Deaf Refugees:
A critical review of the current literature

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Abstract

This working paper presents a critical literature review of the current body of research about deaf refugees; a global population that is largely overlooked. While the literature is limited, this analysis provides insight into what is and is not known and explored about this marginalized demographic. To understand the current research about deaf refugees, an extensive and systematic review of existing literature was conducted. This review resulted in an analysis of how the current literature has largely (A) left multiple contextual gaps regarding deaf refugees, particularly those outside of the global North and (B) has generally limited the understanding of deaf refugees as victims or users within a system or related to an institution, thus overlooking deaf refugee agency. More importantly, this analysis identifies the need for increased research with deaf refugees and increased inclusion of deaf refugee research in the fields of Deaf Studies, Disability Studies, and Refugee Studies.

1.   Introduction

There are 70.8 million forcibly displaced[1] people worldwide, 25.9 million of them are refugees[2] (UNHCR, 2018a). Among this population are refugees who are deaf[3]. However, the number of deaf refugees globally, or in any localized refugee population, is unknown. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), about 15% of the world's population has a disability. The number of deaf people globally is reported by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD, 2016b) as about 70 million. Crock et al. (2017) estimated that there are about 10 million refugees with disabilities worldwide. Despite any attempts, or due to the lack of attempts, to triangulate these figures, the number of deaf refugees remains unknown, and the research about this population is scarce.

Nevertheless, there are several scholars who have explored the experiences of this unique minority. These scholars have built and continue to contribute to the emerging field of research about and with deaf refugees. This literature review includes the current

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[1] A displaced person has left their home or residence and has either relocated within their national border or beyond their national border out of force or obligation due to the events of or related effects of: generalized violence, armed conflict, persecution, human rights violations, human made or natural disasters. A displaced person may be an: Internally Displaced Person (IDP), Asylum Seeker, Refugee prima facie, Refugee (having the status in accordance with the 1951 Convention), Refugee sur place, a Forced Migrant, or a victim of Human Trafficking (IOM, 2019).

[2] While this study focuses on refugees, research about Deaf migrants, asylum seekers, and other deaf persons who are displaced or migrate is included in this literature review and is foundational to this research.

[3] Within the Deaf Community, many spell the word 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' to represent the community of people who have a shared experience of deafness (a hearing disability) and who share a culture and use a signed language. It is the understanding of these users that when 'deaf' is spelled with a lowercase 'd' it represents only the audiological disability of a person to hear. Some use 'D/deaf' or 'd/Deaf' to denote inclusion. However, some recent understanding throughout the global Deaf Community sees use of 'Deaf' as a construct of racial/socio/geo/national/political privilege, creating hierarchies where inclusion should be. Therefore, this study will default to using 'deaf' to include all deaf persons and experiences, and only capitalize 'Deaf' in relation to the Deaf Community, Deaf Culture, Deaf Studies, etc.

literature, humanitarian reporting, and media about deaf[4] refugees[5] and comprises ten thematic sections. Each section presents a gap in the current literature (A) regarding deaf refugees in a certain context and (B) limiting the understanding of deaf refugees as victims or users within a system or related to an institution.

An intention of this review is to practice "…attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) and recognize how those of socio-geo-political privilege conduct research while (or with the aim to) challenge existing hegemonies (Kusters et al., 2017). My positionality as a white hearing person who is not a refugee is at the forefront of my reflexivity while presenting this study. I write this statement for transparency and accountability and I heed the leadership and expertise of deaf researchers and researchers from refugee backgrounds.

This critical literature review was produced as a part of the PhD project, *Deaf Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon*, which aims to address the recommendations set out in this review. This research project centers on the experiences of deaf refugees from Syria, Palestine, and Iraq who are in Jordan and Lebanon, with a particular focus on agency. This research would not be possible without the foundational efforts of many of the scholars included in this literature review. Therefore, the purpose of this review is to contextualize, make recommendations, and sometimes challenge – but not to diminish or reject any of the following work about or with deaf refugees.

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[4] The word 'deaf' will be used for the remainder of this literature review reflecting the approach that all deaf (Deaf, d/Deaf) persons are part of the Deaf community including those framed in the literature as 'deaf', 'hearing impaired, or having a 'communication disability', etc.

[5] All of the research about D/deaf refugees which was (A) available in English; (B) accessible within the resources of the author and the facilities of Oxford Brookes University; (C) exists to the knowledge of the author.

2.   Deaf Refugee Agency & Double Displacement

The current body of literature about deaf refugees would be enriched by (A) deaf refugee contexts which have been scarcely studied and (B) deaf refugee agency including, but not reduced to, their experience within institutions and structures. This analysis defines agency as the capacity of all individuals to make their own choices and exercise their will (Barker, 2005). Deaf refugee agency manifests in a multitude of ways. This includes how and with whom to form social networks and utilize social capital. It also includes any strategic decision making deaf refugees employ while navigating inaccessibility and marginalization. Deaf refugees' agency is also exercised through their choices about how to identify and behave despite stigma and discrimination. This definition of agency goes beyond deaf refugees' experiences within institutional and cultural structures and takes a wider view of their agency as a common thread throughout their lived experience – particularly their experience of displacement. Social capital and ways of being within structures or domains is varied for deaf refugees as they move through hearing and deaf spaces and as their relationships and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) change based on each context.

Conceptualizations of agency from the academic fields of feminism, disability, displacement and migration, and deafness are foundational to this review. Each of these perspectives provides insight into how power dynamics affect the agency of deaf refugees. Deaf refugees demonstrate their agency in how they think and act strategically among structures and systems which are highly contextual and cultural. Deaf refugees navigate constraints in these systems through what Kandiyoti, in the feminist scholarship, calls "patriarchal bargains" (1988, p.274), noting that these bargains are made in order to cope and resist as well as to pursue security and options. Deaf refugee agency is not deployed at random, their 'self-determination' (Wehmeyer, 2004) is a reflection of their individual culture, values, beliefs and experiences. Deaf refugee agency can be enabled, disabled, oppressed, or facilitated by structures over time, as is seen for people with disabilities (Berger, 2008). The embodied nature of agency makes it

especially applicable to both disability and refugee studies. As Berger (2008, p.309) notes, the body is "the vehicle through which agency and structure are enacted". Importantly, scholars such as Bartram (2015), explore the relationship between forced migration or displacement and agency. The forced displacement of people is not evidence of their lack of agency or control, it is demonstrative of their choices when faced with dire circumstances. Deaf refugees are not cast about in the circumstances of deafness, disability, and displacement, they are continuously demonstrating their agency in the contexts of these life factors. Agency for deaf people has the unique lens of language (Ahearn, 2001; Senghas & Monaghan, 2002). The rich diversity of culture and humanity comes from the agency of deaf people as they build communities worldwide (Ladd, 2005; Bauman & Murray, 2009). Deaf refugee agency is nuanced in the ways that make this minority unique, such as linguistic and cultural factors that are not passed through family or geography. However, perspectives of agency from each of these fields provides insight into how deaf refugee agency is consistent with each layer of deaf, disabled, refugee, and minority agency - culminating in a rich example of human agency.

Deaf refugees are displaced twice. If they are born deaf to hearing families, as nearly 90% of those who are deaf at birth are (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004; NCDS, 2020), they are born into displacement. From birth they are missing from the deaf world they are a part of, and are living in a hearing world with language and communication that does not come naturally or is inaccessible. Others may become deaf in childhood or later in life through illness or injury, becoming displaced from the hearing world they knew. As deaf people, they navigate displacement in the hearing world, they are then displaced again by conflict, war, violence, disaster, persecution, human rights violations or other factors and become refugees. Deaf refugees experience both displacements simultaneously and move between them in different contexts. This doubled displacement makes the experience of deaf refugees a unique examination of displacement and agency.

3. Deaf Refugees Outside of Third Country Resettlement

The vast majority of the current literature about deaf refugees focuses on the experiences or needs of deaf refugees who have arrived in host countries for resettlement[6], a third country[7]. These third countries are typically in the West or global North, including: North America, United Kingdom, Western Europe, Scandinavia, and Australia. Literature about deaf refugees' displacement experiences other than or prior to resettlement – internally displaced or in a regional host country for a short or protracted stay – is limited. The current literature focuses on the minority of displaced persons: those who resettle in the global North. According to UNHCR, 92,400 refugees were admitted for resettlement in 25 countries out of the 70.8 million people displaced by the end of 2018 (UNHCR, 2018a). Following these figures, there is contextual gap in the literature as the majority of research about deaf refugees focuses on those within only 1.3% of the displaced population. Further research is needed to (A) explore the deaf refugee experience within the displaced population outside of the global North; and (B) highlight deaf refugee agency which is not limited to experiences within systems and institutions in the global North.

