

EMBODIED HISTORICAL SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS OF SOCIAL DISCOURSE

*A Case Study of the Strategic Boundary-Making Work amongst the Kurdish diaspora
in London in the wake of the Syrian Civil War.*



Éilís O'Connell

5600626

Utrecht University

August 3rd 2016

A Thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Supervisor: Dr. Georg Frerks

Date of Submission: August 3rd 2016

Chosen Trajectory: Research & Thesis writing only – 30 ECTS

Word Count: 26,920

ABSTRACT

Since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, the Kurdish people in the Middle East have gained the attention of the West as one of the main forces on the ground fighting against Islamic State. For Kurds living in the UK, they face a complex political landscape shaped by fear and uncertainty. It is a landscape where the Kurdish people are at once celebrated whilst also trying to navigate an increasingly Islamophobic and nationalist society in which the PKK remain proscribed as a terrorist organisation. In periods of uncertain change, people's self-identities are prone to shift. In this thesis I examine what ways, if any, the self-identification of Kurds in London has been affected by hegemonic categorisations that have existed since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011. Adopting a structurationist approach, this research project progresses along a three-fold trajectory. Firstly, I examined the social field in the UK, focusing on hegemonic discourses and categorisations of Kurds. Next, after conducting a series of in-depth interviews, I looked at the narrative responses of individuals to these categorisations and how individuals perceived and experienced them. Finally, using Wimmer's (2008, 2013) boundary-making approach I examined how individuals responded to these categorisations through a series of boundary-making strategies. The findings indicated that although the recognition of the Kurds that had occurred in the wake of the Syrian Civil War created space for Kurds to identify primarily as an ethnic category, they remain constrained not only by the hegemonic discourses of British society but also by inter-Kurdish divisions and conflicts fostered in the homeland. However, their new 'visible' status has fostered a more inclusive Kurdish identity on multiple levels. This research project concludes suggesting possible avenues for further analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Georg Frerks for all of his help and guidance over the past six months. I would also like to thank everyone at the Centre for Kurdish Progress in London, in particular Ibrahim and Buket. My time working with you, although not over, provided me not only with a great opportunity to learn more about the Kurdistan region but also to meet many incredible and intelligent people. Finally, I would like to thank my respondents, who so bravely shared their stories with me. I hope my findings do justice to your strength.

the Kurdish people are a lot like walnut trees. The more stones you throw into a magnificent walnut tree; the more walnuts will fall to the ground. By springtime there will be many more walnut trees.

-Kurdish Proverb¹

¹ Eccarius-Kelly, 2010.

CONTENTS

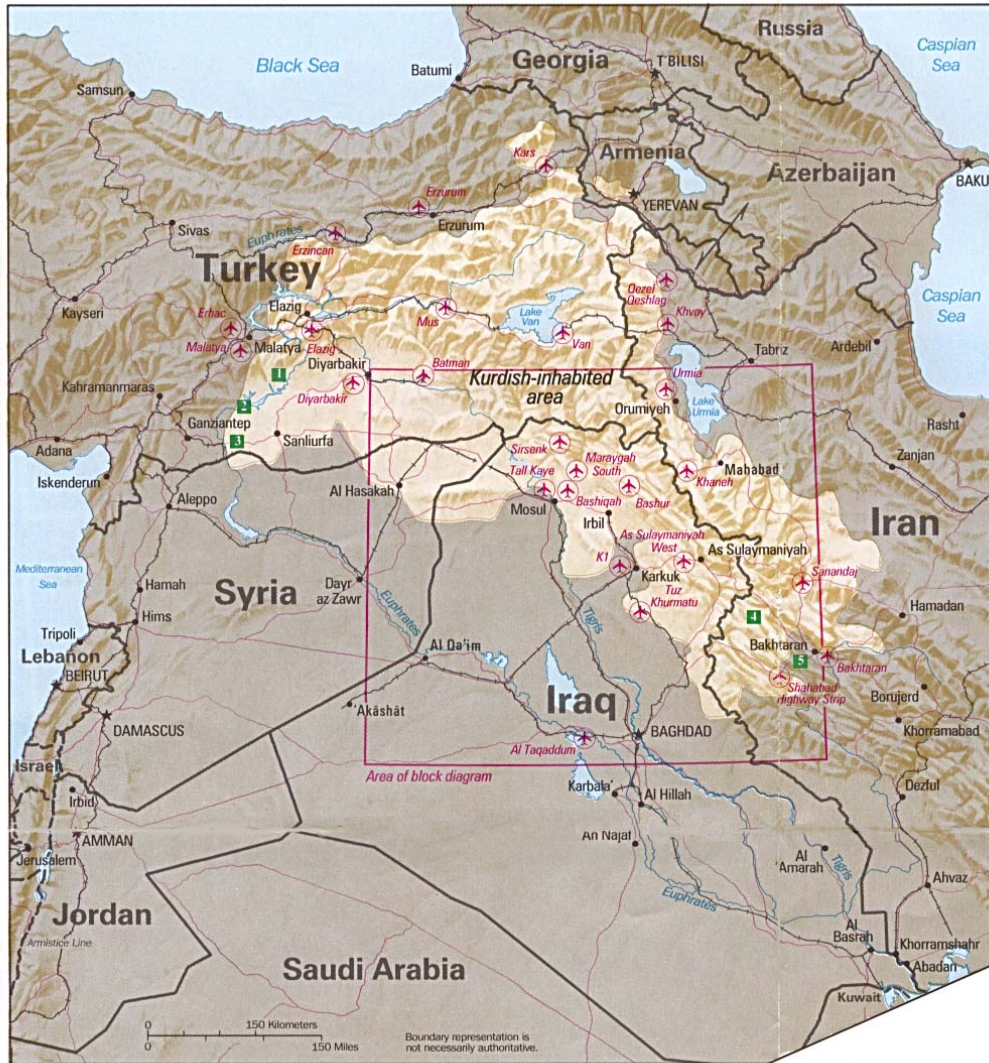
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Acronyms and Abbreviations	8
The Kurdistan Region	9
1. Introduction	10
1.1 The Syrian Civil War	11
1.2 Research Topic	12
1.3 Outline of Thesis	14
2. Theoretical Framework	16
2.1 Identity – Categorising the Self	16
2.2 Good Fences Make Good Neighbours – Making & Maintaining Boundaries	17
2.3 Wimmer & the Boundary-Making Approach	18
2.4 Analytical Tools	20
2.5 Boundary-Making Work & Immigration	22
2.6 Positioning the Theory	23
2.7 The Risk of Reification	24
3. Methodology	26
3.1 Research Design	26
3.1.1 The Case Study Approach	26
3.1.2 The Narrative Approach	27
3.2 Sample	28
3.3 Data Collection	29
3.4 Data Analysis	30
3.5 Limitations and Ethical Issues	31
4. The Social Field	33
4.1 Kurds – Heroes of the Syrian Civil War	33
4.2 Islamophobia and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in the UK	37
4.3 PKK Listing as a Terrorist Organisation	40
5. Embodied Historical Subjects & Objects of Social Discourse	43
5.1 Oh, how happy is the one who says 'I am a Kurd'	43
5.2 The Power to Define – Feeling the British Response	46
5.3 Experiencing Islamophobia	49
5.4 Criminalising A People – The PKK & the Diaspora	50
6. Blurred Lines – Struggling Over Boundaries	54
6.1 Secularism – A Different Way of Doing Things	54
6.2 Partisan Politics – Policing Inter-Kurdish Boundaries	57
6.3 Ideology over Ethnicity	59
6.4 Integration and Identity	62
6.5 A Minority Amongst Minorities	65
7. Conclusion	68
7.1 Discussion	68
7.2 Conclusion	70

7.3 Recommendations for Future Research	71
Index and Appendices	
Appendix A	73
Appendix B	74
Appendix C	75
Bibliography	76

Acronyms and Abbreviations.

HDP	<i>Partiya Demokratîk a Gelan</i> (Peoples' Democratic Party)
KDP	<i>Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê</i> (Kurdistan Democratic Party)
KRG	<i>Hikûmetî Herêmî Kurdistan</i> (Kurdistan Regional Government)
PKK	<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê</i> (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PYD	<i>Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat</i> (Democratic Union Party)
PUK	<i>Ekêtiy Niştîmaniy Kurdistan</i> (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan)
YPG	<i>Yekîneyên Parastina Gel</i> (People's Protection Units)
YPJ	<i>Yekîneyên Parastina Jin</i> (Women's Protection Units)

THE KURDISTAN REGION



725895 (R00180) 8-92

1. INTRODUCTION

“The Kurds are no longer the Kurds of the 1980s. Things will be very different for the Kurdish people. This century will probably be the century of the Kurds”²

Kurds are an ethnic minority peoples, of an estimated 35 million, who populate the borders where Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey meet. This area is effectively known as the Kurdistan region. Despite constituting the fourth largest population group in the Middle East, behind the Arabs, Turks and Persians, Kurds remain the largest stateless minority in the world. They have never had an official homeland territory of their own, having for centuries lived under the rule of various empires and nation-states. From the sixteenth until the beginning of the twentieth century Kurdish inhabited areas were divided between the Safavid and Ottoman empires. This year, 2016, marks the 100-year anniversary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which saw the UK and France redrawing the lines and boundaries of the Middle East. That year the Sykes-Picot Agreement saw the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the sovereign nation-states we know today: Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. These boundary constructions, which were subsequently ratified under the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, have contributed to the historical inequalities experienced by Kurds across each of these four states (Elisassi, 2010: 30) and have been directly and indirectly responsible for much of the forced migration from Kurdistan in recent years.

Kurdish identity today has been described as reactionary in the face of the cultural and political dominance of Arabs, Turks and Persians across the Kurdistan region (van Bruinessen, 1991). Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey have each exposed the Kurdish population to various forms of suppression. The Kurds remain a minority across four nation-states in a world of nation-states, where their formal and institutionalised identity remains tied to that of the sovereign state (even once they leave). In Turkey, homogenisation and forced assimilation were tools utilised by the state to oppose diversity (Vali, 2006). In school Kurdish children were forced to start their mornings by giving up their self-determination with the assertion “How happy is one who says I am a Turk” (Zeydanlioglu, 2008: 162). In Iraq the Kurdish population were suppressed by Arab nationalists. In 1988 a chemical weapon was dropped on the Kurdish region of Halabja in a targeted attack by Saddam Hussein. This was just one in a series of attempts to ethnically cleanse Iraq of the Kurdish people. Since the Iraq War, however, the status of Kurds in Iraq has improved and since 2005 they have enjoyed the right to an autonomous region albeit within Federal Iraq. In Syria Kurds remained

repressed. The state has denied 120,000 Kurds the right to citizenship, leaving them legally stateless. However, a new political programme is underway in Syria. In 2013 Syrian Kurds declared a de facto autonomous region, known as *Rojava*, consisting of three self-governing cantons. Governed under a system of *democratic confederalism*, Rojava gained international attention and interest as a growing project surrounded by the chaos of the Syrian Civil War.

Building from the above description of the various forms of suppression the Kurds have been subjected to and the ways in which they still fight for their autonomy and self-determination, one can describe the various conflicts involving the Kurds in the Middle East as ‘communal conflicts’. In contrast to what is suggested in political and media discourse the driving force behind one of the most serious and protracted communal conflicts in the Middle East is not radical Islam but rather the unsatisfied nationalist aspirations of the Kurds (Gurr, 1995). A communal conflict involves one group inflicting violence onto another group, or onto an individual member of that group solely because of group membership (Brewer, 2010). In this context the Kurds can be described as ethnonationalists: “large, regionally concentrated peoples with a history of organised political autonomy who have pushed separatist objectives at some time in the past fifty years” (Gurr, 1995: 15). According to Gurr (1995) communal conflict involving the Kurds in the Middle East has been on decline since the beginning of the 1990’s. However, in the twenty-first century this communal conflict is rising again. With the ongoing conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurds in Turkey, the autonomy of Rojava, and most prominently the Syrian Civil War, the Kurds have once again become involved in struggles for control, autonomy and identity in the Middle East.

1.1 The Syrian Civil War

In March 2011 rebellions broke out in Syria, in protest against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. The conflict started out as part of the Arab Spring Uprisings, a series of protests and demonstrations that had begun three months before in Tunisia. However, the escalation into violent conflict was rapid and by the summer of 2012 the conflict in Syria had escalated from an insurgency into a civil war. Multiple armed militias clashed with rebels and regime forces, and resulted in power vacuums throughout Syria. Some areas were seized by rebels. Some remained controlled by the regime. It was in this political landscape that the Islamic State (ISIS) rose to prominence and power. ISIS is an extremist jihadist group that aims to found a new Sunni state, an ‘Islamic Caliphate’ which it claims is inspired by the original Caliphate of the time of the Prophet Muhammed in the region of Iraq and the Levant. They practice *sharia* law, and desire to return the Muslim community to its origins and the way of life they allege follows the *true* Islam. Kurdish

forces from across the Kurdistan region have since gained recognition as one of the main forces on the ground fighting against ISIS. Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces, PKK forces from Turkey, YPG and YPJ forces from Rojava have all been actively pushing back ISIS and regaining territory across Iraq and Syria. In January 2015 YPG and YPJ Syrian Kurdish forces in Rojava celebrated the liberation of the Kurdish canton of Kobane, reclaiming a large area of their land from ISIS. For the first time in decades' Western attention was turned towards the Kurdish people. UK media and UK politicians have since frequently celebrated the bravery of Kurdish forces, now hailed as 'allies', and 'friends' of the West. In December 2015, when the UK parliament voted on whether or not to join airstrikes against ISIS in Syria, helping the Kurdish fight was frequently referenced to justify many politicians' decision to vote in favour of airstrikes.

The study of Kurds as a national or ethnic formation is relatively new in the European context (Eliassi, 2010). According to Laitin (1996) in periods of uncertain change, one evidently being underway as I write, people's identities become prone to shift. They become especially responsive to state policy and discourse, to "identity strategies" or projects offered by competing social-political leaders, to political-economic advantages of different identity strategies, and to in-group and out-group social pressures. Whilst the majority of existing studies focus on nationalism and political exclusion (Wahlbeck, 1999; Griffiths, 2002), the ways in which these uncertain and shifting events in the Middle East, and international recognition of the Kurdish struggles, have impacted on the various Diaspora and Kurdish identity is strikingly underexplored.

1.2 Research Topic

It has been estimated that the number of Kurds living in the UK is somewhere between 60,000 and 200,000 (Keles et al, 2009), with a large majority residing in North London (mainly Haringey and Wood Green). According to the 2011 census data there were 11,991 Kurds living in London. This makes the Kurdish diaspora in the UK the second largest worldwide, after Germany (KHRP, 2011: 3). Kurdish diasporas do not have the longest histories in Europe. Mass migration to the UK from the Kurdistan region only began in the 1980's, with the first substantial wave of immigration from Turkey to Europe being triggered by the brutal repression of the 1980 military coup. Approximately 90% of these immigrants settled in London and by the mid 1980's this had led to the Kurdish identity beginning to be asserted in response to the escalation of repression and persecution in Turkey (Wahlbeck, 1999: 218). Kurdish community organisations were subsequently established and provided essential social services and fostering cultural expression that functioned as crucial forms of resistance (Sentas, 2015). At the same time in the Iraqi region of Kurdistan the Al-Anfal

campaign saw thousands of Kurds murdered in military operations carried out under Saddam Hussein. This included the 1988 chemical attacks in Halabja, which left 5000 killed and thousands more injured and displaced (KHRP, 2011). The death and destruction in Halabja triggered another wave of migration to the UK. Since mass arrivals in the 1980's Kurds have continued to settle in London and have now come to occupy many labour-market niches such as coffee-shops and kebab houses across the UK.

Having largely fled from persecution and destruction, the political and social landscape into which Kurdish migrants entered was and remains complex. For years the diaspora in the UK has been subject to continuous policing operations. The Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), an organisation that originated in Turkey as a nationalist liberation movement, has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation in the UK since 2002. However, the PKK remains viewed by many Kurds as a legitimate organisation that stands in opposition to what they consider an oppressive regime (KHRP, 2011). As a result, many Kurds in London have been imputed as terrorists and as 'networked' fronts for the PKK in Europe, and thus been extensively criminalised (Boon-Keo, 2015; Fernandes 2015). In addition, there has been a rise in Islamophobia across the UK in recent years. Islamophobia in Britain, recently described as a new form of 'soft war' refers to 'a rejection of Islam, Muslim groups and Muslim individuals based on prejudice and stereotypes' (Hashemi & Razael, 2015: 3). The rise in Islamophobia and the re-emergence of a British nationalism (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2015) raises questions about identity for minorities and the plurality of identity.

Previous research has pointed to Kurds in London as a particularly active diaspora, noted for being a considerable component of multi-cultural London in terms of both size and also in terms of political voice and activism (Demir, 2014). Demir (2014), having studied the political activism of the Kurdish diaspora in London, concluded that they respond dynamically to events and changes both in country of origin and in country of reception. It is for this reason that I became interested in how individuals in the Kurdish diaspora have responded to the aforementioned events that have taken place since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011. How has the increased visibility of the Kurdish identity and struggle in the UK affected Kurds living in the UK? How do individuals experience being part of a community that is being both celebrated as heroes in the Middle East and criminalised in the UK at the same time? How do individuals that bear a history of repression and statelessness experience the sudden attention of the Western world and recognition of their identity? Is there room for individuals to negotiate their own identity within two extremely complex political landscapes? These initial questions led me to formulate my research question:

How have the categorisations of Kurds, since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, influenced the self-identification of Kurds living in London?

Multiple studies have previously explored Kurdish identity in the UK and other European diasporas. However, there are no studies that explore the impact of the Syrian Civil War and its effects on the Kurdish diaspora in the UK. This is the gap that this research aims to fill.

The analytical lens through which this research project is conducted is Andreas Wimmer's boundary-making approach (2008, 2013). There are two components that need to be addressed in order to answer the research question. Firstly, to understand why boundaries are constructed, contested or negotiated I need to look at categorisations of Kurdish individuals by others in society, essentially defining the 'social field' and the hegemonic discourses that exist within it. Secondly, an understanding of how categorisation has changed self-identification requires looking at boundary-making work that has been used by respondents in how they respond to these categorisations. This is done first by looking individual's narrative responses to the hegemonic discourses in the social field and then by looking at the boundary-making strategies that are employed to navigate it and define their identity. I adopt a structurationist approach to studying the social world. This approach takes into account both structures and agency as driving human action, and helping to shape each other. It is for this reason that I look at both categorisations by 'others' and self-identification. To collect data, I undertook an six-month long internship at the Centre for Kurdish Progress, working in the office and attending a total of 15 political meetings on Kurdish issues (see appendix A). In addition, I conducted 13 in-depth semi-structured interviews (see appendix B). This allowed me to answer my research question of *How have the categorisations of Kurds, since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, influenced the self-identification of Kurds living in London?*

1.3 Outline of thesis

Chapter two will discuss the theoretical underpinnings on which this project is based and illustrate why this specific theoretical approach was adopted for this research project. As mentioned above, Wimmer's boundary-making theory is the analytical lens through which the data will be analysed. In chapter three place this theory and my research puzzle in the wider academic debate. Chapter three will then go on to discuss the methodology used; data collection techniques, sampling methods, data analysis and limitations of the approach chosen. My findings are spread over three empirical chapters. Chapter four examines the social field and the ways in which Kurds are being

categorised, from 2011 to present. Chapter five details interviewees' perceptions and experiences of this social field through narrative analysis. Chapter 6 then deals with how individuals have used strategic boundary-making techniques to navigate their identity in this social field. In my final chapter I will answer my research question. I will discuss the policy implications that have arisen in light of my findings before making suggestions for any future research that could deepen understanding.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explores the theoretical framework that informed the data analysis in this research project. I explore the concepts of identity and identification, seminal sensitizing concepts informing this research, and situate them in the wider academic debate. This research project examines how the categorisations of Kurds influence individuals' self-identification within a given context. Categorisation and identification are the primary sensitising concepts that inform this research and are wholly interdependent and relational. This is because self-identifications always exist in a dialectical interplay with ascribed identifications and categorisations (Brubaker, 2003: 556). I will discuss theories of boundary-making that go on to build the analytical toolkit that was used for data analysis. The theory is then positioned in relation to epistemologically and ontologically before finally discussing the risk of reification that comes with any attempt to study ethnicity and identity.

