

DIASPORIC PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES IN BRAZIL AND HIERARCHIES OF BELONGING: A PERSPECTIVE FROM RESETTLED PALESTINIAN IRAQ WAR REFUGEES

COMUNIDADES PALESTINAS DIASPÓRICAS NO BRASIL E HIERARQUIAS DE PERTENCIMENTO: UMA PERSPECTIVA A PARTIR DE REFUGIADOS PALESTINOS REASSENTADOS DA GUERRA DO IRAQUE

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Abstract: In this article, we examine the historical migration of Palestinians to Brazil, while also exploring the resettlement of a group of just over 100 Palestinian refugees in the country. We seek to focus on this group to attend to specificities in the migratory designations of immigrant and refugee and the complex ways these are activated, their gendered-class formation and distinctions, and important nuances in the overarching category “Arab” (or “turco” or “Sírio-Libanês”) in which differences are subsumed and particularities flattened.

Keywords: Arab Migration; identity; Palestinian refugees; Belonging.

Resumo: Neste artigo, examinamos a histórica migração de palestinos para o Brasil e exploramos o reassentamento de um grupo de pouco mais de 100 refugiados palestinos no país. Focamos nestes grupos com o intuito de entender as especificidades das designações migratórias de imigrantes e refugiados e o modo como são acionadas; suas formações e distinções de classe e gênero; e as nuances existentes na abrangente categoria “árabe” (“turco” ou “sírio-libanês”), a partir da qual as diferenças e particularidades dos grupos não são consideradas.

Palavras-chave: Migração Árabe; Identidade; Refugiados Palestinos; Pertencimento.

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Migratory movements from the Middle East into the Americas, in the late nineteenth century onward, were precipitated by multiple and intersecting factors. European imperial ambitions, along with economic, political, and social conditions, ethnic and sectarian conflict, and forced masculine conscription, brought on by the Ottoman period, are among the factors that affected different regions in different ways and influenced and propelled a wave of Arab masculine migration from what today constitutes Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine into Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century³. Their Ottoman documents became the impetus for the ubiquitous term “turco” to refer to Arabs in Latin American countries⁴. In Brazil specifically, depending on the situation of the term’s deployment as well as the historical moment, “turco” could and can serve as an identitarian marker, and/or a descriptor of frugality, and, more recently, an essentialized indicator of inherent business acumen, among other possibilities. Syrian – Lebanese [*Sírio-Libanês*] – a label that reflects some of the inhabitants of what was Greater Syria under Ottoman rule--has also arisen as a naming convention to refer to Arab Middle Easterners, which conjures monolithic and gendered ideas of Arabness. Contemporarily it marks an economically privileged class, who use their alleged innate merchant propensity to transcend their beginnings as immigrant street peddlers and become elite businessmen⁵. This narrative is not necessarily only an external descriptor, per se, but is often reproduced by “Arabs” themselves. At best, these broad and totalizing strokes elide the gendered, ethnic, economic, and migratory distinctions encompassed within this category. At worst, this particularized form of Orientalizing and self-Orientalizing, can complicate the lives of war refugees, from the late 2000s, whose distinct histories and trajectories challenge the hegemonic constructions of “the Arab” in Latin America’s largest democracy. Thus, this article examines the historical migration of Palestinians to Brazil and draws from field research conducted on Palestinian refugees who were resettled in São Paulo after being displaced as a result of the Iraq War, in 2003. We seek to focus on this group to attend to specificities in migratory designations, such as immigrant and refugee, gendered-class formation and distinctions, management of population flows and important nuances in the

³PINTO, Paulo Gabriel Hilu. *Árabes no Rio de Janeiro*. Uma identidade Plural. Rio de Janeiro: Cidade Viva, 2010.

⁴TRUZZI, Oswaldo. *De mascates a doutores: Sírios e libaneses em São Paulo*. São Paulo: Editora Sumaré, 1992.

LESSER, Jeffrey. *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999.

KARAM, John Tofik. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007.

⁵KARAM, John Tofik. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. *Op. cit.*

overarching category Arab (or “turco” or “Sírio-Libanês”) in which differences are subsumed and particularities flattened.

Framework

In order to provide an ample history of Palestinian migration into Brazil, we engage with historical data from multiple secondary sources that address the legacy of Arab migration into the country as well as through ethnography. The ethnographic data was collected by the authors during fieldwork conducted together and separately between 2008-2012 in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo, and Porto Alegre via participant observation and interviews with the resettled refugees, members of the broader Arab and Brazilian community into which they were emplaced, and the various organizations (nongovernmental and governmental) responsible for their resettlement. The ways in which the *then* recently resettled refugees were labeled and classified—by the established immigrant community and other Brazilians—and simultaneously positioned themselves, demonstrates the importance of engaging with, unpacking, problematizing, and determining the interconnections between different migratory waves. This article simultaneously aims to fill a lacuna in Middle Eastern migration into Brazil, which primarily focuses on Syrian and Lebanese immigration, while also examining how essentialist discourses inside and about established Arab communities impact newly arrived Palestinian refugees.

Palestinians in Brazil: Migration and Refuge

In late 2007, Brazil resettled a group of just over 100 Palestinian refugees who had been displaced and were living in a desert camp in the Jordanian-Iraqi borderlands since 2003. Already refugees in Iraq, they had been relegated to Ruweished camp—a hastily erected borderland camp-- after Baghdad fell and while fleeing persecution and attempting to cross into Jordanian territory, where they were denied entry. When these refugees arrived in Brazil, they were resettled in two states: São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. In the latter, the state which has the largest and most significant long-standing Palestinian community, just over 50 of the refugees were dispersed across small municipalities to ensure, according to the resettlement agency Associação AntônioVieira (ASAV), that they would better integrate. Moreover, the dispersal of the refugees, many of whom needed medical and a series of social services, would ensure that not a single city would bear the weight of

providing these needed services according to the agency⁶. In São Paulo, however, the other group of just over 50 persons, serviced locally by the nongovernmental agency *Cáritas*, were resettled in one municipality that had a long standing, mostly Muslim Lebanese community. In contrast, the logic espoused here was that the refugees would experience a sense of community. Unlike the mostly masculine migration of Arabs aforementioned, the Palestinians from Iraq arrived in varied kinship formations. There were fully constituted families, such as young couples with small children and older couples with adult children. There were single-parent households, elderly couples whose adult children had been resettled in other countries, single elderly men, and single young men. In all, these refugees entered a country with a significant history of Arab presence, including Palestinian. However, the newcomers arrived in a differentiated manner than the already established members of the Palestinian community in Brazil. This difference was not only in family dynamic and provenance, since all of the refugees had been living in Iraq prior to the US invasion, but they all had arrived with refugee status. Moreover, they were all placed in a resettlement program that was meant to ensure their local integration. To understand these specificities and frameworks into which this group was inserted, it is necessary to discuss the broader history of Palestinian immigration in Brazil.

