Masculinities in Conflict

A research about the affected masculine identities of Syrian refugees

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25-07-2017

A Thesis submitted to
the Board of Examiners
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Supervisor:	Prof. dr. ir. Georg Frerks
Date of Submission:	25-07-2017
Programme Trajectory:	Research Project & Thesis Writing (30 ECTS)
Word Count:	26.575

Universiteit Utrecht

Preface

Dear reader,

Before you lies the thesis *Masculinities in conflict. A research about the affected masculine identities of Syrian refugees*. It has been written to fulfil the graduation requirements of the Master Programme Conflict Studies & Human Rights at Utrecht University. In this section I will explain how the research came about and why I chose this particular subject. The preface is also to thank a number of persons for their special contribution.

For as long as I can remember, almost all matters concerning 'refugees' catch my attention. Whether the subject is about global migration processes, reasons for leaving the home country behind, staying in asylum centres or procedures regarding the request for a residence permit. My attention is caught through a combination of two factors. On one hand the subject matter concerns in most cases very vulnerable people, while at the same time discussions and debates regarding refugees take place in a highly polarized context.

The current hardening in the European debate about refugees triggered me to choose a subject related to 'the refugee crisis' which is frequently referred to by politicians, media and concerned civilians. As I will further explain in the introduction, I was motivated to go beyond the strongly politicized discussions regarding the refugee crisis in Europe and wanted to show an insight in how refugees themselves experience their flight from war and new living situation in the country of asylum instead.

Within the refugee population I was particularly interested in women, considering they are extra vulnerable and face a lot of difficulties because of their sex. My argument was supported by an extensive body of academic literature and (non)governmental reports: refugee women deserve special attention because of their subordinate position and vulnerability. I still agree with this point of view, women absolutely deserve this attention. However, my thoughts were shaken when I came across *The other half of gender : Men's issues in Development*. This report of the World Bank aims to "bring the gender and development debate full circle-from a much-needed focus on empowering women to a more comprehensive gender framework that considers gender as a system that affects both women and men" (2006). I realized that the possibility that gender norms and a distinction between sexes could also influence refugee men in a negative way, had never crossed my mind. My search for academic literature that followed, confirmed the World Bank's urge for further research about this topic. Therefore I decided to focus my thesis on the way in which personal masculine identities of refugee men are affected by the (difficult) circumstances they come across during their flight and in the country of asylum. The result of this investigation lies in front of you.

For the realisation of this thesis I owe thanks to many different people who provided wisdom, friendship and encouragement. First of all special gratitude and thanks are owed to all participants in this research. They were willing to share their experiences with me even while their stories were heavy and often very painful. I was, and still am, fully aware that I may not

consider their openness as a matter of course. Furthermore I want to thank my supervisor Georg Frerks for his trust in me, his knowledge and helpful feedback. Others I want to mention here are my so-called study buddies. Renske and Marleen you did not only make my long days in the library a lot more fun, but you were also willing to discuss my research and dilemmas at any time. Furthermore special gratitude is owed to Mirjam. Not only because of your keen eyes for detail, but especially for your love and endless calmness. Finally my parents deserve a particular note of thanks. You two made it possible for me to get where I am now. I want to thank you for your never ending support and unlimited confidence in me.

I hope you enjoy your reading.

Britt Krabbe

Executive Summary

The starting point of this research was the conception that it would be relevant to look at refugees' experiences from a male perspective because of the following complication: I saw a potential dissonance between the pre-flight notions of masculine behaviour and the possibilities for refugee men to act on those traditional ideas because of the living conditions they encounter during and after their flight and in the country of asylum. This potential dissonance triggered me: I wanted to investigate whether the reality in which male refugees live actually challenge their constructions of masculinity and if this is the case how these constructions are affected.

In order to make the complication researchable, I applied the complication to a specific case. I chose to focus on male Syrian refugees, who fled Syria and arrived in the Netherlands between 2010 and 2017. This demarcation led to the following research puzzle statement:

> **How are the personal constructs of masculinity of male Syrian refugees affected by the social and economic living conditions they face(d) after the flight and in the country of asylum, specifically in the Netherlands, from 2010 until 2017?**

Operationalising the analytic frame of this research, masculinity, and formulating sub-questions made the theoretically founded puzzle statement practically researchable. The data collection techniques I used in answering the sub-questions were conducting interviews and the analysis of documents. I did in-depth interviews with male Syrian refugees, who were part of the research population, and with their female family members. I used related literature to position my research in the larger academic debate and to compare my own empirical findings to the results of previous studies that focused on similar complications.

I found that the personal constructs of masculinity of most of the participating male Syrian refugees are affected by the changed living conditions after the flight and in the country of asylum, the Netherlands. Their constructs are influenced by the inability to live up to dominant masculine norms. I distinguished the following three transformations of masculine identities which can be seen as coping mechanisms: *overcompensation, escapism* and *adaptation*. However, the results also demonstrated how personal constructs of masculinity of a few Syrian men remained largely untouched.

The first part of the research was concerned with investigating dominant masculinities in the Syrian society. Empirical and theoretical findings gave insight in what kind of behaviour is expected and what are considered the most important responsibilities for a Syrian man to take care of. These are: 1) access to work and income resulting in financial independence, 2) the creation of one's own family, 3) the ability to provide protection and material needs for the family and 4) exercise power over women and children. Furthermore, the empirical findings demonstrated that the participants in this research try to conform to these hegemonic ideals of masculinity, either consciously or unconsciously.

The second part investigated to what extent the participants in the research are able to live up to the dominant masculine standards demarcated in part one, taking into account their living situation. Findings indicated that the participants face actual difficulties regarding the attempt to comply with these standards. It turns out in most cases men do not succeed in meeting social expectations of what real men are like, how they should act and represent themselves to others. Firstly can be concluded so far no one succeeded in getting access to a paid job which could result in financial independence. Secondly, it is considered very difficult to find a woman in the Netherlands to start a family with. Thirdly, all men experienced difficulties to provide safety and material needs during the time of separation from the family and finally, due to laws and institutional control Syrian men here experience a feeling of disempowerment.

The last part of the research was concerned with finding an answer to the question how the personal masculinities of Syrian refugees are affected by their inability to meet dominant masculine standards. I found that there are various ways in which Syrian refugees respond and how their identities are influenced. Building on my empirical findings I distinguished the following three transformations of masculine identities: *overcompensation*, *escapism* and *adaptation*.

Empirical findings of this study showed that in an attempt to reassert their masculine identity men are inclined to overcompensate for their lack of masculinity. Compensatory reactions are expressed in increases of conservative and violent behaviour and attempts to exercise control over family members. Another type of reaction I came across during the research is escapism. Findings indicated that men are prone to try to escape from the reality in which they live and in which they are unable to live up to masculine standards. This coping mechanism takes various forms. Bringing (masculine) identities and memories of the past back to life is one possible form. Another possible variation of escapism that this research gave insight in is the use of alcohol and other drugs. Where overcompensation and escapism can be seen as ways to fight feelings of emasculation and disempowerment, I also found reactions of acceptation of the inability to meet masculine norms and ways in which this acceptation is expressed. I named this type of reaction adaptation. Examples are behavioural changes in the role distribution between men and women and transfigured ideas about gender norms and interaction between different sexes. Besides these coping mechanisms, empirical findings also showed how a minority of participants manages to partly preserve or recover their masculine identities. These stories demonstrated how men despite their prevailing circumstances may also experience feelings of empowerment, because of their capacity to help and support family members in grievous times.

This case study is a contribution to the theoretical and public debate about men's gendered identities in conflict. A topic that so far has largely been overlooked and neglected by academics and policymakers.

