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“Kurdish Masculinities; from the local socio-cultural context to
the global diaspora”

Dissertation

Comparative Issues on Gender and Cultural Diversity

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the main question that is addressed is whether any changes have been noticed on the way Kurdish men shape and perform their masculinities in Greece in comparison to their position before migration. In order to approach holistically the comparison between the position of Kurdish masculinities in the local socio-cultural context to their position in the global diaspora, the methodology that has been employed is based on literature sources as well as on semi-structured interviews with Kurdish men. The interviews were conducted with eight participants, all of whom are Kurdish male migrants residing in Greece for approximately four to six years. Starting from a theoretical approach on masculinities, fundamental concepts such as hegemonic masculinities and hyper-masculinities are analyzed and suitably utilized so as to construct a proper framework and to further establish links among these concepts and Kurdish masculinities.

In addition to this framework, and in order to have a thorough knowledge of Kurdish men, light is shed on the historical background, as well as on the concepts of identity, migration and diaspora. By exploring different aspects of social, cultural, political, institutional and religious context concerning Kurdish masculinities, this paper highlights that Kurdish masculinities are not homogeneous. Subsequently, by combining the information from the literature sources with the data from the semi-structured interviews, it becomes obvious that changes have emerged on the way Kurdish masculinities are formed and practiced in Greece. One of the main factors leading to that is their distancing from the oppressing and violent circumstances in their countries of origin. Based on the social, political, cultural and economic factors which are taken into consideration, the main argument in this essay is that a set of circumstances and processes lead Kurdish men to shape and perform their masculinities in a different manner in Greece compared to their previous position in the local context.

KEYWORDS

Kurdish masculinities, hegemonic masculinities, hyper-masculinities, migration, identity, diaspora.

INTRODUCTION

In the present dissertation, a case study concerning Kurdish masculinities will be presented. More specifically, the purpose of the particular research is to examine and ascertain whether there have been any possible changes regarding the way Kurdish men shape and perform their masculinities by comparing their position in the local context, before migrating, to their position in the global diaspora, after migrating. In order to have a thorough understanding and a more complete approach to this comparison, different aspects on the basis of social, cultural, political, institutional and religious context will be examined, under the prism of gender.

To achieve that, essential information from relevant literature sources will be shared and utilized, mainly deriving from Masculinities Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Migration Studies. Apart from the bibliographic research, a qualitative research will be conducted. The qualitative research will be based on semi-structured fieldwork interviews. The sample will consist of Kurdish men that have migrated and currently reside in Greece. One important factor for the selection of interviewees will be to reside in Greece for a considerable period of time, so as to conduct a meaningful research and to extract better results on potential changes in the way Kurdish men form and practice their masculinities in Greece in comparison to their previous situation in the countries of origin.

The structure of the dissertation will begin with the depiction of some fundamental concepts such as masculinities, hegemonic masculinities, and hyper-masculinities. Subsequently, useful information concerning Kurdish masculinities will be shared. More specifically, in order to have better knowledge of Kurdish men and the way they form and exercise their masculinities, light will be shed on the historical background and on the concepts of identity, migration and diaspora. In addition to the links above, information from the interviews will be displayed, so as to address deeper the relevant concepts and to approach in a more holistic manner the comparison on the way Kurdish masculinities are practiced before and after migration.

The motivation to deal with Kurdish masculinities and to delve into this field of study mainly derives from my previous profession in the refugee field. Having been employed in various locations in Greece and in different contexts, including non-governmental organizations and long term accommodation centers, I had the opportunity to come into contact with Kurds. Thus, this interaction motivated me to get involved with Kurdish men and to explore their origins, history, cultural peculiarities, political and social positions. From my employment I had already been able to recognize the heterogeneity among Kurdish men, an element that has arise and has been confirmed throughout this paper. At the same time, having selected to do my dissertation on Gender Studies, I was eager to connect and establish links between Kurdish masculinities and fundamental theoretical concepts such as hegemonic masculinities and other subcategories such as hyper-masculinities. Even though the element of heterogeneity and diversity among Kurdish masculinities was the main reason for the challenging circumstances that were encountered during the writing of this essay, as it was quite demanding to categorize Kurdish men and to comprehend deeper their peculiarities, at the same time it was this element that stimulated me to examine the specific subject area and to research the main objective of the dissertation.

METHODOLOGY

In order to accomplish the main objective of this paper, the methodology that is employed is based on data deriving from semi-structured interviews as well as on bibliographic research.

The interviews were conducted with eight participants. All of them are Kurdish male migrants residing in Greece for approximately four to six years. The period of residence in Greece was an important factor for the selection of interviewees, in order to conduct a meaningful research and to extract better results regarding the objective of this essay. Four of the participants are from Syria, two of them are from Turkey and the other two are from Iraq. The ages of the interviewees vary approximately from twenty-three years old to forty-two years old. Some of the interviews were conducted in person while some others were conducted via online platforms. The choice of semi-structured fieldwork interviews was intentional, in order to obtain better knowledge on the heterogeneity and diversity of Kurdish masculinities, but also to allow the participants to talk in depth about practices and issues that they thought to be of high importance. Careful attention was also given on protecting the interviewees' identities, by keeping their names confidential.

Regarding the framework of the interviews, I have deployed my previous profession in the refugee field and my acquaintances from this sector. More specifically, having been employed in different locations in Greece and having constructed a strong network, I approached my previous colleagues in order to help me find and come in contact with Kurdish men. The procedure was quite demanding, due to the fact that I had specific requirements for the selection of Kurdish men as sample for the interviews, like for example to reside in Greece approximately four to six years. Also, I tried to compose a more diverse sample of Kurdish men, for instance to originate from different countries of origin, so as to approach the subject in a more holistic manner.

At this point, it is important to share some further details about the participants. As already mentioned, in order to keep the participants' names confidential, throughout the dissertation only the initials of their names will be displayed. Z.A. is twenty-three

years old, he originates from Syria and he lives in Greece for five years. He did not finish school and currently works as an interpreter. D.O. is thirty years old, he originates from Syria and he lives in Greece for six years. He completed high school in Syria and currently works as an assistant in a local Kurdish business. A.T. is thirty-five years old, he originates from Turkey and he lives in Greece for four years. He did not finish school and he worked as a construction worker in the past. Currently, he is an asylum seeker and resides in a refugee camp. A.I. is twenty-nine years old, he originates from Syria and he lives in Greece for four years. He finished high school and currently works as a tailor. S.N. is thirty-three years old, he originates from Syria and he lives in Greece for six years. He did not finish high school and he works as an interpreter. M.O. is thirty-eight years old, he originates from Iraq and he lives in Greece for five years. He did not complete high school and works as an interpreter. R.D. is twenty-four years old, he originates from Iraq and he lives in Greece for five years. He completed high school and works in a garage, while occasionally he works as a chef. Z.B. is forty-two years old, he originates from Turkey and he lives in Greece for five years. He did not finish school and he works in a garage. All of the participants expressed their willingness and gave their consent to be interviewed. During the interviews, they were quite cooperative and they tried to provide a lot of information about their experiences and practices as Kurdish men.

Furthermore, besides data from the semi-structured interviews, focus will be given on relevant literature sources so as to construct the necessary framework and to present the information required for this dissertation. It is of high importance to obtain a better understanding on the social, cultural, historical, political and institutional contexts that are linked with Kurdish masculinities and to elaborate on such social constructed concepts in order to achieve the purpose of this research. To begin with, an analysis of various publications by R.W. Connell will take place to shed light on the concept of masculinities. "Understanding Men: Gender, Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities" (2002), as well as "The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History" (1993) by R.W. Connell are among these works that will be displayed in order to clarify essential meanings around the concept of masculinities. In addition, "Masculinities and Globalization" (1998) and "Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena" (2005) by Connell will be utilized so as to understand these concepts on a worldwide scale. Moreover, in order to

highlight necessary information in the context of hegemonic masculinities, other literature sources as for example “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” (2005) and “Masculinities in global perspective: hegemony, contestation, and changing structures of power” (2016), both works by Connell, will be mentioned. Furthermore, “Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique” (2001) by D.Z. Demetriou and “Hegemonic Masculinity as a Historical Problem” (2018) by B. Griffin will be displayed in order to enrich the concept of hegemonic masculinities. Subsequently, attention will be given on a specific category of masculinities, namely hyper-masculinities, based on various works, characteristically “Masculinities” (2005) by Connell and “Toward a Transformed Approach to Prevention: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence” (2000) by L. Hong. Hyper-masculinities constitute an important concept for the particular study, which will be further elaborated so as to comprehend its connection with Kurdish masculinities.

After having constructed the necessary framework with the concepts stated above, Kurdish masculinities will be brought into focus. In order to have a better understanding of Kurdish masculinities, light will be shed on the historical background in which these masculinities have been formed. “Gendered Memories and Masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq” (2012) by A. Fischer-Tahir, “Patriline and Modern States in the Middle East” (2018) by D.E. King, “Female Cousins and Wounded Masculinity: Kurdish Nationalist Discourse in the Post-Ottoman Middle East” (2016) by A.S. Akturk and “Dispersed Nationalism: War, Diaspora and Kurdish Women’s Organizing” (2007) by S. Mojab and R. Gorman are among the works that will be utilized so as to comprehend the historical background and social formation of Kurdish masculinities. Subsequently, the research will focus on the concepts of identity, mobility and diaspora. In this way, a more suitable approach can be conducted on the comparison between the ways Kurdish masculinities are performed before and after migration. Some of the publications that will be displayed to explain the concepts mentioned above but also to make further observations are “Transnational Aspects of the Kurdish Question” (2000) by M.V. Bruinessen, “New Online Communities and New Identity Making: The Curious Case of the Kurdish Diaspora” (2019) by J. Mahmood, “Asylum Seekers/Patron Seekers: Interpreting Iraqi Kurdish Migration” (2005) by D.E. King and “Disposable Masculinities in Istanbul” (2011) by N. Mutluer.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION ON MASCULINITIES

To begin with, it is essential to present some information based on the work “Understanding Men: Gender, Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities” (2002) by R.W. Connell. Masculinity, as stated by Connell, does not come from human nature and is not a biological attribute. It has instead been socially built and practiced all across the globe. According to research, there is no universal pattern of masculinity. Masculinity is defined differently in various cultures and historical times. As a result, one might speak about the presence of multiple masculinities, even in a particular cultural situation.¹

A society's gender structures identify specific types of behavior as masculine. These patterns, on one level, describe individuals. As a result, a certain man's behavior can be described as masculine. However, same patterns may also be found on collective level. Masculinities are specified and perpetuated collectively in institutions such as businesses, militaries, governments, schools, and workplaces. Masculinities do not exist before any social conduct and engagement. Rather, masculinities emerge as a result of human action and behavior. They are carried out as patterns of social activity in everyday life. Masculinities appear to be fluid and far from established. One of the primary causes that masculinities are not regarded as established is that they do not follow simple, uniform patterns. Gender research frequently shows contradicting goals and logics.²

The existence of diverse masculinities in various cultures and historical times demonstrates that masculinities may vary. Masculinities formed in certain historical contexts are susceptible to alteration and redevelopment. To speak of masculinity's dynamics is to accept that specific masculinities are historically produced, but can also be challenged, dissolved and replaced.³

¹ Connell, R. W. (2001). Understanding men: Gender, sociology and the new international research on masculinities. *Social Thought & Research*, 24(1&2), 13–31.

² Connell, R. W. (2001). Understanding men: Gender, sociology and the new international research on masculinities. *Social Thought & Research*, 24(1&2), 13–31.

³ Connell, R. W. (2001). Understanding men: Gender, sociology and the new international research on masculinities. *Social Thought & Research*, 24(1&2), 13–31.

Additionally, on “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History” (1993), Connell highlights that masculinity as a human practice cannot be separated from its institutional framework. The state, the workplace, and the community are three institutions that are particularly important in the modern organization of gender. Masculinity is a component of institutions that is formed in institutional activity, in the same way that it is a feature of personality that is produced in interpersonal encounters. Besides, masculinities as cultural entities cannot be detached from sexual behavior, which is a fundamental part of the social construction of gender. While sexuality concerns the human body, it is also a social activity and a component of the social setting.⁴

Moreover, on “Masculinities and Globalization” (1998), Connell points that in a globalizing society, it is critical to bring very large scale systems into focus. To comprehend the global gender order is crucial for analyzing men’s gender practices and masculinities on international level. What occurs in localities is influenced by the history of entire countries, while what occurs in countries is influenced by global history. Geopolitical tensions, worldwide trade, multinational companies, labor migration, and international media have long affected locally located lives and continue to do so. To perceive local masculinities, one must think globally.⁵

In order to comprehend masculinities on a worldwide level, one must first grasp the idea of gender globalization. By acknowledging not just the fact that extremely large scale agencies such as the state are gendered, but additionally that international relationships and global markets are essentially a site of gender formation, one may accept the presence of a world gender order. The operation of gendered institutions, which create distinct circumstances for social engagement, gives rise to certain patterns of practice. Numerous gendered structures from the metropolis, including armies, governments, bureaucracies, companies, labor markets, schools, and legal bodies have directly recreated masculinities on the periphery.⁶

⁴ Connell, R. W. (1993). The big picture: Masculinities in recent world history. *Theory and Society*, 22(5), 597-623.

⁵ Connell, R. W. (1998). Masculinities and globalization. *Men and Masculinities*, 1(1), 3-23.

⁶ Connell, R. W. (1998). Masculinities and globalization. *Men and Masculinities*, 1(1), 3-23.

