

Sociolinguistics of LGBTQ+ Discourse across Lebanese Law, NGO Policy, and Mass Media

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Undergraduate Thesis

November 2018

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Introduction

Perhaps one of the most pressing issues surrounding LGBTQ+ discourse is the question of identification. What is the appropriate way to refer to a queer individual? Do the rules change when the naming is for those within the community? How are words and terms reclaimed? What we commonly see in queer populations across the globe is a tension in answering these questions. Though most of what is commonly taught in women's studies courses and on online forums is of a Western focus, there are some foundational objectives that can be applied to other cultures as well.

In *Queerly Phrased*, an anthology of various writers' discoveries regarding sexuality and language, the key components in understanding linguistic form and change within the LGBTQ+ context are as follows:

1. Differences between groups of different sexualities (cultural, age-based, etc.) will likely be similar, and variances larger, than between the sexes
2. One cannot assume that there is a single "gay community" from which subjects can be randomly sampled, as norms differ quite considerably from one community of practice to another
3. The idea of resistance and subservience, i.e. reclaiming, shapes the characteristics of gay talk and writing. (Livia & Hall, 25-27)

These fundamentals allow for the research of LGBTQ+ terminological trends in a more cohesive sense. Rather than reinventing the wheel when thinking of queer communities outside of the West, one is able to fully investigate the trends occurring worldwide using these ground rules. An example of this application can be seen in Arabic-speaking countries in which queer discourse has become much more prevalent in the past few years, due mostly to the increased visibility of self-identified LGBTQ+ individuals in the public sphere.

When thinking about social and linguistic changes regarding queer discourse in the Middle East, Lebanon's current landscape comes to mind. Relatively progressive and deemed the 'gay paradise of the Arab world' (Reid-Smith, 2016), Lebanon boasts a healthy volume of LGBTQ+ resources and discussion, both in the Arabic and English language. For the purposes of this thesis, one arena of Lebanese society will be carefully analyzed in each chapter:

Law- This chapter charts the role that legal terminology has played in granting or rescinding LGBTQ+ rights. This includes the overturning of Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal code by the Mount Lebanon High Court in July 2018, declaring French Mandate debauchery laws unconstitutional. Also relevant to this chapter is the role of the 2018 Lebanese Parliamentary elections, for which multiple candidates have voiced their support of LGBTQ+ rights in a historic first for the country. Among these are the *Kataeb* party, Joumana Haddad, and the *LiBaladi* civil society collective which have all voiced their support for LGBTQ+ rights in Lebanon. The role of (de)colonization and the subsequent rejection of French Mandate-era debauchery laws is imperative to the understanding of the recent wave of progressive political discourse in Lebanon.

NGO Policies- This chapter analyzes how local and civil society and educational NGOs provide a service to those in the LGBTQ+ community, as well as their allies. Examples in this chapter include LebMASH, Lebanon Support, *Helem*, and Proud Lebanon. The target languages and dialects used in each organization's materials is key to understanding the key audience for each organization, and will allow for the understanding of the role that these NGOs play in lobbying for queer rights in the country. The 'incitement to discourse' that anthropologist Joseph Massad notes in his book *Desiring Arabs* is being implemented in eastern society provides evidence of the western influence on Lebanon's queer community.

Mass Media- Chapter three takes into account the coverage (or lack thereof) of LGBT-centric topics in Lebanon, per the varied biases of news outlets such as *Al-Nahar* and *Al-Mustaqbal*, and *Al-Jadeed TV*. In addition, the role of independently-produced media will be explored, particularly that of e-magazines such as *Seen Noon* and online forums such as the Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor. The language that each media outlet uses, with particular focus to the preference of MSA over Levantine Arabic, or vice versa, is a key component in understanding their target audiences.

The focal points were selected with the intent of providing a relatively comprehensive image of the current political and social climate surrounding LGBTQ+ discourse in Lebanon, and how linguistic changes have followed the evolution of the country's understanding and implementation of civil politics into its fabrics.

The Role of Sociolinguistics

Defined as the way in which “language use symbolically represents fundamental dimensions of social behavior and human interaction” (Wolfram, “Sociolinguistics”), sociolinguistics is a key component in understanding the driving forces behind language use in queer circles. The linguistic changes within the Arabic language with regards to the Lebanese community has thus been a product of change in the community, particularly in the decisions on behalf of queer Arabic-speakers make in elaborating on their experiences.

Within the study of sociolinguistics is the acknowledgement of the linguistic components that uphold the backbone of the target language. In terms of Arabic, there are two main factors that play a role in the evolution of its structure. The first, Arabic’s gendered structure, is a direct challenge for trans and nonbinary Arabic-speakers, who find that they are unable to effectively elaborate on their identities. The second sociolinguistic component to consider is the presence of diglossia in Arabic, which presents itself as various adaptations of traditional Arabic throughout the 26 countries (Sawe, 2016) that speak it.

Arabic As a Gendered Language

Like many other languages in the Semitic family, Arabic is a gendered language. All words are classified as either male or female, as is shown in the example below:

This (M) chair	<i>hatha al kūrṣi</i> هذا الكرسي
This (F) flower	<i>hathihi al zahra</i> هذه الزهرة

Fig.1: Male versus female sentence structure in Arabic

In the first example, the pronoun “هَذَا”, *hatha*, denotes the male categorization of the noun, “الكرسي”, *al kūrṣi*. In the second, the pronoun “هذه”, *hathihi*, denotes the female categorization of the noun, “الزهرة”, *al zahra*, in addition to the traditionally female “ة” ending of the noun itself.

Implementing this grammatical structure to gendered minorities has proven to be difficult in both the social and academic sense. For instance, depicting the experiences of individuals who fall outside the gender binary becomes increasingly more difficult once writers are faced with only two options for gendered terminology. This supposed lexical

‘gap’ has pushed local organizations to produce, and widely circulate the usage of new terms to fit the demand for identification.

One example of this can be seen in *Gender Dictionary*, قاموس الجندر, *qamūs al-jandar*, produced by civil society organization Lebanon Support. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the need for a term to describe one's gender as distinct from one's sex resulted in the creation of the following term:




Fig. 2: ‘Gender’ subheader in *Gender Dictionary*
 (“Gender Dictionary”)

The term “جندر”, *jandar*, is listed as a term indicating one's gender, rather than the usage of “جنس”, *jins*, previously used to simultaneously denote sex and gender. In addition to being of a transliteration of the English word ‘gender’, this creation, among others discussed in this text, has served as tools for Arabic-speaking queer individuals to effectively identify and express themselves.

Diglossia

Known for his extensive work on diglossia, American linguist Charles Ferguson defined the social phenomenon as “two or more varieties of the same language...used by some speakers under different conditions” (Ferguson, 325). Ferguson noted the implementation of diglossia in the Arabic-speaking world, wherein the “‘classical’ language has remained relatively stable” while dialectal variants has been more subject to change (Ferguson, 327). The classical form of Arabic, then, was regarded as more prestigious and reliable than its dialectal counterparts. As such, the ‘classical’ version of Arabic, i.e. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), is only used in official documentations and federal settings.

The absence of MSA in mainstream social contexts is important in understanding linguistic changes on the local level. For many outlets, informal Arabic has been used as a mode of relating to the audience on a more intimate level than the seemingly drier, more formal nature of MSA. In countries such as Lebanon, the Levantine dialect is used

in mainstream life and is often the dialect of choice for socially-driven organizations operating within Lebanon.

The usage of MSA in more prestigious forms of communication can be seen in classic Lebanese media, particularly in print forms such as newspapers and financial magazines. This is strongly contrasted with self-produced and digital media, which have the tendency to use Levantine Arabic in their materials. These differences make an inadvertent statement about the intended audiences that the source materials are geared towards, such that newspapers tend to aim their messages to a more professional crowd while social media is more inclusive.

Lavender Linguistics

Another component in understanding the sociolinguistics of LGBTQ+ nomenclature in the Arabic language is the impact of lavender linguistics. Coined in 1951 by American cultural critic and folklorist Gershon Legman, lavender linguistics was initially created in order to study distinct 'lavender' lexicons of gay men (Jones, "Lavender Languages"). The discipline focuses primarily on the verbiage that LGBTQ+ individuals use to describe their identities while also taking into account the societal factors that may influence changes within this terminological usage. As such, lavender linguistics provides useful context in understanding the differences in self-identifications while also taking into account the forces that push LGBTQ+ individuals to alter terminology relevant to their experiences.

Lavender linguistics often takes two forms in society. The first occurs on an interpersonal level, where queer individuals are faced with decisions regarding the terminology they choose to use. An example of this is depicted below, where *Mashrou' Leila* frontman Hamed Sinno is shown using the term 'كوير' to self-identify as queer.



Fig. 3: Lead singer of Lebanese alternative rock band *Mashrou' Leila* in *No Longer Alone*, a Human Rights Watch production about LGBTQ+ individuals in the Middle East (“No Longer Alone”)

The second form that lavender linguistics takes is often observed on a larger scale, namely via political and social organizations. This approach is much more formal, and is often intended for audiences within the sphere of gender and sexuality-based discourse. As a result, the usage of MSA is much more common. The following example is of a LebMASH press release, which concerns المتحوّلين جنسيًا و جندريًا, *al-mutahawwilūn jinsiyyan wa jandariyyan*, which specifically addresses the transgender community with the application of MSA in its grammar.



Fig. 4: LebMASH press release “Transgender health guidelines: Covering the gap in knowledge among healthcare providers around transgender health” (“Transgender Health Guidelines”)

Both aspects of lavender linguistics address the functionality of queer speak, and attempt to organize the trends of vocabulary creation and usage into two domains--the public and the private.

Reclaiming Identity in the Post-Colonial Context

Potentially the most notable aspect of socio- and lavender linguistics is the westernized basis from which these disciplines have stemmed from. While these contributions are subject to change in the Arabic-speaking world, there is an understandable resistance, both within and outside of the queer Middle Eastern community, of these changes. Even with the existence of LGBTQ+ advocacy and healthcare organizations for individuals in the Middle East, the question of whether claiming LGBTQ+ identities means adopting categories that originated in the West.