Although not numerically significant, Palestinians began to arrive in Brazil during and among the noteworthy exodus of Syrians and Lebanese out of the Middle East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The majority came from in and around Bethlehem, were predominantly Christian, and migrated to the northeastern part of Brazil⁷. However, because their numbers were not as substantial, and since they were considered to have an undifferentiated “culture, ethnicity and religion” from Syrians and Lebanese⁸, they were at once subsumed and invisibilized in this broader category of *Sírio-Libanês*. As a result, there is a dearth of scholarship about them during this historical moment. Beyond this period, Palestinians arrived in Brazil in more substantial numbers after the partition of historic Palestine (1947) and the establishment of the state of Israel – a period during which Palestinians were relegated to mass expulsion and forced migration within their homeland

⁶ HAMID, Sônia. *(Des)Integrando Refugiados: os processos do reassentamento de palestinos no Brasil*. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2019.

MUNEM, Bahia. *Expulsions and receptions: Palestinian Iraq war refugees in the Brazilian Nation-State*, PhD dissertation (Rutgers University. New Jersey, 2014).

⁷ASFORA, João Sales. *Palestinos: A Saga de Seus Descendentes*. Recife: Indústria Gráfica Editora Primeira Edição, Ltda, 2002.

⁸ KNOWLTON, Clark S. *Sírios e libaneses: mobilidade social e especial*. São Paulo: Anhambi, 1960, p. 37.

as well as outside of it. As Rashid Khalidi⁹ notes, “[The] traumatic events of 1947-49, which cost the Palestinians their majority status in Palestine and their hope of controlling the country, and cost half of them their home, land, and property, are inscribed in Palestinian memory and historiography as al-Nakba, ‘the catastrophe’”. The formation of Israel in 1948 gave way in the 1950s to a steady stream of migrants [forced] out of historic Palestine and influenced by both push and pull factors. That is, socio-economic and political instability arising from dispossession pushed many with little option but to seek economic opportunities elsewhere.

Although not emphasized in the literature, this wave of migration, whose classification as "voluntary" can be argued, derived primarily from Palestinians in the West Bank and Jordan, and who benefited from Jordanian passports. According to Hilal (cited in Baeza)¹⁰, between 1950 and 1967, approximately 375,000 migrants came out of both banks of the Jordan River. Of these, 170,000 departed directly from the Jordanian annexed West Bank. Financial prospects in the oil-producing Gulf led many to Kuwait, while others migrated to Brazil, Venezuela, and the United States. In addition to those who were dispossessed and forced into refugee camps, the political economy and high unemployment rates¹¹ induced many to leave in search of economic stability for themselves and to provide remittances for families they had left behind. Some had relatives and friends who had already journeyed into Latin America and thus facilitated their migration. Similar to the first movement of Palestinians into Brazil in the early twentieth century, those who migrated (immigrants or refugees) beginning in the 1950s were predominantly men, but unlike the first group they were predominantly Muslim, as were the most recently resettled Iraq War refugees¹².

Among the subjects migrating in the 1950s were those who had been dispossessed from their ancestral towns during Israel's formation and sought refuge with their families in the now Jordanian controlled West Bank, as well as those whose ancestral homes were

⁹KHALIDI, Rashid. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 178.

¹⁰BAEZA, Cecilia. 2010. *Les Palestiniens d’Amérique Latine et la Cause Palestinienne* (Chili, Brésil, Honduras. 1920-2010). Thèse de Doctorat, Institut d’Études Politiques, Paris.

¹¹HILAL, Jamil. “Class transformation in the West Bank and Gaza.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 6(2): 167-175, 1977.

¹²Scholars have indicated that the majority of the Arabs who migrated to Brazil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including Palestinians, were predominantly Christian. However, historian Kemal Karpát (1985) argues that the number of Muslims arriving in the Americas during this period has been significantly underestimated, particularly because of clandestine migration. For more information, see KARPAT, Kemal: “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 17(2): 175-209, 1985.

originally in the West Bank. And there were still others whose forced displacement led them to refugee camps in countries neighboring historic Palestine – but for the most part, these were Palestinians from camps located in Jordan. In fact, the largest number of Palestinian refugees resided in Jordan and West Bank had been given Jordanian nationality¹³. In their research about Palestinians in Brazil, Jardim and Baeza¹⁴ detail the story of a Palestinian man whose village near Haifa was seized by Israel in 1948. After being forcibly displaced at age 10, Jundi and his family were relegated to a refugee camp. Moved by Arab nationalism and the quest for regaining Palestine, Jundi, at 17, joined the Jordanian army. However, he was later arrested for planning subversive activities against the Jordanian crown. After being released, he experienced harassment from the authorities and explored his options. Jundi learned that Brazil was recruiting agricultural workers and pursued this alternative. He, like many Palestinians (whether refugee or immigrant), arrived in Brazil with a Jordanian passport and an agricultural visa. The process to acquire these required a transnational network and financial resources. First, a certificate of good conduct from Jordanian authorities in Amman had to be obtained to ensure the requester did not have a criminal record¹⁵. Next, in order to secure a visa to journey to Brazil, the individual had to travel to Damascus, Syria - the location of the nearest Brazilian consulate – where they had to take and pass a cursory health exam and a basic literacy test to ensure a healthy and able body¹⁶. For those who passed these exams, an agricultural work visa was stamped on their passports and served to inform the receiving authorities that these were labor migrants who were entering the country to work explicitly in an agricultural zone¹⁷. Palestinians granted agricultural visas beginning in the 1950s were also given permanent status in the country, according to Law 7.967 of 1945. Established at the end of World War II, this was the primary

¹³TAKKENBERG, Lex. *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

¹⁴JARDIM, Denise Fagundes. *Palestinos no Extremo Sul do Brasil: Identidade Étnica e os Mecanismos Sociais de Produção da Etnicidade*. Tese (Doutorado em Antropologia Social) – Museu Nacional. Rio de Janeiro, 2000.

