



Before the Spectacle: Shaping Gender and Class in Beirut's Beauty Salons

Eugenia Lollini*, Anthropology, Romance Languages

ABSTRACT

“Beirut, in the words of one designer, is like a third world city that’s put on some makeup” writes Rima Suqi in the *New York Times* (2016). Indeed, scholars worldwide have coined Beirut the trendsetting beauty city and nightlife capital of the Middle East. My ethnographic fieldwork in Beirut in July and August 2016 examined the construction of women’s beauty work in salons and how it affected gender and class performances in nightlife venues. Contemporary discourses on the popularity of beauty work and nightlife consumption in Beirut are often explained by the reaction to the Lebanese Civil War, and by postmodern, individualistic attitudes celebrating life, glamour, and living in the moment. However, such assumptions overlook the extent to which social and familial networks constitute women’s bodies in Beirut’s small, interconnected and highly visual upper-middle and upper class society.

In my research, I ask: Why are so many young Lebanese women willing to undergo extensive beauty work and engage in opulent nightlife agendas? How do social and familial pressures motivate women’s desire for beauty work? How do women envision and construct gender and class as an outcome of beauty work? How and why do women further class distinctions using beauty work? How do women foster solidarity in the salon space? How do men and women display and perform gender and class in nightlife venues? How do preparation rituals in beauty salons influence women’s performances in nightlife venues and vice versa?

INTRODUCTION

Beauty ideals are historically contingent. They not only vary according to time, place and context but also carry heavy cultural baggage. They can generate conflicts, they intervene in power relations, and they are embedded in the commercialization of our daily lives. Beauty is not superficial, not merely skin-deep. It is closely linked to racial and social hierarchies, to gender roles and ideological and religious imperatives, to questions of individual and collective identities. This is why beauty is highly fluid, ambiguous and contested, and why its study is promising and rewarding. (Berghoff and Kühne, 2013, p. 16)

* Eugenia is a passionate intersectional and transnational feminist. She graduated with a double major in cultural anthropology and romance languages and a minor in Middle East and North Africa studies. This past year she has embarked on a gender-themed career path. She is currently in Istanbul, Turkey pursuing a six-month internship for UN Women in their Europe and Central Asia regional office. Previously, she spent three months in Bologna, Italy interning for MondoDonna Onlus, an NGO addressing gender-based violence against migrant and refugee women. Her future plans include gaining more professional experience in the field of gender and development. Please direct correspondence to elollini93@gmail.com.

As a University of Oregon Undergraduate Fellowship recipient, I conducted ethnographic research during July and August, 2016 in Beirut, Lebanon. My fieldwork examined the construction of women's beauty work in one salon and how it affected gender and class performances in one nightlife venue. In the first chapter, I present a number of socio-cultural perspectives explaining the surge of women's beauty work in Lebanon. I provide a historical and political background and demonstrate how consumerism, post-war anxieties and the local media have all contributed to this surge. I also argue that social pressure from close-knit, familial relationships motivate women's desire for beauty work. Chapter two documents my experience participating in and studying Beirut's beauty salon culture. I examine how women envision and construct gender and class as an outcome of beauty work. I also examine how the beauty salon in Beirut serves as a space in which women's solidarity and pleasure coincides with their subordination. Chapter three recounts my experience participating in and studying Beirut's nightlife. I study how male and female clients display and perform gender and class in a nightclub, arguing that in high-end venues, women assimilate dominant models of beauty and demeanor.

BEAUTY IN BEIRUT: SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Lebanon is one of the most intersected crossroads of the world (Joseph, 1999, p. 166). In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Beirut's mountainous hinterlands became a key site of silk production and an important supplier to the French textile industry (Nagel, 2002, p. 718). Thereafter, the city gained its reputation as a prosperous, cosmopolitan hub. The presence of a strong merchant class, which perceived itself as a community bound by common economic interests, ensured a degree of social tolerance among the city's innumerable ethnic and sectarian groups (Shiites, Sunnis, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Maronite Catholics, Druzes, and Jews) (p. 719).

Some of Lebanon's instabilities leading to the civil war (1975-1990), however, can be traced back to this period. European powers cultivated relationships with individual sectarian groups as a means of gaining a foothold in the region (Nagel, 2002, 719). As it happens, the area of Lebanon was created by France to be a 'safe haven' for the Christian Maronite population settled on Mount Lebanon (Rabin, 2011, p.11). When Lebanon was finally granted independence in 1943, the system of governance that emerged was unjust. Top government posts were assigned to the three major sects (Maronite, Sunni, and Shiite), with the top position of President reserved for a Maronite (Nagel, 2002, p. 720).

Events evolving in Israel and Palestine further burdened the situation. The Lebanese government (and its citizens) were deeply divided over how to treat the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In the early 1970s, the PLO used Beirut's Palestinian refugee camps as bases of operations (Nagel, 2002, p. 720). While many Muslims openly supported the PLO, many Christians feared Israeli retaliation and further embroilment in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Right-wing Christian militias armed themselves to drive the PLO from Lebanon, incurring the hostility of many Muslims (p. 720). Inter-sectarian violence between Muslims, Christians, and

Druzes flared up throughout the country. By the 1980s, Beirut was in a full-blown civil war that lasted for 15 years.

The most potent symbol of social polarization during the war was the infamous Green Line – a no-man’s land of war-damaged and gutted buildings dividing the Muslim West Beirut from the Christian East Beirut. The population became increasingly segregated by religious sect within these two halves of the city (p. 721).

In the early 1990s, Lebanon’s civil war ended more from exhaustion than from the clear victory of any one group. The Ta’if Accord, the 1989 peace agreement put in place after the war, further institutionalized sectarian divisions by introducing a new agreement where power was equally shared between Christian and Muslim communities based on their demographic distribution (Ghosn & Khoury 2011, p. 383). While the Ta’if Accord redistributed power in a more equitable manner, it did so in a way that reinforced sectarianism in Lebanon. In other words, it reinforced loyalty to the sect or sectarian political leader and not to the country.

After the civil war, other political conflicts ensued, the most salient of which are the 33-day Israel-Hezbollah in 2006, the violent clashes between Rafic Hariri’s supporters and Hezbollah in 2008 and most recently, the political unrest brought over by the Syrian Civil War (Bonte, 2016, p. 1). The Syrian conflict has also contributed to the resurgence of sectarian disputes in Lebanon. Many of Lebanon’s Sunni Muslims support the rebels in Syria, while many Shiites support Bashar Al-Assad, whose Alawite minority is usually described as an offshoot of Shi’a Islam (Holmes, 2013).

