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**Multiplicity among Palestinian Masculinity-The Case of Middle Class Men in  
the City of Ramallah**

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## Acknowledgment

*You gave the choice...*

*You gave wings to fly...*

*You liberated my body...*

*You unchained my soul ...*

*You paved my way...*

*You made me fly...*

*You made me be the lady I am ...*

*To YOU...simply YOU...*

*My gratitude*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis main motivation emerged from a found need to emancipate Palestinian masculinity from being represented and perceived in limited models of masculinity. The study hypothesis suggests that masculinity among Palestinian men is a multiple entity that varies according to individual context and circumstances. Therefore, the study challenges portrayed models on Palestinian masculinity throughout the Palestinian history by demonstrating an analytical insight of written literature and studying Palestinian masculinity formation and transformation focusing on debating diverse perspectives of representation. In more depth, this exploratory study aims to explore the complexity of unlimited factors within each individual context that interact along personal and collective history to feed in the active process of constructing individual masculine identity. Consequently, an inductive qualitative research approach is adopted to carry out the analysis of collected data throughout field observation and semi-structured interviews conducted with a sample of 13 Palestinian middle class working men who work in the banking sector and live in the city of Ramallah.

A multilayered thematic analysis of field work emerging themes are employed to serve the hypothesis and to investigate the active process of constructing the masculine identity consider the complex interplay of individual contexts. Two main themes of analysis were identified with sub-themes included. The first theme is “revealing the individual perception of self-masculine identity” nourished by three sub- themes: elucidating masculine standards, evoking masculine inheritance- the halo, and mirroring the self throughout specific contexts.

The second theme is “perception of male privilege and cost of masculinity” nourished by four sub-themes: freedom of mobility, power dynamics, slippage of domination, and perception of masculinity cost. Continuously, two crosscutting themes kept emerging throughout the analysis, which are identified as; “social conformity/masculinity performance” and “differences and inequalities among men”.

At the end, the study concluded that Palestinian men perceive their masculinity in multiple ways following each individual specific and complex context.

## المخلص

ان الدافع الرئيسي لهذه الرسالة جاء من الحاجة الماسة إلى تحرير صورة وتمثيل الذكورة الفلسطينية من نماذج محدودة ومحصورة. وتشير فرضية الدراسة الى أن الذكورة بين الرجال الفلسطينيين، هي كيان متعدد يتغير وفقا للسياق والظروف الفردية. لذا، تتحدى هذه الدراسة النماذج المصورة للذكورية الفلسطينية في التاريخ الفلسطيني، من خلال تصور تحليلي للأدبيات المكتوبة، فضلا عن دراسة التشكيل والتحول الذي طرأ على الذكورية الفلسطينية وذلك من خلال التركيز على مناقشة وجهات النظر المختلفة لهذا التمثيل. وتسعى هذه الدراسة الاستكشافية إلى التبحر بشكل أعمق في تعقيدات العوامل الغير محدودة في كل سياق فردي له علاقة بالتاريخ الشخصي والجماعي من أجل الإفادة في تلك العملية النشطة لبناء الهوية الذكورية الفردية. وعليه، فقد تم اعتماد نهج بحثي استقرائي نوعي لتحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها من خلال المشاهدات الميدانية والمقابلات شبه المنتظمة التي أجريت على عينة من 13 رجلاً فلسطينياً من الطبقة المتوسطة، يعملون في القطاع المصرفي ويعيشون في مدينة رام الله.

وقد تم استخدام التحليل المواضيعي المتعدد الطبقات والذي تم الحصول عليه من الموضوعات التي برزت خلال العمل الميداني لخدمة الفرضية وللتحقق في العملية النشطة لبناء الهوية الذكورية مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار التفاعل المعقد للسياقات الفردية.

وتم تحديد محورين رئيسيين للتحليل مع إدراج محاور فرعية؛ الأول هو "الكشف عن تصور الفرد للهوية الذاتية الذكورة" والتي تتناولها ثلاث مواضيع فرعية: توضيح المعايير الذكورية، وإثارة الميراث الذكوري - الهالة، وانعكاس الذات ضمن سياقات محددة. أما عن المحور الثاني فهو عن "إدراك التميز لكونه ذكرا واحتساب تكلفة هذه الذكورة". وقد تناول هذا المحور ضمن أربع مواضيع فرعية وهي: حرية التنقل، وديناميكيات القوة، وتعرثر الهيمنة، والإدراك لتكلفة الذكورة.

وقد استمر وبشكل ملحوظ، ظهور محورين متقاطعين في جميع مراحل التحليل؛ "التوافق الاجتماعي / الأداء الذكوري" و "الفروقات وعدم المساواة بين الرجال".

وخلصت هذه الدراسة إلى أن الرجال الفلسطينيين يتصورون "كيانهم الذكوري" بطرق متعددة ووفقا للسياق المحدد والمعقد لكل فرد.



## Introduction

Palestinian masculinity was subject to debate by scholars from different perspectives; feminist standpoint (Kanafani 2008; Massad 1995), “uprootness” and “placelessness” (Kawash 2003), the overlap between Nationalism and modernization (Hasso 2000), and masculine identity construction throughout political and social history (Khalidi 1997; Peteet 1994; McKeown and Sharoni 2002; Sharoni 1997). Moreover, scholars provided us with some limited analysis to hegemonic models of Palestinian masculinity that emerged throughout our political history, for instance; “the nationalist” (Kanafani 2008; Massad 1995; Peteet 1994) and the “refugee” (Achilli 2015; Hart 2008; Latif 2012,).

However, Palestinian masculinity has been illustrated in the hegemonic form of masculinity rather than multiple masculinities that exist because aspects of social life affect how Palestinian men engage with gender, race, class, religion, and sexuality are just a few of the other social constructs that interact with gender to create multiple masculinities. In spite of hegemonic form of representation of Palestinian masculinity, this study comes to demonstrate masculine multiplicity among Palestinian men in the city of Ramallah.

My entry point is based on the general idea of “masculinity is not natural” despite the biological sex. Masculinity is a gender identity created throughout cultural interpretations of maleness and constructed within social, historical, political and economic specific contexts. Masculinity concerns the position of men in a gender order and can be defined as the patterns of practice by which people

(both men and women, though predominantly men) engage that position (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Thus, taking gender seriously implies asking critical questions about a complex set of behaviors, social norms, systems of meanings, ways of thinking, and different fields of power relations that affect how we experience, understand and represent ourselves as men and women in specific historical contexts. Moreover, because gender shapes so much of our constructed identities, experiences, and behaviors, by paying close attention to changes in conceptions of femininity, masculinity and gender relations we may gain insight into the complex processes of identity formation and transformation (Sharoni 1997).

I suggest making masculinity an issue is crucial. The general representation of men as “oppressors” by using their masculinity power and not “victims” because of its construction brings to my attention that masculinity power could become a “curse” rather than a “privilege”. Men perform as actors on a stage who are playing parts that have been assigned to them as a set of lines and stage direction as if all males have to learn in order to perform, thus, their masculinity becomes seen as an act rather than an essence (Edley & Wetherill 1995).



# CHAPTER ONE

## **Research Problematic and Methodology**

### **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

I intend to examine how middle class Palestinian men in the city of Ramallah construct their masculine identity in relation to the complexity of social processes within the Palestinian colonial context.

My aim is to understand the interaction and perception of Palestinian men considering the masculinity construction and its multiplicity under our complex reality. Therefore, my social experiment's objective is to provide an open space to Palestinian men to express their perception of self-masculine identity throughout their life experience and beyond the biological terms (being males). Hence, exploring the self-perception of "being a man" aiming to expose the complexities, hierarchy, and multiplicity of masculinities in order to clearly understand how male's privilege and dominance are operating and changing according to each specific context. Thus, an examination of the construction of their identity that is created through an elaborate replication of acts committed, should not be conducted in a narrow view of masculinity.

In this study, I give way to expose the complexity of the social construction of gender identity in the Palestinian context, which highlights the multiple masculinities operating in particular historical and social contexts. In this scope, the study will debate throughout a written literature between the stereotypes and the patterns representing Palestinian men throughout a written literature.

## **1.2. Research Question**

How do Palestinian middle class working young men construct their masculine identity within the complex reality of Ramallah city?

## **1.3. Research Hypothesis**

Masculinity among Palestinian men is a multiple entity that varies according to individual context and circumstances.

I argue in this study that inhabited masculine acts and social conformity performance of men within a specific context illustrate the illusion of one masculine image of a unified masculine model. Thus, my hypothesis comes to stress on revealing the multiple masculine entities by studying a sample of Palestinian middle class working men living in the city of Ramallah.

## **1.4. Significance of Study**

The specific contribution to this study is the presentation of the Palestinian masculinity as a multiple entity. I believe that men too, need to be emancipated from role-playing within a specifically determined frame and the fear of being judged by “being a man or not being a man”. Likewise, men need to be emancipated from being “presented” and “represented” in one hegemonic model or from single-minded perspective. Thus, the focus of my study comes to uncover the superficial belief of fixed characteristics that gather all Palestinian men in one proxy.

### **1.5. Ethical Engagement**

As a researcher, I am privileged to reproduce what I want to know and what I want to present about the “other”. Hence, I have an ethical engagement to reflect participants’ experiences within the scope of this experimental study.

### **1.6. Methodology**

The research will employ the qualitative research techniques reflecting both epistemological and ontological positions with a primarily inductive knowledge based approach (Bryman 2001). My epistemological position is based on Interpretivism, which stresses “the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman 2001, 264). My ontological position is based on constructionism, which “implies that social properties are outcomes of interaction between individuals, rather than phenomena out there and separate from those involved in its construction.” (Bryman 2001, 264). In this research, I am seeking to understand the masculinity formulation instead of explaining it. Additionally, I intend to explore the social actions and interactions that contribute to constructing the masculine model/s in our society.

In this research, I posit “men” and their “masculinity” at the center of the study. As a woman, an outsider of their world, I suggest first, to put away women stereotypes about men in our society, second, I will deeply examine the processes of masculinity construction in order to analyze it. In this scope, I will benefit from the feminist anthropology debates over the meaning of culture and over the

epistemological basis of the representation of specific culture by deconstructing the meaning of it and its anthropological representation considering culture as an inter-subjective and political process that construct meanings and practices (Walter 1995). This means that I will dive in the “masculine-culture” and its construction, and then automatically I will reach the “mother-culture” “Palestinian culture” that feeds this masculine one. Thus a communicative practice approach will help in linking the symbolic and the material by focusing on how meaning-making activities of people affect and is affected by reproducing knowledge of a specific subject (Walter 1995).

In this study, I try to be pragmatic rather than normative by approaching different research instruments (literature analysis, observation and in-depth interviews). I involve moving beyond the homogenized to individualized masculinities not thinking of masculinity structure in monolithic or deterministic way, but to see masculinities construction beyond the relatively visible male-centered cultural dimension of *representation* to more *material institutional* male privileges and *ideologies* of male supremacy down to often virtually invisible *epistemological* dimensions of meanings in these dynamics and interactions that are evolving historically and being continuously reshaped through adaptations of historical and social processes and logics of contestation, co-option, domination, resistance, reorganization and legitimation through multiple levels (from minds and bodies to communities, classes, nations and supranational formations), and, finally, in multiple dimensions (Edstrom 2014).

## **1.7. Research Methods**

### **1.7.1 Research instruments**

In order to avoid misinterpretation, a compound research approach was followed:

- Study and analysis of written literature;
- Qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews. The study field interviews conducted during April and May 2016 in Ramallah. Thirteen interviews were conducted with middle class working men in banking sector from different backgrounds living in Ramallah. The interviewees were; nine between 25-35 years old, and four between 36-45 years old. Among them; three are single, one divorced, nine are married. Participants were recruited throughout snowball sampling method (Bryman 2001, 343), taking into account a combined criteria of; gender, age range, education, place of resident, place of work, and different geographical backgrounds.
- Ethnography/ participant observation was active during the study as an approach of gaining a view of appreciation of the culture of social group (Bryman 2001, 266). The researcher was occupied in a social setting for some time in order to observe and listen in an experiment to deepen the conception of the targeted group. Observed settings included; coffee shops, street, workplace, fathers in children playground and social club, fathers dropping and picking their children from kindergarten and school.



### 1.7.2. Sample

The study target group, is middle class Palestinian men between 25-40 years, working in the banking sector. Since the number of banks has increased in the last two decades in Ramallah following the growth of financial and real estate investment (Hilal 2015), consequently, this situation created employment opportunities for young professionals living within Ramallah and outside it. Ramallah is a contemporary central city that attracts young people from several other cities to live and work in it. Placing the fieldwork of this research in Ramallah will give the researcher a chance to target various sub-cultural backgrounds living in the city signifying themselves middle class following their cultural capital. The sample combines thirteen middle class working men from different backgrounds; cities, villages, and refugee camps.

Having decided to select the research sample from employees in the banking sector, is due to the fact that the banking sector is:

- rapidly expanding the employment sector;
- attracting young professionals from all over Palestine;
- A heterogynous workplace that gathers multi-local-sub-cultural environments under the umbrella of the financial institute.

This combination provides a fertile base for the study of multiple masculinities. It is important to remember that the research holds a social perspective in investigating the case study taking into consideration the economic and political dynamics and interactions.

### **1.7.3. Issues Raised in the Interviews**

The interview inquiries, attempted to open a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee about individual contexts and perceptions of masculinity. The following issues were thoroughly addressed and exposed during the interviews considering the specificity of each individual context:

- “Be a man” or “Hegemonic ideal” and masculine performative accomplishment erected by social audience, including themselves.
- Understand more clearly how male privilege and dominance are constructed and institutionalized.
- Explore harms suffered by men throughout examining the construction of their identity that is instituted and constructed through a stylized repetition of acts and narrow perception of masculinity.
- Expose the complexities, hierarchy, and multiplicity of masculinities by being attentive to different patterns of inequality and to our interpretation of those patterns.

