TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES UNDER SIEGE: LEBANESE SHI'A IN DEARBORN, MICHIGAN, AND THE 2006 WAR ON LEBANON

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on ethnographic research among southern Lebanese in Dearborn, Michigan, in the aftermath of the 2006 war in Lebanon. It focuses on the significance of family and gender in the intensification of long-distance nationalism among Lebanese in diaspora. The war inspired a sense of belonging to a transnational Lebanese family under siege. This naturalized the practice of "comfort mothering," which met the emotive needs of a diaspora engaged from a distance with a war in the homeland. The paper explores how concepts and practices of belonging to a transnational "Arab family" placed a double duty on women activists in official Arab American public politics. Engagements with normative concepts of belonging to an "American family" entailed a gendered strategy of resistance in which Arab American official politics deployed women's narratives to humanize the Lebanese in the face of a "war on terror" discourse that conflated Lebanese Shi'ite masculinity with Hizballah and terrorism. This essay aims to expand theories on the intersections between gender and nation in light of transnational experiences of war. It also questions the expansiveness of intersectionality in light of a collective experience of military invasion in which the urgency of war overdetermines the significance of other forms of oppression, including gender oppression.

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Detroit, Michigan hosts one of the largest and most diverse populations of Arabs and Arab Americans in the U.S. (Shryock and Abraham 2000; Hassoun 2005). In the city of Dearborn in Greater Detroit, they make up 39% of the population, or approximately 40,000 people.[1] The majority are Lebanese Shi'ite Muslims from southern Lebanon near the border with Israel.[2] In the summer of 2006, during the period of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Lebanese flags waved outside nearly every home and storefront along Dearborn's Warren Avenue. The roads were full of cars with Lebanese flags draped across the hood. At gas stations, supermarkets, and community centers, intense exchanges about the invasion replaced customary small talk. Lebanese in Dearborn anxiously awaited news from their villages of origin. Neighborhoods became sites for information-sharing and support. People seemed more captivated by cellphones, satellite television, and the Internet than ever before. While U.S. government and media discourses vilified southern Lebanese through gendered representations of violence and terrorism, personal stories from Lebanon circulated in Dearborn through local constellations of friends and neighbors, the local Arab American press, and religious, cultural, and political networks. Collective experiences with war from a distance brought people together in a communal state of emergency in which two questions took center stage: Has our village been attacked? Are our loved ones alive or dead?

Julie Peteet (1997) writes that "to begin to frame the ways in which gender and conflict intersect one needs to ask various questions," such as what type of warfare is being engaged in, and what is the official war discourse (106). This essay explores how the historically specific rules of engagement through which Lebanese in Dearborn experienced the invasion from afar engendered particular intersections between family, gender, and nation. The paper is based on ethnographic research among Lebanese in Dearborn beginning in July 2006 at the onset of the war. I conducted participant observation at community events related to the war, including protests, demonstrations, fundraisers, teach-ins, and memorial services, and among social, cultural, and political networks where Lebanese people and their allies shared stories, lamented, mourned, and envisioned peace and justice and the possibilities for rebuilding Lebanon. The research is also based on interviews in Dearborn with 22 women and men primarily from south Lebanon, and two Palestinian community leaders who joined in planning solidarity events with Lebanese people.[3]

I show that the transnational character of southern Lebanese families connected these interlocutors to Lebanon in a familial sense and inspired a sense of belonging to transnational families under siege. I then explore how the particular character of the invasion, in which "every" Lebanese had some family member who was affected by it, inspired a sense of belonging to a transnational Lebanese family under siege, which set the stage for an intensification of long-distance Lebanese nationalisms in Dearborn.[4] I use the term "nationalism" to refer to a shared sense of peoplehood or an "imagined community" bound together by a common linguistic, cultural, and historical heritage.[5] Concepts of nationalism took on particular form in this diasporic context and were linked to the political project of building or defending Lebanon; resisting U.S. (and Israeli) policies in Arab nations; and unifying in the face of anti-Arab racism in the U.S. I use the term "long-distance nationalism" to refer to how this sense of peoplehood extended beyond the territorially based boundaries of nation-states.[6] My research demonstrates that the concept of "family" worked to naturalize particular gender constructs within the ideology of long-distance Lebanese nationalism. The practice of "comfort mothering," for example, met the emotive needs of a diaspora engaging with a homeland war from a distance, and expanded the social codes of mothering beyond the domain of extended kin.

I consider how the particular histories and demographics of Dearborn inspired the intensification of an Arab nationalist ideology in the diaspora and of particular intersections between nation, family, and gender. I show how the ideology of pan-Arab (or Arab American) unity in Dearborn placed a double duty on women activists who worked on the front lines in the highly visible sphere of official Arab American public politics while simultaneously upholding the community's invisible forms of labor.

In addition, I focus on how long-distance Lebanese and pan-Arab nationalisms entailed particular kinds of engagements with normative concepts of the U.S. nation as family. Living the war from a distance, Lebanese in Michigan experienced it on multiple fronts. While they were consumed by the invasion itself and by their concern for the safety of loved ones in Lebanon, they were also engaging with the political stance of the U.S. government and the corporate media and their rep-

the past for many Lebanese Shi'a. She came to the U.S. from Bint Jbeil with her parents, and returned with her mother after the 2006 invasion:

> My mom left Lebanon in the 1980s and it was war. The Israelis destroyed her village. In 2000, her village was rebuilt and things were back to normal. When she returned to Lebanon in '06, it was demolished again. She would say... "This is what I waited 27 years for?!"

In Dearborn, anywhere between 500 and 10,000 people participated in vigils, town hall meetings, and political protests and demonstrations during summer 2006. Participants were primarily Arabs and Arab Americans, but also included a diverse spectrum of people who shared a similar critique of the invasion. These numbers reflect the large population of Arabs in Michigan, including the particularly large concentration of southern Lebanese from the areas in Lebanon that were disproportionately targeted by the Israeli military.[13] They also illustrate the extent to which Dearborn's southern Lebanese were intimately connected to Lebanon in the most familial sense.

FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF THE FAMILY

Most of my interlocutors defined family as an extended kin group that included anywhere from 50 to 600 members. The privileging of extended kinship in Dearborn parallels dominant concepts of family in Lebanon. First, as Suad Joseph's research shows, the extended kin (not only the household or the nuclear family) are inscribed in national institutions in Lebanon. Second, Joseph explains, extended kinship is a hegemonic civic myth in Lebanon sanctified by the state and by religion. By using the term "civic myth," Joseph brings feminist critiques of family to bear on the context of Lebanon (Joseph 2000). Feminists who write about nationalism explain that concepts of family naturalize kin relations through the concept of blood ties and that kin groups are imagined communities that are felt to be natural (Thorne and Yalom 1992; Delaney 1995; Williams 1996; Collins 1998; Zinn 2000). By naturalizing kin relations, conventional concepts of family assume that primary emotional bonds of love and caring hold the family together and take for granted a set of rights and responsibilities assigned to kin members (Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako 1992; Collins 1998; Joseph 2000).

Similarly, the myth of extended kin in Lebanon naturalizes the association between blood ties and notions of closeness and unity. More specifically, the civic myth of kinship tells "a story of a nation composed of multiple, large... 'natural' groupings based on biological (blood) relatedness, descended through male genealogies" (Joseph 2000, 109). Joseph adds that the "romantic lure of the kin contract has been grounded in material realities in which kin relationalities have been, for the Lebanese, the core of social identity, economic stability, political security, and religious affiliation and the first (often last) line of security—emotionally, socially, economically, and politically" (116–17).

The Lebanese I interviewed in Dearborn tended to speak about family in similarly taken-for-granted terms: they referred to family as their primary social identity, or as "those closest to you," "the people you depend on in good times and bad," and "the people you turn to when you have joyous and challenging times." Rania, for example, said, "I can even feel that closeness with family I met for the first time, like the family I have in Lebanon. It's that feeling that you are home because you are connected in some way." Her statement reflects the taken-for-granted conflation of blood ties and a notion of closeness and comfort that underpinned most interlocutors' concepts of family.

Feminist research has shown that while naturalizing a sense of closeness and unity, concepts of family also naturalize hierarchies of age and gender, rendering them ordinary and inconspicuous. Joseph points to a configuration in Lebanon in which family worked through concepts of unity and hierarchy. She uses the term "kin contract" to refer to an "ideal of family love organized within a patriarchal structure of rights and responsibilities" (Joseph 2000, 116). Within this context, "cultural notions of motherhood, and of mothers as sacrificial and devoted, are to a degree consistent" (Peteet 1997, 106).[14] Feminist frameworks that examine how family takes on different meanings in different contexts, depending on collective experiences with structural inequalities (such as class oppression, colonization or occupation, war, racism, and generalized experiences of marginality) are particularly relevant to my research (see Rapp 1982; Collins 1998; Johnson and Kuttab 2001).

TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS OF FAMILY: "ONE LEG HERE AND ONE LEG THERE"

My interlocutors perceived themselves as members of multi-sited, ex-

resentations of Lebanese Shi'a. Engagements with "America" entailed a gendered strategy of resistance in which official Arab American politics deployed women's narratives to humanize Lebanese people in the face of a "war on terror" discourse that conflated Lebanese Shi'a, Hizballah, and terrorism.

This essay brings theorizations of family, gender, and nation into a context in which Lebanese transmigrants engage with multiple de-territorialized concepts and practices of nation and with the intersecting forces of U.S. war "over there" and U.S. domestic policies "over here."[7] It shows that within this experience of long-distance nationalism and war from a distance, gender was a site of women's power and constraint. At the same time, it raises questions about the salience of gender as a category of analysis with regard to people facing military invasion. In this respect, it calls for an intersectional analysis that takes seriously the salience of group membership (i.e. racial/ethnic, national, class, etc.) for research about gender and family in times of war.[8]

LEBANESE SHI'A

Lebanon's political system is confessional; it allocates government positions on the basis of the country's eighteen recognized religious groups.[9] According to the 1932 census, the last one taken in Lebanon, Shi'ite Muslims were the third largest sect. Lebanese Shi'a are a historically disenfranchised group and are underrepresented in Lebanon's political system (Deeb 2006a, 72). Between 1978 and 1982, a series of historical events inspired their political mobilization. Among these events were two Israeli invasions of Lebanon in which hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and tens of thousands killed and injured, many of them Shi'ite Muslims (80). The 1982 invasion sparked the formation of Hizballah, the political party that advocates for Lebanon's Shi'ite Muslim community. Hizballah has been powerfully active in Lebanese politics, is a crucial provider of social services, and is a reputable political party among Muslims and Christians. Lara Deeb explains that Hizballah's nationalism views "Lebanon as an Arab state that cannot distance itself from causes like the Palestine question." It maintains an Islamic political outlook and acknowledges sectarian coexistence and pluralism in Lebanon. Deeb adds that, "Outrage at Israel's actions

trump[ed] ideological disagreement with Hizballah for many Lebanese... and as such, it is likely that support for the party will continue to grow." The U.S. State Department includes Hizballah on its list of "terrorist organizations." The reasons for this inclusion are a matter of contention (Deeb 2006a; 2006b).