To the degree that some institutions become prominent in global culture, the structures of masculinity inscribed in them might develop into global standards. Nevertheless, the most typical pattern is the alignment of the local gender norm with the gender order of global model institutions rather than the total displacement of local patterns. The global gender system is undeniably patriarchal in terms of the fact that it favors males over females. There is a patriarchal benefit for males deriving from uneven salaries, uneven participation in the labor force, an importantly unequal ownership structure, and cultural and sexual privilege.⁷

The progressive establishment of a global gender order has resulted in several local gender instabilities. One reaction to such unstableness on behalf of groups whose authority is challenged but remains dominant, is to reassert local gendered orthodoxies and hierarchical structures. As a result, male fundamentalism is a prevalent reaction in gender politics today. For instance, a harsh form may be found in Afghanistan, in the Taliban's military sexism. It is no surprise that in this situation, extreme male fundamentalism is accompanied by a strong sense of anti-internationalism. The global system is viewed as an origin of interruption and disturbance.⁸

Furthermore, on "Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena" (2005), Connell states that imperialism and globalization alter the conditions under which gender orders exist. Colonialism frequently challenged native patriarchies with conquering patriarchies, resulting in volatile and sometimes violent consequences. The creation of new areas of social contact on a global scale results in new structures of gender relationships. Local gender orders increasingly interact with the gender systems of other local cultures as well as with the global gender order. Masculinities as socially produced forms of gender engagement, are likewise generated through a worldwide historical process. The old style ethnographic study that focused solely on gender trends in a particular environment is no longer useful on its own.⁹

⁷ Connell, R. W. (1998). Masculinities and globalization. *Men and Masculinities*, 1(1), 3-23.

⁸ Connell, R. W. (1998). Masculinities and globalization. *Men and Masculinities*, 1(1), 3-23.

⁹ Connell, R. W. (2005a). Change among the gatekeepers: Men, masculinities, and gender equality in the global arena. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3), 1801-1825.

In addition, on “Margin becoming centre: for a world-centred rethinking of masculinities” (2014), Connell indicates that the emergence of masculinities must be studied within a historical setting that includes worldwide phenomena of conquering and disruption of society, the establishment of colonial cultures and an international economy, and post-independence globalization.¹⁰

At this point, it is essential for the objective of this essay to elaborate on the fundamental concept of hegemonic masculinity. As stated by Connell, and further reevaluated on “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” (2005), hegemonic masculinity refers to the culturally dominant kind of masculinity in a certain environment. It may be characterized as the gender practice configuration that reflects the currently accepted response to the issue of patriarchy's legitimacy, which ensures or is assumed to ensure men's dominating position and women's submission. Hegemonic masculinities emerge in certain contexts and are subject to historical change. This is not a set personality that is everywhere and at all times the same. Instead, it is masculinity that holds the position of hegemony in a particular structure of gender relationships, a position that is constantly under dispute.¹¹

Men, as previously stated, do not form a homogenous, internally consistent category. Hegemonic masculinity differs from other masculinities, particularly from the category of subordinated masculinities. It symbolizes the currently most respected manner of being a male, and all other males must place themselves in reference to it. Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity has a position of hegemony not simply in respect to various masculinities, but to the entire gender system. It is a manifestation of men's collective privilege over women, and it conceptually legitimizes women's worldwide subjection to men.¹²

The number of males who strictly practice the hegemonic model in its totality may be fairly limited. Nevertheless, the majority of men benefit by its hegemony because of

¹⁰ Connell, R. (2014). Margin becoming centre: For a world-centred rethinking of masculinities. *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 9(4), 217-231.

¹¹ Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005b). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.

¹² Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005b). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.

the patriarchal dividend, which is the advantage that males obtain from women's overall subjugation. Men who obtain the perks of patriarchy without displaying a solid form of male authority and domination may be considered complicit.¹³

On “Masculinities” (2005), Connell suggests that hegemony, subordination, and complicity are internal gender interactions. The interaction of gender with different variables such as ethnicity, race, class and social and economic status generates different links among masculinities. Regarding the relationships between men in dominant and dominated classes or ethnic communities, one might speak of the presence of marginalized male identities, that is related to the authority of the dominating group's hegemonic masculinity. The men of powerless ethnic minorities, for example, are deemed marginalized in societal context.¹⁴

Subsequently, on “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” (2005), Connell points that hegemony has its foundation on practice, which allows men's collective domination over women to perpetuate. As a result, it is not unexpected that in some situations, hegemonic masculinity refers to males participating in destructive practices, such as physical violence, so as to maintain gender supremacy in a specific environment. Nevertheless, because hegemony may take various formations, violence and other harmful behaviors are not constantly the distinguishing qualities. It has also been observed that in a variety of local situations, many men differentiate their identities from a specific regional hegemonic masculinity.¹⁵

Men can switch between several meanings depending on their interactional demands. Men may embrace hegemonic masculinity when they find it desirable, but they can also intentionally separate themselves from hegemony in other times. As a result, masculinity does not reflect a certain type of male, but rather a manner that men place themselves through discursive actions. Although any description of hegemonic masculinity usually entails the creation of cultural standards, it should not be viewed

¹³ Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005b). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.

¹⁴ Connell, R. W. (2005c). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

¹⁵ Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005b). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.

only as a cultural norm. Non-discursive activities such as wage work, brutality, aggression, sexual behavior, household duties, everyday activities and child care contribute to the formation of gender relations.¹⁶

Some interesting points are shared by D.Z. Demetriou on “Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique” (2001). More specifically, Demetriou distinguishes two types of hegemony: internal and external. External hegemony relates to the establishment of males’ control over women, whereas internal hegemony relates to one group of males' societal superiority over all other males. By contrasting Gramsci and Connell's ideas of hegemony, Demetriou argues that in Connell's narrative, non-hegemonic masculinities are excluded during the developing procedure of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic and non-hegemonic male identities are built as a duality, as two separate and clearly distinguishable practice configurations. In this sense, the objective of internal hegemony is separated from the aim of external hegemony and turns into an end in itself. Hegemonic male dominance is defined by its rejection of subordinate characteristics rather than by its capacity to subordinate women. Thus, Connell's practical and historical explanation of hegemonic masculinity contradicts her conceptual formulation of the idea.¹⁷

Subsequently, Demetriou provides the term of "hegemonic masculine bloc" based on Gramsci's understanding of the internal hegemony process. He recommends deconstructing Connell's dualism of non-hegemonic male identities and hegemonic ones and conceptualizing the latter category to be a hybrid bloc that integrates many and diverse behaviors in order to produce the greatest practical strategy for patriarchal reproduction. Masculine bloc, as opposed to hegemonic masculinity, indicates a conception of masculine power and behavior that transcends dualism. It is the hegemonic bloc's ongoing hybridization, its ongoing appropriation of multiple aspects from several masculinities, that allows it to restructure itself and adapt to the particularities of emerging historical circumstances.¹⁸

¹⁶ Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005b). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829-859.

¹⁷ Demetriou, D. Z. (2001). Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique. *Theory and Society*, 30(3), 337-361.

¹⁸ Demetriou, D. Z. (2001). Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique. *Theory and Society*, 30(3), 337-361.

Another useful critique on hegemonic masculinity is presented by B. Griffin on “Hegemonic Masculinity as a Historical Problem” (2018). Specifically, Griffin gives attention to Connell's classification of masculinity forms in connection to hegemony. Griffin suggests a kind of masculinity demonstrated through active opposition to hegemony, which is not successfully subjected to nor marginalized by the hegemonic model, and it also does not play a complicit role. Thus, subordination, complicity, and marginality, according to Griffin, do not exhaust the spectrum of alternative roles that masculinity may hold in relation to the hegemonic paradigm. In other words, resistance through active behavior can be included in the list.¹⁹

Additionally, Griffin addresses another issue with Connell's concept, that of situational identity. Individual men rarely display the same masculinity since they have diverse and flexible identities. Masculinities are purposefully developed in response to the contexts in which males find themselves. Adopting this stance goes beyond just acknowledging that the borders among different categories of masculinities are indeed fluid, since it modifies Connell's model's interpretive usefulness. Acknowledging that men switch among male identities depending on the situation, it will be hard to fill Connell's model's categories with stable groupings of actual men.²⁰

In addition, on “Masculinities in global perspective: hegemony, contestation, and changing structures of power” (2016), Connell emphasizes the significance of decolonizing masculinities research, arguing that there is a necessity to acquire knowledge not solely from the West and the US, but additionally from the majority globe. It is clear that the relationship between hegemony and masculinity must be reconsidered in the ages of decolonization, postcolonial development, and neoliberal globalization. The problem with Euro-centrism in world discourse on gender is that it sets the perception that the global North has of itself onto gender analysis anywhere else. To disregard Global North notions concerning social development does not require abandoning concepts of gender such as hegemonic masculinity. Instead, it necessitates

¹⁹ Griffin, B. (2018). Hegemonic masculinity as a historical problem. *Gender and History*, 30(2), 377-400.

²⁰ Griffin, B. (2018). Hegemonic masculinity as a historical problem. *Gender and History*, 30(2), 377-400.

that gender conceptions be considered throughout history, as concepts concerned with the emergence and modification of gender orders across time.²¹

As mentioned above, hegemonic masculinity has important impact on other masculinities, as it positions them in a less favored place where they are not allowed to express their values, and at the same time they are oppressed or discriminated due to the fact that they do not behave in a manner that they are expected to. Hegemonic masculinity sets its own ideals on how men should act and behave socially. In this way, many forms of masculinities are often excluded and marginalized by those who enjoy the advantages of patriarchal dividend and usually claim power as their own.

On “Understanding Men: Gender, Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities” (2002), Connell points that masculinities are linked in a number of harmful consequences. These consequences apply not just to men's own life, such as injuries and substance abuse, but additionally impact others as well, such as violence, marginalization, and discrimination. Men as a group benefit significantly from the existing gender relations framework. However, as the observations show above, some other males pay a high price for being part of the existing system.²²

These masculinities that are positioned in a less advantaged position in comparison to hegemonic masculinities, and that are oppressed, subordinated or marginalized by those who benefit from the patriarchal dividend, are seen as harmed masculinities. On “Masculinities” (2005), Connell highlights that one important approach for recovering or restoring their wounded masculinities is to embody various types of hyper-masculinities, such as an exaggerated, intensely visible, and aggressive masculinity. Men's overcompensation for an unstable gender identity is known as hyper-masculinity, which is frequently accompanied by an increase in brutality and violent conduct, or a purposeful male performative behavior.²³

²¹ Connell, R. (2016). Masculinities in global perspective: Hegemony, contestation, and changing structures of power. *Theory and Society*, 45(4), 303-318.

²² Connell, R. W. (2001). Understanding men: Gender, sociology and the new international research on masculinities. *Social Thought & Research*, 24(1&2), 13–31.

²³ Connell, R. W. (2005c). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.

On “The Final Battle: Constructs of Hegemonic Masculinity and Hypermasculinity in Fraternity Membership” (2017), A. Zernechel and A.L. Perry underline that hypermasculinity is considered as an excessive emphasis and extreme devotion to more typical and traditional male gender norms defined by a cultural paradigm. Hypermasculinity is frequently related with anger against women and other males who breach established gender standards, as well as with risk-taking behavior. These hypermasculinities are methods used by males to conceal their feelings or fears, which generally originate from their wounded masculinities, and which may be perceived as evidence of a flawed or less masculine identity. The ability to be accepted by their peers, the attempt to be strong and confident, and the capacity to take care of the family are among the primary areas that characterize their sense of hyper-masculinity and their primary objectives for restoring their harmed masculinity.²⁴

In addition, on “Between emasculation and hypermasculinity: Theorizing British South Asian masculinities” (2009), V.S. Karla states that there is usually a distinction among men who are seen to limit their display of masculine authority to the domestic realm through rigorous control over women and men who spread it beyond of the home environment and into the wider community sphere. On both of these situations, a link with violence and a very evident hyper-masculinity have been observed in these individuals, stressing patriarchy and aggressiveness in an attempt to recover their harmed masculinities.²⁵

Subsequently, on “Toward a Transformed Approach to Prevention: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence” (2000), L. Hong proposes two scenarios during which hyper-masculinity may arise. First, males who are denied equal participation in conventional male advantages as a result of their marginalized ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation are more likely to embrace tighter, more extreme views of traditional masculinity. Second, research shows that males whose

²⁴ Zernechel, A., & Perry, A. L. (2017). The final battle: Constructs of hegemonic masculinity and hypermasculinity in fraternity membership. *College Student Affairs Leadership*, 4(1), 1-9.

²⁵ Kalra, V. S. (2009). Between emasculation and hypermasculinity: Theorizing British South Asian masculinities. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 7(2), 113-125.

main cohabitation or social association is with other men exhibit heightened compliance to conventional male role standards.²⁶

As discussed above, hegemonic masculinity must be understood as non feminine. If males are afraid of being regarded or classified as feminine, there is a strong possibility that they will overcompensate in order to establish their masculinity. A harmed masculinity may be viewed as less manly. Thus, in order to prevent a less manly or effeminate image, these hyper-masculinities are always working to reclaim the foundations of their lost or wounded masculinity. Men are supposed to make great effort for domination, power, prosperity, and success in a patriarchal society. It is also intended to be autonomous, controlled, and emotionless, without showing any flaws.²⁷

Furthermore, on “Mobile Masculinities: Migrant Bangladeshi Men in South Africa” (2017), A. Pande makes some interesting points on hyper-masculinities and migration. Migrant mobility, in particular, influences and is influenced by relational practices of masculinities. The formation of masculinities is multifaceted and actively engaged during the migration process. Pande analyzes three particular moments of these mobile masculinities. The first point may be found in the country of origin, where migration is regarded as a process of passing into manhood. The second point occurs throughout the migration route and while in transit, when encounters among migrant men and various other males, such as traffickers, enable the formation of a hierarchical structure of masculinities, that disturbs the migrants' notions of hegemonic and submissive masculinities. The last stage takes place at the destination country, where types of protest masculinities have been identified in their attempt to reclaim masculinity in the face of helplessness and in reaction to their emasculation throughout the migration process. Hyper-masculinity is a distinct example of protest masculinity. It might be expressed as an exaggerated and extremely visible masculinity, a male performative behavior seeking to restore an insecure and wounded masculinity.²⁸

²⁶ Hong, L. (2000). Toward a transformed approach to prevention: Breaking the link between masculinity and violence. *Journal of American College Health*, 48(6), 269-279.

