Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

M30-IR - Master's Thesis
30 ECTS
Noragric

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT: A LONGITUDINAL CASE STUDY OF IRAQI CHRISTIANS IN KURDISTAN

Word count: 27,735

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MSc International Relations

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Acronyms

AST	Arabia Standard Time
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
DPA	Data Protection Act
EAR	East African Rift
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
GPID	Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
GT	Grounded theory
HLP	High-Level Panel
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally displaced person/ people
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
MoDM	Ministry of Displacement and Migration
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIMBY	Not in my back yard
OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODT	Optimal distinctiveness theory
QDA	Qualitative data analysis
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	Social identity theory
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNSDCF	United Nation Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

In February 2020, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's High-Level Panel (HLP) on internal displacement set out to establish concrete solutions to the perennial exodus of millions of people across the globe. With the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic two weeks later, proceedings were put on hold so that individuals could limit their movement and stay safe in the security of their homes. However, for millions across the globe, the threats presented by the virus were offset by threats of conflicts or disasters. Remaining at home was not an option for everyone. With the last report of displacement documenting an upshot of 55 million internally displaced people (IDP) in 2020 (IDMC, 2021), the next set of statistics after a global pandemic and Europe's largest forced displacement crisis in decades currently taking place in Ukraine, will be far more disturbing. Unlike refugees who have crossed a border and are, therefore, protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention, IDPs exist in a legal void. The fact they remain within the geographical parameters of their country, alongside the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) inaction for fear of violating national sovereignty, mean that the plight of this community continues to intensify. Despite the existence of normative UNHCR frameworks, including the recent establishment of the HLP, these projects have so far only paid lip service to participatory rhetoric (Erdem, Özevin and Özselçuk, 2003). No formal protection of, or accountability for, this group has been formulated.

In the context of the unremitting crisis of protracted internal displacement, this empirical longitudinal study draws attention to the critical inadequacies of the international community in meaningfully responding to the problem of chronic displacement. Specifically, this study extends social identity theory (SIT) to include elements based on internal migration and religious persecution in order to examine the case of autochthonous Christian minorities from Iraq who currently live as protracted IDPs under the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Drawing on key SIT concepts, such as optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), and existing IDP literature, this study theoretically analyses first-hand accounts of displacement to frame the effects of liminality in hyphenated spaces on the construction of personal identity. The key contribution of this research is to highlight the urgency for legal definitions of internal displacement and legally binding constitutional provisions, including a distinct case for ethno-religious IDPs. This thesis makes the case for comprehensive monitoring and assessment

mechanisms that prudently oversee viable and durable solutions to displacement in order to foster positive identities. The insights generated contribute to understanding a hugely neglected domain of migration at a juncture where the stalemates of debates concerning solutions to the current status quo are acutely unsustainable.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Internal displacement is a human rights issue of major proportions. It is neither a novel nor emerging phenomenon. Conceptual and empirical understanding of internal displacement has continued to evolve for over half a century. Causes of displacement can include natural factors, such as climate change, as well as human factors, including armed conflicts and the increasing gap amid the winners and losers of globalisation. Whatever its trigger, displacement must always be treated as a "phenomenon in need of remedy" (Hassine and Leckie, 2015: XVI). However, in the specific case when human conflict drives displacement, the hesitancy of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to infringe upon national sovereignty of states means that the response to this form of migration across the globe has been deeply inadequate. The rising figure of individuals caught in protracted and chronic patterns of displacement is currently the highest ever recorded, underscoring the omission of humanitarian exploitation and the requisite of resolute efforts by constitutional and practical stakeholders to address the shocking and growing numbers of IDPs. While ubiquitous refugee literature comprises the dominant exodus

narrative, this thesis looks to fill the lacunae in migration literature by conducting a nuanced first-hand study of the plight of Iraqi citizens within their own borders. In light of unprecedented forced migration endured by this community over the last few decades, with 2.5 million Iraqis (OCHAa, 2022; OCHAb, 2022) currently experiencing internal displacement, this study specifically investigates the complex dynamics of the unprecedented ethno-religious and humanitarian crises that have led to the predicament of Iraqi IDPs. By drawing on SIT to analyse 22 qualitative interviews with Christian Iraqi IDPs who have migrated to Iraqi Kurdistan, this longitudinal study (2019-2022) intends to answer the key research questions concerning the relationship between persecution and identity, how Iraqi IDPs can achieve a positive social identity, what legal actions can be taken to achieve justice and how this case study can inform the broader IDP situation. Answering these questions will help provide a lucid framework for understanding the current situation and will hopefully inform policy making and action to generate real-world impact.

Motivations for this project are multi-dimensional. Firstly, this research is a systematic effort to understand antecedents and consequences of internal displacement. This includes the causes of forced migration, the legal nature of displacement, and existing policy failures by NGOs such as the UNHCR. Secondly, the dissemination of the data produced looks to fill gaps in existing IDP literature, serving to highlight of the urgency of displacement and hopefully generating an active response to end the perennial exodus of this vulnerable community. With the number of displaced Iraqi Christians in Kurdistan estimated to be less than 1 million, granting them legally enforceable civil liberty protection under international law on the premise of religious discrimination would afford early victory for the recently established HLP on internal displacement. This, in turn, could inform future research and reforms, serving as a catalyst to ultimately reduce the global number of IDPs. A final motivation for writing this thesis is the researcher's intrinsic personal interest, as a native Briton with Iraqi-Christian heritage, whose extended family members currently live as IDPs in the volatile territory of Iraqi Kurdistan.

1.2 Dissertation structure

This investigation begins by establishing key objectives and research questions. Objectives concern the overarching study intentions, namely understanding the underpinnings of displacement, as well as existing human rights policy protections, the effect of displacement on the identity of IDPs and insights into personal IDPs opinions on change going forward. The research questions produced from these themes then look to translate objectives into

answerable enquiries. This includes converting the dialogue from the existing implications of displacement on identity, to the necessary steps towards achieving a positive identity for these subjects. Mapping out these objectives and research questions at the beginning of the thesis is essential to the construction and coherence of the study. These objectives will be continually referred to throughout the thesis, and the data produced will be used to answer the research questions established at the beginning.

The next section, chapter three, provides a conceptually-rich foundation for understanding the constituents and nature of displacement. Based on an in-depth literature review, this section explores the legal status of displaced people, including comparative definitions of refugees, IDPs and stateless persons, the current barriers to return, namely security and economic issues. A comprehensive literature review of key words such as 'IDPs', as well as 'Christians' and 'Iraq' is conducted in order to facilitate familiarity with and understanding of the existing research, as well as to identify gaps in literature that this paper looks to fill. This section also investigates the role of the international community, specifically the evolution of UNHCR support models. Understanding the make-up of internal displacement is important in framing section four, which introduces the case-specific displacement example of Iraqi Christians. This section narrates the plight of this displaced community, from the colonial legacies of the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement to the wrath of radical organisation ISIS. The collateral damage of this arduous history is discussed through the specific lens of the impact on Iraqi IDPs and the associated risks of displacement for this community. This is followed by a discussion of genocidal claims pertaining to this community.

The theoretical framework of the research is then introduced in section five. By employing SIT, a theory concerning the evolution of identities and intergroup behaviour, this section looks to frame the lived experiences of Iraqi Christian IDPs and the barriers that displacement presents to achieving a positive identity. Section five draws on key SIT concepts such as OTD, the notion that individuals seek to achieve a balance between assimilation and differentiation from others, in order to explain behaviours within society. This work is built upon a body of literature that purposefully recognises and reflects on shifting identities. Specifically, a discussion of ascriptive and affective identity features, as well as the role of in-group-out-group dynamics (Turner et al., 2012) in fostering a positive self-hood, will be explored in the context of Iraqi Christian IDPs who have migrated to Kurdistan.

Drawing on SIT and the importance of combating threats to achieving a positive identity, section six details the research design of the empirical study. This section outlines the qualitative interviews with internally displaced Iraqi Christians living in Kurdistan, navigating important triangulation decisions. Methodological choices explored include sample size and

how to conduct interviews in a COVID-19 context. The research design also looks at data analysis decisions, reflexivity surrounding the researcher positionality, inherent ethical issues, and research limitations.

Section seven then presents the findings from the qualitative interviews, detailing the personal responses of Iraqi Christian IDP respondents who live in Erbil and Duhok from 2019 to 2022. Generational insights and the relationship between displacement and negative identities are drawn from this data. Informed by the findings in section seven, chapter eight considers resolutions to the internal displacement problem at hand, considering the path of the persecuted Iraqi Christian community towards both achieving a positive social identity and, ultimately, justice. This section reflects on how the findings can facilitate a workable framework for practical action that can alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi Christian IDP community, and the broader IDP community. Discussions include gaps in legal definitions and frameworks to protect these communities. This section extends recommendation discussions by looking specifically at bringing about justice for the crimes against humanity committed in the case of this particular community. This includes discussions on how the international community can move forward, providing solutions such as establishing an ad hoc tribunal to prosecute ISIS members for their crimes, as well as implementing comprehensive monitoring and assessment mechanisms and legally binding frameworks. Finally, implications for theory, policy and practice are discussed.

Chapter 2. Research objectives and questions

This research project applies SIT in order to evaluate how the subjection of Iraqi Christian IDPs, and their revised position in society as the minority out-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) in Erbil and Duhok, has impacted their ability to achieve a positive social identity. This is a longitudinal study, where the results produced from 2022 will be compared with data produced in 2019, with the same subjects and the same research questions. The intention of this research is to provide first-hand comparative data to reflect the feelings and attitudes of a sample group of Iraqi Christian IDPs. Adequate representation of the persecution of this particular community through a SIT lens, to highlight the urgency for better protections in order to bring about justice, is the main outcome of this project.

2.1 Research objectives

In order to narrow the focus of the research project, several objectives have been established within the overarching study intentions:

- Understanding what internal displacement is, including causes as well as barriers to ending their involuntary displacement
- Understanding what frameworks currently exist for the protection of these communities.
- Exploring specifically the reasons for, and scope of, the persecution of Iraqi Christians including through examination of historical, political, and social contexts.
- Understanding the effects of this persecution on the identity of the Iraqi IDPs, as well as how these identities are formed and change over time.
- Establishing constructive insights into how Iraqi Christian IDPs can be better protected and considering how justice might be reached in order to achieve a positive identity. Within this, considering necessary charges of genocide – reviewing the atrocity of the crimes and prevention responses.

2.2 Research questions

For the purpose of concretising these objectives, I have formulated four key research questions and hypotheses that this research intends to answer:

RQ 1: How has persecution affected identity of Iraqi Christian IDPs?

RQ 2: How can a positive social identity for Iraqi IDPs be reinforced?

RQ 3: What legal actions can be taken in order to achieve justice for the crimes committed against Iraqi Christian citizens?

RQ 4: How can this case study of Iraqi IDPs help us understand and theorise issues of displacement?

To answer these questions adequately in a way that the victims of the plight, Iraqi Christian IDPs, feel best addresses the situation, it was important that the they were asked directly. The research strategy of this social-constructivist (Lombardo and Kantola, 2021) project, wherein knowledge is a shared experience that develops as a result of social interaction, therefore entails an empirical longitudinal study of these communities, their struggle and

personal opinions on how their situation might be improved. Accordingly, this research conducts two sets of 22 semi-structured qualitative online interviews with Iraqi Christian IDPs, using the Gioia method (Corley and Gioia, 2004; 2013) to reduce the answers into key themes that help frame the pressing issues and inform the international community as to what actions need to be taken. The research is carried out using SIT as the central theoretical framework in order to analyse the impact of displacement on identity. This is highly relevant in the context of a growing number of IDPs, in order to prevent more people from becoming internally displaced, as well as to help those who are currently experiencing protracted displacement. I anticipated several limitations, including language barriers and interviewing during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as respondents' uncertainty about their futures. However, as I explore in the research section, comprehensive measures were taken in order to mitigate these challenges. This included opting for online interviews, a native Arabic speaker facilitating the interviews when necessary, researcher reflexivity, and establishing a comprehensive literature review to underpin the research project. My hope in fulfilling these objectives and examining the research questions is to fill the void of internal displacement literature, specifically along ethno-religious lines, and to provide a lifeline for this neglected community by highlighting the plight of Iraqi Christian IDPs

Chapter 3. Internal displacement

The 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (Desa, 2016), which looks to strengthen the shared pledge of universal peace and security, explicitly states that internal displacement is one of the central challenges to sustainable development in our 21st century context. Despite the commitment of the UN's 2015 17 Social Development Goals (SDGs) to "leave no one behind" (United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, 2021: ii), IDPs remain neglected at regional, national and international levels. This exodus of individuals and communities hinders national development plans, national and personal security, international relations and politics, as well as NGO negotiations and peace processes (Abd Ali et al., 2020; International Peace Institute, 2018). This includes obstacles to achieving several of the SDGs, including; SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. All of these goals are interlinked and unattainable if displacement remains endemic. While some countries, including Somalia and Colombia, have incorporated detailed measures to combat displacement in their respective 2021-2025 United Nation Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the majority of nation states across the globe have pushed internal displacement to the back of their

agenda. Most recently, Russia's military offensive and invasion of Ukraine has seen the internal displacement of over 7.1 million Ukrainians (IOM UN Migration, 2022) so far, triggering Europe's biggest forced displacement crisis in decades. With internal displacement constituting a threat to national harmony and security, protecting the internally displaced community should be an essential component of any comprehensive strategy to resolve conflict and create peace (Dirikgil, 2022). The case of IDPs calls for national and international dynamism, not simply due to human rights concerns, but also because of a collective investment in national and global stability. Understanding the fundamentals of displacement is key in framing how this community has emerged, the complexities of their struggles, and the kind of attention needed to mitigate and end their protracted displacement and endangered status.

3.1 Internal displacement

3.1.1 Definitions and legal status

The UNHCR was established in 1950 with the directive to protect refugees, IDPs and stateless persons, supporting their willing repatriation and local integration in their country of origin, or refuge in another country. At 55 million globally (IDMC, 2021), IDPs constitute the greatest and most rapidly-rising category of *persons of concern* (see below). This contrasts with the world's 26.6 million refugees and 4.4 million asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2022c). In order to present the predicament that the "most vulnerable [category] of the human family" (OCHA, 2004) find themselves in, Table 1 presents four classifications of *persons of concern* as understood within the UNHCR.

Given that they remain within the geographical parameters of their country's borders, IDPs are not eligible for security under the 1951 Refugee Geneva Convention, which details border crossing as "the determinant of a person's edibility of international protection" (Lee, 1996: 38 –39). Consequently, IDPs are not entitled to claim any extra protections as those experienced by their compatriots, including protections against political or other forms of persecution. Having crossed a national border and therefore "become an international problem worthy of media attention" (de Alwis, 2021: 457), refugees have become more visible globally than IDPs. On the contrary, the violation and displacement of IDPs takes place within national borders where there are fewer people witnessing the human rights abuse as media access, as well as humanitarian presence, is "at the discretion of the nation-state, which is frequently the perpetrator of the violence resulting in displacement" (de Alwis, 2021: 458). This invisibility creates a vicious cycle. The less visible IDPs are, the less support they receive. The more they

are pushed to the back of the agenda, the further they fall into obscurity and neglect. This neglect results often results in a form of slow violence (de Alwis, 2021; Hyndman, 2019) understood as protracted displacement, a label which very few seem to free themselves of once they receive it.

In some cases of displacement, internal migration has been considered a positive

Table 1. Classification of persons of concern

Terminology	Definition
IDP	"Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border" (Deng, 1999:1).
Protracted IDP	An IDP who has been displaced for "5 years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions" (UNCHR, 2009).
Refugees	"People who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country" (UNHCR, 2021).
Stateless persons	An individual who is not "considered as a national by any State under operation of its law" (UNHCR, 1954: 3).

phenomenon. In 1946, post WWII, the United Kingdom introduced the New Towns Act (Forsyth and Pesiser, 2019). This movement purposefully built new houses in 20 new garden cities, such as Letchworth and Welwyn, in order to remedy overcrowding and congestion. This displacement was deemed necessary in order provide a better quality of existence for individuals and the broader community. Relocating voluntary citizens, who were living in dire poverty, to freshly constructed towns proved to be an economic, social and cultural success, with little opposition from those who were being displaced. While this example had positive outcomes and improved the lives of those impacted by migration, this case study is considered largely anomalous in the broader panorama of internal displacement. The reality of the majority of internal displacement is involuntary, dangerous and often a product of grave injustice, seldom upgrading them to new housing but rather to decrepit temporary accommodation or camps. With the majority of IDPs often dependant on an oppressive state (often the state that rendered them as IDPs in the first place) for human right protections, their positioning is doubly

precarious. For many, displacement signifies a betrayal of the social contract between states and their citizens, a violation of the obligation of the state to protect its citizens. Former US Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke (2000) encapsulated the reality of life as an IDP, wherein the "safety and the well-being of you and your family could turn on the geographic accident of whether you had crossed a border". Holbrooke critiqued what he considered as "sterile […] bureaucratic euphemisms and acronyms" ascribed to internally displaced communities that allow us to overlook these people and place innocent victims in a category that "differentiates them from refugees eligible for UNHCR help" (Holbrooke, 2000). The "anodyne lingo" (Weiss and Korn, 2006: 2) that circulates the IDP narrative fails to illustrate the immeasurable human hardship endured by this community. Given that the definition of an IDP is descriptive, rather than legal, IDPs have become disfranchised in bureaucratic liminal spaces without the official safeguards afforded to refugees. Those who fall under the umbrella of internal displacement subsequently constitute the "lowest status of human existence under the UN Charter", deprived of "dignity, integrity and humanity" (Abdul-Nour, 2016: 140) and the basic right to life and liberty.

3.1.2 Literature review

The myriad forms of internal displacement, including indefinite displacement, as well as circular and hidden displacement, make this community particularly complex to address, with habitual gaps in tackling their needs (Edgcumbe, 2021: 8). Political theorists have paid little attention to internal displacement than the "scale and magnitude of the challenge warrants" (UNHCR, 2022a: 5), with the majority of academic publications focusing on movement "between states", ignoring movement "within states" (Draper, 2021: 2). While there has been substantial focus of political theory on refugee status, there has been no analogous systemic analysis of IDPs status. Sánchez-Mojica (2020) owes the deficiency of public politics and official data of internal displacement to this "lack of enthusiasm shown by academia" and research vis-à-vis the plight of IDPs. Despite data being widely accessible since the first global reports on IDPs in 1982, the lack of attention to this community and the absence of a "single cross-country study on internal displacement" (Echevarria-Coco and Gardeazabal, 2021: 595) means there has been minimal progression of their rights. The limited literature that does exist, however, is essential in framing key concepts and discussions. Not only does it help establish familiarity with current research, but it also identifies existing gaps in literature that this paper endeavours to fill. Table 2 evaluates key literature on IDPs, summarising key journal articles, theoretical perspectives, and findings yielded by the literature review. The review is based on

a literature search using the key terms: 'IDP', 'internally displaced person', 'internally displaced people', followed by a search on refugees', 'religious minorities', 'Christians', 'Iraq' and 'Middle East', as represented in Table 3.

Table 2. Publications on IDPs

Publication	Theory	Findings
Bagshaw, S., 2005. *Developing a normative framework for the protection of internally displaced persons*. London, UK: Transnational Publishers.	Normative theory; implementation measures; flexibility in practice; treaty-effective implementation gap.	Importance of the collaboration of several governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental representatives in providing constitutional safety nets. The need for suitable implementation measures and flexibility through collaborations.
Cardona-Fox, G., 2015. *Exile within borders: a study of compliance with the international regime to protect internally displaced persons*. [Online] [Accessed 28ᵗʰ April 2022] Available from: https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/46559	Compliance, commitment, implementation. (1) when and why countries voluntarily bind their sovereignty by instituting the UN Guiding Principles for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons into domestic law, and (2) if countries that have instituted the GP into law in fact comply with them.	Domestic protections reduce the number of IDPs. Efforts to promote the rights of IDPs need to move from the global to the regional arena.
de Alwis, M., 2021. "I'm a refugee in my own country!" Gendering internal displacement & trauma. In E, Kofman., The *Palgrave Handbook of Gender and Migration*, pp.457–472.	Gendered dimension of internal displacement. Consequences of labels and social status. Continuum between violence and displacement.	Lack of visibility for IDPs. Unlike refugees, IDPs have no legal status. Difficulty of embracing other parts of identity due to negative IDP associations in society. Protracted displacement as a form of slow violence.
Edgcumbe, S., 2021. *Researching internal displacement: Roma in Iraq and Syria. On the Margins of IDP Protection*. [Online] [Accessed 22ⁿᵈ March 2022] Available from: https://researchinginternaldisplacement.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/RID-WP9_Sarah-Edgcumbe_Roma-ID_021221.pdf	Social relations and conflict dynamics. Incorporating marginalised groups into monitoring mechanisms: cluster strategy.	Tendency to homogenise minority groups, homogenisation overlooks power dynamics. Little research on internal displacement and it's link to exclusion at both national and international level. Targeted research necessary through funding and programming.
Gürsoy, H. 2021. *A Sociological Analysis of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as a Social Identity: A Case Study for Georgian IDPs*. [Online] [Accessed 4ᵗʰ May 2022] Available from: https://open.metu.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11511/91480/10410901_PhD_HazarEgeGÜRSOY.pdf	Social identity theory; identity formation process in the context of displacement	IDP identity is stigmatised, group IDP boundaries change as a result social changes, intergenerational findings, IDPs suffering socio-economic handicaps. IDP identity in a state of flux.
Juma, L., 2013. An Overview of Normative Frameworks for the Protection of	Normative theory; regional operationalisation of human rights for IDPs; international	It is difficult to remedy displacement problems and passing a law to provide better protection of

Publication	Theory	Findings
Mansour, R.S., 2019. Displacement, Identity, and Belonging: Iraqi Communities in Amman. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 17(4), pp.425-440.	Post migration integration, shifting social and political landscapes, integration into host societies.	Ensuing insecurity has seen minorities grouping together in ethnically homogenous communities resulting in further isolation.
Margesson, R., Sharp, J.M. and Bruno, A., 2008, Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons: A deepening humanitarian crisis? Washington DC: Library of Congress.	National reconciliation having the potential to activate the interests of international community.	Deterioration of basic human rights as a result of displacement. Concerns surrounding maxing out the absorptive capacity of bordering countries. Amplified competition for limited resources causing drains on host countries.
Orchard, P. (2019) *Protecting the internally displaced: rhetoric and reality*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.	Soft law Guiding Principles signifying hypothetical progress. However, theory and practice are different things. Consistent constitutional frameworks required at both global and domestic level.	Whilst IDP protection exists, it is informal and ad hoc. Rhetorical commitments don't match the reality of situation. Domestic and international policies remain disorganised, no single agency committed to protecting IDPs.
Phuong, C., 2005. *The international protection of internally displaced persons* (Vol. 38). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.	Human rights, sovereignty, intervention, notion of responsibility.	Inadequate legal definitions, need for protection. Importance of framing issue in a wider human rights context.
Weiss, T.G. and Korn, D.A., 2006. *Internal displacement: conceptualization and its consequences*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.	Challenging state sovereignty as basis of international relations. Support of IDPs through framing sovereignty as a responsibility.	Discourse surrounding plight of IDPs essential to development of legal policy change.

Table 3. Publications on other key words: Migration, refugees, religious minorities, Christians, Iraq, Middle East

Publication	Theory	Findings
Ben-Meir, A., 2018. The persecution of minorities in the Middle East. In Ellis, K.C., *Secular nationalism and citizenship in Muslim countries*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 155-170	Secular nationalism, citizenship politics.	Christian citizenship being undermined. The plight of Christian minorities and regional security situation are linked. Equal citizenship under secular regimes as a solution.
Haider, H., 2017. *The Persecution of Christians in the Middle East*. [Online] [Accessed 2ⁿᵈ February 2022] Available from: https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/13055/K4D_HDR_Persecution%20of%20Christians%20in%20the%20Middle%20East.pdf?sequence=142&isAllowed=y	Extremist ideologies, ethno-religious persecution	In the absence of robust interventions, Christianity could vanish in Iraq. Importance of genocidal recognition against the Iraqi Christian community. Insufficient coordination.
Hanafi, S., 2014. Forced Migration in the Middle East and North Africa. *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, pp.585-598.	Protracted displacement and shifting spaces. Intersecting process of forced displacement, challenges of refugee camps as residential solutions.	Legal definitions are not comprehensive enough. Connection between forced migration and human rights.

Jawad, S., 2013. *The Iraqi constitution: Structural flaws and political implications*. LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series. [Online] [Accessed 22 March 2022] Available from: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/54927/1/SaadJawad_Iraqi_Constitution_LSE_Middle_East_Centre_WP01_Nov2013.pdf	Constitutional ambiguity, absence of statutory experts.	The poor constitutional framework has hindered the progress of legal protection. These constitutional flaws have caused deep structural failings and inherent insecurity.
Meral, Z., 2011. The Politics of Religious Minorities in Muslim-Majority States: Old Challenges and New Trends. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 9(2), pp.25-30.	ISIS globalising battle of 'us vs them' for non-Muslims.	Silent resignation and exodus as a result of being seen as disposable communities. Potential for the Middle East to see a complete departure of non-Muslims if the treatment of them is not constitutionally addressed.
Puttick, M and Verbakel, D. 2016. *Middle East and North Africa*. In P. Grant (ed.) *State of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples 2016: Events of 2015 (pp.184-201)* London: Minority Rights Group International. [Online] [Accessed 17 February 2022] Available from: https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/MRG-state-of-the-worlds-minorities-2015-FULL-TEXT.pdf	Routine ethno-religious discrimination experienced in the Middle East, ISIS radicalism, sexual and gendered based violence.	Violence leading to segregation and homogenisation. Negligence of public service provision from Iraqi government. Historical Iraqi community could cease to exist unless changes are made soon.
Shami, S., 1996. Transnationalism and refugee studies: Rethinking forced migration and identity in the Middle East. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 9(1), pp.3-26.	Transnationalism, globalisation, regionalism, Arab nationalism, dislocation of disempowered individuals, agency, gender.	People act opportunistically and are geographically mobile.
Atkinson, K.E., 2021. Displacement, Gender-Based Development, and Grave Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict: The Case of Iraq. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*. London, UK: Sage Publications	Gendered-based development theoretical framework. Displacement dynamics.	The power of mobilising vulnerable communities as peacebuilding agents. Link between female empowerment and international security.