LEBANESE SHI'A IN DEARBORN

The term "transmigrants" provides a framework for conceptualizing the movement of Lebanese Shi'a between Lebanon and the U.S. As transmigrants, they have tended to maintain contact with their villages of origin; travel back and forth to Lebanon; send money to Lebanon; and generally participate in Lebanon's social, cultural, and political life—despite the diverse generations and histories of migration that shape this community.[10] They have been coming to Dearborn by way of family reunification (or chain migration) (Aswad 1974; Abraham, Abraham, and Aswad 1983; Shryock 2000, 577). They first came in small numbers in the early twentieth century at the time of the opening of the Ford Rouge Plant. While many early migrants returned to Lebanon during the Great Depression, they either came back to the U.S. or continued to travel back and forth between the U.S. and Lebanon. Since the onset of the Lebanese civil war (i.e., post–1975), Lebanese Shi'a have come to the U.S. in greater numbers.[11] Two decades of Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon, the forced collective exodus of hundreds of thousands of people, and the destruction or occupation of homes, land, schools, factories, shops, and offices in the south and in Beirut (1978–2000) contributed to this increase. A majority of Lebanese Shi'a in Dearborn originate from the second largest village in south Lebanon, Bint Jbeil, which was nearly destroyed during the decades of occupation. Nasser, director of the Bint Jbeil Cultural Center in Dearborn, told me that since the occupation began, Bint Jbeil's 40,000 residents decreased to approximately 3,000, with 15,000 moving to Dearborn.[12] Lebanese Shi'a in Dearborn tend to be broadly middle-class. Most people whom I interviewed were either professionals or small business owners. Southern Lebanese have established a range of institutions in Dearborn that provide the basis for community-building, including mosques, social clubs, organizations, and Dearborn's community council (see Aswad 1992; Walbridge 1997; Howell and Jamal 2009).

Sara's experience epitomizes why the 2006 invasion meant reliving

tended families, located primarily within and between the boundaries of the U.S. and Lebanon.[15] Family connected people in the U.S. and Lebanon in three ways. The first entailed some members residing in Lebanon and others residing in Dearborn. The second included families with members born and raised in the U.S. who had extended family members in Lebanon but had never (or seldom) visited them. The third entailed families that reside primarily in Dearborn but had one or more members vacationing in Lebanon when the war began. Hussein, a community leader during the period of the invasion, reflected upon how Lebanese families transgressed the borders of a single nation-state: "The same family has one leg here and one leg there, literally." Based on these family formations, I refer to interlocutors' extended kin networks as "transnational social fields,"[16] or networks of social relationships that link Dearborn's Lebanese to Lebanon and bring events in Lebanon to Dearborn in profoundly intimate ways.

TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES UNDER SIEGE

The transnational social fields of family had everything to do with the sense of urgency in Dearborn around the 2006 invasion. For my interlocutors, it was an attack on their families. Roulah, whose husband was in Lebanon during the invasion, said, "Everywhere, families came together and became stronger." Suleiman, who was visiting relatives in Lebanon, said, "We spent days and nights together. It made us closer to each other." These statements show how family became a safe haven in the face of the invasion. It provided sanctuary, put people at ease, and gave them strength. U.S. women-of-color feminist critiques of Western liberal feminist approaches to family help to explain the collective strength that many southern Lebanese found in family. Women-of-color critiques problematize the idea that the patriarchal family is the main source of women's oppression. Maxine Baca Zinn writes,

> Women of color argued that the family means different things to different groups. Treating gender as the main cause of women's inequality obscured women's multiple and contradictory family experiences.... Their scholarship revealed that, in the absence of outside support, many women found collective strength in family life. Some women joined forces with their husbands, brothers, and other community men to forge political struggles against racial and class-based oppression. (Zinn 2000, 47)

In the context of the invasion, the women and men I interviewed similarly spoke about family as a site of immense strength and support. Family was a place for coping with death and destruction,[17] and the need for strength and support took precedence over the hierarchies that structured family.

Sara's extended family in Dearborn includes 500 people. During the war, she spent her time with relatives in Dearborn as they awaited news of their loved ones in Lebanon: "We turned to each other here. You couldn't be there to save your grandmother, to save your grandfather, aunt, or uncle. Having each other kind of helped keep us afloat until it ended." This shows how the transnational social fields of family produced specific kinds of needs in light of the invasion. Family comforted Lebanese transmigrants unable to provide loved ones with adequate defense against or protection from the invasion.

I read Sara's concept of family unity, convergence, and solidarity, like Roulah and Suleiman's statements quoted above, through the lens of women-of-color feminist critiques that call for considering the multiple axes of power that work intersectionally to shape concepts and practices of family. This does not preclude a discussion of hierarchies of gender, age, sexuality, etc., that underpin family. Yet it calls for considering how such hierarchies operate in relation to other hierarchies, such as those of war and military invasion. The hierarchies between Israel and Lebanon during the period of the invasion influenced concepts and practices of family among my interlocutors by intensifying the significance of family in people's lives. In a context where the invasion targeted families writ large and did not leave families untouched or sheltered from harm, people mobilized family as a mechanism of comfort, security, and care. Family was among the most crucial spaces in which people living the war at a distance experienced it and coped with its losses and tragedies.

The invasion's violation of the domain of extended family, coupled with the tacit knowledge that (in the words of a local journalist and community leader), "everyone had some family member impacted by the war," inspired a mobilization of the concept of family within the domain of the nation. The concept of family was crucial in galvanizing the sense

of Lebanese unity that swept Dearborn. The Bint Jbeil Cultural Center in Dearborn was a meeting place where Lebanese people and their allies came together for letter writing and media campaigns; to raise funds for relief; and to attend memorial services for persons killed in Lebanon. "Which story do you want me to pick?" asked the center's director. "Everybody had relatives in Dearborn." According to Eyad, the editor of a leading community-based newspaper, "Anyone you grab on the street will tell you a story that happened to one of their family." Some stories were more tragic than others. Local newspapers reported on one woman who had 600 family members directly targeted by Israeli bombardment. One man lost twelve family members; another lost over 40. Ali is a musician and a recent immigrant in his early 20s. His immediate family and most of his closest friends reside in Lebanon:

> The friends who taught music to me growing up are now dead. After this, every friend I had before, every person in my family, is two times more that friend and two times more my family. Every enemy that I had before is two times more my enemy. When you're killing our children, the Christians and the Muslims, and the Sunnis and the Shi'as, they're going to build stronger bonds.