²⁷ Hong, L. (2000). Toward a transformed approach to prevention: Breaking the link between masculinity and violence. *Journal of American College Health*, 48(6), 269-279.

²⁸ Pande, A. (2017). Mobile masculinities: Migrant Bangladeshi men in South Africa. *Gender and Society*, 31(3), 383-406.

KURDISH MASCULINITIES IN LOCAL CONTEXT

After having constructed the proper framework and having provided enough information concerning concepts that are essential for the present paper, namely the concepts of masculinities, hegemonic masculinities and hyper-masculinities, on this chapter focus will be placed on Kurdish masculinities. Specifically, various information will be displayed so as to connect Kurdish masculinities with the concepts analyzed above but also to delve deeper into the objective of the essay.

For the purpose of the dissertation, that is to examine if there have been any changes regarding the way Kurdish men shape and perform their masculinities comparing their position in the local context before migration to their position in the global diaspora after migration, it is essential to have a better understanding on the historical background and social and cultural formation of Kurdish masculinities. Thus, it is important firstly to provide information concerning the local socio-cultural context in which Kurdish masculinities were formed and practiced in the countries of origin before migrating. Following that, and after having constructed the relevant context, the research will focus on Kurdish masculinities after migration. By shedding light on the concepts of mobility, identity and diaspora, the appropriate ground will be formed so as to elaborate on the main objective of this dissertation, namely to ascertain if any possible changes have been noticed on the way Kurdish men practice their masculinities after migrating to Greece.

To study Kurdish masculinities, one must take into account the unique characteristics of each region of Kurdistan, as well as their distinctions as an outcome of decades of separateness. A complete comprehension of the sociocultural and political dynamics of each region of Kurdistan can only be feasible if each region is considered within the larger sociopolitical context of the nation-state in which it is located. The fact that Kurdish community is not homogeneous was highlighted by all the participants during the interviews that were conducted for the purpose of this dissertation. Each one of the interviewees pointed that besides similarities concerning Kurdish identity and notions of Kurdistan as an entity, there are strong differences among Kurdish men depending on their countries of origin. Characteristically, S.N. states:

“Not all Kurdish men behave in the same way or share the same ideas. It depends from the country of origin. For example, Kurds from Iraq have many differences from the Kurds of Syria, as well as from the Kurds of Turkey or Iran. For example, Kurdish men from Iraq are more close to religion comparing to Kurdish men from Syria. Each Kurdish community in these states has in a way distinct social and ethnical practices. Of course, there is a wider understanding between us and a feeling of compassion. We want to help each other, regardless the country of origin or other differences. At the same time, we share common values. For example, all Kurdish men show respect to their family members and especially to the older men, who act as the leaders of the family or the community.”

Throughout this dissertation, it would be irrational to perceive Kurdish masculinities as a homogenous entity. As stated by Connell on “Understanding Men: Gender, Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities” (2002), within a particular cultural situation, more than one type of masculinity might be found. There are likely to be diverse conceptions of masculinity and varied methods of practicing masculinity within every business, neighborhood, or peer group.²⁹ Additionally, in other cases, differences among Kurdish men and their communities may even lead to more intense situations. R.D. mentions that when he moved from the city that he lived to another city in Iraq, his integration there was very difficult. Also, he states that different Kurdish dialects create an additional barrier:

“For example there are Kurmanji, Sorani and Pehlewani. If I speak Kurmanji, they will say that most probably I am from Syria or from Turkey and they will judge me. One Kurd may criticize negatively another Kurd for belonging in a different tribe. When my family changed place and moved to another place in Iraq, we faced many difficulties and racism from other Kurds. For example, I remember being in the school and another Kurd hit me because my origins were different from his, even if we were both Kurds. Or I remember when I went to a grocery store owned by a Kurdish man and he refused

²⁹ Connell, R. W. (2001). Understanding men: Gender, sociology and the new international research on masculinities. *Social Thought & Research*, 24(1&2), 13–31.

to sell things to me. They were reluctant to our presence and in many cases quite aggressive.”

Thus, it is of high importance to take into consideration that there are many distinctions among Kurdish men and Kurdish communities. Kurdish masculinities are formed in various ways, and apart from similarities, there are also important differences that may be spotted among them, depending on their country of origin. Having in mind that Kurdish masculinities are not homogeneous, it is assumed that cultural, social and political variations may be noticed among them.

At this point, it is essential to mention an additional reasoning, namely the differences among generations. Differentiations on the ways Kurdish masculinities are formed and practiced do not derive only from different countries of origin. Many Kurdish men may be from the same country of origin, but due to the fact that they belong to different generations, it is very likely that there will be various differences even among them. These variations affect the ways that these Kurdish masculinities are shaped and performed. During the interview with D.O., he mentions that he has noticed many differences in comparison to his brother, based on the events that each one of them has experienced in Syria. Thus, this has resulted in behaving and perceiving situations differently on societal level:

“The generational order is something very important. For example, my brother is around thirty-five, he is older than me, a generation before me. He was at the time that the government was in control. Until now he looks at things differently than me. He has more anger than me because he has witnessed more things that the government did to Kurdish people than me. My time in Syria was a slightly different because there was not so much pressure as before. It is only five years’ difference but again it is important when growing up and realizing what is going on and what is happening to your people.”

At this point, it seems necessary to utilize further information deriving from literature sources. On “Dispersed Nationalism: War, Diaspora and Kurdish Women’s Organizing” (2007), S. Mojab and R. Gorman note that the Kurdish nation is split internally by barriers including socioeconomic status, gender, dialect, language, and religious beliefs, as well as externally with the international borders of Iraq, Iran, Syria,

and Turkey. The territory where the Kurdish ethnic group has resided for millennia has become the scene of disputes among these four nation-states, which oppose to the existence of a Kurdish homeland, and the Kurds, who see Kurdistan as a foundation for asserting their entitlement to independence or autonomy. The interstate system, particularly Western powers, has played a direct role in the struggle between Kurds and the four nations who exercise authority over them. Even though it will be discussed more below, it is crucial to note that Kurdish diasporas have been, to a considerable degree, the outcome of this conflicts and serve an important part in its replication and settlement.³⁰

The Kurds, possibly the world's biggest non-state nation, have split among the surrounding nations of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, with people spread across the western and central parts of Asia and, since the 1970s, other continents, constituting an expanding global diasporic society. Many Western countries do not have census data on the total amount of Kurdish immigrants, refugees, or residents living in their countries. In most situations, this is because individuals are counted based on their citizenship from the origin country in censuses or data gathered by different government agencies. Kurds are thus counted as Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian, or Turkish citizens in these estimations by the governments.³¹

A number of incidents resulted in large-scale displacement and relocation of Kurdish inhabitants both inside the region and abroad. Since the foundation of the Iraqi nation under British Mandate in the 1920s, Kurds have sought independence or self-determination within the territorial limits of that nation. Following the First World War, the colonial nations that split the Ottoman Empire in 1918 agreed to establish a Kurdish state. The Treaty of Sevres, signed by the vanquished Ottoman power, included terms for this nation-building initiative. Nevertheless, Western intentions were altered significantly as a result of the reemergence of the Turkish Army under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Iraqi Kurds fought against incorporation by the Iraqi state, however Kurdish uprisings were crushed by the British-Iraqi army. The struggle among the Iraqi

³⁰ Mojab, S., & Gorman, R. (2007). Dispersed nationalism: War, diaspora and Kurdish women's organizing. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 3(1), 58-85.

³¹ Mojab, S., & Gorman, R. (2007). Dispersed nationalism: War, diaspora and Kurdish women's organizing. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 3(1), 58-85.

nation and Kurdish nationalism began to escalate into an international dispute. Iraq was created within the framework of the British colonial plan to divide the Arab Region into a mosaic of nations. This colonial attempt gave rise to a plethora of nationalistic movements founded on the territorial split of the Arab region.³²

The continuing forced assimilation has resulted in increased Kurdish resistance, including military confrontations between Kurds and Iraqi governments since 1961. Western countries and regional governments took part in these as well as other conflicts between states, including Iraq-Kuwait and Iran-Iraq wars, transforming the region into a dynamic and permanent war zone. In the course of the Gulf War of 1991, the US pushed Iraqi Kurds to rebel against Baghdad, but once they did, the US failed to support them. Saddam Hussein's forces targeted them, and around three million Kurds fled, attempting to reach Iran and Turkey. The US did not acknowledge accountability until pushed to do so under the widespread influence of media and public disapproval. The big mobility movement compelled Gulf War allies to establish a “safe haven” in northern Iraqi Kurdistan, wherein the refugees freely returned. The US and British air forces patrolled this safe haven until the start of the most recent war. This region was the center of Kurdish state-building from 1991 until the following US war against Iraq in 2003. The safe haven region in northern Iraq constituted the first solid move toward realizing the ideal concept of an independent Kurdish state for numerous Kurds, despite their place of birth. The rivalry among Iraqi nationalism and Kurdish nationalism, which demands independence or autonomy, has been a key cause of persistent conflict in Iraq. Indeed, neocolonial ambitions transform possibly internal problems into external ones. Among those who have got involved in either a direct or indirect way in the struggle that exists between Kurds and the Iraqi state are the United States and the United Kingdom.³³

Furthermore, on “A de facto Kurdish State in Northern Iraq” (1993), M.M. Gunter points that the economic embargo imposed by Baghdad on the Kurds in 1991, alongside the removal of government employees from the region of Iraqi Kurdistan, strangely

³² Mojab, S., & Gorman, R. (2007). Dispersed nationalism: War, diaspora and Kurdish women's organizing. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 3(1), 58-85.

³³ Mojab, S., & Gorman, R. (2007). Dispersed nationalism: War, diaspora and Kurdish women's organizing. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 3(1), 58-85.

hardened rather than weakened Kurdish commitment. Following that, elections in May 1992 resulted in the creation of an official administration and the establishment of a federated nation.³⁴

In light of the information presented above concerning the historical background, it is clear that Kurdish people have suffered enormous challenges, having been targeted and persecuted for a considerably long time period. This particular issue is still in progress. These social, political, and cultural factors of the broader historical context must be considered in order to comprehend deeper Kurdish masculinities. It becomes obvious that the background of oppression and armed conflict led Kurdish men to shape and practice their masculinities accordingly. Under these circumstances, they had to behave in specific ways in order not only to protect themselves, but also to restore and gain the lost ground of their harmed and wounded masculinities. In their attempt to be recognized as an autonomous ethnic group as well as to establish and maintain geopolitically their nation, they had to react towards the suppressing strategies of the other states. As indicated by the information deriving from the interviews that were conducted for this dissertation, the concepts of war and resistance were cultivated among Kurdish men. As A.D. indicates, it was anticipated for a Kurdish man to join in the war and defend his homeland:

“It is expected from a Kurdish man to participate in an armed conflict. To defend his nation and his people. Not to be afraid to sacrifice himself for Kurdistan. Many Kurds consider that they grow up in order to go to war. It’s not so much to kill other people, but more in a way to protect and to not let others to invade Kurdish lands.”

In addition, discussing with D.O. about the situation in Syria, he considers that the willingness of Kurdish men to take part in armed conflicts does not derive only from their urge to resist and protect Kurdistan but it is also an important way to be opposed and to react against oppressing politics:

“For example, it was illegal in everyday life to speak Kurdish in the government facilities and in this way they were suppressing our identity. This had a large impact on

³⁴ Gunter, M. M. (1993). A de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq. *Third World Quarterly*, 14(2), 295-319.

Kurdish men, but somehow it made them to be closer to their ethnicity, to be prouder of being Kurdish. Of course, this pressure creates a sense of racism inside Kurdish men against their oppressors, and in ways they try to resist and defend themselves. Maybe it is not exactly racism, but in general it is a feeling of not liking for example Arabs. Many Kurdish men tried to join the army and they were happy about doing that, as in this way they had the opportunity to fight the government that was against them and oppressed them for so long. They had been feeling hate for so long and in a way they wanted to take revenge.”

Adding together the information shared above, it is obvious that resistance and participation in armed conflicts is one important way for Kurdish men to recuperate and restore their harmed masculinities.

In addition, as noted by A. Fischer-Tahir on “Gendered Memories and Masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq” (2012), Kurdish nationalist ideology evolved from resistance to state-building operations on track to the foundation of a Kurdish state. In this setting, the Kurdish Peshmerga, that is the Kurdish military armed guerrillas, were viewed as martyrs, particularly these Peshmerga who were murdered. The Peshmerga formed the center of heroic and martyrdom stories. The Peshmerga masculine image symbolized decisiveness, power, and valor. Peshmerga and martyrs acted as strong symbolism of the Kurdish freedom cause, helping to legitimize the Kurdish administration in Iraq. The representation of the powerful man was connected with the Kurdish freedom movement. The Peshmerga were seen as the Kurdish people's defender and liberator, as well as the masculine guardian of Kurdish territory.³⁵

Discussing with M.O. about Kurdish men in Iraq, he made a strong division on categories of Kurdish men that are considered more dominant and ideal in comparison to other Kurdish men in Iraq. Among these categories, it seems that he presents military Kurdish masculinities as hegemonic:

³⁵ Fischer-Tahir, A. (2012). Gendered memories and masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 8(1), 92–114.

“There are two categories where Kurdish men are more admired and being worshiped. We have a history that has been through the wars and wars. For Kurdish people, war has become something very common because we have been through a lot of genocides, through a lot of treacheries. If there is a man who is very brave at war, very fearless, this is an example that is admired by all. A man who is very brave, even if he does not care so much about his family or children, but goes to defend the country, he will be admired by everyone. People will cheer for him even if he died at war. This is the one.”

In combination with the concepts of masculinities that were analyzed in the previous chapters, it becomes obvious that this phenomenon can be interpreted as hegemonic masculinity, which is constituted through practices of distinction from and domination over socially inferior men and women in Kurdish context. Thus, the Peshmerga fighters as well as other Kurdish men participating in armed conflicts in other areas of Kurdistan are considered as hegemonic masculinities, setting ideals on how Kurdish men should act and behave while enjoying the advantages of patriarchy.