New forms of sectarianism dominate much of contemporary Lebanon’s social and political landscape. Political leaders and spokesmen from various factions capitalize on and invoke communal identifications in their rhetoric. Territorial and sectarian and/or ethnic identities have been and continue to be converged. All the above information brought me to ask: how are Lebanese youth reacting to the conflicts of the past, present and possible future? Is it conceivable to restore trust, dialogue and hope among youth in a country characterized by continuous political instability? Clearly, many youth are disenchanted and long to disengage themselves from the conflictual history of the country (R. Khalaf, 2011).

To cope with these conditions, my contributors engaged in a “politics of fun” (Garcia, 2011, p. 12; also see Bayat, 2007), or rather, reacted to the country’s political instabilities by creating a space for social agency in leisure activities. I should emphasize that I conducted research exclusively with upper-middle class and upper-class Lebanese youth. My contributors wanted to remove themselves from the dominant political discourses of the country. In doing so, they searched for “third spaces” (Bhabha 1993) in which cultures of hybridity, mixture and solidarity were developed.

Several of the beauty salons I frequented in Beirut may be called third spaces. As Suad Joseph (1999), a cultural anthropologist, put it, “while the state formally and legally structured a fragmented, [sectarian] nation...the lived reality of the nation’s people was far more complex than the state definition” (p. 176). For example, in the beauty salon I studied, religion was only

one of the many factors that shaped identity and channeled social behavior. As I will elaborate in the next chapter, a long-existent shared interest in beauty practices brought the women in the salon together, even if only in a transient manner.

In the last two decades Beirut has been known, amongst other denominations, as the nightlife capital, hedonistic playground, and cosmetic surgery capital of the Middle East (S. Khalaf 2012, p. 116). This image embeds the city in a globalized, late-capitalist, post-modern culture (S. Khalaf 2012, p. 116). In the past years, the demand for image-enhancing procedures has risen 10 to 20 percent, and many surgeons claim that they are seeing 50 percent more patients per day than they did in the 1990s (Doherty, 2008, p. 28). Samir Khalaf (2012), a Lebanese sociologist, argued these consumer choices are part of an attempt to find meaning, status and identity in a post-war, uncertain landscape. This surge in consumerism has had some unfavorable consequences for women. While men use a myriad of outlets (such as the cars they drive) to express their family status and wealth, women primarily resort to their bodies to express their social status.

Illustrative of this phenomenon is what occurred in the Spring of 2007. The billboards of Beirut and its suburbs became flooded with 900 replications of the close-up picture of a blonde, blue-eyed beauty with typically “Western” features (Mallat, 2011, p. 2-3). However, this picture was not a regular fragrance or cigarette advertisement. It announced the first-ever cosmetic surgery loan in the country by the First National Bank of Lebanon. “In both Arabic and English, the message was the same: ‘Have the life you have always wanted via plastic surgery’” (p. 3).

Contemporary explanations on the popularity of beauty work are often explained by the reaction to the Lebanese Civil War, which created individualistic attitudes celebrating life, glamour, and living in the moment. This anguished desire to live in the moment and enjoy the “good life” reflects “a post-war society desperately trying, during brief peaceful interludes, to make up for lost time” (Mallat, 2011, p. 177). On a similar note, Liliane Ghazale (2007) expressed that because of the country’s conflictual past, the Lebanese “...feel great uncertainty about the future. They feel they are not in control of their own fate. There is an exaggerated emphasis on external appearance because that is the one area in which people can assert control” (as cited in Biedermann 2007, p. 10).

Another explanation on the popularity of beauty work consigns responsibility to the local media. As Khalaf (2012) noted, “the influence and stature of Lebanon’s aggressive and fairly autonomous media, particularly its press and, more recently, its transnational satellite broadcasting...have always been disproportionate to its size” (p. 168). According to Doherty (2008), “the photos [in local society magazines like *Mondanité* and *Noun*] work to create an overarching beauty aesthetic for Lebanese women of certain social strata” (p. 28). Moreover, in the last decade (and especially in the last five years) the scale, rate and access to these photos has proliferated due to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. In Beirut’s small, interconnected and highly visual upper-middle and upper class society, women feel they need to compete by showcasing their beauty, both virtually and face-to-face.

However, post-war anxieties and the influence of the media cannot be the only factors explaining the surge of beauty work in Lebanon. The causes for the growing popularity of beauty procedures lie much deeper, in the very nature of a woman's role within Lebanon's patriarchal social and familial structure. "If there ever has been a culture with an exclusive kinship orientation, Lebanon comes close to being such...The extended and patriarchal family all other evidences to the contrary, has demonstrated remarkable resiliency as a pervasive social institution" (S. Khalaf 1971, p. 236). Within this institution, patriarchal customs, networks and structures have greatly disadvantaged women. In my research, I ask why and, most importantly, *for whom* beauty work in Beirut is being performed.

Although Lebanese women put a high value on their career development and education, they put a greater priority on marriage and motherhood because it falls in line with their family's expectations. In this perspective, I argue that beauty work, and its respective exhibition in nightlife contexts, plays a key role in increasing a family's potential for their daughter's social mobility and marriage prospects.

In her ethnography of Fijian society, Becker (1995) raised questions and arguments similar to mine:

In Fiji, the cultivation of one's own body is not socially legitimated as a means of distinguishing oneself. Still...commentary on body shape - how one is formed, whether one has lost or gained weight - is central to everyday discourse in Fijian villages. ...This unremitting attention to body shape and to appetite is a master idiom of care and nurturance within a social network. What is thereby encoded in and read from the form and changes of the body is the social positioning of individuals, consequent to how each has been nurtured or neglected in his or her social universe. Collective care, then, is recognized in the body's physical form (p. 56).

In a similar manner to Fijian's collective care of the body, beauty work in Beirut displays a family's social standing and investment in its women. This "collective display" of beauty points to the central role of women in Lebanon's patriarchal social and familial structure: that of a wife and mother. As one salon worker expressed, "Beauty for me is a duty, not pleasure - it's to respect others, to have a good presence. It's for our family and friends - that's why it is very important" (Celine, personal communication, August 26, 2016).

Four of my six key informants experienced parental pressures for beauty work, from mothers urging them to wear makeup in all public occasions, to fathers and siblings explicitly encouraging them to undergo rhinoplasty. Similar expectations and pressures appeared in choosing relationships with friends and acquaintances. As a consequence, Beirut women associated with friends that had equally enhanced bodies in order to confirm and enhance their social prestige.

Mallat's (2011) research, which examined the growing trend of cosmetic surgery among middle to upper class female youth Beirut, supports my findings. When asked how common it is for mothers to bring in their daughters for procedures, both plastic surgeons Mallat interviewed commented that it accounted for anywhere between 15 to 35 percent of their patients, with higher frequency in the weeks leading up to and during summer and winter vacations (p. 68). One doctor commented that he often sees mothers pushing their daughters to do some procedure or other, even if the girls themselves are not fully convinced (p. 68).

