Contextualizing the Bros: Kinship Terminology as a Tool to Structure Social Relations among Arabic Speakers in Berlin

By Vicky Panossian

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Supervisor: Prof. Andreas Dafinger

Second Reader: Prof. Khadija Zinnenburg Carroll

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the use of traditional kinship terminology to structure social relations among the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin. Based on the data collected from my ethnographic fieldwork, I use participant observation and interviews to understand the role of Arabic kinship terminology in different social settings. In my literature review, I justify the use of kinship anthropology as an approach, while also explaining my choice of Berlin rather than any other city in Europe. This thesis begins with an archival overview of the history of migration to Berlin and the arrival of initial Arabic-speaking community members since the early 1900s. I then look into the advancements of the Arabic-speaking community while thematically tracing the journeys of different sets of Arabic-speaking migrants. I then move on to describe the contemporary setting of Berlin and the different factions of Arabic speakers.

I structure the analytical chapters of this thesis as a journey through the use of kinship terminologies, from strangers to close friends. I begin by offering a sociolinguistic overview of the use of fictive kinship in contemporary Berlin, focusing on some of the most predominantly used terms and their definitions and implications. In the second analytical chapter, I look into the use of kinship terminology to mark parameters of safe spaces for sub-community formation. Since kinship terminology is used in a non-traditional and non-familial sense, I argue that, when used through humour, it functions as a means of inclusion and exclusion in certain social circles. In the last analytical chapter, I observe the way kinship terminology becomes solidified through the cultural practice of honorary titles that replace people's names; I end my analysis with the example of graveyards across Berlin with tombstones of Arabic speakers with kinship terminology engraved upon them, marking the importance of the use of kinship terminology for community and identity formation.

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Introduction

There's a documentation centre in Berlin where you can see remnants of objects that were found in train stations that welcome refugees and asylum seekers to Germany. Some of these objects include identification documents, banknotes of different currencies, swimming goggles, a handmade kite, and canned meat. It was within these glass boxes of assorted objects that I found a receipt. As shown in the picture below, it was a piece of paper, with the words "Abu Rawad" scribbled on it in Arabic which translates to "the father of Rawad". As the description explained, this paper was a receipt purchased in 2015 by a man called Bassem who was fleeing with his brother from the Al Qutayfah city in Syria. They made their way to Istanbul, where they met with an Arab man to whom they paid the equivalent of a thousand US dollars to be included in the next trafficking rubber dinghy that was headed to Greece. According to the description, this paper was the only guarantee they were given regarding their journey to Greece, which was due to happen a few days after it was purchased.
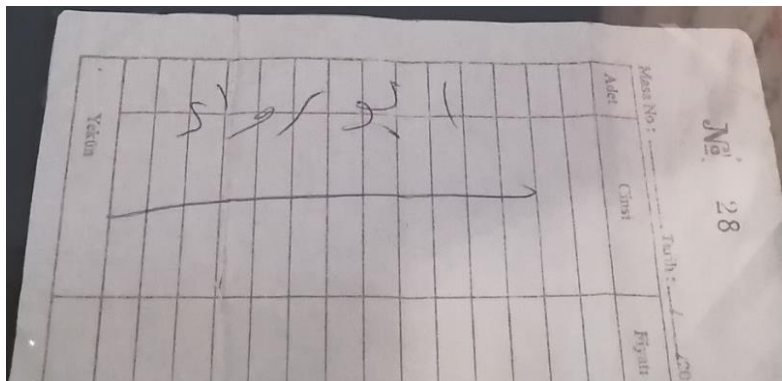
Receipt of a ticket to Greece purchased by Bassem from a trafficker in Istanbul.
The paper reads "Abu Rawad" which translated to "The Father of Rawad".
Part of the Centre of Documentation Archives.

The centre's archives let you follow Bassem's road, from the boat on Greek shores to his eventual wristband which included his registration number in Berlin's refugee centre at the

Templehof Airport.[1] What fascinates me is not the story these objects convey, but the discourse of the project. The receipt that only had two words scribbled on it was not only used as a sign to validate Bassem's payment, but it was also a promise of a journey ahead. Several studies look into the extent to which using one's children's name instead of their own, particularly in times of crisis, is used as not only a means to reassure another, but also demonstrate your seriousness – the same way in which people swear upon the lives of their children when making certain promises.[2] It was this proclamation of kinship and the assurance it grants that I use as a starting point to discuss the power of the use of kinship terminology among Arabic-speaking migrant and diaspora communities, while particularly focusing on the multidimensional city of Berlin.

Throughout my research, I discovered several cultures that value certain familial ties more so than others, considering kins and kinship terminology to be a binding form of community formation and traditional cultural reproduction.[3] This is particularly true when looking at Arabic-speaking cultures, which use kinship terms beyond their family relations, creating a sense of community with an ideological circle based on culture, rather than blood.

Throughout my thesis, I intend to experiment with the notion of family and community within the context of Arabic-speaking diaspora members and migrants in Berlin. As I look into who gets to be considered or addressed as a potential family member, I use the language of kinship based on social anthropology to demonstrate the parameters of this social phenomenon. Using the discourse of "kinning",[4] I observe community formation across the parameters of different sociocultural, political and national backgrounds to elucidate the nature and flexibility of kin formation and its reflections within the parameters of community structures among the

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[1] 'Refugee Accommodation with 840 Places Opens in Tempelhof'.
[2] Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language*, 54.
[3] Salmon and Shackelford, *The Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Family Psychology*, 312.
[4] Howell, 'Postscript'.

Arabic-speaking people in contemporary Berlin. I ventured into this thesis to understand certain patterns of social transformations through the lens of kinship. There are neither guidelines nor a rule book for Arab kinship formation, it's expected to be performative. My topic is about how these kinship discourses become elastic in contexts of migration particularly in Berlin where the diversity of Arabic-speaking immigration experiences blurs the otherwise structured national, political, social and religious derivatives of Arab diaspora community formation.

Statement of Problem and Research Question

My proposed research looks at the evolution of kinship structures among the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin. I use the lens of kinship as a starting point to discuss various levels of sociocultural and political struggles of identification, be it with other migrants, Arabic speakers, or the German host community. In this thesis, I use the term "Arabic-speaking community" and "Arab community" as interchangeable markers of the community in Berlin due to the intricate nature of the diverse socio-political and legal statuses of the Arabic-speaking people in Berlin. I use the linguistic derivative as a binding agent because it takes into account people who have been naturalized, others who have been in Berlin for several generations, and those who are still seeking asylum or are considered refugees. There are also different categories of people who are not predominantly labelled as Arabs on a legal scale, and this subset of people, although they speak Arabic, would not be considered migrants. Therefore, instead of using the terms "migrants" and "refugees" as grander placeholders for Arabic-speaking community members, I refer to the linguistic community of Arabic speakers. A shortcoming of this approach would be that certain non-Arabs speak Arabic, and others are classified as active members of the Arabic-speaking migrant community, but they do not speak Arabic. Having broadly defined some of my terms, I would like to move to discuss the research question that led my fieldwork.

My research question predominantly involves understanding the experiences of the Arab community in Berlin with a particular emphasis on the way they would (un)consciously structure their kinship relations. Kinship anthropology is my starting point, to focus on deeper socio-political relations and their derivatives that not only create some sense of subgroups but also reproduce narratives of respect and responsibility. For this thesis, I use the word kinship in its post-modern, post-Schneider sense which does not render it the equivalent of marriage and descent but rather includes several social subsets which I will approach by breaking it down into three main categories: fictive kinship, alternative kinship and friendship. Although some might argue that friendship is not explicitly related to kinship,[5] I would also like to observe the patterns of the formation of friendships and the extent to which they are prone to evolve in certain linguistic contexts, using frameworks of alternative kinship.

The Arabic-speaking community that I worked with has defined cultural frameworks that tend to overlap with one another, be it through religion, or language. Throughout this thesis, I will explain the different subcategories of the Arab community in Berlin while comparing them to the experiences of other ethnographic researchers who have worked on different topics with the same community in Berlin, or similar communities in other cities. Notably, I will use an ethnographic approach to focus on performative elements of kinship that are particularly focused on certain religious performative discourses which constitute one of my fundamental findings to be discussed in the subsequent section. Therefore, my research question examines the use of kinship terminologies to structure social relations among the Arabis speaking community in Berlin.

Having explained my primary research questions, I devise a series of sub-questions that are the subcategories through which I explain my findings later in this thesis. I specifically focused on two manifestations of kinship, fictive and alternative. Therefore, my sub-questions

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[5] Ackerman, Kenrick, and Schaller, 'Is Friendship Akin to Kinship?'

include various categories of fictive kinship, and to what extent it was adopted in different social settings. I also questioned the nature of alternative kinship in the context of Berlin. Although I had entered the field anticipating some variation of these elements, I had not thought about the possibility of their intricate coexistence with other versions of kinship as a necessary element in the Arabic-speaking community formation within the context of contemporary Berlin which makes up the fundamental finding and contribution of this thesis.

This thesis is broken down into four main parts. In this first section, I include a brief review of the literature on migration to Berlin, with an introduction to theories of kinship. Then, I describe my methodology while explaining my positionality during my ethnographic fieldwork. In the second part of my thesis, I cover the historical background of Arabic speakers' migration to Berlin, while defining my ethnographic context through a historical lens. The third part of my thesis is based on my ethnographic findings, broken down into three main sections discussing fictive kinship, alternative kinship and friendship as well as the performative aspects of kinship. I use these empirical sections to describe the extent to which kinship terminology goes beyond a superficial form of identification and creates social networks that not only define a person's socio-political stance but also hint at their experience with migration and naturalization. In the fourth part of my thesis, I discuss the gaps and limitations of my thesis, while the last section includes my concluding remarks on my findings.

Literature Review

Through this literature review, I shed light on the different thematic and theoretical frameworks that I engage with throughout my thesis. Since the theme of migration and emigration and prominent throughout the different subsets of the thesis, I look at theoretical frameworks while predominantly using references from research that was conducted on migrant communities. There is a considerable gap in the anthropology of kinship regarding alternative kinship that leads to community formation, which is the main reason I borrow from theories of gender and sexuality to explain community formation through the jargon of safe space. This literature review discusses other migration practices to Berlin and the extent to which their community formation can be used as a template to understand the Arab community in Berlin. Then I demonstrate two variations of kinship, the fictive and the alternative form. To conclude this literature review, I engage with some aspects of friendship anthropology to decode the stance of friendship that has direct implications with the evolution of kin-formation, particularly when it comes to certain subgroups of the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin.

Contextualizing Berlin

In the background section that follows, I discuss the historical relevance of Berlin. However, my thesis is based on the contemporary stance of Berlin, therefore it is important to explain the extent to which contemporary Berlin fits the scope of this project. The discourse on migration uses two variations of the same term when referring to residential areas of migrants who are newly settling into a host community. In certain cases, predominantly in the global south, the reference is often given to the term "slums" which represent a variation of packed urban spaces with temporary settlements.[6] The connotation of the word itself has several layers of prejudices and stereotypes. On the other hand, another term used is the word "camp," which

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[6] Caputo, '"Domestication" of Space: Arab Migrants in Milan'.