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1 Introduction

1.1. Motivation of the Research

The European refugee crisis, a crisis for whom?

The global refugee population is currently at the highest level ever recorded. Nowadays over 65 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, among them are 22,5 million refugees (UNHCR, 2017A). According to the UNHCR a refugee is "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence" (2017B).[1]

In 2015, the year with the largest influx of refugees in Europe, 1.26 million asylum applications were requested throughout the European Union (UNHCR, 2017B). In the current debate European politicians, media sources and people like you and me are referring to a 'refugee crisis'. The quote below is an illustration of the innumerable news articles claiming the presence of a crisis situation:

"More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, sparking a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the influx, and creating division in the EU over how best to deal with resettling people"(BBC News, 2016).

Consequences of this 'refugee crisis' are political discussions about how to shelter the 'flood of newcomers' or whether to provide asylum and shelter at all, quarrels between states about the distribution and resettling of refugees, the EU-Turkey refugee deal and protests of concerned European citizens.

The motive of this research is to go beyond the general (political) discussions and debates regarding the refugee crisis in Europe and instead show insight in how (in this case male) refugees experience the flight and situation in the country of asylum themselves. Instead of *talking about* refugees, this research is an attempt to *talk with* refugees, the ones actually facing and living through a crisis situation.

As in the following paragraphs will be explained, this research is concerned with the experiences of male refugees and focuses particularly on the difficulties they face in relation to their sex.

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[1] . In addition to this definition: 'A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries' (UNHCR, 2017).

1.2. Purpose and Research Puzzle Statement

It is commonly understood refugees face a wide range of social and economic difficulties during their flight from war and in their country of asylum. Being a refugee often means leaving your homeland, family and social status behind and becoming economically and legally dependent on others. When looking at these difficulties from a gender perspective, much more attention is paid to women's issues than to men's issues. This does not only apply to the academic debate, but also to the focus of aid workers and policies in refugee settings (as paragraph 1.3. demonstrates).

I argue it would also be relevant to look at the living conditions of refugees from a male perspective, because of the following complication: I see a potential dissonance between the traditional ideas of what it means to be a man in Arabic / African countries and the possibilities for refugee men to act on those traditional ideas because of the living conditions they encounter during their flight and in the country of asylum. One can think of beliefs about the responsibilities and role of a man in relation to his wife and family. Being the head of the family for example and therefore being responsible to provide the family with financial and material needs (breadwinner role) on one hand and physical safety (protector role) on the other. I see a potential dissonance between the cultural constructions of masculinity in the country of origin and the reality in which these men live as a refugee. This complexion triggered me when I first started this research. I wanted to find out whether the living conditions male refugees face actually challenge their constructions of masculinity and if this is the case how these constructions are affected.

Therefore the purpose of this research is threefold. I want to investigate 1) the potential dissonance explained above, 2) the reactions to it of the ones involved and 3) compare the findings of this research to previous studies.

In order to make the complication researchable, I applied the complication to a specific case. I chose to focus on male Syrian refugees, who fled Syria and arrived in the Netherlands between 2010 and 2017. This demarcation led to the following research puzzle statement:

> **How are the personal constructs of masculinity of male Syrian refugees affected by the social and economic living conditions they face(d) after the flight and in the country of asylum, specifically in the Netherlands, from 2010 until 2017?**

The epistemological nature of this research question is an interpretivist stance (as explained in the methodology section). I am seeking to understand the meaning of a specific social construct (masculinity) according to a specific group (male Syrian refugees who arrived in the Netherlands) from examining the interpretations of those involved in it.

1.3. Significance

1.3.1. Scientific Significance

When discussing a gender perspective in conflict and development studies a lot of people automatically make the connection with women. This is not strange if you take into consideration the focus of academics and policymakers on the subordinate position of women in relation to men for the last few decades. This started with initiatives as the United Nation's 'Decade For Women' from 1976 until 1985 and the adoption of the 'Women in Development' (WID) approach in 1986 by reputable institutions. These were one of the first initiatives highlighting the vulnerable and often subordinate position women have in relation to men and how these social structured relations stand in the way of stabilization and the social and economic development of third world and post conflict societies (Moser, 1993, p. 2-3 ; U.N).

The focus on the unequal position of women in relation to men never left the academic gender debate. It even can be argued that in common understandings gender studies automatically refer to women studies. The vast majority of gender orientated articles is written from a female perspective or the author is concerned with problems women, because of their sex, risk to face (The World Bank, 2006).

However, from the nineties onwards a certain change in the gender debate related to conflict and development studies can be notified. This change started with a relatively small group of academics that criticized the single focus on women (Moser, 1993: Greig, 2000 ; Heisse, 1997). According to Greig "gender, as a determinant of social relations that legitimizes and sustains men's power over women, is inherently about relations between women and men, as well as relations among groups of women and among groups of men." Therefore the author argues "achieving gender equality is not possible without changes in men's lives as well as in women's. Efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into thinking about development requires more than a focus on women, however vital that might be; what is also needed is a focus on men" (Greig, 2000, p. 1).

Corresponding to Greig, Heisse also argues men should be more incorporated in the gender debate. According to her point of view quite often men are (and should be) considered the problem regarding the fight for gender equality or the violation of women rights. She states that "the more I work on violence against women, the more I become convinced that the real way forward is to redefine what it means to be male" (1997, p. 426).

Moser, Greig and Heisse are not the only academics who pled for the inclusion of men in debates regarding the way in which relations between men and women are (and should be) constructed. Among academics and policymakers the idea became more and more common that when focusing on gender relations it is necessary to include both men and women. In line with this change in thinking about gender issues the Women in Development approach is nowadays mostly replaced by the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. The GAD approach

emphasizes that the problem of the marginalisation of women cannot be tackled by focusing on women in isolation, but should also include men.

Although this relatively new approach resulted from criticism on the old approach, this does not mean the GAD approach is free of critics. The main critic is that gender in this approach is still only related to the problems women face. The gender debate does not seem to go much further than the debate about how to make the relations between men and women more equal, how to promote women rights and gender equality. The critic is that the majority of the arguments for including men in GAD are based on 'the men as problem' and 'women as victim' discourse, ignoring the fact that constructed gender relations can cause problems for both men and women (Cornwall, 2000). Or as a critical report of The World Bank puts it: "Gender, however, has stubbornly remained a one sided topic, with the focus firmly on women as the discriminated, disenfranchised group. Men are seen as the guilty party, lurking ominously in the background. Little effort has been devoted to understanding men's possible motivations, let alone their own gendered conditions" (The World Bank, 2006, p. ix).

What Cornwall (2000) and others (Moser, 1993; White, 1997) explain perfectly in my view is that an approach as GAD, that argues not to look just at the category women – since that is only half of the story- but at women in relation to men and the way in which the relations between men and women are socially constructed, does not automatically imply a parallel focus on men and women. It does not imply a 'focus on men and their identities, roles or relations, but on women in relation to men. Men as men remain absent from this picture'(Cornwall, 2000, p. 18).

This missing piece in the academic picture; men's gendered identities in conflict and development studies, is what this research focuses on.

The fact that we can speak of a topic that has largely been overlooked and neglected by academics and policymakers, does not automatically imply that any relevant empirical or theoretical knowledge about the subject of men's gendered identities in relation to conflict does not exist. I am not the first one in the conflict studies field who does research about the gap between dominant masculine expectations and the reality wherein men live; a reality that often exists of poor living conditions and somber prospects, and how this gap influences men's personal constructs of masculine identities. Valuable research about this topic which I will come back to is done by Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis (2006) ; Hollander (2014) ; Mungai & Pease (2009) ; Poynting, Talar & Noble (2009) ; Jansen (2008) ; Kabachnik (2012) ; Connell (2005) ; Connell (2015) ; Dolan (2003) and Jaji (2009).