### **1.8. Conceptual Framework**

I start my argument based on the general idea that “masculinity is not natural” despite the biological sex element. Masculinity is a gender identity created throughout different interpretations of masculinity that are constructed within the complexity of social, historical, political and economic specific contexts. Thus, I find it important to engage with the gender-relations perspective on hegemonic and multiple masculinities. **First, hegemonic masculinity** is defined in terms of the logic

of the patriarchal gender relations and system, which might change over history. In this sense, hegemonic masculinity is a social domination achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes. **Second**, multiple masculinities exist because aspects of social life affect how we engage with gender, race, class, religion, and sexuality are just a few of the other social constructs that interact with gender to create multiple masculinities.

*“The multiple-masculinities approach has four key characteristics. First, masculinity is a multiple entity. It is not homogeneous or reducible to a set of simple characteristics. Second, gender is constructed by individuals as well as by societal forces. Individuals do not automatically adopt predetermined gender roles; they are continually active in building, negotiating, and maintaining perceptions of their gender. Third, gender is a relational construct. Boys and men do not construct their versions of masculinity apart from the influences of femininity or other men. Fourth, multiple masculinities diversify hegemonic power structures, rendering them more accessible to rehabilitation (Imms 2000, 159)*

In this sense, masculinity remains multiple/diverse, social, contradictory and contesting, interlinked in hierarchical relationships, as well as dynamic and changing as argued in Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmitt’s (2005) on re-thinking of the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in exploring the patriarchy and performing masculinity throughout its combination of attention to contesting

hierarchical power relations amongst men and masculinities, combined with an interesting use of the “Gramscian” concept of ‘hegemony’ in an attempt to portray the multiple idea of masculinity among; Hegemonic<sup>1</sup>, Complicit<sup>2</sup>, and Subordinated<sup>3</sup> Masculinity. Herein, it is important to highlight that a man is not categorized in one model excluding the other; one man might be once hegemonic, once complicit, and once subordinated.

This study is an experiment to question hegemonic masculinity toward revealing the multiple masculine entities among Palestinian men. In order to examine the notion of multiple masculinities in the Palestinian context, I confirm the Robert LeVine (1973) inspiration by drawing a close attention to the construction on multiple masculinities throughout *dual modality. It is the “two systems” tactic of the individual as having to balance two sets of expectations and demands as a member of society; one is his own psychic conflicts and the other comes as a result of his need for cultural conformity and acceptance that individual’s behavior is seen as a compromise solution to these separate and/or opposing pressures* (Glimore 1991), mutually by combining Michael A. Messner (1997) inspiration in evoking critical sociological understanding of masculinities by

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<sup>1</sup> Hegemonic Masculinity: This model is constructed in relation to other subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. A patriarchal social order is based on the interplay of these different masculinities.

<sup>2</sup> Complicit Masculinity: a model of men who received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance.

<sup>3</sup> Subordinated Masculinity: a model of marginalized masculinities are those of subordinated classes, racial, ethnic groups...etc. such as homosexual men who serve as the inferior “Other” in the gender hegemony.

(Connell & Messerschmidt 2005)

simultaneously taking into account *three main factors; men's institutionalized privileges, the costs attached to adherence to narrow conception of masculinity, and differences and inequalities among men* (Messner 1997, 11-12). The dual modality of individual plays a continuous active role throughout the analysis of three factors as will appear in the analysis of this study.

Within this study, I employ a multilayered and multidimensional framework of thematic analysis trying to reveal the illusion of unified masculine model towards multiple masculine entities among Palestinian men. I will consider the “dual modality”/“two systems” (Gilmore 1991) and self-consciousness of an individual perception “being a man”, and the none-stop active individual process of negotiation, building and maintaining their gender role and perception (Imms 2000). I will also consider the masculine inheritance of hegemonic norms and performative deeds throughout historical and social processes (Connell & Messerschmitt 2005; Edstorm 2014; Imms 2000,) taking into account the individual perceptions of men’s institutionalized privilege, cost of masculinity, and differences and inequalities among them (Messner 1997, 11-12).

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and George Herbert Mead, among others, promoted the phenomenological theory of “acts” seeking to explain how social reality is constituted in a monotonous way by social agents through language, gestures, and all manners of symbolic social signs (Butler 1988). Action or role theory aims to understand “what it is “to do” prior to any, a claim of what one ought to do” (Butler 1988, 519). In this sense, gender is not a fixed or stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; instead, it is an identity that is instituted and constructed through a stylized repetition of acts which are subject to change over time, and performative accomplishment erected by social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief (Butler 1988).

#### **2.2. Questioning Hegemonic Masculinity**

Various theorists studied the field of gender identity construction with different eyes and from different perspectives concluded that what appears to us natural is culturally and socially constructed (Butler 1988; Campbell & Bell 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994; Edley & Wetherell 1995; White 1994). Arguably, various studies emphasized that masculinity should be analyzed as a constructed category within other fields of power such as class,

race and colonialism, because despite the representations of hegemonic masculinity, the conceptions and practices of masculinity are various and multiple (Campbell & Bell 2000; Chant 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Cornwall 2000; Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994; Dowd 2010; Edley & Wetherell 1995; Gonzalez 2008; Imms 2000; Kabesh 2013; Springer and Mouzon 2011; White 1994; White 1997)

Theorists have conceptualized gender in gender-relations theory as a social institution that structures relationships between men and women by being the primary signifier of power that people reproduce in everyday social interactions (Springer and Mouzon 2011). Sociologists such as Connell and Messerschmitt's (2005), conceptualized masculinity as varied and context dependent and argued that masculinity is shaped in relation to the overall structure of power and in relation to general symbolization of difference. This structural fact provides the basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic form of masculinity in society. It is also defined in terms of the logic of a patriarchal gender relations system, which might change over history. Hegemonic masculinities, therefore, came into existence in specific circumstances and were open to historical spheres. In this sense, hegemonic masculinity is a social domination achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes.

Hegemony is not violence, although it could be supported by force; which can mean the ascendancy achieved through culture. In Connell model, hegemonic gender relations depend on the symbolic construction of heterosexual and desire to

feminine object, authority, physical and physiological strength, and the economic power/paid work (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Hegemonic masculinity concept contributes to a better understanding of gender dynamics. However, it is worth mentioning again that the binary structure of gender studies precludes investigating the complex structure of masculinity and has largely ignored problematizing men as part of the solution to gender problems (Imms 2000).

Researches have shown that, to present one's self as a man, is to make a claim to membership in the privileged gender group in multiple ways, whether the presentation emphasizes or deemphasizes the capacity to exert control depending on showing how males compensate- how they modify their acts- when they are unable or unwilling to enact the hegemonic ideal (Schrock & Schwalbe 2009: 284).

In the same sense, Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) argues that a single definition of masculinity is not realistic because masculinities are constructed in relation to others in interaction, which means that there is no single masculinity, but multiple masculinities engaged by individuals, which also shift depending on context. These multiple masculinities operate where certain traits and types of men are privileged and dominant over other men. This concept is best understood in light of patriarchy and the context-specific aspect of gender. Multiple masculinities exist because aspects of social life affect how we engage in gender, race, class, religion, and sexuality that are just a few of the other social constructs that interact with gender to create multiple masculinities.



### **2.3. Formulation of the Masculine Identity: “Be a Man”**

Scholars such as Bly R. (1990) argued that boys and men were victims of a society that no longer valued the essential characteristics of what it was to "be a man" by using metaphor and myth to characterize late twentieth-century masculinity and tied modern "crises" of masculinity to the "wild man within" seeking identification. Moreover, White (1994) supported Bly R. (1990) standpoint by highlighting the importance of acknowledging the immense pressure on men to “be a man” and to deny weakness and show strength. Placing male identities aside un-discussed as “natural” or “norm” misses the opportunity to affirm that they too need to be a subject to change.

Masculine identity seeks stable conventions and relies heavily on social and cultural conventions that explain vulnerability and fragility that masculine identity counter in trying to fade of those conventions (Gonzalez 2008, 22). White (1997), contributed that masculinity seems to depend chronically on the estimation of others and is highly vulnerable to be undermined by ridicule, shaming, subordination, or dishonorable female action. This stress on male status makes masculinity largely a matter of public performance. It is possible that the violence represents men’s struggle for the maintenance of certain fantasies of identity and power. Nevertheless, a big number of men suffer as they try to adjust their sense of themselves with the demand that society makes on them. For example; the overwhelming recruitment of men as fighters by state or revolutionary forces puts them in a great danger, or the cost of gender-related occupational and consumption patterns. Many men are unable to build good relationships with their children

because they have to spend too much time away from home working which also has an impact on the children (White 1997).

This is neither to exempt our folk from the realities of the male privileges, nor the acts of male domination, but rather to focus only on the negative aspects of their interaction with women in representing them as problematic because they miss out on men's experiences of vulnerability and gender-based lack of power, whether amongst other men or women (Cornwall 2000).

## **2.4. Contemporary Era and Masculinity Construction**

### **2.4.1. The Global Context**

By looking at the modern usage of the term masculinity, we find that it assumes that one's behavior, reflects the type of person one is and the context he is in. The social construction of masculinity and the multiple ways in which masculinities can be enacted or lived are illustrated throughout historical specificity and historical change considering the conception of individuality (belief in individual difference and personal agency) that developed in early-modern Europe with the growth of colonial empires and capitalist economic relations (Abumere 2013). Apparently, there is a solid ground of economic, political powers and privileges that bolster every day's life with its highly contagious global economic, financial, environmental, commodity and political crises seem to have meant a particularly rapid series of changes that cannot be postponed or prevented (Kelbert & Hossain 2014).

In this global context, people's relationships to markets have changed, so have their relationships with each other in multiple directions of change in the triple movement throughout the history (economic, political, and social) as the response to neoliberal domination of global economic policymaking response they simultaneously engender (Kelbert & Hossain 2014). Side by side, various studies emphasized that the twentieth century has witnessed the liberation of women that assimilated traditional masculine roles, which could not exclude the masculine's identity and self-conceptions unaffected by the global radical changes (Chant 2000; Gonzalez 2008; Kelbert & Hossain 2014; Moore 1994 Seidler 2008).

The destabilization of men's traditional role as main providers/breadwinners and the matching entrance of more women into paid work further depletes the resources for social reproduction, creating urgent concerns about the quality of care (Kelbert & Hossain 2014). In the middle of all these radical changes surrounding individuals, it became difficult to recognize a particular identity- including gender identity, since the modern individuals keep fluctuating between universalism -global changes- and cultural relativism -specific culture or social construction- (Gonzalez 2008). However, there is a little doubt that globalization is working to frame particular cosmopolitan masculinities forms which create pressures upon women to conform to new techniques of appraisal and regulation without creating or with resistance between women among each other, men among each other, and among women and men to learn to negotiate for a different kind of balance between work, family, and intimate relationships which isolated people from being in touch with themselves and their own values as they

negotiate for an equal relation within globalized world (Seidler 2008).

*“A new civilization is emerging in our lives, and blind men everywhere are trying to suppress it. This new civilization brings with it new family style; changed way of working, loving, and living; a new economy; new political conflicts, and beyond all this an altered consciousness as well. Pieces of this new civilization exist today. Millions are already attuning their lives to the rhythms of tomorrow. Others, terrified of the future, are engaged in a desperate, futile flight into the past and are trying to restore the dying world that gave them birth.” (Alvin Toffler 1981, 9) in (Doyle 1983, 274)*

According to James A. Doyle (1983) contemporary men are faced with a real dilemma in the guise of conflicting social pressures over their sex role and identity, since the modern life system is changing mutually along with women and men roles and acts, here, we must acknowledge that a change in how women act will directly affect how men act and vice versa. Men today are caught between two cultures, on the one hand, *the long established and grounded in history/* the learned traditional structure of societies’ restrictive images, roles and values concerning patterns of dominance, strength and power -not acting feminine, display tough and self-reliant, success in work, stand up and fight for his rights and family rights, showing the proper sex interest...etc.-(Doyle 1983; Hacker 1957; Seidler 2008). On the other hand, *new and uncertain changes accompanied with modernity and contemporary history/* the undercut of masculine values by certain segments of society dynamics and changes by decreeing that men give up part of their power in

favor of sexual equality and learn to permit themselves option for unmanly thought in compression to masculinity construction history (Doyle 1983). New lifestyle is introducing new roles expectations for the male to meet up and is changing the rules of the game of what it means to be a man that make it harder for males to fulfill their society's expectations and affect their identity's construction with a feelings of uncertainty, ambiguity, or confusion regarding their role expectations (Doyle 1983; Hacker 1957).

With men and women attending universities and work market; new ideas, values, and behaviors become part of everyday life where confusion over the male's role and inherited traditional masculine values and behaviors are readily apparent (Chant 2000; Doyle 1983; Hacker 1957; Komarovsky 2004). For instant, Hacker (1957) in her research *The New Burdens of Masculinity* which was conducted in USA revealed from the preliminary interview materials that the ideal man is considered by men as being, among other things, a good provider, the ultimate source of knowledge and authority, and strong in character so that he may give a feeling of security, not only financially but emotionally, to his wife and children, and it was evident that a man may have no doubts concerning the given criteria of masculinity, but feel that he does not live up to them, or he may be unsure concerning the requirements for validating manhood which appeared from men's further responses that the respondents found themselves deficient in meeting these demands.

*“Such difficulties might flow from stepped-up demands of the role itself making it harder to fulfill or from the infusion of ambiguous or*

*contradictory elements into the role, requiring in some cases a double dose of obligation or causing men to cling to a double dose of privilege. Another way of putting this question is to ask whether substantial changes have occurred in the criteria of masculinity over the past fifty years. Everyone thinks he knows what is masculine, and how to recognize a "real man," but no one can give an adequate definition. It is neither money nor muscles." (Hacker 1957, 233)*

Another example is given by Komarovsky (2004- originally published in 1976) in her book *Dilemmas of Masculinity in USA* reported that men preferred intellectual women but were quick to add that they did not want their dates to outshine them intellectually, however, they want their future wives to have their promising career without this interfering with wives duties of house and children. In this sense, the contradiction that men seem to want it in both ways; to handhold the privileges of the old and to stimulate options of the new. Nobody can ignore the tension between masculinity and modernization where their reaction attempts to shore up male privileges during periods when male authority is challenged (Forth 2009).