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essentially, in certain cases, creates the same image of a chaotic slum area. However, there are several variations of refugee camps, from organized ones that function like detention centres to ones that hinder the mobility of the refugees to the ones that are merely residential areas but for people of a specific background or legal status.[7]

There are two main reasons I chose Berlin as an ideal place to conduct this kind of research. The first reason would be Berlin's integration framework and the migration regulations which expect settled people to go through an educational program which involves 600 hours of language and cultural training.[8] At the beginning of 2023, a new law was passed to include a points-based migration system which continues to change the experience of migration to Berlin, drastically going against the otherwise prejudiced resettlement processes that involve controlled temporary settlements.[9] The educational scheme of resettlement into Berlin has been extensively studied to include people of several educational and cultural backgrounds. However, there are various setbacks when it comes to its stance regarding Arab community formation, particularly due to the politicized identities of some factions of Arabic-speaking migrants, which was the first reason I chose Berlin. Bearing in mind the growing number of Arabic speakers and their intricate relationship with the resettlement principles, Berlin has become a hub for different sociocultural intermingling identities which are, to me, interesting to study.

The second reason for choosing Berlin is because it has a substantially diverse Arabic-speaking community, which includes people (re)settled from Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, to name the five largest groups of Arabic speakers in contemporary Berlin. However, I do not aim to use this research to delve into migration policies, but rather I intend to focus on

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[7] Mavrommatis, 'Grasping the Meaning of Integration in an Era of (Forced) Mobility'.
[8] Michalowski, 'Liberal States – Privatised Integration Policies?'
[9] Reuters, 'Germany Unveils Immigration Reform Plan to Tackle Labour Shortages', *Reuters*, 29 March 2023; 'Progress Requires Skilled Labour', Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community.

migrant experiences within the framework of relationships established through the lens of kinship. The realm of migration studies has considered Berlin to be a hub for understanding multicultural integration patterns. Yet, having studied the literature on the topic, I notice that the representation of the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin has been limited to a few notable approaches. For example, this specific group is predominantly introduced and analysed from either the perspective of law, religion, or another's observation of their integration patterns. There are very few studies that are based on the actual experiences of Arabs within the Arab subsets of Berlin which is why chose to utilize my knowledge of Arabic, as well as my cultural background, to offer an insider's understanding of social relations among this specific group members while focusing on the evolution of certain kinship patterns that create a derivate of community formation among Arabic speakers in Berlin.

Migration to Berlin

There are several examples of migrant community formation in Berlin with research ranging from anthropological to political to explain the realities of resettlement and reconstruction of certain social groups. An interesting example is that of the Ghanaian migrant community in Berlin, there is a sense of commitment to traditionally reproduced ideological pillars that bring together members of that community. In a study that deconstructs the stance of social constructs of Ghanaian diaspora members, there have been fundamental references to formed institutional bonds through their religious affiliation and belief in the importance of certain customs.[10] Yet, this is not generalized when speaking about the experience of all Ghanaian migrants in Germany, because some people chose to use Germany as a transit zone to reach the Netherlands and begin a life that was not as dependent on religious affiliation.

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[10] Nieswand, 'Ghanaian Migrants in Germany and the Social Construction of Diaspora Les Migrants Ghanéens En Allemagne et La Construction Sociale de La Diaspora'.

Therefore, those who merely transit through Germany were referred to as the "burgers" because they experienced life there and chose to move away from it.[11] This example necessitates the presence of a scaler understanding of such social issues related to migration and segregation. Looking at it from Caglar Glick-Schiller's understanding of scales in the sense of migration and assimilation,[12] the case of the Ghanaian community in Germany may as well be similar to the Arab one, members of which have their own institutional and ideological scales that overpower the legal migration frameworks set by different host countries.

When asked why they chose to settle in Berlin, most of my interviewees either pointed out the presence of an opportunity that facilitated their family's arrival to Berlin or the presence of an already established Arabic-speaking community which motivated them to search for careers in Berlin. The only formal parameters of resocialization are the primary legal one, through language and cultural acquisition classes, and the secondary one, which happens due to the repetitive nature of social interactions. Therefore, having in mind the specific context of Berlin, the necessitated stance of community formation becomes that of familiarity and comfort rather than institutional resocialization; this was particularly observed when studying the attitudes of Turkish migrants who returned to their countries after spending a considerable amount of time in Berlin.[13]

As I was speaking to people who were second or third-generation immigrants to Berlin, they did not identify as Berliners or Germans, they merely stated that they were born in Berlin, with references to their parents' or grandparents' national background being from a specific Arabic-speaking country. This in turn creates certain sociolinguistic kinship structures and relationship dynamics that I explore throughout this thesis. Many of my interviewees pointed

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[11] Bakuri, *Ghanaian Migrants in the Netherlands*.

[12] Glick Schiller and Çaglar, 'Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale'.

[13] Aydin and Østergaard-Nielsen, *Political Socialization Processes of Return Migrants. The Case of Turkish Returnees from Germany*.

out the political nature of the question of identification, stating that their answer would change in different social circumstances, based on the cues they receive about whether the person asking the question is coming from an Islamophobic or prejudiced perspective; this is not an unprecedented justification since it has also been studied among several other migrant communities such as Vietnamese and Russian ones who happen to reside in densely populated migrants regions across Berlin.[14]

It is these working-class regions that have been transformed into migrant quarters that become focal points for scholarship on migrants and integration in Berlin. This is fundamentally true when looking at research on several generations of Arab migrants to Berlin who happened naturally to be attracted and sought residence in areas of a predominantly Arab population; I will explore this decision further when offering a historical background of the contemporary migrant quarters of Berlin. When asked why they chose to live there, some pointed out the economic feasibility, others referenced the housing crisis, but most of my interviewees mentioned the familiarity that these spaces had to offer, contrary to the rest of the city.

This phenomenon is also true about the legal status of some Arabs in Berlin whose neither career options nor mobility was restricted by any governing principles. Having in mind the layering of this space that was predominantly based on Arab ethnic belonging and language relations, in the upcoming chapters of this thesis, I argue that there is a sense of kinship that is reinforcing the ties between the people who reside and work in specific working-class migrant regions. Similar examples of research were conducted on the Turkish community in Berlin who make up a substantial subset of the migrant community in Berlin, who were initially recruited as labour migrants after the First World War.[15] Therefore, while hosting international migrant

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[14] Kil and Silver, 'From Kreuzberg to Marzahn'.
[15] Çağlar and Soysal, 'Introduction'.

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communities in Berlin, each community identifies with a series of events that initially brought them to Berlin, creating multiple layers of migrant experiences for people of different generations. However, due to the different regulations put into place for people of different backgrounds, and the subsequent policies related to their presence, the migration spectrum in Berlin differs greatly for people of each religious and national background.[16]

When observing the various social policies currently put into place to aid or restrict migration of different peoples to Berlin, finding a template for community formation becomes a claim that goes back to the legal and social status of each person in that community; while some people were granted asylum due to the war happening in their country of origin, others were deported as per the Dublin convention.[17] However, the differences between the stance of the refugee and the rights given to a person who is being considered for migration differ greatly. With the policy alterations currently proposed to the Parliament for the 2024 regulations of a points-based migration system of skilled labourers, the experiences with migration might be drastically altered, allowing more skilled labourers to bypass certain bureaucratic steps, granting them more rights and thus altering the fabric of migrant communities.[18] Having explained the essence of Arabic speakers' migration circumstances with some references to non-Arab migrant communities, I will continue my discussion regarding kinship and how it is related to the community structuring parameters of contemporary Arabic-speaking migrants in Berlin.

Introducing Kinship

For this thesis, I chose to use the discourse of kinship because the same principles apply – the significant role of fictive kinship cannot be denied in the Arabic language. Another reason

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[16] Gschwind, Ratzmann, and Beste, 'Protected against All Odds?'
[17] Scuteri, 'The Dublin Convention and Its Effects on Asylum Seekers in Europe'.
[18] Reuters, 'Germany Unveils Immigration Reform Plan to Tackle Labour Shortages'.

I chose to integrate the language of kinship in my thesis is because of the variations of nurture kinship that are also largely used in Arabic-speaking cultures and nations; therefore, the community at hand is not a cultural or national one, but a linguistic one with specific kinship-oriented inclinations. In the Western understanding of kinship anthropology, nurture kinship refers to cases of adoption and other similar relationships that are based on, the often one-sided, nurturing process of an individual with a considerable age gap.[19] I use these kinship terminologies because the structure of Arabic sentences and how hospitality is prioritized brings about a niche that cannot be categorized as our modern-day understanding of community formation, but rather has certain elements and variables that can be explained through the jargon of kinship theory. I argue that the jargon of anthropological traditional kinship patterns would not necessarily align with the kin relations in contemporary Arab migrant communities. The traditional definition involves some sense of relationship that is either a blood relation or familial bond. However, the nature of the Arab community is neither blood-related nor even familial, in certain cases the religious affiliation, as well as the socio-political views and nationalities of these migrants, are drastically different from one another. The binding aspect of it is the communal understanding of an "Arab", whose identity is predominantly standardized into a person whose native language is Arabic, with the inclusion of some shared values which are propagated in the linguistic aspect of the culture; this is the phenomenon that enabled me to be assigned an uncle who doesn't know my name.

Having in mind that there is no representative definition of kinship from an Arab perspective, I intend to look into that through my fieldwork. This chapter attempts to answer one of my fundamental research questions by demonstrating the ways language of kinship is used as a politicized tool for community construction, inclusion and exclusion, in the context of Arabic speakers of contemporary Berlin. I use the term politicized to not only signal the

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[19] Wierzbicka, 'Back to "Mother" and "Father"'.

parameters of sociocultural perceptions of non-Arabs regarding the Arabic-speaking migrants in Berlin, but also to explain the tensions that arise within Arabic-speaking migrants of different generations, national backgrounds, religious affiliations, and legal status due to their migration experiences to Berlin. The closest I could get to understanding Arab kin formation was through the language use which is based on a system of respect and honour; consequently, referring to someone as kin is an acknowledgement of their authority and importance to you and your family. Identification with certain kin relations has also been historically used as a means of showing respect and a sense of belonging and association, even with no familial underpinnings. Yet, the research on Arabian and Arabic kinship is restricted to tribal societies in conservative contexts which are often detached from the rest of the community, contrary to the case of contemporary Berlin.[20] There is some sense of kin-based relationship in the contemporary Arab migrant community in Berlin, this can be observed when looking at patterns of religious affiliation as a means of kin-formation.[21]

I use the term "kinship" in its anthropological sense while referring to social and familial relationships as well as the symbolic elements related to each of these relationships.[22] Kinship is used as a means of group establishment and development in newly structured communities because it is said to provide a template upon which the enhancement of the community can follow. Kinship theorist Janet Carsten argues that we have reached the era of "after kinship", that is, we no longer speak of traditional understandings of kinship. Contemporary readings of kinship involve relationships that are rarely based on blood relations. However, the jargon of kinship is preferred over that of social-group formation because of the structure of certain communities we are referring to. In the case of Carsten, the community at hand was one that is predominantly meant to be structured like a family, with variations of

[20] KHURI, 'CLASSIFICATION, MEANING AND USAGE OF ARABIC STATUS AND KINSHIP TERMS'.
[21] Bakker Kellogg, 'Perforating Kinship'.
[22] Parkin, 'Kinship'.

respect being observed in the linguistic jargon of the community. In my case, I chose to use the discourse of kinship because the same principles apply – the significant role of fictive kinship cannot be denied in the Arabic language. Another reason I chose to integrate the language of kinship in my thesis is because of the variations of nurture kinship that are also largely used in Arabic-speaking cultures and nations; therefore, the community at hand is not a cultural or national one, but a linguistic one with specific kinship-oriented inclinations. The structure of Arabic sentences and how hospitality is prioritized brings about a niche that cannot be categorized as our modern-day understanding of community formation but rather has certain elements and variables that can be explained through the jargon of kinship theory. I argue that the jargon of anthropological traditional kinship patterns would not necessarily align with the kin relations in contemporary Arab migrant communities. The traditional definition involves some sense of relationship that is either a blood relation or a familial bond. However, the nature of the Arab community is neither blood-related nor even familial, in certain cases the religious affiliation, as well as the socio-political views and nationalities of these migrants, are drastically different from one another. The binding aspect of it is the communal understanding of an "Arab", whose identity is predominantly standardized into a person whose native language is Arabic, with the inclusion of some shared values which are propagated in the linguistic aspect of the culture. Therefore, having in mind that there is no representative definition of kinship from an Arab perspective, I intend to look into that through my fieldwork.