Other groups of males in Kurdish society, on the other hand, were classified as subordinated masculinities. One typical instance is the traitorous Peshmerga warrior who surrenders and offers information to the enemy. A different instance of less powerful and excluded masculinities is the weak males of other parties who are not involved in armed or military conflicts and hence do not support Kurdish principles.³⁶

Thus, to recover and reconstruct their harmed masculinity, Kurds identified with violence and a very visible hyper-masculinity, frequently focusing on traditional values, patriarchy, and aggressiveness. According to Fischer-Tahir, one example of such wounded Kurdish masculinities was produced when the Iraqi authority conducted the Anfal operations targeting the Peshmerga guerillas as well as their sympathizers. The genocidal persecution caused by the Halabja poison gas attacks and the Anfal war, both in 1988, occupied place at the forefront in narratives of shared Kurdish suffering and did serious damage in Iraqi Kurdish male identities.³⁷

³⁶ Fischer-Tahir, A. (2012). Gendered memories and masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 8(1), 92–114.

³⁷ Fischer-Tahir, A. (2012). Gendered memories and masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 8(1), 92–114.

On “Female Cousins and Wounded Masculinity: Kurdish Nationalist Discourse in the Post-Ottoman Middle East” (2016), A.S. Aktürk states that the Kurdish nationalism movement rebuilt its authority over Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and 1940s, following repeated failures to free Kurdish lands under Turkish domination in the 1920s and 1930s. In the absence of an armed opportunity to liberate Kurdistan, these Kurdish nationalists chose to revitalize Kurdish cultural and linguistic heritage, for example by producing Kurdish journals. Despite all their attempts to rehabilitate Kurdish culture and convince the Kurds regarding their national entitlements, Aktürk claims that their masculine honor was still harmed due to the fact they had been unable to stand up and participate in armed conflicts for the autonomy of their country. As a result, another typical example of injured Kurdish masculinities may be seen. However, there is a major distinction in this setting, as the Kurds, having failed to compensate for their injured masculinities through aggression and armed struggle, push themselves to do so in other ways, by seeking to reaffirm key features that make up their Kurdish ethnic identity.³⁸

As a result, it becomes obvious that there are also other ways for Kurdish men to restore their wounded masculinities, besides participating in armed conflicts and violence. At the same time, highlighting once again the heterogeneity of Kurdish men, it is important to note that in many cases, many Kurds preferred to perform their masculinities by distancing themselves from conflict and aggression and by adopting a more traditional lifestyle. Even if they could participate in war, it is something that they could not relate. Distinctively, Z.A. indicates a pattern of practices and behaviors that is attached to traditional context, without including violence:

“When it comes to behaviors, it was quite important to stick with some traditional masculine ways of expression. I used to think about being a strong man when I grow up, that I will stick with my word, like my father and uncles do, that I will look after my family and take care of my woman and children. A man should be disciplined, respected and powerful. Also, a man should be able to handle difficult situations and

³⁸ Aktürk, A. S. (2015). Female cousins and wounded masculinity: Kurdish nationalist discourse in the post-ottoman Middle East. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 52(1), 46-59.

not collapse, and even if he collapses it is okay but he has to get up again. On the contrary, it should be avoided to procrastinate or to not work hard enough. The fact that someone did not work hard enough meant that he could not support his family and that these other family members had to take care of themselves. This is a great dishonor. Every Kurd has to take care of his family members.”

Among the information shared during the interviews, it is presented that adopting and practicing a more traditional way of life was very common for Kurdish men in their countries of origin. In this traditional lifestyle, work and family were the principal concepts that determined the ways Kurdish masculinities were formed and practiced. At the same time, for some of them education is also an important factor shaping their masculinity. As indicated by D.O.:

“Men are looked at to be the ones who are working mainly and who are providing. They are expected to be more responsible of their family. An ideal man would be considered someone serious and well respected. It is essential for a man having a behavior that honors him among other members of the community. Of course education has a great influence on that. If you are educated people look at you in a different, more admiring way.”

As mentioned above, education seems to be a critical component for the formation and performance of many Kurdish masculinities, especially those of younger age. In addition to that, discussing with S.N., he made a reference to Ocalan who was presented as hegemonic masculinity. It is important to note that he was mentioned as a role model not on political context but instead due to his educational background:

“Many Kurdish men had Ocalan as a role model and tried to behave in way that was considered similar to Ocalan’s lifestyle. Some others did not care about Ocalan and the things that he said. Ocalan was admired for the things that he had accomplished, for his studies, that he is an educated man and speaks many languages. Many parents expected from their sons to have a life like Ocalan, not necessarily to be involved with politics, but more importantly to be educated, successful and admired.”

As mentioned on “Disposable Masculinities in Istanbul” (2011) by N. Mutluer, while many Kurdish communities oppose the PKK's military actions, its leader, Ocalan, is viewed as invincible, given that Ocalan epitomizes the PKK, which imposes a unified hegemonic ideology on Kurdishness. The PKK is an organization that seeks to integrate the plurality of Kurdish identities and to construct the image of a perfect Kurdish male and female. Thus, during the procedure of identity making among numerous Kurdish males, Ocalan plays an important role as an ideal male symbol.³⁹

Additionally, apart from the connection of tradition to family and work, other Kurdish men perceive tradition in a more cultural way. Thus, among other behaviors and practices, they also highlight the importance of customs and cultural inheritance. Characteristically, A.I. mentions:

“Apart from working and supporting his family financially, it is very important for a Kurdish man to stick to his traditions. First, it is very important to speak your language. Also to visit your village and do some things there. It is very important not to forget your village. Dancing also is in our culture. A Kurdish man is expected to know all the traditional dances.”

Speaking on a cultural perspective, it seems that it is not only about the way Kurdish men behave on social context, but it is also about the way they look. Z.B. notes that the appearance of a Kurdish man has an impact on the way that he is being perceived from the others and as a result it is a condition that has to be carefully considered:

“Physical appearance is also something that a Kurdish man should be careful about. Wearing earrings or putting gel on his hair make him look less serious and thus he is being less admired among others. To be a man means that your word must be heard, and that is only possible when you are admired and well respected. For example, if you are between your siblings or between other Kurds of your community, and you say something in case of a problem or when something happens, then the rest should respect you, they have to hear what you are saying.”

³⁹ Mutluer, N. (2011). Disposable masculinities in Istanbul. In R. L., Jackson, & M., Balaji (Eds.) *Global masculinities and manhood* (pp. 75-105). University of Illinois Press.

Moreover, on “Patriliney and Modern States in the Middle East” (2018), D.E. King sheds light on another important factor that intertwines with and formulates Kurdish masculinities, namely patrilineal descent. Patrilineality is an ensemble of principles and actions in which just one parent, the biological father, passes to his offspring particular classifications of identity, social positions, and commodities. Patrilineality is central to Middle Eastern views of citizenship and affiliation with a group, as well as thoughts and behaviors concerning statehood and the nation.⁴⁰

A considerable display of the societal categories that engage in everyday social connections in the Kurdistan Region are patrilineal. That is, they are passed on and acquired through biological patrilineal ties, from fathers to children, and their classification is determined by tracing biological patrilineal linkages back at least three generations. Furthermore, in the Kurdistan area, anyone claiming to be a member of the local political body is supposed to be descended from a patrilineage. Many individuals also belong to a tribe, and tribes, with the exception of a few now-settled nomadic tribes, are patrilineal and territory-based. A focus on patrilineages results in distinct types of social connections as well as gender hierarchies within which women and men's anticipated roles can be fairly precise. In this setting, patrilineality has a significant influence on the development and exercise of masculinities.⁴¹

Patrilineages keep their membership under control through restricting reproduction. They exert control over reproduction by restricting female autonomy. A patrilineal society has to maintain females under regulation or may forfeit the certainty of fatherhood, which would then call into doubt infants' patrilineal membership and thus a number of characteristics related to their identity and social positions. According to patrilineality, males create descendants while females only deliver them. Women inherit specific classifications of identity from their biological fathers, yet they are unable to pass them on to their children. Only males pass on a certain number of identity classifications, and an adult male can devote a significant amount of work to creating a

⁴⁰ King, D. E. (2018). Patriliney and modern states in the Middle East. In J. L., Brooke, J. C., Strauss, & G., Anderson (Eds.) *State formations: Global histories and cultures of statehood* (pp. 305-316). Cambridge University Press.

⁴¹ King, D. E. (2018). Patriliney and modern states in the Middle East. In J. L., Brooke, J. C., Strauss, & G., Anderson (Eds.) *State formations: Global histories and cultures of statehood* (pp. 305-316). Cambridge University Press.

legacy that will be recognized by and via his lineal offspring. Identity that is carried down patrilineally should ideally be preserved pure from generation to generation.⁴²

Characteristically, S.N. mentions that in the family context, the roles among the family members were quite specific and distributed. In the absence of a father figure, his older brother was considered to be the leader of the family that had to support them financially and to protect their sisters:

“For example, my older brother did not have any interactions at all with other members of the community. He did not give the right to anyone to approach him because he did not want anybody to understand his weakness. However, inside the house he was the boss. He did not want to have relations with other people outside of our family, mainly because he considered that the people who were living in our neighborhood and in the broader area were not trustworthy. In this way, he was presented as a very serious, strict and tough man that was not interested in social interactions. He wanted to protect us, his family members and especially our sisters. If he had more interactions with these people, then a common practice would be to invite them over to our house or to go to their houses. This was something that my brother was afraid of. Especially concerning our sisters, he was more protective and strict. He did not want to put them in any danger. But at the same time, he expected from our sisters to be careful and not to dishonor our family and family name.”

Subsequently, when his brother was absent and away from home, S.N. used to take over this role. Interesting is the fact that in order to protect his sisters, S.N. followed a different approach in comparison to his brother. While his brother was more quiet and distant from other people, S.N. felt that he had to construct an aggressive self that he would show to the community, so as to provoke fear and respect:

“My older brother was working in Lebanon for many years. When he was absent from home, there was no other male figure so I had to take care of my sisters and to protect them. For this reason, I had to show another self to the neighborhood, to the community

⁴² King, D. E. (2018). Patriline and modern states in the Middle East. In J. L., Brooke, J. C., Strauss, & G., Anderson (Eds.) *State formations: Global histories and cultures of statehood* (pp. 305-316). Cambridge University Press.

and to the outsiders. I had to show a tough face. For example, when my sisters were walking outside on the neighborhood, I wanted to make other people think that these were my sisters and that they should not bother them, otherwise they would have to mess up with me. I wanted to make them think of me as someone tough that would get violent and aggressive in case that something happened to my sisters.”

Staying on this subject, on “Borders as Ethnically Charged Sites: Iraqi Kurdistan Border Crossings, 1995-2006” (2019), King notes in Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, ethno-linguistic and additional collective identity categories are distributed based on patrilineal lineage, which implies that particular identities are passed down from generation to generation.⁴³

Many societal and political classifications in Turkey, Syria and Iraq are regulated by state-promoted patrilineality principles. Citizens who meet across the borders of the aforementioned states may meet as persons who have patrilineally inherited just one ethnic background and citizenship in a single state, but whose identity is really more diverse compared to what official governmental discourse would imply. For example, someone possessing citizenship qualifications issued by the "Arab" Syrian nation may be viewed as having the "Arab" identity when abroad, but within a Syrian setting could argue and be regarded as belonging to another ethno-nationalist identity, such as Kurdish.⁴⁴

Of course, this is not the only case. As indicated by D.O., it was a common practice from the Syrian government not to provide Syrian citizenship to many Kurds, even if they were living in Syrian grounds for decades and they were originated from previous generations also residing in Syria. Additionally, he comments on the impact of the Syrian government on the formation of their behaviors and practices in everyday life:

“Within the city that I used to live, there were also many Arabs. We tried not to interact with them at all because we had several issues. Kurdish people had fought before and

⁴³ King, D. E. (2019). Borders as ethnically charged sites: Iraqi Kurdistan border crossings, 1995-2006. *Urban Anthropology*, 48(1&2), 51-83.

⁴⁴ King, D. E. (2019). Borders as ethnically charged sites: Iraqi Kurdistan border crossings, 1995-2006. *Urban Anthropology*, 48(1&2), 51-83.

some of them had been killed by the Arabs. Also Arabs were very close to the government, while we were against it. Things like that and the political situation made the relationships between us very different, but also impacted on the way that we behaved in everyday life. We felt that they were looking down to Kurdish people. We were very preserved and as I mentioned earlier, we tried not to interact with other ethnicities. In addition, when the Syrian government was in control, there were a lot of restrictions. For example, many Kurdish men in Syria did not have the Syrian citizenship. A large proportion of Kurdish men do not have citizenship at all. So it was very possible that you could find a Kurdish builder that had a degree in law, but he could not become a lawyer because he did not have the citizenship. So the majority of Kurdish men would go to the university and study, and then would return back home and just work at a construction site. It was almost impossible to work on the degree that they had obtained.”

As a result, it becomes obvious that not being legally recognized as an ethnic community by the government nor obtaining any legal documents or citizenship, would create various problems to Kurdish men. Among these, one important problem was the difficulty to be employed. Many Kurds could not find a job relevant to their academic background and, in lack of legal documents, in many cases they were forced to have illegal jobs. Discussing with A.T. about his experience as a Kurd in Turkey, among other issues he highlighted exactly this difficulty on finding a lawful employment. As indicated below, the oppression and exclusion tactics of the Turkish state against Kurds made A.T. feel less powerful, in a way that he was not able to arrange any of the practices that he had in mind:

“Interacting with members of Kurdish community and interacting with Turkish people were two completely different things. I felt that I was two different persons. Turkish people did not accept us even as human beings. I could not speak my own language and I had to be always careful about my actions and everyday activities. I was feeling very stressed. I could not obtain a legal job and I was always trying to find ways to support my family financially. I was young, healthy, strong and willing to work. However, many times I felt like I was going crazy because I wanted to find a work but I could not. The state did not let me to work legally. I was feeling like I was a criminal. I

remember feeling embarrassed in front of the eyes of my family and the eyes of my community. The discrimination from the Turkish state made me feel less of a man.”