Family was a metaphor through which Ali articulated this strengthened sense of Lebanese unity. Patricia Hill Collins (1998) writes that oppressed communities frequently use the concept of family in crafting a political agenda. Rita Giacaman and Penny Johnson (1989), writing on the first intifada in Palestine, argue that the community became the family when "formal networks of support were breaking down and when conditions were creating new and pressing needs," and that women's roles expanded and the barriers between private and public and between home and politics became increasingly blurred (157–161). In Ali's narrative, family offered a seemingly natural image for idealizing loyalties, not only between family and friends but also between Lebanon's diverse religious sects, as a strategy for coping with military invasion. The concept of family helped to mobilize a notion of unity beyond difference as the natural outcome of a collective experience of oppression. Roulah explained how the concept of a Lebanese family took on local form on the streets of Dearborn:

> People who weren't your family became your family. People sitting on their front porch would stop me and ask me about my husband because they heard that he was there. For every mother or father or brother or sister that was trapped over there, they were part of you too and you rooted for them.

Many interlocutors reinforced this idea when they spoke about the demonstrations in Dearborn and concurred that "they included everyone." In this context, the concept of family worked to naturalize a set of rights and responsibilities between southern Lebanese in Dearborn which they conceptualized through an affective language of comfort and security. Configured as family, Lebanese transmigrants idealized the practice of providing a connection and support as their primary responsibilities. As one interlocutor put it, "We became one another's backbones." Zain, referring to Dearborn, said,

> You looked at every person and knew exactly what they were feeling because you were feeling the same thing. People I don't even know. Everyone found a kinship in their frustration, anger, and sadness.

This shows how the logic of long-distance nationalism expanded the boundaries of family beyond the domain of extended kin. The massive memorial services, mourning ceremonies, and house visits that recurred in Dearborn reinforced the significance of family to the intensification of long-distance national solidarity. Typically, southern Lebanese families organized memorial services to mark the passing of an individual family member. In the summer of 2006, several memorials took place that marked the passing of more than one individual. Nasser recalled,

> When my mother died, I had a memorial for her. At least 3,000 people attended. I announced it in the local newspapers and said, "Sunday at the Islamic Center." Three or four other families contacted me and said, "We lost our loved ones too. Can you include us?" That's how we comforted each other.

Nasser's narrative shows how responses to the invasion tended to blur the boundaries between family and nation. Memorials, which ordinarily tend to represent a single extended family, came to represent multiple families, or the long-distance nation as family. Responsibilities typically

associated with extended kin expanded to include other Lebanese who shared similar losses and tragedies. That interlocutors conflated the categories "family" and "nation" is no surprise. The concept of "nation as a family" is an extensive metaphor spanning most, if not all, modern nation-states (McClintock 1993, 63; Williams 1996). In Lebanon, connections between concepts of family and nation have been crucial to the organization of society (Joseph 2000). Here, the language of family provided a language for fostering unity and connection within the experience of a war from a distance. As transmigrants lived the war from Dearborn, they expressed solidarities with a transnational Lebanese family under siege.

COMFORT MOTHERING IN A WAR FROM A DISTANCE

Feminist research on a range of nationalist movements and historical moments shows that while concepts of family naturalize concepts of national unity, they also naturalize gender (and other) constructs within nationalism (McClintock 1993; Collins 1998). Anne McClintock writes that nationalism "cannot be understood without a theory of gender power" (1993, 63). Other scholars have shown that nationalist movements idealize the concept of motherhood, producing historically specific practices such as "mother activism" (Johnson and Kuttab 2001, 37), "maternal activism" (Naples 1992), and "other-mothering" (Collins 1994).[18] Specifying the ways Lebanese transmigrants engaged with the war helps explain the particular ways that gender mattered in Dearborn during the period of the invasion.

Southern Lebanese in Dearborn experienced the war through TV, Internet, phone calls, and the stories that circulated through their local networks and neighborhoods. Earlier, I explained that the concept of family expanded beyond extended kin to the domain of an imagined long-distance Lebanese community. Here I show that the imagined Lebanese community, experiencing the war from a distance, had needs that were primarily emotive—people needed comfort and support to cope with their fears and anxieties, their worries about their loved ones, and their unknown futures. These needs inspired particular practices of mothering that were crucial to idealized concepts of a Lebanese family under siege, which I refer to as comfort mothering. The following examples illustrate how comfort mothering, a practice that typically

shapes concepts of motherhood within the domain of extended kin, became integral to the process of coping among the imagined long-distance nation.

In Firyal's extended family, providing emotional support was crucial to female relatives coping with the war. She said that she coped with the war among her mother, sisters, and female cousins:

> We were all worried about the same things. We spent a lot of time talking on the phone with each other and gathering in my aunt's garage.... Some women would bring baked goods. My aunt would make coffee and we would sit around, eat and drink, and try to talk about things that didn't have anything to do with Lebanon. We were comforting each other and telling each other everyone would be fine.

Firyal's narrative represents what many interlocutors referred to as the experience of being "unable to communicate with loved ones whose lives were at stake" and "feeling worried because you didn't know what was happening to them." As Wafa put it, "You couldn't help them. No one could travel to Lebanon." These statements reflect the character of this war for Lebanese transmigrants. It was war from a distance—from the diaspora—where people could not be there with their relatives who risked death. The casualties were difficult to confirm, and phone calls and the consumption of media images provided the only slice of life on the ground.

This context produced particular needs among the long-distance Lebanese nation that were similar to the needs that emerged among extended kin. The need to comfort people as they dealt with the unknown and feared for the lives of their loved ones far away was integral to the communal process of coping and surviving. Several interlocutors stated that women disproportionately worked to comfort others. Samia described how women visited their neighbors and "took care of things and kept everything settled like the mother hen looking over everyone." According to Wafa, "Women's roles changed because they weren't just mothers to their own children, but to their neighbors and their immediate community." These remarks illustrate how the practice of providing emotional comfort was not only gendered among extended kin, but served the needs of the nation as family writ large. Comfort mothering the long-distance nation emerged from the experience of war from a distance and the sense of belonging to transnational families under siege.

REIFYING THE ARAB FAMILY IN DEARBORN

In Dearborn, Arab diasporas from diverse countries of origin mobilized an Arab nationalist ideology in response to the 2006 invasion of Lebanon. The summer of 2006 was not the first time that homeland politics took on local form in Dearborn. Barbara Aswad writes that, because of constant immigration, "events in the Middle East are strongly reflected in the community and are often played out in the formal and informal institutions such as the mosques, coffee houses and clubs such as the Lebanese Athletic Club" (Aswad 1992, 177). The sense of pan-Arab unity coexisted with identification as American or Arab American, as I explain below under "Tacit Knowledges of America." I use the term "Arab" as shorthand for my interlocutors' shifting references to a pan-Arab or Arab American identity. During the period of the invasion, community-based articulations of the invasion as part of a broader U.S. and Israeli war against Arab people reflected what I refer to as a reification of Arab nationalist ideology in Dearborn. Rashid Khalidi explains this idea on a broader scale, i.e. that beyond the war between Israel and Lebanon, this war was also "another in a series of Arab-Israeli wars" that intensified connections between the Palestine question and the issue of Israel's borders with Syria and Lebanon (Khalidi 2008, xi–xii).

In Dearborn, this perspective supported a sense of belonging to a transnational pan-Arab nation under siege. In the summer of 2006, local critiques focused on the U.S. government's role in the invasion and U.S. government and corporate media representations of Arab and Arab American critics of the invasion as Hizballah supporters and potential terrorists (see "Tacit Knowledges of America," below). Dominant community discourses located these critiques within a history of U.S. intervention in the Middle East, including its support for Israel and its war on Iraq, and in the context of U.S targeting of Arab Americans and Arab immigrants in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. These critiques inspired a tacit knowledge that the invasion was in continuity with histories of anti-Arab/anti-Muslim war and racism. Hind articulated this sentiment as follows: "I don't believe that just us Lebanese people were affected, I believe that my Iraqi next-door neighbors were affected and my Palestinian neighbors were affected and my Yemeni neighbors were affected."

Sara had three boys who were under the age of ten. She explained that her children developed a closer connection to Palestinian children at their school: "When they see how Palestine is being demolished, they say, 'It's the same bad guy doing it.' And nobody's safe from that." An idealization of pan-Arab solidarities was reinforced at political demonstrations. Hussein, a Palestinian activist, explained:

> At one demonstration, a woman chanted that we won't accept being oppressed. You could tell from her accent she was Iraqi. The Palestinians, although they were being assaulted too, raised Lebanese flags. Our people were refusing to submit because we believe in justice. That is what we're built from—Iraqis, Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinians—our true self is to yearn for freedom and insist on it.

Hussein's explanation reflects how a discourse that naturalizes concepts of unity idealizes the responsibilities of freedom, justice, and resistance among those bound in unity. The perspective that "we are one people" underpinned the massive outpouring of people who protested in the streets during the period of the invasion. The particular histories of Arab immigration to Greater Detroit and the formation of particularly diverse and concentrated Arab neighborhoods and institutions also contributed to the intensification of a long-distance pan-Arab nationalist ideology during the period of the invasion. Iraqis, Palestinians, and Lebanese—people from homelands most significantly impacted by U.S. and Israeli wars—are among the largest immigrant communities in Dearborn. In addition, people not only imagined or idealized pan-Arab connections, but they also lived and experienced them—at school and work, in the mosque and the church, and on the streets. "People in our community are like a big family," said Fayza. "We get power from being so concentrated. Every time there is an issue that takes place, we start marching up and down Warren Avenue. The more the Arab population increases, the more this takes place." Many people also stated that the particularly massive character of this invasion intensified notions of pan-Arab unity and obscured long-standing inter-communal differences. Consider Samia's point:

> It was really remarkable to see leaders coming together who would never have sat at a table before—reaching out towards one another

> and making that first step in bringing communities together. Families came together that had issues for years. It didn't matter where you came from, people were standing side by side, dealing with the issues. Everybody was one solid, united community and that's what we needed. The Iraqis understood what the Lebanese were going through, and there was that kinship. It was evident in all of the events that we did, and meetings. Even though we were far removed from our homeland, there's still that bond where people band together.

Many scholars have illustrated the significance of family within political projects focused on resistance or on dismantling social hierarchies (Gilroy 1993; Pierce and Williams 1996; Collins 2000). Samia's remark shows how the concept of family helped to consolidate a notion of unity across the categories of family, religion, and nation of origin that tended to shape Arab Dearborn's inter-communal differences and tensions. It also reflects a nationalist logic that naturalized concepts of pan-Arab unity while obscuring long-standing differences. Inter-communal differences did not disappear during the period of the invasion. One community leader told me that, "A lot of the Iraqi community turned resentful because they were wondering why we [Arabs and Arab Americans] come out in thousands and thousands to protest for Lebanon, but we don't do the same for Iraq." The invasion of Lebanon also took place during a siege on Gaza, yet most of the protests focused on Lebanon. A Palestinian interlocutor explained that "Lebanese flags and Palestinian flags came together to defend Lebanon, although Gaza came in the background. It was painful to accept, but the total destruction of Lebanon made us let go."

DOUBLE DUTY IN THE PAN-ARAB FAMILY: VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE DOMAINS OF WOMEN'S WORK

During the invasion, women held positions on the executive board of the Congress of Arab American Organizations (CAAO), a local network based in Dearborn that played a key role in organizing community-based responses to the invasion. While women participated en masse in demonstrations, shared the podium with male speakers, and held many integral leadership positions in the CAAO, gendered forms of labor

continued to structure official public politics.

Many interlocutors spoke about women's involvement in official public politics. For example, Hala stated, "Women didn't stay home. They came to the demonstrations. They were out there marching—young women, older women, and senior women—just as involved as men." Samia, a leading activist in CAAO, recalled,

> I was in everything that happened. I went to meetings with the local government and the local Dearborn police department. I spoke on stage, urging the community to come together, to call their representatives, and to demand that the U.S. call for a cease-fire and bring home the families caught in Lebanon.

The significance of women's activism to official responses to the invasion was in continuity with local histories in which women's leadership and the widespread support of women leaders have been integral to Arab Dearborn's official politics for decades, not only at times of communal crisis. Barbara Aswad's research historicizes Arab American community struggles against the City of Dearborn. She covers cases in which woman leaders spearheaded these struggles.[19] Women have held prominent positions in the two largest community-based organizations since their establishment.[20] Women currently direct two of the most significant Arab American institutions in Dearborn.[21] Women leaders have decades of experience interfacing with major U.S. agencies, ranging from United Way to the office of the mayor and the state legislature. These histories illustrate that public politics is not solely a male domain in Arab Dearborn, and help to explain the very high visibility of women in Arab Dearborn's public responses to the invasion.

Samia and Roulah held central leadership roles during the summer of 2006. While Roulah recalled that "Women planned the various events and demonstrations with men," she added that "They also did much of the practical work, the hands-on work." Samia expressed a similar perspective:

> During the war, there were a large amount of men with three or four women at the leadership meetings held every couple days. The men argued about who would be on the microphone and who would be speaking on behalf of the community. A lot of the practical concerns

> were left up to women... getting the paperwork done, meeting with the mayor and police chief to discuss the demonstration, making sure people come out to demonstrations in an orderly manner. All the paperwork for the City of Dearborn was in my name because no one else was there to sign the papers to hold events and get the permits. I was the city's point person and they came to me for every issue. We had 15,000 people in attendance—so the work was exhausting.

The gendered structures of Arab Dearborn's official public politics, in which the categories of male and female did not map onto distinct public and private boundaries, help to situate these narratives beyond universalizing feminist concepts that assume that war entails masculine-public and feminine-private spaces and orientations, without specifying the constructs of gender that shape a particular context. Many feminists have studied gender-integrated social movements in which women work on the margins, performing labor that is invisible but indispensable to social movements (Robnett 1997; Kuumba 2001). To a certain extent, this analysis is relevant to Dearborn. Yet in continuity with local Dearborn histories, women also worked alongside men activists in representing the long-distance nation in official public politics and determining the character of its activities and events. In this sense, they encountered a double duty in which "women have come to do men's work, but men have not come to share women's work" (McClintock 1993, 78).

TACIT KNOWLEDGES OF AMERICA

An analysis of U.S. nationalist ideologies in the context of this war is beyond the scope of this essay. Yet the proliferation of long-distance Lebanese and pan-Arab nationalist sentiments did not preclude an engagement with concepts of American identity or negotiations over belonging and non-belonging to an imagined American community. I focus on official public politics to help explain the constructs of gender that structured my interlocutors' engagements with America. I use the term "official public politics" to refer to organized political activities ranging from demonstrations to fundraisers and letter-writing campaigns that were organized under the umbrella of the CAAO or by organizations operating within the CAAO network. Arab Dearborn's official public politics made the following primary claims, among others, on America: 1) they appealed to the U.S. government to support a cease-fire; 2) they called for support of Lebanese American evacuees; and 3) they countered U.S. government and corporate media discourses that marked Arabs and Muslims as potential terrorists.

The U.S. State Department estimated that 25,000 American citizens were in Lebanon during the invasion, and that 5–7,000 of them were people of Arab descent from Greater Detroit; perceptions of State Department foot-dragging in the effort to evacuate U.S. citizens sparked strong criticism in Arab Dearborn (Krupa 2006).

Arab Dearborn's public politics deployed a specifically American (or Lebanese American) standpoint. Community leaders framed their claims in the context of the U.S. government's responsibility to grant particular rights and responsibilities to U.S. citizens. They made claims to belong to the U.S. nation as an idealized family in which all citizens have the right to be protected from harm. They mapped familial ideas about protection, nurturance, and security onto concepts of the U.S. nation's responsibility to care for and nurture its members. Within this framework, they critiqued the "second-class status" of Lebanese Americans who were denied the support of their (U.S.) government and nation.

Official public politics also critiqued dominant U.S. government and media portrayals of Lebanese, Arabs, and Muslims as potential terrorists, and the devaluation of Lebanese casualties. The experience of flipping back and forth between contradictory images on Arab and U.S. TV stations partly informed this perspective, which reverberated in my interlocutors' narratives and in everyday conversations around the coffee table, in cafes and restaurants, and on the streets.

This perspective reflects the tacit knowledges that informed the engagement of official Arab American public politics with the concept of the U.S. nation. Tacit knowledges assumed that the U.S. strategically failed to support an early cease-fire, perceived Arab Americans as second-class citizens, legitimized Israeli actions as self-defense against "Muslim terrorists," and marked people who criticized the invasion as supporters of terrorism. Further, these tacit knowledges inspired particular gender constructs that underpinned official public political strategies of resistance.

Beyond these official engagements, alternative engagements with

America also circulated in Dearborn. For example, several interlocutors dis-identified with America altogether and privileged a desire to return to Lebanon and/or join the resistance in south Lebanon. One interlocutor dis-identified with conventional concepts of an American family-nation and identified with a counter-hegemonic U.S. nation that signified oppressed people, Third World people, and people of color who shared a commitment to racial justice and to ending U.S. imperialism. A range of perspectives on America often co-existed in public discourses and events and in the rhetoric of individuals, depending on the context and the audience at a particular moment.

HUMANIZING ARAB PEOPLE: A HISTORICALLY SPECIFIC GENDERED STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE

During the period of the invasion, a gendered discourse interpolated women and men into stereotypical language in which women represented the human costs of the invasion and its impact on women and children, and men provided abstract political analyses. In official public politics, men and women reinforced this gendered division of labor as a strategy for countering U.S. discourses that devalued Lebanese lives and deaths. There were exceptions to this pattern, moments when men engaged in public expressions of grief, attended to children's needs, or shed tears during an interview, but overall, this gendered language permeated everyday conversations, Internet postings, published essays and diaries, interviews, and political speeches in Dearborn during the period of the invasion. CAAO activist Samia described this dynamic:

> In different conversations, I heard women focus on the loss of lives, the loss of innocence, and men on the political analysis. Women saw how families are devastated and lives altered and that's what hit home for them. Men were more concerned with the monetary and political aspect of the war.

The diary that Dearborn resident Hiam Turfe-Brinjikji kept while visiting Lebanon reflects the kinds of stories that I often heard women tell about the war:

> July 15: Saturday night would prove to be another night of increasing horror. The Israeli bombing seemed to intensify with each passing night. We clutched closer to our children. We leaned on our children's bodies, hoping to protect them from the rubble if the house collapsed on us. We were living through a nightmare and feared that each breath might indeed be our last. We prayed that if we died, it would happen instantly and that we would not live to see our children... suffer a long death.... (Turfe-Brinjikji 2008, 202)

Turfe-Brinjikji's diary uses language that humanizes the war. It brings her readers to daily life in Lebanon where innocent lives are at stake.

In Roulah's experience in Arab Dearborn's official public politics, male activists idealized her story and used her humanizing narrative in a strategy of resistance that subordinated her as a woman leader:

> There were a lot of community events at the time—demonstrations, vigils, gatherings. I became the poster child for Lebanese women who were dealing with the war. I was constantly called on to be the voice that represented women. Men would say to me, "We need a woman speaker." My husband was in Lebanon and I felt like my internal struggle was thrown out there and exploited.

In Roulah's story, men activists conflated the categories of "woman speaker" and "human face of the war," reflecting an idealization of womanhood as a symbol of the nation's human face, its pain and suffering. The call for a woman speaker endowed women with a particular status within Arab Dearborn's official public politics that emerged from the specific context of the U.S. "war on terror" which dehumanized southern Lebanese, Arabs, and Muslims. Perhaps male leaders imagined women's narratives to be more appealing in a U.S. context where conventional discourses generally conflate womanhood with emotion, motherhood, and family, and specifically associate Arab masculinity with violence and terrorism (see Moallem 2005; Naber 2008; Alsultany forthcoming). Yet in calling for a woman speaker, male activists disregarded women's diverse and complex subject-positions, needs, and experiences, and the possibility that they might determine their own participation in the long-distance nation. Roulah felt that she was added on to male activists' pre-existing agenda. In her narrative, the idealization of womanhood positioned men as agents of the nation and assigned women a symbolic role that cast them as abject beings or extensions of male leaders.

Yet the idealization of woman as an icon of the human face of war was not always a site of constraint. Arab American Women Advocating for Resources and Empowerment (AWARE) was a group that operated within the Michigan chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Roulah was president of AWARE during the period of the invasion when the group organized a fundraiser that strategically deployed this image of woman:

> What really got people to listen was putting a human face on the war. Women in our community were able to do that. Women wanted to assist people in Lebanon and our work became more than just rebuilding a country or writing our Congress. It allowed people to understand how the war affected women and children and the people of Lebanon. It was about the human side. We raised thousands of dollars that helped register students back into school whose families had lost everything. People came who had distanced themselves because of how political the war was and were now saying, "How can we help?"

Organizers of the AWARE fundraiser reclaimed the conflation of woman and the human face of war as a device for taking power within official public politics and expanding its scope to include different domains with new audiences. They transformed the taken-for-granted duties of women to represent the fragility of life, in a political strategy for fundraising and expanding the possibilities of support for Lebanon.[22] They re-signified the act of humanizing the war, changing it from a site of subordination to a site of power—albeit temporarily—which paralleled the strategy through which women activists have remade "maternal practice" as a site of agency on a much larger scale in war zones such as Palestine and Argentina (Peteet 1997; Arditti 1999; Johnson and Kuttab 2001). While the AWARE fundraiser did not transform gender hierarchies in official public politics, it is an example of how the practice of humanizing the war had the potential to empower women, reflecting what Frances Hasso refers to as "national identities [that can be] as salient for women as they are for men" (Hasso 1998, 442).

THE SALIENCE OF GENDER

In the previous sections, I analyzed the ways in which concepts of family and gender intersected the remaking of long-distance nationalism in Dearborn. Here, I illustrate that within my interlocutors' lived experiences, gender was a secondary or even an irrelevant concern in light of the invasion. In nearly every conversation I had with women, men, community activists, artists, friends, and colleagues familiar with this context, gender did not emerge as a significant category for discussion. When I asked women and men interlocutors directly about gender, they overwhelmingly agreed that gender difference was not relevant during the period of the invasion. I asked a range of questions about gender difference in various areas of life: the household, extended kin networks, community-wide networks, and official public politics. No matter how I framed my questions, nearly every interlocutor's response was the same: "There were no differences." Consider the following:

> *Interviewer*: Did women and men play different roles during the invasion?
> *Zain*: We experienced the exact same thing. We were all equally important to each other because we were worried about the same people.
> *Interviewer*: Were there different kinds of jobs that women did compared to men?
> *Isaak*: There were no differences. At the protest, everyone was equally involved.
> *Interviewer*: What was it like to be a mother?
> *Kamala*: I don't see anything to think about, being a mother in that situation.
> *Interviewer*: What did women do compared to men?
> *Roulah*: The community was united. Women and men banded together on human rights.

Collins (1998) writes that the existence of multiple axes of power does not mean that these axes are equally salient or that they form uniform principles of social organization in defining group experience. My analysis shows how gender, nation, and war simultaneously shaped the ways the 2006 invasion took on local form in Dearborn. Nevertheless, most interlocutors considered gender hierarchies to be less significant than their engagements with the hierarchies of military invasion and

war and collective struggle to stay alive. Hirsch and Spitzer (1993) write about a similar dynamic when they say that the Holocaust's victims were "'degendered' by the process of persecution and extermination" (4). This is why Collins (1998) points to the significance of group membership with respect to intersectionality. For southern Lebanese, the Israeli army did not distinguish between women and men, and the realities of the invasion were tremendous for everyone. Travelers were fleeing for their lives. Bridges blew up just as one's car crossed over. People were hearing that the driver who took them from point A to point B had died and they realized that they could have been in the car. A collective engagement with the fragility and delicacy of life displaced the relevance of gender.

CONCLUSION

This essay focused on how the specific character of the 2006 invasion and the specific conditions in which Lebanese diasporas lived it from a distance engendered particular concepts and practices of family, gender, and nation in Dearborn during the period of the invasion. Lebanese diasporas experienced the invasion within transnational social fields where they lived the material realities of the invasion "over there" through satellite TV, telephone calls, and social networks, and simultaneously engaged "over here" with U.S. government and media discourses on the invasion. From this standpoint, the invasion sparked negotiations with multiple concepts and practices of the nation as family (Lebanese, Arab, and American) that were overlapping, contested, and laden with specific gender constructs—including comfort mothering, double duty, and the gendered strategy of humanizing the war. This essay illustrates how concepts of family and gender can permeate multiple nationalist ideologies (Lebanese, Arab, and American) in different ways within a particular social location and how the mobilization of gender within long-distance nationalisms can be a site of both constraint and empowerment for women. In this sense, my research calls attention to a de-territorialized experience of gender that cannot be captured by area studies concepts that assume that nation-states operate through rigid boundaries, or by immigration studies concepts that privilege linear models of immigration and assume that immigrants come to the U.S. and leave their homelands behind.[23] It also requires looking beyond

concepts of American exceptionalism that posit a Middle East ravaged by war and violence and an America that provides a safe haven to immigrants escaping war zones far away.

On the one hand, this essay brings a transnational analysis of war to theorizations of the intersections between gender and nation. On the other hand, it seeks to honor the lived experiences of people facing a military invasion who perceived gender to be less salient than (or irrelevant within) a collective engagement with the fragility of life—whether directly in Lebanon, or indirectly from the distance of Michigan.

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NOTES

1. The U.S Census Bureau's 2007 data profile for the city of Dearborn estimates that 39% of the 102,643 residents are of Arab ancestry. See http://factfinder.census.gov.

2. Not all migrated directly from southern Lebanon. Some arrived by way of Beirut, but their families originated in the south (see Deeb 2006a; 2006b; Walbridge 1997). Dearborn's Arab population also includes Yemenis, Iraqis, and Palestinians, among others.

3. I identify interviewees by pseudonyms for the purpose of confidentiality. The interviews were conducted in English.

4. For discussions of Arab nationalisms, see Khalidi et al. 1991.

5. See Benedict Anderson's notion of "nation" (1983).

6. This essay builds on the analyses of long-distance nationalism by Skrbiš (1999) and Anderson (1983). See also Schiller and Fouron (2001) who argue that "the reemergence of long-distance nationalism reflects the tensions generated by the global reach of corporations and banks, continued political division of the world into separate and very unequal states, and longings of disempowered people to lead lives of dignity and self-respect" (4–5). They also contend that "long-distance nationalism... situates people in an ancestral homeland" and persons living away from the homeland "within a single political project" (22).

7. See Schiller, Basch, and Blanc's definition of transnational migration as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (1995, 48).

8. Here, I build on Patricia Hill Collins's analysis of intersectionality (1998).

9. See Deeb 2006a and Joseph 2000 for more on Lebanon's political system.

10. See Abraham, Abraham, and Aswad (1983, 181) and Walbridge (1997, 21).

11. Violence in Lebanon always leads to increased emigration. In the summer of 1989, for example, Dearborn "experienced an immigration explosion as a result of the destruction of Beirut" (Aswad 1992, 168). From the Lebanese side, Labaki (1992) states that emigration as a result of the 1989 violence reached the highest level since 1975, the first year of the civil war (606–9). See also Walbridge 1997, 16–18, and Rignall 2000.

12. Barbara Aswad, who conducted extensive research in Dearborn, writes that, according to an informant whom she interviewed in July 1989, only 3,500 remained in Bint Jbeil (1992, 169).

13. See Shryock 2000 for a detailed study of Arabs in Greater Detroit. See also Ahdab-Yehia 1974; 1983; Abraham, Abraham, and Aswad 1983; Schopmeyer 2000; and Baker et al. 2004. It is important to note that Michigan hosts other Lebanese communities, including Maronite and Greek Orthodox.

14. This quote comes from Julie Peteet's discussion of cultural notions of motherhood in the Arab world (1997).

15. Some family members lived in other Arab countries, Latin America, Europe, and Australia.

16. This concept comes from Schiller and Fouron 2001.

17. The 2006 invasion killed 1,200 Lebanese, wounded 4,000, displaced one million, and destroyed tens of thousands of homes as well as hospitals, schools, factories, roads, airports, power stations, fuel depots, warehouses and most of the bridges (Deeb 2006b; Sayed and Tzannatos 2008).

18. Naples 1992 and Collins 1994 as cited in Peteet 1997, 105 and 107.

19. In one instance, Arab women stood in front of bulldozers that were tearing down the community (Aswad 1974).

20. The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) and the Arab Culture and Community Center (ACCC).

21. The National Arab American Museum and the Arab American Chaldean Council.

22. I build on Peteet's analysis of the significance of motherhood to nationalist ideologies. Writing on Palestinian women in Lebanon during the civil war and in the West Bank during the first intifada, she observes that "sacrificial and activist maternal sentiment and practice, held by Palestinians... to occur naturally," have been "transformed in moments of intense and prolonged conflict" (1997, 103).

23. See Ella Shohat's critique of area studies (2002).

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