Key themes within the reviewed literature on IDPs include the power of the international community in facilitating change, as well as importance of visibility in the form of a legal status, an improvement in migration discourse and the importance of framing displacement in the wider human rights context. Similarly, the literature review of 'refugees', 'religious minorities', 'Christians', 'Iraq' and 'Middle East' yielded important insights regarding the need for interventions and poor constitutional frameworks. While some of the academic literature gives a voice to forcibly displaced Iraqi Christians using methodological tools to understand their ethical perspectives on rights, its limited scope seldom includes recommendations on, for example, how to lobby for in-country constitutional reforms. Although some academics are

successful in informing practical action - namely Juma (2013) who proposed the Internal Displacement Act which would see legally binding changes - the majority of IDP literature presents the issue at hand with no solution to the current predicament. Moreover, as Edgcumbe (2012: 2) explains, the academic literature that does cover the issues faced by IDPs tends to "homogenise minority groups, conflating minority status with marginalisation". This interlinkage does not always reflect the reality of the situation, nor is minority status uniformly felt by all minority IDPs. While they face many similar challenges, IDPs and refugees are not simply "two points along a single trajectory of displacement" (Cantor and Apollo, 2020: 658). Rather, they are different minority groups with distinct social profiles who experience social interactions, conflict dynamics and humanitarian aid uniquely and should be treated accordingly. Homogenising minority groups is to "overlook both inter-, and intra-group power dynamics, alongside a web of intricate social relations" (Edgcumbe, 2021:3) which frequently sees particular groups more overlooked and marginalised than others.

Internal displacement is a societal process in its own right. This should see researchers and policymakers engaging with the problem accordingly, rather than addressing internal displacement as though it is merely the root of refugee flow. In light of the literature review, this thesis consults displaced subjects first hand, with the data yielded hoping to inform national and international bodies on the most valuable changes for IDPs, informed by IDPs themselves.

3.1.3 Barriers to returning home

With a lack of solutions for the conceivable future, the plight of IDPs constitutes a wicked problem (Rittel and Webber, 1973) as the majority of the internally displaced community eventually becomes categorised as protracted (Knapp and Koch, 2021:2). There are perpetual barriers for IDPs who want to return to their place of origin, relating to an inability and/or unwillingness to return. Many people displaced by conflict hold on to hope that returning means recovering what they left behind, with the actors who comprise the primary support networks consisting of family, relatives and friends, while formal actors play a less significant, ancillary role (Barwari, 2018). The unfortunate reality is that the areas from which IDPs are forced are often reshaped. Resultantly, IDPs who manage to return continue to live as strangers or second-class citizens in their own country of origin, separated from family and friends. Barriers to return are linked to a plethora of issues, including: social cohesion, security, land and property ownership, and availability of economically viable livelihoods. Social cohesion in an IDP context relates to the country's "ethno-religious, tribal and political dynamics" (IOM, 2021: 43). With respect to host areas, IDPs are often faced with perpetual insecurity as they

are exposed to mistreatment as a result of factors including loss of identity documents and a loss of social support networks (Cotroneo, 2017). Fragmented social cohesion in both host regions and areas of origin is also linked to the real and imminent danger of residing in a place where the IDPs constitute a minority, for example an ethnic or religious minority. This particular example, where there is a lack of sectarian harmony and degree of ethnic discord, has the potential to generate violent conflict in regions where differences in religion serve as a source of antagonism. As Dirikgil (2022: 22) contends, the "formation of new heterogeneous communities through the resettlement of IDPs can cause the outbreak of excessive conflict that is fuelled by ethnic divisions and lack of trust across home communities causing the failure of community-building". Limited security in the area of origin means many IDPs fear for their lives and are wary of potential barriers to integration should they make the decision to return to their area of origin. Many of these conflict zones remain exposed to acute insecurity or threats to livelihoods, and the internally displaced status appears to have no end date. In the context of conflict-induced-internal displacement, dangers also relate to factors such as citizen unrest, undetonated explosives or fears of sleeper cells that could erupt upon return.

Moreover, the lack of infrastructure and basic services underscores many IDPs' "unwillingness to embark on what they see as another difficult living experience" (Davis, 2018: 2). Specifically, the destruction of houses, land and properties, as a result of conflict-induced displacement, often means that there is nowhere for IDPs to 'return' to. For those whose land or property has not been destroyed by conflict, proving property claims has been difficult. Documentation is often lost as a result of displacement. The nature of protracted displacement means that even those who manage to obtain documentation are frequently victims of larceny. Illegal seizure of homes has been observed as being carried out by people in, or close to, political power — the body which is supposed to protect innocent victims. Government instruments which have been implemented to facilitate the enforcement of property rights and reclaiming of land have operated with effective dubiousness (Fagen, 2011: 8), with complications existing regarding restitution and compensation that impede an individual's ability to afford adequate housing on return. While the UN Principles for Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and IDPs, also known as the Pinherio Principles, provide practical guidance on legal and technical issues, they do not take a comprehensive approach of centralised administration or housing reintegration programmes (Attansio and Sànchez, 2012: 53). As Fagen (2011: 8) contends, the conditions in the country of origin are often worse than their place of refuge as an IDP, where they have likely found shelter and even access to employment. The lack of job opportunities in many areas of origin presents issues when IDPs seek to restore their freedom and regain some economic independence.

In a similar fiscal vein, the longer IDPs remain displaced, the greater the likelihood that their savings will deplete. Covering the costs of returning home, or rebuilding destroyed homes, becomes more difficult, increasing the risk of protracted displacement. Therefore, not only do IDPs not necessarily want to return home, but many simply do not have the means to.

In addition to this, when people flee their homes for safety reasons, particularly as a ramification of conflict, their physical and mental health is often impacted. As IDPs become entangled in the collateral damage of this displacement, health issues worsen through the breakdown of social links, especially the "disruption of family and social ties, the loss of property, such as land and belongings, and the proliferation of grave health issues such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse" (Dirikgil, 2022: 20). The adverse conditions that a lack of a physical home brings, and subsequent impacts to their wellbeing occurring as a result, creates problematic barriers to return.

It is important to note that, whatever the reason, displacement must always be dealt with as a "phenomenon in need of remedy and redress when those forced from their places of habitual residence determine the time is right" (Pinerio and Leckie, 2005: 3). Forced or premature return could cause even greater problems as, even if it technically dissolves the label of internal displacement, it could present other issues relating to safety, wellbeing and financial turmoil. The barriers that exist for IDP return encompasses a broad spectrum of human rights violations, including the right to life, the right to freedom of movement, the right to personal security, the right to property, the right to equal treatment and the right to non-discrimination with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, or political opinion.

3.1.4 Evolution of UNHCR support models

Obstacles for the international community to support IDPs stems largely from the issue of national sovereignty. State and sovereignty are understood as "mutually constitutive concepts" (Biersteker, 2002: 246) and allude to autonomy in frames of certain territories. For example, hegemony in domestic policy and independence in the foreign policy. This self-governing responsibility is bestowed upon nation states to enforce respect for people's human rights. Whilst sovereignty *should* equate to responsibility (Weiss and Korn, 2006: XIII), this is not always the case and many states are either reluctant or unable to protect their citizens. Although the international community often plays a prosocial "subsidiary role in supporting or complementing governmental protection" (Ferreira et al., 2020: 3), the UNHCR's hesitancy to interfere with the autonomy of nation states is problematic for groups such as IDPs who

desperately require comprehensive support mechanisms, rather than merely a subsidiary body. Figure 1 elucidates the evolution and shortcomings of the UNHCR system in relation to IDPs.
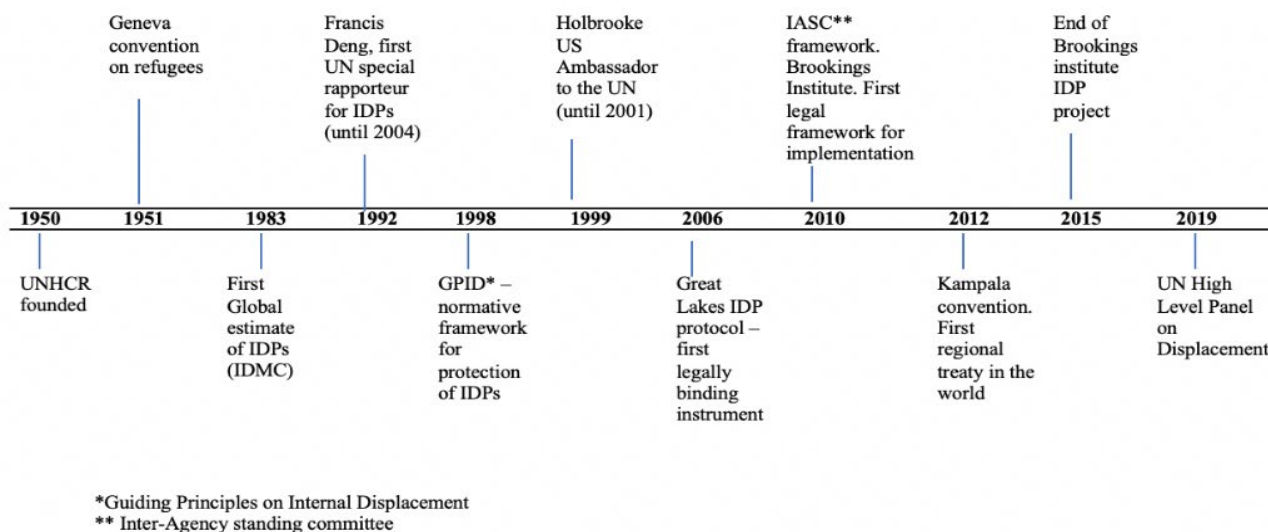
Figure 1. Successive milestones in UNHCR's work on IDPs

Established under the auspices of Francis Deng, the first special rapporteur and representative of the UN Secretary General on IDPs, the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID) provides a framework for the "protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons" (United Nations General Assembly, 2018: 5). At the time of its instatement, the Guiding Principles represented a seminal breakthrough in providing a normative framework for the protection of IDPs (IDMC, 2013; Orchard, 2019). The principles look to support security and assistance throughout displacement, including "the prohibition of arbitrary displacement", and the right to protection against the violation of rights to "life, dignity [and] liberty" (Deng, 1999: 487). However, despite the existence of the GPID, the fact the principles are non-binding and merely an auxiliary mechanism means they are not currently an effective solution to prevent or alleviate the plight of IDPs. The language of the GPID, for example Principle 6 on the right not to be arbitrarily displaced (Deng, 1999: 486), is also generalised and ambiguous.

The collaborative approach adopted by the UN in light of the GPID, wherein no single organisation was accountable for IDPs, meant there was "no real locus of responsibility in the field for assisting and protecting IDPs" (Cohen, 2006: 105). The shortcomings of this approach were clear during the 2003 Darfur genocide where vacillation meant that no UN organisation (UNHCR, UNICEF or OHCHR) took the reins in safeguarding IDPs following the murder of

300,000 Darfurians (Mahmoud, 2019: 157). Following this disaster, 2006 saw the introduction of the Great Lakes IDP Protocol. Created during the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and ratified by numerous countries in the East African Rift (EAR), the *Great Lakes Protocol* was the first legally-binding instrument to incorporate the *GPID* into international law as evident in Article 6.3 and Article 6.5 (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, 2006: 5). Although a step in the right direction, the Protocol was never officially incorporated into international law.

Subsequently, the UNHCR employed a cluster style approach which focused on the commitment of regional and domestic humanitarian agencies in delivering support for IDPs and providing the "coordination architecture" (UNHCR, 2022b: 1) for humanitarian emergencies. Under this arrangement, the UNHCR is responsible for three main clusters: protection, shelter, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) - as well as clusters including education, food and child protection. Designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), this multilateral approach is legally binding and functions as a supportive structure to align different clusters with national authorities to streamline resources and fill gaps in knowledge and response.

However, as exhibited during its first implementation following the 2005 earthquake in the Kashmir region, there are issues with this model concerning "communication between field staff and decision-makers" and clusters becoming "bogged down with the mechanics" (Street and Parihar, 2007) that meant the focus of projects become skewed. While this approach is considered as a positive entry point for effective measures to be carried out, it has been largely unsuccessful in operationalising mandates regarding "local participation and capacity building" (Vinbury, 2017: 40). The over-compartmentalisation and a lack of synthesis of these clusters has meant few countries have adopted this model as a durable policy method to improve the lives of IDPs.

In 2010, the IASC introduced a policy framework regarding durable resolutions for IDPs which concentrated its efforts on binding GPID 15 "the right to be protected against forcible return" (Deng, 1999: 489) into active policy implementation. Accordingly, 2012 saw the instatement of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (The Kampala Convention). This committed to enforcing a legal framework into domestic law that prevents internal displacement, as well as provides durable solutions to those who have already been displaced. The Kampala Convention remains the world's "only legally binding regional instrument on internal displacement" (Massingham et al., 2020: 7). There is far more to be done to translate the objectives of the covenant into a robust policy implementation and to reach a broader scope of IDPs.

In 2015, a partnership between the UN and the Brookings Institute, a public policy organisation, was formed in an attempt to bring the GPID into international law. However, as with many previous attempts, a legal framework was not achieved. The latest progress in UNHCR support models has come in the form of the HLP on Internal Displacement, which was established by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in October 2019. This panel set out to identify tangible proposals to inhibit and/or counter internal displacement, as well as to reach durable solutions. While Guterres proclaimed that it was time to "jettison the model of support" (Gaynor and Mpoke Bigg, 2019) that was leaving IDPs with their lives on hold, the HLP's concern with "raising global awareness of internal displacement" (United Nations Secretary-General, 2019) poses serious queries about its capabilities in the realm of urgent, imminent, and concrete long-term, solutions to irrevocably alleviating the suffering of IDPs.

A comprehensive review of the timeline of UN IDP assistance illustrates that the disconnect between the humanitarian narrative and enforceable action is particularly discernible on two fronts. Firstly, although the UNHCR and international community frequently emphasise the gravity of the situation and highlight the importance of nation state responsibility, providing a durable solution to protracted displacement is still largely dealt with as a de facto task of international actors who have so far provided little besides lip service. While liable coordination architecture for humanitarian response currently exists, there is no such accountability for materialising coordinated solutions (United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, 2021: 28). Secondly, in spite of the recognition of the power of collaborative action across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, minimal tangible change has transpired. As it stands, the UNHCR's humanitarian programme is simply "not tailored to address the particular needs, priorities and rights of IDPs" (Mooney, 2005: 18). Current approaches are not equipped to deal with the gravity of the situation and the business-as-usual approach is patently unacceptable. Building momentum for change must come from a change to the status quo.

Chapter 4. Historical overview

4.1 Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire and Iraq

4.1.1 Introduction

Christianity has existed in the Ottoman Empire since the 4th century AD, preceding Islam in the territory that is now Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Once a region of relatively passive "ta'aish

slime" (تعايش سالمي)[1] that embraced religious heterogeneity, the Middle East has, over the last two centuries, been troubled by colonialist and zealotic impositions. While Iraqi society has long been splintered along ethnic and religious lines, these partitions now define not only the predominant political structure, but also:

> "the geographical division of the population into exclusive zones,
> geographical division of the population into virtually exclusive zones of Shi'a,
> Sunni, and Kurds, with an almost total ethnic cleansing of other minorities"
> (Khedir, 2021: 150).

Accordingly, this section provides an overview of the plight of Iraqi Christians, in the context of historical and political troubles, in order to frame the 21st century *status quo* of Iraqi Christians who have found themselves internally displaced. In particular, an exploration of the pertinence of Western impositions, namely the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, as well as the execution of radical ideals against Christians in Iraq by the rebel group ISIS, will be examined. While displacement typically provides a level of safety away from immediate conflict, the case of Iraqi Christian IDPs illustrates the complexities of prolonged displacement and internal social identity challenges.

4.1.2 Sykes-Picot Agreement

The Sykes-Picot Agreement (also known as the 1916 Asia Minor Agreement) was born out of the De Bunsen Committee[2] as a pre-emptive (classified) wartime treaty. Established by the nucleus of allied powers in WWI known as the Triple Entente (consisting of Great Britain, the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire), the agreement sought to dissect the Middle East based on respective Western interests in the region. This agreement was carefully calculated for nearly three years prior to the Paris Peace Conference, which eventually convened on 18th January 1919, following the allies' success in November 1918. As a result of the conference, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered according to a seemingly arbitrary line drawn across the landscape of the Middle East. This division saw the area north of the Sykes-

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[1] 'Peaceful co-existence' in Arabic.

[2] The first interdepartmental committee established by the British Government in 1915 to determine ruling strategies over the Ottoman Empire in the event of success in WW1 (Klieman, 1968). Its primary aim was to identify a "mechanism that would give local autonomy to the population of the region" (Johnson, 2018: 613). Despite being chiefly anti-annexationist, these initial negotiations ended up giving way to "more ambitious and sweepingly imperialist visions" (Ulrichsen, 2014: 152), such as the Sykes Picot agreement.

Picot line (see Appendix 1) apportioned to France and the southern zone allocated to Great Britain. The Ottoman subjects, who were exposed to the secret treaty in 1916 when the Soviet Russian government published it alongside other undisclosed contracts of imperial Russia, were horrified by what they considered to be explicit imperialist impositions. The agreement signified a watershed in history regarding Western-Arab relations, denying Ottoman subjects from the Arab provinces the national homeland that Britain had promised in a trade-off for their support during the war.

The bleak reality of this imperialist dissection saw indigenous communities wedged together in distinct clusters. This division rendered many in the region as minorities, robbing populations of self-determination altogether and subjugating civilians in their own homeland. The resultant directive inherited by the Middle East as we know it today has thus stemmed from unsystematic borders which were composed with "little regard for ethnic, tribal, religious or linguistic considerations" (Muir, 2016). The imposition was "like a forced marriage" (Wright, 2016), whereby the fate of Ottoman subjects was decided without consulting them. It was this blunt, undiplomatic agreement to divide the Middle East into British and French scopes of interest that has since become the seed that has formed the landscape of the modern Middle East. The plan resulted in "decades of political turmoil, wars, sectarian bloodletting [and] socioeconomic disparities" (Blanford, 2016). This involuntary dissolution of identity still underpins today's social and political landscape in the Middle East, with the framework of territorial borders resulting in enduring antipathy well into the 21st century.

For over a century the resentful reaction to the Sykes-Picot agreement has been evident in the development of politically-driven ideologies. These tensions were further exacerbated by the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Also known as the Battle of Baghdad, the American and British invasion was in response to supposed weapons of mass destruction and links to terrorism by President Saddam Hussein's government. Although U.S. President George W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair claimed the invasion was in the name of freeing the Iraqi people, the collateral damage was dire. Iraq and its citizens suffered immensely from the destabilising effects of the United State's strategic interests in the region, related to resources such as oil, that saw their homeland destroyed. The reality of these undertakings has seen longstanding hostile relations which continue to augment resentment and scepticism among Iraqis and other Arabs.

4.1.3 Islamic State

Historical legacies and political shortcomings in the Middle East have produced a vacuum capitalised on by new actors to intensify religious and sectarian social divisions (Haider, 2017; Katulius et al., 2015). The rise of extremist groups in Iraq has been "predicated largely on the idea of restoring sublime Muslim unity fractured by nefarious western intervention" (Atwan, 2015). The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) -also identified as The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah (abbreviated to the acronym Daesh داعش in Arabic) - is a radical militant organisation that has dominated the Middle East in the past decade. Its followers profess adherence to the fundamentalist Sunni religion, rejecting Westphalian-style constitutions on the basis that they neglect the Qur'an. Original leader Abu Bakr al-Baghadi (2013-2019) previously fore fronted the organisation, before committing suicide in 2019, and adopted the role of "caliph"[3] (Atwan, 2015: 9). The caliph is regarded as the political-religious leader of the whole Muslim "*Ummah*", or community (Denny, 1975: 34). Although its fundamental message supposedly predicates on religiosity, ISIS is far from tolerant when it comes to co-existing with other faiths in the regions it inhabits. The principal catalyst of the organisation has been established through purging those that do not endorse their ideology, with ISIS harbouring an un-Islamic (Barron and Maye, 2017; Sandberg and Colvin, 2020) animosity for religions that had co-existed in the region for centuries).

Initially emerging from the remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq in 2004, ISIS came to the attention of the international community in 2014 when it launched an offensive on major cities in Iraq. ISIS followed this offensive with the release of their first official video, entitled *The End of Sykes-Picot,* in which they can be seen demolishing the border between eastern Syria and northern Iraq. This symbolic move signified ISIS's objective to "eradicate all the region's frontiers and lay Sykes-Picot to rest forever" (Muir, 2016). The Sykes-Picot agreement and its "claimed dissolution" had adopted a "symbolic nature for the group, allowing ISIS to position themselves as the only viable post-colonial, post-national, even post-Arab polity" (Atwan, 2015). This video became the first of many and was succeeded by the incarceration of the city of Mosul, as well as other abuses such as the genocide and kidnapping of thousands of Yazidi citizens during the Sinjar Massacre. Subsequently, ISIS has committed large scale human rights abuses and crimes against humanity.

Officially branded as a terrorist organisation by the UN, ISIS is accountable for committing ethnic cleansing in historic measures. The term ethnic cleansing alludes to the forced rendering of individuals or a collective as "ethnically homogenous by using force and intimidation to remove persons of a given group from the area" (Petrovic, 1994: 351). Ethnic

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[3] The Islamic steward who rules an Islamic state which is recognised as the "caliphate" (Atwan, 2015: 9).

cleansing involves the methodical forced elimination of ethnic, cultural, and/or non-secular groups from a particular area through the usurpation of a more dominant ethnic group. This type of tyranny comprises the systematic *dolus specialis*[4] of Christian minorities within ISIS's territorial control and hegemony in Iraq, Syria and Libya.

The notion of "dhimmi" (ذمي), a historical term that alludes to specific status and safety granted to non-Muslim individuals living under Islamic rule, has since been reintroduced by ISIS. Despite this, sentiments of tolerance have been mis-implemented, with the tyranny of other faiths in the region peaking following the 2014 Northern Iraq Offensive.[5] Despite the direct translation of *dhimmi* meaning protected person, ISIS has abused this historical status, commanding that Christians inhabiting Northern Iraq convert to Islam or pay *jizya,* the tax on non-Muslims, in exchange for protection. However, the jizya tax as a means to escape persecution is believed to be disingenuous propaganda used to extort Christians. This is understood to "deceive Christians into staying in order to hold them for ransom and sexual abuse", with neither "protection nor religious rights […] assured under the pseudo-caliphate of the Islamic State" (Shea, 2016). Both refusal and acceptance of the demands often produce the same result: persecution.

Following caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's ultimatum to meet ISIS's requirements or "leave the borders of the Islamic Caliphate" (Reuters, 2014) by 19th July 2014, millions had no choice but to flee their homeland. Consequently, the world has seen an extensive exodus of Christians from Mosul. Since 2014, there has not been so much as a "single toll of any bell from its ancient churches" (Abdul-Nour, 2017: 142), signifying the end of two millennia of Christianity. While forced migration has displaced entire communities, the physical demolition and defacing of churches, monasteries, and shrines by rebels in Iraq is irreversibly destroying evidence of their long history (Haider, 2017; Puttick and Verbakel, 2016). In Mosul alone, ISIS razed or shut "all 45 churches, confiscated Christian homes and manned checkpoints to steal all possessions and cars from the fleeing Christians" (Shea, 2016). The militant organisation transformed Mosul, a city once home to diverse faiths and harmonious co-existence, into a hub of ethnic cleansing, completely absent of intact Christian communities. Christian homes and businesses were also branded in red paint with the symbol ن[6] representing "Nasara" or "Nazarenes", a disparaging description of Christians in Arabic (Di Giovanni, 2021: 48).

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[4] The intent to harm or destroy a specific group.

[5] Beginning 4th June 2014, ISIS began a major attack on northern Iraq in opposition to the Iraqi government.

[6] Letter transliterated as 'noon.'

Abduction, persecution, rape, enslavement, and, for countless of these Christian subjects, execution, are rampant under ISIS's rule. While the aggregate number of ISIS's atrocities is unknown, the collective evidence suggests that the damage inflicted by ISIS is unprecedented, and irreversible. The destruction has had a harrowing impact on the makeup of Christian communities in the Middle East, in particular Iraq. Iraqi Christians are, once more, subject to threats against their personhood. This time round, they are being targeted and persecuted as a result of their religious affiliations, presented with ultimatums that explicitly threaten to purge them of their identity.

In 2016, John Kerry, then US Secretary of State, officially acknowledged the ethnic cleansing of Christians in the Middle East as a crime against humanity. He asserted that ISIS "kills Christians because they are Christians, Yazidis because they are Yazidis, [and] Shia because they are Shia" (Fishel, 2016), reiterating the sentiment that religion is the primary catalyst in generating enmity among ISIS. In spite of recognition of ISIS's cultural cleansing campaign, there has been an inadequate level of co-operation between global institutions to manumit the Iraqi Christian community. Neglected constitutional protection, partnered with NGO's and states providing little other than hollow words, means that individuals have fallen, and continue to fall, through the net of national and international welfare. Consequently, there has been a complete breakdown of ethno-religious identity in the region. After three years of ISIS militant occupation, Iraqi forces reclaimed Mosul in 2017, and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi formally affirmed victory over ISIS on 10th July (Coker and Hassan, 2017). Whilst reclaiming the city was a poignant milestone in the war against ISIS, Mosul and its citizens are still suffering from the collateral damage of destruction to both its infrastructure and buildings, and from citizens' own fears that extremist sleeper cells and/or unexploded ordnance remain. Safe return is, therefore, not a guarantee, making Iraqi Christians reluctant to return to their place of origin.