Carrying on with “Borders as Ethnically Charged Sites: Iraqi Kurdistan Border Crossings, 1995-2006” (2019), King proposes that in patrilineal communities, important aspects of identity, including language and a feeling of common heritage and history, are instilled through the patrilocal residency norm. A Kurdish Syrian is such because he was born into the same category as his father. These categories are then reinforced by spatial patterns, as individuals congregate in communities or urban areas mostly occupied by individuals of the same type.⁴⁵

Kurdistan's situation involves problems of state, nation, identification, and sovereignty. When traveling from one Kurdish plurality area of one state to another Kurdish majority area of another state, one meets relative sameness rather than ethno-linguistic variance. As previously discussed, the current nations of the Republic of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq emerged in the 1920s, when the Kemalists established the newly created nation of Turkey and the European war winners formed new states on the majority of the land formerly governed by the Ottoman Empire. Iraq and Syria were quasi-sovereign under British and French mandates until the second half of the century, when upheavals resulted in a succession of postcolonial authoritarian administrations in both. The cartographic partition not only divided the huge Kurdish ethno-linguistic community, but it also brought dramatic alterations to the region, restricting people geographically and socio-politically within new nations and establishing a contemporary sense of territoriality.⁴⁶

Commenting on Kurdish majority areas and the experience of living among other Kurds in Syria, D.O. mentions that in many cases the Syrian government tried to dissolve Kurdish populated areas and to mix them with other ethnicities, in order to weaken their sense of common identity:

⁴⁵ King, D. E. (2019). Borders as ethnically charged sites: Iraqi Kurdistan border crossings, 1995-2006. *Urban Anthropology*, 48(1&2), 51-83.

⁴⁶ King, D. E. (2019). Borders as ethnically charged sites: Iraqi Kurdistan border crossings, 1995-2006. *Urban Anthropology*, 48(1&2), 51-83.

“Because of the nature of the area that I lived in, there were a lot of farmers. I think around 2000, the government took the land from many Kurdish people and they brought some Arabs from areas closer to the coast. They brought them and gave them lands and home. That was a characteristic plan to spread Arabs among the Kurdish people and to break down the Kurdish identity. So Arabs started working the land of my grandfathers for example and we could not do anything about it, as they were supported by the government. If we did something, we would end up in prison or being tortured. Things like that had a massive impact on the way Kurdish men were thinking and behaving in everyday life.”

Continuing on the work of King, it is crucial to emphasize that the Kurdistan Area of Iraq is currently not the sole area in which Kurdishness is expressed vigorously and diversely. Rojava, Syria's Kurdish-majority region, has joined it since 2012, after Kurds along with supporters of other ethnic communities took political and armed control of an important part of Syrian land following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Nevertheless, restriction of Kurdish discourse is the norm and keeps occurring.⁴⁷

The rationale of patrilineal lineage, when combined to state authority and reinforced by the legitimacy of state documentation, might help to reject hybridity. This descending logic promotes ethnic distinctiveness. Fathers also pass on religious affiliation to their children, and race and religion are frequently combined to form an ethno-religious communal classification. The contemporary nations of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey all have advocated an ethnically based type of nationalism. As a consequence, not only there is a strong relationship among ethnic nationalism and patrilineal ancestry portrayed, but these conceptions of nationalism and patrilineal descent are also interconnected and have a significant influence on the construction and practice of Kurdish masculinities.⁴⁸

Subsequently, on “Lineal Masculinity: Gendered Memory within Patrilineality” (2010), King elaborates further on the link between patrilineal descent and masculinity. Lineal masculinity is passed on by men to next generations. Each man develops, preserves, or

⁴⁷ King, D. E. (2019). Borders as ethnically charged sites: Iraqi Kurdistan border crossings, 1995-2006. *Urban Anthropology*, 48(1&2), 51-83.

⁴⁸ King, D. E. (2019). Borders as ethnically charged sites: Iraqi Kurdistan border crossings, 1995-2006. *Urban Anthropology*, 48(1&2), 51-83.

minimizes the lineal masculinity he inherited from his ancestors, most notably his father. A male who wants to expand on his inherited masculinity usually requires strong leadership abilities. Lineal masculinity is more than just the present time. Its referent is, by definition, the past that once was, the future that may be, or both. Patrilineality passes not just name, kinship rank, and family prosperity, but also masculine identity, a feature of manhood that applies to both individuals and communities of patrilineally linked individuals. When a man's achievement is articulated and the communal memory of that man's achievements is maintained preserved through oral tradition, this male identity remains resilient throughout time and among succeeding patrilineal generations in the Middle East. Such successes encompass a variety of actions, such as combat victory, administrative establishment, accomplishments in armed conflicts, religious conversion or agency, for example becoming a Sufi leader or mullah, and income improvement.⁴⁹

In this context, it is not difficult to define as hegemonic masculinity one ancestor who is extremely likely to be remembered among the subsequent lineal descendants and to have stamped his identity onto the generations after him. In numerous circumstances, the cause of the descendant's socially given family name is the same individual who is seen as hegemonic masculinity. A man's chances of being recalled for his accomplishments are boosted by the deletion of his prior patrilineal forefathers' memories, or by his accomplishments so outweighing those of his forefathers that, with the passing over time, their recollection no longer appears worthy of maintenance. In Iraqi Kurdistan, King recognized two major reasons that may cause this situation, namely a major shift in identity, which includes religious conversion, as well as migration. It is crucial to recognize that lineal masculinity passed down through generations can place pressure on males. A man may believe that he should match or exceed the level of accomplishment set up to this point in his lineage, which may be challenging if it is significant. During the 1990s, Kurdish men's dissatisfaction with the high rate of job insecurity and unemployment in Iraqi Kurdistan contributed to significant levels of migration. The overwhelming feeling of failing experienced by

⁴⁹ King, D. E. (2010). Lineal masculinity: Gendered memory within patriliney. *American Ethnologist*, 37(2), 323-336.

males who do not succeed to live up to the expectations that come with belonging to a recognized lineage may be even more devastating.⁵⁰

Speaking about his patrilineal lineage, R.D. expresses the pressure that he has felt throughout the years. By migrating and choosing a different path, he mentions that in a way this pressure has decreased. Nevertheless, he makes a very interesting point about the possession of land, and that even if he has left from Iraq, it is something that he will be careful about constantly. At the same time, this indicates the strong connection between Kurdish men and the concept of territoriality:

“Apart from the problem of not finding a good job, it is very important for a Kurdish man not to sell his land. It is consider forbidden to sell your land, especially to people from other ethnicities like for example Arabs. A Kurdish man should not do that at all because this would lead to take our lands and then we will have smaller areas to live in. To sell your land means to dishonor your Kurdish identity and to disgrace your family name.”

On “The Personal is Patrilineal: Namus as Sovereignty” (2008), King emphasizes the notion of "namus" as patrilineal sovereign status, and that an honor killing should be viewed as an answer to an insult to that sovereignty. In certain situations, a man's honor is determined by his capacity for controlling the female member of his family. A hymen acts as a barrier to the womb. Consent must be given in the form of a marriage union for one of the patrilineage's wombs may be utilized. Otherwise, there has been a breach of lineage sovereignty. King has found an intriguing link in this context. Particularly, once the Kurdish uprising gained sovereignty over territory and was bound by a geophysical bordering for the very first time, its people became more preoccupied with policing both borders, that is, the state itself and the wombs of the women being related to the patrilineages that comprised the new state.⁵¹

According to S. Mojab and A. Hassanpour on “The Politics and Culture of Honour Killing: The Murder of Fadime Sahindal” (2002), Kurdish culture, as other cultures,

⁵⁰ King, D. E. (2010). Lineal masculinity: Gendered memory within patriliney. *American Ethnologist*, 37(2), 323-336.

⁵¹ King, D. E. (2008b). The personal is patrilineal: Namus as sovereignty. *Identities*, 15(3), 317-342.

cannot be considered uniform or homogenous. Kurdish gender culture has at least two contradictory aspects. The first is patriarchy, which may be found in tradition, religious beliefs, literature, language and generally in people's everyday lives. The second aspect which is less recognized is its long history of fight for gender equality. This culture arose in the early twentieth century Kurdish publications. It was influenced through the liberal feminist movements of Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the 1990s, there has been a significant fight towards the practice of honor killings in Iraqi Kurdistan, after the 1988 Anfal slaughter and the two Gulf Wars damaged the social framework of society and triggered waves of patriarchal brutality. Kurdish feminists have risen in opposition to their nation's patriarchal system.⁵²

The former component, that is patriarchy, predominates over the latter in Kurdish gender culture. In Iraqi Kurdistan, both of the Kurdish nationalist administrations defend and promote patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is regarded as part of Kurdish culture by Western countries as well. As a result, one can understand that patriarchal violence is a global phenomenon.⁵³

If the KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) administration has consistently rejected the call for gender equality as well as the prosecution of honor killing, and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) administration has given little attention to it, both have surrendered to the requests of a few mullahs and their Iranian masters. Kurdish mullahs, who had never dreamed of theocratic rule, suddenly request the Islamization of the relationship between genders and the submission of Kurdish women to Islamic mandates. Some Kurdish Islamic groups, funded and regulated by the Iranian theocratic system, seek to create a theocracy. Not unexpectedly, Kurdish officials who had been secular before to 1979, currently embrace Islam and Islamists.⁵⁴

⁵² Mojab, S., & Hassanpour, A. (2002). The politics and culture of honour killing: The murder of Fadime Sahindal. *International Feminist Perspectives: Women and Violence*, 1(1), 56-70.

⁵³ Mojab, S., & Hassanpour, A. (2002). The politics and culture of honour killing: The murder of Fadime Sahindal. *International Feminist Perspectives: Women and Violence*, 1(1), 56-70.

⁵⁴ Mojab, S., & Hassanpour, A. (2002). The politics and culture of honour killing: The murder of Fadime Sahindal. *International Feminist Perspectives: Women and Violence*, 1(1), 56-70.

Iranian theocracy characterized the separation of political and religious authorities as a Western plot against Islam. Several Kurdish nationalist administrators, like the region's nations, adopted Islam. While theocrats advocated for execution by stoning and killings for honor as Islamic structures, some Kurdish leaders advocated for male violence as part of national heritage. As L. Ouzgane points out in "Islamic Masculinities: Introduction" (2003), hegemonic masculinity seems to be fundamental to various types of anticolonial opposition that employ conservative interpretations of Islam. In this perspective, Iranian theocrats may be seen as hegemonic masculinities, denoting power and leadership while theoretically legitimizing patriarchy.⁵⁵

At this point, it is essential to continue the discussion with M.O. about Kurdish men in Iraq and his division of Kurdish men on categories that are considered more dominant and ideal in comparison to other Kurdish men in Iraq. Previously, a reference to military Kurdish masculinities was made as hegemonic. Furthermore, M.O. spotted another category of Kurdish men that are presented as hegemonic in Iraq, namely the Kurdish masculinities that are strongly attached to religion:

“The second category is being very very religious but not mistakenly. There are some men for example that generate a war and they seem religious, but in fact they are not. They just take roles for themselves. They take benefit out of the context of the religion. It is very important for a Kurdish man to practice religion in a proper way, as it recommended by religious tradition, and not just take advantage of it.”

Subsequently, on “Globalization and its Mal(e)Contents: The Gendered Moral and Political Economy of Terrorism” (2003), M.S. Kimmel proposes that religious fundamentalism and nationalist sentiments employ local cultural representations to express regional opposition to assimilation and globalization. Such religious and ethnic manifestations are frequently used to rebuild damaged masculinity and conventional patriarchy.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ouzgane, L. (2003). Islamic masculinities: Introduction. *Men and Masculinities*, 5(3), 231-235.

⁵⁶ Kimmel, M. S. (2003). Globalization and its mal(e) contents: The gendered moral and political economy of terrorism. *International Sociology*, 18(3), 603-620.

According to P. Amar on “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of “Men in Crisis,” Industries of Gender in Revolution” (2011), in many circumstances religion has a significant influence on the procedure of formation and performance of Kurdish masculinities. As a result, it is critical to recognize that Kurdish male identities are formed and perpetuated within multifaceted structures of state organizations and procedures that are inherently contradictory and multidimensional. When discussing Kurdish masculinities, it is advised that many factors depending on social, political, cultural, and religious context have to be taken into account.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Amar, P. (2011). Middle East masculinity studies. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 7(3), 36–70.

KURDISH MASCULINITIES IN GLOBAL DIASPORA

After having constructed the proper framework on the historical background and the social formation of Kurdish masculinities, the research will now focus on the concepts of mobility, identity and diaspora. In this way, a more suitable approach can be conducted on the comparison between the way Kurdish masculinities are practiced and performed before migrating, that is in the local context, and after migrating, that is in Greece.

To begin with, on “Dispersed Nationalism: War, Diaspora and Kurdish Women’s Organizing” (2007), Mojab and Gorman argue that diaspora ought to be viewed not just as a cultural phenomenon but also as a historical one. Diaspora and transnationalism constitute historical and political social organization concepts that entail an interconnected set of national, international, and multinational political as well as financial connections.⁵⁸

The creation of emerging Kurdish diasporas occurred in the backdrop of the continuous fight over Kurdistan from the 1960s. Not unexpectedly, these diasporas engage in intricate and shifting contacts with the homeland as well as with one another, actively participating in the creation of circumstances for the reproduction of the country, patriarchy, and their nation. In the backdrop of globalization and the formation of global policies, the Kurdish diasporas in Europe are regarded as transnational actors. These diasporas have shifted their activity away from Kurdish independence and towards the protection of human rights and ethnic and political pluralism.⁵⁹

As indicated by King on “Back from the Outside: Returnees and Diasporic Imagining in Iraqi Kurdistan” (2008), Kurds are not unused to cultural hybridity. Apart from those grown up in Iraqi Kurdistan after 1991, all other Kurds inhabiting in Kurdistan homeland have existed as minorities in multiple states. Life in those states has resulted

⁵⁸ Mojab, S., & Gorman, R. (2007). Dispersed nationalism: War, diaspora and Kurdish women’s organizing. *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, 3(1), 58-85.