Having in mind this specific context of Arab migrants in Berlin, the other variation of kinship that I intend to strongly rely on is theories of alternative kin-formation. Kath Weston argues that these alternative kinship patterns redefine the traditional understandings of familial kinship patterns.[23] This is predominantly observed in the case of Arab migrant communities,

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[23] Weston, 'Get Thee To a Big City'.

particularly those who are current residents of what is known as the "Arab street," because they chose to settle there because of its predominantly Arab population.

As of 1972, the street began to be inhabited by a Lebanese community, after which a greater Palestinian and Egyptian population joined the street and its marketplace, which eventually welcomed Syrian refugees over a decade ago.[24] Consequently, the Arab street, being one of my major research sites, I use the jargon of alternative kinship patterns because the safe space that is sought in the Arab street may be perceived as one that is similar to queer safe spaces which harbour a sense of trust and belonging that cannot be found in the rest of the city space.[25] Therefore, alternative kinship patterns can be observed through the means of resocialization to enhance the establishment of spaces of comfort and familiarity. It is this familiarity that nurtures a sense of belonging within a community, even if this belonging is neither biological nor national – since most Arabs within these spaces do not even come from the same cities or countries. Therefore, having in mind this distinct understanding of the parameters of alternative kinship and the extent to which it applies to this specific community, I argue that the jargon of kinship can more suitably articulate the situation, contrary to that of resocialization. Although resocialization can be used to discuss migration, the realm of assimilation and the resultant community can be more evidently put together by looking at it from a contemporary kinship jargon. For example, after the migration and assimilation frameworks are put into place, the establishment of a sense of kinship is more easily traced than that of resocialization. This goes back to the queer theory argument of safe space formation, as a means to practice an identity that might otherwise be considered a threat by the greater masses.[26] This is predominantly valid because of the series of Islamophobic and anti-Arab discourses observed in several European media outlets that resurface during every

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[24] Ali, 'ON THE NEED TO SHAPE THE ARAB EXILE BODY IN BERLIN'.
[25] Stengel and Weems, 'Questioning Safe Space'.
[26] Mitchell and Sparke, 'Hotspot Geopolitics versus Geosocial Solidarity'.

election.[27] Therefore, I observe the structure of community formation among these predominantly Arab neighbourhoods as a rendition of a safe space for identity formation and performativity within a specific traditional kinship reproducing framework.

Kath Weston also looks into theories of "chosen family", where the race and background of the person are irrelevant, but the formation of the bond is based on some variation of the ability to speak the same language of acceptance.[28] Some theorists argue that chosen families are based on friendship and not kinship, the current debate between friendship and kinship considers them to be two independent subsets of social relations.[29] However, as I argue through my ethnographic chapters, within the contemporary Arab context of Berlin, due to the linguistic implications and their consequent ideological incorporations of kinship structures in everyday social relations, the thin line between friendship and kinship is blurred. One fundamental way to approach this situation would be by looking at an interview with Foucault titled "Friendship as a Way of Life". During this interview, Foucault explains the context of his contemporary pathologizing of the queer community in Paris. Foucault explains that this community was further pathologized because of people's predispositions regarding Aids.[30] However, Foucault goes on to demonstrate how this pathologizing created a sense of queer community that was detached from any biological relationships. He illustrates that the fundamental basis of community formation can be a common interest or common concern, yet this community does not have to stay within the boundaries of friendship, it can reach to become a sense of chosen family.[31] This discourse of becoming is one that Foucault borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, whose understanding of social relations blurs the lines between friendship and kinship, incorporating one into the other. Kath Weston's interpretation of chosen

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[27] Gardner, Karakaşoğlus, and Luchtenberg, 'Islamophobia in the Media'.
[28] Kath Weston, 'Get Thee to a Big City', in *Long, Slow Burn: Sexuality and Social Science* (New York & London: Routledge, 1998), 29–57.
[29] 'The Anthropology of Friendship'.
[30] Roach, *Friendship as a Way of Life*.
[31] Carlson and Rodriguez, 'Foucault, Friendship, and Education'.

families that enhance our understanding of alternative kin-formation is based on these principles of reproduction of tradition in non-traditional circumstances.

Looking at the historical strata of migrants who initiated the current status of the street, similar parameters of "chosen family" formation are observed through the means of acceptance and familiarity, rather than one of biological belonging to the same clan, family, or nationality. The familiarity is cultivated through the establishment of similar migration narratives, reinforced by fictive kinship. Particularly when looking at the first few generations of people who settled within this street, there might not have been any sense of belonging or binding identity formation. However, contemporary observations of the street and its status make me wonder to what extent there would be some sense of urban citizenship, particularly when the current influx of Syrian migrants has settled into the neighbourhood. Therefore, the question of urban citizenship remains a challenging one which I cannot tackle through this thesis, leaving room to discuss whether the resonance of kinship ties and group identity would either enhance this urban citizenship or demolish it. My argument is that citizenship is not necessarily urban, but rather one based on an alternative of friendship. Kinship anthropology draws a clear distinction between kinship and friendship.[32] yet when it comes to the use of Arabic fictive kinship patterns, particularly among the migrant community in Berlin, I use my ethnographic work to explain that linguistic-based friendship and its subsequent identity formation create the steppingstones to a derivative of kinship that functions within the parameters of safe space formation. That is, similar to theories of safe space which promote the creation of a social circle the same principles apply through friendships that enhance alternative kinship patterns among the Arabic-speaking migrant community in Berlin.

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[32] Ackerman, Kenrick, and Schaller, 'Is Friendship Akin to Kinship?'

Methodology

As an attempt to answer my research question, I looked into similar research projects and the methodologies they have used to approach such phenomena. Four approaches were generally used throughout the literature, three of which would specifically serve my interests, including participant observation, interviews, and archival research.

I started with participant observations. Several environments were ideal for my participant observation; contrary to classical participant observation, I had actively involved the people around me that I am there for research regarding this specific topic to abstain from creating any unnecessary tension. As pointed out by one of my interviewees, when working with a community that is dealing with the generational trauma of migration and resettlement, it is important to be conscious of their sensitivities and to be explicit about your intentions as a researcher. I had six main points of ethnography which I describe in the paragraphs that follow.

The first place I started with included several factions of representative community members of the intellectual and artistic subunits of the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin, including libraries and language cafes across the city. This was in the district of Kreuzberg and Neukölln, the historical relevance of which I discuss through my archival background chapter. It was a particularly interesting geographical location because it involves meeting other Arab students, international students, as well as other migrants; it was interesting to observe, pinpoint and deconstruct the relationship formations in this medium that has enough space for both ideological and social diversity.

The second environment that I extensively focused on included different parts of open markets. Some of these markets included the presence of different cultural subgroups, such as other migrants and Arabic-speaking ones. Others included a diverse set of migrants and non-locals, while some markets were predominantly Arabic-speaking spaces. I also frequented

some Arab-owned stores and various coffee houses for different Arabic-speaking groups. Within these close-knit spaces, I observed the evolution of the discourse as well as the language used in situations that include people who do not have a language in common. From the standpoint of an outsider, I eventually became a familiar face, joining the local kin network. These markets serve as a pivotal location because they not only expose me to the relationships between those who work there, but also the reaction of the consumers depending on their age, ethnic background, and knowledge of language.

The third place that was an interesting addition to my research was a rendition of public space, through certain designated parks within the predominantly Arab neighbourhoods and the public transportation within these regions. Bearing in mind the diversity of the people in this space, I observed the groupism happening within the parameters of these specific environments. Due to the Holy month of Ramadan coinciding with the second half of my research, my methodology had to be adjusted to meet the schedule changes and opening hours of different institutions.

I also actively took part in a soup kitchen serving migrants and homeless people across Berlin, while getting to know the social workers and other volunteers who worked there. As a fifth site of fieldwork, I also frequented Arabic libraries and bookstores, speaking to people of different backgrounds who work and volunteer there. My last site of ethnography was in several graveyards across Berlin; I frequented almost every public graveyard, as well as the historical Islamic graveyard of Berlin to begin looking at performative elements of kinship that are engraved upon tombstones of people of different generations.

To encourage the voice of the informants, and give them full agency of their narrative, I conducted ten interviews with people of diverse backgrounds and age groups. While my initial intention was to focus on young adults, while addressing the different sub-questions of my

thesis, I noticed that the involvement of people of different generations and age groups enabled me to have more complete and comprehensive answers regarding community formation and the role of kinship in this specific context. I was unable to include any surveys, and most of my interviews were semi-structured.

An alternative methodology that I used throughout my data collection was subtle archival research, which was not anticipated. As I moved into different circles of the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin, several academics and others who had been in Berlin for more than one generation pointed out that their family histories were recorded and shared with different non-governmental agencies across Berlin that document the migration experiences of contemporary "Berliners". With that incentive, I started looking into several organizations that had archives regarding Arabic-speaking community members' migration processes. I spend a considerable amount of time with the Centre of Documentation of Berlin as well as the Kreuzberg District Museum whose archives enabled me to write the intricate details of my background section. Therefore, although I was not intending to do any archival research, the background it offered was very fundamental to explaining my understanding of the community at hand, including stories of previous generation members who are no longer alive, but whose legacies have shaped some of the key community values of the contemporary Arabic speakers in Berlin.

It is important to reflect on my positionality as a researcher who identifies so closely with the field but is not explicitly a part of it. My knowledge of Arabic eased the data collection process, although there were intervals that needed me to switch to English to explain certain questions, particularly when speaking to people from academic backgrounds similar to mine. Within my gaps and limitations, I will be highlighting the prejudices related to certain Arabic accents, including my own which marks me as a person of a specific national and educational background. It is fundamental to pinpoint that my informants' answers, as well as the social

interactions that I study, were highly impacted by my presence, particularly having in mind that I represent a person who is observed as a Lebanese Christian, contrary to most of the people I spoke to who have different religious affiliations and national backgrounds. The meeting point was the knowledge of Arabic. My gender expression, age and presence also impacted the outcomes of my findings, because of being in the field, particularly in the markets that are observed as a predominantly masculine space, my presence brought about a certain expectation of behaviour among the people I was speaking to. My status as a student also impacted my findings, because people saw me as a person who does not share their migration experience, as a person who has arrived in Berlin with the privilege of mobility. However, the lack of knowledge of German was held against me, particularly when people knew that I had been in a German-speaking country for more than a year. Therefore, my positionality as an ethnographer is fundamental to discuss because it is inevitable that my presence, be it because of my age, gender, nationality, or religious background, impacted the findings of my research, particularly during interviews.