Typically, studies explore service provision and related barriers to it (Saghir, 2017; Balachandra et al., 2009), an undeniably vital subject for deaf refugees. However, this research may provide more information about the system than about the deaf refugees navigating it. This literature consistently provides evidence of the shared experience of deaf migrants from many different countries of origin (Emery & Iyer, no date) who have the shared experience and challenges of: communication and linguistic barriers (Willoughby, 2008), knowledge access challenges, advocating for their self-expression and autonomy (Barpaga, 2011), lack of service accessibility, stigma, marginalization, and

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[6] Resettlement is the movement of people from the country where they sought protection to a different State which has or intends to admit them as refugees until they are granted asylum or other opportunities to become permanent residents and citizens (IOM, 2019; UNHCR, 2011).
[7] Third Country Resettlement is one of the durable solutions under the UNHCR, the other two being local integration and voluntary repatriation (UNHCR, 2011).

complex connections and misconnections to the local Deaf Community and hearing public (Sivunen, 2019).

In the UK, multiple studies have been conducted with deaf labor migrants (Emery & Iyer, no date) and deaf asylum seekers (Breen, 2002) including how their experiences are shaped by gender, intersectionality, language and communication (Emery, 2020), language learning, politics and engagement in public settings. Some case studies of deaf refugees also exist, namely one short film depicting the true story of a deaf person from Afghanistan seeking asylum in London, which also includes the consistent themes of communication barriers and lack of information due to the asylum seeker's deafness, resulting in the three-time denial of their asylum application (Barpaga, 2011). Similar findings are recognized in research about deaf migrants in Victoria, Australia, focusing on the needs and barriers they face while navigating Australian culture, society, and spoken and signed languages (Willoughby, 2008). Barriers to services and the challenges in accessing language, education, and community building in Australia for deaf migrants are consistent with research globally. For many deaf migrants, home sign[8] is commonly used and communication barriers were exacerbated due the lack of a developed first language (Willoughby, 2008). Deaf refugee resettlement in Finland and Norway presents similar themes of barriers, connection with the local Deaf Community, and the challenges of acquiring both a new signed language and a new spoken language simultaneously (Sivunen, 2019; Olsen, 2018; 2019).

Similarly, a modest body of research and activity has developed in the United States. Particularly in New York state, where there is a growing population of deaf refugees due to the large Deaf Community around a university which offers education in sign language[9]. Research about deaf refugees in this area (Mendoza, 2016; Saghir, 2017)

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[8] Home sign is a term used to describe the communication methods used by deaf people and their families when they have no or little access to a formal sign language (i.e. no other deaf persons or Deaf Education in their area). Their gestural communication develops naturally but is not a full language and may not be intelligible to those outside of their family.

[9] National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, New York

includes brief and general views of the lived experiences of deaf refugees. Issues of education, communication, and employment are additionally complex and rife with barriers for deaf refugees (Mendoza, 2016). The inaccessibility of the healthcare system is of particular interest (Saghir, 2017; Balachandra et al., 2009), highlighting the impact of communication and language barriers, as well as the importance of cultural facilitation and the use of interpreters. The discrimination and additional barriers deaf refugees have faced throughout history is presented by one study (Baynton, 2006), which includes examples of deaf migrants' experiences of discrimination, advocacy battles with support from hearing allies, communication barriers, and the fight to uphold their agency and autonomy that are consistent throughout the literature to present day – even after these discriminatory policies were slowly dismantled.

A contextual gap has resulted from how the experiences of deaf refugees prior to their arrival in their place of resettlement are largely erased. Understandably, these experiences are not the focus of many studies. However, as deaf refugees navigate asylum seeking procedures and attempt to access a multitude of services, displacement experiences are often the subject of discussion. Therefore, literature and information about deaf refugees during displacement has the potential to provide great insight in these settings. Increased scholarship about the displacement experiences of deaf refugees could greatly inform the resettlement-centered research, refugee and asylum seeking status decision making, as well as the work of professionals working with deaf refugees in legal, health, and psychosocial services. Fortunately, there are a few scholars who have explored the experiences of deaf refugees while displaced and prior to resettlement in the global North, all[10] are focused in Kenya (le Marie, no date; 2018a; 2018b; Youngs, 2010) or Rwanda (Marshall et al., 2017).

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[10] In 1988, S.B. Lewis, write a Doctoral dissertation entitled 'A Family Sign Handbook: Teaching Sign Language to Family Members of Deaf Southeast Asian Refugees in the Holding Camp Environment' which could not be accessed. It is unclear what Lewis' account could contribute to knowledge about Deaf refugees, their language use, and their family systems in 'holding camps' and if these camps were located in Southeast Asia or in a host country in the global North (Lewis, 1988).

This literature also limits the understanding of deaf refugees in these contexts as users within medical, legal, or social institutions and structures. The focus on service provision and barriers to it is an undeniably vital subject for deaf refugees, but at times this research provides more information about the system than about the deaf refugees themselves. Given this approach, deaf refugee agency is largely missing from the current literature about deaf refugees who have resettled in third countries in the global North.

4.   Deaf Refugees in the Middle East

The small collection of research regarding deaf refugees within the 98.7% (UNHCR, 2018a) of displaced persons who have not resettled in a third country is focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya (le Marie, no date; 2018a; 2018b; Youngs, 2010). There is also a project in Rwanda exploring the vulnerability of refugees with 'communication disabilities' to sexual and gender-based violence (Marshall & Barrett, 2018; Marshall et al., 2017). Increased scholarship is needed to explore the parallels and divergences between deaf refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa and other global context, particularly the the Middle East (A) due to the different geopolitical, cultural and linguistic contexts and (B) how deaf refugee agency operates for different deaf refugee demographics.

The current research demonstrates that the invisibility of deaf refugees in Rwanda increases their vulnerability, marginalization and lack of access, despite humanitarian disability inclusion efforts (Marshall et al., 2017; 2018). However, the high population of deaf refugees in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps may decrease the invisibility of deaf refugees through mere exposure, especially as there are deaf-centric services such as deaf education (le Marie, no date; 2018a; 2018b; Youngs, 2010). The resources and inclusion efforts for refugees with disabilities in humanitarian programming and services often overlook the existence or the unique needs of deaf refugees. Without the exceptional deaf refugee population density, as seen in Kenya, deaf-centric services are rare.

The vulnerability of deaf people and persons with disabilities to sexual and gender-based violence is often due to the perception that they are less able or unable to escape, resist and/or report. Refugees, particularly women and children, are also more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. Deaf refugees, especially deaf refugee women and children, therefore, carry multiple vulnerabilities and furthermore, have less access to protective, preventative, reporting, and physical or mental health services (Marshall & Barrett, 2017; Marshall et al. 2018). In the 'Deaf Unit' of Dadaab refugee camp, a teacher explains that many girl students avoid going to school for fear of being raped (Youngs, 2010). Sexual and gender-based violence against refugees with disabilities, particularly in refugee camps, has been well documented in the literature. However, mention of or focus on deaf refugees in this situation is scarce.

Le Marie's (no date; 2020; 2018a; 2018b) work is immersed in the deaf community of Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Youngs (2010) also studied the situation of deaf refugees in Kenya, but in Dadaab refugee camp. These contexts differ in that Kakuma refugee camp is quite diverse with refugees from 13 countries, while those in Dadaab are predominantly from Somalia (le Marie, no date; UNHCR, 2020a). While Dadaab technically has more refugees and asylum seekers in its complex (UNHCR, 2020a), Kakuma is one of the most researched refugee camps worldwide (Rogers, 2019). Both studies align on the high concentration of deaf refugees which has led to substantial Deaf Education and other services. Despite this large number of deaf refugees, stigma and other barriers still exist in these Kenyan contexts.

The study in Dadaab refugee camp focuses on the experiences of deaf students as well as those involved in deaf education in the refugee camp (Youngs, 2010). The Deaf Units Youngs describes provide community, education, and social and linguistic development for deaf students. Overall, deaf students value their identity, language, and culture and want to ensure the Deaf Units uphold the educational standards and opportunities that are their human rights (Youngs, 2010). Le Marie's study explores the impact of diversity

for this community as deaf refugees from a multitude of national, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds come together, and how deaf refugees interact with deaf Kenyans who are not refugees. Le Marie documented how deaf refugees from different backgrounds (i.e. Sudanese, Rwandan, Somali, Congolese, Burundian, Ethiopian, etc.) prioritized spending time together despite their differences (le Marie, 2018a). This was in contrast to the hearing refugees in Kakuma who tended to only socialize in nationally or ethnically homogenous groups (le Marie, 2018a). Le Marie also explores the intersectionalities of gender, religion and other factors and how that may impact activities and power structures of the deaf refugee community in Kakuma. Language use is also central to le Marie's work which includes the use of various national and regional sign languages as well as the local Kenyan Sign Language, and communication strategies with hearing refugees and service providers in the camp. Le Marie's work is not as education focused as the study in Dadaab, but language education is included especially as it produces DeafSpace[11] (le Marie, no date). Le Marie's research includes the role of humanitarianism and NGOs in the Deaf Community of Kakuma – particularly the problematic provision of hearing aids (le Marie, 2020).