However, most of these studies are performed within an African or South American context. This is indicative for the field work that so far has been done regarding the concept of masculinity in relation to development- and conflict studies. Arabic countries, let alone Syria, have been left out of the picture until now. Concerning the studies mentioned above little attention has been paid specifically to the living conditions of refugees and how these conditions conflict with the pre-flight dominant notions of masculinity. Jaji (2009) studied African refugees who fled to Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. However, she focuses on refugees who fled to

neighbouring countries with largely the same cultural values. This research differs from previous studies, because I focus on refugees who not only fled their country, but also left their continent behind and had to flee to another continent with quite different societies, values and norms. Therefore I conclude that in an academic topic forest where not many research has been done about (men's gendered identities in relation to violent and poor living conditions), I think I found a missing tree by doing research in an **Arabic** (and Western) context, focusing on **refugees**, who not only left their country of origin but also fled to **another continent**.

1.3.2. Social Significance

Corresponding with the academic debate the vast majority of governmental and non-governmental reports and action plans regarding gender-based vulnerability of refugees focuses on females (Amnesty International, 2016 ; European Parliament, 2016A ; European Parliament 2016B ; United Nations, 2003 ; UNHCR, 2005 ; UNHCR, 2011 ; UNHCR, 2015).

By all means this research does not argue the special attention towards women. This is without any doubt important and relevant. Nonetheless the research rather emphasizes refugee men also encounter problems related to their gender and sexuality. Concerning gender issues this thesis is an attempt to demonstrate refugee men and boys deserve more attention than only emphasising the role they could play in increasing women's right and gender equality. As the results will show, they face their own series of problems and difficulties which should be taken in consideration as well.

This is especially relevant because the global refugee population is now at the highest level ever recorded. 65 Million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, among them are 22,5 million refugees. The majority of this population is male (UNHCR, 2017A).

1.4. Reading Guide

The research consists of different parts. In this paragraph all of them will be introduced shortly. The following chapter, operationalisation, is concerned with the question how to transform the abstract puzzle statement into an empirically measurable research. Therefore I will operationalise the concept masculinity and break down the puzzle statement into four empirical researchable sub-questions. Chapter three, the methodology section, elaborates on how the research is designed and constructed. The goal of the chapter is to explain and justify the used research methods. The chapters thereafter demonstrate the empirical findings of the field work. Chapter four attempts to answer the question what dominant masculine norms in the Syrian society are according to the academic debate and Syrian refugees themselves. The next chapter demonstrates to which extent male Syrian refugees, who are currently staying in the Netherlands, are able to live up to these hegemon masculine norms. Chapter six to nine give insight in how Syrian refugee men react to the (in)ability to meet the socially constructed,

gender based expectations. After a demonstration of the empirical findings, the final chapter presents the empirical conclusions and the position of the research in the academic debate.

2 Operationalisation

The goal of this chapter is to make the theoretically founded research puzzle practically researchable.

> **How are the personal constructs of masculinity of male Syrian refugees affected by the social and economic living conditions they face(d) after the flight and in the country of asylum, specifically in the Netherlands, from 2010 until 2017?**

An important step in this process is transforming an abstract, analytic framework into data which is visible and measurable in the field. Another necessary step is to formulate sub-questions to unpack the puzzle in different components that together cover the entire research puzzle.

2.1. Masculinity an Abstract Concept

Among policy makers and in the academic debate there has been a general agreement for decades on the idea that when talking about males and females, there should be made a distinction between on the one hand sex and on the other hand gender. The UNHCR explains this distinction in a proper way: "Sex is what we are born with; it describes the physical and biological differences between males and females. Gender is what society and culture teaches us about how we should behave based on our sex" (2016, p.10). Thus there is a common understanding in the field that gender must be seen as a social construct. This means that gender relates to beliefs, expectations and perceptions which are influenced by social factors such as for example norms, history, religion and tradition (UNHCR, 2016, p. 10). Concepts that have been used in the academic literature to describe this social construct, these socially defined ways of being male or female, are *masculinity* and *femininity*, in this research masculinity takes a central position.

Approaching masculinity as a social construct I chose to use the following definition of masculinity (parts of this definition come from the definition of Lindsay (2003)):

"A social construct expressing explicit and implicit expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are. It includes a cluster of institutionalized values, norms and behavioural patterns by which men are judged and assess themselves."

This definition of masculinity consists of three components: (1) a construct : a social construct; (2) ideas about the contents of the construct: expressing explicit and implicit expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are. (3) an identification of constituent parts that express the contents of the construct – namely, a cluster of institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns by which men are judged and assess themselves.

The different components of the definition can be used as a guideline to identify what kinds of empirical evidence are relevant to assemble in order to answer the research puzzle. It becomes clear that social constructs are the empirical data that have to be assembled (component 1). Furthermore it provides insight in what these constructs include (component 2) and how these constructs are expressed in society and thus by means of which these constructs can be investigated (component 3).

Now it is clear for what kind of empirical data this research is aiming, important as well is to define the different elements of the general definition in a concrete manner. Therefore I included a pragmatic and accurate definition of (the concepts) *masculinity, gender, sex, social construct, institutionalize(d), norms, values* and *behavioural patterns* in a glossary that can be found below. The content of these pragmatic definitions can be helpful in formulating sub-questions and recognizing relevant data in the empirical field.

Concept	Pragmatic Definition
Gender	*Gender is what society and culture teaches us about how we should behave based on our sex.* (UNHCR, 2016)
Institutionalized	*Something made part of a particular society, system, or organization* (Cambridge dictionary)
Masculinity	*A social construct expressing explicit and implicit expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are. It includes a cluster of institutionalized values, norms and behavioural patterns by which men are judged and assess themselves.*
Norms	*Standards or patterns of social behaviour that are accepted in or expected of a group.* (Oxford dictionary)
Sex	*The physical and biological difference between males and females.* (UNHCR)
Social Construct	*A social phenomenon or convention originating within and cultivated by society or a particular social group, as opposed to existing inherently or naturally* (Oxford dictionary)
Values	*The beliefs people have, especially about what is right and wrong and what is most important in life, that control their behaviour.* (Cambridge dictionary)

Table 1: pragmatic definitions of theoretical concepts

2.2. Hegemonic Masculinity

The way in which masculinity is defined above offers an opportunity to work with more pragmatic components of the concept. This can be seen as an important step in transforming masculinity into an empirically researchable concept. However, we are not there yet. In the operationalisation of masculinity it is also necessary to take the academic critique and warnings regarding the use of masculinity as an analytical framework into account.

Petersen (1998, p. 7) for example argues in his work that a problematic characteristic of using the concept masculinity is that it strongly appeals to "what we all know" (to common sense), and in that way tends to exist of gross generalisations about men and women, and how they interact with each other. The main argument of Petersen and likeminded is that the concept of masculinity is flawed, because it imposes generalisations and creates a fake unity about the character of men that way, while in fact the socially constructed reality of what it means to be a real man is fluid and sometimes even contradictory (Petersen, 1998).

Building on criticisms like these, an important development in the academic field is that some authors refer to *masculinities* instead of *masculinity.* Using the concept in plural form emphasizes that there can exist different ideas in society about what is seen as masculine and what is not. This matches with the perspective of Barker & Ricardo (2006, p. 55) who argue that a gendered analysis of boys and men should be aware of the plurality and fluidity of masculinities, that "versions of manhood are fluid over time and in different settings" and that even in one particular setting masculinities are often plural and contradictory."