However, the continuous decline prospects for assuming the economic responsibilities attached to the widely idealized male role of 'breadwinner' or "rich and powerful" have undermined men's status and identities, that, in turn, has been exacerbated by shifts in domestic power relations as women have entered the labor force in rising numbers and are increasingly heading their household in a way that enlarged the gaps, tensions, confusions, and contradictions that men struggle in

giving away part of the historical constructed males' privileges (Chant 2000) and hierarchy domination rather than seeing how they interconnect (Dowd 2010) among the shift occurring in their attitudes concerning the boundaries between them (Edley & Wetherell 1995).

Still, all over the world masculine social role expectations and masculine choices among historical and present changes on the social, economic, and political levels may vary according to individual identities, social group, class, race...etc.- most particularly, urban middle class men since they live and actively communicate with all the changes and contradictions on different levels (Hacker 1957) once by moving ahead with the waves and implications of the modern project which shake the ground of male domination and authority and once by seeking to keep the male power and privilege that was gained throughout history.

It is important to emphasize on considering the universal changing dynamics that affect the masculinity construction, however, it is crucial to bear in mind the multiple entities of men across diverse contexts. Giving accounts to specific culture or society when studying gender formation should reflect a scope of reality, complexity, and contradictions evolving within diverse individual contexts in order to avoid creating a singular image of masculinity that continues to represent and reproduce the illusion of one masculine model. Thus, in the following section of this study I will tackle the representation of Middle East masculinity in a try to reveal the limited perspective that accompanied this field.

## **2.4.2. Middle East Context**

### **2.4.2.1. Masculine Performative deeds**

According to Peteet (1994) in Arab society including the Palestinian one, masculinity construction is well-defined by a set of rites of passage that mark transitions from boyhood to manhood accompanied by performative deeds to convince and win public approval and closely intertwined with various assumptions and concepts such as:

- Virility and paternity associated with sacrifices and denying one's own needs while providing for others is such a signifier.
- The concept of honor as a defining frame for masculinity.
- The notion of authority “control over one” is crucial in signifying "real men".
- Challenging provides an opportunity for males to prove their belonging to the world of men.
- The assumption of rationality/wisdom and sufficient capacity that allows them to deal with the complex problems of social existence.

Moreover, reaffirming masculinity and belonging to the world of men is highly pointed to educational achievements, marriage, income earning, the birth of children, and the acquisition of wisdom that comes from knowledge of one's society and its customs (Peteet 1994).

Nonetheless, no one can ignore the strong influence caused by the economic and cultural forces of globalization combined with demographics in the twenty-first century on the reconstruction of masculinity and gender roles in our region. In this



sense, the identities of young Middle Eastern/Arab/ Palestinian university-educated males are challenged because of social pressures to conform to Middle Eastern constructs of masculinity associated with providing income as breadwinner along with new professionals middle-class facing their own challenges, at the same time as engaged in professional activities with meaningful employment, men in this group strive to secure university places for their children whilst facing blocked or limited political participation (Adibi 2006). Their education, professional activities, and connections with the Western world condition them to be potential supporters of cultural liberalism and strong advocates for gender equality (Adibi 2006). The construction of masculine identities in the Middle East including Palestine is likely to be primarily affected by men's social class considering the fact that political and economic changes may take place rapidly, attitudes towards gender transformation roles are changing more slowly (Adibi 2006).

As indicated above, running through masculine performative deeds and assumptions are vital to understanding aspects of masculine identities. In turn, placing performative deeds as a parameter is problematic because "there are such vast difference and inequalities among men" (Messner 1997, 8). Beyond men's institutionalized privileges, there are costs attached to adherence to narrow conception (Messner 1997, 12), which renders invisible in patterning Middle Eastern masculinities.

#### **2.4.2.2. Representation of Arab Men**

Changing patterns of gender at a world scale during the twentieth century particularly changes on political, economic and social aspects that resulted in shifts that have taken place in education, the labor market and family organization did not exclude the Middle East and Arab countries. In the scope of modernity and colonial realms, Adibi (2006) articulated in his research that during the early twentieth century, masculinities in Middle Eastern societies progressed from diffused ethnic, tribal, rural, and urban masculinities to a national masculinity of independence movements, and then to the diverse masculinities of contemporary times. National media experimented with a variety of masculinity models including peasant, working-class, and ethnic masculinities.

However, the Middle East region had been subject to enormous pressures by the West and the modernity discourse in order to undertake reforms and adopt Western democracy and imperial ideology as the most appropriate model in governing the societies. In the last three decades, core issues revolve around the rights and roles of women and their location within Islamic society. Meanwhile, masculinity has remained invisible and rendered femininity problematic (Adibi 2006).

It is important to think about flashpoints in the history that affected the construction of masculinity in the Middle East, and to draw a closer connection between social and political events on the one hand and discourses of masculinity on the other (Harvey 2005). The attention to language has the benefit of demonstrating the power of discourses to shape our views of the world and of

ourselves. Gender industries have been generated in the Middle East states among the influence of the post- colonial-liberal, neoliberal, and post-neoliberal policies and discourse of dysfunctions of market deregulation, privatization politics and the contradictions of neo-conservative doctrine as well as in the wake of the de-radicalization of Islamism throughout middle-class moral reform movements and consumer culture (Amar 2011).

*“These public-discourse versions of ‘masculinity studies’ and everyday etiologies of racialized Middle Eastern maleness operate as some of the primary public tools for analyzing political change and social conflict in the region...These institutionalized methods of ‘masculinity studies’ have shaped geopolitics and generated support for war, occupation and repression in the region for decades. In this light, when one embarks upon an attempt to reframe Middle East masculinity studies, it must be done with full self-consciousness.” ...*

*“Vernacular, public discourses and theories of masculinity help to render illegible the social realities of 21st century multipolar geopolitics and the origins of insurgent racial, humanitarian and ‘securitized’ nationalisms and globalisms.” (Amar 2011, 5)*

Amar (2011) highpoints the colonial driven discourse of the Middle Eastern masculinities within institutionalized patterns that melts away the complex impact of the contemporary social, political and economic history on maintaining, constructing, and negotiating continuous transformation of Middle Eastern masculinities. He implicitly demands for unmasking diverse realities and

complexity of masculinity studied by “self- consciousness”, which implies a true inductive “bottom-up” approach in analyzing and reflecting complex realities. On the contrary, Adibi (2006) set forth the progress of Middle Eastern masculinity in the early twentieth century from diverse masculinities (ethnic, tribal, rural, and urban) to national masculinity model, then to diverse masculinities of contemporary time resulted from the West modernity project and imperial ideology. Significantly, it is noticed within Adibi (2006) analysis that diversity of masculinities in study Middle East is connected to the Western pressure in transforming a modern model in our societies after the hegemonic national masculinity model watering-down multiple masculinities and complexity of the diverse realities, which in a way or another feeds in the Western oppositional discursive binary of “Middle East – Arab” masculinity modeling representation. It is also essential to problematize the “modeling” and “imaging” perspective in masculinity studies that is placed at the core of this study taking the Palestinian context as a case.

In the same context, the discursive field of representation, public discourse, masculinity studies continue to construct the image of Middle Eastern masculinity based on colonial legacies throughout an oppositional binary between two camps, West and East (Arab) the modern and the backward, decadence, renaissance and tradition (Amar 2011; Massad 2007), by making use of different sets of studies on cultural and social formation of masculinities within national(ist) projects, class formation and popular religious and insurgent cultures, and insert them in a weaved narrative and animated images influenced by Western perspective (characterize norms that foster violence, homophobia, terrorism, militarism ... etc.) that have

incited the formation of men's identities in the region and also affected the way we perceive it (Amar 2011). Thus, the following chapter will present an analytical vision of two examples of controlling masculine discursive models in the Palestinian context.

Here, I would like to present an example of potential initiative toward revealing of masculine plurality in Egypt. "Research has neglected the caring Arab men", was the title of published article on University of Oslo/ Department of Social Anthropology with Nefissa Naguib, the writer of *"Nurturing Masculinities: Men, Food, and Family in Contemporary Egypt"*. Her book illustrates the active role of Arab/Egyptian masculinity in the production of domestic sphere attempting to move Middle Eastern gender studies in a new direction than treating Arab masculinity in its dominance, patriarchal and militarized form.

*"There is an odd and ambivalent meshing of memory making, longing for past forms of family life, striving to accommodate obligation, and enthusiasm for modernity and contemporary life. Unsurprisingly, beneath the surface similarities of "men like us" were individual variations, which are explored throughout the book."*(Naguib 2015, 2)

The vision in Naguib's study is to debate the representation of single form and/or fixed model of masculinity believing that "beneath the surface similarities of "men like us" were individual variations" (Naguib 2015, 2).

Meaningfully, the hegemonic dominating discourse and representations of the Middle East and Arab within masculinity studies necessitate the production of reflective literature representing the complexity of contexts and exposing the denial

of multiple masculinities. Consequently, this study argues the denial of the multiple masculinities in representing Palestinian men in unified masculine models.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Masculinity Construction in the Palestinian Context**

#### **3.1. Historical Background**

Palestine situation and masculinity construction of Palestinian men remain with highly complex context. Palestine became a single geopolitical unit, with Jerusalem as its capital, along with the British forces conquering of Palestine in 1917-18 bringing to an end 500 years of Ottoman rule followed by the League of Nations declaring in 1920 Britain a Mandate to rule Palestine (Elboim-Doro 2000).

The British Mandate lasted until 1948 until the announcement of the Zionist state of Israel on the Palestinians land which was and still well known by the Palestinian Nakba (Alnakba) in 1948, followed by Alnaksa 1967, and a continuous Palestinian national struggle -by Palestinians from inside and outside Palestine- during 1970s, 1980s, beginning of 1990s up-to-date taking different forms of struggles and challenges to conserve the Palestinian identity and right to be (Elboim-Doro 2000; Taraki 2008).

During the British mandate (1920-1948), substantial colonial and settler-colonialism efforts and policies continued to assist the Zionist project by shunning the presence of Arab and Palestinian authentic in Palestine and “redeeming” the myth of “an empty land to Jews” (Swedenburg 1990, 19). In 1936 until 1939, Palestinian “villagers” “peasants” revolted confronting colonial practices and discourses of denying the peasants existence aiming to detach them away from their soil and natural historical connection to land (Swedenburg 1990). Colonial efforts

continued to uproot Palestinian peasants from “*the historicity of a territory and the territorialization of a history*” (Nicos Poulantzas 1980, 114 in Swedenburg 1990, 18-19) until the 1947-1948 war, that moment when the radical expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, vanishing Palestinian towns and villages, and declaring the founding of the state of Israel on 1948 “the Palestinian Nakba” (Swedenburg 1990, 19).

*“Twentieth-century Zionist and British representations of Palestine relied strongly on modernizing and “civilizing” narratives to legitimate Palestine’s colonization. Similar to the usually racist and always ethnocentric discourses justifying such projects, the colonization of Palestine has often been portrayed as the introduction of social, political, and scientific “progress” and economic development to “backward” peoples and places.” (Hasso 2000: 491)*

Immense transformation took place in Palestine with British efforts to cultivate norms of a civil society using education, religion, social norms, fighting Palestinian coalitions and national struggle... etc., in order to promote the model of modernity along with paving the road to the Zionist project throughout intellectual and institutional contributions in domains as law, public administration, city planning and architecture that shaped norms, changed patterns of behavior that were physically evident and left its mark by implanting new Western norms and creating demands for Western ways of life where Palestinian manners and lifestyle changed by time, new patterns of leisure and consumption developed, new languages were heard and new fashions are seen (Elboim-Doro 2000; Hasso 2000).



British and Israeli occupation- whether being subtle/ indirect or harsh/direct could not be ignored since they played an important part in forging and constructing the Palestinian identity and imprinting it on impressionable young minds. Moreover, the contemporary political history of Palestine; the creation of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, uprising/intifada in 1987 until early 1990s, Oslo Agreement in 1993, Alaqsa intifada in 2001 and the failure of Oslo agreement provide another context for the comparison of Palestinian in general and of masculinity construction in specific from different aspects.

The Palestinian masculinity during the intifada in 1987 embodied bitterness and defiance on one hand and optimism and confidence on the other (Sharoni 1997). The “generation of the intifada” and “children of stones” was described as courageous and fearless, almost omnipotent in confronting one of the most powerful armies in the world creating a context in which Palestinian men’s ideas about masculinity are shaped by an ideology of liberation and freedom; Palestinian hero as masculine, young and able-bodied with conception of youthful, assertive and defiant masculinity (McKeown and Sharoni 2002; Sharoni 1997), which was boiled-down afterward during 1990s until the moment.

Different researchers argued the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli Occupation aggression and the implications on transforming and formulating Palestinian masculinity especially after the first Intifada throughout “beating” Palestinian youth at the hand of Israeli army was transformed to be a “rite of passage” or “an initiation to manliness” not as abasement of masculinity (Peteet 1994). From another standpoint, Ronit Lentin (1998), for example, argues that the

humiliation inflicted upon Palestinians at the hands of the occupying powers violates masculinity rather than enriching it (Hawari 2004, 37). Drawing the attention to contradictory debates on Palestinian masculinity envision the process of remodeling the discursive singular image confronting the representation of Palestinian men rather than exploring the complexity of active formation and transformation of masculine identity construction within the colonial context.

Johnson and Kuttab (2001) indicated that consequences of violent confrontations such as high level of death and injury, checkpoints, house demolishing, side by side to the humiliating conditions of Oslo by destabilizing young men roles as heroes, revolutionary capital and agent of national resistance expose a crisis of masculine identity- certainly crises in national identity, class and ethnic identity that are deeply entwined (Johnson & Kuttab 2001, 33-34). Moreover, the high rate of unemployment and the low wages as compared to prices prevent Palestinian men to fulfill male roles and heads of household mean that male breadwinner may not be able to provide for their family, also make it challenging for young men to enter the labor force to establish their household (Johnson & Kuttab 2001, 33-34).

Throughout the Palestinian political and social history and the long living struggle against the Israeli occupation uprooting policies, the Palestinian masculine identity remained subject to patterns of singular representation of hegemonic masculine models. I will mainly explore in this chapter the “Palestinian Nationalist” and the “Palestinian Refugee”.