THE BACK STAGE: PREPARATION PRACTICES IN CHERRY BEAUTY LOUNGE

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1973) defined the back stage as a place where the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking in his lines, and step out of character (p. 112). The backstage is where performers are present but audience is not; it is where facts suppressed in the front stage and various kinds of informal actions may appear (Goffman, 1973, p. 112). In my analysis, I define Cherry Beauty Lounge, the salon I studied, as the "back stage" and White, the nightlife venue, as the "front stage". When preparing for the "spectacle" of night life (i.e. a 7:00 PM hair brushing or eye brow tweeze), I argue women had a "masculine" front stage in mind. As I claim in Chapter Four, the nightlife venue I studied was architecturally built and economically mediated for the performance of heteronormative behavior, and, above all, for the assertion of masculine identity. In this perspective, the beauty salon in Beirut, especially when women "prepare their beauty" (Robinson 2013) before a night out, is a feminine "back stage" to a predominantly "masculine front stage".

Cherry Beauty Lounge is located in the Hamra² district. Nestled between a mini food market and a small electronics kiosk, its compressed façade conveyed unimportance, but after asking around, I soon realized that Cherry was one of the most popular beauty shops in Beirut. The salon's strategic location in front of the Lebanese American University (LAU) and a ten-minute walk from the American University of Beirut (AUB) made it especially popular among young Beirut female students (ages 18-23). Despite the salon's affordable, student-friendly prices, most clients who frequented Cherry were from the Beirut upper-middle and upper class; both LAU and AUB are private institutions boasting the most expensive tuitions in the country. Due to its location in quasi non-sectarian³ Hamra, the salon's employees and clients were both Christian and Muslim.

Whereas Lebanese beauty salons promoted an agenda of self-improvement, the American salons I frequent back home emphasize leisure (Miller 2010, p. 35). American beauty centers often combine the words "salon" and "spa" in their name (p. 35). The salon I frequent in Eugene, Oregon is named "Gervais Salon and Spa". This salon, typical of the American beauty industry, has an "earthy" tone to its interior design, plays soothing "tropical" music and operates at a relaxed, drawn-out pace. A visit to Gervais implies relaxation, involving resting periods between beauty treatments and complementary hand or facial massages. Salon workers are asked to display a "fully-polished" look at work, including full hair and makeup and stylish, all-black outfits.

In contrast, Cherry did not have extended spa facilities. The main purpose of the Beirut salon experience was not to pamper the client, but to actively “work on” and “correct” her body (Miller, 2010, p. 36). Body parts, beauty treatments, and salon workers alike were precisely divided into fixed spaces and hierarchies. Cherry’s spatial and rhythmic analysis clearly reveals this.

Cherry was composed of two floors. Its main entrance extended into a small hairdressing area. The hairdressers were all male; the aestheticians were all female, reflecting a gendered division of labor within the salon. The manicure and pedicure area was located after the hairdressing area beyond the reception desk. Cherry’s basement floor was composed of the makeup, hair removal, tanning and skin rejuvenation areas. Here, the spaces for facial hair removal and makeup application were combined into a single area. Body waxing and skin rejuvenation treatments were performed in separate, specialized rooms on this floor. The male hairdressers were strictly forbidden to enter this privatized, female-only floor. In fact, most salon workers rarely moved from their assigned spot.

Cherry’s clients, on the other hand, were allowed to move from section to section as they wished. In this way, women appeared to “float” through the different spaces and workers to “correct” each part of their body. It was common for women to undergo as many as four treatments per visit. In this analysis, we can see how the “salon delivers a forensic documentation of beauty: the body is divided into individual parts or elements that are minutely scrutinized and traced” (Miller, 2010, p. 41). Beauty, in this perspective, is no longer amorphous but instead is rather predictable and controllable by the woman and her beauty specialists (Miller, 2010, p. 56).

Cherry’s modern, “high-tech” interior decoration with bright lighting, all-white painting and sleek, glossy furniture and the salon workers’ white, nurse-like uniforms redefined “the formerly slippery and subjective concept of beauty...as being specific, concrete, and measurable, and therefore subject to the applications of science and technology” (Miller 2010, p. 56).

Women mostly frequented Cherry alone, booking appointments during their work break or between university lectures. When women visited the salon in pairs or in larger groups, they usually attended a wedding or important event together after the appointments. Nadine, one of my salon client interviewees, explained: “I go to the salon alone and my other friends go alone too. My mom, my sister and I actually go to the same salon, but we never go together, we all have our own schedules.” (Nadine, personal communication, August 15, 2016). The fact that women mostly went to Cherry alone is yet another indication that beauty work in Beirut is considered actual work, sometimes comparable to a part and/or full time job.

Even though I observed little to no competition between women within Cherry, clients furthered class distinctions through various strategies. These included selecting high-end salons and/or increasing the number of and price of treatments and prolonging the amount of time spent in the salon.

In Beirut's eclectic beauty industry, salons are partly segmented by class. In my research, I classify beauty salons as either "low-end", "mid-end" or "high-end" spaces. Some beauty shops also segment their clientele by age, such as student friendly salons⁴⁴ or child and tween salons (which provide services for girls ages three to twelve) (Yazbeck 2009). Although more segmentations exist, class is the most relevant in my research. Ossman (2001) classified beauty salons in a similar method to mine: "Proximate" salons, "Made to Order" salons and "Something Special" salons (p. 100, 112, 121). Although I did not regularly frequent "high-end" (or "Something Special") salons, in Beirut's particularly small, visual upper-middle and upper class, frequenting "high-end" and "Something Special" salons earned women a significant sense of distinction. At high-end nightclubs, women often shared where they had gotten their hair or makeup done. Mentioning a name such as Tony El Mendelek⁵⁵ richly enhanced their aesthetic capital and class status.

Two additional aspects stimulating class distinctions include the number of and price of treatments and the amount of time spent in the salon. As Veblen (1899) pointed out in his "trickle-down model," the new bourgeoisie is the point of origin for all consumer goods and leisure practices (p. 77). In this perspective, salon visits and beauty treatments become an expression of distance from the world of work (p. 124). Indeed, most of my upper-middle and upper class contributors frequented the salon two to three times per week for three to four hours per visit.

Veblen (1899) also pointed out that the lower classes envy and emulate the bourgeoisie (p. 26). In his trickle-down model, "workers and lower-class groups come under attack because, in their emulation of the upper and leisure classes, they are impelled to consume items not on the basis of legitimate needs but for their symbolic status distinction" (S. Khalaf, 2012, p. 120).