4.2 Major implications

4.2.1 Internal displacement of Iraqi Christians

The legacy of ensuing conflict in the region helps frame the reasons why the plight of Christians in Iraq during the 21st century has been characterised by instability and desecrations of human rights. The destabilisation experienced by this community has eroded social cohesion, precarious living conditions and a loss of what previously constituted home. Like their predecessors in the 20th century, Christians have returned to a precarious status in another

milieu of political, religious and ethnic uncertainty. Christians in the region have once again been affected by the wrath of geopolitical conflict, this time with "sectarian tensions" (Gardener, 2019) persisting. As a result, Christians from Iraq are experiencing high levels of diaspora.

Originating from the Greek διασπορά – the "scattering of seeds" (Anthias, 1998: 560), diaspora "designates the dispersal throughout the world of a people with the same origin" (Ben-Rafael, 2013: 842). Diaspora is a descriptive notion that often receives religious or ideological connotations with the most salient features of diaspora being "dispersal or immigration, location outside a homeland, community, orientation to a homeland, transnationalism and group identity" (Grossman, 2018: 1264). In the context of many Iraqi Christians, diaspora translates to autochthonous Iraqis who have fled the country as emigrants or refugees. However, over the past decade, numerous Christians are experiencing a new wave of what is understood as internal diaspora, or (as discussed in section three) internal displacement. In the case of these Christian subjects, internal diaspora is predominantly involuntary and has presented new legal barriers that mean this community is experiencing "unequal citizenship under the law" (Haider, 2017: 8). The uncertain status of Christian Iraqis, who have forcibly left their native cities, has reduced them to IDPs in politically disputed regions of Iraq, predominantly as a result of the ruthless actions of and edicts imposed by ISIS. Fleeing their home as a consequence, or in anticipation, of the effects of violence, 2.5 million Iraqis (OCHAa, 2022; OCHAb, 2022) have found themselves displaced within their home precincts. While ethnic and religious minorities only make up roughly 5% of the country's population, they constitute a disproportionate 20% (Khedir, 2021: 150) of the displacement total.

While many Iraqis have had no choice but to migrate to safer yet still politically disputed regions of Iraq, their basic rights have not migrated with them. This community has found itself in legal limbo within their indigenous borders, facing "existential threats to their cultural survival" (Mako, 2012: 190). Many have moved north to cities in Kurdistan, which consists of four governorates: Erbil, Sulaimani, Duhok and Halabja, under the KRG. Functioning as a self-governing polity within the borders of Iraqi federal state, Kurdistan has remained largely unaffected by the turmoil occurring in other regions of Iraq making it a "safe haven" (Khedir, 2021: 149) for a large proportion of IDPs. Despite relative safety, there are still notable barriers to successful assimilation in these areas due to symbolic boundaries and the ethno-nationalistic approach (Ramsari, 2022: 2-3) of KRG that render Iraqi Christian IDPs quasi-citizens and outsiders to the indigenous community.

While the KRG has been largely tolerant and understanding of the situation into which their new neighbours have been forced, there has also been a 'not in my back yard' (NIMBY)

attitude (Uehling and Pikulicka-Wilczewska, 2017: 34), which characterises opposition to the plight of Iraqi Christian IDPs as a hinderance to the KRG and its citizens. Accordingly, Christian Iraqis cannot claim any benefits from the welfare system and have to pay for visa extensions in order to stay in Kurdistan. Iraqi IDPs that live within the territorial borders of Kurdistan are also experiencing a closed shop approach for work and university, wherein only Kurds can study and work there. Many have had to resort to travelling 50 miles a day to work in neighbouring cities such as Mosul on roads which are dangerous due to having been deformed by heavy vehicles carrying debris from the war. There are no regular trains or other forms of transport to Mosul, so this journey is time consuming and expensive, as well as particularly hazardous.

Barriers to assimilation also stem from the fact that Kurds are Muslims, ethnically non-Arab, and predominantly speak Kurdish. A referendum for Kurdish independence, in which Arabs were not legally permitted to participate due to their outsider status, was held on September 25th 2018. 92% of Kurds supported secession (Chulov, 2017). Independence was ultimately not granted as the referendum was deemed unconstitutional.

However, if the Kurds do eventually achieve independence, the Christian IDPs could suffer acutely as a result of exclusionary ethno-national tendencies of the KRG. Redrawing the borders of Iraq could render IDPs in that region refugees or stateless, as they have not been granted citizenship under the KRG. While the 1954 UN convention acknowledges the international legitimate status of both refugees and stateless people, this category of persons of concern may be constitutionally unprotected in both Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdish independence might result in a loss of patronage from the KRG and could set off a chain reaction of further instability and exodus for this community. Thanks to the Kurds, the Iraqi Christian IDPs have been able to survive - but, should the situation change, this vulnerable community could be back to square one.

In 2003, the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) was established to alleviate the dire effects that accompany the nature of being an IDP or returnee. The Ministry was originally introduced as a lifeline for displaced persons, with the 2008 National Policy for Displacement (Iraqi National Authorities, 2008) providing a blueprint for policy action in the context of migration. However, when the 2014 crisis erupted in Iraq, the Ministry was unqualified to deal with the surge in displacement, with the 2008 National Policy for Displacement proving "insufficient as a credible roadmap for addressing the new displacement tidal wave" (Costantini and Palani:38). The MoDM has since focused its energy on in-camp Muslim refugees, as they constitute a larger majority. Unfortunately, this focus leaves little room for minority Christian IDP rights. The aid that is distributed is sporadic and arbitrary, and

packages are received tri-monthly - or often not at all. This results in a lack of medicines for both common and chronic illnesses, with insufficient healthcare supplies not meeting a basic level of necessary healthcare.

This situation has worsened during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, with the Iraqi government's decisions in response to the crisis negatively impacting the livelihoods of the displaced community even further. Executive measures included enforcing curfews and closing camps, which lasted for nearly six months, and financially drained the displaced community, many of whom could not carry out their usual forms of employment. This exacerbated already high unemployment rates and, in turn, intensified food security. The general national and international efforts have been tragically inept in forming co-ordinated aid for vulnerable Iraqis. With acutely insufficient measures in place to support reintegration, the outlook of Christians in the region remains bleak.

4.2.2 Risks that accompany displacement

The label "displaced" comes hand-in-hand with many risks to both the physical and psychological wellbeing of the subjects who are unfortunate enough to fall into this category. Two particularly pressing risks of displacement specific to the context of Iraq are related to (i) internally displaced children and (2) sexual and gender-based violence, (particularly) against women and girls. These groups are especially vulnerable, through no fault of their own, but also have little agency to change the reality of the situation they have found themselves in.

The first imminent risk - threats to the livelihoods of IDP children - is among "the most tragic legacies of armed conflicts in Iraq" (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 2021: 37). The collateral damage of displacement experienced by children, including deprivation of education and opportunities, and subsequent negative coping strategies, is devastating for both the current and future landscape of these communities and the country as a whole. Discriminatory barriers hinder internally displaced and returnee children's ability to obtain civil documents, including essential authorisation such as birth certificates. Without the presence of the child's father in court, or the presentation of his death certificate (a necessary prerequisite to administering a child's birth certificate), orphaned children or those who are born out of sexual violence are often unable to access the compulsory papers. In the absence of these documents, children are unable to enrol in official forms of education, access health services or request security clearances, which grants some freedom of movement, and enables them to exercise their human rights under the law.

Moreover, while some children can access elementary forms of schooling, the educational reality in these regions is relatively dire. There is strong reliance on volunteers due

to the shortage of educational staff and the severe overcrowding in classes, as well as a lack of educational supplies. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already desperate situation, with the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education closing schools and Iraqi children relying on e-learning, which is an inaccessible platform for the majority of displaced people. This displacement also presents unimaginable psychosocial challenges at an age where children are developing.

The second imminent risk - sexual and gender-based violence - is a growing issue both in and out of camps. Those in camps are especially susceptible due to restrictions to basic services and limited mobility. Tragic cases of what is known as "survival sex" (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 2021: 40), where women exchange sex for sustenance or security, have been reported in camps and regions hosting IDPs. Sexual and gender-based violence in these areas has triggered fears for women and girls, meaning they may be reluctant to go to essential places like shops or schools, adding to economic hardship and subsequent vulnerability. Communal spaces in camps, such as latrines and showers, also exacerbate these issues as women and girls are exposed to males in a particularly vulnerable environment. These cases typically go unreported due to inadequate access to legal or administrative apparatuses, trepidation of stigmatisation, and an absence of criminal culpability for agents of sexual and gender-based violence.

While the Ministry of Interior claims to provide hotlines for sexual violence, like much of the government's actions, these have been largely inept and are not appropriately tailored to support "trauma recovery and rehabilitation" (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 2021: 41) for those IDPs who are experiencing extra dimensions to their already vulnerable existence. There has also been a rise in cases of forced child marriages, being used as coping mechanisms for deprived families facing poverty. Insecurity concerning the future of a country torn apart by violence and economic hard times has made child marriages more common as their families believe that "if they get married they'll be safe" (Barbarani, 2020).

The marry-my-rapist laws (Brons, 2021; Toniyo and Manoj, 2021) are a particularly egregious example of how human rights abuses of IDPs prevail. The marry-my-rapist law is a rule of rape law under the prerogative that a male who carries out rape (including statutory rape), sexual abuse, or abduction is exonerated should he marry his female victim. Article 427 of Iraq's penal code, dating from 1969, states that legal action becomes invalid in the case that the perpetrator marries the victim. Use of this law has been particularly rife under ISIS's rule, where many IDPs have been subject to sexual abuse by ISIS fighters who have abused their position by forcing women into situations where they have no choice but to succumb for fear of their lives. These laws have led to further degradation in the form of forced conversion,

where the Christian subject is forced to lose a huge part of their identity and convert to Islam, the religion of their new 'husband'.

The existence of these blasphemous laws creates additional barriers for the already desperate internally displaced victims of sexual violence, contributing to religious discrimination and undermining basic religious freedoms (Ben-Meir, 2016; Haider, 2017; Katulis et al., 2015). With sexual and gender-based violence rife in the context of internal displacement, it is clear that Iraqi IDPs, particularly the aforementioned doubly vulnerable groups of children and women, face exceptionally heinous, yet endlessly complex, problems.

4.2.3 Recognition of genocide

For a community "close to extinction" (Gardner, 2019), Christian Iraqi IDPs are in a wholly unsustainable situation. Protracted internal displacement, as a consequence of ethnic discrimination, posits an exigent case of genocide (USAID, 2021), and demands recognition of such from the national and international community. Much like the Armenian, Rohingya and Uyghur genocides, persecution in Iraq is characterised by ethnic cleansing. Yet, the struggles endured by this community are not officially accepted as an independent offence under international law, despite "*prima facie* violat[ing] the principle of non-discrimination" (Mooney, 2005: 15).[7] Principle six in the 1998 OCHA GPID declares that the "prohibition of displacement […] based on policies of apartheid, ethnic cleansing or similar practices aimed at/or resulting in altering the ethnic, religious or racial composition of the affected population" (Deng, 1999: 486). Nevertheless, because these principles are not realised by international legislation, the subjection of Iraqi Christians is not acknowledged as an official crime and, therefore, persecutors are not held accountable. As Mako (2012: 190) explains, it is this "omission of cultural genocide from the existing indigenous human rights regime" that currently serves as a "roadblock in the effort to institute mechanisms for indigenous survival". The absence of genocidal recognition poses grave challenges, hindering the development of a robust preventative policy approach on both national and international fronts, that could help preserve the cultures and livelihoods of these vulnerable communities.

Chapter 5. Social identity theory

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[7] This principle seeks "to guarantee that human rights are exercised without discrimination of any kind based on race, colour… language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin" (World Health Organization, 2020a).

5.1 Introduction

With daily threats to displaced Iraqi Christians as a result of historical and political contexts of the Middle East, the social identities of this community are in grave danger. This section presents a comprehensive review of SIT (Tajfel, 1978) literature in order to theoretically frame the lived experiences of this persecuted community and the effect this has had on their selfhood. For the purpose of this study, the theoretical framework of SIT is specifically applied to individual participants' perspectives on their forcible displacement to Kurdistan, where they constitute the minority out-group, and the subsequent impacts this has had on their social identity. With limited IDP literature exploring the conflicting boundaries in "host-sub-state polities where membership peripheries are inconsistent with the respective state membership regulations" (Ramsari, 2022: 4), this study provides key insights into internal displacement and the role of identity in the context of social differentiation.

5.2 Theoretical framework

In *Les identités meurtrières,* Maalouf (2011) asserts that identity is not given, but rather built up and transforms throughout a person's life. Self-identity is, therefore, an evolutionary process, moulded through environmental and social factors. SIT reflects this notion, stemming from the conviction that feeling part of a wider social community or group has the power to develop the self and instil meaning. It is an "interactionist social psychological theory of the role of self-conception" (Hogg, 2016: 3) that helps explain inter-group behaviours and partisan social identity. Membership of distinct groups helps people define who they are, how they are able to relate to others, and how they can generate positive identities. This links to the concept of felt identity (Kaufman and Feldman, 2004: 468), the subjective sense of one's own self as a result of their social experiences, as well as territorialisation of identity, where an individual's spatial continuity (Milligan, 2003: 382) and attachment to their roots forms a great deal of their identity.

In order to frame the intricacies of SIT, Tajfel and Turner (1979) broke this understanding down into three stages: social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison. Social categorisation follows the idea that we compartmentalise objects in order to better understand and identify them. In a similar vein, we categorise individuals in order to better understand society. Such categories include sex, race, and age, as well as social status, occupation and sexual orientation. By apportioning individuals based on this social information, we are able to understand specific characteristics about them and, in turn, decide

where we think they fit in to society. Similarly, we understand ourselves better by knowing which categories we fit into.

While grouping society in this way simplifies perception and cognition of the social world, it also often encourages prejudiced attitudes by accentuating demographic differences. As Absher and Cloutier (2016: 142) contend, once determined, our social categorisations of others "shape downstream evaluation and behaviour" of them. This can lead to out-group homogeneity, where all members of the out-group are deemed to have the same characteristics. For example, some might consider all sports fans to be hooligans based off a small portion of unruly supporters, or view immigrants negatively based on xenophobic assumptions that they want to take jobs from citizens. While this form of schema processing can, in some cases, help describe and predict the world more efficiently, it can also produce distorted stereotypes and subsequent discriminatory treatment of other social groups.

The second stage, social identification, is the idea that we inherit the identity of the group to which we belong, or believe we belong. For example, if someone identifies as an athlete, they are likely to adopt the identity of an athlete and conform to the norms of what it means to be an athlete. Within these groups are particular values and attributes, divided into ascriptive and affective features. Ascriptive features are determinants of an individual's social status based on cultural considerations, including birth right, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, norms, values, and customs (Fukuyama, 2018; Mangum and Block, 2018). Affective features include intellectual and emotional identification in the form of, for example, political affiliation.

The final stage, social comparison, concerns the tendency to compare ourselves to other groups once we have categorised ourselves as part of a particular collective. Ideally, one wants to be part of what they deem to be the favourable group. Social comparison helps explain clashes in the form of prejudice and discrimination. Once a group establishes themselves in opposition to another group, or sees the other group's social identity as a threat to their own, hostilities can arise. Thus, individuals compartmentalise theirs and other salient groups into *us*, the in-group, versus *them*, the out-group. This simple act of "othering" (Said, 1979) is sufficient enough to lead individuals to act differently towards in-group and out-group members (Turner et al., 2012). An individual's social identity and sense of self is produced as a result of the amalgamation of these three processes (social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison). In order to understand the importance of these identities, specifically the role of in-group-out-group disparities, it is crucial to understand that social identity is not a purely cognitive concept, but also driven by the intrinsic motivation to reach positive distinctiveness, striving for a positive self-concept (Haslam, 2004). This idea contends that individuals chose

to be part of a group in order to build self-esteem. Cialdini et al (1976) conducted a study to test this hypothesis, wherein they observed students on the day of an important university football match to examine whether their behaviour would change according to the outcome of the game. Cialdini et al found that students tended to sport more accessories with their team's logo or insignia when they had won, compared to when their team lost. Interestingly, the supporters of the losing team also used pronouns such as 'they', opposed to the fans of the winning team who used pronouns such as 'we'. As Cialdini et al. (1976: 374) explain: "it is our contention that people make known their non-instrumental connections with positive sources because they understand that observers to these connections tend to evaluate connected objects similarly".

The conclusions of this study demonstrate that individual identities are affected by being part of a group, which impacts their behaviour and self-esteem. Individuals strive to be part of the in-group that are viewed positively in society. The findings of this research hold parallels with Huddy and Virtanen's (1995: 98) observation of ethnic identity, in which identity was observed to be stronger in members of the "higher status" group. In their example, Huddy and Virtanen (1995) conclude that national identity was stronger among Cubans than other Latinxs, on the basis that their social status in the US was superior to Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans.

In a similar vein, Ethier and Deaux (1994) observed that Hispanic students at American Ivy League universities found the environment, where they were the out-group minority, threatening to their Hispanic identities. In turn, this out-group status led them to consider themselves as being of lower social standing, weakening their identification as Hispanic as a result.

These observations inform important understanding of inter-group conflict and in-group/out-group hierarchies. Insights into the determinants of these social identities and group dynamics can be framed by ODT (Brewer, 2003). ODT is a branch of SIT that contends that individuals have "two fundamental and competing human needs — the need for inclusion and the need for differentiation" (Leonardelli et al, 2010: 63). Effectively, self-identity is a continuum characterised by a balance between individuality and homogeneity. According to ODT, an optimal equilibrium of the two ends of the spectrum is necessary for a positive social identity and concept of the self. Within this theory are three basic needs: the need to be assimilated, the need to be connected to loved ones and the need for autonomy. While this is the desired combination for a positive sense of self, this search for identity is fraught with difficulties (Ibrahim, 2018) and barriers as a result of complex in-group-out-group dynamics.

5.3 Social identity and internal displacement

For the purpose of this study, SIT and ODT are understood within the context of cultural affinity for the marginal out-group, Iraqi Christian IDPs, as exhibited in Figure 2. Much like Gürsoy's (2021: iv) publication exploring the relationship between SIT and IDPs, this study focuses on the "influential components of the identity formation process" of the lived experiences of this particular Middle Eastern community. With respect to Iraqi Christian IDPs, it is critical to appreciate that the injustices that have manifested as a result of cultural and religious identity factors have accumulated in a "crisis of national identity" (Korn, 2001: 7) where IDPs are wedged between the culture they left behind and the culture they have entered into (Anthias, 2009). As de Awlis (2021:462) explains, this "out-of-placeness" and liminality often results in perceptions of IDPs as "polluting and disruptive" by their host communities.

The in-group in this case study are the Islamic Kurds who constitute the majority, with the Christian Iraqis forming the minority out-group. Ascriptive determinants in this setting differentiate displaced Iraqi Christians from their hosts in the north, Kurdish citizens. While resettlement is a perilous process that impacts all migrants, those who come from cultures different to that of their host communities often face additional barriers to assimilation. As Cadena-Camargo (2021: 893) explains, positive resettlement requires both "IDPs acceptance by the host community and IDPs feeling that they belong to the host community". This process is not unidirectional and acceptance must be reciprocal for progressive migration steps. However, SIT suggests that there is a "favourability gap between the well-liked in-group and a disliked out-group" (Mangum and Block, 2018: 3). Countless ascriptive obstacles to successful assimilation, primarily as a result of the cultural, ethnic and religious differences, language barriers (Iraqis speaking Arabic and Kurds speaking Kurdish), snd anxieties regarding potential Kurdish independence and what this would mean in terms of further displacement, mean that the out-group community of Iraqi IDPs are experiencing constant and unrelenting threats to their identity as the disliked out-group. This frames feelings of instability among the minority Christian Iraqi IDPs, who are deracinated from the securities of the place they normally identify as home.

The structural community restrictions, potency of displacement on the day-to-day lived experience of IDPs, and unremitting precarity of being a minority out-group continues to intimidate the positive social identity of displaced Iraqi Christians. The vulnerability of this identity is also owed to the physical division of Iraqi Christians, with whom these IDPs share a common, and previously positive, identity, that have either moved to different territories or

have reduced in number as a result of subjugation. These majority-in-group/minority-out-group dynamics are fundamental in distinguishing the imperative nature of greater protection for IDPs under the law. Displaced persons, specifically this case of Christian Iraqi IDPs in Kurdistan, continue to endure perilous threats to their identity as a result of these in-group-out-group dynamics, demanding immediate attention if they are to have any hope of fostering a positive sense of self.

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                          │    Iraqi citizen    │
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                          │ Social identity:    │
                          │ centred on religion │
                          │ and ethnicity       │
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                    │ Formation of distinct social groups│
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In-group: Iraqi Muslim Kurds
- Majority, semi-autonomous, Muslim, non-Arab, Kurdish speakers

Out-group: Iraqi Christian IDPs
- Minority living among majority Muslim population of non-Arab, Kurdish speaking, Iraqi Kurds

(Mainly) satisfied social identity:
- Majority religion, culture and language
- Potential for Kurdish independence

Unsatisfied social identity
- Demographic minority
- Continual ambiguity and threats to security
- Fear of persecution based on ethno-religious identity

End goal:
- Independent Iraqi Kurdistan

End goal:
- Legal rights and protection

5.4 SIT critical evaluation

While one of the appeals of SIT is its high heuristic validity (in that it can be used as a schema instrument to rationalise social behaviours and inter-group dynamics) several scholars have flagged crucial limitations that are important to consider when applying the theory to the empirical problem of displacement. A primary criticism is the belief that SIT incorrectly replaces the conventional view of the individual with a nebulous theory of social identity. Postmes et al. (2010) contend that, while in-groups are characterised and influenced by interpersonal relations, individuality plays a dominant part in cultivating group identity and purpose. This could explain why, in some circumstances, personal identity is stronger than group identity. Hence, an Iraqi Christian IDP may affiliate more with their individual identity, for example, as a parent or with their specific occupation, than with their ethno-religious community.

A further critique of SIT is that its cognitive and perceptual focus often neglects the motivational and affective attributes. While it intricately describes human behaviour, some critics (Bartel et al, 2007; Dashtipour, 2012; Huddy, 2001; Rabbie et al, 1989) argue that it does not accurately predict or explain why the behaviour is the way it is. These critics believe that factors are not considered within SIT, including dispositional factors, where some individuals may be more competitive, or cultural factors, where collectivistic societies may display more agreeable, united behaviours. More specifically, political scientist, Huddy (2001), critiques the utility of SIT in its application to political phenomena, casting the value of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) contributions in doubt. Her evaluation of SIT premises on the fact that identity formation is not solely the result of group designation, but instead an amalgamation of subjective factors. As she argues, SIT has had "limited impact on political psychology because of social identity theorists' disinclination to examine the sources of social identity in a real world complicated by history and culture" (Huddy, 2001: 127). Although she appreciates SIT's contribution in framing inter-group dynamics, Huddy (2001) believes it is insufficient in explaining the development of identity, particularly robust identities that are unchanging in spite of differing contexts, or threats to it.

While the absence of identity development would render SIT futile in the context of displacement and its impact on the identities of Iraqi Christian IDP subjects, Oakes (2002: 815) refutes Huddy's (2001) contributions on the basis that SIT presents social groups as a process, rather than "herrings". He directly counters the assertion that "social identity theory from its inception has assumed the existence of fixed and known group members" (Huddy, 2001: 140),

by arguing that "one of the most important messages of the social identity approach is that identities are emergent, context-specific outcomes of the interactions between the perceived and social reality, as expressed through the categorisation process" (Oakes, 2002: 815). While these criticisms of SIT claim that subjective aspects of identity are largely ignored, Oakes (2002: 819) contends that they are actually in fact the "raison d'être" of SIT, with motivations for individual choice and variation at the core of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) study.

Oakes (2002, 817) also stresses that the omissions noted up by Huddy (2001), namely the concept of strong identities enduring across different circumstances, are actually adequately dealt with within the theory. He cites Turner et al. (1994: 460) in his rebuttal, highlighting the assertion that "stability and continuity in [identity]… are produced by the same processes that make possible fluidity and change". Here, SIT can be seen as treating identities as a process, as opposed to fixed properties of cognitive structures. This is crucial in the context of internal displacement, where an analysis of developing identities is fundamental to understanding the relationship between displacement and the self. Moreover, SIT has proven itself to generate testable hypotheses, bridging the gap between "differentiation and dislike" (Brown, 2000: 764). Despite its criticisms related to causation, this theory has been employed throughout academia as a very efficient tool in predicting group attitudes, adequately addressing the nature and consequences of these memberships, while also accounting for cause.

Chapter 6. Research design

6.1 Summary

"In order to comprehend some meanings of life, one must get close to that life"

(Stake and Jegatheesan, 2008: 1).

This section analyses the research design for the 22 semi-structured qualitative interviews with internally displaced Iraqi Christians living in Kurdistan. This design navigates the important triangulation (Patton, 1999) choices surrounding methodology, namely whether to take a qualitative or quantitative research approach, what constitutes an adequate sample size, and how to carry out interviews in a novel COVID-19 context. The methodology section is followed by an exploration of data analysis approaches, employing Braun and Clarke's (2006: 2012) model of thematic analysis and the Gioia method (Corley and Gioia, 2004; 2013) in order to detect patterns and themes within the data. I also explore the inherent politics and bias regarding my positionality as the researcher, focusing on the importance of self-reflection, as

well as conscious and unconscious bias and presuppositions, to enhance the validity and reliability of my project. Next, the ethical issues of the research are explored. With no two researchers or projects the same, there is a myriad of sensitivity issues relating to social science enquiries that demand case specific judgement calls. In this research the ethical issues are two-fold, relating to both the general ethical issues pertinent in the majority of research, as well as issues specifically linked to the sensitive nature of displacement explored in this thesis. Lastly, I will discuss research limitations related to the factors such as the pandemic and self-censorship.