### **3.2. Palestinian Masculinity: The Nationalist**

The emergence of the “Palestinian Nationalist Agents” (Massad 1995, 468) and Palestinian identity was subject to debate by scholars from different perspectives; feminist standpoint (Kanafani 2008; Massad 1995), “uprootness” and “placelessness” (Kawash 2003), the overlap between Nationalism and modernization (Hasso 2000) and masculine identity construction throughout political and social history (Khalidi 1997; McKeown and Sharoni 2002; Peteet 1994; Sharoni 1997).

After the establishment and declaration of Israel as a state on the land of Palestine in May 1948 and the expulsion of Palestinians as refugees, Palestinians remained landless and without a national leadership (Massad 1995), however, Palestinians crave to keep the common Palestinian culture and social organization into an independent and exclusive entity (Kanafani 2008, 298) provoked the emergence of revolutionary groups among refugee camps and Palestinian universities students in the late fifties in which created a wave of Palestinian nationalism that was institutionalized in 1964 by the formation of the umbrella organization for all Palestinian factions and parties, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (Hasso 2000; Kanafani 2008; Massad 1995; Kawash 2003).

European Enlightenment and post- Enlightenment philosophy of anti-colonial resistance had a core influence on the Palestinian nationalism viewpoint (Hasso 2000; Kawash 2003; Massad 1995). As resistance is a contrivance to change reality, Palestinian nationalism in light with anti-colonial nationalism comes with a dual goal; asserting the traditional national culture while combining the

achievement of technological modernization in the western sense throughout constant embedded process of negotiating the relation of the traditional to the modern (Massad 1995, 467).

*“Anti-colonial movements and post-colonial states often saw "modernization" as the only effective response to colonial and neo-colonial domination. Given the technological, economic, and military underpinnings of European colonization, it is not surprising that many anti-colonial elites and counter elites believed that resistance to colonization required the acquisition of these aspects of modernity. Thus, despite the many ideological differences that developed among the Arab nationalist movements after both wars, the necessity of transforming political, cultural, economic, and military backwardness into modernity and progress was a pervasive theme.” (Hasso 2000, 491-492)*

Reviving the Palestinian identity after uprooting of the Palestinian community in 1948 (Alnakba) and the continuous Israeli efforts to vanish this national identity was a central ingredient to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The revolutionary narratives of PLO advocated the emergence of “national identity”, “collective identity” in order to gather the nation; Palestinians in exile, in refugee camps and who remained rooted in Palestine. The national collective identity portrayed the notion pattern of the Palestinian nationalist masculinity in markedly different form than post 1948 by being mainly bourgeois and educated, while pre- 1948 by being a landholder and/or a peasant who fought the colonists

form and were unwilling to sell land to the Zionists (Massad 1995, 479).

Herein, my entry point is Joseph Massad analysis in *Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism (1995)*, to map out the model of “Palestinian national identity” as constructed and transmitted throughout the years of struggles until Oslo Agreement. In his analysis of the Palestinian nationalist movement founding documents and discourses<sup>4</sup>, Massad (1995) explores the process through which notions of “masculinity” have been discursively constructed across the gendered narratives of Palestinian nationalist texts based on masculinizing the Zionist enemy, and the wrong committed by this enemy to Palestinians is considered metaphorically to be of a violent sexual nature.

*“Palestinian nationalism conceives (of) the masculine in defining Palestinian nationalist agency.... Masculinity itself is lived within the modality of Nationalism, indeed how masculinity is nationalized. I maintain that the mobilizing metaphors of nationalist movements are not only metaphors. They reflect the fundamental assumptions of nationalist thought, which establishes the future gender constitution and gender roles of nationalist agents. ” (Massad 1995, 468)*

The Palestinian national agent of liberation with a masculine essence; the “Fida’i” (Kanafani 2008, 297) the “Freedom Fighter” (Kawash 2003, 38) and his role to liberate the “raped land” “his motherland Palestine” (Massad 1995), is promoted to be the counterpart to the emergence of the Zionists agent “the Israeli

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<sup>4</sup> Declaration of Independence, the Palestinian National Charter, the Palestinian Nationalist Charter Communiques of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) and Yasser Arafat Speeches

Sabra” and his role to “fertilize the virgin land” (Massad 1995, 470), Palestine for both of them was declared to be the land to return- the motherland.

*“The national struggle is thus also figuratively masculinized, as the Israeli "sabrah" is met with the Palestinian "freedom fighter," each embodying national identity as potent masculinity.”(Kawash 2003, 38)*

The Palestinian nationalist movement founding documents and discourses differentiate between the ideological images of Palestinian men and women on the basis of traditionally construed social and biological role(s). According to Massad’s (1995) analysis, the introduction of the Palestinian National Charter, illustrated the Zionist conquest of Palestine as a “rape of the land”; viewing Palestinians as the children of Palestine “the portrayed mother”. Moreover, visions of Palestinian independence in the Palestinian Nationalist Charter Communiques of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) as the “birth of the Intifada”, demonstrate that sexual terminology is used to associate women with the control of nature. The national discourse revealed the identification of nationalism with manhood embodied in the Palestinian defense of his land and honor, make the land symbolic of women’s sexual integrity and the struggle dependent upon women’s practical and moral support for men by giving birth to new generations of loyal fighters (Massad 1995). Consequently, Motherhood- *the symbol of nurturing and comforting aspects of belonging and rooting-*, and fatherhood – *the symbol of protection, organization and the agent to distribute the national resources-*, were two gendered facts epitomized within PLO discourses and “Fida’yeen” narratives (Kanafani 2008, 304).

In addition, the static image of women outlined in the Declaration of Independence's reference to the "courageous"; Palestinian woman in her role as "the guardian of our survival and our lives, the guardian of our perennial flame" (Massad 1995, 472). Although women are referred to in these documents as biological reproducers of the nation, men are assigned responsibility for reproducing national citizenship.

While the reference to women is restricted to their reproductive capacities as martyrs and mothers of present and future generations of Palestinian soldiers—an image glorified when the sacrifice of sons and husbands is to be worn by women as a badge of honor—the definition of Palestinian identity in article No. 4 of the Palestinian National Charter as "a genuine, inherent and eternal trait transmitted from fathers to sons", signifies that the actual reproduction of citizens is channeled through paternity and not territory (Massad 1995, 471).

I suggest that transforming the dominant masculine agency nourished by the paternity philosophy to public as a Palestinian national and cultural identity beyond borders and territory enunciates the struggle of "up rootedness" (Malkki 1992, 25) and "placelessness" (Kawash 2003, 37) after Alnakba in 1948. The "metaphors of Kinship" (Malkki 1992, 27) remained at the central of the nationalist discourse; the imaginary use of motherland and parenthood in the national discourse "evokes both temporal continuity of essence and territorial rootedness" (Malkki 1992, 28). Palestinian nationalism mobilized Palestinians in exile and refugees against the implications of diaspora and displacement in one national body as a mechanism of resistance; however, the Palestinian nationalism discourse reveals different gender

dynamics. To this extent, the gendered discourses of Palestinian nationalism articulate the struggle as “a masculinizing act enabling the concrete pairing of nationalist agency and masculinity” (Massad 1995, 470-472), in other words, a “mutual dependency between nationalism and hegemonic masculinity” (Kanafani 2008, 297).

Article 7 of the Palestinian National Charter, for instance, refers to the Palestinian “national duty” to raise Palestinian “individual” on the level of Arab norms, revolutionary norms, and all means of education and consciousness-raising in order “to acquaint the Palestinian with his homeland”. It also holds a description of the “national duty” of the Palestinian individual after being raised, which recommends the qualified armed struggle to sacrifice his life and money to liberate his homeland (Massad 1995, 474-475).

According to Massad (1995) this appeal reveals the masculine ability and bourgeois economic status. Moreover, in his speech to UN, Arafat created “a gendered mindset of agency”(of these educated Palestinians individuals who live in the diaspora work and earn income, which is used to help and raise their families, parents, children, brothers, sisters...etc.) inside and outside Palestine with a dream in to return back. This discourse emphasized the characteristics of the Palestinian nationalist agency (Massad 1995, 475).

In addition, in different speeches of Palestinian nationalists, “Palestinians” at the time referred to women and men; while usually, it used to refer only to men with young and able-bodied. For example, in the communiqué - “you are the stronger body” signifying the “nationalist agent’s body” with the body of its male



enemy- “women supposed to stand side by side with men, in one line, and with one hand”. In the UNLU, “your strong arms” (masculine pronoun)- “Gaza sons” – “rise as one man” (Massad 1995, 476).

This agent is masculine with bourgeois in the making and young strong body, side by side with; education, marriage, income earning, the birth of children, and the acquisition of wisdom that comes from knowledge of one's society and its customs (Peteet 1994), are characteristic of the nationalist agent to reaffirm masculinity and belonging to the world of men.

*“Following Judith Butler, it is clear that substantive effect of nationalist agency, like sexual and gender identities, is performatively produced and compelled by regulatory practices of the coherence of the category of nationalist agency itself.”(Massad 1995,475)*

Massad (1995) relies on Butler’s to explain the emphasis of masculine constitution in the Palestinian nationalists’ performance, which was formatted and transformed throughout and within the Palestinian liberation movement acts and discourses. In this sense, I found it important to indicate, following Butler’s theorization, that gender is not a fixed or stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; instead, it is an identity that is instituted and constructed through a stylized repetition of acts which are subject to change overtime, and performative accomplishment erected by social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief (Butler 1988).

The performance of the Palestinian nationalists amid the mode of beliefs of nationalism, focused the spotlight on one dominant group “the nationalists” as part of the liberation process, “leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies” (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 833) among Palestinians, creating the “nationalist” model -the “hegemonic masculine” model that became the Palestinian norm. The claim of Palestinian “national identity” typically emerges in a gendered form, positing an alignment between nationalism and masculinity. The Palestinian nationalist’s discourse invents a “national body”, and this body is specifically masculine and hegemonic.

Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women and other men to continue, and therefore came into existence in specific circumstances and were open to historical change (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 832-833). It is recognized that national liberation was articulated as a predominantly militarized and masculine act of political struggle in a specific time “by transforming victims into victors” (Kanafani 2008, 303). If the masculine national subject is the heroic counterpart to the feminine mother-land, then perhaps the contest between Israeli nationalism and Palestinian nationalism can only repeat and reinforce the pairing of nationalist agency and masculinity.

*“What is discursively cast as modern has often reproduced, rearticulated, and legitimized gender inequality... identities, like traditions, are "modern" articulations serving contemporary (and sometimes valid) purposes” (Hasso 2000:504-505)*

The fact that the European anti-colonial resistance and the modernization project influenced Palestinian nationalism, implies that the creation of the “nationalist identity” as part of the Palestinian modernists emancipatory wave. The intellectual elites and national group leaders undertook this formal construction of the national identity. They aimed to unitary identities based on group membership (national, gender, sexual, linguistic, racial-ethnic, or class), and to serve the Palestinian liberation purposes (Hasso 2000, 504-505).

Given that the ethnography on rituals was, by and at large, performed on the single-cultural groups, without however, assuming an essential homogeneity, Palestinian nationalism generalized continuity of cultural categories and meaning for the participant that became a “ritual performances” (Petee 1994). In other words, the nationalist ideologies and practices by unifying a collective unitary identity (Hasso 2000) via instituted and constructed stylized repetition of acts (Butler 1998) within certain political and social regimes created other forms of gender inequality (Hasso 2000), leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies (Connell & Messerschmitt’s 2005, 833) within such an institutionalized form of masculinity.

*“Masculinities can be institutionalised in organisations (e.g. armies, trades, bureaucracies) or informal groups (families, friendship networks), and expressed in shared cultural forms (myths and folklore, mass media, social stereotypes). The collective reality is well demonstrated in organisational ethnographies of schools and military organisations. This collective reality is an important reason why*

*change in gender practice among men and boys is hard to start simply by persuasion. An individual man may be willing, but the institutional setting, or the peer group culture, pushes in the other direction.” (Emily Esplen et al 2012, 19)*

It should be emphasized that the presented analysis on the nationalist dominant identity in the Palestinian context is not a criticism; it is there to open a debate on the construction of Palestinian masculinity and its multiple entities. In fact, it should be acknowledged that the emergence of the nationalist identity secured the Palestinian identity and culture from disappearance after the constant efforts by Israel and collaborative powers to obliterate the “being” of Palestine and Palestinian from the land of Palestine and the memory. However, critical approaches to masculinity can become easily incorporated within liberal, colonial, or disciplinary state projects when we follow generalizations and delinking masculinity from theories of specific social and historical power locations (Amar 2011, 14). Also, one of the most important aspects of the identity construction, is the conception of the continuous individual active formation. Identity is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories...etc. (Malkki 1992, 37).

The construction of Palestinian masculinity has been deliberated by scholars’ analysis in a way that shaped the image of “Palestinian men” in specific patterns. Having scrutinized the dominant nationalist identity within the Palestinian nationalism, the following will disclose the existence of multiple masculinities by

articulating further literature studied and/or analyzed the construction of Palestinian masculine identity in specific contexts.

### **3.3. Palestinian Masculinity: The Refugee**

Several field studies challenged the popular stereotypes and portrayed images of Palestinian masculinity in refugee camps – in- exile, for instance; “mukhayyamji” in a field study conducted in Hussein camp in Jordan (Hart 2008), “the male camp refugee” in a field study conducted across refugee camps in Lebanon (Latif 2012), “dawanji” and “Shaikh” in a field study conducted in Al-Wihdat refugee camp in Jordan (Achilli 2015).

The interaction between nationalism and masculinity remained at the central of Palestinian idealized masculinity in the refugee camp (Achilli 2015; Hart 2008; Latif 2012). The masculine hegemonic ideal has shifted throughout the year from 1960s until 1990s, from the nationalist ideal “fiday’i”/ “freedom fighter” to “mukhayyamji”/ “dawanji” (Achilli 2015; Hart 2008). A major characterizations that patterned the male camp refugees’ is the trouble maker, strong and/or violent (Achilli 2015; Hart 2008; Latif 2012) while the shaykh pattern signified by the representation of Islamic religious model of men who adopt Islamic lifestyle and knowledge, follow Prophet Muhammad’s example and fulfill major Islamic duties (Achilli 2015). The emergence of “Shaykh ideal” accompanied the emergences of Islamist groups (such as Muslims Brotherhood and Hamas) in 1970s and 1980s (Achill 2015; Hart 2008).

