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Gender in displacement -

a phenomenological study of a Syrian refugee experience in Sweden
from a gender perspective

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Abstract:

Using a phenomenological approach, this thesis examines the experience of a Syrian refugee in Sweden from a gender perspective. The thesis examines how being a refugee as well as being labelled as one influences everyday lives of Syrian refugees in Sweden. It further describes how gender influences this experience and if the experience is different for male and female refugees. The research is based on qualitative methods of research and is supported with semi-structured interviews with three Syrian women and four Syrian men living in Sweden. Through the research participants' narratives, I analyse the changes that appeared in their lives. This is done in order to allow deeper understanding of the phenomenon of a refugee experience of a Syrian refugee relocated to Sweden.

Keywords:

Sweden, Syria, refugee, female, male, gender, masculinity, femininity, role, stigma, label, vulnerability, empowerment, integration.

Note on transcription

The interviews used in this study were conducted in Arabic. The interview participants used different dialects from several parts of Syria. In the thesis, I provide the transcription of the original statements from the interviews, followed by my own translations of the statements to English. I followed the rules of transcription required at The Section for Middle Eastern Studies at the Department of Asian, Middle Eastern and Turkish Studies at Stockholm University. The consonants are transcribed as following:

ء ... ʾ	د ... d	ض ... ḏ	ك ... k
ب ... b	ذ ... ḏ	ط ... ṭ	ل ... l
ت ... t	ر ... r	ظ ... ṣ	م ... m
ث ... ṯ	ز ... z	ع ... ʿ	ن ... n
ج ... j	س ... s	غ ... ġ	ه ... h
ح ... ḥ	ش ... š	ف ... f	و ... w
خ ... ḫ	ص ... ṣ	ق ... q	ي ... y

Vowels are transcribed as a, e, i or u and long vowels are marked as ā, ī, ē, ō or ū. The definite article **ال** is transcribed invariably as l-, regardless if the article is followed by sun consonant. Prepositions **و**; **ع**-; **ل**-; **ب**- are transcribed as be-, l-, ʿa- and w- and are connected directly to the following word. Hamza **ء** is transcribed only when it is followed by another letter in a word, and omitted when it appears in the beginning. Because of the differences in dialects from different regions in Syria, some of the words are transcribed in different ways, but always according to how exactly the participant pronounced them. Occasionally, one word is pronounced differently by the same participant and the original pronunciation is presented in transcription.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

1951 Convention	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration
SFI	<i>Svenska för Invandrare</i> , Swedish for Immigrants
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

INTRODUCTION

Mass migration of refugees from war-torn countries in the Middle East to Europe has in recent years become an important issue in politics, media and academic research. While migration has been a widely studied subject, academics have only recently turned to gendered approach in the study of forced displacement. Based on several mass migration cases it has been proved that gender plays a significant role in a refugee experience, and the perception of the events as well as the aid needed in the times of a crisis can vary depending on factors determined by gender identity. Although several global refugee aid agencies have recently decided to adopt a gender-specific approach in refugee assistance¹, such policies are often not put into practice widely. I will argue here that ignoring traditional patterns of gender and imposing a foreign idea of gender and empowerment in societies of interest led to a heated debate within the scholarly community (Steiner, Gibney & Loescher 2013).

In June 2017, there were 22,5 million refugees in the world and 5,5 million of them originated from Syria (UNHCR 2017). This makes Syria a country with the biggest share in the global refugee population. The ongoing Syrian Civil War erupted in March 2011 and is still considered to be a relatively recent phenomenon. Therefore, the research body on this area is constantly growing, yet the gender issue in forced migration from Syria has not been covered very sufficiently to this day. Furthermore, as further explained in this thesis, research about gender in forced displacement tends to focus on the experiences of female refugees, sustaining in this way a distorted view of armed conflict, in which women are perceived as victims and men as perpetrators, which not only has negative

¹ See for example: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Age, Gender and Diversity Policy*, 8 June 2011, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4def34f6887.html> [accessed 10 October 2017]

consequences for male migrants, but also simultaneously misappropriates female migrants' agency. To support the recent trend in academic research to include both genders in the study of gender in forced migration, this thesis will focus both on experiences of female as well as male refugees. The main subjects of this study will be the experiences of Syrian refugees coming to Sweden. In semi-structured interviews with seven Syrian refugees currently residing in Sweden, the participants discuss their general experience as refugees, their perceptions about masculinities and femininities, and how their gender influences their everyday lives as well as how has gender influenced their refugee experience.

I decided to study the issue from a phenomenological approach, which focuses on the phenomenon studied as an experience faced by a group of people, and the aim of the approach is to understand how the phenomenon is generally grasped by this group. I study the experience of Syrian refugees coming to Sweden, however my study cannot be representative of the whole group because its every member can experience it differently, and my study has a limited number of participants. Therefore, I approach the study of the phenomenon by examining lived experiences from several members of the group and based on their accounts present a meaning of this lived experience for those particular participants that I talked to. During the semi-structured interviews with Syrian men and women I also noted certain common motifs that the participants brought forward in our conversations, even though questions about those topics were not asked by me as an interviewer. I therefore interpret those subjects as essential to understand the refugee experience of the participants, and present the motifs that were common to all conversations with Syrian men and women in the last chapter.

This research integrates two areas of studies, forced migration and gender. Existing research has connected those two areas and determined that gender is a significant factor defining forced migration. This thesis will study Syrian refugees in Sweden using a gender perspective in forced migration. However, this study will not solely be based on existing models and current academic research and studies on gender in forced migration. Since this is a study of people, the people researched are given voice in the research. My premise for this thesis is that refugees themselves and their experiences are the voice and source of my findings and analysis. Moreover, I want to be careful with using existing labels and

designating a group of people by one name that its members may disagree with. Therefore, as a starting point for this thesis, I, together with the participants of the study, will explicate whether they see themselves at all as 'refugees' or use another term, and what does it mean to be forced to flee to a new country from a perspective of a Syrian relocated to Sweden. Comparing the official definitions and refugees' explanations of the word 'refugee' from their own experiences, new interpretations will be used thorough the study. The thesis will examine how being a refugee as well as being labelled as one influence everyday lives of Syrian refugees in Sweden.

However, since, as further explained in the chapter Refugees, the word refugee may be perceived as depriving of agency and derogatory for those labelled with this word, in this study I oppose the view of refugees as powerless subjects and strongly underline their agency. Refugees are active agents of this study and in control of shaping the labels they are designated with, and in case of this research, they are the ones to form the content of each chapter and definitions used in the study. Therefore, existing labels and definitions are challenged and redesigned based on actual refugee experiences voiced by the participants. Syrian men and women participating in the study are not subjects but agents of this study and are the ones to debate current definitions and understandings of discussed issues.

The following chapters further describe the meaning of gender in lives of refugees after forced migration. The refugees explain how they understand what does it mean to be a woman and a man and how it influences their refugee experience. Based on their narratives, I analyse what gender means for a Syrian refugee and how in their case their journey is different for men and women, as well as how their gender determined the journey. I also examine the process of integration of Syrian refugees in Sweden and assess how the process of integration in a new country is impacted by gender.

The aim of my research is to study the recent influx of Syrians into Sweden using a gender perspective. I intend with my work to improve understanding between forced migrants, members of local receiving communities as well as policymakers. I aim to further contribute to the existing body of research on this specific refugee displacement as well as the demonstration of the relevance of gender-specific research and approach to forced migration.

The main questions for this study that I aim to answer:

- * What does it mean to be a refugee for a Syrian refugee in Sweden?
- * How do the participants of this study understand gender?
- * How does gender influence the refugee experience?
- * Is the refugee experience different for men and women?
- * How being a man or a woman shapes refugees' journey, in what ways it makes it easier or harder?
- * Is the integration of a refugee in a receiving country determined by gender?

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Syrian Civil War

Syria, a country located by the Mediterranean Sea and sharing its border with Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, covers a vast territory of over 185 thousand square kilometres and in 2010 was home to more than 21 million people (World Bank 2018). Syria today consists of multiple groups of different ethnicities, religions and languages, which together create a culturally and historically diverse area and home for a heterogeneous population. This status quo has been a characteristic of the area for many centuries. In recent times, such differences have caused political disagreements. In 1971, the Alawite family of Assad took control over Sunni dominated areas of Syria. Alawites are part of the Shia minority, and, in alliance with Christian and Druze groups, the Alawi-Syrian community left the Sunni majority with considerably less political influence over the Syrian state. The country is also a strategic point for dominant regional powers in the region and a site rivalry over supremacy in the Middle East and the Islamic World. The government of Bashar al-Assad, reigning since 2000, is part of the Shia minority and thus maintains relations with Shiite Iran as well as Lebanese Hezbollah. Saudi Arabia and its alliance preserves ties with Syrian Sunni groups. Turkey is another key actor in the power struggle in the region (Karaveli, 2012).

Syrian refugee crisis

The so-called Syrian refugee crisis of today is a product of a complicated history including the 2011 Syrian Civil war, that as of this writing has entered its eighth year. Under the

authoritarian rule of the Assad family, in March 2011, Syrians took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction about the state of affairs in the country. The demonstrations followed the Arab Spring, a wave of protests in the region that originated in Tunisia in 2010. Some of the problems that contributed to the discontent of Arab citizens at that time were high rates of unemployment, corruption and lack of political freedom in their respective countries (BBC 2018). As a result of complex internal relations and regional power interactions described above, what began as a peaceful protest, transformed into major unrest. More than 40 years of relative internal stability under authoritarian control became a civil war, currently with no end in sight. The conflict has quickly expanded from an internal confrontation and engaged several external and international actors that contributed either directly to the fighting or indirectly by financing one of the parties in the war. The tensions in international relations and engagement of external international actors such as Russia, supporting the Assad government, and USA, backing the rebel forces, were instrumental in the intensification of the violence. Despite reactions from the international community and calls for various solutions to the crisis, the standpoint was not strong enough to produce a resolution and prevent further violence.

As a result, millions of Syrians have fallen victim to the conflict. The number of fatalities has exceeded 511 000 (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2018) and the number is rising every day. The United Nations has called the war in Syria ‘the worst man-made disaster since World War II’ (Collins, 2017) and the ‘worst humanitarian disaster’ (LaFranchi, 2013). What is more, according to UNICEF, Syria is now the most dangerous place in the world to be a child (UNICEF, 2016).

In the study of migration, the reasons for leaving a country can be classified as either push or pull factors. Push factors describe the reasons why migrants decide to leave their countries of residence, and pull factors are aspects that attracted the migrants to their destinations. Human Rights Watch extensively described the push factors that determined why migrants and refugees decided to flee their countries during a great wave of migration in 2015 to Europe (Human Rights Watch, 2015). In the chapter about Syria, the report names as some of the reasons the government’s bombings of civilian areas, as well as arbitrary arrests and torture of those regarded as regime opponents. Opposition groups are also responsible for continuous attacks on civilians, kidnappings, torture and

use of child soldiers in their armies. Moreover, the appearance of extremist Islamist groups in the conflict, such as the Islamic State or al-Qaeda's affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra pose a major threat and are targeting civilians by random kidnappings and carrying out extrajudicial executions. Several areas in the country are under siege, either by governmental or non-state forces, and their residents have no access to fundamental services and resources. A constant threat of violence is a common reason for Syrians to escape. Others saw flight as a solution to avoid being forced to fight in the conflict. Even though, for reasons described in the chapter on Ethics, I did not discuss with my interview participants the reasons of their flight, some of the participants voluntarily shared their stories about the threats they were receiving that put their lives in direct danger and forced them to escape. The flight from Syria can be explained by multiple factors. However, the war and unrest caused by the war itself constitutes the fundamental reason. As one of the interviewees said:

mā fī amān. anā kent 'āyeš ḥayā mnīḥa b-sūryā. w-b-sabab l-ḥarb anā jīt
mū b-sabab šī tānī.

*[In Syria] there is no peace. I lived a good life there, I came here [to Sweden]
because of the war, not because of any other reason.*

Today, over 5.5 million Syrians have been forced to flee their country, and more than 6 million are internally displaced (UNHCR 2018). The majority of refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. The countries, during the first year of Syrian war, allowed Syrian refugees to cross their borders and settle in the country. However, after 2014 they limited the number of accepted refugees by introducing strengthened border control, visa requirements and other additional restrictions. Many of the displaced have decided to choose Europe as their destination for requesting asylum. Since arriving to Europe across land has become more and more controlled and in result, less possible, many have chosen to arrive there by sea. From 2015 until today, more than 1 million refugees and migrants originating mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan arrived in Greece from Turkey via the Aegean Sea (IOM 2018). This route, called 'the Eastern Mediterranean route' (UNHCR, 2015) was the most popular

way to reach the final destination of asylum in Europe, and from Greece, it moved onward to Western and Northern Europe across the Balkan countries.

Syrian refugees in Sweden

Sweden since many years has been labelled as one of the most hospitable countries for refugees and immigrants, receiving in 2015 the highest number of refugees per capita among all European countries. In 2017, 93 percent of Swedes agreed with the statement that their country should help refugees, which is the most positive response among other EU states (Eurobarometer 2017). Between 2011 and 2016, Sweden received almost twelve thousand asylum applications from Syrian nationals (Migrationsverket, 2018). In accordance with the Swedish Migration Agency's declaration from 2013, all Syrian citizens as well as stateless persons from Syria² were to be granted permanent residency permit in the country. In September 2015, the Swedish Prime Minister gave a speech in which he addressed the issue of increased migration to his country and expressed concern about the current situation of migrants in Europe. In his speech, he assured that Sweden will continue to 'take its responsibility' in the ongoing crisis and stressed that the whole of Europe should do so as well. He asserted that his Europe 'welcomes people that flee from war, together and in solidarity' and that it 'does not build walls. We help each other when the need is great' (Regeringkansliet 2015a). However, at the peak of the 'Syrian refugee crisis' and during the greatest increase of numbers of asylum seekers, European countries took additional security measures and introduced more rigorous immigration policies on their borders. Sweden was no exception, and only two months after the Prime Minister's speech cited above, it reintroduced border checks on its internal borders and issued a series of recommendations to reduce the number of asylum seekers arriving in the country. The government proposed offering temporary residence permits instead of those of indefinite duration, limited right to family reunification, as well as tougher security measures (Regeringkansliet 2015b). Those measures have been heavily criticised by the

² With exclusion of persons suspected of war crimes or terrorism.

humanitarian sector, and the Swedish Red Cross commented that they risk violating Sweden's international obligations (Svenska Dagbladet, 2016).

Today, Syrians are the largest immigrant community in Sweden and constitute around 15% of the local immigrant population (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2018). As established by Jörum (2015:38), the greatest pull factor for the majority of asylum seekers fleeing from Syria to Sweden and choosing Sweden as their final destination was the Swedish declaration that it would grant Syrian citizens permanent residence permits. This was believed by the interviewees in her study to give the refugees stable basis for building a new life. For some, the image of Sweden as a free, humane and democratic country welcoming refugees strengthened their decision. The majority of Swedish citizens speaks in positive terms about the cultural diversity in the country and migrants residing in Sweden as well as agree with granting the newly arrived in Sweden the same social and cultural rights as Swedish citizens (Ahmadi, Palm & Ahmadi, 2016). However, over the years the percentage of Swedish citizens sharing those views has decreased. While in 2014 more than 75% of the population was in favour for equality in social rights for immigrants, currently only little more than half of the research participants still supports it (Ahmadi et. al. 2016).

PART ONE

1.1. THEORY AND METHOD

Qualitative methods from a social constructivist perspective

This research is based on epistemological perspective of social constructivism. I believe that this particular epistemology is useful in analysing the realities of refugees and changing social constructs in their lives caused by several factors such as change of existing social relations caused by armed conflict, new experiences generated during refugee journey as well as new social relations and meanings found in a receiving society.

Social constructionism assumes that knowledge is not acquired as a direct perception of the world, but it is a product of human interaction and the knowledge is created between people. Moreover, the understanding of the world and categories that people are divided into is culturally and historically related (Burr 2004:4). The products of a specific culture or time period determine those understandings. Therefore, what we consider as truth is a current common accepted way of understanding the world, and may vary with consideration to time, history and culture. Bryman (2016:33) draws more on constructivist theory and asserts that the social reality is not a fixed product but rather one of constant change and reconstruction done by social actors. Therefore, in order to understand the researched society, it needs to be studied through the eyes of its members (Bryman 2016: 399).

This study will be based on qualitative methods of research, which in comparison with the quantitative research, put more stress on the interpretation of a social world by its participants in order to understand the research society (Bryman 2016:380). In the analysis of gender and forced migration official statistical data on refugees tend to be 'gender blind' and treat refugees as 'genderless migrants'. The data often presents statistics

about refugees as a whole, not distinguishing between male and female refugees. Accordingly, the distinctive experiences of male or female migrants are often neglected and not voiced (Metso, Le Feuvre 2006). Moreover, censuses and official data are often based on inconsistent definitions and categories and the data is accumulated using different methods from country to country (Vargas-Silva, 2012:9). Therefore, according to Hinchman and Hinchman (1997), the qualitative approach makes it possible to extensively understand the richness and complexity of a refugee experience. This method is able to capture and present the agency of forced migrants, which could have been forgotten otherwise when using only quantitative approach.

My choice of using qualitative research is based on the constructivist reasoning of the nature of a human being. Since meanings are continuously created when engaging with the world, open ended questions are useful in allowing the subjects of the study to share freely their views, with no limitations on their answers. Moreover, the engagement of human beings with the world and how they derive meanings requires a historical and social perspective. Some of their understandings and perspectives on the surroundings are imposed by culture (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, qualitative research does not solely focus on the data collected, but also analyses the context of how, where, and why the data was collected, as well as takes into account the particular setting of participants in the research. The data is presented, but also analysed and interpreted based on external factors and even researcher's own experience and background.

Social construction of gender

The social constructivist approach to gender states that gender is a result of socio-cultural influences and interaction and can perform differently in various societies (Schneider, Gruman & Coutts 2005). Accordingly, our gender identity can be shaped by several factors such as ethnical, historical or cultural background, religion, family structures or class relations.

As defined by Oakley (1985:115) 'sex' stands for biological traits, while 'gender' is a psychological and cultural term. As a process, gender creates distinguishable categories

and statuses that define what it means to be a man or what it means to be a woman (Lorber & Farrell, 1991:54-64). The culture itself defines social roles from its members, which in result become a construct of widely accepted social behaviours and institutionalised cultural and social statuses such as race, ethnicity, social class and gender. Although some societies ignore other social classifications such as race or economic status, there is no society that ignores gender as a social category (Lorber & Farrell 1991:313-337). Depending on context, societies can have dissimilar understandings on what defines gender and what are the expectations of masculinities and femininities, what are typical personal traits for a man or woman, their gestures, behaviours and occupations. Therefore, the cultural product of gender 'is defined by a set of culturally relevant beliefs about what gender is, how members of a gender behave and must consequently be treated' (Salem Press 2014:25).