2.1 Identity – Categorising the Self.

We live in a world where identity matters. Identity, broadly defined, is the ability to answer the question “who or what are you?” (Demmers, 2012: 19). There are two very different approaches to identity, the primordialist and constructivist approaches, thus it is important to differentiate between the two. The primordialist approach to identity and group membership assumes that:

certain social categories are natural, inevitable, and unchanging facts about the social world. They believe that particular social categories are fixed by human nature rather than social convention and practice (Fearon & Laitin, 2000: 848 in Demmers, 2012: 25).

With this approach, narratives of difference, origin, and blood are often used to legitimise conflict, violence and tension between groups. In this narrative difference is framed as natural and essential and is often used to provoke and legitimise inter-ethnic clashes and violence. The implication here is that ethnicity breeds violence (Demmers, 2012). Primordialist thought is most often reified by mass media or used by politically or economically interested actors, who turn characteristics into markers of identity than can affect the lived experience (Baumann, 1999).

In academic circles the primordialist approach to identity has been heavily dismissed in favour of a constructivist approach. Jenkins (2008: 5), arguing from a constructivist standpoint, defines identity as:

the human capacity – rooted in language – to know ‘who's who’ (and hence ‘what's what’). This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, knowing who they think they are, and so on ... mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and members of collectives.

The constructivist approach makes the claim that identity is the product of a social process rather than cultural given, made and remade rather than taken for granted as fact. It is a product of circumstance not a condition of birth (Wimmer, 2008: 971). Identity is therefore relational and dynamic. Whilst individuals more than often possess a reified (or primordialist) perception of their identity this does not mean that we should accept it without questioning. Identities are constructed within social, political and cultural contexts that fuel their constructions, naturalness, timelessness, realness, maintenance, tensions, lives, continuities, or demises (Nagel, in Eliassi, 2010: 44). So, for the sake of this project, there is a need to look at the social field, its structures and institutions, those in which Kurds construct and negotiate their identity as 'Kurds', as 'Muslims', as 'immigrants' and so forth. Identity assertion is a highly subjective and variable process. For example, throughout the Ottoman rule, Kurds often described themselves as Muslim subjects rather than an ethnic category (Schiano, 2015: 12). Identity may be functional, serving political and social functions (Demmers, 2012). For this reason, authors sometimes highlight an identity in cases it is being used, promoted or hardened by political reasons. Therefore, identity is seen as strategically selected in a given context.

2.2 Good Fences Make Good Neighbours – Making and Maintaining Boundaries

This study adopts a constructivist approach to identity and builds on the Barthian conceptualisation of ethnicity as a social construct. Barth (1969) was one of the first thinkers to suggest that group membership is not dependent on a shared culture. Prior to Barth, ethnic groups were seen as sharing a unitary identity. Barth, however turned his attention instead to the social boundaries that define a group, to “the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group” rather than “the cultural stuff it encloses” (1969: 15). These social boundaries, he found, are permeable and changeable. According to Barth's findings what makes an ethnic identity “ethnic” is to be found in the “social processes of maintaining boundaries that people themselves recognise as ethnic” (Baumann, 1999: 59). The social processes of maintaining boundaries is crucial to understanding how groups and categories are formed. Brubaker (2004) advocated that whilst it is now agreed on that ethnicity is constructed, the focus should now turn to *how* ethnicity is constructed and maintained.

Jenkins (2008) builds on these theorisations. According to Jenkins, we should distinguish first between an ethnic *group* and an ethnic *category*. A group can be described as the product of self-identification with membership resting on an internal sense of belonging. An ethnic category, however, can be externally imposed by outsiders, and it is categorisation that is a focal point of this research. We categorise the social world in order to make sense of it. Categorisation – external definition of us by others – affects our internal definition. This is largely because, according to

Jenkins, it will influence how *they* orient their behaviour towards *us*. This is somewhat dependent on power: whose definition *counts*? Thus, power relations must be part of the equation. More than often the ones whose definition counts is the national majority, those with the power (often given by the state) to generate consequences and to make identification matter, regardless of internalisation (Jenkins, 2000: 9). For example, during the Troubles in Northern Ireland what mattered most and had the capacity to affect the lived experience was not whether one self-identified as Catholic or as Protestant. Rather, what mattered was how one was perceived others, by potential discriminators (Ringelheim, 2011). This meant that although individuals had the right to self-identify (or not to categorise themselves as either Catholic or Protestant), potential employers relied on information provided, such as surname, schools attended, club affiliations to which community that person is related to and they were subsequently treated as belonging to this community. This illustrates how the categorisations ascribed by those with a higher social positioning can be more meaningful to the lived experience of individuals, as can be associated with processes of discrimination and exclusion (Jenkins, 2008). However, it is important to remember that categorisation is not inherently negative. It can also be emancipatory and enabling (Jenkins, 2000). This research project will examine a case where, throughout the ongoing course of the Syrian Civil War, the dominant external categorisations of a group are at once positive, enhancing, discriminatory and stigmatising, and subsequently how individuals attempt to navigate their identity in relation to these categorisations.

According to Baumann (1999) identification is the social process of maintaining boundaries and the capacity to recognise one's own identity. Whilst I will focus on the dominant categorisations of Kurds since 2011, this does not mean that categorisations are exclusive to that timeframe, or that categorisations and self-identifications which relate to previous categorisations will be ignored. The history and context of categorisations matter (Jenkins, 2000). Given the complex history of the Kurdish people, a people that are at once embodied historical subjects and objects of social discourse (Eliassi, 2016), it is highly unlikely that history will not play a part in self-identification. This is why a short historical analysis was included in chapter one. However, the focus of this research will be on the current hegemonic categorisations of Kurds in the UK, how these categorisations are experienced, and the subsequent responses of participants through boundary-making work. Hegemony implies that “systems of thought develop over time and reflect the interests of certain classes and/or groups in society who have managed to universalise their own beliefs and values” (Nader, 1989: 324).

2.3 Wimmer & the Boundary-Making Approach

Wimmer's (2008, 2013) boundary-making approach is the main analytical frame on which this

project is based. The boundary-making approach allows for the process of identity construction to be easily understood and empirically observed, as it uncovers how identity is made and unmade through everyday social interactions. Social boundaries separate 'us' from 'them' and are relational; the very existence of a group, an 'us', implies existence of an 'Other'. Wimmer follows the constructivist approach to group formation, making the claim that ethnicity is the product of a social process, not a cultural given. It is made and remade. Ethnicity is not primarily conceived as “matter of *relations* between defined, fixed groups ... but rather as a process of *constituting and re-constituting* groups by defining the boundaries between them” (Wimmer, 2008: 1027). I will analyse how through categorisations, boundaries are being drawn in UK society, and how Kurds are responding through strategic boundary-making work of their own. Wimmer’s theory focuses explicitly on ethnic boundary-making. He was interested in understanding why and how there are such a wide range of ethnic constellations. The Kurds are seen in this research projects as ethnonationalists, in which “nation” is defined in terms of ethnicity.

In many ways Wimmer's work goes further than other constructivist theorists such as Barth. Wimmer effectively takes up Brubaker's suggestion that now that it is agreed on that ethnicity is constructed we should therefore turn our attention to *how* it is constructed and maintained. He invokes the metaphor of the boundary to do this. Wimmer's approach follows in the Bourdieuan tradition of seeking to understand how actors who are situated in a historically constituted field develop narratives about who they are, who they are not, who belongs and who does not. Actors are at once embodied historical subjects and categorised objects of social discourse. Identification is seen by Wimmer (2008) as a process of negotiation between actors. Negotiations are situated in a social field, the characteristics of which shape the boundary-making strategies of the relevant actors (2008: 973). The characteristics of the social field that have the power to constrain the agency of the individual are institutional frameworks, the position in a hierarchy of power, and the structure of political networks and allegiances (Wimmer, 2008: 973). Actors often pursue different strategies depending on their position in the power hierarchy. According to Wimmer (2013: 9) a boundary displays two schemes: “a categorical and a social or behavioural dimension”. The categorical dimension refers to “acts of social classification and collective representation”, the behavioural dimension refers to “everyday networks of relationships that result from individual acts of connecting and distancing”:

On the individual level, the categorical and the behavioural aspects appear as two cognitive schemes. One divides the social world into social groups—into “us” and “them”—and the other offers scripts of action—how to relate to individuals classified as “us” and “them” under given circumstances. Only when the two schemes coincide, when ways of seeing the world correspond to ways of acting in the world, shall we speak of a social boundary”

(Wimmer, 2013:9).

Describing a “classification struggle” Bourdieu (1987: 164) explains how the very definition of what is valued and the understanding of one’s position in fields are themselves objects of struggle. The smallest of everyday practices, even food choices, embody an underlying logic of inclusion and exclusion. Thus lifestyle choices are often “the strongest barriers between the classes”. Wimmer's approach builds on Bourdieu's classification struggle in emphasising the strategic nature of practices of categorisation and associations. It is this use of strategies in negotiating over boundary that gives the model its name: “boundary-making *work*”. It should enable us to see which identities are preferred and privileged, and *why*? The *why* can relate to the social field, as individuals attempt to navigate through dominant discourses and categorisations. Boundary-making *work* is then defined as:

the different ways in which individual and collective actors can relate to an existing, established mode of classification and closure, and how they can attempt to reinforce their vision of the legitimate divisions of society (Wimmer, 2013: 44).

Wimmer (2013) differentiates between strategies at three levels. The first level is comprised of boundary shifting and modification. The second level is comprised of expansion, contraction, transvaluation, repositioning and blurring. It is this second level that will provide the analytical tools by which the data collected will be analysed. At the third level are actions chosen by which individuals respond to boundaries. 'Boundary shifting' strategies are those that attempt to change the location of existing boundaries (Wimmer, 2008: 1031). This can be done by 'expanding' or 'contracting' the domains of the included. 'Boundary modification' refers to transvaluation, repositioning and blurring, and means that an attempt is made to change the meaning, and subsequent importance, of an existing boundary by de-emphasising ethnicity, or by changing one's own position or a group's position in regards to a boundary.

2.4 Analytical Tools

In order to study the ways in which way categorisations of the Kurds in the UK impact individuals' self-identification I have selected several analytical tools that will be used to analyse data. Wimmer (2008: 986) introduces five 'strategies' of ethnic boundary making that can be used by different actors in different social contexts. I will use and expand on Wimmer's boundary-making strategies, linking them to Yuval-Davis' (2010) politics of belonging, to make a more comprehensive and applicable analytical toolkit to analyse data.

2.4.1 Boundary Shifting through Expansion:

This strategy is utilised when actors create a more encompassing boundary by joining existing categories into a new, expanded category. The boundary location is changed in an attempt to create a more inclusive group. This is called fusion, where the number of categories are reduced and existing boundaries expanded (Wimmer, 2013: 50). Wimmer (2008) presents nation-building as the most consequential form of boundary-expansion. According to Wimmer (2009: 256) boundary shifting depends on acceptance by the majority population, due to the privileged relationship they have to the state, and thus to the power to police the borders of the nation.

2.4.2 Boundary shifting through contraction:

The reverse of expansion, through contraction boundaries are changed in order to create small groups and narrower boundaries than are in existence: 'drawing narrower boundaries and thus dis-identifying with the category one is assigned by outsiders' (Wimmer, 2013: 55). This strategy includes fission, in which a new category is added. Calling this 'contraction' may seem paradoxical, but it in fact means that existing boundaries contract for those who are included. In other contexts, individuals can create a new category with the goal of dis-identifying with the original, encompassing group; thus more divisions are created (Wimmer, 2013). Boundary contraction strategies can be seen through Yuval-Davis' 'me'/'us' and 'them' conceptualisation in which there is a process of exclusion, and the demonisation of the Other (2010: 276). This is namely when identities are seen as communal, and the fate of the individual is seen as bound to that of their group membership.

The final three strategies do not aim at changing the topography of boundaries, but rather they work to modify the meaning and implications of the boundary Wimmer, 2013: 55).

2.4.3 Transvaluation

This strategy does not seek to change a boundary, but rather to target the hierarchical ordering of ethnic groups. In this regard there are two possibilities. Firstly, a minority group could attempt to change the symbolic hierarchy, to position itself about the dominant group in status and political power, a process that Wimmer calls 'normative inversion' (Wimmer, 2008: 988). Alternatively, there could be a process of equalisation aimed at establishing equality in status and political power (2013: 56).

2.4.4 Repositioning

Repositioning can be concerned with "individual crossing", that being an individual response to categorisation, then an attempt to change group boundaries. In this case, an individual seeks to

change his/her own position with an *existing* hierarchical boundary system (Wimmer, 2008: 988). Less often is “collective repositioning”, an attempt to reposition an entire ethnic category within a multi-tiered hierarchy.

2.4.5 Boundary Blurring

The goal of boundary blurring is to overcome ethnicity as an instrument of categorisation and social organisation (Wimmer, 2008: 989). Hence, non-ethnic principles are promoted, to undermine the principle of categorisation by ethnicity:

boundary blurring reduces the importance of ethnicity as a principle of categorisation and social organisation. Other, non-ethnic principles are promoted and the legitimacy of ethnic, national, or ethnosomatic boundaries undermined. Blurred boundaries are less relevant for the everyday conduct of life, less exclusionary and less institutionalised (Wimmer, 2013: 61).

Wimmer pinpoints the establishment of countercultures (for example the Mods and Rockers in the UK in the 1970's) as a form of boundary blurring, often one of the most visible forms (Wimmer, 2008: 989). Another example he gives is emphasizing civilizational commonalities, in the form of underlining membership in one of the world religions such as Islam. Finally, as Lamont (2000) found, boundaries are blurred through individuals pursuing 'universalising' strategies; for example, when universal moral qualities and membership in the 'human family' is evoked. This strategy parallels Yuval-Davis' 'me' and the transversal 'us'. According to Yuval-Davis transversal politics is

an alternative identity politics and are often aimed at establishing a collective 'us' across borders and boundaries of membership, based on solidarity with regard to common emancipatory of values (2010: 278)

Individuals who are on the same side of an ethnic boundary may occupy very different positions in relation to social divisions (class, gender, age). They may choose to unify around these other social positions.

2.5 Boundary-making work and immigration

I chose to use this theoretical framework based on its applicability to a national majority/minority situation, and the study of immigrant identity. Immigrant ethnicity is conceived of the outcome of an interaction that spans the boundary between majority and minority (Wimmer, 2009: 245). Actors from both sides of the boundary play a role in the creation of immigrant minorities and national majorities. 'Immigrant incorporation' into a host society, is explained by Wimmer as a “shifting of boundaries of belonging, which has come to overcome existing forms of social closure along ethnic lines” (2009: 245). Migrants and minorities often *strategically* adopt cultural markers that may signify full membership of the national majority, simultaneously working to distance themselves

from the stigmatised Other. Boundary maintenance is also a constitutive element of any diaspora (Khayati, 2008: 22).

Wimmer's boundary-making model problematizes a distinction on which the majority of immigration research was founded, that being the distinction between immigrant majorities and national majorities. He does this in three ways (Wimmer, 2009: 255). Firstly, the boundary-making approach implies that ethnicity does not emerge because the 'minority' maintains a separate identity, culture, and community. Rather, minority and majority are made by defining the boundaries between them. Secondly, a comparative perspective then forces itself on the observer, because it becomes obvious that the boundary displays varying properties and is highly dependent on context. Finally, the boundary-making approach reveals the political character of the process of immigration. According to Wimmer (1998: 256) "immigration" only emerged as a political problem to be "managed" once state apparatus assigned passports and memberships in national communities. The state polices territorial boundaries, and has the administrative capacity to distinguish between desirable and undesirable immigrants. Minority boundary shifting then depends on the acceptance of the majority population who has a privileged relationship to the state and, thus, the power to police the borders of the nation.

It is the relationship between boundary making and immigration that underlies Yuval-Davis' description of the politics of belonging as "the dirty work of boundary maintenance" (2006: 204). It dictates who is entitled to status and illustrates how specific symbols or practices can come to signify belonging (or un-belonging), through border patrolling, nation-building or community cohesion. Citizenship is not limited to ownership of a passport, but can be multi-layered so that it relates not only to the state but to political, ethnic, or cultural communities (2006: 206). This illustrates the power imbalance between the state and minorities. The state has the capacity to institutionalise a boundary, to make it into law. Whilst identity narratives in everyday life do not always mention social positionings (that being the positioning of people in grids of social power) that does not mean that their gaze is not situated and affected by those positionings (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 269). Self-identification always exists in a dialectical interplay with ascribed identifications and categorisations, especially those employed by powerful, authoritative institutions – above all the modern state (Brubaker, 2003: 556).

2.6 Positioning the theory

This study adopts an interpretive epistemological stance; it aims to study the social world from within, to "examine the ways in which people understand violence and war, and act upon this"

(Demmers, 2012: 118). The constructivist argument laid out above relates to the epistemological underpinnings of the theory: the epistemological stance of *understanding* focuses on both the construction of meaning and the meaning of action (Demmers, 2012).

Ontologically, this study follows a structurationist approach. As Demmers (2012) stresses, an individualist approach and a structuralist approach need not be mutually exclusive. The individualist approach assumes the actions of individuals to be the stuff of history, with structures being the result of previous actions. Whereas, structuralism assumes that power resides in institutions, with structures enabling and constraining individual action. As such power is beyond the control of the individual (Demmers, 2012: 15). Structuration theory, however, combines these approaches. Giddens (1979) stressed the duality of structure: individuals are not completely free to act, but not wholly constrained by structures and passive. It is *because* we have agency, we reproduce stories and step into institutions through actions. Human agents draw on social structures in their actions, and at the same time these actions serve to produce and reproduce structure (Jones, 2008: 129). It is therefore essential that in conducting empirical research there must be a focus on context, on space and time, as it is central to the analyses of the production and reproduction of social life (Greyson, 1984). Context is central to the research question that this study will answer. Self-identification is not wholly the choice of an individual agent, but rather a self-imposed choice within an externally imposed context (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008: 7).

2.7 The Risk of Reification

The risk of reification is a paramount concern in identity studies. Reification is the process by which a putative identity is turned into something hard, unchangeable and absolute (Demmers, 2012: 27). Reification, defined here by Berger & Luckmann (1967: 10), is related to the aforementioned primordialist approach to identity:

[reification is] the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is ... the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is ... the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something other than products – such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will.

The process of reification, in its simplest phrasing, is to make something imagined into something real. Therefore, in terms of studying identity and ethnicity, it refers to the way in which social constructs such as ethnicity come to be seen as 'real'. Or, perhaps, how what academics view as constructed is more commonly seen by mass media, individuals and groups through the primordialist lens as something that is biological and natural.