BAEZA, Cecilia. *Les Palestiniens d’Amérique Latine et la Cause Palestinienne* (Chili, Brésil, Honduras. 1920-2010). Thèse (Doctorat Institut d’ Études Politique). Paris, 2010.

¹⁵ While Jundi had been arrested, it is likely the Jordanian authorities reasoned it would be in their best interest to grant him the certificate in order for him to seek work and residency elsewhere.

¹⁶ Brazilian immigration law required proof of health and literacy: Law 7.967 enacted 27 August 1945.

¹⁷ The petitioner had 90 days to initiate the voyage and arrive in Brazil. At the time, this journey, by way of steam ship began by traveling to Beirut, where a sea vessel would transport migrants to a European port (usually in Italy). From there, the final leg of the journey transported these subjects to Brazil, where they often entered the country by way of São Paulo’s Porto de Santos [Santos Port]. Counting all travels in between and layovers, the trip took approximately one month. The 90-day time period to initiate travels to Brazil was verified in primary sources, where an agricultural visa was stamped.

immigration law determining the entrance of foreigners into Brazil until it was repealed in 1980.

Because of the large movement of people across the globe, as a result of the Second World War, this immigration law sought and stressed the necessity of protecting Brazil's national interests, while simultaneously opening its borders to immigrants. Concerned with the influx of "undesirables" (read as non-white) into the country, the law privileged the entrance of European descended migrants and stipulated: "In admitting immigrants, there is a necessity to preserve and develop the ethnic composition of the population; the most convenient characteristics of the population's European ancestry must be met" (Article II, Law 7.967). Brazil, like other Latin American nation-states and the United States, privileged European migration, which left Arabs on the margins. Although Arabs were not considered European or white, they were also not considered black. Their ambivalent racial-ethnic positionality allowed them to enter the country¹⁸. Still, like other non-white migrants, such as Asians and Jews, they were considered less desirable or, in some circumstances, undesirable. In general, such attitudes were not glaring, but they were present and emerged and intensified at particular moments. Their ambivalent desirability did not impede Palestinians from obtaining visas nor being subsequently granted permanent status.

Prior to and through the middle of the twentieth century the Brazilian economy was primarily rooted in agriculture. Until abolition (1888), it was very much entrenched in a slave plantation economy and later relied heavily on immigrant labor¹⁹. Thus, the majority of immigrants during this period were given entry as agricultural laborers and worked within this economic framework²⁰. By working and cultivating the earth to yield its fruits and thus contributing to nation building, immigrants could prove their worthiness and eventually become incorporated into the nation-state. Although they were not of the land, working it for agricultural production earned them a place in the national body by performing labor critical to its success. In some ways, working the land granted them rights to belong in it.

¹⁸ KLICH, Ignacio and LESSER, Jeffrey. *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities*. London: Frank Cass, 1998.

LESSER, Jeffrey. "Immigration and Shifting Concepts of National Identity in Brazil During the Vargas Era." *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 31(2): 22-44, 1994.

¹⁹ KLEIN, Herbert and LUNA, Francisco Vidal. *Feeding the World: Brazil's Transformation into a Modern Agricultural Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 5-25.

NISHIDA, Mieko. *Diaspora and Identity: Japanese Brazilians in Brazil and Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2018. p. 31-45

²⁰ LESSER, Jeffrey. *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999

For the most part, however, as we elaborate below, migrants from various parts of the Middle East differed from this economic modality once they arrived in the country.

Despite the explicit mandate of the agricultural visa, which also stipulated that they live in a rural area [*zona rural*], the vast majority of Palestinians, like their Lebanese and Syrian predecessors who arrived in the country, almost immediately began working as itinerant peddlers [*mascates*]. This form of labor was often frowned upon because, whereas agricultural work bound immigrants spatially, peddling was predicated on mobility. The untraceability and illegibility of foreign bodies in the nation, through a form of labor based on movement, heightened anxieties among Brazilians. Thus, nationalist Brazilian elites viewed peddling as parasitic and their promulgators as parasites, since peddlers were seen as achieving wealth at the nation's expense²¹. According to the elite, the Orientalized wily, swarthy, mustachioed figures, with trunks filled with goods in tow –veritable subversive “strangers” – performed an intrusive form of labor, which leeched the nation of its profits in order to reinvest funds in their own “foreign” communities within the country and send remittances to their communities of origin abroad. This shift in employment after entering the Brazilian nation-state, from agriculturalist to traveling merchant, and the subsequent success of many Arabs in peddling, contributed to the parasitic discourse advanced by the elite. But this success also began to reconfigure the perceived social and political status of Arabs broadly, even if Syrian and Lebanese immigrants were making the most notable gains.

Beginning in the 1930s, Syrians and Lebanese who had primarily worked as ambulant vendors started to establish a formidable presence in the São Paulo cityscape, especially in the area of textile production. This became a significant component of an industrializing Brazil, particularly during the protectionist era of Getulio Vargas's Estado Novo (1937-1945), and formed important networks of production and distribution. Most notably Rua 25 de Março – a renowned commercial street – became a marker of this success in the ensuing years and entrenched in the national imaginary an Arabized ethnic space. John Karam²² notes, “through the 1960s, the hundreds of [*Sírio-Libanês*] store owners on 25 de Março accounted for an estimated 60 percent of wholesale profits from textiles in Brazil”. This Arabization in an area of São Paulo's city center can still today be readily seen and reflected in the form of street names and names etched on storefront awnings. Additionally, the intrinsic business skills popularly attached to Arabs, because of the historic

²¹KARAM, John Tofik. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. *Op. cit.*

LESSER, Jeffrey. *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*. 1999. *Op. cit.*

²²KARAM, John Tofik. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. *Op. cit.*

success of the Syrian-Lebanese migrants in São Paulo and the community's hand in Brazilian nation building from the early twentieth century onward, is reinforced by the prominent role well established, elite Arab businessmen have played in facilitating Brazilian exports to various Middle Eastern countries. After the military dictatorship ended in 1985 and as Brazil's economy became increasingly export-driven in the 1990s, this market niche became more relevant in Brazil's globalizing efforts, as were the Arab subjects that facilitated this market²³.