The assignment of social and gender roles starts nearly from the first minutes of our lives. Oakley (1985) describes how a new-born baby is not only immediately classified by sex but also is assigned a gender. Ever since its first days it is acquainted with the behaviour, attitudes and roles that are traditionally expected in surrounding culture. This process occurs in different ways, from the toys chosen for a girl or boy, certain language used towards the baby as well as exposure to traditional activities. And even though the definition of gender is shaped in a child by its family, the parents' teachings are also defined by other factors, which are rooted in the culture they are part of. Based on our performances and new observations and contexts that we are placed in throughout our lives our subjective truths change and our worlds take on new meanings. According to social constructivism all of our knowledge is derived from observations of the world from various perspectives. There are in fact no objective truths (Burr, 2004:7-8).

Gender roles

The culture and society itself defines social roles and behaviours, which eventually become a widely accepted social construct. Different cultures can have distinct understandings of what defines gender and what are the definitions of masculinities and

femininities, as well as what are typical personal traits, gestures, behaviours, occupations for being male or female. Therefore, the cultural product of gender 'is defined by a set of culturally-appropriate beliefs about what gender is, how members of a gender behave and must consequently be treated' (Salem Press, 2014: 25).

In social contexts men and women undertake assigned gender roles which create normative pressure from society and individuals themselves to fulfil expected roles. One reasoning for disparate behaviours of men and women in social situations is that the society dictates certain normative behaviours and beliefs from both genders which determine their responses to those social requirements. This also contributes to the creation of gender stereotypes, which evolve from people's observations of common actions of males and females and infer the existence of gender-specific dispositions (Eagly & Wood, 2011: 458-476). Depending on additional factors, such as the level of technology development, sex differences might be less important in certain cultures and societies, i.e., technology can allow both sexes succeed in same tasks, regardless of individual strength (ibid.).

In my approach, I analyse not only the existing structures but also the emergent meanings of gender roles, which I begin here with explaining existing theory of hegemonic masculinity and challenging it with alternative approach to the issue.

Hegemonic masculinity

The concept of hegemonic masculinity reasons the production and order of masculinities, power structures between them and hierarchical relationships between masculinities and femininities in the society. Since masculinity and femininity are practised in different cultures, social classes and in different historical periods, masculinity as well as femininity has several individual expressions and forms in societies. Based on Gramsci's model (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 829-859) that explained, among others, the concept and functioning of cultural control, the idea of hegemony is put in the context of gender relations. Hegemony in terms of masculinity means achieving dominance leading to patriarchy, and this is done not through violence, although it may be one of the tools used,

but rather by achieving authority through cultural relations and social institutions. Despite its normative character, hegemonic masculinity cannot be attributed to every man but just to a minority of them. However, with its two forms, first being internal hegemony, it shapes the position of other men and masculinities and play a role of an admired example and aim for other men. This is done mainly over masculinities that are named by Connell 'subordinated', representing opposites of hegemonic attributes (Connell, 1993). As an example, in contrast to ruling white heteronormative class in Euro-America Connell names non-white men, working class and homosexuals, which may be oppressed when not achieving the normative masculine expectations. Simultaneously, the external hegemony of masculinity determines the position of women in subordination to men. The concept explains how patriarchy, being at that time and often to this day a common practice in gender relations in different cultures and societies, becomes often a legitimised and widely accepted rule over women using three main structures: work, power and emotional attachment. Moreover, institutions such as labour market, government and family reinforce those structures and increase the strength of the dominant, which makes the structure including both individual as well as institutional character dominant in overall social structure.

As further described by Ghannam (2013), masculinity is shaped by the recognition granted by surrounding society. In this society and in shaping what it means to be masculine it is women who have a significant voice. Daily practices of the masculine as well as feminine show how the society understands gender roles. Ghannam argues that women are not 'mirrors' that men use when defining their masculinity, but rather the interaction between feminine and masculine as well as perceiving their oppositions and conflicts point out to how masculinity is reproduced. (*ibid.*:165) Therefore, the feminine behaviours such as being dutiful wives or being obedient daughters are strong factors that determine the meanings of masculinity, including the hegemonic one (*ibid.*:88).

One of the initial aims of the concept of hegemonic masculinity was to support understanding differences between masculinities in different cultural and time perspectives. The concept, presented first in 1979, is to this day a core theory in many ethnographic studies about gender. However, even the author of the concept agrees that the theory is in some parts outdated and needs to be reformulated to fit to modern times

and modern masculinities and femininities (Connell and Messerschmitt, 2005). One of the critiques is that hegemonic masculinity represents no longer a dominant, desired masculinity, but is associated with a negative image of an indifferent and aggressive men.

Emergent masculinity

Inhorn (2012) draws on Connell's theory and places it in a context of the Middle East. Traditionally in the region, a man is said to be a family patriarch and ever since his boyhood is taught to dominate females in his family and surroundings, although he is still dominated by senior males in the community. By reaching adulthood and marrying, he achieves patriarchy in his family and is able to use his power through coercion or force, especially when family honour is in danger, and he is supported by other males in the family. Beyond its patriarchal character, families in the Middle East are strictly patrilineal and as Inhorn claims, women who marry into the family are put in a vulnerable position. Hegemonic masculinity allows men to use their power and rights freely, in matters such as right to divorce, or, if allowed by religion, right to polygyny. When confronted with other men in the community, hegemonic male is competitive in accumulating greater wealth, fathering more children, demonstrating piety and social power, becoming not only a respected but also a feared man.

However, this image is rather a stereotypical representative of a Middle Eastern man and is no longer fully reflected in modern Middle Eastern societies, as masculinities in the region are never identical but plural and subject to change depending on social, historical and cultural factors distinctive to diverse areas and societies. Inhorn supports the view that the term hegemonic masculinity must be rethought and in the context of the modern Middle East the theory is not entirely valid. She proposes another theory to explain masculinities in the Middle East, which she calls emergent masculinities.

William's (1978) concept of the 'emergent' points out to the new meanings, values, practices and relationship constantly being created. Those are however always produced in context with the dominant, yet the dominant is not exhausting all human practice, and what is created by the emergent can eventually be incorporated into dominant culture

which over time can cause changes in social order. Inhorn draws on the concept and incorporates William's and Connell's work into her proposition of naming new forms of masculinities in the Middle East as emergent. While hegemonic masculinities stress the dominant and idealized masculine traits, emergent masculinities focus on what is novel and transformative, as well as adjust to new social processes and trends and practices developed on them. This understanding of Middle Eastern masculinities is based on expressions of gender in practice, when men act as men in relation to women and other males, and not based on male representatives of states, religious groups or political parties. Therefore, while hegemonic understanding of masculinity classified the relations in hierarchical and culture-specific contexts, Inhorn's approach focuses on diverse and nuanced male responses to constantly volatile and intersectional social contexts that surround Middle Eastern men, which is also valid for other regions. Moreover, as pointed out by Ghannam (2013) women have a significant role in shaping masculinities by their behaviours. Therefore, in order to fully understand what is emergent in masculinities, feminine approach and behaviours also need to be analyzed. Women allow and help men to be 'men', and by allowing new, emergent meanings, simultaneously women allow emergent meanings to appear within femininities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality underlines the connection between different social elements and categories such as class, race and gender, how they interact and together contribute in shaping realities of humans. Intersectionality addresses one of the most central concerns within feminist scholarship, which is recognition of differences between women. To illustrate the importance of this issue, as one of the examples, black feminists' critiqued bourgeois feminism for ignoring the reality of lives of black women and focusing only on issues of oppression of white middle-class women (Lutz, Vivar and Supik 2001:20). Intersectionality takes into account various forms of oppression resulting not only from gender, but also intersecting additional social factors, such as race in the case above. This approach is essential when trying to fully grasp the complexity and multi-layered nature of the social world and social identities. The concept was initially used and is popular

today in feminist debates. However, I believe it applies to perspectives both from female and male standpoint. As an example, as discussed above in this chapter the concept of hegemonic masculinity shows how intersection of three elements, gender, race and class, in this case being white male from middle-class, together contribute to creating an authorized social rule of a group over others.

The concept may seem particularly important in studies of gender and migration, since it is impossible to focus only on one factor, gender, when studying movement of people and ignore other elements that as much as gender contribute to shaping the realities and occurrences of migration. Haile and Siegman (2014) illustrate the idea by presenting how race, class and immigration status of migrant workers from the Philippines shape their new realities in the Netherlands. Firstly, some the reasons of migration were inability to earn in the home country as much money as in the Dutch labour market, which connects to economic situation as well as class of migrants. Some of the workers, for various reasons, one of them being race, accepted jobs below their social status in their home country after coming to the Netherlands. Lastly, male migrants, in order to fulfil their masculine gender role as providers of the household, accepted jobs associated often with feminine roles such as domestic work. On the other hand, female workers migrating to the Netherlands obtained new gender roles as breadwinners, while their husbands, staying in the home country, were taking care of the household and children. This shows how migrants balance their gender identities with intersection of other factors determining their status and availability of services such as job opportunities. Therefore, the analysis of intersection of circumstances is essential to understand various contexts of migration, especially forced migration, which is rooted in significant social, historical or cultural events. Moreover, the concept is essential to adapt the view of migrants as people with agency, rather than 'victims of exclusions', since it offers a broader vision of the nature of the humankind (Bürkner, 2012: 192).

Phenomenological approach

This research focuses on the experience of forced migration and is based on accounts of Syrian men and women that experienced the process and came to Sweden. Since the research is based on a lived experience and is shared by all of the people I interviewed, I therefore approach the data obtained in the interviews from a phenomenological point of view. A phenomenological study focuses on experiences of several individuals and presents the meaning of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell 2017). The study describes what common factors the individuals share when experiencing a chosen phenomenon and afterwards reveals an ‘essence’ of the experience for all individuals in the study. The result is not only focusing on the outcome itself, i.e., ‘what’ the individual experienced, but also shows how the experience was shaped (Moustakas, 1994).

This approach aims to understand the experiencing of realities by people to better apprehend the researched phenomenon. In case of this research, through the research participants’ narratives about their everyday struggles and experiences, I analyse what are the changes that emerged in the lives of participants after moving from their society of origin to Sweden, what are the challenges that they face because of those changes, as well as which parts of their lives, practices and understandings remained unchanged after the flight. All those factors create a base for deeper understanding of the phenomenon of a refugee experience of a Syrian refugee relocated to Sweden. In the following chapters I analyse the motifs that were presented by the participants and that I have observed to be common to their experiences and examine what significance they hold for the evaluation of the phenomena.

Phenomenology draws on the philosophical works of Husserl that called to ‘go back to things’ when acquiring new understandings of the world, meaning that the analysis should be made on things that directly appear to us and therefore when the meaning is undoubted. He claimed that what arises from investigating a phenomenon is not only a sensual element, but underneath it always lies an element that is not sensual, an essence of a matter, general thought or common theory, which is a phenomenon that should be used to fully grasp the cognition of a matter. According to this thought a phenomenon has two layers, first being an empirical and material layer of knowledge acquainted with

using our senses, named *hyle*, and second, *noesis*, carrying a specific intentionality within it. Therefore, every phenomenon has an essence that is shared by people who experience it (Moustakas, 1994).

The philosophical questions and postulations of phenomenology are wide and for many years were considered abstract, and even today's phenomenology point to different arguments. However, they are all based on common ideas that advocate for studying the lived experiences of people as well as view that those experiences are conscious ones (Creswell 2017). Phenomenology assumes no presuppositions about what is real, until the truth is found and is certain. This concept is called by Husserl *epoche* and is achieved by setting aside researcher's perspective to the highest degree possible, to take a new, fresh perspective on a researched phenomenon. In my research, I decided not to impose any labels or definitions during my conversations with Syrian men and women and did not assume anything before I was told that something is actually true. I did not assume any change in their lives as forced migrants from Syria that moved to Sweden, unless they specifically told me so. I formulated my interview questions so that the questions would not assume any answers, and at the same time make space for the participants to voice their own truths.

In-depth interviewing

People affected by forced migration and being placed in a new cultural and social setting may perceive their position as disadvantageous and vulnerable, and therefore be reluctant to share their experiences with an outsider (Vargas-Silva, 2012). In this setting, trying to initiate a too close relationship may be understood as an unwanted intrusion, yet on the other hand, having too much distance could contribute to considerable limitations on the collected data. Therefore, I decided to choose a method of in-depth interviews to collect my data, which is a sensitive method however with a high-level of interaction between researcher and participants which allows the researcher to establish a good relationship during an interview. I believe that this relationship is essential in making the participants comfortable in speaking about their personal experiences.

The interviews were conducted in Stockholm, between March and April 2018. I conducted seven semi-structured interviews with four men and three women that came to Sweden from Syria as a result of the ongoing civil war, and have been living in Stockholm and its suburbs for between one and five years. The participants of the study come from different regions of Syria. Men and women I talked to are Dana, Samar, Zeina, Nader, Riad, Talal and Fadi, aged 22-36, they are married or single and are Christians or Muslims born in Syria. The names listed above are not the real names of the participants. They were assigned new random names by myself to ensure their anonymity.

Before conducting the research, in my opinion it is necessary to reflect about my position as a researcher and what outcome it will have on my research and relations with its participants. Before designing my interview guide I reflected about my identity as a researcher and how will it determine my relations with women and men who I interview. I present my reflections in the next chapter about ethical considerations in my research. All of those reflections were kept in mind when designing the questions for the participants. Furthermore, the questions were formulated in a broad manner so that it would be possible for the participants to answer them freely and maintain the interview as a conversation rather than a rigid questionnaire. Since I chose a semi-structured type of interview, my interview guide included only an outline of topics that I planned to cover, with open-ended questions that I asked but other subsidiary questions were developed during the conversation. The interview guide that I designed and used during the interviews is available in the appendix of this thesis. This type of interview is considered to be a prominent data gathering method among feminist researchers, due to its high-level of rapport between interviewer and interviewee, non-hierarchical relationship as well as acquiring the exact perspective of the women interviewed (Bryman 2016:492). I argue that this method is equally applicable and useful to studies of masculinities and gender in general. As a result of this type of interview, the participants themselves put focus on different issues, some referred more to their family, some underlined their struggles, others talked about their successes, which allowed me to grasp what are the main themes that are currently crucial in their lives.

Language is strongly connected to the culture, therefore words and statements can be interpreted in different ways, as well as gestures (Kvale 2008). That being the case, I decided to conduct the interviews in the first language of the participants of the study, which is Arabic, and depending on the region of origin of the participants, different variations of the Syrian dialect were used. The interviews were recorded, and after finishing them I listened carefully to the tapes several times and made notes about the information I was receiving, and transcribed the most important parts of the interviews that I have chosen to present in this thesis. Below the transcribed answer in Arabic in this thesis I present my translations of the statement to English.

Since the number of interview participants is limited, the question arises as to whether this study can be representative of all Syrian refugees in Sweden. In this case, Bryman (2016:406) introduces the *moderatum* generalizations. Such generalizations are more limited than statistical data, but may be treated as examples of a broader set of features. Therefore, with this thesis I do not intend to apply what I present to all Syrian refugees coming to Sweden and suggest it as a general image of their current position. What I present in this thesis is a study of existing literature on forced migration and gender, as well as accounts of seven Syrian men and women that came to Sweden as forced migrants. Based on those I present the common factors that the participants share in their opinion about the topic discussed and analyse how their situation is determined by external factors.

Limitations of the study

As pointed out by Connell (2009) human life is not divided into two realms, nor the human character is divided into two types. The social reality as well as gender is not dichotomous and takes many forms and meanings. I do not disregard the different perspectives on gender. However, in this study, I decide to limit the research to men and women, and solely describe those two genders.

I acknowledge the intersectional character of the refugee experience, however I do not mention nor analyse all the factors having the influence on the phenomena. Similarly, I

acknowledge the intersectionality of gender but I do not explore further all the elements that build gender identity, one of them being religion. I am aware of the great importance of religion in Syria on shaping masculinities and femininities. However, religion was nearly not mentioned at all by the participants of this study, therefore this question is not covered.

I believe that in case of my research the small sample of participants does not let me analyse and issue recommendations for existing Swedish policies regarding gender-specific approach to receiving refugees and their integration. However, this can be a proper starting point for a further study on this topic.

1.2. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are considered predominantly as vulnerable groups, in need of particular protection (European Commission, 2016:1). Moore and Miller (cited in Vargas-Silva, 2012) define vulnerable persons as ‘persons who are, individually or as part of a group, stigmatised, excluded or have limited control over their lives, to maintain independence and to self-determine’. Undoubtedly people fleeing war are often exposed to many hazards and their protection as vulnerable persons is a justified policy of numerous humanitarian agencies. Yet at the same time, their vulnerability does not deprive them of their agency and refugees are individuals with capacities and skills able to make their own decisions and rebuild their lives. Frequently refugee assistance agencies instead of recognising the abilities of refugees end up classifying them as helpless victims in need of intervention (Ludwig 2013). I elaborate more about the notions of the word ‘refugee’ in the following chapters, but my point here is to make it clear before presenting my research how refugees as a group will be referred to in my thesis. While there certainly are people among the refugee groups in desperate need of help and unable to survive without it, this does not mean that every member of the group has similar needs and needs external aid. Extending the label of a victim to the whole group may have unfortunate consequences and take away the agency. Diana Allen in her work about Palestinian refugees in Lebanon describes how widely the issue of Palestinian identity in exile is discussed among scholars, and how Palestinian agency becomes lost in the discourse. In the end, the scholars, activists and writers who ‘set out to give voice’ to refugees, ‘end up taking it away’ (Allan, 2013:228). This problem has led me to design my project in a way that, as much as possible, assumes agency.

A Guidance note from European Commission provides ethical guidelines for doing research on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Since, according to the Commission, refugees are a particularly vulnerable group, they are in need of special safeguards when

it comes to research ethics (European Commission, 2016:1). Some general principles are to treat the participants with care and sensitivity, be objective and transparent, avoid ethnocentricity and respecting participants' own values and their right to make their own decisions. I believe the latter is of utmost importance in my research, since some of the concepts that I am researching may not be significant or even discussed in the communities I talk to and in many communities in general. Therefore, I need to avoid eliciting ambiguous ideas and definitions that the refugees may not fully agree with. In my interviews with Syrian refugees I decided not to use the word 'gender' and avoid using any theories of gender in the way I formulated my questions. This was done because of the possible confusion resulting from language issues and inability to fully translate certain terms to Arabic retaining the complete meaning. Therefore, the questions were formulated in a simple manner and concern everyday situations and general opinions about women and men that allow further analysis.