It is reification that is responsible for making ethnic categories synonymous with ethnic groups, ignoring the important distinctions outlined previously in the chapter (Jenkins, 2008). Baumann terms the confusing of ethnic categories and ethnic groups as *ethnopolitics*: “a consequence of thinking of ethnicity as natural and restrictive and results in it being mobilised for political gains in order to reinforce or enforce structural inequalities” (1999: 13). Brubaker terms this process *groupism*. In this case ethnic categories are seen as homogenous, externally bounded groups and are assumed to be collective actors with common purposes. For example, an Islamophobic trope that has permeated British media, is that of equating all Muslims with ISIS. In response to the November 2015 Paris Attacks, many called for Muslims (all of them?) to apologise for the actions of the attackers linked to ISIS.

It is important to remember that viewing ethnicity as a social product rather than hard fact does not mean denying its existence or importance to individuals, groups or the lived experience. Wimmer (2008) reports that race and nationhood have been treated as subtypes of ethnicity and subjected to the same processes of reification. Paul (2013: 716) highlights the dangers of full denial. Race, ethnicity, and other forms of identification are often seen as a discursive formation, with no biological foundation, an 'obnoxious falsehood'. However, such identifications are lies and untruths with severe and serious material and symbolic effects that must be taken very seriously. For example, racial and ethnic projects have given race and ethnicity a deep reality, making them integral to the structuring of the social, political and economic spheres of life. Race remains a significant 'real object' independent of individual perception or rejection. This is why Demmers (2012: 24) advocates for the acknowledgment that the primordialist view still carries meaning in the lived experiences as “it is an important narrative through which insiders and outsiders view conflict”.

3. METHODOLOGY

Chapter two has illustrated in depth the theoretical underpinnings upon which this study is based and has demonstrated the considerable gaps in research that this project aims to fill. This chapter will establish what form of research was conducted, what research design was chosen and why, address any possible ethical issues and limitations that could arise with the approach taken, and how they were confronted.

3.1 Research Design

A flexible qualitative research design was adopted in this study. This method of qualitative enquiry follows an inductive approach, open to slight change throughout the research process, allowing for a level of flexibility. The political landscape and relationships in the Middle East and the UK are rapidly changing and shifting, as was outlined in the introduction to chapter one and will be expanded on in chapter four. As Demir (2014) noted, the Kurdish diaspora are assumed to respond quickly and dynamically to changes in both their country of origin and host country. The most recent changes, and the impacts on the Kurdish diaspora in London, are relatively novel and extremely under-examined. It is for this reason that a flexible qualitative research design is most suitable for the study at hand. Qualitative methods and their flexible approach allows the research question to be tailored to the field of study (Boeije, 2010). It allows for some freedom of movement, and for any new data to be included over the course of the research and analysis. Data collection and analysis are a continuous process, allowing the researcher to go back and forth between the two so that they can be continuously adjusted to the emerging findings (Boeije, 2010). Avoiding assumptions is essential in attempting to avoid potential personal bias and to aim for reflexivity as a researcher. In this way it can also be described as an interpretive approach, which 'enables the researcher to an interpretive rendering of a studied phenomenon' (Boeije, 2010: 20). Although my methodological approach was largely inductive there was an element of deduction in it, in the sense that I used Wimmer's theoretical insights to create my analytical toolkit and guide the research process. Whilst I was not explicitly *testing* a theory, it was used to guide observations, moving from the general to the particular. The empirical chapters of this thesis (chapters four, five and six) follow this logic. They move from categorisations, to narrative responses, to data analysed with the analytic tools derived from theory. In this study I am using Wimmer's ethnic boundary making to guide the study of categorisations and self-identity of Kurds in London, and to analyse data. 'If the theory is true, then certain things should follow in the real world' (de Vause, 2001: 6).

3.1.1 The 'Case-Study Approach'

The specific qualitative research design that shapes this project is based on a 'case-study' design. One case, that being Kurdish individuals in London, in this specific time and space, was studied. The case-centric approach: it “begins with a *case* that is somehow defined by a spatial or temporal boundary ... and must then discover the most significant variables and values that describe the case or commonalities between cases” (Curtis & Curtis, 2011: 7). The research design *type* is a case study, and subsequent *methods of data collection* are interviews, observation, and analysis of documents. According to de Vaus (2001) case studies are “prime examples of qualitative research”; the case study approach allows for an interpretive approach to data, it studies 'things' in a particular context whilst acknowledging the subjective meaning that people bring to their situation. It is then compatible with a structurationist approach as it assumes the importance of both societal structures and individual agency.

3.1.2 The Narrative Approach

This study is also influenced by a narrative approach to research. Narratives are “stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, who they are not, who and how they would like to or should be” (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 266). Yuval-Davis (2010: 264) illustrates how this approach can enrich the understanding of processes involved in identity construction and contestation. According to Yuval-Davis (2010) conducting empirical research by using tools of narrative analysis shows in detail how identity signifiers operate in particular social settings; how individuals construct, contest, and authorise different meanings. The narrative approach relates to the ontological stance of this project, that being the structurationist approach, where both structure and agency are meaningful and impactful. According to Spivak (1988) a *narrative* of identity is a necessary condition for the existence of any notion of agency and subjectivity. Again, this approach is Bourdieu-inspired in the sense that it seeks to understand how actors, situated in a historically constituted field, develop narratives about who they are, who belongs, and who does not (Wimmer, 2009: 253).

The narrative approach means looking at hegemonic narratives in society, the hegemonic categorisations, as well as individual and counter-hegemonic narratives of interviewees and respondents. Hegemonic narratives most often reflect the ideology of ruling actors, who seek to gain consent in society for their particular interests. They involve actors ‘framing’ events and help them to define things and to define the reasons for them seeming legitimate and unavoidable (Brand, 2005: 157). This approach works in parallel with the boundary-making approach and provide a more extensive approach to the analysis of boundaries. According to Barth (1969) boundaries are

constructed by narratives, therefore the narrative approach advocates for looking at how stories are formed to understand how groups are constructed. The voices of marginalised or minority groups can both challenge and reinforce the group boundaries that are often sanctioned by the state as the legitimate political order. Thus examining these voices can reveal how group boundaries are made and unmade (Eliassi, 2016: 1408). Narratives reveal specific attitudes and ideologies concerning where and how identity and categorical boundaries are being/or should be drawn. Different ideological perspectives and discourses construct them as more, or less, inclusive (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 52). Narratives produce the founding past of a community, its identity and projections of the future (Sayyid & Zac, 1998). Relationships between 'me', 'us' and the 'Other' are often at the heart of various narratives of identity (Yuval-Davis, 2010). It is for this reason that interviews were heavily relied on as a method of data collection.

3.2 Sample

A sample consists of the cases that will be examined and is selected from a definite 'research population' (Boeije, 2010: 35). The research population for this study was the Kurdish population of London. The cases, or respondents, for the sample were then selected from this research population. In order to be suitable cases the sample needed to consist of those who had been living in London since 2010 or before, to allow for the temporal dimension of the study, and who were first or second generation Kurdish in the assumption that they would have strong ties to Kurdistan. Respondents were selected on the basis that they met this specific criterion. This is an example of non-probability sampling, specifically 'purposive sampling'. This means beginning with specific perspectives in mind, and seeking out participants that cover the range of perspectives. In-depth literature reviews and knowledge of the population is essential in this sampling technique:

the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposive sampling (Patton, 1990: 169).

Individual respondents were mostly found through my internship at the Centre for Kurdish Progress and the Centre for Turkish Studies. A snowball effect then happened, as several interviewees passed on contact details of other people that they knew who met the criteria for the project. The time period was selected so that respondents were in London prior to and during the Syrian Civil War, therefore could be affected by changes in categorisations in the period before and after it began. Morse and Field (1996) suggest, in what they term the 'principle of maximisation', that a location should be determined based on where the topic of study manifests itself strongly. As the Kurdish

diaspora in the UK is the second largest next to Germany, with most Kurds residing in London, London was chosen following the principle of maximisation. Thirteen interviews with four women and nine men were conducted in addition to many informal conversations and discussions in the office and at meetings. Appendix A contains an anonymised list of respondents. Respondents were anonymised at the general request. The majority of respondents worked in political organisations, so anonymity was granted to protect their identity and to encourage them to talk openly and honestly, without fear of how it could affect their job. The need for anonymity on this bases was expected and anticipated, as research has found that the Kurdish Diaspora in the UK are one of the more politically active diaspora groups.

3.3 Data Collection

This research project was conducted using a variety of data collection techniques: interviews, observation, documentary analysis, media analysis. Data collected was triangulated and translated into findings. Triangulation refers to the “mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic. The mixing of data types, known as data triangulation, is often thought to help in validating claims that might arise” (Olsen, 2004: 3).

Over the course of my research I conducted thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted as “attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale, 1996: 7). It relates to Max Weber's notion of *verstehen*: in order to understand social actions, we must look *not only* at the social field but also grasp the meaning that actors attach to it (Macionis, 2011). Interviews were used to target respondent's perceptions and feelings in the context of the social conditions that are surrounding those experiences; the collection of the interview material and its interpretation and analysis are were not primarily directed towards establishing 'objective facts' surrounding these conditions. Rather, this was done through documentary analysis. The aim of the interviews was to “generate data which gives an insight into people's experiences” (Silverman, 1993: 91). This approach to data collection is in line with the structurationist underpinnings of this study in which it is acknowledged that whilst we use narratives as a medium to express ourselves, by talking we also *reproduce* language as a structure. The social field materialises through narratives, discourses and social practices. This method of data collection is suited for 'sensitive topics'. As many interviewees had arrived as asylum seekers, escaping from war, sensitivity was key to building rapport and doing no harm to interviewees. This will be explored further in section 3.6.

Interviews were conducted with the help of a topic guide. Use of the topic guide allowed for similar topics to be discussed with respondents and also allowed room for interviewees to give more in-depth narrative responses and focus on what was important to them personally. Interviews lasted on average from between forty minutes to one hour and a half. In addition to interviews I conducted participant observation and collected naturally occurring data. For this purpose, I undertook a six month-long internship at the Centre for Kurdish Progress in London. The Centre for Kurdish Progress is an independent and non-partisan organisation that serves as a policy forum. It focuses on the issue of Kurdistan and the Kurdish people both in the UK as well as internationally. This allowed me to gain insight into issues that affect Kurds both in the context of the UK and in the homeland. Over the course of my internship I worked in the office, with a team comprised of Kurds, Turks and Brits, and attended a total of fifteen public policy forums and debates. The majority of meetings dealt specifically with topics related to the Syrian Civil War and events that had taken place since 2011 (see Appendix B), so it proved a very valuable source of data for my research. Meetings were generally attended by several Members of Parliament, academics, students, and members of the public, providing a wide range of experiences and perspectives.

As Wimmer (2008) explains, individual experience is embedded in a social milieu which is ontologically prior to both the respondents' and the interviewer's actions, and therefore causally related to them. In order to collect data on how Kurds were being categorised I turned to documentary analysis. Data was collected from official government documents and reports, news reports, previous studies, books, and social media. This data was used to identify the dominant discourses and categorisations of Kurds, or discourses that could possibly effect self-identification. I also looked to certain political groups, mainly the Vote Leave Campaign and Britain First, in the wake of 'Brexit'. This data was relatively new but related to a sharp turn in nationalist discourse in British society from June 2016.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was initially conducted on all data gathered. Thematic analysis is identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail. However, it also goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clark, 2006: 79). Thematic analysis brings to light emerging themes which will then go on to shape the findings. It allows for a thick description, which can help in explaining attitudes and behaviours. This makes the behaviour of the subject meaningful to another (the

researcher) (Geertz, 1973) which is wholly compatible with the ultimate aim of this research project. Meaning was initially ascribed by coding emerging themes, creating categories and developing theories and concept. Firstly, at the descriptive level, a summary of text content, which generates themes and concepts. Thematic analysis can identify the main parts of the world as it is (including areas of social life) which represented – the main 'themes' and identify the particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented. Since adopting an identity position often involves the use of discursive or rhetorical devices, I examined the rhetorical role of epistemological framing, narrative building and discursive representations across all forms of data collected: documentary analysis, interviews and observed data. I then began coding my findings using the analytical toolkit laid out in chapter two.

3.5 Limitations and Ethnics

The issue of generalisability is often a major concern when conducting social research. However, I have acknowledged that generalisability was never the aim of this study. It is generally thought that only large-N samples can promise generalisability and are suited for empirical research. However, respondents are cases rather than variables (those who are bearers of certain designated properties). In-depth understanding is the main aim of this research project. For depth to be achieved it is more important for the research to be intensive and thus pervasive at the conceptual level, rather than to be extensive with the intent to be convincing, at least in part, through enumeration (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Thus small samples are suited to analytic, interpretive studies. Using this type of non-probability sampling gives no indication of whether findings represent the larger population *but* representing the population is not the goal of this research. It is in-depth understanding, not general explaining. According to Nichols (1991: 53), for exploratory or in-depth work there is little need to use a large sample, since the aim is to get a 'feel' for a problem. Semi-structured interviews and the previously tested analytical tools outlined in chapter three were used to provide the maximum level of reliability uniformly across data collection and to see how they related to a certain case.

Many respondents in this research project had arrived in the UK as political asylum seekers, escaping war and persecution in their country of origin. In addition, many interviewees reported having family members still living in areas of conflict and living under oppressive regimes. I have therefore identified discussions surrounding this research a 'sensitive' topic. 'Sensitive' topics are those that deal with behaviour that is intimate, discreditable, or discriminating (Renzetti & Lee, 1993: ix). Research on sensitive topics raises methodological and ethnical problems, and has the capacity to have an effect on the life of the participant. It can result in harm to an individual due to a

variety of factors including conduct, publicity and results of the research (Sieber, 1993). For this reason, respondents were assured of anonymity. This was in the hopes that it would make respondents more comfortable to talk freely. The topic guide was not rigidly stuck by, however. I found it more important to establish rapport with respondents and to judge if a topic was upsetting them. As with all research, the most important ethical principle is to do no harm.

Over the course of conducting interviews I found that the sensitive nature of the topics discussed limited the depth of answers given by several respondents. It generally tended to be those respondents that were not very politically active and working in a political job who were less willing to talk about the conflict in Kurdistan or why they left. Rather the answer that was given was “it was for political reasons” with little explanation or elaboration given. I found that what worked in my favour when discussing the issue of migration and integration in the UK was the fact that I am not British. Respondents seemed willing to talk in depth about unpleasant experiences that they have or had with living in the UK, with British people and British politics. I found it helped to develop rapport quickly.

I made sure to the best of my ability to avoid any assumptions that could cause validity issues relating to the interpretation of data. As I was using a well-tried tool-kit to test a case, I made sure to avoid looking for answers confirming the theory on the basis that “we should be sceptical of the evidence, and rather than seeking evidence that is *consistent* with our theory we should seek evidence that provides a *compelling* test of our theory” (de Vaus, 2001: 10).

4. THE SOCIAL FIELD

Boundary making work is always situated in a social field (Wimmer, 2008). This first empirical chapter details the many ways in which Kurds have been categorised in the social field in the time since the Syrian Civil War began, that might have an effect on the way in which they strategically negotiate their identity. This is not to assume that these are the only ways in which Kurds have been categorised by others. Rather, from a review of literature, observation and documentary analysis over a five-month period they have emerged as the hegemonic discourses in London. It is pivotal in identity studies to study the social field, as claims to identity do not emerge in a political vacuum, but are part of existing discourses through which people position themselves and are positioned. Moreover, individuals also negotiate these structural positionings in contexts of unequal power relations that assign different identities, unequal positionings and values (Eliassi, 2010: 44). There are three dominant categorisations that I propose may impact the self-identifications of respondents. In recent years Kurds have been subjected to increased visibility. They have been hailed as heroes of the Syrian Civil War and allies of the West, in both the political and media discourses. Secondly, due to the majority of Kurds following Islam, Kurds could possibly be affected by rising Islamophobia in the UK, which has spiked in recent years and months. Finally, the proscription of the PKK as a terrorist organisation has possible stigmatising and demonising consequences.

4.1 Kurds – Heroes of the Syrian Civil War

The most prominent discourse involving the Kurds to emerge in the wake of the Syrian Civil War is the celebration of Kurdish forces fighting ISIS. The discourse of celebrating the Kurds has permeated both media and politics in the UK. Previously, the Kurdish identity in the UK was best described as an “invisible” identity. Although there had been large migration flows since the 1980s, there was little visibility of the Kurds as an ethnic category, and migrants were left to identify through their state of origin in their new country of settlement. There was little recognition paid to the Kurdish identity in the UK or to the very reasons that forced migration from Kurdistan. The need for migrants to identify as members of the “very state from which they have escaped”, reinforced a sense of invisibility that had been transferred from their state of origin (Holgate et al, 2012: 596). Their passports state the nation-state in which they lived or were born, not their identity as a Kurd which for many is their primary source of identification. Of this Laiser (1996: 127) expressed how invisibility is transferred from a nation-state where Kurds remain a repressed minority to the country of settlement in which the individual is defined in relation to the nation-state that rendered them invisible: “not only has the Kurdish origin been masked prior to leaving

Turkey ... it is also hidden from the moment of arrival on foreign soil". For example, Kurds from Turkey make up a sizeable proportion of North London's ethnic minority population. Whilst most are registered as Turkish migrants, it is generally thought that many who are regarded or register as 'Turks' in London are of Kurdish origin (Demir, 2014). The lack of correct statistical representation of the Kurdish population in London clearly echoes this invisibility.

According to Jenkins (2000: 2) external definition – by others of us – effects our internal definitions. This is because external categorisations will influence how they, the majority, orient their behaviour towards us. In the UK, there has been not just invisibility of the Kurdish identity, but also the absence of language in the dominant discourse to describe the Kurdish experience. In February 2016 a public policy forum at the Centre for Kurdish Progress was hosted by British MP Jon Woodcock. Upon greeting a Kurdish MP from the KRG, Mr Woodcock seemed unable to find words to describe his recent visit to Kurdistan and the status of the region there: "I was in your co... I was in Kurdistan recently". Mr Woodcock clearly hesitated from saying country, unsure of what exactly to call the Kurdistan region. One woman from Turkey, who had lived in the UK for the past ten years, revealed a similar tone: "I get awkward sometimes when people speak about Kurdistan. There is officially no place called Kurdistan. There just isn't and there probably will never be"³.

According to Eliassi (2016: 6) this 'double consciousness' of many Kurds in the diaspora, in which they experience the structural inequalities of the Middle East and Western Europe at once, complicates their sense of belonging and identity formation in the context of denial, lack of representation and cultural inferiorisation⁴. It is for this reason that Demir (2014: 74) has termed the Kurdish diaspora a 'battleship diaspora'. They have been forced to create alternative political spheres, in order to carry out their identity and political battles in the host community. Increased visibility of the Kurdish identity occurred at different times in different places. Whilst this increased visibility has risen in the UK in recent, in Turkey it happened decades earlier. It was during the 1990s that there was a rising consciousness and politicisation of Kurdish identity and a surging visibility of the Kurdish category within the mainstream public-political discourse (Somer, 2004: 235). It was only in the 90s that Kurds were referred to as an ethnic group. In the UK, this visibility came primarily with the increased visibility of the Kurds in light of the Syrian Civil War.

3 Authors interview, 18/06/16, London

4 Cultural Inferiorisation is the result of a process by which culture comes to be an "organising discursive category at the centre of a system of practices of socio-economic power, exclusion and exploitations" (Hall, 2000: 22). The cultural, linguistic and historical traditions of a group are seen as inferior by the majority population who dictate the hegemonic culture.