In his book *Desiring Arabs*, Dr. Joseph Massad attributes much of Middle Eastern unease surrounding the implementation of modern LGBTQ+ discourse to the Gay International. Defined as the West's early attempts to defend the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people on an international scale through NGOs, the Gay International serves as a vessel of intellectual colonization of the East (Massad, 160). While there is the common belief--on both sides--that Western positive attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community precedes its Eastern counterpart, Massad makes the argument that the West's Gay International is in fact, struggling to keep up with the sexually-forward culture of the East, saying that the often gay, white, male scholars of the movement seek to:

“...unravel the mystery of Islam to a Western audience, while the latter has the unenviable task of informing white male gay sex tourists about the region and to help ‘liberate’ Arab and Muslim ‘gays and lesbians’ from the oppression under which they allegedly live...” (Massad, 162)

Per Massad, the issue with the Gay International is in its blatant application of Orientalist thought. Defined by Palestinian-American anthropologist Edward Said as the West's simplistic view of the Eastern ‘Orient’ (Said, 1), Orientalism has had severe implications on cultural anthropology:

“The interchange between the academic and the more or less imaginative meanings of Orientalism is a constant one, and since the late eighteenth century there has been a considerable, quite disciplined--perhaps even regulated--traffic between the two.”

...

“Orientalism [is a] Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”

(Said, 3)

According to Massad, the Gay International's depiction of Arabs and Muslims as oppressed and in need of liberation further adds to the problematic Orientalist depiction of the region. This has been shown to further aid in the regression of academic scholarship surrounding the topic of LGBTQ+ discourse in Arabic-speaking regions, which is considered by many to be the compliment to countries such as the more 'progressive' United States.

As a result, the impact of Orientalist thought on colonialism extended past Western textbooks and into Eastern civilization, particularly at its height in the eighteenth century. Massad's assertion that the Middle East had eventually begun the "internalization of European conceptions of the human among Arab intellectuals" eventually bled into the very cultural understandings of sex and sexuality (Massad, 172). According to Massad, this would lead to a shift from the reverence of works such as homoerotic poet Abu Nuwas, to the eventual internalization of European ideals of societal conduct, greatly contributing to the region's reputation as a sexually repressed region.

Finding Middle Ground

Massad's claim that Arab populations were much less sexually repressed prior to European colonization is further reasoning for his reluctance to incorporate the Middle Eastern narrative into the Gay International movement. Despite this sentiment, there is a marked rise in implementation of Western-based materials into the LGBTQ+-centric curricula across many Arab institutions. In Lebanon, LGBTQ+ websites often contain an English or French component, a pattern that emerges in Chapter 2.

One particular example of the eventual marriage between the Gay International and Middle Eastern queer discourse can be seen on the Beirut Pride website. Beirut Pride is one of the only pride parades in the Middle East and has gained international acclaim for being one of the first in an Arabic-speaking country (Kotecha, 2013). Upon investigating the parent organization's website, there is a noticeable use of Arabic, French, and English to communicate their mission statements.



Fig. 5: Beirut Pride’s website, with options in English, French, and Arabic (“Beirut Pride”)

This structure directly challenges the philosophy of Massad’s resistance to the Gay International, but also incorporates Ferguson’s point about language’s multilinear purpose as a tool to reach a wider audience through unconventional methods such as those depicted in this thesis.

Conclusion

So where does that leave the queer Lebanese community in their journey of self-identification? The short answer: it depends on who you ask. Those subscribing to Massad’s philosophy of resisting the Gay International’s influence on the Middle Eastern LGBTQ+ movement would find issue with Beirut Pride’s website layout, as would the Lebanese citizens who deem LGBTQ+ discourse to be an issue not worthy of Eastern concern. In the midst of this spectrum lie the majority of Lebanese institutions that specialize in matters relating to the domestic LGBTQ+ community.

While taking into account the many facets of the Arabic language, one can attempt to make sense of the sociolinguistic impact of the language on Arabic-speaking queer individuals. By using Lebanon as a basis for this thesis, there is an opportunity to localize such a vastly complex issue into one of relative homogeneity.

The three focal points of this thesis were selected with the intent of providing a relatively comprehensive image of the current political and social climate surrounding LGBTQ+ discourse in Lebanon and how these linguistic changes have followed the evolution of the country’s understanding and implementation of civil politics into its fabric. By understanding the form that all of these spheres take, it becomes much more feasible to chart the projection of LGBTQ+

discourse in Lebanon and the wider Middle Eastern region.

The usage of sociolinguistics as a tool for measuring these trends fulfils many aspects in understanding the motive and direction behind these trends . Not only does it make the study of the Arabic-speaking LGBTQ+ experience possible, but when combined with the context of colonial and Orientalist thought, the why's and how's of LGBTQ+ discourse in Lebanon can begin to be answered.

Chapter 1: Law

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the involvement of legal and political verbiage in LGBTQ+ rights in Lebanon, and how language shapes the debate and strategies that people use to promote or undermine LGBTQ+ rights. The focus will be split into two separate categories.

I. The Lebanese Penal Code

II. The 2018 Parliamentary Elections

Both aspects of the Lebanese government have played a role in directly impacting the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon. One thing that is noticeable in both categories is the decided use—or lack thereof—of terminology specific to the queer community, and is likely related to the political leanings of each institution, as will be demonstrated in this chapter. The manner in which LGBTQ+ discourse plays out on the legal and political sphere is a major piece in understanding the cultural and linguistic shift in LGBTQ+ discourse in Lebanon.

I. The Lebanese Penal Code

Essential to understanding the structure of Modern-day Lebanese government is the influence of French law on its political makeup. Following the victory of Allied Forces at the conclusion of World War 1, the Ottoman Empire was forced to give up much of its territory to France and Great Britain. This allowed both countries to negotiate the division of the territory, an agreement that would later be referred to as the Sykes Picot Agreement. (“Sykes-Picot Agreement”). The agreement rewarded France much of modern-day Lebanon, which was officially referred to as the French Mandate (“Government and Society”).



Fig. 6: Map depicting the aftermath of the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement (“Sykes-Picot Agreement”)

Orientalism and the Gay East:

The French Mandate of Lebanon brought with it many westernized ideals that had origins in Orientalist thought. As was mentioned in the Introduction, Orientalism often seeks to classify eastern culture as opposite to the West and tends to simplify and deem the region ‘elusive’ as a result. As such, all Orientalist work in the early twentieth century viewed countries like Lebanon through a simplified lens and produced an incomplete analysis of the region as a result. To echo this, Orientalist critic Said states:

“Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being” (Said, 108)

Orientalist scholarship was at an all-time high in the twentieth century, which witnessed an increased interest in Eastern culture. Within this ideology, Arabic literature was originally spearheaded by German scholar Carl Brockelmann, most recognized for his work *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* in 1998 (Massad, 53). Brockelmann’s prodigies included the likes of Reynold A. Nicholson, whose studies of Persian homoerotic poet Abu Nuwas in *A Literary History of the Arabs* lead to the following conclusions:

“the scenes of luxurious dissipation and refined debauchery which [the bawdy poets] describe show us, indeed, that Persian culture was not an unalloyed blessing to the Arabs any more than the arts of Greece to the Romans.” (Massad, 54)

In addition to Nicholson’s work was Adam Mez’s *Die Renaissance des Islams*, which contained an entire chapter specific to the ‘Manners and Morals’ of the medieval Arabs. In this, Mez made a note to address “the ‘pervasive’ nature of pederasty among poets from the fourth to fifth century” (Massad, 54).

Upon analysis of Western rhetoric of Arab sexuality almost a century later, Massad’s point regarding the mistrust of Western institutions of the Gay International begin to make sense. On this, Massad states:

“Western gay interest in and representations of sexuality in Arab and Muslim countries, in fact, coincide with the very emergence of Western gay scholarship on sexuality. Although homoerotic and sexual representations of Arab men by Western male writers, as we saw, precede this period, these neither constituted a genre nor precipitated a full-fledged discourse among Western gay men about Arab male desires. They were rather offshoots of standard Orientalist representation of the Arab world.”

(Massad, 164)

In other words, Massad points out the failures of the Gay International to fully acknowledge the complex relationship between the East and queerness, and cites the very principles of Orientalism in the movement’s current political makeup. To that end, Massad argues that Mez’s description of Arab works as “offensive” and “inferior” to Western sentiments has unequivocally contributed to Middle Eastern attitudes of sexual shame over time (Massad, 54).

The sharp contrast between Western and Eastern attitudes towards sexuality, coupled with the Mandate’s standard of etiquette eventually lead to the implementation of debauchery laws into the Lebanese constitution via the imposition of the French Napoleonic Code (“Government and Society”). This was an attempt by France to regulate the social and cultural norms of the country in an effort to correct it, such that the more ‘primitive’ norms accepted by the Lebanese would be discouraged. Today, the implementation of these debauchery laws has been at the forefront of social and political debate about the fate of LGBTQ+ citizens in the country.

Article 534:

Lebanon’s current Penal Code contains many laws originally adopted from the French Mandate constitution. Among these is Article 534, located in Section II, which concerns the nation’s ‘Promotion of Morality and Public Morals’. In keeping with the moral code left behind by the Mandate, this section outlines the ‘appropriate’ manner of social interaction in Lebanon:

Chapter II: In the Promotion of Morality and
Public Morals

الفصل الثاني: في الحض على الفجور والتعرّض للأخلاق
والآداب العامّة

Proclamation 2: In the Presentation of Ethics and
Public Morality

في التعرّض للآداب العامّة: ٢: النبذة

Article 534: Every unnatural act shall be
punished by imprisonment for up to one year.

كل مجامعة على خلاف الطّبيعة يعاقب عليها: ٥٣٤: المادّة
بالحبس حتّى سنة واحدة

("قانون العقوبات")

The allusion of unnatural sexual acts to homosexuality by Lebanese enforcement has, on several occasions, resulted in the persecution of LGBTQ+ individuals under Article 534. Though there is no figure depicting the number of people negatively impacted by the Article, there have been several instances in which gay-identifying individuals have been punished. According to LGBTQ+ advocacy group *Helem*, this includes “a Mount Lebanon Inquisition Judge in January 2004 who issued an arrest warrant for two gay males, and the “arrest” of two lesbians by the Mount Lebanon Public Prosecution Office in August 2002” (Witton, 2007).