While the capital of São Paulo became widely known for the Syrian-Lebanese presence and success, a significant number of Palestinians who arrived mid-twentieth century and beyond carved a different geographical trajectory. Their course was also different from the earlier Palestinian migration, which predominantly headed and settled in the northeast of the country. This cohort of Palestinians, through indications from friendship and kinship ties from those in Palestine or already in Brazil, largely made their way into the south of the country, where they worked and built their lives. Yet comparable to the Arab migrations that came before, often Palestinians who got started as peddlers eventually went on to establish brick and mortar businesses. This particular history broadly associated with Arab men has the figure of the peddler as an iconic image infused with Orientalized ideas of Arabness in the Brazilian imagination. But attached to this is also the notable success of the *elite* Syrian and Lebanese immigrants²⁴ and their descendants in São Paulo who have made significant economic gains, garnered social and political capital, and are often perceived to represent the social status of most Arabs in Brazil. Even the number of Syrians and Lebanese in the country has been arguably inflated for political purposes²⁵. This is especially true of the Lebanese, whose population is said to be between 7 and 10 million, dwarfing the 4.5 million Lebanese in Lebanon. Despite these numerical inflations, Palestinians represent a much smaller number. Estimates put the number today anywhere between 20,000 and 50,000²⁶. However, because census data do not cull nor specify ethnic distinctions, it is difficult to assess the actual number. And these higher end estimates of Palestinians in Brazil, much like those of the Lebanese, can also be misrepresented to serve political purposes. Important to emphasize, however, is that homogenous renderings of

²³KARAM, John Tofik. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. *Idem. Op. cit.*

²⁴We do not mean to imply that all Syrians and Lebanese occupy an elite economic position but are instead referencing those who are elite.

²⁵KARAM, John Tofik. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. *Op. cit.*

²⁶Based on a conversation the authors had with the president of the Palestinian federation (FEPAL), he indicated that the number of Palestinians in Brazil was 50,000, and with the arrival of 108 Palestinian refugees from Iraq, the number had grown to 50,108. (Interview. July 2010)

“Arabs” obfuscate differences in political, economic and social class, as well as the numerical specificities of those categorized within this broad label. Thus, substantive and nuanced variations within *each* group are erased.

Distinction Between Palestinian Immigrants and Refugees Then and Now

Similar to migration narratives of other groups in various locations who migrate for economic purposes and plan to return “home,” a large number of Palestinians who arrived in Brazil mid-century intended to work, save money, and then return to Palestine. Whether this would have come to pass or not for some migrants is difficult to surmise, particularly because the Six-Day War of 1967, which resulted in the on-going Israeli occupation and Palestinian dispossession, foreclosed (and continues to foreclose) the possibility of return. Thus, some who had gone to Brazil provisionally, with intentions of returning to Palestine, instead brought family members to Brazil where they would remain more definitively. The lived experiences during these waves of migration have had an impact on the manner in which Palestinians self-identify as immigrants and/or refugees. This is in addition to the codified international instruments that outline what determines a refugee and the different incorporation of Palestinians within this category.

As indicated above, one notable contrast between the Palestinians who arrived in the cohort of the middle of the twentieth century onward was that most were single men with work visas, and they came into the country through affective familial and/or social ties. A sizable number had Jordanian passports. This did and does not keep them from self-identifying as refugees. Those who arrived in the country after 1967 also self-ascribed to this designation.

In her work with Palestinian women immigrants in Brasília, whose fathers migrated to Brazil in the 1950s, Hamid²⁷ points out how many of the women who came from Palestine after 1967 identify themselves as “refugees” in Brazil. In their case, this identification was triggered, in part, to the lived traumatic experiences during the Six Day War, the subsequent occupation of Palestinian territory, and the imposition of restrictions by Israel on Palestinian residency and permanent return to their homeland. However, this does not mean that those who migrated in the 1950s to Brazil did not experience their share of trauma and violence during the catastrophic events of 1948, when more than 750,000 Palestinians

²⁷ HAMID, Sônia. *Entre a guerra e o gênero: memória e identidade de mulheres palestinas em Brasília*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Antropologia) – Universidade de Brasília. Brasília, 2007.

were dispossessed. This also contributes to their self-designation of refugee, which is further undergirded by the absence of an established Palestinian state and the ongoing Israeli settler-colonial project, which continues to shrink Palestinian areas through land division and confiscation, and more recently, plans for full annexation. Moreover, many who thought their emigration was temporary, became stateless in exile.

This too is another particularity and distinction between Palestinians and the Syrian-Lebanese with whom they are often conflated. However, Palestinians cannot be monolithically constructed either. Those who migrated to Brazil then have had variegated trajectories and social-economic and political experiences. For instance, there are some who have acquired different degrees of economic stability and success and those who intimate that remittances sent to family back home, because of continued deteriorating conditions, compromised their ability to become more financially sound. In an interview with Khalil, a Palestinian merchant in São Paulo in 2010, during our first phase of research, we asked about the much-lauded economic success of Syrians and Lebanese in national narratives and how Palestinians factored in these economic discourses. He indicated that Palestinians had not been as economically successful in Brazil because Syrians and Lebanese had been in the country far longer and in much greater numbers. The larger the number, he asserted, the better the chances of forming successful economic networks. Moreover, according to Khalil:

The Palestinian, as you know, has one foot here and the other in Palestine. Sometimes they take more [financially] than they should from here to provide there. This is why I think they have not grown as much. They send money back home to family. On the one hand this is good, but on the other hand, business wise, it is not because they stop growing here.