It should be noted that an extensive study of the Jordanian Deaf Community and Jordanian Sign Language was conducted by Hendriks and Baker (2008). Similarly, a study about deaf sign language teachers in Jordan was conducted by Scott (2015). While these studies are useful to increase contextual understanding of the Deaf Community in Jordan, deaf refugees are not included in either study. Notably, in the Jordanian context, deafness and disability are associated with sinfulness, wickedness, or a lack of mental capacity. This is particularly true for people with visual, hearing, and speech disabilities (Turmusani, 1999), which is expected to have an impact on deaf refugee agency. The importance of spoken Arabic in Jordan and the region is expected to be a major element for deaf refugee agency through communication access and their right to sign language

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[11] DeafSpace describes how Deaf people come together and use or manipulate space to make it visually oriented in language and action for full access to be achieved (Gallaudet, no date). The practical actions of creating DeafSpace are part of Deaf Culture. DeafSpace concepts are also applied to architecture and design (Edwards & Harold, 2014) (Gallaudet, no date).

access and free use. One scholar notes the ascension of a blind person to high levels in society due to their mastery of reciting the Qur'an – an opportunity particularly inaccessible to deaf people (Turmasani, 1999). The local perception of the Deaf Community and deaf refugees co-exist with perceptions from the global North through the presence of humanitarian programming and assistance.

The limited literature about deaf refugees who are displaced outside of the global North only provides information about deaf refugees in Kenya and Rwanda. While evidence from these studies is rich with information about the deaf refugee experience, it cannot be assumed that this experience is identical in other global contexts. While it is necessary for knowledge to be increased about deaf refugees in all global contexts of displacement, the high concentration of refugees and displaced persons in the Middle East leads this review to focus on recommending research in that region. Generally, further research is needed to fill (A) this geographic contextual gap and (B) explore how deaf refugee agency is shaped and enacted in other sociocultural and linguistic environments.

5.   Deaf Refugees in and out of the Refugee Camp

Of the scarce research that explores the experiences of deaf refugees during displacement, it is not only all in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it also centers on the setting of the refugee camp (le Marie, no date; le Marie, 2020; le Marie, 2018a; le Marie, 2018b; Youngs, 2010). Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon reside in a variety of contexts both in and out of refugee camps. UNHCR reported in 2019 that of the 745,192 refugees in Jordan, 83.5% of them live in urban areas while 16.5% of refugees live the Zaatari, Azraq, and Emirati Jordanian refugee camps (UNHCR, 2019a). In Lebanon, UNHCR reported in 2020 that there were 1.5 million Syrian refugees and 18,000 refugees from Iraq and elsewhere (UNHCR, 2020b). In 2017, UNHCR reported that due to the government policy that no formal refugee camps be built in Lebanon to shelter Syrian refugees, 73% of all refugees reside in urban or rural areas in rented accommodation and about 30% live

with multiple families in one residence (UNHCR, 2017b). Of those who cannot afford or access this type of rental, 18%, live in informal settlements of tents and other self-made structures (UNHCR, 2017b). The remaining refugees, 9%, shelter in other structures which are non-residential such as farm or industrial buildings (UNHCR, 2017b). Therefore, research about deaf refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, among other global contexts, will bring this unique perspective as it includes deaf refugees residing in two national contexts as well as a variety of living situations. It is expected that these different environments each present their own opportunities and barriers to deaf refugees. For example, the structure of the refugee camp may make it easier for deaf refugees to come together. However, living in an urban environment may give deaf refugees more access to the local Jordanian or Lebanese Deaf Communities. Furthermore, research is needed to understand how deaf refugees living in a camp environment meet with deaf refugees living in an urban environment and vice versa; and the choices relating to each environment.

As seen in the literature, a refugee camp, settlement, or complex – such as in Kenya– presents deaf refugees with community building opportunities, structures and even facilities such as schools or a 'Deaf Unit' (le Marie, no date; 2020; 2018a; 2018b; Youngs, 2010). Refugee camps may also be the center of more activity by researchers, NGOs, and humanitarian institutions, drawing more attention to the inclusion of deaf refugees (le Marie, 2018a). A more concentrated population of deaf refugees in a refugee camp environment may mitigate the invisibility of this population, driving increased awareness and decreasing stigma, as is seen in Dadaab refugee camp (Youngs, 2010). However, the insecurity of a refugee camp environment regarding sexual and gender-based violence may make it a more vulnerable environment for deaf refugees (Marshall and Barrett, 2018; Marshall et al., 2017). An urban environment may decrease access to other deaf refugees due to a larger geography or lack of structure. Or, an urban environment may provide more access to the local Deaf Community and services such as Deaf Education at local schools such as FAID in Lebanon (Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf, no date). An urban settlement may lack the influx of NGO and humanitarian

services that a camp environment has, but it may open access to specialized services that are not available in the camp.

Further scholarship is needed to answer these questions and more by including deaf refugees residing in refugee camps as well as urban and other settings. Future research can (A) broaden the current field of knowledge that is limited to the refugee camp setting. While also complementing the current literature as refugee camps in the Middle East and elsewhere will parallel with refugee camps in Kenya and Rwanda in terms of the deaf refugee experience. Furthermore, further scholarship can (B) explore how deaf refugee agency is enacted, enabled, or oppressed in various environments inside and outside of the refugee camp.

6.   Deaf Refugees' Place-making through DeafSpace

Deafness and displacement are experiences and disciplines with deep connections to space and place. Displacement relates not only to the borders crossed but to how people actively inject meaning into space until it becomes infused with place and home. In 1900, the Paris World Fair welcomed deaf people from all over the world, proving the transnationalism of deaf people and inspiring a French deaf leader to claim that deaf people "know no borders" (Kusters and Friedner, 2015, pp.ix). Place and home making are concepts explored in the refugee studies literature, as displaced persons bring elements of the places they have left behind to new spaces and create meaningful attachments in order to cope, survive, and thrive (Lems, 2016; Zetter & Boano, 2009). These two instances of place-making, seen with deaf people and displaced persons, overlap and intersect within the deaf refugee experience. For deaf refugees, the place and home making may look different because the creation of DeafSpace is outside of the family structure and based on a shared identity that is not ethnic or national. Furthermore, how deaf refugees participate in the making of home and place with their hearing families and ethnic or national communities is a point of access or marginalization to be examined. Each of these instances is evidence of deaf refugee

agency through the making and inhabiting of place. Current literature about the transnational and international experiences of DeafSpace do not include how deaf refugees make and experience this, with the exception of le Marie (2018a). This example of deaf refugees creating DeafSpace in Kenya is not explored through the lens of the place making and home making practices of refugees in general. Further research can (A) bridge Deaf Studies and Refugee Studies in examining the experiences of deaf refugees through the DeafSpace lens as well as through the Refugee Studies place/home making lens, and (B) position and understand the deaf refugee construction of DeafSpace as a manifestation of their agency.

Refugees practice place making and home making in refugee settlements (Kaiser, 2008), in urban settlements, and remake place if resettling in third countries (Sampson & Gifford, 2010). Place connections are made through activities, rituals, and practices such as gardening (Brook, 2003), and through social, cultural, and spiritual activities (Kaiser, 2008). Displaced persons feel connected to multiple places – physically and externally in one place, but internally and irremovably connected to another place (Brun, 2001). The process and practice of creating home and place attachment in new and unknown spaces is an experience shared by displaced persons worldwide. It spans the multitude of types of migration and reasons for displacement and is practiced in large and small ways regardless of age, gender, race, nationality, or other intersectionalities. It is expected that this practice during displacement is also done by refugees with disabilities and deaf refugees, the latter perhaps in the form of DeafSpace.

DeafSpace has been noted since 18th century France, and continues to be a concept that frames the deaf experience separately from disability and through a lens of capability (Gulliver, 2009). DeafSpace includes architectural principals which provide the upmost visual accessibility and is created out of the deaf way of moving and being in space including sign language use. DeafSpace differs from Universal Design[12] in that is

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[12] Universal Design is an approach to design which aims to make an environment accessible to all persons regardless of disability, age, or other factors (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2020).

it not a way of reducing disability or impairment, it is a wholistic understanding ways of being beyond a needs-centric view (Edwards & Harold, 2014). DeafSpace is not limited to design or architecture, it is typically created in simple acts such as the arrangement of furniture and items in a way that allows for the most visual accessibility. DeafSpace is not limited to any regional, national, socioeconomic, cultural, gendered, or other factors or demographics. It is seen in rural communities in Ghana (Kusters, 2015), in urban environments in Cape Town (Heap, 2006), and in refugee camps in Kenya (le Marie, 2018a; Youngs, 2010). The daily and ritualized making and unmaking of DeafSpace in these environments is scaled during the formalized creation of DeafSpace in conference or event settings such as Deaflympics, Deaf Way festivals, or the World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf (Solvang & Haualand, 2014). Transnationalism, tourism, linguistics, education, politics, activism, research and development, and intersectionality are all issues and contexts created within DeafSpaces (Kusters & Friedner, 2015). Removing the phonocentrism of the hearing world reveals other diversities as well as the similarities across deaf people and communities. Despite the current evidence of deaf refugees creating DeafSpace in refugee camps in Kenya (le Marie, 2018a; Youngs, 2010), the creation of DeafSpace by deaf people worldwide, and the making of place and home for displaced people worldwide, (A) the intersection of these three and (B) the explicit connection to deaf refugee agency has not been explored in the literature.

