a more dynamic one. Neal and Neal (2013) suggest viewing these systems as ‘networked’ instead of ‘nested’ (p.723), and Vélez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarrondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, and García Coll (2017) propose bringing culture from the macrosystem into the microsystem. Moreover, while Soja (1999) argues that understanding the world requires an awareness of ‘the simultaneity and interwoven complexity of the social, the historical and the spatial’ (p.261), Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) highlight that many theories, including the ecological model, are based on research conducted in Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) societies. This
literature questions the extent to which knowledge generated in and by WEIRD societies, such as the ecological model, can be representative of other populations.

1.2.2 New sociology of childhood

Froebel’s principle of the integrity of childhood in its own right can be explored through the more contemporary lens of the new sociology of childhood (Murray, 2018). This lens promotes the view of children, even the youngest children, as competent social agents (James et al., 1998), as social actors with agency and reflexivity, who experience social relationships with peers and adults (Matthews, 2007), directly reflecting Froebel’s principle of the child’s unique potential and capacity.

It moves away from developmental psychology perspectives that see children as ‘the same wherever they are’ (Mayall, 1994, p.18), and instead stresses ‘the plurality of childhoods’ both within societies and across social locations, acknowledging that childhood experiences differ across diverse contexts (Jenks, 1996, p.121). Just as Froebel believes that childhood is important in and of itself, not as a preparatory stage for adulthood (Murray, 2018), the new sociology views children as ‘human beings’ who have rights that must be respected rather than ‘human becomings’ who are only eligible to fully-fledged rights once they develop into adults (Mayall, 2015; Brighouse, 2002; Qvortrup, 1985).

Qvortrup (2009) differentiates between childhood as a period that focuses on the individual child, and childhood as a permanent structural form. The former, which is more closely linked to child development, represents ‘the time span demarcating the beginning and the end of an individual person’s childhood’ (Qvortrup, 2009, p.23). The latter, childhood’s structural form, is ‘a result of the interplay of parameters which at [a certain] time and place assum[e] certain values’ (Qvortrup, 2009, p.25). Parameters, Qvortrup notes, include, but are not limited to, economic, social, political, and/or technological factors, in addition to ideological parameters, such as ideologies around childhood and children at a given place and time in history. As relations between and values of these different parameters change over time, so does childhood as a structural form. Therefore, childhood as a period and childhood as a permanent form coexist. While an individual child’s childhood period ends once she/he reaches adulthood, and although childhood changes historically, childhood as a form continues to exist:

‘Childhood is, in other words, both constantly changing and a permanent structural form within which all children spend their personal childhood period’ (Qvortrup, 2009, p.26).

Contrary to socialization theory that sees children as inherently outside society, Qvortrup argues that, looking at childhood as a structural form and generational unit, childhood is an integrated part of society. While all generational units (childhood, adulthood, old age) are defined by parameters, their impact is experienced differently since ‘[m]eans, resources, influence and power are differentially distributed between the units, whose abilities to cope with external challenges vary accordingly’ (2009, p.27).
Here, it is useful to refer to Foucault’s theorisation of power. Foucault (1982) considers that power is not possessed or bestowed, but exercised. Power for Foucault ‘is not a commodity. Rather, it is a situation in which one “entity” (a human being, an institution) acts towards another entity so as to influence the actions of that entity’ (Gallagher, 2008, p.402). Power can be both dangerous and full of promise, a means of control and resistance, yet Foucault argues ‘Power exists only when it is put into action’ (1982, p.219). Power, Foucault suggests, is better thought of in the plural form, where different players exercise different powers (for example, power exercised by a teacher is different from that exercised by a student or by a parent). So the context in which power is being exercised, how it is exercised, over whom and with what impact should be taken into consideration (Gallagher, 2008). This also means that ‘Power is everywhere’ (Foucault, 1978) and so instead of looking at power as being concentrated in the hands of a select few, Foucault suggests that it circulates throughout society, and through ‘networks of relations’ (Gallagher, 2008). In the case of young refugee children in Lebanon, these networks may include relationships between the young children, their families, other refugees and Lebanese citizens, social institutions, UN agencies, the Lebanese government, international organisations, and other entities.

Looking through the lens of the ‘new sociology of childhood’, this study replaces an ‘idealised’ notion of childhood such as childhood as a happy, carefree and innocent phase of life with a more realistic view that childhood differs according to each child’s circumstances and experiences (Morrow, 2011; Netland, 2013). As the next section demonstrates, multiple discourses around childhood may be in competition with each other, making childhood a multifaceted and complex phenomenon.

### 1.2.3 Constructions of childhood in Lebanon and the Middle East

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region encompasses what is known as the Arab world. Although Arab states are united by a common language, each individual state differs from the next historically, geopolitically, socially, economically and culturally (Mandil, 2009). It is important not to refer to Arab countries interchangeably, for ‘[g]eneralization, with respect to demographic features, socio-economic or health indicators may result in over-simplification of an already complex situation, and may be misleading’ (Mandil, 2009, p.361).

Long (2011) argues that literature on childhood in Lebanon tends to generalize about Arab childhoods and places too much emphasis on Islam to differentiate between Western and Middle Eastern childhoods. Long (2011) critiques religious labels applied to childhood saying that ‘ideas about children frequently labelled misleadingly as “Muslim” or “Islamic” are much more complex and defy such restrictive religious signifiers’ (p.257). That is, differences also arise out of the complex interplay between many other forces including economic, political, social and cultural factors (Zubaida, 2011). Fernea (2002) argues that it is becoming impossible to discuss ‘distinctive

---

2 While Arabic is spoken throughout the Arab world, four families of linguistic zones exist across the Arab region: the Gulf, the eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, and North Africa (Mansour, 2018).
cultures’ that are ‘bounded and untouched by outside influences’ (p.4), adding that childhood experiences ‘in the same culture can be so different from one family to another, from one class to the next, between males and females, and within and between religious and ethnic groups’ (Ferne, 2002, p.4). This thesis therefore aims to redress the bias in literature that focuses on Islam and Middle Eastern childhoods by focusing on two Iraqi Christian and two Syrian Muslim young child refugees and their families, living in the predominantly Christian northern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon.

Discourse refers to what is said or written about a certain topic (Gallagher, 2008), and is understood and examined through shared language, concepts, and methods (MacNaughton, 2005). Competing discourses around the same topic, such as childhood, may therefore lead to tensions and debates. The complexity of influences on childhood experiences in the Middle East vary along a wide spectrum depending on multiple and diverse factors such as predominant discourses about childhood, historical events and established traditions, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, culture and religion. Additional factors in the context of this review are children’s experiences of war, persecution, devastation, fear, displacement, discrimination and poverty which in turn shape their childhood experiences. This section therefore focuses on two dominant discourses around childhood in the Middle East that emerged from the literature review: gender as a determinant of the construction of childhood, and childhood and power relations within Middle Eastern families. Examples are given of research in Lebanon and other MENA countries, linking the interplay of these discourses with young refugee children’s childhood experiences, and recognising the tensions and debates that arise from these competing discourses.

1.2.3.1 Gender as a determinant of the construction of childhood

Social constructionism is a theoretical perspective that explores how understandings are mutually constructed and form the foundation for shared assumptions - how ‘realities’ are formed based on people’s interactions with each other and with their cultural and material environment (James & James, 2012). Morrow (2011) argues that while social structures such as gender, religion, ethnicity, class, and cultural background may not necessarily determine children's experiences, they do influence them ‘by setting the boundaries of what is possible, appropriate and expected’, constraining children through diverse institutions, and consequently shaping their experiences of childhood (pp.5-6). Socially constructed understandings and shared assumptions about childhood gendered norms and behaviours greatly influence children’s experiences of childhood:

‘We dress and ornament boys and girls differently, teach them to behave differently, offer them different opportunities and obstacles, treat them differently in a host of ways and emphasize gender to them as a socially important category. Then we interpret the resulting patterns of gendered identity, attributes and behaviours as confirmation that they were different to begin with’ (Kane, 2013, p.13).
Morrow (2006) emphasizes that systems of inequality such as ethnicity, social class, age, religion, and location intersect to construct childhood and gender identity. The ways in which gender is constructed differ between cultures, where social institutions (such as the family, school and media) and the state all influence the social construction of gender, and these influences trickle down to shape family and peer interactions (Kane, 2013). By interacting with others on a daily basis, people pick up on gender role expectations, and although they may not identify with these roles, they may conform to them in order to fit in and to ‘avoid social costs’ (Kane, 2013, p.15).

Gender, paired with religion, social class, age and ethnicity, leads to different experiences and constructions of childhood for children in the Middle East, as elsewhere, and these are in play before the child is even born. While research shows that families in Minority World countries tend to prefer a balance of children from both sexes (Hank & Kohler, 2000; Kippen, Evans, & Gray, 2007; Raley & Bianchi, 2006), the preference of sons over daughters is widespread across the Arab world, although differences do arise between individual countries (Al-Akour et al., 2009; Filmer et al., 2008; OECD, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

The preference of sons over daughters can be linked to economic, psychological, and social factors in a society where patriarchy reigns and the concept of non-substitutability of daughters and sons is prevalent (Al Harahsheh, 2011). Traditional societies are generally thought to view sons as having higher economic net utility, higher wages, and better able to assist with a family’s social security than daughters (Arnold & Roy in Al Harahsheh, 2011). The family name is passed down through the males in the family and the eldest male takes on the economic responsibility of his family. Therefore there is a lot of pressure on couples to give birth to a son who is regarded as being of ‘primary importance’ (Ferneau, 1996, p.6).

However, many studies show that parents still place great importance on having at least one daughter (Arnold, 1997; Hank & Kohler, 2000; Marleau & Saucier, 2002). These studies find that daughters are thought to be more reliable providers of emotional support and help in old age, in addition to assisting in household chores and caring for the young. One can deduce that the role of daughters here is not to be independent, but instead to serve, and so power relations are somewhat predetermined in Arab families based on the conventional gender roles of parents and children. Referring back to Morrow (2011), these different expectations in turn create constructions of childhood that are shaped by different sets of boundaries for boys and girls, including what is appropriate to do and what is possible to attain, leading to different experiences of childhood depending on one’s gender. Nonetheless, while this trend may represent the ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ for some Arabs, individual people’s experiences vary greatly, resulting in a wide range of social constructions of gender.

Furthermore, gender discrimination occurs in many different forms and permeates social institutions and practices. In Lebanon for example, nationality passes down to children through the male, not through the female (Ouis & Myhrman, 2007). While no laws prohibit women’s freedom of movement
in Lebanon, the movement of some girls and women, particularly in urban areas, is restricted due to familial and social pressures (Ouis, 2005; Ouis & Myhrman, 2007). Furthermore, studies have consistently found that girls and women still face high levels of sexual harassment in Lebanon (Naciri & Nusair, 2003). El Saadawi lists the many inequalities experienced by girls and women in a ‘Male-dominant civilization’ (2015, p.164). She notes that while male children are taught to project their personality and be strong, responsible, and have authority, girls are trained to ‘shrink into a corner’, to be ‘passive and weak’, and be dependent on dominant men (El Saadawi, 2015, p.164). She compares a woman to an object who ‘possesses more value when she is new, or in other words young, a virgin who has not been made use of before’ (p.156). El Saadawi adds that young girls are frequently exposed to sexual abuse, commonly perpetrated by male relatives. However, a girl’s honour is linked to her virginity and, once she loses her virginity, even if she is raped during early childhood, her honour can never be replaced (El Saadawi, 2015).

An intersectional approach allows us to recognise that displaced people have different experiences of displacement depending on ‘intersecting and overlapping identity markers’, such as gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, legal status, and age, and based on different power structures, such as xenophobia, Islamophobia and patriarchy (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017, p.1). These identity markers and power structures change across time and space, therefore individual people’s or social groups’ experiences of violence may change throughout the diverse stages of displacement (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017). Experiencing armed conflict and forced displacement places women and girls in danger of gender-specific adversities. With ongoing armed conflict in Iraq and Syria, girls and women have been increasingly subjected to violence in all its forms (Nasar et al., 2013). Interviews in 2013 with Syrian girls and women unearthed stories of being exposed to multiple violations inflicted by diverse parties in the Syrian conflict, such as kidnapping, torture, being used as human shields, and sexual violence - including rape during house raids, during kidnapping, and inside government prisons and detention facilities (Nasar et al., 2013). Under ISIS control, women and girls experienced extreme persecution. According to Siriani (2018), under ISIS rule:

’n]o woman can walk in the streets or be seen by someone else without wearing the nigab and completely covering the body, face and hands with a loose-fitting black robe and gloves […] Brutal penalties are applied to people who do not abide by the rules and required conduct. These can include beating in public, hanging from a wall, crucifixion and even immediate killing’ (Siriani, 2018, p.109).

Siriani found evidence that when ISIS invaded villages in the suburbs of Hassake, North-East Syria (late 2015-early 2016), Assyrian Christians were kidnapped and tortured, and young girls were sold as slaves to other ISIS members. Another minority, the Yazidis, faced ISIS brutality, and possibly ‘the group’s worst treatment’ (Abdel-Razek & Puttick, 2016, p.571). Once ISIS took over Yazidi villages, men, seniors, babies and disabled women were massacred, Yazidi villages were completely destroyed, and women and girls were taken into ISIS captivity where they were subjected to:
'extreme forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) such as torture, abduction, forced conversion to ISIS’s creed of Islam, starvation, miscarriages, and sex-trafficking against the women and girls. [...] The women and girls were distributed and sold as war spoils in the slave market [...] ISIS emirs and soldiers committed systemic rape, forced impregnation, sadistic torture, and infanticide.’ (Hassen, 2016, p.60).

Similar stories were reported about Yazidis and Christians in Iraq (Callaghan, 2018; Counter Extremism Project, 2017; Dulz, 2016). Focus group discussions with Syrian refugee women in Lebanon showed that women were not only exposed to ‘conflict violence’ but also to ‘sexual violence’ and ‘violence from their spouse and community’ (Usta & Masterson, 2015, p.135). They referred to abuse from their husbands as ‘their husbands “letting go on us” or “letting go of the stress on us”’ (p.135). Syrian women and children also reported increased physical aggression towards children due to increased stress and psychological stressors (Sim et al., 2018; Usta et al., 2019). According to Sim et al. (2018), Syrian children in Lebanon who received harsh physical punishments from their parents in turn took out their anger on and exerted violence towards other objects and people. This ‘illustrates how parents’ modelling of violence may contribute to an intergenerational cycle resulting in children themselves perpetrating violent acts as a means of coping with difficult emotions’ (pp.23-4).

Consequently, men, as well as women and children, may be victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). However, while refugee women, children and disabled people tend to be considered vulnerable and in need of protection, the gender-specific vulnerabilities of refugee men tend to be ignored, rendering them invisible (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014, 2017). Some forms of violence specifically target men. For instance, due to GoL policies that restrict ‘temporarily displaced’ persons from working in Lebanon, many Syrian refugee men feel unable to leave their homes, fearing that they may be imprisoned or deported, affecting their and their families’ wellbeing. As a result of these policies, families are left with no choice but to rely on their children for financial support, pushing children into the workforce, leading to multiple child rights violations (Section 1.3.3.) As such, it is not displacement itself that leads children into child labour, but policy structures that make it dangerous for refugee men to work and leave their homes (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017). Therefore, as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh argues, there is a need for an intersectional approach when working with refugees, ‘which aims to ensure people’s dignity and safety without creating or reproducing hierarchies of vulnerability and worth which have dangerous, and at times deadly, outcomes for refugees’ (2017, p.1).

Whilst gender is a key factor in defining all children’s experiences of childhood, and places limits and restrictions on what children can or cannot do, in times of war and displacement, gender as a social structure is pivotal in shaping children’s experiences, in the type of harm they are exposed to, and the war crimes they and their families are subjected to.
1.2.3.2 Childhood and power relations within the Middle Eastern family

Power structures within families, including power relations that play out based on seniority (age) and gender (wife/husband, son/daughter), contribute to shaping constructions of childhood. As Zaatari notes, it seems contradictory that although most academic, political and official writings about the political structure, society and economy in Lebanon start by expressing the importance of the family as ‘the main unit of Lebanese society’, research on family in Lebanon is both limited and ambiguous (Zaatari, 2010, p.252). Zaatari’s (2010) comparative analysis of literature around family in Lebanon concludes that apart from a few consistent researchers’ studies, research on Lebanese families is insufficient, weak and primarily based on speculation rather than rigorous or extensive research. Abu-Lughod’s (1990) review of anthropological research in Lebanon finds that most studies fall within orientalist and positivist theoretical frameworks, targeting ‘hot research areas’, and assuming the family to be the basic unit of society without problematizing ‘family’ as a social construction.

Faour (1989) suggests that Arab countries (excluding Lebanon which has the highest proportion of Christians in the Arab World (see Ross, Tadros, & Johnson, 2018)) fall under the umbrella of an Islamic Arab culture, and their social structure includes ‘strong kinship bonds and strong pronatalist values’ (p.254). As previously argued, the generalisation and overemphasis on the ‘Islamic’ nature of the Arab world ignores many other factors that contribute to the construction of Arab identity. ‘Western ideas’ that have been transmitted historically through colonisation (see Long, 2011; Thompson, 2000), and more recently through global media, education and urbanisation, in addition to the shift from an agricultural labour force to one more focused on the service industry, have led to changes in the traditional Middle Eastern family. Nonetheless, researchers such as Abadeer (2015), Faour (1989) and Ouis (2005) argue that traditional views toward childbearing, in addition to patrilineality, loyalty to family, and respect and authority of elderly, especially male relatives, remain to this day important sociocultural features within Arab societies, including Lebanon.

In her work with Arab families living in Camp Trad, an urban working-class neighbourhood in Beirut, Lebanon, during the early 1970s, Joseph (1993) found that relationality (see Chodorow in Joseph, 1993) was ‘gender and age marked’ (p.466), that is, it was experienced differently by men and women, and based on their age, with parents seeing children as extensions of themselves. Yet, Joseph (1993) argues that whereas ‘patriarchal connectivity’ led men and elders to see others as extensions of themselves, women and juniors were socialised to view themselves as extensions of others, with older sisters tending to see young brothers as extensions of themselves - but this changed once boys reached a certain age.

Nonetheless, the accounts of family life in Camp Trad are place- and time-specific having taken place over 20 years ago prior to the prevalence of global media, and 40 years prior to the influx of over 1.5 million refugees into Lebanon. War and displacement have had a significant impact on traditional Middle Eastern families, and on family power structures. Many refugees in Lebanon have
witnessed changes in the family structure because of separation from or the death of other family members, changes in socioeconomic situation, mental and physical health, amongst many other factors that affect the power dynamics within families. Following Turner’s (1969) and van Gennep’s (1960) notion of liminality (Section 1.5), Mälksoo (2012) notes that in such situations, ‘hierarchies are reversed, and traditional settings of authority possibly endangered’ (p.481). One such example is the growth of child labour, resulting largely from GoL policies that make it dangerous for ‘temporarily displaced’ persons to leave their homes and work, where children become the breadwinners of the family and parents become dependent on them, altering power structures (see Section 1.3.3). However, Lokot (2018) critiques the narrative perpetuated by many NGOs that displacement of Syrians has ‘disrupted “traditional” family life’ (p.33). In 2018, 18% of displaced Syrian households in Lebanon were headed by females and 0.3% were headed by children (15 years or below) (UNHCR et al., 2018). Lokot argues that while ‘female headed households are considered a new sub-category of the “vulnerable”, [t]his narrative fails to recognise […] that women may have been heads of households before their displacement’ (p.33). She contends that some disruptions to traditional gender relations and family life were already taking place before their displacement, and so Syrians may already be able to cope with these changes to household structures. Nonetheless, according to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon [VASyR 2018] (UNHCR et al., 2018) and the Vulnerability Assessment of Refugees of Other Nationalities [VARON 2017] (UNHCR, 2018b) reports, Syrian and Iraqi female-headed households in Lebanon were more vulnerable than male-headed households, were more likely to have lower diversity in their diet and poorer food consumption than their counterparts and had ‘less access to basic sanitation services’ (UNHCR et al., 2018, p.6).

To conclude, this section problematizes generalisations made about Arab childhoods, arguing that childhoods differ between and within diverse societies and are shaped by the complex interplay between cultural, social, economic, historical, and other parameters. Constructions of childhood in Lebanon – as everywhere - are determined by gender (Kane, 2013) and are tightly intertwined with family and power relationships (Joseph, 1993). In the case of refugee children, these constructions are further shaped by their personal experiences prior to, during, and following conflict and displacement. The following section introduces a rights lens to the study’s conceptual framework, studying childhood and refugee children’s experiences in Lebanon in light of the UNCRC.

### 1.3 Children’s rights

The UNCRC, which was passed by the UN General Assembly in 1989, is the most widely ratified international convention, with 54 articles featuring children’s cultural, economic, social and civil rights (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). The UNCRC follows four core guiding principles: that the guidance should be applied ‘without discrimination of any kind’ (Article 2); with ‘the best interest of the child’ as a primary concern (Article 3); that ‘every child has the inherent right to life’ (Article 6); and
children have ‘the right to express’ their ‘views freely’ and to be taken seriously (Article 12) (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1996b).

Verhellen (1993) posits that three main characteristics constitute the UNCRC: the convention is legally binding; it is comprehensive, considering all rights to be equally important, mutually exclusive and indivisible; and children’s participation rights are recognised. Others have interpreted UNCRC differently, for example, Jones and Welch (2018) discuss how children’s rights are sometimes viewed in terms of liberty rights and welfare rights, and sometimes in terms of children’s rights to provision, protection and participation. Bentley (2005) argues that although the UNCRC is the most universally ratified convention, it is based on a ‘halcyon fantasy’ of Western values about childhood, where children are largely seen as ‘passive objects of duties’ with ‘no significant levels of autonomy’ and no responsibility to make decisions (p.117). She further critiques UNCRC for failing to improve children’s lives, as children remain the most abused and marginalised group of people in the world. In her study of the UNCRC, Moorehead (in Alston & Tobin, 2005) observed that the Convention has become ‘something of a sham’ because it is being violated ‘systematically and contemptuously’ by many countries. Jones and Welch (2018) argue that ratifying nations’ responses to the UNCRC sometimes points to the creation of a rights veneer, where ‘structures or processes set in place give the appearance of engaging with a rights agenda, but do not actually do so’ (p.5). For example, Lebanese Law No. 686 of 1998, which amended Article 49 of Decree No. 134/59, states that ‘Public education is free and compulsory in the primary phase, and is a right for every Lebanese of primary education age’. While seemingly engaging with UNCRC Article 28 that stipulates nation states should ‘make primary education compulsory and available free to all’, this law restricts free and compulsory primary education to Lebanese children only (Crul et al., 2019), pointing to the creation of a rights veneer.

Critics also argue that not enough attention is given to UNCRC’s conceptual framework (Tobin, 2013) and that there is tension between anti-paternalistic and paternalistic features of the UNCRC (Bryson, 2010). For instance, as Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) note, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] (United Nations, 1948), promotes everyone’s right to freedom of expression and opinion, yet ‘within the context of the CRC [this] is sometimes confounded by Article 3 “the best interest of the child” and Article 5 “parental and carer responsibilities”’. Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) argue that UNCRC prioritizes adult concerns about child protection and child safety over children’s participation and communication rights, and this carries over into education settings, calling into question the indivisibility and interdependence of rights.

Alderson (2015) further posits that rights related to provision and protection of children are generally accepted, while there remain many controversies regarding children’s participation rights. When talking about Human Rights, Uvin (2004) argues that while at the conceptual level human rights declarations refer to rights as being indivisible and complementary, in practice they are still being treated as separate. Laplante (2007) writes about the interrelatedness of rights through a case study of Peru. She gives the example of Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which
was assigned to investigate and establish an official account of episodes of repression and violence that led to Peru's civil war and ongoing human rights violations. Laplante notes that 'The TRC Final Report presents clear analysis of how social, economic and cultural inequalities contributed to and were made worse by political violence' (p.153). She adds that 'rights are not easily divided in practice' and there are 'dire consequences of ignoring their interconnection' (p.152), as people who suffer equally from political violence, social exclusion and poverty make it a 'nonsensical exercise' to divide those rights (Laplante, 2007, p.157).

Moving the focus to young children, access to basic needs such as 'food, shelter, protection, care and affection' is essential for children to meet their full potential (Hyder, 2005, p.6). Additionally, it is crucial for children to be given opportunities to explore their environments, to communicate with other people and to participate in cultural experiences and in their communities' traditions through stories, art, music, language and relationships, and through play. Research over many years has established that engagement in these activities contributes to children’s development and to the growth of their ‘emotional, social, physical and intellectual capacities’ (Hyder, 2005, p.6). However, there is a need for more research about this in the context of Syrian and Iraqi refugee children in Lebanon, which can be usefully studied through a rights lens.

1.3.1 Lebanon and the UNCRC

While Lebanon has both signed and ratified the UNCRC, it would seem there is still a long way to go before the Convention is fully implemented. The Lebanese Code of Civil Procedure under Article 2 states that courts, ‘shall abide by the principle of the hierarchy of rules’, thus elevating international conventions like the UNCRC above national law, and suggesting that international law takes precedence in case of contradiction between domestic law and international convention (Halabi in Save the Children, 2011). However, Halabi argues that this code is not always upheld, and Lebanese courts rarely consult international conventions: ‘jurisprudence seems to show that the Code of Civil Procedures is not always applied in cases in which there is a contradiction’ (p.50). In addition, Hoteit (2017) argues that although Lebanon has ratified the UNCRC and announced its adherence to international agreements, it is still far from implementing the Convention as it selectively accepts articles that do not contradict the orientations of traditional local structures, and does nothing to change the system of values dominating them. Such systems include the traditional or patriarchal culture, the sectarian system, prevailing male perspectives in formulating policies and the absence of representation by women and children (Hoteit, 2017).

Although Lebanon’s ratification of the UNCRC in 1990 indicated a shift in the way children’s rights were viewed and the beginning of improvements in consequent provision, there are limitations, both in the text itself and in its implementation, to the extent to which Lebanese law can protect children (Save the Children, 2011). Firstly, Lebanon follows a civil law with its own set of codes, rather than Sharia law. However, all matters that are associated with ‘personal status’, such as marriage, child custody, alimony and divorce, are relegated to diverse religious courts, which are ruled by different
laws set by each religion and sect in the country (Save the Children, 2016; Shehadeh, 1998). Personal status laws for Muslims for example draw on Sharia law (El Samad, 2008), which Shehadeh (1998) argues may not be in line with the UNCRC and can act as a source of discrimination against both women and children. In line with the UNCRC, Lebanese law now defines a child as a person below the age of 18 (Save the Children, 2011). However, early marriage (children as young as nine years old in the Shi’a faith), although not very common in Lebanon nowadays, is still allowed by personal status laws (Save the Children, 2011) as each religious sect has its own minimum set age for marriage, which is generally linked to puberty (Ouis, 2005). Corporal punishment is widespread, especially in rural parts of Lebanon, and is even sometimes practised in schools around Lebanon (El Bcheraoui et al., 2012). According to article 186 of the Lebanese Penal Code, violent acts cannot ‘rise above the limits recognized by the customs for a safe punishment’, which in itself seems to condone potential violence and is open to interpretation. Law 422 of 6 June 2002 on the Protection of Juveniles in Conflict with the Law or at Risk notes that a child is in danger if ‘exposed to sexual abuse, and physical violence that exceeds the limits of what is culturally acceptable as non-harmful disciplinary beating’ (Article 25, clause 2). This clause is ambiguous, effectively condoning violence to exceed the standards set by the UNCRC, with no mention made of other forms of abuse such as emotional or psychological abuse (Save the Children, 2011).

Hoteit (2017), in line with Qvortrup (2009) who posits that ‘many, perhaps most, powerful parameters influencing children’s lives are set in motion without having children or childhood in mind at all’ (p.28), argues that Lebanese national policy is issued by adults for adults, and children have no place in it. Although these policies directly affect children’s lives, children are seen as policy subjects rather than political entities who have interests that must be translated into policy and decision-making. Hoteit argues that in Lebanon, attention is not placed on the child as an individual but the child is instead seen as attached to the family, which, in turn, is integrated into wider circles (sectarian, ethnic, customary or tribal). As such, there are many barriers standing in the way of the child, whose interests are buried within broader government policies such as those concerning the family. For example, there is no mention of the terms child or childhood in the Lebanese constitution, even in matters that directly involve children, such as education. Hoteit concludes that by excluding children from the constitution, it can be deduced that the constitution defines citizens as adults, and children will only become citizens (and therefore rights-holders) once they become ‘mature’ adults. A child rights lens can thus provide a useful framework to unpick tensions between international and national policies, within national policies, and between policy and practice, providing a better understanding of the situation of refugee children in the Lebanese context.

1.3.2 UNCRC, Lebanese policies and ‘temporarily displaced’ persons

Policies set by the Government of Lebanon (GoL) affect the lives of adult and child Syrians and Iraqis in Lebanon, both directly and indirectly. Nassar and Stel (2019) refer to the GoL’s strategy in
response to the influx of Syrian refugees as one of institutional ambiguity, ‘an unpredictable, hybrid form of governance that emerges at the continuously shifting interface between formal and informal forms of regulation’ (p.44). GoL policies (see Yassin, Osseiran, Rassi, & Boustani, 2015) have focused on prohibiting formal refugee camps and on regulating the registration of refugees, their residence and their work (Nassar & Stel, 2019). Nonetheless, around 1,900 informal settlements have been established across Lebanon, where living conditions are very poor (Fakhoury, 2017). UNHCR has claimed that living in urban settings as opposed to camps allows refugees ‘the possibility to live with greater dignity, independence and normality as members of the community, either from the beginning of displacement or as soon as possible thereafter’ (UNHCR 2014, p.4). Wilkinson and Ager (2017) list several differences that arise between camp and non-camp settings, which raises questions about the extent to which refugees in urban non-camp settings live with ‘dignity, independence and normality’. One difference that emerges between camp and non-camp settings is that provision of services in camps tends to be centralised, whereas providing services to refugees in urban settings can be more complex. Another important difference revolves around the relationship between refugees and local legal, civic and governmental structures. Refugees living in urban settings may be subjected to arrest and/or deportation should they violate administrative laws. They may also not be registered with UNHCR, leading to challenges with protection and service delivery. Moreover, urban displacement may lead to additional pressure on local resources and services that are usually already insufficient to meet the needs of the urban poor, and may lead to competition in the labour markets, resulting in tensions between refugees and residents (Wilkinson and Ager, 2017, p. 17).

The GoL has sought to ensure that Syrian refugees do not stay permanently in Lebanon, a response that is strongly linked to the history of Palestinian refugees’ presence in Lebanon (Janmyr, 2016). One way to achieve this was to prevent formal refugee camps from being set up for Iraqi or Syrian citizens who were fleeing armed conflict. For instance, IKEA, the Swedish multinational company, had designed sturdy housing units that could be easily assembled to replace tents that refugees were living in. These units were equipped with insulated wall panels as well as solar panels to generate electricity, and IKEA collaborated with UNHCR to distribute these housing units to refugees in Lebanon. However, as Baker (2013) notes, the housing units that were meant to last 3 years instead of 6 months (the life span of a tent) were not considered ‘temporary enough for some’, and GoL legally banned the housing units, as they were ‘worried that the upgraded housing may just incite refugees to stay’ (Baker, 2013, para.1). Even six months later, after a trial run was allowed following many negotiations, the programme was stopped prematurely after outcry from the Lebanese residents of areas where the units were being tested (Hall, 2016). The units were eventually shipped out of Lebanon. This example encapsulates the profound and conflicting tensions between international and national approaches to refugee crises, and in this case, between UN and GoL. Janmyr (2018) poses the crucial question:
‘When a host state rejects the international refugee law regime, yet faces an unprecedented number of refugees, how does the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) execute its mandate to provide international protection to these refugees?’ (Janmyr, 2018, p.393).

This begs a further question: What impact does the state’s rejection of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and its 1967 Protocol have on the implementation of the UNCRC, a convention signed and ratified by the GoL? How can the GoL ensure that ‘displaced’ children’s rights are met? This in turn begs a superordinate question - what is the validity and usefulness of the UNCRC if it cannot be enforced and implemented to provide refugee children with their basic human rights when it encounters opposition within a nation state?

As Tisdall and Punch (2012) argue, UNCRC lacks “teeth” in terms of enforceability’ (p.257). Indeed, the same can be said for the 1951 Convention (see Fiddian, 2006).

Dichotomies such as ‘refugees’/’migrants’, ‘deserving’/ ‘undeserving’ and ‘legitimate’/’illegitimate’ are regularly used to categorise migrants, particularly when tensions arise in policy between ‘providing protection in accordance with international conventions and treating [(im)migration] as a security issue’ (Wernesjö, 2020, p. 391). Legitimate and deserving refugees tend to be perceived as eligible for care and protection, whereas illegitimate and underserving migrants tend to be seen as ‘strategic and untrustworthy’, attempting to illegitimately gain access to welfare benefits (Watters, 2007; Wernesjö, 2020). Labelling, as Zetter (1991) suggests, illustrates ‘conditionality and differentiation, inclusion and exclusion, stereotyping and control’ (p.59). Labelling refugees is a process of disaggregating existing identities, stereotyping a group, and forming a new bureaucratic identity with little or no participation from refugees themselves (Zetter, 1991). Moreover, labelling tends to promote unequal power relations between those who label, and those who are labelled. Janmyr (2018) details the tensions that arose between GoL and UN when the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan [LCRP] document was drawn up, including, for example, how to refer to Syrians who had fled armed conflict and moved to Lebanon. The term ‘refugee’ was endorsed by UNHCR (including the argument that ‘refugee’ would attract more donors), while GoL moved between ‘displaced Syrians’, ‘de facto refugees’ and finally settling on ‘temporarily displaced Syrians’. GoL contests that many Syrians who have entered Lebanon are economic migrants looking for work, not refugees fleeing conflict (Knutsen, 2014). As Janmyr (2018) argues, ‘this ambition to re-categorise Syrian refugees as economic migrants is reflected also in GoL’s residency policies for Syrians’ (p.406) (For residency policies see Government of Lebanon & UN, 2018).

In 2015, the GoL adopted a new residency policy for Syrians and suspended UNHCR registration of Syrian refugees. Since the 2015 amendment, Syrian nationals could either obtain legal residency in Lebanon if they had been registered with UNHCR prior to 2015, or if they had a Lebanese sponsor (Buckner et al., 2017). Syrians aged 15 years and above were also required to pay a 200USD legal residency renewal fee. However, in February and March 2017, the General Security Office announced that this fee was waived for displaced Syrians who had been registered with UNHCR.
prior to January 1, 2015 or for those who had not renewed their residency based on tenancy, sponsorship, tourism or property ownership in the years 2015 and 2016 (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2018). These conditions nonetheless continue to exclude a large portion of Syrian and other refugees in Lebanon. As Janmyr (2016) notes, ‘The new procedures for renewal of residency permits are […] so onerous and expensive that many people are unable to renew their permits’ (p.70). Furthermore, Iraqi refugees above the age of 15 were still required to pay the residency renewal fee (UNHCR, 2018b), a fee that is unattainably high for refugees who have lost everything and do not have the right to work in Lebanon. Moreover, Syrians registered with UNHCR are required to sign a pledge not to work in Lebanon, making them reliant solely on aid assistance, or pushing them towards informal labour where they are put at higher risk of abuse and exploitation (Janmyr, 2016). Additionally, those who are sponsored by a Lebanese national are only allowed to work in three sectors: environment (formerly cleaning), construction and agriculture (Janmyr, 2016). Janmyr argues that under the sponsorship, or kafala, system, Syrian refugees can ‘be subject to Government-sanctioned exploitation’ (p.75). The kafala system in Lebanon is characterised by a ‘legal relationship between employer and employee [that] appears most analogous to a parent and child, or alternatively, master and slave or servant’ (Kagan, 2012, p.322). Under this system, some employees are forced to endure very harsh work conditions, abuse and exploitation for fear that they might be fired, lose their legal status and be deported (Janmyr, 2016). These policies and structures aggravate rights infringements and make it virtually impossible for refugees to escape from poverty.

Calavita (1998) who conducted research with immigrants in Spain found that immigration law ‘actively and regularly “irregularizes” people by making it all but impossible to retain legal status over time’ (p.530). She argues that differentiating between ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ immigrants makes little sense since legal status is temporary, ensuring vulnerability and exclusion of certain populations. Menjívar (2006) adds that:

‘contemporary immigration law creates and recreates an excluded population and ensures its vulnerability and precariousness by blurring the boundaries of legality and illegality to create gray areas of incertitude, with the potential to affect broader issues of citizenship and belonging’ (p.1002).

Menjívar offers the concept of ‘liminal legality’ to describe the ‘gray area between these legal categories, how this “in-between status” or liminal legality shapes different spheres of life’ (p.1000). Similar to the ‘liminal legality’ (Menjívar, 2006, p.999) status of Salvadorean and Guatemalan immigrants living in the US, who were neither categorised as economic migrants nor as refugees, so Syrian and Iraqi ‘temporarily displaced’ can be seen as being in a state of ‘liminal legality’. This liminality is further enforced by contradictory GoL policies and practices. For example, refugees in Lebanon who registered with UNHCR received a registration certificate valid for two years and is renewable, which ‘entitles refugees to international protection and humanitarian assistance’ (Janmyr, 2018, p.406). However, this certificate has not been given formal status by GoL, which
continues to penalize refugees who have entered Lebanon illegally or who do not have residency in Lebanon (Janmyr, 2018).

In addition to GoL’s policies towards ‘temporarily displaced’ persons, the already deteriorating infrastructure and poor urban planning has added to the problems that Syrians and Iraqis face in Lebanon – problems that are also experienced by the Lebanese population. One issue that specifically affects children is the way that cities in Lebanon have evolved, driven for many decades by commercial factors rather than by planning that considers high-quality standards of living (Hoteit, 2017). Cities in Lebanon lack green and/or outdoors spaces, and activities available to children are expensive, restricting what children and their families can do and where they can go, particularly those who lack financial means (Hoteit, 2017). Nazzal and Chinder (2018) note that ‘the shortage of public spaces in Lebanon result[s] from lack of planning, regulations and awareness around the right to the city and the importance of public spaces’ (p.119). Since land prices in Lebanese cities tend to be expensive, real estate development on buildable land is given priority over the development of communal and public spaces. According to Nazzal and Chinder (2018), ‘in 2015, the percentage of green spaces in Lebanon has decreased to less than 13%’, adding that while ‘the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a minimum of 9m² of green space per capita (UN-HABITAT, 2016), Beirut has only 0.8m²’ (p.119). Many children in Lebanon, whether nationals or displaced, therefore lack opportunity to experience places in their own environment or to meet people, affecting their relationship with their community and surroundings (Bruce, 2012a).

1.3.3 Violations of refugee children’s rights

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) has recognised Lebanon’s efforts to host and support the large number of Syrian refugees who have entered Lebanon since the start of the Syrian crisis. However, the Committee also observed that although Lebanon has taken some measures to implement the UNCRC, it has fallen back on many aspects including:

‘[C]orporal punishment (para. 19) sexual exploitation and abuse (paras. 22 and 24), children with disabilities (para. 29), education, including vocational training and guidance (para. 35), economic exploitation, including child labour (para. 40), sale, trafficking and abduction (para. 43), and administration of juvenile justice (para. 45)’ (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2017, p.2).

Furthermore, while Lebanon has made improvements to its human rights, it still struggles with discrimination particularly against children from low-income families, minority groups, people with disabilities, girls and refugees (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1996a, 2017; Save the Children, 2011). The VASyR 2018 (UNHCR et al., 2018) report, which provides an extensive overview of the situation of and the hardships faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon, found that 54% of refugees in Lebanon were children below the age of 18, the majority of whom were facing dire conditions. 73% of interviewed refugees over the age of 15 did not have legal residency.
Furthermore, only 21% of Syrian children who were born in Lebanon had completed their birth registration. 69% of households were living below the poverty line and 51% did not meet the Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) of 2.90 USD per person per day rendering them unable to meet basic needs such as food, health and shelter. 34% of Syrian households were ‘moderately to severely food-insecure’ (p.4). 30% lived in shelters ‘where conditions did not meet humanitarian standards’, 5.5% in shelters that were dangerous, and around 33% lived in overcrowded shelters. Furthermore, while 87% of households reported that they received the healthcare they needed, reports varied from region to region. In Mount Lebanon and Beirut, access was reported at 70% compared to 98% in Akkar. ‘Half of surveyed households reported receiving subsidized health care and 7% reported accessing free health care, while 20% reported having had to pay in full’ (UNHCR et al., 2018, p.4).

Such human rights infringements have had a negative impact on refugee children’s rights in Lebanon. Child marriage, particularly of girls aged between 15 and 19 years, had increased by 7% from 2017 to 2018 reaching 29%. While child marriage did take place in Syria prior to the emergence of armed conflict, several factors have led to its prevalence following forced displacement to Lebanon. Such factors include safety issues following displacement, families’ worsening socio-economic situation, and families’ attempts to protect girls from sexual violence and harassment (Michael et al., 2018; Mourtada et al., 2017). Mourtada et al. (2017) found that the requirement that girls maintain their virginity until after marriage, thus maintaining their and their family’s honour, was one of the main reasons girls were married off young. Moreover, limited access to education was found to be both a consequence of child marriage and a contributor to it, and Michael et al. (2018) suggest that one of the most valuable ways to delay early marriage among girls is to ensure they continue their education. While child marriage is found among girls and boys, the consequences tend to be more severe for girls. Some consequences include giving birth at a young age and thus putting the mother’s life at risk, higher risk of intimate partner violence and other forms of SGBV, social isolation, and higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (Michael et al., 2018).

Child labour was also a problem. The minimum employment age under the Lebanese Labour Law is set at 14, with the minimum age for hazardous work set at 16. The Labour Law specifies that those between 14 and 18 are allowed to work a maximum of 7 hours a day, with an hour of rest after working for four hours. Moreover, while begging is criminalised under the Penal Code, Law 422 states that child beggars are ‘endangered’ and should be sent to juvenile protection facilities. However, due to shortages in juvenile protection facilities, child beggars are oftentimes sent to adult jails (Lewis, 2011).

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, child labour has increased both among Lebanese and among refugees in Lebanon, although exact numbers of children who work in the worst forms of child labour are unknown (Ministry of Labor, ILO, & National Steering Committee against Child Labour, 2013). The number of Lebanese working children has tripled between 2009 and 2016, increasing
from 1.9% to 6% (UNICEF, 2016). According to VARON 2017, 8% of Iraqi children and children of other nationalities\(^3\) aged between 6 and 17 years did not attend school due to work commitments. While VASyR 2018 found that 4.6% of Syrian children were working, other reports found that this number was much higher. One report found that 55% of children (4-18) living in informal settlements in the Beqaa Valley were engaged in child labour, three-quarters of whom were working in agriculture (AUB, FAO, ILO &UNICEF in UNHCR et al., 2018). Habib et al. (2019) provide an extensive and comprehensive account of child labour in Informal Tented Settlements in the Beqaa, which holds the largest number of refugees in Lebanon. 1,902 households were surveyed, including 4,377 working children between the ages of 4 and 18. Habib et al. (2019) found that 74.8% of the children surveyed were working in the agriculture sector, with an average starting age of 10.9 years. Only 18.3% of children were enrolled in school. Furthermore, 96.3% of 8 to 18 year-olds had never worked before moving to Lebanon. Girls were more likely to be exploited than boys, earning less than boys, and were less likely to enrol in school, to take time off work or receive their salaries on time. Moreover, Habib et al.’s (2019) data shows that girls worked longer in harsh weather conditions (cold or sun), were more likely to report health symptoms due to work, and took on more household duties than boys. 45.6% of working children reported being exposed to at least one form of physical or verbal abuse at work and 79 children knew another child who had died due to a work accident.

As for street and working children, a report by Ammar (2015) found that an estimated 1510 children were living or working on the streets in Lebanon in 2014. Almost 73% of Street Based Children (SBC) originated from Syria, whereas 10% were Lebanese, 8% Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, and the remaining children were either stateless or from other ethnic minorities. According to Ammar’s (2015) report, SBC mainly worked in urban centres, with 58% working in Greater Beirut. The most common types of work SBC engaged in were begging (43%) and street vending (37%) while the remaining 20% were engaged in work including shoe shining, labour services, portering, windshield cleaning, and prostitution, among others. Over two thirds of SBC in Lebanon were male. However, the proportion of female SBC was higher than that of males among the younger age groups (5-13 years old) but decreased significantly between the ages of 14 and 17 (16% females compared to 7% males). While over half of SBC in Lebanon were between the ages of 10 and 14 years, around 8% of SBC in Greater Beirut were below the age of 5 years. Children in that age group were mainly engaged in begging (92% begged independently, while 4% were infants carried by their mothers), followed by street vending and fortune telling. According to the report, 26% of 5-8-year-old children worked unaccompanied and 50% worked with their siblings. Moreover, it was more common for boys to work alone than for girls (46% compared to 23%), and as girls grew older, it became more common for mothers to accompany them as they worked. Furthermore, working hours ranged from 4 to 16 hours a day, with an average of 8.46 hours of work per day. Over half of

\(^3\) These include asylum seekers and refugees from countries other than Syria and Palestine who were living in Lebanon.
SBC worked everyday and over half engaged in night work between the hours of 7pm and 7am. 40% of SBC never enrolled in school, while 57% dropped out of school and only 3% were still attending school. 30% of children reported being involved in traffic accidents while working and 39% reported having to carry heavy loads. Moreover, 75% of SBC reported experiencing verbal harassment, 46% reported physical harassment, and 6% reported being subject to sexual abuse or rape while working.

1.3.4 Refugee children’s right to education

Diverse schools, institutions and educational programmes have been set up for refugee children in Lebanon as the refugee crisis has intensified over the years, however this provision has been fractured and unequally distributed. Published research and grey literature highlight different initiatives taken by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and other organisations in attempts to provide education for refugee children.

Throughout 2012, MEHE took a ‘hands-off’ approach to refugee education while local and international NGOs intervened to provide refugee children with informal educational opportunities (Buckner et al., 2017). However, in 2013 GoL shifted its policy deciding to ‘lead the educational response’ (p.452). In 2014, in line with the No Lost Generation (NLG)⁴ initiative, MEHE worked to develop the Reaching All Children with Education programme (RACE), ‘an official policy framework to the Syrian refugee crisis’ (Buckner et al., 2017, p.452) which was later amended and updated as RACE II (2017-2021) (MEHE, 2016). RACE I (2014-16) worked to improve Syrian refugees’ and underprivileged Lebanese children’s access to formal education. Second Shift afternoon sessions were opened in public schools for Syrian refugees and other non-Lebanese children, documentation requirements for school enrolment were waived for non-Lebanese children, and MEHE regulated non-formal education (NFE)⁵ programmes for children who did not qualify to enter into formal public schools (Shuayb et al., 2014). Nonetheless, many community-based organisations were still operating schools and providing informal education programmes in Lebanon ‘seemingly under the radar of the government’ (Buckner et al., 2017, p458).

One main success of RACE I was the increase in numbers of Syrian children aged 3-18 enrolled in public schools, from 18,780 students in 2011-12 to 141,722 students in 2015-

⁴ https://nolostgeneration.org/

⁵ NFEs are educational programmes outside formal education that provide children who have been out of school for a few years with support which will allow them to eventually reintegrate into formal schooling. NFE includes programmes such as Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) (10-18 years) and the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) that works to support children/adults (7-24 years old) who have been out of school for over two years in their transition back into formal education. For young children, NFE programmes include the Community-based Early Childhood Education programme (CB-ECE) (3-5 years old), and the Preparatory Early Childhood Education programme (Prep-ECE) (5-6 years old) while formal education provides children with Pre-primary education (3-5 years old).
However, this drastic increase in student numbers attending state schools severely strained the education system and led to many problems, including overcrowding and poor quality of education (World Bank, 2016). According to MEHE, ‘the magnitude of the Syrian refugee-influx significantly impacted the institutional capacities of an already-compromised Lebanese public education system’ (2016, p.6). MEHE notes that the Lebanese education system, which is severely underfunded, is slowly deteriorating. This can be linked to ‘dated approaches to pedagogy, unfa\v{v}ourable allocation of public resources to the education sector, low investment into education infrastructure and premises, and noticeably absent discourse towards investment in preprimary and post-primary education’ (p.6). As a result, children enrolled in Lebanese public schools receive a relatively low quality education.

This lack of access to high quality early education is particularly troubling in light of the EPPE/EPPSE project findings, which highlight the many and long-lasting benefits of effective preschool practice on young pre-school children in the UK, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Sylva et al., 2004; Taggart et al., 2015). In Lebanon, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is usually fee-paying and provided by the private sector, so children from high SES backgrounds tend to receive higher quality ECEC than those from low SES backgrounds (Faour, 2003). During the academic year 2016-2017, around 60% of young children in preschool attended private preschools while around 27% and 13% attended public and semi-private\(^{6}\) preschools respectively (Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP), 2017). Public schools in Lebanon tend to be perceived as providers of lower quality education than private schools, with many under-qualified teachers. The limited budget attributed to MEHE has led to increased recruitment of ‘contractual teachers’ who receive low benefits, low employment security, and are less qualified than tenured teachers, as only a ‘basic degree’ is required (MEHE, 2016). According to the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies (2006), preschool education in Lebanon, particularly in the public sector, faces many problems including lack of qualified teachers (in 2006, less than 30.6% of pre-school teachers held appropriate degrees to teach young children), inadequate spaces, buildings and educational aids for young children, lack of coherence and efficacy in implementing the curricula. These problems extend into primary and secondary school. Hoteit (2006) notes that around half of preschools in Lebanon do not have a playground where children can play outdoors, and teachers fear taking their students outside school premises due to the lack of pavements and safe street crossings, and to Lebanese drivers’ lack of adherence to road signs and traffic lights.

Despite MEHE’s efforts to increase the number of children enrolled in school, the scale of the refugee crisis is such that less than half of Syrian children in Lebanon attend any form of schooling. UNHCR et al. (2018) report that only 68% of 6-14 year old Syrian children,

\(^{6}\) Children from low income families who cannot access public schools can enrol in semi-private schools and the GoL subsidizes half their tuition fees.
23% of 15-17 year olds and 20% of 3-5 year olds are enrolled in formal schooling, as compared to around 84% of 3-5 year old Lebanese children enrolled in pre-school (World Bank, 2016). According to the Ministry of Health website (the authority responsible for nurseries in Lebanon, not MEHE) only 446 licenced nurseries were available across Lebanon for children between the ages of 40 days and 3 years (Ministry of Public Health, 2019), and it is estimated that around two-thirds of nurseries in Lebanon are unlicensed (Lebanese Examiner, 2015). Hoteit (2017) posits that the shortage in licensed nurseries, and recent accidents that have led to deaths and injuries in unlicensed nurseries have driven mothers to care for their own young children with significant reliance on the help of family members.

Similarly, according to UNHCR's (2018b) VARON 2017 report, only 67% of Iraqi children in Lebanon between 6 and 17 years of age attended school in 2017, with 76% of Iraqi 6-14 year olds attending school compared to 32% of 15-17 year olds and only 24% of 3-5 year olds attending preschool. However, there is a significant difference between these numbers and those provided by MEHE (reported in UNHCR, 2018b), which in 2016 found only 16% of Iraqi children and children of other nationalities7 of primary school age were attending school. These different accounts arise since MEHE only took into consideration children who were attending formal schooling, while VARON 2017 included children who were attending non-formal forms of schooling in its calculations (UNHCR, 2018b).

Although only approximately 20% of 3-5 year old Syrian children attended preschool in Lebanon (UNHCR et al., 2018), this percentage is in line with 2009 reports of 3-5 year-olds’ preschool attendance in Syria prior to the onset of armed conflict in 2011. According to El-Kogali and Krafft (2015), only 17% of 3-5 year old children attended preschool in Syria in 2009 (6% of 3-year-olds and 30% of 5-year-olds). Moreover, only 3% of Iraqi 3-4 year olds and 7% of 5-6 year olds attended preschool in Iraq during 2011 (El-Kogali & Krafft, 2015). Parental education, level of wealth, location and accessibility had significant impacts on children’s preschool attendance. In addition, according to El-Kogali and Krafft (2015), violent discipline was very commonly used in Iraq and Syria, not only in schools but also within families. They note that 77% (in 2011) and 85% (in 2006) of 2-5 year old children had been subject to violent discipline in Iraq and Syria respectively. MEHE (2016) reports suggest that these practices continue in Lebanon, with many incidences of children who have experienced ‘multiple and persistent displacement and violence’ (p.9) experiencing corporal punishment and bullying whilst in Lebanese schools, suggesting that these patterns of child rights violations are persisting rather than changing.

Available documentation reports poor relationships between schools and families in public and semi-private schools (MEHE, 2016). While parents can discuss their children’s wellbeing and

---

7 These include asylum seekers and refugees from countries other than Syria and Palestine who were living in Lebanon.
academic progress with public schools’ administration and staff, there is no formal requirement for schools to inform parents about their children’s development (MEHE, 2016). MEHE (2016) reports that children from poorer communities tend to lack support systems from parents and caregivers, and these ‘unsupportive school and home environments are often hidden causes for dropout and low learning achievement’ (p.9). This has also been reported for Lebanese children attending public schools (Shaito, 2013). In some cases, Syrian parents of refugee children do not own a phone, an email address or even a home address where they could be contacted by the school in case of emergency (Hamadeh, 2018).

This section has introduced an element of rights to the study’s conceptual framework. It has provided a critical analysis of the UNCRC, questioning the indivisibility and interdependence of rights, the Western origins and assumptions inherent in UNCRC, and the tensions that arise between anti-paternalistic and paternalistic features of the UNCRC. While Lebanon has ratified the UNCRC, political and economic factors drive it not to conform to the UNCRC. Moreover, where laudable efforts have been made by MEHE to increase school attendance for all children, these efforts have fallen short and have reached less than half of all refugee children. Therefore, while lack of adherence to the UNCRC has consequences for all children in Lebanon, Iraqi and Syrian children are at a particular disadvantage as their irregular status puts their rights as children into question. This is further exemplified in the violation of children’s rights to food, shelter, protection and participation, in addition to their right to education.

1.4 Play

Although play has been observed and researched from diverse perspectives across disciplines and through different theoretical lenses, it does not have a mutually agreed, clear definition, and Moyles notes ‘we do not seem any nearer to comprehending or valuing it’ (2012, p.1). Play varies in meaning across contexts, culture, and time (Cohen, 2006), and close connection between play and learning has been explored over the years through the work of key ‘play pioneers’ who continue to influence Early Years Education to this day (e.g. Friedrich Froebel, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and Susan Isaacs), and through more recent work (e.g. EPPE/EPPSE). Developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget have viewed play as related to ages and stages on a developmental trajectory, from which perspective, any difference or diversity in play tends to be viewed as deviance from the ‘norm’. Vygotsky offers a social conceptualisation of play, and this has had profound resonance on the development of theories about play and learning, learning through play and the beneficial effects of play (e.g. Rogoff, 1990; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Socio-cultural perspectives on play are in line with Froebelian Principles which lie at the core of this study and which emphasize the indispensable benefits of play for children, and the relationship between the child, family, community, culture and society (Froebel, 1887). Socio-cultural perspectives on play are also in line with the new sociology of childhood (James et al., 1998; Matthews, 2007; Mayall, 1994; Qvortrup, 2009) as they consider play an important and complex socially organised
practice that is meaningful in its own right, not just for children’s educational outcomes (Wood, 2010). In line with contemporary early childhood policy, research and education, UNCRC Article 31 recognises the ‘right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’ (United Nations, 1989). As play is such a wide-ranging field of enquiry, this review focuses on those aspects that are most relevant to the present study, focusing on play as a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon. This section reflects critically on literature around the role of play, and the place of play theories in the study’s conceptual framework. It begins by discussing definitions, values and purposes of play, followed by an overview of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of play. Next, literature on diverse social and cultural elements that shape play in different communities are analysed, including parents’ views on play and gender. The discussion ends by considering literature on factors that negatively affect play.

1.4.1 Definition, value and purpose of play

Despite the many theoretical perspectives that positively endorse play, there is still debate and ambiguity surrounding the definition, value and purposes of play (Sutton-Smith, 2001; Wood, 2013). Sutton-Smith (2001) proposes that this may be due to there being multiple kinds of play and players: ‘infant, preschool, childhood, adolescent, and adult players’ (p.5), and because different academic disciplines have diverse play interests. Play has been described as a ‘natural language’ for children (Jones, 2005, p.139) as ranging from being imitative in nature, where copying and repetition are key characteristics, to being pretend in nature, where creativity is central (Andersen-Warren & Grainger, 2000). Pellegrini (1991) notes that children freely choose to take part in play and make up their own rules. Courtney (1988) adds that play is spontaneous, that children can become fully immersed in it, and that children want and need to play. Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl (1999) posit that play is influenced and shaped by social and cultural norms and expectations. Parents, siblings and teachers teach children how to play, teach children through play, and support children’s play, which inevitably shapes the ways that children’s play unfolds and develops.

Numerous studies reveal the importance of play on a child’s academic and learning outcomes (Fjortoft, 2004; Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk, & Singer, 2009; Wood, 2013) and suggest than in preschool, implementing a play pedagogy is more effective in promoting children’s learning than direct instruction (Weisberg et al., 2013). While it is recognised that play supports children’s intellectual, social, emotional and physical development, evidence suggests that diverse types of play lead to the development of different learning dispositions and skills (Wood, 2013). Free play, where a child is not guided by adults but instead makes independent choices about what and how to play, is thought to be more effective at advancing children’s cognitive development than organized physical activity (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005). Free play allows scope for the development of gross motor skills and promotes the child’s engagement in fantasy play, role-play, and the construction and manipulation of objects, all of which contribute to the improvement of one’s cognitive development, attention, and social skills (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005). Free play is thought
to improve children’s socio-emotional development in addition to their language and literacy development (Weisberg et al., 2013). Moreover, the complexity of socio-dramatic play which involves imaginary scenarios, roles and characters encourages symbolic action and representational thinking (Broadhead, 2004) while social cooperation, creativity and flexibility are developed through outdoor play and the use of everyday objects in play (Brown, 2003). Free play may improve children’s emotional wellbeing by reducing anxiety, aggression, depression and sleeping problems (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005). Play is also often used as a therapeutic tool with children and adults, as it allows the player to take risks within a safe space. For example, Blatner and Blatner refer to ‘a fluid dimension’ in psychodrama, where an individual feels safe to take creative risks during play in a therapeutic space (1988, p.78). Jones adds that in art therapy, the therapist creates ‘a space and an opportunity for this playful state to emerge’ (2005, p.136).

After reviewing key themes from play literature proposed by theorists and researchers, Bruce (1991, 2017, 2020) groups these themes into ‘the twelve features of play’ which resonate with Froebelian principles (Werth, 2018). These features, which focus on ‘free-flow’ play are: play draws on real experiences; children keep control by making, breaking, challenging or changing rules in play; play is a process with no products, and children create and adapt props as they play, using creativity and imagination; children cannot be forced to play, they choose to play and, when the conditions are right, play emerges, then flows and is sustained; in their play, children can rehearse possible pasts or futures; through play, children can pretend, and create alternatives to the way things are, have been and could be, moving from the literal to the abstract; solitary play is important; children play with other children and with adults in pairs or in groups; children concentrate deeply in free-flow play and cannot be easily distracted; in play, children try out skills and competences they have recently learned; and play is an integrating mechanism which allows for creativity, problem-solving, imagination, flexibility and innovation. Bruce’s (1991, 2017, 2020) twelve features point to the richness and undeniable importance of play for children. They highlight the significance of both solitary and group play, of props for play in addition to the importance of imagination to create new meanings for objects, children’s capacity to recreate both literal and abstract themes in play, and their capacity to integrate and develop diverse rich skills in play. Keeping in mind Froebel’s principle of the important relationship between the child, the family, the school and the community, play cannot be studied separately from a child’s society and culture. As Göncü, Tuermer, Jain, and Johnson (1999) emphasize, ‘an adequate examination of children’s play in a given community can be accomplished only by taking into account the unique cultural milieu in which play is embedded’ (p.152). In contexts of conflict and displacement, children’s play which is shaped by their cultural milieu is also limited or negatively affected by factors including trauma, lack of play resources, break-up of families and communities, and lack of access to schools and routine. These factors are addressed and discussed further in Section 1.4.3.
1.4.2 Sociocultural theories of play

Froebel, whose thinking and writing precedes the publication of Vygotsky’s work (1930, 1966, 1978, 1986), considers play to be the highest form of learning as it promotes children’s holistic development (Brown, 2012). According to Froebel (in Lilley, 1967), ‘play is never trivial; it is serious and deeply significant’ (p.84) and is ‘the highest level of child development’ (p.83). Froebel considers childhood to be a phase of life which is important in and of itself, and considers the family to be the first and most important educator in a child’s life, with the school as a community which forms links with the home (Bruce, 1997). His work recognises that children and adults learn from each other, and that adults can ‘support and extend children’s play’ (ibid, p.23). Therefore, Froebel promotes the interconnection of freedom and guidance in play (Bruce, 2015), for while he encourages free, creative and spontaneous play, he also believes in the importance of guidance in play for children to reach their full potential (Werth, 2018).

In line with Froebel, Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the social dimension of play and views play as important in and of itself. Vygotsky notes that play has a fundamental impact on all areas of a child’s development and that ‘the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour. In play, it is as if he were a head taller than himself’ (Vygotsky, 1978, p.102). Vygotsky’s work draws attention to how children recreate events from real life in an imaginary situation through pretend play, trying out skills and social roles that they have not yet fully grasped (Vygotsky, 1978). Development from a Vygotskian perspective occurs in a social matrix, through relationships and social interactions with other children and adults. As such, children first learn ‘interpersonally’ from parents, society and peers, and then ‘intrapersonally’, within themselves, leading to metacognition (p.57). Neo-Vygotskian work has developed these theories, seeing play as a ‘leading activity’ for learning (Leont’ev, 2009), and paying attention to the important role played by adults and peers in ‘scaffolding’ children’s learning (Wood et al., 1976) and in ‘guided participation’ (Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff et al., 1993). Children can do a lot more through collective activity and/or when guided by adults, as scaffolding allows children to reach their full potential and to advance within the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD), which is

‘the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky, 1978, pp.85–86).

From here, it can be deduced that children who are separated from guiding adults and peers for reasons including displacement, death, poverty, or children’s exclusion from society are restricted from advancing within the ZPD.

While play is considered beneficial for all children’s development and learning, research shows that play is culturally and socially constructed (Brooker, 2011), and is seen as a tool children use to
construct knowledge that is socially and culturally contextualised (Wood, 2010). As Kirova (2010) notes:

‘Culture, therefore, is not an “add-on” to a universal play activity but, rather, the origin of what children do in play, the cultural tools they use in mastering social roles and skills, and the ways in which they appropriate a particular cultural activity with its developmental functions that may vary within, as well as across, cultures’ (p.80).

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) also notes that the most powerful cultural tool that children use to change themselves is language. Through language, children can better understand themselves and their surroundings, and can help develop each other’s learning. Nicholson et al. (2015) posit that power relations are played out using language while Gee (1999, p.68) argues that language in itself is ‘constitutive of, specific social practices and […] social practices always have implications for inherently political things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods, and power’.

A socio-cultural lens therefore does not view play as important solely for children’s development, growth and future outcomes, but as a fundamentally important socially organised practice in and of itself.

1.4.2.1 Play, culture, and society

With important exceptions (Göncü et al., 2000; Kinkead-Clark, 2017; Rogoff, 2003; Whiting, 1963) most research on the value of children’s play has been undertaken by researchers in Minority World countries, particularly in North America, Europe, and Australia, or more specifically in WEIRD societies (Henrich et al., 2010). Much of this work is of questionable relevance to different cultures and communities around the world (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Kinkead-Clark & Hardacre, 2017). Cross-cultural studies have demonstrated how communities may have different understandings of play (Göncü et al., 2000), how adults, mainly parents, support and nurture children’s play (Whiting, 1963), and how children practise play in different communities (Kinkead-Clark & Hardacre, 2017).

Whiting’s (1963) study Six Cultures: Studies of Child Rearing, which was conducted in the USA, the Philippines, Mexico, Japan, India and Kenya, found that the way in which parents engage with their children during play differs from one culture to the next. Similarly, Göncü et al. (2000) researched the social play of toddlers by analysing data from a larger study by Rogoff et al. (1993). The larger study was based on semi-structured interviews and observations with 14 families with toddlers (12-24 months old) in San Pedro (Guatemala), Keçiören (Turkey), Dhol-Ki-Patti (India), and Salt Lake City (United States). Göncü et al. (2000) found significant differences in children’s social play, including differences in the children’s play partners (whether parents acted as playmates or not, who parents deemed appropriate for their children to play with, and the number of family and non-family play partners) and types of play they engaged in depending on the value attributed to that type of play within each community. In another study, through observations of 60 Yucatec Mayan children (1-17 years old) in Mexico, Gaskins (2000) illustrated that child development was
considered internal, ongoing, continuous and gradual, something that 'comes out by itself' (p.380). Parents were not concerned with 'monitoring children’s developmental progress nor with structuring experiences to improve or hasten it' (p.380). Children were allowed high levels of independence, and Gaskins found that children almost never experienced adult intervention in their play as parents did not consider play important for development. Parents valued play as a means to get 'children out of the way' while they got work done and as evidence of the children’s good health (p.385). Children found opportunities to play throughout their day as they went about their daily routines, and they did so with little interference from adults.