*“The performance of these two paradigmatic models of masculinity in the camp is thus exemplary of the working of hegemonic masculine norms at the level of the political subject [...] while hegemonic gender norms remain crucial, in certain contexts they do not play their normative role. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is not the only way of being a man in the camp. Not only are certain attributes generally associated with subordinate masculinities and/or femininity (such as docility and passivity) sometimes preferred over more manly virtues, they might even constitute an important source of nationalist agency. “(Achilli 2015, 275)*

Unemployment, poor social, economic, and political circumstances of the highly populated limited areas of residence; “the refugee camp” accompanied with limited opportunities, and the community that is isolated from the nearby social and economic fabric of the city, justify the daily struggle of the camp dwellers (Achilli 2015; Hart 2008; Latif 2012). The camp is well known as a “dangerous place” (Achilli 2015, 264) and/or “filthy” (Latif 2012, 31) by middle and upper class social categories whether in exile or within Palestine (Latif 2012).

However, men vary in confronting the camp’s living conditions and coping mechanisms. The stylization of the male’s refugee masculinity in a specific model neglects the diversity and difference among men in the refugee camp. Within a given situation, violence of the camp’s male refugees’ response may be understood as an attempt to resist emasculation (Latif 2012, 32), in other words, “a short-lived moment of empowerment” (Hart 2008, 22). Acknowledging the fact that

masculinity construction is woven differently from one culture to another, and from one historical moment to another, there is no single version of masculinity, multiple masculinities (defined either as identities or as patterns of practice) are found even within one culture (Emily Esplen et al 2012).

### **3.4. Palestinian Masculinity: The Multiple Entity**

Rashid Khalidi (1997) in *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, argued the perception of unified or fixed Palestinian identity by offering a thorough analytical review of the cultural life and identity formation starting from the late Ottoman era, the British mandate, the disappearance of the Palestinian nationalism after Alnakba 1948, and its re-emergence during 1960s up till mid-1990s. Khalidi (1997) integrated in his analysis several historical events, political and social turning points, multi-religions place, rich divers ethnics lived in Palestine, well-known Palestinian characters and elites, Palestinian peasant resistance, disappearance of Palestinian identity, re-emergence of it, placelessness, borders/checkpoints/airports/limitation of movements, the harm embedded in Palestinian identity documents/travel papers crisis...etc., in order to expose the multi-layered realisms and overlapped narratives of the Palestinian identity formation and transformation.

What Khalidi mostly wanted, is to challenge the representation and misinterpretation of the collective nationalist identity as the only signifier or pattern of the Palestinian masculine identity or the Palestinian individual. Presumably, setting us in crosscutting circles of analysis moving between and among historical,

political, social and geographical places, displaying the impact and influence of specific circumstances in specific historical moments, and giving his high regard to represent individuals, peasants, ethnic groups, refugees, exilic and nationalists, transmit the conception of multiple entity of the Palestinian identity.

Palestinian men, however, function at the moment within complex circumstances that worth studying on different levels. The relationship between and among men, different conceptions of masculinity and various colonial contexts is far more complex because men living in such a situation can militarize certain masculinities and at the same time open up space for the critical exploration of different notions of manhood. Paying attention to these differences is crucial to understanding possible changes in conceptions of masculinity shaped by the conflict or by various attempts to resolve it.

At the end, we can realize how masculinities are constructed in discourse, used and applied in our life. Specifically, we learn how a locally hegemonic version of masculinity can be used to promote self-respect in the face of discredit. Discursive perspectives emphasize the symbolic dimension, whereas the concept of hegemonic masculinity was formulated within a multidimensional understanding of gender (Schippers 2007). Although any specification of hegemonic masculinity typically involves the formulation of cultural and political ideals, it should not be regarded only as a gendered norm.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Ramallah at a Glance**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

After all, it is important to highlight the reason of choosing the field-site and the complex context of Ramallah city in my study. Ramallah's complex situation comes as a result of the rapid changes that the city faced throughout the contemporary political and colonial history of Palestine.

Ramallah has always been a central city of interaction in the colonial context and the context of postcolonial (liberal) state formation. Ramallah's fortunes and misfortunes have long been bound up with the movement of people to work, study or to live - the influx of refugees and other migrants and the emigration of natives - besides other divers historical moments in the Palestinian contemporary history (Alnakba 1948, Alnaksa 1967, national struggle during 1970s and 1980s, 1<sup>st</sup> intifada 1987, Oslo agreement 1993, 2<sup>nd</sup> intifada ...) that come together to make the present reality of Ramallah. However, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority after the Oslo accords in 1993, was the main turning point in Ramallah's passage from small village to a central city for the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The new regime that was ensued had far-reaching political, economic, and social effects (Taraki 2008).

## **4.2. Ramallah and the Colonist Denial**

Ramallah is endowed with two important features that were to prove critical for its future development as a regional market town, administrative center and a home to the middle class. The presence of a sizeable number of foreign-based and church-related institutions, the educational institutions, the Palestinian authority figures and institutions, the business, and none-profit organizations based in the city reflected in educational levels, modes of dress, and lifestyles. Moreover, since the year 2000, the city has changed rapidly; it has become more socially heterogeneous than it was at the onset of the Oslo process (Taraki 2008).

The rapid changes in the past two decades marketed Ramallah in direct and indirect ways. They somehow influenced its architectural, economic, social, security and cultural paths through three main forces following Jamil Hilal (2015) in *Ramallah, the City and its Story*:

1. The racist Israeli colonialist presence and the way it markets Ramallah to be in practice an alternative to Jerusalem with a restricted control over the city's borders and its relationship with other Palestinian zones;
2. The transformation of Ramallah led by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) into a city that matches the taste and lifestyle of the middle class and capital owners (class formation) through the roles and orientations of the different institutions, which illustrates the city as is the case in the communities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

3. The financial and real-estate capital, which produced new architectural and residential forms in the city and created a new hierarchical relation among its components, and between such components and its surrounding.

Ramallah lives in the shadow of the colonial state and under occupation par excellence; entirely surrounded by settlements, detour roads, and checkpoints. The city is fully geared by financial and real estate capital (including banks, real estate developers, private capitals) who are pulling the city outside the Palestinian time and place, acting in a manner that ignores the measures of the settler colonial state and the apartheid regime it imposes, meanwhile, Israel will not give a second thought to invade the entire city or to arresting any individual at any time inside the city without any consideration whatsoever of the fact that it is the seat of the Palestinian Authority and an area “A” (Hilal 2015).

*“It is an illusion that it is a city beyond the control of the occupation and safe from the hegemony of the settler colonizing state.” (Hilal 2015, 25)*

In reality, despite of the fact that death and destruction are not far away and despite its small size, Ramallah is acquiring most of the attributes of contemporary metropolises in the region, including a visible globalized lifestyle and new sensibilities whose most enthusiastic carrier is the aspiring new middle class engaging with modernity, secularism, and globalization on the one hand and the ascetic culture of resistance on the other (Taraki 2008).

*“This capital, alongside many local and international civil society organizations, together with the PNA, generate a state of denial of the*

*colonialist reality and the excessive dependency faced by the Palestinian society with its political, economic and cultural forces.”*

*(Hilal 2015, 12)*

The fact that the occupation regime deepens its hold on Palestinian land while the struggle against the occupation continues to acquire the reputation of a “five-star prison,” with a decided emphasis on the “five-star” rather than the “prison.” In fact, Ramallah today, especially as the Israeli controlling regime intensifies, is viewed increasingly as an oasis of normalcy (and decadence) in a desolate landscape of shattered urban spaces and violated rural expanses (Taraki 2008).

#### **4.3. Ramallah and the Middle Class Formation**

For all the mentioned reasons, Ramallah continues to attract young people seeking work opportunities and different lifestyle. It is important to connect the economic transition of the city with the social one, socio-economic transition play a main factor in formulating the middle class nuclear families. Economic development provides employment opportunities outside the birthplace, which has impacts family structure, relationship, values and beliefs (Xu and Xia 2014). Living away liberates nuclear family from kinship network, less influence and control by elder members in the extended family in fulfilling its traditional roles and obligations (Xu and Xia 2014).

Remarkably, Ramallah has become the new seat of banks and their branches and host of telecommunication and insurance companies, publicity, hotel and

recreational services in addition to trading activities (import, export, and marketing). Ramallah, with its political role, became also the seat of media, research, missionary and financial institutions (Hilal 2015). By the time, the city remains to be the incubator of professional, political, cultural and economic majority, which make Ramallah a place that is largely connected to the formation of the Palestinian middle class (Hilal 2015).

*“This middle class is differentiated from other classes (including the small bourgeoisie or owners of small capital and businesspersons) by its reliance on the ownership of a cultural capital (high educational attainment and fine specializations) in generating income, social status and a particular lifestyle for itself. After the First Intifada, the Gulf War and the Oslo Accord, Israel devised labor restrictions on the Palestinians in its labor market, and employment with the PA, private sector and civil society institutions was open to form a new middle class, which has relative weigh and influence.” (Hilal 2015, 34-35).*

Ramallah has become a most needed space for personal freedom and respect of privacy due to the absence of clan/extended family hegemony on individual behavior (Hilal 2015). As this study focuses on masculinity construction by targeting middle class working men in the banking sector and who established their living in Ramallah, It is important to remind that the research holds a social perspective in investigating the case study with taking into consideration the economic and political dynamics and interactions.

#### **4.4. Living in Ramallah**

It was evident throughout the interviews that living in Ramallah “the small city” offer the participants a wider space on both the private and public spheres and other aspects of being an inhabitant in Ramallah were obvious among them;

*“It is different between Ramallah and other cities. I see my colleagues at work, they want to change and they live a different lifestyle from their extended family. But, they end up living into two realities; what their extended family wants in order to keep his traditional masculine image when he visits his city or village, and his life with his small family in Ramallah comes in a different context.”* (P2, 26 years old)

*“The places we live in change our life. Living in Ramallah is not like living in Jifna, however, Jifna is a village very close to Ramallah. Living in Ramallah gives you a space to live in your small family the way you want, not like any other places. People in Jifna ask about everything in your life and they look, speak, and they judge each other.”* (P10, 34 years old)

*“In Jericho I have limited public space, it is not like Ramallah. Sitting with you now “as a woman” doing the interview in a coffee shop “public space” will not have the same image in Jericho. I am a foreigner here and local there (Ibn Elbalad). People in Jericho will ask me, they will judge, and they will pass it to each other...etc. it will not*

*pass like a normal thing.” He continued, “Still I face difficulties coping with Ramallah life. I like to live in Jericho but Ramallah has more potential for my professional growth.” (P7, 27 years old)*

Living in Ramallah away from the extended family in a different geographical area was a clear aspect among participants. Increasing the number of nuclear families living away from the kinship and clan networks and traditional role is one of Ramallah’s attributes. Also, the centrality of organizations, public and private sector institutions, financial sector...etc. attributed the city to be an employment opportunity for young professionals.

*“In Palestine, we have several social environments. Ramallah is full of contexts. Ramallah differs than Albireh. Each village around Ramallah has its own social environment. We have villages half of its resident in America. Various neighborhoods in Ramallah; Em-alsharayet differs than Altireh, Almanara street differs than Rukab street, Alam’ary or Qadurah or Aljalazon Refugee Camps differ... each place differs with its context...” (P11, 36 years old)*

*“Ramallah is heterogeneous, not homogenous, which gives me a wider space... I even change my accent when I am in Tubas... I check my wife’s dress-up...my children’s dress-up... because I respect the social culture of Tubas and I know that we live a different lifestyle in Ramallah that suits us as a family. ” (P13, 45 years old)*

Another attribute is the various social environments and diversity within its urban fabric, which developed throughout the city's political, economic, and social history in comparison to other cities in Palestine.

*“Ramallah is a bubble... we live in a bubble. Acting as if we do not live under occupation. We just ignore the fact that every day martyrs fall by the Israeli army in Ramallah and other cities. The Israeli soldiers invade the city at night, they attack houses, and they arrest people. In the next morning we act as if nothing happened, we pick our coffee from Zaman café and go to work... funny... but this is real.”* (P6, 32 years old)

The denial of being a city under occupation mixed with the aspects of the modern city is also one of the attributes. However, surprisingly the political aspect was almost extracted or rendered with few words throughout the interviews except some comments such as; *“In Palestine the stages of life differ than any other place. We don't have political stability, which affects our life progress in different stages. Youth in Palestine do not live a normal life cycle.”* (P3, 34 years old), and *“the second intifada laid an impact on our generation”* (P5, 33 years old), and *“things were different in the first intifada than the second one... people were different... political commitment... everything”* (P11, 36 years old). Although, participants remained circulating among social and economic forces that affect their masculinity domination and power dynamics.

Ramallah, the city with the various complex realities, has created throughout its development over the history its own story. Each of the participants



spoke about Ramallah from his own perspective. This complex reality has its implications on the construction of masculinity among Palestinian men (not only in Ramallah), since masculinity is the pattern of social practice associated with the position of men in any society's set of gender relation, in which operates through the different historical phases of imperialism, colonialism, and contemporary globalization with a swing between traditional and modernized modes. Thus, the hierarchies and multiplicity of masculinity, often defining a hegemonic pattern for a given society; are collective as well as individual, actively constructed in social life, internally complex and change over history.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Analysis and Discussion:**

### **The case of Palestinian young men living in Ramallah**

#### **5.1. Participants' Background**

Participant 1 (P1, 34 years old): 34 years old – married- no children. He was born and lived until he got married in Qadura Refugee Camp with his family then moved to Altireh neighborhood. He finished his high school in Ramallah and obtained his BA at Al-Quds University/ Commerce and Economic Faculty, then started working in the banking sector directly after his graduation.

Participant 2 (P2, 26 years old): 26 years old - single. He was born in Birzeit town near Ramallah and still living with his family there. He finished his high school in the town and obtained his BA at Birzeit University/ Commerce and Economic Faculty. He has worked at an NGO for two years, then got into the banking sector.

Participant 3 (P3, 34 years old): 34 years old- single. He was born in Tunisia, came with his family after Oslo agreement in the mid-nineties. He went to Iraq for his BA studies and obtained his degree from the Faculty of Commerce and Economics. He returned to Ramallah after finishing his studies to work in the private sector. He got into the banking sector since 10 years.