Between 1998 and 2003 twenty-five articles in the Guardian matched the word 'Kurdish'. Searching the online library now gives 1007 articles matching this same search. Since the Syrian Civil War broke out the Kurds have continuously been one of the main forces on the ground in the fight against the Islamic State. The battle of Kobanê brought the Kurds in the Middle East to the forefront of UK media attention. In October 2014 the BBC profiled the Kurds, and introduced them as having “increasingly influenced regional developments, fighting for autonomy in Turkey and playing prominent roles in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, where they have resisted the advance of the so-called Islamic State (IS) jihadist group. Recently, an op-ed in The Guardian detailed not only the Kurds fight against ISIS, but their past struggles:

America and Europe need Kurds. Obama and Cameron assure their voters that there will be no 'boots on the ground'. The Kurdish Peshmerga will do our fighting for us. The Kurds have fought Saddam Hussein, once a western ally and then a western enemy. They are now fighting Islamic State, which our leaders condemn as the most barbaric movement on the planet (Cohen, 2016)

The Western interest in Kurds continues to permeate media and political discourse:

the Peshmerga: the fighting force of the Kurds, battling to establish the state of Kurdistan across the existing states of Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey - and now the West's newest best friends, our allies in the fight against Isis, or Daesh – (Bradshaw, The Guardian, 2016).

In December 2015 a vote was put to the British parliament. The vote was to decide whether or not to join coalition airstrikes against IS in Syria. The Kurds were referenced many times by Members of Parliament as incentive to join airstrikes. Labour MP Hilary Benn, who many hailed with making up their mind on voting yes to the airstrikes, made reference to the Kurdish fight: “ask the Kurds about Sinjar and Kobanê. Now of course air strikes alone will not defeat Daesh [ISIS], but they make a difference because they are giving them a hard time”. Prime Minister David Cameron also referred to the Kurds as ground support: “Alongside the 70,000, there are some 20,000 Kurdish fighters with whom we can also work”. Speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress' *Rally for Halabja Remembrance* in March 2016 Hilary Benn referred back to his decision to support airstrikes in support of the Kurds. He stated how he was proud in the choice to “respond to the Iraqi government and to support the Peshmerga”. He stated how at this time he saw “the only way is through a political negotiation” but also “the responsibility to stand up where there cannot be a political negotiation” as in the fight against ISIS. He commended “the efforts of the KRG, the Peshmerga, the alliance against Daesh”. Referring to the 1988 Halabja attacks he said that “as a world community we do learn the lessons of the past, and we must ensure that the actions of today

ensure that 'never again' means something⁵".

However, the picture is not as straightforward as all Kurds being celebrated and recognised. The West's selective recognition of various Kurdish groups throughout history needs to be recognised in this context. On the other side of the coin, the Kurds have a history of being used and discarded as allies by the West:

one incontrovertible fact of realpolitik: they [the Kurds] have no strategic or permanent allies ... these alliances have come undone when the friendly power decided it was in its interest to drop the Kurds in favour of the regime they were opposing (Ciment, 1996: 25-26).

When, in August 2014, the Yazidi fled from ISIS to Mount Sinjar, US special forces arrived to help the Yazidi (Thornton, 2015). Expecting to be greeted by Iraqi Kurdish *Peshmerga* forces, the US forces found that the Yazidi were being guarded by PKK troops. The PKK are listed as a terrorist organisation by the US, the UK and the EU. To avoid a diplomatic incident, the US forces withdrew from the area almost immediately. It is these stories that are far less highlighted in mass media and political discourse. Even stories that are played out in full view of the media are not painted in their full complexity. Take the siege of Kobanê, for example. In March 2016 President Barzani of the KRG cut Rojava off, both physically and metaphorically, from Iraqi Kurdistan. President Erdogan of Turkey, playing the card of being a NATO ally, warned US forces against assisting the Kurds of Kobane. According to Thornton (2015: 881) the Kurds have undeniably become proxies of Western powers: "the situation at Kobanê highlighted ... the complications caused by the involvement of other regional actors as they each try to secure their own favoured strategic outcomes".

This point was also highlighted in the December 2015 vote, however to a much lesser degree. Alex Cunningham MP referred to the UK's relationship with Turkey, outlined above, contrasting with David Cameron's claims that the government remains an ally to Kurds:

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is a ridiculous situation where on the one hand the Government praise the Kurds, but on the other hand the Government's ally, Turkey, is attacking the Kurds? How much more ridiculous can you get?

Dr Phillipa Whitford MP also summed up the West's broken promises to the Kurds:

has anyone informed the Kurds, to whom we are all paying great tribute, that no one has any plans to give them a homeland at the end of this? A hundred years on, yet again they are being allowed to fight, but we are promising them nothing.

From the above descriptions it is clear that there are several layers to how the government and media treat the Kurds, under the guise of them being allies and friends. However, one story is the given far more attention than the other.

4.2 Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment in the UK

In recent years, the UK has seen rising levels of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. Islamophobia, broadly defined, is “a rejection of Islam, Muslim groups and Muslim individuals based on prejudice and stereotypes. It may have emotional, cognitive, evaluative as well as action-oriented elements (e.g. discrimination, violence)” (Stolz in Amiri et al, 2015: 2). It is estimated that the large majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslim, with approximately one third adhering to the Alevi sect of Shia Islam (Sentas, 2015: 3). Popular media discourses on national security threats and anti-terror measures have come together to compound perceptions of Muslims as a threat to British society, further increasing the already prominent obstacles for asylum-seekers of Muslim faith. Previous research has indicated that Kurdish immigrants and asylum seekers in the UK may be adversely affected by the connection between “immigration and 'Islamophobia' as present in the public debate” (KHRP, 2011: 15). The British National Party, a far-right and anti-immigration political party, has further stigmatised the Kurdish population by describing the number of Kurdish and Turkish living in the UK as a *colonisation*. It has correlated the influx of Kurds into the UK with the “ultra- violent drug gang warfare which is plaguing our capital city”.

Hate crimes against Muslims in the UK have risen and spiked in direct relation to a series of attacks across Europe supposedly carried out by ISIS (Pargeter, 2015: 4). In the immediate aftermath of the November 2015 attacks in Paris, in which over one hundred people were killed by individuals claiming to be members of the Islamic State, Prime Minister David Cameron offered his condolences for the victims who were 'going about their way of life – our [*Western*] way of life'. In the weeks that followed, the London Metropolitan Police stated that incidents of Islamophobia in London had tripled. Official reports showed that in the week ending November 10th 2015 there were 24 incidents of Islamophobic abuse recorded. By the week ending November 24th this figure had risen to 76 (Ghani, 2015). This news came just after a report by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC, 2014) claimed that British Muslim's lives had become characterised by rising levels of abuse and discrimination. In 2014 the number of respondents who reported witnessing Islamophobia was 82%. This statistic had risen from 50% in 2010. Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, said of this:

this report offers a structural analysis of contemporary British Islamophobia, demonstrating how policies and media representations have generated an environment in which Muslims are seen as worthy of hatred (Harris, 2015).

Framing Muslims and Islam this way, in the voice of Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' (or rather 'clash of cultures'), echoes how other ethnic or racialized groups have been treated in the UK previously. In the 1980's it was black youths who were seen as a threat to 'our way of life':

at the moment it is black people who stand accused of disrupting peaceful traditions of the 'British way of life' ... But the English have been blaming their violence on someone else for a century (Pearson, 1983: ix).

Enneli et al (2005) express that Kurds in London are 'invisible' in policy discourse as they are ambiguously positioned in regard to the 'black-white dichotomy' that has long structured British multiculturalism. However, this is changing. Muslims, regardless of ethnicity, are the most prominent minority group to be seen as "folk devils" in a British "moral panic". A moral panic refers to how a "condition, episode, person, or group of persons" comes to be defined, usually through stereotyping by mass media, as "a threat to societal values and interests" (Cohen, 1980: 191). "Folk devils" are then "visible reminders of what we should not be". Muslims are "becoming the new 'black'", inherently associated with cultural alienation, deprivation and danger and thus amongst the most marginalised members of society (Salgado-Pottier, 2008: 4). Moral panics often come to the forefront of popular discourse after major global events. In this case it is the Syrian Civil War, attacks claimed by ISIS in Europe and a fear of further violence that have perpetuated this moral panic. Following these events many concerns about ethnic difference and tension now focus on Islam in Western society. The Islamic identity and culture have since been painted as a direct opposition to western values and norms.

This mentality has been further perpetuated by the myths of 'Ghetto Britain'. In 2005, after the July 7th bombings in London, Labour politician Trevor Phillips gave the now infamous speech "Sleepwalking into Segregation" in which he suggested that certain areas were becoming increasingly segregated on the lines of ethnicity, race, and religion. This sparked a moral panic about the perceived failures of British multiculturalism and immigration policy. In reality, what then came to exist in Britain were "reputational ghettos" (Salgado-Potter, 2008), or ghettos of the mind. Many worried that there were large areas throughout the UK where ethnic or religious minorities, such as the Kurds in North London, had become segregated from mainstream society and had created so-called "parallel societies" in which extremism and radicalisation thrived. Again

in 2016, Trevor Phillips sought to spark further moral panic, this time directed towards the Muslim community. Warning that British Muslims are becoming “a nation within a nation”, Phillips presented a Channel 4 documentary that portrayed Muslims in Britain as a nation with “its own geography and values”. Warning of the “failed policy of multiculturalism”, Phillips drew on the ‘way of life’ rhetoric, warning that we are “in danger of sacrificing a generation of young British people to values that are antithetical to the beliefs of most of us” (The Telegraph, 04/10/16). Discourses such as this have ensured that Islam remains at the forefront of a worldwide moral panic.

The Islamophobia described above, running in parallel with rising anti-immigrant sentiment, has been attributed largely to the emergence of an assertive British nationalism. This 'nationalism' involves the forcing of a renewed British identity and a political questioning about state-led multiculturalism:

Britain has entered an authoritarian and 'anti-multiculturalism' period in which multiple identities, loyalties and allegiances are both problematized and are deployed in order to facilitate 'our' primary identifications as British citizens who must accept British values above all else. McGhee (2008: 145)

Nothing has captured this as much as the so-called ‘Brexit’ referendum on Britain's membership in the EU. The Vote Leave campaign largely drew on Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment to frame their argument on why Britain should leave the EU. On June 13th an info-graphic (see fig. 1) was posted on the official Vote Leave campaign's social media platforms (although it was later deleted). The image referred to the June 2016 mass shooting in Orlando Florida, in which 49 people were killed inside a gay nightclub in a homophobic attack. The perpetrator was a US-born citizen who was of Afghan origin. The image portrays the message that unless the UK closes its border, it will be subject to an attack by ISIS militants. In the same week, another group campaigning for a vote to leave the EU realised an anti-immigrant poster that was hailed by many as racist. The photograph (see fig. 2) used was of migrants crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border in 2015, with the only visible white person obscured by a box of text. The rhetoric that dominated these campaigns appeared at time of writing to have caught on. In the week following the vote to leave the European Union The Monitoring Group, an anti-racism charity, received a 112 reports of racist attacks and abuse. This is compared to four it would receive in an average week.

The Islamophobia outlined above is a clear example of boundary contraction, in which the boundary exists between Muslims and non-Muslims. Contraction through fission means splitting an existing category in two, so distinguishing between real British people and “British Muslims” and

the parallel lives they are portrayed as living. Categorising Muslims in this way, as having parallel lives, leaves them systematically excluded from “true” British society. At the same time, they are being demonised and portrayed as self-segregating in a process of social exclusion.

4.3 PKK Listing as a Terrorist Organisation

The Kurdistan Worker's Party (or PKK) was officially established in Turkey in 1978. Its initial aim was for the “destruction of colonialism” (referring to the occupation of Kurdish populated regions by Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran), and “the construction of a democratic and united Kurdistan, based on Marxist-Leninist principles” (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012). Over time the PKK resorted to guerrilla style tactics which resulted in frequent violent conflict with the Turkish state. In 1999 PKK leader and co-founder Abdullah Ocalan was captured, and subsequently advocated for a new PKK, one focused on integration into a democratised, confederalised Turkey (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012). In 2002, several months after the September 11 attacks, the PKK was classified as an international terrorist organisation. This means that both the UK government and the European Union have classified the PKK as a terrorist organisation. Since then, it has been reported that Kurds in the UK are frequently imputed as terrorists and as a 'networked' front for the PKK in Europe and have as a result been extensively criminalised (Fernandes, 2015). According to Sentas (2015) between December 2010 and January 2011 approximately 16 Kurdish Londoners were visited by MI5 and the police in a disruption operation. Although no one was charged with any crime they were warned not to support the PKK. This proscription has been seen as an extension of the globalisation of the post 9/11 ‘War on Terror’.

Fernandes (2015) has argued that the listing of the PKK is simply the old structural discrimination against Kurds with a new facade. He claimed that before the proscription of the PKK in the UK, the criminalisation of Kurdish identity functioned through intensive paramilitary policing. According to Fernandes (2015: 18) this is only one of the repetitive experiences of security policing experienced by a diaspora in order to regenerate a subaltern status. The UK Terrorism Act (2000) makes it an offence to: “belong to, to fundraise for, a listed organisation”. The Act also makes it illegal to wear or carry any item that would give rise to a reasonable suspicion that you support the organisation. Inviting any sort of support for an organization (including non-material support) is a criminal offence punishable with up to 10 years of imprisonment. Helping to manage or arrange a meeting of three or more people who supports the organisation, or helps further its activities, or is addressed by a member of the organization is also an offence. Members of the Kurdish community have confirmed that anti-terrorism legislation has had a negative effect on the Kurdish community, in

particular in that it is seen as restricting expression (KHRP, 2011). The PKK remains viewed by many as a legitimate organisation that stands in opposition to what they consider an oppressive regime in Turkey. Previous studies have confirmed the fear that criminalising the PKK can result in restricting the political freedom of Kurds in the UK to openly discuss and debate Kurdish issues.

In addition to the criminalisation of the PKK, there are now calls on the UK government to criminalise the entire Kurdish Liberation Movement “as it creates serious barriers and difficulties in the search between for a peaceful, political settlement”. This situation is further complicated by the UK's relationship with Turkey, Europe's second largest NATO army. The breakdown in the peace process in Turkey and the subsequent state-led violence against Kurds living in Turkey have gone relatively unreported in UK media. This has caused an outcry amongst the Kurdish community in the UK, who have argued that the UK are more concerned with maintaining their strong ties with Turkey than standing up for the human rights of the citizens who live there. In March 2016 there was a rally in central London, organised by *Stop the War on Kurds*, from the BBC Broadcasting House to Trafalgar Square. A statement published on the group's Facebook page dictated that the action was triggered by state discrimination against the Kurdish population in its region, which attendants claimed are unreported in the UK press. They demand that the UK government puts pressure on Turkey to stop these attacks.

The PKK holds a degree of support from Kurdish diaspora groups. In 2000 van Bruinessen estimated that about ten per cent of Kurds in Europe are PKK sympathisers. The frequency of protests and demonstrations has indicated that this support has not wavered in recent years. The ban has not seriously impeded the organisation's capacity for organising mass action, but it is the freedom to identify or express sympathy that has been impacted (van Bruinessen, 2000: 25). The proscription of the PKK continues to have severe material consequences. This was illustrated only recently when, in November 2015, a British teenager was found guilty of trying to join the PKK. Sihan Ozcelik, who was born and raised in London was sentenced to twenty-one months in jail for engaging in conduct in preparation for terrorist acts. There was significant backlash to Ozcelik's sentencing amongst the Kurdish community and pro-Kurdish activists. A petition was launched to remove the PKK from the terror listing. Colin Chambers, author of the petition, told Russia Today (RT, 27/11/15) why the PKK should be removed, largely due to the role they were playing in fighting ISIS:

The PKK is fighting Daesh/ISIS on the ground, defending Kurdish and other communities

for its barbarism. It is providing an extraordinary military offensive. The UK should be supporting the PKK, not proscribing it. The PKK's strategy is to pursue peace talks while encouraging democracy in Kurdish areas. They embrace women's rights and oppose every aspect of the reactionary ideology of Daesh/ISIS.

The Kurds have come to be a part of two 'suspect communities', that of the Muslim community and the Kurdish community (or the PKK). However, the two suspect communities into which they have been incorporated by the national majority differ greatly in formation and ideology. The PKK is a secularist leftist organisation from which religion is noticeably absent in their political formation and ideology. At the same time as the PKK being a 'suspect community' so are Muslims. If both communities are either criminalised or discriminated against, what room is left for Kurds to safely navigate their identity in British society?

This chapter listed not only the current social field of the UK and the Middle East, but the complexities the Kurds are faced with when trying to navigate their identity and subject positions. Whilst they are twice the "folk devils" in a moral panic, as Muslims and as possible PKK sympathisers, at the same time they are painted as liberal allies of the West. They are celebrated for fighting as allies, yet when a more important strategic ally, such as Turkey, is in the picture they are the first to be pushed to the background. I will uncover in the next chapter how this landscape of confusion, and juxtaposing narratives in the UK, impact individual identity and group membership amongst respondents.

5. EMBODIED HISTORICAL SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS OF SOCIAL DISCOURSE – FEELING THE SOCIAL WORLD

As was outlined in chapter two, what matters most in many cases of identification is how one is perceived and categorised by a potential discriminator. This means that discrimination can largely depend on how persons are perceived by others rather than on how they perceive themselves and self-identify (Ringelheim, 2011: 1689). Therefore, it is often not self-identification but categorisation that has the greatest impact on the lived experience. Whilst there is some level of individual agency available to negotiate one's identity, claims to identity do not emerge in a political vacuum. Rather they are embedded in existing discourses through which people position themselves, are positioned and negotiate these structural positionings in the context of unequal power relations (Elisassi, 2010).

The power to categorise usually lies with the majority population, those with the power or authority to generate consequences, who have the power to make identification regardless of internalisation. The previous chapter examined the hegemonic narratives of the majority. However, it is important to remember at the same time that labelling and categorisation may evoke resistance Jenkins (2000: 9). The Kurdish people are renowned for having a culture of resistance. Structures can constrain individuals but also *enable* them. For this reason, this chapter focuses on the direct impact of the social field and existing discourses in the UK on respondents. It focuses on the narrative responses that individuals describe in relation to the social field outlined in chapter four in order to answer the question: what roles does the UK play in shaping, enabling or constraining the narratives of the Kurdish diaspora? Chapter five, then, focuses on responses and resistance to these categorisations. Ang (1993: 2) warns that in a world where nation-states still constitute the dominant framework for cultural identification and the construction of an “imagined community” the question of “where you're from” comes to dominate and marginalise the question of “where you're at”. I seek to bring “where you're at” back into the question by looking at responses to the changes in the Middle East as well as in the UK, where respondents have been living for the past several years.