The Refugee Studies Centre (2007:167) advises to try as far as possible to involve the people being studied in the research process. The core of my research consists of Syrian men and women participating in the study, their voices, experiences and thoughts about the matters raised in the research. I avoid using the word 'subjects' for the participants in my study, because I believe that the refugees that engage in my research are active agents and not passive subjects of the study. They are the ones that have the greatest influence on the content of this thesis and the thesis is designed in accordance to what information the refugees perceive as important. Despite already existing interpretations and theories of gender, although they are explained further in this thesis, the participants decide themselves what it means to be a woman or a man, and no theories or definitions were imposed on them.

I am aware that my research may have an intrusive potential for my potential participants. As suggested by The Refugee Studies Centre (2017:164), refugees' experience of my research and interviews can be positive but it also may be disturbing for some. Therefore, special care needs to be taken so that too private and personal areas will not be investigated to avoid undue intrusion. Therefore, when designing my interview guide, I decided to avoid certain topics and discarded some of the questions that in my opinion were too sensitive and might evoke trauma or make the participants feel uncomfortable.

Researchers advise against engaging in ‘trauma-exploration’ (Moran and Temple, 2006) and therefore no questions about the reasons for leaving the country, smuggling, experiences of gender-based violence or detailed information about members of participants’ families were asked. Moreover, the participants were informed that if they felt uncomfortable with answering any of the questions they have had the right to skip them and it would not have an influence on the further development of the interview.

Following the Swedish Act (SFS 2003:460) concerning the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans, the research was conducted with full informed consent from the participants in the research. The consent was given orally by the participants before participating in the research and also asked for the second time after finishing our interviews. This was done to make sure that the participants felt comfortable with the information they provided during our conversations and with my using it in my thesis. I asked the participants for oral consent rather than using official consent forms to avoid issues that might be raised by having the consent on paper signed by the participants, such as discouraging refugees from participating in the research and jeopardising their anonymity (European Commission, 2016:2), as well as possibly triggering memories of traumatic experiences (Omidian; cited in Smith, 2009).

Anonymity is another important ethical matter in my research. The participants were assured of their complete anonymity and that their names will never be used or revealed during and after the research process. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym that was used in the presentation of interview results in the thesis. The recordings of the interviews were erased after finishing the thesis. Not having information about exact backgrounds of the participants or any legal issues they may be struggling with, I needed to make sure they felt comfortable with sharing information with me and that they will not be exposed to any dangers. After contacting and choosing participants for my study I self-assessed possible risks of participation in my study and decided which precautions I needed to take to prevent them. Keeping in mind that unintentionally I might discover some information not related to my research area that is alarming, such as discovering that a participant is in danger, I informed the participants that in such case I might contact responsible authorities with expertise to find possible solutions of the situation. However,

the interview guide was designed carefully to provide me only with data essential to my research questions.

Before conducting the research, I also reflected about my own position as a researcher. I am not a member of the researched group and therefore I may be perceived as an outsider by the participants of the study. An outsider position can have both positive and negative effects on the study and on the process of interviewing. While some argue that an outsider can be perceived as distant from the participants, which can affect the outcome of the conversations, this distance can be also beneficial (Vargas-Silva, 2012). It puts the interviewer in a neutral position which can create favourable conditions for the conversations and because of the neutrality, bring trust into the process. Also, the participants may feel safer about their anonymity when talking to an outsider and sharing information (Fonow and Cook, 1991). Undeniably, an insider position comes with great advantages, such as the knowledge about the researched group and the possibility to use it to gain deeper insights into the relations and information given during the interviews (Mullings 1999). However, as suggested by Mullings (1999:337), this binary division of insider and outsider researchers does not take into account the dynamics that take place in time and through space. One can rarely remain invariably an insider or an outsider in a community. From my standpoint, given my background studies about the researched group as well as learning its language and living in Middle Eastern countries I do not consider myself as a complete outsider. However, I may be perceived as one by the members of the community that I interview. Using the help of a translator who is a member of the researched community might be one way to create trust. However, considering the potential problems that the use of a translator might raise, I decided to conduct the interviews by myself as I feel confident enough in Arabic. As Farahani points out, the presence of insiders in research might open some doors, but can close others at the same time (2011:114), and the presence of a person from the same community may cause biased answers in topics that may be easier for the respondents to discuss with a stranger than a person that shares same customs and beliefs. Moreover, learning about the researched refugee group is part of good practice as suggested by Smith (2009). An outsider should do so by spending time in the community, familiarising themselves with the culture, and by doing an extensive secondary literature review about the community and its culture. In preparation for my research I spent considerable time studying about

Syrian refugees, the circumstances they are placed in, and the reasons why they are forced to flee their country. I agree with Smith that understanding those factors is essential for conducting the research ethically.

I am aware that some of my personal characteristics and privileges may put me in a position of power during the interviews and when interpreting the collected data. As a woman, I may have some difficulties in accessing spaces that are dedicated to men (Mullings, 1999:340) and therefore I may not obtain the same information from male respondents in my interviews as a male interviewer would. However, in this case I also have to consider that not sharing information with me may be a consequence of a discomfort of the male interviewees when talking to a woman about certain topics, therefore I was careful when designing the interview guide to avoid questions that may seem too intimate or considered inappropriate to discuss in a mixed gender setting. At the same time my gender can bring beneficial effects when talking to women, because of a possibly higher level of rapport and likely faster establishment of trust from the female participants.

Overall, 'do no harm' is a fundamental ethical principle for doing research on humans. However, researchers argue that the research on refugees and vulnerable people is justified only when it in some way contributes to improving their situation in the form of re-building their capacities and skills, improving quality of humanitarian help or actual ending of their suffering (Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway, 2007; Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). In case of this thesis, this is done with the help of Syrian refugees in order to manifest their capacities in discussing and deciding about their own situation and solutions to solving the problems they face.

PART TWO

2. REFUGEES

‘Refugee’ is a word central to my study and at the same time constitutes a very disputed term which arouses many emotions both for the persons using the label, and those being labelled. The word has not solely a descriptive meaning, but also an evaluative one. As explained by Gibney (2014), there are certain values that make us decide that a person fleeing a country is a refugee in need of protection, and not a suspected felon that violated national laws. Deporting someone for a trial in another democratic country or deporting citizens that are not desirable is generally considered morally tolerable. However, when a person is persecuted on the basis of race, religion or political opinion is rarely acceptable. The word can have different meanings and feelings about the issues surrounding it can differ significantly depending on positioning of a person. The word may take diverse forms for neutral witnesses of refugee migration flows, for those who engage in or act against refugee help or, as presented in this study, for those who themselves are refugees.

In this chapter I present the academic approach to the term refugee and how the definition of refugee was shaped over the years. However, the biggest focus will be placed on the understanding of the word by refugees themselves. I explain what it means to be a refugee for a refugee, and what emotions and connotations follow the usage of the term.

Refugee definition from the 1951 Convention and its criticism

The key legal document setting limitations for the word refugee is the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Agreed upon in 1951, this definition constitutes up until today the foundation for international refugee jurisprudence. According to the definition, a refugee is a person who:

‘owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.’

However, this definition as of today is already 67 years old and the conditions of today’s world differ significantly from the world at the time of its creation. During those years several aspects emerged that influence how migration looks like today. Not only the human mobility and ability of people to cross international borders has strengthened but also new institutions regulating the area of human rights, humanitarian help, development and peace-building were created. Moreover, this development has resulted in evolving and strengthening the ‘refugee regime complex’ that was created after the Second World War and today regulates the movement of forced migrants. The global refugee regime complex represents the ‘set of norms, rules, principles, and decision-making procedures that regulate states’ responses to refugee protection’ (Betts, 2010). However, the states today are able to bypass the regulations without violation by shifting the refugee and travel regimes, for example by limiting spontaneous arrival asylum despite their obligations to non-refoulement, the necessity of not sending back people to their country where their lives would be at risk. Those changes in international order support the claim of scholars about the arbitrariness of the definition and its incompatibility with current condition of forced migration in the world. Moreover, there are also reasons that are not explicit in the 1951 Refugee Convention and notwithstanding force people to flee their countries, such as poverty, disasters and crises (Buckley-Zistel & Krause, 2017). Therefore today, refugees, internationally displaced persons and stateless persons are altogether called forced migrants in research in the area of forced migrations, since victims of natural disasters and crises cannot be assisted by global refugee regime complex but still have legitimate reasons to seek protection in a different country. Those examples show the change happening in the area of forced migration and concerning the agreement upon who is a refugee and who has the right for international protection as well as how it should be regulated.

New definition of a refugee

Numerous new propositions for a reform of the definition of the term ‘refugee’ have been created by policymakers as well as scholars. Shacknove’s (1986: 274) proposed that the label should cover ‘persons whose basic needs are unprotected by their country of origin, who have no remaining recourse other than to seek international restitution of their needs’. His proposition is similar to how Samar explained why she had to seek refuge:

nehnā laja’nā ‘alā ha-l-balad l-ennū fa’adnā šī fi baladnā. w-law mā kennā
fa’dīn l-amān b-baladnā mā kennā ijīnā ‘alā l-swēd l-ennū baladna
kweyyisa kānat ktīr abl l-ḥarb.

*We seeked refuge in this country because we lost something in our country.
If we haven’t lost the peace in our country we wouldn’t come to Sweden
because our country was very good before the war.*

In contrast to official definitions and terms, it is essential to pay attention how the meaning of the word is perceived by those who were forced to flee their country and arrived in Sweden as refugees. The definitions I received from those I talked to are not complicated, nor do they cover all of the aspects of forced migration and do not focus on official conventions or policies. However, they show the meaning of a lived experience as persons who lived through it and point to the essence of the word. Samar says:

kalmēt lājī ta’nī ennū šaḥṣ tarak balado w-ijī ‘alā balad tāni yabḥat ‘an šī
mā fa’ado f-balado. lājī nehnā kennā ‘am neṭlob be-l-amān, ennū nehnā
neš’ur be-l-amān l-ennū b-baladnā b-sūrya mā kān fi amān, kennā ‘ā’dīn
b-byūtnā fa... bijī ‘aleynā šī w-nmōt.

*The word refugee means that a person left his country and arrived in
another country looking for something that he lost in his homeland. We,
refugees, we asked for peace, to feel safe, because in our country, Syria,
there was no safety. We sat in our houses and suddenly something could
happen and we die.*

For Ziad the word means:

lājī huwwe k-muṣṭalaḥ huwwe šaḥṣ mā ‘endo udra lel-difā’ ‘an nafso, fa iltaja’ l-šaḥṣ tānī k-ḥimāya, k-eyya šī.

Refugee, as a term, is a person who does not have the ability to defend himself, so he took refuge in another country for protection.

Stigma of the word

There is no consensus among scholars to how define the word refugee and about the parameters that define who deserves international protection as a refugee. According to Ludwig (2016), both in scholarship and popular discourse two dominant contrasting pictures about refugees exist. The first presents refugees as powerless victims in need of external help, and the second views refugees as beneficiaries of welfare programmes in receiving countries. Drawing on her research about Liberian refugees in the United States, there are clear benefits that the label ‘refugee’ can bring when applying for international protection or governmental aid. Refugees applying for asylum in the US are eligible for certain benefits that may give them an advantage in financial terms over other immigrants. This is also the case for Sweden where people seeking asylum have special right to, among others, daily expenses compensation, Migration Agency’s temporary accommodation, extra allowance for food or special allowance for extra expenses (Migrationsverket, 2018). Moreover, the legal refugee status obliges countries under International Refugee Law to grant protection and ensure the non-refoulement principle for a refugee. Non-refoulement is a principle in international law that forbids countries from sending back asylum seekers to their countries of origin in which they may be in danger of persecution on the base of their race, religion, ethnicity or membership in a particular social or political group. In situations not connected to administrative processes, despite its many legal advantages in the process of re-establishing lives in a new country, the label ‘refugee’ can be a reminder of past trauma and suffering and be

stigmatizing to persons labelled by this term. This is done especially when the designation of the label is non-participatory (Zetter, 1991: 39-62), which means that it is not chosen or created by refugees themselves but rather assigned by their surroundings. This gives the refugees no power over how the vocabulary used to define their situation is shaped, which often results in prejudicial descriptions of a migrant.

This newly imposed identity and label of a refugee may also feel stigmatizing and come with certain stereotyping of a person bearing the label. For Zeina, the word ‘refugee’ causes bitter feelings:

lājī’a, lammā ḥadā yiqūlī lājī’a, enjereḥ men juwwa. l-ennū anā kent ‘āyša aḥsan men hūn kunt mabsūṭa aḥsan men hūn. w-be-l-nihāya kunt ‘āyša b-baladī, mū b-balad ḡarīb, b-baladī l-aḥmel fiḥu jinsiyytu, ya’nī sūrya. w-aḥess ennū l-kalima tajraḥna.

A refugee, if someone says to me refugee, I feel wounded inside. Because I was living better than here and I was happier than I am here. And in the end, I was living in my own country, not in a strange country, but in a country where I bear my nationality, I mean Syrian. And I feel that this word has hurt us.

Riad states that the label he is bearing is limiting his life and hinders him from different aspects of the new society:

fī kūr amāken w-marāḥel bṭess fiḥā ennū wāḥed w-ḥalo lājī, mā fi ey šī beḥessek ennū entī mālek lājī. kel makān beḥessek ennū entī lājī, ente kezā, b-kel makān l-mawdō’ baḥs ‘an l-sekan ‘al-‘amal ‘an ḥettā l-iqāma mā b’aref izā kel nās ta’reḥ ḥāda l-šī bas ma’rūf ey ḥād mā ma’ho iqāma mā fiḥo foṭṭat ‘alā makān metl makān bilyārd w-makān bār, metl hēk mā be’der afūta izā mā mā’e iqāma.

There are many places and many phases in which you feel that one is a refugee. There is no such thing that makes you feel that you are not a

refugee, that you are like that. In every place, in things like looking for an apartment, for work, even when it comes to ID card. I don't know if everyone knows this but it's obvious that if any person is without an ID he cannot enter places like bowling place or a bar, just like that he cannot enter it if he hasn't got an ID.

In her studies of young Oromo refugees in Toronto, Kumsa (2006: 242) describes how the people do not want to be labelled as 'refugees' because they equate this term with being 'stupid, misfits, ignorant, poor and uncivilized', as they feel that the surrounding society have such opinion about refugees in the country. In order to escape this stigmatizing refugee label, many refugees anticipate the end of their 'refugeeness' (Black and Koser, 1999; Zetter, 1991; Garcia, 1997) and embrace other labels when they can. For example, Cubans in the US continue to refer to themselves as exiles (Garcia, 1997). Talal explains how people place negative labels on refugees because of their status:

lājī? gābī, caveman, mānū mt'allem, mā byia'ref šī, mānū ḥaḍārī, mā bystāhel masalan yāḥud šuḡul muratteb l-ennū huwwe lājī masalan.

A refugee? Stupid, a caveman, not educated, doesn't know anything, uncivilised, doesn't deserve for example getting a paid job because he is a refugee for example.

lower chances ennū taḥḍī šuḡul lower chances ennek entī tkūnī metl ey wāḥed ṭabīrī bas l-annek entī lājī w-ḥāṣṭan min Middle East.

Lower chances that you will get a job lower chances that you will become like every normal person just because you are a refugee, and especially when from Middle East.

In their new locations, the understanding of the label is explained to the refugees by surrounding society. In everyday confrontations with local people, in meetings with local authorities, the negative reception causes the people labelled with the word to experience

it as a derogatory. Syrians that I interviewed feel that the label places them in lower position in regard to local society.

Labelling refugees

As pointed out by Ludwig (2016), labelling people fleeing war as ‘refugees’ can be tantamount to denying them their own agency and objectifying them at the same time. Since in many cases refugee aid agencies present refugees as helpless victims in need of intervention and support, as a result in the public view, refugees become defined as people dependent on aid and unable to survive without it. This makes them feel as if they are powerless subjects of external processes. In truth, refugees rarely have any decisive voice over their situation. Once designated as ‘refugees’, it is the government or humanitarian aid institutions that determine their status and conditions of their stay in a new country. In today’s world of mass migration movements, the emergence of new labels for people seeking refuge shows how the approach to refugees has transformed from a uniform description of a refugee as a person escaping war in need and having right to external help. One can argue that these new labels extend the process of marginalisation and exclusion of refugees achieved by political power of labelling. Instead of naming people fleeing their country in fear of their lives as ‘refugees’, as listed by Zetter (2007:184), new labels such as “spontaneous asylum seekers’ (with implications of fecklessness and presumably different from a planned asylum seeker), ‘illegal asylum seekers’, ‘bogus asylum seekers’, ‘economic refugee/asylum seeker’, ‘illegal migrant’, ‘trafficked migrant’, ‘overstayers’, ‘failed asylum seeker’ (note not ‘failed refugee’), ‘undocumented asylum seeker/migrant’ appear in official as well as everyday language. Those pejorative and degrading labels are not accidental and play a significant political role, which certainly have a visible influence on people’s opinions.

McKinnon (2008) argues that labelling refugees as vulnerable subjects is also a product of the definitions that designate refugees as refugees. The UNHCR’s definition describes a refugee as:

someone outside his or her own country and unable to return as a result of a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality, public opinion or membership of a social group.

McKinnon deduces that a refugee by this definition is in fact a stateless subject who stands in a contrasting position to the citizens of a receiving country.

The loss of national identity is one of the most negative factors named by the participants in my study that follow the word and label refugee. Dana says:

anā jāya men balad ennū kān fihu ḥarb. halla' awwal fatra ennū kan estaṣ'ebhā ennū anā lāji'a. ennū matalan anā ejītu ilā balad jdīd ennū mā 'endī šī, ennū mā 'endī hawiyya, mā 'endī jinsiyya. hāy šagle ṣa'be šwey. ya'nī anā b-sūrīyā 'endī jinsiyya, 'endī hawiyya, bas ennū hādo l-fareq.

I am coming from a country where there was war. Now, in the first period I found it hard that I am a refugee. That for example I came to a new country and that I don't have anything, I don't have identity, I don't have nationality. This thing is a bit hard. I mean, in Syria I have nationality, I have identity, only this is the difference.