I also found this to be the case in my fieldwork. One client's background is particularly telling. Amal was a hostess at Crown Plaza Hotel, a hotel near the salon. She made appointments three times per week for nail upkeep, hair blowouts and waxing treatments during her work breaks. Although she was a single mother with a relatively low income (700 dollars per month), Amal prioritized spending money on beauty, even over other appearance-oriented consumptions, such as clothing. In our interview, she expressed how much she enjoyed these treatments, but also how important it was for a woman regardless of her income to be, as she put it, "perfect." Thus, for the lower class, going to the salon three times per week can "lend someone class" because it communicates the ability to have the time and money to become beautiful (Lenehan, 2013, p. 241). The main purpose of the Beirut salon experience, though, is not to pamper the client but to actively "work on" and "correct" her body. Thus, for many Beirut women going to the salon may *symbolize* leisure to the outside world, but does *not constitute* real leisure.

Beauty salons occupy a problematic space in the feminist imaginary. Several feminist scholars view beauty salon cultures as too disciplinary, thereby contributing to women's subordination. Bartky (1997) was one of these feminists, arguing that femininity is something in which virtually every woman is required to participate in and that "...a woman must master the

disciplinary practices in pursuit of a body of the right size and shape that also displays the proper styles of feminine motility” (p. 31). She added, “...a woman’s body is an ornamented surface too, and there is much discipline in this production as well” (p. 31). In this perspective, Bartky (1997) argued that the preservation of women’s femininity is *incompatible* with their struggle for liberation (p. 39-40).

Although I value Bartky’s (1997) foundational contributions to feminism and the body, I feel that some of her contentions are outdated. Using a combination of my own fieldwork and several nuanced feminist studies of beauty and the body, I argue that Cherry served as a space in which women’s solidarity and pleasure coincided with their subordination. As Nadine, a salon client, noted, “In all of its lightness [referring to beauty], it’s the only thing that brings us together” (Nadine, personal communication, August 15, 2016).

Women in Cherry also fostered solidarity by temporarily bridging differences of social class (Scanlon 2007, p. 323). In the previous section, I explained how women furthered class distinctions by selecting high-end salons and increasing the number of and price of treatments and prolonging the amount of time spent in the salon. These forms of distinction then turned into subtle forms of competition in the front stage. However, I did not witness clients explicitly competing over beauty work *within* the salon space. While small comparisons (i.e. judgmental, comparing glances or comments) occurred, in reality, class distinctions were temporarily dismissed in the salon space. Paradoxically, women “prepared their beauty” together in the “back stage” in a mutually supportive way to then compete in the “front stage”.

Women in Cherry also fostered solidarity by (temporarily) bridging differences of social class (Scanlon 2007, p. 323). In the previous section, I explained how women furthered class distinctions by selecting high-end salons and increasing the number of and price of treatments and prolonging the amount of time spent in the salon. These forms of distinction then turned into subtle forms of competition in the front stage. However, I did not witness clients explicitly competing over beauty work *within* the salon space. While small comparisons (i.e. judgmental glances or comments) occurred, in reality, class distinctions were temporarily dismissed in the salon space. Paradoxically, women “prepared their beauty” together in the “back stage” in a mutually supportive way to then compete in the “front stage”.

One example of solidarity among women that transcended religion and class was gossip about male figures. These included boyfriends, husbands, sons and other close or distant relatives. Gossip varied from surface-level inquiries and responses to intimate information about a client’s husband’s sexual preferences (i.e. whether he fancied little or no pubic hair). This type of talk mostly involved the private life of the client. Sometimes, however, I witnessed reciprocal gossip where clients asked questions about the salon worker’s love and family life.

THE FRONT STAGE: PERFORMANCE PRACTICES IN “WHITE”

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1973) defined the front stage, in comparison to the back stage, as that part of the individual’s performance which regularly

functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance. Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance (p. 22). As I mentioned previously, when preparing for the “spectacle” of nightlife in beauty salons, women had a “masculine” front stage in mind. White, the nightlife venue I studied, was architecturally built and economically mediated for the performance of heteronormative behavior, and, above all, for the assertion of masculine identity. In this perspective, nightlife in Beirut is a masculine “front stage” to a predominantly “feminine back stage.”

In 2011, an advertising panel encircling the construction site of Zeituna Bay, the new waterfront bordering Beirut’s downtown, proudly displayed the slogan “The world is Beirut again” (Bonte, 2016, p. 1). This expression reflects what many travel magazines and fashion weeklies have described as the “rebirth of city”, or rather, the rebirth of “the Paris of the Middle East” (p. 1). Apart from several conflicts⁶⁶, “relative political and economic stability over most of the 2000s prompted Beirut to recover its strong and diversified nightlife” (p. 1). Now completed, the redevelopment of the waterfront where endless yachts, luxurious restaurants and pubs add to the numerous bars and nightclubs of the city embody the idea that Beirut is a “playground” (p. 1).

“At first glance, Beirut’s high-end, ‘mainstream’ nightlife looks like that found in any Western city: it inhabits spaces where the rules of daily life don’t apply, where social and moral restrictions vanish and make room for an attitude of ‘anything goes’” (Kegels, 2007, p. 88). As Kegels (2007) observed, the reality is quite different: “the nightlife of the Lebanese upper class is the one place where strict boundaries are set and carefully maintained” (p. 88). She continued, “this turns the night and nightlife into a space where [the Lebanese] can ‘perform upper class’, where they can reinforce social boundaries and ascertain their inclusion in this life that seems so far away from the out-of-control reality of...daily life” (p. 92).

My fieldwork at White, revealed similar findings to Kegels’ (2007) research. I argue that high-end venues are spaces where pre-existing identities of gender and class⁷⁷ are reinforced. These venues also serve as spaces where patriarchal kinship customs and networks are strengthened. In these venues, women assimilated and defended traditional cultural expectations. By displaying a “fully-polished look,” they increased their (and their family’s) potential for social mobility and marriage prospects.

White is owned by Addmind, an entertainment company that owns many other bars and nightclubs in Beirut, including Caprice, Toy Room and Mad, as well as White’s duplicate in Dubai (“Addmind Group”, n.d.). Ever since its opening, White has been the vanguard of Beirut’s high-end nightlife. A night out at White must be planned; it is very difficult to gain entrance if one is alone and lacking a table reservation.

White’s website provides an optimal description of the venue:

Start by imagining a pure white open space that fits 1200 people. You stand, cocktail in hand, and let yourself be seduced by the dancing crowd, the tinkling of champagne

glasses, the wondrous lights, the sea breeze, and the crystal-clear beats. The White experience is famous for allowing everyone to see everyone else from any corner of the venue. While keeping this playful spirit, it recently upgraded the location and enhanced the design with a more progressive feel. As a result, White now features one big central bar, a small VIP and a dedicated VIP section, which in other words “makes you feel like you own the place (“White Beirut”, n. d.).