Khalil did not explicitly discuss the economic effects that the geopolitical situation in Palestine has had on those living in the Middle East as well as those in the diaspora, but he made tacit connections when discussing the difficulty of forming an economic stronghold because of remittances sent back “home.” And although an older and larger migration of Syrians and Lebanese could, in itself, place these groups in a privileged economic position, as John Karam²⁸ elucidates, the Partition and later the Occupation of Palestine had multiple and layered socio-economic effects that heightened such differences. The majority of Palestinians who entered Brazil in the 1950s, for instance, did so because the economic situation in their home location was exceedingly difficult. Thus, many who left did so

²⁸KARAM, John Tofik. *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*. *Op. cit*

precisely to provide economically for the family members who remained behind²⁹. There are still others who, after living in Brazil for multiple years, migrated once again to other countries, such as the United States, for better economic opportunities. Khalil's own brothers had done this and today reside in New York³⁰.

Another interviewee, Amin, who lives in the southernmost state of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul, and is part of the older community [*colônia antiga*] discussed why he migrated to the country and his contribution to the family of eight he left behind. He owns a mini-department store in the center of the same small town to which he first migrated in 1955. Amin came from Ramallah, in the West Bank, but had become a refugee during the *nakbah* in 1948 when he was 15 years old. His ancestral town was in northern Palestine, near Haifa. Amin had a cousin who had made the journey to Brazil earlier and helped facilitate his migration. In 1960, after being in Brazil for five years, he returned to Palestine with the intention of staying, but the hardship his family was enduring there made it difficult³¹.

I saw my family, my siblings, going through very hard times (financially). I could not bear to see that and asked myself: 'Can I live here with a sense of well-being, while seeing my siblings suffering such difficulties?' I am not blind. We stayed in Palestine less than a year. I decided to return to Brazil to work and to help them out more. I did everything I could to help them.

Amin thought he would be better able to financially assist his family in Palestine, through remittances, by going back to Brazil. In this way, his narrative is closely aligned with the generalization Khalil, the São Paulo merchant, made about the Palestinian experience in Brazil. That is, the remittances sent to struggling family members compromises, in one way or another, the sender's financial stability in Brazil and may at times impede establishing a sound financial foundation.

While Amin and Khalil arrived in Brazil 25 years apart, the former in 1955 and the latter in 1980, both have been implicated in the economic and geopolitical situation in their originating location. When family members are unable to subsist or get ahead because of the

²⁹In her article, Denise Jardim indicates that the creation of the Israeli state made economic viability for her interlocutors difficult at best. As a result, they migrated to Brazil to work and help their families. See: "As mulheres voam com seus maridos": A Experiência da Diáspora Palestina e as Relações de Gênero", *Horizontes Antropológicos*, 15(31): 189-217, 2009.

³⁰ MUNEM, Bahia. *Expulsions and receptions: Palestinian Iraq war refugees in the Brazilian Nation-State*, PhD dissertation (Rutgers University. New Jersey, 2014).

³¹ MUNEM, Bahia. *Expulsions and receptions: Palestinian Iraq war refugees in the Brazilian Nation-State*, PhD dissertation (Rutgers University. New Jersey, 2014).

ever-declining socio-economic situation in Palestine, primarily as a result of the Occupation, settler-colonialism, and on-going dispossession, relatives in the diaspora often contribute financially³².

As in other places and other groups, and even in the course of one individual life, economic class status and social conditions are not necessarily fixed and can fluctuate. This does not stave off gendered hegemonic ideas established *about* a group, where an innately entrepreneurial male subject is unquestionably destined for economic success, nor does it keep its own members from reproducing them.

While conducting field research on the resettled Palestinian Iraq war refugees, who were divided into two groups and placed in the states of São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul, we encountered fraught discourses in the already established Palestinian (as well as the Syrian- Lebanese) community regarding the resettled refugees. Many important differences between the former migratory waves and the more recent refugees were elided. For example, unlike those individuals who arrived earlier in the country, through transnational family or friendship networks, the vast majority of these refugees from Iraq did not have ties in Brazil and never intended to settle there. They had very little or no knowledge of the country, save for perhaps their world-renowned reputation for soccer and coffee. Moreover, a significant number of the Iraq war refugees arrived in already-constituted families and with refugee and not permanent status, which stands in contrast to the earlier cohort. The recently resettled did not choose Brazil over another nation-state as a place to build their lives, but instead, as a group, found themselves without alternatives, as Brazil was chosen for them. Without legitimating documents that would allow these refugees to cross any one nation's border, they were forced to stay in Ruweished camp far longer than any of them could have anticipated. This is in contrast to the Jordanian passports with which many Palestinians in prior decades had arrived in the country. For the most part the newly resettled refugees, and especially the elderly among them, would have preferred an "Arab solution" to their predicament – mainly being emplaced in an Arab majority country where Arabic was the dominant language. But this did not materialize, and instead, after being petitioned by

³² The impediment of movement within and between Palestinian towns and territory as a result of checkpoints, roadblocks by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and the separation wall, make economic viability difficult at best. The control over water by the Israelis in the West Bank, where running water is often cut off from Palestinian towns (for days at a time) and siphoned to settler-colonial settlements, considered illegal in international law, compromises the possibility of an agrarian economy. In many cases the separation wall has been built on seized property and impedes access to Palestinian farmers' own lands. Additionally, the blockade of Gaza where again water is completely controlled by the Israelis, as is air space (in the West Bank too), and any and all supplies that come into Gaza, often dubbed as the "world's largest open-air prison," makes economic feasibility difficult at best.

humanitarian activists, Brazil presented a resettlement option for those who remained in the desert outpost.