This fluidity and plurality means that masculinity is not an unambiguous concept, often there exist different ideas of masculinity even within the same society. How then can be prevented that the investigation of masculinity as analytical framework becomes all vague and meaningless?

What I consider a relevant and helpful next step in the academic literature that helps answering this question, building on the criticism described above, is the work of Connell. She introduces the concept *hegemonic masculinity*. In Connel's words: "to say a particular form of masculinity is hegemonic means that it is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilizes the gender as a whole" (Connel, 2015, p. 148). "The fundamental feature of hegemonic masculinity is the combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities" (Connel, 2005, p. 846).

By introducing this combination, on the one hand she acknowledges that masculinity is not an unambiguous concept and that often there exist different ideas about masculine behaviour in one society. On the other hand in this way the concept of masculinity does not become meaningless, it keeps its value because it remains possible to investigate and write about the dominant masculinities in society.

2.3. Formulating Sub-questions

In the first paragraph of this chapter I broke down my analytic framework into different components that revealed for what kind of empirical data I have to search in the research field. In the second paragraph I tried to provide an insight in the problems that can appear while working with this analytical frame and explained how these problems can be overcome. In this last paragraph I will introduce the sub-questions I formulated to answer my research puzzle.

The goal of formulating sub-questions is in no single way the same as trying to ask more questions that are also interesting, but did not fit in the main research puzzle anymore. The goal of formulating sub-questions is to unpack the puzzle in different components that cover the entire research puzzle together. Therefore most important in formulating sub-questions is asking yourself the question: what do I need to know in order to be able to answer my research puzzle? I asked myself this question and concluded the following:

In order to be able to answer my research puzzle, I need to investigate:

- What are the dominant masculinities present in the Syrian society? (Part 1)
- To what extent are Syrian refugees who arrived in the Netherlands able to live up to the dominant masculinities defined in part one, regarding the changes in their living situation? (Part 2)
- How do Syrian refugees react to their ability / inability to live up to dominant masculine identities defined in part one? (Part 3)

In formulating sub-questions I took the constituent parts of my analytical frame into consideration. I divided the sub-questions in three parts to explain why each sub-question serves the purpose of unpacking the research puzzle.

Part 1:

1. What are according to academic debate dominant masculinities in the current Syrian (or Arabic) society?

2. What are according to Syrians' dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in the Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

Part 2:

3. To what extent do the current living conditions of male Syrian refugees *correspond with* or *differ from* the dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

Part 3:

4. How do male Syrian refugees react to their ability / inability to live up to dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

3 Methodology

This chapter elaborates on how the research is designed and constructed. The goal is to explain and justify the research methods. Firstly the research design will be paid attention to, by explaining the ontological and epistemological stance and the strategy of the research. The second paragraph focuses on the way in which the data was collected, by clarifying how the participants of the research were selected and what data collection techniques have been used. Subsequently it will be explained by what method the data was analysed. The fourth paragraph demonstrates which attempts have been done to make the research as valid and reliable as possible. The final paragraph is concerned with the ethical issues I came across as a researcher.

3.1. Research Design

3.1.1. Ontological and Epistemological Stance

The ontological nature where this research is based upon is constructivism. The main assumption underlying a constructionist point of view is that phenomena in society largely consist of social constructs (Bryman, 2012). Reality can be seen as the results of human beings making sense of their experiences in relation to their ideas. Building on the ontological nature, the epistemological stance of this research is an interpretivist stance. Interpretivist research "centres on the way in which human beings make sense of their subjective reality and attach meaning to it" (Rukwaru, 2015). From the puzzle statement can be deduced this thesis focuses on researching how a specific group (male Syrian refugees who arrived in the Netherlands) makes sense of a specific social construct (masculinity) by giving meaning to it.

3.1.2. Research Strategy

In this research the choice for a form of qualitative research was made. The reason for this decision was because a qualitative research strategy was considered more suitable to answer the sub-questions and final puzzle statement than a quantitative research strategy. Orlikowski & Baroudi explain that according to interpretive studies "social process is not captured in hypothetical deductions, covariances and degrees of freedom. Instead, understanding social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it" (1991). Building on an interpretivist puzzle statement myself and investigating social process, the research procedure in this thesis has a rather open character. I did not formulate demarcated categories at forehand to be tested to reality in a deductive way, a method often applied in quantitative research. An open research structure and interpretative approach normally better correspond with a qualitative form of research than a quantitative form (Everaert & van Peet, 2006, p.16). Qualitative research has generally a more flexible and less structured nature than quantitative research, that is in most cases of a deductive nature (Everaert & van Peet, 2006, p. 27). For this reason, a qualitative research strategy was considered more suitable.

Another implication of an interpretative epistemological stance is the central position of empirical data. That is why interpretative research in most cases is not concerned with testing strictly formulated hypotheses which are derived from theory. Getting access to and obtaining empirical data is ideally the starting point of interpretative research. According to interpretative researchers the use of theory at forehand may even cause bias, because the researcher will base his experiences in the field on theoretical presumptions and assumptions. Without choosing a side in the discussion about the risk of theoretical bias, I considered it of great importance to put the empirical data of this study in a central position. Therefore I made the decision to stay away from a theoretical chapter as an introduction to the research field and empirical findings. This of course does in no way imply I left theory completely out. Instead of bringing together all relevant theory in one introducing chapter, I decided to bring theory into play in different chapters. I made use of theory in chapter one and two, when I discussed the scientific significance of this research and unravelled the main analytic frame. I will also come back to relevant theory when I compare my own empirical findings with findings of previous studies.

When we speak of qualitative research, it is important to be aware qualitative research actually is an umbrella term. Just as it is with quantitative research, there are many varieties of qualitative research one can think of. For example *ethnographic* and *narrative* approaches, *phenomenological* research, *case studies* and *grounded theory*. This research can best be classified as a case study. A helpful and commonly used definition of a case study is: "an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment" (Merriam-Webster). As Flyvbjerg (2011) explains according to this definition "the decisive factor in defining a study as a case study is the choice of the individual unit of study and the setting of its boundaries, its "casing" to use Charles Ragin's (1992, p. 217) felicitous term" (p. 301). With regard to this research the "individual unit" exists of male Syrian refugees who arrived in the Netherlands between 2010 and 2017. In the next paragraph it will be discussed how persons within this unit were selected and through which methodical techniques their social constructs were investigated.

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Selection of Participants

Within the research population, male Syrian refugees who arrived in the Netherlands, I distinguished different categories I wanted to include: respondents of different generations, highly educated and less educated individuals, men living with their family (after a family reunion) contrasting to men living a single life (without the presence of family) and participants from different parts of Syria. Taking into account that within the research population I had to select men with different characteristics, helped me to ensure the presence of maximum variability within my primary data collection. Although I considered it important to strife for a certain amount of variation among the participants, at the same time I considered it necessary all participants already lived in the Netherlands for at least a year and were not staying in an

asylum centre anymore. I concluded this to be necessary, because I had the purpose to research what changed in the participant's daily life over a longer period of time. Furthermore I decided to conduct interviews with two Syrian women as well. Although they are not part of the research population, they could inform me from an outsider's view about the changes and difficulties men who were close to them experienced.