As the sensation-filled passage shows, White is an enclosed space where upper class Beirutis (and occasional foreigners such as wealthy Gulf Arab spenders) “perform upper class” and reinforce preexisting social boundaries (Kegels, 2007, p. 92).

In the following paragraphs, I will describe and analyze a typical night out at White. I mostly frequented White with a group of friends, including two Christian-Lebanese male bankers and a Christian-Armenian female AUB recent graduate, Dina. The arrangements for a night out began two to three days in advance. Reservations were usually booked by my male friends under one of their last names. The one time Dina called to make a reservation, she still booked the table under one of our male friends’ last names.

After three hours of preparation at Cherry, I got picked up at around 10:00 PM by one of the bankers and we drove to White together. The actual arrival to the nightclub was very important. Clients, especially men first displayed their class, and most importantly, their *wasta*⁸⁸, with the car they arrived with. My two male friends arrived with new Mercedes and Audi models; they did not refrain from showcasing them.

Beyond the brand and quality of the car, license plates were yet another way by which partygoers displayed their class. My consultants informed me that the numbers listed on a license plate showed whether a partygoer possessed *wasta* or not. Simply put, if a license plate displayed three or less digits (and even better if the all digits were the same number), the car owner was either well connected and/or paid a large sum of money to buy it. If the license plate had four or more digits, the car owner was not well connected and/or couldn’t afford to (or didn’t want to) pay for an “upgraded” license plate.

The valets parked the clients’ cars in a hierarchical order, where the most expensive cars, such as Ferraris and Lamborghinis (and especially the ones with the “right” license plates), were parked at the front of the line or in closest proximity to the nightclub. Sometimes guests even paid up to \$100 for their car to be in front of the line. Thereby, the importance attributed to cars upon arrival to high-end nightclubs provided patrons a multitude of ways for displaying their class and encouraged a culture of exhibitionism from the very beginning of the club experience. Moreover, it established high-end nightclubs as masculine front stages because constructions of masculinity are central to Beirut’s car culture.

After the valets parked our car, we walked to the entrance of the nightclub and skipped the line of people trying to gain entrance without table reservations. My male friend announced his last name and a hostess took us inside and led us to our table. My friends and I were seated at a large VIP table at one of the corners of the nightclub’s lower level. The table was shared with

another group of partygoers; the low volume and slow pace of the music encouraged initial exchanges between our two groups.

These initial exchanges were crucial processes for placing a person in his or her social category. First, my friends and I scrutinized and evaluated the other group's clothing, shoes, jewelry, watches and makeup. Once their attractiveness had been determined, we inquired about their first and last name, occupation, age and religious⁹⁹ and political affiliations. We also evaluated the guests at nearby tables; we commented on what they were wearing, who they were with and whether my friends knew them or any of their extended family and friends. In fact, initial exchanges revealed the importance assigned to family and friend ties both in and outside Beirut's high-end nightlife. This was well demonstrated in the linguistic conventions used in making the acquaintance of a stranger. In Lebanon, an individual introduces himself as *Ibn' Ayleh* ('son of family'), which "prompts one to bypass any other attribute that he may possess" (S. Khalaf 1971, p. 236).

As we can begin to assume, throughout the night, I observed how male and female clients displayed their gender and class in different and/or similar ways. Male clients employed style and grooming to display their class no less than the female guests. They slicked back their hair using an abundant amount of gel, wore dry-cleaned, colorful button-ups and sported polished leather shoes or expensive sneakers. They also proudly showcased costly, trademark watches. One night a collaborator informed me that the watch was the primary way in which he evaluated other men:

"If I want to approach a guy and talk to him, I will first look at his watch. If his watch is the price of mine (\$10,000), that means he is on my level and I can go talk to him. If the price is lower, then I won't go talk to him." "What if its higher than that? Like what if it's 30,000 dollars?" I interjected. He replied, "Then he is out of my league! No, just kidding, of course I can go talk to him! (Youssef, personal communication, July 30, 2016)

The layout of the venue also contributed to the exhibition of the male guests' class. The spatial demarcations were gradational; the "ultra-VIP" area was located on the upper tier of the venue, allowing its guests to look down upon all the revelers on the ground floor. The tables nearest to the DJ's booth were also considered ultra-VIP; these were the two most expensive options. The VIP table area was composed of small bar tables and lower lounge-like tables adjacent to the bar area and larger tables at two of the nightclub's corners. The central bar was where, as the bankers worded it, "the cheap people partied." These spatial demarcations exhibited how much a table (a male or a group of males)¹⁰¹⁰ spent for the night.

The amount and brand of alcohol each table purchased further exhibited male clients' class. To assess this exhibition, I observed how a man's purchase of alcohol interacted with the nightclub's spatial demarcations. I noticed that when a wealthy man ordered a bottle of champagne with a price of \$1,000, the attention of the entire club was redirected to his table – the bottle was delivered to the client accompanied by the DJ's drum roll and followed by a spotlight of no less than three waiters walking from the bar all the way to his table.

Moreover, alcohol consumption informed binary gender performances. Drinking in high-end nightclubs often involved remaining “in control” (i.e. relatively sober) for both men and women. Remaining in control was essential, partly because guests often knew each other or were related in a certain way (Bonte 2016, p. 11). However, women were *especially* subject to maintaining a certain image. Similar to what De Visser and McDonnell found in their own research, public intoxication in Beirut is considered masculine (and as such not participating in ‘feminine’ behavior) and a way for men to achieve and perform ideal masculine identities within the night-time environment (Ross-Houle et al. 2015, p. 32). I vividly remember both the women at our table consuming fewer drinks than our male counterparts.

Female guests displayed their class status by way of their beauty¹¹¹⁵. Before leaving for the nightclub, I spent two to three hours getting a manicure, pedicure and a hair blowout. I usually got my makeup done professionally. I spent another 30 minutes getting dressed, applying more hairspray, lotions and oils and fixing my makeup at my apartment. My attention to detail was not out of the ordinary. Although women’s dress styles varied – from street style jeans and crop tops to elegant maxi dresses – our professionally done hair and makeup and overall “fully-polished look” homogenized us. To a certain extent, we contributed to the cost and ambience of the evening by preparing our beauty.

Our beauty not only enhanced our personal wealth, but also enhanced the class status of our male counterparts. Beautiful women and money were intrinsically connected in Beirut’s high-end nightlife: both stood for and structured the recreation men pursued while partying (Allison, 1994, p. 126; also see Yoda, 1981). I soon came to understand that, the prettier and classier the woman, the better she reflected a man’s status (p. 126). In other words, women and their beauty were never meant to directly affect the outcome of a night, but were inserted into the front stage as a way of supporting male performances (Mulvey, 1999).