There has been an attempt by several organizations to call for the repeal of Article 534. In a statement released in July 2013, the Lebanese Psychiatric Society stated the following:

“Homosexuality in itself does not cause any
defect in judgment, stability, reliability or social
and professional abilities”

"المثليّة الجنسيّة في ذاتها لا تتسبّب بأي خلل في القدرة على
الحكم أو الاستقرار أو في الموثوقيّة أو في القدرات الاجتماعيّة
أو المهنيّة"

(“Lebanese Psychiatric Society”)

Along with the work of lobby groups such as *Helem* and educational organizations such as LebMASH, Article 534 was repealed in June 2018 by the Appeals Court of Mount Lebanon. In their statement is the following:

“...No sufficient evidence has been presented to suggest that Article 534 refers to any sexual acts. This law goes against the United Nations human rights laws relating to sexual orientation, further impeding the social progression in Lebanon. In light of modern reinterpretation and upon close analysis of the text, it has been concluded that the primary source has been ratified in favor of an interpretation that allows any two consenting adults the right to engage in whatever relation they wish. [...]

Article 534 does not specify what constitutes an unnatural relationship.”

(“Human Rights Violations”)

The repeal of Article 534 thus makes a clear distinction between homosexual acts and that of the unnatural. Though not directly implemented from Mandate laws, the idea of promoting ‘morality’ through the punishment of ‘unnatural’ acts such as homosexuality through the eyes of French Orientalism has had clear implications on modern Lebanese society. Whether intentional or not, the repealing of Article 534 is a step away from the colonized standards placed onto Lebanon in the past century.

II. The 2018 Parliamentary Elections

Following the formation of the Sykes-Picot Act of 1918, the French Mandate was established in 1923 in Mount Lebanon, an almost homogeneously Maronite Christian region. As the Mandate expanded to neighboring areas and other religious and ethnic sects began to be incorporated into country’s makeup, the demand for a more representative style of government became increasingly important (“Government and Society”). The map below depicts the rough cultural and religious makeup of the Mandate, which is similar to that of Modern Lebanon.

أن عناصر المادة ٥٣٤ ق.ع. لا تعاقب المثلية الجنسية نصفتها ميلا، و لدعم من خلال تعديل القوانين التي تجرم العلاقات المثلية، و بيان الأمم المتحدة و حقوق الإنسان بما فيها التوجه الجنسي، و للي التطور في لبنان في ضوء الاجتهاد، و الإضافات أنه يقتضي تفسير للنص الجزائي تفسيراً حصرياً و تصديق الحكم الابتدائي الذي قضى بأن العلاقات الجنسية بين راشدين هي ممارسة لحقّ بغير تجاوز تالية بانتيجة ردّ الإستئناف شكلاً و إلا اساساً و تصديق الحكم الابتدائي [...]

مادة ٥٣٤ ق.ع. لم تحدّد ما هي العلاقة الغير طبيعي



Fig. 7: Ethnoreligious breakdown of modern-day Lebanon
 (“Distribution of Religious Groups”)

By 1926, the demand for more representation was met with a restructuring of the executive branch in the Mandate’s Constitution, such that it afforded all sects the opportunity to serve in the Lebanese parliament. Following the conclusion of the Mandate of 1946, this breakdown was similarly adapted into the current system where it still takes effect in its governmental structure.

Today, Lebanon is considered a unitary multiparty republic. The country follows a semi-presidential parliamentary formula adapted from Mandate, wherein both a president and prime minister are elected every 6 years (“Government and Society”). Grandfathered into the constitution is the division of parliamentary seats by religious and ethnic sect. As can be seen by Fig.3, this uneven distribution of parliamentary seats has led to sectarian tensions between political parties (Karam, 2017).

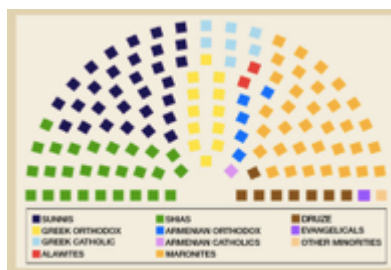


Fig. 8: Sectarian breakdown of Lebanese parliamentary seats.
 (“Lebanon’s Election System”)

The most recent elections of 2018 have shown the role of religion in the fate of LGBTQ+ rights. Until very recently, voices supporting LGBTQ+ rights have been absent in Lebanon’s

political arena, while opposition has been more present in the political arena. A recent example of this is can be seen in October 2018, where Speaker of the Chamber and member of the *Amal* movement Nabih Berri opposed a gay rights bill at an international parliamentary conference in Geneva (Azar, 2018). However, the 2018 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections have introduced a dramatic shift to the progressive, with multiple candidates and collectives historically voicing their support for LGBTQ+ rights, most notably that of the *Kataeb* party and the *LiBaladi* civil society collective.

Kataeb's 131-Point Plan:

The *Kataeb* party's recent support for LGBTQ+ rights and protections has been shown in their 2018 campaign's 131-point plan. Formed at the conclusion of the French Mandate in 1936, the *Kataeb* party describes itself as the "main guarantor of the idea of Lebanon as a refuge for the oppressed minorities of the Arab East" ("History"). The right-wing Christian group has stayed true to this sentiment with their campaign promises, which includes point 78:

<p>78: The abolishment of all legal provisions in the [Lebanese] Penal Code that criminalize homosexuality</p>	<p>٧٨ إلغاء المواد القانونية في قانون العقوبات تجرّم المثليّة الجنسيّة</p>
<p>("Kataeb")</p>	

The explicitness of point 78 is indicated by the usage of term referring specifically to the LGBTQ+ community with the term "المثليّة الجنسيّة" (*almithliyya aljinsiyya*) denoting homosexual populations. This has made *Kataeb* the first party in Lebanon to directly declare its support of LGBTQ+ rights. Additionally, *Kataeb*'s stance as a staunch supporter of minorities can be seen as a term used to encompass the support that has been voiced for the homosexual community as a sexual minority.

Interesting to note is *Kataeb*'s unique attitudes are toward the LGBTQ+ community, given their categorization as a Christian political party. In contrast with the typical leanings of Western Christian political parties, *Kataeb*'s position as the first in the country to endorse rights for queer Lebanese citizens further drives Massad's point home regarding the false depiction of the East as sexually repressive. In fact, it was Western Christian propaganda that, for centuries, "portrayed Muslim societies as immoral and sexually licentious compared to Christian morality"

(Massad, 165). The Orientalist homogenization of ‘Muslim’ as Eastern thus still makes this sentiment applicable to Eastern Christian organizations such as that of *Kataeb*.

LiBaladi

An additional voice for LGBTQ+ support in the elections came from the *LiBaladi* civil collective. Comprised of five political candidates representing multiple subcategories in the parliament, *LiBaladi* aligns itself with progressive ideologies and as such has endorsed like-minded candidates in the 2018 elections.

Defined as ‘For my Country’, *LiBaladi*’s initiatives are centered around societal equality, with particular focus on minorities. This is likely linked to the sectarian makeup of the *LiBaladi* collective, which contains three Armenian Orthodox candidates, an Armenian Catholic candidate, and a Maronite candidate (“LiBaladi”). *LiBaladi*’s mission statement contains the following:

“*LiBaladi* strives to restore noble political work based on efficiency and integrity at the core of our social, economic, environmental, cultural and political issues, centered on the rights of people and the stability of society, which includes a positive participatory process that integrates all segments of society equally and without discrimination”

"تسعى لبلدي إلى إعادة تعريف العمل السياسي على أنه عمل نبيل يعتمد على الكفاءة والنزاهة، في صلبة قضيتنا الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والبيئية والثقافية والسياسية، محررة حقوق الناس واستقرار المجتمع، مسار إيجابي تشاركي دامج لكافة فئات المجتمع بالتساوي ودون تمييز."

(“مواقفنا”)

LiBaladi’s focus on discrimination is another example of the terminology that likely includes LGBTQ+ policy. Though there have not been any statements in support of the LGBTQ+ community on behalf of the collective, *Helem*’s co-founder Georges Azzi has listed them as supporters of the movement, saying:



Fig. 9: *Helem* co-founder Georges Azzi’s tweet regarding pro-LGBTQ+ candidates in the 2018 Lebanese Parliamentary Elections (“Georges”)

This confirms the role that candidates within *LiBaladi* have had in LGBTQ+ advocacy in Lebanon, seen specifically in the campaign of Joumana Haddad.

Joumana Haddad

Within *the LiBaladi* collective is independent candidate Joumana Haddad. In contrast to the many religiously inclined male candidates in the 2018 election cycle, Haddad was one of the few female voices that made an impact on the political sphere. A secular candidate campaigning for the minority sector, Haddad’s campaign largely revolved around supporting minority rights in the country. She has served as the voice for the younger Lebanese generation and evokes these sentiments on her campaign website.

My Vision: A fair country that treats all its citizens equally (both sexes) regardless of sex, religion, socioeconomic class, or political affiliation; A country that considers freedom to be a right, not a request, and offers its sons and daughters the chance to live a generous life; A country that values human rights and affirms the rights of all and fights against all discrimination and mistreatment and protects vulnerable populations in society

رؤيتي: دولة عادلة، تساوي بين جميع مواطناتها ومواطنيها، بمعزل عن الجنس والدين والطبقة الاجتماعية والانتماء السياسي؛ دولة تعتبر الحرية حقاً لا مطلباً، وتوفر لبناتها وأبنائها سبل العيش الكريم؛ دولة تقدّس حقوق الإنسان وثقافة المساواة وتحارب التمييز والظلم على أنواعهما وتحمي الفئات الهشة في المجتمع

(“رؤيتي”)

In tune with her campaign goals has been Haddad’s role as an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. A video from September 2016 posted on Haddad’s YouTube page shows her speaking at an event hosted by Lebanese NGO Proud Lebanon, where she voices her support and philosophy behind LGBTQ+ advocacy in the country, saying:

“...our responsibility as humans is to stand with any person that is being subjected to discrimination, injustice, exclusion, humiliation, and punishment because their orientation does not fit in with the majority...”