Identifying with or refusing the label

I asked all of the participants about how can they describe themselves currently in Sweden, and how do they identify themselves. Šaḥṣ, insān, nājeḥ, 'āmel, ṭālība, marā, which are 'a person', 'a human', 'successful', 'a worker', 'a student', 'a woman', are the words chosen by the interviewees to describe themselves. Even though they do recognize that they are refugees that were forced to leave their country, none of them identifies first as a refugee. Zeina feels that in the end there is no difference between her and other people living in Sweden:

l-ennū ‘am adrus metlī metl ay insān metl l-swēdī huwa yidrus anā ‘am adrus. aḥalles dars āḥed šahāde w-aštegēl. ‘am adfa‘ ḍarība le-l-dawla metlī metlu, ya‘nī mā fī iḥtilāf abadan. bas k-jinsiyya huwa jinsiyyatu swēdī anā jinsiyyatī sūryā.

Because I am studying just like any other person, like a Swede, he is studying and I am studying. I finish studies, I take the degree and I work. I will pay taxes for the country just like others, I mean, there is no difference at all. Only about the nationality, his nationality is Swedish and my nationality is Syrian.

The label evokes different reactions and emotions, but in the end, as Dana underlines, it is only a word, an adjective for a person who was forced to migrate:

‘ādiyye ha-l-kelme. hiyye be-l-nihāye, hiyye kelme. ya‘nī, ennū hiyye šifa. mumken tkūn ennū ilā m‘ānī ktīr, bas ennū anā yhemnī anā ḥālī ennū anā rāḍya ‘alā ḥālī, bas kelmet lājī aw ḡeyr lājī mā tahemm. ya‘nī hāy l-kelme, mā beddī t’asser ‘aley.

It’s normal, this word. In the end, it’s a word. I mean, it’s an adjective. There may be many meanings to it, but I care about myself that I am content with myself. But the word refugee or not refugee does not matter. I mean this word, I don’t want it to affect me.

In the end, a person rarely chooses to become a refugee, and the label is imposed on a person by the international system. In case of participants of the study, the label is imposed on them not only by local legal system, but the participants often feel that many locals perceive them first as refugees, which, as described, can have negative understandings.

PART THREE

3.1. GENDER AND FORCED MIGRATION

Many factors affect the refugee experience. The collective features of an individual such as political and economic situation or social structures as well as individual features like affiliation to political, religious, social groups, personal traits and abilities determine how a person endures displacement and integration in a new country. It is not possible to fully understand the refugee experience when ignoring its intersectional character and not take into account several factors that determine the position of a refugee. In this chapter I present gender as one of the factors and explain in what ways can it be instrumental in the experience of forced migration.

Gendered nature of displacement

Traditionally in the past, researchers assumed that there is one common refugee experience, irrespective of gender and its influence on perceiving and understanding the situation of a forced migrant (Young, Chan 2015: 17-36). Today, the approach to forced migration and the acknowledgment of gender's relevance to the phenomenon is changing, and more consideration is given to how gender identities may influence and shape the experience of forced migration and integration in a receiving country. However, despite this progress, the issue of gender blindness still exists in the area of forced migration and because of this issue, a variety of experiences closely related to gender identity is being trivialized and omitted (El-Bushra, 2000). That being the case, in this chapter I take a closer look at how gender and forced migration are complementary and how gender is one of the decisive factors in a refugee experience.

While statistically displacement affects men and women equally (Dietrich, Quain 2014), the consequences of forced migration can vary for both genders. The 1951 convention regulates who can be named 'a refugee' and on what grounds the refugee protection can be granted, however the definition has no reference to gender. The Convention is not inclusive to gender as one of the reasons of persecution that forces people to flee their place of residence. Moreover, at the time of creating the Convention women's rights were not widely recognized which may also contributed to marginalization of women's issues in forced migration. The scholars argue that the definition is based on androcentric and heteronormative paradigm, demanding that the definition should be rewritten so that gender would be included as a basis of fear of persecution (Fiddyan-Qasmiyeh, 2014).

As pointed out by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014), women and other social groups seeking asylum, such as children or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI), through several new documents constituting their rights are described as having 'unconventional' circumstances when fleeing persecution. It can be concluded that the numerous exceptional guidelines that subsequently include 'other groups' are out of the ordinary, where ordinary means the definitions of the 1951 Convention. Therefore, the definition of a refugee from the Convention has been developed on an image of heteronormative male, since only the groups covered in the exceptional guidelines, such as women or LGBTI persons, are today named as 'other' or 'unconventional'. Today, UNHCR recognizes that in the past 'the refugee definition has been interpreted through a framework of male experiences' which led to lack of recognition of claims of women (UNHCR, 2002). It calls today that the 1951 Convention's refugee definition should be interpreted with awareness of gender dimensions in the context, even though gender is not mentioned in the definition itself.

Reconstructing gender in displacement

As several authors have shown (McSpadden 1999; Jaji 2009), new socio-cultural contexts that refugees are placed in may often lead to difficulties in reconstructing their gender identities after displacement. There are some general tendencies about how traditional

gender roles change during displacement. Women tend to obtain more different roles which often are new to them and contribute to being providers to a family. Men on the other hand often find themselves detached from their old position in the family as decision makers and main providers (El-Bushra, 2000). Those distinctions in changing gender roles between men and women will be developed in the following parts of the chapter.

Conflict and flight have influence on communities and families and, therefore, forced migration which is affected by both conflict and displacement can contribute to rearrangement of social relations and gender relations in a family (Buckley-Zistel, Krause 2007). DeBiaggi (2001), in her study on Brazilian immigrants in the US, indicates the role of gender in establishment in a new country and what influence it has on the structure of an immigrant family. She focuses on changing gender roles in a family, which according to her is a major theme in the adjustment of an immigrant family. In a new place of residence, the traditional and familiar surroundings often disappear and migrants find themselves in a setting with no recognizable social systems and structures. This also applies to gender order that is disrupted and replaced by new structures where migrants need to accommodate themselves to. Her findings may be region- or culture-specific or may only apply to the interviewed Brazilian migrants, but they present an interesting image of how changing gender roles may influence the outcome of migration in a marital setting. Interviewed families often had marital problems due to changes in men's and women's attitudes, which resulted from compulsory change such as entering into work force or from external observations of gender roles of American couples.

Limiting the generalizations of this study

However, as written by El-Bushra (2000) it cannot be assumed that needs and interests of women and men during conflicts or disasters are the same, however, it cannot also be assumed that the needs of women or men are the same everywhere. Every person has their own needs and each migrant may have different experiences and this chapter is not to describe a common female and common male refugee experience which I believe does not exist. This chapter is written to show what influence gender can have on facing

displacement and forced migration. The described influence is not a rule and may not affect every migrant. I intentionally choose to describe experiences of both genders, to support the emerging approach of including both men and women in studies of gender. I do not intend however to assert in this chapter that any of the genders is positioned below the other as refugees or face more problems during integration in a new country. By further explaining the male refugee position and male-specific issues during displacement I do not intend to undermine the existing gender-oriented humanitarian work aimed at empowering women. Focusing on male position and masculinity is not an abandonment of feminist projects, but rather a complimentary study (Sinclair-Webb, 2000).

Initially, the two following parts were named *Being a refugee woman* and *Being a refugee man* but after talking to the Syrian men and women they made me aware that those titles would be inaccurate. While having a refugee status certainly determines their realities, they were and are women and men before they became refugees, and they indeed identify themselves as such, rather than as refugees. They see themselves as capable of the same things as other men and women, but they were forced to leave their country and build new lives in Sweden. In the following, I examine how their status as refugees determines their relationship with their gender.

Including gender in studies of displacement

The change in the research on forced migration described above, more often includes the issues of gender in displacement and recognizes it as a factor affecting the process and consequences of exile. This is related to other outcomes for male and female refugees. In the following part I address the issue of vulnerability and victimization. Common framing of women as powerless victims positioned them in contrast with men that are depicted as perpetrators (Moser and Clarke, 2001). This discourse leads to the neglect of women's role in conflicts and displacement and their active participation in the process, as well as to a 'victimization' of women and taking away their agency. Secondly, men's experiences as victims are trivialized and presupposed roles deprive men of their experiences. This framing has negative consequences for both genders and I discuss those consequences further below as well as examine how this discourse influences the work of humanitarian

aid agencies and what result it has on those receiving aid. In following parts of this chapter I present the accounts of Syrian men and women and analyze how the experiences of both genders may differ and to what extent gender may have a decisive role in shaping a refugee experience.

3.2. BEING A WOMAN IN DISPLACEMENT

The gender blindness in the management of forced migration and of the 1951 Convention has contributed to the discrimination and neglect of gender-specific struggles of both male and female uprooted migrants. However, the discourse and research concerning refugees is based on a primarily male paradigm yet it is widely accepted as representative of a universal image of forced migrants (Indra, 1987). This approach contributes to specific discrimination that women may additionally face during displacement. Since, as established in the previous chapter, the definition of a refugee and criteria for being granted an international protection and asylum is often based on male experiences, women may therefore face difficulties and have lower chances in achieving refugee status (Indra, 1987). Even the thought and decision about fleeing a country can be determined by gender, since in some communities only men can travel freely without a presence of a kinsman, and women cannot travel alone. This definitely determines situation of many women who are not able or simply refuse to be accompanied by a male guardian and in result, the women never get a chance to leave a conflict zone or be granted international protection. Moreover, the agents of hosting countries or aid agencies that refugees have to deal with before, during and after their flight are predominantly male, which makes gender relations an essential issue in the process (ibid.).

Gendered flight and female empowerment in displacement

The female participants of my research travelled safely from Syria accompanied by their families or alone to join their families in Sweden and did not mention any limitations on the decision about their escape raised by their gender. However, Dana mentioned how one of her female relatives decided to move to one of the countries in the region due to difficult economic situation in Syria caused by war and lack of available work in her

profession. She was able to travel alone and it did not raise any issues in her family, however, this was not something normally accepted in the community.

Zeina travelled to Sweden with her female friend and for her the journey as a refugee woman was empowering. The journey did not affect her negatively, she says:

be-l-‘aks, mā attarat fīnī, qawwatnī. qawwat šaḥṣītī aktar w- ṭabbattu l-ḥālī
ennū anā benet, aqdar a‘temed ‘alā ḥālī kūnī bent šarqīyya.

On the contrary, it didn't affect me, it strengthened me. It strengthened my character and I proved myself that I'm a girl and I am able to rely on myself, being a Middle Eastern girl.

fa hāy kān šī kweyyes ilī, aḥadtu ḥebra w- tuqtu b-ḥālī aktar, a‘tamedtu ‘al-
ḥālī f-anā šuftuwā ennū šī kweyyes.

So it was a good thing for me, I got an experience and trusted myself more, I relied on myself and I perceived it as something good.

She states the journey might have been easier for her if she was a man, because of the general view of the society on men as stronger than women and that men are allowed to do more. However, she says, that in the end:

l-ḥōf, kel l-insān yiḥess be-ha-l-šī be-l-šo‘ōr be-l-ḥōf. bas anā ašūf ennū nafs
l-šī be-l-nihāya l-itnēn insānāt w-‘andun nafs l-mašā‘er.

Fear, every person feels this thing, those feelings, the fear. But I see that in the end it's the same for two persons and they have same feelings.

Zeina expressed admiration for women who decide to flee their country. In her opinion women are much stronger than men during the refugee journey, and despite all obstacles they face, their courage and strength allows women to achieve their goals.

Samar travelled alone to Sweden, her husband had already reached the destination before her. However, she had difficulties in joining him and after two years of struggle she used a smuggler to cross the borders. She recollects that others were travelling with their partners and families while she was travelling alone. In this scenario, she admits that the fact that she was a woman was an additional obstacle. However, both Dana and Samar do not think that if they were men the journey would have been much easier. Samar explains that her husband also had difficulties in reaching Sweden and that his journey was a hard struggle lasting for six months. She adds:

fa ʔettā law kunet šāb mā batheyyel l-mawḏōʕ b-jozʕ l-quwwa l-ʔasadiyya
w-tāqat l-taḥammul ʕanda l-rajul šwey aktar men ʕanda l-marā ennū
huwwe momken yḥammal bard aktar yḥammal ymšī aktar masalan yaʕnī
b-šakl ʕām hāda illī bysāʕed. bas k-rajul w-marʕa mā bšūf fī fareq. itnēn yaʕnī
fī ʕandum muškila.

So even if I was a guy the matter would not change, when it comes to physical strength and resistance a man has a bit more than a woman has, that he maybe can bear the cold better, bear the walking better for example, I mean generally this is something that helps. But as a man and a woman I don't see that there's a difference. I mean, they both have a difficulty.

Dana also agrees that during a journey as a refugee there are no differences between women and men.

mā ʕam ašūf fī farq beyn l-rajul we-l-marā, ennū nafs l-šī.

I don't see that there is a difference between a man and a woman, it's the same.

Similar views are shared by Fadi and Talal, however, they both admit that the journey would be harder if they were women. Fadi underlines that the journey is similarly hard for men and women only after they reach Greece. Since initially he travelled to one of the

countries in the region south of Syria, in his opinion women face more obstacles while travelling as refugees in Arab countries, especially with finding an employment.

mā btwaqqa‘ ykūn fī iḥtilāf beyn rajul w-marā b-riḥla lel-swēd, ba‘d mā waṣlū le-l-yūnān. lāken abl l-yūnān k-riḥla ḍimn l-‘ālam l-‘arabī ḍimn l-blād l-‘arabiyya min sūrya l-yemen masalan btwaqqa‘ b-l-nisba l-marā kān šī mustaḥīl. b-balad btmassek jiddan b-‘ādāt w-taqālīd w-qabā’el w-‘ašā’er, fa ṣa‘b jiddan ‘a-l-benet k-l-marā taḥa’’e’ šī hnīk.

I wouldn’t expect there is a difference between a man and a woman in a journey to Sweden, after they reached Greece. But before Greece as a journey through the Arab world, through the Arabic countries, from Syria to Yemen for example, I would expect that for a woman it would be something impossible. In a country that strongly holds on to customs and traditions and tribes and clans, it’s very hard for a girl that you will achieve something there.

Female integration in a new society

Accommodation and acculturation in a new country is a stressful process for both genders where values, traditions and identities from the cultural background in the countries of origin are situated alongside those prevailing in the host country, which are often unfamiliar for the migrants. Hajdukowski-Ahmed (2013) points to how notions of home in displacement are deconstructed and how its feminized notion is undermined. In times of conflict and uprooting women are particularly affected when losing their ‘safe place’. During resettlement, they are said to be attempting to recreate the familiarity of the lost home by reproducing traditional food, familiar customs and spaces.

Refugee women who engage in new work responsibilities are therefore promptly introduced to the new culture and adopt new cultural behaviours and values with less difficulty than their husbands (Hojat et. al, 2000). However, they are in a risk of being

imposed with a ‘triple burden’. Beside the often newly acquired productive role, many of the women still sustain the reproductive role and continue to be responsible for maintaining the household and raising children. Furthermore, they often have the leading role on a community level, and are a ‘cultural broker’ between their partners and children in situations of conflict to acculturation-related topics (Young, Chan 2005, 17-36). Women are numerously pointed out to be the bearers of culture and national identity in times of violent conflict (Chatterji, Chaudhy 2014) in a symbolic and functional way where they can transmit the traditional values to the succeeding generation. Therefore, after adopting new roles during conflict or displaced, not infrequently in the end they are deprived of these new roles and ‘pushed back into the kitchen’ in order to return to the old pre-war order and status quo (Rajasingham-Senanayake 2004:141).

The initial process of integration as a woman in new country has not been easy for Samar, Dana and Zeina. However, the process of integration in Sweden as a Syrian female was in their opinion not very different of experiences of their husbands or male friends. They do not see that their gender had a decisive role in the process. According to Samar:

hūn be-l-swēd rajul w-marā ‘andun nafs l-ṣ‘ōbāt.

Here in Sweden a man and a woman have same difficulties.

ṣ‘ōbāt nafsā llī wājahā zōjī, anā nafsā wājahtā. ma ḥasseyt ennū huwwe wājah šī a’all l-ennū huwwe rajul, la’, huwwe kamān ijā, t’allam luġa, kān fih ṣ‘ōbāt fa anā k-marā rāḥ kamān lī nafs l-ṣ‘ōbāt.

Same difficulties that my husband faced, I myself faced them. I didn’t feel that he faced something less because he’s a man, no. He also came, learned language, had difficulties, so I as a woman will also have same difficulties.

Internal ‘othering’

The intersectional character of the experience and crossing of several factors such as gender, culture and social structures lead to additional issues characteristic for women in a refugee experience. Pittaway and Bartolomei (2005) explain the occurrence of ‘othering’ of refugees, that is, considering a group of people as ‘others’ and in lesser value than the dominant community. Women however are often put in situations where they are ‘othered’ twice. Since the ‘othering’ is usually done on the grounds of race, in women’s case another factor in the discrimination is gender. Therefore, they all too often become targets for sexual violence and sexual torture in order to shame the men of their communities in their home countries. This may also lead to internal ‘othering’ from the members of a group, the practices may lead to general rejection of the affected women in their own communities.

One of the examples of such internal ‘othering’ is the situation of the Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria after the 1991 War. The conflict caused intensification of social differences between genders and women suffered from specific types of persecutions (Sassoon 2010). Women’s organizations noted a high rise in the number of abductions, rapes, sexual slavery of women and forced withdrawal from education of girls in the country. Not only was it causing a massive gap in education, but also due to a very unstable situation in the country, girls were often being kept strictly at home. Moreover, new conservative policies forced dress codes on women and ordered gender segregation at universities and work places. In order to impose conservative political agendas, violence towards women was used as a method and weapon, and in consequence the terror against females was on the rise. The war resulted in millions of refugees, and most of the displaced from Iraq settled in Jordan and Syria. Yet, the violence and trauma from the past persisted in the refugee households, where women were desperately in need of psychological help. However, the difficult financial situation and uncertainty about their status in a new country did not allow women to solve the issue. After fleeing from a conflict and having difficulties with obtaining legal status and work, the desperate situation of the displaced often generated an increase in the number of women involved with prostitution. Many female refugees from Iraq in Syria and Jordan were either forced to or voluntarily took up sex work. It is worth mentioning that in a 2014 survey conducted by UN Women,

92% of Syrian refugees said that a woman who lost her virginity before marriage, regardless of circumstances, would never be accepted in their community (Dietrich, Quain 2014). This proves how sensitive topic it is in this community and how easily can it lead to social ostracism and rejection from the society. The internal ‘othering’ is a significant obstacle in rebuilding women’s lives after the displacement. With no acceptance from the society, women can suffer even more than they did during the conflict.