Participant 4 (P4, 27 years old): 27 years old- engaged. He was born in Al-Amari Refugee Camp and lived there until he turned fifteen years old. He is family then

moved to “Betunia town” near Ramallah. He finished his high school in “Betunia” then obtained his BA at Birzeit University/ Faculty of Commerce and Economics. He worked in the private sector then moved to the banking sector 2 years ago.

Participant 5 (P5, 33 years old): 33 years old- divorced- one child. He was born and lived in Jenin city until he finished his BA from American University of Jenin/ Faculty of Commerce and Economics Faculty. He moved to live in Ramallah once he got employed in the banking sector since 10 years.

Participant 6 (P6, 32 years old): 32 years old- married- two children. He was born in Colombia and came to live in Albireh with his family since he was 2 years old and still living there. He studied for his BA at Birzeit University/ Faculty of Commerce and Economic and is now continuing his MA in the same field. He started his career in the banking sector right after his graduation.

Participant 7 (P7, 27 years old): 27 years old- married – two children. He was born in Saudi Arabia. He lived in Saudi Arabia until his family moved to Jericho when he was 15 years old. He studied for his BA at Al-Quds University/ Faculty of Commerce and Economic. He started his career in the banking sector right after his graduation.

Participant 8 (P8, 27 years old): 27 years old- married- one child. He was born in Jordan then moved to Albireh in the year 2000. He studied for his BA at Birzeit

University/ Faculty of Sociology. He started his career in the banking sector right after his graduation in the Human Resources -HR department.

Participant 9 (P9, 37 years old): 37 years old- married – 3 children. He was born in Tulkarem city. He finished his high school in Tulkarem and obtained his BA at An Najah University/ /Faculty of Commerce and Economic. He started his career in the banking sector right after his graduation. He works now in Ramallah and lives in Kafr Aqab/Jerusalem.

Participant 10 (P10): 34 years old -married- two children. He was born and still living in Jefna village near Ramallah. He studied for his BA at Birzeit University/ Faculty of Sociology and continued in the field of Digital Marketing after university. He works in the banking sector in the Information Technology -IT department in Ramallah.

Participant 11 (P11, 36 years old): 36 years old-married- two children. He is originally from Albireh, he lived in Nablus with his family, studied in Jordan and came back to Ramallah after finishing his BA and MA in Information Technology. He started his career in the banking sector right after graduating in Information Technology -IT department in Ramallah.

Participant 12 (P12, 37 years old): 37 years old- married- 3 children. He was born and raised in Al Ain Refugee Camp in Nablus. He obtained his BA from AlQuds

Open University/Commerce and Economic Faculty and his MA from Jordan. He started his career in the banking sector since 10 years. He lives and works in Ramallah.

Participants 13 (P13, 45 years old): 45 years old- married – 4 children. He was born and raised in Tubas. He obtained his BA from India and MA from Birzeit University in Information Technology. He started his career in the banking sector since 15 years.

## **5.2. Themes of Analysis**

A qualitative thematic analysis via the inductive approach of data is adapted in coding the collected data throughout the interviews into themes of analysis. The “thematic map” was developed to support revealing the multilayered and multidimensional analysis toward studying the active process of constructing the masculine identity consider the complex interplay of individual contexts. The four themes that illustrate the field analysis were identified; two main themes “*revealing the individual perception of self-masculine identity*” and “*perception of male privilege and cost of masculinity*”, and two crosscutting themes “*social conformity/masculinity performance*” and “*differences and inequalities among men*”. The two main themes include subthemes of analysis, which were developed throughout the coding process of collected data. The two crosscutting themes of analysis will remain to appear intertwined within the discussion. Notably, there is

an active complex interrelation across themes that will be exposed throughout the analysis.

Throughout this section, participants will be identified (P1, age) - (P1, 34 years old) considering that all participants come from different backgrounds, working in the banking sector and living in Ramallah as per each section 5.1.

### **5.3. Theme A: Perception of Self-Masculine Identity – “Mirroring the Self”**

The first theme is focused on *revealing the individual perception of self-masculine identity*. Asking about the individual insight of “to be man” or “being a man” is central to understanding masculine norms that are operating among men. The aim is to give the space to each of the participants to express his perception of “being a man” in order to transmit the interplay between learnt hegemonic norm and self-perception.

In the analysis and discussion of this theme “Perception of Self-Masculine Identity “Mirroring the Self”, will be carried out in subthemes; elucidating masculine standards, evoking masculine inheritance- “*The halo*”, and mirroring the self throughout specific contexts. The presentation of data will keep underlining active role of social conformity/masculinity performance and differences and inequalities among men, which is in our case identified as “crosscutting themes”.

### 5.3.1. Elucidating Masculine Standards

To be a man has been expressed in the aspects to be strong, not to cry and express emotions, bear family responsibilities, be the provider-the breadwinner, the protector, to sacrifice for the sake of family...etc. “Responsibility” appears to be a key concept among all interviewees but with different contexts and will keep appearing in the coming examples. These are examples of patterns (but not limited) interweaved within expressing the perception of “being a man” among the interviewees.

All participants articulated the crucial aspects of their parents to achieve higher education and obtain a decent job as part of their mission to raise their children. *“The most important thing was to obtain my university university degree, then get a good job”* (P1, 34 years old) *“My parents focused on our education and good moralities. My mama followed up our education... study... memorize... she always said”* (P4, 27 years old) and *“One night, I heard my dad talking to my mama, he said: my dream is to see my son an employee in a company or a teacher at a university. I made the two dreams true for him”* (P12, 37 years old), and *“we are 3 sons and two daughters, all of us achieved high education”* (P9, 37 years old), and *“I lost my dad in my early childhood. Educating us was my mother life mission.”* (P8, 27 years old). These are some examples among others who advocate the central role of parents and family context. The parents appear to be a primarily agent in constructing and nourishing their child perceptions about the essentiality of education for their future life. The aspect of parental agency and childhood memories remain active in molding conceptions of masculine identity formation of

each person. This indication will keep popping throughout the participants' answers.

Centrally, the answers kept swinging between normative and pragmatic modes across masculine hegemonic inherited norms, other human and ethical patterns and the individual self-consciousness and own psychic conflicts.

For instant, denying weakness signs and showing strength by saying; *“Don't cry... be strong... this is the first thing I learnt in my childhood about being a man.”* (P1, 34 years old). In answering my question about “being a man”, the participant went back directly to childhood memories revealing an example of fundamental practice for institutionalizing masculine inherited norms within his gender identity. He also explained the harshness of controlling his tears when he was a child in front of his family to keep proving the he is up to imposed masculine standard. *“It was not always easy... why don't we cry....”* (P1, 34 years old)

Participant (P5, 33 years old) brought the issue of denying weakness and showing strength, again as a central element of being a man side by side along with the image of a man who is the provider/ breadwinner for his family and the one who sacrifices to afford good living.

*“According to our society being a man is to be strong man, sacrificing for the family and to be able to afford living for it.”* (P5, 33 years old)

From the beginning, he conveyed his undesirable feeling toward imposed and inherited masculine norms by stating *“According to our society”*. He aimed to criticize the general idea of imposed patterns and sets of behaviors that proposes a man in limited frame, and suggests man's life as smoothly moving in a straight line



within fixed circumstance. He also stressed on individual variations among men as personalities and their life conditions.

From another personal viewpoint and with more satisfactory sense of perceiving his gender identity;

*“To be man is to bear responsibilities and not to be emotional. We were not raised to express our emotions.”* (P11, 36 year old).

For him, bearing responsibilities was entwined with the concept of the provider and breadwinner, though, “not to be emotional” was entwined with the concept of wisdom and rationality *“being a man... being wise... being rational...”* that is necessary for a man to manage his family as he explained revealing a strong sense of masculine logic of domination. Again, he expressed his insight with satisfaction clarifying that men are not raised to express their emotion in order to allow them to be rational.

This participant expressed his content feeling of being responsible and the provider/ breadwinner by answering;

*“For me to be responsible and to provide my family good living conditions.”* (P7, 27 years old)

In the same scope, this informant distinguished being responsible than being a controller by stating *“You’re a man means to me to be up to responsibilities toward my family but not in the sense of control or domination.”* (P10, 34 years old). For him being a man was more about his role and responsibility as a family provider and breadwinner but not in the sense of domination. While another

respondent transmit a wider sense of responsibility provider/ breadwinner, and protector;

*“For me to be a man means responsibility towards myself, my life, my family, my work, my country...etc. In my point of view, “responsibility” is not restricted to men only but to human beings regardless of the sex. As a man, I am the seashell that is obliged to protect and contain my family. I perceive myself the key person to hold the responsibility for my family in some matters whereas I see my wife the key person to hold the responsibility in others.”* (P13, 45 years old)

This respondent explained his vision in a romantic dialogue connecting “being a man” with being a seashell that contain and protect the family but with a sense of partnership not controlling or domination. He also made it clear in his speech that responsibility is not a masculine attribute, but to any mature person regardless sex.

These examples transmit to us the fact that masculine patterns are; once **taught** “*I learnt*” (P1, 34 years old), and once **a way of raising** “*we were raised*” (P11, 36 years old). These two simple examples along with the others are enough to evoke the fact that illustrates our understanding of masculinity amid “natural” and “norm”.

Again, the influence of parents “way of raising” and the reinforcement of the society on nourishing the masculine norms and conventions is endorsed during childhood until manhood and will remain to appear throughout the collected data. It is important to mention that these patterns continue to inspire our illusion of the

singular masculinity characteristics. However, explicitly and implicitly each participant transmits a different standpoint of explanation throughout the analysis.

Moreover, feelings among participants varied between satisfaction, rejection and negotiating meaning and perceptions when explaining, “What does it mean to be a man?” This question was the trigger for them to relay the given perceptions, “the learnt perceptions” of masculinity and think loudly.

It is important to note here the direct interplay between the two main themes of analysis in this study. I believe that participants reflected the process of how male privileges start to be institutionalized from the moment they are born “males” and continue to be actively nourished with inherited masculine practices “be a man” within various contexts. We will poster throughout our discussion the interplay among main two themes, crosscutting themes, and subthemes as mirroring each other and circulating to demonstrate a wider understanding of masculinity identity construction.

### **5.3.2. Evoking Masculine Inheritance – The Halo**

Amongst collected data, the binary debate was constantly active between masculine hegemonic norms -masculine rites of passage, and individual self-consciousness intertwined with own psychic conflicts toward these norms transmitting the concept of plurality and differences among interviewed men. Moreover, transmitting the human aspect of personal qualities not necessarily related to sex. For instant:

The following participant highlighted the interplay between the masculine norms, performative deeds, and own psychic conflicts in negotiating the perception of masculinity in a rational way;

*“To be a man: in our society is to follow the founding myth of social beliefs about manhood. The prevailing in society is that the man does not get tired or cry as if to be tougher than we are.... I always argue with my dad the way I want to be and the way he wants me to be until the moment”* (P5, 33 years old)

He argued with deep self-consciousness in his answer the assigned masculine conventions, “the myth”, and the load on men in performing their gender to prove to public their masculinity.

Form a different scheme but in the same line, this informant contributed to clarify the vulnerability of masculine identity, the narrow conception of masculine norms, the cost of performative deeds and group cultural conformity;

*“The masculine image is fragile like glass. It can be broken easily. We are always judged by "being a man" or "not being a man"... men judge each other before women”* (P13, 45 years old)

He touched the base of fragility of being different in public that overburden men with continuous mode of performing to avoid judgments and to follow the flow.

This Participant contended the hegemonic masculine norms and performativity deeds operating within society;

*“It irritates me when I hear “you’re a man” or “be a man” because it imposes on me a set of assigned behavior from the others. It appears that to be a man in our society is to be what the other wants you to be. However, not all my acts and decisions in my life are taken from a perspective to be a man or to prove to be a man. It depends from one to another. For me is to respect myself and respect the other... respect in essential.” (P2, 26 years old)*

He articulated his personal position and characteristics showing a wider balance within his dual modality between what he wants to do and what is expected from him as a man. He also pointed out a zone of gender neutrality by mentioning *“not all my acts and decisions in my life are taken from a perspective to be a man or to prove to be a man”* and elaborated the human aspect of a person regardless the sex type by highlighting “respect” with a confirmation of differences among men.

Participants continued in outlining and highlighting different aspect, personal qualities, and perceptions of the masculine inheritance halo.

*“For me to be ethical human being, a person who meets his promises... a responsible person for his acts. Men are raised with self-image that keeps telling them; as if it is an ongoing internal dialogue; I am the controller... I am the man... I am the king... we learnt this (he laughed).*

He continued, *“Men are very worried about their own space and image. It is very tiring to keep behaving to preserve your image.” (P8, 27 years old)*

In a laughter and sarcastic mode, this participant articulated the inner ego of the masculine self that is actively continue to reinforce institutionalized conventions to preserve the “image”- the “halo”. We can also transmit from his answer the cost of the narrow conception of masculinity that will further explore throughout the analysis.

With this respondent, we find a different way of explaining;

*“There is a man and there is an “az’ar”<sup>5</sup>, they are both called men in our society”. Now I call it “az’ar” but in the teenage, there was criteria or model to be a man among us; to smoke, to drive fast, to walk in a certain style, to wink while talking.... Doing these acts all the time as if there is a spotlight on him to prove his masculinity in acting... as if all people are watching him... (He laughed)... For me, a man is a person who knows his obligations and responsibilities. I look back and I laugh because I see myself a way different nowadays than before... each stage has positives and negatives ” (P3, 34 years old)*

He articulated in his answer different patterns of behaviors and connected it to life stages. These patterns are strongly related to confessing and proving masculinity in transforming phases of childhood- teenage- manhood.

Again, the age element and life phase appear with the answer of this participant;

*“To be a man is to be what I am. I do not care about people judgments. I only care about being the person I want. Still, I am obliged to perform sometimes especially with the extended family... You know, if you*

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<sup>5</sup> Az’ar: indecent/ improper/ naughty/ uncontrollable behavior for teenagers

*asked this question ten years ago my answer would be different” (P6, 32 years old)*

However, his answer communicates a limited worry about masculine inheritance deeds and performativity entwined with a soled self-perception and confident.