"...مسؤوليتنا كجنس بشري أن نوقف حد كل شخص عم يتعرّض للتمييز والظلم والإقصاء والإهانة والتعذيب بسبب ميوله يبلّغ ما بتتوافق مع ميول الأكتريّة..."

“...we must train ourselves to stop using words like queer, sodomite, and fag...”

"...لازم نتدرّب حالنا ما نستخدم الفاظ جارحة، مثل 'شاذ' و 'الوطي' و 'طبشي'..."

“...we must commend every person who lives their difference with pride...”

"...لازم نقدر شجاعة كل شخص مختلف يعيش اختلافه بفخارة"

(Haddad, 2016)

According to Ferguson, Haddad’s usage of the Levantine dialect in her speech aims to fulfill two goals. First, is to ensure “broader communication among different regional and social segments of the community”. Haddad achieves this by uniting all potential Lebanese voters through the usage of their common dialect. Second, is the “desire or a full-fledged standard ‘national’ language as an attribute of autonomy or sovereignty” (Ferguson, 338). By speaking for an advocacy group like Proud Lebanon, which aims to specifically work for the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in Lebanon, Haddad’s usage of Levantine Arabic further strengthens her connection to members of this NGO.

Haddad’s parliamentary campaign is an excellent example of the relationship between politicians and local lobby groups. Azzi’s endorsement of Haddad in his tweet, in addition to her keynote-speaking role at Proud Lebanon’s fundraising event, show the symbiotic relationship between politicians and NGOs. This relationship will be further explored in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The role of language in LGBTQ+ advocacy and the furthering of gay rights within Lebanon is evident in the terminology used in documents relating to the governing body of the country. When analyzing the complex nature and context for which the Lebanese Penal Code was written, understanding the role of French Orientalist standards is important. The regulation of Eastern bodies is evident in debauchery laws such as Article 534, which have until very

recently held queer Lebanese citizens to standards introduced by an influence foreign to the region. The subsequent reclaiming of Lebanese law is therefore shown in the repealing of Article 534, giving those same individuals the freedoms that were present before the French Mandate.

The 2018 Parliamentary Elections are also an important aspect of understanding language and LGBTQ+ rights. What was unique about this cycle was the emergence of unambiguous support by several political groups, including the *Kataeb* party and the *LiBaladi* collective, which Joumana Haddad has been an active part of. Haddad's role in the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights in the country was shown in her campaign's interactions with NGOs such as *Helem* and Proud Lebanon, which has benefitted both sides in the fight against bigotry in the country. The unique role that Christian groups such as *Kataeb* and *LiBaladi* play offers additional support for Massad's point about the corrective nature of the Gay International movement onto Eastern society.

Though it is unclear whether this is a move of reclamation of the Middle Eastern sexual narrative or the continued implementation of Westernized ideals into the country's fabric, the use of Arabic as a medium for which these ideas have been implemented to make changes in Lebanese law is undeniable, and has been a useful vehicle for change in the region. In addition to this is the varied styles in which this information is relayed in English and Arabic, with the former relying on terms coined by the Gay International while the latter has been notably ambiguous in its phrasing.

Chapter 2: NGO Policy

Introduction

LGBTQ+ discourse in Lebanon is central to the mission of many local NGOs and nonprofit organizations. These organizations fulfill a multitude of needs; from educating and advocating for Lebanese LGBTQ+ rights, to offering free health and social services to members of the community. Regardless of the organizations' primary goals, all the NGOs listed in this chapter have played an important role in landmark developments for LGBTQ+ rights in the country.

Much of the source information for these nonprofits draw resources from research originating in the West. With the suppression of queer voices following the formation of the French Mandate cultural shift in attitudes toward homosexuality in the 19th century, much of the research on LGBTQ+ individuals has instead found its home in countries such as the United States and parts of Europe. As such, many organizations list their websites in both English and Arabic and heavily borrow terminology from the English language.

One example of such an application can be seen in Lebanon Support's *Gender Dictionary*. Published as an online document as part of the organizations' *Gender Equity and Information Network* in 2016, *Gender Dictionary* was constructed "based on multidisciplinary research and consultations with local gender actors" ("Traveling Concepts"). The text is comprised of 25 of the most popular topics relating to gender and sexuality, and are presented in English alphabetical order with its Arabic translation on the right-hand side.



Fig. 10: *Gender Dictionary* 'Gender' entry
("Gender Dictionary")

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this resource was among the first to distinguish gender from sex. However, the Arabization of the English word gender into the word "جنس", *jandar*,

leaves one to wonder why a more innovative, more intimately Arabic alternative was not selected for use in the dictionary. The organization clarifies this notion by saying:

“Our aim is to look at the localized usages of the terms and concepts, examining their history and the contexts in which they have emerged, and how these concepts have “traveled”, transnationally, but also between the different spheres of activism, expertise or academia.”

(Ayoub, 2018)

The concept of ‘traveling’ concepts is important in understanding the sociolinguistics of queer discourse. As *Gender Dictionary* states, the terms coined by and for queer Arabic-speaking individuals did not appear spontaneously. This quote instead makes the claim that terms that had already existed in Western contexts were used by Arabic speakers who otherwise had no way to express their identity. The resultant need for labels is what eventually lead to the borrowing of English terms for those who needed it.

In his article *Taking Queer Linguistics Further*, Heiko Motschenbacher details the origins of queer linguistics (QL) in the United States in the 1970s:

“The notion that sexuality may serve as the exclusive basis for an essentialist identity category, which at the surface ignores the intersectionality of sexual identity with other identity facets such as class, age, ethnicity or even gender, was increasingly met with reservation [in the 1970s].”

(Motschenbacher, 151)

Due to the lack of intersectionality in the early studies of queer linguistics, the thought of integrating English words into the Arabic queer dictionary was met with tension similar to that of Massad’s, who writes,

“by inciting discourse about homosexuals where none existed before, the Gay International is in fact *heterosexualizing* a world that is being forced to be fixed by a Western binary. Because most non-Western societies, including Muslim Arab societies, have not subscribed historically to these categories, their imposition is eliciting less than liberatory outcomes”

(Massad, 188)

Massad claims that with the inception of QL came the forced ‘fitting’ of non-western societies such as the Middle East into the Western Gay Western Gay International lest they be labeled un-liberal. The labels of “gay” or “homosexual”, according to Massad, were a product of cultural imperialism onto the queer Arabic population.

So how does this play into the LGBTQ+ advocacy scene in Lebanon? This chapter will describe the structure of five domestic NGOs, the tools they use--or neglect to use--in their resources, and how the resultant impact they may have on Lebanese society may relate to Massad’s Gay International movement.

The Organizations

LebMASH

LebMASH, or the Lebanese Medical Association for Sexual Health, was founded in 2012 and is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization based in Lebanon and lead by a board of directors that includes health professionals based in Lebanon and the United States. The organization operates in full compliance with Lebanese law (“About LebMASH”).

LebMASH’s compliance with Lebanese law, as seen in the previous chapter, has makes it a pivotal in queer rights in the country, as is seen in the previous chapter with the overturning of Article 534 and endorsement of sexual and gender minority rights in the campaigns of Joumana Haddad and the *Kataeb* party. The organization’s show of support has been necessary in the evolution of gay rights in the country.

Linguistic Decisions



Fig. 11: The LebMASH logo
 (“About LebMASH”)

The LebMASH logo, designed by Lebanese expatriate Tarek Atrissi, is described as using “a graphic element the three diacritical dots typically used in the Arabic script,

stacked on top of each other. These symbolize three key points LebMASH is advocating: “Awareness”, “Education” and “Change” in the Middle East”. (“About LebMASH”)

The usage of the English language, American health professionals, and a Lebanese expatriate designer elicits many signals from Massad’s point about the influence of the Gay International in Lebanese queer discourse. The logo is in English, with references to Arabic script, however subtle.

Services and Resources

The organization’s focus on education and research has made LebMASH the first and most prominent source for sexual health articles and journals. This is observed with the ‘Break the Silence’ scholarship, awarded to applicants who submit a research paper related to LGBTQ+ health (“Break the Silence”). All aforementioned publications have been produced in the English language.

The organization’s website also boasts a full ‘Publications’ directory, where one can find various press releases, research articles, and annual reports produced by LebMASH. All information listed is exclusively in the English language (“Guidelines”).

In addition to producing state-of-the-art research on LGBTQ+ health, LebMASH also hosts mental health trainings aimed at educating the public about gender and sexual minorities. Sessions are taught in both English and Arabic, with time for questions at the end of each session. Staff members who are responsible for leading the trainings are all fluent in the Levantine dialect, allowing for a more intimate learning environment. (“Mental Health Training”).

In addition to this is the website’s LebGUIDE section, a directory curated by the organization wherein visitors can select healthcare providers through a search engine. The directory allows visitors to narrow choices down by gender, location, and specialty. These resources allow for convenient access to the organization’s resources. This section of the website offers an Arabic version of the search engine in order to accommodate the needs of Arabic-speakers (“LebGUIDE”).

LebMASH also hosts an annual LGBT Health Week, where Lebanese citizens are encouraged to attend and learn about different aspects of the physical and mental health of those in the domestic community. Unique to this resource is the usage of Arabic in the promotion and materials of LGBT Health week, as is shown by the following example of

the Health Week's #Equalityinhealth, #المساواة_في_الصحة, theme ("LGBT Health Week 2017").



Fig. 12: LGBT Health Week 2017 promotional banner
("LGBT Health Week 2017")

The usage of Arabic can also be seen in the event's promotional videos:



Fig. 13: Dr. Fadi, a sexual health doctor, attributes Article 534 to the low turnout of queer patients to his clinics.
("LGBT Health Week 2017")



Fig. 14: A woman with an HIV+ son describes PrEP medication he takes daily
("LGBT Health Week 2017")

LebMASH's focus on healthcare resources and cutting-edge research on LGBTQ+ health has resulted in its role as one of the premier facilities for those in the Lebanese community to benefit and learn about improving the lives of themselves and others. Additionally, the role that LebMASH has played in societal discourse in the fight to repeal Article 534, as well as their

focus on equality, "مساواة", and marginalization, "تهميش" makes them an integral part of sociolinguistic changes with respect to the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon.

Lebanon Support

Described on the website as an “independent non-governmental, non-religious, non-political, and non-profit making information & research centre”, Lebanon Support was officially classified as a non-governmental organization in 2008 (“About Us”). The organization contains a plethora of informative resources for Lebanese civil society, with some focus on gender and sexuality research per the *Gender and Equity and Information Network*. Through the usage of social science, digital technologies, and publication and research of knowledge (“About Us”), Lebanon Support’s purpose is to serve as the go-to research hub for all things pertaining to Lebanese society.

Linguistic Decisions

Like LebMASH, Lebanon Support seems to prioritize the usage of English on its website. The reasons for this are numbered, but are most likely due to the universality of English as the default language for research papers and projects. Since around 20 percent of Lebanese people under the age of 30 speak English (“Government and Society”), this development almost seems natural.

Unlike LebMASH, Lebanon Support’s use of Arabic in its logos and subheaders accommodates the needs of those navigating the organizations website in a way that LebMASH fails to. Though predominantly in English, there is a fair distribution of Arabic text throughout the key aspects of its layout, as shown below:



Fig. 15: Lebanon Support, دعم لبنان, logo
 (“About Us”)

In addition to the arabesque design of the logo, the title is also written in both Arabic and English. The usage of "دعم", *da'am*, i.e. “support”, also implies that the organization is meant to cater to the entire fabric of Lebanese society.

Services and Resources

Civil Society Knowledge Centre

This program includes civil society publications by Lebanon Support as well as present articles being circulated in other Lebanese and Middle Eastern think tanks. All included materials have been published in Arabic, English, or French, and do not always offer all materials in all three languages (“Civil Society Knowledge Center”).

Among the four domains of research in the Civil Society Knowledge Center is the *Gender Equity and Information Network*, which “aims to enhance local capacities, improve access to knowledge, as well as fill gaps in knowledge on gender thematics in Lebanon” (“Civil Society Knowledge Center”) and is responsible for the production of the aforementioned bilingual *Gender Dictionary*.

Daleel Madani | دليل مدني

Daleel Madani operates as an online tool that researchers can use to communicate with others in their research areas. The goal for this is to “strengthen civil society cooperation, thus limiting duplication of work, and enhancing the sector in Lebanon” (“Daleel Madani”). This includes archives of previously published editorial newsletters and articles in order to more easily meet the program’s goal.

Civil Society Incubator

This aspect of Lebanon Support operates as a mentoring and coaching tool for those interested in civil society and public service, and is the latest addition to the organization’s resources (“Civil Society Incubator”).

Lebanon Support’s resources span all aspects and populations within Lebanon, and has a broader focus than LebMASH. With groups such as the *Gender Equity and Information Network*, Lebanon Support seeks to focus on the gender disparities in the country. The network addresses issues of gender discrimination, bias, and mistreatment. Within the context of the LGBTQ+ community, the Civil Society Knowledge Centre’s publication of the *Gender Dictionary* aims to educate the public about the nuanced nature of gender and sexuality terminology. As a result, the purposes of *Gender Dictionary* are meant to cater to communities outside of the LGBTQ+ community as well. Lebanon Support also appears to be geared towards both Arabic and English-Speaking audiences. The bilingual translation throughout the PDF is a good indicator of the type of audience envisioned for the text.

The reason for this may be the more general purposes of the organization, compared to LebMASH's more specific focus on the LGBTQ+ community and resources aimed more so at the community. When thinking of this in Gay International terms, this could be indicative of Western standards placed implicitly upon LGBT-centric organizations such as LebMASH compared to the more diversified information contained on the Lebanon Support website.

Proud Lebanon

Proud Lebanon is a “non-profit, non-religious, non-political, non-partisan civil society that aims to promote sustainable social & economic development in Lebanon”, with goals to achieve equality of marginalized sexual groups via community service activities. Founded in 2013, Proud Lebanon seeks to elevate the voices of those who have been discriminated against for their gender or sexuality (“About Proud Lebanon”).

Linguistic Decisions

Proud Lebanon's website and logo are both in English, with the occasional article containing Arabic equivalents.



Fig. 16: Proud Lebanon logo
("About Proud Lebanon")

The website operates mainly like a blog, with an exclusively English menu. Within each section, however, are materials used by Proud Lebanon in Arabic text.



Fig. 17: Proud Lebanon poster listing Article 534 detainee rights (“Publications - Proud Lebanon”)

Services and Resources

The organization has four components:

- Legal Support: mainly in reference to Article 534
- Health care: STD testing, free of charge
- Psychosocial support: therapy services for LGBTQ+ survivors, presented either in individual counseling or through art therapy
- Awareness Raising & Capacity Building: weekly info sessions centered around gender and sexuality (“Services”)

What’s interesting about the Proud Lebanon website is the Westernized standard for progressiveness seemingly shown in its articles. One example of this is in an article written in December 14, 2017, where an ex-member of Proud Lebanon who recently moved to a Scandinavian country describes his experience as “perfect”, with “normal people”, as opposed to his in Lebanon (“You Never Know”).

This notion is reminiscent of the rejection that some Eastern LGBTQ+ activists may evoke when describing the ‘regressive’ nature of their own culture with respect to that of the ‘progressive’ Western LGBTQ+ movement. The example that Massad gives is of an organization for gay and Lesbian Muslims located in the United States, wherein a speaker “explains to his Western audience his Islam is ‘200 years behind Christianity in terms of progress on gay issues’” (Massad, 175). Similarly, Proud Lebanon’s praising of Scandinavia

appears to be a limited observation that neglects the decades of suppression from western Morality Codes such as Article 534.

Helem

Founded in 2004 by Lebanese LGBTQ+ activist Georges Azzi, *Helem* was the first organization in the Middle East to advocate for gay rights. Since its foundation, *Helem* has been associated with the Lebanese Ministry of Interior, and has been the official voice for LGBTQ+ equality in the country ever since (“Helem - About”).

Helem's main goal was for the repeal of Article 534, and has worked historically with other organizations such as LebMASH and the Lebanese Psychiatric Society to produce statements refuting misconceptions about homosexuality. *Helem* also operates as a community center for the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon, where “LGBT+ people can meet one another, organize, and partake in activities and find support services” as well as get tested and treated for HIV, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections (“Helem - About”).

Linguistic Decisions

The word ‘*Helem*’ means ‘dream’ in Arabic. The organization’s title also doubles as an acronym translating to ‘Lebanese protection for gays and lesbians’, or **حماية لبنانية للمثليين والمثليات** (*himaya lubnaniyyah lil mithliyyeen wa almithliyyat*). The logo is constructed from Arabic letters, resembling the following:



Fig. 18: *Helem*'s logo
 (“Helem - About”)

Helem's decision to incorporate Arabic into its logo shows a different usage of language to advertise the organization’s services to its intended audiences. Due to the usage of Arabic in its logo, it's likely that this organization’s efforts are more focused on the Lebanese and wider Middle Eastern community.

Services and Resources

As an advocacy group, *Helem* works to dispel misconceptions about queer identity politics in Lebanon. Below, an example of their social media presence is shown with a cartoon intended to educate the public about the appropriate Arabic terminology for homosexual individuals.



Fig. 19: *Helem* campaign depicting the incorrect usage of anti-LGBTQ+ slurs in Arabic (“Helem - About”)

Helem’s advertisement in Fig. 8 shows a conversation wherein the figure on the right asks if the other is *lūṭi*, لوطي, a term that has often been associated with anti-homosexual slurs. To counter this, the second figure offers the term *mithli*, مثلي, for use, one that has been accepted by the LGBTQ+ community in the region to be more accepted. *Helem*’s point here is to provide additional pushback against slurs such as *lūṭi* while simultaneously encouraging the usage of *mithli*, a word that warrants objectivity rather than name-calling

Helem’s approach to addressing the issues and struggles of those in the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon is unique in its directness. Organizations focused on research and resources such as Proud Lebanon and LebMASH seek to improve the lives of those within the community, while organizations such as *Helem* primarily address those outside the community. This distinction sets *Helem* apart in its role as a solely activist group, with goals slightly varied from that of the others mentioned in this chapter.

Conclusion

Massad’s correlation between lack of labeling in Eastern culture prior to Western colonization coupled with the recent attempt on the Gay International movement to impose labels on LGBTQ+ individuals has certainly shown its effects in some of the Lebanese NGOs mentioned in this chapter. When analyzing countries like Lebanon, which had no laws prior to the French Mandate pertaining to homosexuality, he states:

“...Most Arab and Muslim countries that do not have laws against sexual contact between men respond to the Gay International’s incitement to discourse by professing anti-homosexual stances on a nationalist basis. This is leading to police harassment in some cases and could lead to anti-homosexual legislation. Those countries that already have unenforced laws begin to enforce them. Ironically, this is the very process through which ‘homosexuality’ was invented in the West”

(Massad, 189)

When thinking of Article 534, then, the concept of ‘legalizing’ homosexuality is due in part to the initial debauchery laws instilled by the French, followed by the West’s disownment of its homophobia half a century later. The definition of homosexuality, derived from the West’s Gay International movement, is also being notably implemented in all of these organizations to varying degrees.

Nevertheless, there has been a noted resurgence in recent years of Western materials and mores being incorporated into Lebanese NGOs. This plays out linguistically in several ways. The first is the primary usage of English to coincide with the Western, mainly American, LGBTQ+ movement, as noted by Motschenbacher. LebMASH’s direct work with American doctors is likely a direct result of this standard, as is the English layout of all four of the organizations’ websites.

Lastly, and most clearly, are the clear Western and English influences behind LGBT-inclusive Arabic terminology in Lebanon Support’s *Gender Dictionary*. This source further draws from Western sources, with the distinction between gender and sex being directly transliterated for use in the dictionary. While the entirety of the dictionary is translated between both languages in a bilateral format, it’s important to note the context from which many of the terms were derived from. The influence that Western culture has had on the Gay International is undeniable, but as we can see from the examples given in this chapter, there is much work that is still needed to more clearly establish Lebanon as a source of LGBTQ+ resources independent of the West.

Chapter 3: Mass Media

Introduction

Mass media in Lebanon has played a central role in exporting the regional aspects of the LGBTQ+ movement to a wider audience. For the purpose of this thesis, the forms of media explored will fall under the following categories:

- I. Newspapers- This chapter explores patterns of reporting in three of Lebanon's most widely circulated newspapers and their coverage of LGBT-focused events in the country.
- II. Self-Produced Media-This category focuses on civilian-produced media, which includes social media pages, e-magazines, and blogs often created by an unofficial source to cover LGBTQ+ topics in Lebanon and the wider Middle East.
- III. Television- Specific to this section are the interviews with members of the community, with particular focus on the forms in which Arabic can gender—or misgender—the individuals of focus.

A note about bias

With more regimented news sources such as newspapers and television, there is often an unspoken agreement with the audience about maintaining some level of objectivity in reporting. However, this is often not seen to be the case with many readers and viewers, as accusations of a biased news source is a very common regarding issues as polarizing as LGBTQ+ rights. In his article *The Impact of Individual and Interpersonal Factors on Perceived News Media Bias*, Dr. William Eveland discusses the predicament of the perceived biases that news sources may have. In conducting a national survey in the United States about whether viewers felt that their news sources were biased against their personal viewpoints, he concluded, “individuals’ perceptions of media bias are at least partly shaped through their interactions with others” (Eveland & Shah, 113).

This conclusion lends some validity to the idea of self-perceived biased reporting on the behalf of many news and media outlets in Lebanon, and introduces questions pertaining to the motivations and goals of the news sources involved in LGBTQ+ reporting. Keeping the political

and cultural backgrounds of these sources in mind is key to understanding the ways in which certain articles or news stories may be told.

The issue of biased reporting is not one that is unique to Lebanon. In her thesis regarding the news coverage on LGBTQ+ topics in channels such as MSNBC and Fox News, Ashley Wiktorek notes the vast difference in news coverage between both channels. In a channel as left-leaning as MSNBC, Wiktorek notes that the channels “use of language in reference to the LGBT or LGBT community is overall positive” (Wiktorek, 63), while its right-leaning counterpart, Fox News “portrays an agenda in defense of religious liberty” (Wiktorek, 68).

The linkage of religious liberty and freedoms to LGBTQ+ coverage in the various modes of mass media are also an important piece to the puzzle of media coverage regarding the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon. As was seen in Chapter 1, the various backgrounds from which politicians came from were relevant to the policies that they campaigned for in the 2018 Parliamentary Elections. The tension between religion and secularity, English and Arabic, straight and queer-produced materials are all variables that play into the ways that media projects the current state of LGBTQ+ rights and liberties in the country.

Western coverage of LGBTQ+ in Lebanon

One thing to note is the difference in news coverage about the Lebanese LGBTQ+ community across the globe. While there is a substantial amount of coverage within the country through state-funded newspapers and channels such as *Al-Nahar* and *Al-Jadeed TV*, there is often a substantial amount of information that is left out from these articles. For instance, the articles in this chapter from these sources rarely contain interviews with members of the community and tend to stick to the already well-known LGBTQ+ organizers in the country.

An example of this difference can be seen in *Playboy's* June 2018 article “Pride in the Arab World”, wherein American journalist Alexandra Talty visits Beirut following the cancellation of the second annual Beirut Pride by Lebanese authorities. The article details the aftermath of the cancellation, driven largely by the arrest of primary event organizers. Talty attempts to make sense of this incident to her American audience as she interviews members of the LGBTQ+ community in a busy café in the Achrafieh district.

One person interviewed by Talty describes the extreme loss she felt after the cancellation of Beirut Pride Week. Lynn, a closeted lesbian, sees these events as a lifeline of sorts, since they allow her to stay connected within the community in a private way. Like many in Lebanon,

Lynn's reliance on gay hangout spaces such as Pride is driven by the need to avoid the risk of being outed. Echoing this, Lynn states,

““I can't be in on a group for gay people in Lebanon. If someone else who knew me saw that, it would be over. That's why I don't go on dating apps.” Even in safe spaces, Lynn has never approached a woman at a bar, as she worries they might be connected to her community.”

(Talty, “Pride”)

Talty's willingness to interview a variety of LGBTQ+ individuals is rarely seen in Lebanese media. This has led to the production of independent media by the community itself. An example of this is *Seen Noon*, an e-magazine published by LGBTQ+ activists in an effort to push back on the media's suppression of topics relating to the community. According to co-founders Zoro and Ram, the magazine's electronic medium makes it so that they do not have to follow the same censorship rules as print publications (Talty, “Pride”).

The exposure that e-magazines and other online media give to the LGBTQ+ community has been a significant factor in amplifying the voice of queer individuals in the region. As will be seen in this chapter, media exposed through the internet medium has played a major role in tapping into a younger and typically more technologically savvy audience, a majority of whom share similar ideologies to producers of such media.

Diglossia in Lebanese Mass Media

An important component to consider is the usage of modern standard and informal Arabic in each of these mediums. What is often observed is the usage of modern standard Arabic (MSA) as the language of choice for more 'legitimate' media sources such as Lebanese news channels and newspapers, and the usage of Levantine Arabic in magazines, newspaper think pieces, TV interviews, or independently produced media.

This distinction brings us back to Ferguson's article, where the distinction between more prestigious and informal forms of media is made with the language of choice. Ferguson's idea's idea regarding this is the following:

“...in all the defining languages, the speakers regard H as superior to L in a number of respects. Sometimes the feeling is so strong that H alone is regarded as real and L is reported "not to exist." Speakers

of Arabic, for example, may say (in L) that ‘so-and-so’ doesn't know Arabic. This normally means he doesn't know H, although he may be a fluent, effective speaker of L.”

(Ferguson, 329)

With H denoting MSA and L denoting Levantine Arabic, the implementation of Ferguson’s theory allows audiences outside of the Arabic-speaking context to understand the linguistic divide between media forms. While official newspapers often resort to the usage of H, e-magazines and social media tend to use L, leading to the connotation of the former being more official while the latter is regarded by the public as more of an extracurricular source of information. The usage of L in self-produced media also contributes to the trend seen in LGBTQ+ advocacy-related materials, as it allows for a sense of intimacy with its audience.

Multilingual forms of Media in Lebanon

While the vast majority of mass media in Lebanon is produced in Arabic, there are also a fair number of outlets that produce materials in French, English, and Armenian. This is due to the diverse ethnic and social makeup of Lebanon, as described in Chapter 1, where there is a significant portion of the population that may utilize one of these languages in addition to, or instead of, Arabic. In fact, the wide range of language use is alluded to in Talty’s article, where she recalls witnessing one of the interviewees as he “screens his phone for calls, sometimes answering in French or Arabic” (Talty, “Pride”).

Due to this, a lot of Arabic newspapers also contain English and French versions of their articles in an effort to widen their audiences. In addition to this are other leading news outlets that operate strictly in English or French, such as *L’Orient*, *Le Jour* and *The Daily Star*, while others, such as the Armenian *Ararad*, *Zartonk*, and *Aztag*, are intended for Lebanon’s Armenian population.

With all of these factors in mind, the next step is to analyze the four major forms of mass media and how the aforementioned aspects of the Lebanese media industry have played a role in the linguistic usage—or misuse—by its producers. By noting the steps—or missteps—that a particular publication takes in regards to addressing LGBTQ+ topics, some inferences can be made regarding the political leanings of such organizations.

I. Newspapers

For the sake of equivalency, the terms that will be used to search for articles in the following newspapers will be the following:

homosexual(s): مثلي/مثليون

LGBTQ+: مجتمع الميم

Al-Nahar

Regarded as one of the leading newspapers in Lebanon, *Al-Nahar*, meaning “the day”, boasts some of the highest circulation of printed news in the country. According to the website, the newspaper is considered to have a left-leaning political outlook (“Al-Nahar”).

With digital forms in both English and Arabic, the newspaper covers news topics that span lifestyle, economics, culture, and sports. When searching the specified terms on the newspaper’s online site, the results were unspecific to Lebanon and included news pertaining to LGBTQ+ events around the world. Though this constituted the majority of the results for both searches on the site, there were the following results:



Fig. 20: Al-Nahar op-ed, “*The Persistent War Against Gays in Lebanon...Where are the Human Rights?*”

(أيوب، ٢٠١٨)

This op-ed references Berri’s proposal to a gay rights bill, referenced in Chapter 1. Due to the genre in which Nada Ayoub has chosen to report on this story, she writes in the following style:

“...the national attitudes have not changed, as was seen with Speaker Nabih Berri’s vote which undermined the fight against the discrimination on the basis of identity...”

لم يقتصر موقف لبنان على ذلك الصوت الذي صدع به رئيس مجلس النواب نبيل برّي عالياً قبل أسبوعين داخل الجمعية العامة للإتحاد البرلماني الدولي حين لعب دوراً ناشطاً لتقويض محاربة التمييز على أساس الهوية

(“الحرب المستمرة”)

It's clear that Ayoub's stance on Berri's actions in the conference were that of concern, as words such as "discrimination", تمييز, were used to describe the impact of the event. This verbiage corresponds to the liberal stance that the *Al-Nahar* claims to take on social issues. By describing Berri's actions as discriminatory, the left-leaning bias of the newspaper is revealed. Using words such as these places *Al-Nahar* at odds with more conservative channels, which would have likely responded to the story differently.



Fig. 21: Al-Nahar article, “Same Sex” Night in Beirut...Religious Authorities Get Involved!”
(“سهرة”)

Al-Nahar's coverage of a recent event cancellation by the American University in Beirut (AUB)'s 'Gender Club' following the comments of former Mufti of the Lebanese Republic Mohammad Rashid Qabbani starkly contrasted that of Ayoub's article. This is largely due to the objective nature of this article, wherein the writer mentioned details of the event's cancellation with no personal statement made. In addition to this contrast was the inclusion of a direct quote from Mufti Qabbani to further explain the reasoning behind the cancellation, something that was absent in Ayoub's op-ed:

“...Mufti Qabbani considered the topic of the event to be ‘indecent for the Lebanese and for Lebanon’, and said that it would contribute to the spiritual destruction of Lebanon”

“...ويعتبر المفتي قباني أن موضوع السهرة 'مفضوح وهو عار على لبنان واللبنانيين، وينذر بدمار إلهي للبنان”

(“سهرة”)

As one can see from the selected text, this quote is listed without the additional input of the writer's opinion.

The two select styles of coverage surrounding the *Al-Nahar* news on LGBTQ+ topics in Lebanon are indicative of two things. The first is that this outlet does not shy away from its progressive stance on queer rights in Lebanon. The second is indicative of the vast variety of

article formats, likely intended to reach a wider audience. On one hand, Ayoub’s op-ed lets readers know her thoughts, and by extension the newspapers thoughts, on Berri’s opposition to the gay rights bill. On the other hand, the newspaper’s coverage of AUB’s cancellation of the Gender Club event was far less subjective, and offered more information regarding the events that had taken place. Both of these approaches can be seen in newspapers in other countries, including American news sources such as MSNBC and Fox News.

Al-Mustaqbal

On the other end of the spectrum is the newspaper *Al-Mustaqbal*, meaning “the future”. The newspaper is named after owner and Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri’s *Tayyar Al-Mustaqbal* political party, which leans right in its policies (“Saad Hariri”). As such, the newspaper offers its readers a right leaning, conservative, and typically shies away from coverage of issues such as the LGBTQ+ movement.

When investigating the coverage of topics relating to مثليين or مجتمع الميم, *Al-Mustaqbal*’s website neglects to offer any results relating to domestic news regarding the LGBTQ+ community. In fact, the only results that appear in reference to the terms searched pertained to international social topics, such as a review on American coming-of-age story *Moonlight* and coverage of the second annual 2017 Women’s March in Washington D.C.



Fig. 22: Al-Mustaqbal’s top results when searching for news relating to ‘مثليين’ (“نتائج”)

This conservative publication’s approach to LGBT-centered issues is distinct from those in the United States, as referenced in Wiktorek’s thesis. Rather than directly address

the contrasting views that likely align with *Al-Mustaqbal's* views, the newspaper seems to opt for a 'don't speak, don't tell' approach to its coverage.

The sharp contrast between *Al-Nahar* and *Al-Mustaqbal's* coverage of LGBTQ+ issues is indicated in the materials they produce—or lack in producing. *Al-Nahar's* choice to publish personal op-eds on issues pertaining to LGBTQ+ events inadvertently allows viewers to witness their liberal bias in effect. On the other hand, *Al-Mustaqbal's* lack of materials surrounding this topic is likely a conscious decision as well, since the issues surrounding LGBTQ+ rights, such as the overturning of Article 534, have occurred recently.

Lastly, the decided usage of MSA is likely due to the official nature of newspaper production. Given that newspapers are one of the oldest vehicles for news transference, the standards that have always been placed on it would logically still remain in the production of opinion pieces such as Ayoub's. Nevertheless, the usage of certain terms, such as *متلي*, bring forth the question of whether or not these terms have a place in traditional media, and if not, what terms may fit the mold of MSA instead.

II. Self-Produced Media

With the combined suppression of LGBTQ+ coverage in Lebanese media, there has been a plethora of independent media production by local LGBTQ+ groups in the country. Similar to the organizations discussed in chapter 2, the conception of such materials came about due to the severe lack of resources for those in the LGBTQ+ community in Lebanon. As such, productions such as *Barra Magazine* as well as the *Queer Narratives Beirut* podcast were created to fill the void left by print media and traditional news. The following examples of self-produced media are intended to showcase the various ways in which members within the LGBTQ+ community have claimed responsibility for the ways in which their stories are covered.

Seen Noon

Most notable of these productions is *Seen Noon*, an e-magazine published by Beirut Pride. Described as “the one pretty, witty, dapper magazine” (“Seen Noon”), *Seen Noon* is forthright in its approach to be lighthearted and funny, which is a change from the more serious tones that *An-Nahar* and *Al-Mustaqbal* tend to take. Free from the bounds of prestigious language and by-the-book news coverage, *Seen Noon* does a great job of filling those in the

community in on current events, resources, artistic installations, and the like while maintaining a humorous demeanor.

The electronic format of *Seen Noon* seems to fulfill a dual purpose. The first, alluded to in Talty's article, is the need that for many LGBTQ+ individuals in Lebanon to remain discreet about their identity. When inquiring about the social hubs of queer life in Beirut, Talty was told that,

"Many clubs wouldn't brand themselves as "just for gays," but instead focus on hosting one night or a specific party. It also helps people who are still not out, as they can go to specific bars or cafes that are known to be queer-friendly without the risk of running into friends or family."

(Talty, "Pride")

Rather than create a print-based magazine that may out contributors or readers, *Seen Noon*'s decision to only produce its issues electronically allows all individuals involved the option to read as they wish. Additionally, all of the articles in Issue 1 of the magazine are anonymously written, to further cultivate a literary safe space.

The second, and arguably more obvious benefit for *Seen Noon*'s digital home is its potential to reach a significantly larger audience. *Seen Noon*'s intended audience as "Rainbow fans and pink souls all over the Arab world" ("Seen Noon") echoes this sentiment well.

Upon visiting the magazine's website, the first thing that is of note is the usage of the aforementioned societal shame as a vehicle of relativity with the magazine's audience. Issue 1 of *Seen Noon* opens with an image of queer and non-binary exotic dancer Alexander Bolkevich, the topic of this issue's main article. To fit with the theme of shame and societal standards Boklevich stands in his performance clothing with their back facing away from a flag that reads 'When is it time [for Arabs]?'. The collective faces of shame and pride, of disgust and admiration, is meant to depict the conflict that many in the Lebanese community feel.



Fig. 23: Issue 1 header for *Seen Noon*
 (“Seen Noon Magazine”)

In an attempt to relate to its readers, *Seen Noon*'s dialect of choice tends to be the Levantine dialect. This follows the diglossia formula that Ferguson alludes to, wherein the usage of less formal Arabic is intended to reach an audience of diverse cultural and educational backgrounds.

Seen Noon's structure also seems to embed English phrasing and terminology into its framework, in addition to Arabic transliteration. In thinking of Massad's point about the influence of the Gay International into the Middle Eastern community, questions about the motivation behind the usage of English arise, with specific concerns as to the intended audiences of these subcategories. One example of this can be seen in the *Jeyin el Ahel* editorial, a step-by-step instruction on how readers can 'hide their gay' from their parents. Levantine speak for 'the parents are coming', the piece describes the all-too-common phrases that Lebanese gays and lesbians hear when they speak with their families. The piece is written in English, with the exception of Arabic transliteration, as seen in the title, and the Arabic phrases written in the Levantine dialect (“Seen Noon Magazine”).

Though clearly satire, *Jeyin el Ahel* re-introduces the question of audience; if *Seen Noon*'s issues are almost entirely in Arabic, why do some parts, such as the one depicted above, contain English, or Anglicized-Arabic? Regardless of the reasoning, *Seen Noon*'s focus on the adversity facing a significant number of those in the queer Lebanese community has given a voice to those who would otherwise lack one.

Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor

A project by *Raynbow*, a nonprofit organization that “helps empower and support the LGBT movement in Lebanon” (“Raynbow”), the Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor operates as a ‘pulse’ of sorts to all topics relating to LGBTQ+ news. The page is admin-run and operates mostly in English and Arabic. The page has been utilized for a variety of subjects, such as the following:



Fig. 24: LGBT Media Monitor post sharing Al-Nahar Article “*Homosexuality is not a disease...changing your orientation ‘doesn’t help, it hurts!’*” (Nov 9 2018)

News Headlines- This page has been used to promote news exclusively pertaining to the Lebanese queer community, which helps to narrow down the wide scope of materials by traditional news sources.



Fig. 25: Facebook user inquires those on the LGBT Media Monitor page about finding a pro-LGBT Islamic scholar (Aug 4 2018)

Advice/Referrals- Due to the forum-esque style of the page, all users can actively discuss with other users.



Fig. 26: LebMASH campaign ‘*This Is Not a Disease*’ هيدا_مش_مرض # shared onto the LGBT Media Monitor page (16 Oct 2018)

NGO Campaigns- Often drawing reference from local organizational causes in an effort to spread awareness to more individuals in the community

Both examples of self-produced media show the resultant narrowing of the gap between mainstream media and the LGBTQ+ community. The power of independently produced media can be seen in the two aforementioned examples, particularly in their usage of Levantine Arabic to provide a sense of comfort to a community that has been repeatedly erased by mainstream Lebanese media. The accessibility of both resources has also aided in the convenience of its use since readers can find these publications at their fingertips should they so wish.

III. Television

The role of television plays a significant role in Lebanese queer discourse is vastly different from newspapers and electronic media, due to the usage of audio and video in this medium. The unique aspect of language exposed by television allows for an analysis of the language used in a different form. With this, the question of diglossia arises again, particularly in reference to the delegation of certain dialects when broaching certain topics.

One thing that has remained constant in Lebanese television is the usage of Levantine Arabic in interviews. This is especially true of interviews being conducted between a Lebanese anchor and their guest, since both parties understand the dialect and likely converse more comfortably when speaking about a selected topic. When observing an interview with a member of the Arabic-speaking LGBTQ+ community, the question of gendered language plays a significant role in the attitudes that the interviewer holds when conducting the interview.

An example where this unravels can be seen in *Al-Jadeed*, a 24-hour pan-Arabic news station headquartered in Lebanon. While the news station is considered to be an apolitical source with no particular leanings, it has also been accused of shaping its news coverage in a biased way (“Al Jadeed”). An example of this can be seen on *lil nashr ma’ rima*, للنشر مع رима, a talk show where the host, Rima, speaks with Fatima, a trans woman who has decided to wear a hijab as part of her transition:

للنشر مازن ليس مثلياً لكنه يريد التحول إلى فاطمة... ما هي

الأسباب

رима: ليه اخترت تكون امرأة ملتزمة؟ أنت

جاي بالحجاب وصورك بالحجاب. أيش

اخترت ضغري أنو...

فاطمة: اخترتني، لو سمحتي

رима: أنا معك، عم بتقلي 'اخترتني'، بس بدّي عرف المشاهدين

على نقلتك، فبدك تقبل مني أنني حاكبك كذكر، لننتقل معدين

لحكي ثاني

Report- *Mazen is not homosexual, but wants to transition to 'Fatima' ...what are the reasons for this?*

Rima: Why did you (M) choose to become a conservative woman? You've (M) come in a hijab, and your pictures show you in in hijab. What made you (M) choose—

Fatima: You (F) choose, please.

Rima: I'm with you. You're telling me “choose” (F), but I want our viewers to know about your transition, so you (M) have to allow me to speak to you as a male, so we can change this aspect of the discussion later.

("للنشر")

To Arabic speakers, the interviewer's disregard for Fatima's preferred pronouns can be heard through her usage of male-oriented words. Since Arabic is a gendered language, the usage of a gendered word such as اخترت reveals the dissonance between host and guest before the introduction of any pronouns.

The added dimension that television adds to the observer's experience of media is a blessing and a curse, and can be seen in the example of Fatima's interview as the latter. Unlike Modern Standard Arabic, Levantine Arabic's gendered nature is difficult to detect on paper, so its implementation through audio makes any missteps easier to note.

Conclusion:

The various forms of mass media exposure to LGBTQ+ topics relevant to Lebanon is an essential lifeline for many in the community. As was seen with the example of Lynn in Alexandra Talty's article, many queer Lebanese individuals struggle to connect with others in the community for fear of being outed. Because of this, the creation of resources such as *Seen Noon* and the Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor bridges the gap between the individual and the available resources and social circles available for them to thrive in. The usage of various forms the Arabic

language has made this possible, with MSA being reserved for newspapers such as *Al-Nahar*, and Levantine Arabic being used for more intimate forums such as *lil nashr ma' rima*.

When observing the different approaches to news relating to the LGBTQ+ community across the different media outlets, the proposed 'defining' of homosexuality that Massad cites once again becomes relevant. While newspapers such as *Al-Nahar* and magazines such as *Seen Noon* were quick to employ Western methods of definition and labeling in their productions, newspapers such as *Al-Mustaqbal* and *Al-Jadeed* seemed to defer to more familiar methods of generalization and themes that would come to contradict that of the Gay International.

Conclusion

Defining Sexuality

The role that language plays in lavender discourse tells its audience a lot about the politics behind its usage. Whether it's in the direct usage of words particular to the LGBTQ+ community, such as *مئلي*, or the usage of more general terms such as *مساواه* and *تھميش*, there is an undeniable impact on the community as a result. In *Gay and Lesbian Language*, social anthropologist Don Kulick describes the ways in which these two styles work to address LGBTQ+ discourse in their own ways.

“By focusing on the ways in which repressions and silences are constituted through language, on how those silences play a structuring role in the way in which interactions are organized, and on how specific linguistic conventions are used to structure and convey desire, this research opens up new lines of inquiry that promise to engage linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists in exciting and mutually enriching ways”. (Cameron & Kulick, 277)

In his review of lavender linguistics as a research discipline, Kulick makes the point that the resultant lack of research produced regarding gay and lesbian language is due to the seeming confusion in the classification of such discourse. The two main classifications are the following:

Sexuality as Performance: The idea that gender and sexuality are defined by how they appear to the public.

Sexuality as Identity: The idea that gender and sexuality are defined by those who choose to label themselves as such. (Cameron & Kulick, 271)

This understanding of sexuality as a performance has shown its effects in Lebanon. In the analysis of Article 534, the reference to ‘unnatural acts’ as a criminal offense is what allowed organizations such as *Helem* and the Lebanese Psychiatric Society (LPS) to campaign against its usage to persecute homosexuals in the country. LPS’s clarification that homosexuality did not cause any marked defects could be seen as a direct counter-argument to Article 534. As a result, one can see that Lebanon’s persecution of homosexual populations is related to homosexual

‘acts’ rather than simply identifying as gay. In fact, the emphasis on homosexuality as an action, with terms like لوطي, referencing the biblical story of Lot, has allowed advocacy groups such as *Helem* to shift the focus to define sexuality by its objective labels, such as مثلي, which merely indicates to the observer one’s attraction to those of the same sex, without the connotation that لوطي carries.

The Impact of the Gay International on Lebanon

As was referenced in *Desiring Arabs*, the shift to more positive labels regarding the LGBTQ+ community was linked to the ‘creation’ of homosexuality by the Gay International as a label, which brought forth tensions in societies such as that of Lebanon regarding gay rights and liberties. Massad writes,

“In the era before the Gay International, academic and scholarly debates among Arab intellectuals analyzed the past and less often the present. They were followed by highly charged interventions of the secular and Islamist varieties in the post-Gay International period, which pushed an agenda of what should or should not exist in contemporary society as well as in past history” (Massad, 415)

The conception of LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, then, is linked to the Gay International movements definitions of sexuality and gender. The direct influence of Gay International on groups such as LebMASH and Lebanon Support is seen through their usage of English-derived words in their organizations. With LebMASH, this is observed in the ‘Break the Silence’ scholarship, which operates mainly as an English-based research scholarship. In Lebanon Support, this is observed in the use of Anglicized Arabic in *Gender Dictionary*.

Nevertheless, the relationship between Orientalism is not lost on the Gay International movement, which seeks to correct the implementation of debauchery laws and other homophobic components that were injected into Eastern societies. With works such as Mez’s *Die Renaissance Des Islams* and Brockelmann’s *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* deeming the ‘pervasive’ nature of homoerotic poetry, there has been a clear shift in ideology that the Gay International has claimed as its own.

Diglossic Divide in Information Sharing

With the use of MSA in addition to the Levantine dialect across all three chapters discussed in this thesis, there is a clear impact on the role that each plays in the transmission of

information to their audiences. For example, Joumana Haddad's use of Levantine Arabic in her speech at Proud Lebanon is sharply countered by her use of MSA on her campaign website. Each form illustrates a different purpose. In the former, Haddad has established a connection with her audience, who also share the same values of LGBTQ+ equality. In the latter, Haddad maintains use of the more formal MSA dialect, and establishes herself as a serious contender for parliament as a result. Haddad's usage of both dialects seems to be an effort to establish her as a well-rounded, relatable person to the Lebanese public, as she shows both her humanitarian and professional sides in her campaign.

When looking at diglossia through the lens of mass media, the usage of Levantine seems to accomplish the same goals as Haddad's campaign. In Issue 1 of *Seen Noon*, the use of Levantine Arabic phrases to relate to readers in *Jeyin El Ahel* bridges the gap between media coverage and relatability that many members of the LGBTQ+ community feel, as Lynn states in Talty's article. With the usage of MSA in *Al-Nahar*, however, there is the added layer of authenticity to the LGBT-related news articles published, since the newspaper is one of Lebanon's largest and as a result is taken more seriously as a source.

An Incitement to Discourse

As we have seen throughout this thesis, the role that language plays in each facet of Lebanese society continually reinforces Massad's proposed binary between western and eastern styles of LGBTQ+ expression. Whether in the selective overturning of French Article 534, which preceded the defining of 'homosexuality' by the Gay International over half a century later, or LebMASH's 'Break the Silence' scholarship, focused primarily on using the movements' labels in furthering the rights of queer individuals in Lebanon, language has shown itself to be relevant in the debate surrounding gay rights in the region. The clash between eastern and western discourse can be seen in all three chapters.

In chapter one, Haddad's usage of terms coined specifically for those in the community was a clear steer in the direction of the Gay International's standards of labeling. In chapter two, the tensions were noted within all of the organizations listed, namely in their language and dialect of choice used to further their mission statements. Organizations that used English were found to also use acronyms such as 'LGBT' and 'queer', and worked against the usage of biblically-based slurs such as 'luti', echoing the sentiments of American activists in the 1970s. The coining of terms such as 'jandar' to denote 'gender' is also an example of the Gay

Internationals influence on Lebanese queer discourse. In chapter three, the political leanings of each news outlet was a contributor to the style of news reporting that was taken. As was seen in self-produced LGBT media such as *Seen Noon* and *Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor*, there was also a lean in the direction of English-inspired labeling.

The push from the private to the public expression of queer identity in Lebanon, as described in Talty's coverage of Beirut Pride, is therefore inexplicably tied to the local movement's insistence of word-usage. Rather than hide behind pseudo-safe spaces, organizations such as those mentioned in chapter two as well as the politically oriented left-leaning outlets listed in chapter three demonstrate the necessity of coining terms to express the queer Arabic-speaking identity, particularly within the borders of Lebanon. Rather than shy away from the topic of LGBTQ+ rights, these resources are calling for an ownership, both within and outside of the community, of the queer identity.

Whether in English, MSA, or Levantine Arabic, the indicators associated with language referring to the LGBTQ+ community has played a role in politics, NGO policy, and mass media in an relational way. With the impact of politics on society, such as that of Article 534 on Beirut Pride, or the Parliamentary elections on NGOs like Proud Lebanon, the ways in which LGBTQ+ discourse plays into Lebanese society is interconnected such that one cannot be referenced in a vacuum. The evidence of linguistic interplay when researching lavender discourse has shown evidence for its existence as a social phenomena, lending some validity to the works of the NGOs mentioned as well as others who advocate for the education and rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in Lebanon and the wider Middle East.

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