6.2 Methodology

6.2.1 Qualitative research

The objective of this social constructivist study was to accurately represent the lived experiences of the Iraqi Christian IDP respondents over time. The power of longitudinal studies is that they help identify constructive interventions (Wenger, 1999: 375) through comparisons over a period of time (in this research, a period of two years). While studies on internal displacement typically focus on providing data for organisations such as the UNHCR (Ramsari, 2022), this study opts for a qualitative research approach in order to address the nucleus of the project and answer key research questions concerning the relationship between displacement and identity. Qualitative interviews consist of interpretative practices for in-depth insights into specific concepts in order to make the world visible by turning it into "a series of representations" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: 3). While quantitative research focuses on quantifying the phenomenon at play, qualitative research concentrates on "theory building, narrative interviewing coupled with observation, to generate a theoretical explanation for the phenomenon under study" (Jain and Brockova, 2022: 20). Concerned with "subjective meanings" (Silverman, 2020: 3), qualitative research was adopted to facilitate in-depth insight into the attitudes and feelings of research subjects, which I felt was essential for understanding issues such as "identity and self-description" (Mansour, 2019: 430). I opted for a semi-structured approach, where I used the predetermined questions from my previous study, whilst simultaneously encouraging participant interpretation that meant that they could and for dictate the trajectory of their answers. This phenomenological approach allowed for tractability whilst also ensuring central themes, namely identity and displacement, were addressed. This flexibility was crucial in reflecting the dynamic reality of displacement and appreciating how respondents derive meaning from their lived experiences. I considered Creswell and Poth's (2016), five approaches to qualitative research, as illustrated in Figure

3, to decide on the best method to approach the study. The five major traditions in qualitative research exhibited include: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographic and case study.
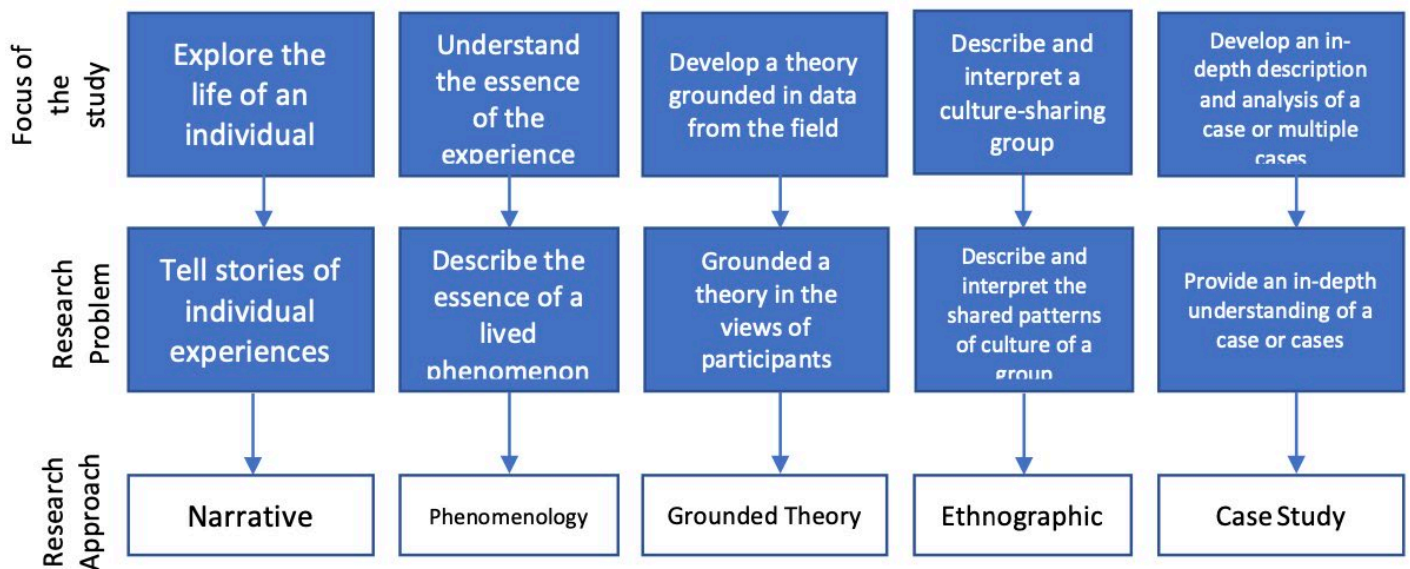
Figure 3. Qualitative research approach.

Creswell and Poth (2016) in Islam and Aldaihani (2022: 3).

Before choosing the most appropriate research approach(es) for my qualitative research, it was important to familiarise myself with the primary focus of my study. Given that grounded theory (GT) (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) is a data generation technique which inductively discovers new theories that emerge from data, I decided that it was not relevant to my study as I had already pre-established my theory. Similarly, the ethnographic study category was ruled out as ethnography requires in-person researcher observations or interactions with participants in their real-life setting, which my study did not have due to COVID-19. As my study explored first-hand accounts of lived experiences, I subsequently decided that my study was compatible with the (i) narrative, (ii) phenomenology and (iii) case study categories, as the research looks to reflect the personal experiences of individuals experiencing a particular phenomenon. This provided a strong basis for the data analysis process, as I was able to develop codes and subsequent categorises in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012) model of thematic analysis and to filter these data using the Gioia method (Corley and Gioia, 2004; 2013).

6.2.2 Sample size and respondents

With the nature of this study being longitudinal, the sample size had already been pre-established in a suitable way that was tailored to generate a broad range of data that would contribute towards answering the pre-established research questions and objectives of my study. This was achieved during my first set of interviews in 2020 through purposive sampling, where specific characteristics were chosen for the defined purpose of the study in order to "yield appropriate and useful information" (Kelly, 2010: 317). Given that I set out to interview a specific group of people for the purpose of answering specific question, it was important that the participants fit certain criteria in order to match the aims and objectives of the study, ultimately improving the rigour and trustworthiness of the results (Campbell et al., 2020: 653). In the initial interviews, I approached family members, as well as family friends, who had been internally displaced in Kurdistan and who were happy to be interviewed for my study. I then used these connections to develop my sample size through recommendations, who these initial participants were able to put me in contact with. This snowballing technique (Staller, 2021: 901) expanded my initial networks and worked effectively in soliciting participants who fit the criteria of my thesis: Iraqi Christian IDPs who had migrated to Erbil or Duhok. It was essential that I obtained a stratified sample of a broad demographic cross-section of participants, including different generations, social circles, genders, and occupations to provide a comprehensive representation of the lived experiences of this displaced community. Details of the (anonymised) respondents are exhibited in Table 4. As evident from Table 4, and Figure 4, I interviewed nine women (comprising 41% of the respondents) and thirteen men (comprising 59% of the respondents), ranging between the ages of 22 and 76, who worked in a variety of occupations from architecture to medicine. For the purpose of inter-generational analysis once the data are yielded, the respondents were grouped into those born before the 1990 and those born from 1990 (as exhibited in Figure 5). I deemed these two categories as significant due to particular watershed moments in Iraqi history. Those born before the 1990 would have reached teenage-hood or adulthood prior to the 2003 Iraq war and the emergence of ISIS, and would have clearer, and perhaps more nostalgic, memories of growing up and living in Iraq. The respondents born after 1990 would have grown up experiencing a lot of turmoil and have presumably more stained memories of their homeland. I felt this would serve as an interesting comparative analysis and provide interesting reflections on subsequent attachment, or lack of, to identity. I was lucky enough not to be affected by selective attrition, where people drop out of studies due to several factors such as loss of motivation, mobility, morbidity, or mortality. As the majority of the members interviewed were people I had kept in touch with over the

course of the longitudinal research, I had maintained good relations and the respondents were all willing (and able) to participate.

Table 4. Anonymised participant list

| Respondent number	Gender	Age	Occupation
1	Male	22	Medical student
2	Female	22	Medical student
3	Female	25	Medical doctor
4	Female	29	Pharmacist
5	Male	30	Master's student
6	Male	35	Agricultural engineer
7	Male	36	Accountant
8	Male	38	Chemist
9	Female	41	IT specialist
10	Female	46	Architect
11	Female	50	Chemistry university lecturer
12	Male	50	Chemist working for an NGO
13	Male	50	Computer programmer
14	Female	50	Dentist
15	Male	57	Architect
16	Male	60	Radiologist consultant
17	Female	63	Mechanical engineer lecturer
18	Male	63	Civil engineer
19	Male	63	Aircraft engineer
20	Male	64	Microbiologist
21	Male	67	Priest
22	Female	76	Chemistry lecturer
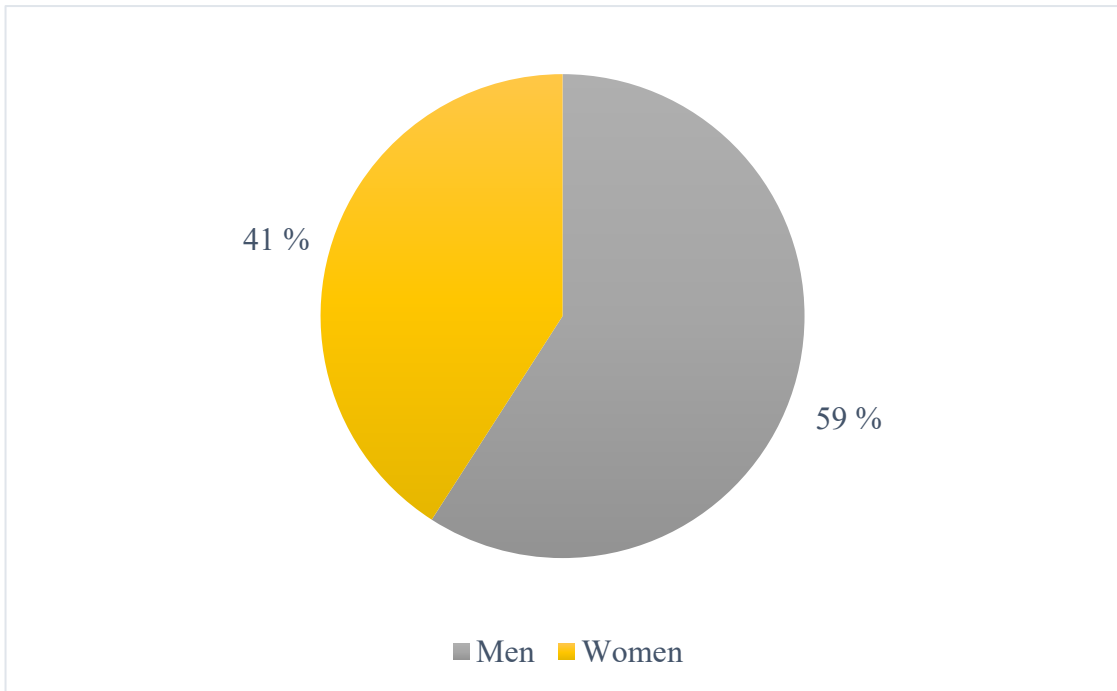
Figure 4. Respondents' gender
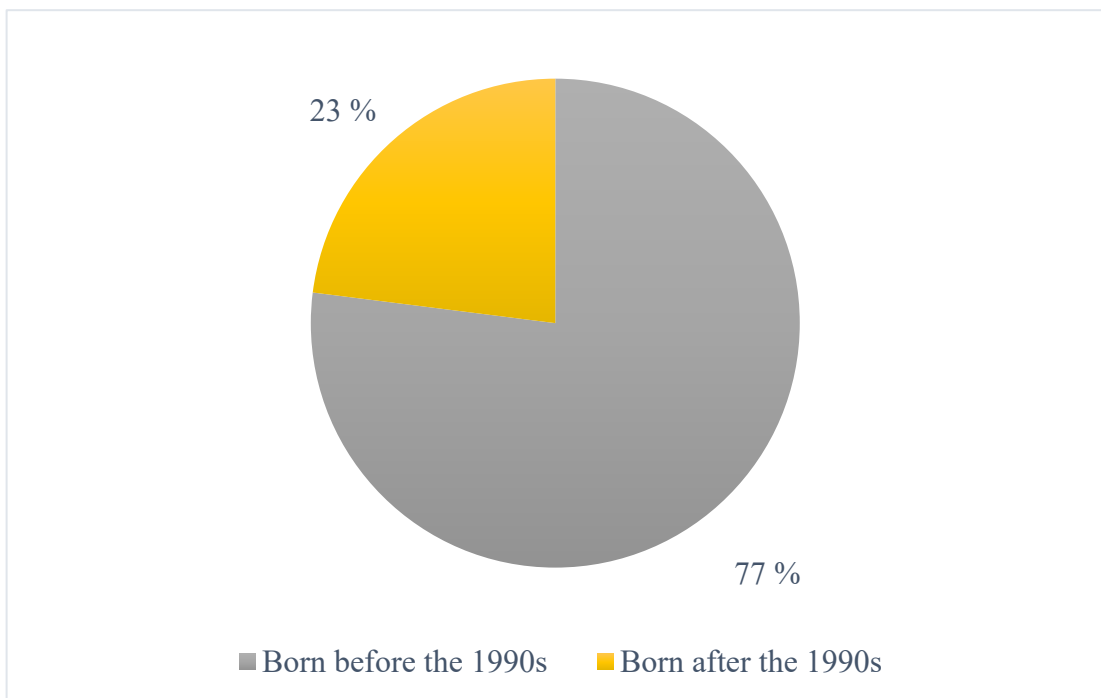
Figure 5. Respondents born before and since 1990

6.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

The COVID-19 pandemic was (and still is at the time of this study) a "social event that [has] disrupted our social order" (Teti et al., 2020), having a significant impact on research. Global travel restrictions, reduced social mobility, social distancing instructions and public health guidelines made in-person discussion difficult and restricted field studies indefinitely. Given that interviewing is a fundamental mode of inquiry in qualitative research (Seidman, 2006), collating diverse attitudes, standpoints and language via in-depth discussions was vital for my phenomenological study. Thus, I had to reconsider how to execute the empirical aspect of my project during a pandemic in a safe, suitable, and practical way while crossing physical, digital, and cultural borders. While traditional social science research suggests that in-person interviews are the most valuable qualitative interview approach (Krouwel et al., 2019), cross-cultural qualitative research continues to develop in conjunction with globalization trends, and technological advances in the 21st century have provided valuable and innovative alternative avenues for qualitative research (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Islam and Aldaihan, 2022; Jain and Brockova, 2022; Lawrence et al., 2022; Lo Iacono et al., 2016; Saarijärvi and Bratt, 2021). Accordingly, for this research project I chose to conduct interviews on-line. Unlike in-person interviews, as with the first set of interviews in the longitudinal study, online interviews meant that respondents could partake in their own convenient space which mitigated the distance of physical space. This was extremely beneficial when interviewing subjects in remote locations or different countries, in the case of Iraq, whose war-torn landscape is still experiencing fragile security. Factors including cost (flights, domestic transport, venue hire, accommodation, and other additional expenses) and potential exposure to danger are all alleviated through this digital medium. The distance is also thought to mediate sensitive conversations with the researcher, as well promote "inclusion and equality in research" (Saarijärvi and Bratt: 2021) as it facilitates wider reaching participant recruitment. As Oliffe et al. (2021: 3) observe, feedback from interviews carried out during the COVID-19 lockdown "laced the adage [that] there's no place like home", wherein participants appeared "especially relaxed talking in their living rooms, kitchens and home offices – often times surrounded by personal belongings". I felt that the home environment provided positive incentives for participants and aided the fluidity, candour and richness of the conversation. The potential burden to the participants of having to physically host me was also alleviated.

Given that interviews were conducted during the latter half of the pandemic, the majority of participants had used online digital platforms for communication and were comfortable navigating the intricacies of such. Instead of impersonal asynchronous digital

methods, such as email, for this interview I utilised Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) mediated technology, Zoom. Cloud-based videoconferencing service, Zoom, was adopted for its simple and user-friendly layout in order to facilitate real time communication with geographically dispersed individuals (Archibald et al., 2019). Luckily for the purpose of this study, unlike neighbouring countries such as Iran and Syria, Zoom is not restricted in Iraq. This platform was employed to assist personal interface, in order to explore personal topics with real-time encryption of meetings. The participants had the option to turn their video off at any point or exit the conversation with an easy click of the button if they no longer wanted to engage, giving them some "management over how much was seen and said" (Oliffe et al., 2021: 3). The zoom meetings were free up to 40 minutes (with the option to create another free meeting once the 40 minutes are up), with only the person required to download the software being the researcher. The participants need not even to have an account or any particular programme, all that was necessary is that they could access the internet. As the researcher, I sent the participants an electronic invitation produced by Zoom that was able to be edited to detail the specificities of the interview, which then created a live link that the participants could click to join. Zoom also offered the choice for interviewees to add the Zoom meeting to their personal calendars as a reminder of the upcoming meeting. A further helpful feature of the calendar function was the automatic time zone conversion. For example, what would have been 10am Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) for the researcher in the United Kingdom, would have been 1pm Arabia Standard Time (AST) in Iraq. This automatic conversion was key in avoiding accidental miscalculations of time difference and potentially wasting the participants time by missing the meeting. Additionally, as Gray et al. (2020) explain, Zoom automatically stores the recording into two files: audio only and combined audio video. The former, the smaller audio-only file, is useful in that it supports an individual's confidentiality. Whilst the participant might feel comfortable revealing their identity to the interviewee, they may not want a video recording of them to be passed on. The audio-only save option supports this decision and means that the recording is still able to be saved for transcription purposes without violating participant privacy, and the personal connection between the interviewer and interviewee is maintained. Zoom recently added a feature that includes prompts for participants to warrant the beginning of the recording, which, alongside prior email consent, helped clarify participant permission, adding to Zoom's salutary value. Another key selling point of Zoom was its screen-sharing function. Although I had shared the interview questions beforehand via email (in both English and Arabic, as exhibited in Appendix 2 and 3, to ensure full comprehension of what was being asked), this feature was useful for sharing questionnaire documents that I could refer to throughout the conversation. This served as a constant visual

reminder of the topics and themes and which specific question was being addressed. In conjunction with Zoom I used Otter.ai. This software has a partnership with Zoom and provides live, and post-meeting, transcriptions of Zoom audio recordings that become translated into smart notes. This feature is automatic and does not require the interviewer to turn it on or off at the beginning or end of the interview, which means that transcriptions are always generated without the researcher having to remember to activate the function. Zoom was the platform of choice over other VoIP's, such as Skype, as previous studies have reported poor audio and video quality with lags in connectivity (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Weller, 2015). Moreover, Skype does not have the option to record interviews securely, and instead necessitates third party providers to store interview content. Unlike Skype, Zoom is able to securely record and save sessions without external software, which is a particularly important feature in the context of sensitive data. It is important to note that prearranged alternative options, in the case of technical issues, were also established. This was important as the nature of conflict in Iraq meant that certain factors were not always a guarantee. For example, if the internet connection were unstable and arbitrarily cut off. The emails prior to the zoom enquired whether the participants were willing to provide a contact number that they could be called on should Zoom fail.

6.2.4 Pilot interviews

The groundwork for the interview was as important as the interview itself. As Lawrence (2022: 155) contends, interviews are not strictly a matter of asking questions, but rather "illustrate a negotiation of information between two parties". Two initial pilot interviews were carried out prior to having established the interview questions. This principally involved informal interviews, where I asked the participants to provide a brief biography, as well as context to their status as an IDP, followed by insights on their personal identity. From this data I devised five formal interview questions (see Appendix 2 and 3), inspired in conjunction with the research objectives. For example, question five echoes research question three, regarding how a positive social identity for the internally displaced people in Iraq be fortified. I then conducted two more pilot studies, but this time with the formal interview questions I had devised after the initial pilot interviews. Within these questions I made sure to concentrate on key terminologies, including displacement, identity, and Christianity, in order to be able to make direct comparisons concerning the relationship between the biographical data generated. I felt that all four pilot interviews had gone well in that they helped familiarise me as the interviewer with Zoom, how the interview was roughly likely to take shape, and the approximate interview duration.

Following on from the successful pilot interviews, I felt confident to start with the interview process at the pre-agreed times and dates. It was important to check the audio volume before and during each meeting to ensure that the recording was operational. I commenced each interview with the reiteration of my name, background and research objective. I then detailed how the interview would develop, specifying the nature of the questions, the semi-structured style and a duration estimation. Before proceeding, I asked the respondents to reconfirm oral consent to being recorded and having their data transcribed. I adopted the talk less, listen more (McGrath et al., 2018) approach in an attempt to encourage a conversation that was at the discretion of the participant, which allowed the researcher to enjoy the alchemy of the interview process. I paid particular attention to my linguistic choices, trying to "mirror the participants' casual and personalised language" (Fritz and Vandermause, 2018: 1646) in order to elicit a positive, constructive atmosphere, whilst also being aware of language sensitivities. Given the intercultural context, the language had to be carefully considered to mitigate culturally influenced communication patterns that could lead to misunderstandings (Rundnagel, 2021: 348). The interviews were conducted in English, the lingua franca of both researcher and respondents. Whilst all respondents had good basic levels of English, I made sure to have my native, Arabic speaking Iraqi father nearby should we encounter any translation issues, or cross-cultural vernacular nuances that could impact communication. The aforementioned screen-sharing option on Zoom also enabled me to share pages such as google translate, which helped the conversation flow smoothly in the event of miscommunication, as the visual translation helped facilitate clear transliteration.

6.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) involves the identification and analysis of patterns and themes in data. It helps establish how these factors aid the understanding of certain phenomena in a more in-depth way, in order to answer the research questions at hand. Rather than predicting or explaining topics, qualitative analysis was adopted for the purpose of this thesis for its emphasis on "sense-making" (Islam and Aldaihani, 2022: 4) of data sets. Once the medium for interviewing had been identified (Zoom), and all the interview transcripts had been transcribed verbatim in accordance with the Otter.ai., establishing the most appropriate method of data analysis was the next important step. Each interview was a personal, nuanced account of the lived experiences of Iraqi Christians. Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012) model of thematic analysis, as exhibited in Figure 6, was adopted to provide step by step post-interview data analysis interpretation.
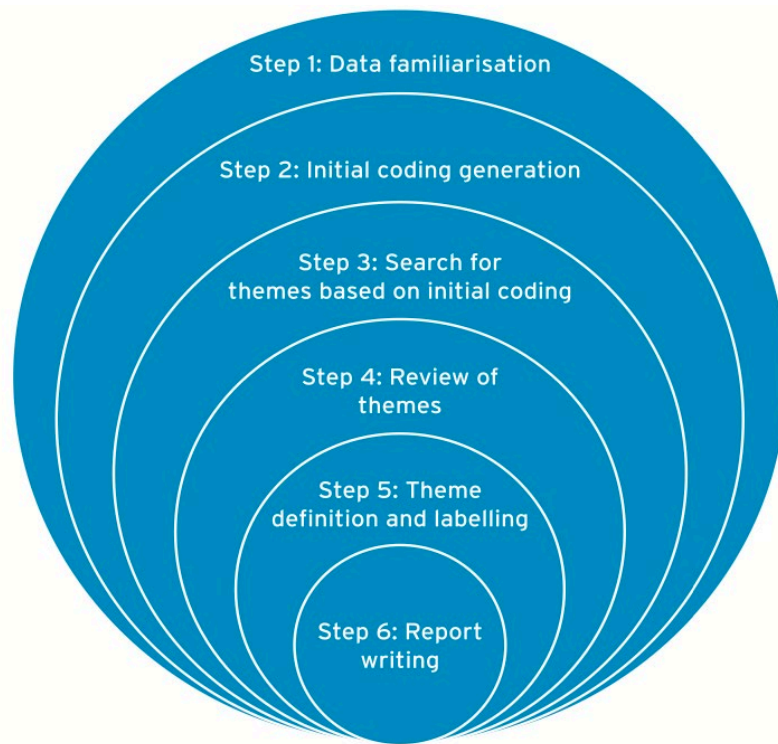
Figure 6. Model of thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012) in Islam and Aldaihani (2022: 7).