This internal ‘othering’ was also mentioned in my conversations with the participants in the interviews. Talal describes how integration may be harder for women because of the community of origin and its judgments towards women.

l-ṣu‘ūbāt awwalan be-l-mujtama‘. mujtama‘ ġālīban mutaḥallef. lammā marā bitijī ya‘nī abṣaṭ l-umūr mā fihā t‘amelā masalan mā fihā tšīl l-ḥijāb, mā fihā t‘amel beddyā lāzem tjawwez wāḥed min nafs l-dīn taba‘ā‘ masalan. hay l-ṣ‘ūba tab‘at l-nisā. we-l-swēdiyīn beḥebbū ysā‘edū l-nisā bas hiya l-ṣ‘ūba btšīr be-l-mujtama‘ btšīr fi šī ismo *shadow society* w-mā fihā ḥad byia‘mel *integration* w-min ḍumn l-nisā ṭab‘an.

The difficulties are first within the community. Community is often backward. When a woman arrives, I mean, the simplest things she cannot do, for example, she cannot take off hijab, she cannot do what she wants she has to marry someone from same religion that her’s, for example. This is a difficulty for a woman. And Swedes love helping women but the difficulty occurs in the community, there occurs something that’s called shadow society, and nobody in it can integrate, including women of course.

law kent imrā men sūrya kān ašhal be-l-swēd ma‘-l-swēdiyyīn aw b-šakl ‘ām, bas kān aša‘b ma‘-l-muḥīṭ taba‘ī, masalan, l-ahlī.

If a were a woman from Syria it would be easier in Sweden with Swedes or generally, but it would be harder with my own surroundings, for example, with my family.

f-ashal ennū tendemej l-ennū hum bye'tebrūhā k-ḍaḥiyya, w-lāzem nsā'adhā, bas aṣa'b l-ennū 'āyelthā mā bḥallēhā, ḥaṣṣatan izā kānt men saqāfa mānā ktīr mutaḥarrera.

So it's easier [for a woman] to integrate because they [Swedes] consider her as a victim, so we have to help her. But it's harder because her family is not allowing her, especially when she is from a culture that is not very liberal.

Reconceptualising a refugee woman

In Siddambarapuram Camp in Sri Lanka which was a transit camp created for refugees returning from Jaffna to India in 1991, traditional gender and caste structures were gradually vanishing under the circumstances of displacement. Traditionally, the notion of widowhood in Indian society had negative connotations, however during uprooting it transformed to be an empowering factor for the displaced women. Widowed women who were forced to take the role of a breadwinner and head of the family refused to be stigmatized as widows, and, despite initial difficulties with new responsibilities imposed on them, they enjoyed their new roles as breadwinners and decision-makers in their households.

Hajdukowski (2013:165) argues that currently the term 'a refugee woman' is being remodelled and new contexts and meanings are analysed in order to better understand the concept. Primarily the image of a victimized woman is being deconstructed, and more focus is being put on female agency and resilience. In scenarios where women are free to speak without fear to be discriminated on the grounds of their opinions, female narratives show women's determination and strong ability to plan and decide about their own identities as well as taking care of themselves and their families. The personal narratives of the women I interviewed present similar image. While for none of them the journey and initial settlement in a new country was easy and they struggled with many obstacles as newcomers in an unfamiliar community, they talk positively about their futures and plans how to achieve their goals.

awwal fatra ktīr ṣa‘ba kanet be-l-nisba illī, ya‘nī balad jdīd w-‘ādāt jdīda. bas ta‘wwadtu šwey šwey. ilā hallā’ ennū anā ṣar lī sane w-nuṣ ennū ‘am aḥāwel akūn aqwā akūn aqwā matalan min hadāk l-šahar aw šahar illī qablu, ‘am aḥāwel.

The first period was very hard for me, I mean, a new country and new customs. But I got used to it a bit by a bit. Until now, that it became a year and a half for me, I am trying to be stronger, be stronger than last month, or the month before it, I am trying.

Dana, Samar and Zeina are studying Swedish language in a national Swedish course for immigrants (SFI). They also study English and completed apprentice programme in order to find further employment or volunteer in local projects. They describe their current duties as challenging but necessary to achieve certain desired status in Sweden.

mā beddī aḥess fī farq beynī w-beyn ey šaḥṣ illī kān muqēm be-l-swēd.

I don’t want to feel that there is a difference between me and any person that lives in Sweden.

However, while the women agree that in their opinion this is the right way for integration in a new country, they underline that not all of their friends act the same way.

anā ‘andī ṣadī’a w-hiya aṣḡar minnī bas mā fiā taṭawwer abadan, anā ṣar ‘andī ktīr aṣḡiqā’ l-šwēdīn w-‘amalt *praktik* b-širke w-‘am dawwer ‘a-šēḡel w-hiya lissā ‘am tedrus. iza bedā trūḥ ‘alā makān barrā minti’tā mā bt‘aref kif trūḥ. hiya ktīr šāṭra be-l-inglīzī w-ktīr šāṭra be-l-swēdī hiya ḥattā luḡatā be-l-dirāsā hiya aṣṡar minnī. bas hiyā ijtimā‘iyyan mā ‘am tetharrar, hiyya ḥāyfe, ma beddā, beddā ā‘da be-l-bēt.

I have a friend and she is younger than me but she is not developing at all. I made a lot of Swedish friends, did the traineeship in a company and I am looking for a job and she is still studying [the language]. If she wants to go to

any place outside her area she doesn't know how to go. She is very smart in English and very smart in Swedish, she is even smarter than me in language studies. But socially she is not freed, she is scared, she doesn't want to, she wants to sit in the house.

Yet, in Zeina's opinion, it is men travelling from Middle Eastern societies to Sweden who have more difficulties in integrating in the country than women. She personally did not feel that her gender hindered her integration in Sweden. She was allowed to enjoy same activities and went through processes as men did. While this was an advantage for her personally, in her opinion it might constitute a problem for men:

l-rajul k-rajul mā yṯqabbal ha-l-šī, l-rajul l-šarqī mā yṯqabbal abadan. ennū l-marā raḥ taṯla' l-yōm trūḥ l-madrassa w-mā tabqā ma'-l-walad, la', mā yṯqabbal ha-l-šī. aw law bintu kubret w-ysīr 'andā rifqāt w-tiṯla'. mā raḥ yṯqabbal ha-l-šī, raḥ yšūfu kīr ša'b.

A man as a man doesn't accept this thing, a Middle Eastern man doesn't accept it at all. That a woman will go out one day, go to school and will not stay [home] with the kid, no, he doesn't accept this thing. Or if his daughter grows up and gets friends and goes out. He will not accept this thing, he will see it as very hard.

3.3. BEING A MAN IN DISPLACEMENT

A growing number of researchers point to the imbalance in gender studies between the genders as well as unequal vulnerability assessment or distribution of gender-oriented aid. Prevailing images of both genders determine their position in conflict and violence. The critique of research about forced migration and humanitarian aid was directed towards the norms and definitions that were created by building on a male paradigm. The focus of the critique was to balance men's and women's position and to raise the issue of inequalities that women face. Today, the discourse is heading towards the question of whether the efforts to increase awareness about the situation of women in displacement contributed to disregarding the condition of male migrants. While women's question was previously nearly inexistent in the studies of forced migration, researchers argue that currently it is women who are receiving now almost exclusive attention in refugee research (El-Bushra, 2000), which may lead to negative outcomes both for men and women. In this part I discuss the position of men during conflict as assessed by research and common media framing and what are its results for male migrants, as well as present Syrian men's approach to this issue.

Male roles during conflict and assessment of masculinity

Up until the mid 1980s, migration was considered a male phenomenon (IOM 2014), however, as presented in previous chapters, forced migration affects both genders almost equally. When it comes to gender divisions in an armed conflict, predominantly men are fighters and soldiers. Historically, despite rising number, there are only less than 1% exceptions to this gendered rule (Goldstein, 2003). Therefore, it is often men who are

more often associated with functional roles during in wars, while women are associated with more passive roles in times of conflict (*ibid.*).

Consequently, during violent conflicts, the common framing of women in violent conflicts as 'victims' and men as 'perpetrators' is prevailing (Moser and Clarke 2001). This led to a widespread assessment of who is the most vulnerable in a conflict and in the greatest need of aid and assistance programmes by humanitarian agencies, which also had significant influence on general image of conflict-displaced people in media. Considering the content of the previous chapter it is evident that it is usually women and children that are assessed as those in greatest need of aid and vulnerable to discrimination and persecution on grounds of gender. A similar trend exists in academic research, and as pointed out by Jaji (2009) 'gender perspective in refugee studies usually conjures up images of refugee women [...] yet, it is not only refugee women who face monumental challenges in the country of asylum; refugee men also encounter a wide range of problems'. In Jordan, a country hosting one of the biggest numbers of Syrian refugees, men are more often subject to refoulement to Syria for alleged security reasons (Turner 2016). And as summarized by Davis (2014) 'by any reasonable definition, men are the most vulnerable. And yet, they are not considered vulnerable'.

Even during a flight, and especially during illegal travel, there is an assumption about men being more often smuggled, having at the same time agency and choice during the flight, and women being often trafficked, without any agency or voice (van Liempt, 2008). Yet, the data on smuggled or trafficked migrants is not precise nor reliable, and therefore there is no proof to support this view. After arriving from forced flight, access to resettlement is different for male and female migrants and those who are perceived as more 'vulnerable' have clearly additional advantage in applying to resettlement programmes. As a result, men are being resettled less frequently than women and children (Horst 2013).

Disempowering men

Humanitarian agencies frequently launch programmes that intend to empower women and settle their position in refugee settlements, for example in refugee camps. While it is

a necessary idea, it also has implications for the structure of affected society and often creates new power structures and hierarchies (Buckley-Zistel and Krause, 2017). In numerous instances, the process of empowerment of women may result in disempowerment of men and undermining their position in a society. One such instance was described by Turner (2004) in his study in Tanzanian camp in 1998 for Burundian refugees. With UNHCR's efforts to encourage women for employment, men lost their positions as providers for their households and struggled with adapting to new structures and reconstructing their roles in society and complained about losing respect in the family. Turner notes that refugees 'use gender as a major interpretative scheme – gender being central to their identity' (Turner 2014:104), and in cases where this major factor was underestimated and focus was put on only one of the genders, the second suffered and was confused in the unwanted new order of matters.

This does not mean that male refugees are not able to fit into new structures. Many displaced men undertake new roles arising from new environments and structures as well as out of necessity. However, the acceptance of new roles as well as embracing the roles of a female partner in a household is a process and that is often viewed by men as stressful, especially for men coming from societies with rigid gender role structures (Young, 2015: 17-36).

One of the participants in the study, Fadi, generally had no difficulties in accommodating to new country. In his opinion, those actions that were considered as wrong in his country are acceptable behaviours in Sweden so he was not forced to restrictions on his behaviour. For Talal it was not the case, and fitting his life to new customs in Sweden was challenging. Moreover, in his opinion integration in a new country is always harder for a man, especially when he comes from a Middle Eastern country. One of the reasons for that is the level of vulnerability for the two genders that is assessed by a receiving community.

l-ennū benet, ḥāssatan lemmā yijī l-wāḥed men *Middle East*, w-lemmā yijī
 ‘alā l-swēd, l-benet byeṭalla‘ ‘aleyhā k-ḍaḥiyya, k-*victim*, ennū hiya ḍa‘ēfa w-
 lāzem nsā‘edhā. ammā šāb huwwe *threat* ‘a-l-mujtama‘.

Because a girl, especially when one comes from the Middle East, and when one comes to Sweden, a girl is looked at as a victim, because she is weak and we need to help her. But a guy he is a threat to the society.

Assessment of vulnerability

Turner (2016) elaborates the vulnerability assessment in refugee camp setting and shows, using the example of his research in Jordan, how vulnerability is almost exclusively assigned only for women and children. An official UNHCR document named Vulnerability Assessment Framework Baseline Survey reporting the most vulnerable areas among those inhabited by Syrian refugees in Jordan consists of photographs of twenty people. Only one of those people is an adult male, which according to the author is not accidental. Turner contacted the photographer whose work was used in the report, and he explained that ‘I was told at times that really we need pictures of women and children, and as a photographer you learn to shoot what is wanted... So you learned to not even really in most cases bother to shoot lots of stuff of men... Because you knew it wasn’t going to be used’ (Turner, 2016:2). The approach described by Turner is also often experienced by men I talked to when they arrived from their journey. Nader said:

rijāl bywājho muškile ktīr kbīre ma‘ l-marā l-ennun rijāl. hay l-far’ beyn l-rajul w l-marā, l-mar’a be-l-hūn be-l-mujtama‘ aḥsan men l-rajul. ya’nī l-rajul mā fiho y’ūl ijīt w-ṭhaššarat fih benet, aw ṭharrašat fih, bas l-mar’a fihā ta’ūl ennū ḥad taḥarraš fiyā we-l-keḷ byrūḥ l-‘ando byeḥkī ma’yo.

Men face a very big problem with a woman because they are men. This is the difference between a man and a woman, a woman here in the society is better than a man. I mean, a man cannot say ‘I came and a girl harassed me’, but a woman can say that someone has harassed her and everyone goes to him [the man] and talks to him.

- meškilet hūn ennū l-rajul dāyman huwwe lissā awṭa darajto min l-mar'a hūn l-huqūq kellā ya'tā lel-mar'a w ma' dālek l-mar'a beddā ba'd huqūqā. ya'nī kel šī hūn lel-mar'a, fa rajul be-l-'aks fī 'endo mašākel hūn.
- *A problem here is that a man always has lower grade than a woman, here all of the rights are given to a woman and with that a woman wants her rights. I mean, everything here is for a woman, and a man the opposite he has problems here.*

Exclusion of men and its effects

Several humanitarian organizations target primarily women and children, providing programmes dedicated to empowering them. Both male and female Syrians in Jordan that Turner spoke with in his research (2016), commented that, in their opinion, the humanitarian sector is not interested in working with men. Turner suggests this is due to the perception that an adult male refugee 'looks like a threat, not like a beneficiary'. The men I interviewed had similar feelings about society's perception about them. Talal explains what in his understanding Swedish society thinks about male refugees coming from Middle East:

fakrū kel l-'ālam ennū masalan irhabiyyīn men *Middle East*, šī mū ḥelū enta *alien* enta mū bašar enta šart lājī.

Everyone thinks, for example, terrorists from Middle East. It's not a nice thing, you are an alien, you are not a human you became a refugee.

One of the examples of such omission are assistance programmes for persons affected by sexual violence. It is often assumed that sexual violence is imposed by men on women. However, many cases show that sexual violence on men is an existing issue. Dolan (2014) in his report indicates that nearly 40% of male refugees in a settlement in Western Uganda had experienced an incident of sexual violence in their lives. That being the case, while

programmes for female victims of sexual violence are not very sufficient, support for male victims is nearly non-existent (El-Bushra, 2000). In refugee settlements in Jordan, several agencies refused to modify the definition of sexual and gender-based violence in prevention and response programs in order to include men and boys as potential victims of sexual violence, claiming at the same time that men cannot be victims in such cases, or claiming that the number of such occurrences is too low to be significant, or explaining the cases as a cultural practice. (Turner, 2016).

PART FOUR

4. MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES IN SYRIA

The people that I interviewed often repeated similar statement about how difficult it is to describe Syrian people, since Syria is such a big country full of different cultures. Talal said:

anā beḥkī ‘an nafsi, mā bḥeṣṣ ḥālī *typical syrian*. ġalaṭ izā wāḥed ys’alnī šū typical syrian. ktīr ġalaṭ ennū ‘aṭī misāl ‘an l-šab l-sūrī, l-ennū l-šab l-sūrī b-šakl l-‘ām ya‘nī ḥatta sūryā ša‘b l-wāḥed y’ūl ennū šū l-sūrī l-ennū sūryā fihā arba‘ w-‘išrīn miliōn wāḥed aw waḥda w-fihā ktīr *cultures* w-fihā ktīr *differences*, ya‘nī mā fī typical rajul aw typical marā.

I am talking about myself, I don’t consider myself a ‘typical Syrian’. It’s a mistake when someone asks me who is a typical Syrian. It’s very wrong that I give you an example of Syrian people, because Syrian people in general, I mean, even Syria, it’s hard for one to say what is Syrian because in Syria there is 24 million people and it has many cultures and it has many differences, I mean, there is no typical man or typical woman.

Therefore, in this thesis I draw on Moghadam’s work on gender and women in the Middle East (1993). Studying the region needs to be done with acknowledgement of heterogeneity of the region and the diversity of population inhabiting it. There are no archetypical Middle Eastern women and, depending on area of residence, social and cultural arrangements, education or age, a woman’s position and characteristics will differ. Even throughout the same social and cultural arrangements, women will vary, some will have different political or religious views, some will follow local traditions, while for others the heritage will not have much value. Similar statement can be made about Syrian women,

since although limited to one country, the inhabited area is very diverse historically, culturally and socially.

I argue that this also applies to men in the Middle East and that there are no archetypical Middle Eastern men, nor archetypical Syrian men. Therefore, I do not intend to create one general image describing who is a Syrian woman or who is a Syrian man, since there is no single answer to that question. Rather, I present examples of how gender, femininity and masculinity are understood by academics from different parts of the world in relation to what is the understanding of those questions by Syrian men and women. The content of this chapter is based on secondary literature review of gender, femininities and masculinities of the region of Middle East and Syria as well as the stories and views of three Syrian women and four Syrian men that I interviewed, who came to Sweden after the outbreak of Syrian Civil War, about the notions of masculinity and femininity in their homeland.

4.1. FEMININITIES IN SYRIA

Women's rights and duties in Syria

Syria is said to be one of the most advanced Middle Eastern countries in terms of women's rights (Kelly & Breslin 2010). The constitution adopted in 1973 and later revised and adopted in 2012 guarantees the effort for achieving equality between genders in article 23 that says:

‘The state shall provide women with all opportunities enabling them to effectively and fully contribute to the political, economic, social and cultural life, and the state shall work on removing the restrictions that prevent their development and participation in building society.’³

As of 2005, 16.3 percent of Syrian women were active in the workforce. The number dropped to 13.5 percent in 2013 after the outbreak of the war (Hudock, Sherman & Williamson 2016). This number is one of the lowest in comparison to other Middle Eastern countries. The explanation to this status according to research is that, despite high level of education amongst Syrian females, political and social obstacles stand in their way when entering the workforce.