In this context, female clients not only subdued to “the male gaze,” but also looked at themselves and other women through eyes of men (Mulvey, 1999). As such, I noticed many women competing by way of and for the male gaze. For example, female clients competed by dancing “atop bars and tables, appropriating these surfaces as their impromptu stage, and increasing their visibility” (Mallat, 2011, p. 71).

At around 3:00 AM the moment came to leave White. The table’s bill was paid by one of my male friends. Before handing over a credit card to the waiter, my friends bickered over the bill. Interestingly, they were not arguing about the high cost of the bill, but rather, because both wanted to pay for it. It was uncommon for a group of males to split the cost of an evening. Instead, an individual male in a group paid the entire night’s bill. In this way, the male who paid individually showcased his class and overall masculine performance.

CONCLUSION

As a University of Oregon Undergraduate Fellowship recipient, I conducted ethnographic research during July and August 2016 in Beirut, Lebanon. My fieldwork examined the

construction of women's beauty work in salons and how it affected gender and class performances in nightlife venues. Contemporary explanations on the popularity of beauty work are often explained by the reaction to the Lebanese Civil War, and by individualistic attitudes celebrating life, glamour, and living in the moment. This anguished desire to enjoy the "good life" reflects "a post-war society desperately trying, during brief peaceful interludes, to make up for lost time" (Mallat, 2011, p. 177). However, post-war anxieties and the influence of the media cannot be the only factors explaining the surge of beauty work. The causes for the growing popularity of beauty procedures lie much deeper: in the very nature of a woman's role within Lebanon's patriarchal kinship structure. In Lebanon, the family is the most pervasive and important social institution. Although Lebanese women put a high value on their career development and education, they put a greater priority on marriage and motherhood because it falls in line with the family's expectations. In this perspective, I argued that beauty work (and its respective exhibition in nightlife contexts) plays a key role in increasing a family's potential for their daughter's social mobility and marriage prospects.

I documented my experience participating in and studying Beirut's beauty salon culture. Women furthered class distinctions using various strategies in beauty work and beauty salons. One strategy included choosing to frequent high-end salons. At exclusive nightclubs, women often shared where they had gotten their hair or makeup done. Mentioning a high-end salon richly enhanced their class status. Women also furthered class distinctions by increasing the number and price of beauty treatments and prolonging the amount of time they spent at the salon. Most upper-middle and upper class women frequented the salon two to three times per week for three to four hours each time. Lower class women emulated the upper classes; they too frequented the salon abundantly, sometimes sacrificing valuable time and other expenses in order to get by.

Although these forms of distinction in beauty work and beauty salons may have turned into subtle forms of competition in nightlife venues, I never witnessed women explicitly competing *within* the salon space. In fact, through their reciprocal participation in beauty work, women in Cherry (temporarily) bridged class and religious differences that existed outside the salon. Paradoxically enough, women "prepared their beauty" together in the "back stage" in a mutually supportive way to then compete in the "front stage." For this reason, I argue that beauty salons in Beirut serve as "third spaces" (Bhabha, 1993), in which women's solidarity and pleasure temporally coincide with their subordination.

In my paper, I recounted my experience participating in and studying Beirut's nightlife. Nightlife plays an essential role in the formation of young Beirutis' social identity. My collaborators frequented specific venues to consolidate traditional identities of age, gender and class and/or to contest these very identities. On the one hand, I argued that high-end venues are spaces where pre-existing identities of gender and class are reinforced. High-end venues also serve as spaces where patriarchal kinship customs and networks are strengthened. Specifically, they are architecturally built and economically mediated for the performance of heteronormative behavior, and, above all, for the assertion of masculine identity. In these venues, women assimilated dominant models of beauty and demeanor. By "preparing their

beauty” in the back stage and displaying a “fully-polished look” in the front stage, they increased their (and their family’s) potential for social mobility and marriage prospects.

The two original contributions of my research to the study of Lebanese women’s beauty work concern both my methodological choices as well as the actual results of my field work. First, by using the framework of Erving Goffman’s “back stage” and “front stage” theory, I linked women’s preparation practices in beauty salons with their performance practices in nightlife venues. Although I considered the space of beauty’s construction to be distinct from the space of its exhibition, I also recognized Beirut women’s engagement in beauty work as processual – both within and between these settings. Seeing beauty as a process through the lens of dramaturgical and performance theory not only highlighted the extensive energy, time, and money Beirut women dedicated to their self-beautification in the “back stage,” but also called attention to the emotional labor they underwent to parallelly femininize their tact, demeanor and poise in the “front stage.”

Second, by disputing Lebanon’s post-war interlude as the main explanation for the current wave of escapism, consumerism, and exhibitionism, I complicated accepted anthropological and sociological assumptions for why Beirut women engage in extensive beauty work. Instead, I analyzed the country’s deeply rooted patriarchal and familial structure; my findings revealed that women’s extensive and consistent participation in beauty work primarily enhanced the social and class status of both the nuclear and extended family. As one elderly salon worker told me, Beirut women beautified themselves long before the civil war and the proliferation of invasive media and cosmetic surgery. I invite researchers interested in Lebanese women’s beauty and consumer practices – as well as in their cultural, social economic and political status – to not merely rely on post-war theory, but to embed women’s behavior in the context of the country’s deeply rooted familial and collective past, present and, most likely, future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Carol Silverman for helping me study and experience this topic in depth, and for inspiring and motivating me when I felt discouraged. Without her mentorship (and relentless patience), this research wouldn’t have been possible. I would also like to thank all beauty salon clients and workers, nightlife partygoers, contributors, interviewees and friends I collaborated with in Beirut. I sure hope their voices transpire and come alive to the reader throughout the thesis. Amongst them, I would like to especially thank Leila, a close friend and contributor, who’s love for beauty and all things “feminine” initially inspired this research. Thanks also to Mamma and Babbo, who supported me tirelessly throughout this entire process.

REFERENCES

Abu-Lughod, L. (2001). “Orientalism” and Middle East Feminist Studies, 101-113.