5.1 Oh, how happy is the one who says 'I am a Kurd'

There is no doubt of the existence of a discourse that comprises the portrayal of the Kurdish fighters, particularly YPG/PYJ and Peshmerga forces, as heroes and 'allies' in the fight against ISIS. Participants uniformly identified the fight against ISIS as a catalyst for increased international visibility of the Kurdish identity and struggles:

I think they've become a bit more famous. I think people are much more aware because they are helping with ISIS and stuff. Before that no one even knew what Kurdish is⁶

People see in the media the state of women, you see all these women fighting with men and fighting ISIS⁷

Patterson (2012) noted that when a group has been repressed and discriminated against for a long time, and gains new recognition, it is normal and natural for that group then to celebrate exactly the part of their identity that was discriminated against. Many respondents expressed that increased visibility of the Kurdish identity in the UK allowed them to now associate with their Kurdish identity rather than the national identity of the nation-state into which they were born (specifically Iraq, Syria or Turkey). This marks a significant change from what is reported in literature. As a diaspora group Kurds have frequently been referred to as 'invisible' migrants (Holgate et al, 2012), in which their Kurdish identity disappears once they leave their homeland and settle in a new country. This is due to their 'stateless position' in which the only passport they can possess will be that of the nation-state. Respondents reported previously having to explain their identity in relation to the state from which many had been forced to flee state-inflicted violence and discrimination. One respondent, a 32-year-old who fled Iraqi Kurdistan in 2002, told me how his ability to express his identity in the UK has changed in the years since he arrived. Prior to the recognition of Kurds as fighting ISIS, he was denied of his Kurdish subjectivity and the language to identify:

when I came here, people would say; oh, where are you from?' and we would say Kurdistan and we had to correct. They'd say 'oh where is Kurdistan'. So you could have said I am Kurdish, and we would love to say that but a lot of people had never heard of it, 'what is Kurdistan' you would have to say it's part of Iraq. But now when you say I'm Kurdish everybody knows where you're from⁸.

In this sense the Kurdish identity takes the place of national identity, regardless of the fact that the Kurds officially remain a 'stateless diaspora'. People have the ability to pursue a strategy of emphasising their Kurdish identity and disidentifying with the nation-state in which they had lived. Respondents remain part of the 'us'/'them' majority/minority, but have been able to reclaim a Kurdish 'us', rather than being forced to assimilate into the 'us' of the nation-state from which they came, i.e. Iraq, Syria or Turkey. By overcoming their 'invisible' status and forced assimilation, individuals have overthrown the ideal subjectivity of a nation-state, one where population = territory = government = sovereignty (Anand, 2009). Wimmer (2009: 255) explains how a state

6 Author's interview, 23/04/16, London

7 Author's Interview, 09/05/16, London

8 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

apparatus assigns passports and thus membership of national communities. Whilst the diaspora remains bound to their state via the passport, they are now able to break from membership of the national communities when living in the UK. Previously, in the world of the nation-state, the only way to answer the question 'where are you from?' would be to locate the nation-state on the world map where it is firmly named and identified. This is changing. Another example of this was the frequency of Kurdistan being referred to as 'southern', 'western', 'eastern' and 'northern' Kurdistan, rather than in reference to the nation-state in which the Kurdish region falls. This is another evident form of resistance to the sovereignty of the nation-state.

The current struggles of the Kurds and the Kurdish issue in the Middle East the majority of respondents spoke with a sense of optimism and independence. A mobilising rhetoric ran throughout the data collected and analysed. The Kurds in 2016 were routinely compared with how the Kurds *used to be*. In terms of group identity, as well as individual identity discussed previously, there is an emerging discourse of independence and autonomy. Both the UK and Kurdistan were referred to in this regard:

the Kurds are no longer the Kurds of the 1980's. They're well organised, and have more friends than ever. The Kurds in the UK have a growing role, with communities and leaders making a name in politics. We may be small as a community but we are making a name for ourselves, making allies, and we are proud of our identity as Kurds ... This century could be the century of the Kurds⁹.

this time it's looking a little different because they are not relying on external forces, they are creating their own internal alternative structures. Because the Kurds are a bit different. Their structures are set up this time¹⁰

Kurds are doing better, it's a different world now¹¹

The ability to identify primarily as Kurd, before anything else, was referred to as a source of pride by respondents. One respondent spoke on how this was one positive consequence to come from of the horror of the Syrian Civil War:

we have a saying 'sometimes even war can bring benefits with it'. We lost a lot of Peshmerga but at the same time our name was taken to a different level ... 13 years ago I was embarrassed to say where I was from, because of what was going on. But now I want people to stop me on the street and say where are you so I can say I'm Kurdish. So they all know and appreciate and they'll say that you guys are fighting ISIS¹².

9 Author's Interview, 16/06/16, London

10 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

11 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

12 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

One respondent grew up in Turkey before moving to the UK to study at university. She spoke of how, “as someone who was bullied for being a Kurd”, the adding of Kurmanji, to Google Translate meant so much to her: “I can finally work on my Kurdish. I wasn't able to learn this growing up, so this is so exciting to me”¹³. Another respondent recounted how much the availability of Kurdish art and language has enabled Kurds in the UK to reconnect with their Kurdish identity and to be able to define it:

Turks until recently started their mornings by saying 'oh how happy is the one who says I am a Turk'. This is regardless of whether you were Turkish or Kurdish. You couldn't listen to Kurdish music, you couldn't name a child a Kurdish name. This is changing now¹⁴.

5.2 The Power to Define – Feeling the British Response

The recognition and celebration of the Kurds since the Syrian Civil War began has created significant space for ethnic identification for respondents, giving them the recognition they have been denied in their nation-state of origin and when arriving in the UK. However, the British response to the Kurdish fight against ISIS also constrained respondents' ability to fully take ownership over their personal identity and history. This is where power relations come into play. Representations and categorisations are related to “who speaks in the name of identity and what work it does in relation to the dominant society and the groups that are hailed through collective attributions, images and symbols” (Eliassi, 2010: 146). The Kurdish population remain a minority in the UK, with the majority and government possessing the power to define, and more importantly to decide who matters and when. Whilst respondents appreciated that it was government and media acknowledgment of the Kurds as 'allies' in the fight against ISIS that was responsible for a new awareness of Kurdish identity in British society, they were highly critical and sceptical why this attention was now being paid to the Kurds. In December 2015 Prime Minister David Cameron had referred to Kurdish forces on the ground to justify his decision to vote in favour of airstrikes in Syria. This came after the media had frequently referred to Kurds as allies and heroes in the midst of conflict, which has been outline in previous chapters. The selectivity of the Kurdish historiography was felt with frustration:

the whole concept of the airstrikes in Syria solely for the Kurds I think is bullshit on Cameron's behalf¹⁵

13 Author's Interview, 02/04/16, London

14 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

15 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

They were talking about Syria after 2011/2012 only. The Kurds have been suffering for 30 to 40 years and it's really down to Western media who gets to hear that¹⁶

if you compare now to '83 and '84; they killed thousands of Kurds, Iraqi's and there was not enough coverage. There was no media, no nothing. But now you see the media, when you go to Erbil on a plane it's like Hollywood¹⁷.

In March a pro-Kurdish organisation Stop War on Kurds organised a protest in London in response to the Turkish crackdown on the Kurdish minority which participants said *goes unreported in the UK Press*. This resonates with participant responses as well as data gathered at Kurdish Progress policy forums. Several participants referred to the strategic decision making of the UK government to ignore curfews imposed in Kurdish regions in Turkey, in favour of maintain strong relationship with their NATO ally Turkey. In this sense they saw the UK government of policing the boundary of who matters and who does not, which Kurds matter and which do not, in a strategic way.

The strategic use of the Kurds, or rather ignorance towards, by the UK government was a strong re-occurring theme. Duna & Duna (2011: 242) describe that through the Kurdish diaspora in Britain the memory of Halabja and chaos of the Iraq War lives on. These memories can be utilised by the diaspora to illustrate that the presence of conflict is not necessary. However, respondents explained how in their experiences the memory of Halabja was used by actors on the other side of the majority/minority boundary to justify their continued role in conflict. It was ignored at the time, only to be remembered later for strategic reasons:

Britain doesn't really care about whether Halabja was gassed or whether the Turkish army are marching and killing people so long as the human rights situation is not becoming a problem for Britain¹⁸

The Kurds right now are a bandwagon. When Saddam actually gassed the Kurds no one was saying anything. So as soon as they wanted to go to Iraq in 1992 suddenly the Kurds were the reason why. It's been like this several times¹⁹

The Kurds since the Lausanne treaty, 90 years ago, not enough has been done. And we didn't kill anyone, we didn't do anything bad for anybody ... business is very important to them [the UK] ... nobody agrees to give the Kurds a state. It was for many reasons as well as control. The Middle East map, who drew it? ... We have the right to talk, to protest, to write, but not to actually do anything²⁰

Why didn't the Western media do enough to publish [what was happening] back in the day?

16 Author's Interview, 16/06/16, London

17 Author's Interview, 09/05/16, London

18 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

19 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

20 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

We all know it's because Saddam was good to them, and then they tried to get rid of him because they didn't want him anymore. Look to history to see²¹.

Historical experiences of subordination and inequality are important repertoires for the construction of identification of people with Kurdish backgrounds (Eliassi, 2010: 30). My respondents illustrated their frustration at how the ability to shape public image has been in the hands of the British majority, with severe consequences. One respondent related the situation to what is depicted in the documentary film “Good Kurds, Bad Kurds: No Friends but the Mountains” directed by journalist Kevin McKiernan (2000). McKiernan spent time investigating post-Gulf War Iraq as well as migration from the Kurdistan region to the US. The film essentially poses the question: are you a freedom fighter or a terrorist? The film looks at Kurdish forces in both Iraq and Syria, carefully tracing and exposing the double standard that exists in western foreign policy towards the Kurds: Iraqi Kurds are declared “good” as they oppose the Saddam Regime, whilst the Kurds in Turkey, a US ally, remain vilified as “bad Kurds”.

This tells of the social location of people, “the positioning of people, in particular time and space, along intersecting (mutually constitutive) grids of power” (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 268). Positionalities tend to be different in different historical contexts and are often fluid and contested (Safi, 2013). At the time of the Halabja attacks in 1988, as illustrated in the introduction, there had already been significant migrant flows from the Kurdistan region to the UK. At this time the Kurds did not have the power to define who matters and who does not, and the Halabja attacks went unnoticed. In 2016, whilst the Kurdish name is well-known in the UK, respondents expressed their frustration about remaining unable to play any role in defining who matters. The power lies in the government. Who matters are the Kurds fighting ISIS, not the Kurds subjected to state-violence in Turkey. The Kurds in the UK occupy a similar if not equal social position to that of twenty years ago. In this way in the UK they remain subjugated to, albeit a different form, of oppression.

According to Renan (1990) in the context of the nationalist discourse, grievances are in fact seen as more valuable than victory in mobilising a common effort. Shared adversity and conflict with dominant groups almost invariably sharpen the sense of common interest and build support for political action Gurr (1995: 212). My respondents reported a shared narrative of historical oppression by the British, which is central to the construction of Kurdish identity politics (Eliassi, 2016). Regardless of whether respondents experienced this directly, they take the group experiences

and internalise it. However, regardless of their frustration with the lack of power to define respondents described a change in the mentality of Kurds themselves, a new sense of agency and independence (as outlined in above in section 5.1) that indicates a shift in Kurdish identity. Whilst individuals' social positioning remains similar, there is a sense of hope: "the Kurds are no longer the Kurds of the 1980's. Things will be very different for the Kurdish people. This century will probably be the century of the Kurds"²²

5.3 Experiencing Islamophobia

The Islamophobic, anti-immigrant, and xenophobic rhetoric that has permeated British society in the last several years has been reported as heightened in the past few weeks, since the UK voted to Leave the EU on June 23. All respondents reported being aware of this rising Islamophobia and often bearing witness to it, confirming that the climate was worse in 2016 than ten years prior. However, reported responses in my sample differed to those reported by other minority ethnic Muslim groups in the UK, such as Pakistanis (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2015.) who internalise experiences of Islamophobia. Several respondents reported that even if Islamophobic sentiments were directed at them directly, it would not offend them personally:

I'll be sad if somebody insults my religion, or my God, or my Prophet, but I'm not really goanna say anything back to them ... Since I've been here I don't think I have ever come across a Kurd that has been offended by what has been said to them to be honest. I don't care, but at the same time I am a Muslim. I love my religion, my God, my Prophet. But I'm not really going to the street and fight somebody who swears at Islam or being Islamophobic²³.

I mean obviously it [Islamophobia] has been trouble for everybody because the land of freedom has somehow shrunk ... but it hasn't really affected me. I mean, someone whose name is Fatah, I might get a funny look or can I see your passport ... it hasn't really affected me but it's annoying. And it's not just for me, it's for everyone²⁴.

When discussing the topic of religion, twelve out of thirteen respondents reporting being practicing Muslims. Religion was primarily associated with personal identity, rather than as an attribute of group membership, collective identity or an Islamic 'us'. Religion and faith was portrayed as individual choice not an attribute of collective identity:

It's like yoga, you believe in it, that you have a connection with something and it's like this you have to keep it to yourself. You can't force people to change, it's not going to happen

22 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

23 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

24 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

and it shouldn't happen. It's a personal choice²⁵

For me my religion is something guiding and empowering. Especially during Ramadan. People here have such a different view of it, like you'd always be tired, or hungry, or ... it's a chance to put my worries, to forget about material things, to put distractions all behind me. Especially as a woman, it has made me realise that I can find strength in myself²⁶.

Literature on the Kurdish diaspora in the UK suggested that religious identity, especially for Alevi Kurds, has become more central than ethnic identity (Celik, 2003; Demir, 2012): “many, if not most, of the Kurdish Alevi define themselves as Alevi’s first and only in the second place, or not at all, as Kurds” (van Bruinessen, 1998: 10). However, this was not the case with my respondents. Of thirteen, none identified by their religion first. Four identified as British first and Kurdish second (two of whom were born in the UK to Kurdish parents). The remaining nine participants identified as first and foremost Kurdish. As I have described, religion was mostly related to as something belonging to the individual, not as an attribute that contributed to group membership. What did emerge from narratives was that the lack of impact of Islamophobia was related to the discourse that surrounds Kurds, portraying them as being more secular and open-minded than other minority ethnic groups. This will be explored further in chapter six.

5.4 Criminalising A People – The PKK & The Diaspora

It has been fourteen years since the PKK was placed on the list of proscribed terrorist organisations by the UK government and the European Union. The PKK, the UK government claims, is “primarily a separatist movement that seeks an independent Kurdish state in southeast Turkey” (UK Government, 2012). The PKK has been heavily engaged in the fight against ISIS for years, leaving Western media confused at the terrorist group PKK fighting the terrorist group ISIS. Usually, proscription demonises one side of a conflict and supports another. This is why confusion has circulated around the PKK, especially as the media have often portrayed Kurdish Peshmerga forces as heroes and allies in the same conflict fighting against the same enemy. Sympathy with the PKK is enough under UK law to count as membership and can have material consequences. The boundary of what counts as membership and how much discussion or debate is allowed is extremely blurred. The proscription was talked about in a similar way to ‘good Kurds and bad Kurds’, in the sense that the way the PKK are portrayed is unfair and impacts more than just its members:

it's sad to see other Kurds named as terrorists. When you say terrorist it's like ISIS and the

25 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

26 Author's Interview, 13/04/16, London

PKK are the same, but actually the PKK they're doing more if not equal to the Peshmerga to stop them [ISIS]. When there was an attack on Erbil they came all the way from Syria. Same thing with Kobanê²⁷

It's not good to sentence the whole nation. For example, the UK and the EU say that the PKK are terrorists. But there are 25 million Kurds in Turkey, give them their rights, let their children go to school and learn Kurdish. People say that the PKK ban makes the whole nation as the PKK²⁸

Respondents felt strongly about the discrepancy between the British response to the Kurds, Peshmerga in particular, fighting ISIS and the continued listing of the Kurdish PKK as terrorists. It was widely felt amongst respondents that listing the PKK as terrorist allowed for no moral distinction between a group like ISIS and the PKK, who many see as a legitimate force fighting an oppressive regime. This was seen as undermining the legitimacy of Kurdish resistance. Memed, a Kurdish activist based in London reported that since 2011, the year of the Arab Spring and outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, the series of police raids that 'criminalised' and 'marginalised' British Kurds have stopped²⁹. Regardless of whether this can be confirmed, several respondents spoke in depth about the social implications that the listing of the PKK presents for them as individuals and for the Kurdish community living in the UK. One respondent, who makes documentaries on Kurdish issues for a major British broadcaster told me of how the ban restricts not just his work but his ability to tell full, objective stories about Kurds to the British public:

in the UK it's much harder for me to make a documentary about the PKK, than as about Kurds, or other nations. Because when you mention the PKK these guys, the broadcaster, or the police will say 'what are you trying to do?'. And we need you know your moves and what is really going on³⁰.

This again relates to the power to define who matters and the power, to those with the power or authority to generate consequences (Jenkins, 2000). Although no respondents identified with the group, or signalled group membership, the external definition of the PKK as a terrorist group affected internal definitions. The listing is seen as targeting all Kurds, regardless of membership of or support for the PKK. It is an operative misrecognition of Kurdish self-determination as terrorism (Sentas, 2015). A Kurdish teenager living in North London expressed that it impacts how she feels and how her classmates view her: "I hate this. The PKK is not a terrorist group. This is why I

27 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

28 Author's Interview, 09/05/16, London

29 2014. 'How British Kurds are heading to fight IS', *Channel 4 News* [online]. September 9th. Available at <<http://www.channel4.com/news/pkk-kurdish-workers-party-islamic-state-syria-iraq-uk>>, accessed on 07/07/16.

30 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

cannot be Kurdish in London, in my school, with my friends”³¹. If not in a strict organisational sense, the PKK provides a social base through which much of the Kurdish freedom movement has been based, from Rojava to Turkey. One respondent from Iraqi Kurdistan, whilst personally not following the ideology of the PKK, still supports their existence and work:

I support them for the Kurdish cause, the ideology no. All that Marxist and communist stuff no, I don't believe in that ... I support them in terms of the work they do for the Kurdish cause, but I'm against a lot of their ideology³².

The Kurdish diaspora have been referred to as one of the most organised, politically active and responsive diasporas in London (Demir, 2014; Dirik, 2015). They have revived, constructed and translated their struggle whilst living in diasporic neighbourhoods. However, the PKK listing has in recent years hindered their political freedom and ability to talk openly about Kurdish issues. Community centres and organisations are a major source of integration and political activity for Kurds in London, providing not only political involvement but help in dealing with immigration issues (Holgate et al, 2012). This was confirmed by participants who were attendees of the Kurdish Cultural Centre in North London, who brought their children there every Saturday morning for Kurdish language and culture classes. Organisations play a role in maintaining or actively creating a sense of ethnic or national identity among the diaspora. Ibrahim, founder and director of the Centre for Kurdish Progress, lamented how the ban has hindered the organisation's ability to openly discuss all aspects of Kurdish politics. The organisation was established as a neutral platform, but this should not mean that the PKK cannot be openly discussed, he said:

It causes problems. Yes, they have caused crime because they have reignited an armed struggle with a sovereign state ... but it causes problems because we are very open minded and want to discuss and debate everything. So to talk about the Kurdish issue in Turkey you need to talk about the PKK, you need to talk about Ocalan ... We want people in Britain to understand what is happening with Kurds and in Turkey from both sides so they can have a full picture³³

it has a massive impact on the Kurds living in Europe. I would say that an overwhelming majority support the PKK and all these community centres are organised with the ideology of the PKK now, but they're unable to openly say it. But everyone knows. It makes it difficult for a lot of law abiding citizens to actually support the political solutions they support ... The demonisation in the West incapacitates the people to organise. It's a massive blow to the human rights of Kurds in Europe. We cannot freely express our own ideas³⁴.

31 Audience member speaking at Centre for Kurdish Progress Meeting, *Democratic Confederalism and the Turkish case in Turkey*, 18/04/16, London.