Historical Background and Ethnographic Context

As demonstrated in my methodology, there are a few predominantly Arabic-speaking regions of Berlin that I used as sites for my ethnography. However, there are intricate details of their historical backgrounds that I intend to look into through this historical background chapter to pinpoint their relevance to the contemporary Arabic community's substructures in Berlin. This historical background serves our contemporary understanding of Arabic speakers' positionality in Berlin since the First World War. A fundamental part of my work was in the region of what is commonly known as the "Arab Street" in Neukolln, the street's official name is Sonnenallee, and most of the historical elements that follow are also from the same region.

To offer a brief background, Neukolln is in the south of Berlin. It is known as the working-class district. Until 1989, it was bisected by the Berlin Wall, remnants of which can still be traced throughout the district.[33] Since most of the research about the street is from the perspective of people advertising it or others considering it a national threat, the history of the region is seldom tackled. This region's predominantly Arabic-speaking population can be traced back to the Lebanese Civil War which was during the years of 1970-1980. The Civil War in Lebanon granted the citizens, predominantly the Christians of Lebanon, the option to apply for asylum seeking in Europe.[34] Having in mind the labour market in Germany and the need for skilled workers, Berlin was considered to be an ideal option. As Neukolln was observed as one of the most prominent spaces to find a suitable career, most Lebanese emigrants settled there, creating some rendition of a diaspora community. As the years progressed, around the 1990s, a large population of Palestinians and Egyptians sought refuge in Berlin, most of whom were employed by the Lebanese who had already started their businesses – predominantly within the food industry. As of the 2000s, the influx of Iraqis was

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[33] Huning and Schuster, ''Social Mixing' or 'Gentrification'?'
[34] Huning and Schuster.

drastically observed in Sonnenallee, when the housing crisis began within the district. The arrival of Syrian refugees during the years 2011-2017 and the influx of skilled workers made Sonnenallee a popular residential and career-seeking area. Having in mind that most newly settled people did not have any command of English or German, they were attracted to a newly budding Arab neighbourhood which did not rely on people's command of German.[35] Therefore, by 2015, these residents attracted housing facilities and hostels, predominantly funded by the government, to reorganize the living quarters of Sonnenallee.[36] However, contrary to how contemporary media outlets frame Arabic-speaking migrants in Europe, my archival research validates that the initial arrivals of Arabic speakers, particularly to Berlin, were motivated by other strategies for the recruitment of intellectuals from the Middle East. Therefore, Neukolln, after the Second World War, became a region advertised to Arabic speakers for its work market, which was not always the case.

During my fieldwork, I did archival research at the FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum which is the Kreuzberg and Neukolln district museum. I also spent considerable time at the Dokumentations Zentrum, which is a centre for documentation, hosting archives as part of a collection on forced migration to and from Berlin. I chose to focus on these two sources because not only were their archives the most accessible, but they also had a considerable amount of documentation on the arrival of Arabic speakers to Berlin. They even had testimonies of Arabic-speaking people from all generations and national backgrounds, contrary to other archives that only had numerical representations of Arabic speakers in Berlin through different periods and regional divisions.

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[35] Janna Lena Degener, '"Sometimes My Mother Does Not Understand, Then I Need to Translate"1. Child and Youth Language Brokering in Berlin- Neukölln (Germany)', 2010, 22.

[36] Eksner, 'Revisiting the "Ghetto" in the New Berlin Republic'.

This historical background has helped me understand contemporary sociocultural divisions as well as the political turmoil between Arabic speakers of different generations and national backgrounds in Berlin. There is a common misconception that is publicized through some political campaigns that Arabic-speaking migrants arrived in Berlin to provide affordable labour and replace other workers due to their minimum wage requirements.[37] However, this historical chapter demonstrates that the archives illustrate that the initial waves of Arabic speakers' immigration to Berlin were a carefully orchestrated act by the German government for various reasons, thus creating a stepping stone which welcomed several other generations and nationalities of Arabic speakers to Berlin.

Throughout my archival research, I noticed three of the following main conceptual reasons that impacted the arrival of Arabic speakers in Berlin. First, there are the people who were recruited to teach Arabic to commanders and missionaries who were going to different colonized regions in and across the Middle East. The second includes the Art sector, which is characterized by the increasing demand for Arabic cultural and artistic centres across Berlin, particularly by the Germans who had returned from the Middle East after the First World War, or those who wanted to study the "Orient". The third motivating factor for the arrival of Arabic speakers to Berlin was the recruitment processes put forth by the German government to recruit Arab soldiers who had been recruited during the First World War.

The first most prominent archived theme that I was exposed to that reported the arrival of Arabic-speaking people to Berlin included some aspects of an "oriental" educational sector which included language as well as cultural training for soldiers, commanders and missionaries going to colonized regions in the "Orient". I learned more about this through an exhibition called "Trotz Allem", which follows the biographies of 6 immigrant families whose roots can

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[37] Özvatan, Neuhauser, and Yurdakul, 'The "Arab Clans" Discourse'.

be traced throughout 19th and 20th century Berlin.[38] Within these families, there were considerable Arabic-speaking families from different regions who settled into working-class locations across Berlin. In the Appendix of this thesis, you can find the map that was created tracing the different ethnic sub-circles that emerged due to early migration practices.

As per the history of migrant labour across different European countries, the wage gap was pointed out through several familial records. By 1896, seven Egyptian workers sued the Industrial Court of Berlin for the wage differences between them and the locals, and the seven Egyptians were reported a few months after.[39] By the late 19th century, Berlin had become a common labour market for Egyptian men; with the advancements of the Seminar for Oriental Languages that trained colonial officers to speak Arabic, Egyptian instructors were recruited to teach different dialects and accents.[40] The colonial narrative reinforced a discourse that is extensively discussed by scholars who observed the evolution of European migrant labour through the lens of Saidian Oriental theory.[41] Yet, even when the demand for Arabic language teachers kept increasing, there was noted discrimination against Arabic language teachers. Through the letters exchanged between different ministries across Berlin, we can see several cases where language teachers, particularly those working at the Seminar for Oriental Languages, filed reports against the Imperial Colonial Ministry for their underpaid labour.[42]

As the advancements of the oriental discourse were scattered throughout Germany, there were also different market demands including ones that had artistic underpinnings which gave rise to the second motivating factor enabling Arabic speaker's arrival to Berlin. For instance, there was the case of Mohamed Soliman and his family;[43] as a young Egyptian,

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[38] 'TROTZ ALLEM'.
[39] Part of the FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum project title "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".
[40] Worrell, 'An Account of Schools for Living Oriental Languages Established in Europe'.
[41] Kaps, 'Orientalism and the Geoculture of the World System'.
[42] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City". The case of Mdachi Bin Sharifu from German East Africa.
[43] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".

Mohamed moved to Berlin, and married a German woman; he was one of the first cases of recorded intermarriage in Germany between an Arabic speaker and a German.[44] Mohamed was one of the first people to be buried in what is now called the Islamic Cemetery of Neukolln. He was also one of the first people to join the art scene in Berlin as a cinema operator showcasing oriental silent movies. He recruited Egyptian young men, and he was said to provide the first outlet for "oriental exposure" in Berlin.[45] In the years that followed his cinema's success,

Mohamed's brother also moved to Berlin, starting an oriental dance school. The two brothers were said to be the first facades of the representation Arabic-speaking people in Berlin. They also established the "Orientalische Café" in Berlin,[46] which offered an oriental experience to working-class locals. Although propagating a predominantly orientalist and colonial narrative, the arrival of these two brothers was one of the first few communal representations of Arabic-speaking people who were not seen as war criminals, labourers, or mercenaries.

Mohamed Soliman and his family, photo from the private archive of M. Mahdi, included in Trotz Allem Exhibition.

By then, the third motivating factor reinforcing the arrival of Arabic speakers was already put into place; as part of the strategies put forth by the German "Intelligence Bureau of the East", in July 1915 a mosque was established on the outskirts of Berlin. This mosque was built as a starting point of a recruitment procedure; as per the correspondence of the Bureau members, the mosque was built to recruit Muslim war prisoners who were captured by British

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[44] 'Kinobesitzer Mohamed Soliman'; 'Berliner Gedenktafel für Mohamed Soliman'.
[45] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".
[46] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".

and French armies during the First World War.[47] The presence of the mosque was supposed to attract these war prisoners to live in close gated communities which German forces were intending to recruit to support their military service as per the correspondence from the archives with different French and British diplomats across the Middle East.[48] Additionally, the regulations stated that if these war prisoners had any companions who did not know how to fight or were physically no longer able to fight, they were put in charge of the news reports that were sent to the Middle Eastern regions colonized by the French and British to recruit soldiers in preparation for any uprisings.[49] Hence this was one of the first officially recorded instances of the recruitment of Muslim people to Berlin; since some of the Muslim regions colonized by the British and French included Arabic-speaking people, this created the nuances of the first arrivals of Arabic speakers to Berlin. By 1925, there are records of several migrants who were soldiers who fought in the German army in different colonial regions. For instance, there is the case of a Tunisian soldier called Mahmud Osman who was a soldier with the French military who eventually joined the German army. Due to his status as a soldier, his identity documents and savings were confiscated, currently in the German archives, while the fleet he was assigned to eventually made it to Berlin. There are records of him writing to the foreign minister in 1925 explaining his situation and asking to be returned to Tunisia.[50]

Having described the motivating factors promoting the arrival of Arabic speakers to Berlin, it's important to shed light on the different legal and political underpinnings of their arrival. For the first generations of immigrants to Berlin, several social policies laid the groundwork for contemporary policies that dictate the lives of migrants in Berlin. The first wave of migration to Berlin was recorded by the end of the First World War, which changed

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[47] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".
[48] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".
[49] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".
[50] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".

the landscape of the city, marking certain neighbourhoods as labour and migrant ones, contrary to those which were preserved by predominantly German families with a conservative political agenda.[51] Before the Frist World War, by 1909, these records from the municipality of Berlin show the initial round of policies which were put into place to "regulate" and "sustain" immigrant communities; these gave rise to a certain regulation called the "Obligation to Legitimize and Return" which is the eldest recorded version of a "legitimization card" for migrants in Berlin.[52] It was used as an alternative to a contemporary work permit, to enable employment of non-German people. However, it also came with a set of obligations and limitations, for instance, people who had this document could lose it due to unsatisfactory work, which would lead to their immediate deportation. When women started joining these migrant-based workforces, a clause was added to the regulation stating that pregnancy during the employment term was to be considered a violation of the employment contract, which called for immediate deportation.[53] By 1912, due to the diverse nature of the migrant workers in Berlin, there were a new set of policies put into place that prohibited the marriage of Muslims to non-Muslims. This had a drastic impact on communal structures and the family-oriented nature of the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin which I extensively tackle through my empirical chapters. It was because of these laws and regulations that the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin felt more segregated and discriminated against. This also promoted alienation from the rest of the migrant communities which were predominantly Christian, including the rising numbers of the Polish community within the same regions. This schism between the Muslim and non-Muslim migrant communities is observed throughout my ethnographic work since it was a prominent means for calibrating performative kinship patterns among Arabic-speaking community members in Berlin. There were some exceptions to this