Stage one of my data analysis was concerned with familiarity of the data and emphasises the importance of becoming acquainted with the content of the interviews. This initial stage was essential in order to progress to step two, where I began to develop initial codes through a subcategory of substantive coding, known as open coding, which seeks for the emergence of core categories. This was a meticulous line-by-line process in order to ensure I had not missed any key information. As Islam and Alddihani (2022, 7-8) contend, this initial coding stage is meant to be "guided by the bigger picture and not simply one or two sentences in the text". Once these more general themes, including the nature and impacts of displacement, had been produced, I was able to move on to stage three where I looked for specific patterns. This is known as the other subcategory of substantive coding, commonly referred to as theoretical sampling and selective coding which is the process of fracturing and analysing the data to "saturate the core and related concepts" (Holton, 266). From my data, I produced categories concerning fears surrounding being a religious minority IDP and anxieties about the lack of protection. From these categories I was able to establish core themes, which included compromised sectarian safety and threats to freedom. Stage four was important for re-examining the themes produced. This was achieved by arranging the data around the themes. If I noticed that there was minimal data for a certain theme, I would deem that particular theme unsuitable in the final catalogue of themes, and either adjust or abandon it altogether. The

penultimate stage, stage five, concerned theme discrepancies to obtain "meaningful answers to the research questions" (Islam and Alddihani, 2022: 8). The last stage of the model of thematic analysis I adopted, stage six, dealt with refining and altering the analysis according to the problems. This stage was particularly useful as it provided me with the information to reformulate my research questions several times (Dawson, 2019) to produce a succinct data-question outcome. It is important to note that all of the stages and subsequent codes and themes produced were influenced greatly by existing literature related to the topic. This data was then analysed again, in a similar way to ensure robustness of codes, through the Gioia method (Corley & Gioia, 2004: 15), as exhibited in Figure 7, a "systematic approach to new concept development that is designed to bring qualitative rigor". This template helped facilitate transparency while I was conducting analytic research in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012) model of thematic analysis. In the first order analysis, which is derived from informant-centric terms (Gehman, 2018: 286), broad attempts to filter categories were made (as in step three of the Model of Thematic Analysis). Similarly, these stemmed from initial groupings of parallels and differences, through a process of axial coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Bonfim, 2021) which helped construct linkages between data in order to produce codes, categories and subcategories with the respondent voices at the centre. These categories were then given labels or phrasal descriptions, which tried to embody specific respondent terms. The second order analysis, which derived from research-centric concepts, introduced the theoretical realm (as with step four of the model of theoretical analysis), exploring whether the emergent themes point towards specific concepts that can help elucidate the phenomena we are observing. Once workable second order themes were deduced, these themes were filtered down even further into three aggregate dimensions: reasons for displacement, threats to achieving a positive identity, attitudes towards lack of legal protections. These dimensions helped provide clear key themes, in line with those deduced for Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012) model, that translated the data produced into constructive information that could be used for developing the project beyond just research, and into something palpable that can be acted upon.
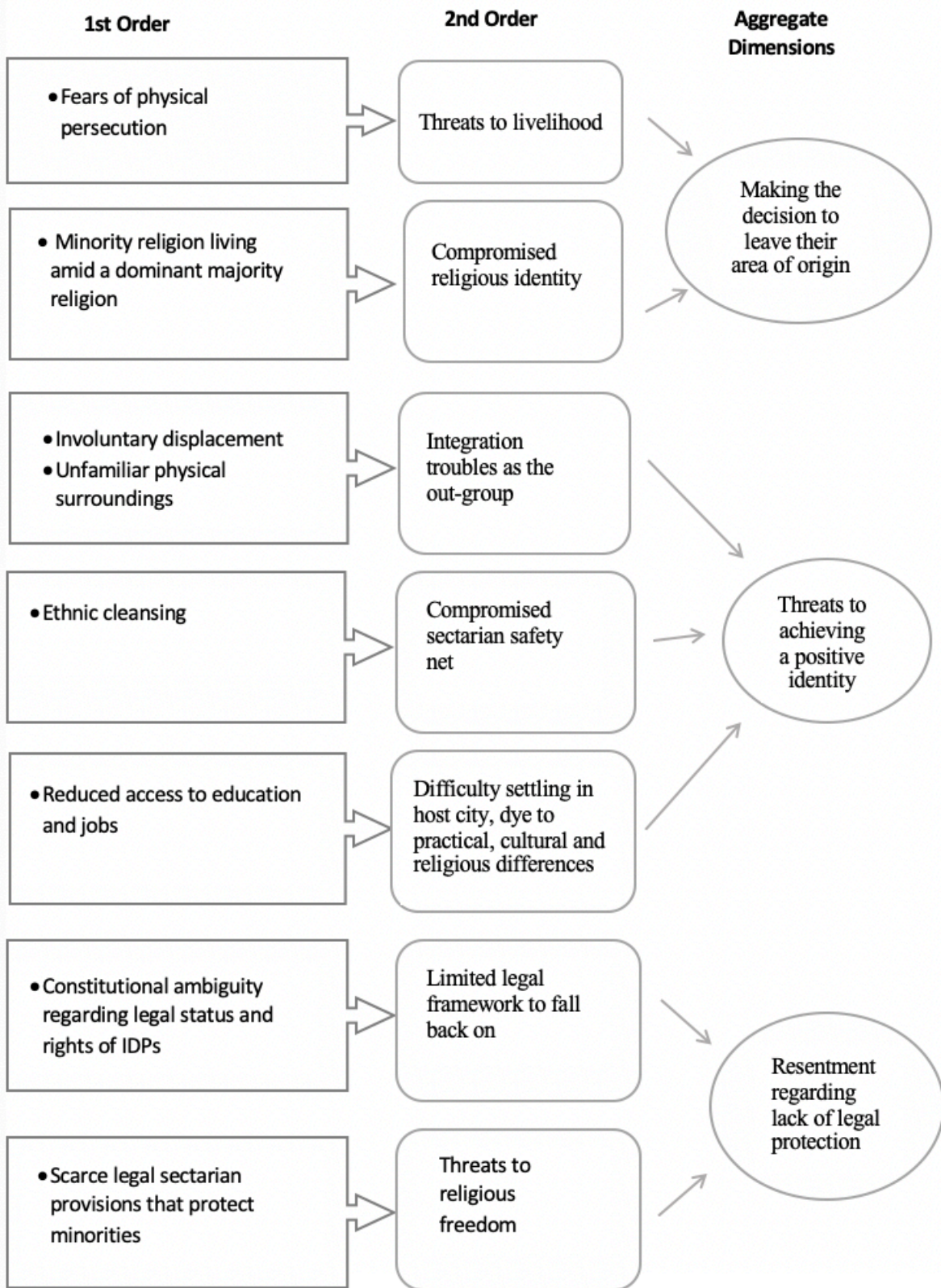
Figure 7. Data analysis based on the Gioia method

Corley and Gioia (2004; 2013).

6.4 Researcher positionality

Given that "research is only as good as the investigator" (Morse et al., 2002: 17), self-reflection was critical throughout the research process. Effective reflexivity within my research was primarily concerned with reducing researcher bias. I felt that this introspective meta-analysis was essential in increasing the credibility of data (Berger, 2015: Dodgson, 2018) and the starting place for safeguarding validity and reliability. During my research design I continually considered the purview, the purpose or scope of my research, and asked questions such as: are these interviews necessary for my research? Am I the best researcher to conduct the interviews? What are the potential implications of piloting these interviews? Who will benefit from the interview? And is there potential for bias? Such considerations sought to engage with both prospective and retrospective reflexivity, cogitating the ways in which (i) the researcher influences the research and (ii) is influenced by the research (Attia and Edge, 2017; Njeri, 2021). As a researcher of Iraqi Christian heritage, I consider myself to have partial "insider" (Knott, 2009: 243) perspectives, as I share mutual religious and cultural heritage with the participants, as well as close family ties to displaced persons. As a result of my deeper understanding of the contextual factors of displacement and the sensitive nature of the issue, I felt like I was able to create rapport with participants as they did not consider me as a stranger. This generated what I deemed to be more authentic results than a complete outsider would have achieved, as it meant I was less inclined to construct stereotypes and the participants appeared, on the whole, to be speaking candidly throughout. Despite this stance, it is important to acknowledge the potential for bias. While I recognised my position as a partial insider, I felt it was also important to acknowledge my partial "outsider" (Knott, 2009: 243) status as well. Despite my Iraqi Christian heritage, I cannot wholly claim to understand or relate to the lived experiences of the displaced subjects being interviewed, as I reside in London and have never myself been an IDP or faced any form of persecution. This partial outsider status had notable strengths, as I was able to maintain objectivity regarding certain properties that would perhaps have been lost to a complete insider due to over familiarisation or potentially personally triggering topics. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 114) contend, the qualitative researcher's perspective is a paradoxical one in that "it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand". I felt that the symbiotic nature of my insider/outsider status allowed me to reap the benefits of both perspectives to optimise the credibility of my data and alleviate the "inherent power imbalance in the researcher–researched relationship" (Lawrence, 2022: 161) which could impact the reliability and validity of the data.

6.5 Ethical issues

My apprehensions concerning the qualitative interviews were three-fold: ethics and reflexivity; practical problems; and interviewee communication, rapport and researcher integrity. These areas are all intrinsically linked and demand a great deal of reflection. For example, deciding upon a certain mode of interviewing based on logic in turn fosters ethical questions regarding the appropriate nature of the question or the context it is being asked in. While the researcher can never be fully divorced from the interview process, I was conscious of the importance of comprehensive awareness regarding social contexts in both the research design and the data analysis process (Islam and Aldaihani, 2022: 8) With emphasis on a consideration of cross-cultural issues, threats to security and benefits for the participant (Ess and af Segerstad, 2019), the research was conducted in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the 2018 United Kingdom rendition, the Data Protection Act (DPA). These legal frameworks command that responsibility of personal data follow strict data protection rules, including whether information is used lawfully and handled in a way that guarantees optimal security. This includes specific legal protection regarding sensitive information pertaining to race, ethnic background and religious beliefs, which I felt was particularly important for my own research, as protecting the safety and discretion of the participants was of key concern.

Prior to the interviews, I exchanged several emails in order to build rapport (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). I felt that this was essential in order to generate rich, comprehensive data which, in turn, would help validate the research. I explained the consent form to each participant, so that their participation predicated upon transparent comprehension of the available options pertaining to the interview and the resultant data produced. Again, at the start of the official interview, I reiterated the details of the consent form to give the participant the option to reconsider what kind of authorisations they are comfortable granting, and the relationship this may have with disclosure throughout the interview. I made sure to emphasise that consenting to their data being published was not binding, and that the participant could decide to keep or retract permission after the interview, once they could retrospectively reflect on their contributions. I felt that this was an important ethical consideration, as, unlike social media posts which can be modified or erased, it is often not possible for a "narrator's personal information to be removed from a book, article or exhibition once published" (Pascoe Leahy, 2021: 10). I followed up the interviews with an email detailing each respondent's respective transcript, reiterating my thanks for their contributions and inviting them to amend any mistakes I may have made, or remove any comments they no longer want to be shared. This

was an important chance for the participant to reflect on whether they are still content with the details of the co-created interview.

As the researcher, I was mindful that I was documenting details about a very emotionally and loaded transition in the subjects' lives, and so made sure to tread judiciously whilst exploring this territory (Pascoe Leahy, 2021: 2). Given the politically sensitive nature of the topic and the particular vulnerability of many of the participants, it was crucial to avoid emotionally fuelled, potentially triggering words or phrases, for example, ISIS. I was also actively looking out for both overt social cues, such as tears, or more subtle signs, demonstrated through facial expressions or bodily movements, in order to gauge whether the respondent was comfortable to continue with the interview. I was aware, however, that certain non-verbal reactions did not necessarily imply that the conversation had crossed over to uncomfortable boundaries. For example, crying may depict significance (Jones, 1998), as opposed to discomfort. Nonetheless, it was important to continually check in on the participant and ask whether they were okay to continue. This tied into the anthropological concept of "rolling consent" (Pascoe Leahy, 2021) which I sought to maintain throughout the interview in order to foster trust and facilitate candid conversation. Additionally, the semi-structured, open-ended questions meant I could evade leading questions and allow the respondents to authentically shape the interview in a way that felt comfortable for them. For the duration of the research and dialogic interview process, I became acutely aware of the conscious and unconscious bias that underpinned my project. For example, I was mindful that my shared heritage would have the potential to influence my attempts to draw out raw, but potentially very triggering information, to elicit strong reactions from the reader. While inherent bias is hard to completely mitigate, adopting open-ended questions, with a few occasional prompts to guarantee key themes were addressed, meant I was able to maintain a professional distance and mitigate conscious and unconscious bias as best as possible. Post-interview, ethical issues included how the interview material was saved, follow up communication and what kind of consent had been granted to the usage of the material produced.

6.6 Research limitations

While there were significant benefits from having to use alternative interview methods due to the COIVD-19 pandemic, there were also notable restrictions. One of the greatest limitations was the reduced time capacity of certain participants owing to family and work-related constraints. While the pandemic started out as a health emergency, as it progressed it developed into a socio-economic crisis. Lockdowns meant children were working from home and adults

had to dedicate their spare time to teach and look after their children. Moreover, many of my subjects were health workers who were facing longer hours at work. The changes to many subjects' personal and professional livelihoods meant that they did not have the time to participate in interviews, or, if they did participate, they could only do so for a short period of time before they got cut off and had to attend to other duties. This often meant that they could not answer all the questions in one interview, or they would rush through their answers and not give a comprehensive reflection.

I was also conscious of the possibility of self-censorship among respondents who did end up participating, placing limits on wholly understanding the lived experiences of those involved in the study. It is therefore important to acknowledge potential threats to the veracity and subsequent robustness of certain data. Moreover, as a result of several practical factors including economic and logistic constraints, achieving wide-reaching, comprehensive data through random sampling was not possible. With only 22 participants, it would be naïve to claim that this study is (i) wholly representative of the thoughts and feelings of all Iraqi Christian IDPs and (ii) compatible with Litwin's (1995: 6) characterisation of reliable data as reproducible, which further encumbers the validity and reliability of the research. With this being said, having a diverse sample of varying ages, genders, occupations and social circles means that I was able to generate a varied range of comparative data from multiple perspectives that begins to reflect the sentiments of the lived experiences of Iraqi Christian IDPs and their attitudes towards the current situation. The fact it is a longitudinal cohort study also helps justify the robustness of the data, as it follows the variable patterns that allow for a unique insight into cause-and-effect of displacement. As there was no selective attrition, the original representative sample was still maintained. Thus, despite some of its shortcomings, the data produced serve as a strong basis for future, post-pandemic research.

Chapter 7. Results and discussion

Data generated in the longitudinal study of 22 Iraqi Christian IDPs living in Erbil and Duhok under the KRG over the course of two years is analysed in the following section. Appendix 4 presents a condensed selection of some key answers in response to all five questions over the two studies. The purpose of the data collection is to address this study's objectives, which concern the nature of displacement as well as solutions to, and justice for, displacement. It also functions to address all four research questions: the effect of persecution on this community (research question one); how to reinforce a positive social identity (research question two);

what legal actions can be taken to achieve justice for the crimes committed against Iraqi IDPs (research question three); and how this particular case can help us understand and theorise issues of displacement (research question four). The data generated helps to fill the gaps in existing literature and understanding in order to enlighten current policy from the first-hand perspectives of those who suffer from perpetual internal displacement. Key themes, including self-identity, insecurity and intergenerational differences, reflect the scope of precarity that comes with living as the minority out-group with limited agency. With sentiments ranging from indignant to indifferent, the power of comparative longitudinal data is evident in its invaluable insights into the personal perceptions of respondents and the changes in their outlooks over time.

7.1 Intergenerational comparisons

A key discovery across the two studies was the significant intergenerational discrepancy. Among the 17 participants aged between 35 and 76 -who were born before 1990 (see Figure 5) and had reached their teenage years or adulthood before the 2003 Iraq war and the rise of ISIS - a more robust sense of self was apparent. As Respondent 13, a 50-year-old male computer programmer, explains in the 2022 interviews:

> "I feel nostalgic about our life before becoming displaced. Holding on to these fond memories helps me maintain a positive personal identity as indigenous individuals within an increasingly diminishing demography."

Nostalgia - "positive tones of evocation of a lived past" (Davis, 1979: 18) - serves as a powerful tool in helping maintain or regain identities within communities. This is specific to generations whose territorialisation of identity is owed to "experience[ing] shared space and place attachment" (Milligan, 2003: 382) that form a large proportion of their identities. Here, we can see nostalgia playing a huge role in upholding a positive identity, despite being the minority out-group and experiencing consistent threats to selfhood. This demonstrate the power of ethnicity and religion for these older communities in providing an unwavering sense of security in the face of adversity.

In response to question two, on the role of religious and ethnic identity, Respondent 14, a 50-year-old dentist, claimed: "while we have always technically been a numerical minority, I never viewed it as a bad thing growing up in Mosul. We always co-existed with the majority Muslims in the region". Despite being a minority in their areas of origin, the general consensus

was that this group was able to co-exist within a majority Muslim demographic in their area of origin without feeling marginalised as the other (Said, 1979).

However, these feelings were predominantly exclusive to the older generation, who had deep-rooted positive associations with their ethno-religious identity. The majority felt as though their ascriptive features, being Christian and Iraqi, helped them feel like they were "part of something bigger" (Respondent 10, 2019 interview). It appears to be this camaraderie with the community of Iraqi Christians that has helped keep their identities rooted. Respondent 18, 63-year-old civil engineer, embodies these feelings:

> "Christianity provides a sort of private sanctuary and allows me to find meaning in the day to day. Being an Iraqi has been important in providing a place that will always feel like home. Both equate to a sense of community and solidarity, which I consider important in fostering a positive identity."

Clearly, this unanimity with their identity means that, regardless of threats to it, many older respondents saw it as a lifeline and thus a positive thing, regardless of the fact they are part of the minority out-group. This response embodies the SIT notion that being part of a wider social community or group has the ability to instil meaning and foster positive partisan positivity (Hogg, 2016: 3). Interestingly, for some of the other older respondents, these feelings seemed to have changed as they changed location. Respondent 19, a 63-year-old aircraft engineer, sheds light on this, explaining that while "ethnic and religious discrepancies didn't used to be an issue" they now serve as "strong barriers to creating a positive existence in Kurdistan" where the majority in-group is less tolerant of them. For this participant, and several others of this generation, this strong connection to their identity meant that threats to it took a real toll on their selfhood. However, all in all, ethno-religious affiliation was something the older generation deemed as important to their identities and something they were proud of.

On the contrary, the younger generation (see Figure 5), whose memories of growing up were dominated by the successive conflicts in Iraq in the 1990s, appear to have less of a connection to both their religion and ethnicity. With few memories of peaceful co-existence, this group seem to view these ascriptive characteristics as a "precursor to persecution" (Respondent 2, 2022 interviews) and a burden to achieving a positive social identity. Respondent 11, 50-year-old female university lecturer, defends these generational differences, explaining:

"I am 50, so I have had the opportunity to be many other things before becoming an IDP. I was able to really establish my identity over the years, so it has not been very harmful to me. However, for my children, I can see that being an IDP has been very damaging as it has consumed so much of their life. I am fearful for their future as their identity continues to be influenced negatively."

Respondent 11's daughter, Respondent 2, reflected her mother's sentiments in her 2019 interview, stating:

"I feel like I am just existing, not living. I know it sounds bad, but sometimes I wish I was born somewhere else. Somewhere where my homeland, my ethnicity and my religion are not under constant threat. I am studying to be a lawyer so that I can try to create a positive future for myself, and hopefully help those in a similar situation to me. But it is not a straight path. I feel like I am constantly struggling for the right to basic education, basic representation and basic human rights protections."

This response was powerful in highlighting the desperation this community feel as a result of their social experiences that form their felt identities (Kaufman and Feldman, 2004: 468). For the younger generation, it became apparent that adversity was all they seemed to know. Threats to their identity are considered the norm, and fostering a positive identity whilst in their current protracted displacement situation, living as the unfavourable minority out-group, feels like an impossible task. Resentment and cynicism towards the challenges of achieving positive distinctiveness and a positive conception of the self seemed to manifest in the outlooks of this persecuted group, something that was still evident two years later in the second set of interviews. When asked question 3, regarding displacement and identity, in 2022, Respondent 2 stated:

"I still feel very claustrophobic and disheartened. I should be a qualified lawyer by now but I am not because of tireless obstacles in the way. Although COVID has been difficult for everyone, the government's handling of the situation has made our lives as IDPs even worse. Universities closed and e-learning was not an option for me, so I have fallen behind."

The government's neglect of this community during the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly problematic for the younger generation, many of whom faced major disruptions to their education and day-to-day routines. With no influence over decisions, nor any power to better their situation, the consensus was that these individuals felt helpless. This is reflected in the words of Respondent 3, who explains that she is "a shell" of who she once was. As this displacement is predominantly a result of ethnic and/or religious persecution, the younger

generation generally felt that gaining a positive identity was not possible whilst living as a demographically-challenged minority out-group in an environment that does not wholly understand, accept, nor support them. With limited agency and few memories of ever having power over their circumstances, it is unsurprising that the younger participants generally felt deflated and desperate to be freed from the chains of displacement. This has taken its toll on the identities of this category of IDPs, as 29-year-old Respondent 4 explained:

> "Compared to my parents, and the older generations that have been uprooted with us, I think my ethno-religious identity is comparatively quite weak. I try to identify more with aspects of myself that aren't the subject of persecution, for example being a pharmacist."

This response is consistent with the SIT findings of Ethier and Deaux (1994) discussed in section 5, where the identities of the Hispanic students at Ivy League universities were shown to become weaker as a result of being part of the out-group minority. Instead of enduring continual threats to her identity, Respondent 4 has chosen to detach herself from the parts of herself that encourage persecution, in the same way that the Hispanic students did. While this can alleviate some of the suffering, it unfortunately weakens individual distinctiveness. For a large portion of their lifetime, these affiliations have been the reason for their subjection and the reason they are unable to achieve optimal distinctiveness – in respect to assimilation, connection to loved ones (as a result of being displaced and being split up), as well the inability to achieve autonomy and differentiation. Unlike the older generations, who were able to endorse their identities for much of their lives prior to being uprooted, the younger generation do not seem to have such a strong attachment. With their ethno-religious IDP identities riddled with continual negative associations as a result of the favourability gap between the "well-liked in-group and a disliked out-group" (Mangum and Block, 2018: 3), many of those born during or after the 1990s opt to distance themselves to their original ethno-religious identities in the pursuit of a more peaceful life.

7.2 Gendered insights

Gendered perspectives and concerns pertaining to the current plight of Iraqi Christian IDPs were also of particular note within the data, providing highly significant insights in relation to SDG 5: Gender Inequality. While there were many mutual worries among participants relating to displacement generally, the female participants expressed more anxiety vis-à-vis additional factors that the male participants did not raise. The female participants on average relayed

greater fear when it came to persecution as a result of their gender. During the 2019 interviews, in response to question 4 regarding protection, Respondent 2 expressed fears relating to her identity as a woman. She claimed:

> "It is a dire situation and I feel doubly vulnerable because I am a woman. Over the years, I feel like female IDPs have suffered disproportionately due to a lack of protection. For example, the fact that marry-your-rapist laws are still not illegal in Iraq just shows how slow progress is. I currently live in a camp and feel as though I would be completely helpless if, God forbid, I were raped and forced to marry someone. I do not know where I would turn. I am trying to keep a low profile so none of these parts of my identity, the fact I am a female Iraqi Christian IDP, is violated further."

In the 2022 set of interviews, Respondent 2 reiterated her concerns relating to her gender. She contended that, while she is no longer living in a camp and therefore "not so exposed to the same violations as a result of being female", many other women still are, and the "lack of attention to the reality of their vulnerabilities makes the plight of female IDPs especially challenging and dangerous". The data yielded from the longitudinal interviews highlights the persistent additional complexities living as a female IDP presents. While men are also vulnerable to rape and other violations, the existing literature and the qualitative data gathered by this study suggest that it is far less common – it was not referenced by any of the male interviewees.

Additional fears, expressed specifically by female respondents, included the hesitancy to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This included avoiding travelling to shops or attending educational institutes due to being perceived as a more vulnerable group by their hosts and broader society. This group had many anxieties linked to carrying out activities that used to be part of their standard routine, as a result of their status as both Iraqi Christian IDPs, as well as being female. While being internally displaced has its inherent vulnerabilities, the general consensus was that the men were treated with more respect under the KRG and faced less explicit ostracism. On the other hand, women recounted facing more hurdles as IDPs in KRG and broader society, as a result of their gender. As Respondent 17 explains:

> "When I am out with my husband, no one says anything to me or makes me feel particularly unwelcome. When I am alone, I feel like others take advantage of the fact that I am a woman and perhaps an easier target for discrimination."

Respondent 14, a female dentist, expanded on this in the 2019 interviews, stating that: "my daughter is scared to go to school because she has seen my fear of leaving the house". As is evident, the reality of this gendered discrimination is that many IDP women have stopped going about their day as they were previously able to, which has stagnated their existence. It has also made many women reluctant to access education or to apply for jobs for fear of rejection or persecution. Female IDPs have found themselves in a catch-22 situation where they need to secure a job in order to better their situation and achieve positive identities, yet when they endeavour to do so, they are made to feel like outsiders or persecuted, which negatively impacts their identity. In the second set of interviews, Respondent 14 notes the direct links to economic and psychological hardship because of this reduced agency, noting that:

> "We are not only struggling financially, but also mentally. If things stay the way they are, our female identities, and broader Iraqi Christian identities, will be in grave danger".

Such obstacles serve as a "constant uphill battle" (Respondent 1, 2019 interviews) to IDP women being able to advance or change their situation. This could have serious long-term implications, with a generation of women who are potentially less educated and less experienced in the workforce as a result of being discriminated against.

While the literature on displacement in Iraq highlighted many cases of forced marriage, none of the participants expressed any personal experiences of involuntary matrimony. Reasons for a lack of first-hand accounts of forced marriage, despite it still being rife in the Middle East, may be owed to the fact that I did not have access to any participants who were underage or the fact that the majority of participants in the sample no longer live in camps where it is more common. With this said, it is possible that some of the respondents had been forced, or nearly forced, into marriage, but did not want to disclose that (or felt that it was irrelevant to any of the questions). However, second-hand accounts of forced marriages, namely from Respondent 9, highlighted concerns regarding the fate of young women as a result of the hardships caused by displacement. The 41-year-old IT specialist detailed how many families had forced their daughters into marriages in order to alleviate financial burdens, asking: "how has it gotten to this point? Where we are so scared for our own futures that we are willing to sacrifice the futures of our daughters?" The lack of security of basic human rights for this already vulnerable group of women has meant they have no power over their futures. They simply have had to go along with countless impositions on their identities. While these women are naturally part of the societal out-group due to their Iraqi-Christian IDP status,

within this out-group, they are outsiders once again to male IDPs, who seem to be afforded more respect and protection.

Specific gendered worries from the male respondents only seemed to concern the livelihoods of the female members of their family, linked to the issues that the women had flagged up. For example, Respondent 16 stated: "I am so fearful for my wife and daughters. How will I be able to support them if we are not afforded protection soon?" Given that Respondent 16 is 60-years old, it is likely that his daughters are of working age, yet he still stresses that it is his duty to be able to protect them. This response underscores the additional struggles and barriers that female IDPs face. Interestingly, none of the male respondents mentioned gender as an issue to their own displacement struggles, implying that it is an issue that is specific to female IDPs. It is also important to note that any discussion of gender was particularly poignant, as none of the questions specifically mentioned or alluded to gender identity. The fact that several of the participants highlighted issues related to gender suggests that it is a significant issue and therefore a necessary factor to consider when exploring IDP protection.

7.3 Displacement and negative identity

Anxiety relating to the perilous position of being both a religious minority and an IDP was clear across the cohort, in both the 2019 and 2022 study. In the first set of interviews, 20 out of the 22 respondents referred to the term *ethno-religious cleansing.* In the second set of interviews, all 22 participants used the term, or a rendition of these terms. Given this language was left out of the question set, the fact that all interviewees referred to this particular persecution highlights the significance of pivotal role ethnicity and religion plays in relation to these IDPs' feelings of insecurity. The general consensus was that Christians had become scapegoats for the turmoil experienced in Iraq, with Respondent 4, a 29-year-old female pharmacist, in the 2022 interviews, contending that:

"If the political condition were not so dire, and if the state and international community upheld their stewardship duties to protect their citizens, we would not have been forced from our homes and cleansed of forms of identity that are essential to us – our ethnicity and our religion".

Clearly, the liminality endured by the protracted internally displaced subjects has had a destabilising consequence, disenfranchising personal identity in a society where IDPs still

continue to live as the minority out-group. Respondent 7's response reiterated these feelings, explaining that:

> "While I am many other things; a son, a husband, a father, an accountant, all other people seem to see me as is an IDP. So long as I am an IDP, I feel like I cannot embrace the beauty of being anything else."

This response emphasises the negatives of out-group homogeneity explored in SIT, whereby IDPs as the "other" (Said, 1979) are viewed as a collective based solely off their identity as displaced people, ignoring their individual distinctiveness. This echoes the findings from de Alwis' (2021: 462) study, where a Vasuki (a Tamil IDP), contended that "I have lots of identities, as a single mother, a teacher, a Hindu woman, but because the word IDP is stamped on my NIC, I continue to be seen as one and face discrimination". The parallels across different groups of IDPs highlights the negative associations of the internal displacement label across the global community of IDPs, something that stands as a clear barrier to embracing any other part of one's social identity. Such sentiments were also reflected in the initial response of Respondent 12, a 50-year-old male chemist working for an NGO in Erbil, in 2019, who stated:

> "Being an IDP and having a negative identity are homogenous. This transition period, where we cannot return to our original homes and cannot adopt a new home without complications, means we are trapped. We are imprisoned within the confines that displacement places on us, with no viable solutions presented for a positive future."

When asked the same question two years later, Respondent 12's feelings towards the situation had not changed:

> "My identity, and the identity of my family, continues to suffer from negative associations that are an inherent part of being an IDP. The transition period remains stagnant, as though we are in a vehicle stuck in mud with no one able, or willing, to tow us out."

This liminal impasse in which IDPs are stuck augments the disquiet nature of being an out-group minority living in the in-group majority host region. These sentiments are consistent with the destabilising impact of shifting identities (Bammer, 1994; Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema, 2016), where people "treat you differently" and you "feel differently about yourself" in turn (Respondent 5, 2022 interview). Whilst many of the respondents viewed their position

as a minority out-group IDP negatively, describing it as "suffocating" (Respondent 9, 2019 interviews), some felt that it was important to make the active decision for it not to consume them. This is evident in Respondent 14's 2019 response, where she claims: "being displaced from our homelands was something that we did not have any power over. However, we do have some kind of power over how it affects us". This insight demonstrates the resilience of this vulnerable community and their strength to resist their negative status.

Many respondents also seemed to acknowledge, and appreciate, Kurdish refuge as a vital lifeline. In the 2022 interviews, Respondent 3, a 25-year-old medical doctor, hailed the "safety net and protection that the KRG has provided", explaining that "without this salvation, who knows where I would be now". This was a stark change from Respondent 3's response in 2019, where she critiques the KRG from preventing her from pursuing her "dream of becoming a doctor", due to restrictions on IDPs enrolling in Kurdish universities or sharing Kurdish resources. While this barrier still exists, with Respondent 3 travelling to Mosul most days over the last two years in order to complete her practical studies, now that she is a qualified doctor she is able to appreciate the stability that having a base in Kurdistan has given her. In hindsight, Respondent 3 is able to acknowledge that Kurdish refuge has provided her with opportunities that she may not otherwise have been afforded. With this said, Kurdish independence was flagged up as a central concern, with independence potentially equating to further displacement, and further threats to the positive identity of the respondents. This fear was consistent throughout the study, with just as much ambiguity surrounding the likelihood of independence two years on from the original interviews. As Respondent 5, a 30-year master's student, explained: "if Kurdistan was to gain independence, the progress we have made towards constructing a positive future for ourselves will be stymied. We will be back to square one". With their current, and only, lifeline potentially subject to being removed at any moment, this community is forced to live in constant fear of being uprooted and having to start rebuilding their lives all over again. Until they are granted citizenship under the KRG or manage to resettle somewhere where they are recognised and, importantly, protected in the law, they cannot fully relax. The responses were all poignant in reflecting the general fear regarding the ambiguity of this displacement and the impact this displacement has had on their identities.

7.4 Protection and justice

A recurring theme in discussions on protection across both sets of interviews was the pressing issue of legal recognition, as well as national and international protection in line with SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Anger towards those who should be protecting them and

helping safeguard their identities was widespread, with high level of disappointment expressed at the sheer neglect on the part of their government and the international community. In the 2019 interviews, Respondent 10, a then 46-year-old female architect, contended that: "the baton of responsibility keeps being passed on, with no one stepping up to protect us". This resentment remained strong in the 2022 interviews, with Respondent 10 desperately questioning: "in the absence of international or constitutional protection, a loss of patronage from the KRG could be the end of the Iraqi Christian community – where would we turn next?" These replies embody the anger at the absence of any real concern for what happens to their community, who are currently "sitting ducks" (Respondent 20, 2019 interviews) to any impositions or forms of persecution. This community cannot possibly achieve an optimal equilibrium in their current set up, as their need to be assimilated, to be connected to love ones, or to be autonomous is not nurtured or protected.

Responses concerning what these provisions would look like were largely two-fold. On a national level, inclusive citizenship and state protection was noted as essential for this community to protect their status as ethno-religious IDPs. At an international level, the second proposals argued for robust constitutional frameworks and legal recognition. In response to question 4 in the initial interviews, Respondent 11, a 50-year-old female chemistry lecturer, stated: "We have no legal status. We are quite literally nobodies in the eyes of the law. Until that changes, we stay nobodies." This issue was still pertinent in the second set of interviews, with Respondent 11 maintaining recognition in the law as the "first stepping stone to alleviating our plight". As a protracted IDP themselves, having lived in Kurdistan for eight years, Respondent 6, a 35-year-old male engineer, also shed some insights into the general feelings of displaced persons and what they believe the international community needs to do going forward:

> "International protection must have several dimensions. Firstly, provisions need to be established to prevent displacement from occurring in the first place. Secondly, adequate assistance must be delivered to individuals and communities that are currently experiencing internal displacement. Thirdly, durable and legally binding – this is key – solutions must be established so that people can release themselves from the shackles of protracted displacement. Finally, support must be maintained even once IDPs are no longer technically displaced, to aid their reintegration back into society. With an amalgamation of these factors, we might just be able to find the solution to the very complex equation of displacement. If not, then we have a continued recipe for disaster for the identity, and ultimately livelihoods, of IDPs."

This response was one of many that articulated concerns about perennial threats to personal identity and livelihoods if legal action to prevent and protect internal displacement were not adopted soon. Across both interview sets, there was strong emphasis on comprehensive monitoring and assessment mechanisms. Respondent 9, a 41-year-old female IT specialist, embodied these feelings in the 2022 interviews, stressing the need for: "sustained support that is informed by the actual needs of IDPs, in order to facilitate tailored and effective changes that can work towards creating a better future and positive sense of self". An absence of this, she explained, would see "continued threats to our Iraqi and Christian identity, making us endangered and even more vulnerable in our homeland". These fears dominated the rhetoric concerning the future of the IDP community, with anxieties regarding what would happen to this community if their status were to face further threats very apparent. Respondent 1, a 22-year-old medical student, also reflected these broader feelings in her response to question five, stating:

"National and supranational frameworks need to activate their agency and provide something durable we as IDPs can invest our hope in to. I am young, I need to be able to envision a bright future for myself. Hope is the only thing keeping me going".

In her earlier 2019 interviews, Respondent 1 had emphasised that this support did not mean "superficial lip service" but instead "legally binding frameworks that those with the power to help us can be held accountable to if they fail to support us". This emphasis is significant as it demonstrates the frustrations of previous weak policy objectives that failed to provide any substantial support. Instead, Respondent 1 focuses on the importance of legal responsibility for IDPs that the community can depend on, and that helps create a safe space where positive identities can flourish. Her response is forward-thinking, covering her future and the importance of hope in keeping morale high. In a similar vein, in the 2022 interviews, Respondent 18 suggested that the international community should "emulate the response to refugees" in order to place the community of Iraqi Christian IDPs "on track to fostering positive identities". What was apparent among all respondents was that these identities could not be wholly positive without being buoyed by legal recognition and robust policy implementation that they could rely on.

When it came to discussions regarding justice for the crimes against humanity inflicted on this community, the general consensus was that holding ISIS accountable for the persecution committed was essential. In the 2019 interviews, Respondent 16, 50-year-old male radiologist consultant, affirmed: "what they have done is inexcusable and there can be no room for the

same to happen again". Two years later, Respondent 21, a 67-year-old male priest, echoed these sentiments:

> "If you do not make it excruciatingly clear that what ISIS has committed is a complete crime against humanity, you are effectively consenting to further crimes taking place. You are consenting to rape, to forced marriage and to genocide, among many other things. The international community bears that blood on their hands if they do not adequately punish the persecutors."

Feelings towards this punishment for the crimes committed were very strong, with no room for negotiation regarding whether retribution from the crimes executed by ISIS were necessary. The interviews make clear that healing not only requires protectionist measures going forward, but it also requires looking back and gaining justice for the persecution that has taken place. Even in the place of international protection and support, it is not possible for this community to foster a wholly positive identity without retribution of ISIS first.

7.5 Summary of findings

Nearly 10 years have elapsed since the exodus of Christians from Mosul by ISIS in 2014, yet this community continues to live as foreigners in its own country. With unrelenting vicissitudes to the circumstance and identity of these communities, the interviews have provided meaningful first-hand observations to the lived experiences and feelings of this vulnerable group through a SIT lens. As evident from the longitudinal data, little has changed over the course of the past two years - if anything, the situation has gotten worse. COVID-19 has presented even more barriers, and this community is no closer to achieving adequate protection. Unlike the uprooted subjects of the 1946 New Towns Act, Iraqi Christian IDPs have not found themselves in spacious new accommodation. Instead, they are in camps and temporary housing, with limited access to basic human liberties. Framing these findings within the model of SIT, as seen in Figure 8, highlights that the toll that being an ethno-religious IDP out-group minority has taken on achieving a positive social identity is cosmic. In-group-out-group hierarchies as a result of ascriptive determinants, as well as subsequent favourability gaps between the two groups, have intensified the plight of the already struggling community of Iraqi Christian IDPs, leading to a "crisis of identity" (Korn, 2001: 7).

A thematic breakdown of findings helps elucidate the destabilising effects of these dynamics on individual identity. In response to interview questions two and three (the role of ethno-religious affiliation and the effect of internal displacement on identity), the data has highlighted some important findings related to research question one concerning the

relationship between persecution and identity. Intergenerational themes of social identity for the older generation included features such as faith and preservation of identity as a result of nostalgia and territorialisation of identity, while key themes for the younger generation included adversity, resentment, and claustrophobia as a product of their felt identity as Iraqi Christian IDP. Both generations shared mutual frustrations towards their limited agency as a demographic minority out-group and the disorientation of being an IDP.

Furthermore, gendered insights highlighted the disproportionate suffering of female IDPs, whose plight is doubly precarious due to both real and perceived female vulnerabilities. This has created difficult obstacles specific to women, including barriers to carrying out day-to-day activities such as shopping, as well as accessing education and work, placing them in a situation that makes it impossible to foster a positive sense of self.

Mutual themes across all ages, genders, and both interview sets, was anger towards the challenges that come with being a demographic minority, the liminal disorientation of being an IDP, the negatives of out-group homogeneity and the absence of robust protection. This research illustrates barriers to a positive self-identity as being Iraqi and being Christian, as well as being internally displaced - all minority out-group statuses in Erbil and Duhok. Key sentiments relating to displacement and identity included: anxiety, insecurity, disenfranchisement of personal identity, the homogeneity of internal displacement and negative identity, as well the destabilising effect of shifting identities. Other key terms included ethno-religious cleansing, and endangerment.

With respect to research question two, the data (predominantly in response to interview question five) suggests that reinforcing positive social identities among Iraqi Christian IDPs is not possible without national and international protection. This includes proactive steps related to prevention, as well as monitoring and assessment mechanisms that facilitate successful and sustainable reintegration into society. For this to be effective, and for Iraqi IDPs' social identities to be positively reinforced, these steps must be informed by IDPs from the outset. This rapport between IDPs and the national and international community is essential in ensuring that the plight of the minority out-group is being adequately addressed, and that their livelihoods and identities are not vulnerable to similar forms of persecution again. Instilling confidence through the form of a robust safety net for this community to fall back on would help the Iraqi Christian IDP community work towards achieving optimal distinctiveness, where they can embrace their individuality without fear of discrimination and, similarly, embrace membership to their community without worrying about in-group-out-group favourability gaps. Achieving this balance would help Iraqi Christians work towards reinforcing both positive individual identities, as well as positive community identities, with the safety net of

international protection providing them with the confidence to endorse these social identities freely.

Moreover, in response to both questions four and five (refer to appendix 2), the respondents emphasised the importance of legal frameworks in achieving recognition, protection and, subsequently, a positive sense of self. Emphasis was put on the necessity of legal definitions of IDPs and formally binding national and international security. There was also unanimity concerning justice in the form of the official prosecution of ISIS and recognition of genocide for ISIS's ethnic cleansing campaign. The respondents' insights also offer important solutions to research question three, regarding legal action, and put crucial emphasis on the weight that the international community would bear if they did not act soon to protect vulnerable communities. Lastly, with respect to question four regarding the importance of this case study in theorising issues of displacement, the data published in this longitudinal report concerning the lived experiences of protracted IDPs is invaluable in filling in the gaps of current practical and academic understandings surrounding the relationship between internal displacement and identity.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the liminality between the out-group Iraqi Christian IDPs and the in-group Muslim Kurds has had a destabilising effect. Feelings of ostracism and anxiety are heightened due to a lack of robust constitutional protection, which was owed to both national and international failures. The inability to exercise their own agency and change their negative circumstances means achieving optimal distinctiveness and, ultimately, a positive identity, is seemingly impossible without comprehensive attention and responses from the national and international community to the plight of this community.

Intergenerational comparisons

Older generation:
- Faith
- Role of nostalgia in preserving a positive identity

Younger generation:
- Identity causing claustrophobia
- Identity as the cause of adversity
- Resentment of identity

Mutual themes:
- Anger towards limited agency as a result of identification as Iraqi/ Christian
- Frustration with being a demographic minority
- Identity disorientation of being an IDP

Gendered insights

Females:
- Doubly vulnerable status due to being a female IDP
- Additional complexities not experienced by male IDPs

Males:
- Fear for female family members

Displacement and identity
- Anxiety
- Insecurity
- Disenfranchisement of personal identity
- Homogeneity of internal displacement
- Negative identity
- Scapegoating
- Ethno-religious cleansing and endangerment

Fostering a positive identity: protection and justice

Protection:
- Legal definition of IDP
- Formally binding protections
- Robust monitoring and assessment mechanism

Justice:
- Prosecution of ISIS fighters

Outcome findings
- Destabilising effect of in group-out-group dynamics on identity
- Feelings of ostracism and anxiety
- Gender inequality among IDPs
- Inability to exercise own agency and change circumstance as a barrier to achieving a positive identity
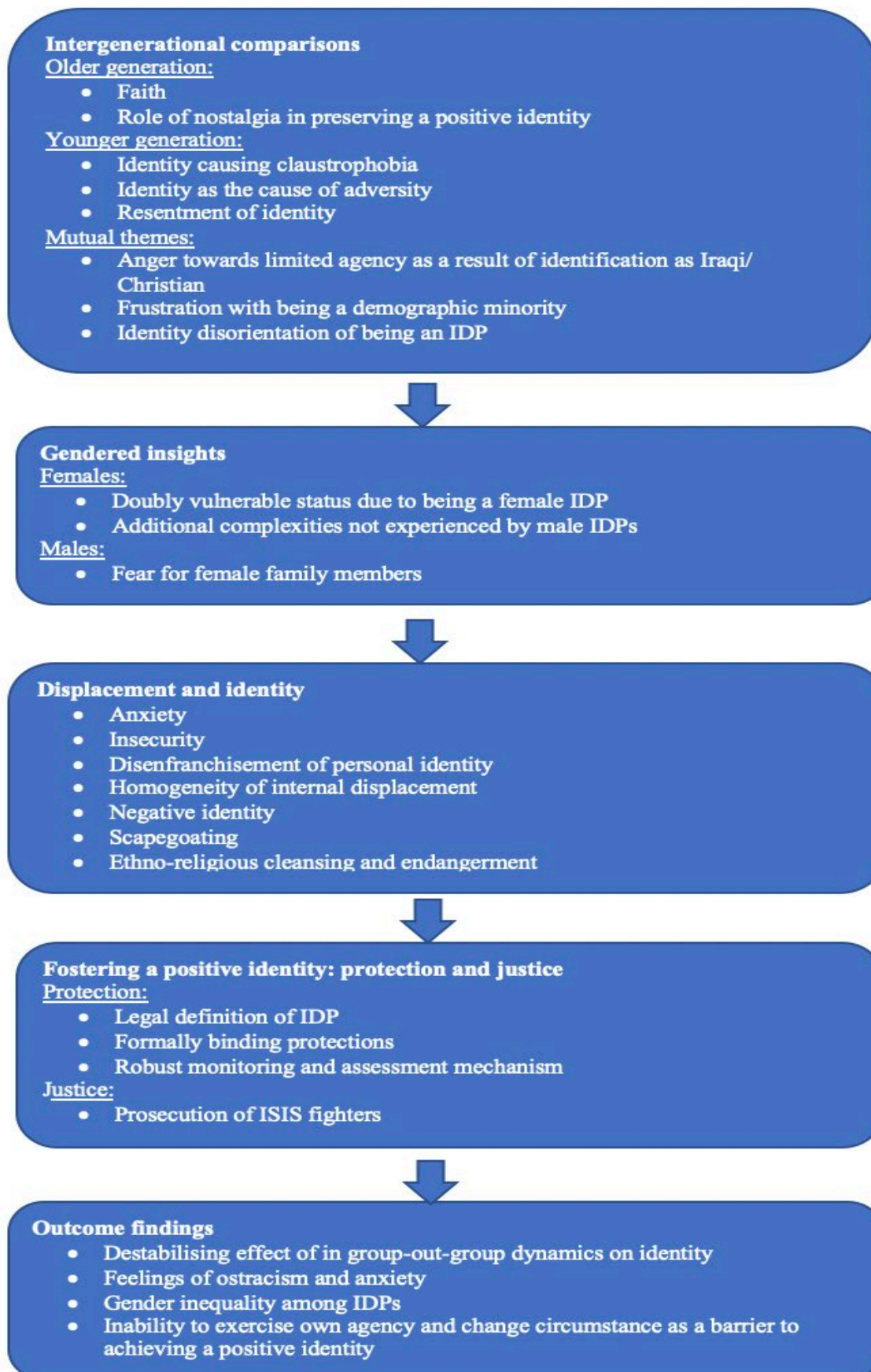
Figure 8. Annotated SIT model of the findings

Chapter 8. Recommendations

8.1 Establishing solutions

The current status quo for IDPs in Iraq, and globally, cannot be maintained. With geopolitical conflicts being fought in the demographic battleground of the Middle East, this thesis has demonstrated that Iraqi Christians cannot endure this turmoil any longer if they want to have any kind of meaningful presence. The existing legal situation is tragically inadequate and, without comprehensive representation and attention, IDP identities and livelihoods continue to waver. As this longitudinal study highlights, failure to find solutions will contribute to reduced human mobility and reduced quality of existence (Okazaki, 2021). Theorising internal displacement within state sovereignty exemplifies Holbrooke's (2000) notion that sovereignty does not licence irresponsibility. While normative frameworks help elucidate the plight of IDPs more broadly, hollow international policy instruments offered by NGOs such as the UNHCR have meant that the number of IDPs continue to rise globally, with their plight intensifying daily.

With the Iraqi Christian community achieving positive identities as the key motivation, this thesis focuses on proactive steps that need to be taken in order to foster a favourable sense of self in line with ODT (Leonardelli et al., 2010: 63). Figure 9 presents the opposing forces to achieving a positive identity in the context of Iraqi Christian IDPs, by employing Lewin's (1964) force field analysis model. The current state of stasis illustrated in this diagram reflects the stagnant transition period Respondent 12 refers to in the most recent 2022 interviews, with IDPs stuck in a tough liminal state. The forces working in favour of a positive social identity for IDPs include solidarity of ethno-religious identity, a key defining characteristic of this community and something that functions as an essential lifeline for many, as well as the work of UNHCR, including the intentions of the HLP, current Kurdish tolerance and the guiding principles on internal displacement which provide guidelines for the treatment of IDPs. While, as a collective, these factors all contribute towards fostering positive social identities of this IDP community, the resisting forces (which correspond to the opposing arrows in this model) demonstrate the current barriers to achieving positive identities. These opposing forces include their status as a minority out-group in Kurdistan, the sectarian (Muslim) government in charge of Iraq, Kurdish instability and threats of independence, as well as the lack of legally-binding protection to safeguard the identities of this community. At any moment, any of the forces resisting change, such as Kurdish instability, could overpower the forces for positive change, and the situation for Iraqi IDPs could spiral into further despair. On the contrary, if the forces

for change manage to overpower the forces resisting change, the Iraqi IDP community could see positive vicissitudes to their current plight. While the international community has minimal control over certain forces, such as the extent of Kurdish tolerance of IDPs, it does have the power to exercise its clout to propel sustainable change in many of the other areas, namely legally-binding protection. With the sum of IDPs in the Middle East growing exponentially, if this positive change is to be achieved, action to protect this ethnically persecuted community must be taken soon.
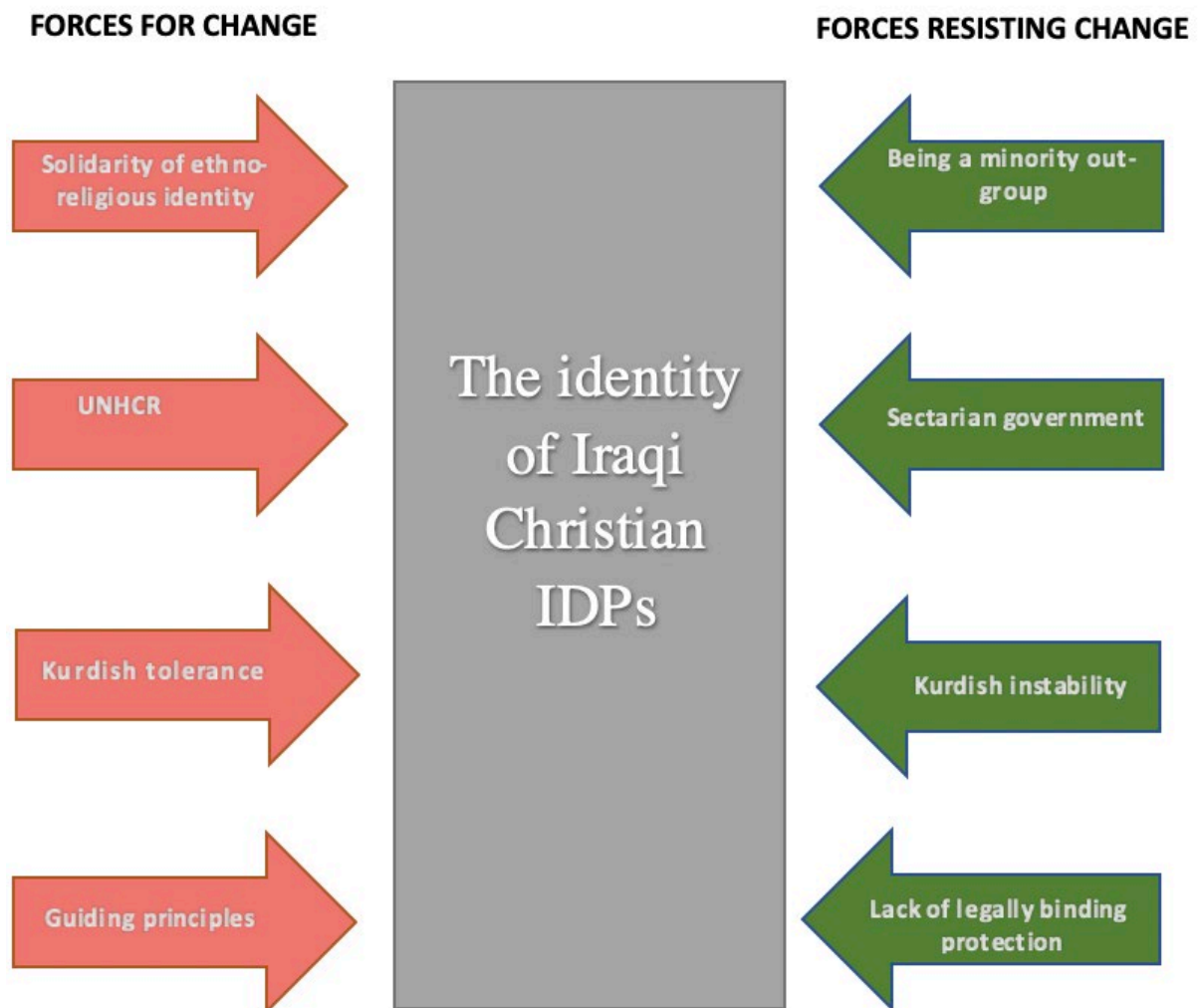

Figure 9. Force field analysis

Lewin (1946)

In line with insights from the comprehensive literature review and the data produced from the qualitative interview in this thesis, recommendations for driving these changes and creating viable lifelines for these communities are presented in the following section.

Recommendation one: legally-binding definition of IDP

The current ambiguity around what constitutes internal displacement and the lack of any binding definition of IDPs is a "grave lacuna in international law" (Nyanduga, 2004: 58). Change must begin with the recognition of the basic importance of right to legal identity in order for these communities to be recognised before the law (Clutterbuck et al., 2018; Tull, 2019) and be granted with the agency required to improve their situation. As Mooney (2005: 19) contends, it is essential to put emphasis on the fact that the utility of identifying internal displacement as a distinctive category of concern is not to "privilege them over others but rather to ensure that their needs are addressed and their human rights are respected *along with* those of other persons". Establishing who falls within this category, including what comprises an IDP and their associated struggles, is an essential starting point for change. Not only would it oblige states to "respond to IDPs as citizens" (Almanza and Phillips-Barrasso, 2021), it would also impose global accountability for the fate of this vulnerable group. This would allow these communities to be adequately addressed and, in turn, enable positive and meaningful identities to be constructed.

Recommendation two: integrate GPID into law

With no state or international body currently accountable for the fate of the IDP community, the future of Iraqi IDPs is in the hands of the federal government of Iraq. By the nature of it being an (Islamic) sectarian body, the provisions in place by the Iraqi government are "fraught with difficulties and discrimination" (Chatelard, 2012: 12). These obstacles deny basic protections, further depriving IDPs of the ability to improve their situation. By the very nature of the GPID being a *guiding* body, it steers "towards flexibility, rather than legal precision" (Vincent, 2000: 30). Formally establishing the GPID as a legally-binding decree would be a proactive step in fortifying refuge and rehabilitation for these vulnerable members of society. While case studies taken from Angola and Colombia, which have taken the step to incorporate GPID into domestic law, suggest that the principles do not necessarily "lead to a better government policy or to automatic improvements in the rights of IDPs", officiating these principles would ensure that there is legislation in place "against which governments can be held account" (Borton et al., 2005: 134). Liability mechanisms would give the international community more clout by, in part, dissolving the obstacle of state sovereignty that is currently preventing UNHCR and other international bodies from effectively helping these communities. Implementing the GPID into normative state canons would protect against arbitrary displacement and provide resettlement initiatives to facilitate self-reliance amongst IDP communities (Seff et al., 2021: 1).

In this case study of the Iraqi Christian IDP community, and in the case of other IDP communities who are persecuted on the basis of their ethno-religious status, progress calls for special legal recognition of ethno-religious IDPs that does not violate the precincts of national sovereignty. More specifically, a distinct case for ethno-religious IDPs, in accordance with Guiding Principle Six, would elevate the status of ethno-religious IDPs by highlighting their position as endangered persons of concern. Guiding Principle Six states:

> "Every human being shall have the right to be protected against being arbitrarily displaced…when it is based on policies of apartheid, 'ethnic cleansing', or similar practices aimed at/or resulting in altering the ethnic, religious or racial composition of the affected population" (Deng, 1999: 486).

Reclassifying ethnic and religious groups within a new category of UNHCR responsibility (specifically, the HLP on internal displacement) would ameliorate representation and, in turn, provide protracted Iraqi Christian IDPs, and other groups of persecuted IDP minorities, with the recognition and subsequent protections afforded to refugees. As with the legally-binding statue of the 2010 IASC, heads of states and national and international bodies could then be held accountable in places like the United Nations' International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, should crimes against humanity, including genocide, transpire. This would see corruption against Iraqi Christian IDPs, which is intrinsically linked to their distinct minority out-group status, become a prosecutable offence.

Recommendation three: comprehensive monitoring and assessment mechanisms

Geographic return is "not synonymous with full restitution of rights or instantaneous to the pre-displacement of status quo" (Davis et al., 2018). Even after returning to their places of origin, IDP communities are exposed to challenges that cannot be imminently eradicated. Therefore, resolving displacement is an abiding procedure that should see a gradual reduction in the need for external security and support.

With no assistance for their trauma, a key theme in the interviews was sustainable support mechanisms. Monitoring and assessment systems must have long-term visions, with viable solutions that advance security, compensation for damage to/loss of property and be able to create an environment that IDPs are able to flourish in under healthy socio-economic settings. Despite IDPs being the very group impacted by policies to end displacement, they are seldom consulted. Little has been done to explore how IDPs can adopt necessary tactics to improve their situation, with, or in the absence of, external help. Neglecting these important

insights, in turn, ignores how the IDP community can activate their own agency and "negotiate their harsh surroundings" (Zhou et al., 2022: 49). Thus, within the international assessment monitoring and mechanisms should be a platform for IDPs to participate in the decision-making process (Dirikgil, 2022). These should integrate IDP contributions regarding day-to-day living, as well as facilitate durable solutions. When these communities are involved in modalities, they are able to work proactively towards rebuilding positive identities. This process of return and reintegration is vital for addressing the root cause of conflict and can help IDPs develop a sustained self-reliance (Seff et al., 2021; UNHCR, 2020), so long as it takes into consideration returnees' motivations, needs, and concerns. Effective mechanisms of different states must be investigated and emulated, using this knowledge to act upon existing, as well as prevent pending, internal displacement. These monitoring systems could follow suit from approaches taken in Rwanda and Bosnia. In both examples, the UN Security Council took a two-step approach by (i) forming a group of experts to collect and analyse evidence of atrocities, and (ii) establishing ad-hoc tribunals, with the UN Security Council the only existing UN body with the power to do this.

Contingency plans must also include reviews into triggers of displacement, attention to specific vulnerabilities that could make communities susceptible to displacement, and examination of the early warning signs of genocide. Specifically, the rigorous application of the UN's Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes (United Nations, 2014) to the displacement would stipulate frequent and systematic assessments of the treatment of these vulnerable communities. This framework includes three legally-defined international crimes: genocide - crimes against humanity and war crimes - as well as mentions of ethnic cleansing. Detailed affirmations of the customary obligation to prevent these crimes are specified in the body of the framework. While the political will of states is a "necessary precondition for guaranteeing human protection" (Marinelli, 2015), if the UN asserts this framework as a communal focus and standard procedure then it can become an essential instrument in improving the efficacy and consistencies of the UN bodies in relation to this vulnerable community.

Recommendation four: bringing ISIS to account

Establishing recommendations to place the persecuted Christian Iraqi IDP community on a path towards positive identities is a necessary challenge. However, in light of the data produced from this longitudinal qualitative study, for this community to be wholly satisfied, it is essential that justice is also achieved through the prosecution of the predominant persecutor – ISIS. Until

recently, ISIS fighters have only been prosecuted for terrorism-related offences. November 30th 2021 saw a landmark change to this, wherein former ISIS member, Taha al-Jumailly, was given a life sentence for genocide and war crimes, at a court in Frankfurt, Germany (Morris, 2021; Ochab, 2021). This was the first genocide conviction of an ISIS fighter. While neither the perpetrator nor his victims were German, the German courts had jurisdiction over the crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity under the principle of universal jurisdiction. This case served as a watershed moment in the retribution of ISIS fighters and helped set the precedent for the importance of a tribunal for such offences. If the Christian and broader community of victims is able to achieve any justice, as well have future atrocities prevented, the prosecution of ISIS fighters for these crimes must become customary.

Conclusion

With perennial geopolitical conflicts fought within the battle lines of Iraq, Christian communities inside its borders have found themselves in a catch-22 situation. They have had to choose between preserving their national identity and remaining loyal to Christianity in a climate that rejects it, or absconding their indigenous homeland and risking protracted threats to their ethno-religious identity. As a result of real fears of genocide inflicted by ISIS, millions of Iraqi Christians resorted to the latter and fled to safer areas under the KRG in the north of Iraq. Unfortunately, this community has now found themselves displaced within the confines of their country of origin, where the lack of protection, with respect to their new status as IDPs, has meant that their lives continue to be punctuated by turmoil and hardship. Unlike their refugee compatriots who have been able to gain international recognition as a result of border crossing, this community of Iraqi IDPs, as well as the broader international IDP community, remains invisible. An absence of international attention, partnered with obstacles such as national sovereignty, has meant that this community remains perpetually neglected, with no viable lifelines currently presented to alleviate their struggles. This paper has employed SIT and ODT to encompass dimensions based on internal displacement and ethno-religious discrimination in light of the specific case of Iraq. Conducting a longitudinal study (from 2019-2022) of 22 Iraqi Christian IDPs living in Erbil and Duhok under the KRG, the object of this social constructivist research has been to specifically answer the research questions concerning the resultant impact on the identity of this community; how this identity can be positively fostered; necessary legal action for justice; and how this specific case study can inform the broader IDP situation. Through qualitative interviews and a comprehensive analysis of the problem of displacement, including the role of the international community and the legacy of conflict in Iraq, this paper identifies systematic failures of international bodies, namely

UNHCR, as a key barrier to progress. As a product of this struggle, it is clear that the oppression endured by this community has had predominantly negative implications, creating difficult hurdles to achieving optimal distinctiveness. Despite many respondents trying to maintain a positive sense of self, the data highlights the bleak reality of the relationship between discrimination and the inherent struggles that come as a result of the internal displacement label.

With the number of IDPs rising continually, this dissertation offers feasible solutions to permanently end the plight of the displaced community, with personal insights from the vulnerable community itself on how to foster positive social identities. Fortifying the sustained presence of these communities around the world requires a more inclusive vision which endorses rich diversity and the right to identity. More specifically, these recommendations look to migrate beyond the stalemate of discussions pertaining to national sovereignty and the agency of international bodies which have, to date, impeded progress in reducing the number of individuals who fall under this category. This includes legal recognition and associated protections, as well as comprehensive assessment and monitoring mechanisms that would be indispensable in improving the agency of this out-group minority community in Kurdistan, as well as the broader internally displaced community. Addressing each specific echelon of internal displacement is not only essential in protecting the fundamental human rights of this community, but also in advancing regional and global stability in line with the 2030 UN SDGs. Given that the Iraqi Christian IDP community constitutes less than 1 million, affording them legally-binding human rights under the GPID in international law on the basis of ethno-religious discrimination would grant early success for the UN's so far stagnant HLP on displacement. This case could pave the way for future advances for the internally displaced community, demonstrating that ending the plight of the internally displaced community is both possible and feasible.

Implications for theory, policy and practice

This paper comes at a timely juncture, with the current forced displacement from Ukraine underscoring the urgency for momentum behind the internal displacement crisis. If the UN is truly committed to its maxim of "leav[ing] no one behind" (United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, 2021: ii), then internal displacement needs to be prioritised on the international agenda. This particular case aims to help fill existing gaps in literature, functioning as a powerful tool in informing future research, policy enforcement, and

systemic modifications to obviate genocide and ethnic cleansing, working towards achieving the ultimate goal of alleviating protracted displacement altogether.

While these findings are important in advancing attention of this vulnerable community, from comprehensive analysis of the unhelpful reality of lip service, I am aware that theory without action is hollow. In order to translate my findings into meaningful change, I have taken proactive steps to engage with the field of internal displacement and engage with progress on the ground. First, I am collaborating with BBC Arabic, which is using my paper as the basis for an upcoming programme being commissioned on displacement in Iraq. I am currently in talks with Dr Said Shehata and producers at the BBC to personally carry out ethnographic research and assist with on-the-ground filming in northern Iraq when the documentary goes ahead. My hopes for the documentary include far-reaching coverage of the displacement crisis in the Middle East, raising the profile of this community on the international agenda.

Secondly, I have shared my paper with Caritas Iraq Project Manager, Firas Almatbaai, who will use material from my work for their website and upcoming newsletters. Mr Almatbaai has invited me to assist Caritas Iraq in their displacement centres based in northern Iraq when I visit for the documentary.

Lastly, I have communicated the findings of this research project with Dr Chaloka Beyani, associate professor of International Law at LSE and expert on IDPs, as well as Dr Jeff Crisp, who has previously held senior positions in the UNHCR, with hopes to be able to continue collaborations at an academic level and further enrich the scholarship on internal displacement.

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Appendix 1. Sykes-Picot borders
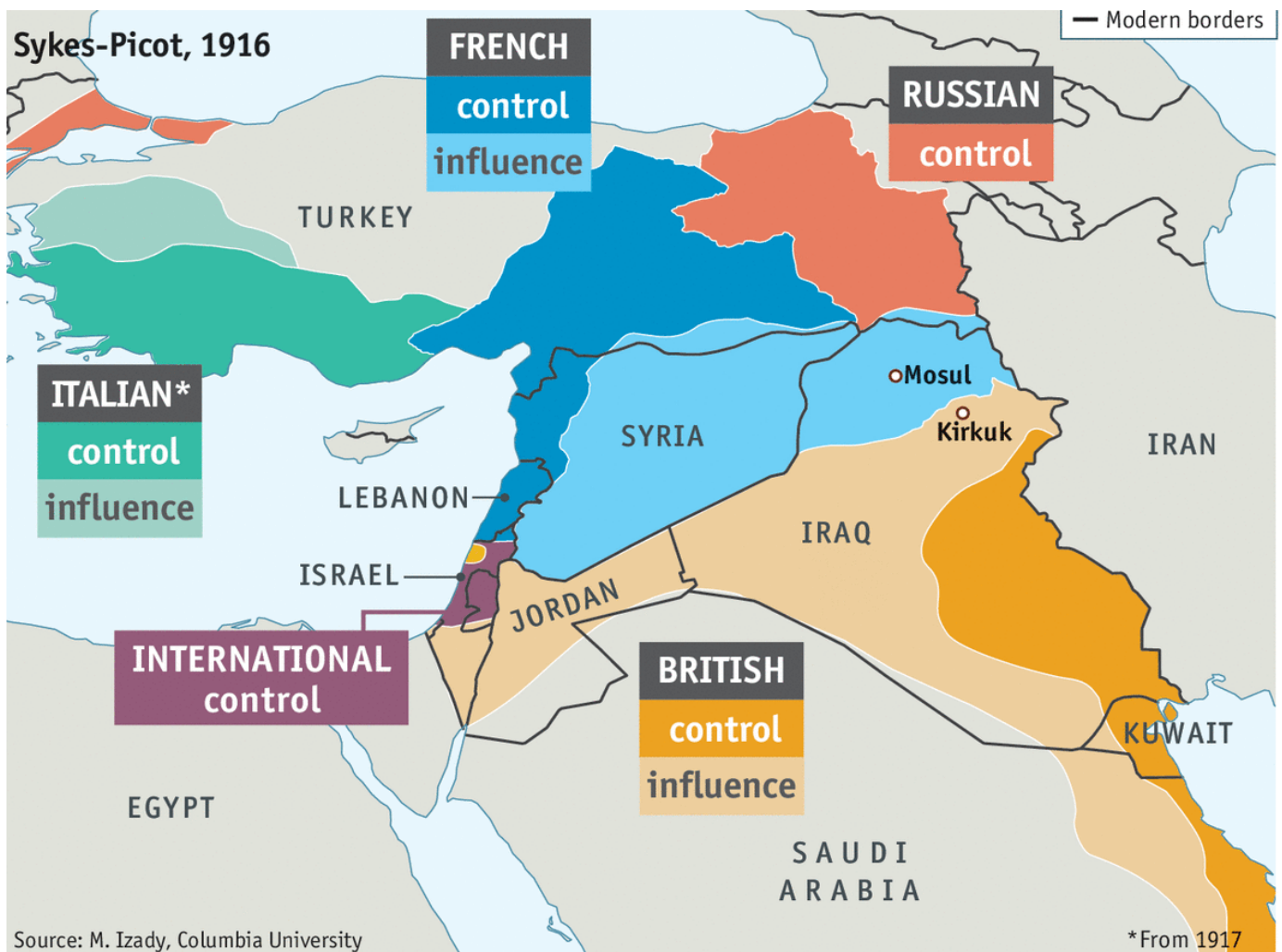
The Economist (2016)

Appendix 2. Interview questions (English version)

Question number	Interview questions
1	How old are you?
2	What role does your religious and ethnic identity play in your life?
3	What effect do you feel living as an IDP has had on your identity?

4	Do you feel like your identity, as both an Iraqi Christian and as an IDP, is protected?
5	Going forward, how can the community of Iraqi Christian IDPs achieve a positive social identity?

Appendix 3. Interview questions (Arabic version)

رقم السؤال	سؤال المقابلة
١	كم عمرك
٢	ما هو الدور الذي تلعبه هويتك الدينية والعرقية في حياتك؟
٣	ما هو التأثير الذي تشعر به على هويتك عند العيش بصفتك نازحًا داخلياً؟
٤	هل تشعر ، كمسيحي عراقي و كنازح داخلي ، بأن هويتك محمية؟
٥	للمضي قدمًا ، كيف يمكن لمجتمع النازحين الداخليين من المسيحيين العراقيين تحقيق هوية اجتماعية ايجابية

Appendix 4. Table of selected data from 2019 and 2022 interviews

Q1: How old are you?		
Respondent	**2019 answers**	**2022 answers**
1	20	22
2	19	22
3	23	25
4	27	29
5	28	30
6	32	35
7	34	36
8	35	38
9	39	41
10	44	46
11	48	50
12	47	50
13	48	50
14	48	50

15	54	57
16	58	60
17	61	63
18	61	63
19	60	63
20	62	64
21	65	67
22	73	76

Q2: What role does your religious and ethnic identity play in your life?		
Respondent	**2019 answers**	**2022 answers**
1	"While I identify with being both Christian and Iraqi, so far these labels have been more of a hindrance than a help when it has come to living a peaceful life."	"My feelings have not changed since we last spoke. Sadly, I still feel as though being Christian and an Iraqi is the root of my struggles."
2	"My ethno-religious identity still prevents me from living a normal life, one without oppression."	"My ethno-religious identity has served as a precursor to persecution."
3	"It is a strange situation, because my identity is the source of all my hope but also the reason that my hope is constantly in danger. So, while I see it as a positive part of me, it has many negative connotations due to our current circumstance."	"Over the past few years our situation has not changed and so the negative connotations of my ethno-religious identity have unfortunately intensified."
4	"Compared to my parents, and the older generations that have been uprooted with us, I think my ethno-religious identity is comparatively quite weak. I try to identify more with aspects of myself that aren't the subject of persecution, for example being a pharmacist."	"My ethno-religious identity still continues to be something that I put less emphasis on in my day-to-day life for fear of persecution."
5	"When we lived in Mosul, my ethno-religious identity played a strong role in my day-to-day life. However, since we have moved to the north and faced ostracism as a result of our identities, I feel as though I have had to distance myself from these parts of my identity in order to be accepted into society."	"Distancing myself from my ethno-religious identity during my time here has unfortunately been the most effective way of assimilating into the KRG. The longer I stay here, the more I fear I will have to part from what was such a strong component of my identity. It is a sad reality."
6	"These are both important aspects of who I identify as. While we have faced much persecution as a result of being both Iraqi and being Christian, these features are deeply rooted in my sense of self and my sense of community."	"Unlike before, where I was open about my identity, living in Kurdistan for a while has taught me to be cautious about preaching any aspects of my ethno-religious identity. Telling locals from the KRG that I am a Christian from Mosul is often met with negative reactions. I almost feel like I am an undercover Iraqi Christian, posing as a Muslim Kurd in order to fit in."
7	"Being Christian and being Iraqi is an important part of my identity. It helps me navigate day to day life."	"My ethno-religious identity remains very important to me."
8	"While both have formed a great deal of my identity, I affiliate more with being a Christian than with being an Iraqi. I have studied abroad and been away from Iraq for several periods at a time but being Christian is something that has travelled with me the whole time."	"Personal Christian faith has remained strong during my time here, even through adversity, so it remains a resilient part of my identity."

9	"Being Christian and Iraqi serves as a strong lifeline for me and a fundamental part of my identity."	"Despite continued threats to my identity, as a result of my ethno-religious affiliation, I still strongly associate with both being a Christian and an Iraqi."
10	"The role that my ethno-religious identity plays in my life is very important. It helps me keep faith and feel as though I am part of something bigger."	"Being a Christian-Iraqi is still a very important part of my identity. My suffering is alleviated because I am part of this community."
11	"While my identity has been influenced by many different things in my life, being Christian and being Iraqi have both been a constant part of what I identify as throughout."	"I still identify as an Iraqi and a Christian. These labels continue to play a big role in understanding who I am and how I present myself day to day."
12	"Growing up in Mosul, I always had a strong connection to my ethno-religious identity and considered it a key aspect of who I am."	"While my religion and ethnicity remain an essential part of who I am, I am slightly more cautious than I used to be about preaching these aspects about myself given the current climate."
13	"I am proud to be both Christian and to be an Iraqi. No amount of adversity will change that. It gives me a sense of purpose and belonging."	"My ethno-religious identity remains a form of refuge, a form of hope."
14	"My identity remains resilient despite what has happened in my lifetime. I am a Christian from Iraq. That is an unchanging fact, and something that is very important to me."	"I have maintained pride in my ethno-religious identity, which continues to be preserved despite threats to it. Over the years, it has been an unwavering part of me and helps me stay grounded."
15	"My ethno-religious affiliations are huge parts of my identity. In some ways I suppose this is a negative thing. For as long as my ethnicity and religion are under persecution, my identity will be too."	"Unfortunately, these have become slightly diluted aspects of my identity due to the nature of living in a host city with a different religion and ethnicity. I cannot fully endorse these parts of my identity that I once was able to. It is a massive shame and feels like a great loss, but my identity was being far too negatively impacted."
16	"Iraq is where home is, and will always be, no matter how much damage it is subject to. So, I strongly identify with being an Iraqi as I associate it with a great sense of nostalgia. Being a Christian was a strong part my identity growing up, however, it has been a point much adversity over the years and so I do not practice as regularly and do not consider it as essential to my identity as being an Iraqi."	"I still very much identify as an Iraqi despite being a minority in the KRG, and, while I am certainly a Christian man, Christianity is not such a core component to my being because of the unrelenting threats to my personhood as a result of my religious affiliation."
17	"I think I am sometimes in denial of how big of a role both Christianity and being Iraqi play in my life. They are such a huge part of me and who I have always been, yet because of what we have experienced we are made to believe they are bad things. I am guilty of perhaps not embracing these parts of my identity enough for fear that I will be discriminated against as a result."	"Since our discussion in the last interview, I have made a conscious effort to embrace these important parts of myself. While Iraqi-Christians still face ostracism and threats to our identity, the positives I gain from the Iraqi Christian community far outweigh the negatives drawn from persecution to it."
18	"Christianity provides a sort of private sanctuary and allows me to find meaning in the day to day. Being an Iraqi has been important in providing a place that will always feel like home. Both equate to a sense of community and solidarity, which I consider important in fostering a positive identity."	"Regardless of the fact that nothing has changed, and, if anything, the attitudes towards Iraqi Christians have worsened, my sense of self has become even more robust. I value my Christian-Iraqi identity more than ever."

19	"My ethno-religious identity plays an important role in my life. It's much about who I am. However, I am often anxious of connotations that come with identifying as Iraqi and/or Christian under the current circumstance."	"My religion and ethnicity are significant yet volatile parts of my identity. Unlike other aspects of my identity, my ethno-religious identity is frequently riddled with negative associations which make it hard to fully attain a positive sense of self. While ethnic and religious discrepancies didn't used to be an issue, they now serve as strong barrier to creating a positive existence in Kurdistan."
20	"The role that being an Iraqi Christian plays in my life is second to none. It has seen me through some incredible times of my life, and also through my worst. I have always come out the other end stronger because of my ethno-religious identity."	"Now, more than ever, my ethno-religious identity is essential in maintaining positivity and hope."
21	"Christianity is the cornerstone of my existence and I am proud to call myself an Iraqi, having lived there my whole life before we became uprooted. So, with respect to the role they play in my life, well, they are essential. They are part of my DNA."	"Throughout years of struggle and turmoil as a result of being an Iraqi Christian, these forms of identification remain strong. As a priest I have witnessed first-hand the safety net that religion has provided our community and I wonder if many would have maintained hope without it."
22	"I am very proud of my religious and ethnic identity. They are parts of me that have always existed and will continue to exist for as long as I do."	"Without religion and my strong attachment to Iraq, I would have found being uprooted far more difficult. I continue to stay proud of these aspects of my identity and nothing could threaten that."

Q3: What effect do you feel living as an IDP has had on your identity?

Respondent	2019 answers	2022 answers
1	"Living as an IDP has been a constant uphill battle, with no end in sight. The impact that this has had on my identity is terrible and the longer it goes on, the worse I fear it is going to get."	"While it is all I've known for a while now, being in this precarious state never really gets any better. It is such a big part of how we are viewed and treated, so it is hard to shake the negative connotations that come with being an IDP."
2	"I feel like I am just existing, not living. I know it sounds bad, but sometimes I wish I was born somewhere else. Somewhere where my homeland, my ethnicity and my religion are not under constant threat. I am studying to be a lawyer so that I can try to create a positive future for myself, and hopefully help those in a similar situation to me. But, it is not a straight path. I feel like I am constantly struggling for the right to basic education, basic representation and basic human rights protections because of the fact that I am an IDP."	"I still feel very claustrophobic and disheartened as a result of being an IDP. I should be a qualified lawyer by now but I am not because of tireless obstacles in the way. Although COVID has been difficult for everyone, the government's handling of the situation has made our lives as IDPs even worse. Universities closed and E-learning was not an option for me, so I have fallen behind."
3	"I am a shell of who I once was. Being internally displaced has had a negative effect on my identity. It makes me feel as though I don't belong anywhere and that no one cares about what happens to me or my family."	"Nothing has changed since the last interview. I am still internally displaced, and it still bears a very heavy weight on my identity."
4	"Although it is just a label to outsiders, the reality of being an IDP is very harrowing."	"Displacement is very destabilising. I still do not feel settled and feel like I can't fully establish myself in Kurdistan."
5	"The only way I can achieve a positive identity is by getting rid of the IDP label. For as long as I stay an IDP, I cannot possibly be completely happy."	"When you are an IDP, people treat you differently and, in turn, you feel differently about yourself. I have a negative image of myself, which I did not have until I became displaced. I feel like a foreigner and a burden in what is meant to be my new home."

6	"I struggle to achieve a positive identity whilst being an IDP. I feel trapped within the confines of displacement and feel completely neglected."	"I have become slightly more accustomed to the ambiguity of being an IDP and have lowered my expectations for my day to day life as we continue to be internally displaced. It is the only way to manage the collateral damage to my identity."
7	"While I am many other things; a son, a husband, a father, an accountant, all other people seem to see me as is an IDP. So long as I am an IDP, I feel like I cannot embrace the beauty of being anything else."	"I struggle to achieve a positive identity whilst being an IDP. It is still such a dominant part of how people view me, and subsequently such a dominant part of how I see myself now."
8	"Displacement has impacted every part of my life, including my family and my job, so it is only natural that it has impacted my identity."	"It is a label that we as IDPs have no power to escape from on our own, yet we have been left to deal with the consequences of what being displaced entails all by ourselves, with no support. It is no surprise that it has had a negative effect on our identity."
9	"Living as an IDP is very suffocating. It feels like there is no room to breathe or be anything other than a displaced person."	"Being an IDP has had a detrimental effect on my identity."
10	"I am trying to stay positive but displacement is an undeniably negative thing in our circumstance. I am lucky to have my family with me, but this liminality is still very traumatic nonetheless."	"We are still not, and I doubt we ever will be fully accepted into the society we have been displaced to. We are very much the minority here and that is not a nice feeling. I feel like we cannot live a completely normal life until we return to our homelands, or cross a border and become legally accepted citizens. Once we are recognised properly by others, we will start to be able to recognise ourselves."
11	"I am 50, I have had the opportunity to be many other things before becoming an IDP. I was able to really establish my identity over the years, so it has not been very harmful to me. However, for my children, I can see that being an IDP has been very damaging as it has consumed so much of their life. I am fearful for their future as their identity continues to be influenced negatively, but trying to stay as hopeful as possible."	"I have still managed to maintain a relatively positive attitude. I have tried to manifest a positive life for me and my family, like the one I used to have. My children have also been surprisingly resilient, despite being too young to really have many fond memories of life before becoming displaced. Yet, I am worried how long this will be able to last. If we remain displaced, I anticipate that their resilience will dwindle and being an IDP will start to have a very negative impact on their identity."
12	"Being an IDP and having a negative identity are homogenous. This transition period, where we cannot return to our original homes and cannot adopt a new home without complications, means we are trapped. We are imprisoned within the confines that displacement places on us, with no viable solutions presented for a positive future."	"My identity, and the identity of my family, continues to suffer from negative associations that are an inherent part of being an IDP. The transition period remains stagnant, as though we are in a vehicle stuck in mud with no one able, or willing, to tow us out."
13	"While I am technically an internally displaced person, it is not something that defines me. It is simply my current circumstance. I will continue to repel all of the negative associations that come with displacement and work towards preserving a positive image of myself."	"I feel nostalgic about our life before becoming displaced. Holding on to these fond memories helps me maintain a positive personal identity as indigenous individuals within an increasingly diminishing demography."
14	"Being displaced from our homelands was something that we did not have any power over. However, we do have some kind of power over how it affects us. I decided from the start that I would not let being an IDP consume my identity, and I plan to continue with this mentality."	"While we have always technically been a numerical minority, I never viewed it as a bad thing growing up in Mosul. We always co-existed with the majority Muslims in the region. I try to apply the same logic here, and I am always very amicable to those in the KRG who are hosting us. I believe that this attitude has helped me preserve a positive identity despite all that has happened."

	2019 answers	2022 answers
15	"We have been forced to acclimatise to our situation but it does not make it any easier. We are resilient, which is why we have been able to exist as IDPs for as long as we have, but how much longer can we live like this?"	"It is really hard. Living as an IDP means always living on edge and that does terrible things to one's identity."
16	"Being displaced and uprooted from your home is hard enough, but what is harder is how people treat you as a result. That is what makes it hard to maintain a positive identity."	"Until either our situation changes or attitudes towards us change, we cannot be fully settled or content within ourselves."
17	"Life as an IDP is not without its daily challenges. Challenges to work, challenges to family life and challenges to integration. These all make upholding a positive identity difficult."	"We are still persevering day to day but living like this is unsustainable. Our identity is constantly under threat and can never be fully formed while we live as IDPs."
18	"It is a conscious daily struggle but I am doing my best to defy the negative associations and implications of being an IDP. I am not the exact same person I was before being uprooted, but I am learning to adjust and not let my displacement status defeat me."	"As with my ethno-religious identity discussed in the previous question, I feel like my overall identity has become more robust over time, despite threats that come with being an IDP. This robustness has allowed me to maintain a relatively positive identity."
19	"While my identity is very established through all the experiences I have had in my life, that is not to say am not susceptible to the negative implications of being an IDP. It certainly serves as a huge obstacle in achieving a wholly positive individual identity."	"There are currently many forces preventing me from achieving a positive identity. I am doing my best to push these forces back and stay optimistic, but it is exhausting. Living as an IDP is inherently problematic and has a significant impact on the person I once was."
20	"Understandably, my identity would be better protected had we not been uprooted, but there is nothing I can do about it at the moment. So, I have had to adapt and try to see the positives of the situation, including the fact that we are out of harms away and are no longer being subject to explicit persecution."	"It is hard but it is still a process of adjusting to our circumstances and appreciating the positives of the situation. It is the only way to safeguard our identities."
21	"Although to outsiders I am an IDP, to my family and my community there is so much more that defines me. That is what keeps my identity intact. As long as I am surrounded by loved ones, I am able to preserve a positive identity."	"My community is still fundamental in helping me maintain a positive identity. Although I have been uprooted, I still have people that are important to me around me. This solidarity has been essential in avoiding identifying as the outsider that many have as a result of being an IDP."
22	"Displacement brings many complexities that are difficult to grapple with. It bears a heavy weight on the identity of every IDP and makes us long for our old lives. We are trying to stay positive but it is difficult."	"We continue to struggle as a product of our displacement. We are not fully accepted by our host city which makes integrating more difficult and puts pressure on us to be something we are not – naturally a big threat to the identities we have been trying to preserve."

Q4: Do you feel that your identity, as both an Iraqi Christian and as an IDP, is protected?

Respondent	2019 answers	2022 answers
1	"I do not feel like my identity is protected. No one is accountable for what happens to us and so no one cares. We don't really exist in the eye of the law."	"I still passionately feel that neither my Iraqi Christian identity nor my identity as an IDP is protected. Nothing concrete has changed since we last spoke and I fear nothing concrete is going to change any time soon."
2	"If either part of our identities were protected, we would not still be in this situation. It is a dire situation and I feel doubly vulnerable because I am a woman. Over the years, I feel like female IDPs have suffered disproportionately due to a lack of protection. For example, the fact that	"We continue to be neglected with terrible side effects to our identities. How are we meant to improve our situation when we are invisible to the national and international community? While I am no longer living in a camp and therefore not as exposed to the same violations as a result of being

	marry-your-rapist laws are still not illegal in Iraq just shows how slow progress is. I currently live in a camp and feel as though I would be completely helpless if, god forbid, I were raped and forced to marry someone. I do not know where I would turn. I am trying to keep a low profile so none of these parts of my identity – the fact I am a female Iraqi Christian IDP, are violated further.”	female, many others still are and the lack of attention to the reality of their vulnerabilities makes the plight of female IDPs especially challenging and dangerous.”
3	“We have little to no protection and, on top of this, the restrictions imposed by the KRG have hindered my dreams of becoming a doctor.”	“It is important to acknowledge the safety net and protection that the KRG has provided. Without this salvation, who knows where I would be now.”
4	“We are in a mess. Our identities are in a mess. No one is there to protect our community, and we do not have the means to protect ourselves. We are left completely vulnerable.”	“If the political condition were not so dire, and if the state and international community upheld their stewardship duties to protect their citizens, we would not have been forced from our homes and cleansed of forms of identity that are essential to us – our ethnicity and our religion. We are not a priority to our state, nor any international body and left helpless.”
5	“While we are not currently subject to physical persecution thanks to refuge under the KRG, our identities continue to suffer from the absence of any protection of our Iraqi Christian identities.”	“Currently, the only body providing us with any form of protection is the KRG. If Kurdistan were to gain independence, the progress we have made towards constructing a positive future for ourselves will be stymied. We will be back to square one.”
6	“No one is looking out for us. We don't know where to turn if any parts of our identity are under persecution, which happens often.”	“Protection is not a liberty afforded to us. We are just like every other citizen of the world, but because of where we were born and the situation we were born in to, we are not considered worthy of protecting.”
7	“If we were protected, we wouldn't have been in this situation in the first place. It is as simple as that. If there was any protection against religious or ethnic persecution, we would have never become IDPs. If there were any protections for IDPs, we would not have stayed in this situation for so long and become protracted”	“No, I do not think that we are protected in any sense of the term. Yes, we are technically currently safe living in Kurdistan, but that could change at any moment. Should the KRG decide that they no longer want to host us, there is no safety net of welfare protection to fall back on”
8	“The only protection I feel I have is from the community of others like me. From other Iraqi Christians, or other IDPs in Kurdistan. We all do our best to look out for each other because, unfortunately, there is no one else to protect our identities.”	“Solidarity among the community remains strong, because it has to. Nothing has changed and during COVID the lack of protection has been very apparent. We have suffered disproportionately because no provisions have been tailored to our specific needs as IDPs.”
9	“I do not feel like either part of my identity has been adequately protected. ISIS persecuting and uprooting us because of our religious affiliation, where is our protection?! We have been forced into such hardship that people are even forcing their young daughters into marriages with people they have never met in order to alleviate financial burdens. How has it gotten to this point? Where we are so scared for our own futures that we are willing to sacrifice the futures of our daughters?”	“Our identities are under constant jeopardy because we are Iraqi, because we are Christian and because we are our IDPs. Our livelihoods are suffering daily. Yet, no one will take responsibility for protecting us.”
10	“We are one of the most neglected groups in the law. The baton of responsibility keeps being passed on, with no one stepping up to protect us. While some international organisations, like the UN, bring attention to our plight, nothing has	“We have no protection, it is all lip service. We are currently able to uphold some semblance of a positive identity as a result of refuge in Kurdistan, however this is very fragile. In the absence of international or constitutional protection, a loss of patronage from the KRG could be the end of the

	actually been done so far to make sure we are safeguarded."	Iraqi Christian community – where would we turn next?"
11	"Protection is limited and we struggle as a result. We are not confident that, if Kurdistan was to gain independence and wanted us to leave, anyone would come to our rescue."	"Since no one is there to protect us we have had to resort to protecting ourselves as a community in order to uphold our ethno-religious identity best we can. This comes in the form of grouping together as a community in order to help one another when possible when it comes to education, work and so on. Our allied response helps us preserve our identity to some extent, however, it is unsustainable. We need official protection to have any real hope."
12	"To say we are at the bottom of the hierarchy of concern is an understatement. We have no protection in the law and it does not look like there are any serious steps to change this. Naturally, our identity is taking a massive hit and I am unsure how long we can survive like this."	"Protection for the Iraqi Christian IDP community is nowhere to be seen. Unlike refugees who have crossed a border, IDPs have not been deemed important enough to look after. Our identities are clearly considered lesser."
13	"We are made to feel as though our identities are not worthy of protecting. As though the Iraqi Christian IDP community does not deserve being safeguarding."	"We remain unprotected, and deflated as a result. How are we meant to embrace our Iraqi Christian identity when it is under constant threat? Our government, nor the international community, will commit to properly helping us."
14	"There is a reason we have ended up as protracted IDPs. We are constantly fed false hope that another international organisation is planning on helping us, but nothing ever materialises. There is nothing in the law that specifically looks out for IDPs, or for the ethno-religious persecution of IDPs. So being an Iraqi Christian IDP is a disaster in respect to safety, particularly as a woman. My daughter is scared to go to school because she has seen my fear of leaving the house."	"We have been informed about the recently established High Level Panel on Internal Displacement and their intent to protect us, however, naturally, we are quite sceptical. We have gotten our hopes up from promises in the past. only to be let down. So, we will just have to wait and see. We are not only struggling financially, but also mentally. If things stay the way they are, our female identities and broader Iraqi Christian identities will be in grave danger."
15	"We were not protected when we were uprooted and forced to leave our homelands, and we are not protected now. It is such a difficult task trying to maintain your identity when there is so much working against it. On top of this, having no protection for when things do go wrong makes preserving who we are an impossible task."	"I do not believe that my identity as an Iraqi Christian IDP is protected by any means. Not only is the constitutional neglect of our community the reason we are here in the first place, but ever since we migrated the response to our struggles have been shocking. The COVID-19 pandemic was no different, where the impact on IDPs were not considered when deciding how to mitigate negative effects of lockdowns and so on."
16	"Protection is not afforded to our community of Iraqi Christian IDPs. We fall through the gaps of state and international welfare and no one seems to be worried about our fate. I am so fearful for my wife and daughters. How will I be able to support them if we are not afforded protection soon?"	"We are still in a very vulnerable position with no support. Our identities are continually undermined and exposed to many threats. There is nothing we can do ourselves and nothing anyone else seems to be willing to do."
17	"Sadly, no. The law does not recognise us and our government does not seem interested in helping us. It has been suggested many times that we are next on the agenda for help, but nothing ever seems to materialise. I am very scared for our wellbeing, and I do not feel comfortable in our current set up. I have noticed that the lack of protection, and our subsequent treatment, has affected females more so than male IDPs. When I am out with my husband, no one says anything to me or makes me feel	"The pandemic highlighted just how little protection we have as IDPs. It has been such a struggle to get our basic needs recognised because no one if looking out for us or considering the uniqueness of our situation."

	particularly unwelcome. When I am alone, I feel like others take advantage of the fact that I am a woman and perhaps an easier target for discrimination."	
18	"The fact that we are Christian Iraqi IDPs in a majority Muslim Kurd host region means preserving our identities is difficult as it is, let alone with no official protection of these identities in the law."	"I do not feel like my identity is protected. If ISIS decided to enter Kurdistan and persecute us again on the basis of our religion, we would be helpless. If Kurdistan decided to kick us out because we are IDPs and not official citizens of the region, we would also be helpless."
19	"As an IDP you are a nobody. We don't even have a legal definition of what encompasses an IDP, let alone any protection if you are unfortunate enough to come under the ambiguous bracket of internal displacement. On top of this, being an Iraqi Christian in a majority Muslim Kurd environment, it is impossible to assert ourselves as of any importance. We do not want to start demanding anything extra from them. We are just trying to stay harmonious so that they continue to host us. Hence, being Iraqi Christian is currently the disaster combination with respect to trying to protect any part of your identity."	"There are no provisions in place to save us from our current plight. We became IDPs in order to protect our Iraqi Christian identities from ISIS, yet being an IDP has brought it with many other vulnerabilities that simply demand more protection that we do not have access to."
20	"How can I feel protected when there is nothing for us to fall back on. If any part of our identities - the fact we are Christian, Iraqi or IDPs - comes under threat, we simply have no one to turn to. No law we can refer to defend ourselves. We are sitting ducks."	"It has been clear that we are no one's responsibility. It is very worrying that my identity as a Christian Iraqi IDP is in the hands of people who do not care enough to safeguard it. As the years go by, and our status as protracted IDPs becomes more permanent, I fear that my identity will struggle to ever recover."
21	"It is a sad situation but I would be lying to myself if I said I felt my identity was even remotely protected. If it was, I would not be in the situation I am, helpless, with no one to go to for assistance. Being unable to study or work in Kurdistan because we are Iraqi, what kind of 'protection' is this?"	"Nothing has changed with respect to the protection of my identity since we last spoke. As a Christian Iraq IDP I am not protected by anyone, not the government of Iraq, not the KRG and not the international community. When anything bad happens to us we are effectively left to fend for ourselves. I'm not sure how much longer we can survive without any protection."
22	"As far as I am aware, we have no legal status and no protection as a consequence. It is really difficult to live like this, knowing at any minute you could be persecuted or uprooted and there would be no one you could confidently turn to for help."	"No, it is not protected. Our Iraqi Christian IDP status is clearly looked upon as something unimportant of sheltering. The plight of my community seems to be the concern of our community alone, and not that of the law or any official bodies."

Q5: Going forward, how can the community of Iraqi Christian IDPs achieve a positive social identity?

Respondent	2019 answers	2022 answers
1	"It is the responsibility of the national and international community to provide robust support that can be relied on in times of need. This does not mean lip service, but a rather legally binding framework that those with the power to help us can be held accountable to if they fail to support us."	"National and supranational frameworks need to activate their agency and provide something durable we as IDPs can invest our hope in to. I am young, I need to be able to envision a bright future for myself. Hope is the only thing keeping me going."
2	"Protection is key in order for our community to achieve positive social identities. We need to have somebody or something that we can fall	"We currently have no one that is specifically looking out for IDPs in a way that has produced any robust changes, nor do we have any legislation that anyone can be held accountable against when things

		back on when any part of our identity is under persecution."	do happen to us. This must change in order for the Iraqi Christian IDP community to be able to achieve positive social identities."
3		"Fostering a positive social identity requires recognition in the law through an official definition of who comes under the label of internal displacement."	"I stand by what I said in the last interview, a legal definition is essential for our community. Once we are put into a distinct group and category of concern in the eyes of the law we will start to be treated as the vulnerable people we are, simply in need of help. If we get this recognition, we will be able to work towards rebuilding our identities."
4		"The fundamental reason that our identities are negative is due to the persecution that we face as a result of being Iraqi, Christian and/ or IDPs. Transforming this identity in to a positive thing would require making persecution or discrimination of our identities a prosecutable offence."	"Achieving a positive identity still requires repercussions for what has happened to us. Those who have put us in this situation need to be held against some kind of law that not only prosecutes previous actions, but prevents future ones in order to allow us to flourish as a community that is not in constant fear of negative threats to our identity."
5		"We need durable solutions to our situation. This includes policies for IDPs that have long term visions, such as rehabilitation and reintegration into society."	"Our situation demands serious consideration of how our plight can be alleviated and how we can be reintegrated back into society. This would require constant monitoring and mechanism systems."
6		"Our negative identities are a product of an intricate web of factors, including a lack of legal protection, neglectful national and international instruments, as well as continual threats to our ethno-religious identities. Until each of these elements are dealt with thoroughly, we cannot achieve a positive social identity."	"International protection must have several dimensions. Firstly, provisions need to be established to prevent displacement from occurring in the first place. Secondly, adequate assistance must be delivered to individuals and communities that are currently experiencing internal displacement. Thirdly, durable and legally binding – this is key – solutions must be established so that people can release themselves from the shackles of protracted displacement. Finally, support must be maintained even once IDPs are no longer technically displaced, to aid their reintegration back into society. With an amalgamation of these factors, we might just be able to find the solution to the very complex equation of displacement. If not, then we have a continued recipe for disaster for the identity, and ultimately livelihoods, of IDPs."
7		"I hope that our disappointment will be temporary. I hope that the international community steps up and recognizes this situation for what it is – a crime against humanity. Once this step is made, I am optimistic that appropriate action will be taken and we will start getting the justice necessary to start rebuilding our identities."	"The Iraqi Christian IDP community stays in hope of being saved. Granting our case adequate representation and prosecuting those responsible for our situation accordingly would give the IDP community a safe space to grow."
8		"Ultimately, we want to exist without fear of persecution because of our ethno-religious affiliation. For this to be a guarantee, we must have specific legislation that means discrimination on the basis of religion or ethnicity is illegal."	"One way we can work towards achieving a positive identity would be if we were granted citizenship in Kurdistan. We don't know when, or if, we will be able to return to our homelands, so gaining citizen rights to work, study and live comfortably under the KRG would be invaluable in working towards a more progressive identity."
9		"A positive social identity requires Iraqi Christian IDPs to be involved in the policy process. By giving our community a platform to articulate our needs and concerns, provisions	"We need sustained support that is informed by the actual needs of IDPs to facilitate tailored and effective changes that can work towards creating a better future and positive sense of self. An absence of this would see continued threats to our Iraqi and

	"that generate effective outcomes would be guaranteed."	Christian identity, making us endangered and even more vulnerable in our homeland."
10	"While our situation could have been prevented if we weren't so neglected, we cannot reflect on what has been. We must look forward to transforming our negative identities into positive ones. This demands the international community to treat us as though we have crossed a border and give us the same protections afforded to refugees."	"We still demand an adequate response to our struggle by the international community who continually ignore the severity of our situation."
11	"We have no legal status. We are quite literally nobodies in the eyes of the law. Until that changes, we stay nobodies."	"Recognition in the law is the first stepping stone to alleviating our plight."
12	"Justice is a necessary condition to building back our identities. This includes gaining justice for ISIS's persecution of our Iraqi Christian community. Until the actions of the extremist group have done are deemed genocidal and prosecuted accordingly, we cannot fully move on from what has happened."	"I am still waiting for justice. It currently serves as a very strong barrier to our community healing. I know an ISIS fighter was recently prosecuted for the death of a Yazidi girl and I am hoping will pave the way for future accountability of ISIS's actions."
13	"Assistance to the internally displaced community in Iraq is essential in fostering positive identities. More specifically, for this positive identity to be maintained the assistance must be upheld until our community is no longer subject to persecution and we are successfully integrated back into society."	"Durable monitoring and mechanism systems would be invaluable in instilling hope into our community and rebuilding some kind of future for ourselves. The success of this would, in turn, provide an environment that our identities could prosper in."
14	"We must get our community recognised in the eyes of the law. This means recognition for both the specific Iraqi Christian community, as well as the broader IDP community."	"We still require a shift from this ambiguous situation if our identities, as well as the attitudes to our situation, have any hope of transitioning into positive ones."
15	"Acknowledgement that our plight has been a real crime against humanity is the first step towards building some kind of future positive for ourselves and our community."	"The positive identities of Iraqi Christian IDPs can only be achieved if the gravity of our situation is adequately recognised by the international community and dealt with accordingly."
16	"In order to foster a positive identity, one of the first steps is making ISIS pay for their actions. What they have done is inexcusable and there can be no room for the same to happen again."	"Barriers to achieving a positive social identity stems from a lack of justice of what has happened to us. If the persecution we experienced had happened to a group that were not so legally ambiguous, I have no doubt that action would have been taken already and the violators would have been dealt with. Because we are not recognised in the law, our struggles seem to go under the radar. This must change for our identities to recover."
17	"All we want is for our struggles to be recognised and dealt with seriously. This would help validate our feelings and restore our faith in the intentions of the international community. Not only this, but by drawing international attention to our case and getting adequate protections going forward would help prevent future atrocities from occurring."	"Eliminating the uncertainty of the situation is crucial for our identities to heal. We need protection as citizens of the world, whose rights have been completely violated, so that we can start to mend our broken identities."
18	"We just want the respect that most other persecuted groups are afforded. The situation is very black and white - we are struggling and we need assistance to change our circumstance. I do not understand why there is so much hesitation to alleviate our hardships and help us work	"By emulating the response to refugees and other legally recognised persons of concern, the international community would be able to get our community of Iraqi Christian IDPs on track to fostering positive identities"

	towards restoring the positive identities we once had"	
19	"Positive social identities would come hand in hand with better recognition. By granting IDPs with a legal definition, as well as laws which we are protected by, we would be able to start building better lives for ourselves aided by national and international bodies. Lives we actually want to live, not the lives we are trying to escape from currently"	"It is absolutely imperative that we are given imminent recognition of the threats to our livelihoods and, subsequently, our identities. We cannot possibly breed positivity within our collective identity as IDPs if every single member is not recognised as worthy of attention and help"
20	"We need something to change with respect to our current status. Being an internally displaced person is very demoralising and has really taken its toll on our identities. We either need to be able to safely return to our homelands, or be granted citizenship in Kurdistan"	"Salvation in the form of adequate recognition by the national and international community is essential for the Iraqi Christian who have been internally displaced to achieving a positive identity"
21	"Our struggles must be seen for what they are – a real violation of basic human rights. This includes the right to freedom of torture, the right to freedom of opinion and the right to adequate work and education, all of which have been compromised. We cannot possibly achieve positive identities if these remain compromised. Accountability is essential if we are to make any progress."	"Positive identities will come through adequate justice. If you do not make it excruciatingly clear that what ISIS has committed is a complete crime against humanity, you are effectively consenting to further crimes taking place. You are consenting to rape, to forced marriage and to genocide, among many other things. The international community bears that blood on their hands if they do not adequately punish the persecutors."
22	"Our community cannot deal with any more hardships. From now on, we need the international community to group together to produce tangible policies that we can cling on to. Our fate cannot continue to be in the hands of whether our hosts in Kurdistan are willing or able to help us. We should always be protected and granted with basic human rights, no matter where we live."	"An unwavering network of support is absolutely critical if we have any hope of advancing our situation. We demand robust policies and frameworks that persecutors can be held accountable to and that would prevent future atrocities from occurring. Only when we are certain that we are safe will we be able to achieve a wholly positive sense of self."