The above examples reveal different images, standpoints, and understandings that impose question masculine inheritance insight per individual. Though, a heavy load on social performativity and cultural group conformity (crosscutting theme social conformity/performance) from different perspectives.

The life phase/personal history/ age, all these differences are also observed (crosscutting theme differences among men); *“I look back and I laugh because I see myself a way different now a days than before... each stage has positives and negatives” (P3, 34 years old)*, and *“You know, if you asked this question ten years ago my answer would be different” (P6, 32 years old)*. These answers indicate the active evolvment of gender identity structure by age and life experience from one to another.

Thus, I found it important to demonstrate a wider reflection aiming to reconfirm revealing multiple masculinities by “mirroring the self” throughout the interaction of complex and diverse context pre individual in three examples of specific contexts in the following subtheme.

### **5.3.3. Mirroring the Self throughout Specific Contexts**

In the same scope of arguing hegemonic masculine norms and performativity toward multiple entities, I will demonstrate three examples of specific contexts;

#### **5.3.3.1. Case A**

He is the 27 years old young man who is preparing himself for getting married this summer. Participant (P4, 27 years old) was born in Al-Amari Refugee Camp in Ramallah. He spent his childhood in the camp until his family moved to Beitunia town on the other side of the city of Ramallah. His father worked all his life in a labor in construction to afford living for the family and his mother at home taking care of the household. He obtained his BA at Birzeit University/ Commerce and Economic Faculty, and then moved to work in the private sector and since two years he entered the banking sector.

*“For me to be a man is to be strong and up to responsibility. You are a man... don’t cry... be strong... be brave... we rely on you ...etc. Our parents and society nourish us with these concepts. We were raised to be heroes... This is how we were raised.”* (P4, 27 years old)

He argued from the beginning the hegemonic masculine norms and the “hero” figure, since following his perception *“being male or man is not being a hero by default... we get to discover this by time”*. For him; life circumstances, opportunities, personal characteristics play an important role in each individual. He continued;

*“My dad was a construction labor in the Israeli market he used to leave at 5:00 am and come back at night. My parents focused on our education and*



*good moralities. My mama followed our education... study... memorize... she always said. Their aim was to educate us... and they did... I am proud of them. But they did not focus on improving weaknesses in my personality. I am not complaining... I believe they did more than what they can do... again and always I am proud of them. I was always a shy and calm boy. I lost chances... I think because my shyness prevented me from expressing myself. I always noticed this among my classmates in school, but the big difference was when I entered university.”*

His description provided an important example for personal contradictory context. Simply, he was open and honest to share with me his inner conflict and feelings toward what he thinks about the way he was raised, although, showing a deep appreciation for his parent’s experience and devotion to their five children aiming to raise the to be an educated with good manners. He always observed himself among his male peers a shy, not loud, and calm guy transmitting the fact that children are not all homogenous and born with a set of fixed characteristics.

*He continued with a smile: “Students from all over Palestine in one place; different backgrounds, boys and girls together, different social classes and different levels of education. In the university time I noticed that I am not able to present in front of students or to participate in class discussions. In the university we study in English, thus I needed to study harder than other students graduated from private schools. I will focus with my children on quality of education and their characters not only education.”*

His dialogue also released that reality of contexts diversity and differences among people that play a main role in our daily complex life processes of interaction, maintaining, building and negotiating our identities. Talking about his school and university time pictured for me an image “of multi-contexts of interaction and integration” in every single moment we live. We “skip posing” it in every moment of our life because we are busy in interacting and not observing. Actually his example reminded me of the schoolteacher and author Ziad Khadash’s (2014). Khadash (2014) portrayed in his book *“Delightful Rushes of Zesty Blunders: The Duplicity of Context”* a simple image of diversity and plurality of the classroom student simply by posturing their reactions in one moment. In the classroom he decided not to give a regular class to his ninth grade students, but to deceit the school context by talking about his story with Fairouz (the famous Lebanese singer). He requested from the students to join him in his spiritual journey expressing the inner beauty of the self and Fairouz songs. He wrote;

*“The reactions of my students vary; some of them would hear me smiling, some of them would scribble on his book, some of them would look at the mountain in boredom and some of them would be asleep. It is life ... it is life.” (Khadash 2014, 129)*

For him-P4, university experience was still an active memory until the moment. The diversity of the social environments and backgrounds put him always in the dual comparison between his life circumstances and the others. Following his social experience in the university, he often emphasized during the interview the differences among men in specific and people in general such as; family name,

wealth, place of resident, personal characteristics and education are important in privileging one person than the other.

*“I worked in an organization in Ramallah. The director always pushed her limits in an impolite way with employees regardless being a female or male. One day we were discussing work in her office where she started shouting and insulting. I couldn’t accept to be insulted in front of all my colleagues... I couldn’t take the insult anymore. I resigned... I left my job. That was last year. I was in the middle of building my apartment above my parent’s house. I had to pay the wages for construction labors and buy the raw materials. Everything was frozen... even myself. I stayed at home three months until I found the job in the bank. It is a short period but for me it was very long. I locked myself at home because I do not want to hear more from people. For example; you’re a man...you must handle work pressure, what you will do now... staying at home like a woman, what you will do without money... and more. I discovered that there are no standards for being a man... what does it mean to be strong!! To accept insult??!!... To accept not to be respected just to gain money??!! That was a life turning point; my experience taught me that everyone has his different personality, reactions and life circumstances. People judge the image but I live the details.”*

This specific experience puzzled his understanding of inherited masculine norm. Especially by the contradictory reactions toward his decision to leave the job,

which was connected to his gender and expected set of behaviors from each individual viewpoint.

Beyond his description, the participant context outlined an integration of several aspects concerning masculine identity construction per each individual such as; social and family background and life circumstances, personal characteristics, personal perspective for future based on personal history, active living childhood memories, individual dual modality that swing between the self-perception of masculine behavior and the expected one from society, questioning hegemonic masculine norms and performativity deeds, and struggle the “hero” image...etc.

He exemplified his story throughout his personal history and life circumstances. Noticeably, an active process of constructing, negotiating, and maintaining his perception of masculinity was continuously operating among his individual perception as well as among other -not limited- forces. His personal psychic conflict in challenging and questioning hegemonic masculine norms and the narrow conception of masculinity was also actively growing within his context.

#### **5.3.3.2. Case B**

He is the 37 years old man who was born and raised in the city of Tulkarem. He is married with 3 children. He was born in Tulkarem city. During his study at AlNajah University/ Faculty of Commerce and Economics, he worked in a hotel in Israel to help his family, to afford paying for his studies, and for the construction of his own house in Tulkarem. After finishing his studies, he started his career in the banking sector in Tulkarem right after his graduation. After a couple of years, he

moved to Ramallah to work at the bank's headquarters where he is currently still there and lives in Kafr Aqab/Jerusalem.

He started working in a hotel in Israel since his high school years until he finished his studies at the university in order to afford his tuition fees, help his family, and build a house of his own.

*“I am a hard worker and focused person. I always have a clear aim to achieve in my life. My mother always stimulated the economical insights among us, the importance of planning our life, and thinking of future steps. I split my life into phases. My work in Israel was a phase during high school and university time to help my family in covering study costs and to build my own house.” (P9, 37 years old)*

After graduation from university, he started applying for banks. He wanted to start his career in the banking sector, which happened to be the second phase of his career life as he mentioned during the interview. He started to work in a bank branch in Tulkarem, then he moved to Ramallah seeking wider opportunities to grow in his career. *“In Tulkarem we have only small bank branches but the headquarters of the national and transnational banks are located in Ramallah”.*

His way of describing the phases of his life was in a very organized and mature manner. It is important to reflect here on the aspects of life phases and their diverse contexts that appear across our participants. Each person transmit different personal strategy of identity formation in the way of dealing with the phase conditions, understanding, perceiving, and reproducing his masculine entity.

He expressed with a great satisfaction his masculine gender role and related accounts to masculinity.

*“To be a man is to be a human being who can endure the hardships of life, a human being who has the understanding and the awareness of what is going on around him. Committed with integrity and satisfaction to maintain his family...”*

He continuously underlined the importance of deep thinking and understanding specific settings of personal life in order to pick opportunities in life for future.

He also emphasized on the individuals' mindsets that make one differs than the other;

*Each person represents his mentality. There is a man.... and a man... and a man, which man are you talking about? (He smiled). To be a human being who respects himself and the other. To be a man is not to insult and humiliate the other. Unfortunately, some men over-act their masculinity by force and by being load, others by working hard to build their future, others by drinking, going out with girls and having fun, and others have a mix of everything. It is a matter of mentality and behavior.”*

In his answer, he stated explicitly the different aspects of the masculine behavior and the ways of expressing this masculinity, referring those deeds to personal mindsets of perceiving it.

In clarifying what he meant by *“It is a matter of mentality and behavior”*, he mentioned an example from his workplace in the bank at the time he was a head of department. He supposed to employ four new staff for new open vacancies in his department. The bank had the tendency to employ men not women. The environment was totally masculine. He decided to announce the vacancies for females only for two reasons: 1. the high turnover in staff, 2. the closer follow up on work process through his work experience with them. *“For me, these were the main two reasons to aiming to improve my department performance”*. The management and colleagues challenged his idea in different ways.

*“Some colleagues threatened my reputation and claimed that I am seeking women, others used religion to convince the management that mixing men and women in workplace is forbidden in Islam, others did not interfere”*

Participant’s example stresses the diverse forms of behaviors that explicitly reflect different mindsets among men. He also asserts the dualism that is created by the “use of religion” to justify or to defense our opinion. The participant was not the only one who mentioned the “use of religion”, other participants (not limited only to mentioned examples) shared the same standpoint regarding “the use of religion”, for instant; *“it is true that people use religion”* (P2, 26 years old), and *“it is funny how we deal with religion, we say what we want and hide what we want... in general People are more concern to keep their image in front of other than to keep their morals. We use the discourse of religion and traditions in our life but we act in the opposite. (P7, 27 years old).*

At the end, his experience mirrored a different side of masculine entity dialog and formation. He stated clearly the crucial role of his mother in associating them to plan their life. Moreover, he articulated his masculine entity with a satisfactory sense while arguing other masculine inherited attitude that interplay in each specific setting, which demand a multiple way of thinking.

### 5.3.3.3. Case C

This participant is 37 years old who is married and having 3 children. He was born and raised in Al Ain Refugee Camp in Nablus in very poor conditions. He worked since he was a child until he obtained his BA from Al-Quds Open University/ Faculty of Commerce and Economics and his MA from Jordan. He started his career in the banking sector 10 years ago, and is now living and working in Ramallah.

He was raised in very poor circumstances in the camp. His father was a labor worker at the UNRWA. He started to sell in streets since he was in his fifth grade.

*“Not because my dad wanted us to work but because reality obliged us to work” ... “We used to sell whatever available by my mother; popcorn, or sweets or juice...anything that can help...then I worked in the construction field until I graduated from the university...”*

*“My mother also used to work to help my father. My father used to bring goods and my mother used to sell them in front of our house... we all worked to survive our family. My parents raised us all in the sense that each one of us is responsible for this family”*



His life context illustrates the struggle of family to maintain living and build a future of its member by hard work and continuous collaborative efforts to be. His life history integrated within his identity formation an insight that is established on collaborative responsibilities to maintain his family life.

Based on his experience, this participant continued to explain his perception of being a man;

*“I want to be honest with you...there are always parameters that determine one’s life. It is always said traditionally that the man is the breadwinner, the main provider, the protector, the strong person in the family to face life challenges in order to protect his own family...etc. This is what people say and what men say, however, the reality is that I as a man, husband, and father holds only part of the responsibility in everything, side by side along with my wife and my children. It is not true that the man has the ultimate responsibility or authority”*

This participant shared his insight through his specific context. His example revealed the active role of his childhood’s experience and his family circumstances in constructing his own perception by illustrating his sole image of to be a man. Although, his personal interpretation of “being a man” presents an alternative conception of masculine identity formation within a given circumstances.

The three cases mirrored dissimilar states of the masculine entity perceptions and formation throughout their specific contexts. Eventually, it brings us back to our claim of the existence of multiple masculinities because of different realities and aspects of social life affect how we engage in gender, race, class,

religion... etc. that are just a few of the other social, political and economic constructs that interact with gender to create multiple masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

#### **5.4. Theme B: Perception of Existing Male Privilege**

Conspicuously, challenging participants with questions related to their privilege as males, stimulated multiple perceptions that operate within their institutionalized privilege on one hand, and the cost countering them on the other.

##### **5.4.1. Freedom of Mobility**

Being a male and freedom in movement are two main given features of a male privilege that were articulated during the interviews among participants, for example; *“Men in our society have more freedom in movement than women in general. We are allowed to stay late outside home and at work place.”* (P3, 34 years old), and *“... the gained physical freedom by being a man...”* (P5, 33 years old), and *“Males have more freedom that facilitate movement and open more life chances for them...”* (P12, 37 years old), and *“The source of privilege for a man in our society is being “male...”* (P13, 45 years old). Respondents constantly reflected the freedom of mobility in relation to their male sex.

Other participants argued the idea of the extreme freedom given to males; *“Excessive freedom without monitoring, puts the youth at a big risk”* (P5, 33 years old), and *“...everything has a limit... being a male doesn’t mean to stay most of the time outside the house away from your family”* (P2, 26 years old), and *“I see*

*teenagers at bars after midnight and I ask myself... don't they have parents to ask about them... This is not freedom" (P3, 34 years old), and "... boys are also subject to sexual harassment... how can they leave them in the streets for hours going everywhere?... boys are not safe due to the fact that they are males" (P7, 27 years old), and "...still not all of us use this privilege in the right way" (P12, 37 years old).*

Importantly, participants assimilated different aspects of the male freedom of mobility as a privilege. The first group maintained the given male privilege, while the second group of respondents revealed risks that adhere "*excessive freedom*" (P5, 33 years old) as part of male privilege. This recommended to me that suppressing male freedom as a privilege, especially among children and teenagers, contributes to a narrow understanding of masculinity by limiting it to "freedom of mobility". Furthermore, irrational and irresponsible use of this freedom as a "male privilege" that can easily turn it into "curse".