Particular parts of the Syrian Penal Code discriminate against women, as they might be punished more severely than men. As an example, women and men are differently prosecuted in instances of adultery under Articles 239, 242 and 548, and women have limited possibilities to provide evidence, have broader ground on which they can be prosecuted, as well as face longer sentences (Kelly et al. 2010). The personal status law differentiates the rights depending on the religious group that the person belongs to.

³ UN translation of the Arabic text of the Constitution to English available at: <http://constitutions.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/syrian-arab-republic?provisioncategory=d91f71586bb54610baa13236037086c1> [accessed March 2018]

However, in many cases, men and women have unequal rights under the law and, if not stated otherwise for a certain religious group, rights often differ in terms of marriage, divorce, ability to travel or inheritance rights. It is women who are in inferior legal position than men. However, women enjoy their rights to work, own property and access to education.

Being a woman in Syria

In Syria, Dana was working as a clerk and volunteered in humanitarian agencies. Zeina was studying and her plan after graduation was to get employment in a bank and help others in need as a volunteer. Samar says that in Syria she was free to choose who she wanted to be and the life she wanted to have. She did not like to spend much time at home, she used to work a lot and go out with her friends.

For Zeina, being a woman means to be part of a society. However, she points out that there are many factors that influence what it means to be a woman in Syria. One of the factors she names is religion. Certainly, she is right to point out how religion determines rights and duties of a woman in Syria, especially knowing that, as mentioned above, the national law related to personal status differentiates according to religion of a citizen, providing different freedoms accordingly. According to Zeina, a lot has recently changed in Syria and a Christian woman has more freedoms than a Muslim woman. She herself is a Christian.

Dana also emphasises that the most important thing for her as a woman is to be part of the society. She does not like her days to be useless but to be beneficial both for her and for others. Dana believes that women have an essential position in the society. She wants for herself as a woman:

ennū ykūn ilī dawr be-l-mujtama'. ennū mā akūn sitt l-beyt. lāzem asbet ḥālī, ennū l-marā mū lāzem taq'ad fe-l-beyt, lāzem tešteḡel metla metl l-šāb, tešteḡel, tkawwen l-usra, tfakker hiya kamān, tfakker teḡtār šarēk ḥayātā, ennū mā bas l-šāb illī yeḡtār.

That there is a role for me in society. That I will not be a housewife. I need to prove myself, a woman does not have to only sit in the house. She needs to work just like men do, establish a family, she also needs to be the one that thinks about it, thinks about choosing a companion in her life. It is not only the guys that choose.

Yet, in everyday life for a Syrian woman, men can have a significant voice in woman's life, which is emphasised by Samar.

l-marā, ḥalaqā aḍ'af b-sūrya, l-marā hiyye šaḥṣ lāzem ennū ḍall ḥāḍ'a l-sultat l-rajul. ya'ni id mā entī kuntī qawiyya w-id mā kānet šaḥṣiyatek qawiyya, fī illī huwa rajul, huwa l-ab, huwa l-aḥ, dā'imān 'am byikūno hinnā l-ra's. w-entī taḥto.

A woman, she is the weaker link in Syria. A woman is a person that has to continue being subject to the power of a man. I mean, even if you were strong and even if your personality was strong, there is a man, a father, a brother, there always is a head there. And you are below it.

Both women and men that I interviewed mention that for a Syrian woman it is the society that constitutes an obstacle in many respects of her life. Samar continues:

hiya betwājeh l-mujtama' awwalan. fa be-šarq l-awṣaṭ betwājeh š'ubāt aktar dāyman l-marā hiya 'am tet'arraḍ taḥarruṣ aktar. l-marā hiya 'am tet'arraḍ lel-ta'nīf we-l-'itidā'āt aktar min l-rajul.

First of all, she faces the society. So in the Middle East a woman always faces more difficulties, she is exposed more to the harassment. A woman is exposed to violence and assault more than a man.

Female strength

For the women I interviewed, an ability to be independent is a common trait that they name as a desirable trait for women. A woman can achieve her goals without the help of a man, she is capable of taking care of herself on her own if she desires so. Dana said:

lā tkūn d'ēfa. ya'nī l-marā, ennū hiya insāne tuqder ta'tamed 'alā ḥālā.
tuqder t'āmel kel šī l-ḥālā bdūn l-rajul.

[A woman] should not be weak. I mean, a woman, she is a person that can rely on herself. She is able to do everything by herself without any man.

Even though every woman has different aims and ideas about her life, independence and ability to pursue one's dreams are traits that are common between many Syrian women.

In Samar's opinion:

ey marā b-sūryā tetmannā ennū hiyā mustaqilla b-ḥayātā. ennū mā tkūn taba' l-zōjā. mū bas ennū btkūn ā'eda be-l-bēt 'am tuṭbuḥ w-tnazzef w-trabbī l-awlād. ya'nī 'andnā aḥlām anā beddī adres beddī aštaḡel beddī asbet ḥālī.

Any woman in Syria wishes that she is independent in her life. That she is not subject to her husband. Not that she will be sitting at home, cooking and cleaning and raising the kids. I mean we have dreams, I want to study, I want to work, I want to prove myself.

Unūta – femininity

Both the men and women I interviewed look for similar traits in femininity. Being feminine is not only associated with external appearance of a woman or solely to internal characteristics, but is rather a connection of those two. For Zeina femininity means:

anā bħess ennū l-mawdō‘ mutarābet, huwa ‘ebāra ‘an šekl w-šaḥṣīyya b-nafs l-wa’t, murtabeṭīn b-b‘aḍun. huwwe tarābuṭ beyn l-maḍmūn we-l-šakl l-ḥārejī, ya‘nī šaḥṣīyya w-šekl.

I feel that the question is linked, it’s a term about the appearance and personality at the same time, it’s connected together. It’s a correlation between what’s inside and the external form, I mean the personality and appearance.

For women, to be feminine means to have delicate traits and act gently. Dana explains that feminine means:

jins laṭīf, ktīr ḥassās, w-ktīr barī’, yiḥtāj dāyman l-ḥobb w-ḥimām w-ḥanniye ktīr kbīre.

A kind gender, very sensitive, and very innocent. Always needs love and concern and a lot of warmth.

Even the men interviewed mentioned the soft and gentle character of femininity. Nader, Riad, Talal and Fadi mention following traits as feminine:

ḥasab mafhūmī anā al-unūsa huwwe ennū al-bint tetkūn nā‘ema k-šaḥṣ raqēq.

In my understanding, femininity means that a girl is delicate, like a gentle person.

anā baḥebb l-bent tkūn bārī’a, nā‘ma, mā tkūn āsya ktīr.

I like when a girl is innocent, delicate, is not very harsh.

laṭīfe, ḥabbābe, zarīfe, kamān tkūn muḥtereme, tkūn šādeqa.

Kind, loving, charming, also she is respectful, is a friend.

l-riqqa, ḥanān, hay ktīr muhimme, ahamm šī ennū dāyman l-untā bt'aṭī,
bt'aṭī w-mā btas'al, l-musāmaḥa, ktīr btsāmiḥ

Gentleness, care, those are very important. The most important thing is that a woman always gives, gives without asking, and forgiveness, she forgives a lot.

Therefore, in understanding of Syrian men and women, in connection to being strong and independent, a woman should be tender and sensitive. She is loving and giving, and cares about others surrounding her and is forgiving. At the same time, when liberated from men's domination, she is fully able to take care of herself and achieve her dreams. She does not want to be limited in her ideas about her future, and be forced to stay at home and abandon work or other plans. She has an important role in a society and contributes to the family and her community. A woman is not weak and can rely on herself only if she desires so and succeed with her dreams.

4.2. MASCULINITIES IN SYRIA

Challenging traditional masculinity

The ‘traditional’ view of a Middle Eastern man as a family patriarch who is able to exert his power over women and junior members of the family through coercion or even force is currently being challenged. Inhorn (2012) puts forward the argument that Middle Eastern men are questioning traditional notions of manhood, and as a result, the Middle Eastern patriarchy is currently being unseated. In response to new emerging technologies, in case of her research new possible solutions for solving male infertility, the meaning of masculinity in the region is changing. Men are redefining current meanings of manhood by comparing themselves to the lives and customs of their fathers and grandfathers.

The first man that we meet in Inhorn’s study is Hamza, a patriot, willing to fight for his country. However, after his baby was born his priorities changed and since then, protecting his family was more important than anything. Even his political views and affiliations changed with the death of his father. This shows how surroundings and context strongly define individual changes and what difference one single factor may have on our understandings of the world. In the context of displacement, the surroundings change almost entirely and an individual faces series of new contexts and meanings, that emerge during an armed conflict in the home country, during the journey and when settling down in new culture and new community.

Male refugee journey to Sweden

The experiences of the men I talked to tell different stories about their journeys to Sweden. Most of the men used smugglers to cross the borders, and all of them recollect leaving the country as hard and full of extreme feelings. Riad recalls his journey:

l-riḥla kānet b-ṣarāḥa ṣa'ba l-ennū awwal marra b-ḥayātī baṭla' min barra ḥedūd baladī. aḥsās kān ṣa'b, mut'eb jiddan. b-ktīr marāḥel b-ktīr amāken kān fi nās beddā tstagellek beddā t'amel ey šī kermāl ennū tāḥud minnak maṣārī tāḥud ey šī minnek. ḥōf, ṭa'b ktīr, qalaq, za'l, ya'nī kel mašā'er muḥtalaṭa.

The journey was hard, honestly, because for the first time in my life I am going outside the borders of my country. The feelings [that I had] were difficult, very fatiguing. At many stages and in many places, there were people that want to take advantage of you, they want to do anything so that they take money from you, take anything from you. Fear, great fatigue, concern, anger, I mean, all of the feelings mixed.

Talal had similar thoughts about the journey:

ṣa'be ṭab'an ktīr ya'nī mū sahl wāḥid biḍṭar yitruk baladu wa yijī. anā baḥebb sāfer... bas ennū ṣa'b ennū wāḥed yijī w-byedṭar

Of course it's very hard, it's not easy when you have to leave your country and just come. I love travelling... But it's hard when you are forced to come.

The men recollect that at the beginning of their stay in a new country they envisioned Sweden as very different from Syria and when coming here, almost everything in the beginning seemed strange to them. Talal recollects his thoughts after his arrival in Sweden:

kel šī ġarēb be-l-swēd, ‘anjād, ḥattā masalan men aṣġar l-šaġlāt l-akbar l-šaġlād, kel šī ġarēb.

Everything was strange in Sweden, really, even from the smallest things to bigger things, everything was strange.

While for none of the men interviewed getting used to everything new that they encountered in Sweden was hard, Fadi emphasizes that:

šaḥṣiyyan mā kān ṣa‘b. l-ennū anā k-šaḥṣ anā mā betmassak be-l-‘ādāt we-l-taqālīd abadan. fa anā be-l-nisbat ilī mā kān ṣa‘b bas be-l-nisba l-ktīr min l-lājīrīn huwwa šī ktīr ṣa‘b. l-ennū yetmassak be-l-‘ādāt be-l-taqālīd illī neḥnā irbīna ennū huwa ġalaṭ w-hāda l-šī anta mā btšīr t‘amlo. bas hūn fī ‘ādāt jdīda.

Personally, it was not hard. Because me as a person I don’t stick to customs and traditions at all. So for me it wasn’t hard but for many of the refugees it’s a very hard thing. Because they stick to the traditions and customs that we were raised to, that this is wrong and this is something that we cannot do. But here there are new customs.

Being a man in Syria

Having in mind Talal’s words quoted above, that it is a mistake to talk about a ‘typical Syrian’, which was emphasised by all of the men interviewed, it is not possible to present one image of who a Syrian man is. However, I asked the men to describe what does it mean in their opinion to be a man in Syria. Nader explains it as following:

l-rajul b-sūrya ‘aley mustalzamāt, ya‘nī huwwa lāzem yšteġel, w-lāzem yijīb l-maṣārī, w-lāzem ykūn dāyman qawī, kamān fī šaġlāt mnīḥa ennū fī yirūh wēn mā beddo we-l-mujtama‘ mā byiḥāsbo, l-far’ l-asāsī ennū l-mujtama‘

dāyman byihāsib l-mar'a b-sūrya, ya'nī lēš 'āmeltī hēk, ya'nī ṭalla'at, mā bi'ūlū l-zalame lēš ant ṭalla't, byirūh l-'andā, lēš jōzek ṭalla'ek entī mālek mnīh, fa hiyye btaḥtalef beyn l-rajul we-l-mar'a be-l-nisbe ilī anā ya'nī, izā rajul 'amal šagle, eyya šī, ē ma'lēš huwa rijjāl, al-mar'a la'.

A man in Syria has duties, he has to work, he has to bring money, he always has to be strong. There are also some nice things [about being a man], he can go wherever he wants and the society is not holding him accountable. The fundamental difference is that society is always holding the woman accountable in Syria, for example, why did you do this, or when you divorce, they do not ask a guy why did you divorce, but they go to the woman and ask why did your husband divorced you, you are not good. So this is the difference for men and women, in my opinion when a man does something, anything - no worries - because he is a man. But for a woman no.

Fadi describes being a man in Syria as:

k-rajul b-sūrya ente mujbar tštegēl, mujbar taḡeyyer ḡayātak, et'esses l-ennū beddak tetzawwaj. mā fī fikrat ennū anā šaḡš 'umrī ḡamsa w-talatīn aw arba'in sana w-mānī mtezawwej. la' lāzim tetzawwaj. fa hiyye l-'ādāt we-l-taqalīd. šabāb men šaḡar byit'allamo ennū tedrus, štehed b-dirāstak, durus mnīh, 'ašān ykūn 'endak musta'bal mnīh 'ašān ykūn 'andak daḡal māddī mnīh 'ašān ta'dar tetzawwaj.

As a man in Syria you are obliged to work, obliged to change your life and lay a foundation in order to marry. There is not even a thought, that me, a 35-years old person or 40-years old, and I'm not married. No, you have to marry. So those are the customs and traditions. Young men since young age are taught that you need to study, be diligent in your studies, study well in order to have a good future, in order to have a good income, in order to be able to get married.

Therefore, a man in Syria is a person that has duties imposed by the society and is expected to fulfil them. It is important in general understanding of the community that he is a strong and diligent person, pursues education and later is employed. His work and salary are essential to continue his masculine role in society, which is to marry and provide for his family. However, his gender also comes with certain freedoms. In contrast with women, he can afford to do more what he wants, and the society will not oppose that.

Being a man during an armed conflict

The statements quoted above are describing a Syrian man before the war. After the outbreak of the war according to the men I interviewed approaches to masculinity in Syria have changed. Riad said:

rajul b-sūrya huwa k̄an b-ṣarāḥa fatrat l-ḥarb w-k̄an ‘eb’ aktar men wāḥed
ykūn unsā b-ṣarāḥa, ‘eb’ men kt̄ir nawāḥī, mawdō‘ l-ḥuṭūra masalan

For a man in Syria in the war period, really the burden was much bigger than for a woman, honestly. The burden from many sides, for example, the danger.

The majority of soldiers engaged in fighting in Syria are men, and at the same time more than 70% of civilian deaths in the conflict are of adult male. Syrian men are more likely to be shot, injured during bombings, starved, tortured or killed (Turner 2016). I asked Riad if he ever had a situation in his life when he wished he was a woman so that his struggle would be easier:

la’ bas b-sūryā yumken aw’āt mešān l-ennū bas l-ṣabāb brūḥū ‘a-l-jeiš, ya’nī
mujbarīn nrūḥ ‘a-l-militärtjänst. fa ē mumken mešān mā arūḥ.

No, but maybe in Syria sometimes just because guys go to the army, I mean, they are forced to go to military service. So yes, maybe in order to not go.

Current Syrian constitution states that ‘compulsory military service shall be a sacred duty and is regulated by a law’ (Syria 2012, Art. 46). The service is compulsory for all males over 18 years old and below 42. The laws protecting groups previously being able to postpone the conscription, such as university students, only male children of families, or persons with certain health issues, are no longer strictly followed. Reports about recruiting males over the age of 42 have been recently revealed (Danish Immigration Service 2017). Syrian authorities are continuously pursuing evaders of military service through checkpoints and raids in public areas or house searches, and when caught, a person evading the conscription is immediately sent to military service. Deserters risk imprisonment or even the death penalty (*ibid.*). Compulsory military service became, therefore, one of the major reasons for Syrian males to flee their country.

Rujūla – masculinity

Egyptian men interviewed by Ghannam (2013) in her study about gender dynamics in Egypt defined masculinity - *rujūla* as a group of certain attributes and rules in a man’s behaviour. Some of the traits mentioned are protecting women, fighting, working, taking risks. Syrian men I talked to mention similar duties and characteristics for a man in Syria. Talal describes:

fī sūrya, rajul dāyman lāzim ykūn ‘andu šifāt l-rajul an ykūn *testosteron* an ykūn qawī, w-huwwe yqarrer, hāda l-mafhūm l-šar‘ī taba‘ l-rujūle.

In Syria, a man has to always have the attributes of a man, have the testosterone, be strong, be the one who decides. This is the eastern understanding of a masculinity.

l-rajul b-sūrya b-fakkar ḥālu huwwe allāh masalan, ennū huwwe awī, w-lāzem ya‘mel mitl mā beddo.

A man in Syria thinks about himself that he is a god, for example, that he is strong and has to do whatever he wants to do.

However, the hegemonic *rujūla*, that was associated with attributes such as tribalism, fathering of many sons, oppression of women (Inhorn 2012:55), is challenged also by the Syrian men when describing what *rujūla* means to them personally. The qualities that are more readily mentioned are taking care of others and showing respect. Fadi explains what are the real traits of masculinity for him:

al-rujūla btaʿnī iḥtirām abl kel šī. lammā šaḥṣ byikūn rajul mū mujarrad huwwe šaklo w-lā huwwe mujarrad šawārbo aw laḥyito w-lā huwwe mujarrad tarkībat jismo. maʿnā al-rujūla huwwe iḥtirām huwwe masʿūliyya.

Masculinity means respect before anything else. If a person is a man, it's not only about his looks, or only about his moustache or beard or his body type. The meaning of masculinity is respect and responsibility.

Riad also names respect as an important trait of masculinity:

iḥtirām w-masalan ennū wāḥed ykūn gentleman, w-meltezem ḥdūdo, huwwe muḥterem ḥalo muḥterem l-āḥerīn w-be-l-nisbat lī rujūla hiyye qiyam, ennū wāḥed ykūn šādeq momken kamān ykūn ḥād ellī yaʿtamed ʿalā nafso, ḥād nājeḥ

Respect. And also for example to be a gentleman, to respect one's boundaries. [A man] respects himself but also respects others. And when it comes to masculinity it means values like to be honest, be a person that can stand on his own, someone successful.