Reckoning with all the above I chose to make use of purposive sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling. Despite the fact random sampling (probability sampling) would provide a more accurate representation of the constructs of masculinity of Syrian refugees in the Netherlands, the considerations discussed above, the time-frame and access were obstacles in the use of fully random sampling. Therefore I chose to use purposive sampling. Due to personal contacts I had access to some Syrian refugees, but I also made use of the snowball sampling strategy; I asked my respondents if they knew other Syrian refugees who also would be willing to take part in the research. This strategy resulted in the participation of the following individuals (all names are fictitious) :

Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Place of Origin
Ammar	Male	26-30	Married	Damascus
Ahmad	Male	26-30	Single	Idlib
Burhan	Male	21-25	Single	Aleppo
Kinan	Male	21-25	Single	Qalamoun
Marwan	Male	31-35	Single	Place of Origin Unknown
Mohammed	Male	31-35	Single	Countryside close to Aleppo
Shakour	Male	36-40	Divorced	Countryside close to Damascus
Rifat	Male	41-45	Married	Countryside close to Homs
Sayid	Male	21-25	Single	Homs
Shayma	Female	31-35	Married	Damascus
Sara	Female	31-35	Single	As-Sywayda
Tarek	Male	26-30	Married	Countryside close to Hama
Zain	Male	26-30	Single	Hama

Table 2: basic information of participants

As figure 2 indicates there were few men participating above the age of forty in the research. This is compensated by the fact that over five respondents shared the experiences of their fathers (all older than 45) into great detail.

Now that it is clear in which way the participants were selected, the next paragraph will give insight in the data collection techniques that were used to obtain the actual empirical data among participants and other sources of information.

3.2.2. Data Collection Techniques

In order to come to an answer to my research puzzle statement the following sub-questions needed to be answered:

1. What are according to the academic debate dominant masculinities in the current Syrian (or Middle Eastern) society?

2. What are according to Syrians dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in the Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

3. To what extent do the current living conditions of male Syrian refugees *correspond with* or *differ from* the dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

4. How do male Syrian refugees react to their ability / inability to live up to dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

In answering the first sub-question I made use of *document analysis* as a data collection technique. I compared public reports and scientific articles to get an overview of the existing ideas of dominant masculine identities in general and specifically in the Middle East. An advantage of using documents as data, is that these documents are overall "naturally occurring" (Silverman, 2011, p. 274). This implies the documents are not influenced by me as a researcher, but are already out there in the open. Another advantage is that analysing documents is in general not an intensive research method. As Bryman (2012) notices, documents "are already there" and therefore they can in most cases easily be looked through and investigated (p. 543).

In answering sub-question two, three and four I particularly made use of conducting interviews as data collection technique. I did in-depth interviews with all participants mentioned in the

previous section. The main advantage of conducting interviews was that I got access to information that nowhere else could be found: neither in governmental reports, neither in previous studies. The in-depth interviews had a semi-structured character. On the one hand this means the researcher determines a fixed number of topics in advance and all these topics will be addressed during the interview (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). On the other hand a semi-structured interview leaves room for other subjects, for example a discussion about specific input of the interviewee (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the topics the interviewer wants to discuss, actually will be addressed. This makes it possible to estimate the similarities and differences between the respondents. While at the same time the interviews may provide valuable information about topics the researcher at forehand did not have in mind (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). On the next pages a topic guide can be found, which gives insight in the topics that were addressed during every interview. It is important to notice that the items on the list are not similar to the questions actually asked. Regarding every sub-topic different questions can be asked. As the name tells us, the items on the list rather should be seen as a guide for the interviewer.

Although conducting interviews were helpful and even necessary, this is not the only data collection technique used to answer sub-question two, three and four. In answering each of these sub-questions, I compared the outcomes of the interviews (empirical data) to academic literature. The academic articles and books I made use of focus on comparable topics but deal with other cases. The comparisons between my own empirical findings and findings of previous studies uncovered both similarities and differences and therefore the research can be seen as an addition to the academic debate.

Topic	Sub-topic
Introduction of the research	- subject of research - purpose of the interview - topics to be discussed - agreements on the use of information
Introduction of the respondent	- name and age - place of origin in Syria - date of arrival in the Netherlands
Living situation (pre-flight and currently)	Regarding: - family - marital status - household - social network (friends, neighbours) - work and economic status (responsibilities) - study - activities (voluntary work, participation in associations, religious activities)
Personal values and beliefs	- personal dreams for the future - personal ambitions for the future - description of important life-events - level of satisfaction in one's life - description of what makes a man/woman a good person
Values and beliefs regarding masculinity (at a societal level and personal level)	description of societal/general expectations of men in Syria: - traditions - behaviour - norms - representation to others - education - personal position towards societal expectations - possibilities / struggles to live up to societal dominant masculine identities - response to (in)ability to live up to dominant masculine identities

Table 3: topic guide

3.3. Data Analysis

The goal of analysing data was that in the end all empirical sub-questions could be answered. Together with an answer to the theoretical sub-question this led to the possibility of answering the final puzzle statement. This paragraph will explain how the empirical data obtained in the field, was analysed.

The first step to take after conducting interviews was transcribing the records of the interviews. In order to create an exhaustive dataset, I chose to transcribe the total length of all records. After I wrote down every word said by the respondents, the analysis of these words could start. To come to an adequate analysis I started coding the transcripts of the interviews. As Boeije (2006) explains: "The main activity in the analysis of qualitative research is coding" (p.85). Coding is the process of distinguishing themes or categories in the dataset and name these categories with a code. In other words codes are summarized notations of small fragments of texts (Boeije, 2006, p. 85). The process of coding existed of three steps. Boeije refers to these three distinct steps consecutively as open coding, axial coding and selective coding (2006, p. 85-117) . Firstly, I read all transcripts in a very precise manner and divided the text into categories. I gave these different categories a summarizing name. Secondly, I approached the already existing categories in a critical way and made comparisons between the categories. Different categories could be merged and some categories I deleted. This led to a reduction of the original number of categories. The last step I had to take was determining the final relations between the remaining categories. In this way the main categories and corresponding sub-categories could be defined. Although I generally followed the three steps explained by Boeije (2006), it is almost needless to say the process of coding did not start from scratch. I already had ideas about what would be relevant information and which topics could be distinguished. Take for example the topic guide, in which I at forehand placed emphasis on themes / topics that I thought would be of real importance. The code categories I ended up with are added as an appendix.

3.4. Validity & Reliability

Now that it is clear how the research was designed, which data collection techniques have been used and how the empirical data was analysed, it is necessary to elaborate on the validity and reliability of the methodology.

3.4.1. Internal and External Validity

With regard to validity a distinction between internal and external validity can be made. Internal validity is concerned with the extent to which the research actually investigates and measures what is supposed to be investigated (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). What this research should have investigated is: how the personal constructs of masculinity of male Syrian refugees are affected by the social and economic living conditions they face(d) during the flight and in the country of asylum, specifically in the Netherlands, from 2010 until 2017. During the entire research period I attempted to guarantee the internal validity the best way possible. On the one hand

through an adequate operationalisation of the theoretical concept masculinity, which is the analytic frame of this research. In chapter two I transformed masculinity from an abstract concept into pragmatic and workable components. On the other hand I guaranteed the internal validity by formulating appropriate sub-questions. As explained before, the goal of formulating sub-questions is to unpack the puzzle in different components that together cover the entire research puzzle. Therefore most important in formulating sub-questions was answering the question: what do I need to know in order to be able to answer the puzzle statement? Furthermore I took into account that the differences within the research population should be reflected in the participants of the research. Therefore I selected participants with different characteristics, to help me ensure the presence of maximum variability within my primary data collection. To guarantee the internal validity it was sometimes also necessary to ask for explanations during the interviews, to ask probing questions in order to get the information I needed. At the same time I had to be careful with asking follow-up questions, because of the sensitivity of the topic. Moreover I used a well-known form of triangulation to increase the validity of the research, namely data-triangulation. Data-triangulation means that in order to answer the research question you use different data sources (Baarda, 2009, p. 187-188). I did not only speak to different respondents who were part of the research population (male Syrian refugees), but also interviewed female family members of these men. I found that mostly the women confirmed the stories told by the men but also could add valuable information from an outsider's perspective. Furthermore, in order to make a comparison with my empirical data, I used theoretical data in answering the sub-questions.