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[51] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".The specific reference of an advertisement from Vosische Zeitung, March 38, 1868, Landesarchiv Berlin.
[52] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".
[53] "Decolonial Remembrance Culture in the City".

marriage case, specifically when such marriages were conducted under Muslim rules, and not officially registered in Germany. Under these specific conditions, the Muslims who had married non-Muslims were prohibited from leaving the region even if their partners had done so. The interesting case of Mtoro Bin Mwinyi Bakari had postcards that explain his circumstances as a person who is caught between two ends of the same law with the inability to leave, and the threat of deportation for unsatisfactory work.[54]

With the end of the First World War, due to the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers, the Nansen Passport became widely used across the EU, including Germany. Although initially used for refugees, the Nansen passport was also used as a document for Arabic-speaking people who had established themselves in Berlin to replace their work permits with it. The Nansen passport was a document of protection that was initially established by the League of Nations High Commissioner specifically for refugees from Russia.[55] However, by 1937, it became a mainstream document for protection for anyone unable to return to their home country; this document brought with it strict bureaucratic control and restrictions on certain rights.[56] It was not long after that terms such as "resettlement" and "refugee" were adopted in German to signal people who were potentially considered on the track for German citizenship.[57] There is very little information regarding the Arabic-speaking community's experiences with the Second World War, as well as the atrocities and the forced migration it brought about. After the Second World War, particularly because of the Geneva Convention of 1951, the definition of the term "refugee" became uniform across all European countries, constituting a direct responsibility of the nation to offer protection to those who fit into the refugee category,[58] thus creating various categories of the initial "migration" procedure. These

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[54] Wimmelbücker, *Mtoro Bin Mwinyi Bakari (c. 1869-1927).*
[55] Hieronymi, 'The Nansen Passport'.
[56] Dated 26 Nov 1927 found in Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin.
[57] Dated 28 Sept. 1939, political archives of the foreign office Berlin.
[58] Schuster, 'Common Sense or Racism?'

laws were revised every few years, creating subcategories for migrants of different backgrounds. For instance, observing the legal status of contemporary Arabic speakers in Berlin, there are several levels of migrant procedure and experiences; there are the Palestinians with a document that protects their stay but limited their rights,[59] while Syrians are given a different document that classifies them as war refugees. However, the Egyptians and Lebanese which make up another big faction of the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin, are considered equal to any other migrant nationality, making their reality similar to that of Turkish citizens.[60] It is these nuances in the official status of migrant experiences that drastically hinder the Arabic speaker's perception of each other. Since some people are given rights, contrary to those whose status is pending, and those who have arrived in Germany as students, or labourers. It is the historical underpinnings and experiences of their national communities that dictate the parameters of local prejudices, for those who "had it easy" while others had to go through several years of bureaucratic procedures, as explained by one of my interviewees when asked about the tensions within Arabic speaking peoples of different nationalities. In the empirical chapters that follow, I will focus more on the discrepancies between politicized national identities and how it shifts our understanding of contemporary performative and fictive kinship practices among the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin, some of whom, as explained through the archival elements of this chapter, can trace their communities' roots in Berlin to the early 19th century. Although most of the contemporary Arabic speakers do not explicitly identify with the people who came before them, my interviewees hinted at the sociocultural layered presence of Arabic speakers in Berlin, with distinctions of people of different educational backgrounds similar to the ones that were portrayed throughout the archives. Therefore, I use the archives as a mediator to throw a glance at the intricate history that not

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[59] Abdulrahim, 'Islam in a North European Setting'.
[60] Perolini, '"We Are All Refugees"'; Berger, Galonska, and Koopmans, 'Political Integration by a Detour?'

only shaped our current understanding of Arabic speakers in Berlin but also went against the common stereotypes associated with the background of certain subgroups of Arabic-speaking migrant workers. In the empirical chapters that follow, I will look into how contemporary social structures, through the use of kinship terminology, and structure, maintain and solidify a sense of community formation of Arabic speakers in Berlin.

Empirical Analysis

Conceptual Framework

When speaking to strangers of different age groups, most languages have derivatives of different forms of showing respect, ranging from addressing the person as "uncle" to "teacher".[61] Due to pop culture trends, the similar term "bro" was used as a means to address strangers while demonstrating some faction of familiarity with the person. These terms are also common in Arabic, however, when it comes to the case of contemporary Arabic speakers in Berlin, I argue in this chapter that it is their use of such terminologies that not only defines the person's relationship with the stranger but also conveys several layers of sociopolitical and migration-histories depending on which term they choose to use. I use this chapter to examine two of the most commonly used terms, "uncle" and "brother" to explain how these otherwise fictive kinship markers serve the Arabic-speaking community as markers of not only one's political identity but also legal status, sociopolitical background and economic standing. I define these terms through several scenarios from my ethnographic fieldwork, followed by input from the interviews I conducted with people who frequently use these terminologies to not only create a sense of community but also consciously include or exclude certain people from these subgroups. When I asked an Arabic instructor in Berlin whether or not she feels comfortable teaching the intricacies of these terms to Arabic-speaking children, she explained that most children who speak Arabic have internalized these patterns, therefore they would only learn the standard form of Arabic to be able to read and write it. When asked explicitly whether non-Arabic speaking children are taught the kinship terminology when addressing people, the interviewee explained that "We are exposed to these traditions as a matter of

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[61] Howard, '"When Meeting Khun Teacher, Each Time We Should Pay Respect": Standardizing Respect in a Northern Thai Classroom'.

knowing the thing, but we do not give them any more space than they are part of the culture or traditions that the student has to learn about within the context. As I mentioned most of the students are German or born here", illustrating the extent to which such cultural traditions cannot be translated to people who are not raised in communities that practice the social hierarchies that fictive kinship creates and reflects.

Two weeks into my fieldwork, I had a self-proclaimed "uncle." A man almost three times my age who saw me every day eventually noticed that I was alone in Berlin and that I don't speak enough German. He spoke a dialect of Levantine Arabic, quite close to mine, but he never clarified his national background. He used to work at a little shop where I frequently went to buy bread. After seeing me for a few days in a row, he asked if I'm married or currently living with my family, since I said no, he then said that "A girl your age should not be alone, if you need anything I am your uncle." I continued to call him my uncle until I bid him goodbye when I exited the field. I still don't know his name, and he doesn't know mine. Had this been a different cultural context, the term uncle would only entail a fictive kinship relationship. However, in this specific context of Berlin, having in mind the gender and age dynamics, the term "uncle" put him in a position of authority to not only offer me a sense of "protection" if necessary but also provide a sense of stability. Traditionally, a family's uncle in Arabic, is a person who is trustable and can be relied upon to replace the father figure. Therefore, by inferring these principles unto the context of Berlin, the uncle I gained was not a hypothetical one but one that came with a considerable amount of reciprocated responsibilities and respect; anthropologist Suad Joseph refers to the terms of reproductive patriarchy when speaking of these responsibilities in the context of Arabic speaking diaspora communities.[62] It is important to pinpoint that this variation of fictive kinship has different connotations for Arabic-speaking people. When speaking of fictive kinship in different settings, it is only said to be a descriptive

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[62] Joseph, 'Brother/Sister Relationships'.

variation of a way to refer to certain members of the community who have been somewhat promoted to the stance of kin.[63] Yet, when referring to the Arabic version of the words for kinship, as described by Suad Joseph, there is the inherited reproduction of patriarchal norms; which in turn means that the variations of fictive kinship include explicit regard for the nature of one's relationship to the other person. As I explore linguistic derivatives through my first ethnographic chapter that follows, it is important to emphasize that the term used for "cousin" rather than "sibling" entails a possibility to have or maintain a sexual relationship, or any relationship beyond the realm of a hypothetical familial one. Since, according to Muslim tradition, there is the possibility to marry one's biological cousin, the use of the term in the fictive sense opens an array of possibilities for both parties.[64] However, in the context of sibling fictive relationships, this possibility is nullified. Yet, when it comes to calling a person one's uncle, the patriarchal understanding of a role of a father figure is implied through the stranger's use of the term "uncle" which not only becomes a marker for a person's patriarchal superiority, but it also creates a derivative of responsibility, care, and a shared understanding of familial honour.[65]

There are drastically different experiences for people of different national and religious backgrounds, migration statuses, and economic standing. An academic interviewee used the theory of asymmetry to demonstrate the intricacies of the use of fictive kinship titles in the context of Berlin based on his experience in predominantly Arabic-speaking markets and shops; he explained that "when they ask where I'm from, and I say 5 years, this is when the conversation stops. 5 years means I am not born here, I do not have the same history, it means that I came here with certain privileges, I came here legally", comparing this to when speaking to a non-Arab person, he said that "When a German person asks you how long have you been

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[63] Qirko, 'Kinship Appeals and Conservation Social Marketing'.
[64] Giuliani, Olivari, and Alfieri, 'Being a "Good" Son and a "Good" Daughter'.
[65] Mosquera, 'Cultures of Honor'.

here, it is a question that implicitly asks whether you belong to any clans that are already known across Berlin. If you say you are born here, there is a question mark, but if you say 5 years, that clarifies things."

As demonstrated through my literature review, kinship theorist Janet Carsten argues that we have reached the era of "after kinship". Therefore, when I use the term "uncle" it is not the biological relation that I highlight, but rather the Arabic alternative of the term which is used to refer to any masculine presenting person who is considerably older than the speaker. There is a distinct understanding of fictive kinship in this cultural context of Berlin. As Carsten argues, the use of fictive kinship is often limited to using kinship terms as a form of respect, without inferring alternative meanings. However, in the context of Berlin, the fictive kinship had multiple layers of inferences which I look into through my first ethnographic chapter that analyses the different derivatives, interpretations, and implications of the most common fictive kinship terminology among Arabic speakers in Berlin. Through this conceptual framework, it is also significant to demonstrate that there are academically debated differences between an anthropological understanding of kinship, kinship terminology and the act of kinning. In this thesis, based on the definition provided in my literature review, the main focus is on the use of fictive kinship which, I argue, fuels a sense of kinning. My theoretical framework is that of contemporary kinship studies, but the essence of it is not biological kinship. Therefore, when referring to "kins" the category I use also includes friendships that extend beyond familial ties. In my second empirical chapter, I look into the evolution from fictive kinship to friendship. However, theories of anthropology would argue that they are two differing, parallel fields of social relations.[66] My conceptual framework goes against this by utilizing theories of alternative kinship which speak of the concept of "chosen family", as explained through my literature review. I use chosen families as a means to begin a discussion about the potential of

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[66] 'The Anthropology of Friendship'.

friendships that are based on Arab understandings of kinship that entail a relationship responsibility, similar to that of a friendship but with the power dynamics of a family. Yet, there is an evident gap in kinship studies regarding this thin line between friendship and kinship; it is this line that is blurred by queer kinship studies, demonstrating the bending point of one's understanding of friends, as a potential stepping stone for a family. I delve into theories of chosen family through Weston's analysis which also talks about theories of safe space and the extent to which a person feels welcomed, accepted, and tolerated in different spaces.

In the context of the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin, the safe spaces were those of language, which I delve into when talking about subgroup formation. The general knowledge of Arabic and certain cultural intricacies paves the way to the creation of different derivatives of safe spaces, for people of different backgrounds and ideologies. These patterns can be easily understood when looking at the initial arrival of Arabic speakers to Berlin, and how they were recruited by different sectors, for different purposes, thus creating substructures that the contemporary Arabic-speaking community has enhanced and internalized.