Nader explains that for him masculinity means:

ennak tkūn qawī, tsā'ed l-'ālam, hey men şifāt l-rujūle ... aktar şī be-l-rujūle
ennū huwwe [rajul] izā fi ḥāda maḥtāj ysā'edo, ya'nī hey rujūle btkūn, hey
l-rujūle l-şah

*To be strong and to help people, those are the attributes of masculinity. The
most important thing in masculinity is that if there is someone in need, a
man helps him/her, this is what masculinity means, a true masculinity.*

According to him, masculinity has different meanings:

be-l-şegel, ma' l-mar'a, be-l-bēt, ya'nī hay fi iḥtilāfāt, ma' l-mar'a mafrūḍ
ykūn ḥanūn, mafrūḍ ykūn bysā'edā mafrūḍ ykūn byetfahhamā, be-l-şegel
lāzem ykūn mandabet, yiştegel b-şah b-nazāha b-şaraf, hay şifāt lāzem
ykūn mawjūde be-l-rajul

*In work, when with a woman, at home. I mean there are differences, when
with a woman, he has to be tender, he has to help her and be understanding.
At work, he has to be disciplined, work correctly, honestly and with honours.
Those are the characteristics that a man needs to have.*

Even for the women interviewed, *rujūla* means first and foremost respect. Dana said:

ennū ykūn şahş muḥtaram, w-yetqabbel ra'y l-āḥar, w-lammā beddo yiṭrah
l-mawdō' yetqabbal l-niqāş, lāzem ykūn niqāş lel-ṭarafeyn, ennū mū
yqarrer kel şī l-ḥālo, ennū ykūn ey şī beddo yqarrero, be-l-qarār muştareq
beyno w-beyn ḥaṭēbe aw l-zawje aw şrikat l-ḥayā, ennū lā yāḥud qarārāt
b-ḥālo

*[A man] needs to be a respected person, who accepts the opinion of others.
And when he wants to come up with a topic he allows a discussion, there
needs to be a discussion between two sides, and that he doesn't decide only
by himself but the decision is joint between him and his fiancée or wife or
his life partner, and that he never takes the decision only to his own.*

None of the interviewed men described any of the hegemonic characteristics when taking about what masculinity means for them. In lights of new contexts appearing, described in the following chapter, such as integrating in new society, facing new difficulties and change, the meaning of masculinity is challenged and takes on new meanings. For the Syrian men, masculine no longer means hegemonic, having power over others and following traditions supporting strong male position in a society. They rather strive for masculinity as an attitude respectful for others and responsible for those who are close to the man. The strength of a man is not physical, but is manifests itself in being able to protect others and help those in need.

However, it is important to mention in this chapter the issue of my positionality as a researcher. The setting of the interview might have had an influence on the participants' answers in this chapter. The men interviewed were asked about their thoughts as Syrian men, while interviews were held in Sweden and conducted by a female researcher. As a woman, I may have not accesed the same informations as a male researcher would. The answers could also vary if the interviews were conducted in Syria.

PART FIVE

5. SYRIA, SWEDEN, CHANGE

Using a phenomenological perspective in the analysis of my conversations with Syrian men and women, certain motifs appear that are repetitive in the statements I have listened to. The basic phenomena analysed is the ‘refugeeness’ that Syrians face and go through in their daily lives, as well as its by-products that emerge during the journey and integration in a new country. Through the narratives of several individuals about their lived experiences, an ‘essence’ of the phenomena comprising of what and how the individuals experienced the refugee experience can be drawn. In the following parts of this chapter I present the themes I extracted from my conversations with the Syrian men and women that were accentuated by them and were common to their experience.

Integration

Men and women that I talked to do not identify first as refugees, but rather as students, professionals, wives, husbands or simply inhabitants of a certain place just like other people. Coming to a new country, they had to start over with building their lives and proving their abilities and today all of them are pursuing their studies of Swedish and English languages or at the university level. If they are finished with their studies, they are developing their professional careers. In Sweden, their past experiences became largely irrelevant and they were often forced to take on new roles in the society, yet how they identify as a person did not change much. First period in a new country was hard, but now they are generally pleased with their lives.

awwal fatra kānat ṣa'ba bas halla' 'ādi. bas ennū 'am aḥāwel ya'nī ennū
anā akūn waḥda min ha-l-mujtama' ya'nī ennū beddī at'allem l-luġa
aḥāwel atqinā kweyyes 'ašān lā aḥess fī farq.

*The first period was hard but now it's normal. I am only trying that I will be
part of this community, I mean that I want to learn the language, I am trying
to master it well so that I will not feel there is a difference [between me and
other people in Sweden].*

The way they coped with new surroundings and often entirely new social contexts asserts their strong agency over their lives and ability to decide for themselves. The experience was a challenge for many, but at the same time it strengthened their self-confidence as men and women being fully able to achieve their goals. However, their experiences point out how the notions of a word 'refugee' imposed on them by international policies and society influence their daily lives. While the word can be stigmatizing and limiting access to different aspects of new life in Sweden, in the end they treat it as an adjective describing the legal status of their stay.

Intersectional nature of a refugee experience

Several factors named by the men and women when talking about their arrival in Sweden demonstrate the intersectional nature of integration of a refugee in a receiving country and multi-layered realities they face every day. A strong factor that influences their lives in addition to being a forced migrant is their race. Talal said:

anā dāyman *misstänkt* l-ennū anā jāy min sūryā masalan. w-šaklī *typical
arabic*, ya'nī illī byiṭalla' 'aley byia'ref ennū anā masalan mānī iṭālī walla
isbānī. mumken izā mā byia'ref kūr byifakker ennī yūnānī. fa law anā
yūnānī kel 'ālam beṭṭebnī 'abl mā yaḥkū ma'y. law anā sūrī mā ḥāda
byiḥebnī aw beddum yaḥkī ma'ī.

I am always suspected, because I am coming from Syria for example. And my appearance is 'typical Arabic', if someone looks at me knows that I am not Italian or Spanish for example. Maybe when a person doesn't know well will think that I am Greek. So when I'm Greek everyone likes me prior to talking to me. If I'm Syrian nobody likes me nor wants to talk to me.

He also noted that in Syria he did not have to worry about issues that he faces here in Sweden on a daily basis:

b-sūrya kent šaḥṣ baṣēt aktar, l-ennū kānet ihtimāmātī masalan bšūf ref'ātī be-l-jāmi'a, enzel l-bēt, atla' ashar be-l-weekend, mā kent fakker b-aṣaṣ tānya. hūn lammā jīt l-hūn, bafakker b-šaḡlāt tānya, masalan racism aw exclusion, aw masalan discrimination, hāda šī mawjūd kel yōm.

In Syria I was a simpler person. Because my concerns were to meet my friends at university, go out and stay up late at weekends, I wasn't thinking about other things. Here, when I came here, I am thinking about other things, for example about racism or exclusion, or for example about discrimination, this is something present every day.

Fadi also considers race a significant factor in Sweden:

l-mujtama' ṣa'b yt'abbal šaḥṣ bišufū k-šakl ḡarīb ṣa'b bit'abbalu min l-bidāya. ḡālīban ykūn fī ḥōf šwey, b-sabab l-šakl l-'ām l-šaḥṣ, lōn l-ša'r lōn l-bašra lōn l-'ayūn, laḥya. afkār musbaqa 'and l-nās hiya btsabbeeb hāda l-ḥōf. b'ad niqāš b'ad tawāṣol yiḥtefi hāda l-ḥōf, bas k-mujtama' swēdi ṣa'b lammā yšūf šaḥṣ min bašara šwey ḡam'a.

It's hard for the society to accept a person who they consider has a strange appearance, it's hard that they accept him from the beginning. Often there is a bit of fear, because of the general appearance of the person. Hair colour,

skin colour, eye colour, beard. Preconceptions amongst people cause this fear. After conversation, after communication this fear disappears. But as for the Swedish society, it's hard when they see a person with a bit of darker skin colour.

Obstacles such as racism, social ostracism and exclusion are new themes that appeared in the lives of Syrian men and women that came to Sweden. They did not struggle with those issues in their homeland, however now their country or origin, race, skin colour is no longer neutral. While many disregard this issue, a distance from the local community is generally experienced.

Approach to Sweden and Sweden's approach

However, their experience of a new country and new society is rather positive. I asked men and women about how they felt about Sweden directly after they arrived there, and most common answer given was *kel šī kān ġarīb* ('everything was strange'). Adapting to new norms and traditions was essential for them in order to accommodate in new society.

anā qarrart ijī l-hūn. hūn l-mujtama' 'andun šī muḥtalef 'annī fa anā baḥāwel innī bašūf ha-l-'ādāt illī 'andun w tekeyyif fiḥā, ha-l-šī mā byiḍurnī anā.

I decided to come here. Here the society has something different [than my society], so I am trying to see those customs that they have and adjust to them. It does not harm me.

Both men and women I talked to express their gratitude for how Sweden received them and helped Syrians that were forced to flee their country. Samar names different advantages of the country and its people:

l-ḥelo be-l-swēd ennū l-nās l-swēdiyyīn ktīr *snäll* w-ktīr ennū byiḥbbū ysā'edū byišūfū ennū entī šaḥṣ jdīd byi'āmlū ktīr jam'iyāt l-ḥattā entī ta'mlī *kompis* ṣadī' swēdī, l-ḥattā tadrusī dirāsa hūn entī duḡrī btījī 'a-l-balad betballeš šī *SFI*. l-balad fihā ktīr mumeyyizāt addamat l-ašḥās ellī b-ḥāja lel-amān w-b-ḥāja ennū yibdū musta'balum men awwal w-jdīd.

It is nice in Sweden that Swedish people are very kind and they like a lot to help and see that you are a new person, they make a lot of associations, even so that you will make a friend, a Swedish friend, even so that you study here, you come here to this country and directly you start SFI. This country has a lot of advantages, it accepted people that are in need for peace, in need for beginning their futures again.

They encountered, however, not solely positive reception of them as refugees by Swedish people. Zeina said:

mā aqdar aqūl b-šakl l-'ām ennū l-ša'b l-swēdī hēk, la'. fī ktīr swēdiyyīn laṭīfin ma'nā, yiḥtarmūnā, yiḥāwlū hennā ysā'edūnā. w-fī minnūn la' mū yiḥubbūn l-lājī'īn l-ennū yšūfūhun ennū iḥnā jīnā w-šār fī qawānīn jdīda be-l-balad, aḥadnā furaṣ l-'amal.

I cannot say that in general Swedish people are like that, no. There are a lot of Swedes that are being kind with us, they respect us, they try to help us here. And there are some of them that no, they don't like refugees because they see them that we came and there became new laws in the country, and we took job opportunities.

Some of the persons criticized the lack of knowledge and interest about getting to know Syrian culture, and complained that Swedish people have wrong image about their country. Fadi described his relations with his Swedish friends:

nisbe kbīre min l-swēdiyyīn illī šuftun illī anā ba'rifūn šaḥsiyyan, bidāyatan 'andun nazra ḡalaṭ. hinnā yifakkirīn ennū k-ša'b k-šaḥṣ sūrī ennū anā jāy

min hēme, mānī šāyef eyya namaṭ min anmāṭ l-ḥaḍāra. fā hāda šwey muz‘ej l-ennū neḥnā mānā jāyyin min hēme, kān ‘annā ḥaḍāra kān fī ‘annā mujtama‘ mutaḥaḍḍer.

Many Swedes that I know personally had in the beginning a wrong idea. They think that I, as a Syrian, come from a tent and I’ve never seen any signs of civilisation. It’s a bit annoying because we don’t come from tents, we had a civilization and a civilised society.

Difficulties and challenges

The approach of local community definitely influences the process of integration of a newcomer in a new country. Many of the men and women interviewed spend most of their time with friends and families from their community of origin. Having the support of fellow countrymen and countrywomen improves the wellbeing of an immigrant or a refugee, as well as having the possibility to express one’s feelings and share thoughts in a native language. However, exclusive contact with one’s cultural group may lead to marginalization and distress (Wallin & Ahlström, 2006, 723-735). Fadi explained:

ḡālīban mujtama‘āt l-lājīrīn hiyya mujtama‘āt tetejamma‘ ma‘ ba‘ḍ. ya‘nī l-kommun lammā ‘āmila lī ‘am ya‘ṭī sakan l-‘ā’ilē fa huwwa ‘am ya‘ṭīnī mujamma‘ l-lājīrīn. l-muškala ennū mā fī biyūt, fa ‘am yikūn fī mujamma‘āt. mujamma‘ l-lājīrīn b-ḡaḍ l-naẓar huwa tajammu‘ salbī l-ennū mā fihā eyya ta’llum l-luḡa ey iḥtilāṭ be-l-mujtama‘ l-swēdi. we-l-mujtama‘ l-swēdi byiḥāf min hāda l-tajammu‘.

Often the refugee communities are communities that gather together. When the municipality was giving me accommodation for the family it granted me the refugee housing. The problem is that there are no apartments, so there are the housings. Generally, a refugee housing is a negative collective, because there is no learning language there or mixing with the Swedish

community. And the Swedish community is scared of this [refugee] collective.

Syrians that I talked to expressed that they often have difficulties with acquiring new friends from the Swedish society. This has been influenced by language and the difficulties they face when learning it. Language was named by all of the participants as one of the greatest issues after arriving in Sweden. Learning Swedish is seen as a basis for getting a chance to establish oneself in the country and succeeding with getting a job and being independent. All of the participants finished, or are in the process of completing a Swedish course, however, they all agree that learning the language is a daily experience and will be a long-term process. Dana complained that:

mā ašūf ḥadā aḥkī ma'yo l-luḡa. fī l-bēt 'am aḥki 'arabī aw syriānī. ḥatta ya'nī barra be-l-'ālam ennū ey ḥad min 'ālam illī 'am ašūfe ennū 'am yeḥkū 'arabī. fī kamān muškila be-l-madrasa 'andnā ennū nuṣ l-ṭullāb 'am yaḥkū 'arabī. fa ha-l-šī šwey 'am yaz'ajni. l-ennū l-luḡa hiyya l-waṣēla l-ḥattā l-atfahham ma' l-'ālam l-ḥattā aštaḡel l-ḥattā adres l-ḥatta aḥeqqeq aḥlāmī hūn b-hāda l-beled l-ajētu le. fa dāyman ennū l-luḡa.

I don't meet anyone that I can speak language with. At home I speak Arabic or Syriac. Even outside with people, everyone from the people I meet speaks Arabic. There is also a problem at school, we have half of the students who speak Arabic. So this makes me angry a bit. Because the language is a tool so that I get along with people, so that I work, so that I study, so that I make my dreams come true here in the country I came to. So it's always the language.

Change

In addition to new gender roles, the approach to how society perceives them as men and women has changed. Many of those interviewed refer to the 'traditional way of thinking'

of their home society, which at the same time limits and imposes certain duties on being a man or a woman, even though it does not affect them directly on an everyday basis back in Syria, but they were aware it existed. For the men and women that I talked to adjusting to new customs and structures in a new country was essential, and their lives partially changed because of those adjustments. Firstly, their lives are more distant from their society of origin. The distance was however chosen by the participants of the study themselves, as some of them oppose some of the traditions from their homeland. Fadi explains what he decided to abandon from his past life in Syria:

rafaḡt l-‘ādāt we-l-taqālīd, rafaḡt al-mujtama‘ illī fiḡu kalmat ‘ēb. rafaḡt al-mujtama‘ fiḡu kalmat ḡarām.

I refused the customs and traditions, I refused the community that uses the word shame. I refused the community that uses the word haram.

Men and women feel less limited by the surrounding society, and give less attention to the judgments of others as well as the society’s expectations of how a woman or a man should act like. Talal explains the change:

anā baḡebb l-swēd k-balad we-l-swēd a‘ṡatnī kūr ṡaḡlāt. anā baḡebb l-balad k-qawānīn baḡebb masalan ennū wāḡhed fiḡu ya‘īṡ kīf mā beddu mānu muḡṡar yiḡāf min ḡada tānī aw ṡū yiḡkū okey ya‘nī fī social codes lāzem tiḡḡā‘iyā bas entī fikī ta‘īṡī kīf mā beddak.

I like Sweden as a country, and Sweden gave me a lot of things. I like the country for its laws, I like for example that a person can live as he wants, he is not forced to be scared of other person or what will others say, okay, there are social codes, you have to follow them, but you can live however you want.

Samar also enjoys her position as a woman in a new society:

hūn mā bafakker fihā ennū anā hūn mar'a šū lāzem a'mel šū mā lāzem a'mel. la' abadan la'. b-sūryā ē bas hūn la'. b-sūryā akīd bafakker anā ennū anā izā beddī a'mel ha-l-šaḡle bafakker l-ʿālam šū ḡataḡkī šū ḡat'ul, izā anā štaḡalt hēk bafakker ha-l-šaḡle kweyyes, l-mudīr tabā'ī šū kweyyes walla mū kweyyes, ašḡāš illī ma'y be-l-šēḡel kweyyisīn, izā beddī azūr ha-l-šaḡš be-l-bēt mnīḡ walla mū mnīḡ, sama'tu kweyyesa?

Here I don't think about that I am a woman here, what do I have to do, what I don't have to do. No, never. In Syria yes but here no. In Syria of course I am thinking that if I want to do this thing I am thinking what the people will tell, what will they say. If I worked like this, I am thinking if this work is good, if my boss is good or not good. The people who are at work with me are they good, if I want to visit this person at home is he good or not good, is his reputation good?

anā ašḡāš illī ḡawāley ašlan hinne ya'nī mānū ktīr *strict* aw ennū muta'ššibīn. anā zōjī šaḡš ya'nī mā 'andu muškila b-ktīr ašaš ennū masalan kān 'andī *kompis*, šāb swēdī, iṡla', iḡkī a'ad ma'yo b-kāfe w-nešrab 'ahwe w-neḡkī swēdī. hāda b-sūryā mustaḡīl yšīr ennū anā mutzawje, w-aṡla' ma' šāb, l-ʿālam kellā ḡat'ul ennū zōjtu ā'da ma' šāb ḡarīb. bas anā hūn fīnī iṡla' fīnī iḡkī w-zōjī mā 'andu muškila.