- (1990). The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women. *American ethnologist*, 17(1), 41-55.
- Allison, A. (2009). *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*. University of Chicago Press
- Bartky, S. L. (1998). Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power. Oxford University Press, 25-44.
- Bayat, A. (2007). Islamism and the Politics of Fun. *Public Culture*, 19(3), 433.
- Becker, A. E. (1995). *Body, Self, and Society: The View from Fiji*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Berghoff, H., & Kühne, T. (2013). *Globalizing Beauty: Consumerism and Body Aesthetics in the Twentieth Century*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Biedermann, F. (2007, May 8). Loans for plastic surgery answer Lebanon's yearning for fresh start. *Financial Times*, 10.
- Black, P., & Sharma, U. (2001). Men are real, women are 'made up': beauty therapy and the construction of femininity. *The Sociological Review*, 49(1), 100-116.
- Bonte, M. (2016). "Eat, Drink and Be Merry for Tomorrow We Die": Alcohol Practices in Mar Mikhael, Beirut. *Drinking Dilemmas: Space, Culture and Identity*, 1-25. Routledge.
- Bonte, M., & Douarin, L. (2014). Dans les pas de la nuit. Les rythmes urbains de Beyrouth à la tombée du jour. *Revue Des Mondes Musulmans Et De La Méditerranée*, (136), 163-184.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. *Cultural theory: An anthology*, 1, 81-93.
- (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.
- Chatterton, P., & Hollands, R. (2003). *Urban nightscapes: Youth cultures, pleasure spaces and corporate power* (Vol. 18). Psychology Press.
- C.I.A. World Factbook. (2016). *Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>
- Davis, K. (1997). Cosmetic Surgery as Feminist Utopia? *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 4(1), 23-37.
- (1991). Remaking the She-Devil: A Critical Look at Feminist Approaches to Beauty. *Hypatia*, 6(2), 21-43.

- Daragahi, B. (2008, May 20). LEBANON: If Hamra street could talk. Retrieved October 05, 2017, from <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2008/05/lebanon-if-hamr.html>
- Debord, G. (2012). *Society of the Spectacle*. Bread and Circuses Publishing.
- De Visser, R. O., & McDonnell, E. J. (2012). 'That's OK. He's a guy': A mixed-methods study of gender double-standards for alcohol use. *Psychology & health, 27*(5), 618-639.
- Dewalt, B., & Dewalt, C. (1998). Participant Observation. *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. H. Russell Bernard, 259-99. AltaMira Press.
- Doherty, S. B. (2008). Cosmetic surgery and the beauty regime in Lebanon. *Middle East Report, (249)*, 28-31.
- Emerson, R., & Rachel, F., & Linda, S. (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 1-38. University of Chicago Press.
- Farsoun, S. (1970). Family Structure and Society in Modern Lebanon. *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East, 2*, 257-307.
- Featherstone, M. (1982). The Body in Consumer Culture. *Theory, Culture & Society, 1*(2), 18-33.
- Ferrante, J. (1988). Biomedical versus cultural constructions of abnormality: The case of idiopathic hirsutism in the United States. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 12*(2), 219-238.
- Ferris, G. (2017, April 17). Dive into Beirut's electronic club scene. Retrieved October 05, 2017, from <https://www.redbull.com/us-en/watch-an-exclusive-short-film-about-club-culture-in-beirut-lebanon>
- Fetterman, D. M. (Ed.). (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by-step* (Vol. 17). Sage.
- Foster, A. M. (2006). In the eye of which beholder? Beauty, Body Image and Sexuality in Contemporary Tunisia. *Sexuality in the Arab World*. Saqi.
- French Syria. (n.d.). Retrieved October 05, 2017, from <http://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/french-syria-1919-1946/>
- Garcia, L. M. (2013). Doing Nightlife and EDMC Fieldwork: Guest Editor's Introduction. *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture, 5*(1), 3-17.
- (2011). "Can you feel it, too?": Intimacy and affect at electronic dance music events in Paris, Chicago, and Berlin. The University of Chicago.
- Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 10*(2), 147-166.

- Gilmore, D. (1987). *Honor and shame and the unity of the Mediterranean*. American Anthropological Association.
- Goffman E. (1973). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. The Overlook Press.
- (1967). *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-face Behavior*. Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co.
- Ghosn, F., & Khoury, A. (2011). Lebanon after the Civil War: Peace or the Illusion of Peace? *The Middle East Journal*, 65(3), 381-397.
- Grazian, D. (2008). *On the Make: The Hustle of Urban Nightlife*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hamra Street. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved September 26, 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamra_Street
- History of Lebanon, (n.d.). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved September 3, 2017 from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=History_of_Lebanon&oldid=794404518
- Holmes, O., & Siddiq, N. (2013, August 23). Bombs kill 42 outside mosques in Lebanon's Tripoli. Retrieved October 05, 2017, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-explosion-deaths/bombs-kill-42-outside-mosques-in-lebanons-tripoli-idUSBRE97MoFL20130823>
- Jamali, D., Sidani, Y., & Safieddine, A. (2005). Constraints facing working women in Lebanon: An insider view. *Women in Management Review*, 20(8), 581-594.
- Joseph, S. (1999). Women Between Nation and State in Lebanon. *Between Women and Nation: Nationalism, Transnational Feminism, and the State*, 162-81.
- (1988). Feminization, Familism, Self, and Politics: *Research as a Mughtaribi*. *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, 25-47.
- Kang, M. (2003). The managed hand: The Commercialization of Bodies and Emotions in Korean Immigrant-owned Nail Salons. *Gender & Society*, 17(6), 820-839.
- Kegels, N. (2007). Nothing Shines as Bright as a Beirut Night. *Etnofoor*, 20(2), 87-101.
- Khalaf, R. S. (2011). Idealistic and Indignant Young Lebanese. *Arab Youth: Social Mobilization in Times of Risk*. London: Saqi, 44(1), 97-116.
- (2006). Breaking the silence: what AUB students really think about sex. *Sexuality in the Arab World*, 175-198. Saqi.
- Khalaf, S. (2012). *Lebanon adrift: From Battleground to Playground*. Saqi.
- & Gagnon, J.H. (Eds.). (2006). *Sexuality in the Arab World*. Saqi.

- (1987). *Lebanon's predicament*. Columbia University Press.^[1]
- (1971). Family Associations in Lebanon. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 235-250.
- Khuri, F. I. (1969). The changing class structure in Lebanon. *Middle East Journal*, 23(1), 29-44.
- Kulick, D. (1995). Introduction: The Sexual Life of Anthropologists: Erotic Subjectivity and Ethnographic Work. *Taboo: Sex, Identity, and Erotic Subjectivity in Anthropological Fieldwork*, ed. D. Kulick and M. Wilson, 1-28. Routledge.
- Kubie, Lawrence S. (1937). The fantasy of dirt. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 6, 388-425.
- Lebanon in History. (n.d.). Lebanon in History. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <http://wlcu.com/ng/blog/2017/02/14/lebanon-in-history/>
- Larkin, C. (2011). Between Silences and Screams: The Lebanese Postmemory Experience. *Arab Youth. Social Mobilization in Times of Risk*, 127-145. Saqi.
- Lassiter, Luke E. 2005. *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lawless, E. J. (2000). "Reciprocal" Ethnography: No One Said It Was Easy. *Journal of Folklore Research*, 197-205.
- (1992). "I was afraid someone like you... an outsider... would misunderstand": Negotiating Interpretive Differences between Ethnographers and Subjects. *Journal of American Folklore*, 302-314.
- Lenehan, S. (2013). Imported Surgeries? Accounting for the Rise of Tehran's Nose-Job Industry. *Globalizing Beauty: Consumerism and Body Aesthetics in the Twentieth Century*, 233-248. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mallat, S. E. (2011). *More than just another pretty face? understanding motivations for plastic surgery among Lebanese female youth-by Sarah Elizabeth Mallat* (Masters dissertation).
- May, R. A. B. (2014). *Urban nightlife: Entertaining Race, Class, and Culture in Public Space*. Rutgers University Press.
- Moeran, B. (2010). The portrayal of beauty in women's fashion magazines. *Fashion Theory*, 14(4): 491-510.
- Monroe, K. V. (2016). *The Insecure City: Space, Power, and Mobility in Beirut*. Rutgers University Press.
- Moore, M. (2016). Nightlife as Form. *Theater*, 46(1), 49-63.
- Michael, J. (2015). It's really not hip to be a hipster: Negotiating trends and authenticity in the cultural field. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 15(2), 163-182.