7.   Deaf Refugees of a Shared Language Family

Many studies of deaf refugees, and the literature of Deaf Studies, relates to communication and the use of sign language. As opposed to the common misconception, sign language is not universal. Sign languages develop distinctly through the same indigenous and sociopolitical mechanisms that spoken languages do. It is estimated that there are between 138 and 300 different sign languages globally which evolve and develop naturally (Simmons & Deaf Education Without Borders, 2019). Deaf Communities tend to gather and grow, leading to sign language development, around schools or clubs for the deaf and/or where there are high rates of genetic deafness

(Groce, 1985). This history is important to consider in the study of deaf refugees as it influences how they communicate with each other and with Deaf Community members who are not refugees. For example, the studies of deaf refugees during resettlement outlined in section three describe the challenges and strategies between deaf refugees of diverse global backgrounds and the sign languages of their resettlement countries such as Finnish Sign Language (Sivunen, 2019), Norwegian Sign Language (Olsen, 2018), American Sign Language[13] (Akamatsu & Cole, 2000; Moers, 2017; Fischbeck, 2018; Reimers, 2011; Mendoza, 2016; Saghir, 2017), Auslan[14] (Willoughby, 2008), and British Sign Language (Emery & Iyer, no date; Iyer, 2019). These sign languages of country of origin and resettlement country are typically distant on the etymological family tree of sign languages (Simmons & Deaf Education Without Borders, 2019). This linguistic dynamic has been the context of the majority of studies about deaf refugees.

The use of sign language between deaf refugees and each other or with a local Deaf Community within one region are included in Youngs' (2010) study of Deaf Education in Dadaab refugee camp, primarily the use of Somali Sign Language and Kenyan Sign Language. In the study of Deaf refugees in Kakuma refugee camp, le Marie (2018) explores how deaf refugees use Kenyan Sign Language and American Sign Language as the languages of instruction for deaf refugee students but that deaf refugees coming from Burundi, Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan come from different sign language backgrounds and/or use home signs. Le Marie also notes the existence of a Kakuma Sign Language developed naturally at the camp through the use of multiple sign languages among the diverse deaf refugees. These sign languages vary in their positioning on the sign language family tree, some deriving from Kenyan Sign Language but with no connection to American Sign Language (i.e. Somali Sign Language), others with no connection to Kenyan Sign Language (i.e. Ethiopian Sign Language) (Simmons & Deaf Education Without Borders, 2019).

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[13] American Sign Language is used both in the United States and Canada.
[14] Auslan is the sign language used in Australia.

Increased scholarship is needed to explore the linguistic context of deaf refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. In this region, deaf refugees from Syria, Iraq and Palestine, deaf people native to Jordan and Lebanon, as well as their neighbors in the deaf communities of Kuwait, Yemen, Egypt, Oman, and Qatar all use sign languages which have developed directly from Arabian Sign Language (Simmons & Deaf Education Without Borders, 2019). According to Sivunen's (2019) experience with deaf refugees in Finland, deaf refugees from this region consistently refer to each of their languages as 'ArabSign'. The contact of these languages and these deaf communities will provide a different context and dynamic to the study of how deaf refugees interact and navigate through their displacement experience - potentially forging stronger bonds between deaf refugees from different countries of origin due to the ease of communicating across distinct but related sign languages.

An extensive lexicostatistical study of sign languages in the Arab world was conducted in 2010 which covered many populations and dialects (Al-Fityani & Padden, 2010). Unlike the common misconception that the shared use of Arabic in this region should lead to a common sign language, different sign language communities exist – many with a similar diglossia to Arabic. This study found that any two distinct sign languages in the Arab world are more similar than any two distinct spoken languages – perhaps due to the iconic, gestural, and visual modality and cultural connection of deaf persons as well as the connection of the sign languages of the region (Simmons & Deaf Education Without Borders, 2019) or 'ArabSign' (Sivunen, 2019). Deaf refugees are not included in this study, nor are the sign languages used by deaf persons from Syria and Iraq. Linguistic phenomena such as creolization, codeswitching, and contact language development may also occur between users of different 'ArabSign' languages. The sudden concentration deaf persons in a displacement setting is evidenced to develop their sign language(s), as was seen with displaced deaf Haitians after the 2010 earthquake (Hochgesang & McAuliff, 2016). Prior to the earthquake, deaf Haitians were separated geographically and therefore used various dialects of Haitian Sign Language, after the

earthquake brought them to a Red Cross displacement camp in Port-au-Prince, Haitian Sign Language developed and standardized rapidly.

Therefore, research with deaf refugees in Jordan and Lebanon can (A) explore the experiences of deaf refugees in a very different linguistic context, and (B) investigate how the impact of a shared language family promotes agency through deaf community building across nationalities and other differences, and (C) expand upon the scholarship on sign languages in the Arab world and the development of contact sign languages in general.

8.   Deaf Refugees' Intersectionality and Transnationalism

Multiple studies of deaf refugees highlight the value of deaf refugees connecting with the local Deaf Community during displacement and resettlement. Some studies explore intersectionalities in diverse deaf refugee populations including gender and religion. Few studies of deaf refugees explore the connections between deaf refugees from different countries of origin. The concept of deaf people connecting across intersectional differences is prominent in the Deaf Studies literature (Solvang & Haualand, 2014). The concept of 'DEAF-SAME' is a cornerstone of the Deaf Community worldwide, describing the deep connection with a stranger with whom you may have nothing in common except your shared experience of deafness (Friedner & Kusters, 2015, p. x). The localized deaf communities of the world are understood to be part of the larger transnational deaf community – connected not by one universal sign language (a common misconception) but by a shared *deaf epistemology* or "Deaf ways of being" (Ladd, 2003), a visual orientation to the world, and a shared identity (Breivik, 2007).

In the literature about deaf refugees, the focus of these connections is between deaf refugees and deaf people from the host or resettlement country. Except a few, studies seem to have largely overlooked the transnational connections of deaf refugees from different countries of origin with each other. Further research can (A) expand on the

current literature which does not deeply explore transnational and intersectional connections of deaf refugees and (B) demonstrate the impact of these transnational and intersectional ties on deaf refugee agency. For example, deaf refugees may leverage their transnational Deaf Community network to navigate toward seeking asylum elsewhere, or connection to the Deaf Community may guide them to a specific destination.

During resettlement, the connection to the local Deaf Community is consistently reported as a vital tool and source of information, resilience, and support for deaf refugees. The mutual understanding between deaf people is not only a conduit for language learning and interpretation, but a bridge between the deaf refugee and the hearing public. Emery and Iyer (no date), in their study of deaf labor migrants in the UK, describe how deaf refugees seek out deaf-centered organizations and events and use both hearing and deaf British Sign Language interpreters[15]. In Norway, Olsen (2019) discusses the role of the Norwegian Deaf community, including Sign Language Interpreters, as conduits for connection to the public, particularly with deaf refugees who are acquiring Norwegian Sign Language, some of whom do not have a foundation in any formalized sign language. These authors, among others, describe how local Deaf Community members become advocates for deaf refugees through clubs and organizations. Activities from these organizations and individuals go beyond sign language instruction into cultural and practical knowledge of the country and management of (mis)communication between deaf refugees and hearing service providers. Local deaf organizations such as Equalizent, in Austria (BBC News, 2018) and Deaf Refugee Advocacy in the United

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[15] Hearing Sign Language Interpreters interpret between the local spoken language and the local sign language. In contexts where the client (e.g. deaf refugee) does not know the local sign language (e.g. British Sign Language (BSL)) and/or has limited formal language and/or has other disabilities which may alter the clients signing or receptive abilities (e.g. Cerebral Palsy; Autism) a Deaf Sign Language Interpreter (DI or CDI) may also be used. This interpreter and the hearing interpreter will work together, with the hearing interpreter interpreting for the deaf interpreter into BSL and the deaf interpreter interpreting from BSL into whatever gesture, other modality, or additional strategies needed to establish communication with the client. This process would be 'reversed' as the client then expressed themselves, the deaf interpreter interprets into BSL to the hearing interpreter and the hearing interpreter interprets the message into English.

States (Deaf Refugee Advocacy, 2017) provide a range of services from assistance with the asylum seeking process to instruction in the local sign and written languages.

Deaf refugees also connect to the local Deaf Community while displaced outside of third country resettlement. This is through Deaf Education at schools such as FAID, a school for the deaf in Lebanon which is inclusive of deaf refugee children (Father Andeweg Institute for the Deaf, no date). Or, in Jordan, at the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf in Salt (2004), which both includes deaf refugee children and performs outreach to deaf refugee adults in refugee camps. In Kenya, deaf refugees connect to the Kenyan Deaf Community through their teachers at schools for the deaf within the camps and some service providers, but their connection to other deaf people is typically other refugees in the refugee camp environments of Kakuma (le Marie, no date) and Dadaab (Youngs, 2010).