⁵⁹ Mojab, S., & Gorman, R. (2007). Dispersed nationalism: War, diaspora and Kurdish women’s organizing. *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, 3(1), 58-85.

in cultural and linguistic fusions with the Turkish, Persian, and Arab populations. Nevertheless, the West is a lot more culturally distinct area to Kurdish life compared to the dominating local people who are already dominant within the Kurdish homeland. By participating in the emerging diasporas, they acquired an innovative social hybridity, an aspect of being Kurdish but also obtaining a distinct cultural basis in the West as well.⁶⁰

On “Transnational Aspects of the Kurdish Question” (2000), M.V. Bruinessen observes that by simplifying a complicated subject, one can see that the goals that have motivated Kurdish political movements over the last century have been twofold, namely culture and territory. The Kurds' most prominent national emblems are the Kurdish dialect and the territory traditionally known as Kurdistan. Many of those who are most involved in the current Kurdish movement speak limited Kurdish and have actually long lived outside of Kurdistan, which appears to be a paradox. These concepts of a shared identity and of geographical unity are not wholly new, but they only gained popularity in the twentieth century. The initial Kurdish nationalist organizations were formed outside of Kurdistan, and influence was first concentrated in the Kurdistan's biggest and most modern cities.⁶¹

A considerable majority of Kurds in their new homes have preserved or reestablished a strong feeling of Kurdish identity, and rather than progressively assimilating with host communities, they have grouped themselves into Kurdish diasporas. During the interview, S.N. mentions that in a way he feels closer to his Kurdish identity since he has moved and resides in Greece. Thanks to his interactions and relations with other Kurds in Greece, characteristically he managed to improve his Kurdish language skills. For S.N. there were more opportunities to do so and to interact more freely with other Kurds, whereas in Syria in many cases he had to be careful and speak mainly Arabic:

“I had many Kurdish friends in Greece and tried to interact a lot with the Kurdish community here. Imagine that I learned to speak better the Kurdish language here in Greece. Back in Syria I used to speak Kurmanji but only inside my house or at work

⁶⁰ King, D. E. (2008a). Back from the outside: Returnees and diasporic imagining in Iraqi Kurdistan. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 10(2), 208-222.

⁶¹ Bruinessen, M. V. (2000). *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question*. European University Institute.

where all of my coworkers were also Kurds. Of course, if they were not Kurds, I would not have been able to do that. In all the other areas in Syria I used to speak Arabic. For this reason, my Kurdish language was poor. My interactions and relations with other Kurds here in Greece helped me to improve my Kurdish language and to use it quite often.”

According to Bruinessen, starting in the 1960s, migration of laborers from Turkey resulted in relatively major Kurdish groups across Europe. From the late 1970s, academics as well as political refugees have contributed to a significant part in forming and making political these diasporas. Ethnic consciousness among these workers' groups was practically non-existent at first; the migrants throughout Europe had arrived as Turkish guest workers, and this had long been their most notable identity. Only over time did particular Kurdish connections and affiliations arise inside these groups, and people began to reclaim and express their Kurdish identity. Since the 1980s, these groups' focus toward improvements in Kurdistan has grown significantly, and political as well as cultural groups that transcend local and national borders have been increasingly important amongst them.⁶²

Large migration movements were triggered by the violent repression of the Kurdish independence movement in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. The military coup in Turkey in 1980, as well as the Iraq-Iran conflict, resulted in large numbers of refugees. In the course of the 1990s, Turkey replicated on a smaller scale Iraq's 1980s counter-insurgency operations. Hundreds of villages were demolished and residents were obligated to flee in order to prevent civilian support to the PKK guerilla combatants. Millions of people were displaced, fleeing their villages for nearby urban areas, and the Kurdish area for western Turkey. Many thousands of people sought to seek asylum for political reasons in the western part of Europe. Political refugees have become a prominent component of Europe's Kurdish communities.⁶³

Especially for the situation in Turkey, based on “Gendered, sexualized and ethnicized clashes in Turkey’s media” (2019) by N. Mutluer, it is essential to note that the Kurdish

⁶² Bruinessen, M. V. (2000). *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question*. European University Institute.

⁶³ Bruinessen, M. V. (2000). *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question*. European University Institute.

question became an argument of conflict for the Turkish state primarily with the founding of the PKK and the ensuing military confrontation that followed among Turkey against the PKK. Following that point, any debate about Kurdish objectives or ethnicity or cultural liberties has been presented either separatist or terrorist actions. Extended curfews, destruction of whole villages and even towns, and mass executions of people became the norm in Turkey's southeastern Kurdish territories. Scholars and refugees additionally attempted to develop the Kurdish language and utilize it as an important tool for raising Kurdish national awareness. This was particularly significant for Kurds leaving Turkey, since Kurdish had been prohibited. While in Turkey they were forced to communicate in Turkish, when they reached Europe they were not anymore restricted to speak Kurdish.⁶⁴

Speaking about the situation in Turkey, Z.B. distinctively mentions that it was not only the ban on Kurdish language, but also a broad pattern of oppressing politics against Kurds. Thus, Z.B. had to behave in a very specific way and to be careful about not expressing his Kurdish identity in a more public context:

“When I was in Turkey, we were not able to do anything when it comes to our Kurdish background and our culture. As you may know, people of the Kurdish community in Turkey are prosecuted. For me, we could not do anything about it. As I remember, when we had celebrations, for example Nowruz, we were not able to go outside and celebrate, we were doing all the festivities inside our house. It was a bit terrifying to be honest. But apart from celebrations, we had to behave in a very specific way in every aspect of our everyday lives and activities, staying as more low profiled as possible and just trying to afford our living condition, in order to avoid having troubles”.

Subsequently, Z.B. makes a comparison about his previous situation in Turkey and his current situation in Greece. He clarifies that since having migrated to Greece, he feels more open and free to engage in his Kurdish identity. He is able to speak his own language and to practice behaviors that he feels that are accepted by the Greek society:

⁶⁴ Mutluer, N. (2019a). Gendered, sexualized and ethnicized clashes in Turkey's media. In E., Eide, K. S., Orgeret, & N., Mutluer (Eds.) *Transnational othering – global diversities: Media, extremism and free expression* (pp. 253-271). University of Gothenburg.

“In any case, I feel better here in Greece in comparison to Turkey because people here can understand that I am Kurdish and not Turkish. It is important that not only they understand it but also they accept it in a peaceful way. They are more open to see our traditions, to taste our food or to listen to our music. In Turkey I was not free to express my cultural origins. Here I can speak Kurdish and interact with other Kurds without worrying of being arrested, being tortured or having any other troubles.”

Continuing on “Transnational Aspects of the Kurdish Question” (2000) by Bruinessen, it is obvious that Kurdish diaspora is not anymore subsidiary to the happenings in Kurdistan, but rather plays a more significant part. The development of the Kurdish diaspora demonstrates, perhaps more than improvements in Kurdistan, the procedure of reemergence of Kurdish identity following an era of progressive assimilation in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. In addition to the fact that the Kurdish diaspora has been more focused on the condition and conflict in their home countries, yet it has also been more successful in contributing to their progress. The diaspora has played a crucial part in developing Kurdish culture, coordinating relief operations in Iraqi Kurdistan, and supporting both the military and political disputes in Turkey.⁶⁵

The Kurdish issue is no longer merely an Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian, or Turkish issue; rather it has grown into a European political one. The development of established Kurdish diasporas and the technological revolution in communication have altered the dynamics of the Kurdish issue. It is no longer an issue involving simply the Kurds and the governments of the countries of origin; it has infiltrated the political plans of European countries too. Despite the fact that the Kurds are not a homogenous entity and definitely do not speak with a unified voice, the world community has begun to acknowledge them, perhaps not as a distinct nation at the moment, but as Kurds and not only as residents of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, or Syria.⁶⁶

The multifaceted web of worldwide connections detailed in this research has transformed the Kurds into a nation considerably more than they were just a few decades ago. The Iraqi and Turkish governments' attempts to put down Kurdish

⁶⁵ Bruinessen, M. V. (2000). *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question*. European University Institute.

⁶⁶ Bruinessen, M. V. (2000). *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question*. European University Institute.

nationalism through catastrophic armed forces have surprisingly helped significantly to this development. Hundreds of Kurdish towns were destroyed, and millions of Kurds had to flee the Kurdish region, but this had an impact of bringing together Kurds from various geographical backgrounds and incorporating numerous of these individuals into broader, non-territorial Kurdish communities.⁶⁷

Subsequently, on “Identity Formation and Community Organization among Kurdish Diaspora in London” (2014), O. Ugurlu emphasizes the fact that the Kurdish diaspora does not constitute a unified entity. Furthermore, a big number of Kurds only had the opportunity to find their Kurdishness in Europe, where they could freely express their heritage, speak their language, and organize themselves. Kurds, unable to display their Kurdish history in their country of origin, have found a place to express themselves in liberal Western democracies. The Kurds needed to rebuild their true identity in an unfamiliar setting and gain recognition as such, despite the fact that European countries were significantly more open in a way that they were capable of expressing themselves openly there.⁶⁸

It is crucial to highlight that in the modern era of the spread of globalization, diasporas operating as non-state actors possess the power to impact policy-making procedures in both home and host nations. They have the benefit of acting as an intermediary among their home countries and host nations, or between various homeland groups, due to their awareness of each country's politics. It is additionally worth noting that the amount of integration into the host community cannot be determined by the level of attachment to the homeland. Some are well assimilated but still identify as politically engaged Kurds, whereas others feel totally alienated from the society in host country and seek refuge in the Kurdish community and relevant groups.⁶⁹

Of course, these are not the only cases. It is important to note that the list of practices and behaviors among Kurdish masculinities is indicative and not exhaustive. During

⁶⁷ Bruinessen, M. V. (2000). *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question*. European University Institute.

⁶⁸ Ugurlu, O. (2014). Identity formation and community organization among Kurdish Diaspora in London. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 1(1), 22-34.

⁶⁹ Ugurlu, O. (2014). Identity formation and community organization among Kurdish Diaspora in London. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 1(1), 22-34.

the interview with S.N., another situation is presented. Specifically, S.N. points out that when he arrived in Greece and for a long period he had a lot of interactions with other members of the Kurdish community. However, as the time went by, he preferred to distance himself mainly from most of the other Kurds that he interacted with. S.N. felt that these Kurds were stuck in a very old-fashioned and traditional way of thinking and behaving, without incorporating any new elements that were provided to them inside the Greek and European context:

“However, most of these interactions have been decreased now. I think that we do not match anymore in the way of thinking. There are a lot of Kurds who do not want to evolve their way of thinking and to adopt new routines and practices. They try to stuck to their tradition and culture without noticing what happens around them or generally what happens in the world. Personally I do not like to judge other people on what they are wearing, or about their religion, if they believe in one god or if they have changed religion, if they are gay or lesbian. I do not have such problems. Many Kurds for example criticize in a negative way someone who has changed his religion or someone who has different sexual preferences. Also, they stick to more traditional roles inside the house, they expect from their woman to clean and do all the chores relating to the household, while they think that only them are allowed to work. These opinions have annoyed me so much that I chose to reduce my interactions with these Kurdish people. Currently I am more careful and selective on the Kurdish people that I have in my life.”

Through the example analyzed above, the plurality of masculinities and the diversity of men’s gender practices are being confirmed once again. On “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History” (1993), Connell proposes that one is unable to be masculine in a certain way and participate in specific activities producing a particular type of masculinity without shaping the conditions that gave rise to that form of masculinity, whether to replicate, deepen, or overturn them. Various forms of masculinities emerge in connection to this structure, embodying different engagements and methods.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Connell, R. W. (1993). The big picture: Masculinities in recent world history. *Theory and Society*, 22(5), 597-623.

Furthermore, on “The Kurdish Diaspora: Transnational Ties, Home, and Politics of Belonging” (2014) by M. Alinia, O. Wahlbeck, B. Eliassi, and K. Khayati, it is noted that the past twenty years of Kurdish history may be identified as an era in which the Kurdish diaspora became highly mobilized. These trends highlight the significance of transnational links among today's migrant groups. Transnational relationships include many links that connect individuals or institutions beyond national borders. Kurdish international communities and diasporic settings are emerging as a result of increased Kurdish migration and relationships with countries of origin and among Kurds living in various places across the world. Diasporas, on the other hand, are complicated and fluid social processes that undergo constant change and alteration throughout time.⁷¹

Diasporas are a cross-border phenomenon in society defined on the one hand by scattering, displacement, feelings of social exclusion, and a desire to return home, and on the other by actions, mobilizations, and policies for setting, home making, and belonging. Diasporas are groups of expatriates that can be identified by their distinctive relationship to a hypothetical or actual homeland. Nevertheless, homeland must be regarded as an idea; the diaspora is defined by displacement and migration in connection with the idea of a homeland. As a result, the idea of diaspora has proved effective in defining the social structure, transnational ties, and community formation processes associated with relocation. There is a requirement for diaspora historicity, which means every diaspora has to be understood in its historical character.⁷²

As indicated by A.I. in a comparison between his position in Syria and his position in Greece, he mentions that there are advantages and disadvantages at the same time. Nevertheless, A.I. expresses a strong attachment to the idea of homeland. It becomes obvious that for A.I., even if there are many positive things in his current situation in Greece, he cannot abandon the idea of his homeland, which apparently affects him to a large extent:

⁷¹ Alinia, M., Wahlbeck, Ö., Eliassi, B., & Khayati, K. (2014). The Kurdish diaspora: Transnational ties, home, and politics of belonging. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 4(2), 53–56.

⁷² Alinia, M., Wahlbeck, Ö., Eliassi, B., & Khayati, K. (2014). The Kurdish diaspora: Transnational ties, home, and politics of belonging. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 4(2), 53–56.