Recent studies have shown that work seems to play a central role in childhoods within the Majority World, and while work is sometimes detrimental for children's wellbeing, it can often have both positive and negative impacts on children (Boyden et al., 1998; Connolly & Ennew, 1996; Woodhead, 1998). That being said, Punch (2003) contends that literature around childhood in the Majority World tends to neglect children’s play while focusing largely on their work. Studies that do look into children’s play in Majority World countries have found that children’s play coincides with work, daily tasks and education (Gaskins, 2000; Katz, 2004; Punch, 2003; Rogoff et al., 1993). Katz's (2004) longitudinal ethnographic study with Sudanese children (from 10 years old to early adulthood) growing up in Howa, Sudan found that:

‘Play and work were intertwined in the time-space of children's everyday lives in Howa with deep resonances between the two. An element of play was almost fused with the work of children— they worked at play and played at work— temporally, metaphorically, and imaginatively. They worked while they played and played while they worked, they worked around their play and they played in the interstices of their work, they participated in tasks that were playful and play that was "workful," and they engaged in play activities whose focus was work’ (Katz, 2004, p.60).

Katz notes that the children who were involved in agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, and housework, acquired environmental knowledge and practiced their skills through play, rhymes, riddles and work. Play was widespread among children especially when they worked together. Katz found that the boys who herded together experienced adventures, played and formed strong bonds as they worked whereas those who worked alone tended to miss out on these play and friendship opportunities.

Furthermore, research shows that children explore the societies and relationships in their lives through play (Kinkead-Clark, 2017; Long, 2013). Examples of such play vary greatly depending on children’s environments and relationships. Omer (2006) provides the example of Palestinian children in Gaza, who had lived through five years of warfare, playing a popular game they called "Jews and Arabs," "Army versus Militants," or "Settlers and Villagers". In their play, the children took on roles of Israeli occupation soldiers, Palestinians who were being harassed and bullied at checkpoints, or resistance fighters who fought against the Israeli army, reflecting relationships and
events the children had experienced or been exposed to in their everyday lives. Omer offers the following description of the children’s play:

‘Khalil Abed, 13, from the opposing team of resistance fighters, quickly ran out of ammunition and was “captured”. Soon, the “Israelis” ordered him to undress and lie on the ground, where he was blindfolded’ (Omer, 2006, p.24).

The children also played out other real-life situations including ‘ambulance drivers pleading to pass a checkpoint to save the life of a critically ill patient; or civilians telling the soldiers in vain of their lost relatives, their lost land’ (Omer, 2006, p.24).

1.4.2.2 Play and gender

Cultural, social, economic and political variables affect ‘children’s opportunity to create time-spaces for play’ (Lester & Russell, 2010, p.33). One such example can be seen in the construction and enactment of gendered identities in play (Martin, 2011; Lester & Russell, 2010). Several studies have found that parents place greater restrictions on girls’ movement outside the home than on boys’ movement (Addabbo et al., 2014; Gosso et al., 2007; Kinkead-Clark & Hardacre, 2017; Marshall, 2015; Mayall, 2002; Morrow, 2006; Thorne, 1993). Lester and Russell (2010) note that restrictions on girls’ outdoor play tend to be linked to cultural expectations, safety concerns, and to girls’ household responsibilities. Historically, girls in Jamaica were expected to remain at home and do housework while only boys were allowed to play outdoors. In some Jamaican families, girls are still not allowed to play games that lead to their clothes getting dirty or to their skin being bruised or tanned from the sun (Kinkead-Clark & Hardacre, 2017). Engaging in cross-cultural conversations about their individual ethnographic studies on play in the UK and Jamaica (observations, semi-structured interviews, field notes and collection of play artefacts), Kinkead-Clark and Hardacre (2017) discussed how boys in Jamaica are punished for playing games that are closely related to stereotypical girl play or behaviour and vice versa.

However, this pattern is neither static nor constant, and variations between children in the same gender group may be as great as across genders (Lester & Russell, 2010). The freedom of movement that boys and girls have is dependent on diverse factors, and children find individual approaches to negotiating access in their everyday lives (Punch, 2003). Valentine’s (1997) research suggests that although girls have traditionally been perceived as being more at risk than boys in public spaces, parents’ views of gender and siblings are more multifaceted and contradictory than previously thought. Valentine (1997) argues that while girls tend to be perceived as more capable of ‘negotiating public space safely than boys’, boys are considered ‘increasingly vulnerable to violence from peers and adolescents’ (p.57). In a study conducted with 10-13 year old Palestinian children living in a refugee camp in the West Bank, Marshall (2015) illustrates how girls and boys ‘make sense of and resist […] intersecting forms of power – both the occupation and internal social hierarchies and inequalities – in their everyday lives’ (p.192). This study found that the restriction of space caused by the Israeli occupation and displacement created a lack of privacy, leading to
increased restriction of girls’ mobility. Restrictions on girls were however relaxed when the political situation was calmer, which ‘suggests a relationship between political instability and familial insecurity that manifests itself in terms of tighter restrictions on girls’ mobility’ (p.196). Girls found the streets to be threatening because of the congregation of older male youths and due to ‘the threat of familial shame’ (p.196). Young boys’ mobility and access to space was also restricted by older youths and by irritated neighbours and relatives who chased them out of alleys and other public spaces. The streets were not ‘spaces of carefree play and freedom’, but were ‘depicted as a volatile site that must be constantly negotiated and defended’ (p.198). Girls, who were mainly confined to the home, took advantage of their situation by focusing on their studies, pushing parents to invest more in girls’ education than in that of boys.

1.4.3 Factors that negatively affect play, and play as recovery

Given the weight of research evidence suggesting that play is indispensable for young children, factors that negatively affect play, and thus impede the many benefits that play has to offer in the context of conflict and displacement, should be addressed. Children exposed to conflict endure grave violations of their rights. Children are in danger of being harmed and/or killed from direct exposure to war and from indirect effects of war such as malnutrition and disease, and problems related to water, sanitation and physical and psychological healthcare. As a result, children’s physical health, education, and psychosocial wellbeing are threatened (Barenbaum et al., 2004; Machel, 2001; Sommers, 2002; Wessels & Kostelny, 1996). The impact of their exposure to conflict on their cognitive and psychosocial wellbeing may be long lasting and profound (Dubrow & Garbarino, 1989; Kalksma-Van Lith, 2007; Wessels & Monteiro, 2004). This section discusses literature on the negative effects of trauma, fear, lack of play resources and lack of schooling and routine on children’s play, which often accompany exposure to conflict and displacement. It also considers how play can be part of the process of recovery.

Khamis (2019) investigated the prevalence of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and emotion dysregulation among 1000 Syrian refugee children (7-18 years old) who resettled to Lebanon and Jordan. She found that 45.6% of children who had been subjected to war traumas developed PTSD, but children who had been living in their new host country for longer lengths of time had significantly lower levels of PTSD and emotion dysregulation. PTSD was more prevalent among children in Lebanon than among children in Jordan, even when the children had been there for similar lengths of time. This may be due to ‘post-resettlement stressors’ in Lebanon such as discrimination and lack of support, the security, legal and economic problems they faced, in addition to the particularly difficult living conditions forced upon ‘displaced’ persons in Lebanon (Khamis, 2019, p.36). van der Kolk (1989) notes that ‘traumatization occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat’ (p.393). The damage is not necessarily caused by the trauma itself but by the way the child or adult’s body and mind react to the experience of trauma together with how the individual’s social circle reacts to support the individual or not (Bloom, 1999). Thus, trauma has different impacts on different children (Landers, 1998).
Bloom (1999) suggests that for healing to occur, people often need to put their experiences into words and share them with others and themselves. Since many young children’s verbal skills are still developing, it may be difficult for them to express their experiences through words. Instead, they tend to act out these thoughts and memories through their behaviour (James, 1994). This includes ‘re-experiencing the event’ (nightmares, re-enactment, repetitive play), ‘avoidance and numbing’ (not engaging in activities previously enjoyed), ‘physiological arousal’ (irritability, sleep disturbance, excessive alertness to danger), ‘becoming aggressive’, ‘becoming clingy’ to guardians, developmental regression, and becoming fearful of new things (Trickey & Black, 2012, p.1728). While some children might recover without professional intervention, others do not.

Children also exhibit their thoughts and memories through play, as ‘their natural medium of communication’ (Landreth, 2012, p.9). Tolfree (1996) finds that play is a helpful indicator of a child’s wellbeing; the problems that children face in their lives are represented in the content of their play, and the extent of the impact of these experiences on their lives is revealed in the ways in which they play. Landers (1998) proposes that trauma changes the quality of play in multiple ways. The range of some children’s play activities may become restricted. Moreover, while children try to come to terms with their traumatic experiences and to understand the violence they have lived or witnessed through repetitive play (Levin, 2003), this repetition ‘may become stereotypical, limited and limiting’ (Lester and Russell, 2010, p.11), and when play becomes ‘ritualistic repetition’ it lacks playfulness and joy (Paksuniemi, Määttä, & Uusiautti, 2015, p.115). Terr (1981) argues that such repetition may lead to increased aggravation instead of providing relief or lowering anxiety caused by a traumatic event.

Additionally, traumatised children’s play is frequently dark and despondent, with little organisation or elaboration, often with distressing themes that are played out but are not resolved through play. While Kaplan (2000) notes that imagination is a crucial resource for children to survive during times of armed conflict, Terr (1981) finds that the play of traumatised children is inclined to be more literal and ‘far less elaborate than the imaginative play of non-traumatized children’ (p.746). Landers (1998) suggests that this might be because their developmental processes have been interrupted and this may delay their capacities for symbolic representation. It may also be due to the disruption in their early relationships, which would limit children’s ability to use resources or transitional objects to symbolize important people and experiences. Another impact of war and trauma on children’s play is that it may cause them to stop playing (Hyder, 2005; Landers, 1998). Tolfree (1996) argues that children who are ‘unable’ to play are most at risk, for the absence of play indicates the magnitude of the impact which events have had on their lives and limits them from benefiting from the developmental and healing properties of play. In such cases, therapists intervene and try to progress and support children’s play by helping children become aware of their feelings and express them, be empowered, reduce anxiety and fear, control their anger, and improve their problem-solving abilities and self-control (Dripchak, 2007).
Burdette and Whitaker (2005) argue that, similar to research findings with adults and older children that has identified the positive impact of physical activity on emotional wellbeing, free play may positively affect young children’s emotional wellbeing by reducing aggression, depression, anxiety and sleep problems. According to Lester and Russell (2010), play may offer a ‘time-space’ where children can establish predictability and structure, which helps them cope with the disturbances in their environment and life. Therefore, under the right circumstances, play can help with trauma. However, lack of access to play resources such as spaces for play, people to play with and toys to play with, limits children’s play. Punch (2003) recognises that ‘[c]hildren’s culture is closely related to the surrounding environment, which dictates the spaces where they play, the materials which they use and their access to recreational resources’ (p.287). MacMillan, Ohan, Cherian, and Mutch (2015) suggest that providing resettled refugee children with play opportunities may improve the quality and quantity of their play and facilitate their resettlement. However, Cohen and Gadassi (2018) note that this is not as simple as it may seem since play spaces and playgrounds in warzones and host countries may have been destroyed, may be scarce, or may not be safe for children. Moreover, armed conflict and displacement forcefully separate refugees from family members and friends, whether as a result of death or of displacement (Hopkins & Hill, 2008), and break up communities and social circles, limiting who children can play with. Even when residing in the host country, and even when children are born into displaced families, both adult and child refugees tend to be isolated from their surrounding community. When it comes to toys, displacement and policy structures set up in host countries tend to perpetuate poverty, making it difficult for parents to provide children with toys and play materials. However, Atkinson (2007) who conducted fieldwork in Kala refugee camp in Zambia to study Congolese children’s everyday lives in the camp, found that the children who had very limited spaces and materials for play created and assigned meanings to their own toys. Some examples of the toys are footballs made out of rags bound with plastic and with string, guns made with straw and string, and dolls made from cloth or clay.

Moreover, Hyder (2005) suggests that the restoration of play, routine and order in the lives of children who have experienced trauma, along with support from their families and communities, may allow children to begin to recover from their difficult experiences. Abdunnur and Hartley (2007) depict how drama workshops that were held for internally displaced children during the 2006 war in Lebanon provided those children with fun activities, a sense of purpose, structure, and promoted their self-expression, helping them to heal from their war experiences. In line with Rivera et al. (2008) and Sarmiento and Cardemil (2009), Khamis found that Syrian children from families that promoted ‘free expression of feelings’ had lower levels of PTSD and emotion dysregulation than children from non-supportive families. Masten and Narayan (2012) also note that ‘[t]he buffering effect of proximity to parents and other attachment figures for children in the midst of terrifying experiences is one of the most enduring findings in the literature on war and other life-threatening disasters’ (p.229). Moreover, children who had positive perceptions of their school environment were inclined to have lower levels of emotion dysregulation than those with negative perceptions.
Research has also emphasized the importance of school for refugee children’s psychosocial adjustment (Hamilton, 2004). Therefore, the restoration of routine in the daily lives of children and their families, by providing children with opportunities to go to school, to socialise and play, by supporting religious and cultural practices, reconnecting the child and family with the community, and providing supportive play therapy when needed, is crucial for the wellbeing of children who have experienced war and displacement (Barber, 2009; Franks, 2011; Masten & Osofsky, 2010).

1.5 Liminality

Lebanese policies that regulate the lives of ‘temporarily displaced’ persons and violate children’s rights exacerbate the liminal state of refugee children (Section 1.3.2). Originating in the field of anthropology, the concept of liminality refers to situations of ‘in-between-ness’ where established structures are broken down, hierarchies reversed, and traditional places of authority endangered (Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960). Turner draws heavily on van Gennep’s (1960) analytic framework which notes that transitions give way to rites of passage that consist of three stages: separation (pre-liminal), whereby an individual or group is detached from ‘a state’ such as a social structure or a cultural position; transition (liminal) rites whereby the ‘passenger’ is in an ambiguous state and passes through a realm that has nothing or very little in common with either past or future states; and incorporation (post-liminal) through re-entry and re-integration into the everyday world (van Gennep, 1960). Turner’s (1969) sole focus was on the liminal stage, the stage where one is ‘betwixt and between’, presented with a ‘moment in and out of time’ (p.69), where one’s sense of identity disintegrates leading to disorientation, but at the same time allowing for the emergence of new opportunities and perspectives (Apergi, 2014). According to Turner (1982), during the period of transition, which is also referred to as margin or limen (van Gennep, 1960), the ‘ritual subject’ experiences a period of ambiguity, a ‘social limbo’ which carries with it very few characteristics of either past or future cultural statuses and social standings. When going through a rite of passage, people can find themselves ‘in a limbo that was not any place they were in before and not yet any place they would be in’ (Turner, 1988, p.25). While Turner’s theory evolved by studying rituals of the Ndembu people in Zambia, his theories seem apt to conceptualise the lives of refugee children in Lebanon.

The concept of liminality has been brought into dialogue with empirical research in the field of refugee studies. For example several references have been made to refugees in camps living in ‘limbo’ (Bousquet, 1987; Kunz, 1973; Malkki, 1995), where refugees are ‘in, but not of’ the societies that host them (Bauman, 2000) and are ‘at the spiritual, spatial, temporal, and emotional equidistant no-man’s-land of midway-to-nowhere’ (Kunz 1973, p.133). Asylum seekers, who have been excluded from ordinary life experiences through exclusionary practices, have also been described as occupying a liminal state, one where they are ‘betwixt and between’, since they have left their home country but are not yet accepted in their host country. They are invisible as individuals, but
are homogenised into a group that is perceived as ‘threatening and potentially dangerous’ (Hynes 2011, p.31). As such, ‘asylum seekers are simultaneously everywhere and nowhere – imagined as a “community” (Anderson, 1991) yet “outside” mainstream society’ (Hynes 2011, p.31).

Critiquing the notion of liminality, Johnson-Hanks (2002) argues that while van Gennep emphasises the ‘totalizing transformations that move people from one named status to another, […] liminal states between stable statuses are rare’ (p.865). She argues that the most important events in a person’s life, such as migration or marriage, ‘are instead negotiable and contested, fraught with uncertainty, innovation, and ambivalence’ (p.865). While van Gennep differentiates between the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal states, literature on refugee studies has questioned this clear-cut distinction between the three stages. That is, people who have been forcibly displaced have often experienced marginalisation and exclusion linked to ‘intersecting and overlapping identity markers’ (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017, p. 1) and different power structures (see 1.2.3.1) long before the emergence of armed conflict and consequent forced displacement. For example, Bousquet (1987) describes ‘the state of limbo’ experienced by Vietnamese refugees living in closed camps in Hong Kong, where adult refugees considered their status within the camp ‘as only a continuation of their status in Vietnam as outcasts excluded from normal life’ (p.36) and viewed their lives as refugees as a ‘continuation of a long process of alienation which had started in Vietnam before they made their escape into the international refugee system’ (p. 52).

Furthermore, research shows that asylum and resettlement do not necessarily lead to a post-liminal state. Kerbage et al. (2020) found that many Syrian refugees in Lebanon considered resettlement to countries including Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Sweden as the only ‘true and definite’ solution to their mental health and social problems in Lebanon, and as the ‘only outcome that granted them [and their children] a future’ (p.9). However, while resettlement may be the only feasible solution to their problems, ‘integrating into a host state, resettlement state, or country of origin may equally lead to new or repeated forms of exclusion and marginalization’ (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014, p.406). One example is that of resettled Muslim refugee women who are veiled and may experience both ‘new forms of discrimination’ such as racism and Islamophobia, and may continue to live under patriarchal structures (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014, p.406).

1.5.1 Liminality and childhood

Liminality can be applied to single individuals, larger social groups such as minorities or cohorts, or to entire societies and possibly even civilisations (Thomassen, 2009). Liminality can also be applicable to time and space:

‘Single moments, longer periods, or even whole epochs can be liminal. Liminal places can be specific thresholds; they can also be more extended areas, like “borderlands” or, arguably, whole countries, placed in important in-between positions between larger civilizations’ (Thomassen, 2009, p.16).
Thomassen, (2009) posits that while the temporal and spatial dimensions of liminality are clearly defined in anthropology, where members of society are aware that they are in a liminal state and know that it is temporary and that they will be leaving this state at some point in the future, this is not the case for societies that are affected by a ‘collapse’ of order. For Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, ‘the future is inherently unknown’ (Thomassen, 2009, p.22) and individuals do not know if, when or how they will be able to leave the liminal state they find themselves in. Liminality in ritual passages is followed by the critical passage of re-integration. However, when larger societies experience liminality with no end in sight to their current situation of in-between-ness, and when reintegration is far from assured, then refugees may find themselves in a state of ‘permanent liminality’ (Turner, 1969, p.145).

1.5.1.1 The ‘invisible’ and ‘polluting’ child refugee

Little, Jordens, Paul, Montgomery and Philipson (1998) suggest that when one is going through the experience of a potentially life-threatening illness, liminality is experienced in two stages: the direct stage of acute liminality, and the long-term and continuing stage of sustained liminality. During the stage of acute liminality, a person may experience intense fear and diminishing control, whereas during the stage of sustained liminality, fear tends to decrease and some sense of control returns. Just as acute and chronic illness such as cancer can bring uncertainty and disorientation into one’s life, where a person can go back and forth between the states of ‘acute’ and ‘sustained liminality’ (Little et al., 1998, pp.1492-3), so these concepts can be used to understand the refugee experience.

Shuayb et al.’s (2016) study can be usefully re-interpreted using the theory of liminality to exemplify how children’s rights and political status can either facilitate refugee children’s escape from their liminal state, or can keep them locked in a state of sustained liminality. Shuayb et al. (2016) researched the schooling experience of Syrian children in Lebanon and Germany and found that enrolment rates in school were impacted by the Syrian children’s political status in the host country and by rights offered to them. While Syrian children in Germany considered their presence there to be a new start in life where they could build better futures for themselves, moving from a state of liminality to re-incorporation, those in Lebanon thought of their presence there as being temporary, operating in ‘survival mode’, prioritising survival over other rights such as education (Shuayb et al., 2016), thus prolonging the liminal state (see Section 1.3.4).

Turner (1967) argues that liminal beings are structurally, and perhaps even physically, ‘invisible’ (p.95), describing liminal subjects as ‘at once no longer classified and not yet classified’ (p.96) and their condition as being ‘one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories’ (p.97). This is particularly relevant in the case of refugees fleeing to Lebanon, a country which is not signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, and therefore considers all those who seek refuge in Lebanon to be ‘temporarily displaced’ persons rather than ‘refugees’ (see Section 1.3.2). Denying refugee status to those who are ‘temporarily displaced’ redefines immigrant
populations (both children and adults) as illegal immigrants who are therefore liable to arrest and deportation, and severely curtails their access to essential resources such as health, welfare and education (Chaaban et al., 2013; Sassoon, 2009). Turner further concurs with Douglas’ (1966) proposal that liminal persons who lack legal status are often seen as ‘polluting’ (p.97), where the notion of pollution ‘is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction’ (Douglas in Turner, 1967, p.97). That is, when someone or something’s status is unclear from a social standpoint, it tends to be seen as unclean. With this in mind, Turner (1967) argues that liminal beings can be seen as:

‘particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing nor another, or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of any recognized cultural topography), and are at the very least “betwixt and between” all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classifications’ (p.97).

The political status of ‘temporarily displaced’ children in Lebanon reinforces their ‘invisibility’ and their ‘polluting’ state. By being both structurally ‘invisible’ and viewed as polluting, refugees are usually either partially or fully secluded ‘from the realm of culturally defined and ordered states and statuses’ (Turner, 1967, p.98). Therefore they have to be hidden, or feel forced to hide themselves, since it is almost a ‘paradox, a scandal, to see what ought not to be there’ (p.98). As such, refugees are often placed in refugee camps out of sight of the host communities. Although this can also be a practical solution (as mentioned earlier in the example of IKEA in Section 1.3.2), this is not always the case. The Lebanese government refused to set up formal refugee camps for those fleeing the war in Syria, as such camps would necessitate formal acknowledgement of their refugee status. While the international community has commended GoL for allowing refugees to reside in private housing and to integrate with the Lebanese community, it is argued that this decision was taken as an economic and security rationale, and not as an inclusive approach (L. Turner, 2015). Political actors justified this decision by recalling Lebanon’s history with Palestinian camps, claiming they wanted to avoid the threat of conflict enclaves emerging in new refugee camps (Fakhoury, 2017; L. Turner, 2015).

However, GoL’s refusal to set up formal camps has led to the establishment of 1,900 informal settlements across Lebanon where living conditions are very poor and dangerous (Fakhoury, 2017). Moreover, even if integrated in their living quarters, the invisibility of displaced people is promoted through other means of social control, such as enforced curfews on refugees in some parts of the country (Fakhoury, 2017). In addition, due to their irregular status, many displaced peoples in Lebanon feel it is safer to stay invisible and out of sight to avoid imprisonment or fines. Furthermore, research has found that it is not only their nationality and ‘displaced person’ status that renders refugees ‘invisible’ but also their lack of financial resources which leads to their ‘social exclusion’ for economic as well as political reasons (Sen, 1999). This is also the case for school access, for most refugees in Lebanon live in the poorest areas where there are low rates of school attendance and very low rates of education attainment (see Section 1.3.4), due to their limited socioeconomic
means and to the low quality of education in public schools (OCHA et al., 2015; Shuayb et al., 2016).

While most Iraqi and Syrian child refugees in Lebanon live in residential areas as opposed to non-residential shelters (UNHCR, 2018b; UNHCR et al., 2018) or informal tented settlements (UNHCR et al., 2018), the expectation and their perception that they should remain ‘invisible’ affects their social integration and sense of belonging within their new communities. However, a sense of belonging can emerge among people who have experienced similar atrocities, and who are vulnerable to being considered ‘invisible’ and ‘polluting’ in their new environment, by ensuring that people experience a new sense of community or ‘communits’ (Turner, 1969).

1.5.1.2 Building ‘communitas’ in liminality

Turner (1969) refers to communitas as an ‘intense comradeship’, a sort of ‘communion’ or ‘connection’ through shared experience (pp.95-6). The term describes a state when people who actively participate in or witness an event experience a ‘coming together’ after having been alienated or isolated, and irrespective of previous states, liminal beings regard each other as equals (Turner, 1967). Turner (1969) argues that certain life crises and the transition from one structural status to another may lead to ‘humankindness’, a ‘social bond between all members of society’ that may transcend national boundaries and ‘subgroup affiliations’ (p.116). However, although different refugees might have fled their home countries as a result of the same conflict, this does not necessarily bring them together or encourage the formation of communitas between them since the difficulties and conflicts they have experienced are multiple, diverse, complex and multifaceted. In her study with protracted Congolese refugees in Kampala, Uganda, Boer (2015) found that the participants did not form a community in Kampala since they did not live close to other refugees, and the battles they had fled was complex, ‘displacing both allies and enemies’ (p.495). As one participant explained ‘you can never know who is a good person and who is a bad person, so the conflict could start from here’ (p.495). Congolese refugees lived in fear that although they may have left armed conflict behind, the conflict might follow them, and they could be hurt or killed, leading them to distrust and stay away from other refugees.

Displacement has also become increasingly protracted and overlapping (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016b). Refugees may experience multiple displacements, such as Iraqi refugees who were displaced twice, first to Syria and subsequently to Lebanon, and most refugees live alongside other displaced people in their host community (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016b). However, only a small number of research studies look into the experiences of different groups of refugees living in the same city (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016b). Protracted and overlapping displacement may also lead to situations of ‘refugees-hosting-refugees’ (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016b), such as the case of Syrian

---

8 Protracted displacement is a situation ‘in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five consecutive years or more in a given host country’ (UNHCR, 2019c, p.22).
refugees who have been hosted by refugees in Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Whether hosted by citizens or by other refugees, displaced people are often met with both hospitality and hostility (Berg & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018). Although seemingly contradictory, these two concepts are closely interlinked, as Selwyn (2000) argues, ‘Acceptance and incorporation may rapidly become transformed into hostility, rejection, and even expulsion […] both hospitality and hostility imply the possibility of the other’ (p.20). The relationship between the refugee host and the hosted refugee is characterised by a power imbalance, putting into question the possibility of formation of communitas among different groups of refugees.

While refugee children may experience separation and isolation from their communities, and be seen as ‘invisible’ and ‘polluting’, research shows that play can be used as a means to rebuild communitas and a sense of belonging and inclusion. Kobayashi, Nicholson, and Hoye (2013), Skinner, Zakus, and Cowell (2008), and Welty Peachey, Borland, Loblies, and Cohen (2015) give examples of how physical activity and sports programmes can bring together people from different social, geographical and cultural backgrounds, and lead to positive change (improve public health, help nurture beneficial social experiences for children, youth and adults, and cultivate a sense of community between participants). Through sports activities, players can develop social networks, reducing social isolation, offering marginalised and disadvantaged people opportunities for social mobility and social inclusion. For young children, play is a key activity to help them build a sense of communitas.

1.5.2 Liminality and play

Having discussed the importance of play for children (Section 1.4.1) and how social and cultural parameters shape play (Section 1.4.2), this section hones in on play in liminality. It proposes using the concept of ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault, 1986) to conceive play spaces, offers insight into how ‘displaced’, ‘polluting’ and ‘powerless’ children can exercise power in play, and discusses how children’s embodied experiences are affected by conflict and displacement.

1.5.2.1 Play, liminality, and heterotopias

Sibbett (2008) suggests that Foucault's (1986) concept of ‘heterotopia’ might be useful in conceiving liminal space. Unlike utopias which ‘are sites with no real place’, heterotopias are:

‘real spaces … which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites … are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality… they are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about’ (Foucault, 1986, p.24).

When discussing the space between utopias and heterotopias, Foucault (1986) gives the example of the mirror. The mirror he argues is a utopia since ‘it is a placeless place’ where ‘I see myself where I am not’, but at the same time is a heterotopia, since the mirror exists in reality and ‘exerts a
sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy’ (p.24). He adds that heterotopias are linked to ‘slices in time’ and are fully functioning when individuals reach an ‘absolute break with their traditional time’ (p.26). The concept of heterotopia may be useful to conceive play spaces. While Sutton-Smith (2001) does not directly refer to heterotopias, he notes that children’s play fantasies ‘are meant to fabricate another world that lives alongside the first one and carries on its own kind of life, a life often much more emotionally vivid than mundane reality’ (p.158). In their play, children are transported from an actual place and time to one where objects, people and places are converted through their imagination. Richards (2013) researched children’s fantasy play and found that the school playground could be negotiated as a heterotopian space through children’s pretend play, for it is ‘mundane and real and institutionally defined but also a place of fantasy and possible transgression’. In line with Foucault's (1986) suggestion that in a heterotopia, diverse incompatible spaces or sites can be juxtaposed in one single real place, the playground as Richards (2013) observed was transformed into ‘Manhattan, Roald Dahl’s Oompa-Loompa land and, more fleetingly, an attack by the Japanese, the Japs (in the language of comics) in World War Two’ (p.388). Children therefore assign meaning and importance to spaces using their imagination and creativity, and these meanings can differ to those intended by adults who created those ‘places for children’ (see Rasmussen, 2004, p.156).

By contrast, McNamee (2000), whose concern is with play in virtual spaces, suggests that video games played by children can be considered as a strategy to resist and negotiate spatial boundaries. She argues that video games can be seen as a ‘kind of heterotopia’ (p.484), for although children are playing games on real machines in real places, they do not experience the adventure in these ‘real spaces’ but in ‘other spaces’ (Foucault, 1984). Inspired by McNamee (2000), Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) similarly study the internet and websites as cultural spaces where childhood can be explored. They adopt Sefton-Green and Buckingham's (1998) term ‘digital bedroom’ as children tend to play computer games or surf the Web on devices which are physically located in their bedroom. Through personal homepages, domestic spaces start to exist in cyberspace, and so these homepages can be considered ‘heterotopias’.

1.5.2.2 Play and power(lessness)

Power is also a central feature of both play and liminality. Refugees’ experience of war, displacement and liminality is a result of power play between the diverse actors taking part in generating fear, instability and insecurity through armed conflict, and in their responses to refugees’ displacement. Foucault's conceptualisation of power as multiple, diffuse and exercised through relationships (see Section 1.2.2) resonates with Turner's (1969) perception of liminality as being linked to individuals’ structural inferiority and to being an outsider, resulting in ‘invisibility’ (p.95), ‘submissiveness and silence’ (p.103), and to being ‘passive or humble’ (p.95).

Here I return to Little et al. (1998) who adapt Turner’s theory of liminality to the experience of life-threatening illness (in their study, cancer), and suggest that:
‘an initial acute phase of liminality is marked by disorientation, a sense of loss and of loss of control, and a sense of uncertainty ... [followed by]... an adaptive, enduring phase of suspended liminality […], in which each patient constructs and reconstructs meaning for their experience by means of narrative’ (p.1485).

With this in mind and considering refugee children’s experience of war and forced displacement, although they initially experience a ‘sense of uncertainty’ and ‘loss of control’, refugee children can use play as a way of constructing and reconstructing meaning of their own experiences.

Kinkead-Clark (2017) argues that play is empowering. Play provides children with an arena to exercise power, where they can master and make sense of the multiple cultures of their society, homes and schools (Wood, 2013). For instance, play in Early Years settings has been found to be important for refugees or migrants in bridging between home and school cultures, and promoting cultural awareness and understanding among children (Kirova, 2010; Yahya & Wood, 2017). Play allows children to allocate meaning to and transform not only the realities of their world, but also its power structures. It is common for children to exercise power through play, allowing the powerless to become powerful (Lester & Russell, 2010), and to maintain ethnic, gender and cultural practices and systems (Henricks, 2006). Adults may expect children’s play to be a catalyst for socialisation into their cultural practices, but these expectations are not always met (Lester & Russell, 2010).

Since play transcends time and space, it allows players to cross borders, alter structures and create new ways of being (Thorne, 1993). In such cases, adults may view play as disruptive. Play allows children to create their own order in a disorderly or chaotic world (Sobel, 2002). The ‘real’ world can be restructured through play and can ‘create as well as subvert order’ (Lester & Russell, 2010, p.11), in play worlds where children can be in control of not being in control (Gordon & Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007). Furthermore, by creating a world in parallel to the real one in play, children can take control of their situation and turn it into something less scary (Sutton-Smith, 2001).

Power may be seen in a positive or negative light. Children may exercise their power by, for example, excluding or including others, or by bullying or teasing. According to Meire (2007), ‘play is influenced by larger social and cultural norms and inequalities’ (p.24). In her book Language and Muslim Immigrant Childhoods: The Politics of Belonging, García-Sánchez (2014) illustrates how Spanish children excluded Moroccan immigrant children from games and activities, reflecting broader issues of racialized exclusion and discrimination. Power could also be exercised through playing out themes that adults deemed ‘dirty’ (Arluke, 2002) or ‘less innocent’ (Meire, 2007, p.24). A study by Griffin, Nairn, Wickes, and Phoenix (2006) found that children between 7 and 11 years old ‘tortured’ their Barbie dolls by maiming, microwaving and decapitating them. This was seen as a ‘rite of passage’ for children who reached an age where they considered Barbie babyish.

Moreover, Bruce (2012b) notes that children exercise power in play by escaping from the here and now, by changing realities, by experimenting, creating and reflecting, and by building resilience through acquiring tools that are necessary for them to overcome hardships and that help them
overcome past and present experiences. Resilience has been defined variously as the capacity to adapt to change and overcome life adversities (Cameron et al., 2006; Fearn & Howard, 2012), the ability to overcome stress or resist environmental risk (Bowes & Jaffee, 2013), or having a positive psychological state despite exposure to serious risk experiences (Rutter, 2006). It is often conceptualised as a phenomenon that can help protect people from negative psychological outcomes when they are exposed to risks (Masten, 2001; Werner & Smith, 1992). According to Lemay and Ghazal (2001), resilience is a feature of human adaptation that occurs naturally and that may be built through mundane experiences of everyday life. It is a ‘reflection of the ongoing transactions between a child and the favourable features of their surroundings’ (Lester & Russell, 2010, p. 16). Such favourable features include the child’s access to supportive carers, self-expression opportunities through play and the arts, high quality schooling, and the ability to practice one’s language and culture (Hyder, 2005). If basic ‘human adaptive systems’ are in place and working well then one’s ability to cope with certain hardships is strong. However, when these systems are impaired, for instance when a child experiences separation from family, violence, unsupportive carers, poverty, no free play, and racism (Hyder, 2005), then one’s capacity to adapt is weak, which subsequently affects one’s well-being (Masten, 2001).

Diprose (2015) critiques the resilience ‘trend’ and argues that instead of being a sign of defiance, resilience is simply a means of continuing ‘business as usual’ (p.44), to ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ (p.46) in the face of adversity which can cause more harm than good. Resilience, she contends, is being set up as a means to encourage the tolerance and endurance of inequality and insecurity, to put off making needed changes, and to transfer responsibility from the state or those responsible to ‘active citizens in charge of their own destiny’ (p.51).

‘Resilient communities, resilient sectors and resilient people are required to suffer these troubled times. In this context, resilience resonates more as a statement of survival than of aspiration - and one that entreats people to consider man-made crises as mysterious tests of character’ (Diprose, 2015, p.45).

Instead of relying on the development of individuals’ resilience, Diprose (2015) proposes that a culture where people thrive, not only survive, should be promoted, where instead of ‘future-proofing’ themselves, people use their time and effort to improve their current situation and fulfil the change they want to see.

1.5.2.3 Embodied experience

Another element that is central to both play and liminality is individuals’ and groups’ embodied experiences. ‘Embodiment’ is a substantial aspect of refugees’ or ‘displaced’ persons’ liminal lived experience. Turner (1969) refers to ‘embodied experience’ in liminality, where the liminal being undergoes physiological ‘ordeals and humiliations’ (p.103), ‘pain and suffering’ (p.107), ‘stigma and effacement’ (p.26), and is considered ‘polluting’ (p.97). War and terror disrupt children’s access to basic needs such as ‘food, shelter, protection, care and affection’ (Hyder, 2005, p.6). They are
exposed to the spread of disease and loss of education, some experience abduction and abuse, including physical and psychological damage, nutritional deprivation and the death or persecution of close family members (Amnesty International, 1999; Björn et al., 2011; Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2014).

Leaving their homes behind does not mean refugee populations are out of harm’s way. Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) is a human rights organisation that documents the situation of refugees and displaced persons who seek protection in Europe. Their report *Hidden Struggles* (Refugee Rights Europe, 2016), which focuses on the adversities faced by women refugees in Greece, draws attention to how refugee women are exposed to a wide range of challenging struggles and adversity once they embark on their journey to Europe. Some women reported exposure to abuse by smugglers, detention, physical abuse by police or men they knew, and sexual exploitation. Reports also included stories of men and children being abused. Furthermore, the physical danger of being smuggled, especially by sea, led to the death of many refugees and/or their family members. Upon arrival in the host country, after having endured direct and life-threatening dangers both at home and throughout their journey, the physical challenges continue. One such challenge is that poverty, as mentioned earlier, limits families’ and children’s access to basic necessities such as food, adequate shelter and schooling, as well as children’s access to play spaces. Play in both real and virtual spaces, as argued in Section 1.5.2.2, can be a means for children to escape from the confines of their limited physical space and enter into a heterotopia where time and space are their own to control. However, what happens to children when they have no space to play and cannot move freely in their environment?

Although embodied experiences such as seeing, smelling, touching, hearing and tasting are all involved in play to different extents (Harker, 2005), Meire (2007) argues that the bodily experience in play has been ‘largely neglected in conventional play research’ (p.20). Children’s holistic development requires freedom to explore one’s surroundings, interact with other people, and take part in the community’s traditions and culture (Bruce, 2012b; Froebel, 1887; Hyder, 2005). This allows children, as Froebel believed, to see connections and relationships among places and feel as a member ‘of the whole’ (Bruce, 2012c). Therefore, the inability to explore one’s surroundings could lead to disconnection from a child’s community, inhibiting their sense of belonging and their ability to recover from the deep traumas experienced during war and displacement.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents a unique combination of theories and literature forming a conceptual framework through which to study the complexities of young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s childhood and play experiences in Lebanon. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, this study, which looks through a Foucauldian critical lens, situates Froebelian Principles at its core, forming a weaving thread that binds Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, the new sociology of childhood, children’s
rights, Vygotskian sociocultural theory and the theory of liminality together. These multiple, interrelated, and overlapping theories help illuminate diverse aspects of ‘invisible’ and ‘polluting’ refugee children’s childhoods and play in Lebanon.

In view of these theories, this study seeks to fill a gap in knowledge related to constructions and understandings of childhood in the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon, and of refugee children’s play in a liminal state. Childhood in Lebanon is a multifaceted concept that has been shaped by centuries of politics, customs and religion. While children are generally thought to be a blessing, particularly for religious, economic and political purposes, childhood as constructed and experienced in Lebanon is the product of multiple truths arising from diverse cultural norms, religious beliefs, local and international political agendas and power relations. Studying children’s play and childhood experiences from a rights perspective, literature shows that insufficient measures have been taken in Lebanon to promote and implement refugee children’s rights according to the UNCRC, and some national laws are permitted to contravene these rights. Children around the world witness and experience disadvantage and gender discrimination very early on, as is the case in Lebanon where a diversity of personal status laws can legalise early marriage (resulting in a violation of many of their rights), and where national laws permit corporal punishment, child labour, and low-quality education. Poverty, which is itself shaped by policies and political structures, is generally a major catalyst for the infringement of children’s rights. Given that the majority of the 1.5 million Syrian and 18,000 Iraqi refugees are living in poverty in Lebanon, the number of children whose rights are being violated on a daily basis is high, whether they are disadvantaged by refugee/displaced status or by poverty, or both. The discourses of childhood, the power relations at play within families and the community, the blatant violation of children’s rights – all of these shape the lives and opportunities of young refugee children in Lebanon, including their opportunities for play. Furthermore, Lebanese policies towards the ‘temporarily displaced’ perpetuate the view of refugees as ‘polluting’ and ‘invisible’, pushing children into isolation and propagating discrimination and oppression against them.

Play is important for children’s holistic development, and Vygotsky emphasizes the social dimension of play. Play takes place in a social matrix through relationships with adults and peers. Children’s physical environment also shapes their play. Children who have experienced war and displacement may be traumatised by their experiences and their trauma is reflected in their play. The promotion of play through providing children with play resources (places to play, people to play with, and materials for play), a sense of safety and security, and returning routine and high quality education into their lives is crucial for children to recover from trauma and regain the many benefits play has to offer. Through play, children can escape liminality and transport themselves into a heterotopia, providing them with a space to exercise power, escape from the here and now, and begin to regain a sense of community and belonging.

Therefore, this study explores Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s experiences of conflict and forced displacement to Lebanon, the continuing violations of their rights following their displacement to
Beirut’s northern suburbs, the multiple ways in which their play has been affected by conflict and displacement, but also how play endures under such difficult circumstances, and how lifelines, which were set up to support refugees, have failed to meet refugees’ needs, pushing children and their families further into a state of liminality. The following chapter provides an overview of how the research has been designed to achieve the study’s aims.
Figure 1.1: Study’s theoretical model
Chapter 2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the ways in which armed conflict and displacement from their home countries may affect young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s childhoods and play in Lebanon. In line with this aim, the introduction presented the questions that drive this study, and Chapter 1 clarified the theoretical approach that frames this research and considered literature related to this field of research. In this chapter, I present the methodological framework designed to research young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s experiences of armed conflict and displacement from their home countries, and the consequences of these experiences for their play and childhoods in Beirut’s northern suburbs. To address the research questions, the study required a methodological framework that would lead to in-depth insights into children’s play and childhoods, and offer a broader perspective on the plight of Syrian and Iraqi refugee children whose families have sought refuge in Lebanon from armed conflict in their home countries. Case studies were therefore conducted with two Iraqi and two Syrian young refugee children and their families living in Lebanon, supplemented by 100 questionnaires completed by Iraqi and Syrian refugees and Lebanese nationals living in an area in the Northern suburbs of Beirut with high numbers of refugees. Interviews were also conducted with professionals working with child refugees in Lebanon and an observation was made in a local school for refugee children. This chapter begins by clarifying the objective of each research question, and then critically reflects on the methodological approach and overarching research design. Subsequent sections reflect critically on the many practical and ethical challenges in accessing these hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations whose lives were still subject to change, and on issues of validity and reliability, data representation and analysis, and researcher subjectivity.

2.2 Research questions

RQ1: How are the childhoods of young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees affected by armed conflict and their forced displacement to Beirut’s northern suburbs?

This question considered how children’s first-hand exposure to armed conflict, war and violence may affect their childhoods. Through interviews, observations and participatory methods that sought the perspectives of child refugees, this question aimed to find out about children’s experiences and how they perceived their experiences. My Masters dissertation had found that some refugee children in Lebanon had been exposed to ISIS, witnessing beheadings and hangings, kidnappings, theft and forceful expulsion from their homes, among other atrocities. Others had had to escape from bombings, shootings and the destruction of their homes. Some children knew people (family members, neighbours, friends, acquaintances) who had been killed, tortured, arrested, or kidnapped. Although limited in its scope and depth, my Masters study found that all the young child
participants had feared for their own or their loved ones’ lives as a consequence of armed conflict, and displacement had brought many new challenges.

RQ1 therefore sought to explore in greater depth how children’s experiences of displacement affect their childhood, and to study children’s rights violations before, during and after displacement. These experiences of displacement include their journeys from their homes to Lebanon (escaping under bombs, being internally displaced, being stopped by armed men at checkpoints, being smuggled across borders, and uncertainty about where they would end up), and children’s experiences of living as ‘temporarily displaced’ persons in Beirut’s northern suburbs (irregular status, consequent poverty - which is a new experience for some refugee families - new culture, different curriculum in schools, and discrimination).

RQ2: How are the young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees’ opportunities to play affected by their experiences of armed conflict and forced displacement in Beirut’s northern suburbs?

The aim of this question was twofold. It first sought to identify the diverse play opportunities that were available (or not) to child refugees who moved to Beirut’s northern suburbs for an indefinite period. Play opportunities were conceptualised as: spaces for play (for example in schools, parks, at home, in the streets); people to play with (friends, parents/guardians, siblings, extended family, and neighbours); time for play (depending on whether children go to school or not, whether they work or not, and if they do work, how they play during, before or after work); materials available for play (diversity, quantity and quality of play resources); family, social and cultural expectations and discourses around play; and broader discourses regarding who bears responsibility for the wellbeing of refugee status children. This question also investigated factors that influenced children’s opportunities to play, including opportunities and constraints associated with gender, poverty, legal status, and acceptance in the local community, the role of play and different understandings of childhood in the children’s cultures, religious communities, and families.

This question further sought to explore how experiences of conflict and displacement that reshaped constructions of childhood as addressed in RQ1 consequently shaped play. For example, individual children’s past experiences may emerge in their play themes, use of language, and behaviours, such as increased aggression. In addition, in situations of armed conflict and displacement, basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter may have been scarce, affecting children’s health and leading to a decrease in their energy levels, and consequently in their desire or ability to play. This question also explored whether children who may have been traumatised by their past experiences continued to play or whether in extreme cases trauma led to a lack of play (and associated lack of play benefits).
RQ 3: How might young refugee children’s play opportunities be improved in Beirut’s northern suburbs?

The aim of this question was to identify potential ways to improve the play opportunities for young child refugees in Lebanon, specifically in the communities chosen for this study, so that they may reap the indispensable benefits that play has to offer (Brown, 2012; Jones, 2005; Lilley, 1967; Wood, 2013). Taking into consideration the highly diverse circumstances of refugees in different parts of Lebanon, this question allowed for reflection on the specific needs of individuals and groups of people, based on the resources and services available to them according to their location (Northern suburbs of Beirut/ Mount Lebanon), where play resources may be accessible in one district but not in another. This question also explored what ‘lifelines’ (help provided to refugees, allowing them to ‘escape’ from or cope with their current liminal situation) are available or lacking to refugee children in Lebanon, and how studying factors such as child labour, gender-related issues, mental and physical health, integration into the Lebanese community, legal status of refugees in Lebanon, and resources already available can help determine what measures might be taken to ameliorate constraints to children’s play.

2.3 Research design

Kuhn (1970) describes paradigms as ‘the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community’ (p.175). In general terms, these paradigms can be seen as philosophical stances, such as positivism, constructivism, postmodernism, realism and pragmatism, each possessing different epistemological and ontological beliefs that are intrinsically linked (Maxwell, 2013).

This research study is located within a constructivist paradigm, based on the ontological view that reality is constructed, not discovered (Crotty, 1998; Maxwell, 2013). This view is reflected in the research questions, which set out to explore how child refugees’ constructions of childhood and play have been shaped by conflict and displacement. Instead of trying to find a universal ‘truth’, this study adopts an interpretive stance that considers reality to be understood within a social and cultural context. It situates itself within qualitative tradition, as it seeks to interpret how participants make sense of and construct complex meanings within particular contexts and moments of time, and consequently how their understandings shape and influence their behaviours (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). Drawing on Froebelian Principles, the new sociology of childhood and Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, this study positions both children and adults as agents and meaning makers whose understandings are shaped by their personal experience of armed conflict and displacement, by their interactions with others, by their culture, values and social structures.

Therefore, this research project is designed principally as qualitative, with in-depth case studies of individual children and their families using a day in the life (DITL) approach, supplemented by semi-
structured interviews with professionals who work with refugees in Lebanon, an observation in a school, and questionnaire of wider Iraqi and Syrian refugee and local Lebanese populations to provide robust data that inform the research questions. By incorporating diverse methods and including an array of participants in the study, a more complex and in-depth understanding of the issues being studied emerges as multiple perspectives are drawn on to answer the research questions (Maxwell, 2013). Accordingly, the ways in which each method selected for this study answers each research question is presented in Appendix A. This study is also exploratory, for although I started out with intended research questions and their role in my study, I was also open to discovering different ways of interpreting and analysing the data, by using the unique combination of Froebelian principles, the new sociology of childhood, children’s rights, Foucault’s theorisation of power, sociocultural theories of play, and the theory of liminality as a theoretical lens (see Chapter 1 Figure 1.1).

2.3.1 Case study
Case study has been described as empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon, using several sources of evidence within a real-life context to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, and allowing for a large amount of rich and in-depth data to be collated (Creswell, 1998; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). Since this study sought to gain ‘in-depth’ data to answer ‘how’ questions by investigating a contemporary event, case studies constituted the focus point of this research. The ‘case’ can be anything of interest, from a particular situation to a certain individual, group or organisation (Hammersley & Gomm, 2013; Robson, 2011). This research project comprised four case studies of two Iraqi and two Syrian refugee children between the ages of 4 and 8 years and their families who lived in Lebanon at the time of the study.

While the case study is commonly adopted in empirical inquiry, it has been critiqued for its lack of rigour, lack of generalizability, for being time-consuming, and for generating excessive amounts of data (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) argues that while case studies are not generalizable to populations or universes, they are generalizable to theoretical propositions. That is, the goal of the case study is not statistical generalisation but to expand theory. Furthermore, a strength of the case study is that it allows investigators to better ‘understand complex social phenomena’ and ‘retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of real-life events’ (Yin, 2009, p.4). Using a case study design, this research project studied the interplay between the multiple, complex and multifaceted relationships, events, experiences and sociocultural phenomena that shape Iraqi and Syrian children’s childhoods and play in Lebanon, providing answers to all three research questions. Such examples include: the interaction between children’s home culture and the new cultures they are exposed to in their *liminal* state (in school/preschool, on the streets, in their neighbourhoods etc.); children’s experiences of armed conflict, internal displacement, displacement to Lebanon; the interplay between GoL policies towards children and ‘temporarily displaced’ persons, UN policies towards refugees, and the UNCRC; and children’s exposure to oppression and discrimination.
Since data collected through a case study are specific to that case and cannot be generalised, this study used method triangulation ‘to improve the quality of research results and combine the benefits (and limit the disadvantages) of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies’ (Stephenson, 2001, p.535). Although research that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods is increasingly being considered as mixed method research, Bryman, Becker, & Sempik (2008) argue that qualitative researchers may include the use of quantitative methods to inform their research, and vice versa. Similarly, Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) propose that qualitative researchers may support their interviews and observations with surveys or quantitative instruments. If one finding is confirmed by diverse methods, this may lead to greater confidence in the findings, and if it is not confirmed, more nuanced knowledge and understanding about the given situation is generated (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The questionnaire designed for this study consisted of closed and open-ended questions to address RQ1 and RQ2, and therefore contained qualitative aspects that added further texture to information generated through the interviews and observations conducted with the case study families, interviews with professionals working in refugee communities, and observation in a local school. While the interviews with professionals addressed all three research questions, the school observation addressed RQ2, providing insight into children’s play in a school setting (Appendix A).

2.3.2 ‘Day in the life’ approach (DITL)

According to Silverman (2016), ethnography is a methodology characterised by conducting in-depth fieldwork over a prolonged period of time with social actors with whom the researcher has established a direct relationship. The researcher, who immerses him/herself in the participants’ natural environment and participates in their everyday practices, conducts detailed observations and interviews to generate rich insights into people’s lives, culture, opinions, environments and practices (Reeves et al., 2008; Silverman, 2016). Ethnography has developed and changed over recent decades to become more flexible and diverse (Street, 1995). Green and Bloome distinguish between ‘doing ethnography, adopting an ethnographic perspective, and using ethnographic tools’ (1997, p.4). Unlike ‘doing ethnography’, the ethnographic perspective does not require one to conduct a comprehensive ethnography, but rather takes a more focused approach to studying certain cultural aspects or everyday practices of a social group. The researcher uses research practices and theories linked to sociology or anthropology to conduct the study.

When designing this study, I took into consideration the complexity of the context I was researching. Refugee children and their families’ lives in Lebanon are marked by instability and uncertainty. Therefore, I was conscious of the possibility that they might relocate within Lebanon, return to their home countries, or be resettled to a third country at any time during the study. As such, I refrained from conducting a long-term ethnography but instead chose to adopt the day in the life (DITL) approach when conducting the case studies with each of the four participating refugee children (Cameron et al., 2006; Gillen et al., 2007; Hancock & Gillen, 2007). DITL provided a tried-and-tested, structured process (see Section 2.5.2) based on well-established ethnographic principles to
investigate the home lives of families who might well have been moved on at any given time, and so answer the research questions.

Using this approach allowed me to understand the ‘meaning of human action in cultural context’ (Gaskins, Miller, & Corsaro, 1992, p.6), to gain adult and child perspectives on the children’s play, and to gain insight into the children’s experiences of conflict and displacement, the daily lives of the child participants within their family unit, including their behaviours, their interactions with family and with others, their routines (or lack thereof), and their culture. This is particularly important given that the families in this study had been removed from the familiar economic, social and cultural contexts of their home countries and found themselves in different economic, social and cultural circumstances in Lebanon. Although there were some cultural similarities between the home and new environments, there were marked differences, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 1) and the findings chapters (Chapter 3-6), and these differences made the transition from one country to another more difficult.

One main factor to keep in mind regarding DITL is that it uses the concept of a day and therefore is more focused on studying ‘moments of being in situ’ than investigating developmental change over time’ (Gillen & Cameron, 2010, p.12). I was aware that any data I collected from observations during a day in the life of each child participant were moment-specific and could not be generalised to children’s everyday childhood and play experiences. Therefore, method triangulation (as discussed in Section 2.3.1) helped situate the case studies and make them more generalizable.

2.4 Research settings and participants

This study was conducted in my home country, Lebanon. Research settings were selected purposively along with consideration of convenience and safety. As stipulated in my UCL IOE Ethics form, I followed Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advice regarding which areas were deemed safe to visit in Lebanon, and adhered to the latest FCO updates in a changing political climate (see Figure 2.1a&b). All research settings were consequently located in ‘green zones’ within the Northern suburbs of Beirut/ Mount Lebanon area (Figure 2.2).

2.4.1 Questionnaire settings and participants: Dispensary

Purposive sampling entails deliberately selecting certain persons, settings, or activities that provide information relevant to the study’s aims (Maxwell, 2013). For this study, a dispensary run by Catholic nuns was purposively chosen as the location for questionnaire distribution, as I was aware that Lebanese, Iraqis and Syrians came to the dispensary for medical advice and supplies, and that it would be the ideal location to distribute the questionnaire in line with the study’s aims. I had also previously established a relationship with the nuns who ran the dispensary during my Masters dissertation.
Figure 2.1: Map of Lebanon depicting level of safety according to area (retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/lebanon)

Figure 2.2: Areas I visited for fieldwork
The dispensary was a medical clinic in the northern suburbs of Beirut which had been set up by a bishop during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), and provided quality healthcare services to marginalised local residents, irrespective of nationality or religion, for free or at a nominal cost. It had been run by catholic nuns since 2005. Once predominantly accessed by Lebanese citizens, the dispensary is now largely visited by refugees, most having low socio-economic status, although this may not have been the case before the start of armed conflict in their home countries. Furthermore, the dispensary is one of the multiple ‘Primary Health Care Centres’ listed on the UNHCR website and included in the UNHCR brochures. These brochures and website provide information for refugees who have registered with the UN upon entry into Lebanon about low cost health care services available to them in their area of residence.

Figure 2.3: Waiting area in dispensary

The dispensary is formed of several corrugated shipping containers that are placed side by side, each container comprising a doctor’s office (Figure 2.3). The dispensary provides family medicine and paediatric services in addition to gynaecology, cardiology, and ear, nose and throat services. Vaccinations are provided for free, and mental health services and a social worker are available at the dispensary. The dispensary opens from 08:00 until 13:00, Monday to Friday, and from 08:00 until 11:00 on Saturdays with different medical specialists present on the different days of the week. Therefore, in order to get a more diverse and representative sample of questionnaire respondents, I purposively visited the dispensary on different days of the week (Table 2.2).

Although the main focus of this study was on Iraqi and Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, it was important for me to include the voices of Lebanese citizens whose lives, in many aspects, have also been affected by the influx of refugees. Their views have helped me develop a more nuanced
understanding of the relationship between Iraqis, Syrians, and Lebanese in Lebanon, and the impact of these relationships on young refugee children’s experiences of childhood and play.

2.4.1.1 Pilot questionnaire

After purposively choosing the dispensary as a research setting, I employed a convenience sampling strategy to distribute the questionnaires within the dispensary (Robson, 2011). Convenience sampling involves selecting respondents based on their proximity to the researcher or based on how convenient it is to reach them. While convenience sampling has been critiqued for generating findings that are not representative of the wider population (Robson, 2011), my aim was not to collect statistically representative data for generalization, but to gain information about the people who attended the dispensary and to learn about their experiences of armed conflict and displacement that would help inform the four case studies. Five Lebanese women, four Syrian women, and one Syrian man completed the pilot questionnaire. None of the pilot questionnaires were completed by Iraqi respondents, however this is a result of the nature of the sampling procedure, as no Iraqis happened to be present in the pilot sample approached.

2.4.1.2 Final questionnaire

In line with the sampling strategy employed for the pilot questionnaire, and following amendments made to the final questionnaire in light of the pilot study (See section 2.5.1.2), I returned to the dispensary and personally worked with 100 participants to complete the final questionnaire between May 30 and June 12, 2017 (Table 2.1). After reviewing all 100 questionnaire responses, it was clear that 3 out of the 100 questionnaires were incomplete, and missed the majority of the data, since soon after starting the questionnaire the respondents were called to see the doctor. Furthermore, one respondent was a migrant worker from Bangladesh and after careful consideration, I decided that although the data collected from him were insightful they fell outside the scope of my study. Therefore, after omitting these four questionnaires, I returned one last time to the dispensary on August 17, 2017 and through convenience sampling distributed four additional questionnaires to two Syrian, one Iraqi and one Lebanese respondents (Table 2.2). The final questionnaire was completed by 21 Lebanese, 43 Syrian and 36 Iraqi respondents (for more detailed demographic data see Chapter 3 Section 3.3.1).

Similar to Stephenson (2001) who warns that the sample in her study cannot be considered ‘truly representative’, I cannot claim that this study’s participants represent all refugees in Lebanon and their experiences of armed conflict and displacement. As mentioned by some respondents, some people could not access the dispensary for various reasons such as inability to pay for transportation costs to and from the dispensary, inability to leave their work in order to go to the dispensary, being too unwell to leave their homes, or unaware of the dispensary services. While this portion of the population is not represented in my study, I was able to gather information on reasons for not attending the dispensary through my conversations with respondents at the dispensary in order to get a clearer idea of who is, and is not, represented in my sample.
2.4.2 Case study settings and participants

As my doctorate was based in London, I was only able to begin recruiting participants for the study once I moved to Lebanon for my fieldwork. The samples were therefore chosen strategically and purposively, with an aim to incorporate an equal number of male and female Iraqi and Syrian child refugees aged 4 to 8 years who had directly experienced armed conflict and who had subsequently moved to Lebanon to escape from war and persecution. The cases were also chosen based on convenience, practicality and feasibility (Henn et al., 2006), as they needed to be located in comparatively ‘safe zones’ (see Section 2.6.4), and I was highly dependent on Greater Beirut-based gatekeepers to gain access to these ‘hard-to-reach’ populations (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Kennan, Fives, & Canavan, 2012).

I wanted both Iraqi and Syrian young children to be represented in this study since half of the 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon were children, and since most Iraqi refugees whom I had interviewed for my MA dissertation voiced their anger and frustration over being ‘forgotten’ by the national and international community, making it ethically important for me to include them in this study (Section 2.6.5). My initial aim was to find six children (three Iraqi and three Syrian) who, with their assent and the consent of their parents, would be willing to take part in the study. However, I
was aware of the possibility that some participants might drop out at any given point. As Hammersley (2014) notes, there are often discrepancies between the cases intended to be investigated and the cases actually studied. My original plan to visit six families could not be realised for several reasons including time constraints, unforeseen circumstances that deferred my expected fieldwork start date, difficulties with recruitment and unexpected circumstances arising during fieldwork that led to my supervisors advising me to leave a study site for reasons of personal safety (Section 2.6.3). This section details the recruitment process for the final four case study participants. Details of unsuccessful attempts to recruit participant families are presented in Appendix B.

Recruiting participants for the qualitative study was initially dependent on my existing contacts in Lebanon who acted as gatekeepers. Sr Mary, who I met when conducting fieldwork for my Masters and who I had been in contact with during my time in London, acted as a gatekeeper to the participants in the dispensary and in the school that she had opened for refugee children. In May 2017, I visited the school with Sr Mary and explained my study to Mariana, a teacher whom I had met when conducting research for my Masters dissertation. Mariana in turn contacted three of her students’ parents about their potential participation, explaining the study to them, emphasizing that participation was completely optional and that their decision would not affect their child’s schooling in any way. Of these three, 5-year-old Kefa and his Iraqi family agreed to participate.

My next step was to contact a Lebanese family friend who regularly and voluntarily visits Iraqi and Syrian refugees living in Lebanon. Through the family friend, I was introduced to a second Iraqi family (7-year-old Maria’s family), and one Syrian family who lived across the road from my contact (6-year-old Ahmed’s family). Finally, during one of my visits to Ahmed’s family, his father asked me if I was looking for more participants and mentioned he had a friend who would like to take part in it. Through Ahmed, I was therefore introduced to the fourth and final case study participant, 4-year-old Muna. As a result, I completed four case studies with two Iraqi and two Syrian children between the ages of 4 and 8 years old who had experienced armed conflict and consequent displacement to Lebanon (see Table 2.3). Detailed case study portraits are presented in Chapter 3.

All case study fieldwork was conducted in the participating families’ homes in the Northern suburbs of Beirut/ Mount Lebanon area (see Figure 2.2). Kefa, Ahmed and Muna’s family homes were in very poor condition (see Chapter 3). The case studies were conducted in the family homes for several reasons. Firstly, public spaces and child care centres where children and their parents come together to play or socialize are rare in Lebanon, especially for those with limited financial resources. Moreover, I did not conduct the case studies in nursery or school settings since, as the questionnaire had shown, most refugee children did not attend school or preschool. Additionally, children’s play in private home settings remains a largely under-researched field (Meire, 2007). Therefore, conducting case studies in the homes of young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees in Lebanon using DITL approach allowed me to fill a gap in the literature as I gained invaluable insights into the lives of ‘hard-to-reach’ children, who are considered as ‘polluting’ and must remain
invisible’ (Turner, 1967). In so doing, this study makes visible the lives of children who remain largely hidden from society and from research.

Table 2.3: Case Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Kefa</th>
<th>Maria</th>
<th>Ahmed</th>
<th>Muna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years.months)</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliation</td>
<td>Chaldean, Christian</td>
<td>Syriac, Christian</td>
<td>Sunni, Muslim</td>
<td>Sunni, Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td>Chaldean</td>
<td>Syriac</td>
<td>Bedouin dialect</td>
<td>Bedouin dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency in other language</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father resided in Lebanon prior to armed conflict</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at most recent departure from home country (years.months)</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at most recent arrival to Lebanon (years.months)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting Family Members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Lia (24)</td>
<td>Thalia (32)</td>
<td>Salwa (38)</td>
<td>Janna (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Matta (32)</td>
<td>Yohannan (38)</td>
<td>Omar (38)</td>
<td>Qassem (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother(s)</td>
<td>Tomas (3.4)</td>
<td>Gorges (5.11)</td>
<td>Bilal (2.8)</td>
<td>Kamal (12), Alaa (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister(s)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Rima (1.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.3 School observation

Purposive sampling was adopted to conduct an observation in a school opened by Sr Mary for Iraqi children, which was located in a church meeting hall and was attended by Kefa, although Kefa was absent from school on that day (Section 2.5.4). The school did not have a permanent physical location, but its location changed from year to year depending on which church accepted to turn its meeting hall into a classroom where children might be educated. At the time of the study, the school was located around 15 minutes by car from the dispensary, and was attended by thirty-three Iraqi boys and girls aged 5 to 14 years on the day that I visited for an observation. All the children had fled from Iraq to Lebanon due to ISIS invasion of their hometowns. Mariana (Section 2.4.4.1) and one other teacher were both present during the classroom observation.

2.4.4 Interviews with local professionals

Purposive sampling was adopted to conduct interviews with professionals who worked directly with Iraqi and/or Syrian child refugees in Lebanon (Section 2.5.3). These included a schoolteacher, a
medical doctor, and a Program Manager for International Rescue Committee’s (IRC) Street and Working Children Program in Mount Lebanon and Tripoli.

2.4.4.1 Schoolteacher: Mariana

Mariana is a professional Lebanese Biology teacher who worked from 1994 until 2003 as a schoolteacher in a Christian school in Lebanon. She was a stay-at-home mother from 2003 until 2013 until she was offered a teaching role at the school opened by Sr Mary for child refugees. She had been teaching Arabic and Maths at the school since 2013 and later started teaching science and geography. I asked Mariana to choose a location convenient for her where we might conduct the interview, and based on her suggestion, I interviewed her in a large and quiet café close to the school.

2.4.4.2 Medical doctor: Dr Denise

Dr Denise is a Lebanese Medical Doctor with 26 years’ work experience. An International Board Lactation Certified Consultant, she specialised in general paediatrics, child protection, and mother and child health. At the time of the study, Dr Denise had been working intermittently in the dispensary since 2007 and was partly in charge of the children’s department. She attended the dispensary at least twice a week, supervising all work related to paediatrics, being responsible for residents, making sure vaccines and tests were completed efficiently and systematically, and that children’s health issues were followed up. I interviewed Dr Denise in her office at the dispensary.

2.4.4.3 Program Manager for IRC’s Street and Working Children Program in Mount Lebanon and Tripoli: Colette

Colette is Lebanese and has been working in her current field since 2013. At the time of the study, she managed the IRC’s Child Protection: Street and Working Children Program, conducted the overview and implementation of the program in addition to developing strategies, wrote proposals to donors, took charge of budgeting, and monitored and managed the team. Her role consisted of implementing activities with street connected children and children who worked in other worst forms of child labour. She tried to decrease the working hours of the children, informed them of and linked them to existing services, and in the long term tried to remove them from their harsh work environment. I interviewed Colette in her IRC office in Beirut.