Deaf-led organizations like Deaf Planet Soul, an American deaf-led organization which conducts hearing aid distribution and sign language instruction for deaf refugee children in refugee camps are a connection of the transnational Deaf Community (2015). More common are the efforts of deaf scholars in conducting research with deaf refugees and other deaf migrants. The researchers working within MobileDeaf, a research unit comprised of only deaf researchers at Heriot-Watt University in Scotland, each specialize in different aspects of deaf mobilities and transnational Deaf Communities (MobileDeaf, no date). Other deaf researchers in the scholarship of deaf refugees include: Youngs' research at Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya (2010) and Sivunen's research with Deaf asylum seekers in Finland (2019).

These connections to Deaf Communities through networks, organizations, researchers, and initiatives may be leveraged by deaf refugees as they seek asylum elsewhere, their deaf connections may guide them to a specific destination. For example, Olsen notes that Sweden is a hub for deaf refugees, leading Olsen to assume that a similar phenomenon is happening in Norway. As discussed section three, this situation is

paralleled in other major deaf hubs, such as the Rochester area of New York State in the US, which has become a common place for deaf refugees to resettle due to its large preexisting Deaf Community (Mendoza, 2016; Saghir, 2017). This concentration in Rochester has led to the establishment of organizations such as Deaf Refugee Advocacy, which provides support services for deaf refugees during resettlement, presenting another potential pull factor (Deaf Refugee Advocacy, 2017).

Deaf refugees connect with each other across intersectionalities of language, education, religion, and country of origin in both displacement and resettlement contexts. Despite the lack of deep exploration of this topic, it is noted by many researchers. In the education environment of the United States, Moers notes the diversity of the deaf refugee students and the challenges this poses regarding their language use and development (2017). In the UK, Barpaga (2011) and Emery & Iyer (no date) note the diversity and connections between deaf refugees and how they support each other in their shared aims of navigating the asylum seeking process, adapting to a new culture, and learning both British Sign Language and English. Iyer's aspects of the study of deaf labor migrants takes the lens of intersectionality, particularly how female deaf labor migrants' experiences vary in relation to these and other identities such as ethnicity, education, and class which may or may not connect them to other deaf refugees (Emery & Iyer, no date). Similar phenomena of deaf refugees forging intersectional and transnational connections is seen in the reception center that was the context of Sivunen's study of deaf asylum seekers in Finland (2019).

There is more evidence of deaf refugees connecting while they are in refugee camps with deaf refugees from other countries of origin from le Marie (no date) and Youngs (2010). Le Marie (no date) explores how deaf refugees connect despite differences and the impact of factors such as gender, ethnicity, and religion on how deaf refugees connect over some intersectionalities more than others. The majority of refugees (including deaf refugees) in Dadaab refugee camp are from Somalia, therefore connections between deaf refugees of different countries of origin may not be as

common, but, the different backgrounds of deaf refugees from urban areas with those from pastoral backgrounds may lead to connections between different language abilities or education (UNHCR, 2020a). The current literature demonstrates some connections between deaf refugees, but much remains to be understood about (A) how deaf refugees connect transnationally and intersectionally and (B) how this exemplifies and enables deaf refugee agency.

9. Deaf Refugee Adults

There is a common pattern in deaf and disability research to focus on children and students, this is consistent in the research about deaf refugees. Therefore, we know far less about the lives of autonomous, adult deaf refugees than we do of deaf refugees who are children. This could be due to the structure and resources provided by education, social work, or services for adolescents and their families. A more critical view poses that the focus on deaf children relates to the paternalism and infantilization that many deaf people and people with disabilities experience – oppressing or negating their agency. Furthermore, many organizations, institutions, and NGOs focus on service provision for deaf refugee children, leaving adult deaf refugees invisible and marginalized. Research is needed to (A) fill this contextual gap and (B) focus on deaf refugee agency in how deaf refugees make decisions within systems and institutions.

The scholarship about deaf refugee children is primarily conducted in the United States and Canada, providing further evidence of the imbalance of research about resettlement in the global North as discussed in the first section. Akamatsu and Cole (2000; 2003; 2004) have thrice published on the subject of deaf immigrant and refugee children, particularly focused on the context of the school system. During migration and resettlement, stress and trauma are exacerbated for deaf refugees who have a lack of information and knowledge about the safety and events of their surroundings (Akamatsu & Cole, 2000). Some deaf refugees do not know that they are leaving their home indefinitely or where they are going due to the lack of communication they have with

their family and community (Moers, 2017). Family separation for deaf refugees is sometimes paired with lack of information about potential reunification or the reasons for separation. Many experience trauma and isolation, worsened by the inability to express these experiences due to the lack of language access (Reimers, 2011). These aspects and traumatic experiences are faced by deaf refugee children and adults alike.

Refugee families with deaf children are also typically new to information about the rights, capabilities, and opportunities for education and livelihood that their deaf children have (Akamatsu and Cole, 2000). Refugee families often fear discrimination against their deaf family member as they may be perceived as drain on social services. This and other factors can make the deafness in the family a subject of shame. In one study, school psychologists and other school personnel are encouraged to consider how deafness and disability are perceived within the culture of the student and their family when assisting and supporting them in the acculturation and adaptation process (Akamatsu & Cole, 2003; 2004). Akamatsu and Cole recommend strategies related to inclusive educational environments, access in sign language, use of natural home signs as a bridge to language learning, and emphasize the vital role of schools, particularly school psychology, and families to the health and well-being of deaf refugee children. While the experience of deaf immigrants and deaf refugees differ, their adaptation and acculturation processes as well as their early life experiences are likely similar (Akamatsu & Cole, 2003; 2004).

The cognitive and linguistic impacts of children being cut off from language learning opportunities, particularly if their family is hearing (as is typically the case), leads to many deaf refugee students beginning school in a new country without any formal language and perhaps never having attended school (Akamatsu & Cole, 2000; 2003; 2004). Moers (2017), an educator of the deaf in the United States, echoes that her deaf students from immigrant or refugee backgrounds vary greatly as some students have fluency in the signed and written languages of their country of origin while others have no formal language at all. The use of sign language interpreters is argued by some as being

inaccessible to deaf refugee students (Moers, 2017), while others focus on the role and strategies of educational interpreters working with deaf immigrant and refugee students in mainstream[16] educational environments (Fischbeck, 2018). The team approach of teachers, interpreters, and other personnel to provide wholistic educational support for the deaf refugee student is consistent in the literature, as well as strategies to foster social skills and modify language use to include more iconicity and gesture (Fischbeck, 2018). One study uniquely highlights the agency and actions of a deaf refugee student by shifting the focus from their needs and services in the school to their agency (Reimers, 2011). This case study of a deaf refugee student from Somalia explores how their personal culture comes through their sign language expression.

Youngs (2010) is the only instance of research focused on deaf refugee children during displacement outside of the global North. The study in Dadaab refugee camp focuses on the experiences of deaf students as well as those involved in Deaf Education in the refugee camp (Youngs, 2010). The perspective Youngs presents about what deaf refugee students experience before they arrive in resettlement nations could be applied to educational and psychosocial decision-making regarding the care of deaf refugee children. Given the volume, proportionally, of research about deaf refugee children, increased research is needed which is focused on adults. This research can provide more context for educators and service providers who work with deaf refugee students in understanding the social, cultural, and linguistic context which multiple scholars emphasize as crucial for acculturation and adaptation. Research is needed to (A) expand the current context to explore the experiences of deaf refugees who are adults and (B) break away from the structures researched in conjunction with children (i.e. school) and focus on deaf refugee agency in adulthood.

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[16] 'Mainstream' refers to a deaf student being educated in a school which is not specialized in Deaf Education. These schools have primarily or all hearing teachers and students. Deaf students may have access to sign language interpreters or teaching assistants who know sign language.

10. Deaf Refugees Beyond the Media

Deaf refugees, especially those who are children from the Middle East, have been the subjects of multiple recent media stories, often in the form of short videos on social media. These videos are evidence of the existence of, and interest in, deaf refugees. The production and distribution of this content by UNHCR, news agencies, and other organizations proves that deaf refugees are recognized and seen by institutions. Hopefully this visibility is a sign of efforts to make services inclusive. However, many of these human interest stories take the lens of the Medical Model of Disability, victimizing and describing the plight of the deaf refugee and leaving out their agency or the inaccessibility of their environment. Fortunately, there are a few videos highlighting the agency of deaf refugees as well as how the transnational Deaf Community has come together to work with deaf refugees. Increased scholarship is needed to expand the understanding of deaf refugees beyond the superficial and at times biased story of victimhood by shifting the focus to agency. Further research can (A) show the true context of the lives of deaf refugees by penetrating beyond the glimpse shown in the media and (B) center deaf refugees' narratives and agency as the source of truth beyond media perception.