When working with identity politics throughout my ethnographic chapters, it is important to keep in mind that the scalar approach to identification also applies to this specific context of asymmetry. Therefore, the processes of identification greatly vary, based on people's legal status, national background, occupation and the extent to which they have found some sense of community in Berlin, be it an Arabic-speaking one or the lack thereof. However, when looking at the attachment parameters of the Arabic-speaking community, as explained by several researchers working on migration, the migration patterns that give rise to community substructures do not perceive the host nation, in this case, Germany, as a potential land that they grow attached to;[67] yet, specifically for the case of those who have refugee or asylum seeker status, Berlin was one of the few options they had to reach safety. Therefore, the

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[67] van Liempt and Sersli, 'State Responses and Migrant Experiences with Human Smuggling'.

attachment is not to the place itself, or the sense of home it might trigger, but rather the security that comes with being within Berlin, in contrast to being in one's country of origin during times of war. Theoretically speaking, it is important to see this distinction regarding people's motives to avoid propagating a colonial discourse regarding the supremacy of a potential European country.[68]

A substantial part of contemporary identity studies falls within the range of politicized people's identities, often viewed through the lens of a theoretical framework. In my thesis, as I delve into religious discourse and the connotation of certain terms, I often rely on theories of performativity to ground my thoughts within a framework that explains the importance of the utterance, particularly in a religious context. Geertz explains that for one to understand religion as a system there needs to be a historical understanding of the cultural circumstances related to this religion. He characterized religion as a set of symbols the definition of which were somewhat flexible since people use it to interpret different actions and their subsequent circumstances.[69] However, although Geertz's understanding of religious symbolism is interesting and relevant to Arab migrants in Berlin, I would like to go back to Asad's interpretation of religiosity when looking into the religious aspects of kin structures in Arab migrant communities.[70] Asad's explanation that there can be no concrete separation between belief and power in the Islamic sense is relevant not only to the Arab Muslim migrant community, but it should also be relevant to the non-muslim one since it has become such a strong property of cultural understanding of power in the Arab world.[71] Thus, I use Asad's argument about the change in perspective that is brought about by this understanding of the power of religiosity and religious belief. Therefore, although I rely on Asad's interpretation of the power of religion, I don't delve into the object or subject of belief, since I merely focus on

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[68] Samaddar, 'Chapter 8: The Postcolonial Nature of Europe's Migration Crisis'.
[69] Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System'.
[70] Asad, 'Anthropological Conceptions of Religion'.
[71] Asad, 'Religion, Nation State, Secularism'.

the performative cultural manifestations of it. Performativity, as I argue for it, is an act similar to Fredrik Barth's understanding of knowledge transmission that does not necessarily include a community secret, but rather an act of performative sentiment regarding the possibility of a secret that binds a community.[72] Therefore, the performativity of belief does not have to be a signifier of a signified that is attached to a bigger religious system, it is merely an act of cultural conformity or identification.

In the chapters that follow, I approach my ethnography as a journey, going over certain sociolinguistics of fictive kinning, and moving into a discussion regarding the variations of kinning terms and the connotations of each. The chapter that follows will look into safe space as a means of sub-community formation, based on the parameters of kinship which, I argue, create some sense of a friendship dynamic. The last empirical chapter includes references to honorary titles and how they ground certain kinship terminology; the last subsection looks into how these titles are solidified through a religious discourse observed on tombstones of Arabic-speaking community members in Berlin.

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[72] Barth, 'An Anthropology of Knowledge'.

Structuring the Sociolinguistics of Kinning

The Bro-blem

After my second trip to a Berlin-based Arabic library, I was addressed with the Arabic version of the term "sister" by the person who works there. It was not a reference to our relationship, because we were strangers to each other. However, it was a cultural and intellectual meeting point, showing a sense of commonality that we had mutually experienced through our presence there. As explained throughout my introduction, fictive kinship is purely figurative in its general sense. However, in the specific sense of Berlin, being called sister entails a sense of belonging, and acceptance because it is coming from someone established in the community, welcoming me, a newcomer as a potential community member.

In Arabic, holding someone in enough esteem to refer to them as a next of kin entails a strong sense of identification with the person. I chose to look into fictive kinship because it is a common term used in Arabic, but I was interested in the extent to which it would be used, and altered, in the multicultural case of Berlin. One aspect of kinning that I predominantly noticed was the reference to the term "brother", in its official Arabic form. However, having in mind the multiplicity of Arabic dialects and accents, the term "brother" was often used and rephrased to serve different social cues as well as principles of friendship and fictive kin-formation. In this section, I examine the variations of the term "brother" and the intensity of

politicized identification that they infer. Variations of the term brother were used as different indicators of social situations, migration histories, and economic and legal status.

Weekend vegetable Market in Berlin known for its Middle Eastern vendors.
Photo from https://theculturetrip.com/

To begin with, while going to several open markets on Saturdays across the city of Berlin, Arabic-speaking vendors often referred to young non-Arab German-speaking men by the English term "bro", particularly when telling them about the price of specific items. When asked why, they answered that this was used as a meeting point to negotiate prices which were common practice for these situations. However, one interesting aspect of this observation was that the term "bro" was not gendered; that is, it was used to refer to people of all genders. The fact that the English alternative to the term was used entails that there was the need to isolate oneself from their native language, be it German or Arabic, to meet through a language that was alien to both. Yet, it was restricted to people of a specific age group – most of the people who were called "bro" in three separate instances, in three different open markets, were young adults, even if they were not necessarily masculine-presenting. As explained by Meillassoux, this reference to kinship is to fight against the social distance between the salesmen and the

person buying the product, thus inferring a sense of reliability regarding the value and the price of the product.[73]

The use of the Modern Standard Arabic version of the word brother which is *Al Akh* was used as a derogatory term to speak about a stranger. For context, modern standard Arabic is a variation of Arabic that is the formal written form of the language devoid of any regional and dialect-oriented derivatives – sociolinguists often explain that it is this modern standard Arabic that is used as a meeting point for Arabic speakers of different nationalities and social backgrounds.[74] Therefore, referring to a stranger using this language entails creating a boundary between the Arabic speaker, who understands Modern Standard Arabic, and the stranger who does not, thus nullifying any national or social boundaries between the two Arabic speakers and creating the image of an outsider for the person referred to in Modern Standard Arabic. In two separate instances, once in a farmer's market, and another in a shop in a predominantly Arabic-speaking area, the term "*Al Akh*" (the brother) was used as a derogatory term to speak to an Arabic speaker, about a non-Arabic speaker's behaviour. It was almost as if the use of the grammatical article "the" was used as a distancing of the next of kin, it was no longer a reference to the speaker's fictive brother, but rather a stranger's brother who had behaved in a way that needed to be pointed out, in a language that they would not understand.

The use of the term "brother" has a significant cultural connotation but there are derivatives of it that feed on specific sociocultural prejudices. For instance, the version "*khayo*" is often used by Syrians which, in the case of Berlin, did not only demonstrate a person's national background but also their immigration experiences and the approximate time they had spent in Berlin. When asked, one of my Syrian interviewees explained that he only uses this term when he knows that the person he is speaking to is also Syrian, otherwise, it would signal

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[73] Meillassoux, 'Part I, Chapter 4: Profits and Accumulation'.
[74] Al-Kahtany, 'The "Problem" of Diglossia in the Arab World'.

that he is relatively new to Berlin and thus his experience is not similar to that of the people he was speaking to; when asked to clarify his statement, the interviewee explained that there are specific politicized prejudices against Syrians, particularly from other Arabic speakers whose immigration journey was more challenging in Berlin, particularly due to their national status. Therefore, the single use of the term "*Khayo*" becomes a loaded signifier of an experience as well as an immigration status and a national background.

The Levantine alternative that was used was the term "*Khayi*" which translates to "my brother", as it stands ungendered, it demonstrates the person's background from the Levant without shedding light on any specific national or migration-oriented background. This term, including heightened personalization, was used as a means of finding a meeting point between Arabic speakers of different nationalities. For instance, when speaking to someone I'm getting to know, I would use the term "khayi" when talking about my endeavours or explaining the struggles I've had reaching Berlin. As explained by another interviewee, "*Khayi*" is used to illustrate a cultural understanding of a brotherhood, and not necessarily an ideology or national belonging. It is a meeting point for people of different dialects. When used, it negates the politicized stance of each national background, bringing them together based on their stance in Berlin, usually vis a vie the German community, or other non-Arab migrant communities.

When coupled with the Arabic term "Ya" which is a direct reference to the person spoken to, "*Ya khayi*" becomes a term used to complain about a common challenge that the two speakers are facing. The nuances of these terminologies were unclear to me at the beginning of my fieldwork because I was not exposed to these intricate variations of the term brother, with each having such loaded implications. The use of "*ya*" (ya) in Arabic, is used as a letter that calls on one's attention; with a specific religious connotation, "*ya*" is used as a means to often express agony or a complaint. Therefore, when paired with the fictive term of brother, it was used as a means to signify that the speaker and the one who was being spoken

to, were in the same situation. There were two instances of this term being used as a means of complaining about the inflation in Berlin, and once it was used as a neutralizing agent by a third person when two people were arguing. The reference to the "*ya*" followed by the Kinning term "brother" functioned as a neutralizing element softening the argument. Interestingly, this term was used by Arabic speakers of very different cultural and national backgrounds, their accents and subsequent dialects were very different but the signalling of the relational element of brotherhood, heightened by the use of the "*ya*" functioned as a means of merging their experiences. This can also be due to the religious connotation of the term "*Ya*" which is used to address the general public during prayers. Therefore, it plays on several layers of cultural meeting points, thus conversationally nullifying arguments. A descriptive example of this would be the use of the term "*Ya khayi*" to speak of something controversial but without getting an extensive backlash from the speaker, due to the responsibilities that they are under now that the term "brother" is used. Similar dynamics are noticed when it comes to the use of the term "uncle" in its various linguistic alternatives during different sociocultural circumstances. As explained by one of my interviewees who moved to Berlin from Morocco, "where I come from, [using the Arabic version of the term for uncle] implies a significant age difference" which I will be describing in the following subtopic.

The Making of Uncles

Fictive kinship does not necessarily function within the linguistic capacity of alternative sibling creation and assignment. There are several cultural examples of fictive kinship functioning as a means of respect and showing formal affection. For the special case of Arabic, the use of kinning factors can function as reflective terms as well. For instance, if I were to address someone as my uncle as a form of respect, they would in turn also be able to call me "uncle" to reinforce their relationship as accepting the positionality of my fictive uncle.

Although it does not apply to the gender or age dynamics of the situation, this reinforcing factor highlights my social responsibility to show respect to them – often used when the power dynamics of the situation are gradually shifting to people of power who are considerably younger than the "uncle" figure. This was a very common phenomenon in Berlin, "it's just one of the many forms of politeness that e draw upon in our day-to-day experiences" explained one of my interviewees. The process of calling a person one's uncle is a natural part of the colloquial Arabic that I grew up with, leaving little room for one to understand the difference between a biological uncle and a fictive one. Another layer of analysis is the fact that colloquial Arabic does not differentiate between paternal and maternal uncles. Therefore, when calling someone one's "uncle", not only are the biological lines blurred, but also the absence of a sense of kinning that extends the layer of paternal or maternal relatives. An uncle may also be understood as a father-in-law since the concept of marrying one's cousin is not opposed to traditional Islam which has directly influenced the use of contemporary Arabic.