32 Author's Interview, 09/04/15, London

33 Author's Interview, 16/06/16, London

34 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

This felt discrimination on the grounds of criminalisation differs in comparison to other Kurdish diasporas. For example, Eliassi (2010) found that in comparison to the criminalisation of Kurdish identity in Turkey, Sweden is appreciated by Kurdish migrants for the political freedom it provides for Kurds. However, in the UK, the criminalisation of the PKK has the effect of limiting political freedom for Kurds. The feelings outlined above, of the criminalisation of the PKK criminalising all Kurds, can also be seen through the lens of Yuval-Davis' (2010) theorisation of identity. The relationship and response outlined above is an example of Yuval-Davis' 'me' and 'us' relationship. In this case identity is constructed around 'us', rather than the individual. This can continue up until *the* boundary between 'me' and 'us' can disappear completely (2010: 273). The criminalisation of the PKK has such an impact on the Kurdish community that the line between the PKK and the individual almost disappears regardless of group membership. The listing criminalises the Kurdish identity.

This chapter dealt with the three main factors that emerged from participant's narratives that they felt constrained their ability to negotiate over boundaries of identity. Each restriction also related back to what enabled informants to identify first as Kurdish – the rising awareness of the Kurdish identity in the UK facilitated by the Kurds fight against ISIS. Firstly, the British government have the power to define what Kurds matter, and when. The Kurds in the UK occupy the same social position as they did in the time of the Halabja attack in this regard, regardless of public interest or increased migrant flows. Secondly, they distanced themselves from identifying as a *member* of a religious *group*. Whilst to the categoriser they may remain part of the 'us'/'them' of non-Muslims/Muslims, they relate to religion as a personal choice rather than an attribute of group membership. The majority identified first by nationality or ethnicity, and non by religion first. Finally, the PKK listing was perhaps the main factor that constrained the individual's ability to negotiate over boundaries of identity. The issue of discrimination by religion and criminalisation of a secular left-wing group raises the question: what room is left in the social field for individuals to negotiate boundaries? Chapter six will answer this question and explain how individuals responded to categorisations and narratives via strategic boundary-making work.

6. BLURRED LINES – STRUGGLING OVER BOUNDARIES

As chapter two explained in depth, Wimmer (2008, 2013) pinpoints five boundary making strategies, which have been used to analyse the data for this research project. The results will be outlined in this chapter. Wimmer's theory will be used to explain how and *why* participants responded to the social field in the way in which they do.

6.1 *Secularism – A Different Way of Doing Things*

Religion and religiosity were discussed in-depth by the majority of participants. However, as illustrated in the previous chapter, religion was never pinpointed as an attribute of group membership or a first source of identification. Respondents referred to themselves and religious Kurds as more relaxed, more liberal than “other” Muslims. A boundary was drawn between Kurdish Muslims and other Muslims. Respondents expressed uniformly that Kurds who were religious were more secular, liberal, and tolerant than what is expected for a Muslim by non-Muslims. This is an example of what Wimmer (2013: 61) calls collective repositioning, a boundary-making strategy that “aims at changing the relative position of the entire ethnic category one is assigned to”. The strategy is chosen to reposition the Kurdish population higher up in terms of liberal values compared to the majority of the Muslim population:

they're [Kurds] very liberal, we don't believe in this radical Islam, in cutting culture of from the rest of society. Even Kurds that take religion seriously, they're very lenient³⁵

Yeah, I'm religious, we grew up as Muslims. You're supposed to wear scarves and pray and stuff. Do I do that? No. Am I open minded? Very. You can say I'm Muslim, but I'm an open-minded one. I'm not really into the really religious way because I'm against it as well, what they do ... you'll see people with the scarf, without the scarf, quite open-minded. Muslim people even know that we're [Kurds] quite open-minded³⁶

Rather than a politics of negation or a rejection of Islam, this may be a strategic way of navigating the Islamophobic climate of the UK. The celebration of the Kurds as liberal in UK media has the ability to have enabled this strategy and created the space for this kind of identification. Thus boundary-making work has been taking place on both sides of the boundary to enable boundary crossing. The lack of markers of identity, such as the Muslim headscarves, makes it easier to avoid categorisation as such. When asked why she did not wear the scarf, one respondent stated that although people still “looked differently at her”: “It's not because the Muslim thing because I don't

35 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

36 Author's Interview, 23/04/16, London

wear a scarf here, but because I have black hair and dark skin”³⁷. Practicing Islam in this way in the UK was seen as incompatible in more ways than just wearing the headscarf. Religious practices were strategically chosen to in order to show moderate values and move closer to the majority population:

when you come here, okay you can be Muslim but you can just be cool and adapt to what you can and can't do. You can't bring Sharia law to the UK it's not going to happen. Same as if you bring up the terrorism stuff like this would offend me but at the same time if I say I will bring Sharia law here, it would offend you, so why should I do that? So this is where the Islamophobia happens³⁸.

Wimmer (2009: 2) states that migrants strategically try to adopt cultural markers that signify full memberships and distance themselves from stigmatised others. Here, rather than adopting cultural markers they were being strategically ignored. Markers of Islam, in particular the headscarf, is an example of a symbol that has been used by Other actors and turned into a marker of identity that effects the lived experience. The headscarf was presented to me as a contentious issue. At one Centre for Turkey Studies³⁹ meeting a debate broke out about it. When one women spoke of her pride in wearing the headscarf, many other women present expressed that it was evocative of state oppression in the homeland and of repression, and, hence, incompatible with the liberal Kurdish identity.

The shift to moderateness, liberalism and secularism was also expressed through sympathy towards and support for the PKK and Ocalan. The PKK was used as a symbolic boundary to highlight the secular nature of the Kurds, both in the diaspora and in relation to the context of the homeland. According to Wimmer (2013: 63) both categorisation practices (those being the processes of defining relevant groups and identification practices) use discursive and symbolic means to alter the salience of an ethnic boundary. Whilst the national majority in the UK define the PKK as a terrorist organisation, on the other side of the boundary the PKK was used symbolically as a marker of the secular nature of the Kurds:

If you look at the PKK's ideology, it's very secular. They believe in status, like Switzerland⁴⁰

The PKK is an anti-imperialist, openly social agenda that is deemed a terrorist organisation by the whole of the West ... We're for neighbourhood assemblies and localised democracy. That's what best represents what the PKK are trying to do. The PKK has a completely

37 Author's Interview, 23/04/16, London

38 Author's Interview, 23/04/16, London

39 Centre for Turkey Studies meeting, *Academic Freedom in Turkey*, February 2016, London

40 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

different idea on socialism⁴¹

The role of women in Kurdish society was also used by respondents as a symbol to highlight the progressive nature of Kurdish identity:

I think people see the women fighting ISIS and they have a different view. Amongst conservative people you hear about women not having rights, or they can't go out, they have to cover up, they cannot drive. People see in the media this state of women, and then you see all these Kurdish women fighting with men and fighting ISIS, and [this] makes the men embarrassed⁴²

this [the Middle East] is a region where a man is entitled to four wives. Now, [in Rojava] every assembly has a co-chair, men and women can share power at every level ... The PKK has a completely different idea on socialism. It's not the liberation of the working class but the liberation of women. So society won't be free when the working class is free, but when women are free⁴³.

Whilst respondents used collective repositioning to navigate the climate of Islamophobia, another boundary-making strategy was present in relation to the topic of religion and secularism. The boundary shift was not to shift into the majority British national population, seen mostly as secular. One respondent spoke of how the secular ideology of the PKK, whom he supports, is truly incompatible with Western capitalism and values: “They think they have gender equality here, and we are all so far behind there. But neither of these is true⁴⁴”. Here, the Kurds were being repositioned on closer to other minority ethnic groups who share similar struggles and ideology:

If you look at the PKK's ideology, it's very secular.⁴⁵

Look at the Zapatista, how they construct their own system, it's literally a bubble. How do you maintain such a structure in a nation-state dominated system? Why aren't they expanding their revolution? Everyone has to go the revolution for themselves, we could be the example⁴⁶.

This is an example of transvaluation, specifically normative inversion, in which the boundary-making strategy works to reverse the existing ranking order (Wimmer, 2013: 56). The symbolic hierarchy is turned upside-down so that the category of exclusion comes to change places with the dominant category. There is a process of reverse stigmatisation. Instead of assimilating into the ideology of the majority, what is celebrated is an alternative ideology of socialism and resistance.

41 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

42 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

43 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

44 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

45 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

46 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

Relating to Switzerland and the Zapatista, these respondents expressed no desire to cross over to the majority and forsake their own ideology. Rather there is a resistance to the hegemonic western Weberian state, and again respondents are challenging the notion of the sovereign state. Whereas Eliassi (2016: 1404) argues that Kurdish diaspora formations in the UK are situated between authoritarian national contexts in the Middle East and liberal democratic political arrangements in Western Europe, my respondents from Turkish Kurdistan expressed an explicit inclination towards alternative, socialist projects rather than any space between authoritarian and liberal democratic arrangements.

6.2 Partisan Politics – the Policing of Intra-Kurdish Boundaries

Not everyone in a communal group agrees about their common identities and interests; most minorities are divided by crosscutting loyalties to different clans, localities, classes or political movements (Gurr, 1995: 212). I found that partisan politics overwhelmingly permeates and divides the Kurdish community in the UK. These divisions are an example of boundary contraction meaning “drawing narrower boundaries and thus dis-identifying with the category one is assigned by outsider” (Wimmer, 2013: 50), effectively excluding people from the boundary. An existing category is split into new categories. This is what occurs in the Kurdish case: there is a conflict within Kurdish identity. Primary identification is not just as being a Kurd but as belonging to a particular Kurdish political party. This topic was perhaps the most extensively discussed in interviews, but what I found was that for the majority of respondents there were no overt signs of boundary contraction. Rather, it was an acknowledgement of the consequences brought about by the partisan politics that permeate their communities and a desire to override these differences, essentially the desire for boundary expansion. Boundary expansion is aimed at changing the location of an existing boundary by drawing more inclusive boundaries.

The main Kurdish political parties are the PUK and KDP from Iraqi Kurdistan, the HDP in Turkey, and the PYD of Rojava. Interviewees uniformly denounced the role that partisan politics has played in Kurdish identity construction and negotiation. One audience member at a Kurdish Progress meeting expressed that “the divisions are a hindrance for unity⁴⁷”. The desire for boundary expansion and for a focus on Kurdish identity was expressed in interviews. The boundary was seen as ideally being between Kurds and non-Kurds, rather than the contracted inter-Kurdish boundaries that exist:

47 Audience member speaking at Centre for Kurdish Progress, *Changing Kurdish Dynamics in the Middle East*, London, 19/04/16.

we've gone from Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalist identity towards partisan politics which is incredibly dangerous for Kurds, especially when every single one of our neighbours wants to hurt us. For example, two political parties, one will be backed by Turkey, and the other by Iran and who suffers in all of this? The Kurdish Cause and the Kurdish people⁴⁸

it has [partisan politics] affected the Kurdish identity a lot. So they don't fight for the Kurdish cause as much as they should have because they believe I fight, I die, and he takes over. So the Kurdish parties have really affected this, it's a real problem. It has affected the chances of a united, independent Kurdistan⁴⁹

The boundaries have contracted along so many lines, one individual expressed, that “half the PUK won't even go to a PUK conference”⁵⁰. Responses varied when I asked them for how long partisan politics had played such a role. One respondent, from Iraqi Kurdistan, he said that it was recent. This is due to the KDP and PUK gaining power in Iraq in the mid 2000s he said, so his reality in this regard was very different to how it was for his parents:

I'm seeing the growth of people saying that it was better in Saddam's day. Now for somebody to say that, yeah what have they done to the Kurdish identity, the politics. What have they done to the Kurdish identity when a Kurd that suffered under the regime would say that it was better under Saddam Hussein?⁵¹

The majority of participants, however, gave a more historical account of why Kurds remain so divided amongst themselves, across all of the nations:

it is something that the Kurds have been struggling throughout their history. It's nothing new. This is all because we have been surrounded by sharks. Turks, Arabs, Persians. So we're in the middle of this, and they all use different parties for their own agendas.⁵²

When they came back from the mountains, that's the way they established themselves, they never established themselves as a civil society and organisation. The concept is now very complicated for them because they lose their powers⁵³.

Whilst the majority of respondents were of the opinion that partisan divisions were destroying Kurdish identity and the diaspora as a community, there was also some evidence of boundary contraction. One respondent, who identified as associating with the PUK, described in great detail the harm that partisan politics was doing and the need to overcome it and unite: “outside there's an

48 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

49 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

50 Centre for Kurdish Progress meeting

51 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

52 Author's Interview, 09/05/16, London

53 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

incredible amount of sympathy toward the Kurdish cause, but then at the same time there's our own stupidity, like I said, it's the political side of Kurdish factions that ruin it for us". However, another day the same participant spoke to me about another man with whom we had just been speaking, and who associated with the rival KDP party: "he's a member of a different party, not my party, an example of everything that's wrong with party politics⁵⁴". At the same time as denouncing partisan politics he was an embodiment of how it played out in everyday life. During a public policy forum, a fight broke out over the keynote speaker, a politician from the Iraqi KRG. The tensions between supporters of the KRG and the opposition resulted in what verged on physical altercations. Boundary contraction in this way echoes Yuval-Davis' (2010) concept of antagonistic "friendly enemies". When a boundary is drawn between 'me'/'us' and many 'others' in many social contexts, identity boundaries between 'us' and 'them' can become banalised and accepted. Such is the case as when a respondent explicitly denounced partisan politics, without realising that he himself was contributing. Boundaries have become so banalised and accepted that they have permeated everyday talk and action.

6.3 Ideology over Ethnicity

Section 6.2 outlined how political party affiliation has caused factions and divisions under the umbrella of Kurdish identity. Politically party membership and association is closely tied to political and social ideology. Under the umbrella of Kurdish ethnonationalist identity there has been significant boundary contraction along the lines of party affiliation, in which more categories have been created. This has also resulted in boundaries drawn within the Kurdish identity in the name of ideology, with boundary contraction happening along the grounds of ideology. It is an example of contraction through fission, in which an existing category is split into new categories (Wimmer, 2013:55). Respondents were split into categories on the basis of ideology resulting in two polarised stances. Kurds from Turkey and Kurds from Syria share many commonalities in terms of ideology. Both the PKK, from Turkey, and PYD, from Rojava, follow the teachings of Abdullah Ocalan and signify a move away from nationalism and towards democratic autonomy. In Rojava, Ocalan has inspired their system of democratic confederalism, a libertarian socialist political system. In Iraqi Kurdistan, where Kurds occupy an autonomous Kurdistan region, their structure echoes that of the traditional nation-state, with their own regional government, parliament, and capitalist economy. These two ideologies are seen by respondents as incompatible, with individuals on either side of the boundary believing their ideology is preferable. One respondent, a second generation Kurd from

Turkey, and a supporter of the PKK describes how he sees the ideology of and relationship between the PKK and Rojava:

The Kurds in Rojava, the PKK, have this programme and are implementing it right now, as we speak. No one in this world believes that the YPG and YPJ are any different from the PKK. The Syrian Kurds and organisations structured there are on the same political lines as the PKK⁵⁵.

He spoke in depth about how the ideology of the PKK and Rojava was incompatible with the Western world of nation-states and capitalism. For this same reason, it was incompatible with the ideology of the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. Again, the west was referred to as those with the power to define who counts, regardless of any processes of Kurdish internalisation:

you know about Barzani and the other Kurdish parties in Iraq? They are very, very Western friendly. It's exactly like a nation-state in itself. They don't have any alternative project there. The West tries to show them as the legitimate representatives of the Kurds. It's nowhere near that, they're only organised in Southern Kurdistan to represent 2 to 3 million people and the Kurds are 40 million⁵⁶

The critique of the KRG and Iraqi Kurdistan in general was referred to not just in relation to the homeland but also in London, where they have formal offices:

there is no KRG, the KRG is a joke. There is no political entity 'KRG' ... they try to control themselves through clans and tribes, through families. Now they [KRG] have formal offices [in London] and I don't know what they do. I have been here since 1982 and they have never had a meeting for Kurds. It is like a place for business. There is no link between technocrats in the West and Kurdish groups in Kurdistan. By that I mean whether it is here, Turkey or Rojava⁵⁷.

We have had enough of PUK/KDP. They have done nothing good for people, people are not listened to, the struggle was taken elsewhere. What about a better life for people? What have you done for women's rights, one of the biggest struggles and issues?⁵⁸

On one side of the intra-Kurdish boundary, Iraqi Kurdistan is described by Kurds from Iraq as a success-story. PKK/Rojava ideology was described as something that is lacking progression. The nation-state like structure is equated with modernity:

if you compare Kurds from Iraq and Kurds from Turkey, there's a huge difference. They're like twenty years behind us. We have semi-autonomous, we have a parliament, we have

55 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

56 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

57 Author's Interview, 16/06/16, London

58 Audience member speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress, *Public forum with Mr Yousef Mohammed Sadiq, Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament (KRG)*, London, 22/02/16.

everything. We have our own economy⁵⁹.

Iraqi Kurdistan was seen as the success story of the Iraq War. We see double digit growth; we were doing well at that time, we were what you could call democracy in a sense ... These Marxists [referring to the PKK], they've all got oil well; the whole concept of it – All that Marxist and communist stuff I don't believe in that, and I don't think they do either⁶⁰.

Over the past decade or so, Kurds in Iraq have experienced a shift in power relations that has not yet been experienced in other Kurdish regions. In the past Kurds were subjected to Arabisation projects or ethnic cleaning. Now, they are regarded as a legitimate ethnic category with their own rights and institutions. When speaking of the re-emergence of the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state in recent years, he said: “so what do you expect when you push someone into a corner? You try to find a way out and look how they responded to it”⁶¹. Unlike with partisan politics there was little evidence of possible boundary expansion on the grounds of ideology. No individual on either side of the boundary suggested that one side or the other should or would shift their ideology. However, the issue of ideology trumping nationalism was uniformly identified by the majority of participants as a barrier to Kurdish unification in the future:

It has affected the chances of a united, independent Kurdistan. If you look at the PKK's ideology and the Kurdish from Iraq's ideology, it's totally different ... That they want to take over Northern Iraqi cities to make it into Rojava, sadly tensions go high and the fight might break out. These two types of ideology are not going away⁶².

In my personal opinion if there wasn't such a tribal based political system you wouldn't see the factions within Kurds themselves that we're seeing today⁶³.

I think the Kurds themselves are a major problem. Different groups and not really understanding how to coordinate and work together ... you see all these ultra-patriotic Kurds saying we have one nationality, one land, one leader. I'm looking to that culture really people are what they are, what they think they are. But [the problem is with] Kurdish political attitude⁶⁴.

The PKK was formed to liberate Kurdistan. The ideological conversations after this conflict will be very, very intense. Right now, the conflict [with ISIS] is covering the cracks and everyone is in a tactical alliance, even the PKK. You have an unhuman enemy in front of you. So even they need US air cover. That's natural right now. But then the real ideological war will break out⁶⁵.

59 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

60 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

61 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

62 Author's Interview, 26/04/16, London

63 Author's Interview, 09/05/16, London

64 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

65 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

It is clear that fragmented Kurdish identity politics exists not only within Kurdistan but has manifested strongly within the diaspora as well. I propose that boundary contraction on the grounds of ideology is a manifestation of the different ways in which Iraq, Syria and Turkey have treated the Kurdish minority and how this treatment has changed in recent years. After years of subjecting Kurds to brutal attacks Iraq as now recognised the Kurds as an ethnic group. Turkey has long since denied Kurds ethnic recognition, and most recently subjected Kurds to extreme curfews in which access to medical services was frequently denied and left many dead. In Syria the Kurds were denied citizenship in attempts at introducing forced Arabisation. In the face of denial and oppression Kurds in Syria and Turkey have mobilised around a shared culture and politics of resistance. The data showed that they even saw that political parties and military in Rojava and Turkey were linked on the grounds that they shared ideology. Robert Lowe⁶⁶, from LSE's Middle Eastern Studies department, stated that in certain circumstances the relationships between Kurds are just as strong as the divisions, specifically that between the PKK and PYD. Each side sees their ideology as the way forward for Kurdistan, in this way they are both policing the boundaries. Kurdish identity has no one genesis and is rooted in historical divisions that fostered ideological and political diversity.