#### **5.4.2. Power Dynamics - Differences and Inequalities**

Conversely, other features and conditions can quake this privilege and create different dynamics within a specific context.

*"I personally see that men privilege has two aspects; the gained physical freedom by being a man and the opportunity to have wider choices in the labor market. But it is changing by time the women entered the working market. For example, my privilege as a male turns*

*into disadvantage when it comes to vacancies targeting females.” (P5, 33 years old)*

Participant 5 revealed the fact that this male privilege disappears in conditional situations, such jobs that are set for females only.

This participant pointed out other factors that determine male privilege besides; *“Being male privileges men...”* (P8, 27 years old) He added;

*... They are also privileged by their social status, financial status and by age.”* (P8, years old)

Differences among men such as; social and financial status and age, create the possibility for different dynamics and can also shun ones privilege. Correspondingly but not identical, (P4, 27 years old) mentioned *“In our society what privilege men are first money, then family name, and character.”* Referring to other features that continue to reveal differences and inequalities among men. However, this participant revealed the way of understanding instead of featuring the privilege: *“We differ in understanding our privilege by how we were raised, life experience, and our behavior ...”* (P11, 36 years old)

While this participant explained that the male privilege is obtained from the very beginning by “being male” in the family and society.

*The source of a privilege for a man in our society, is being “male”, then other factors play an important role in widening this privilege such as authority, money, and personal character and charisma... At the end, men differ from each other by personal experience, life circumstances,*

*culture, the place... the person creates his own space within a given situation.*” (P13, 45 years old)

Still, he continued to outline different factors that interact in the male privilege weight in comparison to other along with the characteristics of each person.

This informant revealed his view from a different perceptive;

*“The culture and religion in our society gives the man the authority. The use of religion and how we perceive it gives us the privilege and authority over the woman especially in the private sphere and of course the public sphere. It depends on the individual, for me it means responsibility but not authority or to control the family... because by controlling the man marginalizes his wife and children from their roles and responsibilities... Even if we have a stereotype of authority... each individual has his specific characteristics that show a different dimensions.”* (P2, 26 years old)

For him, he referred to the essential connection between the male privilege, use of religion, and culture, which helps in institutionalizing this male privilege over women. But, he also reflected his special conception of this privilege within the family dynamics that brings us back to the conception of “responsibility” more than control or impose authority that we that we discussed in theme A.

This response distinguished another understanding for us:

*“There is a dominant masculine model but I chose not to see it because it doesn't represent me.... males are privileged... yes but to be a man is*

*not enough to be privileged... male privilege depends on many factors such as; the background, demographic, work hierarchy, wealth ... etc. look... Life is about power dynamics. We play within these dynamics and we use different models of lifestyles... I mean... we mix between modern and tradition... we are swinging between them and we use the two modes... we are a mixture of everything.”* (P6, 32 years old)

He stressed on the differences and inequalities among men that create different power dynamics not limited to “being a male” only. However, he conveyed the fact of dominant masculine model but sharply announces his grounded rejection to it by stating “*I chose not to see it because it doesn’t represent me... ”*. Moreover, he brings on the surface the dual lifestyle of modern and tradition and making use of swinging between them according to specific contexts. His input reveals the mixture of realities that reconfirm the concept of masculine multiple entities.

Participant (P7, 27 years old) articulated the direct connection with power dynamics by giving an example of relations within the workplace:

*“Power and authority play a main role among us and fluctuate our privilege. Usually, my reactions toward solving work problems differ with work colleague in the same line and my boss.”* (P7, 27 years old)

His answer presents an example of power dynamic through workplace hierarchy that envision the disappearance of male privilege in comparison to other men with power.

Additionally, participant (P3, 34 years old) described;

*“In the bank I experience many cases that show how money control people behavior and create power dynamics regardless your male privilege....Personal connections and common interests among colleagues and higher administration... it depends on the person tactics.” (P3, 34 years old)*

His description outlined different sets of power dynamics, relations and factors within workplace and society that withdraw the power of male privilege in specific occasions, opportunities, and contexts as he explained.

While participant (P10, 34 year old) gave an example of the disappearance to male privilege in comparison to women with authority:

*“Yes, men are privileged in our society but it is more in other places than Ramallah. However, male privilege can disappear with other parameters like a woman with authority. But in the family context still the man is privileged.” (P10, 34, years old)*

Throughout the participants’ responses to my question about “what limits your privilege?”, we can convey that male privilege is not linear or fixed. This privilege is always subject to disappear, or weaken, or hegemonies within specific setting and by different individual perceptions. Moreover, power dynamics across men and women continue to affect how we engage in the overall structure of power stimulates the concept of multiple masculinities.

### **5.4.3. The Slippage of Domination**

Palestine is not isolated of the neoliberal domination of global economic policymaking (Kelbert & Hossain 2014) accompany with the formulation of Oslo agreement 1993 that followed rapid changes on the political, economic, and social aspects of life (Taraki 2008). This change in global context in people's relationships to markets and so have their relationships with each other throughout the history (Kelbert & Hossain 2014). Besides, The Palestinian society, like others in the glob, has witnessed the twentieth century liberation of women that assimilated traditional masculine roles, which could not exclude masculine identity and self-conceptions unaffected by the global radical changes (Chant 2000; Gonzalez 2008; Kelbert & Hossain 2014; Moore 1994; Seidler 2008).

In light with the above introduction, participants implicitly and explicitly expressed the change overtime on the perception of male privilege and domination that affected their masculine entity and hegemonic norms of masculinity. Commonly, during the interviews participants' signify the roots of this change due to universal capital system, globalization, and economic policies as a main energizer from the different perspectives.

For instance; (P1, 34 years old) confirmed the agreement with his wife for sharing financial resources in order to afford a better life and social status, while (P3, 34 years old) he mentioned that deep inside, he would always wish to be the main provider to maintain his privilege and male dominancy, although (P11, 36 years old) revealed that he is the main provider for the family while his wife's work



comes as a secondary income. He also mentioned that he is the one to decide when his wife should work and in which organization.

Participant (P8, 27 years old) commented that regardless if his wife worked or not, men will always be worried about their masculinity, their space and image with their wives and at home:

*“...remember in the beginning of the interview....the masculine ego... I told you...the internal dialogue; I am the controller... I am the man... I am the king... sometimes we exaggerate our acts to show dominance (he laughed)”.* (P8, 27 years old)

Perhaps this participant meant that exaggerating in the masculine acts, is a moment of domination as a respond for their male slippage on the one hand and to nourish their egos on the other.

Moreover, participant (P2, 26 years old) gave a clear statement about the context of Ramallah and the role of the economic and social forces in changing the masculine way of thinking:

*“The economic situation and the city of Ramallah imposed on men different realities than the ones they were raised on. The economic situation is the main factor of change; thus the roots of the current social change are mainly connected to economic factors.”* (P2, 26 years old)

He continued to explain, that men need to accept the current social changes that follow the economic participation of women and not only play the game of taking advantage of it by increasing his monthly income and perform masculine

domination as many cases he experienced in the bank and among his friends (P2, 26 years old). It is important to witness here the duality of “money” or “interest” and male domination slippage, which suggest to me another layer of multiple behaviors among men.

While and (P9, 37 years old) blamed by saying:

*“The capital system controls our life... we allowed this change. We look at each other and keep comparing what we have and what they have and what we must have even if we cannot afford it... We built our lives on what we do not have not on what is available.”* (P9, 37 years old)

I found his description of the changes in our life as an impact of the capital system, offers a source of clarification to the issue mentioned by participant (P2, 26 years old) and about the change in behavior among men.

Though, participants (P6, 32 years old) expressed the change from a different standpoint in the following;

*“I was raised in a different way by my dad. We were all equal inside our family...my dad always used to say” you are both respected as long as you respect yourself”* (he smiled)... *The main privilege was not being a male but being discipline... For example, my sister is managing the family business because she is better than us in management... We chose to give away this privilege for a better future and better partnership.* (P6, 32 years old)

This participant presents a different example than the others by explaining the way he was raised by his father on equal bases, and not on gender and sex difference. His example also reveals a different context that stimulates diversity.

It is noticed that the participant focused on private spheres in discussing the transitional change of male privilege and domination. Though, while discussing differences, inequalities among men and power dynamics the participants' answers were mainly on issues regarding public spheres. However, the change in the hegemonic domination is also due to power dynamics and forces in both public and private spheres. This brings me back to the two crosscutting themes I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter about masculine "social conformity/ performance" and "difference and inequalities among men". I would suggest out of participants answers, that public spheres are opened to unlimited factors that cannot be controlled by the individual and certainly cannot maintain his male privilege and obligate him to perform differently in specific contexts, so that, their answers explained their perception of their masculine identity in relation to a given power dynamic. Whereas, the focus on private sphere (not limited to it) in explaining a male privilege and domination slippage is rooted and based on his sex as a male as some participants asserted. The male privilege in the private sphere and family contexts is institutionalized by sex and other factors that are limited to family context and controlled by them. Maybe the reason of focusing on a private sphere reflects the institutionalized sense of domination within the masculine inheritance that cannot be sustained or controlled in public sphere but can be in many cases limited within the private one.

#### **5.4.4. Perception of the Masculinity Cost**

Different participants argued about the heavy load of inherited masculine norms in the previous themes of analysis, reflecting a sense of a cost of masculinity and male privilege. Thus, this subtheme -along with previous analysis- continues to provide men's perception on "costs attached to adherence to narrow conception of masculinity" (Messner 1997, 11-12).

*"...Of course this privilege has a cost. I worked since my teenage years to gather money and be ready for getting married... to be able to afford the marriage costs."* (P1, 34 years old)

He identified his perception of the masculinity cost by highlighting the financial burden of marriage costs as an aspect of narrow conception of masculinity.

From a totally different perspective;

*"The man pays a huge sum of money because he is always subject to continuous judgment from the family and the society. We men, struggle to meet people's standards."* (P4, 27 years old)

Participant (P4) considered the cost of masculinity resides mainly in masculine performative accomplishments that position his masculinity to be questioned by others and contribute to the attached narrow conception.

Similarly but not identically, this participant emphasized on masculine performative accomplishments in meeting people's expectations;

*“The standard of People around him, gives a cost to this privilege, because we need to meet people expectations...especially single men from our friends... It is funny how in our society as a man you have to be responsible for your family but when you get married they start teasing you and questioning your manhood because you are no longer available to go out with them anytime...” (P7, 27 years old)*

He explained another dimension of the group social conformity, especially among men revealing that men among each other overload each other with teasing and judging.

While this participant assessed the cost of his masculine identity with the time he spent to meet social obligations;

*“Personally, to me the cost of being a man is the time that I waste to meet the social events. As a man, I am obliged to meet all these traditional occasions...” (P10, 34 years old)*

Contrarily, this informant highlighted his understanding that he never thought about burdens of masculinity;

*“I never thought about the cost of being a man. Actually, I am satisfied with my life and I work to accomplish a better life for my family and myself.” (P12, 37 years old)*

These different opinions about the cost of masculinity among others, appeared throughout the analysis which indicated the different perceptions of masculinity's cost by the participants.

### **5.5. Observations and Reflections**

- The male participants were very pleased after the interviews. Most of them stated that they do not speak about their masculinity. During the interviews, several silent moments occurred for opening their integral debates about their own understanding. They all recommended that opening the discussion about their masculinity put them in confrontation with what they understand and what they think they understand about “being a man”.
- Even if people are gathered in one group or working for reaching a joint goal, it did not mean that all of them share the same personality and ethics. We usually mix identities by illustrating a unified pattern starting from the joint goal not the individual behavior.
- Behavior in front of public in general and the extended family in specific is determined highly on conformity with the dominant group or culture. Thus, social performativity manipulates multiplicity among individuals, however, individual identity remain multiple.
- The power dynamics and inequalities were two main factors operate among men to formalize social power and hegemonic power structure.
- Ramallah city provides a space for domestic men immigrants to create their own private life away from the constraints of their extended families. For them, it is a space of liberation from their sub-society.
- Most of the interviewees questioned the “leader” or the “hero” model of the male. The way of raising men on masculine standards; heroes, strong, powerful... etc.

- Women continued to be raised as a binary of comparison by interviewees when explaining the male privilege and social power, which also proves that men don't construct their masculinity apart from the influence of femininity.
- As an indication of multiplicity; each interview took a different perspective of life vision and ways of explaining the answers. Each one started with an example that revealed his way of thinking and his perspective on the matter.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

My social experiment study aimed to understand the complexity of the masculine identity's construction from a multiple perspectives. My hypothesis suggested masculinity among Palestinian men is a multiple entity that varies according to individual context and circumstances based on the general idea that "masculinity is not natural" despite the biological sex. I also argued in my presented analysis the illusion of one masculine model that is illustrated throughout inhabited masculine act and social conformity performance among men in specific context. I intended to demonstrate a different kind of representation on Palestinian men toward multiple masculinities than the fixed hegemonic models presented within available literature that in my opinion remain superficial.

Throughout the multidimensional and interlinked thematic analysis, my analysis verified that the masculine performative deeds and cultural and social conformity, persisting to be important attributes of being men, which in turn forms a challenge to the individual perceptions and own psychic conflicts. Consequently, the themes of analysis continue to spiral and overlap with each other reflecting the

complexity of gender identity's formation, throughout the different interpretations of masculinity, and within an unlimited complex; social, historical, political and economic factors and contradictions. Men operate within a halo of masculine conventions that is accumulated throughout history rendering the fact that each human being constructs his identity within diverse specific contexts.

The participants demonstrated multiple constructions of masculinities throughout their stories and understanding of their-self masculine entity throughout an active dual modality of balancing the two sets of expectations; the personal psychic conflict and cultural and social conformity (Gilmore 1991). Additionally, interviewees' characteristics were diverse and their communicated experiences illustrated the continually active negotiating, building, and maintaining perceptions of their gender (Imm 2000). Nonetheless, they also proved various perceptions of men's institutionalized privilege and narrow conception of masculinity considering difference and inequalities (Messner 1997) among their diverse contexts.

To conclude, by questioning what defines "men" and by thinking of men in biological terms (being a male) then largely gave way to greater emphasis on the social construction of gender (on our context, being masculine), which highlighted the various forms of masculinities that function in specific the historical and cultural contexts (Gelfer 2014, 3).



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