Whereas Brazil boasts a robust and long history of migration and immigration, its history of resettling refugees was sparse and recent at the time Palestinian refugees arrived in the country. Official statistical data from UNHCR (or ACNUR) indicate that Brazil had a total of 4,306 refugees by July 2010. Of these, only 395 had been in the Resettlement Program and included Palestinian Iraq War refugees, who had already been in the country for over two years³³. These small numbers are despite the fact that Brazil, in 1960, was the first nation in the Southern Cone to ratify the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. That Convention provides the principle international codification that allows signatories to determine who is a refugee, establish their rights, and prescribe the standard of treatment and legal obligations the state has to refugees in its national territory³⁴. The treaty refers specifically to European persons who became refugees as a result of events that occurred before January 1, 1951. This temporal and geographical limitation on the designation of refugees led to the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which addresses the circumstances of those who became refugees after 1951. Brazil became signatory to the 1967 Protocol on April 7, 1972. However, it still applied the 1951 Convention's geographical restrictions, accepting only refugees from Europe, and it did not implement the 1967 expansion of this category until a few years after the end of the military dictatorship (1964-1985), in 1989³⁵. And it was only in 1997 when Brazil developed a national policy for refugees, under Refugee Law 9474, adopted July 22, 1997. More specifically, in 2004, during a gathering of 20 Latin American nations in Mexico City, Brazil proposed to establish a regional resettlement program to address concerns regarding refugee protection because of wars and conflicts Latin America. This led to the 2004 Mexico Plan of Action (MPA), which delineates actions to be undertaken to ensure the protection of refugees in Latin America who have been displaced as a consequence of civil wars and conflicts in their country of origin. The Solidarity Resettlement Program in Brazil, under the auspices of the 2004 Mexico/Latin America Plan of Action, boasts an intensive tripartite collaboration. While serving mostly refugees from nations in Central and South America, the program, however,

³³ BARRETO, Luiz Paulo. *Refúgio No Brasil: A Proteção Brasileira aos Refugiados e Seu Impacto nas Américas*, Brasília: ACNUR, p. 20, 2010.

³⁴ TAKKENBERG, Lex. The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law. *Op. cit*

³⁵ JUBILUT, Liliana Lyra. "Refugee Law and Protection in Brazil: a Model in South America?" *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19(1): 22-44, 2006.

laid the groundwork for Brazil's humanitarian overture to resettle the Palestinian refugees from Iraq.

As earlier noted, Palestinians have always occupied a particular refugee designation despite efforts in international law to construct a universal "refugee" category. Because of this, there is one UN agency exclusively dedicated to providing humanitarian assistance to them across the Middle East, UNRWA³⁶. As indicated by Randa Farah³⁷, UNRWA developed its own definition of a Palestine refugee, which is "any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict" (2003, 163). Currently in UNRWA's five fields of operation (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem), there are over 5.6 million registered Palestinian refugees³⁸. As a result of this alternate instrument, Palestinian refugees often do not benefit from UNHCR protection; however, this does not imply that certain groups of Palestinian refugees can *never* benefit from protections afforded in the 1951 Convention. Specifically, if they are outside of UNRWA's spaces of operation and cannot be granted assistance or protection by UNRWA, Palestinian refugees would then be entitled to benefits delineated in the 1951 Convention and would fall under the jurisdiction of UNHCR.

For instance, although UNRWA operates in Jordan, the Palestinian refugees who were in Ruweished refugee camp, in Jordanian territory, were not registered with the agency because they were not able to establish that they were indeed "Palestine refugees," as per the criteria specified in the UNRWA definition cited above. Moreover, the Jordanian government saw them as having entered the country illegally; thus, they could not fall under UNRWA's mandate. And since Jordan is not signatory to the 1951 Convention, they were in danger of *refoulement*-returning persecuted persons back to the country in which they would be likely submitted to persecution. That is, they could be sent back to Iraq despite the

³⁶The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

³⁷ FARAH, Randa. "The Marginalization of Palestinian Refugees" In *Problems of Protection: The UNHCR, Refugees, and Human Rights* eds. Niklaus Steiner, Mark Gibney, and Gil Loescher. New York & London: Routledge, 2003.

³⁸This number reflects the descendants of those who have been given Palestinian refugee status by UNRWA. Based on UNRWA's formal definition, there is a gendered biased dimension of conferring this status to posterity, as it is only a patrilineal designation. That is, children and adopted children of Palestinian male refugees are eligible. Palestinian women refugees who have married non-Palestinian men and their children are not eligible for services provided by UNRWA, unless they are divorced or widowed.

These figures are as of 2019:

https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_in_figures_2019_eng_sep_2019_final.pdf

eminent threat to their lives. If we can then consider hierarchies within the Palestinian refugee category generally and within the Brazilian context specifically, the Iraq War refugees were subjected to quite different technologies of population management.

The nature of the resettlement program in Brazil ensured that these refugees who had lived under precarious conditions, in a fenced-in camp, in the middle of the desert for nearly five years received assistance. Under the tripartite agreement between UNHCR, the Brazilian government, and local civil society, the refugees would receive assistance for up to two years. This assistance came in the form of a monthly stipend (adjusted for household size)³⁹, monthly rent for a furnished apartment provided upon arrival, language classes, and healthcare, under the country's universal healthcare system – Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS). The humanitarian and state interventions in the placement of this group made this a distinct migratory trajectory from Palestinians who had preceded them in the nation-state, even if the implementation and practices of the resettlement program were questionable.

For the established community and some social service providers, however, the assistance became a measure of the “privileges” afforded the refugees to which those who had arrived in the country in earlier migrations (with permanent and temporary status) did not have access. As we instantiate above, for Palestinians in Brazil the distinction between an immigrant and a refugee is not always as clear cut as Jeremy Hein indicates when he states, “Immigrants constitut[e] an economic form of migration [and] refugees a political form”⁴⁰. These forms overlap and are interwoven at different moments. While formal refugee definitions emphasize the critical moment an individual is forced to depart from their country of origin owing to persecution and violence as a condition to grant refugee status⁴¹, the Palestinian case demonstrates how the continuous annexation of territory by Israel and changes in residency laws, precluding their return, has transformed Palestinian migrants, tourists, and students into subjects who see themselves as refugees. Thus, for Palestinians in Brazil this designation is not only contingent on precarious departure or arrival in a new country, but also encompasses life in the diaspora. These diverse factors inform Palestinian refugee identity beyond formal designations by international humanitarian instruments and nation-states.