“There are positive things and there are negative things. Positive things are that here you are free, you can speak whatever you want, you can say whatever you think. You can find a work and if you do not work usually they give you money from the state. You can study. Everything is free. Here the situation helps you to understand the world and what is going on around you. In Greece, everyone says that you can do this or you can do that. In Syria, everyone tells you that you cannot do this or you cannot do that. On the other hand, there are also negative things. For example, sometimes you feel like a robot, you know, go to work, come back, there is no free time. Also Syria is home for me. You cannot forget your home. But even if it was my home, the situation there was very bad and I had to leave.”

Due to the fact that belonging is not considered a fixed entity, but rather a series of activities that are important to how human interactions are conducted, it is a term that may be utilized to analyze the aforementioned social procedures. Furthermore, it is critical to recognize that belonging is more than just acquiring citizenship; it is also about building emotional and social relationships with places that are built as locations of identification and participation.

On the context of participation, an important aspect is considered to be the political expression and the ability to place oneself towards specific political circumstances. Discussing on the issue of politics in Syria, A.I. highlights that it was considered extremely dangerous for a Kurdish man to be involved or even to speak about his position in the political context, as there was a possibility to be imprisoned or tortured for doing so. In many cases, the danger lurked even among members of the Kurdish community:

“We could not speak our language outside of the house. We could only speak in Arabic in order to be safe and not have problems. Also, you could not discuss or take any position in a political conversation. Many Kurdish men who talked about politics or expressed their opinion about the government, ended up in prison or tortured. It was only secure to go to work and return back home, without further interactions and especially without expressing political opinions. A Kurdish man should be careful during his everyday life. Even inside the Kurdish community in Syria many times it

was not wise to express yourself openly. It was quite dangerous and thus it was considered not allowed in a way.”

Continuing on the issue of politics in Syria, D.O. also mentions the dangers in political involvement and the restrictions for Kurdish men to demonstrate or to manifest their opposition to the Syrian government. As D.O. states, these oppressing tactics had a great impact on Kurdish masculinities who could not express their political views:

“Another characteristic example was in 2004 during a football match between the Kurds and the Arabs. During the football game there was a fight, and some government officers came and killed a couple of Kurdish people, as these officers were supporting the Arabs. And when this happened, people went on demonstrations. Even during these demonstrations, Kurdish people had been shot and killed. I still remember that day. After that, Kurdish people stopped demonstrating at all, because they knew that if they had demonstrated, there would be a big possibility to be killed. In such ways the government planted hate in people’s hearts. These facts had also great impact on Kurdish men and on the way that they could express or manage their anger deriving from being oppressed.”

The situation on the political context and the fear of expressing oneself or participating in politics was quite similar in Iraq. M.O. points the struggles for a Kurdish man to express his opposition to political conditions that were imposed by the government and the fact that he was unable to do anything about it:

“The situation was not very open. For example, if I wanted to express myself in the middle of the center or if I wanted to demonstrate on something, or just to announce to someone to go for demonstration, I would get arrested in less than twenty hours. You cannot freely talk. They will guarantee you freedom of speech, but they will not guarantee you freedom after speech.”

By making a comparison between the situation in Iraq, as described above, and his current position in Greece, M.O. spots important differences. As he states, in Greece he feels that he has the ability to express any potential dissenting opinion on political issues or any possible disagreement in order to protect and to stand up for his rights:

“If I am against something in Greece, I can use social media, I can use newspapers, I can go everywhere and approach people and talk about it. I can go out on the streets and demonstrate. I do not think that something will happen to me. In Iraq, if government does not like that, they will arrest me. They will arrest me for days, weeks, even months if for example I speak about something that they do not want to be heard or if I demonstrate on the streets. People usually do not demonstrate in my country because of the violence and the danger of the events that may take place in such situations.”

Diasporic communities behave both outwards, toward their previous homeland, and internally, toward their new home nation. Furthermore, involvement in one direction does not preclude involvement in another.

Additionally, on “New Online Communities and New Identity Making: The Curious Case of the Kurdish Diaspora” (2019), J. Mahmood sheds light on a different critical element of Kurdish diasporas, that is technology and its relationship to the development of Kurdish identity. Thus, Mahmood suggests that an inseparably connected grouping of procedures including diaspora, transnationalism, and technological communication is generating new maps of identity that differ from conventional modes of identity building inside geographical and national borders. With their online activities, diasporic Kurds have grown a new sort of transnational and international awareness, a form of awareness that exceeds both national and diasporic binary consciousness. Kurdish diasporas are becoming more aware of identity variations not just among diaspora and Kurds in the countries of origin, but additionally among Kurdish diasporas in other Western nations. As people become more exposed to diversity and societal plurality, new discourses about internal distinctions emerge. The idea of imagined community seems to be more understandable in the Kurdish question, due to the fact that Kurds do not originate from a single state but they are split among the four states of Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, all of which have declined to acknowledge Kurdish nation-wide and ethnic identity, as well as its political and cultural manifestations.⁷³

⁷³ Mahmood, J. (2019). New online communities and new identity making: The curious case of the Kurdish diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(2), 34-43.

The development of the Kurdish diasporas, emerging methods of communication, and transnational activities all contribute to the development of new identities. In a larger perspective, this may be considered as an illustration of how conventional dimensions of identity within geographical area, such as ethnic background, socioeconomic status, gender and religion, are starting to be challenged in the context of technological advancements and new transnational relationships and global connections. Many younger Kurds join online networks to develop a shared sense regarding identity and to unify on crucial cultural, societal and political concerns. In numerous ways, digital technologies provide a new type of power for those who, up until lately, had little opportunity of having an opinion, much alone being heard and making a distinction. This is especially relevant in a setting of oppressed populations and victim diasporas, which Kurds are a part of.⁷⁴

Communication through online networks is not only for younger Kurds. In other settings, online communication seems to be like the main possible option for a Kurdish man to interact with other Kurdish people. A characteristic example is the case of A.T., who resides in a refugee camp since the time that he has arrived in Greece. For A.T., communication through online platforms is very important, due to the fact that in the refugee camp that he resides there are not many other Kurds to interact with. Thus, only via online platforms he has the ability to connect with other Kurds and to share their thoughts, concerns and practices:

“Since I came to Greece I live in a refugee camp. I never had the chance to live in the city or a village and to have interactions with other people living there. As time goes by, I feel less able to do anything, to study, to work, to be a better man. Also, in the refugee camp that I stay, there are not many Kurdish people, and even with these few I cannot communicate well because they are from Syria and I do not speak Arabic. So I have few interactions only with Kurdish people that are from Turkey like me. Most of them live in Athens and we communicate through telephone and internet. These interactions are very important for me. Most of the time we discuss about our problems. Personally, I do not have papers and I stay in the camp for four years now. So we speak

⁷⁴ Mahmood, J. (2019). New online communities and new identity making: The curious case of the Kurdish diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(2), 34-43.

about how we can support our lives and move forward, as we feel stuck in the same situation for so long. We need to move forward so we keep encouraging each other and supporting each other, because things are not good.”

These dialogues show an innovative narrative that more clearly demonstrates diverse ways of comprehending Kurdish identity through its various contexts and stages of migration. This, in return, generates new perspectives that require a reassessment of traditional approaches of understanding diaspora dynamics and identity formation. The increasing realization and skepticism among Kurds regarding the homogeneous idea of community and identity, even though they keep striving for an independent shared identity while bringing themselves socially and politically closer to Kurdish nation, communicates to the discourse on the weakening of states as an indicator of one's identity. Being brought up as a member of more than one culture, speaking a number of languages, and participating in transnational practices have all affected personal identities and communities, but the drastic and unforeseen rise of social, cultural, and political plurality generated by the swift development of technological advances in digital media has made the Kurdish identity considerably more fluid. Different ideologies arguing for support and recognition have replaced the traditional pattern of tragedy, which functioned as a major venue for political engagement among diasporic Kurds.⁷⁵

According to Mahmood, it is critical to separate transnational political activities that attempt to address political issues in the homeland from individual lifestyles that now incorporate fresh routines, behaviors, and fears originating from a shifted perception of solidarity and community. The principles and methods of cosmopolitanism articulated by diaspora individuals are in tension with nationalist ideology, therefore diasporic forms of culture can never be completely nationalist. One may argue that the identity dilemma emerges when young Kurds wish to transcend their cultural constraints yet are reluctant to renounce the heritage and independence movement for which generations before them paid such a high price. This identity problem manifests itself in young Kurds as they seek to keep their links with the Kurdish community while also adjusting

⁷⁵ Mahmood, J. (2019). New online communities and new identity making: The curious case of the Kurdish diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(2), 34-43.

and reproducing themselves and confronting others who demand cultures to stay unchanged.⁷⁶

Differences among Kurds exist not just between old and new migrants, but also among diasporas raising within different European nations. As a result, it is clear that diasporic trends and developments are impacted by the state's identity policies. It is vital to bear in mind that identities are always changing as a result of movement and multicultural and nationwide encounter. Many diasporic cultural and social engagements have been profoundly changed, shattering narratives of diasporic homeland desire. Kurds have proved that a feeling of belonging to one's country of origin and adaptation to a new country are not incompatible with one another, but do require transformed identities in the process of deconstructing old Kurdish identities and articulating new ones, regardless of the problems that may arise.⁷⁷

Discussing about interaction with other members of Kurdish community in Greece, as well as relations with the homeland, Z.A. mentions the difficulties that he has faced during his attempts to maintain connection links not only with his country of origin but also with the Kurdish community in Greece. He considers that being away from his own family is an important factor that further affects the rest of his interactions with Kurdish people:

“Besides the very limited connections with my country of origin, at the same time I do not interact that much also with Kurdish community in Greece. Of course, when I first arrived here I had some connections with other Kurds, as we had the same ethnicity and it was easier for us to interact and communicate. However, when I started working in Greece and moving from one place to another, these interactions started to decrease a lot. I think it was quite important for me that my family was not here. If my family members were here, I think that I would have interacted more not only with them but also with other people from the Kurdish community in Greece. The fact that we have been spread across many places affects me and also has led me to decrease my

⁷⁶ Mahmood, J. (2019). New online communities and new identity making: The curious case of the Kurdish diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(2), 34-43.

⁷⁷ Mahmood, J. (2019). New online communities and new identity making: The curious case of the Kurdish diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(2), 34-43.

interactions with them. But also my distancing from Kurdish people relates to the fact that I am working and as a result I have very limited time. Nevertheless, even if I had more free time and wanted to interact more with my people, it is a bit more difficult in Greece as there are not so many Kurds residing here at the present moment. It makes me sad to be away from my family, from my Kurdish people and from my tradition.”

On “Asylum Seekers/Patron Seekers: Interpreting Iraqi Kurdish Migration” (2005), some interesting points have been made by King regarding Kurds and migration. More specifically, King focuses on how patronage and clientage ties serve as an explanatory framework for Kurdish migration. Kurdish experiences with patron-client relationships, most notably from the perspective of clientage, shape normative beliefs about movement and relocation procedures. Patron-client relationships arise among unequal people that are dependent. Clients exhibit political support and respect in many symbolic forms, while patrons provide hospitality, job opportunities, and safety. These are mostly harmful partnerships because they foster inequity and instability. Therefore, the focus is in the patron's best interest for keeping the client insecure in order to maintain the connection, resulting in advantages for the patron rather than the client.⁷⁸

Kurds are an ethnic minority in all of the four states where they live, and have been mistreated in various ways by the main ethnic groups. Patronage and clientage are depicted as indigenous, emerging from inside, in most of the scholarship on patron-client social organizations in the Middle East. However, they were also imposed from outside by colonizers. Prior to European control, the majority of Kurdistan was component of the Ottoman rule, where patronage and clientage were very important in administration. In summary, it may be said that Kurds never encountered a social and political system, whether native or imposed from the outside or established, that did not contain patron-client connections as its core.⁷⁹

Patronage and clientage were naturalized and glorified in Iraq at a period when such connections could have given place to a more adaptable capitalism. Nevertheless, this

⁷⁸ King, D. E. (2005). Asylum seekers / Patron seekers: Interpreting Iraqi Kurdish migration. *Human Organization*, 64(4), 316-326.

⁷⁹ King, D. E. (2005). Asylum seekers / Patron seekers: Interpreting Iraqi Kurdish migration. *Human Organization*, 64(4), 316-326.

system was not exclusive to Iraq. Throughout Kurdistan, the different regimes have not only avoided trying to dismantle these relational systems, but have instead reinforced and exploited them. Individuals were used to patronage connections at more particular local levels, such as among Kurdish political organizations or the peasant-landowner relationship, whether they lived in regions under centralized government or Kurdish rule. In comparison to previous patrons ranging from landowners to the nation, the refuge-giving nations of Western Europe appear to be excellent patrons, demanding less and providing more. As a consequence, many Kurds began moving at a rapid pace in order to set themselves in front of the Western nations so as to seek refuge.⁸⁰

Obtaining legal status is a major factor that affects the way Kurdish men shape and perform their masculinities in Greece. During the interview with A.T., it becomes obvious that the fact that he has not received yet refugee status in Greece affects the formation of his masculinity, and specifically his behavior, practices, emotions and thoughts. He feels trapped and he cannot behave and live in the way that he wants to:

“As Kurdish people from Turkey, we have difficulties in getting papers in Greece, I do not know why. I see Kurdish people from Syria getting their papers and leave from the camp but I am stuck here. This has become very difficult for me. I cannot even go to work and provide food to my children. Currently, the only thing that I can do is to wait in the queue so as to get a basket of food and give it to my children. I feel like I don't know who I am anymore, I feel like a prisoner. I cannot go out and work and provide food and other staff to my children. I feel embarrassed in front of them. Whatever comes to my mind to do, at the end of the day they do not allow me to do it, because it is always the same problems, as I do not have legal papers and I do not have rights.”