Two videos published in 2018, one published by UNHCR and the other by Al Jazeera English, take place at the FAID school for the Deaf in Lebanon. Both of these videos demonstrate how an inclusive environment of education in sign language can uphold the agency of deaf students and be a vital tool in their life trajectories. The UNHCR video shows UN Refugee Chief, Filippo Grandi, visiting deaf students, including deaf refugee students, at FAID (UNHCR, 2018b). As is quoted as the title of the video, Grandi says of one deaf Syrian refugee student: "With proper attention he can again have a future and opportunities" (UNHCR, 2018b). The FAID visit video takes the approach of the Social Model of Disability (Shakespeare, 2006; Oliver and Sapey, 1999; Oliver, 2013), focusing on the environment and how with "the proper attention" meaning sign language, Deaf Education, and other accessibility and inclusion measures, deaf refugee students can

succeed. This video has not quite reached the level of the Active Model of Disability (Levitt, 2017) or Human Rights Model of Disability (Degener, 2014) which would focus more on the abilities and rights of the student than the activities of the school – but some comments by the teacher in the video and the overall nature of the story show positive and agency-affirming messaging.

The video published by Al Jazeera English (2018) was also filmed at FAID and focuses on the same deaf Syrian refugee student who Grandi addresses. This video highlights not only the inclusive educational environment at FAID, but also the student's agency by showing his love of learning and motivation with his schoolwork. His deafness is incidental, despite the caption[17] of the video perhaps alluding to him losing his hearing and his hand as a result of the violence in Syria, and the focus is more about how the impact of the war and violence has impacted his young life in general. The video also shows the resource scarcity at FAID, as the school expresses they do not have the resources to enroll more refugee students.

On the contrary, there are two videos, also focused on deaf refugee children, which take the approach of the phonocentric and Medical Model of Disability. One was also published by UNHCR in 2019, the other was published by Channel 4 News in 2016. The video distributed by UNHCR about deaf refugees in 2019 (UNHCR, 2019b) entitled 'The Syrian brothers were born deaf... a viral video changes their lives' was firmly positioned in the Medical Model of Disability, celebrating their cochlear implantation[18] surgery. These children, using sign language and communicating well in the video, were in a video

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[17] "Meet the 7-year-old Syrian refugee who lost his hand, his hearing - but not his love for learning." (Al Jazeera English, 2018)

[18] A cochlear implant is a device which is surgically inserted in the head of a Deaf person. Using a magnet, it transmits sounds into electronic signals that are received by the Deaf person to mimic sound. The surgery involves the removal of all of the Deaf persons' inner ear anatomy to make space for the device. The success rate of cochlear implantation varies widely and is highly dependent on additional audiological and speech pathology services. Unlike the use of a hearing aid, it cannot be reversed. Cochlear implantation, perceived as a way to fix or cure Deafness, is highly contested in the Deaf community, especially as it is often performed on babies and young children who are born to hearing parents and may not be exposed to sign language or Deaf culture.

that went viral, tweeted by an Arab journalist, and seen by the Kuwaiti Red Crescent who financed and performed the surgery. This video emphasizes how a benefactor changed or saved the lives of the deaf Syrian refugee boys, noticeably not addressing any social or environmental aspects that could have changed their lives such as inclusive education or connection to the Deaf Community (UNHCR, 2019b). After the brothers have had the surgery, text appears that "The world is now theirs to discover" (UNHCR, 2019b) an unfortunately limiting view that deaf people without this surgery do not discover the world.

Similarly, the video from Channel 4 News entitled 'The boy who wouldn't talk', focuses on the efforts of the family of a deaf refugee child to "give him the chance to speak" (2016). This video focused on the inability of this deaf refugee child to speak, despite his attendance to a deaf school in the UK where children fluently communicate in sign language. This video does uniquely point out the dangers of refoulement and asylum seeking based on disability as they remind or inform the audience that "In 2015 the terror group [ISIS] reportedly ordered disabled children should be killed" (Channel 4 News, 2016). Incidentally, they show the fallacies of the medical model through explaining that the deaf refugee child had cochlear implantation surgery at 18 months old, but it has not been successful because of the lack of therapy at the camp. The video emphasizes the urgency needed to get the deaf refugee child 'communicating' insinuating that this means speaking – while sign language is accessible to him naturally. Fortunately, the family was able to admit their child to the Royal School for the Deaf – a connection to the Deaf Community and sign language beyond home sign. You can see that the school tested his hearing but states that "a language that suits his needs" and getting a language base for him that will enable his success is the priority, perhaps introducing the Social Model of Disability and inclusive sign language education after all (Channel 4 News, 2016).

Furthermore, three videos, two of which are produced by Deaf Community organizations and the third which features a deaf organization, are examples of how deaf refugees

exercise their agency when supported by the Deaf Community. BBC News (2018) distributed a video about a deaf organization in Vienna, called Equalizent, which provides sign language, written German, and Austrian life classes for deaf refugees from Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This is an example of the transnational Deaf Community, also focused on deaf adults. The video features a deaf refugee from Iraq sharing his narrative in sign language about his experience of violence and displacement. A member of the organization, a deaf person, briefly describes how prior to this course deaf refugees were isolated, and their rights were not upheld. However, the primary focus of the video is the narrative of the deaf refugee including his life goals, self-determination, and agency.

Seek The World (2019), a deaf media company, produced a video about deaf refugees as part of a series about deaf businesses. Typically, these videos focus on the business owner, however this refreshing take is from the employee perspective as it features a deaf Syrian refugee who works at an American deaf owned furniture company. This video provides two examples of the transnational Deaf Community: deaf people creating a business with the purpose of employing deaf refugees as well as deaf refugees of different backgrounds coming together as co-workers. Deaf refugee agency is clearly upheld in this video and the business' practices as DeafSpace is created and the deaf refugee employees have total access. The English, American Sign Language, and vocational training available for the deaf refugee employees is included in the video, but unlike other storytelling approaches, the generosity of the teacher and employer is not the focus. Within the narration by a deaf Syrian refugee employee, his agency and self-determination are evident in his description of when he and his family leveraged their network of friends in Turkey to leave Syria.

Another deaf-produced video, this one by Barpaga and a BSL Zone, features the true story of a deaf Afghani asylum seeker in the UK (2011). The positioning of the video from the deaf asylum seeker's point of view features his agency, his connection to the transnational Deaf Community, the trauma he faced during displacement, and the barriers he faces in the asylum seeking process. The deaf asylum seeker describes how

in Afghanistan he was cut off from information about the disappearance of his family and the dangers in his area, a common experience for many deaf refugees (2011). After arrival in the UK, the video shows an ideal situation: the deaf asylum seeker having access to a case worker and an interpreter who he is able to communicate with well. From literature such as Sivunen (2019) and Olsen (2018) as well as Every & Iyer (no date) we know these resources and ease of communication are rarely the case. Despite this ideal situation, his asylum application is still denied.

Although these media examples fall outside of the academic literature, they are included because the knowledge about deaf refugees is limited to the point that much of perspective on deaf refugees comes through media and social sources. The narratives distributed by humanitarian institutions such as UNHCR and Deaf Community organizations such as BSL Zone and Seek the World also provide insight into the types of inclusion initiatives for deaf refugees which might be created or supported by these parties. Further research is needed to (A) increase the knowledge about this population by broadening the context beyond the brevity of the media and (B) reduce media bias and highlight deaf refugee agency by centering the deaf refugees' own narrative of their experience.

11.   Deaf Refugees as Research Partners & Participants

The methodological approaches of the current research conducted with deaf refugees is consistently qualitative, typically including individual or focus group interviews. In multiple studies about deaf refugees, deaf refugees themselves were not participants; instead interpreters or educators were interviewed about their experiences with their deaf refugee clients or students. Other studies were more inclusive, interviewing deaf refugees directly and leveraging and upholding their expertise on their own experience. Increased scholarship is needed to (A) gain deeper insight and broader context by partnering with deaf refugees in conducting research and (B) co-create with deaf

refugees by centering their narrative and experience through the use of participatory methodologies.

Interviewing Deaf refugees presents linguistic and cultural challenges which were identified by multiple researchers. Their approaches to mitigating and navigating these challenges should be applied to future research with deaf refugees in any context. Particularly, the differences in dynamics and approached between deaf and hearing researchers and their deaf refugee participants should be considered relating both to positionality and to language and communication.

On one end of the spectrum, the two studies of interpreters working with deaf refugees, one in the community setting (Olsen, 2019) and the other in the educational setting (Fischbeck, 2017) both comprised interviews with interpreters and did not include interviews with deaf refugees themselves. In a more balanced approach, Reimers' (2011) case study approach with a deaf refugee student from Somalia balanced the narrative of the student with interviews with the educational team. Youngs' (2010) research was also balanced with interviews with deaf refugee students, teachers, and parents. Notably, on the other end of the spectrum are the deaf researchers, including those from the research unit MobileDeaf. Le Marie (no date) and Emery and Iyer (no date) all conduct interviews and focus groups with deaf refugees themselves. Sivunen (2019), also deaf, conducted in depth interviews with 10 deaf refugees during her study.