- Miller, L. (2006). *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics*. University of California Press.
- Muggleton, D. (2000). *Inside subculture*. Berg Publishers.
- Mulvey, L. (1989). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 14-26. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Myers, D. (1921). The Mandate System of the League of Nations. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 96, 74-77
- Nagel, C. (2002). Reconstructing space, re-creating memory: sectarian politics and urban development in post-war Beirut. *Political geography*, 21(5), 717-725.
- Nasr, S. (1993). New Social Realities and Post-war Lebanon: Issues for Reconstruction. In S. Khalaf, & P. Khoury (Eds.), *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design and Post-war Reconstruction*. Leiden/ New York/ Köln, E.J. Brill.^[SEP]
- Ossman, S. (2002). *Three Faces of Beauty: Casablanca, Paris, Cairo*. Duke University Press.
- Ortner, S. B. (1997). Thick resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering. *Representations*, (59), 135-162.
- (1995). Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 37(1), 173-193.
- Pini, M. (1997). Cyborgs, nomads and the raving feminine. In *Dance in the City*, (111-129). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- RA: überhaus. (n.d.). Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://www.residentadvisor.net/promoter.aspx?id=43355>
- Rabil, R. (2011). *Religion, National Identity, and Confessional Politics in Lebanon: The Challenge of Islamism*. Springer.
- Raidy, G. (2016, June 28). How the Private Party Scene Is Democratizing the Dancefloor in Beirut. Retrieved September 3, 2017, from https://thump.vice.com/en_ca/article/8q7vab/private-party-beirut-lebanon-berhaus-garten-feature
- Robinson, C. (2013). Wasta Capital: Ethnographic Reflexivity at a Rooftop Nightclub in Beirut. *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture*, 5(1).
- Ross-Houle, K., Atkinson, A., & Sumnall, H. (2015). The symbolic value of alcohol. *Drinking Dilemmas: Space, Culture and Identity*, 28.
- Salamandra, C. (2006). Chastity Capital: Hierarchy and Distinction in Damascus. *Sexuality in the Arab World*, 152-62. Saqi.

- Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). *Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observations, Interviews, and Questionnaires* (Vol. 2). Rowman Altamira.
- Sluka, Jeffrey, and A. Robben. *Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction. Ethnographic Fieldwork; An Anthropological Reader*, 1-28. Blackwell.
- Smith, L. T. (2013). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Zed Books Ltd.
- Scanlon, J. (2007). "If My Husband Calls I'm Not Here": The Beauty Parlor as Real and Representational Female Space. *Feminist Studies* 33.2, 308–334.
- Susman, W. (1979). "Personality" and the Making of Twentieth-Century American Culture. *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, 212-26.
- Suqi, R. (2016, October 03). The Thriving Designers Who Dominate Beirut's Flourishing Scene. Retrieved September 26, 2017, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/06/style/the-thriving-designers-of-beirut.html>
- The Global Divide on Homosexuality. (2013, June 04). Retrieved October 05, 2017, from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality/>
- Thomas, M. (2012). *Women in Lebanon: Living with Christianity, Islam, and Multiculturalism*. Springer.
- Thornton, S. (1996). *Club Cultures: Music, media, and Subcultural Capital*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Woman. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 333-344). Pergamon.
- Veblen, T. (1899). *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Vol. 1). Macmillan. Cited from Veblen (2007). *The Theory of the Leisure Class* Oxford World's Classics.
- White, (n.d.). Retrieved June 20, 2017. <http://www.whitebeirut.com/home>
- White, G. M., & Kirkpatrick, J. (Eds.). (1987). *Person, self and experience: Exploring Pacific Ethnopsychologies*. University of California Press.
- Yegenoglu, M. (1998). *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yoda, A. (1981) *What are Women to Men?* Nihon Jitsugyo Shuppan.
- Zoepf, K. (2016). The Intimate World of Muslim Beauty. Retrieved August 20, 2017, from <https://www.allure.com/story/the-intimate-world-of-muslim-beauty>.

NOTES

¹ Hariri was a Lebanese business tycoon and the Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1992 to 1998 and again from 2000 until his resignation on 20 October 2004.

² Hamra is a central district and economic hub of Beirut.

³ *Los Angeles Times* journalist Borzou Daragahi describes the street as a bastion of liberalism [that] embraces multiple religions and political views; Hamra Street is an amalgam of all of Lebanon's religious groups, including Sunnis, Maronites, Melkites, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Shias. Hamra remains Lebanon's secular haven, melting pot for free thinkers and the least religiously affiliated area around Beirut (Daragahi 2008).

⁴ Salons that cater to university students are usually near universities and have special student discounts.

⁵ A celebrity hair-stylist in Beirut.

⁶ These conflicts include 33-day Israeli war on Hezbollah in 2006, the crisis in 2008 during which Hezbollah militia clashed with the government and seized control of a part of Beirut, and Lebanon's involvement in the Syrian civil war.

⁷ Ethnic, religious and political identities are also reinforced.

⁸ Wasta "refers to connections people have and use in order to obtain various kinds of benefits for themselves or someone else. ...As a type of favoritism based primarily on kinship ties, wasta resembles other

⁹ If not already evident from religious symbols worn as jewelry.

¹⁰ A table at White was usually bought by a single man in a group of two to ten clients of mixed sexes. Women in these groups almost never contributed to the cost of the table. All-male groups were also common; a single man in the group would buy the table. All-female groups were less common but still existed. I do not have sufficient data to know how all-female groups bought tables.

¹¹ The brand and style of clothing also had important implications for the display of wealth but this is not the focus of my research.