External validity refers to the extent to which the research findings can be generalised and lead to universal conclusions (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). The external validity in this research is limited to a certain extent. The research is a case study and thus focuses on (the meaning making process of) a *demarcated* group regarding a *well-defined* topic in a *specific* context. Therefore I will not be able to make universal generalisations about my research findings and have to be careful with claims that are referring to other people than the men and women who participated in the research. It is important to mention that a relatively low external validity is not by definition inferior. The main goal of a case study is not to formulate standardized generalisations, a case study is valuable in itself because it provides particular knowledge about a specific situation. Furthermore it is noteworthy that despite the fact the results of this case study do not lead to standardized generalisations, this does not automatically imply the research is not an addition to the existing literature. I consider this research as a small puzzle piece in the academic debate about men's gendered identities in conflict.

3.4.2. Reliability

Reliability is related to the question whether you get the same results if somebody else would replicate the research. Logically the extent to which a research is reliable influences the legitimacy of outcomes (Bryman, 2012). In this research I attempted to guarantee the reliability in the best way possible. The way in which data was collected as well as the way in which data was analysed, was with regard to all different respondents as similar as possible. For example

by using the same topic guide during the interviews and following the three distinct steps (open coding, axial coding and selective coding) in the analysis of empirical data. This way the differences I found between the information of respondents are as little as possible dependent on differences in research methods.

3.5. Ethics

During the research period I tried to conform to the 'do no harm' principle as much as possible. This was particularly important because of the vulnerability of the research population and the sensitivity of the subject matter. Regarding the research the 'do no harm' principle implied that without any exception the participants and specifically their well-being had priority over the results. First of all, I tried to guarantee the participants well-being by making clear that questions which made the respondent feel uncomfortable could be skipped, there were no wrong or right answers and the interview could be stopped at any time. Furthermore I only recorded the interviews when I had the respondent's permission to do so. Moreover I guaranteed that the identity of the respondents remained anonymous and their stories only would be used with regard to this specific research. I also informed the participants about the possibility to contact me after the interview had taken place, on the one hand to give them the opportunity to share more information or elaborate on their stories and on to other hand to make it possible for them to decide whether or not certain parts of the interview could be used in the research. This way I tried to create an environment in which the respondents felt safe and secure.

Besides guaranteeing the participant's well-being I tried to use the information and anecdotes (empirical data) that the participants shared with me in an ethical way. This means I always attempted to put the data in a contextual perspective to cover the entire story and I did not "cherry-pick" quotes with the sole purpose of supporting my argument. As a result of this, I described and analysed the differences and contrasts between the respondents and continuously nuanced my findings.

This chapter explained, inter alia, how the data was obtained and analysed. The following chapters demonstrate the results of the analysis: the empirical findings.

4 What 'Real Men' are Like

Prior to investigating whether male Syrian refugees are able to live up to social norms and expectations regarding masculine behaviour, it is firstly necessary to demarcate what these societal expectations about masculine behaviour are. What are the predominant masculinities present in the Syrian society? This chapter tries to answer that question in a twofold way. The existing literature about masculine identities will be discussed and compared to interviewees' ideas about what is commonly assumed of adult men in Syria.

4.1 Dominant Masculinities According to the Academic Debate

4.1.1. Predominant Masculinities in General

Before taking a closer look at the existing literature about Middle Eastern masculine identities, this paragraph pays attention to what are academic views on standard dominant masculinities, thus without a demarcation of time, place and socio-economic settings.

Inhorn (2012) discusses hegemonic masculinity as "a normative ideal type which, while varying cross-culturally, exhibits general patterns" (p. 43). According to her study these general patterns include; access to work and income resulting in wealth and financial independence, (being able to) reproduce progeny, exercise of power over others (especially women and men younger than themselves), physical strength, heterosexuality and emotional detachment (p. 43).

Another important contribution is *The Other Half of Gender* published by The World Bank. This report succeeded in producing a valuable summary of existing academic analyses about hegemonic masculinities worldwide (2006, p. 246-248). According to the World Bank report the first and most important prerequisite for being a male is to be financially independent. In most cases this means men need the ability to work and make an income before they will achieve the status of being a real man (p.246). Another prerequisite that is of great value in most cultures is creating and controlling one's own family. In the first place this refers to becoming a husband and father, but this does not seal the deal. Also important as a husband and father is being able to provide (physical) protection for the family and the (material) needs (p.247). A third prerequisite in many cultures is having sexual experience and being sexually active before (young) men are seen as grown up, adult men. This often promotes perceiving sex as a performance and thus a way in which men are able to demonstrate and prove their masculinity (p. 247). Another element of hegemonic masculinity is men's power, which refers to the expectation that "men exercise power, control and authority over women". Power can be exerted in the domestic sphere (male-female relations and family life) as well as in public settings, referring to institutional regulations that promote masculine behaviour over feminine (p. 248). A last prerequisite for being a male mentioned by The World Bank report is that the performance of acting like a man, should be approved by others. Not oneself, but other members of society judge whether a men succeeds in achieving manhood (p.248).

4.1.2. Predominant Masculinities in the Middle East

Taking into account that researchers should be aware of the plurality and fluidity of masculinities and that versions of manhood are fluid over time and in different settings, as explained in the operationalisation section, it is necessary to go beyond general assumptions about universal masculinities. Therefore this paragraph zooms in from masculinities worldwide towards masculine identities in Arab societies. It does not require any further explanation that the Middle Eastern societies are not a uniform entity either and even within a society trends can range from modern to traditional, liberal to conservative and moderate to radical. Therefore it is not possible to generalize about 'the masculine identity'. However as said before I do consider it possible to discuss *predominant* masculine identities.

First it must be noticed literature concerning Muslim masculinities in the Middle East remains scare. Important exceptions to this are the works of Adibi (2006) and Inhorn (2012).

In *sociology of masculinity in the Middle East* Adibi explains gender in Middle Eastern countries is unquestionably shaped by and created within a patriarchal society (2006, p. 5). The word patriarch derives from ancient Greek and literally means father of the family. A modern and academic definition of patriarchy is "male (formal) control over women and family, exercised by fathers, husbands and brothers" (Kandiyoti, 1991, p. 26-27). In both definitions the importance of family is clearly visible. If masculinity in Arab societies is shaped by patriarchy as Adibi points out, than men are judged on their ability to exercise control over women and their family. Controlling one's family can be interpreted in a positive and negative way. The first interpretation refers to controlling the situation of the family and can thus be explained as men's responsibility to provide necessities for the family's well-being. The second interpretation refers to a more restrictive way of controlling one's family and focuses on the actual power of the man to let his family act and behave according to his will. Taking into account both interpretations the conditions a 'real man' in a patriarchal society has to satisfy are as follows: 1) marry a woman to be able to create one's own family, 2) reproduce children, 3) create a healthy financial situation to be able to provide a safe and secure situation for the family, 4) exercise power over his family members.

Inhorn (2012) is relatively cautious with carrying out a Middle Eastern form of hegemonic masculinity, yet does an attempt to formulate a notion of dominant masculinities in the Middle East by relying on her own long-term engagement in that region and different types of other sources (p. 49). In accordance with Adibi she writes in Middle Eastern societies, the dominant masculine identity is said to be a family patriarch. She continues explaining that a boy is already "socialized into patriarchy during boyhood and eventually achieves patriarchal control over his own family when he reaches adulthood, marries and produces offspring" (p. 49). An everlasting search for wealth and hyper virility are described as masculine characteristics. Furthermore Incorn notes that "a hegemonic male is homosocially competitive" which means 'real men' for instance accumulate greater wealth than other men or father more offspring than others do (p. 50).