Throughout my ethnographic fieldwork, almost daily I heard people addressing elders as their uncle. As someone who grew up with this habit, it was easy for me to accommodate and try addressing people as uncles. At first, for those who didn't know I was an Arabic speaker, it was relatively surprising, but it gradually became comfortable and they addressed me as their "uncle" too, acknowledging the relationship. However, as pointed out by one of my interviewees, there is a difference between calling someone an "uncle" and calling them "my uncle"; the addition of the personalized element depends on age and gender dynamics. My interviewee explained that there are certain instances where it becomes almost impossible to relate to the person, because of their age, ideology and their social stance, but due to the commonalities brought about by their knowledge of Arabic, the person would be reduced to "*aam*" (an uncle) instead of "*aamo*" (my uncle). Another interviewee pointed out that the use

of the personalized version of one's uncle entailed a certain sense of femininity or childishness, thus considering it emasculating for the speaker.

There are also more neutral alternatives when certain age, gender or political ideologies come into play; one common term to use is predominantly used in the context of the marketplace or any other informal business setting where Arabic speakers can address the shopkeeper using the term "*muallem*" which refers to one's teacher or mentor. A more formal derivative of this was the term "*Ustaz*" which has the same meaning as a teacher, but it includes a sense of formality. This also entails some sense of acknowledgement without including the Kinning element, signalling it a more formal version of an informal address. When asked when these words would come into play, almost all of my interviewees pointed out the need for a fundamental cultural and ideological gap for this formality to replace the otherwise commonly used kinning alternative of an uncle, or brother. One of my interviewees who is currently a university student in Berlin explained that terms such as the Arabic alternative to the teacher are used as a means to nullify the religious connotation of certain fictive kinship terminology. He clarified his idea by stating:

> In my neighbourhood in Damascus, we used *Muallem* as of teacher in Arabic to interact with strangers. I find myself using this term more than brother/Sister when speaking to strangers. It is interesting as I believe that there are no specific reasons I would not use Brother/sister. However, the more I think about it, I do think it's due to the strong religious connotations the terms have, such as "we are all brothers and sisters in Islam".

In the chapter that follows I explain the extent to which these fictive kinship patterns are used, and internalize, to create different subgroups among the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin. I observe fictive kinship as a tool for the creation of safe spaces, since in a theoretical sense, a safe space is defined as one that includes people who share an outlook, or a discourse.[75] I observe the process of fictive kinning as a means to sever the asymmetry mentioned by one

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[75] Stoudt, 'The Role of Language & Discourse in the Investigation of Privilege'.

of my interviewees. In the last chapter, I return to the essence of kinning by analyzing different ways in which certain terminologies replace people's names and social identities, eventually making their way to their tombstones.

Maintaining Locales of Friendship

Safe Spaces

Having deconstructed how certain fictive kinship not only defines a person's social standing but also hints at their migration stance and social standing, in this subtopic I look into the creations of safe spaces for community formation that were initiated based on the fictive kinship language structures. I look into a few diverse sets of community subgroups, ranging from social circles based on artistic and cultural endeavours, to those structured around labour statuses. Similar studies conducted on migrant subcommunity formation, are also largely defined by certain social spaces and specific places which constitute meeting points, be it public or private.

Throughout my fieldwork, I noticed several layers of Arabic-speaking communal spaces in Berlin. First, there were certain intellectual circles, particularly those who were fit in the greater art and cultural scheme, this subgroup was fundamentally observed in different Art spaces and Arab-oriented libraries across the city. It was also common for there to be certain meeting points beyond the intellectual sphere, in pubs and bars beyond the Arab street, ones that were specifically targeting people of a specific ideological and sociopolitical background. Such were places that were known for their relatively "Berliner" style, contrary to the Arab markets. I was advised to visit several such closed spaces, which predominantly included young adults, from different Arabic-speaking national, religious and political backgrounds, and of diverse gender identities. It was this sense of diversity that had created a safe space, similar to those spoken of when reading about the establishment of queer community safe spaces in different cities. Therefore, looking at it from the perspective of urban citizenship, one can argue that my findings throughout this ethnographic fieldwork can be understood through the realm of safe space formation, particularly for people of a specific liberal ideological inclination.

My fieldwork made me pinpoint the parameters of three simultaneous circles of safe spaces, that although intertwined, predominantly included different factions of the Arabic-speaking migrant community in Berlin. There was a greater community of migrants of different backgrounds, be it Arabic speakers or the lack thereof, who were said to treat Arabic speakers as less alienated than the locals of Berlin, as explained by most of my interviewees. Then there was the subsequent Arabic-speaking migrant community, with a variation of communal relationship that was predominantly language based; the third was the different subgroups of the Arabic-speaking community, such as the art and cultural one, which is intertwined with intellectual subcommunities as well as various religious or national communities, each with their agendas and ideologies.

Using the concept of the language of safe space, when asked my interviewees whether the presence of an Arabic-speaking community in Berlin had insinuated a sense of calm and belonging to them when they first arrived in Berlin, most of the answers I received were positive, stating that the presence of an Arabic speaking community, although it did not impact their lives drastically, had created some variation of a cultural safety net, validating that they are moving to a region that has been previously exposed to Arabic speaking migrant people, while also insinuating the presence of various cultural subcommunities within the linguistic community of Arabic speakers in Berlin. Therefore, although not necessarily the essence of everyday friendships, there was a sense of identification that was reinforced when thinking of Berlin as a destination with an already established Arabic-speaking community.

When asked whether it is important for the interviewees to have Arabic-speaking friends, I received a series of different answers, most of them with the same thematic inclinations, explaining that although most of my interviewees had friends from different national, ideological and religious backgrounds, it was often easier for them to have friends who spoke their language, even if they had an excellent command of English and German. As

explained by one of my interviewees, when initially moving to Berlin, it was important for them to have a local community that they could lean on, yet with the eventual understanding that locals and the contemporary Arabic-speaking migrant have different understandings of power structures, different experiences with immigration as well as different outlooks on life, it was often easier to connect with Arabic speakers who had similar experiences. The interviewee went on to explain that this does not necessarily include Arabic speakers of all ideological backgrounds, since certain people are only connected with their shared immigration experiences and no common interests; however, the presence of a cultural meeting point, reinforced with experiences of immigration, homesickness, and an ideological inclination, prepares the foreground of a friendship that can function within the parameters of eventual kinship.

Yet there was the narrative of space that ranged throughout most of the discussions that centred around friendship. My leading question was to ask which district the interviewees lived in, and what that meant for them. Most of the people I spoke to mentioned that lived relatively close to Arabic-speaking people and the Arab market of Sonnenallee. As mentioned by one of my interviewees: "It is indeed great to go grab Syrian Shawarma whenever I feel like it. It makes it accessible to me, and I think there is comfort in that. I have no one back in Syria so I think what I miss is my family that is scattered around the globe and food rather than the land/streets itself. Berlin compensates for the food part."

A diner in Sonnenallee called "Aldimashqi" which translates to "the one from Damascus", photo by Ralf Günther via https://www.bz-berlin.de/

People of different generations had different understandings of this question, some mentioned that they had moved away, wanting to live a more "Berliner experience" and tried to live in districts that did not include any Arabic speakers. However, one of my interviewees with an academic background in the social sciences mentioned that her understanding of the Arab community in Berlin changed drastically after she spent five years in Berlin. She explained that although she tried to move away from the Arabic-speaking people, strictly befriending Germans, she noticed that there was a cultural difference and she felt alien to her surroundings, gradually deciding to move to the Neukolln to feel closer to home. I asked whether her understanding of home was still that of her childhood since she had spent most of her life in Berlin, and she explained that although she sees herself as an Arab woman, her experience with home involves the familiarity of Arabic-speaking people and their "cultural warmth", coupled with Berlin's lifestyle. Her experience with the place of Berlin is similar to those of the Italian-speaking community in Chicago, who although tried to move away from their quarters and integrate into the American community, they noticed a sense of alienation, thus returning to their community with a deeper understanding and appreciation of their cultural specificities.[76] In the section that follows I look into the extent to which special elements of safety and familiarity morph into a greater understanding of a chosen family, particularly through the language of kinship.

Kinship as Humor: Friendships

The transition from friendship to kinship is highly debated in kinship theories of anthropology. However, when looking at kinship studies which fall within the subset of queer families, the essence of friendship being the stepping stone to kin-formation is a common

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[76] Knottnerus and Loconto, 'Strategic Ritualization and Ethnicity: Atypology and Analysis of Ritual Enactments in an Italian American Community'.

aspect, as explained in my conceptual framework by referring to the concept of "chosen families". In this subtopic, I deconstruct the essence of these chosen families, explaining the dynamics of fictive kinship that gradually lose their fictive status, creating a variety of kinship and friendship which is defined by the use of kinship terminology in a friendship setting predominantly mediated by humour.

Sociologists often study humour as a cultural phenomenon.[77] In Berlin, when I asked people about their specific encounters with Arabic-speaking people, and whether they used kinship terminology, humour was not the answer I was anticipating. It was in these friendships that were newly budding yet established with fellow Arabic speakers that several of my interviewees emphasized the use of traditional kinship terminology as a humorous way of breaking the formality of using a person's first name. Since it is not common to use the person's name in Arabic, the fictive kinship terminology that I explain in my first empirical chapter was used as a means of not only breaking the ice but also establishing inside jokes about who can be classified as a brother, and which terms to use for which person. An example of this would be a newly established friend group calling a specific person with the Syrian dialect alternative of brother (*khayo*) as a way to emphasize his national background, while another who dressed formally was addressed by the Modern Standard Arabic term of brother (*al akh*). Through my participant observation, I encountered these terms being used with people of all genders, therefore the denominator of the term "brother" was not a specific male figure or a specific age group as it would have been had this study been conducted in the context of contemporary Beirut.

Therefore, initiating the first budding parameters of an eventual understanding of traditional kinship patterns in contemporary Arabic-speaking migrant communities in Berlin.

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[77] Kutz-Flamenbaum, 'Humor and Social Movements'.

When asked to elaborate on how kinship is used as a linguistic means of bridging the gap between formality and friendship. This in turn creates a variation of a safe space which functions as a fence that protects the members of the community, while also functioning as a gate for outsiders wanting access to the community. Therefore, the use of Arabic becomes a means through which certain ideological boundaries are met, bringing together various spaces of communal belonging to members of the Arabic-speaking migrant community in Berlin. This is a common form of friendship formation that is also among members of other migrant communities, who use and teach their native language as a means to present an essence of community formation that is reinforced by a linguistic identity – such is the case of the Kurdish community in the levant and the Armenian diaspora communities across different countries.[78] This might also arguably be the reason behind certain Arabic language centres, particularly targeting second and third-generation migrants who aspire to learn Arabic at a later stage in life. There are several such organizations all across the city, with virtual and in-person services, including language training that focuses on different dialects of Arabic. As explained by one of my interviewees, this is used as a means to fight against the fear of people losing touch with their "Arab side," or certain dialects losing their power and essence because diaspora children fail to learn and use it.