The communication barriers which occur between deaf refugees and their teachers, doctors, service providers, and others also exist between researchers and deaf refugees. Deaf researchers, with their shared experience of deafness and visual orientation to the world, are typically best at bridging these gaps and understanding the mix of home sign, gesture, and the sign languages of the deaf refugees' countries of origin, displacement, and/or resettlement. While not all scholars expanded upon their methodological approaches and challenges, Sivunen (2019) described the approach used to communicate with deaf asylum seekers in her study. These deaf refugees identified as

being 'ArabSign' users and had varied levels of using Finnish Sign Language (FinSL) the native sign language of Sivunen. Sivunen notes strategies such as avoiding writing and fingerspelling[19] during interviews and waiting to use FinSL for interviewing until after participants acquired some of the language and the researcher and participant had developed a foundation of communication and mutual understanding. Sivunen also describes the use of repetition, mixing sign languages, using gesture, and employing visual aids to get informed consent. In Sivunen's presentation of the data, the unique description of how a deaf asylum seeker interviewee used their gesture and home sign to strategically tell the researcher their story is an approach to be followed by other researchers interacting with deaf refugees. This approach includes the description not only Sivunen's interview skills and strategy, but the way the deaf asylum seeker's signing was described in detail including facial expression, hand position, shape, and movement. This allowed the reader to imagine the visual communication, and then read the subsequent translated into the English meaning. Sivunen's study presents a methodological approach which upholds the agency of the deaf refugee to express their narrative, and also exemplifies the communication strategies the deaf refugee may use with other deaf refugees of different sign languages, Deaf Community members who are not refugees, hearing and deaf interpreters, and members of the hearing public. Further research should (A) draw upon the methodological tools used by researchers to partner with deaf refugees in conducting research, (B) center the narrative and agency of deaf refugees through the use of participatory and inclusive methodologies, and (C) share methodological insights explicitly to uphold deaf refugee agency in future research processes.

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[19] Fingerspelling is an aspect of sign languages where letters of the spoken language of the region where the sign language has developed are represented manually and signed in sequence in order to spell proper nouns or indicate specific words in a spoken language for clarification or emphasis (i.e. describing signage or instructing how to fill out a form).

12. Deaf Refugees within the Disabled Refugee Literature

Refugees with disabilities rank "among the world's most vulnerable persons" (Crock et al., 2013, p.736), despite this, the scholarship about refugees with disabilities is limited – although markedly larger than the research about deaf refugees. It may be assumed that deaf refugees are captured under the umbrella of refugees with disabilities, and this may be true in some cases relating to general inclusion and resource provision for disability during displacement. However, deaf refugees are largely missing from the research about refugees with disabilities. In most studies, scholars do not mention deafness, hearing disabilities, sign language, or other specific identifications of deaf refugees. In a few instances, deafness is identified as a disability type (Mirza, 2012). Deaf people generally, and deaf refugees in particular are an invisible population – often unseen or overlooked in academia as well as service provision and other inclusion efforts, particularly those aimed at more visible forms of disability (e.g. mobility). This section explores what the scholarship about refugees with disabilities contributes to the study of deaf refugees, including common themes within the experience of refugees with disabilities that need further review for deaf refugees. This section also provides a review of deaf refugee representation in the disabled refugee literature as well as representation in the literature produced by humanitarian organizations.

Prior to delving into these aspects, it is important to set out why deaf refugees should be included in the research about refugees with disabilities. In the field of Deaf Studies and in many Deaf Communities, particularly those in the global North or West, deaf people do not consider themselves disabled. They identify as members of a sociolinguistic minority. While the cultural and linguistic minority approach to deafness is well suited to many, there are gaps where the categorization within disability is important. For example, when applying the Social Model of Disability (Shakespeare, 2006; Oliver and Sapey, 1999; Oliver, 2013): deaf people, as a sociolinguistic and cultural minority, can be 'disabled' by a phonocentric environment therefore making the disability label appropriate and useful. Environments such as those of displacement, conflict, or

in developing countries are typically disabling in this way due to lack of access, education, and acceptance of sign language and other features of deaf life. Despite their human rights to sign language and education being protected by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)[20], deaf people are often disabled by the contexts they live in (UNDESA, 2006). Therefore, deaf refugees fit within the disabled refugee community without having to shed or diminish their identities as members of the Deaf Community. Furthermore, deaf refugees are not served well by rejecting the disability community or label. Their inclusion in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is one example of this. It is also apparent that deaf refugees are not treated like a linguistic minority, as is exemplified by the scarce mention of sign language and no mention of deaf people in the extensive UNHCR published *Handbook for Interpreters in Asylum Procedures* (2017a).

This establishes the logic that deaf refugees should be included in research about refugees with disabilities. However, the simple lack of mention of deafness in the literature, is exacerbated by other evidence that shows deaf refugees remain marginalized and overlooked. Typically, in the literature deaf people are identified as Deaf, deaf, D/deaf, d/Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing impaired[21], deaf-mute[22] or other labels such as Marshall and Barrett, H. (2018) and Marshall et al. (2017) who identify deaf refugees either as or among 'refugees with communication disabilities'.. As certain labels are no longer accepted by the Deaf Community, it is a sign of the disconnect between Refugee Studies, Disability Studies and Deaf Studies when literature such as Lambert's study on the European Convention on Human Rights and Protection of Refugees cited an example of an Algerian 'deaf-mute' refugee, a label which is considered outdated (at best) and offensive (at worst) to the Deaf Community (2005).

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[20] The following articles of the CRPD, if implemented, would mitigate or resolve the disabling situations experienced by Deaf people, including Deaf refugees, worldwide: Article 2; 5; 9; 12; 20; 21.b; 21.e; 23; 23.3; 24; 24.1; 24.3b; 24.4; 24.5; 27; 29; 30.4 (WFD, 2016a; UNDESA, 2006).

[21] 'Hearing Impaired' is not typically an accepted term in the Deaf community as it proliferates the phonocentric, medical, and deficiency perspective of deafness.

[22] 'Deaf-Mute' is no longer an accepted term in the Deaf community.

Despite this disconnect, and the unclear or inconsistent inclusion of deaf refugees in the literature about refugees with disabilities, it is important to consider the perspective that this scholarship has to offer deaf refugee research. Themes and theories developed through research with refugees with disabilities which likely relate to deaf refugees are identified here. They include perceptions of personhood, the application of models of disability, marginalization, vulnerability, grassroots efforts, accessibility, social capital, and resource scarcity. Each of these themes identified with disabled refugees requires increased scholarship to be inclusive of deaf refugees. Foundationally, Mirza's (2010; 2014) observations demonstrate how both disability and displacement diverge from societal understandings of personhood. Disability challenges understandings of embodiment and displacement challenges understandings of citizenship (Mirza, 2014). Crock et al. make a similar connection that refugees are denationalized by their context (e.g. borders) in the same way that people with disabilities are disabled by their context (e.g. access) (2017). The application of these authors' keen connections between disability and displacement suggest that deaf refugees challenge understandings of communication and citizenship simultaneously – connecting to the concept of 'double displacement' discussed in the first section.

The impact of the models of disability applied within the experiences of refugees with disabilities have a clear tie to the experiences of deaf refugees. Therefore, the observations regarding the various models in the disabled refugee literature is a useful starting point. The implications of the use of the Medical Model of Disability in resettlement processes (Mirza, 2010) and access to employment (Mirza, 2012) for refugees with disabilities is a common theme. Authors describe how refugees with disabilities may diminish themselves and their agency in order to fit the narrative of vulnerability in order to be prioritized (Elder, 2015). In an example of deaf refugees in the disabled refugee research, Elder (2015) identified this when a deaf refugee participant from Bhutan did not identify as being disabled but took on the disability label in order to receive her rightful accommodations from UNHCR during her resettlement processes.

Fortunately, further inclusion of deaf refugees is seen through studies which take a strong Social and Active Model approach to disability, perhaps inferring that these studies are more engaged with the diversities within the demographic of refugees with disabilities (Pearce, 2012; 2017). While the models of disability certainly parallel in their impact on different disabilities and the work with disabled refugees is a strong starting point, for deaf refugees the lens of phonocentrism and the specificity of assistive technologies and therapies related to communication and language requires increased research.

Marginalization and vulnerability are themes present throughout the research on deaf refugees as well as on disabled refugees. However, the broad insights from the disabled refugee literature remain important to consider for future research with deaf refugees. Elder (2015), Crock with Ernst and Ao (2012) and with Smith-Khan, McCallum and Saul (2017), along with many others who reference and echo their work, consistently identify themes of vulnerability, human rights abuses, and the invisibility and marginalization of refugees with disabilities. Importantly, Elder (2015) includes a discussion and application of intersectionality and how the multiple intersectional oppressions impact the autonomy and self-determination of refugees with disabilities as well as deaf refugees. Further research is needed on the intersectionality of marginalization, vulnerability, and agency for deaf refugees. Crock et al. (2017) identify the overarching social isolation and political marginalization which are the permanent states of many refugees with disabilities. This warrants deeper application to deaf refugees given the communication barriers and invisibility they experience. For example, Pearce (2017) highlighted the narrative of deaf Bhutanese refugees' experience of vulnerability and invisibility. Importantly, studies indicate that the agency and self-determination of refugees with disabilities is a major contributor to their survival, particularly as they lack the privilege of people with disabilities who are not refugees to exert their political power (Crock et al., 2017). Further study with deaf refugees may reveal a further level of privilege (or underprivilege) between deaf refugees and refugees with disabilities regarding the recognition or space for their agency.