Later on in her research Inhorn (2012) tries to nuance her findings concerning dominant masculinities in the Middle East by comparing these general ideas to the results of her field research in which she incorporated the personal voice of Middle Eastern men. This chapter attempts to do the same. In the following paragraph the theoretical works discussed above will be compared to how Syrian men themselves describe predominant masculinities in Syria.

4.2 Dominant Masculinities According to Male Syrian refugees

4.2.1. What is Expected of an Adult Man

Comparing the different descriptions of when someone is seen as a respectable man in Syria it must be said these descriptions are quite similar to each other. Regarding the stories told, there can be discovered an unambiguous image of what is expected of men.[2]

A man explains the expectations regarding men are high in his country of origin, a lot higher than the expectations regarding women.[3] First of all it is seen as self-evident that a man has a wife and children. Before marrying a woman and producing offspring a life is not complete, moreover men describe a life only starts once you are married and have your first child. You also get more respect from others once you are married and have a child. As one man describes:

'If you are married in Syria, some people will not call you by your name. They will call you by another name. They know your son's name and have to call you by your son's name. "The father of ..." so it is more respectful (...) That is how we are more respectful towards people who are married and have children.' [4]

What is most important for a man after the creation of his own family is performing the role of a provider. This means it is expected of a man he can take good care of his wife, children and other family members such as his parents.

'Really a lot of things are expected of a man, more than a woman. The man is been called the god of the house, so he has to arrange everything. His task is working. (...) A real man has to work and earn money. He has to take care of everything. Arrange everything. Every day work from the morning until the evening. There is expected a lot of a man in comparison to a woman.' [5]

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[2] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Marwan 10-05-2017, Ahmed, 08-05-2017; Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017)

[3] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)

[4] (Author's interview with Rifat, 03-05-2017)

[5] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)

'In our culture the man still takes care of especially the work and the money and all the needs for the house. It is expected of you to supply your family with money and food, that sort of things. As a man.' [6]

Men explain what is crucial in order to be able to provide the necessities for the family's well-being. It becomes clear it is essential to be independent and to have a good financial situation. As one man illustrates:

'If you want to marry a girl, her family will ask you: what can you offer? (...) You should offer your wife a nice life, a car, a beautiful house etcetera.' [7]

What are seen as urgent and important steps towards a sufficient financial situation and the independency needed to provide the family are diplomas and a well-paid job. Adequate schooling and an acceptable job show other people you are able to start and create your own life.

'For the man I guess if he would show that he's a good man he should work in the beginning. Everybody likes a person who works. Especially in Syria a lot of women don't work, because they like to sit in a home or to raise their kids or have a family. So everything depends on the man. The working, the money for everything. So of course he should show that he is able to build things. To build a new life.' [8]

'For example my sister, when we talk about her future husband she says 'I want him to have a very good diploma, like for example a doctor or a lawyer, or engineer and also he is a good man. He respects people, he treats people very nicely and also he has a house. That is important in Arabic culture, if you want to get married, that your husband has a house (...) and he should have work.' [9]

The characterizations above, about what men in Syria should achieve and behave like, of course are related to what is expected of Syrian women. What corresponds with the descriptions of masculine behaviour are the explanations that in some occasions women are allowed to work in Syria, but in no occasion they are really seen as responsible for attributing to the family's financial situation: men remain responsible.

'We have many women who work, but it is more that they can work they do not have to. They work if they want. If they want to make also more money.' [10]

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[6] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[7] (Author's interview with Shakour, 13-04-2017)
[8] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[9] (Author's interview with Sayid, 11-04-2017)
[10] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05 -2017)

'Some people they do not like their wives to have work. For some of them they have no problem with that, it is up to her. Like for my family, my father, we were in a good financial situation. My mother she did not have to work. But if she wanted to work, my father would not have any problems with this.'[11]

What is nowadays the dominant image of female behaviour in Syria is that women, whether they work or they do not work, marry a man and take care after the house (cooking, cleaning) and the children.

'The women does not necessarily need to work, but if she wants to that is fine. She has other tasks. Domestic tasks.' [12]

'In general? That she gets married. I know so many women who left university because they got married. They do not need the diploma because they are… they get… yes.' [13]

Furthermore it is mentioned a woman needs 'to understand her man' and take his ideas and feelings into account. One man explains:

'She needs to understand her man very well. I mean that if you are a little bit a jealous man, then she has to reckon with this. Do you understand? That is what I mean. She for example will not, it depends on how jealous her man is, but with those kind of things she really needs to reckon with. For example "my husband does not like it that I dance with this person, so I will not do that."' [14]

During the conversations I had some men explicitly told me these dominant ideas of desirable masculine and feminine behaviour were the general more traditional ideas and did not specifically account to their personal views. Therefore I consider it as relevant to take a closer look at their personal dreams and ambitions for the future. Afterwards it will then be possible to make a comparison between the descriptions of dominant masculinities by Syrian men and their descriptions of personal ambitions and dreams for the future, in an attempt to analyse the extent to which these results correspond with each other. Or in other words whether male Syrian refugees themselves, consciously or unconsciously, try to conform to the hegemonic ideals of masculinity.

4.2.2. Personal Ambitions and Dreams

Regarding personal dreams four different types can be distinguished that were mentioned during the conversations. Special is that these were at the same time the only personal dreams spoken about, without any exception. It can thus be said that most of the men I spoke to, seem

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[11] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[12] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)
[13] (Author's interview with Burhan, 17-05-2017)
[14] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)

to have the same dreams for the future. The four different types distinguished are: having a job, marrying a woman and creating a family, completing a study and seeing family members again.

The dream most mentioned by the respondents is having a paid job. [15] As the respondents explain, a paid job is seen as an important goal, because it creates independence which opens doors to other personal aspirations. What is remarkable is that according to the interviewees work is not only important to open these doors, but these doors would not be opened at all without having a paid job. In line with this argumentation one man said:

'I want to work here, I want that really, because I want to marry, I like to have money to marry. A marriage is very responsible for your life.' [16]

Just like it is the case in this story, work is by most men not seen as a goal in itself but as a necessary stepping stone that creates other possibilities. Three men even see work as the one solution that would solve all of their problems.[17] As they explain, work would not only help them in finding a relation and fill their days, but would also help themselves or their fathers to get over their past and to move on with their lives.

Another personal aspiration mentioned is finishing a study. Where most men who were relatively old spoke about the necessity of a paid job, the younger ones also underlined the importance of getting a diploma.[18] The argumentation used is less or more similar. Completing a study is compared to creating the ability to build or start an own life.

Where finding a paid job and completing a study are described as stepping stones for a better life, marrying a woman and creating a family are seen as a goal on its own as the following story illustrates.

'I am not married, but I would like to find someone to marry with. (…) I want a family living. The marriage is very important for Syrian men and women (…) I hope to find someone to marry with.' [19]

For two men the aspiration of having an own family is so clearly evident they were surprised there were even asked questions about, as if this is something to be in doubt about or not to want to. Close after the dream of having a paid job, this was the dream most mentioned during the conversations. [20]

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[15] (Author's interview with Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Burhan 17-05-2017 ; Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Ahmed, 08-05-2017)
[16] (Author's interview with Zain, 02-05-2017)
[17] (Author's interview with Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Kinan 19-05-2017)
[18] (Author's interview with Sayid, 11-04-2017 ; Burhan 17-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017)
[19] (Author's interview with Ahmed, 08-05-2017)
[20] (Author's interview with Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017 ; Ahmed, 08-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017)

The fourth dream spoken about is to be reunited with family or to see and/or visit family members who stayed behind or life in another country now.