6.4 Integration & Identity

Self-identification was the main point of discussion for interviews. However, identification was not always primarily as Kurdish with its numerous sub-categories. Four participants reported that their primary identity is not as straightforward as simply identifying as Kurdish. As respondents uniformly explained that they were pleased to be able to identify as Kurdish in their everyday life, the main struggle facing several participants was how to balance the roles of their British identity and Kurdish identity. This is another example of Wimmer's strategy of boundary expansion where individuals are shifting existing boundaries to a more inclusive category (2013: 50). This is not to say that for every respondent there was a distinct tension between British and Kurdish identity. Strategies varied for different respondents. For several respondents what was expressed was the need to adapt one's identity to the dominant majority one, to adopt certain traits, and to accept that this needs to happen when one moves country. One respondent, an artist who studied in London and now runs the Kurdish Film Festival, expressed the need to assimilate Kurdish art and issues into the wider landscape of the UK:

⁶⁶ Academic Robert Lowe speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress, *Changing Kurdish Dynamics in the Middle East*, 19/04/16, London

I remember in 2007, we were in the Kurdish film festival and we had to translate. If somebody asked a question in English, then we had to answer in English and then in Kurmanji. Honestly, I suggested, no more Kurdish. You are in London; you should learn English. And then, with young Kurdish people born here, these people helped a lot⁶⁷.

Another respondent elaborated on the need to integrate into society in the UK. A report issued by ROJ women in 2011 found that “the Kurdish community tends to keep to itself” and that this type of “social closure” has contributed to its “invisibility” (2010: 7). Data collected and analysed in this research project indicated that this may be changing:

I think they should integrate into the system, get to know places like the BBC, NHS, go to the Guardian, work in the Parliament, be an MP ... that's the best thing they can do for the Kurdish cause. If I had known, I could have done it ten years earlier. There is a chance for everyone. Especially in the UK⁶⁸.

It's in every culture how similar you are to the culture, to the people. When you have someone who is not your own kind flooding in, making things harder, it makes sense⁶⁹.

We may be small as a community but we are making a name for ourselves, making allies, and we are proud of our identity as Kurds and as British citizens⁷⁰

Ibrahim Dogus, as founder of the Centre for Kurdish Progress is deeply involved in the Kurdish community in London. However, this does not mean that it is only his Kurdish identity that defines him. Ibrahim identifies as “a Londoner first, born into a Kurdish family from Turkey”⁷¹. It is possible, according to multiple respondents, to have a more fluid identity that incorporates being Kurdish and British at once. The two need not be incompatible, there are positive aspects to identifying as both. Another man, who was raised in the UK, drew on this identity mix: “do I consider myself Kurdish? Well, I’m a lot of things really”⁷². Rather than choosing one identity, there is room to have multiple, fluid identities. This is an example of boundary expansion through fusion (Wimmer, 2013), meaning that the number of categories are reduced and boundaries expanded.

This response was not uniform, however. A respondent from Iraqi Kurdistan stated that whilst he

67 Author’s Interview, 30/04/16, London

68 Author’s Interview, 26/04, 16, London

69 Author’s Interview, 09/04/16, London

70 Ibrahim Dogus speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress *Newroz Reception*, 15/03/16, London

71 Armitrage, J., 2016. ‘Entrepreneurs: The kebab king who’s put a career as an MP on his menu too. *Evening Standard* [online] June 13.

72 Audience member speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress, *Changing Kurdish Dynamics in the Middle East*, 19/04/16, London

was born and grew up in Kurdistan, after twenty-five years of living in London he now identifies as British first. He pinpointed his political views and beliefs as a reason that he feels closer to his British identity than his Kurdish one. This is an example of Wimmer's repositioning strategy, individual repositioning, in which a boundary is crossed by changing the individual's own categorical membership. He had also spoken in depth to me about the harm that partisan politics had done to Kurdish politics and identity. I suggest that this repositioning strategy could be an attempt to navigate between the complexities of the intra-Kurdish divisions in the UK as-well as the restrictions the social field imposes on Kurdish self-identification. Using political views as a way to relate strongly to British identity could be a strategic way for him negotiate his identity and disassociate with something he views as negative:

I don't have a singular identity. Probably before everything I am British over everything else. It's probably the time I have been here. My education is here, my business is here, my children were born here. I mean of course I am a Kurd by background, but I think my attitude and politics are more British ... you can't change that [Kurdish] mentality. That's why when I say by the end of the day I am British, more than Kurdish. I find it very difficult to associate or comprehend that mentality⁷³.

A female respondent, born in London to Kurdish parents, expressed a similar narrative. She was born and raised in London, so first and foremost she is British. Her physical distance from Kurdistan and distance from the politics of the Kurds were referred to as reasons she identified first and foremost as British:

I've kind of put that [Kurdish politics] behind me. My dad moved here before I was born. It's kind of different for me, like I was born in the UK, I'm British. In Kurdistan, our war never ended. It was there before I was born and it's still going on, so I don't see the point in focusing on only that in my life. I was born here, I grew up here, so now I'm more interested in getting into politics here, to make a change in the UK⁷⁴.

This seems to be part of a theme of second generation Kurds. This respondent was a twenty-two year-old, born and raised in London. Ibrahim Dogus, founder of the Centre for Kurdish Progress in London, has spoken in depth about the identity crisis that has arisen in second generation Kurds:

The first generation of Kurdish immigrants they had a lot of problems and were stuck in their own small community. They ran their own small businesses because they weren't fully engaged or felt they weren't part of the bigger picture. Many young people have an identity crisis and are underachieving in school. Part of the problem is that their parents are from one culture and they are part of another ... Lots of kids don't see any benefits of being seen as

73 Author's Interview, 16/05/16, London

74 Author's Interview, 09/05/16, London

Kurdish⁷⁵

This is an example of Wimmer's strategy of boundary contraction, in which individuals' narrow boundaries and dis-identify with the category imposed by outsiders. The extent to which partisan politics and ideology has fostered intra-Kurdish boundaries played a role in this strategy. As outlined in section 6.3, for many people what part of Kurdistan or what political party they belonged to played a major role in how they identify. In other words, identifications from the homeland have been transported to the diaspora. Therefore, it is almost impossible to speak of a homogenous Kurdish identity. Instead 'Kurdish' as an ethnic category brings together multiple identities that exist under a larger umbrella of a Kurdish identity. Whilst the answer to the question of "where you're from" was almost always geographically placing it on the map (e.g. I am from Sulaymaniyah in Southern Kurdistan or Iraq), this did not directly translate to a purely Kurdish identity. What emerges is what Somer (2004: 247) calls the "melting pot" ideology where people strategically negotiate the inclusive and exclusive elements of Kurdish identity and/or British identity.

6.5 A Minority amongst Minorities

How respondent related to other communities and minority groups revealed interesting boundary-making strategies. One such strategy was the comparison of the Kurdish struggle to the struggles in Ireland. I propose that this is an example of boundary blurring, reducing "the importance of ethnicity as a principle of categorisation and social organisation. Other, non-ethnic principles are promoted, and the legitimacy of ethnic, national or ethnosomatic boundaries undermined" (Wimmer, 2013: 61). The non-ethnic principle highlighted here is that of being a minority, an 'Other', in your own homeland and in Britain, and of resistance to this status:

I would compare it with the division in Northern Ireland ... I know that's a different situation and I know it's within another country, but it's the same kind of idea with the same effects⁷⁶.

If the IRA blows up a house the IRA becomes a security problem. If it was like one bomb at a time, nobody would have cared really, so if it was only in Northern Ireland no one would have cared. But when it comes to London and the security services couldn't do anything about that and you don't need many people to do that so they had to solve the problems⁷⁷

it's [the PKK] like the case with the IRA. Terrorism is only terrorism when it's a non-state

75 Interview with Ibrahim Dogus in Devi, S., 2013. *Kurd Behind 'British Kebab Awards' Sets Sights on Parliament Seat*. Available at < <http://rudaw.net/english/world/15112013>>, accessed on 13/06/16.

76 Author's Interview, 30/04/16, London

77 Author's Interview, 26/05/16, London

actor acting against a state. Simple as that⁷⁸.

What Kurds are like now [in London] are the same as the Irish were back in the 1980s in the UK. I don't see a difference to be honest. Randomly stopping people and all of this⁷⁹.

What is emphasised here is not nationality or ethnicity but the position of the group as a minority in relation to the state⁸⁰. The above examples have been used to express that in the case 'of terrorism' what matters often in British society is not (only) ethnicity but social positioning. The Irish in the 1980s were seen as an ethnic minority and were treated in many ways as a 'suspect community', assumed membership of the IRA until proven otherwise, in a similar way to the PKK now. As the second quote illustrates, in both cases it is the state with the power to define who is a terrorist and when.

At first I assumed the fact that interviewees were drawing to the Irish case was because I am Irish, and a common way to get someone to understand that they are trying to say. However, the comparison to the conflict in Ireland was present on both sides of the majority/minority boundary, and was present in public debates in which I was only an observer (thus confirmed by the triangulation of data). British MP's and Kurds alike related to the Irish example as a model for future conflict resolution for the Kurds:

there are two elements needed to proceed [with the peace process in Turkey] – like in Northern Ireland what is needed is trust and understanding, they need a series of confidence building measures⁸¹

look to Northern Ireland for a solution to the conflict. Get different parts of a divided community to show mutual respect. You must challenge the political investment in emphasising difference rather than similarity. Both sides need to acknowledge their misdeeds⁸².

Northern Ireland was resolved because the majority of British people came to concede that it was the right decision. From an ordinary person's point of view – if they could realise Kurds are different and could remain different it could be solved⁸³.

78 Author's Interview, 19/06/16, London

79 Author's Interview, 09/04/16, London

80 What is worth noting is that it seems unusual for a group who are seen as having a strong nationalist movement to emphasise other features that distract from nationalist identity.

81 Sharon Hodgeson MP speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress, *Changing Kurdish Dynamics in the Middle East*, 19/04/16, London.

82 George Howard MP speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress, *Democratic Confederalism and the Kurdish Case in Turkey*, 18/04/16, London.

83 Audience Member speaking at the Centre for Kurdish Progress, *Changing Kurdish Dynamics in the Middle East*, 19/04/16, London.

This can be viewed through Yuval-Davis (2010) conceptualisation of 'me' and the transversal 'us': "transversal politics developed as an alternative identity politics and are often aimed at establishing a collective 'us' across borders and boundaries of membership, based on solidarity with regard to common emancipatory values". Like Wimmer's strategy of boundary blurring, this boundary technique sees people who identify around a range of social divisions such as class, age, gender etc. The Irish are an example of a group the Wimmer describes as having *crossed the colour line*, having originally been seen as and been treated as non-whites (Wimmer, 2013: 61). This suggests that there is a desire to follow the Irish example in terms of both political resolutions to a conflict and towards assimilation in the UK.

This chapter revealed the ways in which Kurdish individuals in London have strategically negotiated boundaries of identity, in relation to the social field and hegemonic discourses in the UK. The data analysed revealed a number of boundary-making strategies that were employed in an attempt to contest and navigate identity within a complex social field. Individuals employed Wimmer's (2008, 2013) strategy of collective repositioning to distance their Kurdish identity from the religiosity associated with Islam. Instead, they emphasised the more secular and liberal aspects of their Kurdish identity to avoid association with the religion of Islam that has become a target of hate in Britain. Boundary-making strategies were often employed to navigate a number of intra-Kurdish identity divisions. Whilst respondents unanimously spoke about the need to overcome partisan politics, boundary contraction on these lines was still present in the form of everyday talk and actions. Or, as Yuval-Davis (2010) would say, boundaries had become so normal and banalised that individuals in different categories come to exist as "friendly enemies". Differences in ideology resulted in boundary contraction through fission and the introduction of new intra-Kurdish categories. Navigating the relationship between a British identity and a Kurdish identity resulted in both strategies of expansion and contraction for different respondents. Finally, respondents used the comparison to Ireland as a form of 'boundary blurring', to universalise the Kurdish identity struggle and to express how an ethnonationalist identity remains cut across by numerous factors including gender, age, class, and sexuality.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Discussion

This research project sought to uncover the ways in which Kurds living in London experienced the political landscape of the UK in light of the events that had taken place since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011. This was done by exploring the ways in which the hegemonic discourses and categorisations impacted individuals' self-identification. I looked at the ways in which they navigated the enabling and constraining elements of the social field through narrative responses. To answer the research question: *How have the categorisations of Kurds, since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, influenced the self-identification of Kurds living in London?* I adopted Wimmer's boundary-making approach and incorporated Yuval-Davis' politics of belonging to add the narrative element. My approach was three-fold. I first used documentary analysis to identify the primary categorisations that dominated the social field. Next, using observations and interviews I analysed how these categorisations were experienced. Finally, using the analytical toolkit I had built, I looked at strategic boundary-making responses to these categorisations.

To answer my research question I first looked at the social field. In the wake of the Syrian Civil War the Kurdish people and their struggles had become the focus of political and media attention in the West. Kurdish forces in Iraq and Syria are celebrated as allies fighting against ISIS. This brought about a new visibility to a minority group in the UK. With the majority of Kurds identifying as Muslim, it was important to explore Islamophobia in the UK. I found that in the wake of a series of attacks carried across Europe by ISIS, Muslims had become the "folk devils" in a "moral panic" in Britain. Ethnic tensions were described in hegemonic narratives as the result of Islamic culture and traditions' incompatibility with the western "way of life". The recent "Brexit" vote in the UK was a novel factor that penetrated this discourse and triggered a surge in anti-immigrant sentiment. Finally, the continued listing of the PKK as a terrorist group was identified as having the capacity to affect self-identification. Previous research had suggested that this listing had the ability to constrain the Kurds' political freedom in the UK and identification. In a time where some Kurds are celebrated whilst others are criminalised, while all fight against a common enemy, this raised questions about why they remained proscribed as terrorists.

I found that an increased visibility of Kurdish identity in British political and media discourse allowed individuals to identify first and foremost by their Kurdish ethnic identity. This visibility was directly related to the attention the Kurds had received since the fight against ISIS began.

However, respondents overwhelmingly expressed frustration at the way this narrative was framed. Whilst celebrating the Kurds in Rojava and Iraq, they said, Britain was simultaneously ignoring the crisis in Turkey that was responsible for the death of many Kurds this year alone. They remained sceptical that the current attention was little more than a strategic interest of the West, as this was a pattern that had been repeated throughout the course of history. At the same time the impact of the PKK ban was felt. The continued listing of the PKK impacted respondents' political freedom and ability to openly discuss Kurdish issues and identity. The dominant recognition of the Kurdish quest for self-determinism as terrorism was reported as limited individual's capacity to identify freely. Respondents reported finding it difficult being at once categorised as peace-seekers and destroyers of peace. In response to Islamophobia, religion was referred to as an individual choice and something personal, rather than an attribute of group memberships. Respondents identified as *a* Muslim rather than a member of the Muslim community. Consequentially, self-identification as Kurdish, and the positive connotations it has, took primacy over religious identification in all cases.

Participants responded to the Islamophobic climate through a strategy of collective repositioning. This saw Kurds positioned and portrayed as more liberal and secular than "other Muslims", creating an us/them divide, and thus positioning themselves closer to the majority population. They responded to the PKK ban through a process of normative inversion, that saw respondents seek to celebrate exactly what they saw the UK as having criminalised the PKK for: its socialist ideology and resistance to Western political traditions. Respondents attempted to navigate the intra-Kurdish boundaries created by partisan politics by expressing the need for boundary expansion. However, boundary contraction was evident in the everyday talk of respondents, who confirmed how this thinking had become reified and banalised in everyday life. Boundary contraction, under the umbrella of Kurdish identity, was also present on the lines of Kurdish region and ideology. Kurds from Rojava and Turkey were united by their shared ideology, based on the writings of Abdullah Ocalan and socialist principles. Their ideology opposed the existence of a traditional nation-state for Kurds and that is not what they saw as the future for Kurdistan. Iraqi Kurds, were generally against the PKK and in favour of the nation-state approach to governance. Both saw their ideology as best for the future of Kurdistan. Whilst notions of community and identity are premised on the common national origin, defined in terms of a uniform Kurdish identity (Khayati, 2008: 3), it is impossible to speak of a uniform Kurdish nationalism or unified Kurdish movement in this case. Whilst respondents identified as Kurdish there was no homogenous definition of Kurdishness. Self-identification remains constrained by structures and characterised by plural nationalist ideologies, fragmented partisan politics and various identity mixes.

7.2 Conclusion.

I can now answer the main research question and determine if the categorisations of Kurds in the wake of the Syrian Civil War has influenced the self-identification of Kurdish individuals in London. According to my findings these categorisations have influenced self-identification in several ways, which are both enabling and constraining. Kurdish identity has been subjected to new levels of visibility which has enabled them to self-identify as Kurdish in their everyday lives, for the first time. However, the listing of the PKK has constrained individuals to fully define what being a Kurd is and means. An Islamophobic climate has pushed respondents to identify primarily as Kurdish rather than Muslim, emphasising secularism rather than overt religiosity. Respondents also remain embodied historical subjects who are somewhat bound to the political divisions and inequalities that were fostered in the country of origin.

Despite these constraints, individuals responded through a series of boundary-making strategies that showed a desire to overcome many of the historical divisions and revealed resistance to the hegemonic categorisations. There was a clear agential capacity and room for contesting identity, with varying levels of success. Their new found visibility enabled respondents to pursue strategies of repositioning in which the visibility and strength of Kurdish identity is no longer tied to the structures of the state, either in the Middle East or the West. Whilst some boundary-making strategies reinforce the hegemonic narratives and structures they are responding to, such as divisive partisan politics, there was still a strong assertion of agency. Respondents overwhelmingly demonstrated the potential for boundary expansion and a desire to override the difference fostered by partisan politics. They employed strategies that universalised their identity, transcending the definition of their struggle and identity as purely an ethnonationalist one, another strategy that shows the potential for further boundary expansion. Respondents were not constrained by British nationalism, rather choosing strategies of boundary expansion to illustrate that British and Kurdish identities do not need to be mutually exclusive. In this way one can see that categorisations have fostered a more inclusive identity in the face of several constraints in the social field, proving, as Jenkins claimed, that negative categorisation does not have inherently negative results on self-identification. The most common strategy utilised was boundary expansion. Wimmer (2013: 51) has indicated that this has previously been used to shift the emphasis away from well-established and communal categories of belonging to more encompassing national category. This process manifested itself in my findings, suggesting new levels of inclusive belonging.

My findings have several social implications. Wimmer uses the example of the Irish (which was explored in section 6.5) to describe a group who were not always treated as whites and have managed to cross the colour line. He makes the case several times over the course of his conceptualisation of ethnicity and identity that perception is socially constructed. Whilst this view of course has some degree of legitimacy, in my opinion I think it is evidence of the lack of Wimmer's ability to acknowledge the capacity of the "visibility of ethnic markers" in effecting the lived experience. My respondents verified that in this specific context visible markers of ethnicity, in this case brown skin, effects their lived experience and they are often discriminated against because of it. It might not mean they are internalising any imposed categorisation, but without even speaking they are already assumed to fall on the minority side of the national majority/minority boundary. For non-white individuals in a majority white society, the answer to the question "where are you from" is presumed to be that they are from somewhere else.