³⁹ In a traditional heteronormative family dynamic, the head would receive \$R 350.00 monthly salary and the other members a percentage of that figure, according to their position and/or age in the family. For instance, the wife would receive 75% of the \$R 350.00 amount, an adult child 50%, and children 25%.

⁴⁰ HEIN, Jeremy. “Refugees, Immigrants, and the State.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 19: 43-59, 1993.

⁴¹ For instance, see Article 1, paragraph 2 of the 1951 Convention, applying the term “refugee” to anyone who has a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion...and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events.”

However, the differences (temporal, locational, political, class etc.) within this categorization cannot be overlooked. Many of the Palestinian Iraq War refugees arrived within a constituted family in the country, and for some Brazil marked a third or fourth displacement. In some cases, the political currency of identifying as a Palestinian immigrant/refugee for those who had arrived in Brazil decades earlier and constructed lives, overshadowed and even blurred the realities to which the resettled Iraq war refugees had been subjected, both in Iraq and Brazil, and our interlocutors often pointed this out. Members of the older community's own real or imagined migratory trajectory became by and large the point of reference through which to view the newly arrived refugees.

Among other difficulties, the recent refugees were discouraged and worried about the low-wage work options available to them when they entered the country. They claimed that they had been assured of a strong Brazilian economy, where there would be prospects for gainful employment, but instead only found unstable minimum wage labor. These complaints easily incited familiar discourses of immigrant ascension reproduced by those in the established community (Palestinian and Syrian and Lebanese alike) as a *pedagogy of social mobility*, with a special emphasis on the difficult and humble beginnings as [the iconic] peddlers.

On one occasion the daughter of a Palestinian man who had arrived in Brazil in the mid 1950s said this of the newly arrived refugees: "They do not want to work. When my father...came here, no one gave him anything! He came with the little money he had in his pocket and made [his] life here. [He] worked as a peddler to put food on the table. These people here want everything for free." On another occasion, a Palestinian who arrived in the country in 1968, at the age of 17, recalled how his brother gave him a suitcase filled with clothes to sell and told him he was on his own. To prepare him to work as a peddler, Akram recalled being taught only these words by his brother: "Do you want to buy clothes?" When potential customers asked prices, he would respond with finger gestures. Today, Akram has two stores in the same municipality outside of the capital of São Paulo where half of the refugees who arrived from Ruweished were resettled. Reflecting on his experience, and in line with the gendered, immigrant economic success narratives (by way of peddling) he commented on the value of being earnest and not laidback, and then asserted, "The person who comes to Brazil and [really] wants to build a life, will!". For the recent Iraq War refugees, this neoliberal discourse of self-sufficiency became a banal discourse that fostered some resentment. Amani, a resettled woman, described how common it was to hear about the infamous peddler trajectory. She underscored that this was a recurring theme in conversations with members of the established community who could not keep themselves

from repeating this tale. As she noted, “[it’s always] that same thing, they say they came with nothing, the peddler...it’s all the same.” A resettled man in his early forties, indicated that theirs, the established community, “was a different time. Today you cannot make your life like you did 30, 40, 50 years ago. It is not the same thing.” The *mascate* period was in the past, something that automation and various technologies assured it remain there.

The emphasis and repetition of such trajectories not only sought to make known to the new refugees the stories of those who had been established in the country, but conveyed a certain *pedagogy of social mobility*, which underscored the attitudes and values necessary for effective adaptation and social ascension in Brazil. This pedagogy was framed by beginning life in the country conducting difficult peddling work and guided still by hard work and monitoring spending. Indeed, the accounts about the trajectories of the first immigrants seem to follow a script whose key components included coming to the country with no money; contact with a liaison, friend, or relative who would supply them with the first goods to sell (usually on consignment); the hard life of a peddler characterized by difficulty with the language; making sacrifices in an effort to save money; and, after a period of hard work, the purchase of the first storefront business. Thus, some of the already established Arabs (Palestinians and others) distanced themselves from the refugees to reinforce the idea that they “had to stand on their own two-feet,” as they themselves had done. They criticized what they perceived in some refugees as lack of motivation and settling for their circumstances, as much as warned against the dangerous outcome of a relationship based on assistance. Importantly however, even if this was a common position by those already established in the country, these ideas were not uniform. There were those who had a deeper connection with the newcomers more so than with the prominent elite Arab community in São Paulo, to which they did not feel a sense of commonality or belonging. Political positions, social class, and bonds established with the refugees themselves, are among the factors that influenced and determined closer or more distant relations with the Palestinian Iraq War refugees.

Service providers who worked with the newcomers also deployed familiar discourses of Arab immigrant ascension. These were intertwined with essentialist, hegemonic Orientalist constructions of Arabs being by “nature” commercially inclined and therefore easily able to construct their financial lives if that was truly what they intended. The general consensus by the resettlement agents had been that the refugees had stellar business acumen, even though many had no experience in business ventures and others had been involved in failed business endeavors in the short time they had been in Brazil. For instance, a young married couple who were important interlocutors, Amani and Nabil, had opened an

internet café, which had been an epic failure. They then collaborated with another refugee to open a luncheonette and that too failed—not quite surviving three months. Although they had never owned a business, they were expected to know exactly how to run one, especially Nabil, because they were *turcos*. This alleged “natural” *turco* (Arab) trait was echoed in an interview with a city worker who had had contact with the refugees as part of a municipal evaluation process. Reproducing dominant narratives, she referenced the young couple and categorically assessed the refugees as “real entrepreneurs; they have a facility with business. They are ‘turcos,’ right?” This gendered essentialist construction of the *turco* as business oriented (especially men) and bound to be successful in commerce, was haunting for the newly arrived refugees⁴². There were glaring contradictions between the assumptions of an inherent Arab business savviness and the ways in which the most recent Palestinian refugees came woefully short of these.

Moreover, when a job search began for a position with the local resettlement authorities charged with providing direct services to the refugees, the advertisement for the “economic integration agent” emphasized that the prospective employee would support Palestinian refugees with business ventures:

Monitor and facilitate refugee access to employment information, worker’s rights, business management, micro-credit and related areas;
Assist Palestinian refugees in the implementation of individual plans and suggest changes/adjustments when necessary.
Develop a business plan describing their goals, the steps that must be taken to achieve them with lower risks and uncertainties, and indicating the feasibility to start, maintain or expand the business;
Develop with the refugee strategic planning in order to direct the administrative course of the business and give it sustainability⁴³.