2.5 Data collection methods

This section presents a detailed account of the data collection methods adopted during fieldwork in Lebanon between May 10, 2017 and January 21, 2018, over four overlapping phases: questionnaire distribution; a day in the life (D/TL) approach to case studies; semi-structured interviews with professionals; and observation in a school. A summary of the multiple data collection methods and datasets outlined in this section can be found in Appendix C.
2.5.1 Questionnaire

The first phase of data collection consisted in the distribution of a questionnaire to Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese respondents in order to collect demographic data of people who attended the dispensary, in addition to information about their children's school attendance, living situation and reasons for leaving their home country and residing in Lebanon. Chaudhary (2009) notes that the cultural context must be taken into account when designing data collection methods. She argues that data collection methods may be appropriate in one community but inappropriate in another, and difficulties may arise with the 'meanings of words, and translations of culturally embedded concepts [...]’ (p.395). Having gained experience filling out surveys with Syrian, Kurdish, Iraqi and Afghan refugees in camps around Greece and on the streets of Paris\(^9\), I had become aware of respondents’ diverse attitudes towards surveys, the types of questions they are familiar with and terminologies commonly used. This experience was invaluable in designing the questionnaire for my thesis.

2.5.1.1 Pilot questionnaire

As a fluent Arabic speaker, I translated the questionnaires from English into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and read the questions out to questionnaire respondents either in MSA or in the Lebanese dialect, while their responses tended to be in their local Arabic dialect (see Table 2.3). When piloting the questionnaire, I allocated one hour between 10:30 am and 11:30 am to distribute it to as many people as possible within that time slot in order to have an idea of how much time it would take to distribute approximately 100 questionnaires, to gauge people’s willingness to participate, and to explore how many people might answer the open ended questions. I went around the waiting area (Figure 2.3 above), starting with the person sitting closest to the entrance and making my way to those seated at the opposite end of the room, explaining my study to each person and then asking them one by one if they would like to answer the questionnaire.

I had anticipated that some participants might not be literate, so to overcome this without causing discomfort or unease to participants, I asked all respondents as soon as I handed out the questionnaire whether they would like me to read it to them and write their answers or whether they would prefer to fill it out by themselves. In the event, all the respondents asked me to write their answers, which I had not expected. Although this proved to be time consuming, the data collected through the questionnaires were rich and robust, allowing me to ask follow up questions to answers that might not have been clear, and allowing participants to give as much or as little information as

---

\(^9\) I volunteered as a researcher and Arabic interpreter with Refugee Rights Europe (http://refugeerights.org.uk/) during November 2016 to collect data around human rights violations experienced by refugees and adversities faced by refugee women in Greece and during January 2017 to collect data around human rights violations experienced by refugees who are homeless, living on the streets in Paris
they desired (Bowling, 2005). Arguably, aspects of the questionnaires were therefore similar to structured interviews (Robson, 2011).

I included a feedback form at the end of the pilot questionnaire asking respondents to rate the questionnaire on clarity and intrusiveness, if the questions had caused them any distress and if they had enough time to complete the questionnaire. I ended the feedback form with an open-ended question, asking respondents to mention anything they would add, change or remove. Although I read out the questions on the feedback form to all 10 pilot respondents (Section 2.4.1.1), only one respondent answered this question, and suggested that I ask ‘How are Syrians living in Lebanon? How are they treated by the Lebanese?’

Based on responses to the pilot questionnaire and the feedback form, I made necessary adjustments to the final questionnaire (Appendices D and E).

2.5.1.2 Final questionnaire

After making all necessary adjustments following the pilot study, the final questionnaire consisted of four sections: Consent; General information; Living situation; Life in Lebanon. Respondents were asked about their age, nationality, current location and type of accommodation, in addition to questions related to their source of income and approximate monthly household income, giving me insight into their living conditions in Lebanon. Furthermore, some questions were directed specifically to respondents with children below the age of 18 years, asking about the children’s school attendance, available play spaces, and work habits. Gillham (2007) suggests that one or two open-ended questions can be a good way to end a questionnaire. While most questions were aimed at gathering demographic data and data regarding participant family lifestyles, I ended the questionnaire with three open-ended questions where participants could write about the experiences that led them to leave their home country and take refuge in Lebanon, their reasons for choosing Lebanon, and whether or not they felt that refugees were welcome in Lebanon. The answers to these questions provided invaluable information on the diverse experiences of refugees, on their lives before and after taking refuge in Lebanon, and on the relationship between Lebanese and refugee populations. As with the pilot questionnaire, all final questionnaire respondents were asked if they would like me to read out the questions and write their answers, or if they would prefer to fill it out themselves. All respondents asked me to read the questions and scribe their answers.

2.5.2 Case studies: Day in the life (DITL)

The second phase of data collection comprised conducting case studies with two Iraqi and two Syrian young refugee children living in Lebanon using DITL approach. Since negotiating access and consent was a delicate process, the case studies were conducted sequentially starting with Kefa, followed by Maria, Ahmed and Muna.
2.5.2.1 Adapting DITL to my study

DITL is based on a structured agenda of data collection methods and procedures (Gillen & Cameron, 2010). The first step involves locating research participants, followed by a first home visit of approximately half a day in order to: get to know each family; discuss the research; answer any questions; try out approximately 30 minutes of filming; conduct a preliminary interview with the parent(s); and spend time talking with the child(ren). This is followed by a full day of filming (approximately 6 hours) at a later date agreed with the family which involves filming the child(ren)’s play throughout one day, using an ethnographic approach to data collection. Following the filming, a half hour compilation video of clips is made of the observed activities. The researcher then returns to the family for a third visit lasting approximately 1-2 hours, and watches the compilation video with the family, pausing after each clip for discussion. This discussion is itself recorded by video or audio.

In the case of my study, after locating my first participant, Kefa (Section 2.4.2), I spoke with Kefa’s father over the phone and explained the study and received his initial consent to visit the family at home. Upon my first visit, I introduced the information sheets to all participants, explained the study to them in detail, received the parents’ written consent and Kefa’s assent, then began data collection. I visited the family on three occasions as recommended by the approach (Gillen & Cameron, 2010). Based on my experience with Kefa and his family, I adapted the approach in a way that would better serve the aims of my research (Table 2.4). I decided that conducting an initial introductory visit to each family before beginning the study would build more trust with the participants, and would put them more at ease, which might in turn lead to more reliable and robust data. Therefore, during the introductory visit with the subsequent three case study children and their families, I focused on distributing the information sheets and consent/assent forms to the participants, on explaining the study to them in detail, and answering any questions they might have about the research. I then asked the parents and children to consider whether or not they would like to take part in the study and, if they would, for parents to sign and return the forms to me during my next visit. Following the introductory visit, I completed the subsequent three visits with each family as per the DITL approach. I added an additional method to the approach; interviews using participatory methods with the children. I included this approach since the children in this study were older than children participating in Gillen and Cameron’s (2010) study (4-8 years old compared to 2 years old) and were therefore more able to verbalise their thoughts and opinions. These participatory methods included block construction, drawing, and asking the children to take photographs using disposable cameras. Moreover, while DITL usually requires two researchers to conduct the study, I was the sole researcher in this case (see Section 2.6.4).

Furthermore, my aim in visiting participants several times was to establish a more trusting and comfortable relationship with them where they may come to accept and feel comfortable with my presence in their daily lives. At times, this contributed to some participants disclosing information that went beyond the research, and I had to use careful judgement regarding what information to
include or exclude from my study (Flewitt, 2005). Although I grew up in Lebanon, and the Lebanese and Syrian cultures are similar in many ways, there are also differences and tensions, especially in the wake of the current situation of refugees in Lebanon. One way I endeavoured to overcome the potential chasm created by these differences was by spending time familiarising myself with each family and just writing reflective notes. Once I felt that each family was becoming comfortable with my presence in their home, I asked if I might begin to film and remained vigilant towards each family’s comfort with this process.

Table 2.4: A day in the life approach stages (see Gillen & Cameron, 2010) adapted to this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locate research participants</td>
<td>Recruit participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 1</td>
<td>Try out approximately 30 minutes of filming; conduct a preliminary interview with the parent(s); spend time talking with the child(ren)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 2</td>
<td>Full day of filming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 3</td>
<td>Watch compilation video with family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Day in the Life approach adapted to this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locate research participants</td>
<td>Recruit participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 1: Introductory Visit</td>
<td>Get to know each family; discuss the research; distribute information sheets and consent/assent forms; answer any questions; spend time talking with the child(ren)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 2</td>
<td>Try out approximately 30 minutes of filming; conduct a semi-structured interview with the parent(s); conduct a semi-structured interview with children using drawing as a participatory method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 3</td>
<td>Full day of filming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 4</td>
<td>Watch and discuss compilation video with family; semi-structured interview with child using photovoice; semi-structured interview with children using block constructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the DITL approach may be revealing and insightful, it does bring with it certain difficulties. Introducing a stranger with recording equipment and her own agenda into people’s homes, especially when participants may never have experienced taking part in research, alters the participants’ behaviour no matter how young they are (Chaudhary, 2009; Speer & Hutchby, 2003).
Participants may alter their behaviour or modify their answers to questions for ‘social desirability’, for as Chaudhary (2009) puts it, ‘there is an urge to present oneself in a culturally favoured manner, and that in and of itself is a reflection of cultural priorities’ (p.390).

Moreover, researchers must be aware that conducting research in any setting is context specific (Chaudhary, 2009; Henn et al., 2006). Before going into the field, I was aware that family structures were likely to have been affected by war and displacement. While some refugees were living as nuclear families, others were living with extended family, friends, former neighbours or acquaintances. All four families that I visited had at one point lived with extended family in Lebanon for periods of months or years. However, at the time of data collection, all participants were only living with their nuclear family. Kefa had relatives who lived in the same building and on the same street. Therefore, spending a day with each family included not only spending time with the child(ren) and parents, but also with anyone the child came across during the day, including relatives and neighbours. This meant that negotiating consent for filming was an ongoing process (Section 2.6.1).

2.5.2.2 Observations

A key part of spending a few days over a month with each family is observing the children in their natural environment. ‘Observation is the key to, and bedrock of, good research’ (Ennew & Save the Children Fund, 2000, p.73). It is a productive way to learn about the contexts in which participants live, to find out what questions are appropriate or inappropriate to ask, and opens the researcher’s eyes to issues that would not previously have been considered (Ennew & Save the Children Fund, 2000).

Hammersley (2014, p.114) suggests that observation varies along at least two dimensions: ‘detached observation versus participant observation’ and ‘variation in degree to which data are structured’ (p.115). The former refers to the degree to which the researcher interacts with the participants and takes part in their social life, while the latter is concerned with the degree to which researchers rely on observational schedules. I conducted participant observation, following where the children went and observing not only them but their environments, their relationships with people they interacted with, their cultural practices, and how all of these aspects affected or impacted on their play. My observations were rooted in approaches used in visual ethnography (Pink, 2013), which is increasingly recognised in the field of education research. For the DITL day of filming, I opted for the Sony HDR CX450 Camcorder because it: was affordable, compact and simple to use; allowed me to take still images in addition to video footage; had ample battery life for long hours of filming; had a side opening monitor and a microphone port. I used the Rode VideoMicro Compact on Camera Microphone to capture sounds more clearly, and mounted the camera on a tripod when filming, which enabled me to take fieldnotes, to interact with the children when they asked me to, and to be less intrusive.
Furthermore, knowing when to start video recording is a subjective matter and may differ from case to case (Pink, 2013). In this study, I introduced the recording equipment during my first visit to each family, and encouraged adults and children to handle the equipment when they expressed interest, in the hope their familiarity with the equipment would reduce their anxiety about the full day of filming. However, despite these attempts, it was clear that the children and adults in all four case studies were highly aware of the camera’s presence when recording first commenced. These behaviours reflect limitations to using video recording equipment in research, and the risk that it may intimidate participants and/or lead them to perform for the camera (Pink, 2013). Maria for example put on a show for the camera, asking me to film her as she danced, instructing me where to stand and at what angle to film. Later on during the day, while Maria was playing with her neighbours, the children regularly looked over at the camera and seemed to be ‘performing’ for the camera, possibly due to both the camera’s and my presence beside the camera. At one point, I kept the camera running as I went into another room to speak with the neighbours’ parents. Looking back at the footage that was recorded in my absence, I noticed that the children seemed much more relaxed, more expressive and more dynamic when I was outside the room than when I was present in the room. With time however, the children seemed to get used to my presence, and although they were sometimes aware of the camera’s presence, it did not seem to intimidate them but instead heightened their excitement.

In the example of Kefa however, the camera seemed to be a source of intimidation and loss of control that could be regained by changing his position from the ‘observed’ to the ‘observer’. Although I encouraged Kefa to go about his day and show me what he did when I was not around, instead of being observed, Kefa decided that he would rather stand behind the camera beside me and take on the role of commentator, giving me insight into aspects of his play, highlighting issues of power relations between the researcher and the researched which he felt empowered to challenge. A couple of hours into filming Kefa, his older cousin visited the house, and at that point he left the camera and seemed to be fully immersed in play without a thought for the camera. It was clear in all four case studies that, at times, the children tended to either ignore or forget about the presence of the camera, especially when they were deeply engrossed in play, but at other times it was the focus of their attention and they performed for it or preferred to be in control of it.

2.5.2.3 Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the children’s parents in accordance with the DITL approach (For all interview questions see Appendix F). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), semi-structured interviews, unlike structured interviews, enhance knowledge-production through dialogue by giving interviewees more freedom to elaborate on topics that they deem important. Moreover, unlike more unstructured interviews, the interviewer can focus more on certain topics that are important for the research project at hand. This led to in-depth information into their lives, past experiences, thoughts and opinions (Bryman et al., 2008; Stephenson, 2001).
Al-Amer et al. (2014, 2016) argue that it can be helpful if the person conducting the interviews shares the language and understands the culture of participants. As I grew up in Lebanon and am bilingual in English and Arabic, I personally conducted all interviews with case study participants and professionals. While Modern Standard Arabic, a variation of classical Arabic, is widely used for writing, colloquial Arabic dialects are used in everyday informal conversations. These dialects vary according to the speakers’ social, religious and geographical background (Bateson, 2003). For example, the main dialect spoken in Lebanon and Syria is Levantine Arabic while that spoken in Iraq is Iraqi Arabic (Biadsy et al., 2009). Furthermore, three sub-dialects are recognised in each region: that of city residents; villagers/farmers; and Bedouins (Farhaly and Shaalan, 2009, in Al-Amer et al., 2016). While Arabic is the most widespread language in the Arab World, other residents such as Assyrian, Syriac, Chaldean and Chaldo-Assyrian Christians of Iraq speak Syriac in its various dialects as their mother tongue (Hanish, 2008).

In this study, the two Syrian participants originated from Bedouin communities and considered their Bedouin dialect to be their mother tongue, while the two Iraqi families were Christians from Northern Iraq who considered Chaldean and Syriac to be their mother tongues respectively. Additionally, all four families spoke fluent Arabic. Kefa and Maria both attended school in Lebanon and both understood and spoke in the Lebanese dialect. Ahmed and his mother spoke with me in the Syrian dialect and his father who had been living in Lebanon for over a decade spoke with me in the Lebanese dialect. Muna never spoke with me directly. Any questions I asked her were asked through her father who acted as an intermediary between us. She replied in a low voice to her father who in turn gave me her responses in Lebanese Arabic. Both Ahmed’s and Muna’s fathers acted as translators between me and their wives and children when certain terms differed across dialects.

There were times when family members started talking with each other in their mother tongue, and I was unable to understand what was being said. I would argue this was highly valuable as it gave them a degree of privacy even when I was present in their homes. In respect of their privacy, I did not ask them to translate what they had said on these occasions, although the parents or children often voluntarily translated what was being said so I could be included in the conversation.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, I conducted informal unstructured interviews. When conducting unstructured interviews, anyone the researcher meets in the context of the study can be interviewed and can contribute information that is useful for the study (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Interviews can also follow observations to gain clarity around events that took place or that were observed (Robson, 2011). In line with DITL approach (Cameron et al., 2006; Gillen et al., 2007; Hancock & Gillen, 2007), I spent a whole day with each family and talked to the people who interacted with the child or who constituted members of the child’s local community after gaining their informed consent. I therefore conducted many unstructured interviews in order to ‘understand’ the situation at hand instead of attempting to ‘explain’ a preconceived idea I might have had (Spradley 1979 in Fontana & Frey, 2000, p.654). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) argue that interviews
can be more or less structured, but are never completely unstructured since the researcher always has a general idea about what any conversation will revolve around.

### 2.5.2.4 Participatory methods

The individual experiences of children are central to my study. With the increasing recognition of children’s rights and the view of children as agents, their power as co-creators of knowledge is being increasingly recognised and valued, with children being consulted on issues that affect their own lives (see Kellett, 2005; Rasmussen, 2004; Shier, 2015; Smith, 2014; Wright et al., 2006). Children’s voices are able to provide us with unique knowledge into and understanding of their own lives and experiences (Clark et al., 2014; Kellock & Lawthom, 2011). Even the youngest children’s voices can be heard if appropriate methods are used (Alderson, 2008; Killen et al., 2005). As the case study children moved to Lebanon at a young age, it is possible that they may have recounted events that they had not personally experienced or remembered, but that they had heard in conversation between their parents and other family members or watched on television (see Miller, 1996). That being said, Maria, Kefa and Ahmed clearly described their personal experiences of particular events, as well as their own perspectives, thoughts and feelings, providing unique and strongly held views that sometimes differed to those of their parents. In both cases, children’s stories remain valid as they reflect their perceptions, thoughts and concerns around issues that ultimately shaped their experiences of childhood and their play.

In order to gain children’s insights into their own lives, I gave children disposable cameras, and, after explaining in detail the practicalities of using the equipment (Mizen, 2005), asked them to take photographs of things they like to do and things they like (places, people, toys, etc.) as well as those they do not like. Once I had sent the photographs to be developed, I asked the children to describe what the photographs represented and why they chose to photograph these things. This method is sometimes referred to as ‘photovoice’ (Wang et al., 1998). When photographs are paired with interviews, written accounts, or unstructured conversations, they give rich details and great insight into the area being researched (Mizen, 2005; Young & Barrett, 2001). Child participation through photography is an inclusive method that facilitates accessibility and engagement for children, and can display children’s rich opinions and experiences (Kellock & Lawthom, 2011; Wang et al., 1998; Young & Barrett, 2001). Young & Barrett (2001) discuss advantages to using ‘photodaries’ with 9-17 year-old street children in Kampala, Uganda, including enabling ‘excellent coverage of children’s daily lives’ especially in times and places that were not accessible by the researcher, and initiating conversations which elicited detailed information about the children’s lives, often in unexpected ways (p.148). This approach can offer advantages for the participating children, whose self-image may benefit from being trusted with a camera and who may experience fun and excitement during the activity.

However, there are limitations to using ‘photovoice’. In Young & Barrett’s (2001) study with street children in Kampala, three out of fifteen disposable cameras were not returned to the researcher.
due to two being destroyed by other children who had been ‘accidentally’ photographed, and one being sold. There are therefore potential risks, such as other children being jealous of a camera, or a figure of authority believing the camera may have been stolen by the child (Mizen, 2005). Keeping in mind the children’s safety, I discussed how children should use the cameras with both the children and their parents, recommending that the child only use the camera in their parents’ presence or whilst with a trusted adult. When I had this conversation with Lia, Kefa’s mother, she replied:

‘Anyway, Kefa is afraid of taking it outside or that anyone might take it from him, and of course I won’t allow him to take it and play with it’.

All of Kefa’s photographs were captured inside the house. Although this did not permit a view into ‘other spaces’ he visited, it illustrated how Kefa lived with his own and others’ fears that extended into many different aspects of his life. Maria was the only participant out of the four case studies to take photographs outside the home, with some taken at her relative’s house, and others on her way to church or on the road. Ahmed had shown excitement when given the disposable camera but was unable to freely use the camera because his younger brother Bilal became upset every time Ahmed wanted to use the camera, and his parents did not give Bilal the camera for fear that he might break it. During photovoice interviews, case study children and their families pointed out who had taken the different photographs, and in all cases other than Ahmed’s, other children, parents, siblings, or other relatives had done so.

Issues around ‘cameras, power and ethics’ were considered (Wang et al., 1998, p.84). Children and their parents were informed about the use of ‘photovoice’ as a method during my introductory visit so they would have time to consider it and give their consent/assent. In addition, the purpose of taking photographs, potential implications, and possible uses of these photographs were clarified. Parents and children were given a copy of all the images they took and were given the choice to include or exclude any image they wanted from the study (Mizen, 2005; Wiles et al., 2008).

In addition to photos produced by participants, attention was paid to photos that had been produced in the past (photo albums, photographs on participants’ smartphones), and these led to informative and sometimes deeply moving conversations with participants. Maria’s mother Thalia brought out a photo album that they had been able to rescue from their ravaged house in Iraq, and went through every photograph with me in detail, pointing out all her relatives and loved ones, which revealed great detail about their comfortable life before ISIS. On my last visit to Maria’s family, her parents played their wedding DVD on my laptop and we all watched it together. All four families had smartphones and used these to show me photographs, videos and YouTube clips of the participants’ lives both before and after leaving their home country. Both Kefa’s and Maria’s fathers used smartphones to show me photographs of the remnants of their houses after ISIS entered them. These photographs were taken by relatives who had stayed in Iraq and who were able to return to the house after ISIS had been defeated. Muna’s brother Kamal showed me a YouTube clip
that portrayed a warplane that had been shot down in their village, and her father showed me a picture of their house in Syria and videos of a wedding he had attended in Syria. Ahmed’s father also showed me a video of a wedding he had attended in Syria. Case study parents also exerted their power and acted as co-researchers by voluntarily sending me photos and video clips of their children’s play via WhatsApp. The clips and photos represented activities that parents considered important in the children’s lives and that their children enjoyed, but that I had not come across during DITL observations. Maria’s father sent me photographs over WhatsApp of his two children serving at mass on Sunday. Muna’s father also regularly sent me videos over WhatsApp of his children playing in Lebanon. Some of these photos and videos are referred to in later findings chapters. These additional insights into the lives of case study children can be explored as an extension to DITL as parents and children used social media to make aspects of their lives visible when the researcher was physically absent. This can lead to a stronger relationship between researcher and participants.

In addition to ‘photovoice’, block construction and drawing were employed as participatory methods for child participants. According to Gross and Hayne (1998), drawing facilitates children’s self-expression about emotional experiences and about events that they do not fully comprehend or cannot easily describe. Nonetheless, drawing as a participatory method has limitations. In this study, while all children were happy to draw, not all parents saw the value in asking their children to draw. For instance, Janna (Muna’s mother) questioned the usefulness of asking Muna to draw since, in her view, Muna ‘does not know how to draw’. Since drawing is a ‘highly interpretive method’, the circumstances under which a drawing is produced must be kept in mind, understanding that these drawings are based within a certain cultural context, and so the research must ‘resist a culturally neutral interpretation’ (Literat, 2013, p.93). Furthermore, it is crucial that the researcher conduct an interview or discussion about the drawing with the child in order to grasp the child’s own interpretation of the drawing, and so avoid misinterpretation or over-interpretation by the researcher (Literat, 2013).

Block construction, which also gives insight into children’s experiences, reduces the focus on children’s potentially negative perceptions of their own drawing skills and allows children to ‘impart information in ways which are based on their cultural experiences’ (Pimlott-Wilson, 2012, p.137). All case study children eagerly and excitedly welcomed both the drawing and the block construction participatory methods. I introduced the blocks to Kefa at the end of my first visit to his house. However, this impacted the data that I collected while filming DITL, as Kefa spent a large portion of his time playing with the blocks when I was filming, which meant I was less able to see what he did and how he played before I introduced the blocks. From then on, I decided to introduce the blocks at the end of Visit 3 once I had completed the day of filming. In this way, I could learn more about each child’s play without influencing it by introducing a new toy, and the children who might not be familiar with playing with blocks could have some time to use them before Visit 4 when I would ask them questions based on their constructions.
2.5.3 Interviews with professionals

In addition to questionnaires, one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the professionals (Section 2.4.4) were also conducted to support the four case studies. Interviews with the professionals were conducted in the Lebanese dialect, and as is common with Lebanese, both English and French terms were incorporated in the dialogue. The interviews with Mariana, Dr Denise, and Colette lasted 1hr 26mins, 57mins, and 57mins respectively, and were recorded using a voice recorder as I simultaneously took notes. These gave insights into professionals’ experiences of the lives of young refugee children in Lebanon. These interviews provided a more holistic view of the life of young refugee children in Lebanon, broaching issues related to children’s right to schooling, healthcare and play, and their encounters with child labour. The information generated helped contextualise the four case study children’s childhood experiences, moving from in-depth insights into individual children’s lives, to a broader and more generalizable understanding of child refugees’ experiences of armed conflict and displacement in Lebanon.

2.5.4 Observation in a school

The final stage of data collection included conducting an observation in a school for Iraqi refugees (see Section 2.4.3). I had originally intended to visit the school whilst I was conducting the case study with Kefa, but school had unfortunately already closed for the summer. The school visit was therefore postponed and I eventually made a school observation during one morning in November, 2017. Unfortunately, Kefa was absent from school on that day. Although I had received gatekeepers’, Kefa’s and his parents’ consent to conduct the observations, I had not received consent from the other students’ parents/guardians since I had originally planned to focus on Kefa. After consulting with the teachers, I decided to go forward with the observation, and instead of focusing on one child, I made notes on the play resources available, student-teacher and student-student interactions, and children’s play experiences in school. I relied solely on field notes to record observations and informal conversations with the participants, and took photographs of resources available in the school without taking child facial images or any other personal information about the children. Ideally, I would have liked to visit other schools, for example the private school that Maria and her brother attended, however due to time and access restrictions, this was not possible.

2.5.5 Field notes

Field notes accompanied all data collection methods apart from the questionnaires. While interviewing adults and children using a voice recorder, and while video recording a day in the life of the case study children, I wrote down notes that mirrored what was being recorded. At times when the recorders were not in use, field notes were particularly helpful. I attempted to write down verbatim quotes as said by participants, and kept a note of thoughts that emerged during the data collection process. During observations, I kept unstructured notes, writing down the time each note
was taken, and detailing events that were taking place, people who were present, what was being said, and thoughts that emerged.

2.5.6 Research diary
Throughout the process of fieldwork, I kept a research diary as a platform to collect my thoughts, concerns and ideas surrounding the multiple and diverse aspects of the research process, from recruitment of participants and planning data collection methods, to a daily reflection of the data collection process upon returning home from the field. I attempted to write detailed diary entries when recounting my day in the field, however at times when I was too tired to write, I recorded my diary entries using a voice recorder, which I later transcribed. The diary also included preliminary data analysis, and suggestions for improvement and possible changes to data collection methods.

2.5.7 Documents
Diverse types of documents were collated to inform this study. Documentation in and of itself was an important element in refugees’ lives which was evident when Iraqi and Syrian participants voluntarily showed me their UN registration certificates and identification documents provided to them by churches. Lack of documentation limited children’s mobility, embodiment and freedom to explore their environments, as well as their rights, including their rights to education and to play. Other documentary evidence used in this thesis include UN and GoL reports to gather statistical data on and to understand different players’ views regarding refugee children’s rights and lives in Lebanon. Children’s drawings and photographs gathered through participatory methods (Section 2.5.2.4) also fall within this category.

2.6 Ethics
My research was planned to ensure a high standard of ethical conduct, and adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2011) and Visual Ethics: Ethical Issues in Visual Research as set out by Wiles et al. (2008). I paid attention to the complexities of the particular context of the research and constantly reviewed ethical considerations on a moment by moment basis throughout the research process (Flewitt, 2005). Before data collection began, I obtained approval from UCL IOE internal ethics committee to commence with my research and then obtained consent/assent from all participants. Consideration was given to adult/child consent and assent; working with potentially vulnerable participants; anonymity and confidentiality; risk to participants and/or researcher; and main beneficiaries.

2.6.1 Consent/assent
After gaining access to participants through gatekeepers (Section 2.4), I discussed the planned study and issues of consent with all adults and children before they agreed to participate, always offering the opportunity for potential participants to ask questions about the project.
Concerning the questionnaires, I was aware that participants might feel obligated to fill out the questionnaire since they were receiving cheap and sometimes free healthcare, and regularly asked the nuns who work in the dispensary for financial and other help. They may have feared they would not be given help later on if they did not take part, or they may have felt that if they participated then they would be more likely to be offered the help they needed in future (Henn et al., 2006). I included an opening paragraph at the top of the questionnaire, which I read out, informing readers that participation was optional and that they might skip any question they preferred not to answer, and stop completing the questionnaire at any time (Appendix E). I also explained that the questionnaires were in no way associated with the dispensary or the nuns. Furthermore, a common question that I received as soon as I approached respondents was: *Are you with the UN?* (عندت مع الأمم؟). I made it clear that I had no affiliation with UNHCR and that I could not help respondents with their cases, whether related to getting financial assistance or resettlement to a third country via the UN. All questionnaires were anonymized and children who were accompanying their parents were given papers and colouring pencils to use whilst their parents were answering the questions, which helped create quieter thinking time for the respondents. After completion, I placed the questionnaire in a folder inside my backpack, which was either beside me or on my back throughout my visits to the dispensary.

I approached the case study families after receiving initial consent from potential participants either via a gatekeeper who acted as a mediator or through a phone call or WhatsApp conversation with one adult in each family (Section 2.4.2). I subsequently visited each family and talked through the project information sheets (Appendices G and H) with the potential adult and child participants, and gave consent forms to the adult participants (Appendix I). I discussed the project with each family, and although they immediately confirmed their interest in taking part, I asked them to think over the project, and to let me know their final decision within a week. During my next visit, I obtained adult participants’ written consent and, on two occasions where participants were reluctant to sign a form, their consent was recorded via a tape recorder. I reminded them that they could withdraw at any time. After obtaining parental consent, children were asked for their assent. Drawing on Pyle and Danniels’ (2016) picture book idea, I created information sheets for the children in the form of colouring books, substituting photographs with cartoon image outlines (Appendix H). The colouring-in cartoon picture books were given to each of the case study children and their siblings, with coloured pencils. These proved to be very popular among all the young children. For example, during my second visit to Kefa he excitedly asked ‘Do you remember the papers you gave me? I colour them in everyday… I coloured them all!’ I offered Kefa another colouring book and he proceeded to open it up and point to a cartoon of the children playing with blocks. He exclaimed ‘See this picture? This is my favourite picture and I coloured it all’. He then brought over his mother’s smartphone to show me pictures he had taken of the first copy that he had coloured in.

Not only did the children enjoy colouring in the cartoon outlines, but this format enabled them to understand different aspects of the research process. The children used the cartoons as a point of
reference when asking questions about the study. For example, after explaining the study to Maria using the colouring book, Maria pointed to the image of a child holding a camera and asked me:

Maria: **What is this person taking a picture of?**

Me: **He is taking pictures of things he likes.**

After discussing the research process with each child, the children were asked to make a ‘thumbs up’ sign if they wanted to take part in the study and a ‘thumbs down’ sign if they did not. I also explained that any time I asked them to do something or was filming them, they could make the thumbs up or down sign and I would respect their wishes. Cartoon images of both thumbs up and down signs were depicted in the picture books. Unexpectedly, all refugee children and their parents linked the ‘thumbs up’ sign to the ‘Like’ button on Facebook, and children exclaimed ‘Like!’ every time they made a thumbs up sign. Ahmed even played around with the assent process, laughing as he alternated very quickly between the thumbs up and down signs to toy with me.

Consent and assent were negotiated in this ongoing manner throughout the entire research process. When children or adults did not explicitly ask me to stop filming or recording, I used my own personal judgement to decide when participants might need a ‘break’ from the study or when to make notes rather than video recordings.

### 2.6.2 Working with vulnerable participants

In this study, I was working with children and adults who had experienced many profound difficulties leaving their homes, being separated from family, and in some cases witnessing war first-hand, making it likely for aspects of the study topic to be difficult for them to discuss or revisit. When conducting interviews, I asked questions in an empathetic and relaxed demeanour, using MSA or the Lebanese dialect (see Section 2.8.2) and presenting myself as guided by my consideration of their circumstances. Knowing the sensitivity of the study, I encouraged participants to decline to answer any questions they wished, to bring the interview to an end at any time if they preferred not to continue, and to feel free to withdraw at any time, whereupon I would destroy any of the information about them (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018) but that did not happen. Children were similarly reminded they might ask to stop being recorded at any time during filming.

### 2.6.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

All questionnaire respondents remained anonymous and were not asked for their names. One respondent asked if I needed her name and when I said I did not, replied: ‘**Good, I was going to give you a fake name anyway**’. Pseudonyms were allocated to all professionals, gatekeepers, case study participants, and settings. Two children told me they wanted to keep their own names and were not happy to have pseudonyms or for their faces to be blurred out. Their parents agreed I could use their children’s real names and unedited photographs but asked that I anonymize theirs.
However after discussion with the parents, they asked me to do what I thought was best, and pseudonyms were consequently used.

Furthermore, I am the only person who has access to the original data which have been kept in a password-protected system (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018). Although consent was granted for all still and moving images to be shared, I opted to blur participants’ faces in photographs to safeguard their identity (Wiles et al., 2008).

While I planned to ensure all participants’ confidentiality and anonymity, I was aware that I might be told about child abuse and/or maltreatment during interviews or observations. I clarified to all participants at the outset of the study that if such issues arose, it is my duty to report them to the relevant authorities (Wiles et al., 2008). However, the research process is neither simple nor straightforward. Domestic abuse arose during my interview with a potential case study participant. The potential participant spoke to me about physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse from her husband, and about verbal and sometimes physical abuse by her husband towards their eldest child. I talked with her about reporting this, but she informed me the family had received confirmation about their imminent resettlement in a European country, and she did not want any action to jeopardise this outcome. She reassured me she would get help for herself and her children once resettled. Whilst I felt responsible to refer this case to the necessary authorities, it was clear such action might not be in the best interest of the mother or the children. I therefore took the following steps:

1- I immediately contacted my supervisors and discussed the situation with them, and they advised me to withdraw from the family for my own personal safety. They in turn contacted UCL IOE Ethics Committee, who consulted the requirements for reporting abuse in Lebanon:
   ‘The law does not mandate any public or private sector to report instances of abuse, nor does it impose any legal measures on those who witness or suspect abuse but do not report’ (Al Turk et al., 2014, p.8).

2- I consulted with a UN contact in Lebanon, without mentioning any participant personal details. He advised that I could send him the family’s case number and that he could ensure that the family was assigned someone to visit them regularly when they arrived in Europe and keep an eye on them. When I told the mother, she declined to give me her case number telling me she was afraid that, if anyone from the UN knew about this abuse, the resettlement decision would be withdrawn and they would be stuck in Lebanon, explaining:
   ‘A friend of mine who was supposed to be resettled let it slip to someone in the UN that her son had been sexually abused. So the resettlement was cancelled and instead her son was assigned a therapist in Lebanon’.

3- I referred her to an organisation called KAFA: Enough Violence and Exploitation (http://www.kafa.org.lb) which works with victims of domestic abuse, specifically women
and children, in Lebanon, and discussed immediate support that would be available to her and her children confidentially.

4- I made enquiries and learnt that the children were already attending therapy sessions in Lebanon, and that an assigned social worker would follow their case closely once they had been resettled.

Knowing that the family had experienced multiple and profound difficulties in Lebanon, that they were soon being resettled, that UCL IOE could not be held accountable for any outcome, that the children had begun to receive therapy and were to be assigned a social worker after resettlement, and that the mother would consult KAFA, I could not justify jeopardizing their chances of a better supported and more settled life in a new country.

2.6.4 Risk to participants and/or researcher

Throughout the research process, I assessed risk constantly to avoid putting myself or the study participants in harm’s way. This included keeping up to date with local news and events regarding the country’s security situation, not asking participants to do anything that might have a negative impact on them, and not going alone to participants’ houses if I felt uneasy about it. My supervisors and I discussed the possibility of being accompanied by a trusted individual when visiting participants’ houses, which is justified by the DITL approach. After careful thought and consideration, I decided that being accompanied by a male, while offering me more protection, would not be well received by the participants, especially since the majority of my time would be spent with the women and children while the husband was away at work. I endeavoured to find a female companion for the case studies, but was unable to. With time moving forward, I decided that my best option was to find participants through trusted gatekeepers and to give my family, with whom I lived at the time of the study, information of my whereabouts and a time-frame in which I was expected to be with the participants. Ahmed and his family also lived across the street from one gatekeeper who was kept informed of the dates and times of my visits and whom I sometimes visited after conducting the research.

My supervisors also advised me to use my instincts and do what felt right for me. After visiting potential case study families (See Appendix B), it became clear that the risks of working with some families were too high (see Section 2.6.3). Following their advice, I therefore withdrew from these families, and took the steps described above (Section 2.6.3) to ensure the mother and children were receiving help.

2.6.5 Main beneficiaries

Even though this study is personally and professionally beneficial for me, the participants were also beneficiaries in different ways. Interviewing parents and discussing their experiences and concerns was in some cases cathartic, enabling participants to openly discuss issues instead of bottling them up. For example, during an unstructured interview with Maria’s Iraqi neighbours, one man said:
‘I am sorry that we are letting all this out on you and talking to you about such difficult things, but we need to vent, we need to talk about it.’

During my interviews with the Iraqi families, the parents started crying when talking about how they missed the life that they used to live in Iraq. When I told them that we did not have to continue with the interview or that we could skip the question if they preferred, they replied that they had to talk about it, that there was no one else that they could talk to.

As in my MA dissertation data collection, many Iraqi participants in this study had the impression that Syrian refugees received national and international help and attention while they did not, and this angered and frustrated them. I therefore considered it ethically important to include Iraqi refugee perspectives in this study, to explore their plight in Lebanon and bring their circumstances to light. Syrian parents also welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences, and to feel their life experiences were being respected and represented. Furthermore, the children benefited in a practical sense by keeping the photographs, blocks, colouring pencils and papers after the end of the data collection, and my discussions with parents brought the children’s opportunities to play to parents’ attention, provoking reflection. An aim of this project is to identify and to improve refugee children’s opportunities to play, through accessing play areas, materials to use and interacting with others, which will hopefully, one day, benefit the children taking part in my study in addition to many others living under similar circumstances.

2.7 Validity and reliability

Several measures were taken to ensure the study’s validity and reliability, including respondent validation, conducting pilot studies, and maintaining transparency. The study validity was further enhanced by using Theory Triangulation (Denzin, 1978) to scrutinise the data.

2.7.1 Validity

Validity in qualitative research may be ensured primarily by including appropriate participants, collecting rich data, triangulating data collection methods, (Winter, 2000) and reflecting critically on one’s own subjectivity (Whittemore et al., 2001). As described, when looking for case study participants, I approached Syrian and Iraqi refugees living in Lebanon with children under the age of eight, who had left their home countries because of armed conflict or threats to their lives. I also visited each family several times over a one-month period, allowing me ‘to check and confirm [my] observations and inferences’ (Maxwell, 2013, p.135). I transcribed data in Arabic and translated them into English as soon as possible after they were collected, which helped ensure accurate data records. The information from professionals was well-informed, as they each had many years’ experience of working with refugee children in Lebanon and were experts in their fields. I triangulated my data collection methods as described in Section 2.5, which led to in-depth, rich case-study data sets, complemented by breadth of insight from the questionnaires and interviews.
with professionals. Additionally, parents and/or children showed me photographs or videos while I was in their homes, or sent them to me via WhatsApp. This ‘volunteered’ information lent insight into their lives before armed conflict, and their daily routines as displaced people in Lebanon, at times when I was not present with them.

Moreover, member checking (Robson, 2011), also referred to as respondent validation (Maxwell, 2013), was employed. Respondent perspectives and validation were central features of the DITL approach, where I selected approximately 30 minutes’ video footage of each child, using VLC media player, and viewed this selection with each family, hence gaining their insight into what was happening at the moment of recording (see Gillen et al., 2007; Hancock & Gillen, 2007). The case study children also discussed what was happening in their play and at other times of the day, and Kefa, Maria and Ahmed took on the role of ‘co-researchers’, regularly explaining to me what was happening as I was filming. Consequently, when we co-viewed the compilation video, many of the snippets had already been explained to me either by the children or by their parents while I was filming, and participants sometimes gave additional information when re-watching. However, there were also difficult moments when watching the compilation video, for example, when Maria viewed a scene of her dancing, she became embarrassed, upset and left the room, prompting me to immediately stop the video while her father tried to console her.

Although all parents spent some time co-viewing the video compilations, some were more enthusiastic than others. Maria’s parents greatly enjoyed watching their children’s play episodes as they laughed and commented on the children’s play. However, while all parents and children showed initial interest in the compilation videos (except for Ahmed who preferred to watch TV rather than the research recordings), diverse distractions averted their attention. For instance, although Muna’s mother showed initial enthusiasm when watching the compilation DVD, she left the room after the second snippet to start preparing lunch for her family.

Some families did not own a laptop, and asked if they might use mine from time to time, to which I agreed. For instance, after watching Maria play at weddings, her parents played their own wedding DVD, pointing to parallels between their wedding and the children’s play episode. This in itself gave me a glimpse into their lives before ISIS and into the extent to which tradition, culture and community were, or had been, engrained into their lives. Maria also took advantage of the laptop’s presence and asked if she could play a music CD she had been given at school but had not been able to listen to because she did not have a CD player.

Respondent validation was also ensured when interviewing children using participatory methods. Whatever the children drew, photographed or built, I asked them about their own meanings and understandings of their representations to avoid making false presumptions. As for the questionnaires, I piloted these to ensure that the final questions were clear, followed a logical sequence, and provided scope for answers that were relevant to my research aims (Gillham, 2007).


2.7.2 Reliability

Moisander and Valtonen (2006) suggest that in order to attain reliability in qualitative work, there should be transparency through giving a detailed account of the research strategy and the methods of data analysis. They add that ‘theoretical transparency’ must also be met by being explicit about a study’s theoretical framework. In this thesis, both the research process and underpinning theory have been made explicit. Reliability also involves the design of data collection methods. For example, to ensure reliability in interviews, Silverman (2011) suggests the use of 'low-inference descriptors', by recording interviews, transcribing them carefully, and 'presenting long extracts of data in the research report' (p.365).

The next section gives a detailed account of the way data were represented and analysed in this study.

2.8 Representing and analysing data

Data generated during this study included video recordings, voice recordings, photographs, and written notes in multiple languages and dialects (Section 2.5). It was important that I represent the data as accurately and as close to participants’ intended meanings as possible. As mentioned, data were transcribed and translated as soon as possible after I had left the research site, while it was still fresh in my mind. When translating, terms that were culturally specific or particularly challenging to translate were left in parentheses in the Source Language within the English text. As transcriptions are representations of the data, they also constitute a guide to the data (Gibson & Brown, 2009), which can save time since replaying video recordings can be very time-consuming. Nonetheless, I regularly revisited the original data when writing up my findings, to check for the accuracy of transcription, making adjustments and corrections to the translations and transcriptions where necessary, as discussed below.

2.8.1 Transcribing voice and video data

Apart from acting as a data guide, another aim of transcription is ‘to produce an analytic focus on a given data set’ (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p.110). By transcribing, researchers are making decisions about what aspects of the data to represent while filtering out features that might be less important for the aims of the intended study.

I personally transcribed all voice and video recordings that I had generated through fieldwork. Voice and video recordings were originally transcribed using unfocused transcription (Gibson & Brown, 2009) where I typed out what was said (voice and video recordings) and what actions were occurring (detailed transcripts of video recordings). The video transcripts included a time index of where data could be found for ease of access when revisiting the original data source. Following initial unfocused transcription, and when conducting more advanced analysis, revisiting and
selecting data sources, more detailed transcription was conducted of excerpts selected for inclusion in the findings chapters.

Transcribing video data involves representing both the visual and auditory aspects of the recordings. I transcribed both simultaneously, first focusing on what participants said, then replaying the same scene and describing what was happening in those moments. In this way, I built up rich descriptions of the children’s movements, facial expressions, play resources and surroundings alongside what they said.

2.8.2 Translating the data

Challenges often arise in translations between dialects or languages when attempting to capture the meanings of one language and represent them in another language (Al-Amer et al., 2014, 2016). When translating from the Source Language (mainly Arabic, but also French) into the Target Language (English), I was conscious that Arabic is a language rich in metaphors, and I considered it important to reflect both the ‘cultural meaning’ and the ‘intended meaning of [these] culturally bound expression[s]’ (Al-Amer et al., 2016, p.154). For example, during interview, Muna’s mother used the term كامشين قلوبنا بيدينا / Kāmšīn qīlūnbna biyadaynā when discussing their experience of being smuggled from Syria into Lebanon. This literally translates as ‘holding onto our hearts with our hands’, and captures the extreme anxiety they experienced during their journey to Lebanon. Using the literal translation does not necessarily portray the cultural meaning reflected through the metaphor. Therefore I used the metaphor ‘hearts in our mouths’ which more closely portrays the feeling of anxiety and nervousness in the English language.

Furthermore, while all excerpts were presented in English, culturally specific terms were presented in both English and Arabic in order to maintain the participants’ voices. However, as there is no standard spelling of words spoken in different Arabic dialects (Biadsy et al., 2009), I transcribed the spoken Arabic using both Arabic and Latin alphabet, drawing on Brill’s simple Arabic transliteration system (Rietbroek, 2010) for the latter, and represented both side by side separated by a slash (/). I also retained French and English words that were embedded in the utterances of the professional respondents and the children who spoke Lebanese Arabic as illustrated in the following extract from the day of filming Maria when she was playing a game called ‘Flag’ with her brother and neighbours:

Maria: We’re going to play drapeau (flag).

[…]

Dany starts shouting out numbers in French as he holds up the ‘flag’

Dany: Numéro un (number one)!

Sabine grabs it quickly. Gerges was supposed to grab it too but he just stands there

Dany: yallā / يلى Gerges (come on Gerges)!

107
Dany points to the winning team

Dany: *Henne/هنّي* un *(They get one point).*

This extract perfectly illustrates the children’s use of both Arabic and French when talking and playing. In order to maintain the richness of this exchange, I represented the Arabic words in *Italics* and the French words in *Bold Italics*. In other exchanges, words spoken in *English* were underlined.

### 2.8.3 Analysis

Quantitative data were collected via questionnaires in order to inform and support the case studies. All quantitative data from pilot and final questionnaires were entered by the researcher into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet shortly after being collected which was then imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). I employed *Exploratory Data Analysis* (Albers, 2017) which places specific emphasis on graphical display of the data and ‘simply regularizes the very common process whereby researchers make inferences about relationships between variables after data collection which their study was not designed to test formally … and provides helpful tools for that task’ (Robson, 2011, p.419). As a result, data were analysed using frequency distributions and graphical displays such as pie charts, bar graphs and histograms, using descriptive statistics including measures of central tendency such as the mean, and exploring relationships between two variables using cross-tabulations.

Pilot and final questionnaires, case studies, interviews with professionals, the school observation, and my personal journal entries all generated a substantial amount of qualitative data (Appendix C). After being translated and transcribed, data were imported from Microsoft Word into NVivo, a computer package designed specifically for qualitative data analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Thematic coding analysis was completed at several time points throughout the research project. Starting with early analysis, transcribed data were coded and labelled, and those with the same label were grouped together under one theme (Belotto, 2018). This early analysis allowed me to alter questions that I had intended to ask in subsequent interviews. Following this early phase of data analysis, I prepared a ‘Case Study Information Form’ (see Appendix J) for each case study child, including: a summary of essential information (location, age of child, date of entry into Lebanon …); summary notes on all visits per case study; responses to research questions; and any thoughts on early analysis. I then revisited the literature and conceptual framework before conducting a second phase of qualitative data analysis. Links between theory, data collected in the field and literature were made, leading to a deeper and more elaborate set of key themes, all informed by theory and capturing my experiences rather than being masked by pre-existing literature (Appendix K). Returning to the data, I went over all the translated transcripts again, and conducted a second phase of data analysis using the coding tools available in NVivo. The visual representations generated from the quantitative data analysis were imported as images into NVivo, in addition to photographs taken by the researcher or by the participants, and were coded and embedded within.
the qualitative data. The final codes were grouped under themes which were used as subheadings in my ‘Findings’ chapters (Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6) (See Appendix L for descriptions of final themes and subthemes). Extracts selected for inclusion in the thesis write-up were reviewed against the original voice and video recordings to confirm that the transcripts and translations accurately represented what was taking place at the time of recording.

When deciding how to report this study, I made an ethical decision to include direct (translated) citations from the participants when they spoke of particularly difficult experiences and/or emotions. These quotes were sometimes long, however, as a duty of care of testimony, I decided to include these quotes rather than paraphrase them as they are richly embedded in meaning, emotion, experience, and culture. This thesis also aimed to foreground the voices of child and adult refugees, voices that do not tend to be ‘acknowledged as significant speech’ (hooks, 1989, p.6). As Nicholson et al. (2015) note, knowledge production is pervaded by politics, where only particular stories and voices are heard and given weight. This leads to the formulation of a constructed ‘truth’ while other voices are hidden and disregarded. Therefore, the ‘fuller’ representation of ‘othered’ voices in this thesis can be considered a valid and political choice.

2.9 Reflexivity

Many aspects of this study proved to be personally challenging. Talking to and spending time with people who have experienced and are still experiencing hardship and pain was at times highly distressing. After discussing this with my supervisors, who secured generous supplementary funding from the Froebel Trust for my mental well-being, I consulted a counsellor during the last three months of my fieldwork in Lebanon with whom I went over challenging aspects of the study. I also kept a daily journal and wrote down my thoughts, experiences and observations concerning the study. This allowed me to track the development of my thought process and keep notes of things that might not be evident in the videos, voice recordings or field notes.

I kept in mind my “Subjective I’s” (Peshkin, 1988) and how these influence all the processes that encompass this study, and was aware of my insider/outsider position within the research community (Todorov, 1988). Reflecting on my Subjective I’s, my choice of research topic, settings and participants is also linked to the ‘Lebanese I’, to the ‘Humanitarian I’, and to the ‘Early Childhood Supporter I’. These ‘I’s’, these ‘aspects of the whole which constitutes me’ (Peshkin, 1988, p.18) have been shaped by books I have read, by people I have met, by my own personal life experiences, and influenced by cultural, historical and social norms in the worlds I have lived in and read about. This does not mean that I can ‘uncritically impose’ my own beliefs and principles on the study (Maxwell, 2013, p.45). Rather, through ‘critical subjectivity’, I can raise ‘primary experience … to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process’ (Reason, 1988, p.12).
As an example, my understanding of the extent to which participants might have been psychologically affected by their experiences of armed conflict and chose what to say and what not to say during the interviews deepened after I presented my work at a conference in Hiroshima, Japan. Keiko Ogura, a World War II Atomic Bomb survivor, spoke about how it took her 50 years to finally speak out about her experience, and to let others know that she is an Atomic Bomb survivor. Her mind was plagued with guilt and horror, and she, like many other survivors, did not want to be discriminated against.

I recognise that participants ‘Subjective I’s’ may have influenced how they viewed me, why they agreed to take part in the study or let me into their homes. Both questionnaire and case study participants regularly asked about my age and my relationship status, wondering why I was not yet married. One case study participant even tried to find me a husband, and sent me a photograph of an eligible bachelor over WhatsApp. The female participants may have seen me as an alter ego - when asking me about my own relationship status and why I had prioritized my education, they often opened up about their relationships, their difficult or happy marriages, their regrets in choosing marriage over schooling, or their acceptance that marriage was their destiny and that they had no other choice but to get married, especially if they had left school at a young age.

Some participants also included me as part of their story, drawing on my Subjective I’s in a way that I might relate more to their stories. When talking about the religious persecution of Iraqi Christians, one Iraqi male questionnaire participant told me:

‘If they saw a girl dressed like you, jeans and a t-shirt, they would know she was Christian and they would rape her, 12, 13 years old, and we couldn't say anything’.

This is not only true for the adult participants but also for the children. Attempting to distinguish between the ‘Researcher I’ and the ‘Early Childhood Supporter I’ proved to be sometimes difficult, especially when children saw me as a ‘friend’ or as a ‘playmate’ and asked, even begged, that I play with them. Balancing between these ‘I’s’ was key since I knew that these children sometimes had no one to play with and found my presence in their house exciting. This was also the case with adult case study participants who were happy to have a visitor in their homes to talk and socialize with. During my first interview with Maria’s mother she told me ‘the moment I saw you Sandra I felt close to you. You are like my sister. I have no one to talk to here’. Similarly, although I had told them that I would leave for an hour during the day of filming when they were having lunch, none of the four case study participants accepted this and insisted that I stay and eat with them, sometimes even preparing certain meals specifically for me. I was not sure whether to accept their offer at first since I knew that providing food for their children was sometimes a struggle. When I told Lia for example that I would be leaving them for an hour so they could have lunch she said:

‘No don’t leave. Join us. Seriously. We are happy with you here. I am usually very bored, there is nothing to do. At least with you here you keep me company’.
2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the research design for this study, and how this design enabled the research questions to be addressed through the lens of the study’s conceptual framework. This qualitative study using an ethnographic approach to data collection was conducted in Lebanon with Iraqi and Syrian refugees, focusing on four case studies of two Iraqi and two Syrian young child refugees in Lebanon. The case study data are supported by information generated through questionnaires, interviews with professionals and an observation in a school for Iraqi children. Challenging ethical decisions had to be taken when selecting participants and research settings, to minimise risk to researcher and participant safety. Consent and assent were an ongoing process throughout the study, and great care was taken to maintain participants’ anonymity. Validity and reliability of the study, in addition to complexities of representing and analysing the data have also been discussed. Finally, being reflexive of my personal thoughts and experiences was crucial both to keep track of my thoughts and ongoing events throughout the fieldwork and for my personal emotional and mental wellbeing.

The next chapter is the first of four findings chapters. It sets the scene for this study, presenting participating children’s individual case study profiles including their experiences of armed conflict and displacement. Questionnaire respondents’ experiences of armed conflict and displacement and professionals’ accounts of these experiences are then presented.
Chapter 3 War and displacement: From pre-liminal to liminal

We left Iraq so we could come to Lebanon and then go to Australia [...] [We left Iraq because] ISIS came [...] they explode the ... they explode and kill the people.

تركنا العراق نتجي ع لبنان و بعدان ع اوستراليا ... (تركنا العراق لأن) داعش اجو ... بفجرو ال... بفجرو و بببمو الناس

(Kefa, Iraqi case study participant, 5 years and 9 months old)

3.1 Introduction

Key challenges in analysing the data and presenting the findings for this study lay in developing an apt theoretical framing and clear structure that would enable me to interrogate, capture and convey the richness and complexity of the data generated. I began with preliminary analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires and case studies, using thematic analysis to code the semi-structured interviews, observations, and field and journal notes, as described in Chapter 2. As the conceptual framework of the study developed, I revisited the data and the coding scheme multiple times, and finally selected extracts as representative of the study participants’ views and experiences. In order to answer the study’s research questions and explore how conflict and displacement have shaped children’s constructions of childhood and play, it is first necessary to clarify what those experiences entailed. In this first of four findings chapters, I present profiles of the four case study children and their families, using ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973; Ryle, 1971) to portray their accounts of their life experiences before, during and after the armed conflict that had led to their displacement. Following the case study profiles, demographic data about the questionnaire respondents is presented, followed by in-depth scrutiny of the reasons given by the questionnaire respondents about why they had left their home countries, which is also informed by case study data and interviews with professionals. Bringing together these different elements from the case studies and questionnaires, this chapter highlights refugees’ diverse experiences of conflict and displacement, the similarities between their experiences, and the uniqueness of each person’s experiences, which consequently shape children’s childhoods and play. Following these detailed profiles and accounts of conflict and forced displacement, the next chapter focuses on children’s rights infringements as ‘temporarily displaced’ persons in Lebanon.
3.2 Child profiles

This section presents in-depth information about the four case study participants, who were first introduced in Chapter 2. These profiles present more detailed information about each child’s life experiences before, during and after moving to Lebanon, and clarify how the children’s experiences mirrored those of their direct and indirect family members. These experiences include exposure to events that unfolded as a result of armed conflict and displacement to Lebanon, which pushed participants into a state of ‘in-between-ness’ as temporarily displaced persons in Lebanon.

3.2.1 Kefa case study profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kefa Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location (Country; Region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study child age and gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Parents’ pseudonym and age | Lia (Mother, 24)  
Matta (Father, 32) |
| Sibling(s) age and gender | Tomas, male, 3.4 |
| Date they left their home | August 2014 |
| Date they arrived in Lebanon | November 2014 |
| Area and country of origin | Nineveh Plains, Iraq |
| Day in the Life |
| Visit 1 date | June 24, 2017 |
| Visit 2 date | June 29, 2017 |
| Visit 3 date | July 29, 2017 |

Table 3.1: Kefa case study profile

The first child to take part in this study was Kefa, a young Iraqi boy aged 5 years and 9 months. Kefa was born and lived in an Assyrian town north of Mosul in Northern Iraq’s Nineveh Plains (see Figure 3.1 below) with his family until he was three years old. Kefa’s parents described his town as a place where ‘there is very wide land’, and ‘a lot of planting’. Here, Kefa and his family had lived comfortably in a three-bedroom house with his father Matta’s parents. Kefa’s father described their former home in Iraq as having ‘space for the children to play’. Family formed a core part of their
lives, as Matta explained: ‘You can say that the whole town is related to one another. Everyone is related to everyone. We are all intertwined’. Kefa and his family followed the Chaldean Christian religion and spoke the Chaldean language with each other and with their Chaldean relatives and friends.

Figure 3.1: Map of Nineveh Plains, Erbil, Duhok and Mosul in Iraq

3.2.1.1 Kefa’s experience of armed conflict

‘We migrated because of ISIS. They came and entered our town’

(Matta, Kefa’s father)

ISIS had been making their way across Northern Iraq, and had captured the city of Mosul and villages that led to Kefa’s town. Matta recounted how ‘every time they (ISIS) would come closer, come closer, come closer’. On August 6 2014, all town residents including Kefa and his family were advised by their Bishop to leave because ISIS were on the verge of entering the town.

3.2.1.2 Kefa’s experience of internal displacement

Kefa, his parents, and his then 9-month-old brother Tomas left immediately. Due to the ‘fear’ and ‘bewilderment’ (labaka/لياقة) they left most of their possessions behind, grabbing only ‘one or two items’ before leaving.
‘So every family took its cars, those who didn’t have [cars] went with other people, others went walking[…] there were checkpoints and so much traffic, and so many people.

Everyone wanted to leave before the other, because of the fear’ (Lia, Kefa’s mother).

Around 20 people including Kefa and his family left their town in a truck owned by Matta’s brother-in-law. Because everyone left at once, traffic was intense and the journey from their town to Erbil, which would usually take approximately 2 hours, took them 10 hours. They had no food or water until they reached Erbil. Although Matta and Lia described a very tense and difficult situation, Kefa said that he remembered leaving on the truck, and that although ‘it was a bit small’ he had fun on the truck.

Kefa and his family arrived in Erbil but had nowhere to stay. Matta told me ‘we spent the night outside, no one welcomed us’. They slept in the truck overnight. The next day they went to Duhok where they stayed for 3 months and lived in one big hall with around 30 other families. Kefa told me that he liked Duhok because there were many people living with them and he had a friend with whom he played. His parents on the other hand described living under such conditions as ‘demeaning’ and ‘difficult’ thus they decided to move to Lebanon. Matta worked and saved up some money in order to afford plane tickets to Lebanon, a country where they ‘could work’ and which they considered to be a ‘Christian country’. They registered with UNHCR, their main goal being to be resettled to a third country via UNHCR.

3.2.1.3 Life in Lebanon

Kefa, Tomas, Lia and Matta migrated to Lebanon in November 2014 and directly moved into a ground floor apartment in a low-income, densely populated area in Beirut’s Northern suburbs, where they lived with Matta’s mother, father and brother. A large number of Syrian and Iraqi refugees resided in that area alongside Lebanese residents. Lia’s sister had arranged for them to move into the apartment prior to their arrival. Kefa, his parents and brother lived with Matta’s mother, father and brother until the latter three received a sponsorship to move to Australia in early 2017. From 2014 until 2017, Lia, Matta, and Matta’s brother worked as unskilled labourers while Matta’s mother looked after Kefa and Tomas. Once Matta’s parents and brother left for Australia, Lia had no choice but to stop working and look after her children, making Matta the sole breadwinner of the household and putting financial strain on the family. Lia’s uncle, his wife and their four children lived in an apartment on the second floor in the same building. Other relatives lived nearby. Kefa attended a school that was opened by Sr Mary for Iraqi refugee children, but was on summer holidays at the time of the study and spent most of his time at home.

3.2.1.4 Plan of apartment

Figure 3.2 presents a plan of Kefa’s apartment, which was located in a run-down concrete building, with electric cables and flaking walls on the exterior. The main door led to an outdoor entrance/balcony which in turn led to a storage room where the family stored the children’s toys.
The indoor space consisted of a large living room, bedroom, small hallway, kitchen and bathroom. In the living room was an L-shaped sofa, a table, a bed that was used as a sofa, a television and a fridge. In the bedroom, two beds were pushed together and the family's belongings were stored in cupboards and drawers. In the kitchen, there was an oven, a sink and a washbasin. The walls and ceilings of the kitchen and bathroom were covered in mould. In the bathroom, there was a toilet, a showerhead and a bucket, with a washbasin in the kitchen area. Although most of my time was spent collecting data with Kefa and his family in their home, I accompanied Kefa during the day of filming on a 15-minute outing to his cousins' apartment on the second floor of the same building.

![Figure 3.2: Plan of Kefa's apartment](image)

Figure 3.2: Plan of Kefa's apartment
### Maria Case Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location (Country; region)</th>
<th>Lebanon; Northern suburbs of Beirut/ Mount Lebanon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study child age and gender</td>
<td>Maria, Female, 7.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Parents’ pseudonym and age | Thalia (Mother, 32)  
Yohannan (Father, 38) |
| Sibling(s) age and gender | Gerges, Male, 5.11 |
| Date they left their home | August 2014 |
| Date they arrived in Lebanon | February 2015 |
| Area and country of origin | Nineveh Plains, Iraq |
| Day in the Life | |
| Visit 1 date: Introductory visit | September 9, 2017 |
| Visit 2 date | September 13, 2017 |
| Visit 3 date | September 20, 2017 |
| Visit 4 date | October 7, 2017 |

**Table 3.2: Maria case study profile**

The second child to take part in the study was Maria, a young Iraqi girl aged 7 years and 6 months. Maria was born in Iraq, and lived with her family in a city east of Mosul in the Nineveh Plains of Northern Iraq (see Figure 3.1 above), where she attended nursery school. Thalia, Maria’s mother, described their city as ‘a small city where everyone knew everyone’ but at the same time where ‘everyone did their own thing’ and ‘lived their own life’. Thalia added that the city had two Orthodox and two Catholic churches and a turbulent history:

‘[the city] was ‘turned over’ (inqilbit/ انتقليت) around 7 times. This is the 8th time, since ISIS entered’ (Thalia).

Maria and her family followed the Syriac Catholic religion and spoke the Syriac language amongst themselves and with other family and community members. They used to live a ‘comfortable life’ with Yohannan’s parents in Iraq.
3.2.2.1 Maria’s experience of armed conflict

On August 5, 2014, ISIS had arrived in a village near them where fighting erupted. At 5am Maria and her family heard gunshots and explosions and everyone ran up to the roof to see what was happening. Although many inhabitants of their city started to pack up and leave, Yohannan did not want to leave his home behind. He was attached to his city, his home and his family, calling the other people who had left cowards. Thalia collected money and their important documents and begged Yohannan to leave.

‘We were looking around, it became a ghost-town. There were no people, Sandra, it was EMPTY of people EMPTY! How scary is that?’ (Thalia).

Eventually, almost everyone had left the city and, after the Kurds who were defending it pulled back, Yohannan agreed to leave. They drove off at 9pm and ISIS invaded the city seven hours later.

3.2.2.2 Maria’s experience of internal displacement

Maria left her house with her parents and brother. They took a side road in order to avoid the traffic caused by the sudden surge of residents of the town and surrounding villages who were fleeing from ISIS.

‘People were disoriented; all they wanted was to leave and to get to Erbil’ (Thalia)

Thalia described the terror and helplessness they felt as Yohannan drove them from their house to Erbil:

‘ISIS was there [on the road]. But … they did not see us. But the Virgin Mary, I had the bible and I was holding on to it and praying and was saying Our Lady, just get us there safely, we don’t want anything else, our Lady please save us’. (Thalia)

Two hours later the family arrived safely in Erbil.

‘We got there and the people […] were spread on the floor […] crying, crying for themselves, the children crying […] We stayed with people we know […] in their house in Erbil. Thank God. We woke up in the morning and we saw people in tents, in … the situation was so difficult, no matter how much you try to describe it, it was something … what can I say […] We thought we’d be away for three days and we’d go back home. Now it’s been three years’ (Thalia).

Maria and her family stayed in Erbil for around 2 months. They lived in a three-bedroom house with Yohannan’s sister, her husband and children, her parents-in-law and Yohannan’s parents. They then moved to Anakawa, a Christian enclave of Erbil, where they stayed for a further two to three months, living in a house with Yohannan’s sister, her husband and children, and Yohannan’s parents.
After gathering all their papers and documents, they applied for a Jordanian visa, but this was turned down three times. They were running out of money since they had to pay a fee every time they applied for the Jordanian visa, therefore after the third failed attempt, they decided to move to Lebanon instead. They flew to Lebanon in February 2015.

3.2.2.3 Life in Lebanon

Once in Lebanon, the family registered with UNHCR with the intention of resettling to a third country. They moved from apartment to apartment on four occasions, often living with relatives, before settling in the one-bedroom apartment where Maria’s family lived at the time of this study. Since they had arrived in Lebanon during the middle of the school year, the children could not be registered in school until the following September, when a priest offered to sponsor Maria’s and Gerges’ education. At the time of the study, Maria and Gerges were on their summer holidays but had been attending a private school that followed the Lebanese curriculum. The children were taught in Arabic and French languages, and received a one-hour English lesson every week. Although their education was being sponsored by the priest, Maria’s parents had to pay 400USD (approx. £314) a year to cover the cost of stationery.

3.2.2.4 Plan of apartment

Maria’s family’s apartment was on the third floor of a comparatively well-maintained two-star motel in Beirut’s Northern suburbs (Figure 3.3). The apartment consisted of a living room/kitchen area, bathroom, bedroom, and balcony. The kitchen had an oven and a fridge. The living room had two long couches and two small tables, one adorned with religious icons, candles and prayers and a large decorated cross above the table. The bathroom had a toilet, sink and shower. In the bedroom, there were two beds separated by a nightstand, a table and washing machine covered in a table cloth and cupboards. The table was decorated with stuffed animals and rosary beads, and the walls with religious images. The bedroom led to a balcony that overlooked a church parking lot.

![Figure 3.3: Plan of Maria's apartment](image-url)
3.2.3 Ahmed case study profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahmed Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location (Country; region)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon; Northern suburbs of Beirut/ Mount Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case study child age and gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed, Male, 6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents’ pseudonym and age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salwa (Mother, 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omar (Father, 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sibling(s) age and gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilal, Male, 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date they arrived in Lebanon (1st time)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date they returned to home country</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date they left their home (2nd time)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date they arrived in Lebanon (2nd time)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area and country of origin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reef Idlib, Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day in the Life</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit 1 date: Introductory visit</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 23, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit 2 date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 4, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit 3 date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit 4 date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 29, 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Ahmed case study profile

The third child to take part in this study was Ahmed, a young Syrian boy aged 6 years and 5 months. Ahmed was born in a small Syrian village located in the Idlib countryside east of Idlib city in North-West Syria (Figure 3.4). Omar described the village as an area that ‘was calm’, that ‘was known for generosity and good hospitality’, and where ‘people were kind’. Omar added:

‘We were around 30 houses, the whole village had around 200 people in it, they were all maternal and paternal uncles. We all knew each other, and when an outsider came in to the village […] we had celebrations’ (Omar, Ahmed’s father).
Omar explained that although their financial situation was not good in Syria they were content because ‘there was simplicity’. The family were descendants of Bedouins but their way of life had developed:

‘We are more Arab but we are also Bedouins, especially when it comes to our language, but there has been development (ṣar fi tatāwwur/صار في تطور). We don’t live in tents anymore […] We have four or five sheep per family and plant olives and grapes around the house […] [My parents’] source of income was very simple, they had land that they ploughed and they planted herbs’ (Omar).

In Syria, the family lived in a three-bedroom house with a kitchen and bathroom that Omar had bought with money he had earned while working in Lebanon. Only one room and the bathroom had been furnished. For decades, it has been common for Syrian men to work in unskilled jobs in Lebanon and send money back to their wives and children in Syria. Similarly, Omar had been working in Lebanon for 22 years. He worked at ‘anything [he] found’, and visited his family in Syria every two to three months.
When I asked Ahmed to draw a drawing of ‘things you like to do, people you like, places you like … or those you don’t like’ he drew a picture of ‘houses’, ‘the roses’, ‘my brother’, ‘my brother’s house’, and ‘my father’s house’, which were all located ‘in [our village] in Syria’ (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5: Ahmed's (6.5 years old) drawing

On my fourth visit to Ahmed, he brought out the blocks that I had introduced at the end of Visit 3. He emptied the blocks onto the floor and started building, focused on his play yet occasionally stopping to watch television for a while and then resume building. When I asked what he had built Ahmed replied ‘a city […] in Syria. This is the road (pointing to the horizontal constructions) and those are the buildings (pointing to the vertical constructions) (Figure 3.6).
3.2.3.1 Ahmed’s first experience of armed conflict and displacement

In mid-2012, the war in Syria reached Ahmed’s village. Omar explained that their village was bombed by the regime and ‘there were armed men and all that’, but ‘it started lightly, protests and so on, and then it got worse’. At the time, Omar had a work permit, and was living and working legally in Lebanon, while Salwa and Ahmed were living through the war in Syria. When the bombing intensified in 2013, Salwa and 3-year-old Ahmed left the Idlib countryside and moved to Lebanon to be with Omar. They entered Lebanon legally, registered with UNHCR, and lived in a single room in a village in the North of Lebanon. However, after 10 months Salwa and Ahmed returned to their village in Syria, partly because they could no longer afford to rent the room they were living in, and partly because the situation in their village seemed to have improved. When Salwa and Ahmed returned to Syria, Salwa found out that she was pregnant. She gave birth to Bilal in Syria.

3.2.3.2 Ahmed’s second experience of armed conflict and displacement

‘In 2014 they all came, Iran, Russia, all of them. It became a war zone in our area, and they all wanted to try their weapons out on us’ (Omar, Ahmed’s father).

In 2014, bombing resumed in Ahmed’s village and armed men would pass through on their way to fight in nearby villages. Rockets were launched and planes flew overhead, bombing nearby areas.

Salwa: there is one winter where two or three months passed and I did not sleep. Our children were with me and I was always afraid, I was thinking now if an airplane bombs us...
we will have to leave the house, I would have to take my children and get out, at night, during the day, I don’t know where to go.

Ahmed: a plane hit at night

Salwa and Omar: in the village

Me: and do you remember this?

Ahmed: Yes. Then we took our mattresses and blankets and slept in the fields

Salwa: outside on the floor

Omar: so that if the house was hit it would not fall on top of them

Salwa added that even simple daily tasks like going to buy vegetables and taking Bilal (who was sick until he turned 1 year and 8 months old) to the doctor were difficult because of the aeroplanes and bombing. Moreover, Ahmed’s cousin and Salwa’s two cousins were ‘killed on the spot’ by aeroplanes. Each of Salwa’s cousins had 10 young children and were the sole breadwinners of their households. Salwa added that ‘the houses of my neighbours were demolished. My parents’ neighbours, [their house was] on the floor, their two storey building fell to the ground’.

Ahmed added that he ‘used to study’ when he lived in Syria explaining that he ‘used to go walking with my boy and girl cousins’ although the school ‘was far’. Ahmed’s parents confirmed that he had attended a school every morning for two months before moving to Lebanon.

In 2015, the Lebanese government made amendments to entry policy requirements, to residency permit renewal requirements, and to work permit requirements for Syrians in Lebanon (Section 1.3.2). As a result, Omar lost his legal status and his work permit. He was arrested because of his irregular status and was threatened to be deported but was then released. Omar had been apart from his family in Syria for three years and had never seen his son Bilal, yet it was too dangerous for him to visit his family in Syria in case he was caught travelling without his legal papers. In May 2017, Salwa, Ahmed and Bilal decided to return to Lebanon instead. Since they did not meet the requirements to enter Lebanon legally, they paid smugglers 350USD to get them into Lebanon. They crossed the borders, climbing up and down mountains at 2:30am and arriving in Lebanon at 5am. This was a dangerous and frightening journey and Salwa, Omar and Ahmed recalled:

Salwa: it was all mountainous, we had to walk in the mountains

Omar: they were exposed every minute to shooting

Salwa: I was alone with the children. He (Omar) was in Lebanon […] we had nothing, no food, no water, they didn’t allow it.

Ahmed: they wanted us to die […] We were going to fall.
Salwa: yes, I was holding Bilal, and Ahmed was walking and it was so steep that we were going to fall.

Omar: and one man came and held them so that they would not fall down the mountain.

3.2.3.3 Life in Lebanon

When the family were reunited in Lebanon (May 2017) Omar moved out of the apartment he had been living in with four other Syrian men, and through word of mouth found a ground-floor ‘studio’ apartment in a predominantly Christian area in Mount Lebanon, which is where they were living with irregular status, at the time of the study. Ahmed did not go to school and instead spent most of his time at home with his family or with his Syrian neighbours.

3.2.3.4 Plan of apartment

The apartment Ahmed lived in at the time of the study (Figure 3.7) consisted of a main entrance that led onto an outdoor space (similar to a porch) where the family had placed a sofa and an armchair. At the end of that space, a fence separated the ‘porch’ from a small run-down garden, which housed old scaffolding, two ladders and some wooden planks. The indoor space consisted of a kitchen/entrance to the apartment, living room/bedroom, and bathroom. The kitchen had a sink and gas stove. Foam mattresses lined two walls in the living room/bedroom, where the family members sat and slept. There was a small television, a storage unit that acted as a cupboard on one end of the room, and, on the other end, storage crates piled up on top of each other, covered with a cloth. There were no tables or chairs in the house. A large straw mat covered the living room/bedroom floor, which the family sat on when eating or watching TV. The bathroom contained a toilet, washbasin, and hose linked to a showerhead that the family used to fill up a bucket in order to shower.

Figure 3.7: Plan of Ahmed’s apartment
### Muna Case Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location (Country; region)</th>
<th>Lebanon; Northern suburbs of Beirut/ Mount Lebanon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study child age and gender</td>
<td>Muna, Female, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ pseudonym and age</td>
<td>Janna (Mother, 29) Qassem (Father, 36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling(s) age and gender</td>
<td>Kamal, Male, 12 Alaa, Male, 7 Rima, Female, 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date they left their home</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date they arrived in Lebanon</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area and country of origin</td>
<td>Reef Idlib, Syria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Visit 1 date: Introductory visit
- December 2, 2017

#### Visit 2 date
- December 4, 2017

#### Visit 3 date
- December 6, 2017

#### Visit 4 date
- December 26, 2017

### Table 3.4: Muna case study profile

The fourth and final case study child was Muna, a four-year-old Syrian girl. Muna was born in a Syrian village in the countryside east of Idlib (Figure 3.4 above) where she had lived with her parents, siblings and extended family. The village she and her family lived in was described by her father as a place where ‘there is space, it is empty, it is in the countryside, it is a beautiful village’. Muna, her parents and siblings lived in a 6-bedroom house with Muna’s two uncles, their wives and children. When I asked Muna to draw ‘something she likes’ she chose to depict her former home in Syria (Figure 3.8):

**Father:** what did you draw?

Muna does not answer

**Father:** is this a house?
Muna: (In a very low voice – but not whispering) yes

Father: where is this house?

Muna: (again in a very low voice) In Syria, our big house

Qassem, Muna’s father, then turned to me and explained that it is her grandmother’s house in Syria and that they lived in that house for years with their relatives. Qassem eventually built his own house, which he moved into with his wife and children:

‘We were comfortable and happy. As a family we were happy. We would all eat together, we would stay up late (nishar/نسهر) all together. It was an Arabic house. We were in paradise; in paradise I swear (walla/وأنا)’ (Qassem).

3.2.4.1 Muna’s experience of armed conflict

Janna, Qassem, Kamal and Alaa all told me about their experiences of armed conflict. Janna mentioned that their village was hit ‘three or four times’. Qassem recounted how on one occasion he was one kilometre away from home when a bomb fell right across the street from their house. He rushed back on his motorcycle, ran into the house to find his family and saw Muna’s face was covered in dust from the blast. Qassem added that the children saw the explosions:

Qassem: Alaa used to see the planes. He would see them fire the rockets and so on. [The children] used to go up on the roof and see the plane, how it would fire rockets and hit them.

Alaa: They would get the phosphorus! (Here Alaa is referring to white phosphorus munitions used for airstrikes)
During my unstructured interview with 12-year-old Kamal, he and his mother recounted more detail about the family’s experiences of armed conflict in Syria:

Kamal: *There were planes flying overhead. At first, we used to see maybe one or two planes at a time. Later on, there would be around five planes all flying together and they would then disperse and fly over different areas to bomb them. They threatened to bomb the school.*

Janna: *So we stopped sending them to school*

Kamal: *One day a bomb fell 50 meters from the school. It fell and even though the teachers told us not to move, we all started running out of the classroom and pushing the teachers aside. We were so scared.*

Janna: *From the shock, they didn’t know what they were doing. You just start running, you don’t know what to do … During the summer we used to sleep out on the balcony. As I looked up to the sky I would see stars and think they were planes overhead. We were afraid.*

Kamal also recalled when a plane crashed ‘200 meters from [their] house’, he showed me footage of the incident on YouTube, and added that the neighbouring village had threatened to drive tanks into their village but they never had: ‘they just wanted to scare us. We were very scared’.

3.2.4.2 *Muna’s journey to Lebanon*

Qassem had been working in Lebanon for 16 years, living and working in Lebanon for two months and then returning to Syria for one month. However after the Lebanese Government’s change in residency requirements, he was no longer able to live legally in Lebanon and found it too dangerous to visit his family in Syria for fear that he might be arrested. Therefore, he did not return to Syria for two years.

‘*I wanted to bring them over. Because I couldn’t go to them and I missed the children so much. It was difficult. So I told them to come*‘ (Qassem).

Janna recounted their ‘dangerous and scary’ journey from their house in Syria to Lebanon. Janna and her four children left their house in Syria by bus at 9am and ‘got to the borders and waited till 1am’ before starting their journey across the borders to Lebanon. They took nothing with them when leaving their house, but the bus sometimes stopped for a break and they could buy food from the supermarket. They stopped at many checkpoints along the way and were searched by rebels and the police. Once they reached and started crossing the borders, Janna explained that ‘coming to Lebanon was very difficult’. The mountain was very steep, and Janna who was holding Rima ‘fell on her two or three times. It was a bad fall. I was very scared that she would suffocate’. Rima ‘would start to cry’ and the smugglers ‘would tell us to be quiet before [the army] heard us. They tried to keep the children quiet’.
Kamal recounted his own experience of being smuggled into Lebanon.

‘[The smugglers] had sticks. They would beat us … I was so tired, it was 2am and I just wanted to sleep. When we were climbing the mountain I was going past everyone and walking as quickly as I could. I just wanted to get to the other side, sleep and eat. But [the smuggler] came and beat me with his stick and told me to slow down and to help the slower people. There were children and old people. But it’s not my job to do that! I just wanted to arrive. Also if a child started to cry they would cover the child’s mouth and we would all duck so that no one saw us … it was scary. When we were on the mountain it was so steep, every step I took felt like I was about to step on nothing, it felt like I was going to miss a step and fall’.

When they arrived in Lebanon, they stayed with Qassem’s sister who was living in the Beqaa valley from ‘3am until 8am or 9am’ then directly moved into their own apartment in the morning.

3.2.4.3 Life in Lebanon

Muna, her mother, sister and brothers made this journey to Lebanon in June 2017. Qassem had been living with five other men in Lebanon, but found a three-bedroom apartment for his family, his brother and his brother’s family. They had then all moved to another apartment where they lived for one month before Qassem found the apartment where he was living with his wife and four children at the time of this study. The family’s status in Lebanon was irregular. None of the four children attended school and they spent the majority of their time with their mother in the house, except for Kamal who helped boost the family’s income by working at a flower shop and selling flowers on the street to passers-by.

3.2.4.4 Plan of apartment

At the time of the study, Muna’s family lived in a first floor ‘studio’ apartment in Mount Lebanon (Figure 3.9). Stairs led to the main apartment entrance, with a balcony overlooking the street below. The entrance/balcony area had been covered with cardboard and fabric, turning it from an outdoor space into a semi-indoor space (the right side of the entrance/balcony area was completely open and was only shielded by curtains). The entrance/balcony led to the makeshift kitchen area, where a two-ring hob was placed on a table. The only sink was in the bathroom so food was washed in the bathroom, where there was also a toilet, and a tap with a bucket placed underneath that the family used for showering. In the living room/bedroom area, there was a bed, large couch, small couch and television set. At breakfast, lunch and dinnertime, the family sat in a circle on the floor and ate off a large round tray in the middle.
3.3 Questionnaire respondents’ experience of armed conflict

Following the detailed case study profiles, this section provides summary details of the questionnaire responses, including respondents’ nationality, dates of entry into Lebanon, reported reasons for leaving their home countries, and experiences of internal displacement (see Appendix E for questionnaire). Analysis of the questionnaire data suggested distinct patterns in the differences and similarities within and across Iraqi and Syrian respondents’ experiences.

3.3.1 Questionnaire respondents’ demographic data

The final questionnaire was completed by 100 respondents, 35 males and 65 females (Refer to Appendix M for graphic representations of demographic data). Thirty-six percent of the respondents were Iraqi (n=36), 43% Syrian (n=43), and 21% Lebanese (n=21). The majority of respondents were aged 26-40 years (n=38), and 41-60 years (n=32) respectively. While over half of the Syrian respondents were aged 26-40 years, around 57% and 44% of Lebanese and Iraqi respondents respectively were aged 41-60 years. Furthermore, 14% of respondents were Syrians aged 18-25 years, whereas only 2% and 1% of respondents were Iraqi and Lebanese respectively in the same age bracket. Eighty-three percent of respondents were married, 8% single, 7% widowed and 2% divorced. All Iraqi respondents (100%) were Christians whereas the vast majority of Syrian respondents (95.3%) were Muslims. Two-thirds of Lebanese respondents were Muslim and the
remaining one-third Christian. The vast majority (97%) of the final questionnaire respondents lived in the Mount Lebanon Governorate at the time of the study, 92% living in the Metn District of Mount Lebanon while 1% lived in Beirut, 1% in Akkar, and 1% in Baalbeck-Hermel.

3.3.2 Date of entry into Lebanon

![Graph showing Questionnaire Respondents' Year of Entry into Lebanon](image)

*Figure 3.10: Questionnaire respondents' year of entry into Lebanon*

As seen in Figure 3.10, the majority of Iraqi respondents to this study’s questionnaire (n=28) entered Lebanon between the years 2014 and 2015, reflecting broader trends of Iraqi displacement in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2018b). Of those, five moved to Lebanon directly from Baghdad while the remaining 23 moved to Lebanon from Mosul. This sharp spike in the number of Iraqis entering Lebanon comes as a direct result of ISIS taking over towns and villages in Northern Iraq during the summer of 2014, forcing people to flee their homes. The other Iraqi respondents entered Lebanon in 2011 (n=1), 2013 (n=3) and in 2016 (n=4).

As for the Syrian respondents, the number entering Lebanon fluctuated between 2011 and 2017 however there is a noticeable spike in the number of Syrian respondents who entered Lebanon in the years 2013 (n=10) and 2016 (n=9). Nine of the 43 Syrian respondents said they had been living in Lebanon for over 7 years and first came to Lebanon in order to work, so their reasons for coming to Lebanon were independent of the armed conflict that later arose in their home country.
3.3.3 Reasons for leaving their home country

There is a clear link between many respondents’ date of entry into Lebanon and the events that they had endured and eventually escaped in their home countries. Most Iraqis fled because of religious persecution by religious extremists in Baghdad or because of ISIS. Syrians on the other hand left for a variety of reasons including ISIS, war and bombing, and the economic situation in Syria.

3.3.3.1 Iraqi respondents’ stories

‘ISIS came in. We lost everything. We left. We have nothing’

(Iraqi questionnaire respondent).

All Iraqi questionnaire respondents were Christians and either fled Baghdad and areas surrounding Baghdad, or Mosul and the villages surrounding Mosul in Northern Iraq due to threats from ISIS and due to religious persecution. A number of Iraqi respondents who moved to Lebanon from Northern Iraq had previously lived in Baghdad, but had moved to Northern Iraq because their lives were threatened in Baghdad; they were being persecuted for their faith and the North of Iraq was seen as a safe haven for Christians. As one respondent explained:

‘We used to live in Baghdad. When they hit the Church of our Lady of Deliverance in 2011 and were killing Christians and leaving mines in front of the church we left to Batnay in Northern Iraq’.

However this safe haven soon transformed with the emergence of ISIS who made their way into the villages and towns in the North, forcing people to flee. The same respondent continued:

‘In 2014 ISIS came in to Mosul. We heard that they were close [to Batnay]. We left and three days later they arrived’.

Another respondent who had lived in Baghdad for 20 years moved to Mosul (North Iraq) with her children since ‘Baghdad was dangerous’. She continued that she ‘never imagined that ISIS would come in’ to Mosul. Her house and her brother’s house were bombed ‘when the government was bombing ISIS to liberate Mosul’ and her ‘parents’ house was burned down by ISIS’.

Furthermore, 23 out of 36 Iraqi respondents mentioned ISIS as their reason for leaving Iraq and moving to Lebanon. Respondents repeatedly mentioned ‘terror’ and ‘fear’ when discussing ISIS, in addition to being forced to leave everything behind. They talked about their houses being looted and burned to the ground. One respondent mentioned receiving threats over social media:

‘We got threats via Facebook on my husband’s account. They then came to the house and burned it down so we left’ (Female Iraqi questionnaire respondent).

Another woman explained that her husband was kidnapped and that she was threatened with kidnapping if she did not leave Mosul. One man who was a blacksmith in Iraq gave me insight into
their lives in Mosul and the constant threats and oppression they endured because they were Christians. He talked about a gang of armed men stealing all his equipment, of young 12 and 13 year old Christian girls being raped by these gangs simply because of their religion, and of Christians being too fearful to hang a cross in their car since they would ‘key your car or destroy it’. He added

‘They used to have a big signboard at the entrance of the mosque and write down the names of people who should be slaughtered. My name was on that list’.

These reports echoed data from the case study with Maria; in an unstructured interview, Maria’s Iraqi neighbour whose relatives had lived under ISIS rule for 1 month and 20 days told me:

‘Some people were asleep and did not realise that ISIS was coming in. So they slept through it and woke up the next morning surrounded by ISIS. My daughter’s grandfather and uncle were stuck there. They kept their children hidden in the basement. Two months later they escaped. One woman was held by ISIS and was sold seven times. She had two children from them. One woman and her family drowned on their way to Greece to get to Germany. Only her son survived (he was a child) and he was taken to the UK (his uncle was there). One girl was kidnapped by ISIS. She was 3 years old. They found her three years later. She said to the bishop ‘you should bow down before ISIS’. She forgot all her Syriac. They brainwashed her’ (Fieldnotes, October 7, 2017).

A major theme that arose when discussing reasons for leaving Iraq was religious persecution. All Iraqi respondents were Christians and, while some had left Baghdad and moved to Northern Iraq because of religious persecution, others stayed in Baghdad and eventually moved straight to Lebanon since the North of Iraq was no longer safe for them due to the presence of ISIS. Respondents had experienced explosions, were threatened by gangs, militias and armed men. Being kidnapped was a constant threat. One woman told me that her son ‘was kidnapped 11 years ago’ and was never returned to them. One respondent reported that her son was shot in the leg because they are ‘infidels’ they are ‘crusaders’. Another woman’s son was killed in Baghdad. One respondent explained that extremists burned down her son’s internet café because ‘the internet is sinful, corrupt, the devil’. She added ‘I got scared and took my family out’.

I spoke to one man who had left Baghdad in 2005 after being kidnapped in 2004 and released on a 70,000USD ransom. He moved to Syria where he lived until the war erupted, so it was no longer safe to live there and ‘there was no water and no electricity. I could not handle it’.

3.3.3.2 Syrian respondents’ stories

Forty-one out of the 43 Syrian respondents were Muslims and two were Christians. Unlike the Iraqi respondents, their reasons for leaving Syria were not related to religious persecution but were linked to the ongoing war in the country, the threats by ISIS, the economic situation in Syria, and historical ties with Lebanon.
The first reason for leaving Syria that was mentioned by Syrian respondents was war. War, including bombing, shelling, rockets, gunmen, killing, airplanes and fear were mentioned by most Syrian questionnaire respondents as reasons for leaving Syria and moving to Lebanon. Some respondents also mentioned being deprived of food:

‘We experienced everything. My husband lived in Lebanon. I was stuck there (in Syria). I was pregnant with twins. Every 15 days we were bombed and people were kidnapped. I gave birth in the hospital in Syria. We had no food, nothing. We had to leave, it was so difficult. We suffered.’

Some respondents’ houses were destroyed by bombs and they had nowhere to stay in Syria. Two respondents explained that while they were visiting Lebanon they heard that their houses were hit adding that ‘there was nowhere to go’ and ‘There’s no way I could return.’ Another female respondent explained that she had just purchased a house in Syria but never even got the chance to see it since it was bombed.

In addition to exposure to war, a few Syrian questionnaire respondents recounted their experience with ISIS and life under ISIS rule. One woman explained why she left Syria:

‘[We left] because of ISIS, the war, we were trapped, we couldn’t breathe (metaphorically), the airplanes. Giving birth became illegal and we had to give birth at home. We had to wear all black, we could not even show our nails, we had to wear gloves. My daughter is 2.5 years old, she was just a few months old then, and she cries whenever she hears airplanes. She remembers’.

As another woman explained, women and children living under ISIS rule had no rights and were exposed to extreme physical punishments and life-threatening situations:

‘We were forced to leave. ISIS were there for 4 years. They would put traps, landmines, and so many innocent people were killed. If you gave your child a trendy haircut you had to pay a fine. You (as a woman) had to be covered all the time. If my husband sent me money (over 200USD) they would take a commission on it. My house was destroyed. They would put toy bombs and children would play with them and die. There were too many weapons. We were trapped. Then there were the Russian, the Turkish, and the alliance jets. ISIS would hide between us and the planes would bomb us. The children are so afraid of airplanes. When they shelled us, the sound was terrifying. My 2.5 year old remembers the planes. He was 1.5 years old when we were in Syria but whenever he hears planes he gets scared. He’s so young! Turkey would bomb ISIS and bomb us. We were on the Turkish borders but we couldn’t get into Turkey. They would kill us. We didn’t have money to pay them to get in. My son couldn’t even get vaccines in Syria. They would beat women if they weren’t covered up or if they wore perfume. They would beat our children. Children would go out to the store and come back covered in blood with gashes in their heads. You
couldn’t go anywhere without a man. They forbade gynaecologists and dentists. Our situation was very bad. Children were forbidden from going to school under ISIS rule so I used to send my children to my neighbour’s house and she would secretly teach them. ISIS are out now but the situation there is still very bad. Before the war it was a beautiful life. Only the innocent people were killed in the war’.

Because of armed conflict in Syria, the economic situation took a heavy blow. Eight respondents mentioned lack of job opportunities or the bad economic situation as reasons for leaving Syria. According to one respondent, ‘We left because of the living situation, it became so expensive. We did not leave because of direct effects of war’ while another noted ‘I couldn’t afford living without a job anymore’. During the professionals’ interviews, Dr Denise confirmed that she had come across ‘many families with young children’ who moved to Lebanon and received free schooling and vaccines although their areas had not been affected by war. She argued that those children are:

‘coming to Lebanon and studying for free at the expense of the Lebanese who is not studying […] They are coming because their circumstances are better here than they are in their country. […] but I think my country’s people should be put first. If someone is in danger of course you accept them in […] but in the end where are my country’s people?’

(Dr Denise).

This sentiment was shared by many Lebanese questionnaire respondents. Resentment was expressed particularly towards Syrian refugees, who were seen as taking the jobs of the Lebanese people and receiving benefits from UNHCR and other organisations at the expense of the Lebanese people who were ‘forgotten’. Dr Denise’s quote portrays how Iraqi and Syrian children and their families in Lebanon are categorised either as ‘legitimate and deserving refugees’ who moved to Lebanon because they were ‘powerless’ and their lives were threatened by war, or as ‘illegitimate underserving migrants’ who were taking advantage of the situation and strategically benefiting from it (Wernesjö, 2020). Consequently, while resentment towards refugees is widespread, it does not necessarily portray the reality of refugees’ experiences and their protection needs in Lebanon. For instance, although the professional interviewee Colette, who worked with street children, recognised that some Syrians might have moved to Lebanon solely for economic reasons, she argued that the majority of Syrian ‘displaced’ persons she came across could not wait to go back to Syria. They were unhappy, living under extremely difficult circumstances in Lebanon, and would have returned to Syria if it were possible. Colette added that whenever children took part in IRC workshops, the theme of Syria always arose in their play:

‘Syria is always mentioned. When we ask: “what is your safe space?” They say “Syria”. “What is your dream?” “I want to go back to Syria to play”. “What is your superpower?” “I want to fly and return to my house in Syria”.

One further reason mentioned by respondents for moving to Lebanon was the already large presence of Syrian men working in Lebanon. As one questionnaire respondent explained, he came
to Lebanon to work when he was 10 years old. Another added ‘I came here to work a long time ago’. When the war started in Syria, many women and children moved to Lebanon to be reunited with their husbands/fathers who had been living and working in Lebanon for many years.

### 3.3.4 Experience of internal displacement

Following armed conflict, most Iraqi and two Syrian respondents explained that they were internally displaced for a few days up to a few years before moving to Lebanon. Iraqi participants in particular spoke about being forced to move out of their homes a few years earlier because of religious persecution and settling down in a village where Christians were safe, only to be thrown out of their new homes upon ISIS’ entry into their village, forcing them into a cycle of internal displacement. One woman reported that she, a teacher, and her husband, a doctor, were living in Mosul but had to flee when religious extremists threatened to kill her husband. They moved to a village and lived there comfortably but then had to flee when ISIS invaded the village.

‘We were going from place to place for 15 days and my daughter had a fever of 40 degrees and was in the sun the whole time. […] We stayed in a school. Thirty people in one room in August. There was no water. I got no clothes for my children because we left in such a hurry and I was afraid. […] My elderly parents were with us and you cannot imagine what it was like. Sadness, exhaustion...’ (Female Iraqi Questionnaire Respondent).

Another Iraqi respondent added that his family had been internally displaced twice within a 2-month period because of ISIS. When internally displaced, some people lived in churches, some in schools and others in caravans, having to share cramped living spaces with many other people for a few months.

### 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the four case study children, presented a profile of each child and their families, and offered a glimpse into the children’s lives before armed conflict, during their displacement and since they had begun to establish new lives in Lebanon, as recounted by the children and their parents. This was followed by questionnaire respondents’ accounts of armed conflict and displacement, with a comparative analysis of differences and similarities between Iraqi and Syrian respondents’ accounts of armed conflict and internal displacement. Although some quotes in this chapter were particularly long, this decision was deliberately taken to make ‘othered’ and silenced voices heard, and to reflect the richness of participants’ emotions, meanings and experiences (see Chapter 2 Section 2.8.3). The next chapter takes an in-depth look into the lives of the case study child participants and their families in Lebanon, as well as the questionnaire respondents’ accounts, especially concerning the violations of their rights in terms of family unity, culture and enforced poverty.
Chapter 4 Child refugees’ lives in Lebanon: Continuing children's rights infringements

“When they first arrived, the Syrians had a lot of anger, indignation, depression, sadness, and in a sense you felt like they wanted to cry. Now, it is not that they got used to it, but finish, this is reality. Now there is a sort of submission. Now they are defeated” (Dr Denise).

The previous chapter presented detailed profiles of case study child participants and their families, and demographic data relating to questionnaire respondents. It gave participants’ accounts of why they left their home countries and their experiences of armed conflict, internal displacement and consequent displacement to Lebanon. As discussed, many children in the families consulted during this study had witnessed terrifying events, and had been in physical danger when exposed to armed conflict, to ISIS, to limited access to food and water, and to extreme weather during their journeys from their home country to Lebanon. This chapter builds on these profiles and challenging experiences, and reports on how many of the children remained far from being out of harm’s way once they had arrived in Lebanon, where they continued to experience both new and recurring human rights violations. The chapter draws on data from case studies, questionnaires, interviews with professionals and the school observation.

This chapter connects with my first research question about how Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s constructions of childhood are affected by conflict and forced displacement to Beirut’s northern suburbs. Data collected for this study shed light on the diversity of children’s suffering in Lebanon, and their multiple encounters with new facets of disadvantage. Poverty was widespread among the study participants, and poverty served to perpetuate unhealthy living conditions and at times harmful practices that the children had to learn to endure. Children and their parents were living with mental, emotional and physical health problems, but were unable to pay for essential healthcare and had limited or no access to free health provision – for some questionnaire participants in this study, the dispensary where data were collected was their only haven of help and hope. Many of the families reported that their children lived in unhealthy environments and some were forced, through a sense of familial duty or against their will, into child labour. Children were exposed to early marriage and were kept out of school. Finally, children were separated from their immediate and wider families and from their familiar communities. However, in some cases, such separation placed them at less immediate physical and emotional risk, as will be discussed. Chapter 5, the third findings chapter, builds upon this current chapter and looks into ‘displaced’ children’s right to play in Lebanon, focusing on play resources (un)available to them, the inter-relationality of rights and its impact on children’s right to play in Lebanon, and how children’s various life experiences before, during and after armed conflict and displacement were shaping their play.
4.1 Children living in poverty

‘We have no money, no food. We get no help. It is so difficult’.

(Syrian Questionnaire Respondent)

Almost all participants from the case studies and the questionnaires complained about the ‘very difficult’ life they had to endure in Lebanon. Living in poverty was reported to be the main factor contributing to their suffering and affecting the lives of adult and child participants. Syrian and Iraqi participants were shocked at how expensive life in Lebanon was compared to life in their home countries. While conducting an unstructured interview with case study child Maria’s neighbours, one Iraqi woman told me:

‘Poor Lebanese! It is such a difficult country to live in. I feel bad for the Lebanese’.

One Lebanese questionnaire respondent also recognised the economic challenge of living in Lebanon, but was less sympathetic to the plight of Syrian refugees, blaming Syrians for the war that erupted in Syria and for not recognising that they had ‘everything’ in Syria, ‘they had rights’, they ‘got food and heating for free’, ‘everything there was cheap’ and that as a country, Syria ‘is amazing. Better than our country’. In her view, Syrian refugees were undeserving of sympathy or help and were responsible for their own misfortune. This connects with Wernesjö’s (2020) argument that dichotomies such as ‘deserving/undeserving’ are often used to categorise migrants and their claims (p.391).

In this section, I look at the ripple effect that poverty, which has been exacerbated by GoL policies and structures targeting refugees, has had on Iraqi and Syrian refugees’ lives in Lebanon. Beginning with refugees’ access to healthcare, the conditions under which they were living, and their exploitation, the section demonstrates how lack of basic human rights among adult refugees filtered into the lives of young children and infringed their right to a ‘normal’ childhood.

4.1.1 Children’s physical and mental health and access to healthcare

Healthcare accessibility and affordability in Lebanon were major and recurring concerns among the refugee participants in this study, exemplified by the following quote from one questionnaire respondent, which is selected here as representative of over 10 similar reports:

‘My mother is sick. It is a very difficult life. We are a big family. Doctors and hospitals are expensive and our income is not enough’.

Postponing important operations until they were resettled to another country and had the means to pay for an operation was the only option for some refugees. For example, one questionnaire respondent needed a hernia operation but could not afford to pay for it, so was ‘waiting to leave but we have not been resettled yet’. One Syrian questionnaire respondent was worried about having to give birth in Lebanon because as she said:
'I've been here for 9 months - I'm 6 months pregnant and still haven't been to hospital. My brother in law's wife was pregnant. They wouldn't let her into hospital to give birth because she couldn't afford to pay for it. Eventually she found one that accepted her. I don't know what I will do when my time comes. Hospitals are so expensive'.

Refugees were having to live through and endure physical pain without any means to improve their physical well-being as they tried to build their lives in Lebanon. One Syrian female questionnaire respondent needed an operation on her foot after it was run over by a car. However, neither could she afford to get the operation nor could she pay for transportation adding, 'we can barely afford to live. We hardly have any food'. Instead, she walked everywhere although her foot was injured, explaining that it took her an hour to walk to the dispensary.

UNHCR covered up to 75% of refugees’ hospital bills (of those registered with UNHCR), yet not all medical emergencies were covered. Matta explained that although the UN claims it will cover 75% of hospital bills ‘it’s not for sure, you tire yourself out following them and asking for the money, you have to find a hospital that works with the UN to get anything done’. In line with this, one Syrian questionnaire respondent reported that her husband was admitted as an emergency in hospital but the UN refused to cover the cost. ‘He had to pay 400USD. It's as much as we make in a month’.

One Iraqi respondent mentioned that her son’s arm was broken and needed to be operated on, but UNHCR kept asking her what type of emergency is was and if his arm was bleeding.

These accounts in the questionnaire data were further supported by insights from the case study data, where difficulty paying for hospitalisation was an issue for all four case study families. Thalia’s mother for example was visiting Thalia in Lebanon when she fell and broke her arm and her hip. Instead of sending her to hospital in Lebanon, Thalia asked medics to give her a temporary fix and brought forward the date of her mother’s flight back to Iraq so she could get the operation she needed there. Thalia added that ‘they took 500USD. They did not even do the operation.’

Inability to pay for healthcare burdened parents, leading to an increase in child surveillance and a decrease in risk-taking activities among their children. For instance, Lia told me that she postponed sending Kefa to school because ‘he was afraid of everything’. When I asked her where this fear came from she told me ‘it’s a new country and we are afraid that something might happen to him. You know here everything is expensive, in case anything happens to him we don’t have money to take him to cover hospital expenses.’ The parents projected their fears onto their children, and due to their concerns about not being able to cover hospital bills in case of an accident, many stopped children from exploring their new environment or taking risks.

In addition to living with close and increased parental surveillance, displacement and war had led to many physical and mental child health problems, which needed specialist care and attention. These problems were additionally exacerbated by political and policy structures in Lebanon such as GoL policies that made it dangerous for ‘temporarily displaced’ men to leave their homes and work, consequently pushing children into the labour market. Colette listed the many mental and physical
child health problems she has come across through her work with street and working children in
Lebanon:

‘work affects children, especially those who work in the worst forms of child labour, physically and of course mentally. All the children suffer from distress, other than the major protection risks. Psychosocial distress is definitely present. There are more traumatic events, from their work, from their move from Syria… One boy was traumatised from the war and developed a stutter […] Many children suffer from many mental health issues. Emotional behaviours, aggression, fear, isolation, it depends what they went through. Either abuse on the streets, or by their parents, or through the war, the context, the work, physically depending on what they work, they get sicker … Depression is a theme. You come across a lot of people who lose hope’.

Colette’s colleague was in the office as I conducted this professionals interview, and interjected to add that many caregivers and children were depressed or had PTSD but ‘are unable to point out that this is depression’ or cannot identify PTSD since ‘they don’t know what it is’. In her opinion, even more dangerous than having depression was not being able to identify this as depression and so seek the help and treatment they needed. Therefore, it was important for parents to be educated on what symptoms to look out for and to be guided on how to act.

In her interview, Dr Denise explained that one physical manifestation of children’s ‘hidden problems’ and their ‘psychological state’ shows up through involuntary urination, enuresis. She clarified that children below the age of 6 years who ‘were dry for a while’ but then experienced ‘some sort of shock’ were ‘no longer dry at night’. She attributed this hidden psychological state partly to parents’ psychological abuse of their children, although parents were not aware of it. She added that although there is a social worker in the dispensary who follows up on these issues, some issues remain hidden as neither parents nor children discuss them. Dr Denise had also referred some children for psychological follow-up to a child psychologist and a child psychiatrist at the dispensary for cases including depression.

While access to hospitals was a big barrier for Iraqis and Syrians in Lebanon, the dispensary provided people of all nationalities with free or very cheap healthcare. Young children received free vaccines in the dispensary, which, as Dr Denise explained, was an opportunity for doctors to fully examine the children and make sure that they were developing well. However, older children did not visit the dispensary as often since they no longer needed vaccines, and so might have ‘a hundred problems but we are unaware of them because they don’t come’.

Moreover, although the dispensary provided access to a psychologist or a psychiatrist, not everyone accessed them since they were not aware that these services existed. For example, Lia, Kefa’s mother, told me that she, her husband and her children needed to see a psychologist because their ‘psychological state is affected […] by the displacement and by the difficult circumstances under which we are living, all the waiting’. When asked if those services were
already available, she replied ‘maybe it is available and we don’t go, maybe these services are not supported, I don’t know’.

Colette believed that there are enough psychosocial support services available to refugees in Lebanon and explained that some NGOs provided free mental health services. However, this viewpoint is not supported by evidence from academic and non-academic publications, which highlight the lack of sufficient mental health services for refugees in Lebanon (WHO, 2015), and point to the need for additional paediatric psychosocial support particularly with the prevalence of depression and child abuse among children and adolescents (El Arnaout et al., 2019), the limited availability of mental health professionals in Lebanon (Sijbrandij et al., 2017), and the many barriers that stand in the way of refugees accessing those services, both in refugee-specific and national health systems (Sijbrandij et al., 2017). Such barriers include navigating the complex healthcare system in Lebanon, prejudice and the perceived low interest from healthcare providers, and cost of healthcare (El Arnaout et al., 2019).

4.1.2 Poor living conditions

Living conditions were a constant and major source of distress for the refugee families in this study. Case study and questionnaire data revealed how sudden displacement, policies reinforcing their irregular status and aggravating exploitation, and limitations to their freedom of movement and rights to work had led to poverty and reduced quality of life for refugee participants, including their accommodation and the number of people they lived with. Mariana, the schoolteacher, explained that her Iraqi students and their parents were ‘shocked’ when they came to Lebanon and saw the apartments that they were expected to live in since ‘in Iraq, in their villages, every house has a garden and the houses were big’.

The questionnaires provided data on the different types of accommodation in which Iraqis, Syrians and Lebanese lived in Lebanon. As seen in Figure 4.1, 67% of Lebanese respondents (n=14) lived in a two-bedroom apartment compared to 50% of Iraqis (n=18) and 33% of Syrians (n=14). In comparison, 30% of Syrians (n=13) lived in a studio apartment compared to approximately 5% of Lebanese (n=1) and 14% of Iraqis (n=5). This suggests that Syrians lived in more cramped accommodation than the Iraqis and the Lebanese.

Some Iraqi questionnaire respondents mentioned ‘other’ types of accommodation, including two-bedroom chalets, holiday apartments with access to a swimming pool, beach and park, which respondents paid for using money that they had brought with them from Iraq. Conversely, the ‘other’ types of accommodation reported by Syrian respondents included: ‘One big room with wooden boards put up to form a kitchen and bathroom’, ‘one big hall’, ‘a warehouse’ and three Syrian respondents mentioned living at their workplace.

---

10 All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.
Furthermore, as seen in Figure 4.2, the average number of people living in the same accommodation was around 5. Figure 4.3 breaks the numbers down further according to type of accommodation. The average number of people living together in a studio apartment was slightly under 4, in a one-bedroom apartment was just over 4, in a two-bedroom apartment was 5.7 and in a three-bedroom apartment was 8.6. These numbers are further categorised by nationality in Appendix M (last three graphs).
Moreover, 41% of respondents mentioned that the people with whom they shared accommodation were people other than their spouse and children and included extended family members such as respondents’ or their spouses’ parents, siblings, grandchildren, cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. Respondents living at their workplace lived with other workers, while one Syrian man and his daughter co-habited a large hall with four other, non-related families. Only 19% of Lebanese respondents lived with family members who were not their spouses or children, compared to 44% of Iraqis and 49% of Syrians (Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.3: Total number of people living together according to type of accommodation**

**Figure 4.4: Percentage of respondents living with people other than spouse and children according to nationality**
This questionnaire data on the living conditions of Iraqi and Syrian refugee families supported data collected through the case studies. Both the Iraqi case study families lived in one-bedroom apartments, whereas both Syrian families lived in a 'studio apartment' where, although the kitchen area was separate from the main living area, the bedroom was also used as a living room. Although all case study families were living as nuclear families at the time of the study, they had all lived with extended family at one point or another since moving to Lebanon.

The poor condition of accommodation was a recurring issue across the questionnaire and case study participants, where deeper insight was gained into how the living conditions affected family life and children’s opportunities to play. Three of the four case study participants lived in accommodation that they described as unfit for habitation. Kefa’s family lived in an apartment that was infested with mould (Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1.4). Although the bedroom was stuffy and damp and the walls were mouldy, Lia complained that she could not open the window since large insects and spiders regularly crawled in. The walls and ceiling in the kitchen and bathrooms were completely covered in mould and Lia explained that no matter how hard she tried, she could not get rid of it. Ahmed lived with his parents and younger brother in a small 'studio' apartment (Chapter 3 Section 3.2.3.4). The ceiling sloped at a marked angle, and Ahmed’s father demonstrated this by standing up straight at one end of the room and then slouching when he stood at the other end of the room so that his head did not touch the ceiling. Muna lived with her parents, her two older brothers and one younger sister in a larger 'studio' apartment (Chapter 3 Section 3.2.4.4), however the ceiling at the entrance was made of cardboard tied together with rope. The kitchen of both Syrian families comprised only a small two-burner gas hob placed on top of a table. Ahmed’s family had a sink near the stove but Muna’s family had to use the sink near the toilet. None of these three case study families had a bath or proper shower, just a bucket and hose with a showerhead that they used to wash themselves.

These insanitary and cramped living conditions affected children’s health, as paediatrician Dr Denise explained during interview:

‘Here (at the dispensary) we see a lot of scabies. Now we are seeing less of it than when the migration first started. Almost 9 in 10 children had scabies. Now 1 in 10 have scabies. It has changed. But it still exists’ (Dr Denise).

She explained that scabies and everything related to ‘direct contamination’ and cleanliness was much more common among Syrians than among Lebanese because of their living conditions and overcrowding in their homes.

As opposed to Kefa’s, Ahmed’s and Muna’s accommodation, Maria, her parents and her younger brother lived in a one-bedroom apartment in a two-star motel which seemed to be in better condition than the other three. The kitchen area, which opened up to the living room, included a gas oven with a four-burner gas hob, a large fridge and a kitchen sink. The bathroom included a shower, a toilet and a washbasin. The family did not mention any issues with mould, insect
infestations, structural stability of the building, or incomplete or improper works to the apartment. Thalia explained that since they were used to living a comfortable life in Iraq, they were unwilling and unable to live in an apartment that was unfit for habitation. Similar to the three other families, their apartment was not equipped with air-conditioning which made the summer months for all four families very uncomfortable. Although I conducted the study with Maria’s family in the aforementioned apartment, they had previously lived in several other apartments across Lebanon, and had endured overcrowding and sharing the previous apartments with several other family members.

4.1.3 **High rent and low-paid work**

In addition to living in insanitary and cramped conditions, almost all questionnaire and case study participants complained that they were being exploited by landlords and had to pay rents that were unreasonably high for the low quality of their accommodation. Lia, Kefa’s mother, mentioned that her husband Matta’s monthly income was 480USD (approx. 365GBP) and they were paying ‘400USD and 20,000LL (approx. 315GBP) for this small apartment in this area (poor neighbourhood)’ every month, not including ‘water and electricity and internet and gas’. Thalia, Maria’s mother, also reported that Yohannan made 600USD (approx. 456GBP) per month but they spent 500USD (approx. 380GBP) per month on rent.

While both Iraqi families had a low but stable income every month, neither of the Syrian families had a stable income, and reported in interview that they sometimes went for months without finding work. Both fathers worked in construction and their employment was dependent on demand. As Ahmed’s father explained, he worked in ‘random jobs, something from here, something from there (Šī min hōn, šī min honīk/ صلى من هون, صلى من هونیک).’

The questionnaires provided data of each household’s income per month (Figure 4.5). One Syrian respondent reported making less than 30USD per month compared to 0% of Iraqis and Lebanese. Four Syrians (9%) and two Iraqis (6%) reported a household income between 30USD and 300USD per month compared to 0% of Lebanese respondents. The majority of Syrian respondents (n=20) reported a household income between 300USD and 600USD per month whereas the majority of Iraqis (n=18) and Lebanese (n=9) reported a household income between 600USD and 1200USD per month.

This discrepancy in monthly income could be linked to respondents’ level of education, which may have opened up different work opportunities (Appendix N). The first twenty-nine questionnaire respondents (11 Iraqi, 12 Syrian, and 6 Lebanese) did not report on level of education since the question was introduced on the fourth day of data collection. Of the remaining 25 Iraqis who answered the question, 11 (3 females, 8 males) had attended college or university, including one male who had a PhD. Conversely, of the 31 Syrian responses, only 1 male had attended university. Information regarding spouses’ level of education was not collected and could have given further insight into the link between refugees’ level of education and monthly income. Case study data
support these findings, for both Iraqi fathers attended university and both Iraqi mothers reached secondary level education while none of the Syrian fathers or mothers completed primary school - both Iraqi families had a higher income than the Syrian case study families.

Moreover, the questionnaire and case study respondents were asked to include income generated from all members living in the same household in their accounts of the total household income (Figure 4.5), and this sometimes included children.

4.1.4 Child labour, exploitation and abuse

The questionnaire responses, case studies, and the interviews with professionals (doctor, teacher and child protection worker) all indicated that child labour was not an uncommon phenomenon.

With regard to child labour, Article 32 of the UNCRC which recognises the right of the child to protection from 'economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development' (United Nations, 1989). Seven questionnaire respondents with children aged under 18 (9 children in total) said that their children contributed to the household income, the majority being between the ages of 15 and 17 years old (Males: n=5; Female: n=1).

One Iraqi questionnaire respondent reported that her 9- and 12-year-old boys and her 10-year-old girl sometimes worked.

Deeper insights into child labour were gained through the case studies. For example, Muna's 12-year old brother Kamal had been working for a florist for a week when I first visited the family. His father explained how Kamal, who was not attending school, had asked the florist across the street
from his home if he had a job vacancy because he was bored. However, Kamal’s parents were not happy with Kamal’s wage and working hours. His father said that he was going to make him stop working because he is working ‘12 hours a day, 7 days a week’, and is only paid 40,000 LL (approx. 20GBP) per week adding ‘It’s not worth it. 40,000LL is nothing!’.

Kamal later talked to me about his job:

Kamal: I get very tired and I have a backache. I work at the flower shop across the street, but [the owner] drives me up the road where I have to sell roses on the street to passing cars. But I was so cold today. I stand in the sun and it is too hot, I stand in the shade and it is too cold. I get a headache. And the flowers are so heavy that I have a backache. They weigh around 10 Kg.

[…]

Me: Have you sold many flowers?

Kamal: No, I haven’t sold any. No one stops.

[…]

Me: Did you know he was going to be selling roses on the street?

Father: No! We thought he was going to stay in the shop across the road […] He is a child and is being exploited. Maybe I will take him with me on the job and he will start to learn my profession.

During my next visit to the family, Kamal recounted how on the previous day his boss had accused him of stealing and told him ‘you’re hiding the money in your shoe’ and then ‘in your pockets’. Kamal was very upset. Although his father told me that Kamal was going to stop working at the flower shop, he was still working there after my third visit to the family. The family were desperate for the extra income, no matter how low it was and in spite of its detrimental impact on Kamal.

Kamal was one among many children who worked outside the home to support their families. The child protection professional I interviewed, Colette, worked with street and working children and had found ‘children as young as 4 or 5 years old working on the streets … up to the age of 18 years old’, adding that children below the age of 8 were usually accompanied by their parents or older siblings. The majority of children Colette came across were Syrian, and ‘at least ten percent […] are stateless or of the Dom community’11, and their work ranged from being a ‘mechanic, begging, selling flowers on the streets, […] selling CDs, any item, depending on the season’. ‘Survival sex’ also existed. She added that ‘some [children] work 7 out of 7 [days a week], some take one day off […] Some work up to 10 hours, 12 hours. It varies’. Furthermore, these children’s paid employment

11 The Dom Community are often referred to as Middle-Eastern gypsies who originate from the Indian sub-continent.
was ‘in conflict with […] the Lebanese labour law’ and so could be stopped by the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and the children could be arrested.

Not only were these children liable to arrest, they were also exposed to violence and emotional, verbal, physical and sexual abuse when working on the streets. Colette noted, ‘The least they hear is “ya ḥmār/يا حمار” (‘you donkey’) or “go back to your country”:’. She added that children who work at night, especially when not accompanied by their parents, ‘are at a higher risk of sexual abuse, of drug abuse, [and] of being trafficked’:

Colette: [sexual] abuse is for both genders, but you see it more with girls […] You notice at a certain age girls stop working on the street, at least in the Syrian community. When they get their period they stop sending them on the street in general… Because she has become a woman and she is at that vulnerable and eligible age

Me: Do you think parents are not aware of sexual abuse towards boys?

Colette: Correct, that is why we do awareness for all. It does exist, they don’t think of it as much as they think about the girl.

During my interview with Kefa’s mother, Lia, she told me that there were a few cases of child abuse in their area, and mentioned a 10 year-old Iraqi boy who was sexually abused on two occasions by a shop owner explaining that ‘the owner of the shop convinced him to do something, the boy was a bit sick, he had mental problems and so the man took advantage of him’. As the above examples and interview extracts illustrate, boys and girls may be victims of sexual and gender-based violence. While many instances of sexual abuse happen within the home (El Saadawi, 2015), children are also targeted outside the home. Rather than protecting children from abuse and exploitation, policies, systems, and lack of support mechanisms tend to cause and perpetuate children’s vulnerability. For instance, policies that make it dangerous for refugees to work outside the home without providing them with other mechanisms of support leave families with no choice but to send their children to work, exposing children to multiple forms of violence and abuse.

Colette recounted how many children, especially those from single-parent households, felt responsible for providing for their families: ‘A lot of the times, if the mother is the head of the household (as a result of the father being deceased, injured, handicapped or fighting), the eldest male child becomes the breadwinner. He is forced to work, and becomes the man of the house’. However, in cases where the eldest child is a female, she also feels responsible and takes on this responsibility. Similarly, Dr Denise recounted cases where children’s physical and mental health had suffered as a result of work, such as a young boy who had come to the dispensary because he had broken his leg while he was working. As Colette reflected:

‘They get tired, they get older, sometimes they don’t grow up properly, even physically … other than the chemicals these children are absorbing, they don’t get proper hours of sleep, proper nutrition because of poverty, all this affects them’ (Colette, IRC).
The schoolteacher, Mariana, also recounted how she knew that one boy and his sister went home every day after school and helped their mother who was a caretaker \( (nāṭūr) \) of a few buildings. They washed the stairs and helped her with other errands.

In addition to poorly paid employment outside the home, household work was widespread among refugee children in this study, especially among girls. During my interview with Mariana, the schoolteacher, she explained that her students clean the classroom at the end of each week. She noted that while the girls enjoyed this cleaning and got excited when asked to clean the floors, boys considered it a punishment. These gendered responses reflect children’s home life, where girls are usually the ones who help their mother with the housework. This not only came up in my interview with Mariana but also when conducting the case study with Maria. When I asked Maria to draw a picture of ‘things you like to do, people you like, places you like … or those you don’t like’, she drew a picture of ‘Clouds, sky, house, two trees, grass’ (Figure 4.6). She added that the house was in Lebanon and belonged to ‘Mami, Gerges, and me and you and Papi’. I then asked her what she liked to do in the house. She replied:

Maria: *Cleaning toilets! And cleaning the balcony! And only*

Me: *So you like to clean?*

Mother: *Yes she works.*

Me: *And who helps you? Who cleans with you?*

Maria: *alone*

Mother: *yes, she cleans this bathroom by herself. She is very clean and tidy. I have taught her since she was young. If she does something wrong I ask her to repeat it. Yes. How else will a girl learn? She should learn to do this from when she is young so that when she grows up she will get better and better.*

*Figure 4.6: Maria’s drawing of a house*
Janna, Muna’s mother, also noted that she would start teaching her daughters how to help around the house when they were around 10 years old. When I asked Salwa, Ahmed’s mother, if play opportunities differed between boys and girls she replied ‘the girl helps her mother in the house but the boys don’t help’.

Another form of child labour included caring for younger siblings and for parents or disabled adults. Although child carers are a significant phenomenon in many parts of the world, I coded instances of this phenomenon as child labour because, as the following data demonstrate, this role impeded children’s schooling, sometimes forcing children to stop attending school (United Nations, 1989, Article 32). For instance, the schoolteacher Mariana recounted how this phenomenon led to school absences for many children:

‘some [children] even stopped going to school to wait for their younger siblings [to come back home from school]. If there is a baby in the house, who is going to take care of the baby if both the mother and father are working? Where can they put the child? They don’t have nurseries and these things. There is sacrifice on behalf of the children (إذا ضحيت من قبل الأولاد)’.

Mariana told of how a 13-year old girl stopped going to school in order to take care of her new-born sibling. Another 13-year old girl had stopped going to school in order to ‘serve’ (خدم) her paralysed mother while her father was at work:

‘It is wrong (حرام) for the child to experience this injustice (يظلم) because of this situation. What will happen to the child’s psychological state (نفسية)? And it is the child’s right to learn. She is losing time and wasting time’ (Mariana).

Doing time-consuming ‘girls’ family work’ such as household chores and caring for siblings and less-abled adults seemed to ‘demand the offering of oneself personally and intensely, siphoning off strength which might have been devoted elsewhere’, such as on their education (Dodson, 1999, p.15).

Although it was mainly girls who were reported as taking on the responsibility of housework and caring for their younger siblings and parents, Dr Denise regularly saw both boys and girls care for their younger siblings while their mother had to see the doctor at the dispensary. She mainly saw this phenomenon in big families where the ‘family unit […] helps each other. The older helps the younger, even the boys’. Although children caring for siblings is not an uncommon phenomenon, the extent to which this occurred led to infringement of children’s right to an education, as exemplified in Mariana’s quote above, and their right to play, as exemplified in the following quote by Dr Denise:

‘this boy who is 8, 9, 10 years old who carries his younger brother or sister, if this boy plays he might feel guilty, “no I should be helping my mother, I should take care of my brother”.'
He might say “no I shouldn’t play, I am a man, my father is absent, how am I supposed to play”?” (Dr Denise).

Consequently, professionals commented how taking on significant responsibility at a young age had affected many of the children. Mariana, the teacher, felt that the children’s personalities ‘are too strong’, particularly the eldest boys in the families those who had to look after their siblings. She added, ‘[the boy] tends to be very virile (mfaḥil). And let anyone DARE say anything to him or wrong him, or not do what he wants’.

4.2 Early marriage

Another topic that arose when conducting this study was child marriage. My initial concern was for young children below the age of eight, since my research focuses on that age group. However, through my interviews with case study parents, Dr Denise, and Colette who works with street children, I found that the parents of refugee children were many times themselves the victims of early marriage. Dr Denise recounted how many Syrian mothers who came to the dispensary with young children were children themselves. One woman who had married at the age of 14 had three children by the time she turned 18. Another 15-year-old girl was the mother of two children. Similarly, Colette informed me that she saw many young girls aged 14-15 years, and even young boys aged 16-17 years getting married.

The case study family data reflected these observations made by professionals working with refugee communities. For example, Lia and Janna, the mothers of Kefa and Muna respectively, both got married in Iraq and Syria at the age of 17. As Janna explained:

‘It is requirement that a girl gets married at 13, 14. I was old when I got married at 17. After 30 we ask ourselves why, why won’t a man marry her?’ (Janna, Muna’s mother).

Qassem, Janna’s husband, even joked about Janna being a child when they got married, saying that she and Kamal, their first-born son, would fight over sweets. When discussing early marriage and child labour, Colette added that girls who get married young tend to ‘stay at home’ and ‘take on the household chores’ […] Early marriage is forced labour […] household chores are (forced labour) if they prevent the girl from attending school and put her at additional risk without her consent’.

4.3 Education

Another major child rights infringement that was widely reported by respondents in this study was children not going to school. Sixty-three percent of questionnaire respondents (n=63) had children below the age of 18. Of those 63 respondents, 32 were Syrian, 19 were Iraqi and 12 were Lebanese (Figure 4.7).
Schooling in Lebanon is compulsory for Lebanese children between the ages of 6 and 15 years old. Through the questionnaire data, I found that while all Lebanese respondents’ school-aged children attended school, around 59% of both Iraqis (n=10) and Syrians (n=10) reported that none of their school-age children attended school. Questionnaire respondents accounted for this by citing the barriers to school attendance as including: inability to keep up with the curriculum; poor command of the language of instruction; financial problems and the need for children to work to help with the families’ income; the school not accepting to register ‘displaced’ children; missing the registration deadline; children being put back a grade (making them several years older than other children in their grade, leading to demotivation and embarrassment which stops them from attending school and so dropping out); the child’s poor physical and/or mental health; the parents did not want their child to be subjected to corporal punishment which was used in school; and the poor quality of public school education. Moreover, both Iraqi and Syrian respondents cited bullying as a reason for their children not attending school. While the Iraqis complained that their children were bullied and beaten by Syrian children, the Syrians complained that their children were bullied and mocked by Lebanese children. One Iraqi questionnaire respondent said:

‘[My children] used to go to school in Mosul. Out of everything that has happened to us, this is by far the worst thing that has happened. They started attending a public school (in Lebanon) but they were beaten and mocked so they stopped going. They used to be at the top of their class’.

Moreover, one Syrian questionnaire respondent whose son attended afternoon sessions in a Lebanese public school spoke about the bullying her son received and how it had affected him. These afternoon or ‘second-shift’ sessions were opened specifically for refugee children who could not keep up with the curriculum and language of instruction of the morning sessions that the
Lebanese children attended. She complained that her son, who ‘used to be so quiet and gentle’, has become ‘so aggressive’ ever since he started attending school in Lebanon because ‘The Lebanese children bully him. They come out of their morning school session and taunt my child. They beat him’. She also criticised the teachers for not teaching the second-shift children properly since they are ‘tired after teaching the morning lessons’. When she discovered that her son’s teacher was giving all the children in the class the same grade, she went to the school and complained only to be told that the teacher could not fail any of the students ‘so she just gives them a passing grade whether they deserve it or not’.

In an interview, Colette explained that even though the ‘second shift’ and the ‘Accelerated learning program’ have been opened for Syrians, ‘not all of them go. Some people don’t accept to send their children and some children don’t want to go’. Children and their parents were ‘very resistant […] because of the many challenges in the school system’. Challenges included bullying and racism by peers and ‘sometimes [by] the teachers’. In addition, although school ‘registration is for free’, refugees struggled to meet ‘transportation fees, schooling fees’ and costs of books. Some schools also refused to register refugee children, claiming that ‘they don’t have any more spaces [available] even though the Ministry [of Education] has opened its doors [to refugees], but the school decides not to accept any more students’.

The questionnaire findings were consistent with my observations when conducting the case studies. None of the school-aged Syrian children in the case study families attended school. Ahmed’s father had tried to register Ahmed in school when he was 6 years old, but missed the registration deadline. Muna’s father had been misinformed that children could only be registered in school if they were registered with UNHCR, so he did not attempt to register Kamal (12 years old) and Alaa (8 years old) in school once they moved to Lebanon. That being said, the children from both Syrian families had only been in Lebanon for a few months before they were due to be registered for school, and those months had been exceptionally difficult for the families, who received very little, if any, information about school registration processes.

The case study Iraqi families on the other hand did send their school-aged children to school. Kefa went to an informal school (Chapter 2 Section 2.4.3) established by Sr Mary. This school constituted an education ‘lifeline’ for Iraqi children who were not attending any formal schooling and were consequently spending their days on the streets (Interview with Mariana, teacher). As mentioned in Chapter 2 Section 2.4.3, this school’s location changed every year, and lessons took place in one large reception hall that was transformed into two classroom areas – one for 5-10 year-olds and one for 10-14 year olds, each led by a different teacher (Figure 4.8a & b). The venue was clean but resources were limited, and children sat at forward-facing ranks of plastic tables in their ‘classes’, each of which had a small white board and markers (Figure 4.9).
Kefa, whose parents did not send him to public school for fear of him being mistreated by Syrians, attended this informal school where he was taught basic literacy (English and Arabic), basic Geography, Maths and Sciences. Since Iraqi children had been out of school for a long time, Mariana explained that she ‘had to see what the children already knew and build [the curriculum] from there’. She added ‘the youngest children learn the alphabet, slightly older children learn words and build sentences, [...] and the eldest children (12-14 year-olds) are ‘at the level of 9 year olds [in Lebanon], so grade three’.

Maria and her brother Gerges attended a private school with the help of a priest who sponsored her and her brother’s education, which her parents could not otherwise have afforded. Maria was happy in her school and loved her teachers. Gerges and Maria both raved about their French teacher, and Gerges happily exclaimed: ‘she used to tell me I was smart’. This was in stark contrast to Thalia’s, Maria’s mother, schooling experience in Iraq. Thalia detailed how corporal punishment was widely used in school when she was a child and was still widespread in Iraq, and how she was beaten by
her teachers, to which Maria replied ‘because they don’t have a brain! Just because you are small they do that’.

Both Iraqi families consciously refused to send their children to state schools due to the reputed poor quality of public education and widespread corporal punishment, and their fear of their children mingling with Syrian refugees. Both families mentioned that if their only option was to send their children to a state school they would refuse to send them, and would instead wait until they were resettled to a third country rather than send their children to the Lebanese school system. Both families had been in Lebanon for over 2 years at the time of the study, so had had more time than the Syrian families to adapt to and organise their new lives.

Mariana, the teacher at Kefa’s school, mentioned other similar informal school initiatives that had been set up for Iraqi refugee children who did not attend public school either because ‘the public schools are full (الدولة مفولة)’ or because ‘They (Iraqi children) are afraid of the Syrians’. According to Mariana, a few small institutions had been opened nearby, including one close to Kefa’s school, opened by a priest. However as Mariana noted, the children and parents were not happy with the teachers there since although they were Iraqi, they were ‘around 18 or 19 years old’, were unqualified and lacked experience. This was similar to the complaint of three Iraqi questionnaire respondents who explained that although their children went to an informal school for Iraqi children, they could ‘hardly read since the teachers don’t teach them correctly’, ‘the teachers are not qualified […] so the children just learn basic things’, and ‘they don’t really improve. The level of education is not very high’. Mariana also mentioned a school that had been set up by a ‘Lebanese group’ which focused on revision of lessons learnt in school and on play, adding that an Iraqi priest had opened two nurseries in the area for young Iraqi children below the age of 5.

As a result of the low quality and scarce provision of state-funded ECEC programmes for young refugee children (see Chapter 1 Section 1.3.4), most refugee parents in this study were the sole providers of care and education for their young children (0-5 years). Before moving to Lebanon, case study participants had received childcare support from their nuclear and extended families, with whom they had close relationships, but displacement and separation had led to the disintegration of these familial support systems. Consequently, at the time of this study, none of the refugee case study children or their siblings who were below 5 years old received any care or education beyond their immediate family in Lebanon. Maria had attended a nursery school in Iraq, but not in Lebanon. When Kefa’s family first moved to Lebanon, Kefa was looked after by his grandparents while his mother, father and uncle went to work. However once Kefa’s grandparents and uncle moved to Australia in February 2017, Lia was forced to leave her job in order to care for her children, leaving the family with reduced income and dependent on the father’s meagre earnings.
Yet the families were not totally alone, and all four case study children had relatives who lived in Lebanon. Two of Maria’s aunts lived in Lebanon with their husbands and children, and provided occasional care when needed.

While all the case study children received care from their families, this study points to the importance for children of attending high quality preschool where they can take part in different activities in a safe and caring environment, where they can interact with and learn from other children and teachers, and where they are not subject to violent discipline and bullying. In the next section, I consider the issue of children’s separation from their extended and sometimes nuclear family members, and from their wider community, and how this separation affected the case study children’s lives.

4.4 Family separation: A double-edged sword

The family unit was at the centre of all four case study children’s lives. The importance to children of their relationship with their immediate and extended family was represented in children’s drawings, in their block constructions and in their photographs, and was better understood through observations, interviews and informal conversations with the children. However, all four case study children had been separated from at least some family members and familiar community members due to displacement. Both Syrian children, Ahmed and Muna, were separated from their fathers for a period of over two years before moving to Lebanon where they were reunited. Once they moved to Lebanon, all four case study children were separated from their extended family networks, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins and from their communities. War and displacement transformed and redefined family relationships. The children who had once lived either with or close to extended family were now having to renegotiate relationships at a distance with their relatives as a result of family separation. This study found that living in a liminal state altered these relationships in both positive and negative ways. Recognising the importance of family and community in the case study children’s lives, this section discusses how children’s relationships to family and community had been affected by living in a liminal state, and for some, separation from immediate and extended family was a double-edged sword.

4.4.1 Family members torn apart through physical separation

Separation tore some families apart creating a permanent rift between their members. During my introductory visit to Bushra, a Syrian single mother with whom I ended the study (Appendix B), she told me about being separated from her husband when he decided to move to Germany. His plan was to be smuggled through to Turkey, take a boat to Greece and then make his way to Germany. Once he arrived in Germany and was settled, he was meant to bring his wife and three children over. However, that did not happen. The husband instead re-mARRied in Germany. Bushra told me:
‘My daughter (8) now hates him, more than hates him. He is worse than her enemy. My eldest son (11) I can see that he misses him and wants to be reunited with his father and that angers me […] My eldest son is not very strong. My youngest son (5) is very brave and strong’.

Displacement led to separation of children from their extended family members and from their communities. During Visit 3 to Maria, Thalia brought out a family album that Yohannan’s uncle was able to salvage from their house once ISIS had been defeated. She went through every photograph pointing to family members and telling me where they had migrated. During Visit 4 to Maria and her family, her mother played their wedding DVD, a wedding attended by 1250 people, and we all sat around the laptop to watch it. As we were watching, Yohannan (Maria’s father) started pointing out ‘this is my mother, my father, my sisters, my aunt, my grandmother’ He then continued ‘they are in Germany, they are in the US, they are in France, they are in Canada’. Thalia had a sister in Sweden, a brother in Turkey, and another brother in Iraq. Their families and tightknit community had been torn apart, in ways that they had never anticipated.

One questionnaire respondent who was at the dispensary, sitting with his arm around his 10-year-old daughter as if to protect her, explained that he had fled from Deir Ez-Zor in Syria with his daughter because she was sick and needed medical help. He left his three other children and wife behind, because ‘I couldn’t get my family here and I can’t get into Deir Ez-Zor. It’s so difficult’. He continued that Deir Ez-Zor was held by ISIS, that schools were closed and that his children were traumatised, adding that his daughter did not play since she had been greatly affected by her experience in Deir Ez-Zor.

Mariana added that some of her students used to tell her “we miss our brothers”. These children had been separated from their older brothers who were not allowed into Lebanon because they were young men. She added that while parents escaped Iraq with their young children, their older male children were forced to stay behind with maternal or paternal uncles leading to the break-up of nuclear families and to great sadness, distress and pain among parents and siblings.

While physical separation severed ties between some family members, others tried to overcome this separation and find a way to be reunited. For example, both Syrian case study children were separated from their fathers for a couple of years. As mentioned, both fathers used to work in Lebanon and would visit their families in Syria every few months. However, when residency requirements changed and both fathers lost legal residency in Lebanon, it was dangerous for them to travel back to Syria. They were separated from their wives and children for around 2 years.

Muna’s father explained that since he could not go to them in Syria, he asked them to come to him in Lebanon. However, he added that rent and expenses were a big burden that he did not have to worry about when they lived in Syria. Moreover, Muna’s younger sister Rima and Ahmed’s younger brother Bilal had never seen their fathers except through photographs and had only heard their
fathers’ voice over the phone until they moved to Lebanon when they were one year old and two years old respectively.

In some cases, wilful separation from the immediate family for the expected greater good of the family in the long run was considered. For example, Muna's mother Janna mentioned that they could have sent Kamal, their 12-year-old son, to Sweden where they had relatives. They could have then applied for family reunification in Sweden, giving Kamal's parents and siblings a way out of Lebanon. However, they had declined to do that since Janna has a relative who sent her son over to Norway thinking that they would be reunited quickly, but it had been two years since they have seen their son, and he missed them deeply.

In another example, some families who had been living together in Lebanon were agents in their decision to leave, leading to their separation from members left behind. In Kefa’s case, his paternal grandparents and uncle who had lived with them in Lebanon were sponsored by a relative in Australia and moved there. Lia told me:

‘[We want to go to Australia] God willing. We have completed the whole process and now we are waiting to hear back […] [We did not go through] UNHCR, because every time we go to UNHCR they say there is nothing, if there is anything we will call you. We have been here for three years now and they still haven’t done anything’.

4.4.2 Families holding together but in conflict due to cohabiting confined spaces

While family separation had led to great hardship and sadness among children and their families, cohabiting in confined spaces also exposed children to multiple child rights violations. All four case study families had at one point lived with extended family in their home countries and/or in Lebanon. While Kefa’s parents talked about the positive aspects of living with family (such as grandparents taking care of the young children while the parents were at work, additional income), many discussed the hardships and problems that came with sharing a small space with others. For example, Thalia, Maria’s mother, had had bad experiences of living with extended family while they were internally displaced in Iraq, explaining that ‘the problems started’ when they were displaced in Erbil and living with extended family in the same accommodation.

Problems arising between relatives living together was not uncommon. As Muna’s father explained, when they lived with his brother and his brother’s wife and children in Lebanon, they were twelve people sharing a three room, one kitchen and one bathroom apartment. He added ‘the children did not get along, and it was very noisy’. Similarly, one Syrian questionnaire respondent moved into an apartment in Lebanon with her brother in law’s family and his children, however this caused many problems because ‘His children were too hyper and aggressive. It is better for each family to live alone’.

Apart from medical issues (e.g. scabies), living in cramped conditions had an impact on children’s quality of life and opportunities to play. Dr Denise, the paediatrician, mentioned in interview:
We are back to overcrowding. I am not in Europe where I have a public garden. Where are they playing? They are sitting in their houses on top of each other, there is no space no space, [...] they don’t have the freedom to play anymore like before. They feel like they are suppressed (مکبوتین/مکبوتین) they feel like something is wrong’.

Batoul, a mother of one Syrian case study participant with whom I ended the study (Appendix B), also told me that before moving to her current studio apartment she was living in a studio apartment with her husband, her two children, her relative and her relative’s three children ‘All in one room! A studio apartment. Eight people including 5 children in a studio apartment!’ She described these conditions as ‘horrible’ and recounted how her son had been quiet and gentle until the other family moved in with them. The other children did not have a father and they were jealous whenever her son got any affection from his father, so he ‘became very aggressive and stopped speaking’.

Sudden and unwanted separation from direct and indirect family members and from community members had brought pain and sadness to child and adult participants. Fathers had been separated from their wives and children who were stuck in war zones, placing immense stress on the mothers, and keeping children away from a main figure of support, security and stability in their lives at a time riddled with insecurity, terror, and instability. Separation from direct and indirect family and from one’s community had dismantled support systems, bringing many cultural practices to a halt, and placing additional stress on individuals who once relied on family and community ties for help. However, acknowledging the detrimental impact of such separation on young children, the other extreme where several families move in together leading to overcrowding, had brought multiple dangerous problems into children’s lives including increased exposure to abuse, whether directly or indirectly, and whether among adults, among children, or among children and adults, increased exposure to tension, fights, and jealousy among the children, increased chances of contracting medical conditions linked to overcrowding, and reduced space for play.

4.5 Conclusion
This chapter presented examples of children’s rights infringements in Lebanon, drawing from questionnaires, interviews, field and diary notes, and observations to support or contrast with data collected via case studies. The study findings indicate how living in poverty had led to further child rights infringements including inability to access healthcare, living in unsafe and unhygienic accommodation, and child labour. Many children were exposed to abuse and were victims of early marriage. Furthermore, the majority of refugee children did not attend school for a variety of reasons. Finally, this chapter analysed family separation as a double-edged sword, where both family separation and overcrowding of families in the same accommodation led to varying children’s rights infringements. The next chapter provides insight into the play of child refugees in Lebanon, where the implementation of their right to play is tightly linked to the multitude of children’s rights infringements already discussed in detail in this chapter. Following an overview of play resources
available to young Iraqi and Syrian children in Lebanon and the effect of fear and surveillance on children's play, I look into children's creation of space and use of imagination in play, followed by children's revival and merging of cultures and identities in play.
Chapter 5 Play ‘in-between’ and the great escape

‘The children have been deprived of childhood and play. They have been greatly deprived’ (Thalia, Maria’s mother).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the play of four Iraqi and Syrian case study child refugees in Lebanon who are at the centre of this study. It presents in-depth insights into the four children’s play lives, and builds on data discussed in the previous chapters, including how their play behaviours reflected their experiences of armed conflict and displacement. Insight into the four case study children’s play experiences is informed by data generated during a day in the life (DITL) (Gillen & Cameron, 2010) home visits, as described in Chapter 2. This approach afforded rich and deep insights into the children’s everyday lives through observations, interviews with the children and their parents and siblings, along with field notes and a research diary. The DITL data were supplemented by interviews with three professionals working with child refugees in Lebanon (a teacher, a medical doctor and a Program Manager for Street and Working Children), observations in a school for Iraqi children and a questionnaire completed orally by 100 respondents, as presented in Chapter 2.

This chapter connects with my second research question about how young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s play opportunities and constructions of play are affected by conflict and their forced displacement in Beirut’s northern suburbs. It unpicks multiple aspects of the case study refugee children’s play, including the resources available to them for play, the role of fear and surveillance in limiting their play opportunities, and gendered trends and expectations in their play. The chapter presents analysis of the children’s play in physically confined and more open spaces, and illustrates how the children negotiated and manipulated play spaces, sometimes breaking boundaries imposed by their parents or by physical limitations. This leads into discussion of how play, both solitary and joint play with others, enabled the children to figuratively break free of the boundaries that constrained their lives, to escape (albeit temporarily) from their liminal state by imagining and transforming their lives through art, block play, imaginative play and digital media, and to connect with their heritage cultures through music, dance, rhymes and hand games. The subsequent chapter shifts the focus to ‘lifelines’ available to ‘temporarily displaced’ persons in Lebanon and particularly to children, and brings to light how these lifelines provide or fail to provide children with their basic rights, including their right to education and play.
5.2 Limiting children’s play: Resources, fear and surveillance

When analyzing the interview, observation and questionnaire data, three main topics regularly arose regarding limitations on children’s play opportunities, namely, 1) a lack of resources available to young children, 2) fear experienced by parents and children, and 3) close surveillance of children’s play. In this section, I commence with participants’ definitions of play followed by a detailed overview of the play resources available to the young child participants (people, space, materials and time), how these compare to resources that had been available to children in their home countries, and how the currently available resources were viewed by participants through a dual deficit lens (financial and social deficit). I then look into the children's expression of fear and their ‘fragile resilience’, linking the children's life experiences with their liminal state, fear and the infringement of their rights. Finally, I discuss the role of surveillance in promoting or disrupting children's play, moving from the macro to the micro, and ending with the notion of gender as a justification to limiting freedom of movement, freedom of expression and freedom in play.

5.2.1 Participant perspectives on play

Play was highly regarded among all case study parents and professionals, who emphasised its importance in children’s lives. Play, parents said, calmed children down (Qassem) and gave them ‘peace of mind’ (yerteh nafsian/raha nafsiya/betrayehlon nafsieton) (Lia, Salwa and Omar). Through play, children ‘remain happy’ (Qassem), ‘are happy’ (Salwa), or ‘become happy’ (Lia), since through play children ‘have fun’ (Lia and Thalia) and ‘their boredom goes away’ (Lia). Thalia, Lia and Mariana referred to play as a tool for development, where ‘the child can absorb more and mature’ (Thalia), where the child can ‘develop his thinking a bit [and] learn things he didn’t know before’ (Lia), and where the child ‘develops [and] grows […] just like [through] eating’ (Mariana, teacher). Moreover, Omar noted that his children ‘are not afraid in play’ and Salwa believed that ‘if we take away their freedom to play they won’t be able to cope’. Lia noted that ‘Young children, now is their time to play, If they grow older they become shy to play in front of people who know better’ (Lia). Qassem also talked about play as an important way of expending energy, thus providing parents themselves with benefits:

‘[Through play] he gets tired and sleeps early, he doesn’t give his mother and father a hard time (Ma bi azīb ēmmō ū bay’/ وما يعزب اموم و بيو’ (Qassem).

Furthermore, Mariana referred to play as ‘a child’s right just like eating and drinking’ and considered taking play away from children as ‘a punishment’.

Parents and professionals all emphasised that play is a child’s right, play is fun, play gives children peace of mind, play makes children happy. Play was also associated with development, with learning and maturing, and with expending energy. Although all case study parents and professionals talked about the importance of play in children’s lives, data showed that children faced multiple limitations to their play. For example, when asked where their children played, 9 out of 63 questionnaire respondents with children below the age of 18 said their children did not play
While I did not ask them to elaborate on their answers, this response might have depended on how the questionnaire respondents interpreted 'play'. This finding brought to light issues that I later probed in the case studies.

**Figure 5.1:** Number of questionnaire respondents who claim their children do not play according to nationality

The following sections provide insight into the obstacles identified in this study that created limitations for play, including access to play resources, children’s and parents’ feelings of fear, and restricting children’s freedoms.

### 5.2.2 Play resources: A dual deficit

This study found that play resources available (or more accurately, unavailable) to young refugee children in Lebanon were addressed by parents within the frame of a dual deficit: financial deficit and social deficit. The families all linked their lack of financial resources and living in poverty (Chapter 4 Section 4.1) to children’s lack of both material and social resources to support play. This section therefore draws on case study data to consider the relationship between the child participants in this study and their environment: people to play with, spaces to play, artefacts to play with, and time to play.

#### 5.2.2.1 People to play with

People to play with was a main topic discussed by participants in this study, including siblings and parents, school friends, and relatives and/or neighbours. However, access to these people was restricted for diverse reasons. All the case study children had at least one sibling with whom they sometimes played, and were living with both their parents at the time of the study. Siblings and parents were represented in case study children's photographs using the disposable camera, in children’s drawings, and in their block constructions using blocks I had provided (Figure 5.2), and children often played with their siblings during my visits and in my absence (See Figure 5.3a,b & c).
Figure 5.2: Kefa’s block construction of ‘my father’s head’

(5.3a) Kefa and Tomas playing with toy guns  (5.3b) Maria and Gerges playing ‘Restaurant’

(5.3c) Muna being chased by her brother Alaa – Video clip sent to me by father via WhatsApp

Figure 5.3: Case study children playing with their siblings
When asked if she played with her children, Thalia replied that she watched movies and cartoons with Maria and Gerges on the phone when her husband came home from work and wanted to relax. When observing the children's play during fieldwork, although Thalia spent most of her time cooking and cleaning while the children went about their day, there were moments when she encouraged them to play and provided certain conditions for them to play, including inviting their neighbours round, proposing certain games, and helping them with props and music while they played.

When asked if they played with their children, Ahmed's parents, Salwa and Omar, replied 'no, rarely'. However, this did not coincide with what I observed during my introductory visit to Ahmed who, before I left the house, was sitting on the floor with his mother, father, and brother who all took turns rolling a football across the floor to each other as they laughed and smiled. During my subsequent visits, I observed the parents regularly playing with Bilal, their 2-year-old son, and less frequently with Ahmed (6 years 5 months old). When Omar was at home, he often played with Bilal (Figure 5.4a&b), pushing him around on a 'car' (either a toy car or in plastic box which represented a car) and playing 'accident' as he tilted him over and lightly bumped him into things, and sometimes encouraging both his sons to play by finding music on his phone so they could dance.

![Image](image1.png)

(5.4a) Omar and Bilal playing a word game  
(5.4b) Omar pushing Bilal around on a car

Figure 5.4: Omar and Bilal playing

The discrepancy between parents' accounts and my observations can be attributed largely to different understandings of what 'play' is. For example, Omar associated play with freedom of movement, space, and running:

He (Ahmed) plays here (in Lebanon). He thinks he is playing here, but this is not really play. There is nowhere for him to run’ (Omar, Ahmed’s father).

This definition contrasted with my observations of parent-child play indoors, mostly with Omar sitting or lying down. Conversely, Muna’s father, Qassem, explained that rather than play with his children, he created play opportunities for them. Although Qassem was not at home during most of my visits, he sent me video clips on WhatsApp that he had captured with his phone, and these either showed his children playing with him, or play opportunities that he had created for his children, for example, by building ‘forts’ for them made out of bed mattresses and sofa cushions which the children loved.
(Figure 5.5a), and by creating a swing using his arms, swinging Muna and her younger sister Rima (Figure 5.5b).

(5.5a) Muna crawling under fort  
(5.5b) Muna playing 'swing' with her father

Figure 5.5: Play opportunities created by Muna's father

Kefa and Maria, who both attended school in Lebanon, mentioned playing with other children at school. Kefa recounted how he and his school friends ‘play with the ball’, eat together and play with toys. Kefa’s parents stressed the importance of making friends in school, and how it affected Kefa, saying that ‘he learned to be courageous’ and ‘he learned to integrate with others’. Lia noted that before he started attending school in Lebanon, Kefa did not play with others since he did not have friends and because he was afraid. However once he started attending school, Kefa ‘learned, he has friends, he talks to them, he is happy’.

Maria also made friends in school and recounted how she played with ‘the boys and with the girls in school’ Thalia adding ‘but they don’t come over here and she doesn’t go to their houses. Only in school’. Thalia noted that Maria had Iraqi and Lebanese friends in school but did not mingle with Syrian children. Although Maria only played with her school friends in school, some of her Iraqi school friends lived in the same building as Maria and came over to her home ‘only once a month’. When I was filming a day in the life of Maria, Thalia informed me that she was going to call the neighbour’s children upstairs to play with Maria and Gerges to which Maria jumped up and down excitedly exclaiming ‘yes, call them! They are all my friends!’
All four case study participants reported that their children rarely mingled with people of nationalities other than theirs. Even though both Syrians and Iraqis fled armed conflict and moved to Lebanon to seek refuge, the notion of ‘communitas’, an ‘intense comradeship or egalitarianism’ among people who have lived a shared experience, (Turner, 1969, p.95) as reported by participants was linked to nationality and religion. Although both Syrians and Iraqis were forcibly displaced out of their homes and took refuge in Lebanon, the details and specificities surrounding these experiences were perceived as unique to people’s religion and nationality. Mariana, the school teacher, gave me an example from her school:

‘There were two Syrian girls here two years ago, they were not accepted by the Iraqis for a while. The girls are Christian, but [the Iraqis] have this enmity (هالعداوة) towards Syrians, it is in their heads, not for any other reason. But then we spoke to them a lot and got them to play together and then things were OK […] Last year there was a Muslim boy, they also rejected him, they wouldn’t play with him. We (the teachers) used to tell them “come on let him play with you, he is a human like you”. Again the Muslim, because ISIS are Muslim, they immediately relate the two together. Immediately. They are one and the same to them’ (Mariana, Teacher).

Mariana added that the boy’s mother made an effort to build a relationship and talk with the other children, and to explain to them that her son ‘is like them’ and that ‘he wants to play with [them]’. After the teachers’ and mother’s continuous efforts, Mariana explained that the children ‘finally started to accept him’. Parents and teachers may hold discriminatory views towards refugees and/or people of other religions (see Chapter 5 Section 5.3.2.6). While most case study and questionnaire data pointed to parents tending to prevent their children from interacting with children of other nationalities and/or religions, this example shows that teachers and parents can play a pivotal role in building relationships between children of different nationalities and religions, and can help break down barriers that stop them from interacting, that breed racism, and that promote bullying and isolation. This is in line with research by Bergset (2017), which found that parents of refugee children in Norway used ‘informal network mechanisms’ to collaborate with staff in their children’s schools and successfully tackle issues of bullying (p.66).

The children in this study mostly interacted with other children who shared the same nationality and religion. Thalia recognised the importance of their Iraqi neighbours for her children’s sense of community, and the similarities in their life experiences:

‘They are Iraqis, like us, they are from [an area close to ours in Iraq]. But they lived the same thing we did with ISIS and fleeing’ (Thalia, Maria’s mother).

Not only were Maria’s neighbours Iraqi, they were also Christians who fled because of ISIS and were living in a similar state of liminality in Lebanon. The children also mainly interacted with extended family who had also sought refuge in Lebanon and lived nearby. Children from all four case studies played with their relatives who, in some cases, happened to also be their neighbours, but the
frequency of these encounters differed between children. Kefa’s cousins lived in the same building as him, and so he played with them every day. He also had a female cousin who lived close by and who visited Kefa and his brother on Sundays (Figure 5.6).

![Figure 5.6: Kefa playing with his brother and female cousin, photo taken by Lia (mother) using Kefa’s disposable camera](image)

Similarly, Maria’s two aunts (her father’s sisters) lived in Lebanon (in Beirut’s Northern suburbs) with their husbands and children, and Maria visited her cousins on Sundays. Both Kefa’s and Maria’s cousins were represented in the photographs taken using the disposable cameras, suggesting these were important events in the children’s lives. Muna also met up with her cousins who lived close-by on Sundays. Although Ahmed had relatives in Lebanon, he only visited them on rare occasions since they lived far away, in the South of Lebanon and in the Beqaa Valley, and since his father was afraid of being arrested and imprisoned again, his journeys around Lebanon were limited.

Although Ahmed lived far from his relatives and did not attend school, he had Syrian neighbours with whom he played, but his relationship with them was volatile. Ahmed’s neighbours (a family with mother, father, three boys aged 11, 9 and 2 years old, and a 5-year-old girl) had moved to Lebanon in 2011 when conflict first started to unfold in Syria. During my interviews with Ahmed and his mother, and during my DITL observations of Ahmed, it was clear that there were tensions between Ahmed and his 11- and 9-year-old male neighbours, as mentioned by Ahmed’s mother:
‘Their children are difficult, they are older than Ahmed [...] they are always mean to Ahmed, they tease him that they go to school and he doesn’t and he starts to cry’ (Salwa, Ahmed’s mother).

Later on during the day, Ahmed, who had been playing on the ‘porch’ with his 11- and 9-year-old neighbours, was called inside by his mother. Around 30 minutes later, Ahmed remembered that he had left a half-full container of ‘water bullets’ (Figure 5.7) that his father’s Lebanese friend had bought him for his toy gun outside. When he went to retrieve it, the container was empty. His neighbours had thrown out the ‘bullets’ which greatly upset Ahmed who lay on the floor, weeping. Salwa tried to console Ahmed, telling him that ‘Uncle’ (‘ammā/عمّو), his father’s Lebanese friend, will buy him a new one. Salwa then told me:

‘They’re not happy unless they hurt him, they do it on purpose. He feels hurt (n’ahar/نأهر), but now he’ll forget about it. He’ll play and forget’ (Salwa, Ahmed’s mother).

Ahmed’s father expressed regret over his son’s lack of play companions, recounting how when they lived in Syria, Ahmed had many playmates, so if he fought with or was on bad terms with a child he could simply play with someone else. In Lebanon, he had no playmates other than his neighbours, which limited his play opportunities and left him vulnerable to being bullied by older children. Although Ahmed was upset with his male neighbours, he later played with their 5-year-old sister while her two older brothers were at school.

Figure 5.7: Ahmed proudly holding up the container of ‘water bullets’

Although all case study children played with either siblings, parents, school friends, neighbours and/or relatives, time spent with these playmates was limited, and the children all told me that they
had no one to play with. For example, as Maria’s neighbours only came over around once a month, and since Maria only played with her school friends at school, Maria and her brother Gerges spent the majority of their summer holidays alone in the house with their mother. Similarly, Muna’s father told me:

‘Kamal and Alaa (Muna’s brothers), when they were in the village [in Syria], they would go [far], they had friends … Here they don’t go or come, they know no one, this is a problem. One’s childhood is the most important thing’ (Qassem, Muna’s father).

In line with his father, Kamal also said:

‘Here I’m so bored. Over there (Syria) I would spend the whole day with my friends and the day would pass by so quickly, it would pass by like it was a minute’ (Kamal, Muna’s brother).

Like her older brothers who had few people to play with, their mother Janna felt that Muna ‘needs to be around more children so she can socialize more and open up more’. Janna described Muna as a very quiet child, who hardly ever spoke and spent the majority of her day watching television and playing alone on her mother’s smartphone.

5.2.2.2 Space to play

Space available to children tended to be divided into four main categories: inside or around the child’s home; inside neighbours'/relatives' homes; at school; or in a public space. When asked where their children played, over 80% (n=51) of questionnaire respondents who had children below the age of 18 years (n=63) reported that their children played at home, with almost half of these 63 respondents (n=30) reporting that their children only played at home.

Data from my informal conversations and semi-structured interviews with parents and children suggested that all four case study children spent the majority of their time in their own home. These reports were consistent with my observations, where, apart from the 15 minutes spent by Kefa in his neighbouring relatives’ flat, none of the children left the confines of their homes.

During the DITL observations, Ahmed spent half of his day on the ‘porch’ and in the ‘garden’ and the other half in the living room/bedroom (Section 3.2.3.4). Maria spent the majority of her day indoors in the bedroom and living room, occasionally going out onto the balcony (Section 3.2.2.4). Muna spent the vast majority of her day in the bedroom/living room, briefly walking out into the entrance/balcony area a few times and then returning to the bedroom/living room (Section 3.2.4.4). When he was not at his relatives’ house, Kefa spent the vast majority of his time in the living room (Section 3.2.1.4). In addition, the photographs taken by Kefa, Ahmed and Muna in my absence were all taken inside their homes. Kefa took photos of specific objects and spaces within his home:
‘I took a picture of the door (Figure 5.8a) […] the window (Figure 5.8b) […] the balcony (Figure 5.8c) […] the house inside (Figure 5.8d) […] that place (pointing out the window to the bakery across the street) (Figure 5.8e)’ (Kefa).

Figure 5.8: Photographs by Kefa using disposable camera

Similarly, Ahmed’s photographs were all taken either inside his home or from the ‘porch’. Those
taken from the ‘porch’ were either of the garden (Figure 5.9a) or the street (Figure 5.9b). However, as Ahmed declined to talk to me about the pictures he had taken and why, I was unable to get further insight into why he decided to take these photographs.

Figure 5.9: Photographs by Ahmed using disposable camera

While the children mainly stayed at home, they sometimes visited their neighbours’ and/or relatives’ houses. Lia mentioned that Kefa, who lived in the same building as his cousins, visited their house on a daily basis, and indeed, while I was filming, Kefa and his brother visited their cousins’ apartment upstairs in the same building, where the children immediately started to play on the balcony. Kefa joined them for a short while but then spent most of the time standing behind the videocamera as I filmed his brother and cousins playing (Figure 5.10). However, his mother told me that he usually plays with them on the balcony and takes charge in play, telling the other children what to do.

Figure 5.10: Kefa behind the camera as his brother and cousin play on the balcony

Conversely, while Ahmed had Syrian neighbours upstairs in the same building, his mother did not allow him to go up to their flat, mainly to avoid problems with the other children and their parents.
Maria was the only child who took photographs outside her own house. She showed me a photograph of ‘Doudou’, a toy stuffed panda and a cross, both of which were taken at her nearby cousin’s house (Figure 5.11a & b). Maria’s mother also shared photographs that she had taken on her smartphone of Maria playing with her cousin at her cousin’s home, where the children had built a ‘house’ out of mattresses and blankets in the living room.

(5.11a) Doudou  (5.11b) Maria’s aunt’s cross

Figure 5.11: Photographs by Maria using disposable camera

School is usually a potential place for children to play. However, of the 25 Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese questionnaire respondents who said their children attended school, only 6 respondents mentioned school as a place where their children played. While it is unclear why 19 of the 25 respondents did not consider school to be a place where their children played, it is possible that parents considered school to be a place for studying and learning, not a place for play, as suggested by Colette:

‘I don’t think they (parents) understand the importance of play in the children’s life. The first thing parents tell you they want is for their children to go to school and learn. They don’t say to go and play’ (Colette, IRC).

Colette suggests that parents do not prioritise play in school because they do not understand the importance of play for their children. This however, is a generalisation since, as highlighted in Section 5.2.1, parents of all four case study children clearly valued play and lamented their children’s loss of play opportunities. Therefore, it is not necessarily that parents lack understanding of the importance of play for their children, but rather that they associate school with more direct instruction and studying, not with play. In contrast to this viewpoint, Mariana, the teacher at Kefa’s school, emphasised the importance of playing in the school:

‘The energy that the children release, it is as if someone was in prison and was set free. Their house is one room, two rooms and a big family, and sometimes two families. Each family and their in-laws, children and their cousins sleeping in the same room on the floor
They want to get out of the house. This is very important. We have provided them with a place so they can leave the house’ (Mariana, teacher).

During my observations in the school, I noted that the schoolchildren had access to a large hall where they were taught (Figure 5.12a), and outside there was a steep, sloping driveway that levelled out at the bottom and served as a playground where children spent their recess (Figure 5.12b). At the top of the driveway was a busy street and at the bottom of the driveway were steps leading to a large, fenced-off and locked playground, which the children did not have access to, as it was reserved for other younger Iraqi children who attended a nursery run by a priest (Figure 5.12c).
Public spaces were a commonly debated topic by parents, who were frustrated at the need to pay to access them, so these potential play spaces were inaccessible for their children. In interviews and questionnaires, parents frequently complained about the entry fees charged to access parks. Only 7 out of 63 questionnaire respondents who had children below the age of 18 years mentioned parks as a place where their children played. As Thalia pointed out: ‘Here there are parks, but they are only accessible with money’. Similarly, Kefa’s mother Lia and Muna’s father Qassem contrasted the public facilities in Lebanon with those they had left behind in Iraq and Syria explaining that in their home countries they had free access to parks or paid a very small amount of money to access parks with swings and toys. However, in Lebanon, they had no access to such spaces.

Access to parks was a common issue among all nationalities in Lebanon, for as Dr Denise stated, ‘even the Lebanese don’t go to parks’. This lack of access to public parks resulted in lack of access to public play resources. None of the case study children mentioned going with their families to public parks with slides or swings. However, I was able to learn about children’s access to public spaces and play resources through one of Kefa’s block constructions. When filming DITL, Kefa was playing with the blocks that I had introduced, building with great focus. Upon completion, Kefa announced to me and his mother ‘This is a slide. Wrrrrr’, sliding the tip of his finger from the top to the bottom of the slide. He added ‘this is for children. They climb up here (moving his fingers up the ‘ladder’) then they slide down (sliding his fingers from the top to the bottom of the slide)’ (Figure 5.13). Lia explained that Kefa’s school took him ‘on three or four occasions’ to Burger King where he saw the slides adding: ‘that is why they are building slides’. He also went twice with his school to ‘a park with slides in Sabtieh area’ adding ‘Kefa was so happy when they went.'
Another public space for play that came to light in this study was ‘on the streets’. While none of the Iraqi or Syrian questionnaire respondents mentioned the streets as a place where their children played, one Lebanese respondent did mention it. One Syrian questionnaire respondent explained that ‘play is a problem’ since his children had nowhere to play as their apartment was very small, the streets were dangerous as children regularly got hit by cars, and the woods, the only place they could play, were full of trash and used as a dump following the ‘trash crisis’\footnote{Lebanon’s main landfill, which had reached capacity, closed down in 2015, leading to a pile-up of tons of garbage on the streets of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, in forests, rivers, the sea and coastal landfills.}. Street play was mentioned during the interviews with professionals and case study parents. For example, Matta and Lia complained about Syrian children playing in the street outside their apartment during the evenings, saying they are ‘always in the streets, till 12 am’. They blamed lack of school attendance on Syrian children’s constant presence in the streets where ‘they fight, even the young children fight with each other’.

Kefa’s parents described Syrian children on the streets outside their apartment building as aggressive, saying they regularly fought with each other, so they considered them a threat to their children’s safety and wellbeing. The streets in Beirut and its Northern suburbs were certainly not safe places for children to play. As Colette (IRC) explained, children were regularly harassed and abused on the streets. Ahmed’s father forbade his children from playing on the street because he was afraid that they would be hit by passing cars.

Colette mentioned that the majority of the street children she worked with were Syrian, she only exceptionally came across Lebanese children, and her organisation had no Iraqi children in their database. However, this does not mean that Iraqi children did not spend time on the streets. During interview, Mariana explained that Sr Mary’s motivation for opening the school was seeing so many Iraqi children on the streets. When asked what the children were doing on the streets, Mariana replied ‘Some were let loose and others worked (fi falatēn û fi šīḡīl/في فلتان و في شغل). There were problems’.

Mariana noted that while Lebanese parents ‘are present’ and ‘can take their children places to play’
and therefore do not ‘let their children loose on the streets’, refugees ‘don’t have a problem with it (playing on the streets). They are not afraid’. This, however, seems to be a generalisation since case study parents expressed great fear for their children, not allowing them outside the house unattended. This was particularly the case for their daughters and their young sons.

Some spaces to play were provided by religious and non-religious organisations, for example, Colette explained how the IRC provided children with ‘a safe space where they can play, learn and receive emotional support and […] develop, […] a safe space to just be children again. They operated ‘through centre and mobile approaches’. Mariana also mentioned that the church provided children with space to play and activities to do. Maria for example sometimes played and rode her bicycle in the church parking lot (Figure 5.14), and Maria and her Iraqi neighbours had attended a 5-day camp run by their church.

Figure 5.14: Maria’s photograph of church parking lot

5.2.2.3 Play materials and toys

Availability of play materials such as toys was another aspect of play resources that was regularly mentioned by participants and observed during this study. Parents were upset that they could not afford to buy their children toys for, as Lia told me, ‘If we ever buy them anything it’s as if we gave them the world, when we buy them a toy they become so happy’. This section details the play materials available to children in their homes and in school.

At home, each of the case study children had a small number of toys to play with. Table 5.1 lists the limited selection of toys (toys manufactured for children) that each case study child and/or their sibling(s) played with or mentioned during the DITL filming day, excluding the blocks, colouring pencils and disposable cameras that I introduced as part of the study.
Table 5.1: Case Study Children’s Toys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Child</th>
<th>Toys at Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kefa</td>
<td>Boat, matchbox toy cars, toy guns, musical house toy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Ball, bicycle, stuffed animals used to decorate the bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmed</td>
<td>‘Fish toy’, toy gun with water bullets, small electronic keyboard with no batteries, three footballs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muna</td>
<td>‘Marble Run’ blocks, block sorting game, dinosaur toy, remote control car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kefa had a few other toys that I discovered on my final visit to his house, when his younger brother brought out a crate from the storage room and emptied it onto the living room floor (Figure 5.15). While some toys had been bought by parents at a $1 shop, the majority of the toys owned by the Iraqi children were donated to the children by the church. Most of Ahmed’s toys were bought by his father’s Lebanese friend, while Muna’s father bought all the toys she owned. Both sets of Iraqi parents voiced their frustration at not being able to afford to buy toys for their children. Thalia considered that her children were being ‘deprived of childhood and play’ since they did not have toys explaining ‘they ask us for toys, a car, a plane […] Maria wants dolls and a pram for the baby doll but I cannot afford them’.

Lia also told me with tears in her eyes:

‘There are many things we cannot buy. There are certain foods we don’t buy so that we can get more quantities of cheaper food. If the children cry and ask for a toy we don’t buy it for them. We tell them we can’t get it so that we don’t spend a lot of money’ (Lia, Kefa’s mother).

Both Kefa’s and Ahmed’s parents noted that the children regularly broke their toys, which Lia attributed to boredom, sadness and anger. Not only was Kefa bored because he had nothing to do, but he was bored of his toys, and he took out his frustration on the toys. She added:

‘… he starts beating his brother or he starts tearing up the papers. For example, he sits down to draw and when he gets bored he starts tearing them up. He gets very bored here, because of the boredom anything you tell him he gets angry (بيصبر) and starts breaking things’ (Lia, Kefa’s mother).
Salwa, Ahmed’s mother, also mentioned how her children had purposefully broken their toys. For example, while Ahmed, his brother Bilal and mother Salwa were playing with the ‘fish toy’ (li’bit ilsamak/لعبه السمك), all but one rod and half the fish were missing. As they played, Salwa notes ‘This was full of fish but they broke them, they break them apart’. Ahmed, who did not find a rod, instead took his belt and used the long thin metal rod to scoop out the fish (Figure 5.16).

Lia linked breaking toys with boredom and anger. She also linked breaking toys with children’s sadness, their resentment at how their childhoods are impoverished, and their feeling of suffocation due to the many restrictions that are imposed on them. Going beyond that, and seeing as children exercise power in their play (Section 1.5.2.2), breaking toys could also be a way of exerting power when children might feel like they are powerless.

In the absence of conventional children’s play artefacts, Omar, Ahmed’s father, mentioned the children’s resourcefulness in adapting everyday objects for their play:
‘they get anything, a stick […] Now they have a ball, they play with the ball, they have a ladder, they play with the ladders’.

Upon further investigation, I discovered that Ahmed’s neighbour owned two ladders and used them when working around the house. Ahmed used these ladders as toys, as described in transcripts of my observations of Ahmed’s play during the full day of filming:

Ahmed, who is playing on the porch, runs up to the fence, says ‘Bismillah ilrahman ilraḥīm/بِسْمَالِلَّهِ الرَّحْمَانِ الرَّحِيمِ (In the name of God, the beneficent and merciful). He climbs up on the fence, then climbs down the first ladder, then steps onto the second ladder, climbs up the second ladder, steps onto the top step of the first ladder then climbs back down the first ladder. Ahmed repeats this play but makes it more challenging each time, changing his climbing methods by going up and down the ladder with his back facing the ladder and by skipping steps as he climbs (Figure 5.17).

Figure 5.17: Ahmed playing on the ladders

Another important artefact that was often used for extensive periods in all four case studies was the smartphone. All four case study children and their siblings played games on the smartphone and watched cartoons or YouTube clips on the phone (Figure 5.18a, b, c & d). The smartphones were owned by the children’s parents and were brought over with the parents from their home country. While Kefa, Maria, and Muna’s mothers and fathers owned a smartphone each, allowing the children to use the mother’s phone when the father was at work, Ahmed’s mother did not own a smartphone as Bilal, her youngest son, had broken it. Therefore, the children had to wait for their father to return home from work in order to use his phone.
Children also watched cartoons and programmes on television. Throughout the day, Kefa watched cartoons including Bob the Builder, The Airport Diary, Babar, and The Electric Train on ‘Cartoon Network Arabic’ and ‘Spacetoon’. Maria’s parents reported that she did not spend a lot of time watching television, however at one point while she was watching Mr. Bean during the DITL filming day, her mother changed the channel to watch an Arabic drama series called Al ‘Arḍ Al ṣayiba/ الأرض الطيبة (The Good Land) which she regularly watched with Maria. The programme contained themes of violence, shooting, death, kidnapping, and war however Thalia did not seem to mind that Maria was watching such a violent programme as it reflected many themes they had either personally experienced, had seen on the news, or had heard of from friends and relatives.

Muna spent the majority of her day watching English and Arabic video clips on Baby TV (Tayor Al Jannah/طيور الجنة), a music channel for children (Section 5.3.2.5). Ahmed watched series on ‘Zee Alwan’, a channel that plays both Arabic series and Indian series dubbed in Arabic, and Teenovation, an Egyptian program where children present their inventions. Moreover, when I visited Ahmed on a Friday, Friday prayers were playing on TV.

Figure 5.18: All four case study children watching YouTube clips, cartoons or episodes on smartphone
Overall, the home visits revealed that poverty had resulted in children not having access to many material play resources, which parents lamented as a deficit in their lives and a loss of a source of happiness. In some cases, poverty and financial or material constraints were reported by adult participants as affecting children’s social lives and well-being, for instance by isolating children from wider social groups and perpetuating bullying, as one questionnaire respondent indicated:

‘When [my children] go out, they meet Lebanese children who have toys and iPads and they tease and shame my sons for not having any. So I tell my sons not to go out anymore’ (Syrian Female - Questionnaire).

While play materials were limited at home, some resources were available in schools, as discussed by the only two case study children who attended school in Lebanon, Maria and Kefa. When talking about school, Maria and her mother mainly focused on the academic aspect of school as a place where children learn. Maria loved going to school because she ‘love[d] to learn’. Maria mentioned playing with blocks in school, which, prior to me introducing blocks in their home, was only available to her in school.

Kefa mentioned playing with a football in school. Through my visit to Kefa’s school, my interview with his teacher Mariana, and my observation in the school, I learnt more about what was available to children in the school, or not. During my observations at recess, one boy stood at the top of the driveway and another halfway down throwing a tennis ball to each other while other children in the middle tried to catch it. Some boys played football with a small ball, whilst other boys played football using a Styrofoam ball (Figure 5.19). When asked why they were using the Styrofoam ball, Mariana explained that one boy had the idea of bringing that ball to school since the children sometimes kicked the football towards the neighbours which ‘caused problems’. Mariana continued ‘This way, if the ball falls down, it won’t hurt anyone’. She also noted that the Styrofoam ball did not travel very far, and so she was less worried about the ball being kicked onto the street and the children running after it. The boys also used a plastic bottle filled with soil as a football when they did not have access to a ball (Figure 5.20).
While conducting the school observation, one young girl emerged from the classroom with a skipping rope (Figure 5.21). During an informal conversation with the girl, I asked her what toys they had in school and she replied: ‘we have balls, skipping ropes, and we used to have blocks and other things but they are all broken’. Mariana, the schoolteacher, like some of the case study parents, talked about children breaking their toys. She explained that they had bought toys the previous year such as ‘hula-hoops for the girls’ and LEGO blocks but ‘they started building guns and throwing pieces at each other’, and all the toys were broken and destroyed. She added that since they had no more toys, the young boys would ‘bring a chair or a table from inside, turn it upside down, sit on it, and start sliding on it from the top of the driveway to the bottom’, ruining the tables.
As seen in Mariana’s quote, although children did not have access to many toys in school, they transformed everyday artefacts into play materials; however, this was not always welcomed by adults.

5.2.2.4  Time

Time seemed to be a resource that all case study children had abundant access to while I was conducting the study. Although the children seemed to have plenty of time on their hands, they did not necessarily use this time to play. When I asked Kefa what he usually did during the day he replied: ‘Nothing, I sit. I bring a chair and I sit here’. Similarly, when I asked Maria and Ahmed what they played during the day Maria replied: ‘Nothing, I play with the phone’ while Ahmed simply replied ‘Nothing’. Lacking other resources, some parents reported how time was more of a burden than a resource. Lia, Kefa’s mother, regularly mentioned Kefa’s frustration because he was bored and had nothing to do. Ahmed and Muna’s parents explained that their children followed the same routine all year round. However, Maria and Kefa’s routines changed once they went back to school. During an informal conversation, Maria’s mother emphasised that when her children return to school, ‘Finish, there’s no more play, it’s now time to study’. Thalia explained that once school started, she packed away all the children’s toys as her children would leave home at 6:30am to go to school and return home at around 3:15pm when they took a shower, had lunch, went straight to do their homework, then went to bed at around 6:30pm. The children were only allowed to play during the weekends, after all their homework had been completed. By contrast, Kefa went to school at 8:00am and returned home at 12:30pm after which he had lunch, did his homework, and had free time during the rest of the day. On the day that I visited Kefa’s school, the children were sitting a Maths test. Therefore, after submitting their tests, and as an exception, the children were allowed to play for the rest of the school day, from 10:10am until 12:10pm when the school bus
arrived to drive them back home. During my interview with the teacher, Mariana, she explained that on a regular school day:

‘[They get] more than an hour [to play]. They get time in the morning when they first arrive to school and around half an hour before the bus comes to take them home. They are under pressure and suffocated (ḥtana’/ختنأو) in the classroom and they need to play’.

A further issue that emerged during the study was the lives of working children. Although Colette recognised that working children might be playful whilst working, she had witnessed how ‘they get tired, they get older, sometimes they don’t grow up properly, even physically’. Working impacted negatively on their lives and play. In an attempt to reduce such harm, IRC aimed to provide street and working children with time and safe spaces to play by focusing on play in the curriculum, by running special events for those children ‘to make them truly experience their childhood’ through, for example, football tournaments, musical choir events and such like, depending on the children’s interests. While these services were available to street and working children in Mount Lebanon and other areas, Kamal, who sold flowers on the street, and his family had not heard about these services and did not know they could access them.

Despite Colette’s comment that some working children played together on the streets, she recognised this was often not the case. Colette also recognised the social stigma encountered by street-working children:

‘the public tends to judge [child beggars] and get annoyed by them. The moment you start talking to the child[ren] and telling [them] about the activities, [they] forget about [their] street work and become all excited to join the activities. [They are] child[ren] again. Most of them are eager to learn and go to school. They cry when they are forced to leave school. They want this opportunity’.

5.2.3 Fear, play and children’s ‘fragile resilience’

_The children have a complex now, especially from the planes. They hear the sound of a plane and my goodness (ya laṭīf/يا لطيف) (Omar, Ahmed’s father)_

Children and their families reported they had experienced fear during armed conflict, during internal displacement, during their journey to Lebanon, and, although physically safe from direct war-related experiences, they continued experiencing fear after moving to Lebanon. Through the interviews with parents and children, I found that this was the case for all four case study children. During my first visit to Maria, both Thalia and Maria spoke about their fear. Thalia recalled how Maria was very scared when they first moved to Lebanon and clung to her mother, not leaving her side. Thalia associated this fear with ISIS, and Maria remembering or imagining events related to ISIS. Maria added:
Maria: I would dream scary things! [...] I would dream that a Buffalo killed someone and killed me.

Thalia: Sometimes she would scream at night. She would wake up at night, afraid, screaming. Now why are we surprised by her? Now she talks and does and things. Her personality has changed 180 degrees. Life has become better for her.

Thalia explained that since Maria had started going to school she had become more sociable and started to ‘come and go and talk’, and so ‘she changed herself. Her mentality and the way she thinks changed.’

Kefa’s parents talked about how he was afraid when he first came to Lebanon, which stopped him from going out and made his parents wonder if they had made the right decision to send him to school. Lia explained: ‘he was afraid of everything. If he went outside he would be afraid. Very slowly he started gaining some confidence’. Lia added that after he started going to school he changed, made friends and became less afraid.

While school in both Kefa and Maria’s cases helped them to overcome certain fears, the questionnaire responses suggested that for some children, attending school increased their fears. For example, one Iraqi father mentioned how the teachers used to beat his son and so he stopped sending him to school, adding ‘he’s been out of school for four years’. One Iraqi mother mentioned that she had stopped sending her daughter to school because ‘so many Syrians would shout at her because she is Iraqi’. Fear of sending children to school was felt by both Iraqi and Syrian parents and children. One Syrian father who took part in the pilot questionnaire mentioned that he was too afraid to send his son to school and that he was home-schooled instead, and a Syrian mother said ‘We could put our children in public schools but we were advised not to. The way the children are treated is not good. There is a lot of conflict’.

Therefore, although school could be seen as a place to help some children overcome traumatic experiences, socialise with others and make friends, in other cases it was a further source of suffering caused by bullying and corporal punishment, where parents and children preferred to stay away from poor quality schooling, rather than be further subjected to violent or prejudicial behaviours.

The children’s experiences of armed conflict in their home countries had left them with haunting memories. Both Muna and Ahmed were terrified of aeroplanes after having experienced their villages being bombed, as Muna’s father recalled:

‘There were helicopters that dropped explosives that wiped out 10 houses at a time. The children are terrified of aeroplanes. When they hear an aeroplane they start to cry’.

Similarly, Ahmed’s father told me that his children were still deeply disturbed by aeroplanes. If they heard an aeroplane ‘they start screaming and crying and hiding themselves. He (Ahmed) doesn’t
know when a shell will fall'. During one of my visits to Ahmed, he asked his mother to make him a paper aeroplane:

Salwa: We are sick of aeroplanes, you want an aeroplane?

Ahmed laughs.

Me: Do you like aeroplanes?

Ahmed: Yes!

Salwa: He likes the toys he doesn't like the actual planes.

Ahmed: I don't like it (the real aeroplane), I hate it.

After moving to Lebanon, children continued to experience threats to their safety, which led to insecurity. For example, during visit three to Kefa and his family, Kefa and his mother spoke to me about an incident they had witnessed the night before, when an inebriated and angry man broke the window of a car that was parked immediately outside their house, and how shaken they had all been by that event. Although Kefa seemed to have gained some confidence since first arriving in Lebanon, school did not eradicate his feelings of fear, and Lia, his mother, explained that Kefa always ‘wants to [be in] control’, which might have been a mechanism to combat uncertainty in his life.

Moreover, while parents and children talked about experiencing fear as a result of both past and present experiences, play seemed to provide children with the opportunity to challenge fear, for example through playing with paper aeroplanes. However, this was specific to their play in Lebanon, for as Omar, Ahmed’s father, said during an interview, when his children were living in Syria they were afraid of aeroplanes, of going to school, and were ‘living a state of horror even in their play’. He then went on to say that now in Lebanon ‘Play is peace of mind (rāḥa nafsiyya/راحة نفسية for the children […] they are not afraid in play’.

Although children might have been open to taking risks in play, I observed that fear crept up in diverse ways, putting a stop to and/or limiting children’s play. The following is an excerpt from my observations during a day in the life of Kefa (Figure 5.22):

Kefa, Tomas and their three male cousins (7, 5, and 4 years old) are playing in the living room in Kefa’s house. Lia and her uncle are there too. Suddenly a loud bang is heard. Someone is lighting fireworks outside their apartment. The children freeze and stop playing, with a look of surprise on their faces. Tomas points toward the source of the loud bang. All the children, Lia and her uncle suddenly get up and run to the door to see what is happening. White smoke emerges from behind the balcony wall. Kefa runs into the kitchen. All the other children scream, laugh, jump up and down, and cover their ears with their hands. The fireworks stop.
Kefa returns to the living room and shouts: ‘what’s wrong with those people!?’ Kefa goes outside and shouts to his mother in Chaldean. As Kefa turns to come back into the living room, the fireworks resume. He is startled by the sound, runs into the living room and stands with his hands on his ears looking out. Kefa, looking towards the fireworks, shouts out STOP! (LIK HALAS!!). He turns around and looks distressed. Kefa sits on an armchair and covers his ears with his hands. Lia tells Kefa ‘these are only fireworks’. He starts shouting in Chaldean, pointing towards the fireworks and covering his ears. I ask Kefa why he does not like the fireworks and he replies ‘I DON’T LIKE THEM! They are very loud!’.

During my next visit to the family while re-watching the compilation video, I addressed the fireworks episode and asked Lia why she thinks Kefa was afraid of them. She explained that even she was afraid of fireworks and sometimes starts ‘shaking with fear, thinking it is shooting’, adding ‘from the fear that we experienced before, we are now afraid of anything, even a low or loud sound, we are afraid that it will grow into something bigger and a problem will arise’.

This episode shows that even though attending school seemed to have helped Kefa to gain confidence and be less fearful, he was still wrestling with deep, past trauma that was shaping his present life. This suggests that school and routine, while helpful and beneficial, was not enough for Kefa to overcome his past traumatic experiences. Instead, Kefa needed specialised help to make sense of and recover from his trauma, to help him feel safe in Lebanon.

Figure 5.22: Kefa and the fireworks
5.2.4 Freedom, surveillance, power and play

In addition to adults being surveilled as ‘temporarily displaced’ persons, this study found that surveillance took on a new form for ‘displaced’ children in Lebanon. Having once had the freedom to explore their surroundings, go distances without parental supervision, and play outdoors without concern of disturbing others, children in Lebanon were bound to their houses and exposed to additional surveillance by local authorities, parents, and neighbours. Increased parental surveillance was linked to children and their parents having witnessed and experienced terrifying and traumatic events, moving to a strange country away from family and community members, and living in poverty where resources were scarce. Close surveillance in this new environment limited children’s freedom and play. Kefa, Ahmed and Muna’s parents all talked about the freedom of children’s play in their home country before armed conflict.

Lia: Play in Iraq is different to here. It’s not just the toys themselves. It’s the games they play. They draw on the floor with chalk, they jump and play.

Matta: In our village, 15, 16 young boys Kefa’s age would all be outside on their bicycles. They wouldn’t go very far. Everyone knew who each child was. It was safe […] The men would take their sons out while the women stayed with the girls at home.

Similarly, Qassem told me that his two sons used to spend their whole day outside.

‘Before the war they used to come and go and play and do whatever they want […] We only saw Alaa when it was time for bed, he would be out all day playing with his cousins’.

Qassem mentioned that Janna had been wanting to move to Lebanon for two years with the children because of the war but that he delayed it since he ‘knew the children had so much space to play there’ and that ‘here they would be imprisoned in this house’. Likewise, Salwa told me:

‘[In Syria] they play more than here, there is space for them to play. Ahmed would be out all day and only come home if he wants food or if he’s coming to sleep. We weren’t afraid there […] they used to play in the ground (канū yal‘abū bil’ard/كانو يلعبو بالأرض). Anywhere they went they played with the ball, with anything’.

Ahmed added:

‘[I used to play] in a big square next to my grandfather’s house […] with my cousins and my uncle with the ball’.

After moving to Lebanon, these freedoms of movement were restricted by the constraints of their new circumstances and by their parents’ irregular status, as was their freedom of expression (making noise and expressing their opinions) through increased surveillance, which all acted as constraints on play. This section considers three types of freedom that the study identified as restricted due to increased surveillance in Lebanon: freedom of movement and state surveillance; freedom of expression and surveillance by neighbours and parents; and gender-specific freedoms.
5.2.4.1 Freedom of movement and state surveillance

Both adults’ and children’s freedom of movement had been restricted in Lebanon. This was largely due to ‘temporarily displaced’ persons’ legal status in Lebanon. Qassem explained:

‘The word displaced (نَازِيُّح/نازوح), the word refugee (لاجِيُّ/لاجي), these words, we the older ones don’t like these words’ (Qassem, Muna’s father).

Through my interviews with professionals and case study parents, I was able to gain a better understanding of the different discourses around ‘refugees’ or ‘displaced persons’, and at how the refugee narrative was shaped in Lebanon. In interview, Mariana noted that:

‘[Iraqi] parents have a lot of fear. The parents tell you “we are refugees, we are immigrants, what are we to do?”. They are obliged to stay quiet (يسكتو/يسيكتو) and succumb to reality. They are forced to stay quiet so they can live’.

She added that their houses were raided (بيجيون كسية) every one or two months by the gendarmerie who were searching for drugs or weapons. These raids happened at night, and both adults and children were forced to wait outside ‘for an hour or so’ before they could go back indoors and go back to sleep.

In Mariana’s account, Iraqi parents identify as ‘powerless’ when talking about their ‘refugee’ or ‘immigrant’ status. Because they are refugees, they are helpless and ‘are forced to stay quiet so they can live’. This quote portrays the view of refugees as people who are unable to exercise power because of their status and who must instead ‘succumb to reality’. The gendarmerie’s act of raiding houses reflects a view of refugees as ‘polluting’ and as people outside the law who are guilty until proven innocent, a threat to the Lebanese people. The deficit narrative of being ‘displaced’ was mentioned by Lia: ‘We here are displaced, we don’t have the ability to spend money every time we want to take them out’. Lia linked their limited financial resources with her family’s ‘displaced’ status, adding to the ‘powerless’ narrative of ‘refugees’, ‘immigrants’, or ‘displaced people’.

This ‘powerlessness’ which constrained adults in turn inhibited children’s freedom of movement, especially for those families who were residing with irregular status in Lebanon. During interview, Ahmed’s father explained that he very rarely took his children out of the house because it was ‘unsafe’ adding, ‘the reason is the papers, that’s it, so that no one asks us where our papers are and starts a problem with us’. He elaborated that if he could walk outside freely without fear of arrest he would take his children to a park, to a playground, to the beach, to their relatives’ or friends’ house where they could play with other children. However, due to fear of being caught, he could not even take his children out for a walk. Omar added that while it was rare to be caught during the day, his municipality decided to set a curfew for Syrians, forbidding them out of their houses after 8pm. Colette also noted that although there are services, such as mental health
services, available to refugee children, one of the barriers to accessing these services is the expiration of people’s legal papers.

Contrary to Mariana’s, Lia’s, Omar’s, Colette’s and questionnaire respondents’ accounts, Qassem mentioned that he was not afraid of taking his children outside ‘because we ran away from the war and we are refugees here’. In this quote, the view of the ‘refugee’ or ‘displaced’ person is linked to certain rights of one fleeing war and having no choice but to leave. For Qassem, fleeing for reasons beyond their control gave them a degree of power by taking a decision to act, even though in acting they encountered further oppression. This narrative was at odds with the discourses of powerlessness and oppression voiced by the majority of respondents. Qassem’s narrative associated with the words ‘displaced’ and ‘refugee’ suggests a sense of honour in exercising power by taking matters into their own hands, as opposed to the negative narrative of refugees feeling powerless and helpless in the face of oppression.

5.2.4.2  *Freedom of expression and surveillance by neighbours and parents*

In addition to limitations to their freedom of movement, freedom of expression was an issue that arose in multiple ways throughout this study, and the issue of children not being allowed to make noise recurred in this study’s data. One Iraqi male questionnaire respondent complained that although his children ‘play in the house, they are not allowed to make noise. They are forbidden from doing so many things’. Another Syrian questionnaire respondent reported that they had to move apartments because the neighbours would not let his children make any noise. Similarly, Thalia reflected on their living situation:

‘The apartment is small, I don’t even allow them to shout or make noise […] But then again they are children and it is their right to play and make noise and shout. But we shut them up (Naḥna mkattamīhūm/نحنا مكتُمهم)’ (Thalia, Maria’s mother).

This issue came up while I was observing Ahmed’s play whose mother asked him to keep his voice down when playing on the porch so as not to disturb the neighbours.

Conversely, Mariana had a different outlook on the noise issue. She felt that even if Lebanese people complained about noise the Iraqis did not always respond to them, moving away from looking at refugees as helpless and powerless beings, and attributing them with agency. However, her comment reflects how tensions are pervasive between refugees and Lebanese in Lebanon.

5.2.4.3  *Gender-specific freedoms and parental surveillance*

As freedom of movement and freedom to make noise were restricted, refugee children were expected to be neither seen nor heard. Gender-specific freedoms such as freedom of expressing one’s opinions was also a problem, particularly when it came to girls. Mariana elaborated:

‘The girl is more oppressed (maẓlūme/مظلومة). The boy is comfortable doing everything (byeḥud rāḥto bi kil Šī) whereas the girl is not allowed to talk, she is not
allowed to express [...] If it is a young woman, she is not allowed to talk or to raise her eyes to her father and refuse to do something she doesn't want to do [...] they have their traditions, traditions that are a bit conservative (رَجُعية). Thank God we (Lebanese) give girls and boys equal rights but them, no, they don't. The girl is slapped immediately (بتكع الكف ضغري) whereas the boy, if he does anything it’s ok’. (Mariana, teacher)

Mariana highlights a problem that she encounters among her Iraqis students, where Iraqi female students’ freedom of expression is severely restricted compared to that of her Iraqi male students. However, she also draws comparison between the ‘traditional’ refugee and the more ‘modern’ Lebanese, noting that, unlike ‘them’, Lebanese boys and girls have equal rights. Not only does this view imply unequal power relations among ‘them’, the traditional refugees, and ‘us’, the modern hosts (Jackson, 2013), but it ignores the fact that gender intersects with systems of inequality such as religion, age, social class, location and ethnicity to shape different experiences and constructions of childhood (Morrow, 2006). That is to say, not all Iraqi girls and boys experience unequal rights and not all Lebanese girls and boys experience equal rights. Considering that professionals such as teachers who work with refugees may differentiate between ‘them’ and ‘us’, it is important to consider how teachers’ interactions with students in school may reproduce certain views that ‘other’ refugee children (Jackson, 2013).

It was not only freedom of expression but also freedom of movement that was sometimes restricted based on gender. Mariana explained that Iraqi parents allowed their sons to play on the streets or even to go from one area to another, but not their daughters. She recounted ‘getting a fright’ when she drove past one of her 10-year-old male students one evening who had cycled all the way to his friend’s house and was cycling back home. Mariana added ‘I am afraid of sending my own son to these places, and on a bicycle on the roads in Lebanon, and have him cross streets. It’s normal for them. For girls it’s forbidden’. Mariana’s report was confirmed during my interviews with Janna (Muna’s mother) and Thalia (Maria’s mother). Janna recognised that:

‘We don’t entrust the girl with many things. We don’t relax if the girl goes out. I don’t know why. With boys there’s no problem, he can go far away. But not the girl’ (Janna).

Similarly, Thalia believed that ‘the boy is one thing and the girl is something else’. She believed that girls should be made more aware of what is right and wrong since:

‘The girl, God forbid something happens, she is broken, finish, that’s how I think. How we protected (حافظنا) (insinuating maintained the virginity of) ourselves, and our parents protected us, I want to protect the girl’ (Thalia).

Mariana, Thalia, and Janna mentioned that parents were more afraid for their daughters and put more pressure on their daughters and more limits on what the girls could or could not do, whereas boys enjoyed far greater freedom. As mentioned above, Mariana had been shocked that parents did not consider the dangers of allowing their son to ride his bicycle in an unsafe neighbourhood, on
poorly-lit, dangerous streets, where people drove recklessly. This dichotomy of over-protection of girls versus under-protection of boys put boys at risk of physical, mental, sexual and emotional harm as parents seemed unaware of dangers they might be exposed to, whereas girls were denied freedom to explore their environment, to voice their thoughts and opinions, to socialize, to participate in wider social life, and to be respected.

According to Mariana, Iraqi refugees considered their status as ‘displaced’ or ‘refugees’ to be a danger, particularly when it comes to girls:

‘They (Iraqi refugees) think “we are refugees, anyone could take advantage of us. We are poor, he might give us money and take advantage of some girl, kidnap some girl”’ (Mariana, Teacher).

Thalia similarly emphasised the importance of a girl’s chastity by holding up a glass in front of me and explaining, ‘a woman is like this glass. If the glass breaks it is destroyed forever’. The importance of a girl’s chastity was not only linked to her own wellbeing, but to her own and to her family’s honour. Contrary to Mariana, Janna and Thalia’s reports about boys having more freedom than girls, Lia (Kefa’s mother) had a very different approach with Kefa, explaining that she did not allow him to leave the house without her, even if it was to simply buy something from the supermarket across the road or retrieve a toy that fell off the balcony.

Play opportunities and resources sometimes differed between girls and boys. Mariana explained that boys had more opportunities to access play spaces such as football fields than girls did. Lia explained that in Iraq, fathers took their boys out with them while girls stayed at home with their mothers. She added that the girl ‘plays next to her [mother] at home’. When I asked Muna’s parents if they allowed their boys to play with certain toys or do certain things that their girls were not allowed to, they replied ‘there are some people like that but not us, no, it is normal […]. When [Muna] plays with her brother as long as they do not fight we have no problem with it’.

However, during my observations, I noticed that Janna’s interpretation of her daughter Muna’s play seemed to be gendered. For instance, during Muna’s play with her brother’s ‘Marble Run’ blocks (Figure 5.23), I observed as she stacked cylindrical blocks on top of each other to form one long tube. She then attached the tube to a green piece formed of two thin and long plastic arms that emerge from a central circle at a 120 degree angle. Once complete, she held onto each plastic arm, holding it out in front of her with straight arms for 20 seconds. When the construction broke, she rebuilt it, again holding it out as she looked at it, pointing it towards the ceiling and then towards the wall.
When watching the compilation DVD with Muna's mother, I asked her what it was that Muna had built. She replied that Muna was simply stacking the blocks one over the other. Muna’s brother Alaa enthusiastically replied ‘Dūška’! (‘دوشكا!’) a Russian heavy machine gun that can be mounted on a tripod) but Janna quickly retaliated: ‘no, no she does not build guns. It is the boy who builds guns not the girl. He sees it as a gun but she did not intend it’. Later, when talking about the children’s block play, Janna compared the blocks that I had given the children to the cylindrical blocks that the children already owned saying ‘This (the cylindrical blocks) is a boys’ toy not a girls’ toy […] Because it has marbles and requires building. It is difficult for girls. This one (the blocks I brought) is more dainty’.

To conclude this section, armed conflict and displacement had led to increased fear among parents and children, and consequently to increased surveillance. This study found that parental surveillance was gendered, as girls were reported as being more oppressed and having fewer rights than boys. Girls’ movement, freedom of expression and voice, and play resources were limited by close parental surveillance. Parents tended to view girls as ‘in need of protection’ whereas many boys, although not all, could ‘go far’ and do what they wanted. This in itself created unequal grounds for many refugee boys and girls’ experiences of childhood, and consequently their play experiences. Surveillance came from local authorities, increasing parents’ fears of arrest, consequently leading to increased parental surveillance and restriction of children’s movement, and therefore their play opportunities. Being ‘displaced’ was generally seen as a disadvantage and as a burden, rendering refugees ‘powerless’, under the scrutiny of their Lebanese neighbours and the Lebanese authorities. However, in Qassem’s view, being ‘displaced’ was linked to exercising power
by fleeing armed conflict and attempting to regain control of their lives, suggesting a sense of honour in the ‘displaced’ or ‘refugee’ status.

5.3 Play, boundaries and liminality

Despite the constraints on children’s play opportunities due to lack of resources, fear, and increased surveillance, this section explores how the children in this study deployed and created spaces as a play resource through their embodied experiences even when their movement was physically constrained. Building on Section 5.2.2.2 where I considered the spaces (un)available to children, this section explores how the children used the spaces available to create their own spaces in play, and how they escaped from their liminal state through imagination and transformation in play, by creating alternate realities, by transforming objects and spaces, and by relying on digital media to transport them into a ‘heterotopia’, a world within a world, that can both mirror and unsettle (Foucault, 1986).

5.3.1 Embodied experiences

You see Sandra, they are deprived of everything … this room, we all sit in the same room. They can’t play... now you saw they were playing, like this (walks on her tiptoes). They are very constrained (Mqayyidīn (مقيّدين) (holding her wrists together). Even their movements are constrained (Thalia, Maria’s mother).

Apart from their experience of leaving their home countries behind, being internally displaced, moving to/ being smuggled into Lebanon, and spending the majority of their time in or around their houses, refugee children’s embodied experiences were limited by the physical spaces they had available to them (Section 5.2.2.2). Seeing as case study children spent most of their time in or around their home, this section looks into how they made use of this space and created their own spaces through play. I look into how confined indoor spaces constrained children’s movements as opposed to outdoor spaces that, although still constrained, provided the opportunity for freer, uninterrupted and more varied movement. I also discuss how children were both physically and metaphorically on the edge, sometimes being agents in breaking boundaries, and sometimes falling off the edge – both literally and metaphorically.

The children in all four case studies lived in compact and confined spaces, yet their movements were not always constrained by this confinement. The following two play episodes are presented as examples of the children’s play in confined space: one play episode with Maria (Drapeau) and one with Ahmed (Jumping).
5.3.1.1 Maria play episode: Drapeau (Flag)

During a day in the life of Maria, I observed as she played for 1hr34mins with her brother Gerges and their four Iraqi neighbours: Dany (10-year-old boy), Rami (7-year-old boy), Sabine (10-year-old girl), and Maya (6-year-old girl). Within that time, the children played hand games and a circle game (4mins) (Section 5.4.2.1), Hide and Seek (3mins), Flag (4mins), played with stuffed animals (13mins), put on a theatrical performance and a magic show (15 mins), and played music, danced and re-enacted an Iraqi wedding (55 mins) (Section 5.4.1.1). The children mainly played in the bedroom, except for hand games and the circle game that they played on the balcony, and the wedding that extended from the bedroom to the living room. The following is an excerpt from the children’s game of Drapeau (flag).

The game Drapeau requires one child to be the leader, dividing the other children into two groups and assigning each child in both groups a number between 1 and 10. The leader then stands far away and equidistant from the two groups, holds up the flag and shouts out a number. One child from each group who was assigned that number has to run up to the leader, grab the flag, and run back to their group before their opponent catches them.

The children stood in the tight space between the foot of the bed and a table at the front of the room. Dany, the leader, held up a pencil case in the shape of a pink dog to represent a flag, exclaiming:

Dany: Numéro un (number one)!

Sabine excitedly steps forward with one foot, reaches her hand up and grabs the flag, then steps back into place and smiles […]

Dany (pointing to the winning team): Henne un (They get one point).

Dany starts again

Dany: Numéro trois (Number three)

Maria takes one large and one small step forward, grabs the ‘flag’, then takes two steps back (Figure 5.24) […]

Dany: Numéro deux (Number two)

Rami, standing still, simply raises both arms and grabs the ‘flag’.

While this game requires children to run and catch the flag when the number assigned to them is called out, they were standing so close to each other that all they had to do was step forward and grab the flag. Although the children giggled, laughed and exhibited some excitement as they played ‘flag’, they did not seem fully engrossed in the game. While this could be because the children were aware of the camera’s presence, their physical restriction due to confined space seemed to diminish
their enjoyment and their ability to fully participate in the game and, after 4 minutes of playing ‘flag’, moved on to another game.

![Figure 5.24: Maria reaching for the ‘flag’](image)

5.3.1.2 Ahmed play episode: Jumping indoors

During DITL of Ahmed, Ahmed, Bilal and their father Omar were in the living room/bedroom. I observed the following:

Ahmed is kneeling in front of the camera, looking straight into it. He points his finger towards the lens, brings his finger inwards as if to pull the trigger and says: ‘To!’ He then makes an L shape with his thumb and index finger, points towards the camera and repeats *Tototototoo!,* shooting at the camera. Ahmed then crawls away toward the mattress by the wall, comes up onto his right foot then leaps onto his left foot then onto his right foot, keeping in parallel with the mattress. He then leaps back onto his left foot and finally again onto his right foot, moving away from the mattress. His father tells him: ‘*Play, but not this play where you jump and put and take and bump into things.*’ Ahmed stops leaping around, finds his toy gun and lies down on the mattress next to his father. He looks straight into the camera and shoots his gun into the lens (Figure 5.25).
Both play episodes above portray clear examples of children’s constrained play due to limited space. In the above episodes, the bedroom and the living room were used as spaces where children played. All spaces were tight, limiting children’s freedom of movement and activity. Maria, Gerges and their neighbours played ‘flag’ in the tight space between the beds and the table at the front of the room, forcing the children to step forwards and backwards instead of running to catch the flag. Ahmed’s movements were constrained, limited by the confines of the living room/bedroom, as the proximity of the walls to each other defined and restricted their movements. In Ahmed’s example, his choice of what to play was also limited by his father who preferred Ahmed not play indoors in the confines of the small living room/bedroom and possibly break things, forcing him to stop his physical play and instead resort to something that required less movement. Nonetheless, the examples show that children still played and made the most of the space available to them. Children also used their imagination to transform objects into others, for example transforming a pencil case into a flag and fingers into a gun (Transformation in play is discussed in more detail in Section 5.3.2).

In contrast to Ahmed’s and Maria’s embodiment inside the house, the following transcript from 23 seconds of video footage demonstrates the way Ahmed used space and his body when playing in the garden, portraying a stark contrast with the episodes of indoor play.

5.3.1.3 Ahmed play episode: Running in the garden

Ahmed is running around the garden. He prances from the fence towards the tree, legs far apart and arms out, swinging his arms. He holds onto the tree, steps onto a wooden plank that is lying on the floor, swings his leg over the tree, climbs up, squats in preparation for
his jump, and then jumps off, landing on his hands and feet. Ahmed runs towards the fence, jumps onto the ladders that are lying on their side and jumps over the fence. He is out of breath and beats his hands together to get the dust off them, signifying the end of the episode (Figure 5.26).

Figure 5.26: Ahmed prancing around and swinging his arms in the garden
Ahmed had a lot more freedom to move in the garden than he did in the apartment. He could take up physical space, hold out his arms and swing them as he pranced around. Ahmed varied his physical movements, prancing, climbing, jumping, and running, with fewer restrictions as to what he could and could not do. He also used the objects available in the space, climbing on the tree, stepping on the planks, jumping over the fence, using these objects as play materials, allowing him to vary his movements and take certain risks in play. Unlike his play indoors, Ahmed was out of breath at the end of the 23 seconds and was not asked to stop playing by his mother, who instead found his play amusing, laughing and smiling as she observed him.

Whether they were in a confined space or in a more spacious outdoor environment, children were sometimes both metaphorically and physically 'on the edge'. Metaphorically, children were in a precarious position, being in-between the life they once lived and the life they hoped to live, with the possibility of moving to this post-liminal state being largely, but not entirely, dependent on external actors and factors. Similarly, being physically on the edge pointed towards children’s isolation as a result of their displacement, legal and 'temporarily displaced' status, and consequent issues they had to face including poverty. However, it also demonstrated children taking risks and exercising their agency, which sometimes had potentially harmful repercussions. The following episodes provide examples of children physically on the edge of a balcony, a football stadium, and a 'porch', and considers how children are pushed onto the side-lines as a result of poverty, how children are agents in their own lives, breaking boundaries and bypassing obstacles, or how children, while being in control and jumping off the edge, might easily lose their balance and fall off the edge.

5.3.1.4  Kefa play episode: On the edge

When filming a *day in the life* of Kefa, he went upstairs to his relatives’ house with his brother and two male cousins. The children ran out onto the second floor balcony. Kefa started play fighting with one of his cousins. He then turned around, facing the ledge of the balcony and lifted himself up with both hands as he looked down onto the road two storeys below. Kefa came back down, turned around and lifted himself up with both hands so he could sit on the ledge telling me ‘I can sit here!’ (Figure 5.27).

I immediately asked Kefa to come down, telling him that it is dangerous.\(^{13}\) Later on during an informal conversation with the neighbours’ mother, she told me:

\[
\text{‘We are afraid of the balcony walls because they are so low. We should keep an eye on them when they are there.’}
\]

\(^{13}\) While my interference may have altered the episode being filmed, the participants’ and my own safety and wellbeing were a priority, and it was my ethical responsibility to interfere and ask Kefa to get down, especially in the absence of parental supervision.
Being on the edge was not confined to spaces around the house. In another example, Lia told me that some days at around 8pm in the evening she and her husband took their two boys to a football field near the house. She added:

‘A woman who works there doesn’t let the children play. So they just sit on the side-lines and watch the football players play. People pay to rent out the field for an hour to play on it. The children walk around and watch the teams […] . Although it is a big field you still feel like they are imprisoned in a small space’.

Rather than considering poverty as the reason behind her children’s inability to play in the football field, Lia blamed the woman who worked there.

5.3.1.5 Ahmed play episode: jumping off/falling off the edge

In some cases, taking risks and being on the edge had consequences. While filming a day in the life of Ahmed, Ahmed spent the majority of his time on the ‘porch’ climbing up onto the seat of the armchair then onto its back, squatting and jumping from the back of the armchair onto the adjacent couch, varying how he landed (on his stomach, on his feet) and what he did once he landed (lying there, rolling over, jumping back up etc.) between each jump. Above the armchair was a clothesline that Ahmed lifted behind his head before jumping (Figure 5.28). Behind the armchair and couch was a ledge with metal rods sticking out of it, and behind the ledge was a one-meter drop onto the road behind. Ahmed’s parents had previously explained that playing there was dangerous and they were afraid that Ahmed might fall onto the road and be hit by a passing car, however Salwa added that Ahmed still played there since ‘they are children, they don’t know fear’ (wlad, ma ya’rfū alḥot).

As I observed Ahmed jump from armchair to couch, he climbed up onto the back of the armchair and, standing there, laughingly asked his mother to bring him a bucket of water that he could dive into. Ahmed raised his arms high, bent down to touch his toes in preparation for his dive but lost balance and fell off the armchair onto the ledge behind him. His mother exclaimed ‘Ya (Oh) Mohammad!’. Ahmed screamed out and started to cry. I stopped filming.
It is important to consider that my presence and that of the camera might have contributed to this incident, as Ahmed might have been performing for the camera (Pink, 2013), leading to his fall. Ahmed was not seriously hurt but sustained superficial scratches on his arm that he covered up with a long white bandage, a prop he later used in his play (Section 5.3.2).

These episodes demonstrate how refugee children are restrained by boundaries, restricting their freedom of movement and freedom to engage with their environment that lies beyond those boundaries. The children in turn challenge these boundaries as well their parents’ instructions and, as such, may end up in compromising situations. Taking this notion one step further, by being physically on the edge in their daily lives, by having tight restrictions on how, with whom, when and where they played, by being limited to the confines of their often insanitary homes, often encouraged not to be seen or heard, and by being stripped of their most basic rights, refugee children are forced into a state of liminality from which there is no tangible way out.

### 5.3.2 Escaping liminality through media, transformation and imagination

Children were sometimes physically constrained and on the edge, isolated from their extended family and community members, with their sense of identity and belonging shifting back and forth between their pre-conflict lives and their pre-liminal, liminal and long-awaited but elusive post-liminal states, the latter being a state they may never arrive at. Nonetheless, play served as a means to escape from liminality into a ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault, 1986) where anything was possible. Following are data excerpts depicting how children created alternate realities in play, used play as a platform
to re-enact and make sense of sometimes troubling experiences they had witnessed, and used media as an aid in their great escape.

One way of escaping liminality was by creating alternate realities in play. Although the case study children were forbidden from or unable to do certain things in reality, play provided them with an arena to imagine alternate outcomes and situations. This is represented in the following play episodes.

5.3.2.1  *Kefa play episode: Drawing of a boat*

When asked to draw ‘things he likes…’, Kefa drew himself, his brother and his father on a boat, while his mother was ‘at home in the kitchen’ (Figure 5.29).

![Figure 5.29: Kefa’s drawing of a boat](image)

When I asked Kefa where they were going on the boat he replied ‘*umm (pause)* we go like this together and then we come back home’, making a trajectory with his finger, pointing from the boat, going beyond the edge of the paper then back to the boat’s starting point. Kefa added that he had never been on a boat but saw one when he visited Jbeil, a seaside Lebanese city, with his parents and brother. Although Kefa could not go onto the boat when he visited Jbeil, he was able to create an alternate reality through his drawing. While I first expected the boat to provide Kefa with an escape from Lebanon, he told me that he would be returning to his starting point where his mother was waiting for them. The boat signified a temporary escape from their everyday reality and not a permanent escape to, for example, Australia where his grandparents and uncle lived, and where he had previously mentioned he wanted to move.

5.3.2.2  *Kefa play episode: Building and driving on a road*

Kefa’s love for cars and his frustration that he was too young to drive came up in interview with his parents, with him, and through observations. During the day of filming, Kefa, Tomas and their three male cousins (7, 5 and 4) were in Kefa’s living room playing with the blocks. The children mainly
spoke in Chaldean while playing, and either the mother or Kefa voluntarily translated what was being said at some points during their play. Throughout the whole play episode, Kefa took charge of the play, telling the children what to do and how to do it, snatching blocks from them, and even fighting with his eldest cousin. Nonetheless, the play continued to progress and develop with flowing creativity, imagination and transformation as portrayed in the following example (Figure 5.30):

Kefa, Tomas and their three cousins started joining coloured blocks together to form one long line, creating a spiral on one end of the road. Kefa exclaimed ‘now we are building a very big road! This is for the cars to drive on’. Once the road was built, the children went on to ‘drive’ their cars up and down the road. Each child chose one coloured block representing a car, and crawled or ran from one end of the road to the other with his arm extended, sliding the car along the road. The game evolved even further when Tomas created a partition in the centre of the road, leading his three cousins who reached the partition to stop driving their cars and instead start beeping their horns ‘Beep Beep Beep!’. The eldest cousin who was the first in line joined the two sections of the road back together and the children resumed driving their cars. Tomas created a partition on a second occasion, and this time instead of beeping or fixing the road, Kefa’s eldest cousin lifted the car, making it ‘jump’ from one side to the other and then continued driving. The children then went from driving on the road to fixing the road, playing ‘Mtawwe’ (Volunteer), where children who broke the road shouted out ‘Mtawwe? Mtawwe!’ and the volunteers, Kefa and his eldest cousin, rushed over to fix the road using a block that represented what seemed to be a wrench.

Figure 5.30: Kefa, his brother and his neighbours building a road and driving
This rich play episode, which lasted 40 minutes, evolved from building the road, to driving on the road, to overcoming obstacles while driving on the road and to finally fixing the road. Imagination and creativity throughout the play episode was key. Transforming the line of blocks into a road and the individual blocks into cars or tools, and creating imaginary scenarios allowed the children to escape from the confines of their physical environment and be transposed into a world where they could own and drive cars, and where they could not only overcome but fix any obstacle that came their way.

As well as creating alternate realities, children re-enacted certain events they had experienced or witnessed through play. In this section, I present two episodes of play where Muna and Ahmed used their imagination to transform objects and to reimagine events they had witnessed or been exposed to in real life. Their play was sometimes based on troubling events they had experienced (example of Ahmed) but other times reflected everyday activities that took place in the safety of their own homes (example of Muna).

### 5.3.2.3 Muna play episode: Playing House

As I was filming a day in the life of Muna, Muna sat with her older brother Alaa on the carpeted floor of the living room/bedroom and played with cylindrical blocks from Alaa’s ‘Marble Run’ set. Rima sat beside them watching YouTube clips on her mother’s smartphone. While Alaa experimented by placing the different shaped blocks in diverse orders to form multiple paths that the marble could pass through, Muna used the blocks in her own way:

Muna places a large green rectangular container and a small red figurine of a man in front of her. She lays the red figurine inside the container for two seconds then holds onto the figurine’s hands, lifting it in and out of the container 15 times. Muna lays the figurine back down inside the container, dips her fingers inside the container and then runs her fingers over the figurine’s legs and head. She repeats this two more times.

Later, Muna grabs a blue container and places it near the green one. She repeatedly dips the figurine into the blue and green containers, alternating between the two. She then places the blue container over the green one and lays the figurine in between both containers.

Around 15 minutes later, Muna places three green cylindrical blocks in the green container and three blue blocks in the blue container. She first lifts the green container over her head followed by the blue container, and empties the blocks onto her head. She collects and returns the fallen blocks into the containers. [...] She then lifts both containers simultaneously and empties their contents onto her head and smiles (Figure 5.31).
Figure 5.31: Muna playing with figurine, blocks, and containers

When re-watching the compilation video, Janna explained that Muna was bathing the figurine and then bathing herself as ‘part of the house (bayt byūt/بيت بيوت) game’:

‘She likes to pretend she is cooking, feeding, bathing. Sometimes she acts like she is giving them a shower with soap […] usually when the younger cousins come over we give them a shower in the bathroom and so she sees that and re-enacts it. She used to see me breastfeed Rima and would copy me, pretending that she was breastfeeding a baby, but I told her this is shameful (‘ayb/عيب) and not to do it’ (Janna, Muna’s mother).

Furthermore, the song ‘Shower shower’ was playing repeatedly on the ‘Toyor al Jannah’ channel. The video clip of two young boys bathing and the lyrics which are sung in Arabic, encourage
children to bathe with soap and water (bil sâbûni welmayi/بالصابونة والميّ) and with vigour and vitality (našâṭ w ḥayawyâ/نشاط و حيوية).

In this episode, Muna re-enacted an event that she saw in her daily life, taking a shower. Muna saw her younger cousins being bathed and her favourite TV channel encouraged children to bathe. While the cylindrical blocks, the rectangular containers, and the figurine were meant to be used as part of the ‘Marble Run’ set as demonstrated by Alaa, Muna assigned her own meanings to each item. Similar to the play episode where Kefa was building a road and the blocks represented different objects as the play evolved (road, car, wrench), the container in this play seemed to represent a bathtub, a bed and blanket, and finally a bucket. This however is my own interpretation as Muna did not explain what meanings she had assigned to each object. While I consider that the container first represented a bathtub in which Muna bathed the figurine, Muna’s family used a bucket to shower since they had no bathtub or proper shower area (Chapter 3 Section 3.2.4.4) which could explain her emptying the ‘buckets of water’ on her head. A bathtub however was represented in the ‘Shower Shower’ video clip.

5.3.2.4 Ahmed play episode: Gun play

Ahmed used creativity and imagination in his play, emerging themes giving me insight into his past experiences of armed conflict. As I was filming DITL, Ahmed, who was sitting on a mattress in the living room/bedroom, took a belt, a bandage, and a plastic gun and played with them:

Ahmed ties one end of his belt to one end of a long white bandage. He places the plastic gun between his thighs and ties the white bandage around the barrel of the gun. Ahmed holds onto the bandage on either side of the gun and lifts it up but the bandage is not tied tight enough and the gun falls out onto the floor. Ahmed takes the bandage/belt, holds up the two loose ends making sure that the bandage/belt is perfectly folded in half, holds the gun between his feet and places the midsection of the bandage/belt around the barrel. He then turns the gun onto its side on the floor, holding it down with his two feet, and ties the two loose ends of the bandage/belt around the gun.

Once the bandage/belt is securely tied around the barrel of the gun, Ahmed holds onto the two loose ends of the bandage/belt, swings it around onto his back placing the two loose ends over his shoulders. Ahmed stands up and moves towards his brother who is seated on the floor by the window watching YouTube clips on his father’s smartphone. Still holding onto the two loose ends, Ahmed reaches with both hands behind his back and ties the two loose ends. Ahmed only makes one knot, and as soon as he lets go of the bandage/belt, it comes undone. Ahmed repeats the same process, swinging the gun onto his back, bringing the two loose ends over his shoulders and then behind his back to tie them, this time making a double knot. Ahmed stands and later sits beside his brother and watches YouTube clips (Figure 5.32).
As Ahmed was playing, his father Omar commented on his play:

‘He is imitating them, what he used to see, what they used to wear over there (In Syria), [he saw them] in person […] our village was in the middle, and so all the people would come and go via our village’.

An unstructured interview with Ahmed’s mother provided greater insight into the children’s lives in Syria.

‘They started playing with guns more after the events in Syria. We used to hear “tatatatata!”, the sound of bullets, and they were affected. When he was young, if he was asleep and heard gunshots he would jump up and start screaming and would hold me tight. But now he is a bit older, he isn't very afraid anymore […] now Ahmed knows all types of weapons like the 23 (talaṭṭa wa ‘ešrīn), the BKC, the cannon/artillery (madfa‘). Before the events we didn’t know anything […] After the war we knew. He
“would see them on the news, he would see them going through our village on their way to other villages” (Salwa, Ahmed’s mother).

In this episode, Omar did not interfere in his son’s play and did not seem concerned by Ahmed’s representation of gunmen whom he had seen pass through their village. However, both Omar and Salwa were aware that their children had been negatively affected by the events they had witnessed, and that those events had planted fear in them and influenced their play. This play episode is directly linked to Ahmed’s experiences of armed conflict in his village in Syria. Ahmed and his brother were exposed to weapons, armed men, and the sounds of firing weapons both in their village and on the news. Throughout this 4-minute play episode, Ahmed turned everyday objects into props in his play, as the bandage/belt represented a gun sling, fully engrossed in the activity at hand. While the events he had witnessed planted fear in him, Ahmed did not display fear as he played out the episode. Instead, he seemed fully absorbed in the play and concentrated fully on the technical aspects of tying the belt and the bandage together, then around the gun, and finally around his torso. His play also developed as he learned from mistakes he did and fixed them until he reached the outcome he wanted. Unlike Muna’s play episode (shower), Ahmed re-enacted an event that he had witnessed from his home in Syria many months before this episode was filmed, an event that might not be associated with a ‘normal’ childhood but is the reality of millions of children around the world. This play episode represented a moment ‘in and out of time’ (Turner, 1969, p.96) as Ahmed transported himself from one time and place to another through his play. Ahmed, who was completely immersed in play, was in the ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), timelessly absorbed in the moment, where events from real life could be revisited and made sense of free from the dangers they posed in reality.

Case study children escaped from liminality by creating alternate realities and by using transformation and imagination to re-enact already lived experiences, whether positive or negative. Another escape arose through media. Children in all four case studies enjoyed watching cartoons and programmes on TV and on their parents’ smartphones, and enjoyed playing games on the smartphones. Media provided children with an escape into the imaginary world of ‘Toyor Al Jannah’, ‘Mr. Bean’, and ‘Doctor Mania’ to name a few. In the following sub-section, I give examples of how children escaped from their liminal state by means of virtual reality which transported them into a ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault, 1986).

5.3.2.5 Muna play episode: Watching clips on TV and smartphones

Muna spent the majority of the day watching Baby TV channel (Toyar Al Jannah/طيور الجنّة), and when she was not watching, it was on in the background. Muna watched Baby TV both on the television and on her mother’s smartphone, sometimes having both on at the same time. The following is an episode from a DITL of Muna:

Muna sits on the bed, legs straight out, upper body crouched over, with her mother’s smartphone in hand. She is watching a YouTube clip where four faces (a human, a panda,
a bear and a rabbit) revolve around a lamb in the centre of the screen. She stares intently at the screen, opens her mouth then closes it, smiles, and puckers up her lips. She then leans back, smiles, and kicks her legs in the air happily. She goes back to her original position, staring at the screen, and making faces. She chooses another video from the bottom of the screen where faces of Tom and Jerry characters rotate around the screen. Immediately, she leans back, smiles, winces her eyes and kicks her legs up, moving her head from side to side (Figure 5.33).

Figure 5.33: Muna on smartphone and TV

According to Qassem, Muna’s father, ‘the children spend their day watching TV or on the phone. They don’t even step outside’. My observations confirmed Qassem’s statement. The television in Muna’s household was on throughout the whole day of filming, and was only turned off for one hour while the family and I were having lunch. As previously mentioned, the television and smartphone were sometimes used simultaneously, and Muna switched her attention from one to the other. Muna did not leave the house when I was filming, and briefly stepped out into the ‘entrance’ a few times, spending the majority of her day in the living room/bedroom. She spent around 105 minutes watching Baby TV on the television and around 40 minutes watching YouTube clips or looking through videos on her mother’s smartphone, fully immersed in the clips she was watching. She was mainly seated when watching television, but sometimes stood, crawled, jumped, stretched out her legs, or rolled around as she watched. Moreover, throughout the time she spent focused on other activities such as playing with the ‘Marble Run’ blocks or the block sorting toy, running around the
room, crawling, or jumping on the bed, Muna regularly looked up at the television screen stopping what she was doing for a few seconds, and then resumed the activity at hand.

Muna’s facial expressions and body movements while watching clips on the smartphone portray an experience of great enjoyment and happiness. Complete immersion in the clips she was watching seemed to transport Muna into another time and place. Hunched over, her eyes fixed on the screen, her lips puckered and both hands holding onto the device signify her investment in the clips she was watching. Further body movements and facial expressions such as leaning back, kicking her legs in the air, moving her head quickly from side to side, pressing her eyelids shut and wearing a big smile on her face signified extreme enjoyment and suggested that she was more invested in the virtual world than in her current physical environment.

5.3.2.6 Maria play episode: Playing Doctor Mania and watching YouTube clips

Although both Maria and Gerges watched cartoons and played games on the smartphone, it was mainly Gerges who controlled the content and who spent the majority of his time playing with the phone. In interview with Maria, she explained that she likes to play ‘girl games’ on the smartphone, games like ‘make-up […], hairdresser […] she broke her hand […] and throat operations too’, referring to a game called ‘Doctor Mania’. Maria noted that her brother sometimes played ‘girls’ games’ too.

During my next visit to Maria’s house, I was filming Maria when she started playing ‘Doctor Mania’ on her mother’s smartphone. Maria excitedly gestured me over to ‘look look look! I have to fix her throat!’ as she proceeded to fix her patient’s throat (Figure 5.34). Her play only lasted a few minutes since her brother snatched the phone from her so he could play.

Figure 5.34: Maria playing Doctor Mania
Other than playing games on the smartphone, Maria and Gerges enjoyed watching episodes on YouTube. Thalia told me that she regularly watched Christian cartoons and programmes with them that depicted the lives of Jesus, Mary and the saints. When Thalia was not watching with them, Maria and Gerges watched an array of cartoons and episodes on YouTube, including a programme called *Fozi mozi wa Tutti*. The programme is an Arabic YouTube channel that plays episodes where Fozi mozi and his sister Tutti live out different adventures. I observed as Maria and Gerges watched an episode of *Fozi mozi and Tutti*. While not a religious programme per se, this particular episode was an educational video about *Ramadan*, the holy month observed by Muslims around the world, where Fozi mozi and Tutti were asking their older sister and grandmother questions about Ramadan.

Maria and Gerges grew up in a Christian household that held onto their religious beliefs. Their parents preferred their children not to mingle with Muslims, whom they associated with ISIS and other extremists who persecuted Christian minorities in Iraq. Although they held on tightly to their faith and wanted distance from Muslims, Maria and Gerges watched the episode intently even though it portrayed Muslim beliefs and practices. Contrary to parents’ depictions of Muslims as dangerous, the episodes of *Fozi Mozi wa Tutti* all portrayed children living happy lives, eager to learn about their environment and, in this particular episode of Ramadan, about their Muslim faith.

Maria could exert her power both by playing games and by watching episodes on the smartphone. When entering the virtual world of Doctor Mania, Maria could transform herself and her daily reality of living as a displaced person in a liminal state to become a powerful doctor who operated on patients. When watching episodes, Maria exerted her power by deciding to watch episodes her parents would otherwise deter her from watching and escaped from the confines of her apartment by entering into the imaginary world of *Fozi Mozi wa Tutti* where, in contrast to the reality she had lived, Muslims were not dangerous.

5.4 Cultural heritage and identity in play themes, dance, songs, language and rhymes

In this final section, I consider children’s revival and merging of cultures and identities in play through play themes, dance, songs, language and rhymes. The importance of identity and belonging to one’s community emerged through interviews with both parents and children, and through observations of a day in the children’s lives. Parents were concerned that children had forgotten their roots. For example, Thalia told me that Maria loved to dance. When I asked her if she danced Iraqi dances Thalia replied ‘*No, she learned [to dance] here in Lebanon. Iraqi is forgotten*’.

Furthermore, I had an informal conversation with Sabine and Maya’s parents (Maria’s neighbours) and with Thalia and Yohannan (Maria’s parents) when the former visited Maria’s house during my final visit. We were discussing children’s use of language when the neighbours’ father told me that
his children were forgetting the Syriac language adding:

Neighbours’ father: they say, “why should we talk in Syriac?” But it is your heritage! It is your identity!

Thalia: yes, my nephew has forgotten how to speak Syriac. He only speaks Arabic now.

Neighbours’ father: I don’t let my children speak Arabic with me. When they are playing and they speak Arabic it is OK, but with me they are not allowed to.

Thalia: but that is not necessarily right. Look at Gerges. Yohannan wouldn’t allow him to speak Arabic when we were in Iraq and now we are in Lebanon and he can barely communicate with others.

While neither of the Syrian case study families mentioned this concern, Iraqi parents, whose children were attending school in Lebanon, were worried that their children would lose their Iraqi Syriac identity, an identity that they had been holding onto and preserving despite religious persecution in Iraq and ISIS attacks that forced them to flee their homes. Drawing on the importance of culture and identity in case study children’s and their parents’ lives, this section presents episodes of play where children’s identity and culture emerged through dance and the theme of ‘weddings’. The section then looks into the emergence of diverse aspects of culture in children’s hand games and rhymes.

5.4.1 Weddings, music and dance

The following two episodes demonstrate children’s absorption in their play, escaping from their current liminal state through dance and music, reviving their home cultures, but also integrating aspects of the Lebanese culture in their play.

5.4.1.1 Maria play episode: Bride and Groom

Maria, Gerges and their four neighbours (Dany, Rami, Sabine and Maya) were in the bedroom. Maria’s mother Thalia came in and asked them if they wanted to play bride and groom.

Rami: Yes! Bride and groom!

Thalia: Maya will be the bride and Rami the groom. OK?

Children: Yes!

Thalia plays a Syriac wedding song on her phone and the children start discussing what the bride should wear.

Maria: she should wear a dress!

Thalia takes a red dress out of the cupboard and starts dressing Maya in the red dress. All the children are very excited, laughing, smiling, covering their faces and jumping up and
down. Maria helps dress Maya. Once she is dressed, Maria and Dany tie a white headband with a white flower on it around Maya’s arm. This white band represents the iklīl, إكليل, a sash decorated in crosses worn in Iraqi Christian tradition by the bride and groom during the wedding ceremony. Gerges then brings a headband covered in flowers and says ‘this is for the bride’ and places it over her head. Thalia brings out Gerges’ suit and dresses Rami in it.

Gerges: Where is her flower?

Maria: She needs a flower, she needs a flower!

Dany gives Maya a blue hair ribbon that represents her bouquet.

Thalia: Come on, ululate (‘amilū al halhūla/عملوا اليلهولة)!)

Maria and Sabine ululate: wiliwili!

The children line up along the foot of the bed and start dancing and clapping as the bride and groom walk from the bedroom to the living room. The children skip into the living room behind the bride and groom, dancing. They stand in a line and dance the dabke, دبكة, an Arabic folk dance (Figure 5.35). They then start speaking in Syriac.

![Figure 5.35: Maria, Gerges and neighbours playing Bride and Groom](image)

Imagination allowed the children to play out this scene and include unique cultural aspects related to their Syriac and Iraqi identities. In Maria’s episode, the children transformed the white headband
into the *Ikili* and played Syriac music in the background, representing their Syriac identity, and the children danced the dabke, a folklore dance common to all Arab countries, but with steps and music unique to their Iraqi culture. This play scene transported children back into their lives prior to forced displacement, as they exuded happiness and excitement throughout the play episode, laughing and smiling as they dressed the Bride and Groom, ululated, danced and celebrated the wedding. Switching from speaking in Arabic to speaking in the Syriac language towards the end of the episode may signify their complete engrossment in the play where space and time were transformed, transporting the children to a time before forced displacement, and transforming the living room and bedroom into a wedding venue.

### 5.4.1.2 Ahmed play episode: Dancing at a wedding

When I was observing the play of Ahmed, the theme of weddings, dance and celebrations also emerged. Omar, Ahmed, and Bilal were sitting in the living room/bedroom. Omar explained that celebrations in their village, including dancing, playing music, and attending weddings, were banned for a long time after the war started by ‘all those men with the big beards’. Now that they were in Lebanon, they were happy that they could play music and dance. Omar added that his children loved a Bedouin song called ‘*Yumma elḥub yumma*’، which he then played on his phone.

The moment ‘*Yumma elḥub yumma*’ starts playing, Ahmed, who is lying down on the mattress, starts to flick his fingers to the beat of the song. Ahmed then stands up and starts dancing. He dances the dabke with his plastic gun in hand. He jumps up and down, holds his arm out and taps one foot three times on the floor. He then jumps back and forth and taps the second foot on the ground. Ahmed holds up the toy gun exclaiming: ‘*Tatatata!*’. Bilal imitates his brother, shouting ‘*Ta! Ta!*’. Ahmed puts the gun in his trousers, does three clicks with his tongue and then starts singing and dancing […] Omar hands Ahmed a small electronic keyboard that Ahmed proceeds to ‘play’ on as he sings (there are no batteries in the keyboard). Ahmed holds the keyboard above his head with both hands and sings ‘*tilililili*’ (imitating the sound of the electronic keyboard to the tune of the song). Ahmed stands on one foot, supporting the keyboard with the other lifted leg, and continues to imitate the sound as he runs his fingers across the keys. Ahmed then takes a long white bandage and ties it around his face, covering his nose and mouth. I ask him why he is covering his face. His father replies ‘*he is a doctor*’. I enquire ‘*what type of Doctor*?’ to which Ahmed exclaims ‘*A dance Doctor!*’ (Figure 5.36).
Ahmed and his family were deprived of their basic human right to freely ‘enjoy [their] culture’ (United Nations, 1989) after the war broke out in Syria by the ‘men with big beards’. Moving to Lebanon, a country with similar yet different traditions and customs allowed them the freedom to practice those traditions without any threat to their lives. Although both Ahmed and Maria played out a wedding scene, differences arose in their play. Both children danced the dabke, however their dance steps differed, mirroring similarities and differences among the different Arabic communities. Ahmed shot his gun as he danced, a sign of celebration and a tradition in his village, in contrast with previous associations of guns with fear. He danced to a Bedouin song. There was an abundance of transformation and imagination in both Maria and Ahmed’s play episodes, allowing the children to practice their cultural heritage and explore their identities further.
5.4.2 **Rhymes, songs and hand games**

Not only did children revive culture and identity by playing ‘bride and groom’, dancing, and playing music, but they also reflected culture and identity in rhymes, songs and hand games. The play episodes described in this section bring forth diverse aspects of culture from participant children’s home countries, from the children’s country of refuge, and from across the world.

5.4.2.1 *Maria play episode: Un éléphant and Ya Salwa Liš ‘Am Tibki*

During DITL, Maria, Gerges and their four Iraqi neighbours were out on the balcony of Maria’s house and played hand games and a circle game that they had learned in school in Lebanon.

The children are playing ‘*Un éléphant*’, a hand game accompanied by a French song. The children team up into pairs. Two children stand facing each other, placing their right hand over their partner’s left hand. The children take turns slapping their partner’s left hand with their right hand as they sing (Figure 5.37):

- *Un éléphant qui se balançait* (An elephant who was swinging)
- *Sur une toile, toile, toile, toile d’araignée,* (On a web, web, web, spider web)
- *Et un jour cla cla* (And one day cla cla)
- *Un éléphant tomba* (An elephant fell)
- *Un, deux, trois, ca sera sur toi* (One, two, three, it will be on you)

On the final word ‘*toi*’ the child whose turn it is to slap the other’s hand wins if she slaps it before her partner withdraws her hand.

*Figure 5.37: Maria, Gerges and neighbours playing hand games on balcony*
Another game Maria and her neighbours played was ‘Ya Salwa Leš ‘Am Tibki/يا سلوى ليش عم تبكي’. This is a popular Lebanese game that they learned in school where a group of children stand in a circle holding hands while one child sits in the centre ‘crying’.

The children form a circle and proceed to rotate around the child in the centre, as they sing:

*Oh Salwa why are you crying?* (Ya Salwa liš ‘am tibki/يا سلوى ليش عم تبكي؟)

The child in the centre replies:

*I’m crying because I want a friend* (‘Am bibki baddi rfi’a/عم ببكي بذي رفيقة)

To which the children holding hands reply:

*Get up and pick a friend* (Ūmi na’i ši rfi’āa/قومي نقي شيء رفيقة)

The child in the middle stands up and picks someone else out of the children holding hands to take her place in the middle and they play the game again.

Un éléphant and *Ya Salwa Liš ‘Am Tibki* are both games that have been played by children in Lebanon for generations. The use of French, English and Arabic in the children’s hand games represents Lebanon’s unique history and the influence of Western powers on Lebanon over the centuries. The children sang the Lebanese version of *Ya Salwa Liš ‘Am Tibki* in the Lebanese dialect although other versions, such as the Syrian version, which is sung in the Syrian dialect with some changes to the words, exist. Although difficult to prove the origin of the song, it is believed that the song originated in Lebanon during the Lebanese civil war when Salwa’s friends left Lebanon and she stayed behind, friendless.

5.4.2.2 Ahmed play episode: The ‘say’ game

Rhymes similarly emerged in Ahmed’s play. During DITL, Ahmed played a ‘rhyming’ game, the ‘say’ (oole/قالي) game, with his 5-year-old female neighbour. The following are extracts from the day of filming:

Ahmed and his neighbour stand on the ‘porch’ as they play the ‘say’ game:

Ahmed: *say ‘iya’* (قبولية أية)

Neighbour: *‘iya’* (أية)

Ahmed: *eat a fried (migliya) mouse* (تاكلي فارة مقلية)

Ahmed laughs. His mother shouts out from the kitchen

Salwa: *That’s shameful Ahmed!* (‘ayb Ahmed/عيب أحمد)

The children ignore Ahmed’s mother and continue

Neighbour: *say dabbūs (needle)* (قول نتوس)
Ahmed predicts what she is about to say and replies

Ahmed: *Not a bride ('arūs)*  
*miš 'arūs* (مش عروس)

She laughs and points at Ahmed saying

Neighbour: *Your mother is a bride ('arūs)*!  
*Immak 'arūs* (إنتك عروس)

They both laugh.

While Maria played many games that she learned in a Lebanese school and which therefore carried many aspects of Lebanese culture, Ahmed did not attend school in Lebanon and mainly interacted with his Syrian neighbours. Ahmed and his neighbour laughed and giggled as they played the ‘say’ game, a game that reflected aspects of his home culture, as they referred to the mother being a bride (*'arūs/عروس*), and later, to the father being a dancer (*raggaṣ/رقّاص*). The ‘say’ game, which builds on rhymes, reflects the importance of poetry, which is engrained in both Arabic and Bedouin societies.

This section looked into children’s revival and merging of cultures and identities in play through play themes, dance, songs, language and rhymes. While parents encouraged their children to integrate cultural practices from their home countries in their play, children drew on aspects from their home and host countries, as they formed a sense of communitas with others in their play.

### 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented fulsome detail of the multiple facets of play that arose in the data, linking between the inter-relationality of children’s rights (Chapter 3) and the unfolding of children’s play when living in a liminal state. All case study parents reported that they valued play. However, the fieldwork identified multiple constraints (spatial, temporal, material, social, psychological, and power-related) that created confined parameters for children’s play, and all the parents lamented their children’s loss of play resources and opportunities. In many cases, these constraints were interlinked, leading to a vicious cycle of multiple forms of deprivation. Although moving to Lebanon had ameliorated the families’ immediate threat of being attacked, bombed, abducted or raped, both adults and children continued to live with the emotional and physical toll of their past traumas, and encountered new threats to their wellbeing. The constraints on their new lives as refugees were felt by parents and children, limiting children’s play opportunities and often breaching their rights to play and education. Fear of the other, (Iraqis fearing Syrians, Syrians fearing Lebanese, Lebanese fearing both Syrians and Iraqis) perpetuated social isolation, and these fears were key factors that led to the children dropping out of school or not being able to attend school, and to spending increased time indoors. Moreover, both fear and hegemony (state, local authorities, Lebanese, masculine and feminine) led to increased surveillance of children, limiting their freedom of movement and expression, particularly with respect to girls.
As this chapter unfolded, detailed examples of the case study children’s play were presented, portraying the children’s experiences of living with such limitations and restrictions. The study found that children’s embodiment is determined not only by the limited physical space they occupy, but also by their legal status and by their limited financial resources. Consequently, children end up ‘on the edge’ sometimes taking on an agentic and powerful role, breaking boundaries, and wilfully jumping off the edge, but at other times loosing balance and falling over the edge.

Transformation through imagination was also a powerful tool used by children to escape from liminality. Children used drawing, block building, and transformation of objects as means to create alternate realities, and to re-enact and make meaning of certain events they had witnessed or experienced. Children also frequently found an escape in digital media, escaping from their liminal states into a heterotopia.

Finally, culture and identity recurred in the children’s play through play themes, dance, songs, language, rhymes and hand games. The ‘wedding’ theme arose in Maria’s and in Ahmed’s play, with similarities and stark differences arising in each episode. Dance constituted a major portion of both play episodes. Children were exposed not only to the Lebanese culture, but also to other cultures through global media resources, including cultures with which parents had stated they actively discouraged their children from engaging. The revival and merging of culture and identity from participant children’s home countries, but also from their liminal and possible post-liminal life stages also arose in children’s rhymes and hand games, with the languages they used and the themes that emerged rich in cultural practices, traditions and beliefs.

The next chapter presents adult and child participants’ accounts of how different organisations have provided or failed to provide refugees with lifelines that upheld their basic human rights, highlighting profound discrepancies between policy and practice that hinder refugees’ permanent escape from the liminal into the long-awaited post-liminal state.
Chapter 6 Lifelines

6.1 Introduction

The three previous findings chapters presented study participants’ experiences of armed conflict and displacement (Chapter 3), their exposure to human rights violations in their home and host countries (Chapter 4), and the consequences of armed conflict and displacement for refugee children’s play in Beirut’s northern suburbs, Lebanon (Chapter 5). Chapter 5 reported on how the refugee children in this study had access to very few play resources, in terms of people and artefacts to play with as well as spaces to play. Their own and their parents’ fears, coupled with close parental surveillance, often hindered children’s opportunities to play, yet the case studies showed how play nonetheless offered an escape for the children through imagination, transformation and the merging of cultures and identities.

This final findings chapter identifies what support mechanisms, or ‘lifelines’, the Iraqi and Syrian refugee participants in this study encountered in Lebanon. It connects with my third research question about how children’s play opportunities can be improved in Beirut’s northern suburbs by identifying gaps between policy and provision for refugees, which directly or indirectly infringe children’s rights, including their right to play. The chapter presents adult and child participants’ accounts of how local, national and international organisations either provided or failed to provide them with resources, routes and options that upheld their basic human rights. The chapter highlights profound discrepancies between relief organisations’ policy and practice, and homes in on the effects of these discrepancies on young children’s play and right to education during their time as displaced persons in Lebanon. Although this chapter does not focus specifically on play, it addresses the shortcomings of GoL and diverse organisations that both directly and indirectly affect children’s play and childhoods, leading to further child rights infringements that push children further into a spiral of disadvantage.

I begin this chapter by considering data generated in this study relating to UNHCR, which was mentioned repeatedly by participants as the main point of contact for refugees in Lebanon. I present questionnaire respondents’ and case study participants’ views on UNHCR, and in what ways they felt UNHCR had been successful and unsuccessful in implementing what it had set out to achieve, both in general and in relation to their own and their young children’s lives. I compare participants’ accounts of their lived experiences with UN accounts as detailed in UN documentation, and point to a wide gap between UN policy and action on the ground. I then report on how other organisations have sought to fill this gap in provision, how the Church has reinforced its role as spiritual as well as material and security provider, and I critique the Government of Lebanon’s (GoL) approach to the refugee situation which has led to the continuation of children’s rights infringements.
6.2 UNHCR

‘ISIS kill us and the UN suck out our blood’.

(Male Iraqi Questionnaire Respondent)

Help provided by UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, and other organisations in cash and in kind was an essential lifeline for children and their families who lived in poverty and who could sometimes barely afford to eat. Moreover, for refugees to be eligible for resettlement, they had to be registered with UNHCR\(^\text{14}\). When asked whether or not they were registered with UNHCR, referred to as \textit{alomam} /\textit{الأمم} or \textit{The Nations}\(^\text{15}\), all 36 Iraqi questionnaire respondents informed me that they were registered with UNHCR compared to 46%\(^\text{16}\) of Syrian respondents (n=19). Unlike Syrian respondents, all Iraqi respondents mentioned that they were registered with UNHCR with the intention of being resettled to a third country.

According to the VASyR 2018 and VARON 2017 reports, Syrian and Iraqi refugees deemed the ‘most vulnerable’ by UNHCR received cash assistance and sometimes assistance in kind. Vulnerable Syrian refugees received cash for food (27USD per family member per month), cash for winter, child-focused grants, or multipurpose cash (175USD per household per month) from WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, and/or other organisations, while Iraqi refugees received cash for winter or multipurpose cash from UNHCR (UNHCR, 2018b; UNHCR et al., 2018). According to VARON 2017 report, WFP only provided assistance to Syrian refugees, and in March 2017, UNHCR stopped giving food assistance to Iraqi refugees due to lack of funds. This study found that UNHCR was far from reaching all refugees who needed help.

When conducting the questionnaires, two Iraqi and two Syrian respondents who were registered with UNHCR mentioned receiving cash assistance in the form of bankcards to be used for food and/or heating. UNHCR bankcards were also a lifeline for parents who could not provide other essentials for their children. One Iraqi woman told me:

‘[UNHCR] gave us the red card\(^\text{17}\). It is a debit card with 260,000 LL (approx. 130 GBP) on it. Last month they saved us. It was my son’s birthday and 10 days had passed and I couldn’t afford to get him anything and I got the card so they saved me’ (Iraqi female, questionnaire).

This respondent reported how UNHCR ‘saved us’ as she was finally able to buy her son food and a belated birthday present, which to her was essential for her children’s wellbeing. Two other

\(^\text{14}\) https://www.unhcr.org/lb/protection

\(^\text{15}\) Respondents used the terms UN and UNHCR interchangeably.

\(^\text{16}\) Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

\(^\text{17}\) The ‘red card’, also known as ‘OneCard’ is a bankcard given to refugees on which they can receive payments from different aid agencies such as UNHCR and WFP. The card can be used in authorised WFP shops to buy food, and can be used to withdraw multi-purpose cash provided by UNHCR or other agencies.
questionnaire respondents, one Iraqi and one Syrian, reported that they had previously received financial help from UNHCR to buy food for themselves and their children but at the time of the study no longer received anything since they were no longer deemed vulnerable enough, although their situation had worsened. Children’s most basic right to food was at risk when refugees no longer received financial help from UNHCR, and the resultant lack of adequate nutrition jeopardized their healthy and holistic development, and poor nutrition in turn impacted their rights to play and to education.

Indeed, the majority of questionnaire respondents felt they had been forgotten and abandoned by UNHCR. One Iraqi respondent felt defeated saying: ‘The UN (الامم) does nothing. I have washed my hands of them. The way they treat us is inhumane’. The same respondent recounted how he had sent an email to the inspector in Geneva complaining about the way refugees were being treated. Additionally, 12 Iraqi and 11 Syrian respondents reported that although they were registered with UNHCR they had not received anything from them. ‘I get NOTHING from them. I complain and NOTHING’ (Syrian respondent). ‘We get nothing at all, not a hair, nothing’ (Iraqi respondent). Another respondent complained that not only had they not received help from UNHCR, but no-one answered the UNHCR hotline when they tried to call. One Iraqi woman protested that ‘it is as if there is no UN. […]They take care of animals and not us humans’. The lack of assistance seemed to be resulting in a lack of trust, with one Iraqi female and one male Syrian respondent accusing the ‘big heads’ in the UN of stealing the money that is meant for refugees.

Refugees registered with UNHCR have to renew their registration once every two years. If they fail to do so up to three months after their certificate expires, their registration is inactivated by UNHCR (UNHCR, 2017). Some Syrian respondents had registered with UNHCR when they first arrived in Lebanon but had not renewed their registration once two years had passed. The reasons given for this ranged from not being able to leave work to complete the renewal, to UNHCR asking for too many documents, to respondents finding it useless to renew their registration. Those who had never registered with UNHCR had diverse reasons for not doing so. One young Syrian questionnaire respondent entered Lebanon illegally and was afraid to register with UNHCR in case it caused him problems when the situation in Syria eventually improved. One Syrian respondent was unsure if he could register with UNHCR as he was told that it would affect his job, fearing that he would have to stop working in Lebanon, while another Syrian respondent did not know how or where to register. Moreover, one Syrian woman reported that fellow refugees had discouraged her from going to UNHCR to register herself and her family, saying “your poor [1-year-old] daughter! You’ll be standing in the sun for hours waiting to get in”. This comment suggests that while the intention of UNHCR may have been to offer a lifeline for children and their families, the first step in receiving help from UNHCR potentially put children, who were positioned by UNHCR as vulnerable and in need of protection, in harm’s way. UNHCR registration was not made easy for refugees. For many questionnaire respondents and case study parents, the difficulties impeding UNHCR registration outweighed the benefits such registration might offer, and this viewpoint was reinforced.
by registered refugees’ indignation with the organisation. For instance, four Syrian respondents mentioned, in general terms, that the UN did nothing to help people who were registered, so they did not see the point in registering themselves. Moreover, one respondent had wanted to renew his UN registration after his two year registration period had expired, but having waited hours for his appointment he was not seen and therefore ‘never went back’.

During my interactions with participants, it became clear that many refugees and local nationals felt that UNHCR was unequal in its treatment of different nationalities, and this perception fueled tensions and fostered resentment between Syrians, Iraqis and Lebanese. As previously mentioned, all Iraqi respondents had registered with UNHCR since their sole purpose of being in Lebanon was to be resettled to a third country via the UN. However, in Iraqi respondents’ eyes, the Syrian crisis and the inflow of over 1.5 million Syrians into Lebanon had shifted UN and international attention away from the Iraqis. In the words of one Iraqi woman:

‘I went [to UNHCR] and said that we have been here [in Lebanon] for over two years and want to leave! He (an employee) said “there is nothing for the Iraqis at the moment”. The room was full of Syrians and we were the only Iraqis.’

Iraqi respondents felt abandoned by UNHCR who, in their view, were resettling and helping Syrian refugees instead of working on resettling Iraqis as they had been led to expect. However, UNHCR’s ability to resettle Iraqis is dependent on Resettlement Countries’ size and allocation of quotas (UNHCR, 2011). These quotas, as detailed in UNHCR’s Resettlement at a Glance 2017 review, had dropped by 54% compared to the previous year (UNHCR, 2018a). In 2017, 433 Iraqi and 13,253 Syrian refugees in Lebanon were submitted for resettlement (UNHCR identified refugees for resettlement)18. Of those, 404 Iraqis and 12,095 Syrians departed to their resettlement countries. As argued in previous chapters, Iraqi refugees were putting their and their children’s lives on hold, waiting for resettlement. For example, some Iraqi parents were not sending their children to formal schools in Lebanon, but were waiting to do so in their resettlement country. However, until resettlement countries increase these quotas and speed up the resettlement process allowing more Iraqis in, Iraqi children will remain in this liminal state where their rights continue to be violated, and where they will be increasingly exposed to physical, mental, and emotional harm.

In line with questionnaire respondents’ accounts, both Iraqi case study families were registered with UNHCR but reported that they received no help from them. They had grown tired of waiting to be resettled to a third country and felt abandoned by UNHCR, which they believed differentiated between Iraqi and Syrian refugees. However, losing hope in UNHCR only fuelled Iraqi participants’ motivation to take matters of resettlement into their own hands. Using smartphones, both Kefa’s and Maria’s families browsed the internet to find other ways out. Kefa’s grandparents and uncle had applied for sponsorship in Australia and their efforts had paid off. Although they had had to pay for their move and borrow money to cover the expenses, they were willing to spend as much money as

---

18 https://rsq.unhcr.org/
it required so they could leave Lebanon and start their lives afresh in Australia. Kefa’s parents had also applied for sponsorship and were still awaiting a decision at the time of the study. Consequently, after waiting for years to be resettled via UNHCR, Maria’s family applied to be sponsored in Canada. Regardless of their efforts, Maria and her family’s claim for sponsorship to Canada was rejected. They continued to research other opportunities and countries that might accept them. Like Kefa and Maria’s families, many of the school teacher Mariana’s Iraqi students and their families were seeking alternate ways out of Lebanon. Mariana explained that some of her Iraqi students applied for resettlement, however because it is very expensive to apply, and because ‘three-quarters of them are poor’ children had to work alongside their parents to cover the cost of their resettlement applications. She added that in some cases, the applications were rejected, after families had paid ‘A LOT to submit their papers’. She added ‘They would rather pay [this large sum] and then go live a good life and get a house and find stability [than wait]’. Many Iraqi children’s rights were therefore being infringed due to their prolonged liminal state, as they were forced to give up their schooling and take on jobs that exposed them to exploitation and abuse, and particular rights were foregrounded in the data. Children’s rights to education (Article 28), protection from economic exploitation (Article 32), protection from harm and abuse (Article 19), and rest and leisure (Article 31) were being postponed indefinitely for the hope of a better future and the off-chance that the family might be resettled to a third country where they would live a better life, leaving behind the harsh conditions they were facing in Lebanon.

Unlike the Iraqi case study families, neither of the two Syrian families were registered with UNHCR at the time of the study. Ahmed and his parents had registered with UNHCR in 2013, the first time they entered Lebanon legally, and UNHCR had provided them with blankets and 200USD on two occasions to pay for heating during the winter of 2013 but were later informed that they would no longer be receiving assistance. They decided not to renew their registration, as Ahmed’s father complained: ‘[UNHCR] don’t help us with anything’.

Moreover, due to the large influx of refugees into Lebanon and the understaffed UNHCR offices, refugees had to wait for months for an appointment with UNHCR. In interview with Muna’s father, he explained that he had wanted to register his family with UNHCR but had to wait six months for an appointment. Moreover, the appointment, which was originally set for December 2017, was further postponed to a later date only a few days prior to their original appointment. Nonetheless, Muna’s parents were hopeful that UNHCR would help them, explaining that the UN helps many people, especially people living in camps, providing them with things like money, blankets, and food. They added that the UN helps people who do not live in camps particularly if they have young children. Since Muna’s parents had three children aged 8 years and below, and during the study found out that they were expecting another child, they were confident that they would receive help from UNHCR. That being said, Syrian respondents seemed to be unaware of the decision to temporarily suspend registration of Syrian refugees with UNHCR as of May 5, 2015, in line with the GoL’s instructions. At the time of data collection, UNHCR was still collecting refugees’ basic
information, however if refugees had not formally registered with UNHCR, then the organisation’s response to their needs was limited, both within and outside Lebanon with regards to support for return and reintegration in their home country when the situation there improved. Despite these constraints, according to UNHCR’s Q&A for Syrians Seeking Registration (UNHCR, 2015b), food assistance was not affected by the suspension of registration since it was managed by the World Food Programme (WFP).

Consequently, Lebanese respondents were frustrated by the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, blaming Syrians for getting them fired and taking their jobs, and making it impossible for them and their families to find a job. Not only did they complain that Syrians were taking their jobs, but also that Syrians were receiving financial and other help from UNHCR and other aid organizations while the Lebanese were receiving no help at all. As one Lebanese questionnaire respondent exclaimed, while Syrian refugees were receiving help, ‘there are times we can’t even afford bread. What do we do? Die of hunger?’. Another Lebanese respondent complained that her daughter had to pay 4,000 USD to study at an institute in Lebanon while Syrians only paid 800,000LL (530 USD). ‘It is the same exact education and we are having to work tirelessly to be able to afford it at a time they get it for almost nothing’. Another Lebanese respondent who worked as a secretary in a public school in Lebanon said:

’I see the refugee children in the school. They are all registered with UNHCR [...] Even Lebanese children feel there is a difference between them and the refugee children. I see a Syrian child bring a 7000LL/Kg (3.5 GBP/Kg) box of cherries and the Lebanese child cannot afford it. The situation of Lebanese is very difficult. The Lebanese are bearing the brunt of it (āklīna/أكلينا). The refugees are comfortable’.

The presence of refugees in Lebanon was perceived as a burden on Lebanese citizens who were often themselves facing difficult economic circumstances and were being pushed into poverty. Urban displacement can place a lot of pressure on services and resources that are usually already overstretched and fall short of meeting the needs of the urban poor. This, as well as competition for jobs in the labour market can lead to tensions between host and refugee populations (UNHCR, 2009) and between different groups of refugees. Many Lebanese citizens tend to perceive help provided to Syrian refugees by the international community as unfair and biased compared to help provided to the Lebanese poor (CARE International, 2018). Moreover, the perception of refugees as ‘a burden on society’ also tends to be enhanced by political rhetoric (Wilkinson & Ager, 2017) as Lebanese politicians have repeatedly framed refugees as the cause behind the country’s many problems including disease, instability and unemployment (Geha & Talhouk, 2018). Lebanese professionals working with Syrian refugees are also subject to the same political climate as other Lebanese citizens, and this can affect the way they interact with and provide services to refugees (Kerbage et al., 2020). For instance, as this study found, resentment towards Syrian refugees led to racism and abuse by Lebanese citizens, which was also manifested by some teachers who were
physically violent with Syrian or Iraqi children, and among children in schools where bullying was common, as reported by questionnaire respondents.

6.3 The contribution of other international and national organisations

As of December 2017, UNHCR had 31 partner organisations (13 international NGOs, 13 national NGOs, 3 UN agencies and 2 governmental partners) who worked in different sectors and across different regions of Lebanon\(^\text{19}\) to provide services for refugees (Appendix O). Questionnaire and case study participants recounted their experiences with Caritas and Makhzoumi Foundation, two of UNHCR’s national partners. Four questionnaire respondents singled out Caritas as an organisation that was meant to help them but did not. For example, one Syrian respondent had asked Caritas for help but was told ‘if you really needed help you would have knocked on many more doors by now’. Another Iraqi respondent was bounced back and forth between Caritas and the UN, explaining that when she went to Caritas for help she was told to go to the UN, and vice versa. One respondent complained that Caritas treated her badly, that ‘people insult us and are rough with us’, while another argued that Caritas did not properly study people’s files - instead of helping families with young children who had little or no income, they were helping families who had multiple sources of income and no young children. This point about the inappropriate distribution of relief funds recurred in the questionnaire responses, with multiple mentions of how major relief organisations mismanage funds that are intended for refugees.

Contrary to these accounts, one Iraqi woman acknowledged that Caritas phoned her repeatedly to ask her to register her four children (aged 9-16 years) in a school they were affiliated with. Kefa’s family recounted help received from the Makhzoumi Foundation, which had provided them with a visa card holding a value of 200USD or 100,000LL (66 USD) on ‘two or three occasions’ but had then stopped. The efforts of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) were also mentioned by the teacher, Mariana. In interview, Mariana explained that when they were opening the school for Iraqi children, they had planned to collaborate with the NRC who were already providing services such as basic needs and food products to Iraqi refugees in Lebanon. However, things had not gone as planned since, according to Mariana:

> ‘They closed down. They used to support [Iraqis] with everything. They had opened a school. We were collaborating with them for the first two months but they didn’t have sufficient resources to provide anymore for the school (stationery, rent, teachers) […]They gave a lot, but they disappeared, and they told us we would have to continue by ourselves, their capabilities had weakened and they were no longer getting the financial help (مساعدات that they relied on from Norway’.

\(^{19}\) [https://www.unhcr.org/lb/project-partnerships](https://www.unhcr.org/lb/project-partnerships)
As reported in the above data, participants mentioned many difficulties and organisational tensions that had limited the amount of help that national and international bodies such as the UN, Caritas, Makhzoumi Foundation and NRC could offer to refugees. A major issue was the scale of the refugee crisis: as of September 2018, it was estimated that Lebanon was host to over 1.5 million Syrian refugees, 952,562 of whom were registered with the UN (UNHCR et al., 2018). Regardless of this large number of people who needed (and still need) help, the funding available to major organisations had decreased. According to UNHCR et al. (2018):

‘In 2018, funding requirements for adequate support to Syrian refugees in Lebanon was estimated at US$ 2.291 billion. As of 30 September 2018, those needs were only one third funded’ (p.1).

This fundamental lack of funding had resulted in inadequate support for refugees and insufficient provision of ‘assistance and protection, safe shelter and effective education’ (Ibid). In interview, Colette, who worked for the International Rescue Committee (IRC), one of UNHCR’s international partners, addressed the issue of lack of funding:

‘We need long-term funding. Now the funding is decreasing because it is going more towards Syria because they want to shift, to have refugees return to Syria. With the situation unstable and nothing tangible, NGOs don’t recommend this. We don’t recommend repatriation at this point’.

This decrease in funding is reflected in the lived experiences of four questionnaire respondents and all case study participants, who mentioned receiving financial help in the past but no longer receiving such help. Colette elaborated on the impact of repatriation and lack of funding on street and working children in Lebanon, explaining that child labour programming requires long-term planning since children who leave work ‘need follow-up’ otherwise they could return to work. Colette argued that these children need alternatives to work including ‘better provision of services’ and ‘cash [...] to vulnerable families’.

While Colette thought that there were enough services such as mental health and psychosocial services available for refugees (although I found that many refugees themselves did not know about these services), she found that cash services and livelihood opportunities were lacking, suggesting that the GoL should become involved in the ‘fair distribution of jobs’. Colette also felt there had been a focus on ‘response in emergencies’ rather than ‘more sustainable projects that will eventually focus on development’. Colette mentioned the school system as an example, which, despite extensive work by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and other actors, was still unable to ‘receive and absorb’ the hundreds of thousands of children not yet attending school – an issue discussed in Chapter 4. Due to the public sector’s inability to absorb hundreds of thousands of Syrian children into the school system, the private sector had played an important role in filling this gap. However, Menashy and Zakaria (2017) argue that corporate actors have taken advantage of this situation, and while some have humanitarian motivations for involvement in the
provision of education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, many have profit-oriented objectives. Menashy and Zakharia (2017) suggest corporate actors are not only using humanitarian activities to improve their brand image, but are also exploiting the crisis to experiment with ideas and products, to enhance the potential of a future market once the crisis is over, in what Klein (2007) refers to as ‘disaster capitalism’ (p.6). However, not all privately-established schools fell into this category - in this study, Maria and her brother Gerges attended a private school that was well-established school and mainly attended by Lebanese children, not a newly-established school opened by corporate or other actors. Moreover, the goal of the school established by Sr Mary for Iraqi children was neither financial gain nor ‘experimentation’ with products and ideas- attendance was free of charge, the Lebanese teachers had many years’ teaching experience, and were not affiliated with any corporation.

6.4 The Church

Religion plays a significant role throughout the diverse stages of refugees’ forced displacement (Mayer, 2007). Religion can cause forced displacement (Chaillot, 2007), and remains significant for forcibly displaced persons’ experiences of displacement, during their journey to their host country, after arriving in their host country, or in their search for longer-term solutions to their plight (see Mayer 2007). Several studies have begun to shed light on the important role played by religion within humanitarian responses to displacement (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011; Wilkinson & Ager, 2017). Local Faith Communities (LFC) have been identified in research as playing an important role in alleviating pressures on refugees across Lebanon (Kraft, 2015). LFCs are usually well-established and trusted in their communities, with physical and social structures in place that allow them to provide urgent services to those in need and to be highly effective in responding to the influx of refugees, providing ‘basic services (such as offering shelter and material support), psychosocial support, registration and Refugee Status Determination, advocacy and influencing on behalf of refugees, and peacebuilding in contexts of displacement’ (Wilkinson & Ager, 2017, p. 4).

This study was conducted in predominantly Christian areas, so perhaps it is unsurprising that the church was repeatedly mentioned by refugees as a source of help. While two questionnaire respondents complained that the church had stopped helping them either in cash or in kind, five respondents named particular individuals, priests or nuns, who helped them with food, money, clothes, household items, and essential supplies such as nappies, among other things. One respondent praised the organisation Bonheur du Ciel, and the priest who had started the organisation, for helping many Iraqis when UNHCR and Caritas ‘did nothing’. Mariana, the teacher, also mentioned the same priest, saying that he provided food and lunches for both Lebanese and foreigners, and did not differentiate between Syrians and Iraqis. Both Iraqi case study families received help from the church. Kefa and his family received bread three times a week from the Sisters of Mother Theresa. They also received food supplies from the Chaldean Archbishopric once every 4 to 6 months, and were advised by other Iraqi refugees to register with certain churches that
gave them a meal once a month. Maria and her family received help from more than one church. *Yasū’ Nūr Al ‘Ālam* (Jesus light of the world) an Evangelical church, and the Syriac church of the Holy Family, gave them food supplies once every couple of months. Not only did the church provide refugees with food, financial assistance and advice, but according to two Iraqi questionnaire respondents, the church had given Iraqi refugees ID cards with their name, country of origin and religious sect so that the police would not detain them. If refugees were detained, the church would intervene to help them be released. In interview, Maria and Mariana reported that the church also created opportunities for children to go to camps and fieldtrips, to offer them different surroundings and activities that brought some relief from their confined living conditions in Lebanon.

Drawing on questionnaire responses and interviews with professionals and case study participants, the church seemed to extend its role as provider of spiritual guidance to that of provider of people’s other basic needs including healthcare, food, schooling, and even protection, working to fill the gap where the UN and other NGOs fell short. However, it is important to note that only Iraqi questionnaire respondents mentioned the church as a source of help. This might be because all the Iraqi respondents were Christians and sought help directly from the church, whereas the Syrians in this study were mainly Muslims who were living in predominantly Christian areas and would usually have sought help from mosques, which were rarely found in Christian areas. Although LFC are crucial actors that play complex roles in responding to urban refugees’ needs, ‘faith remains a dimension that is systematically overlooked by the humanitarian system’ (Wilkinson and Ager 2017, p.4). The humanitarian principle of impartiality is a main point that emerges in debates around the role of LFC, as there tend to be concerns that LFC will prioritise those who follow their religion instead of operating solely based on people’s needs. However, the dispensary run by nuns that was the site for the questionnaire distribution offered healthcare services to patients from all nationalities and religions without discrimination, as noted in interview with Dr Denise. Moreover, several research studies have indicated that Muslim refugees from Syria have been receiving aid from churches and other Christian organisations across Lebanon (Kraft, 2015).

One final point to consider regarding the role of the church in refugees’ lives in Lebanon is the way in which the church helped people find out about other sources of support. Participants in this study reported how they and their fellow refugees had sometimes found out about sources of support when attending Sunday service or through people they knew who attended church. Furthermore, refugees’ access to social media was important - as one Iraqi questionnaire respondent explained, the Chaldean church regularly put notifications on Facebook to inform refugees when they could go to collect food and clothes. Since Iraqis and Syrians did not seem to mingle, news about this help, which was usually spread through word of mouth (or via mobile apps like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger), tended to stay within religious groups.
6.5 Lebanese policies

The constellation of events from the moment children and their families had been exposed to armed conflict in their home countries, to internal displacement and consequent external displacement to Lebanon, along with the reluctance of the host country to recognise their refugee status and the inefficacy of international aid to alleviate their displaced circumstances, all converged to impede the refugee participants in this study from getting the help they need. The GoL had opened its doors to over a million refugees (although many entered Lebanon irregularly after residency requirements were changed) however, the initial open-door policy was not backed up by mechanisms – or indeed the will – to ensure that people’s rights were met. While one Iraqi respondent was grateful that the Lebanese government had accepted her and her family in Lebanon, another respondent argued that even though the state did not object to the presence of Iraqis in Lebanon, ‘if they don't give us residency it is considered a form of oppression. You can't move’. Refugees’ status in Lebanon as ‘temporarily displaced’ people made many feel they ‘can't move’ around freely for fear of imprisonment, particularly since Lebanon is not signatory to the 1951 Convention or to its 1967 Protocol.

Although refugees registered with UNHCR receive a registration certificate, that ‘entitles refugees to international protection and humanitarian assistance’ (Janmyr, 2018, p.406), this certificate has not been formally recognised by GoL, consequently putting those who do not have legal residency in Lebanon in danger of being penalised. Illustrating this, one female Iraqi questionnaire respondent explained:

‘We have the UN documents but they are not really considered to be proper documents. The police stop us more often now and ask for our papers. My children who work come back late so I’m afraid that they’ll be stopped by the police or the army’.

Moreover, although the 200USD residency fee was waived for Syrians in Lebanon (see Chapter 1 Section 1.3.2), Iraqis still had to pay this fee. As one female Iraqi questionnaire respondent protested:

‘Iraqi people have to pay 200USD to be in Lebanon every year. […] I wish they would cancel this payment. We are six people in the family. Each person has to pay 200USD. Some people don’t even have food’.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Syrian refugees who were not registered with UNHCR prior to 2015 required a work sponsor to ensure that they could stay legally in Lebanon under the kafala system, a system that promotes ‘Government-sanctioned exploitation’ (Janmyr, 2016, p.75). Although Ahmed’s father had been working and living in Lebanon for over 10 years, he was not registered with UNHCR when the new policy came into place, and he had experienced grave consequences:
‘I entered Lebanon legally, but I could not renew my papers. I need a sponsor. I went to do a sponsorship but they did not agree to it. They decided to deport me, but right now they are not allowed to deport me because the war is still ongoing. But there is no systematic way that they decide if someone should be deported or not. They just look at a person and based on their look they decide. If I like your look, ok, if not then you get deported. They don’t care about the children, they don’t care’ (Ahmed’s father).

This quote by Ahmed’s father points to how refugees perceived GoL as failing to care for or even take interest in children’s rights. ‘Their look’ as he phrases it, suggests institutionalized prejudices felt by families based on their appearance, linked with ill-informed generalisations about their nationality and race, and determines precarious outcomes for their children’s lives. Refugees’ lack of legal status and their reliance on the kafala system left them highly vulnerable to exploitation. In my data, several respondents reported having been exploited by Lebanese citizens when trying to find a sponsor so they could remain legally in Lebanon. As one Syrian questionnaire respondent vented:

‘I paid a man 600 USD to sponsor me and he stole the money and disappeared. Another time the same thing happened but I paid 300 USD. I worked at a restaurant and was supposed to be paid 1000 USD but they never paid me. Exploitation, exploitation!’ (Syrian male – Questionnaire).

Therefore, even when trying to take initiative and improve their circumstances in Lebanon, refugees were victims of exploitation or/and of institutional policies that worked against their interests, making it virtually impossible to break free of the cycle of disadvantage in which they found themselves. GoL policies reinforced exploitation, and placed both adult and child refugees in an extremely difficult position, setting them up to lose an uphill battle. Returning to their home countries where war was still raging, where they had lost their homes, and where their lives would be in direct danger was not an option for Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Moving to a third country was also impossible for most refugees due to limited quotas set by resettlement countries and being rejected when applying for resettlement independently of UNHCR. Unable to move back or forward, the refugee participants in this study had no choice but to remain in their liminal state, where the real and constant threat of imprisonment, exploitation, harassment, and racism was – and still is – ever-present.

6.6 Conclusion

While this chapter does not focus specifically on play, the shortcomings of international aid organisations and GoL have both direct and indirect consequences for children’s play and childhoods, which, if not addressed, will continue to push children further into a spiral of disadvantage with dire consequences on their rights, including their rights to a safe and happy
childhood, to play and to education. The unprecedented and sudden influx of around 1.5 million Syrian and 18,000 Iraqi refugees into Lebanon has led to disjuncture in the treatment of refugees between the GoL, UNHCR, NGOs and charitable organisations. While UNHCR has been the main point of reference for refugees and portrays itself as a lobbyist to protect, provide for and stand up for refugees in the face of GoL’s response, the information generated in this study about individual families’ experiences throws doubt on UNHCR’s capacity to turn rhetoric into reality when faced with a crisis of the scale experienced in Lebanon. With a reduction in donor assistance, the contradictions within GoL policies, and in the face of the scale of the Iraqi and Syrian refugee crisis, questionnaire and case study participants recounted their lived experiences that had left them feeling forgotten, disrespected and disillusioned by UNHCR.

Tensions between different GoL policies also determined refugee children’s childhood experiences in Lebanon. While GoL has not ratified the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol, it has ratified the UNCRC. Therefore, one must question which convention takes precedence and how GoL can ensure its compliance with UNCRC when half of the refugee population in Lebanon, which GoL refers to as ‘temporarily displaced’, is made up of children.

Bringing together the findings from this study about young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s experiences of war and displacement, the violation of their rights, their play, and the care and education ‘lifelines’ available to them, the next and final chapter concludes this thesis. It discusses my findings in light of the theories introduced in Chapter 1, which includes Froebelian Principles, the new sociology of childhood, children’s rights, Vygotskian sociocultural theory and liminality. The following and final chapter reflects on how armed conflict and displacement affect the play and childhoods of Iraqi and Syrian refugee children in Beirut’s northern suburbs, and proposes pathways that could and should be followed to improve refugee children’s play opportunities and ensure their rights are met in the face of adversity.
Chapter 7 Discussion and conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The four previous chapters provided a detailed analysis of the data generated by this study regarding the Iraqi and Syrian child participants’ experiences of war and displacement, the continuous violations of their rights in their liminal state, their play opportunities, and the lifelines (un)available to them. This final chapter draws the study findings together and creates dialogue between them and the study’s conceptual framework in order to answer the research questions:

RQ1: How are the childhoods of young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees affected by armed conflict and their forced displacement to Beirut’s northern suburbs?

RQ2: How are the young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees’ opportunities to play and constructions of play affected by their experiences of armed conflict and forced displacement in Beirut’s northern suburbs?

RQ3: How might young refugee children’s play opportunities be improved in Beirut’s northern suburbs?

These questions aimed to generate a critical perspective of the many ways in which exposure to armed conflict and consequent forced displacement have pushed the child participants and their families into a state of liminality, have led to the violation of the children’s rights even after leaving immediate danger and seeking safety in Lebanon, and have re-shaped the children’s experiences of childhood and play. This chapter will therefore discuss:

- How armed conflict and displacement affect childhood in Beirut’s northern suburbs
- How armed conflict, displacement and reshaped constructions of childhood affect children’s play opportunities and constructions of play in Beirut’s northern suburbs
- Ways of improving refugee children’s play opportunities in Beirut’s northern suburbs

Following a discussion under each theme, the thesis concludes by reflecting on the study’s limitations, implications for policy, for child refugee education, and for future research. To conclude the study, I offer reflections on how the complexities of the refugee populations’ situation in Lebanon might be theorised, and propose a conceptual model identifying factors that serve to aggravate or improve their plight.
7.2 How armed conflict and displacement affect childhood in Beirut’s northern suburbs

Findings detailed in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 have demonstrated how, as discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.2.3, complex and competing parameters linked to history, international and national policies and power relations, gender, cultural and social traditions and expectations, religious beliefs and practices, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity influenced the constructions of Iraqi and Syrian children’s childhoods in Lebanon. The individual participating children’s experiences of childhood and play had been, were being, and still are being shaped by their experiences of armed conflict and displacement. Armed conflict had exposed many of the participant children directly or indirectly to warplanes, bombings, chemical attacks, death of family members, gunmen, houses being burned down, loss of their homes and communities, ISIS or fear of ISIS, kidnapping, killing and religious persecution. Displacement had involved sudden escape from armed conflict, long and often perilous journeys, followed by the unexpected challenges of living as refugees often in unsanitary housing conditions, with a powerless lack of economic and social status, and lack of legal rights to nationhood, freedom of movement, medical care and education, in a country and indeed in a world that simply could not respond adequately to the scale of the Syrian and Iraqi refugee crisis. As to the future for these refugee families in Lebanon, there was dwindling hope for a better life, with armed conflict still raging in their home countries and resettlement a hopeful yet ever more distant dream.

This section creates dialogue between the study’s findings related to children’s childhood experiences and the conceptual framework, reflecting on how policies and power structures reinforced Iraqi and Syrian child participants’ liminality in Lebanon, how armed conflict paired with liminality altered family structures, gender expectations, and the respect shown towards children’s rights, with particular focus on children’s education rights, and how the childhoods of the ‘temporarily displaced’ children who participated in this study were constructed whilst living in a liminal state in Lebanon.

7.2.1 Barriers, liminality and the invisible child

One overarching parameter identified in this study that affected the constructions of childhood among refugees in Lebanon was their irregular status. This was reinforced by GoL’s refugee policies and exclusionary practices and pushed many children and their families into a liminal state.

In line with critiques of van Gennep’s (1960) analytic framework, this study found that the distinction between the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages was not always clear-cut. Several Iraqi questionnaire respondents reported experiencing marginalization, exclusion long before the emergence of ISIS in their home country, as many had been victims of religious persecution and had fled and/or been internally displaced in their home countries for months and even years prior to their forced displacement to Lebanon. The experience of liminality was not always triggered by refugees’ displacement to Lebanon, rather, and similar to Vietnamese participants in Bousquet’s
(1987) study, many Christian Iraqi refugees saw their life as a ‘continuation of a long process of alienation’ (p.52), which was largely linked to longstanding and ongoing suffering resulting from religious persecution (Chaillot, 2007). Likewise, the liminal and post-liminal stages were not necessarily distinct and clearly defined in refugees’ lives. Similar to participants in Kerbage et al.’s (2020) study, many Iraqi and Syrian questionnaire and case study participants in the present study viewed repatriation as their only hope for a better future, particularly for their children. However, as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh notes, repatriation may lead to ‘new or repeated forms of exclusion and marginalization’ (2014, p.406) and therefore may not necessarily draw refugees out of their liminal state.

Consequently, this study found that many of the ‘temporarily displaced’ (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2018) children appeared to be trapped in the liminal stage, with the post-liminal stage being no more than a mirage. Thus trapped, the temporarily displaced children and their families had been moving back and forth between the stages of ‘acute’ and ‘sustained’ liminality (Little et al., 1998, pp.1492-3). They experienced acute liminality upon first leaving their homes behind due to armed conflict, feeling intense fear and having diminished control over their situation. For Iraqi case study participants who were internally displaced, acute liminality soon changed into sustained liminality as they knew that their lives were no longer in immediate physical danger, becoming less fearful and regaining some control of their lives. Moving to Lebanon, Iraqi and Syrian respondents fluctuated back to a state of acute liminality, where often profoundly challenging journeys, fear of the unknown, of living in a new country with new customs and ways of life, and of being stuck in limbo returned, and control over their own destiny plummeted. This back and forth continued as the child refugees and their families waited and hoped for a better life, and as they attempted to exercise their power and agency in matters affecting them. However, institutional policies and power structures stood as barriers that blocked those attempts, sending children (and their parents) back into a state of acute liminality, with ever diminishing hope of an exit. Key barriers included children’s lack of representation in Lebanese laws and policies, poor enforcement of the UNCRC, inefficacy of international aid in the face of a refugee crisis of such scale, refugees’ ‘liminal legality’, and increased surveillance.

Considering children’s lack of representation in Lebanese laws and policies as a barrier to children’s rights and agency, Hoteit (2017) argues that by excluding children from the Lebanese constitution, only adults are included as citizens (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1). This suggests that Lebanese policies promote the view of the child as ‘not yet adult’ and as a ‘human becoming’ who will only be awarded rights once adulthood is reached (Mayall, 2015; Qvortrup, 1985). However, taking into consideration refugees’ liminal state, the validity of the ‘beings’ versus ‘becomings’ dichotomy is called into question. The validity of this theoretical duality rests on the assumption that all adults have rights. As the GoL has not ratified the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol, neither child nor adult refugees’ rights are fully respected. Therefore, children, like adults, are stripped of their human-ness and are reconstructed as ‘polluting’ (Turner, 1967, p.97) and/or ‘invisible’ (p.95)
for the duration of their indefinite temporary displacement. Moreover, although Lebanon has ratified the UNCRC, Lebanese laws are not enforced to ensure children’s rights are being met, putting into question the usefulness of the Convention. For example, as this study found to be the case with refugee children in Lebanon, Lebanese children were considered more deserving of rights than children of other nationalities, contradicting UNCRC Article 2 (non-discrimination), reinforcing the liminality of these ‘other’ children. This ‘othering’ of refugees trickled down into daily interactions and practices and infiltrated all aspects of refugees’ lives. This includes children’s schooling, where generalisations and discrimination were reproduced by both teachers and other students, leading to damaging consequences for refugee children who became victims of bullying and abuse (Jackson, 2013). While there is potential for children to be seen in terms of rights, such factors impede the presence of rights as an active force in children’s lives.

GoL policies forced Iraqi and Syrian children and their families into ‘liminal legality’ (Menjivar, 2006), stripping them of many rights including their rights to high quality education, play, freedom of expression, and protection from harm, abuse and exploitation. These policies ensured the temporariness of displaced persons’ legal status, making it difficult to gain or retain their legal status, perpetuating vulnerability and exclusion of refugee populations. These policies had devastating consequences for children. Similar to Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2017) who argued that policy structures such as those that limit men’s ability to work force families to rely on child begging to survive, the parent participants in this study consistently referred to how their lack of legal status instilled fear of arrest and imprisonment, and promoted exploitation in the workplace, forcing them to work long hours for low pay and no benefits. This pushed families further into poverty and financially desperate circumstances, and in turn led to some families allowing their children to work in unsafe conditions. In addition to perpetuating child labour, and in line with previous studies exploring child marriage practices in the Beqaa (Mourtada et al., 2017), interviews with professionals highlighted that the hopelessness of their situation also led some parents in Beirut’s northern suburbs to seek early marriage for their daughters and sons. Moreover, the ‘polluting’ status of refugee families and their children led to increased surveillance by local authorities and neighbours, with strictly imposed curfews ensuring that displaced children and their families remained less visible. Adult Iraqi and Syrian parent participants mentioned how, when not housebound by curfews and poverty, their children were sometimes harassed and shouted at by neighbours who did not want to see or hear them. Furthermore, while refugees in this study were expected to remain invisible in Greater Beirut, they were homogenised into a group that was perceived as ‘threatening and potentially dangerous’ (Hynes 2011, p.31). This is evident in Mariana’s explanation of how the gendarmerie regularly raided the homes of her Iraqi students, instilling a sense of fear, helplessness, inferiority, and criminality in the children and their families, solely because they were refugees.
7.2.2 The child at the heart of the family

Prior to armed conflict, the concept of family as described by adult and child participants constituted children’s and their parents’ main social circle, with both nuclear and extended family members playing a direct role in children’s upbringing. However, over the course of conflict and forced displacement, these family structures underwent tumultuous changes, as families transformed from being stable entities to being in a volatile state of flux, which profoundly affected the children’s experiences of childhood and play. According to Masten and Narayan (2012), ‘[t]he buffering effect of proximity to parents and other attachment figures for children in the midst of terrifying experiences is one of the most enduring findings in the literature on war and other life-threatening disasters’ (p.229). Nonetheless, this study found consistent evidence that children had been separated from key support figures when they needed them most, and their communities had been dismantled bringing familiar social and cultural practices to a halt. This led to increased stress amongst children and their parents, as they were no longer able to rely on family for support at a time when other lifelines were failing them and familiar pathways were closed to them. While family held undeniable importance for all the case study participants, and separation from immediate and extended family was a major concern and source of additional sadness, attempts to reunite families by living in confined spaces with extended family members caused problems that affected power dynamics among all parties, and put children in sometimes dangerous situations that affected their mental and physical health, as discussed below. Paired with their traumatic experiences of armed conflict, these tinderbox circumstances led to behavioural changes in children, including aggression, increased fear and developmental problems such as enuresis (Section 4.1.1) (Björn et al., 2011; Hyder, 2005; Landers, 1998; Trickey & Black, 2012).

In line with Abu-Lughod's (1990) critique of studies that investigate the family in Lebanon without problematizing ‘family’ as a social construction, this study considered the family as socially constructed, shaped by multiple competing factors, and recognised that while family can provide children with security, stability, a feeling of belonging and an arena for participation, it can also be the source of insecurity, abuse, jealousy, and mental and physical danger to children. Like Hyder's (2005) and Masten and Narayan's (2012) reports of how parents’ traumatic experiences of armed conflict and displacement affected their ability to provide their children with emotional support and attention, this study found that parents’ high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, instability, lack of support mechanisms and their state of indefinite liminality negatively affected their relationship with their children, and with each other. Parents reported paying less attention to their children and being less emotionally present than they had been prior to their experiences of war and displacement. Moreover, this study, in line with Usta and Masterson (2015) and Usta et al. (2019), found that some Syrian and Iraqi female questionnaire and case study participants reported they and their husbands had become less patient, leading to increased physical aggression towards children and between spouses, which children witnessed. While some of the female questionnaire respondents justified this behaviour, other participants were looking for ways to change their
situation. Additionally, further to Sim et al.’s (2018) findings that children who were physically punished and shouted at by their parents took out their own frustrations on their toys and on other people, this study found that boredom, combined with more than ample time to reflect on negative past experiences, due largely to isolation and confined living conditions, led to increased frustration and anger, which pushed some children to take out their aggression on their toys, and to break them (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.2.3).

Moreover, this study found that family structures and power balances had changed among refugee populations who were living in a liminal state in Lebanon as ‘hierarchies [are] reversed, and traditional settings of authority possibly endangered’ (Mälksoo, 2012, p.481). In their previously settled lives, the women and girls had taken care of the household while the men worked outside the house. However, due to their irregular status and GoL policies that restrict ‘temporarily displaced’ persons from working in Lebanon, some men were pushed to stop working and spend long day after long day ‘hidden’ in the confines of their temporary homes (See Section 7.2.1). Their irregular status also meant that landlords could easily exploit them by asking for unreasonably high rents for low quality accommodation. As highlighted in the VASyR 2018 report (UNHCR et al., 2018), some families became female-headed households due to separation from or death of the former male head of the household. The consequent poverty and widespread exploitation had led to children and women joining the illegal labour force to support their families financially. For example, Kefa’s mother had worked at some point after moving to Lebanon even though she had never worked outside the house when living in Iraq (Chapter 3 Section 3.2.1). Many children’s roles and responsibilities had changed from being dependent on their parents and attending school, to being providers for the family. For instance, although 12-year-old Kamal attended school in Syria, he no longer attended school in Lebanon but spent his days selling flowers on the streets to support his family financially. His parents knew that he was being exploited by his employer but still sent him to work because they were in desperate need for money as his father struggled to find work and feared arrest. Therefore, I argue that the ‘child’ status was sometimes considered a powerful tool that families could use in their attempt to escape from the poverty, oppression and destitution that characterised their liminal state in Lebanon. Similarly, very young children were sometimes considered powerful by parents as they gave families access to more lifelines. For example, although Muna’s family were living in poverty in Lebanon and her brother Kamal worked to support the family financially, Muna’s mother Janna, who had three children below the age of 8 years and was expecting her fifth child, believed that the more young children they had, the more likely it was that they would receive help from UNHCR.

The ‘child’ status was also a powerful tool in the eyes of some parents who felt they had exhausted all options to leave Lebanon. A fitting example would be Janna’s story of a family who, as a last resort, smuggled their unaccompanied child to Sweden so that he could apply for family reunification, giving them a route out of Lebanon. However, the family reunification process took much longer than they had expected, leaving their child stranded in a strange country for an
indefinite length of time, far away from the familiar protection and love of his parents and siblings. The intentional separation of the child from his parents and caregivers is likely to have had a particularly negative impact on his mental health (Masten & Narayan, 2012) as well as exposing him to a multitude of dangers during his journey and upon arrival in his host country (Refugee Rights Europe, 2016). The family’s desperation to leave their liminal state amidst extreme hardships and failing lifelines had pushed them to place their own child’s life in danger for the future benefit of the whole family. Children’s welfare may well have been at the heart of many families’ decisions, but rather than being cherished and protected, some children were used as tools to improve the whole family’s situation. This set aside children’s rights and exposed them to innumerable physical, sexual, emotional and mental dangers as well as indefinite separation from the family unit.

Turner (1969) refers to communitas as an ‘intense comradeship’, a sort of ‘communion’ or ‘connection’ through shared experience (pp.95-6) where regardless of previous states, liminal beings consider each other equals. Yet this study, being one of the few that looks into the experiences of different groups of refugees living in a situation of protracted and overlapping urban displacement (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a), found a fractured and anxious environment, where Iraqi participants did not regard Syrians as equals, and where adults, including parents, knowingly exploited children’s vulnerability.

In line with Mayer’s (2007) Special Issue of Refugee Survey Quarterly (RSQ), this study found that religion played a significant role during the different stages of Iraqi refugees’ forced displacement to Lebanon. Religion was a significant factor causing the displacement of Iraqi Christians. Religion provided refugees with hope and strength during their journey of displacement as exemplified by Thalia (Section 3.2.2.2), and was a major factor influencing Iraqi refugees’ decision to move to Lebanon, a country they considered to be a ‘Christian country’. Religion also influenced Iraqi refugees’ decision-making once they arrived in Lebanon, such as deciding which area to live in, which organisations, churches or other local faith communities to reach out to, and where to send their children to school. Past experiences of religious persecution against minorities in Iraq and violence perpetrated by ISIS towards Christians and other minorities led Iraqi Christians in this study to categorize all Muslims as dangerous and violent. The Iraqi participants in this study voiced strong resentment towards Syrians, who they perceived as having taken the attention and support of the international community, UNHCR, other organisations, and Lebanese citizens away from Iraqis. This deeply-held and widely-voiced resentment effectively eradicated all possibility of communitas forming between them. Moreover, just as Mayer (2007) argued that the relationship between religion and national/ethnic identity can be complicated, leading people from the same religion but different ethnicities or nationalities to compete with each other and wish to remain separate from each other, the school teacher Mariana reported how Iraqi children excluded Christian Syrian children from their play, and although both Iraqi and Syrian children had fled conflict, shared the same religion, and lived in similarly liminal circumstances in Lebanon, the Syrian refugees were ‘othered’ by Iraqi populations.
Similar to Boer’s (2015) example of Congolese refugees in Kampala who did not form a community in their host country, Iraqi and Syrian children in this study were not in a position to form a community in Lebanon. Rather, communitas tended to be primarily within families, where trusting bonds had already been formed prior to the emergence of conflict, and only occasionally went beyond family ties to include people from the same nationality and religion who had endured similar atrocities. Families were the main source of community for all four case study participants. Although very close-knit extended families had been broken apart and dispersed around the world because of forced displacement, all the case study families kept in close contact with extended family in Lebanon, and if resident in the same areas, tried to meet up regularly despite the restrictions imposed on their movement due to their irregular status in Lebanon. Parents and children also kept in close contact with extended family who lived abroad or at a distance through social media applications such as Facebook messenger and WhatsApp. Social media therefore allowed a sense of familial communitas to transcend spatial boundaries and exist in a ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault, 1986).

Moreover, while Turner (1969) argued that certain life crises and the transition from one structural status to another may lead to ‘humankindness’ (p.116), which he defines as a ‘social bond between all members of society’ that may transcend national boundaries and ‘subgroup affiliations’, this study found that historical and religious factors paired with personal past experiences led to highly selective ‘humankindness’. The relationship between different groups of refugees and between the Lebanese and refugees living in Beirut’s northern suburbs was highly strained. Lebanese participants in Beirut’s northern suburbs voiced resentment towards refugees whom they perceived as a burden on them, taking their jobs and pushing them further into poverty, all the while receiving help from the international community at a time the Lebanese were ‘forgotten’ (CARE International, 2018). This perception was similarly enhanced by political rhetoric (Wilkinson & Ager, 2017) which Lebanese citizens, including professionals working with refugee children, were subject to. Mariana for instance compared the ‘modern’ Lebanese with the more ‘traditional’ refugees, implying unequal relations between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Jackson, 2013). This can be linked to Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2018) who note that the relationship between host and hosted tends to be characterised by a power imbalance, where the hosted tend to be met with both hospitality and hostility. While UNHCR claimed that living in urban settings as opposed to camps allows refugees ‘the possibility to live with greater dignity, independence and normality as members of the community’ (UNHCR 2014, p.4), this study found that this was far from an accurate depiction of the situation on the ground. Findings highlighted how policies forced refugees to remain invisible’ and “outside” mainstream society’ (Hynes 2011, p.31), how refugees were exploited and stripped of their most basic rights, and how families and previously close-knit communities were fragmented following conflict and displacement. In Lebanon, refugees tended to be ‘imagined as a community’ (Anderson, 1991), however as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2017) notes, diverse identity markers and power structures that change across time and space lead to diverse experiences of violence during the different stages of displacement. In this study, these identity markers and power structures additionally led to different experiences of (un)belonging prior to and throughout the stages of displacement.
7.2.3 Gender, safety and freedom

Gender was a main determinant of the constructions of childhood among Iraqi and Syrian children in Lebanon. This study’s findings supported Abadeer’s (2015), Ouis' (2005), Joseph's (1993) and Faour's (1989) arguments that traditional views towards childbearing, respect and authority of elders, patrilineality, family loyalty, and ‘patriarchal connectivity’ (Joseph, 1993, p.466) remain important sociocultural parameters in Arab societies, including among refugee communities. In this study, sociocultural parameters perpetuated gender inequality leading parents to allow boys more freedoms than girls, including freedom of movement and expression. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2017) notes, individual people’s experiences of displacement are shaped by ‘intersecting and overlapping identity markers’ such as gender, age, religion and ethnicity, as well as different power structures such as xenophobia and patriarchy (p.1). Displaced children’s childhoods were similarly shaped by these systems and power structures. Similar to El Saadawi’s (2015) in-depth insight into the role of girls in ensuring family honour in the Arab world, this study found that family honour was manifested primarily in relation to the girls in the family. Parental responsibility to retain girls’ chastity and their fear that, due to their ‘powerlessness’ in Lebanon, their female children were more vulnerable to exploitation, meant that girls were restricted from leaving the house unattended and received additional protection and surveillance. Figure 7.1 represents this concept, where the ‘Safety-Danger’ axis intersects with the ‘Freedom-Constraint axis’ to create four quadrants. Multiple factors determine each child’s position within the quadrants, and children may move from one quadrant to another as factors change. The factors include the child’s gender, age, sociocultural factors, religious beliefs, exposure to conflict and their own and their families’ experiences of displacement, which includes their exposure to diverse power structures throughout the different stages of their displacement.

This study found that girls’ freedom was compromised in order to ensure their safety, so the girls of all ages in this study could be said to be positioned by their parents in ‘Quadrant IV’, where high levels of constraint were intended to protect the girls’ virtue and safety from harm. Girls were also often restricted from participating in some aspects of family life, such as voicing their opinions or objecting to anything their fathers said, as Mariana explained that girls were slapped if they did, whereas boys were allowed to do what they wanted. Mariana, Salwa, Thalia, and one Syrian female questionnaire respondent noted that these customs had been practised before girls were displaced; therefore, surveillance of girls to avoid harm and bring dishonour to the family was not only linked to fears related to armed conflict and displacement but was engrained in sociocultural traditions and norms – which were enforced with rigour in the uncertain and constrained circumstances in which the displaced families found themselves. As Morrow (2011) notes, social structures such as gender, ethnicity and religion may not necessarily determine children’s experiences, but they influence them ‘by setting the boundaries of what is possible, appropriate and expected’ (pp.5-6). Iraqi and Syrian girls’ freedom was therefore associated with danger but also with girls crossing boundaries, and punishment was used to put girls back in their place, as they were physically slapped by their
fathers for expressing themselves and outside the home ran the risk of being exposed to harassment and abuse for being visible refugees in a society that was struggling to cope with their presence. Therefore, while parents constrained their girls’ freedom with the intention of keeping them safe and due to cultural expectations, this study in line with Foucault found that intentions were ‘largely irrelevant’ (Gallagher, 2008, p.400), since constraining girls only exposed them to different dangers such as isolation, lack of education, abuse within the family and limitations on their play.

While Marshall (2015) found that restrictions on Palestinian girls in a refugee camp in the West Bank were more relaxed when the political situation was less tense, the irregular and ‘polluting’ status of displaced Iraqi and Syrian participants intensified familial insecurity even though they were no longer in direct danger of war or ISIS atrocities, leading to tighter restrictions on girls’ mobility. Even when young boys and girls worked on the streets, and in line with Ammar’s (2015) report on street-based children, Colette explained that very young children below the age of 8 years were usually accompanied by an adult or older sibling. Older girls who reached or who were approaching puberty were more likely to be accompanied by an adult when working (Ammar, 2015) and tended

---

**Figure 7.1: Safety-Danger vs Freedom-Constraint**

---

While Marshall (2015) found that restrictions on Palestinian girls in a refugee camp in the West Bank were more relaxed when the political situation was less tense, the irregular and ‘polluting’ status of displaced Iraqi and Syrian participants intensified familial insecurity even though they were no longer in direct danger of war or ISIS atrocities, leading to tighter restrictions on girls’ mobility. Even when young boys and girls worked on the streets, and in line with Ammar’s (2015) report on street-based children, Colette explained that very young children below the age of 8 years were usually accompanied by an adult or older sibling. Older girls who reached or who were approaching puberty were more likely to be accompanied by an adult when working (Ammar, 2015) and tended
to forgo child labour on the streets for child labour in the home, under the watchful eyes of their family, doing household chores and caring for younger siblings or disabled parents/relatives at the expense of their education, sometimes while both their parents sought work outside the home. As Colette explained, Syrian girls who reached puberty were considered women, and no longer children. This view has persisted since Ottoman days (Long, 2011), as has the view that the age of marriage is linked to puberty (Ouis, 2005).

This study found that surveillance of boys on the other hand differed to that of girls, as boys' surveillance was both gender- and age-specific, and affected by displacement. Boys of all ages had been allowed to leave the house unattended when they lived in their home communities in Iraq and Syria. Syrian case study parents explained that their sons would be out for hours and only come home to eat or to sleep. Matta recounted how groups of young boys used to cycle around the town without supervision. Referring back to Figure 7.1, younger and older boys were reported as occupying ‘Quadrant I’ prior to conflict and displacement. However, displacement to Lebanon, irregular status, and living in a strange urban environment as opposed to the countryside or their hometown surrounded by their own community affected young boys’ freedom to leave their homes unattended. These findings are similar to Marshall's (2015) findings that the mobility of young Palestinian boys in a West Bank refugee camp was restricted by annoyed neighbours and relatives, and by older youths. Therefore, in the Northern suburbs of Beirut, young boys no longer occupied ‘Quadrant I’ but were grouped with girls in ‘Quadrant IV’. However, older boys in my study had more freedom to express themselves when at home, and had more access to play spaces and play resources such as access to football fields and parental permission to visit friends’ houses. While older boys were allowed more freedoms than girls and younger boys, parents’ lack of understanding that boys as well as girls could be subjected to danger meant that boys were increasingly exposed to violence, to sexual exploitation and harassment.

Parents valued their older sons’ freedom and this was particularly apparent when Qassem postponed moving his family to Lebanon knowing that his children would be imprisoned in the house and would not have space to move and play like they did in Syria. Although his wife and children were in physical danger in their home country, his sons’ freedom was valued to the extent that it was placed before the impending threat to the family’s safety. In this case, while Alderson (2015) posits that children’s protection and provision rights are generally accepted while their participation rights face many controversies, these examples point to the much more complex interplay of factors leading to the implementation of participation and protection rights within the family. Gender and age differences paired with culture, power structures, and experiences of displacement and armed conflict, led to increased surveillance and to the protection of young boys and girls of all ages, whereas older boys were more likely to practise their participation rights at the expense of their protection rights.
7.2.4 Education

Although there is very rich research evidence pointing to the importance of high quality ECEC for children (Kirova, 2010; Yahya & Wood, 2017), none of the children in this study attended preschool in Lebanon. Just as family is ‘at the heart of the educational process in the Froebelian tradition’ (Bruce, 2012b, p.20), so was the case among Iraqi and Syrian participants. However, while extended families had usually cared for and educated young children in their home countries prior to armed conflict, the separation of children from both immediate and extended family and communities put the quality of children’s ECEC at risk. While MEHE is working to enhance children’s enrolment in preschool programmes as outlined in the RACE II report (MEHE, 2016), issues of suitable resourcing (including qualified teachers, teacher training, student support and behaviour management, transportation costs, venues, facilities and equipment for preschool settings) have constrained and defined refugee children’s access to ECEC, and will continue to do so, so low attendance and high drop-out rates will most likely continue to persist.

Young children who were being deprived of education during the period of their parents’ disorientation and family fragmentation were also being deprived of future life chances. Similar to Shuayb et al.’s (2016) findings that focus on the schooling experience of Syrian children in Lebanon and Germany, this study found that all Iraqi and most Syrian adults and children considered their presence in Lebanon to be temporary, and although parents valued their children’s right to education, they had had to prioritise survival over other rights. While MEHE has taken the laudable initiative to meet the educational needs of young refugee children (RACE I and II), provision and implementation were still profoundly lacking at the time of this study, for both practical and political reasons. Firstly, MEHE’s stated aim to prioritise children’s right to education and integrate all children in school was negated by the GoL’s residency policy that left the majority of Syrian and Iraqi refugees without legal residency. This highlights the dire consequences of ignoring the interrelationality and interconnection of rights (Laplante, 2007), not only within individual conventions but also across them (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018). GoL’s residency policy, poor quality education, misinformation about school registration, widespread corporal punishment and bullying in schools, inability to keep up with a new and very different curriculum, poor command of the language of instruction, the school not accepting to register ‘displaced’ children, missing the annual school registration deadline, children suffering the humility of being put back a grade, child labour, child marriage, the child’s poor physical and/or mental health, and unmet costs such as transportation costs all combined to hinder children’s access to education. This was the case with both Syrian case study families and for 58% of both Syrian and Iraqi questionnaire respondents who had school-aged children. As one questionnaire respondent explained, children not attending school ‘is by far the worst thing that has happened’ even considering the destruction of their homes, their displacement and the consequent fragmentation of their families. This points to the great value placed by parents on education, which was also made clear by a questionnaire respondent who
reported she had secretly sent her children to study when living under ISIS rule in Syria where education was forbidden, which risked putting all members of the family’s lives in danger.

While the VASyR 2018 and VARON 2017 reports cited inability to cover cost of transportation and educational materials, schools not allowing children to be enrolled, child marriage, and work-related reasons, as the main reasons Syrian and Iraqi children did not attend school, neither report mentioned the detrimental effect that low-quality education, corporal punishment and bullying had on children. Iraqi and Syrian case study and questionnaire respondents as well as Colette mentioned how many parents refused to send their children to school due to bullying and corporal punishment. In one comparatively small area of Beirut’s Northern suburbs, this study found that the school opened by Sr Mary for Iraqi children was a lifeline for those children whose parents permitted them to attend school yet were too afraid to attend public schools. Sr Mary was trusted among Christian Iraqi families and played an important role as a female religious leader responding to refugees’ needs (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017). Although the school did not follow the Lebanese curriculum and did not provide children with a formal recognised certificate at the end of their education, it did provide children with routine, with a basic education, with qualified teachers, and with friends and opportunities to play that Lia reported had had a hugely positive effect on her son Kefa. Parents exercised their power by refusing to send their children to reputed low-quality schools, where although children would receive a formal education, their psychological, physical and emotional well-being was at risk of further harm by exposure to traumatic experiences caused by racism, bullying, and corporal punishment. Therefore, while education was highly regarded among Iraqi and Syrian participants, many parents had no choice but to keep their children out of school to protect them from additional mental, physical and emotional harm. In this study, very few Syrian or Iraqi questionnaire respondents identified schools where teachers were qualified and not only educated but cared for the children, where children felt accepted by their teachers and by peers and had opportunities to play, and where schools worked with parents to create supportive home and school environments for the children. Sr Mary’s was one such school that was striving, with meagre resources, to achieve these aims, so children might begin to overcome their traumatic past experiences and the challenges they faced in Lebanon. However, Sr Mary’s was an exception rather than the norm. Schools (whether formal or informal) where teachers were not qualified, where children experienced bullying, harassment, and corporal punishment, and where children did not receive support from the home and school environments led to increased trauma and aggression among children and to further school dropouts.

In line with Mourtada et al. (2017), this study found that child marriage was common among both Iraqi and Syrian case study and questionnaire participants even before exposure to conflict and displacement. For instance, one Iraqi and one Syrian mothers of case study children had been married at the age of 17, before the start of armed conflict. Janna, the Syrian mother, explained that girls in her village usually got married much earlier, and that 17 was old. The professionals who were interviewed reported that child marriage, although common even before participants were
exposed to war and forced displacement, was on the rise. These findings are supported by research literature that shows that war and displacement, which lead to increased levels of poverty, safety issues, lack of education, and increased gender inequality and sexual violence, and the requirement that girls maintain their virginity until after marriage, result in increased levels of child marriage (Kukrety, 2016; Michael et al., 2018; Mourtada et al., 2017). This is a particular problem for refugees in Lebanon since the laws in Lebanon do not prohibit child marriage. Importantly, as Michael et al. (2018) suggest, one of the most valuable ways to delay early marriage among girls is to ensure they continue their education.

To conclude this section, power structures that played out through multiple competing and interweaving parameters shaped how Iraqi and Syrian children’s childhoods were constructed in diverse ways. ‘Liminal legality’ led to a distinction between the childhood of Lebanese children on the one hand and the childhood of ‘temporarily displaced’ children on the other. While child refugees were developmentally in their ‘childhood phase’, the structural form of their childhood was characterised by their invisibility, powerlessness and lack of agency as refugee children.

Power relations played out between children of different nationalities as well as among children of the same nationality. While traumatic experiences and further oppression of children led to increased aggression among those children, bullying was not simply a result of this aggression. It was fuelled by discrimination and fear, as generalisations about certain groups of people that have been building up over decades, have trickled down over generations and within generational units, and have been further encouraged within families, schools, media, wider social circles and governmental policies. Moreover, as hierarchies reversed and as the structure of childhood started changing from a stage of carefree learning and play to one of constant fear, instability, and increasing responsibility to provide for the family, the ‘child’ status started to gain recognition as a powerful tool for potential exploitation by some families within the liminal state. This, however, robbed children of their fundamental rights, affecting not only their present but also endangering their future physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Qvortrup (2009) notes that people within different generational units (childhood, adulthood, old age) deal with challenges in different ways since resources, means, influence, and power are distributed differently among them. While experiencing armed conflict and being forced to leave their homes behind is a harrowing experience for all generational units, children are affected not only by their experiences but also by the toll it takes on their parents and wider family circle (Hyder, 2005), disrupting their whole support system, as well as being forced to take on adult responsibilities that hinder their holistic development and fail to respect their rights. Refugee children were referred to by Mariana, the schoolteacher, as being ‘virile’ and having personalities that ‘are too strong’.

Mariana described how many children she knew had to forego play in order to provide for their families, and Colette pointed out that street children ‘became children again’ when given opportunities to play and exercise their rights. These comments shed light on professionals’ understandings of childhood and on their definition of a child, insinuating that exposure to armed
conflict and displacement, and living in a liminal state in Lebanon have reshaped how childhoods are experienced by refugee children and how childhoods are constructed for refugee children in Lebanon. In their view, refugee children have been obliged to adopt adult characteristics and forgo play, rendering them no longer children.

7.3 How armed conflict, displacement and reshaped constructions of childhood affect children’s play opportunities and constructions of play in Beirut’s northern suburbs

Cross-cultural studies have demonstrated that understandings of play may differ between one community and another, and the types of play children engage in may depend on the value attributed to that type of play within each community (see Göncü et al., 2000). In this study, parents of all four case study children as well as all three professionals whom I interviewed regarded play as essential for children’s emotional wellbeing, their mental and physical development, for risk-taking and for their amusement. Many participants referred to an ideal childhood as a period in which children played and tried new things without fear of judgement. Taking play away from children was considered a punishment. Parents noted that they also benefited when the children played and expended their energy, with particular value being placed on freedom of movement, space, and running. As discussed, and contrary to Göncü et al. (2000), this study found that regardless of the importance that parents and professionals placed on play, experiences of armed conflict and forced displacement as well as the combination of government policies, irregular status, poverty, fear, and surveillance in Lebanon had led to severe limitations on Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s play opportunities and had reshaped the constructions of children’s play in Lebanon.

7.3.1 Refugee children’s play opportunities in Lebanon

While introducing play opportunities to refugee children and returning routine to their lives has been shown by previous research to have positive effects on their resettlement (Hyder, 2005; MacMillan et al., 2015), this study highlighted the multi-layered factors that restricted the children in this study from accessing such opportunities. Parameters that shaped children’s childhoods as discussed in Section 7.2 similarly affected children’s play opportunities, highlighting the damaging consequences of ignoring certain rights when all rights are interrelated (Laplante, 2007). In Lebanon, policy structures and lack of legal residency were directly linked to poverty, child labour, early marriage, lack of adequate provision for schooling, fear, and increased surveillance, which both individually and in combination had severe impacts on children’s childhoods and consequently on their right to play.

Although research has shown that establishing routines and opportunities to play have positive effects on displaced children’s resettlement, Cohen and Gadassi (2018) argue that doing so may not be possible since play spaces such as playgrounds in warzones and host countries may have
been destroyed, may be scarce, or may not be safe for children. In addition to lack of availability of freely accessible public spaces to play, this study found that young children’s right to play outside the home was restricted by fear and increased surveillance by parents, neighbours, local authorities and the GoL. Poverty, intersecting with other factors, contributed to children not being able to access parks or other safe play spaces that tend to be private, fee-paying facilities in Lebanon, as parents could not afford to cover transportation costs or costs of entry to parks. The government’s lack of investment in public spaces (Hoteit, 2017; Nazzal & Chinder, 2018) further limited access to play spaces for both Lebanese children and children from other nationalities. Moreover, this study found that it is not only the lack of availability of or lack of access to ‘places for children’ (Rasmussen, 2004) that limited children’s play, but also children’s living conditions and home environments. Poverty and associated poor housing led to severe restrictions on spaces for play, materials for play and access to people to play with. Living in cramped, sometimes insanitary and poorly maintained accommodation meant that children had limited space to play at home. Overcrowding in already small homes due to poverty not only put children at higher risk of catching contagious diseases and of being exposed to abuse either directly or indirectly as a result of tension in family relationships, but also further limited children’s play spaces, their freedom to express themselves and to make noise.

Poverty led to a duality of both financial and social deficit. Limited access to play spaces rendered most refugee children ‘invisible’ (Turner, 1967), and limited access to other play resources, such as toys, created rifts between children who had toys and children who did not, making the latter targets of bullying and exclusion. However, all case study families owned smartphones, and these acted as lifelines that helped maintain family bonds and provided children and their families with an escape from their liminal state. Children spent a lot of time watching television and playing games on their parents’ smartphones, allowing them to play in virtual spaces when their physical play spaces were highly restricted. Furthermore, this study, in line with VASyR 2018, found that poverty was a main factor leading to no or low school attendance and increased school dropouts for young children (Section 7.2.4). Lack of schooling robbed children of play opportunities including safe spaces to play, people to play with, and access to a variety of play materials.

Moreover, all four case study children’s access to play partners, whether adults or children, was limited. Within the family unit, all four case study children lived with both their parents and their siblings. The case study children played with their siblings, but also tended to spend a lot of time alone. Similar to other cross-cultural studies that have demonstrated how adults, mainly parents, support and nurture children’s play in different ways (Whiting, 1963), this study found that while parents commented that they did not often play with their children, observations showed that both mothers and fathers did regularly play with their very young children (0-4 years old) and created play opportunities for the case study children (4-8 years old) by providing conditions to help their play flourish, such as inviting friends and family to play with them, proposing games, and providing children with make-do props for play. In this way, all the parents encouraged their children to play
and promoted cultural and religious practices in their play. Maria’s mother and Ahmed’s father played music that reflected their culture and religion, encouraging their children to dance traditional dances and play out scenes rich in cultural significance. Parents who were financially restricted from buying toys for their children or taking them outside also created play materials and spaces for their children, such as Munia’s father who built his children a fort out of mattresses and used his arms as swings for his young children (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.2.1). However, as questionnaire respondents noted, parents’ own problems including poor physical health, stress, depression, and trauma affected their interactions with their children, leading the parents to be less engaged than they formerly had been in their children’s play (Hyder, 2005), less patient and displaying increased aggression (Sim et al., 2018; Usta et al., 2019).

Beyond the immediate family, the Iraqi and Syrian young children’s separation from their extended families further reduced their opportunities for play and learning in the home environment. This, along with feeling shunned by Lebanese society, affected the social matrix in which they developed. As their social circle decreased in size, so did their opportunities to play and learn from adults and peers ‘interpersonally’ and ‘intrapersonally’ (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57), and to learn about and practice cultural customs and traditions. Additionally, similar to findings from Göncü, Mistry, and Mosier’s (2000) study, children’s play partners were dependent on who their parents deemed appropriate for them to play with. Play partners tended to be relations, or on occasion to include members of the same nationality and religion, in line with the formation of communitas (Section 7.2.2). Children who did not attend school were deprived of opportunities to make new friends of their own choosing, and those who attended low-quality schools mostly missed out on opportunities to play in open spaces, time for play, children to play with, play materials, play routines, and trusting adults, and to progress within their Zones of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

While MEHE has worked to increase school access for all children regardless of nationality, recent reports suggest that half of Syrian children in Lebanon were not attending school (MEHE, 2016). Furthermore, not all schools had adequate resources for children (Hoteit, 2006) and this study found that a major factor apart from poverty that kept children away from school or that pushed children to leave school in Lebanon was the poor quality of education they received (Section 7.2.4). My observation in the school opened by the church for Iraqi children showed that space was limited and toys were almost non-existent. However, children made friends in school and formed healthy and trusting relationships with their teachers, factors that Maria’s and Kefa’s parents found extremely important and contributed to their children feeling less fearful, more sociable, and bringing more stability into their lives. Mariana, the teacher in Kefa’s school, allowed the children plenty of time to play at school as she considered play extremely important for those children who were ‘imprisoned’ in overcrowded homes with depressed adults and who were taking on huge responsibilities to provide for their families. Mariana recounted how to help children overcome their traumatic experiences, she spent a lot of time talking with children and their parents, stressing the importance of maintaining a relationship between the home and school environments (Bruce,
2012a) and tried to create a learning environment where teachers and students were supportive and accepting of one another, where children had a safe space to play and ‘let loose’ - to escape for a while from their difficult lives outside school. However, as noted by questionnaire respondents and Colette (IRC), many parents did not recognise school as a place for play, but associated it solely with studying. Thalia similarly informed me that during the school year ‘Finish, there’s no more play, it’s now time to study’. Therefore, while Thalia believed that children ‘have fun’ in play and can ‘absorb more and mature’ in play, she also saw play as a distraction from learning. This belief further limited children’s access to play opportunities and the benefits children can receive from play.

Social and cultural variables affected ‘children’s opportunity to create time-spaces for play’ (Lester & Russell, 2010, p.33). For instance, children’s play opportunities were limited by social expectations in their new environments, which were dictated by children’s nationality and legal status. The children in this study were expected to remain silent or very quiet both indoors and outdoors, in the house and on the streets, and did not have access to the kinds of spaces – such as those that school could provide - to be children, to make noise and express themselves however they wanted to. Racism led to unfair social expectations regarding which children were allowed to make noise and to be seen, and which were not.

Lack of other play resources meant that the one resource some children had abundance of, time, was not used to its full potential. Time without safe spaces for play and play materials, but especially without people to play with, meant that children were frequently bored, and this worsened their ability to cope with their liminal situation, affecting their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. Children who were forced into child labour and who therefore did not attend school were also deprived of time to play. While this study did not generate observations of working children’s days, unstructured conversations with 12-year-old Kamal gave the researcher insight into the difficult circumstances of his solitary work selling flowers on the street, where he could not play. Colette also noted that while street and working children might play amongst themselves, the excitement that they exhibit when informed that they can access the IRC’s different learning and play opportunities points to their deprivation from and yearning for these opportunities. Katz’s (2004) study found that in Howa, Sudan, much of children’s work when herding with other children was simultaneously playful, whereas those who herded alone missed out on play opportunities. However, the context of children herding in Howa is very different to that of refugee street and working children in the northern suburbs of Beirut, where the added components of fleeing armed conflict, their irregular status, racism, harassment, oppression, and abuse in Lebanon, as well as the different physical aspect of their surroundings on city streets versus those in the village and the different cultures, further affected children’s work and play.

As Trickey and Black (2012) note, traumatised children exhibit many symptoms of distress, including re-experiencing past events through dreams and in play, by being on guard and constantly on the lookout for danger, and by needing to know what is happening in their
environment. Deep-rooted trauma can result in aggression, anxiety, phobia and depression, depending on the child. This pushes children into survival mode, draining their energy and diverting them from activities that might better sustain their physical, mental and emotional development and well-being, including play. Maria had recurring nightmares from which she woke screaming, and often would not leave her mother’s side. Kefa was still traumatised and was too afraid to leave the house. Ahmed and Muna were terrified of aeroplanes and still screamed, cried and hid when they saw or heard them. However, Hyder (2005) notes that re-establishing play and education opportunities, restoring routine, and strengthening families and communities of children who have been subject to conflict and displacement can help them recover from their traumatic experiences. That being said, although school and play greatly helped Kefa to overcome some of his fears, they did not eradicate them, and at the time of data collection he still exhibited a need to stay in control, both in his play and in his interactions with people. Unexpected events, including fireworks and the breaking of a car window outside his apartment (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.3), re-ignited fear in Kefa and fuelled his feelings of lacking control of his surroundings and life. Kefa was also highly aware of his forced separation from his extended family whom he loved and missed deeply, of the fact that his educational attainment in school was limited, and of his indefinite temporary displacement in Lebanon. Lack of stability pushed Kefa into survival mode, and while play provided him with a space to be in control when he had no control over his own life, his constant need to control his environment regularly took his attention away from play, as did his lack of play resources and playmates.

7.3.2 Constructions of play in Lebanon

Young refugee children’s lack of play opportunities (Section 7.3.1) as well as barriers that shaped their childhoods (Section 7.2) further shaped the constructions of their play. This section begins by discussing how children used play as an escape from liminality through creativity, imagination, and transformation. It then looks into how children’s play themes were shaped by cultural and social norms and by their unique experiences in their home countries and in their liminal state, and finally reflects on how gendered identities and expectations around gender were re-enacted in children’s play and arose in parents’ interpretations of children’s play.

7.3.2.1 Escaping through creativity, transformation and imagination

While Foucault’s concept of heterotopia did not originate within the field of play studies, it has been adopted by play scholars to theorise and better understand the significance of physical and virtual play spaces. This study moves these debates forward by creating further links between Foucault’s (1986) concept of heterotopia and Bruce’s (1991, 2017, 2020) twelve features of play, conceptualising how children’s total engagement in free-flow play transports them into a heterotopia, helping to articulate how armed conflict and displacement affect the play of young Iraqi and Syrian refugee children living in Beirut’s northern suburbs.
This study found that although the case study children had very limited play resources, including limited spaces in which to play, they all continued to play when the conditions were right for them (Bruce, 1991, 2017, 2020). Children exhibited power and agency by actively using imagination, problem-solving, negotiation, flexibility and creativity (Bruce, 1991, 2017, 2020) to transform their limited resources into rich play opportunities, and this included their ability to negotiate real spaces as heterotopian spaces (Foucault, 1986). Children made use of every inch of space in their homes, transforming and reconfiguring their own spaces in play. Imagination allowed children to escape from liminality, to be transported to a wedding hall in Iraq or Syria, to an imaginary playground in Lebanon, and to re-enact the war zone that Ahmed had fled in the Idlib countryside. Creating heterotopian spaces in play allowed children to advance from the literal to the abstract (Bruce, 1991, 2017), thus transforming ‘mundane and real and institutionally defined’ spaces to ‘a place of fantasy and possible transgression’ (Rasmussen, 2004).

In line with Foucault's (1986) suggestion that in a heterotopia diverse incompatible spaces that reflect the society in which one exists can be juxtaposed in one single real place, this study found that each bedroom and/or living room in the case study children’s homes was transformed into multiple and diverse sites where children could rehearse possible pasts or futures, pretend and create alternatives to the way things were, are, or could be, and draw on real experiences in their play (Bruce, 1991, 2017, 2020). For example, the bedroom in which Maria, Gerges and their parents slept became a stage for theatrical and dance performances, a wedding hall, a hiding place, and a playground. While Richards (2013) observed how children’s play transformed a playground designed by adults, this study found that spaces that were not created by adults as ‘places for children’ (Rasmussen, 2004, p.156) were assigned meaning and significance through children’s imagination, and in ways unintended by adults. One feature of play (see twelve features of play, Bruce, 1991, 2017) that was found to be particularly important to sustain play, especially in light of the highly restricted resources available to them, was children’s use of everyday objects in their play, reassigning their purpose as materials required for their play theme - a pencil case became a flag, small plastic blocks represented cars and wrenches, two ladders provided endless possibilities of climbing techniques, a bandage and belt became a gun sling, and a small container turned into a bathtub.

Although the children in this study played, and although they transformed spaces and objects in their play, their physical mobility and action were constrained by the confines of their cramped homes. For example, while Maria, Gerges and their neighbours played ‘flag’ in a tight space at the foot of the bed, instead of running and catching each other they simply stepped forward and snatched the ‘flag’. Ahmed was the only focus child in this study who played outdoors during the day of filming, and his outdoor play presented a stark contrast to his indoor play. Ahmed’s indoor play and physical movement was not only restricted by the confines of the small living room/bedroom but also by his father’s request that he ‘Play, but not this play where you jump and put and take and bump into things’, leading Ahmed to stop leaping around the room and instead to lie down...
on a mattress and pretend to shoot his *gun*. By contrast, Ahmed’s parents did not restrict his outdoor play, where he enjoyed freedom of movement, albeit in a still constrained space, where he could interact with nature, draw on a variety of objects in his play, and vary his physical activity (Chapter 5 Section 5.3.1). Ahmed’s father explained that Ahmed ‘*thinks he is playing here, but this is not really play*’ - he associated play with far greater freedom, mobility and space to run, which they had enjoyed in abundance in Syria but not in Lebanon. There were therefore multiple factors that constrained how refugee children could play, including restrictions as displaced persons on their mobility in the city, lack of public play spaces, and surveillance.

Foucault (1986) suggests that heterotopias are usually linked to ‘slices in time’ and are fully functioning when individuals reach an ‘absolute break with their traditional time’ (p.26). This can be directly linked to Bruce’s twelve features of play, as she notes that children concentrate deeply in free-flow play and cannot be easily distracted, and that when the conditions are right, play flows and is sustained. Accordingly, when the conditions for play are right, children can transport themselves from one time and place to another, reaching heterotopia. As discussed in Section 7.3.1, lack of play companions further constrained children’s play. While both solitary and group play are important for children (Bruce, 1991, 2017), the four case study children regularly had no option but to play alone, leading to anger, boredom, sadness and aggression, and parents explained that their children took out their boredom and anger on their toys. While the case study children exhibited creativity and absorption in solitary play, the excitement and happiness they showed when other children visited them or joined them in play was evident. When playing with other children, the case study children were in the ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), timelessly absorbed in play. Their interaction with older and younger peers led to the development of new and creative ideas, leading to the progression of the children’s play that was emotionally, physically, socially and cognitively stimulating (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, when Kefa was playing with his brother and neighbours, the children started by building a road, progressing their building methods as they went along and as more children joined in their play. They then drove their ‘cars’ on the road, and when it eventually broke, they negotiated and resolved how to mend it. The children began by beeping their horns when they reached the damaged road section, but then decided to lift their cars over the broken road to get to the other side, and finally mutually decided to turn the game from driving up and down the road to fixing the road using ‘wrenches’. This example illustrates the power of imagination to free children from constraints to their play, but nonetheless, such rich opportunities and collaborative negotiation of play were infrequently observed during this study.

Children also used smartphones to watch cartoons and play games in virtual spaces, allowing them to resist and negotiate spatial boundaries (McNamee, 2000) and escape from their liminal state into a ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault, 1986). Children kept in contact with distant family and communities via smartphones, allowing them to overcome the distance of physical separation. Children could exert their agency and power in virtual spaces. As Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) studied the internet and websites as cultural spaces where childhood can be explored, this study found that watching
cartoons and popular series on parents’ smartphones via YouTube and on television, as well as playing games on phone applications, opened children’s lives to new cultures, traditions, languages and religions. While Christian Iraqi parents did not want their children interacting with Muslim or Syrian children, both Iraqi case study children enjoyed watching cartoons and programs that depicted Islam and Arab cultures. Children who were physically confined to their small apartments could explore online spaces and identities, such as becoming doctors, dentists, or hairdressers, and had ample virtual resources to sustain this play. Therefore, similar to how physical activity and sports programmes can bring together people from different religious, social, geographical and cultural backgrounds and lead to positive change (Kobayashi et al., 2013; Skinner et al., 2008; Welty Peachey et al., 2015), play, whether in physical or virtual spaces, could aid in the formation of communitas among children of different religions, ethnicities and nationalities.

Iraqi and Syrian children’s liminal state meant that they were on the edge, somewhere between the life they had once lived and the life they hoped to live. As ‘temporarily displaced’ persons, they were made to feel that they would never belong in Lebanon, and were at the edge of the local society and community, as policies as well as practices promoted their ‘invisible’ and ‘polluting’ status. Being kept on the liminal edge of society reinforced the violation of their rights, and seeped into their play. Poverty further characterised their ‘outsider’ status - Kefa was obliged to hover on the side-lines of a football field because he could not afford to pay to access the field, allowing him to observe but not participate in play. Lack of space to play literally forced Kefa to play on the precarious edge of the balcony, and Ahmed to play on the edge of the porch. While children exerted their agency by challenging their liminal position and jumping off the edge, at other times they lost their balance and fell off the edge, leading to painful consequences for their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

7.3.2.2 Play Themes

In this study, children’s play was shaped by cultural and social norms that emerged from their lives before conflict and displacement and from their liminal state. Themes in play, games played, and social expectations in play were learned from parents and families, teachers, peers, religion and wider social circles. Cultural events such as weddings, traditional dance and music were re-enacted and represented in children’s play, reviving aspects of their home countries. Parents encouraged children to do this as they did not want their children to forget their roots. Language was also an important cultural tool that children used in their play (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). After attending a Lebanese school, Maria played games that were common in Lebanon and reflected Lebanese culture. When speaking, Maria alternated between Lebanese Arabic, Syriac, English and French, reflecting her exposure to multiple cultures before and after her exposure to conflict and forced displacement to Lebanon, which emerged in her play. In another example, the ‘say’ game that Ahmed played with his Syrian neighbour drew on the importance of rhyme and oral poetry in the Bedouin culture. In the ‘say’ game, themes of ‘brides’, ‘dancers’ and ‘family’ emerged, reflecting important aspects of the children’s cultures and experiences (Bruce, 2012b). Power was exercised
in the ‘say’ game, as Ahmed and his neighbour took turns initiating the game or deciding not to reply to the other’s advances, and trying to come up with rhymes that were ‘shameful’ and therefore ‘funny’. This is similar to Arluke (2002) and Meire's (2007) finding that children exercised power by playing out themes that parents deemed ‘less innocent’ or ‘dirty’. Moreover, religion and religious practices held great importance in both Iraqi and Syrian children’s lives. Children represented religion and religious practices in their drawings, block constructions, photographs, and imitative play. Religion was also present in children's online games and cartoons (Section 5.3.2).

All four case study children represented their immediate and/or extended family members in drawings, block constructions, photographs and in their sociodramatic play, exploring the relationships in their lives through play (Kinkead-Clark, 2017; Long, 2013). Children depicted past events they had witnessed and experienced in their play. While Muna enjoyed playing ‘house’, Ahmed’s frequent play with a gun, belt, and bandage reflected traumatic events he had witnessed in his village in Syria which he re-enacted to try to make sense of them (Bruce, 1991, 2017; Levin, 2003).

### 7.3.2.3 Gender in Play

Building on previous cross-cultural studies that demonstrate the different ways in which adults support play (Whiting, 1963), the different understandings of play (Göncü et al., 2000), and the diverse ways in which children practise play (Kinkead-Clark & Hardacre, 2017) in different communities, this study found that gendered identities and social and cultural expectations around gender were re-enacted and reinforced in Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s play and arose in parents’ interpretations of children’s play. While parents noted that they allowed both boys and girls the same freedoms in play, they added that boys and girls had different play interests. This study found that although parents did not intend to differentiate between boys and girls, they did have different expectations of what was acceptable in girls’ and boys’ play. While Alaa interpreted his younger sister Muna’s block play to be a construction of a machinegun, her mother rejected this interpretation since she considered gun play to be boys’ play. Muna’s mother considered the ‘marble run’ block set a boys’ game since ‘it has marbles and requires building’, and was therefore ‘difficult for girls’. Girls’ play was also constructed by themes deemed appropriate for them to re-enact and represent in play. For instance, Muna’s mother forbade her daughter from play-breastfeeding her doll since it was ‘shameful’.