My findings also illustrated the extent to which theory is shaped by Wimmer's interest in power and *Realpolitik*, in the sense that the actions of the minority are thought to be a consequence of changes in the social field. Lamont (2014: 815) critiques Wimmer from this standpoint, implying that too much attention is paid to the actions of the dominant actors. The abstractness of his theory relates to this emphasis. Wimmer provides little scope for the specific actions that actors could employ to respond to group boundaries. Whilst his toolkit gives examples of groups who have employed certain strategies, it is on the basis of an entire category, for example the Jews. There is little speak of the actions of individuals who have successfully employed them, making it slightly difficult to translate to the actions of everyday life. An example of an approach that operates at both the conceptual level but is also empirically applicable in the everyday is that of James C. Scott. In his analysis of peasant resistance James C. Scott gave the examples of performative actions of foot-dragging, theft, arson, to illustrate a minority's resistance to power. This would be useful in creating a rounded approach that goes beyond the narrative approach and makes it more applicable in empirical analysis, relying less on the actions of dominant actors.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Research.

The number of interviews conducted was thirteen, the results of which were then triangulated with documentary analysis and observation. Eleven out of thirteen respondents worked in a political job or worked specifically in relation to Kurdish issues. Whilst this research project did not attempt to generalise beyond this particular case study, I wish to note that findings should not be generalised to individuals whose everyday life and reality is outside the experiences described to me. These

findings should be read in light of the standpoint on which they are based: that being the move away from essentialising identities. Other than religion, what was not taken into account was the cross-cuttings of ethnonationalisms: for example, gender, age, sexuality, class. A cross case, site-specific comparison can reveal a more in-depth research. I explained in chapter one that Kurds in London occupy niche sections in the labour market, specifically in the kebab industry. Would these individuals, who often occupy a lower social position respond in the same way and employ similar boundary-making strategies to navigate their identity and resist power as my respondents did?

A gendered look at identity could add another layer to the findings of this research project. Only four of thirteen respondents were women. Again, this was a product of snowball sampling. However, the invisibility of Kurdish women was raised frequently at Kurdish Progress events. Panels were dominated by male speakers and women's voices were rarely heard. This point was in fact raised by several female audience members at debates. ROJ Women (2011) issued a warning that women are marginalised within the Kurdish diaspora in London. They face many unaddressed problems such as patriarchal norms, unemployment and isolation. A failure to address these issues has resulted in Kurdish women being twice invisible subjects – as Kurds and as Kurdish women. It is also a time where the role of women in Kurdish society is evolving. As outlined by my respondents, women (especially in Rojava) occupy an equal social position to men. They fight alongside men against ISIS and society is operated on the basis that men and women are equal. This is based on Ocalan's declaration: 'kill the dominant male'. In other words, society cannot be free until women are free. Would these gender dynamics impact the self-identification of Kurdish women in London, who are reported as being invisible subjects? There is much more that can be learned about Kurdish identity from a wider application of the boundary-making approach into these areas. Further research and explorations into these areas would result in a more rounded, in-depth understanding of Kurdish identity as a whole.

Appendix A: Interview Respondents

Date	Region	Location
April 9 th 2016	Iraqi Kurdistan	Kurdish Cultural Centre
April 13 th 2016	Turkish Kurdistan	Centre for Kurdish Progress
April 23 rd 2016	Iraqi Kurdistan	Kurdish Cultural Centre
April 23 rd 2016	Iraqi Kurdistan	Kurdish Cultural Centre
April 26 th 2016	Iraqi Kurdistan	BBC Offices
April 30 th 2016	Iraqi Kurdistan	Kurdish Cultural Centre
April 30 th 2016	Iraqi Kurdistan	Kurdish Cultural Centre
May 9 th 2016	Iraqi Kurdistan	Cafe
May 9 th 2016	Turkish Kurdistan	Centre for Kurdish Progress
May 16 th 2016	Syrian Kurdistan	Cafe
May 18 th 2016	Turkish Kurdistan	Centre for Kurdish Progress
June 16 th 2016	Turkish Kurdistan	Centre for Kurdish Progress
June 19 th 2016	Turkish Kurdistan	Centre for Kurdish Progress

Appendix B: Events Attended.

Date	Event Name	Organiser
22/02/16	Public Forum with Mr Yousef Mohammed Sadiq, Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament (KRG)	Kurdish Progress
29/02/16	Academic Freedom in Turkey	CEFTUS
02/03/16	Women's Rights and Achievements Reception	CEFTUS
15/03/16	Newroz Reception 2016 – Most Successful Kurds in Britain Awards	Kurdish Progress
16/03/16	Rally for Halabja Remembrance	Kurdish Progress
18/04/2016	Democratic Confederalism and the Kurdish Case in Turkey	Kurdish Progress
30/03/16	British Kebab Awards	CEFTUS
19/04/16	Changing Kurdish Dynamics in the Middle East	CEFTUS
26/04/16	Democratic Autonomy and the Fight Against ISIS	Kurdish Progress
09/05/16	The Kurdish Question and the Chaos in the Middle East	Kurdish Progress
18/05/16	From Peace Process to Conflict in Turkey	Kurdish Progress
23/05/16	Public Forum with a Parliamentary Delegation from the Kurdistan Region	Kurdish Progress
24/05/16	Turkish Democracy Today	CEFTUS
09/06/16	Turkey: An Analysis on Political Changes and Potential Scenarios for the Future	CEFTUS
10/06/16	Regime Change in Turkey: Kurdish Politics and Foreign Policy	CEFTUS

Appendix C: Images



Figure 1. 2016. *VoteLeave.EU Campaign*. [electronic print]. Available at < <http://bit.ly/2adws03> >, accessed on 22/06/16.



Figure 2. *Vote to Leave the EU.co.uk Campaign*. [electronic print]. Available at < <http://bit.ly/2adws03> >, accessed on 22/06/16.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015. 'Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK', [report]. London: IHRC. Available at

<http://www.ihrc.org.uk/attachments/article/11559/Executive%20Summary-UK-11-02.pdf>, accessed on 29/06/16.

Kurdish Human Rights Project, 2011. 'What Impact does UK Government Legislation and Policy have on the Kurdish Diaspora?' [report]. Berlin: Berghof Peace Support. Available at

<<http://bit.ly/29MpSKP>>, accessed on June 2nd 2016.

UK Parliament House of Commons Debate. 2015. *Motion on ISIL in Syria*. Available at <

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm151202/debtext/151202-0001.htm#15120254000002>>, accessed on 04/04/16.

Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations 2013. Available at <

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/538297/20160715-Proscription-website-update.pdf> , accessed on 12/04/16.

ROJ Women's Association, 2011. 'Empowering Kurdish women in London: A consultation of their needs' [report]. Available at <<http://bit.ly/29QsolM>>, accessed on June 12th 2016.

Terrorism Act 2000, Chapter 11. Available at

<<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/introduction>>, accessed on 17/03/16.

DOCUMENTS VIA INTERNET

Ang, I., 1993. 'Migrations of Chineseness: Ethnicity in the Postmodern World', available at <

<http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP798ia.html>>, accessed on 12/06/16.

Author not specified. 2015. 'Remove PKK from terror list', petition tells UK government'. *Russia Today*, [online] November 27. Available at <

<https://www.rt.com/uk/323681-pkk-petition-terrorism-isis/>>, accessed on 05/05/16.

Author not specified, 2016. 'London rally condemns Turkey's 'war on Kurds', UK media silence',

Russia Today [online]. Available at < <https://www.rt.com/uk/334745-london-protest-kurds-turkey/>>, accessed on 07/04/16.

Author not specified, 2016. 'Who are the Kurds?', *BBC News*. [online]. March 14. Available at

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29702440>>, accessed on 09/05/2016.

Barrett, D., 2016. 'British Muslims becoming a nation within a nation, Trevor Phillips warns', *The*

Telegraph, [online] April 10. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/10/uk-muslim-ghettoes-warning/>, accessed on 02/07/16.

Bradshaw, P., 2016. 'Peshmerga review – an intellectually gripping tribute to Kurdish fighters battling Isis', [online] May 20. Available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/may/20/peshmerga-review-bernard-henri-levy-cannes-2016>>, accessed on 28/06/16.

British National Party. 2015. '200,000 Kurds in London as Drug Gang War Rips through Capital'. [online]. Available at <<http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/200000-kurds-london-drug-gang-war-rips-through-capital>>, accessed on 12/07/16.

Cohen, N., 2014. 'The stateless Kurds are right about radical Islam, but the west is too meek to stop Isis's fascism'. October 12. Available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/12/will-no-one-help-kurds-fight-fascism>>, accessed on 02/04/16.

Dirik, D., 2015. 'Criminalising Out People: Social Impacts of the PKK Ban'. *Blog Post* [online]. Available at <<http://bit.ly/29QXAPd>> accessed on 25/12/15.

Fernandes, D. 2015. 'Surveillance, Targeting and Criminalisation of the Kurds in the UK: Parts I-IV', *The Kurdish Question*, [online]. Available at <<http://kurdishquestion.com/oldsite/index.php/kurdistan/surveillance-targeting-and-the-criminalisation-of-kurds-in-the-uk-part-i/613-surveillance-targeting-and-the-criminalisation-of-kurds-in-the-uk-part-i.html>>, accessed on 12/01/16.

Ghani, A., 2015. 'Targeting of London Muslims triples after Paris attacks'. *The Guardian* [online]. Available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/dec/04/attacks-against-london-muslims-triple-in-wake-of-paris-attacks>>, accessed on 12/07/16.

Harris, S., 2015. 'Rising Islamophobia in Britain "Is Creating an Environment of Hate" – Islamic Human Rights Commission Report', *Huffington Post UK* [online] 19 November. Available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/11/12/discrimination-against-muslims-environment-hate-ihrc-report_n_8541662.html>, accessed on 23/06/16.

Secondary Sources

FILMS

Good Kurds, Bad Kurds: No Friends but the mountains (2000). Directed by Kevin McKiernan [Documentary Film]. USA.

PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

- Aliana, M., & Eliassi, B.**, 2014. 'Temporal and Generational Impact on Identity, Home(Land) and Politics of Belonging Among the Kurdish Diaspora', *Normadic Journal of Migration Research* 4(2): 73-81.
- Amiri et al.**, 2015. 'The Representation of Islamophobia: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Yahoo News', *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 8(28): 1-17.
- Anand, D.** 2009. 'Nationalism' in Shepherd, L., (ed.) *Gender matters in global politics: a feminist introduction to international relations in London*. London: Routledge.
- Barth, F.**, 1969. *Ethnic Grounds and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference*. Illinois: Waveland Press
- Baumann, G.** 1999. *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities*. London: Routledge.
- Berger, P & Luckmann, T.**, 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books
- Boeije, H.**, 2010. *Analysis in Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Bonilla-Silva, E., & Zuberi, T.**, 2008. *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bourdieu, P.**, 1987. 'What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32: 1-17.
- Brand, U.**, 2005. 'Order and regulation: Global Governance as a hegemonic discourse of international politics?', *Review of International Political Economy* 12(1): 155-176.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V.**, 2006. 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77-101.
- Brewer, D.**, 2010. *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach*. London: Polity.
- Brubaker, R.**, 2003. 'Neither individualism or nor 'groupism': a reply to Craig Calhoun', *Ethnicities* 17: 297-314p
- Brubaker, R.**, 2004. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, *Ethnicities* 3 (4): 553-557.
- Celik, A.**, 2003. 'Alevis, Kurds and Hemsehris: Alevi Kurdish Revival in the Nineties', in White, P., & Jongerder J., (eds.) *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Compressive Overview*. Boston: Brill.
- Cohen, S.**, 1980. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London: Routledge.
- Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H.**, 2006. 'The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research', *Social Science Information* 45(4): 483-499.
- Curtis, B., & Curtis, C.**, 2011. *Social Research: A Practical Introduction*. London: SAGE.
- de Vaus, D., 2001. *Research Design in Social Research*. London: SAGE Publications.

- Demir, I.**, 2012. 'Battling with *Memleket* in London: The Kurdish Diaspora's Engagement with Turkey', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 (5): 815-831
- Demir, I.**, 2014. Battleship Diaspora: How the Kurds of Turkey Revive, Construct and Translate the Kurdish Struggle in London
- Demmers, J.**, 2012. *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Duna, D., & Duna, V.**, 2011. 'War, Migration and Societal Security: The Case of Iraqi Kurdish Diasporas in Europe', *Eurotimes* 223-247.
- Eccarius-Kelly, V.**, 2010. 'Nationalism, Ethnic Rap and the Kurdish Diaspora', *Peace Review* 22(4): 423-431.
- Eliassi, B.**, 2010. A stranger in my homeland: The politics of belonging among young people with Kurdish backgrounds in Sweden. PhD Thesis, Mid Sweden University
- Eliassi, B.**, 2016. Narratives of statelessness and political belonging among Kurdish diasporas, *International Migration Institute* 114: 1-38.
- Eliassi, B.**, 2016. 'Stateless in a world of nation-states: the cases of the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden and the UK', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42(9): 1-17.
- Enneli, P.**, et al 2005. *Young Turks and Kurds: A Set of Invisible Disadvantaged Groups*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Geertz, R.**, 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books
- Giddens, A.**, 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory*. London: Macmillan.
- Griffiths, D.**, 2002. *Somali and Kurdish Refugees in London: New Identities in the Diaspora*. London: Ashgate.
- Gurr, T.**, 1995. 'Communal Conflicts and Global Security', *Current History* 94: 212-217.
- Hall, S.**, 2000. *The multicultural question*. Available at www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/N-Q/perc/Hall.html , accessed on 02/07/2016.
- Holgate et al.**, 2012. 'Workplace Problems Among Kurdish Workers in London: Experiences of an 'Invisible' Community and the Role of Community Organisation Support Networks', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38(4): 595-612.
- Jenkins, R.**, 2000. 'Categorisation: Identity, Social Process and Epistemology', *Current Sociology* 48(3): 7-25.
- Jenkins, R.**, 2008. *Social Identity*. Taylor & Francis.
- Jongerden, J., & Akkaya, A.**, 2012. 'Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the project of Radical Democracy', *European Journal of Turkish Studies*
- Khayati, K.**, 2008. *From Victim Diaspora to Transborder Citizenship? Diaspora formation and transnational relations among Kurds in France and Sweden*. PhD Thesis. Linköping University.

- Kvale, S.**, 1996. *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Writing*. London: SAGE
- Lamont, M.**, 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class and Immigration*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Laiser, S.**, 1996. *Martyrs, Traitors and Patriots: Kurdistan after the Gulf War*. London: Zed Books.
- Laitin, D.**, 1998. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the New Abroad*. US: Cornell University Press.
- Mac an Ghail, M., & Haywood, C.**, 2014. British-Born Pakistani and Bangladeshi Young Men: Exploring Unstable Concepts of Muslim, Islamophobia and Racialisation, *Critical Sociology*, 41(1): 97-114.
- Macionis, J.**, 2011. *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. London: Pearson Education.
- McGhee, D.**, 2008. *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights*. UK: McGraw-Hill.
- Morse, J., & Field, P.**, 1996. *Nursing Research: The application of Qualitative Approaches*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Nader, L.**, 1989. 'Orientalism, Occidentalism and the control of women, *Cultural Dynamics* 2: 323-355.
- Olsen, W.**, 2004. 'Triangulation in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Can Really Be Mixed, in Holborn, M., *Developments in Sociology*. Ormskirk: Causeway Press.
- Patton, M.**, 1990. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. California: SAGE.
- Patterson, O.**, 2012. 'The Paradoxes of Integration' in Calhoun, C., et al *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Pargeter, A.**, 2015. *The Rise of ISIS and Islamophobia in the UK*. Al Jazeera English. Al Jazeera Centre for Studies: London.
- Pearson, G.**, 1983. *Hooligans: A History of Respectable Fears*. London: MacMillan.
- Paul, J.**, 2014. Post-racial futures: imagining post-racialist antiracist antiracism(s), *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37(4): 702-718
- Renan, E.**, 1990. 'What is a Nation' in Bhabha, H., (ed.) *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.
- Renzetti, C., & Lee, R.**, 1993. *Researching Sensitive Topics*. London: SAGE.
- Ringelheim, J.**, 2011. 'Ethnic Categories and the European Human Rights Law', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34 (10): 1682-1696.
- Safi, S.**, 2013. 'Turkish Youth in the UK: An Analysis of their identity formation, belonging and perceptions of Europe', *Journal of World of Turks* 5(3): 49-62.
- Salgado-Pottier, R.**, 2008. 'A modern moral panic: the representation of British Bangladeshi and Pakistani youth in relation to violence and religion', *Anthropology Matters* 10(1): 1-12.

- Schiano, D.**, 2015. 'Asking the Kurdish Question Today: Paths to Self-Determination for the 'Largest Ethnic Group without a State'. PhD Thesis. Haverford College.
- Sentas, V.**, 2015. 'Policing the Diaspora: Kurdish Londoners, MI5 and the Proscription of Terrorist Organisations in the UK', *British Journal of Criminology* 56(4): 1-22.
- Sieber, J.** 1993. The Ethics and Politics of Sensitive Research. In Renzetti, C., & Lee, R., 1993. *Researching Sensitive Topics*. California: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D.**, 1993. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: SAGE.
- Somer, M.**, 2004. 'Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications', *Middle East Journal* 58(2): 235-253.
- Spivak, G.**, 1988, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Nelson, C., & Grossberg, L., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Thornton, R.**, 2015. 'Problems with the Kurds as proxies against Islamic State: insights from the siege of Kobane', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26(6): 865-885.
- Vali, A.**, 2006. The Kurds and Their 'Others': Fragmented identity and Fragmented Politics. In Jabar, F., & Dawod, H., (eds.) *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*. London: SAQI.
- van Bruinessen, M.**, 1991. 'Religion in Kurdistan', *Kurdish Times* 4(2): 5-27.
- van Bruinessen, M.**, 1998. 'Shifting national and ethnic identities: the Kurds in Turkey and the European Diaspora', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18(1): 39-52
- van Bruinessen, M.**, 2000. *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question*. Working paper, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence.
- Wahleck, O.**, 1998. 'Community Work and Exile Politics: Kurdish Refugee Associations in London', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11(3): 215-230.
- Wahlbeck, O.**, 1999. *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities*. London: Macmillan.
- Wimmer, A.**, 2008. 'Elementary strategies of ethnic boundary making', *Ethical and Racial Studies* 31 (6): 1025-1055
- Wimmer, A.**, 2008. 'The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory', *American Journal of Sociology* 113 (4): 970-1022
- Wimmer, A.**, 2009. 'Herder's Heritage and the Boundary-Making Approach: Studying Ethnicity in Immigrant Societies', *Social Theory* 27 (3): 244-270
- Wimmer, A.**, 2013. *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power & Networks*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press
- Wimmer, A.**, 2014. 'Ethnic boundary making as strategic action: reply to my critics', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37(5): 834-842.

Yuval-Davis, N., 2006. 'Belonging and the politics of belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice* 40(3): 197-214.

Yuval-Davis, N., 2010. 'Theorising identity: Beyond the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy', *Patterns of Prejudice* 44(3): 261-280

Zeydanlioglu, W., 2008. 'The White Turkish Man's Burden': Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds in Turkey', in Rings, G., & Ife, A. *Neo-colonial Mentalities in Contemporary Europe? Language and Discourse in the Construction of Identities*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing