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### Men at work: the role gender in refugee men's solidarity enactments in Athens

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# **Men at work: the role gender in refugee men's solidarity enactments in Athens**

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**Abstract:** In recent years, there has been a burgeoning academic interest in both the solidarity enactments of European volunteers in Greece, and more recently the ways refugees' also enact themselves as political subjects. These studies have illustrated the alternative system of humanitarian provision, services exchange, solidarity and a sociability that can be shared. As a result, refugees have become more visible as political subjects. However, the role of gender in, especially, refugee men's responses to displacement remains largely overlooked. This paper seeks to remedy this by exploring refugee men's capacity for autonomous action in seemingly overwhelming conditions of precarity, and in doing so challenges assumptions about displaced masculinity and the gendered distribution of care.

## **1. Introduction**

The scale of forced displacement to Greece is well known and documented, having reached unprecedented levels for any European Union country in 2015 (European Union, 2018). Despite significant spending on support of new arrivals since then (Refugee Deeply, 2017), many of the political and humanitarian agencies responsible have been unable or unwilling to provide sufficient support. In response, a network of alternative, grassroots humanitarian movements has blossomed in Athens, seeking to not only provide material and rights-based assistance to displaced persons, but also to do so in more egalitarian ways (Rozakou, 2016a). These have attracted a remarkable amount of material and financial donations from across Europe, as well as international volunteers (Rozakou, 2017:99; 2016a:102). Such initiatives have rightly received positive attention in public and political discourse, as well as significant academic interest (Cabot, 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2016b; Christodoulou et al., 2016; Grewal, 2018; Kalantzakos, 2017; Rakopoulos, 2014; Rozakou, 2012; 2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2018; Theodossopoulos, 2016; Valenti and Tzannetakis, 2018).

For a while, the role of refugees in these networks was largely overlooked. However, since 2018, there has been a burgeoning interest in the way refugees' enact themselves as political subjects in Greece (Zaman, 2019a; 2019b; Zaphiriou-Zarifi, 2019; al Qabbani and Habbal with Western, 2020; Reda and Proudfoot, 2020). These studies have illustrated the systems of services exchange, solidarity and sociability that refugees have enacted amid and to deal with the challenging circumstances they face. As a result, refugees have become more visible as political subjects in recent years. However, the

role of gender in, especially, refugee men's responses to displacement remains largely overlooked. This paper seeks to remedy this by exploring solidarity practices of refugee men in Athens. In doing so, it contributes to a growing body of literature that has begun to complicate considerably stereotypes about migrant men's incapacity and/or refusals to engage in caring practices (Kathiravelu, 2012; Ahmed, 2011; Pavilos, 2018).

The refugee-volunteer community in Athens is predominantly made up of young, single, refugee men – although there are highly effective refugee-women-led initiatives (see for example Zaphiriou-Zarifi, 2017). As in other contexts of displacement (Turner, 2018), in Athens men face far greater exclusion from humanitarian care and assistance than women and children—whether from the state, international agencies or grassroots organisations. As a response to this, many refugee men in Athens are responding to this marginalisation by creating networks of support for themselves and other refugees, male and female, and for those in both less and more fortunate situations than themselves.

What is significant about the predominance of male refugee-volunteers/humanitarians, is that their enactments of solidarity challenge assumptions about the relationship between displacement and the gendered distribution of care in ways we might not anticipate. The following pages seek to explore refugee men's capacity for autonomous action in seemingly overwhelming conditions of precarity, and in doing so centralise their conceptualisations and enactments of collective solidarity in Athens.

With this in mind, the questions that guide this research are: firstly, how is humanitarianism enacted, reflected upon, and interpreted by refugee men providing care? Secondly, what impact do refugee-volunteers feel their voluntary work has on their ability to reconstitute their lives, and those of the social groups they support, in exile? And finally, a key question that runs through this entire study, how, if at all, does gender, and more specifically notions of manhood and masculinity, relate to refugee-led responses to displacement in Athens? In addressing these questions, this paper seeks to disrupt commonly held assumptions about displaced masculinity, and the roles these play in shaping asylum policies, humanitarian discourses, as well as the experiences, performances and identities of displaced men.

## **2. Methodology**

The significance and relevance of this study became apparent to me whilst volunteering in the legal team of the Athens Refugee Centre (ARC) for 5 months in the summer of 2017. Between May and July 2018, I returned to volunteer at ARC whilst also conducting fieldwork for this MSc. Dissertation. During this time, I interviewed ten refugee volunteers, from six different voluntary initiatives in Athens. The interviews lasted between one and two hours and were fully transcribed. The participants originated from Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, and Pakistan. They held different legal statuses in Greece and had chosen to travel to Greece for a variety of reasons. The names of the participants have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Respondent-driven sampling helped to identify potential research participants. However, I also met people from ARC and other service centres in professional and social settings. Indeed, the volunteer community in Athens is bound together not only by their work, but also by meaningful relationships developed in more social contexts (see below). Although I do not include any of these informal encounters explicitly in this text, these moments shaped how I reflected upon, contextualised, and wrote the research, and were also important in building trust, confidence, and informed consent ahead of semi-structured interviews.

I have limited the data presented to the responses elicited in the deliberative interview settings. By doing so, I aimed to improve the informed consent of my participants. The semi-structured interviews enabled participants to discuss, engage with, and reflect upon the complex web of feelings, values, and meanings they ascribe to their voluntary work. While my questioning gave thematic structure to our conversations, it also allowed flexibility based on the participants' responses to questions (Squire, 2018a). Rather than simply recognising refugees as bodies that experience and respond, it acknowledges them "as active authors of their own stories, literally authorizing their voices in the construction of wider understandings" (Johnson, 2017:10; see also Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016b). This narrative-led approach was an appropriate methodology for the overall aim of this research, which seeks to give due voice to marginalised humanitarian actors and recognise their capacity to critically reflect on their own situations.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Intersectionality is at the core of this project, and this framework was operationalised throughout the data collection and analysis. The theory of intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to highlight the multiple discriminations "women of colour" experience at the "intersection of race and gender" (*Ibid.*, 1993:3). The strength of this framework lies in the attention it pays to the ways social identities and divisions relate to the specific positioning of an individual in a particular location. Resultantly, numerous other positionalities, such as inter alia an individual's sexuality, legal status, ethnicity, age, physical ability, and religion have become important parts of intersectional analyses.

So far, intersectional analyses of men's vulnerability and social identity remain relatively rare, especially in the context of forced displacement (Sinatti, 2009). While many studies have shown how gender relations undergo processes of change during forced displacement, few have focused on masculinity. As a result, the making of masculinity in displacement contexts and humanitarian logic remains tightly linked "with the construction of racial and ethnic hierarchies". This has led to popular visions of "Muslim masculinity" as inherently violent, threatening and patriarchal (see next section).

Intersectionality moves beyond this, forcing us to confront and think about both the complex and heterogeneous effects of a refugee men's social location in different contexts, as well as the institutionalised, political exclusion and silencing of certain groups of people that result from it.

Attention to these processes is crucial when seeking to construct a politics that supports and recognises the complex social justice claims of *all* refugees.

#### 4. Differentiating Men's Experiences of Displacement in Athens

The representational frames through which displaced men and masculinity are made visible in the contemporary 'refugee crisis' have broad implications for how refugee men experience displacement, including their attempts to secure international protection and humanitarian assistance (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016a). The current humanitarian framework in Greece is imbued with representations of refugee men that completely disregard their experiences, understandings, and responses of displacement. There exists a cruel mixture of on the one hand, political abandonment, waiving their obligations to establish adequate systems for the provision of human rights (Cabot, 2014), and, on the other, securitisation, in the form of police harassment, detention and deportation, leaves few opportunities for refugee men to enact themselves as political subjects within the strictures of the state.

In terms of the design and implementation of policies, discourse and evaluation procedures men are often left outside the humanitarian purview. This is no more evident than in the process of applying for asylum itself. Since the increase of asylum applications from 2015, the Greek State was compelled to invest in a more comprehensive and regulated asylum procedure, including the establishment of Regional Asylum Offices (RAOs). The RAO of Attica has struggled to be fit for purpose. Soon after it opened, it ceased to accept asylum claims in person for those who do not qualify as "vulnerable" (Greek Forum for Refugees, 2017). A "vulnerable group", according to Greek Law #4375, refers to *inter alia* pregnant women, victims of sexual and gender-based violence (which rarely recognises men), as well as unaccompanied minors (Greece National Legislative, 2016). These categories are predominantly inapplicable to the young, single, men in Athens. As Pezhvak, a resident of a squat and volunteer at ARC noted, "because I am a single man, it is really hard [to register]" (Interview with Pezhvak, 2018).

Mehdi, another ARC volunteer, elaborates:

"If you are a woman, or a sick person, or a family, the [GAS] help you more. If you are a single man, without sickness, they won't help you. They are not accepting of you. We are at the end of the queue *because* we are single men." (Interview with Mehdi, 2018).

Men (as well as women), like Mehdi and Pezhvak, who do not qualify as vulnerable under Law #4375 are instructed to apply for asylum using Skype, at specific and very narrow time slots during the week, according to their language preference. The Skype lines are interminably unavailable however, due to vast oversubscription or administrative reasons, such as daily quotas on admissions (Oxfam, 2016). This thrusts many refugees in Greece into a state often described by migration scholars as 'legal

limbo': the "juridical status that entails a social relation to the state" experienced as exclusion and waiting (De Genova, 2002:424).

For men, this feeling of exclusion is acutely felt and related to their masculine identities, and it does not stop following receipt of documentation. Although most humanitarian agencies and grassroots initiatives do not implement Law #4375, there remains a highly gendered understanding of vulnerability, which leads many organisations to prioritise women, irrespective of specific, individual needs of men (Alberti, 2010; Ticktin, 2005; Fassin, 2012). Mehdi's experiences looking for accommodation as a single, refugee man, captures this:

"I went to [an EU funded NGO] and asked them [for] a place to stay. But I was very innocent. Some people were laughing. They were laughing. They laugh when they hear this thing from me." (Interview with Mehdi, 2018).

As a category of humanitarian assessment, 'vulnerability' has largely been restricted to refugee "women and children" (Enloe, 1993). Critical scholars have noted the ways this infantilizes and depoliticises female experiences of displacement, and casts men outside the humanitarian purview (Ticktin, 2005; Carpenter, 2006). Furthermore, the gendered techniques for determining who is the "deserving" subject of care rarely emerge in isolation, but often alongside other intersecting axes of social identity, such as age or nationality. As Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016c) has shown male forms of vulnerability are often only recognised among refugee fathers. Whereas, young, single, refugee men continue to be presented as a personal, national and/or international security concern for Europe.

In Greece, where "national identity and belonging are racialised as white" and religiously uniform (Zaphirou-Zarifi, 2019:13; Cabot 2014), the presumption of violence among Muslim, refugee men has grave consequences. In 2007, for example, the local commander of Lesbos Island coastguard, Apostolos Mikromastoras, said of refugees arriving by boat:

"they could strike in Europe, beginning a war here. That's dangerous, very dangerous. They are all men between 15 and 35 years of age. They are all very well trained, they swim very well! Europe has to understand that a very real danger is approaching. I believe we are dealing with an Islamic invasion. They are all warriors!" (in Pro Asyl, 2007:13).

Although specific laws and law enforcement agencies relating to international protection have been introduced since then, Mikromastoras' comments remain indicative of the strategies adopted by the Greek State to 'manage' the presence of refugee men. The Greek border forces are also known to detain, physically and sexually assault and shoot at, especially, male asylum seekers and migrants (Human Rights Watch, 2020) – a form of gender based violence that remains underacknowledged.

In Athens, as in other contexts (Turner, 2018), young refugee men are the target of police violence when traversing urban space. The consequences of a police encounter can be severe, often leading to arbitrary detention, deportation, and even custodial murder, as was the horrific fate of Ebuka Mamashoubek (Statewatch, 2019). This affects men's ability to participate in humanitarian and solidarity initiatives safely. Noor recounts his sense of vulnerability when volunteering in specific urban space whilst undocumented:

“I didn't have paper, so for me it was crazy to go to Omonia [(a central square in Athens)], because we have this feeling we couldn't walk around because we didn't have paper, it is not allowed for us: a single man, who doesn't have paper to be here...” (Interview with Noor, 2018).

Yet, many men continue to experience police harassment even after receiving papers (Ebuka Mamashoubek, for example, was documented). Noor, for example, continued to be harassed even after acquiring papers: “I have all my paper, all my documents, but even then, the police stop me [...] and take me to the police station, just because I am brown basically, because I am refugee.”

Of course, police harassment also affects refugee men differently according their intersectional identities, such as age, nationality and racial appearance. Indeed, refugees from South Asia are often erroneously considered “economic migrants” (Cabot, 2014:87), and thus at increased risk of police harassment. This can have further restrictive effects on different refugees' voluntary activities. Sam, for example, is a Pakistani refugee, and therefore at greater risk when traversing specific urban spaces. As a result, he has pursued a more “hidden” (Coutin, 2003) volunteer role for the past two years, cooking for a refugee youth centre located in Exarchia.

Sam's capacity to volunteer significantly differs from Mohammed, who is from Syria. Mohammed coordinates a mobile medical team operative across fourteen different sites in Athens, where police presence is high. Although Mohammed, like Sam, is undocumented he feels less threatened by the police or perhaps less visible to them because, as he explains, “I am Syrian”. Mohammed and Sam's differential safety when traversing urban space results from systemic racial prejudices in Greece, which affect the nature of their humanitarian work. Yet, in spite of these minor privileges, the feeling of vulnerability to police attack was present among all of my participants, including Mohammed:

“Even though I am Syrian, I [am] still questioned about my existence, about my papers, or my job here in Athens or what I am doing. It is dangerous. I should be careful. I shouldn't work in the centre [of Athens], or the areas which are full of police.” (Interview with Mohammed, 2018).

This triggers feelings of insignificance and powerlessness, especially with regards to men's volunteer work. As Noor recounts:

"I was the only refugee in the demonstration, and a policeman told me, "If you cross this line I will put you in there [a police van], with them, you are a refugee also". I can't get out of this circle of being a refugee, I can't be a normal human being who is just helping here. No. Still, I am a refugee" (Interview with Noor, 2018).

Yet, Noor's encounters with police by no means constricts him to the image of the powerless and vulnerable refugee victim (Malkki, 1996). Recent work with displaced communities has highlighted the fact that vulnerability is not a "fixed concept" (Van de Hoonard, 2018:312) but remains "reflective of context and [...] social conditions that are also politically and institutionally created" (Squire, 2018b:119). To add to this definition, vulnerability also remains reflective of how persons negotiate and ascribe meaning to their subjectivity and ability to resist under these conditions.

Noor, for instance, articulates a certain resilience to police harassment through a comparison to smoking: "it's like when you have the first cigarette, you cough. But when you've had ten thousand cigarettes you feel like, 'Okay, its fine!'" (Interview with Noor, 2018). He, like others, suggests that developing resilience is part of the process of *becoming* a refugee. This has made him stronger, and not simply more vulnerable. For another volunteer, Tipu, being detained is an especially male and masculine experience, perceived almost as a "rite of passage" toward refugee manhood (Monsutti, 2009). In the context of discussing why more men volunteer than women, he remarks:

"We are not afraid from anything, from any challenge. We know that we are refugees, and we have to support our brothers and sisters in Greece, maybe our women are not strong enough, or maybe they don't want this, if something happens. We have to go to detention centre... If they want to put us in detention centre... No worries!" (Interview with Tipu, 2018).

These strong narratives of male indifference and/or resilience to police brutality and discrimination in Athens resist and ascribe meaning to a socio-political and legal life under conditions of violence and extreme vulnerability. Although the intersectional discrimination scares and frustrates refugee-volunteers, inhibits their humanitarian contribution, and triggers feelings of vulnerability and weakness. Many refugee men respond to this by fostering a notion of masculinity grounded in strength and resilience, rather than in the need for assistance. In doing so, refugee-volunteers define the terms of their own belonging and determine the meanings of manhood on individual and collective levels.

## 5. Solidarity and Care Among Refugee Men

Many refugee men in Athens have begun to develop alternative resource and aid distribution networks, through which their political and gendered subjectivities can emerge on their own terms. In other contexts of displacement, participating in humanitarian initiatives has been identified as an opportunity for men to fulfil gender roles as ‘provider’ and regain a sense of power, in circumstances where encampment is seen to have undermined their ability to perform masculinity (Turner, 2000; Turner, 2018). Although, in Athens, similar processes may also be at play, I found that volunteering offered young, single, refugee men opportunities to rebuild familial and familiar bonds of care and responsibility that were lost during displacement.

Liisa Malkki (2015) has highlighted in her study of Scandinavian volunteers that humanitarian participation “often helps the “benefactor” in surprising and vital ways” (8). The vital forms and practices of sociality fostered through voluntary and/or humanitarian labour in Athens are even more pronounced for single, male refugee-volunteers, who more commonly travel alone to Greece. Here, Noor’s emphatic need for kin-like relations inverts the location of ‘need’ in typical humanitarian relations of giving and receiving: “The people volunteering is a huge part here, for that I have a lot of friends. I know when I am in a crisis of emotion, I can consult them. That’s what I need, basically I need family” (Interview with Noor, 2018).

In these circumstances of solitude and abandonment, volunteers appear to gladly, perhaps even gratefully, engage in the types of “affective labour” (Muehlebach, 2011:68), and in doing so challenge dominant understandings of masculine care. As Hasan describes, the refugee squats mobilised around the recreation of family and everyday familial practices that had been lost as a result of displacement:

“We were like a family at the squat. We had all lost our homes, and we had lost our family also. It was building a new family, a new relationship. We acted like a family. We felt like we were at our home, in the squat, facing each other every day. We were having the same breakfast, lunch and dinner. It means a lot to build a new family, and to feel that you are belonging to something. When you are among these people, sharing the food, sharing everything, caring about them [...] it gives you the feeling that you are among your family. I lost that in Syria, but I found it here.” (Interview with Hassan, 2018).

Attention to the familial and affective dimensions moreover shows how enactment of solidarity is not always narrated in political terms (Cabot, 2015:5). My interlocutors present these enactments as a lived practice of sharing in each other’s daily existence. For those who have been displaced from their families and are in Athens alone, volunteering is an opportunity to regain a sense of the everyday through the exchange of sentient resources in simple practices as sharing meals or sitting and talking.

Such practices of sociality are crucial both for the realisation of refugees' initiatives (*Ibid.*), and for the needs of single men to care and be cared for.

Many of the interlocutors identified in the processes of displacement, a greater capacity for expressing tenderness and care, as a result of having to negotiate the complex emotional dimensions of being both a volunteer and a refugee. In this context, the re-traumatising effects of hearing other refugees' cruel stories of conflict and displacement were highlighted as one of the greatest challenges of volunteering. However, being able to respond with compassion not only challenges prejudices of especially racialised, male violence, but also is understood by refugee men themselves to help them reconstitute their own lives in exile. Ali, for example, who lost his fiancé during wartime in Syria, describes how this tragedy initially led him to alcohol abuse in Athens. However, as he started volunteering he began to offer tenderness and care to other persons, which simultaneously empowered him:

“[When] I came to Greece I was completely destroyed. I lost my fiancé in the war. This pain is hard to control; this darkness. In the beginning I couldn't control it. In the beginning I drank a lot: to forget. Exactly when I start helping other people, I start to remember some situation happening to him with me, and I don't want to give him that feeling of darkness. After that I controlled this pain. Volunteering helped me to control that pain a lot.”  
(Interview with Ali, 2018).

Such affective performances of familial masculinity, tenderness, and care are often experienced and conceptualised through notions of “brotherhood”. The utility of brotherhood-qua-solidarity is not new to male political and religious rhetoric. However, this identifier has added significance in the Athenian context, as the majority of refugees originate from Muslim countries where the term has been used to refer to a community of believers with shared core politico-religious beliefs (Munson, 2001). More research is required to unpack the religious, moral-ethical and political dimensions of assuming fraternal relations with other refugees in humanitarian encounters in Athens. However, among my participants, “brotherhood” appears to respond more directly to the shared emotions of losing a certain connectedness, familial care and gendered obligations to others than to a specific political ideology or religious spirituality.

The usage of brotherhood in this context allows men on both sides of the humanitarian encounter to maintain typically male paradigms of belonging while engaging in affective labour. Tipu, in order to process his intense emotional responses to listening and reliving cruel stories of displacement, positions himself as a brother to the boys he works with, who are often, like him, alone in Athens:

“Sometimes it's very emotional, when we hear young boys' stories. They see us as a brother, as a family member. So, we feel like we are really a part of the family, because

they don't have a family here, so we just try to become closer to them, and make them feel like, ok, you're not alone here." (Interview with Noor, 2018).

In thinking about the formation of "caring masculinities" it is important "not to assume that care is counterpoised to power and domination even if practices of care shift significantly the ways that dominant status is achieved and recognised" (Johnson, 2017:825). The practice of adopting the guise of a wiser and concerned older brother can, for instance, construct and sustain unequal power dynamics between the provider and recipient of aid (Martin-Márquez, 2006:243). As Ali notes:

"I am a brother to them, a bigger brother. The brother he gives the idea, and he gives the advice. So, for that I feel like I am a brother, because I support him in the teaching." (Interview with Ali, 2018).

Indeed, this elevated brotherly relation was most commonly assumed by the relatively more privileged refugee-volunteers with whom I spoke—in terms of their level of education, nationality, legal status, and possibly also wealth. These men often demanded of their "brothers" a greater sense of ambition, to set and achieve their goals, in order to reconstitute their lives in exile, just as they had done. As Hasan, a recognised refugee in the Netherlands who returns to Greece to volunteer, exemplifies:

"What I did at the squats is just showing the people the right path to follow, to show the people what I did, and maybe they will be motivated [...] I sit with him and say, "Look brother, you have to do this or this, otherwise you will get lost. I don't want you to get lost; I want you to be a human being again. Act like a human being. Forget about what happened to us in Syria. Follow your dream, put some goals." (Interview with Hassan, 2018).

Such demands often elide the restricted opportunities of those less privileged, to whom Hasan offers 'brotherly' advice. Thus, while acts of care are part of the acknowledged interdependencies of refugee men in Athens, they also reinscribe social hierarchies of class and age.

In other instances, however, "brotherhood" is utilised as a way to ease the potential power imbalances of gender and sexuality. Noor finds that forging kin-like relationships with women encourages the disclosure of information that enables him to assist them better: "in cases with single women, you have to create a relationship to make her feel like I am her brother, to make her feel comfortable and give her confidence to talk to you" (Interview with Noor, 2018). These masculine expressions of vulnerability, connectedness and care are central to how young men deliver and conceive of effective assistance. But they also enable refugee-volunteers to grieve and receive emotional support themselves. As Noor notes:

When the kids say, “I miss my mum”, that’s when it will break your heart, because you miss your mum also. These people [have not seen their family in] five years, maybe, six. When he starts to cry, you will cry also. You cry together, you want to hold him, you want to tell them “we are together”. That’s built a lot of relationships. (Interview with Noor, 2018).

Noor’s tearful and tactile affirmation, “we are together”, demonstrates the ways that shared and embodied acts of mourning not only promote and foster new notions of belonging grounded in fraternity, but are also articulated as part of a process of becoming stronger. As Tipu and Pezhvak respectively note:

“The most difficult part is emotionally. That is the biggest challenge. Obviously, there is an effect on us, and we have to be more strong, and more strong.” (Interview with Tipu, 2018).

“It’s really tough, you have to hear some really tough stories [...] at the end of this I became more strong. I had empathy, I had sensitivity. But at the same time, I was more strong.” (Interview with Pezhvak, 2018).

On the one hand these displays of vulnerability and sensitivity can be seen to broaden representations and performances of masculinities, as suggested above. On the other hand, my participants’ emotional responses nevertheless remain bound to normative gendered relations of care that depict men as strong, and conversely women as weak.

Indeed, in spite of recognising the sanative power of sharing moments of tears with young men, Noor later notes that, “for women to hear these stories she will *just* cry” (Interview with Noor, 2018, *emphasis added*). This highlights the way masculinities are constructed and performed in social action, and thus “differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:836). Thus, when Noor cries with young men he conceptualises this affective expression of vulnerability as instrumental to the building of strong relations between ‘brothers’ who have both been displaced from their families. Whereas when women cry, their tears are seen to “just” signify emotional weakness. As a result, affective performances of vulnerability and care may simultaneously reinstate power dynamics and hierarchies they appear to challenge.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to acknowledge refugee men’s (positive and political) responses to displacement in Athens. In doing so I hope to have opened up discussions regarding the multiple ways that care is provided in Athens, and how solidarity itself is conceived and practiced by refugees.

For single refugee men, whose lives during conflict and displacement may feel disposable, this research has highlighted their capacity to build and sustain refugee communities, and the inherently gendered ways this unfolds.

In this context, it is worth asking whether Muslim men's caring masculinities explored here are truly "emergent" (Inhorn, 2012) and a result of displacement, or whether this reflects the standpoint of previous scholarship that has been disinterested in its existence all along? I suspect it is a mixture of both. Indeed, the usage of masculine paradigms of belonging among refugee men in Athens highlights how their creative, subversive and affective enactments both challenge and reinforce dominant patterns of manhood as a result of their care-oriented political subjectivities.

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