The people that are around me basically are not very strict or fanatical. My husband is a person who doesn't have a problem with many things, for example, that I have a friend, a Swedish guy, I go out, talk, sit with him in a cafe and we drink coffee and speak Swedish. This is impossible in Syria to happen, that I am married and go out with a guy, everyone would say that his wife is sitting with a strange guy. But here I can go out, I can talk and my husband doesn't have a problem [with it].

They point out however an issue of rejecting the adaptation of new customs by other Syrians they know. Talal explains:

teḥtelef ḥasab kif l-wāḥed byinzur l-mawḍō'. lel-asaf fi ktūr 'ālam min sūryā ijū, rijāl masalan, w-tafkīru lissātu mitl mā huwwa b-sūryā, ennū marā lāzem tu'ad be-l-bēt. masalan byi'tabrū ennū l-swēdiyyīn masalan keffār hēk byi'tabrū. fa ilī 'andū ha-l-perspective mā raḥ ytgeyyer 'aley šī.

It depends how one approaches this. Unfortunately, many Syrians that come here, men for example, their thinking is still as it was in Syria, that women have to stay at home. Or for example that Swedes are infidels, that's what they think. So as long as they have this perspective nothing will change for them.

Fadi recalls that many of his Syrian friends refuse the Swedish society which hinders them from integration in a new country:

'andī nās min aṣḍiqā'ī illī ṣārlum arba' sinīn be-l-balad aw ḥamsa snīn be-l-swēd bas l-hāda l-yōm mā a'der yfūṭ be-l-mujtama' mā a'der ḥattā yit'allem l-luḡa, l-ennū huwwa rāfeḍ afkār l-mujtama'.

I have people among my friends that it's been four years for them in the country, or five years in Sweden, but to this day they are not able to enter the society, they are not able even to learn the language, because they refuse the thinking of the society.

Gendered process of integration

The process of integration was not significantly different for men and women coming to Sweden from Syria. This approach is naturally dependent on the surroundings and traditions a person was raised in. While during the interviews Syrians repeatedly indicated some existent inequalities in Syrian law for men and women, or several approaches to the issue in different religions, traditions and regions, they point out that their families raised

them up in the thought of gender equality, and as sisters and brothers they had broadly equal opportunities.

After arrival in Sweden, the women generally speak positively about their new gender roles and status as a woman in the new society. They do not perceive any additional difficulties in the process of integration because of their gender, the process is, in their opinion, the same for men and women. This likeness in different aspects of daily processes between gender is in women's opinion a positive experience and gives them opportunity to focus on their personal growth, studies and career. They enjoy the customs of a new country, that in a way differ from Syrian ones. As Samar said:

be-l-swēd awwal mā ijīt, 'endī ḥsāb be-l-bank b-ismī, w-'am bāḥud rātbī l-ḥāṣ. akīd b-sūrya kān fī ḥēk šī kamān, kān fī istiqlāliyya kānet, l-marā tštāḡel we-l-rajul yštāḡel, bas hūn istiqlāliyya aktar b-kel šī.

When I came to Sweden immediately I have a bank account in my name and I am getting my own salary. Of course in Syria was also like this, there was independence, a woman works and a man works, but here there is more independence in everything.

At the same time, according to the women, they face the same difficulties as men, both while escaping a country and fleeing to Sweden, as well as during integration in the new community. This view is not shared by men, who generally agree that women do not face additional difficulties in integration in a new country, but emphasise the opposite situation, that women have certain advantages because of their gender. Men perceive therefore their own situation in a new country as worse than women's, because of additional discriminations they face, and acknowledge that some aspects of integration are harder for them only because they are male. They mention discrimination and limitation of services in comparison to what is accessible for women, who in their opinion are favoured by Swedish policies, as well as by Swedish society, who tends to be more willing to help a female refugee that in their opinion, is perceived more often as a victim.

The process of integration, in other words, is a gendered phenomenon. Some women and men supported and maintained gender equal relations and traditions in Syria, but find

differences in Sweden. Others come from traditional environments and women tend to point out the vast possibilities that were opened for them, and desired equality with male members of society. Men in contrast perceive their position in intersection with several factors such as gender, race, nationality and refugee status that restricts their possibilities and makes them vulnerable to discrimination.

Challenging masculinities and femininities

The understanding of masculinity and femininity by Syrian men and women I talked to reaffirms the theory of emerging masculinities as well as indicates the emerging meanings of femininities. For them, masculine does not mean hegemonic, but respectful, caring and supporting the equality between men and women. Feminine means gentle, but strong and able to take care of herself, as well as capable of achieving goals and having equal chances in life as men do. Both men and women describe that men have certain responsibilities, and need to take care of women, but at the same time women have significant voice in the decisions that should be taken in partnership. Women point out that at the present time masculinity takes on new meanings and men need to face new challenges in order to fulfil the framework of newly emerging meanings of masculinity in Sweden as well as in Syria. Samar said:

mašākel l-wājehu l-rijāl ennū henna mā byi'darū yinfuṣlū 'an-l-'ālam illī kānū 'ā'išīnu b-fatra mu'ayyana min abl ya'nī. dāyman hāy šūra adīma ennū rajul a'wā, rajul huwa šāḥeb l-sulṭa. bas halla' btšīr mar'a 'am taṭla' šwey šwey raḥ tšīr b-nafs l-mustawā tabā'on 'a'lo mā 'am yiṭḥammal fa yšīr fi ḥalal 'andum.

The problems that men face is that here they are not able to disconnect with the world they lived in at a certain period in the past. Always this old picture that a man is stronger, a man owns the power. But now the women go out and a bit by a bit will become on a same level as them [men]. His mind cannot bear it so there arise trouble for them.

‘am yišūfū šu‘ūbe b-‘aqliyyet l-mar’a. l-annū fi qism mu‘ayyen min l-rijāl yikūnū diktātōriyyīn ennū beddan ennū l-benet temšī ‘alā kifan. ennū beddan yisayyirūhā. bas fi kamān ašḥāṣ munfatihīn l-šabāb ‘aqlun munfatih. ya‘nī hēk w-hēk.

They are seeing a problem in the mentality of a woman. Because there is a certain group of men that are dictators, that want the girl to go as they wish. That they want to dictate her. But there are also liberal people, guys that have open minds. I mean, it’s like this, and like that.

Men themselves perceive their position as dictated by the surrounding society. Fadi described men’s position in the society as:

mutawaqqa‘ min l-rajul yikūn šaḥṣ ‘udwānī aktar min l-mar’a. hāda illī kel l-‘ālam byitwaqqa‘ minnu. l-mujtama‘ kellu šār šāyef l-rajul huwwe ‘ibāra ‘an maṣdar taḥdīd šwey.

Men are required by the society to be more aggressive than women. And that’s how everybody expects men to be. The world also looks at men a bit like they are source of danger.

Therefore, many men feel that because of those beliefs they are expected to conform to their position in the society is defined. The society demands from a man to be strong. However, his strength is not physical, the appearance of a man does not seem important neither to men interviewed nor to women. As Dana said:

šagle be-l-rajul ennū quwwatu mū l-badaniyye. ennū l-quwwe b-‘aqlu b-tafkīru.

The strength of a man is not in his physical, but in his mind and his thinking.

The current gender relations in the Middle East, often described as hegemonic for the masculine and subordinate for the feminine, are challenged by the participants of my study. New meanings for masculinity and femininity in the Middle East are emerging.

CONCLUSION

The refugee experience is an individual process and depending on the context, setting and migrant's approach it can take on different meanings. With this thesis, I present the phenomenological analysis of the experience of leaving war-torn Syria and arriving in Sweden as a refugee. The thesis presents the understandings of the process of flight and integration by seven Syrian men and women, who shared with me their stories and discussed questions concerning forced migration, integration, masculinities and femininities. The results of the study allow a better understanding of the intersectional character of the experience, as well as how gender represents one of the factors shaping the experience.

Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees found shelter from the ongoing Civil War in Syria by arriving to Sweden, a country recognized as one of the most hospitable places for refugees. Moreover, Sweden is one of the world leading countries when it comes to gender equality, as well as advanced attempts in the empowerment of women. Yet, the attempts to connect those two policies: widely welcoming people seeking asylum and maintaining and imposing country's guidelines about gender equality, in many cases proved challenging and resulted in unwanted outcomes. Examining the dynamics between refugees and policymakers, as well as challenging existing presumptions is crucial for developing right approach to forced displacement (Essed, Frerks, Schrijvers, 2004). It is therefore essential to recognise how refugees themselves understand gender and what are the existing gender relations in their societies. The ambiguous assumptions and misinterpretations of prevailing relations in a society along with forcing foreign structures may lead to exclusion and discrimination, as well as rejection of newly arrived migrants by receiving society.

The equality discourse in Sweden paradoxically contributed several times to emerging new inequalities between its citizens. Towns (2002) describes how gender equality has become a point of comparison between Swedes and immigrants residing in Sweden and creating two distinct categories of locals and immigrants by its gender equality policies. After years of efforts and developing progressive policies about the empowerment of Swedish women and international attempts in achieving gender equality, Sweden has secured its position as a gender equality champion. Yet with time and growth of number of immigrants coming to Sweden, gender equality became a trait associated solely with 'Swedish culture', while gender inequality was incorporated into 'cultures' of immigrants by media and political agendas. An 'immigrant men' driven by patriarchal 'cultures' was seen as a potential perpetrator, while 'immigrant woman' was likely his victim. The equality discourse contributed therefore to the creation of a new inequalities, and simultaneously the creation of a hierarchical classifications of society based on gender.

Mc Cluskey (2017) explains how Swedish policies and openness to receiving high amounts of refugees in the last few years helped the country to regain its old status as a 'moral superpower'. With the Swedish decision from 2013 to grant all Syrian refugees permanent residency, Syrians were placed in different cities and towns all over Sweden, possibly receiving a governmental accommodation in a refugee residence facility. Oreby, a village in southern Sweden having such facility and accommodating refugees from Syria, maintained the Swedish gender equality policies but paradoxically, with time, based on the notion of gender equality, two distinct categories were created between local inhabitants of the village and the refugees. The comparison between who has a 'higher level of gender equality' contributed to violence as well as segregation of refugees from the receiving community. The reappropriation of decency and gender equality by local volunteers in the refugee residence facility, contributed to viewing of refugees by local inhabitants as 'less' decent and gender equal.

Establishing a dialogue between local community and the migrant groups willing to fully integrate in a new country is therefore essential to avoid such complications. Gender in Syria has many meanings, but as proved in this thesis it constantly takes on new meanings. According to the Syrian men and women that I interviewed, the understanding of gender takes on new meanings. Masculine no longer means always hegemonic in terms of

extorting male power over women. Qualities such as respect, responsibility or concern for others are more appreciated amongst Syrian men and women. Feminine means gentle and compassionate, but can also be simultaneously equivalent to strong and independent as well as not subordinate, but competent and self-standing. However, interviewees express other elements of male domination in the society, such as taking care of and being responsible for women as well as being stronger. Both men and women agree that there are differences in the roles of men and women, and while they strive that the roles will be equal, in Syria the inequalities still exist. There are men that extort power over women and do not accept that women get more freedoms and possibilities. However, this is condemned by the participants of this study who say that men and women in Syria have different, but equally important roles, and gender equality and gender equal structures in the society are jointly praised by the participants.

It is therefore essential to understand the complexity of the male dominance in the region and its compound cultural context. Male dominance does not always mean patriarchal hegemony, but takes on new emerging meanings that undergo changes in the Middle East, as well as in new contexts in Sweden. Moreover, the feminine has a significant voice in shaping what it means to be masculine, transcending the image of a subordinate gender.

Leaving one's country was never easy for any of the women and men I talked to, and all of them were forced to do so because of the war and lack of safety and peace for them and their families. Therefore, for the Syrian men and women I talked to, being a refugee means to be deprived of the possibility to stay in one's homeland and seek help in another place. The label 'refugee' for the refugees themselves constitutes a description of their legal status, yet in everyday life can be stigmatizing and depriving of their agency.

Dana, Samar, Zeina, Nader, Riad, Talal and Fadi, as well as millions of other Syrians are people who lived regular lives in their homes in Syria, but happened to be put in unfortunate circumstances of a gruesome war and forced to flee. Although the exact push factors of migration can vary for men and women, after making the decision for fleeing, the differences between genders during the journey disappear. Syrian men and women emphasise that both men and women struggle with the same fear, that accompanies them throughout the journey over land and water. For the women interviewed, their gender

was a boost in their journey, as they felt empowered when travelling such a long distance with no or only with little company. Being female does not hinder their integration in a new country, as women they feel they have equal chances as men in rebuilding their lives in Sweden. For the men however, their gender at times constituted an obstacle, since being a refugee man was in their experience often associated with being a threat. This assessment of vulnerability spreads anywhere from politics, media and common understanding of who is in the most need of attention and help. Priority is often given to women who are assumed to be more 'victimized', and while it is often the case, men's needs are often fully ignored. The very needed policies of empowerment of women might however lead to the disempowerment of men.

Forced displacement is therefore excessively influenced by gender and simultaneously itself has an effect on migrant's gender identity and roles. Not only the new surrounding contexts force new meanings of what it means to be a man or a woman, but also the policies and recommendations of humanitarian and governmental agencies can often lead to transformations within a society and to creating new hierarchies and power structures between genders (Essed, Frerks & Schrijvers, 2004).

This study further contributes to the body of research on gender in forced displacement, and fills the gap in the research on the Syrian refugee question. The study is placed in a specific context of Syrian refugee migration to Sweden as a receiving country. The questions I answered can be further developed to investigate the influence of gender on the means of accommodation in the country after the initial after-arrival integration process. The research can be also further applied to broader sample of participants in the study to develop policy recommendations regarding gender-specific approach to receiving refugees and their integration in Sweden in comparison to existing policies.

Continuing the trend in academic research on gender in forced migration that gives the examination of masculinities and femininities equal attention will undoubtedly not diminish any of the gender's perspectives and specific issues, but have the opposite effect. The approach will contribute to strengthening the general understanding of the gendered-specific issues in migration and allow the reconceptualization of the prevailing fixed settings of gender roles in a conflict which will give both male and female refugees the attention they need.

I hope that with my research I gave the Syrian men and women that participated in this study a chance to express their perspectives on the process of forced migration of a Syrian refugee to Sweden and at the same time underlined their capacity to act as agents in the face of displacement. It is crucial to not forget to give voice and listen to people that are studied, since they are the ones that fully experienced the researched phenomenon, and the dialogue between people that lived the phenomenon and academics and policymakers can result in great improvement in the field.

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Interview guide

English	عربي
Tell me about your journey to Sweden. What are your experiences?	اخبرني عن رحلتك إلى السويد. شو تجربتك؟
How did being a woman/man affect this journey?	أنت رجل / امرأة ... كيف أثر هاده على رحلتك؟
Would it be easier if you were a man/woman? Why?	هل بتظن إنو رحلتك كانت أسهل لو كنت رجل / امرأة؟ ليش؟
What does it mean to be a refugee?	شو بيعني أنو تكون لاجئ؟
Do you consider yourself as a refugee? How do you feel about this?	هل بتعتبر نفسك لاجئ؟ كيف بتشعر نفسك مع هاده الشيء؟
Is the word refugee positive or negative for you? What do you think other people in Sweden think about the word refugee?	كلمة ' لاجئ ' - هل هي إيجابية ولا سلبية برايك؟ شو برايك بيفكرون الناس في السويد عن هادي الكلمة؟
What are some customs that are new to you? Have you had to fit your life to these new customs? (If yes) Have you found it easy?	شو التقاليد اللي كانت جديدة عليك لما وصلت للسويد؟ هل كان لازم تناسك حياتك للتقليد الجديد؟ (لو نعم) كان هاده سهل لك؟
What were the difficulties for you as a man/woman in accommodating to new country and its customs?	شو الصعوبات اللي وجهتها في الإندماج في بلد جديد وتقاليد كالمراة / الرجل؟
Who are you in Sweden? How would you describe yourself in your home here?	مين أنت هنا في السويد؟ كيف بتصف نفسك في بيتك هنا في السويد؟
Who were you in Syria? How would you describe yourself in your home there?	مين كنت في سوريا؟ كيف بتصف نفسك في بيتك هناك؟

What does it mean for you to be a man/woman in Syria?	شو بيعني لك أن تكون رجل / امرأة في سوريا؟
What does it mean for you today in Sweden?	شو بيعني أن تكون راجل / امرأة هالأ في السويد؟
Are those experiences shared with other men/other women that you know? Can you give me some examples?	هل الرجال / النساء اللي بتعرفهم مروا بنفس التجربة؟ ممکن تعطيني بعض الأمثلة؟
What do you have in common with other women/men in Syria?	شو المشترك بينك وبين الرجال / النساء الآخرين في سوريا؟
What do you have in common with women/men in Sweden?	شو المشترك بينك وبين الرجال / النساء الآخرين في السويد؟
How would you describe your family in Syria? What were its main attributes?	كيف بتصف أسرتك في سوريا؟
How would you describe your family in Sweden?	كيف بتصف أسرتك في السويد؟
What kind of things are you struggling with in your life?	شو الأشياء / المشاكل اللي أنت بتقاومها في حياتك اليومية؟
Does being a man/woman make it easier or harder?	كونك رجل / امرأة ... هل هاده الشيء بيخلي كفاحك أصعب أو أسهل؟
Do you think your experience is like that of other men/women? How is it different? What makes it different?	بتظن أنو تجربتك مشابهة بتجربات الرجال / النساء الآخرين؟ كيف بتختلف تجربتك؟ شو بيجعل هاده الشيء مختلف؟
What are men/women struggling with in today's world?	شو الأشياء اللي الرجال / النساء بيقاومونها في عالم اليوم؟
What about man/woman (the opposite gender)?	والرجل / النساء؟
Can you think of any situation where you wished that you were a man/woman? (If yes) Why? Why would it be easier to be a man/woman in that situation?	هل كانت في حياتك لحظة تمنيت فيها لو كنت رجل / امرأة؟ (لو نعم) ليش؟ ليش بتعتقد انو هيكون هاده أسهل؟
What does rujūla ('masculinity') mean to you? How would you define it?	شو بتعني الرجولة برايك؟ كيف ممكن تصف الرجولة؟

What should be men like?	في رايبك كيف لازم يكون الرجل؟
What are men like?	كيف هم الرجال؟
What are man's attributes/mawaqif?	شو صفات الرجل برايبك؟
What does unūta ('femininity') mean to you? How would you define it?	شو بتعني الأنوثة برايبك؟ كيف ممكن تصفي الأنوثة؟
What should women be like?	في رايبك كيف لازم تكون المرأة؟
What are women like?	كيف هم النساء؟
What are women's attributes/mawaqif?	شو صفات النساء؟