Subsequently, on “I have too much baggage: the impacts of legal status on the social worlds of irregular migrants” (2012), N. Sigona proposes that living with no legal documents offers another layer of difficulty, as migrants taking into account problems with security and stability. The distinction in legal status makes it hard to form

⁸⁰ King, D. E. (2005). Asylum seekers / Patron seekers: Interpreting Iraqi Kurdish migration. *Human Organization*, 64(4), 316-326.

connections among recognized and unrecognized refugees since their objectives, plans, and opportunities are distinct.⁸¹

In addition to that, as stated by Connell on “Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena” (2005), gender relations have many dimensions, but there are also many forms of inequality within these dimensions. Specifically, the males who receive the majority of the advantages and the men that suffer the majority of the disadvantages do not constitute the same people. On a worldwide basis, the men who enjoy corporate wealth, security, and health care are not the same men who provide the labor force in developing nations. Class, ethnic, regional, national, social and economic variations cut across the male category, distributing the benefits and drawbacks of gender interactions extremely unevenly.⁸²

It becomes obvious that an important factor that should be taken into consideration regarding integration of Kurdish men in Greece and the way they shape and perform their masculinities is the legal status. Z.A. describes how the status affect the procedure of integration and practice of masculinity:

“A difference among a Kurd asylum seeker and a Kurd that has received legal status and documents is that the latter will be able to practice his traditions more freely, to go and come around more easily, to interact with other communities. In a few words, he will be more comfortable and secure if he has all his legal documents and be able to move freely. Once he has received his documents, he can work legally, live in a nice place and have relations with other people without worrying about anything.”

At this point, it is important to present some useful information on internally displaced Kurdish men, deriving from “Disposable Masculinities in Istanbul” (2011) by N. Mutluer. More specifically, Mutluer seeks to understand how the Turkish government practices and discourses, as well as civil and political structures such as the Kurdish movement, and the broader understanding of familial, social, customary, nationwide,

⁸¹ Sigona, N. (2012). I have too much baggage: The impacts of legal status on the social worlds of irregular migrants. *Social Anthropology*, 20(1), 50-65.

⁸² Connell, R. W. (2005a). Change among the gatekeepers: Men, masculinities, and gender equality in the global arena. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3), 1801-1825.

and Islamic values, are used, modified, and established in the daily lives of internally displaced men who reside in the center of Istanbul. Simultaneously, Mutluer emphasizes on how this conflict shapes the masculinities of internally displaced Kurdish males.⁸³

Combining the literature source above with another work by Mutluer, that is “The intersectionality of gender, sexuality, and religion: novelties and continuities in Turkey during the AKP era” (2019), it is stated that throughout the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, during the peak of the armed struggle among the Turkish army and the PKK, Turkish state troops evicted Kurdish communities in Southeast Anatolia and removed Kurdish populations without providing them with alternative housing. The objectives of the internal displacement strategy were to avoid probable Kurdish encouragement to the PKK, and additionally to guarantee safety in the region, that is a prerequisite for the implementation of the neoliberal economic agenda. The state's internal displacement system involves not only removing and destroying Kurdish communities, but also enforcing other types of oppression and brutality, notably torturing and sexual assault, on individuals that reside in those lands. The state's internal displacement strategy for security permits the authorities to stigmatize persons who resided in a certain location or territory, to whom any disciplinary standard and regulation may be enforced under a circumstance of exception.⁸⁴

Internally displaced Kurdish males encounter distinct power dynamics in city life than they did in their home country. Internally displaced Kurdish men associate with the rules and ideals associated with various sorts of masculinities in their daily lives. Kurdish nationalist organizations, Kurdish communities, and the Turkish state served as the primary external identifiers for Kurdish men in the Kurd's place of origin, whereas in the city, besides those mentioned above, multiple economic, social, cultural and political structures, as well as both Kurdish and non-Kurdish people of various backgrounds, are taken into account. As a result, power centers and types of oppression

⁸³ Mutluer, N. (2011). Disposable masculinities in Istanbul. In R. L., Jackson, & M., Balaji (Eds.) *Global masculinities and manhood* (pp. 75-105). University of Illinois Press.

⁸⁴ Mutluer, N. (2019b). The intersectionality of gender, sexuality, and religion: Novelties and continuities in Turkey during the AKP era. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 19(1), 1-20.

change position, affecting the internal and external processes of identification of internally displaced males.⁸⁵

Internally displaced Kurdish men employ the sovereign's techniques and establish numerous strategies across all of their interactions with organizations and people in the city. In this tension, their everyday actions are molded in a positional fashion, resulting in these masculinities being disposed of and disposing in return. Therefore, the masculinities of internally displaced males are constructed in such a disposable manner that each encounter in a certain power based relational environment creates a new sort of masculine being. As a result, internally displaced Kurdish men have discovered themselves in the position of being both invisible in their quest for social and economic equality and visible in their societal discrimination and oppression, on the one hand, and both dominant across other disadvantaged males and females and subordinated by the patriarchal, dominant principles that characterize Turkish and Kurdish societies, on the other.⁸⁶

Subsequently, on “The role of Transnational and National Institutions in Internally Displaced Men’s Everyday Life in Tarlabasi in Istanbul” (2009), Mutluer claims that the daily identification process of internally displaced Kurdish males leads to the development of situational masculinity, that depends on their position in power relations. Because their dominating and dominated positions vary based on the power filled encounter, individuals grow into the subject and object of dominance and apply coercion, persuasion, and consent in a variety of methods in their daily contacts. The strategies used by internally displaced Kurdish males to establish their masculinities mirror the society's gendered national, ethnic, social hierarchy, and power dynamics. Their approaches expose not only institutional regulations and distribution patterns in the social, economic, and political contexts, but also power-laden social ties in the local and global arenas.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Mutluer, N. (2019b). The intersectionality of gender, sexuality, and religion: Novelties and continuities in Turkey during the AKP era. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 19(1), 1-20.

⁸⁶ Mutluer, N. (2019b). The intersectionality of gender, sexuality, and religion: Novelties and continuities in Turkey during the AKP era. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 19(1), 1-20.

⁸⁷ Mutluer, N. (2009). The role of transnational and national institutions in internally displaced men’s everyday life in Tarlabasi in Istanbul. In K., Harrison, & J., Hearn (Eds.) *Deconstructing the hegemony of men and masculinities* (pp. 91-108). Linköping University.

Speaking about daily life in Syria, S.N. mentions that in a way he had to embody different roles depending on the context in which he was located. Specifically, under specific circumstances, he had to behave more aggressively in order not only to provoke fear and respect but also to ensure safety and protection:

“I think that it was necessary for us to have different characteristics inside the house and outside of it. It was like having different roles in every situation. For example, it was not considered acceptable to be violent inside the house and towards your family. But outside of the house, you should behave like a man, a man that could be violent in many cases in order to support himself, his honor and the honor of his family members.”

In comparison to the situation mentioned above, S.N. feels quite different since he has migrated and resides in Greece. He highlights that in Greece he does not have to embody different roles in order to protect himself or his family members, as he feels more secure. By not having to embody different roles, he realizes that he managed to come closer to his true self, to become the man that he aspired to be:

“I think that there are similarities and differences as well. For example, I continue to take care of my family and I try to support them in every possible way. On the other hand, here I feel more safe and secure. I also believe that the place that I was living back in my country of origin could not help me to be a better person or to evolve. In the area that I used to live, I always had to act and to embody a more aggressive identity in order to survive and to avoid having troubles. I had to show a more aggressive face towards the others. Here I don't have to do that. I do not fear that someone will hit me or that someone will enter my house and steal it. Here I had the opportunity to change, and to become what I truly wanted. On the contrary, the circumstances in Syria did not allow me to do that. I had to pretend to be someone else.”

Once again, it seems necessary to emphasize the fact that Kurdish men are not a homogeneous entity. Many variations are noticed among Kurds on social, cultural, political and religious context. These variations lead to equivalent consequences on the ways Kurdish masculinities are formed and practiced. During the interview, D.O. shares his experience with other members from the Kurdish community in Greece, but

also makes a comparison with information that he has obtained from his family in Germany and the Kurdish community that is located there:

“Personally, I am currently out of the Kurdish community in Greece. I do not interact with them but mainly because of the circumstances, as I work a lot and do not have much free time. But also I feel that in Greece there is not a big Kurdish community. For example, my family members live in Germany and as they have told me, there are very large Kurdish communities there and many Kurdish associations, too. When it is Nowruz, around one thousand people may gather in the area that my family resides and celebrate it all together. It seems that it is more common there, but not so much here. To be honest, I would like to participate more and to be an active member of the Kurdish community here. But also, I would like to interact specifically with Kurdish people from my area, from northern eastern Syria, people who have the same accent, people who are the same as me. I think that the majority of Kurdish people here are Sorani speakers, from northern Iraq and Iran. I do not feel very comfortable with them, as their accents are quite hard and they have slightly a different culture. But if they were from Syria I would love to interact more. It is something that I miss, the interaction with Kurdish people. I feel more comfortable talking to Kurdish people. The interaction with Kurdish people is different, the way of thinking is different, the topics Kurds talk about are different. Even the culture, the way we communicate, the way we meet and the things that we do when we go out together are different in comparison to the things that I do with Greek people.”

Thus, the heterogeneity of Kurds is brought once again into focus. For D.O., it is of high importance to interact with Kurdish people originating from Syria, as they share common way of thinking, common behaviors and practices which are essential for him. Additionally, even if there are not so many Kurds in Greece, he prefers to be distant rather than to associate with other Kurds, considering that these Kurds mainly originate from different regions and not from Syria.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, in the present dissertation, a case study concerning Kurdish masculinities has been presented. The main objective of the current research has been to explore if any changes have been noticed regarding the way Kurdish masculinities are formed and practiced by comparing their position in the country of origin, that is before migrating, to their position in Greece, that is after migrating. In order to achieve that, the methodology that has been employed is based on data deriving from semi-structured interviews with Kurdish men, as well as on literature sources.

As having already described concerning the structure of the dissertation, at the beginning some fundamental concepts such as masculinities, hegemonic masculinities, and hyper-masculinities have been depicted and further analyzed. Subsequently, essential information concerning Kurdish masculinities has been shared. In order to have better knowledge of Kurdish men and the way they form and exercise their masculinities, light has been shed on the historical background and on the concepts of identity, migration and diaspora. In addition to the links above, information from the interviews has been displayed, so as to approach holistically the way that Kurdish masculinities are practiced in the socio-cultural context in comparison to their position in Greece.

Throughout this dissertation, different aspects of social, cultural, political, institutional, and religious contexts concerning Kurdish masculinities have been examined. It has been of high importance to take into consideration that there are many distinctions among Kurdish men and Kurdish communities. As already demonstrated, Kurdish masculinities are formed in various ways, and apart from similarities, there are also important differences that may be spotted among them, depending, to name a few, on their country of origin, age, cultural background, social environment, education. Having in mind that Kurdish masculinities are not homogeneous, it has been proved that cultural, social and political variations have been noticed among them.

The complexity among Kurdish men as well as the various approaches on the formation and practice of their masculinities have been challenging issues. Even after having

constructed the necessary frameworks for the examination of Kurdish masculinities, one should have in mind their heterogeneity and diversity. Based on the literature sources and the data deriving from the semi-structured interviews with Kurdish men, it is safe to say that various differences and changes have been noticed on the way Kurdish masculinities are shaped and performed in Greece in comparison to their position in the countries of origin. Nevertheless, by comparing the Kurdish men that have migrated to Greece and have been interviewed for the purpose of this paper, one can spot differences even among them.

Combining the information from the literature sources with the data from the semi-structured interviews that have been collected and analyzed, it becomes obvious that Kurdish masculinities have changed the way that they are formed and practiced in Greece. One of the main factors leading to that, is their distancing from the oppressing and violent circumstances in their countries of origin. As described by all the participants during the interviews, feeling free to express their Kurdish identity has affected their behaviors and practices in social, cultural, religious and political context. It has been noticed that in Greece, Kurdish men do not have to hide behind masks or to construct different versions of personalities depending on the context that they are located, as they previously did in their countries of origin. On the contrary, they feel that there is no stigmatization of the Kurdish identity in Greece. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, there are also variations comparing the level of freedom that each one of these Kurds may experience. Characteristically, different approaches and practices are displayed comparing Kurdish men in Greece that have been recognized with refugee status to those who have not received legal status yet.

Moreover, based on the information shared during the interviews, it has been presented that Kurdish men were adopting and practicing a more traditional way of life in their countries of origin, in which family and work were the principal concepts that determined the way that these masculinities were formed and practiced. Nevertheless, while in the countries of origin these Kurdish men focused on a more traditional lifestyle, in Greece they appear to be in a way more distant from this lifestyle. In other words, even if they continue to prioritize family and work as concepts, in most of the cases, by being away from their family members and close community, there is a notable change on the way they behave and perceive these concepts. It seems that after

migrating and while residing in Greece, they put themselves at the center of their life, by expressing and discovering their true identity and by fulfilling their own needs and ambitions, without having to embody other personalities or identities. The practices used by Kurdish men to establish their masculinities mirror the society's gendered national, ethnic, social hierarchy, power dynamics, economic, and political contexts.

Another interesting point is that while Kurdish men were in the local socio-cultural context, they used to interact mainly inside the Kurdish communities and not with outsiders or with people of different ethnicity or nationality. For example, as deriving from the literature sources as well as the data from the interviews, Kurds were quite reluctant and skeptical towards Arabs, mainly because of the circumstances and the events that had taken place throughout the years in their countries of origin. Instead, in Greece, it seems that Kurdish men do not restrict themselves to interact only with other Kurdish people, but they also associate and communicate with other ethnicities, mainly with Greeks. This can be explained by the fact that they do not feel threatened to express more openly their identity among people of different ethnicities. They become more exposed to diversity and societal plurality, and as a result they feel liberated to explore and express their identity as well.

Diversities in culture, society, community, religion, language, educational background are among some factors that affect the formation and practice of Kurdish masculinities. Nevertheless, during the period of globalization and the weakening of the idea of nation-state as an entity, Kurds may present useful information that are of high importance to be further examined, concerning issues of migration, technology, identity formation, oppression management, autonomy and diaspora making.

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