Despite vigorous efforts to fit the refugees into essentialist ideas about Arabs/Turcos, the ad also indicated the Palestinians’ failure to live up to these purported intrinsic entrepreneurial traits by pointing to the areas in which they needed assistance. This was made ever more apparent when part of the job description not only constructed the refugees as financially undisciplined but also as unable to discern between private and commercial affairs. Thus the “economic integration agent” would:

⁴² MUNEM, Bahia. *Expulsions and receptions: Palestinian Iraq war refugees in the Brazilian Nation-State*, PhD dissertation (Rutgers University. New Jersey, 2014).

⁴³For the full job description, see <http://empregocerto.uol.com.br/vagas/agente-de-integracao-economica-mogi-das-cruzes-sp-1083896>. Last accessed, August 28, 2019.

Assist with and train the refugees on business and personal finances to minimize the problems caused by uncontrolled finances and the *systematic confusion* between personal and business expenses, aiming to increase business productivity by balancing financial resources in business ventures and personal life (emphasis added).

The employment advertisement functioned as a broad assessment of the refugees and it reflected the resettlement authorities' perception of the group. Yet despite the glaring contradictions between the assumptions of innate Arab business acumen and ideas to which Palestinian refugees did not measure up, there was a parallel effort to mold them to fit the broader stereotypes and an insistence on holding them accountable to these constructions⁴⁴. Moreover, these stereotypes are also often echoed by those who themselves have origins in the Levant, which occurs at an average day-to-day interactional level as well as among the elite. In short, a self-Orientalizing that reproduces the *pedagogy of social mobility*. Pinto, who elaborates various forms of Orientalism in his text, echoes these auto-Orientalizing dynamics, specifying it as “orientalismo nativo”, as well as broader orientalist narratives⁴⁵. These were proffered as early as the beginning of the twentieth century by Arab intellectuals as a counter-narrative to negative dominant discourses fomented by Brazilian nativists. Syrian-Lebanese intellectuals attempted to sanitize any residue of multivalent Arab cultural and religious formations because they were seen as highlighting alterity and jeopardizing belonging. Instead, they centered an economic exceptionalism that was perceived as facilitating integration, which has had an enduring effect.

In November 2018, then Brazilian President Michel Temer, who is of Christian-Lebanese descent, at an Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce dinner in São Paulo, in partnership with the Federation of Muslim Associations of Brazil, said:

Arab presence in Brazil is part of our daily lives, in the arts, in literature, economics, medicine, architecture and politics. This deeply human connection is the foundation of our fluid dialogue with all Arab countries, and truly the foundation to an intense, fruitful economic exchange⁴⁶.

The Arab-Brazilian Chamber president, Rubens Hannun, hearkened back to Temer's Arab roots—the son of Lebanese immigrants, who had worked hard to obtain

⁴⁴ MUNEM, Bahia. *Expulsions and receptions: Palestinian Iraq war refugees in the Brazilian Nation-State*, PhD dissertation (Rutgers University. New Jersey, 2014).

⁴⁵ PINTO, Paulo Gabriel Hilu. “El Labirinto de Espejos: Orientalismos, Imigração e Discursos sobre a Nação no Brasil” *Revista de Estudos Internacionais Mediterrâneos* (REIM): No. 21 (December 2016)

⁴⁶ ANBA, Brazil-Arab News Agency. 11 November 2018. See: <https://anba.com.br/en/we-want-much-more-says-temer-on-trade-with-arabs/>

economic and political gains and had a direct role in growing exports to Arab countries, claiming a 12% growth during part of his presidency, between 2015 and 2017. These political economic regimes have contemporary popular appraisals of an ethnicized entrepreneurial class whose cosmopolitanism has made a significant contribution to a globalized economy.

Notwithstanding the significant distinction between Palestinians and other groups of “Arabs,” and considering the more varying contrasts *within* these groups, Palestinians were and are too often absorbed into broader Brazilian national discourses about Arabs/*turcos* belonging to a successful business class. While there might be some merit to this broad stroke description because of the visibility of the elite in commerce, trade, and politics, such as the former president, more nuanced socio-economic, political, and lived realities within and between groups are too often overlooked. Since there is a redeeming “model minority” aspect of this attribution, Arabs themselves often reproduce these stereotyped tropes.

Conclusion

Our aim in this article was to map Palestinian migratory movements into Brazil and examine, through secondary sources and ethnography, the social, political, and economic dynamics specific to Palestinian immigrants and refugees in different historical moments. In doing so, we have elucidated important differences that must be considered in the monolithic “Arab,” “turco,” or “Syrian-Lebanese” category into which they are too often subsumed. Moreover, we have also demonstrated the critical hierarchies, distinctions, and nuances in the “refugee” category that can overlap with the immigrant designations in Brazil, as far as Palestinians are concerned. We demonstrate how Palestinians occupy a distinct social-political geography. While their migration was influenced by similar factors as other Arab Middle Easterners, they are differentiated in the ways in which they have been continually caught in the net of global governance, policies and formations of nation-states, settler colonialism, ongoing dispossession, and in their particular precarity in having only refugee status in times of war in the Middle East. In Brazil, on the other hand, where a distinct orientalism has emerged and endured, the monolithic attribution of the wealthy, business-savvy Arab, has served as a dis-integrating phenomenon for Palestinian Iraq War refugees. The *pedagogy of social mobility*, a layered disciplining technique, has contributed to this dynamic both by an older cohort of migrants who share similar home locations as well as resettlement institutions. Despite having reached the country via a distinct trajectory, the efforts to insert refugees into a fixed, essentialist category, without substantive

institutional recourses to provide social and economic integration, contributed to many wanting to leave the country. The imagined potentiality of a new space invigorated their desire. Those who were not able to leave, had lingering feelings of being out of place. The essentialist conceptualizations animating the legacy of Middle Eastern migrants functioned to circumscribe possibilities and served to produce estrangement, rather than a sense of belonging in a new place.

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