Photo from one of the Arabic libraries in Berlin that enables
people to borrow and share books, via Arabnews.com

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[78] Ergin Öpengin, 'Sociolinguistic Situation of Kurdish in Turkey'; Sahradyan and Elo, 'The Role of Linguistic Resources in the Institutional Organisation of the Armenian Diaspora in Finland'.

As pointed point by several interviewees, there is a variation of Berlin Arabic that takes its toll over a standard use of Arabic. That is, the dialect that people use in Berlin are often levelled so that they can be understood by people of different national backgrounds. However, through this act of levelling that is practised by people of drastically different backgrounds, the dialect that appears is not necessarily a standard version of Arabic that is used elsewhere. Linguistically speaking, several interviewees pointed out the integration of specifically Syrian terms after the arrival of the Syrian community in Berlin. They also pointed out that earlier communities use certain terms that are not known to the newer migrants since they refer to terms that are no longer used in the Arab world but have been passed down through several generations in Berlin. It would be interesting to study the specific parameters of Berlin's Arabic dialect, which has been extensively influenced by German, as well as the presence of other migrant communities, such as the Turkish one. Although I do not have the linguistic tools to understand the essence of the community formation that is brought about by the use of this specific variation of Arabic, I was told by people of different educational and national backgrounds that there is a sense of identification with people who speak this specific version of Arabic, thus enabling them to not only relate to the other Arabic speaker's migration to Berlin but also to signify a sense of greater community establishment, as I explain at the beginning of this chapter. In the chapter that follows, I will look into how certain kinship terminologies are solidified by referring to honorary titles that were able to outstand the challenge of time.

Solidifying Kinship

Honorary Titles

In the first empirical chapter of this thesis, I discuss the extent to which kinship terminology is used as a defining factor of social relations. In the second empirical chapter, I use my ethnography as a guide to understanding the establishment of friendships and the extent to which they are foiled and reinforced by kinship terminology. In this chapter, I describe how kinship relations become an integral part of one's social standing in the Arabic-speaking community in Berlin by focusing on both the honorary associations made with identifying with one's next of kin, be it biological or social kinship. Then I look into the extent to which these titles become solidified within the parameters of contemporary understandings of kinship by observing engravings on various graves and tombstones across Berlin.

As explained in my conceptual framework, I approach kinship in its post-Schneider sense, predominantly focusing on the social implications of kinning that either enhance one's social standing or enable a sense of community formation. Therefore, my understanding of kinship is a performative one. A social experiment that I conducted throughout my fieldwork was approaching Arabic speakers of different national and religious backgrounds with different greetings ranging from a religious one to a neutral Arabic greeting, to an English and German one. Based on their response, I recorded the fictive kinship elements that followed. As I noticed, when approached in a relatively religious setting with a religious greeting, I was immediately addressed as a sister – this goes back to my conceptual framework about the relationship between the connotation of calling someone a sibling, contrary to addressing them as a cousin or relative. However, when addressed with a neutral Arabic term, I was often addressed as a cousin, or even just using a feminine respectful term. Yet, the experiment was particularly interesting when they knew I spoke Arabic, but I chose to speak English or German with them,

enabling a sense of distance between us; it was in this scenario that I was unable to be kinned, with little to no kinship terminology used to refer to me. I found that one way to combat this was to use kinship terms that people identified with. For instance, it is a common tradition for Arab men to identify with the name of their first-born male child. That is when addressing a person, they would no longer be addressed by their first name, but rather as "father of" followed by the son's name. Whenever I used these intricate and personalized titles of people, I was inherently referred to as a sibling, reducing all social barriers, even if I had greeted them in English.

I found this particularly interesting and started asking people why they had chosen to abide by this traditional naming pattern which, in the context of the Arab world, is perceived as one that is used by traditionalist and religious people.[79] I was told by several young adult men that they found pride in using the name of their children because it reinforced a sense of belonging to the community that their fathers belonged to, even if it is geographically far from it. A third-generation Palestinian man explained to me that he feels that there are very few elements that he has yet to hold onto from his family's understanding of Arab traditions, and this happens to be one that he can publicly practice in Berlin. Another pointed out that although he appreciates the traditional sentiment that this creates for people and their families by reinforcing a pattern that they are nostalgic about, the need to use the male child's name was uncomfortable for him. He explained that although he wants to keep the tradition, he does not want his daughters growing up to think less of him for not using their names as well, so instead of being addressed as the "father of" followed by his son's name, he had told people to call him based on the "father of" followed by his daughter's name. In his words, this act of religion was not against the traditional adoption of kinship terminology to identify oneself by their family, but it was rather an act of going against reproducing patriarchal norms to reinforce his

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[79] Cerchiaro, "'In the Name of the Children'".

daughter's experience with Arabic as a language that does not necessarily have to reinforce patriarchal relations. I found this approach to be considerably interesting which lead me to interview people of different age groups, asking why they chose to identify with their children, and to what extent this identification had to be biological.

An elderly woman who had been in Berlin since her youth explained to me that there is no such thing as biological when it comes to her family because she had to leave behind so many of her loved ones that she currently considers her friends and relatives to be her family. When asked whether she would call herself by the name of anyone besides her biological children, she explained that the biological dimensions of the relationship were irrelevant to her, which is why she felt comfortable identifying as the next of kin to the German woman who had been taking care of her for over a decade. Her understanding of kinship made me realize the extent to which in the context of the Arab world, these terminologies would be deeply rooted in our understanding of biological family, but for people who had to leave behind large factions of their families, these titles become synonymous with care, nurture and affection.

I walked into a restaurant called "Baba" which is the slang term for father, and I asked the man who worked there if I could speak to the owner. When meeting the owner, he explained to me that the shop was a means of honouring the man who taught him how to cook when he moved to Berlin as a construction worker. I asked if the man was his biological father, and he smiled, saying that a "Baba" does not have to be one of care, but it can be one of love and respect. These titles were solidified in ways that people would not only identify with them for strangers but knowing who identifies with which title inherently made one a member of their community, making kinship terminology and the knowledge of its intricacies a gateway to inclusion into a larger social circle.

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Tombstones

The thought of solidification of certain titles made me find my way into the public graveyards of Berlin, looking for traces of the Arabic-speaking community who had initially moved there, either via educational recruitment or by becoming mercenaries. As explained in the chapter where I focus on the historical development and the layers of Arabic speaker's arrival to Berlin, the generational differences between Arabic speakers who had been established in Berlin before the second world war, and the contemporary ones, are closely intertwined yet their social status is a drastic difference. The initial arrival of Arabic speakers was funded by schools, it was centred around an understanding of Arabic speakers as educators who could prepare soldiers and missionaries to be sent to the Middle East. However, over time, the perception of the Arabic-speaking migrant was no longer that of an educator but rather as one who was a representative of affordable labour, which eventually became a marker for people who were fleeing war crimes. This transition can be seen by observing the different tombstones across Berlin's graveyards, ranging from the ones in the Islamic Cemetery that were established near the quarters of a mosque that was used as a mercenary recruitment strategy.

My initial explanation of the sociolinguistic dynamics of fictive kinship can be traced through the totality of the cemeteries, with the tombstones of Arabic speakers from different periods. However, one common denominator is the usage of the Arabic language, with references to either religious or culturally specific sayings coupled with some kinship markers. For instance, I found several tombstones that mentioned the names of the children of the deceased, or those mentioning the name of the parents of the deceased. However, any also included their socially assigned kin titles, such as the loving brother – with an evident reference of this relationship being one that is not biological. Having spoken to experts who compared this to the tombstones of non-Arab people, one of them explained that this happens because of the absence of an immediate family to identify with, particularly when it comes to people of

certain war regions whose families were not only left behind but also deceased or lost. The recreation of kinship ties to replace biological ones was seen as a means of not only community formation but also to establish oneself to a greater family unit, even If no biological ties were observed. It is this fundamental essence of kinship that I trace back to my historical chapter, arguing that with the arrival of layers of different Arabic-speaking migrants to Berlin, there was a sense of community formation that can easily be understood through the observation of kinship terminology across different generations.

I asked one of my interviewees who identified as a conservative man whether he would want an Arabic saying, his children's names, or his parents' names on his grave, and he stated that having any sense of grounding in family, be it biological or linguistic, is the only way he could feel at home in a land that was not his own.

Concluding Remarks

There are a plethora of gaps and limitations that not only impact my research findings but can also be used as a starting point for future research projects within a similar scope. First, there is the problem of my positionality as I discuss throughout my methodology, which includes my accent and dialect of a Lebanese Christian person that not only dictate people's behaviour towards me but can also trigger some prejudices regarding my social stance and perception of my migration experiences. Second, I cannot understand the context of migration to its fullest, because I am not an Arabic-speaking migrant in Berlin, although I was welcomed into the community during my ethnographic fieldwork. Then comes people's perception of me, including my gender and age which might have come in the way of some interviewee's in-depth answers because of the fundamental age difference or the traditional Arab understanding of certain hardships that cannot be shared with women to avoid emasculation. A fourth factor that impacted my research was its duration, my ethnographic fieldwork was also during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which has me wondering to what extent my findings might have been similar under different circumstances. An approach-based gap in my research is the fact that I do not have an in-depth engagement with policies of migration to Berlin and the subsequent integration frameworks that impact people of different nationalities and educational backgrounds. My last limitation was my inability to have access to archives that were chronologically documenting the lives of Arabic speakers in Berlin, with a fundamental gap being my inability to access World War Two references regarding Arabic speakers and the extent to which their realities had changed due to the war and its atrocities. Therefore, although there is a chronological gap in my thesis, the argument of kin-based community formation is one that I follow thematically, from the arrival of Arabic speakers to Berlin as educators to the last wave of contemporary Arabic-speaking immigrants fleeing the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis.

I use this thesis as a starting point regarding an alternative of kinship terminology that is both post-Schneider and also evolutionary since it is based on a variation of community formation that promotes some sense of continuity by recreating certain principles of communication. Throughout my fieldwork in Berlin, I visited several sites, and spoke to people from diverse backgrounds, with different accents, dialects and experiences. Each person had their narrative of migration, no two were identical, but some threads could be seen sewn throughout each of them. Several people pointed out that at first, they wished to make peace with their migration journeys, learning German and trying to "integrate". However, much like the academic conflict regarding the nature and the predispositions of the term "integration", the experiences of people were also ones that lead them to have their kind of relationships with other Arabs. This relationship, be it is seen through the lens of kinship, or that of community formation, was said to function as a safe space. Although not safe for all factions of the same community at the same time, it enabled the creation of certain bubbles that not only provided a familiar type of care but also nurtured a linguistic jargon.

It was within those bubbles that I could retrace my understanding of kinship, being used in its fictive sense to bind people with different experiences. As the structure of this thesis explains, my first encounters were with the linguistic derivatives of kinship, followed by parameters of kinship that were signals of friendship formation which in turn nurtured safe spaces for people to cultivate their understanding of a chosen family. By the end of my fieldwork, I had understood the importance of the kinship terminology for people who found refuge within the parameters of identification that were traditionally used in their home countries, which is a concept that I focus on when explaining honorary titles, and those that found their way unto tombstones. Due to the intricate and personal nature of my ethnographic fieldwork, I had the chance to speak to very interesting people, with their input regarding their ideological understandings of kinship terminology. This thesis allowed me to conceptualize

kinship terminology as a mere tool for community formation, that is used as a means to form ties, strengthen them, and eternalize them by replacing people's names and identities with that of their relationship with their kin.

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