To mitigate the marginalization of refugees with disabilities, grassroots efforts are sometimes identified in the research. Given the institutional issues of stigma and accessibility identified by Mirza (2011), grassroots initiatives and community based efforts towards disability inclusion and rights within refugee camp settings become vitally important; including an example of grassroots efforts with deaf refugees. Pearce (2012) included the facilitation of access to sign language classes for deaf refugees through local partners. Given these two brief examples of deaf refugees, both within wider studies of refugees with disabilities, it is worth exploring how grassroots efforts or other community based initiatives include deaf refugees. Further study may provide insight into if deaf refugees are marginalized by or included within grassroots efforts for refugees with disabilities or if they are more apt to utilize grassroots initiatives designed for deaf people who are not refugees.

Of course, accessibility, is a major factor for any study of disability or deafness. Most scholars identify similar barriers and challenges for refugees with disabilities within the displacement and resettlement settings. Within the refugee camp, Mirza (2017) identifies healthcare as a particular challenge for refugees with disabilities related to the (mis)understandings of their health needs and accommodations. During resettlement, Crock et al. (2012) delve into the practical impact of disability to the legal resettlement processes and how the disability itself may interfere with the understanding or performing procedural steps, including the access to information for refugees with intellectual disabilities and the provision of sign language interpreters for deaf refugees. Further research about deaf refugees can build upon the knowledge of barriers to identify areas where deaf refugees are lacking access to their healthcare, education, legal, and other rights. Furthermore, accessibility and inclusion of research itself is a necessary consideration for deaf refugees. In her work, Pearce (2012; 2017) highlighted the participation of deaf refugees in consultations and noted how deaf refugees used and developed a sign language they could use to share their narratives and communicate. These examples, along with the deaf refugee focused literature provide leadership for

future research initiatives that both identify accessibility for deaf refugees as well as operate an inclusive research process.

Authors including Crock et al. (2017) discuss severe resource scarcity and the lack of or loss of social capital by refugees with disabilities. The application of the knowledge about refugees with disabilities by these scholars is of interest to future research with deaf refugees especially as it is combined with the social capital of the transnational deaf community as explored in section eight. The concept of social capital also raises the question of the social capital shared, or not, between refugees with disabilities and deaf refugees.

Humanitarian organizations and institutions make strides in the inclusion of refugees with disabilities and advocate for their needs and narratives which are often ignored or marginalized by other institutions (HelpAge International & Handicap International, 2014; Australia Aid, 2018a; 2018b; Women's Refugee Commission, 2012; 2017; 2019; 2020a). However, deaf refugees are often not specifically identified and therefore it remains a mystery if they are included in these studies and efforts at all. Nevertheless, efforts toward the inclusion of refugees with disabilities provide a foundation and context for deaf refugee access and inclusion and are therefore included in this review.

Organizations such as HelpAge International (2014) have identified deaf refugees and include them in their study of refugees with disabilities. However, in many of these instances, deafness is identified as 'hearing impairment' and the focus of accommodation is on hearing aids, continuing the approach of the medical model of disability. Similarly, extensive disability assessments of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon done by Australia Aid and Humanity & Inclusion[23] in 2018 (Australia Aid, 2018a; 2018b) primarily note 'hearing impairments' and the use of or need for hearing aids. Fortunately, there are brief mentions of the use of sign language to make information

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[23] Humanity & Inclusion is the new name of the organization Handicap International. This change was made in 2018.

accessible and the provision of a sign language interpreter in the school setting with a deaf child. These reports demonstrate a focus on disability, centering the 'problem' in the disabled refugee or deaf refugee. It is also apparent that the reports make the assumption that hearing aids are useful or desired by all deaf people, which is especially presumptuous in an environment where speech and language pathology and audiology services are less accessible or nonexistent.

Women's Refugee Commission has been a leader in inclusion and information about refugees with disabilities, particularly under the leadership of Pearce[24], cited earlier, who led the Disability Program until 2018. The work of Women's Refugee Commission typically discusses disability in general terms, perhaps due to the institutional level at which it functions. For this or other reasons, deaf refugees do not appear in their publications. In publications varying from a description of their Disability Program (WRC, 2020a) to research about the vulnerability of women and girl refugees with disabilities to gender-based violence (WRC, 2012), a guidance sheet for disability, age, and gender inclusion (Plan International & WRC, 2019), or their study of the connections of refugees and host community disability networks (WRC, 2017) there were no mentions of deafness, hearing disabilities, or sign language. In the collaborative effort between Women's Refugee Commission, UNHCR, Handicap International, and HelpAge International promoting disability and age inclusion in the Syrian crisis, 'mild hearing disabilities' was mentioned once – and only as a description of educational activities performed by a separate organization (WRC, et al., 2015). This lack of information about deaf refugees leaves the inclusion or invisibility or deaf refugees in these contexts suspected, but ultimately unknown.

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[24] Pearce was formerly (2012-2018) the Disability Program officer at the Women's Refugee Commission. There is currently no Disability Program Officer at Women's Refugee Commission that is identifiable on their Staff webpage (Women's Refugee Commission, 2020c). Disability is no longer a program but is included under the focus area of 'Gender and Inclusion' at Women's Refugee Commission (Women's Refugee Commission, 2020b).

Increased scholarship is needed to (A) build upon the themes seen in the literature about refugees with disabilities, identifying where deaf refugees are included, where they are overlooked, and where their experiences fit with or diverge from the experiences of refugees with disabilities more generally. Furthermore, research is needed to (B) reposition deaf refugees within the literature about refugees with disabilities, and (C) explore how deaf refugees interact with refugees with disabilities, disability-centric or inclusive programs and humanitarian organizations.

13. Conclusion

The current literature about deaf refugees in any context is extremely scarce. The position of this population between the Refugee Studies, Disability Studies, and Deaf Studies disciplines has left it neglected, if not orphaned – none of the three fields seeming to take the reins on developing this new field of knowledge. The limited knowledge about deaf refugees at this stage has multiple contextual focal points: deaf refugees, particularly children, 'resettled' in the global North, and how services should be inclusive. Scholarship about refugees outside of the global North only includes those in Kenya and Rwanda. The knowledge about deaf refugees from outside of academia is superficial media coverage and/or focused on the work of organizations for deaf refugees as opposed to the experiences or choices of deaf refugees themselves. This critical literature review presents a clear need for increased research about deaf refugees in general and presents a series of recommendations about where this future research should focus.

Given the foundation of the current knowledge about deaf refugees outlined here, a clear need presents itself to understand the experiences deaf refugees in other contexts and with new dimensions which bring the fields of research together. Contextually, deaf refugees in the Middle East and other global contexts, prior to resettlement in the global North remain to be researched. Research which seeks to understand the experiences of deaf refugee adults is needed. Research outside of the contexts of institutions and

camps would also enrich the field of knowledge about deaf refugees. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for the Refugee Studies and Deaf Studies lenses to combine in the experience of deaf refugees by examining how place-making and DeafSpace parallel. Finally, the re-centering of deaf refugee agency and the narratives of deaf refugees through participatory and accessible research can transcend the current limited knowledge of this population.

These recommendations and aims provide the foundation for the PhD research project: *Deaf Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. This study aims to* complement the current knowledge of deaf refugees in Kenya, parallel in displacement context but in a very different cultural, social, and linguistic context. By focusing on deaf refugees prior to third-country resettlement, this study can provide the background for the majority of the deaf refugee research and service provision for deaf refugees during resettlement in the global North. In understanding what deaf refugees in the Middle East have experienced during displacement and how they have exercised their agency to arrive at the asylum seeking process, professionals will be empowered to provide more inclusive services and use their position to make space for the agency of the deaf refugees with whom they work. Through conducting research with adult deaf refugees, it can balance and complement the scholarship and media which largely focuses on children. This project aims to bring a multi-disciplinary approach in applying concepts from Disability, Refugee, and Deaf Studies such as the combination of place-making and DeafSpace and the ways in which refugees with disabilities and deaf refugees are the same but different. As deaf refugees are doubly displaced, both from the hearing world and as refugees – this study aims to enrich the understanding of displacement and agency within displacement. Through accessible and participatory research practices, the narratives and agency of deaf refugees can be upheld and highlighted through this research project. In exploring and recognizing the experiences and agency of deaf refugees in Jordan and Lebanon in these ways, the gaps identified in this critical literature review can begin to be filled and the fields of Refugee Studies, Disability Studies, and Deaf Studies can become more inclusive of this unique, but overlooked, minority.

Acknowledgements:

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