Moreover, research has shown that children explore the societies and relationships in their lives through play (Kinkead-Clark, 2017; Long, 2013). In this study, Muna’s, Maria’s and Ahmed’s parents discussed the significance of weddings in their communities, showing me photographs and videos of their and their relatives’ wedding ceremonies before the emergence of armed conflict in their home countries, and described the tragedy of being forbidden from celebrating weddings during times of armed conflict. Consequently, both boys and girls played weddings (Maria and Ahmed), and this points to the significance assigned to weddings and marriage in Arab culture and
in these children’s and their families’ lives. However, when talking about their own children’s futures, only the parents of girls talked about their daughters getting married when they grew up, and no parents mentioned their sons’ future marriage. Furthermore, as discussed previously, both male and female children’s freedom and resources for play were restricted by the circumstances of their refugee status, in terms of mobility, physical action, interaction with other children, exploring and developing trusting relationships with other children and adults, and interacting in the local community. However, social media acted as a resource where children could escape for a while, and both resist and exert a degree of power over their own lives and choices.

7.4 Ways of improving refugee children’s play opportunities in Beirut’s northern suburbs

A key aim of this study was to identify how Iraqi and Syrian refugee children’s opportunities to play could be improved in Beirut’s northern suburbs. Bridging between Bruce’s (1991, 2017, 2020) twelve features of play and Foucault’s (1986) concept of heterotopia has helped articulate my findings and observations of young Syrian and Iraqi refugee children’s play in Beirut’s northern suburbs. This link has shed light on how children living under such difficult circumstances and who were experiencing extreme hardships were able to overcome obstacles to play, and thus escape from their liminal state where they could take control and exhibit agency. Through transformation, imagination, creativity, and problem-solving, children transformed objects and created play spaces and, even under the most difficult conditions, children found ways to play, and their play flowed. Children entered into a heterotopia when playing alone and in groups, and their play advanced and changed as they kept control in play. The real experiences and places that children drew on reflected not only the skills they had learned, their culture, religion and traditions, but also the hardships they had endured and were still enduring, their fears and concerns. As the literature emphasizes, play is highly important for refugee children as it allows them to make sense of and overcome past traumas and difficult experiences. That being said, while the link between Bruce’s and Foucault’s work has shed light on what free-flow play entails and how Iraqi and Syrian refugee children living in Beirut’s northern suburbs entered heterotopias when they engaged in free-flow play (refer to Section 7.3.2.1), it has also highlighted the absence of play or children’s lack of full engagement in play in particular situations. As Bruce (1991, 2017, 2020) notes, play flows when the conditions are right, so this study found that certain conditions were necessary for children to feel safe enough to enter into a heterotopia and for their play to flow, for the children to feel free, safe and comfortable moving from the literal to the abstract. When the children’s stress-response system was continuously activated, when they were on high alert, constantly monitoring their surroundings, worried about their family members who were separated from them, concerned about their and their family’s safety and legal status, taking on the responsibility of providing for their families, and unable to access healthcare in time of necessity, this left children with very little mental, physical
and emotional capacity to focus on play. Moreover, although children transformed spaces and objects in their play, the physical constraints of their home environments severely restricted their play and their embodiment in play, particularly children living in cramped and unsanitary accommodation with no access to the outdoors, to nature, or to other play spaces. Isolation from the familiar communities they had known in their native countries, coupled with being treated as polluting beings in the host nation, further restricted children’s play. Although solitary play is important, and while all case study children exhibited enjoyment in solitary play, having no choice but to spend most days playing alone due to isolation from their community, breakup of families, inability to access schools and make friends, and parents’ preoccupation with a myriad of problems, led to children being bored, angry and resentful and often prevented them from engaging in and enjoying play even if they had the time and space for it.

As such, to ameliorate children’s play opportunities in Lebanon, multiple aspects of children’s lives must be addressed. Here, the Froebelian principles of the integrity of childhood in its own right, the relationship of the child to her/his environment, the indispensable benefits of play, and the right of the child to protection from harm and abuse can act as important guides for all people and organisations that interact with children, including policy influencers and policy makers aiming to improve all children’s experiences of childhood and play opportunities in Lebanon, with both permanently and temporarily displaced children accepted as having the same rights as the local population. Promoting Froebel’s principle of the integrity of childhood in its own right could therefore provide a robust cornerstone upon which to build respect for all children as agentic human beings with rights that must be respected, regardless of nationality, religion or social status. But in itself, this is far from enough to engender profound and long-lasting change.

The following are potential solutions that, if enacted in unison, could begin to improve refugee children’s play opportunities and their rights, including their right to play. This study has found that facilitating application for and renewal of legal residency in Lebanon, as well as reinstating UNHCR registration, are steps towards overcoming these problems and promoting children’s rights, including their right to play, in Beirut’s northern suburbs. Moreover, the scale of the refugee presence in Lebanon and the unforeseeable end to the situation means that there is a need to shift strategies from short-term to short- and long-term planning, moving from emergency response to sustainable projects and solutions that will promote stability, security and belonging in children’s lives. Long-term funding with the help of the international community is necessary to ensure that children and their families’ most basic rights are met, that children are not forced into child labour, and that programmes set up to help young children by keeping them off the streets and providing them with lifelines such as educational, psychological, and play opportunities can continue to operate successfully. Moreover, cash assistance remains a necessity for these families and for the promotion of children’s rights.

Regarding their education rights, although MEHE took initiative to make public education available for all children regardless of nationality, questionnaire respondents, case study participants and
professionals all mentioned several factors that stood in the way of children’s school attendance including costs of transportation and school supplies, schools not allowing refugee children to enrol, low quality of public schools, corporal punishment and bullying. Further steps must be taken to facilitate children’s transportation to/from school and provide them with necessary school supplies. There is also much work to be done to enforce policies and ensure that schools are not turning refugee children away when they are meant to be enrolling them. Furthermore, this study has found that high-quality provision in public schools is pivotal to ensure children’s right to education and play, as well as many other interrelated rights. This is not limited to learning outcomes but entails providing children with a safe environment to learn and play with the help and support of knowledgeable, caring and well-trained teachers. Corporal punishment should be criminalized and article 186 repealed, removing ambiguity from the article and stating clearly that no form of violence, including all physical, verbal, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse, will be tolerated. Corporal punishment and bullying should be banned from schools, and parents should be taught alternative ways of disciplining their children. Both teachers and children should be taught tolerance and schools must strive to tackle racism by addressing these issues directly and by including parents in the process. Teachers should be provided with the necessary support, tools, and training to care for the hundreds of thousands of children who have experienced unimaginable hardships due to armed conflict. Furthermore, providing children and their families with psychological help, and ensuring that they are aware of the availability of these services is essential. Additionally, provision of adequate school resources including space for play, materials for play and time for play as well a safe and secure environment that promotes children’s play is essential for children to reap the innumerable benefits that play has to offer, especially for those who are stripped from these opportunities at home. Many parents value play and look for ways to create play opportunities for their children, at a time political structures and barriers severely limit children’s access to such opportunities. However, play is sometimes seen as a distraction from learning. In such cases, parents should be educated about the importance of play for children and their role in progressing children’s play. As family is ‘at the heart of the educational process in the Froebelian tradition’ (Bruce, 2012b, p.20), maintaining strong contact between the school and the family should be ensured in order to support children in their education more effectively.

Freely accessible high-quality pre-primary education is essential for children, including all young refugee children and other disadvantaged children, where qualified teachers support children through child-centred approaches and where they have access to adequate play spaces and materials. MEHE should therefore increase investment in pre-primary education to provide all children especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds with high quality ECEC. This may in turn allow mothers who are caring for their children with no extended family or external support to return to the workforce, reducing reliance on older siblings to generate an income, and allowing children who care for their younger siblings and other disabled family members to return to school. However, for this to happen, refugees must be entitled to the right to work, which in turn requires a fundamental change to their status as temporarily displaced people.
Opening children’s centres in Beirut’s Northern suburbs/ Mount Lebanon and ensuring transportation to and from the centres would offer highly valuable support for young families in multiple ways, providing them with support and a wide range of services in a safe and inclusive environment, where men, women and children can begin to feel a sense of ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1969). Through these centres, children could access play spaces, materials, and people to play with. Children and parents could access health and therapy services, and parents could receive advice and support regarding birth registration, pre-school and school access, and registration with UNHCR. Such centres could also provide confidential advice and support for victims of domestic abuse. Parental education and support is highly important to ensure that parents have the necessary tools and guidance to navigate their own hardships following their traumatic experiences of armed conflict, the destruction of their homes, the break-up of their families, and unexpected hardships that they have to endure in Lebanon. Moreover, such centres could help parents understand and deal with their children’s behavioural manifestations through healthy strategies. By removing the stigma from seeking mental health support, and by educating parents about the symptoms of mental health issues such as PTSD and depression, both children and their parents may be more willing to seek help and begin to overcome their traumas.

This study has further highlighted the damaging effect that child labour and early marriage can have on refugee children living in Beirut’s northern suburbs. Child labour and child marriage, which both rob children of their right to education and expose them to innumerable rights violations, are two major issues that must be immediately revised and addressed by the GoL. Child labour, as Colette who works with street and working children explained, is frequently seen as a last resort for families living in extreme poverty where fathers cannot find work, are separated from their families or are afraid of their own visibility as workers, and consequent arrest due to their irregular status. 12-year-old Kamal worked 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, under harsh work conditions, only to be paid the equivalent of 20GBP per week. Kamal worked in order to help his father who did not have a stable income, and because he was bored of sitting at home all day as he did not attend school. Lifelines should be put in place in an attempt to alleviate the factors that drive children into the labour force, and laws around child labour should be enforced on local employers who exploit children. The GoL should also set the minimum age for marriage at 18 years. Knowing that economic hardships, safety issues, and disrupted education are some of the main factors pushing girls into early marriage (Michael et al., 2018; Mourtada et al., 2017), lifelines should be made available to Iraqi and Syrian families, directly addressing these factors, and providing them with alternatives to marrying off their children at a young age.

Finally, freely accessible and well-maintained public spaces for play, particularly in areas where families live in small, overcrowded and unsafe spaces are essential to help promote and realise all children’s right to play. The GoL must therefore address the scarcity of public spaces available to children of all nationalities, particularly for those with limited financial means, and invest in safe, inclusive public spaces that are accessible to all.
Figure 7.2 below presents a visual representation of the study’s findings (Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6) in light of the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 1. This model draws on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) model, Froebelian Principles, the new sociology of childhood, children’s rights, Vygotskian sociocultural theories of play, Foucault’s theory of power, and Turner’s theory of liminality, visually representing how barriers (detailed in Sections 7.2 and 7.3) stand in the way of the happy, healthy and playful child who has rights, forcing the child into a state of liminality. Barriers (represented by concentric circles of barbed wire) obstruct the relationship between the child and the family, community, civil society, UNHCR and GoL, and other wider historical, political, cultural, economic, religious and social systems. Following armed conflict and displacement to Lebanon, the agentic child, who is at the heart of the family, is physically separated from immediate and extended family members, and the parent-child relationship is strained due to consequent trauma, depression and stress. The child’s community is fractured due to conflict and displacement, but also due to the child’s ‘polluting’ and irregular status in Lebanon, inability to access school or accessing low-quality schooling, and lack of public space for play. Tensions arise between GoL, UNHCR, and civil society, as mismatch emerges between different policies and between policies and practice. Moreover, the wider systems that affect the child’s whole environment are embedded in and promote inequality. These barriers push the child into a state of liminality, with no way out. While some lifelines have emerged within these overlapping and interrelated systems to target diverse aspects of children’s lives and help them overcome these barriers, misalignment between these lifelines forces children to remain in a state of liminality. One way of visualising this is by thinking of a combination lock. When its ‘notches’ are misaligned, the combination lock remains locked. It is only when the dial is turned and those notches are aligned that the lock can be opened. Similarly, it is only when the lifelines are aligned, that children can find a permanent passage out of their liminal state into their post-liminal state where they can enjoy a happy, healthy and playful childhood where they are free to exercise their rights.

7.5 Study limitations

The findings and recommendations of this study must be seen in light of its limitations. While the methodological approach of DITL (Cameron et al., 2006; Gillen et al., 2007; Hancock & Gillen, 2007) was chosen specifically as a data collection approach to work with families who might move from their homes or travel out of Lebanon at any given point in time, and while it gave great insights into a day in the lives of Iraqi and Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, the resultant data was time-space-specific and therefore is not generalizable to the case study children’s wider childhoods and play experiences. Moreover, introduction of a researcher and recording equipment inevitably alters children’s and adults’ behaviours, and changes events during the day of filming that might not have taken place had the researcher not been there. However, in this study DITL involved multiple visits to each home, both before and after the day of filming. This was partly because negotiating access was at times far from straightforward, and I wanted at all costs to avoid introducing stress or
uncertainty into these vulnerable families’ lives, such as by rejecting kindly offered invitations to eat with them or to return to their homes. During these visits, I gained a strong sense of each family’s routines and interactions, and I became welcomed into each family as a trusted guest.

Furthermore, the study design included data triangulation (interviews with parents and children, interviews with professionals, questionnaires with Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese adults, and observations in a school) to gain a broader perspective. Administering 100 questionnaires, although not enough to make results statistically generalizable, allowed for greater understanding of how complex factors affecting case study children and their families were shared among refugee populations and local Lebanese residents living in the area of Beirut’s Northern suburbs. Moreover, while random sampling allows ‘each person in the sampling frame […] an equal chance of being included in the sample’ (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p.277), convenience sampling was my best option within the dispensary setting, given the ‘hard-to-reach’ nature of the people whose lives I was focusing on. Another limitation of the questionnaire was that the question regarding refugees’ level of education was introduced a few days into questionnaire distribution, and led to 29 missing responses.

The political and security situation in Lebanon at the time of the study dictated what areas I could and could not visit. Although I had received approval from an organisation to conduct fieldwork in an informal settlement in the Beqaa Valley, ethical considerations and safeguarding issues meant that I had to forgo that opportunity. Moreover, as I conducted the case studies with Kefa and Maria during the summer months, I could not conduct observations in their schools since school was closed for the summer, limiting my chances of observing their interactions with other children and teachers as well as their access to play opportunities in the school setting. To compensate for this, I visited Kefa’s school a few months later with the intention of observing his play in school, but unfortunately Kefa was absent on that day and I was unable to arrange an alternative day. Instead of focusing on Kefa, I observed the interactions between students and between students and the teachers, and made notes on the children’s play and resources available. These observations were most helpful as I developed the study findings and reflected on the data I had collected for each case-study child.

This study has introduced a new conceptual framework, drawing on Froebelian principles, the new sociology of childhood, children’s rights, Vygotskian sociocultural theory, and Turner’s theory of liminality to create a multifaceted lens through which to conceptualise and study the complexity of issues at play in the lives of young refugee children. That being said, there is further scope for future development of this model and for the advancement of research into the childhoods and play of young refugee children.
Figure 7.2: Model of study findings in light of conceptual framework
Lastly, a lot of planning, flexibility, and determination went into collecting data for this study, which was by no means a straightforward task. It required flexibility to change and adjust plans as the study progressed and deliberations with my supervisors to discuss and find solutions to issues as they arose. When searching for case study participants, I reached out to many families, organisations and gatekeepers before I was able to secure the final four case study families who took part in this study. I had initially found three potential participants who had agreed to take part in the study, but it became clear to me that they were no longer interested after several failed attempts at planning an introductory visit to their homes. Institutional rules and ethical considerations regarding my personal safety restricted what areas of Lebanon I could visit for data collection, and although I had secured a site that would have potentially reaped very rich data for the study, I had to forgo that opportunity. In another example, I ended a case study with one potential participant after being informed about domestic abuse, which could have potentially placed me in a dangerous situation (Chapter 2 Section 2.6.3).

As a young woman visiting strangers’ homes, I had to anticipate the possible dangers I was placing myself in, and attempt to mitigate those dangers. That being said, visiting participants on my own put them more at ease and created a more trusting dynamic between us, which I believe led to greater openness on their part. This however sometimes placed a heavy load on me as a researcher, as participants looked for an emotional connection and shared sometimes harrowing stories with me. The case study mothers with whom I spent a lot of time during my visits all mentioned that they enjoyed or looked forward to my visits. By visiting their homes, it seemed as though I provided them with a connection to the outside world, a world where they were not wanted, and gave them a feeling of acceptance and belonging, and the belief that someone cared about them and truly listened to them. Although the women could identify with me as a young woman, they also looked upon me as someone who did not have to lead their lives, and that gave them hope for their own future lives.

Following fieldwork, some participants kept in touch with me, giving me updates about their situation:

- One year after conducting fieldwork with Muna and her family, the family was evicted from the home that I had visited since they could no longer afford their rent. They moved into a wooden structure in the Beqaa Valley where Muna’s father explained his children had much more space to play, but that their living conditions had worsened.
- Two years after conducting the study with Maria and her family, and following several failed attempts at applying for resettlement, they had finally been called for interviews to be resettled to Canada. They were still awaiting the decision of their final interview at the time of writing this thesis.
One year after my visits to Kefa's family, Kefa's father moved the family to a smaller and cheaper 'concierge' room in Mount Lebanon as he could no longer afford the high rent of their past accommodation. Since his new home was much farther away from the school he had been attending, Kefa could no longer take the bus to school and was forced to drop out.

Concerning the Syrian family I had conducted fieldwork with for my masters dissertation in 2015, they were resettled to Canada three years later. They informed me that they were very happy in Canada, that they had a new-born daughter, and that their two young boys were finally attending a good quality school.

As these examples demonstrate, for some refugees the lifelines do eventually connect (see Figure 7.2), giving children and their families a permanent escape from liminality. However, for others, the lifelines do not connect, pushing children and their families further into liminality.

7.6 Implications and future recommendations for research

In this section, I state the study's implications for further redressing the gap in knowledge concerning refugee children's play and childhoods, the development of theory, research methods and methods of gaining children's ongoing informed assent, filling a literature gap on the lived experiences of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, and make recommendations for future research.

Play is indispensable for children and is arguably crucial for refugee children who have witnessed and experienced unimaginable atrocities, have been separated from families and communities, have been forced to leave school and have been stripped of structure and stability in their lives. Regardless of the countless benefits of play for children's holistic development, and its role in helping them recover from trauma, make sense of real life events, and establish structure following environmental changes and life disturbances (see Chapter 1 Section 1.4.1), in-depth studies conducted into the childhoods and play of young refugee children are comparatively few and far between. This is particularly significant for Lebanon, a country that has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, half of whom are children.

This thesis therefore addressed aspects of this gap in the literature, focussing on the ways in which constructions of refugee children's childhoods and play in Lebanon have been shaped by armed conflict and displacement, and how Syrian and Iraqi refugee children's play opportunities might be improved in Lebanon. My conceptual framework brought together different yet complementary conceptualisations of childhood, play and human rights, creating interdisciplinary dialogue between them, and constructing a broad lens through which to study the three major and directly interlinked themes of childhood, play, and conflict and displacement. The combination of theories used to shed light on this study's data is, to my knowledge, a unique approach to studying children's childhoods and play, particularly in refugee situations (see Chapter 1 Figure 1.1).
This study is particularly relevant and timely in the face of unfolding events in Syria and Iraq and the unprecedented scale of the influx of refugees into Lebanon (OCHA, 2016; OCHA et al., 2015). As half of all refugees in Lebanon are children (UNHCR, 2016), this study has addressed the lack of in-depth research into how armed conflict and displacement affect young Syrian and Iraqi children’s play and experiences of childhood in Beirut’s northern suburbs, advancing literature on overlapping urban displacement, and its unique consequences for children. It studied the UNCRC and its lack of enforceability in wake of the refugee crisis in Lebanon. It critiqued the GoL’s lack of adherence to the UNCRC which it has ratified, and the discrepancies between policy and practice, particularly in light of contradictions between the UNCRC and the 1951 Convention and its 1967 protocol which the GoL has not ratified.

This study has also highlighted profound discrepancies between relief organisations’ policy and practice, as well as diverging goals that led to tensions between and among the different organisations and the GoL, which all had profound implications for young children’s rights, their childhoods and their play, particularly in the northern suburbs of Beirut.

Seventy-three percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon lived in rented accommodation in 2017 (UNHCR et al., 2017), as opposed to refugee camps, and this study which was conducted in participants’ homes in Beirut’s Northern suburbs, lends unique insight into the lives, childhoods and play of young children who tend to be under-represented in research because of their age, displaced status and their location. Including young children’s voices in the study was a main consideration when designing the study’s methodology. Therefore, while ‘A day in the life’ was adopted as a central approach to this study (Cameron et al., 2006; Gillen et al., 2007; Hancock & Gillen, 2007), it was adapted in several ways to fit the aims of this project. Unlike previous examples of using the DITL methodology that have mainly been conducted with very young children aged under 4 years, this study was conducted with 4-8 year olds. As a result, the approach was amended to include not only observations of children but also participatory methods to encourage children’s own voices. These participatory methods included photovoice, drawings, and block constructions, as well as gaining children’s own perspectives on a day in their life when re-watching the compilation video. To my knowledge, DITL has never been used as an approach to data collection with children in Lebanon, or with refugee children. I would argue that for all its limitations, it offers a highly valuable and powerful lens for studying lives in flux.

Moreover, creating the colouring book information sheets for the young case study children introduced an innovative, fun, engaging, informative and age-appropriate method of gaining children’s informed assent when conducting research (Chapter 2 Section 2.6.1). The simple ‘thumbs up’ and ‘thumbs down’ signs proved extremely effective and culturally appropriate to gain ongoing assent throughout the research process, and established a mechanism by which the children could easily manifest their willingness to continue to be involved in the study, or to withdraw, through a simple gesture.
Given the dearth of in-depth research on and with Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, particularly those who fled Iraq in 2014 following ISIS invasions of their towns and villages, and having heard personally and directly from Iraqi refugees when conducting my Masters dissertation in 2015, about how they felt forgotten and that their situation had been overshadowed by the arrival of Syrian refugees, I purposefully incorporated both Iraqi and Syrian young children and adults in this study. By including both Muslim Syrian and Christian Iraqi children, this study redirected research around Arab childhoods away from generalisations that tend to focus on the Islam aspect (Long, 2011) and instead showed how childhoods across the Middle East and within individual countries are diverse and constructed according to diverse parameters, including economic, political, social and cultural factors (Zubaida, 2011). Overall, though, this study found that children are children, that their parents had similar key concerns for their children, and that despite sometimes profound differences in socio-cultural-historical-political influences on their lives, and despite the seeming absence of ‘communitas’, all the study participants’ lives had a great deal in common.

While research into children’s schooling in Lebanon tends to be conducted in public and private schools or in non-formal educational settings (Shuayb et al., 2014, 2016), this study provided unique insight not only into the refugee children’s home lives, but also into an informal school for Iraqi children in Lebanon. This informal school, as well as the dispensary where questionnaires were distributed, were run by a Catholic nun, thus beginning to fill a gap in the literature on the important role played by female leaders within local faith communities (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017). Knowing that over half of refugee children in Lebanon do not attend school (UNHCR et al., 2018), using the dispensary as a hub for questionnaire data collection proved fruitful to learn about the experiences of Iraqi and Syrian refugees as well as economically disadvantaged Lebanese locals in the vicinity, whether their children attended school or not. Identifying such social hubs as sites for data collection could be replicated in future research into hard-to-reach and diverse community groups.

With regard to future recommendations for research, childhood and play in the Middle East are two under-researched areas that urgently need further attention. Focusing particularly on young refugee children in Lebanon, a wide array of further research is needed into young refugee children’s lives in order to further unpick the complex interplay of issues that might ameliorate lifelines and provisions that could help promote their rights. Future research might focus on a day in the life of refugee children who live in diverse types of accommodation (residential accommodation, informal settlements, non-residential accommodation) across Lebanon’s governorates, and within different family structures. Particular focus should be paid to young street and working children, as direct observation of and research with those children may bring great insight into the interaction between work and play within different work settings (in agriculture, on the streets, etc.), their experiences of working with other children, and their encounters with Lebanese citizens and local authorities.

Knowing that the participants were living in a volatile state in Lebanon and could have left Lebanon or moved homes in Lebanon at any given time, DITL approach (Gillen et al., 2007) provided me
with the necessary structure based on ethnographic principles to study the lives of young refugee children in Lebanon within the limited amount of time I had during my funded doctoral study. As such, this data is specific to these case study participants and the observational data represent events that took place on one day in those children’s lives and are therefore not generalizable. A suggested plan to develop future research in this area could therefore focus on conducting a longitudinal ethnographic study with young Iraqi and Syrian children and their families in Lebanon, documenting the ways in which different factors over time shape and reshape how childhoods are constructed, and how play unfolds over time as children and their families navigate their liminal state, or as they finally enter into the long-awaited post-liminal state. Moreover, while I included young children between the ages of 4 and 8 years in this study who had experienced both armed conflict and displacement, there is further need to conduct research into the consequences of armed conflict and displacement for children between the ages of 0 and 3 years, with the possibility of including young children who have fled armed conflict as well as those who were born into refugee families in Lebanon.

While some research exists on refugee children’s education in Lebanon (particularly in public, private and non-formal educational settings), and a few studies have addressed issues in ECEC in Lebanon (Faour, 2003; Hoteit, 2006), there is a need for more research into pre-school provision for children in Lebanon and for longitudinal research into the effects of pre-school (non-)attendance on children’s present and future wellbeing and development, particularly for children who come from low SES backgrounds.

7.7 Final comments

Kefa, Maria, Ahmed and Muna are four out of hundreds of thousands of children who have witnessed, experienced and/or fled armed conflict in their home countries and who have sought refuge in Lebanon. While each participant’s story was personal and unique, the suffering endured by Iraqi and Syrian questionnaire respondents and by case study children, their parents and siblings, their neighbours, and their relatives was palpable, infiltrating every aspect of their lives. All case study participants, as well as most Iraqi and Syrian questionnaire respondents, were burdened not only by their personal experiences of armed conflict and separation from their families and communities but also by their liminal state in Lebanon. In this liminal state, children were stripped of their childhood status and reduced to ‘polluting’ beings who were obliged to remain invisible. This study therefore highlighted the devastating impact of children’s experiences of war on their wellbeing and their rights to childhood and play, and the persistently disabling impact for displaced children and families of living with only liminal status in a new country.

Play is indispensable for all children. It is poignantly needed by young Iraqi and Syrian children who have experienced terror, oppression, persecution, loss of loved ones, destruction of homes, instability and insecurity as a result of exposure to ISIS, living through war, and being forcefully
displaced to Lebanon where they are indefinitely obliged to remain in an ‘in-between’ state of unwontedness. This study has identified how, despite their traumatic experiences and constrained lives in Lebanon, through play, children experienced holistic development and built friendships and relationships with adults and peers that aided their self-expression and enhanced their sense of belonging. The sheer excitement children exhibited when playing with friends, neighbours or cousins pointed to the invaluable importance of play and community to children. Children who had been separated from their families and communities kept cultural and religious practices alive through their play. Play – both physical and virtual - offered children an escape from their liminal, polluting, and invisible status into a heterotopia where they could create alternate realities and transform power structures. Children exerted their power in play by transforming objects and spaces to meet their play needs, and by re-enacting past experiences and making sense of them. Through play, children built resilience allowing them to begin to resolve and overcome their traumatic experiences.

However, in line with Diprose’s (2015) critique of the resilience ‘trend’, this study emphasizes the role of the international community, governmental and other organisations, civil society, and practitioners, in providing suitable conditions for children to begin to recover from their life-changing experiences and to thrive, rather than merely survive. By viewing refugee children as human beings in their own right, by amending policies to include children’s voices, by ensuring the UNCRC is integrated into Lebanese laws, by prioritizing refugee children’s child status over their ‘temporarily displaced’ status, by ratifying the 1951 convention and its protocol, by providing refugees with opportunities to maintain livelihoods and to form communities, by making play and high quality educational opportunities freely available and accessible to children in Lebanon, refugee children could begin to feel a sense of belonging and community and recover from their past experiences, allowing them a permanent escape from liminality.
References


Committee on the Rights of the Child. (1996b). *General guidelines regarding the form and contents of periodic reports to be submitted by states parties under article 44, paragraph 1 (b), of the convention* (General Guidelines for Periodic Reports CRC/C/58).


https://www.counterextremism.com/


http://reliefweb.int/


https://doi.org/10.3898/136266215814379736


Fawcett, L. (2013). The Iraq war ten years on: Assessing the fallout. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 89(2), 325–343.


Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2017). *Presentation by Dr. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Co-Director of the UCL Migration Research Unit to the UNHCR High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges Panel 1, Session 1 on Reception and Admission*. UCL Migration Research Unit.


https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007114514000282


https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430500393763


https://doi.org/10.1080/01650250050118303


https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2018.1516800


https://doi.org/10.1080/14733280701631775


https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2000.2.1


Marshall, D. J. (2015). ‘We have a place to play, but someone else controls it’: Girls’ mobility and access to space in a Palestinian refugee camp. *Global Studies of Childhood, 5*(2), 191–205. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610615586105


Morrow, V. (2011). *Understanding children and childhood* (Centre for Children and Young People Background Briefing Series, No. 1). Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University.


OCHA. (2016). *Lebanon overview (May 2016).*


https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2009.00139.x


http://rgdoi.net/10.13140/RG.2.2.35641.83042


https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610615587798


Middle East: Integrating scalable psychological interventions in eight countries. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 8*(sup2), 1388102.
https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2017.1388102


https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.947834


https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2015.1078125


UNHCR. (2009). *UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas*.

UNHCR. (2011). *UNHCR resettlement handbook*.

UNHCR. (2014). *Policy on alternatives to camps*.


http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf


https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516670881


https://doi.org/10.1080/09663699725495


https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X15616833


## Appendix A: Link between methods and RQs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1: How have armed conflict and displacement shaped the childhoods of young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees in Lebanon?</th>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study using DITL</td>
<td>Through semi-structured interviews with parents and semi-structured interviews with case study children, data was collected around children's experiences of armed conflict, internal displacement, forced displacement to Lebanon, and the many violations of their rights, in addition to how factors such as power relations, irregular status of 'displaced persons' and gender shape their childhood experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Questionnaires provided insight into refugee respondents’ and their children’s diverse experiences of armed conflict and displacement, as well the impact of the Lebanese response to their displacement on their lives. Data regarding the living situation of the wider refugee and local Lebanese populations was collected, which both directly and indirectly affect children's childhoods. Respondents were asked about their children’s school attendance and whether children contribute to the household income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews with professionals</td>
<td>Professionals provided insight into the many rights violations faced by young Iraqi and Syrian children in the Northern suburbs of Beirut/Mount Lebanon, particularly with regards to child labour, healthcare, and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| RQ2: How have armed conflict and displacement shaped their play opportunities and constructions of play in Lebanon? |
|---|---|
| Insight into four case study children's play opportunities and constructions of play was gained through semi-structured interviews with parents, semi-structured interviews using participatory methods with children, and an observation of a day in the life of each case study child. |
| Respondents were asked where their children played | |
| Professionals provided insight into the play opportunities available to young Iraqi and Syrian children within the wider community, and the ways in which their many rights violations have negatively impacted on their play. |
| A school observation supplemented the case study observations of children's play at home by providing insight into play opportunities and constructions of play within a school setting. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ3: How can opportunities for refugee children’s play, through accessing play areas, resources and interacting with others, be improved in Lebanon?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents provided recommendations regarding how their children’s play opportunities can be improved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals provided recommendations regarding how play opportunities can be improved for children within Beirut’s Northern suburbs/ Mount Lebanon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Unsuccessful recruitment attempts

In May 2017 the resident social worker at the dispensary introduced me and my study to a group of 15 Iraqi and Syrian women, of whom three Syrian women agreed to participate in the study. Although I tried to make contact with the women over the following few weeks to secure a home visit, it was clear that none of the three women were willing to take part in the study. I accepted their decision and returned to the field to seek other willing participants.

After returning to the field, I began to negotiate consent with several other families. While some attempts at recruitment were successful, others were not. I decided to end the study with some families for several reasons including reports of domestic abuse (see Chapter 2 Section 2.6.3), inability to agree on a date for a future home visit, and parents informing me that I would be left alone with the children during the day of filming.

I had hoped to recruit participants who lived in informal settlements in the Beqaa region or in the North of Lebanon in order to get a broader and more diverse view of the lives of child refugees in Lebanon. Through two friends, I was able to gain access to contacts in two organisations, one who worked with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and another who worked with Nabad Association for Development, an NGO that works toward ‘sustainale development of individuals and the society’ (http://www.nabadlb.org). After contacting the NRC, I was informed that they did not have enough resources to accommodate my request to visit an informal settlement. Conversely, while I did get approval from Nabad Association for Development, the two informal settlements that they had suggested I visit were on the margins between ‘yellow’ and ‘red’ zones (Chapter 2 Figure 2.1) and therefore lay outside the remit of my Ethics approval.
# Appendix C: Overview table of methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Method Details</th>
<th>Voice or Video Recording</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaires</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n=10</td>
<td>Collect demographic data in addition for reasons for leaving home country and description of life in Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n=100 (+4 discarded)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>n=5; T=3hrs37mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews give 'voice' to participants, particularly to the young children, and allow for different viewpoints to emerge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interview with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n=3; 5 hand-written A5 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>n=11; T=1hr53mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using participatory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>n=3; T=3hrs21mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviews with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>n=4; T=20hrs15mins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acquire background information of the participants and the contexts in which they live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n=1; 29 hand-written A5 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field Notes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>181 hand-written A5 pages</td>
<td>Supplement recorded interviews/observations and include thoughts and possible emerging themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journal Entries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>156 hand-written A5 pages and 7 typed pages</td>
<td>Write down thought processes around research, feelings, developing fieldnotes, emerging themes and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gain understanding of individual experiences and wider refugee situation in Lebanon in addition to children's rights infringements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Pilot questionnaire

Pilot Questionnaire

Introduction

My name is Sandra El Gemayel and I am a PhD student at the UCL, Institute of Education in London. My research aims to look at the impact of armed conflict and displacement on the play of young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees in Lebanon and to improve children’s play opportunities in Lebanon.

As part of my research I am giving out questionnaires to get an overview of the demographics of residents in this area in addition to their living conditions and the reasons why people fled their home countries to come to Lebanon.

You decide if you want to take part and, even if you start filling out the questionnaire, you can choose not to answer any particular questions. In case you decide to withdraw midway through the study, all your data will be completely withdrawn and will not be used.

On the final page of this questionnaire you will find a feedback form which will help me understand whether the questions were clear, intrusive or distressing, whether the questionnaire was too long or not, and what changes you suggest I make to this questionnaire.

All data is kept anonymous. Once you have filled out the questionnaire please return the questionnaire to me.

Part I: Consent

1) Would you like to continue with this questionnaire?
   a. Yes
   b. No*

*If No, please return the questionnaire

Part II: General Information

2) Please select your gender
   a. Male
   b. Female
3) **Please select your age range**
   a. Below 18
   b. 18 - 25
   c. 26 - 40
   d. 41 – 60
   e. Above 60

4) **Marital Status**
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Divorced
   d. Widowed
   e. Other (Please specify) ..............................................................

5) **Country of Origin**
   a. Syria
   b. Iraq
   c. Lebanon
   d. Palestine
   e. Other (Please specify) ..............................................................

6) **Which religion do you identify with (Please specify sect in brackets)**
   a. Muslim (.................................................................)
   b. Christian (.................................................................)
   c. Other (.................................................................)

*If you have children **below the age of 18**, please answer questions 7-9. Otherwise please move directly to question 10.

7) **Number and ages of Children**
   Number of girls ........... Ages of girls .........................
   Number of boys ........... Ages of boys .........................

8) **Do your children attend school?**
   a. All my children attend school
   b. Some of my children attend school (Please specify age and gender of children who attend school):
      ..............................................................................................
   c. None of my children attend school (Please specify why):
      ..............................................................................................
9) Where do your children play? (You may choose more than one answer)
   - At home
   - In the streets
   - At school
   - In a public park
   - Other …………………………………………………

Part III: Living Situation

10) For how long have you been living in Lebanon?

11) In which area do you currently live? …………………………………….

12) Which answer best describes your type of accommodation
   a. Concrete Shelter
   b. Tent
   c. Garage
   d. Wooden Shelter
   e. Container (Iso box)
   f. Other (Please specify) ………………………………………………

13) Who lives in your accommodation (Please specify number in brackets)?
   - Husband/Wife (     )
   - Mother
   - Father
   - Children (     )
   - Brothers (     )
   - Sisters (     )
   - Cousins (     )
   - Other (Please specify)
     ……………………………………………………………………………………………

14) Please specify your daily household income
   a. Income below 1USD (1,500 LL) per day
   b. Income between 1USD and 10USD (1,500LL - 15,000 LL) per day
   c. Income between 10USD and 20USD (15,000 LL – 30,000LL) per day
   d. Income between 20USD and 40USD (30,000LL – 60,000LL) per day
Part IV: Life in Lebanon

15) Please specify your household’s source of income (You may select multiple answers)

- My job (Please specify type of job)
- My spouse’s job (Please specify type of job)
- My child’s job (Please specify child’s age, gender and type of job)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Donations
- My family/friends send me money from abroad
- Other (Please specify)

16) Are you registered with UNHCR?

a. Yes
b. No*

*If No, Please explain why

17) What events led you to leave your country of origin and reside in Lebanon?

- e. Income above 40USD (60,000LL) per day
18) Why did you choose Lebanon as a country of refuge?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your collaboration is very much appreciated. If you have any further questions regarding this study please contact me by sending an email to s.gemayel.14@ucl.ac.uk

Feedback

1) Were the questions clear?
   - Very Clear
   - Somewhat Clear
   - Not Clear
   - Completely Unclear

2) Were the questions intrusive?
   - Not intrusive at all
   - Not intrusive
   - Somewhat intrusive
   - Very intrusive

3) Did any of the questions cause you distress
   - None
   - One of two
   - A few
   - The majority

4) Is the questionnaire too long?
   - No, I had more than enough time to fill it out
   - No, I had just enough time to fill it out
   - Yes, I had to continue filling it out after meeting with the doctor
   - Yes, I did not have time to complete it

5) If there is any question you would add, change or remove, please mention it here

Thank you for your feedback ☺
Appendix E: Final questionnaire

Final Questionnaire
Doctoral Research Project
May 2017 – January 2018

Introduction

My name is Sandra El Gemayel and I am a PhD student at the UCL, Institute of Education in London. My research aims to look at the impact of armed conflict and displacement on the play of young Iraqi and Syrian child refugees in Lebanon and to improve children’s play opportunities in Lebanon.

As part of my research, I am giving out questionnaires to get an overview of the demographics of residents in this area in addition to their living conditions and the reasons why people fled their home countries to come to Lebanon.

You decide if you want to take part and, even if you start filling out the questionnaire, you can choose not to answer any particular questions. In case you decide to withdraw midway through the study, all your data will be completely withdrawn and will not be used.

All data are kept anonymous. Once you have filled out the questionnaire, please return the questionnaire to me.

Part I: Consent

1) Would you like to continue with this questionnaire?
   a. Yes
   b. No*

*If No, please return the questionnaire

Part II: General Information

2) Please select your gender
   a. Male
   b. Female
3) Please select your age range
   a. Below 18
   b. 18 - 25
   c. 26 - 40
   d. 41 – 60
   e. Above 60

4) Marital Status
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Divorced
   d. Widowed
   e. Other (Please specify) ..............................................................

5) Country of Origin
   a. Iraq
   b. Lebanon (If you are Lebanese, please only answer questions 1-16)
   c. Palestine
   d. Syria
   e. Other (Please specify) ..............................................................

6) Which religion do you identify with (Please specify sect in brackets)
   a. Muslim ..............................................................
   b. Christian ..............................................................
   c. Other ..............................................................

7) Please specify your level of education ........................................

8) Do you have children below the age of 18 years?
   a. Yes
   b. No

*If you answered “Yes”, please answer questions 9-11. If you answered “No”, please move directly to question 12.

9) Number and ages of Children
   Number of girls .......... Ages of girls .................................
   Number of boys .......... Ages of boys .................................
10) **Do your children attend school?**
   
   d. All my children attend school
   
   e. Some of my children attend school (Please specify reason in addition to age and gender of children who attend school):
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   
   f. None of my children attend school (Please specify reason):
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

11) **Where do your children play? (You may choose more than one answer)**
   
   • At home
   • In the streets
   • At school
   • In a public park
   • My children do not play
   • Other …………………………………………………………………………………

**Part III: Living Situation**

12) **For how long have you been living in Lebanon?**

13) **In which area do you currently live?** …………………………………………………

14) **Which answer best describes your type of accommodation**
   
   a. Tent
   b. Garage
   c. Studio apartment
   d. One-bedroom apartment
   e. Two-bedroom apartment
   f. Other (Please specify) …………………………………………………………………………………

15) **Who lives in your accommodation (Please specify number in brackets)?**
   
   o Husband/Wife (   )
   o Mother
   o Father
   o Children (   )
   o Brothers (   )
   o Sisters (   )
   o Cousins (   )
Part IV: Life in Lebanon

16) Please specify your household’s source(s) of income (You may select multiple answers)

- Your job (Please specify type of job)
- Your spouse’s job (Please specify type of job)
- Your child’s job (Please specify child’s age, gender and type of job)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Please specify type of help received)
- Donations
- My family/friends send me money from abroad
- Other (Please specify)

17) Please specify your monthly household income

- Income below 30USD (45,000 LL) per month
- Income between 30USD and 300USD (45,000 LL - 450,000 LL) per month
- Income between 300USD and 600USD (450,000 LL – 900,000 LL) per month
- Income between 600USD and 1200USD (900,000 LL – 1,800,000 LL) per month
- Income above 1200USD (1,800,000 LL) per month

18) Are you registered with UNHCR?

- Yes
- No*

  *If No, please explain why

19) What events led you to leave your home country and reside in Lebanon?
Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your collaboration is very much appreciated. If you have any further questions regarding this study please contact me by sending an email to s.gemayel.14@ucl.ac.uk

20) Why did you choose Lebanon (and not another country or another area in your home country) as a country of refuge?

21) Do you feel that refugees are welcome in Lebanon?
   a. Yes
   b. No
      Why/ Why not?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your collaboration is very much appreciated. If you have any further questions regarding this study please contact me by sending an email to s.gemayel.14@ucl.ac.uk
Appendix F: Interview questions

**Interview with Parents/ Guardians**

**Warm-up questions**

1. What is your relationship to "name of the child who is participating in this study"?
2. What is your age? Marital status? Religious sect? Level of education?
3. What country are you from? What area did you live in? Can you describe it to me? Could you tell me a bit about your life in your home country before the war started?

**Experiences of armed conflict**

4. What events led you to leave your country of origin?
5. Did you or your child(ren) witness any events related to armed conflict? Could you tell me about it?

**Experience of migration**

6. Could you describe for me your family’s journey from your country of origin to Lebanon? (Including information about the route, smugglers, checkpoints, safety, health, food, how long it took, means of transport etc.).

**Lebanon: Registration and socioeconomic situation**

7. For how long have you been living in Lebanon?
8. What area do you live in now? What type of accommodation do you live in (tent, apartment, garage etc.)? How long did it take to arrange where to live?
10. Are you registered with UNHCR? If no, why not?
11. Is your socioeconomic status different to what it was in your country of origin? Could you explain any differences to me?
12. What is your current source of income? (UNHCR? Do you and/or your partner work? If yes, what does this work constitute of? Donations? Loans?)

**Children, work and play**

13. How many children do you have? Please specify age and sex.
14. How would you describe an average day in the life of your child?
   a. Do your children attend school? If no, why not? If yes, how long did it take after you arrived in Lebanon before your child began to attend school?
   b. Do your children do any paid work? If yes, please give details (What do they do? Where? How often? For how long? Why?)
15. How do you think armed conflict has impacted your child’s experience of childhood?
16. How do you think displacement has impacted your child’s experience of childhood?
17. How would you define the term 'play'? Do you think play is important for children? Why?
18. How would you describe the difference between play opportunities (places to play, resources to play with, people to play with, time to play …) that were available to your children before coming to Lebanon compared to those available to them since you came to Lebanon?
19. Do you think that your child’s experience of war and displacement has affected the way in which he/she plays? Could you tell me in what ways you think your child(ren)’s play has changed or has not changed?
20. What themes arise in your child’s play? Could you give me some examples? Do you interfere in their play on certain occasions or stop their play? When? Why?
Gender
21- Do you think there is a difference between girls’ and boys’ experiences of childhood? If yes, why?
22- Do you think that girls’ and boys’ play opportunities differ? If yes, how do they differ and why?
23- How do girls' and boys' behaviours and themes in play differ?

Possible change needed
24- Does your child have access in Lebanon to support him/her through his/her experiences of armed conflict and displacement? If yes, what are these services (social workers, therapist, teachers in school, UN provides services?)?
25- In your opinion, what other services should be made available to improve children’s experiences of childhood (this may include services for adults which in turn affect children)? and their play opportunities?

End of Interview
26- Is there anything else you would like to add or ask me about?

Interview with Children
Age: ____________ Gender: M/F
1- Could you draw me a picture of something you enjoy doing?
2- What is happening in the drawing?
3- When and where do you do this?
4- With whom do you do this?
5- Do you like to play? Can you give me examples of play? What games do you like to play?
6- Who do you play with?
7- Do you remember what you used to play before coming to Lebanon? Who did you play with? When and where?
8- What do you do during the day when you are not playing?
9- Do you go to school?
   If no: Do you want to go to school? Why/ why not?
   If yes: Do you like going to school? Why/ why not?
10- What do you enjoy doing most every day?
11- Is there anything else you would like to add or ask me about?

Interview with Teachers
- Name Of school: _____________________________
- Location of school: ___________________________

Information about the school
1- Can you tell me about this school? (public/private; total number of students; average number of students per class; student-teacher ratio; Nationalities of students; Ages of students; curriculum followed, gender …)
Information about teacher’s experience in the school

2- For how long have you been teaching and where have you taught? For how long have you been teaching in this school?
3- What subjects do you teach?
4- How many children are in your class?
5- What are the ages and nationalities of your students?

Information about the children

6- For how long have the Iraqi/Syrian children been attending this school?
9- What have the children shared with you directly, or communicated in other ways, connected to their experience of armed conflict and displacement?
10- How have these experiences affected their experience of childhood? (ex: change in responsibilities like work and supporting the family, gender-specific changes like child marriage or inability to leave the home because of parents’ fears, change in cultural and traditional practices, relationship between parents/guardians and children, feeling of safety and stability, feeling of belonging, freedom, PTSD, change in daily routine, school attendance, play opportunities, mental health …)

Play

11- How would you define the term ‘play’? Do you think play is important for children? Why?
12- Do the young children have opportunities to play while they are in school? When/where/ who with?
13- What resources do the children have in this school to support their play? (spaces to play, play equipment …)
14- How often and for how long do they play when they attend school?
15- Have you witnessed children play outside of school? Do you know if the young children have opportunities to play when they are outside of school? When/where/ who with?
16- Do you think that the children’s experiences of war and displacement have affected their play? (if yes) In what ways?
17- Have any measures been taken to support children and enable them to come to terms with what has happened to them?
18- Have you observed any particular themes in their play? Are there recurring themes in their play? Have their play themes changed since you first met them?

Gender

19- Do boys and girls play together in this school?
20- Do you think that girls’ and boys’ play opportunities differ? If yes, how do they differ and why? (ex: playing outdoors (parks, streets, playgrounds), access to toys, types of toys, types of play (ex boys allowed to played football but not girls), are girls expected to help mothers with housework while fathers take sons out?)
21- Do you think that girls’ and boys’ behaviours and themes in play differ? If yes, how do they differ and why? (ex: more vs less aggressive aspects of war, gun play, airplane fighting, bombing, ISIS, playing house, family, baby, ball games, cultural aspects show in play, fighting in play, physical aspects, animal play …)

Nationality

22- Do Iraqis, Syrians and Lebanese play together in school?
23- Do Iraqi’s and Syrian’s and Lebanese’s play opportunities differ? If yes, how do they differ and why? (ex: reaction of neighbours or locals, financial situation, access to schools and types of schools, difference in parents’/guardians’ views on play …)
24- Do you think that Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese behaviours and themes in play differ? If yes, how do they differ and why? (ex: more or less aggression, fear, no play, war play, cultural themes, family play, animal play, physical play, etc.)

Possible change needed

25- What services, if any, do the children have access to in Lebanon to support them through their experiences of armed conflict and displacement?

26- In your opinion, what other services could or should be made available to improve children’s experiences of childhood (this may include services for adults which in turn affect children)? and their play opportunities?

End of interview

27- Is there anything else you would like to add or ask me about?

Interview with Street and Working Children Manager:

Name: (optional)

Age:

Name of organisation:

Speciality:

Years of experience:

Years/months working for this organisation:

Country of Origin:

General questions:

1- Could you tell me about your role at this organisation and what is required of you?

2- What are the nationalities and ages of the people you work with? For how long have they been in Lebanon?

Impact of living situation on refugees' lives:

3- In what type of accommodation and with whom do the children that you work with live?

4- Are you aware of any children living on the streets? If yes, what led them to this situation? Who do they live on the streets with?

5- What sorts of issues do you come across when working with young refugee children? (Child Poverty; Child Labour; Physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect, imprisonment; unaccompanied minors; Physical and mental problems; gang affiliation, trafficking; sex workers). If they experience abuse, where do they experience it and by whom? (Home, streets, when working, in school, parents, neighbours, people from same or different nationality…).

6- Do the issues differ between Iraqis, Syrians and Lebanese? If yes, how?

7- What are the reasons behind these issues? (existed before war and displacement, experience of armed conflict, experience of displacement, stress, living conditions, no stability, many people living in the same place, no power or freedom, cultural differences, clashes between nationalities…)?

Street and Working children:
8- From what you have seen or discussed with the refugee children, how do the children spend their day?
9- Why do the children work? (unaccompanied minors, parents’ irregular status, parents sick, to get out of the house, child wants to work, child forced to work …)
10- What types of jobs do the children do? How many hours a day/ days a week do they work?
11- What dangers are the children exposed to on the streets or at work?
12- Do the children attend school? If no, why not. If yes, what type of school? How often do they attend?

Gender
13- In your experienced view, do the boys and girls you come in contact with face similar or different issues? If they differ, how and why do they differ? (Early marriage and child pregnancy, FGM, Child abuse (psychological, physical, sexual), types of work, household work, schooling …)

Childhood and Play
14- How would you describe the childhood experience of the child refugees you work with? Does work affect their experiences of childhood? If yes, How?
15- Can you talk to me about the play opportunities available to the child refugees you work with? (Where? With who? With what? When? Do they work instead?)
16- Do Lebanese, Iraqi and Syrian parents value play?
17- Can you tell me about the themes that arise in children’s play? What are your views on why they play out these themes?

Mental and Physical Health
18- How would you describe the mental and physical health of the refugees you work with? Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese?
19- Have you come across cases where you feel that the parents’ mental and physical health affects the child? How? (children’s own health, going to school, working, taking on family responsibility, children becoming stressed …)
20- Do the adult and child refugees have access to therapy sessions or services related to their mental health? What kinds of therapy, how frequent, length of therapy? Who provides these sessions? Are they free? What barriers to accessing therapy are you aware of?

Services needed for a change
21- What can be done to improve the life of child refugees in Lebanon? What services or support are they in need of? (Services for children that can improve their childhood experience. More awareness-raising campaigns for the local and refugee populations of how children and women should be treated, importance of school, negative effect of work on children, Better integration into the Lebanese community …)

End
22- Would you like to add anything else?
Interview with Doctor

Name (optional):
Age:
Specialty:
Years of experience:
Years/months working in the dispensary:
Country of origin:

General questions about dispensary:
1- Could you tell me about your role at this organisation and what is required of you?
2- What are the nationalities, gender and ages of your patients?

Medical Issues and living situation
3- What sorts of medical issues have you come across at this dispensary? Do they differ from medical issues you see elsewhere? If yes, how?
4- Are there issues that you think might occur but you do not see directly at the dispensary?
5- What are the reasons behind these issues (age-related, stress, post-traumatic stress, living conditions, lack of sanitation, lack of food, lack of clean water, many people living in the same place…)? Who experiences these issues? (Lebanese, Syrians, Iraqis? Young vs old? Males vs Females?)

Children and medical issues
6- What physical and mental health issue have you seen specifically regarding young children? (Please specify nationality and gender). What is the cause of these medical issues? (Is it something that can happen anywhere or is it specific to their living situation in Lebanon or to what they have experienced before coming to Lebanon? Lack of play and recreation?)
7- How would you describe the mental health of your adult patients (Please specify nationality) – (ex: anger, depression, anxiety, drugs, eating disorders, loneliness, PTSD, suicidal feelings, stress, …)? and child patients? Have you seen a link between the mental and physical health of your patients?
8- Do you think that the parents’ mental and physical health affect the child? How? (children's own health, going to school, working, taking on family responsibility, …)
9- Do the adult and child refugees have access to therapy sessions or services related to their mental health? What kinds of therapy, how frequent, length of therapy? Who provides these sessions? Are they free? What barriers to accessing therapy are you aware of?
10- In what ways do you think children’s experiences of childhood have been affected by war and displacement?

Gender
11- Have you found any differences between girls’ and boys’ medical issues? If yes, how and why do they differ? (Early marriage and child pregnancy, Child abuse (psychological, physical, sexual), types of work …)
12- Do the children you have come across work? How old are they? Does this affect them? How?

*Childbirth and Care of very young children:*

13- Is there a difference in childbirth rates between Lebanese, Syrians and Iraqis? If yes, do you have an idea of factors that contribute to any differences (religious, cultural, educational)? How does this affect the children?

14- I have read that women who are going to give birth are allowed 4 pre-natal doctor visits and are allowed into a number of hospitals where the UN covers 75% of the cost for the delivery. Can you tell me about postnatal physical and mental health of refugee mothers? Does a mother's postnatal mental and physical health affect the bonding that happens between her and her baby? If yes, how?

*What is needed?*

15- Are you aware of any services or support that is not available to refugees and you feel they are in need of?

16- In particular, what services or support do you think children need that they do not have access to which can improve the quality of their childhood?

*End*

17- Is there anything else you like would to add?
Appendix G: Information sheet adults

The Impact of Armed Conflict and Displacement on the Play and Childhood of Young Iraqi and Syrian Child Refugees in Lebanon
PhD research project
May 2017 - January 2018
Information for Parents

My name is Sandra El Gemayel. I am a PhD student at UCL, Institute of Education in London.

This leaflet tells you about my research.
I hope the leaflet will be useful, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.

This study involves child participation.
Please would you explain the research to your child and talk over whether he/she wants to take part. I will also ask the children during sessions and make it clear that they can drop out if they wish.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this research is to find out the ways in which armed conflict and displacement affects children’s play and childhood, and to identify ways in which children’s opportunities for play might be improved in Lebanon. Play is very important for children’s development. More and more children are being exposed to war, fighting and displacement from their homes, and there is not enough research to show the effect that this has on children’s play.

Who will be in the project?
The study will include young Iraqi and Syrian children aged 8 and under and their parents/guardians. It will also include people the children come in contact with during their daily lives (e.g. teachers, social workers, service providers or neighbours) in addition to other Iraqi and Syrian refugees.
What will happen during the research?

After getting approval from all parties I will visit the child’s home three times throughout the year in order to:

- Conduct an initial interview (approximately 30 mins.) with each parent/guardian using a voice recorder in addition to follow-up interviews where necessary.

- Spend one whole day with the children (around 6 hours from morning till evening), observing the events that unfold in their daily life, and using a video camera to document these events. I will select 6-10 short episodes and make a 30 minute compilation in order to watch it with the family and discuss it.

- Ask the children to draw a picture and use blocks to construct what they enjoy doing during the day and the games they usually play. I will then interview them based on their drawings and block constructions using a voice recorder (around 15 mins.). I will keep the pictures they have drawn and take photographs of their block constructions for later analysis.

- Give the children disposable cameras that they may use to take pictures of aspects related to their new environment and their play (for example: things they really like doing, people who are important to them, their favourite places in addition to some things they don’t really like doing, places they don’t like that much). I will develop the photographs, give them to the children and will ask the children questions based on the photos they have taken using a voice recorder. I will also get digital copies developed from the disposable cameras both to keep and to share with the children.

What questions will be asked?

I will ask you to take part in an interview with me, and I will ask you what ‘play’ and ‘childhood’ mean to you, about your current lives in Lebanon, your own and your children’s experiences of armed conflict and displacement and about any effects these have had on your child(ren)’s childhood and play.

With your permission and your child’s permission, I will ask your child(ren) to represent aspects related to their daily life and their play (such as how, where, what and with whom they play) through drawing, block construction, and taking photographs with disposable cameras that I will give to your child(ren). I will talk to your child(ren) about their drawings, block constructions and photographs, so I can be sure that I understand their meanings.

Could there be problems for you if you take part?

I hope you will enjoy talking with me. If any aspect of this study is upsetting for you, or if you would prefer not to answer some questions or to stop the interview or observations, then your preferences will be honoured immediately. You may review the recordings and ask for any particular segments or all of it to be excluded from the research. All data will be anonymised and only I will have direct access to it.

I will observe the UCL, Institute of Education ethical codes that require me, at all times, to respect the views of all participants.

Will doing the research help you?

The primary benefits from this work are for the advancement of in-depth understanding of the impact that war and displacement have on children’s experiences of childhood and play. Children will be given copies of all the photographs they take using the disposable cameras and they will be
able to keep the building blocks and colouring pencils introduced during the research. When I have completed my project, I will make short reports for you of the research findings, and illustrated booklets for your child(ren) as a memento of their involvement in the project. I plan on disseminating my findings in diverse formats and to diverse audiences, including conference presentations, and through short reports for the participants and local community.

Do you have to take part?

You decide if you want to take part or not and, even if you say 'yes' and sign the consent form, you can drop out at any time or you can choose at any time not to answer particular questions or for the observations to stop. If you decide to withdraw partway through the study, all your data will be destroyed and no record of it will be kept.

The project has been reviewed by the UCL, Institute of Education Learning and Leadership Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for reading this leaflet.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the research, please e-mail:

Researcher: Sandra El Gemayel
Email: s.gemayel.14@ucl.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Rosie Flewitt
Email: r.flewitt@ucl.ac.uk
My name is Sandra El Gemayel. I am a PhD student at UCL, Institute of Education in London.

*This leaflet tells you about my research.*

I hope the leaflet will be useful, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.

**Why is this research being done?**

More and more children are experiencing war, fighting and displacement from their homes. I want to find out how war and displacement affects children’s play and childhood, and how their play opportunities may be improved in Lebanon.
Who will take part in the project?

Children below the age of 8 and their parents/guardians.

People who come in contact with the children such as teachers or neighbours.
What will happen during the research?

First I will ask you if you would like to take part in the research:

If you would like to take part I will ask you to make a thumbs up sign

If you would not like to take part I will ask you to make a thumbs down sign
If you say 'yes' and make the thumbs up sign then I will ask you to draw a picture to show what you enjoy doing during the day.
I will ask you to play using building blocks

I will give you a camera to take pictures of your environment and of your play. You will get a copy of all the photographs when I develop them.
I will then talk with you about the things you have drawn, built with blocks and taken photographs of (around 15 mins each). I will use a voice recorder and I will keep your drawings and photographs so that I can think about them.

I will spend one whole day with you (around 6 hours) and will observe your play wherever you go (home, school, playground, streets, etc.).
I will use a video camera.

**What questions will be asked?**

I will ask you questions about your drawings, block constructions and photographs to get a better idea about how you spend your days and how, where and with whom you play.

**Could there be problems for you if you take part?**

I hope you will enjoy being part of my research. If any part of this study is upsetting for you, or if you would prefer not to answer some questions or to stop the interview or stop being observed, then we will stop immediately. You may listen to or watch the recordings and ask for particular segments to be excluded. All data will be anonymous (your name will be changed) and only I will have direct access to it.

I will follow the UCL, Institute of Education ethical codes that require me to respect the views of all participants.
Do you have to take part?

You decide if you want to take part and, even if you say ‘yes’ you can drop out at any time or you can choose at any time not to answer particular questions. You can also ask me at any time to stop videotaping or following you around. If you decide to withdraw partway through the study, none of your data will be used.

The project has been reviewed by the UCL, Institute of Education, Learning and Leadership Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for reading this leaflet.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the research, please just ask me or you can ask your parent/guardian to e-mail:

Researcher: Sandra El Gemayel
Email: s.gemayel.14@ucl.ac.uk
Appendix I: Consent form for adults

Consent Form for Parents

The Impact of Armed Conflict and Displacement on the Play and Childhood of Young Iraqi and Syrian Child Refugees in Lebanon

April 2017 - January 2018

I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research. □ (please tick)

I agree to be interviewed and for my comments to be used in the thesis of Sandra El Gemayel and for educational, research and training purposes. □ (please tick)

I will allow the researcher to observe my child using a video recorder. □ (please tick)

I will allow the researcher to interview my child using a voice recorder through participatory approaches including drawing, block construction and photo production. □ (please tick)

I will allow the researcher to take photographs of me and my child which will be anonymised if presented to the general public. □ (please tick)

I understand that any information given by me or my child may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, as agreed in our discussions. Neither my name nor my
child(ren)’s name will be disclosed in the study.

Participant’s Name ………………………………………..
Signed ………………………………………. Date ………………………………………

Researcher’s name ………………………………………
Signed ………………………………………. Date ………………………………………
Appendix J: Case study information sheet

This information sheet has been previously used as a tool to share information across the international team that took part in the research summarised in the Gillen et al. (2018) report.

Section 1: Summary of Essential Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher(s) (state if you were accompanied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (Country; region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (pseudonym)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and age of child (pseudonym)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings, gender and age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date they left their home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date they arrived in Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area and Country of Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 1 date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 2 date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit 3 date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dataset</th>
<th>date and nature of data</th>
<th>location</th>
<th>notes on ability to share data or not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} visit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the full day of data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the compilation video</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iterative stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 2: Summary notes on all visits per case study
Section 3: Responses to Research Questions
Section 4: Any thoughts on early analysis; information; references etc.
Appendix K: Linking theory and data

Following initial coding, I created the following diagram to link between theory, data collected in the field and literature.
Appendix L: Description of final themes and subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War and displacement: From pre-liminal to liminal</td>
<td>Child profiles</td>
<td>Participants’ accounts of armed conflict and displacement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire respondents’ experience of armed conflict</td>
<td>Details about case study children and their families including their life experiences before armed conflict and their experience of armed conflict, internal displacement, and displacement to Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire respondents’ demographic data, their experiences of armed conflict and displacement including date of entry into Lebanon, reasons for leaving home country, and experiences of internal displacement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child refugees’ lives in Lebanon: Continuing Children’s rights infringements</td>
<td>Children living in poverty</td>
<td>Children and their families’ experiences of poverty in Lebanon including their ability to access healthcare, poor living conditions, high rent, low-paid work, child labour and exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Marriage</td>
<td>Refugees’ experiences of early marriage in Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Whether children attend school or not, the types of schools they attend, quality of provision in schools, barriers to school attendance including prevalence of bullying and corporal punishment in schools, ECEC provision and the consequence of family separation on ECEC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family separation: A double-edged sword</td>
<td>The importance of immediate and extended family to children, children's experiences of physical separation from direct and extended family members as a result of war and forced displacement, families’ attempts at getting back together as well as problems that arise when extended families get back together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play ‘in-between’ and the great escape</td>
<td>Multiple aspects of refugee children’s play including the resources available to them for play, the role of fear and surveillance in limiting their play opportunities, gendered trends and expectations in their play, their embodiment in play, their use of imagination and media to escape from liminality, and their integration of culture and heritage into their play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limiting children’s play:Resources, fear and surveillance</td>
<td>Participant perspectives on play, play resources (un)available to child refugees in Lebanon, fear experienced by parents and children that limits their play, and surveillance of children and their play.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play, boundaries and liminality</td>
<td>Children's embodied experiences in play when living as displaced persons in Lebanon and their use of imagination, transformation and media to escape from their liminal state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural heritage and identity in play themes, dance, songs, media, language and rhymes</td>
<td>Examples of children's revival and merging of cultures and identities in play through play themes, dance, songs, media, language and rhymes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelines</td>
<td>Support mechanisms set up for refugees in Lebanon and how they provide, or fall short of providing, refugee children and their families their basic rights.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Participants’ reports of support provided by UNHCR and critiques of UNHCR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other international and national organisations</td>
<td>Participants' reports of support provided by UNHCR partners as well as other organisations and their shortfalls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church</td>
<td>Participants' reports of support provided by the church and its shortfalls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese policies</td>
<td>Participants’ reports of how Lebanese policies have reinforced exploitation and led to further human rights infringements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M: Questionnaire participants’ demographic information

Questionnaire Respondents' Gender

- Male: 63%
- Female: 35%

Questionnaire Respondents' Country of Origin

- Iraq: 36%
- Lebanon: 43%
- Syria: 21%
**Questionnaire Respondents’ Age Range**

![Age Range Chart]

**Questionnaire Respondents’ Age Range According to Nationality**

![Age Range by Nationality Chart]

**Questionnaire Respondents’ Age Range According to Nationality**
Questionnaire Respondents’ Marital Status

Marital Status According to Age Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Below 18</th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-40</th>
<th>41-60</th>
<th>Above 60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marital Status According to Age Range*
Respondents' Religion According to Nationality

Respondents' Religion According to Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 10 20 30 40 50
Number of Respondents

Iraq Lebanon Syria

Muslim Christian
Municipality where Respondents Live

Number of Respondents
Total number of Syrians Living Together According to Type of Accommodation

Total Number of Syrians Living in the Same Accommodation

- Studio Apartment
- One-Bedroom Apartment
- Two-Bedroom Apartment
- Three-Bedroom Apartment
- Other

Total number of Syrians Living Together According to Type of Accommodation
Appendix N: Questionnaire respondents who attended university by nationality and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Attended College/ University</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix O: UNHCR 2017 partners

Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/lb/project-partnerships