'*My first dream is to see my family again. Because, yes, we love family so much in Syria.*' [21]

Four men told stories about how their dreams were destroyed and would maybe never come truth anymore.[22] Their requests for family reunion were turned down because they were found to be too old for a family reunion or in another case the IND (Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service) did not believe that the woman of a Syrian refugee, who was still in Syria, actually was his wife. One man explained it the other way around:

'*I think many of my dreams already came truth. I have my family again with me. The most of my family is safe now.*' [23]

Looking at all four categories together it can be concluded especially family takes a central position in the dreams and ambitions of the respondents. Whether it is about creating an own family or reuniting with family or creating possibilities to start a family and the ability to take care of one's own family (study and work).

4.3 Sub-conclusion

In this paragraph the sub-questions belonging to part 1 will be answered. These questions are:

1. What are according to academic debate dominant masculinities in the current Syrian (or Middle Eastern) society?

2. What are according to Syrians dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in the Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

Relying on what academics wrote about dominant masculinities in general, a long list of prerequisites has to be met before someone is accepted as and considered a respectable man. According to the World Banks report most important are creating and controlling one's own family and having access to work and income resulting in financial independence which enables a man to provide his family protection and (material) needs. Concerning hegemonic masculinities in the Middle East most recapitulatory is the term 'patriarchy'. The expectations a 'real man' has to live up to in a patriarchal society are similar to the most important prerequisites mentioned above.

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[21] (Author's interview with Sayid, 11-04-2017)
[22] (Author's interview with Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017)
[23] (Author's interview with Tarek, 20-04-2017)

According to how Syrian men themselves describe how men should act and represent themselves to others in Syria it can be concluded the aspects of creating a family (having a wife and children) and having access to a paid job to be able to provide the necessities for the family's well-being are corresponding with the findings in the academic debate. What is mentioned less explicitly by the Syrians I spoke to is the part of controlling one's family and exercise power over women and children. There are made comments about how the man is seen as 'the god of the house' and that a woman should always try to 'understand her man', but with regard to the prerequisite of controlling one's family this kind of comments should be classified as rather implicit.

Furthermore the comparison between dominant masculine identities according to Syrian men and their personal dreams demonstrates a lot of similarities. Study and especially work are referred to as important stepping stones for a better life, because they create the ability to be financially independent and the hoped-for consequence; the possibility to start a family. In line with these findings to marry a woman and to actualize an own family are noted a lot, similarly as the dream to be reunited with lost family members.

The similarities between the findings indicate that although some men declared that the dominant ideas about desirable masculine behaviour do not apply to themselves, their dreams and personal aspirations largely correspond with the hegemonic ideals of masculinity in the Syrian society.

5 The (Dis)ability to Live up to Dominant Norms of Masculinity

Findings of the previous chapter give insight in what are seen as the most important responsibilities for a Syrian man to take care of. Furthermore it is indicated that the participants in this research themselves, consciously or unconsciously, try to live up to these hegemonic ideals of masculinity. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate whether the Syrian refugees who now stay in the Netherlands are able to live up to these social norms of masculine behaviour, considering the changes in their living situation.

Taking into account the overall findings of chapter four, the themes that are considered most relevant are; 1) access to work and income resulting in financial independence, 2) the creation of one's own family, 3) the ability to provide protection and material needs for the family and 4) exercise power over women and children.

5.1 Access to Work Resulting in Financial Independence

Referring to the previous chapter it can be concluded the most desirable goal for the future according to the respondents is getting access to paid work. However, of all men who participated in this research no one so far succeeded in finding a paid job, while all respondents arrived in the Netherlands between 2011 and 2015. One Syrian man is currently involved in an internship and another one can start an internship in the near future. [24] Of all the others three are involved in doing volunteering work[25], although the great majority is not involved in any of the types of (unpaid)work mentioned above.[26]

As reported by the respondents, their unwanted unemployment is difficult to deal with. One of the difficulties is the fact most men were totally financially independent in the past, before the conflict started, and are nowadays dependent on a third party, which is in most cases the government.

'When you get financial support, that is difficult. That you are dependent that is the hardest part.' [27]

'Work is the big problem here. (...) I am not used to get money from anyone. I was the one giving money. (...) I used to be the centre. I helped others. I did not need help. I was the Joker from the card game.' [28]

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[24] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017)
[25] (Author's interview with Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017)
[26] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Ahmed, 08-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017)
[27] (Author's interview with Burhan, 17-05-2017)
[28] (Author's interview with Shakour, 13-04-2017)

Especially younger people share their experiences about how hard this change from independency towards dependency is for their fathers. [29]

'He had ambition when he was in Syria and he felt that he was still able to do things. But here he feels like now he is just like the grandfather. An old man who is watching others. But he is not an old man. Yes I think this is the situation with him. He was always in the centre. he used to feel that he is very strong and he was able to do a lot of things. Now he feels like he is nothing.'[30]

Besides the consequence of no longer being financially independent, unemployment for most men results in a situation of having a lot of spare time to fill but little to fill this time with. According to several respondents this state of inactivity and sitting at home not only makes themselves or other Syrian men feel bored but in some cases also worthless and depressed.[31]

'This was basically my father's life. He was completely into work, thinking about the restaurant and staying there all the time. For my dad it is still hard. (...) He was always busy, he always had something to do. So I think this is the most important part for him, that he lost. (...) He still finds it not okay. I think if he started the work he will be much better. Because he never sat before. He was never without work or without anything.'[32]

'This is the hardest thing actually. I am so bored. Because I did not use to sit in the house actually. My life was always outside. And my life was so active. (...) When I sit alone and I think a lot in my place, in my house, it is kind of like destroying me. I do not like to sit alone and I get very bored. And the extra thinking makes you think in a bad way, not in a good way and then I start to think about the bad things.'[33]

Besides dealing with a situation of financial dependence and (too) much of unused time, it was also mentioned four times that it is hard to be not able to do the same kind of work men were used to do back in Syria.[34] It is argued this applies for everyone. According to the stories of the respondents most of them had good jobs in Syria, but they feel unable to get access to the same kind of job here in the Netherlands. Reasons referred to are particularly complicated procedures, no recognition of Syrian diplomas and the language barrier.

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[29] (Author's interview with Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017)
[30] (Author's interview with Sara, 18-05-2017)
[31] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[32] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[33] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[34] (Author's interview with Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Sara, 18-05, 2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Ahmed, 08-05-2017)

'In Syria I studied at a technical institute for oil and gas. I worked for an oil company. I liked my job and it paid well. I have no work in the Netherlands, I find it very difficult to find work. I always look for work, but I found nothing. They always told me "you have to speak Dutch properly". I started with MBO now, the first level.' [35]

That men who participated in this research are not able to find work until now, in particular because of the reasons mentioned above, does not mean all of them have the same ideas about their chances for the future. Especially young men are optimistic about their future ambitions and careers and emphasize the process of finding a job in the Netherlands just takes time.

'I am allowed to work, but for me it is difficult to start to work now, because I do not speak Dutch so well. And also I have like, I do not have a diploma to find a good job. So also I can wait around two or three years, so I could speak very good Dutch and maybe I will have my diploma and I can find a very good job.' [36]

Relatively older men are in general more pessimistic about their future possibilities to work than the younger generation and also respondents referring to older family members are sceptical about the career chances of their fathers and uncles.

5.2. The Creation of an own Family

Data of the previous chapter indicate that besides having access to a paid job, the creation of an own family is, considering the dominant masculine norms, of great valuable for Syrian men. According to the respondents a first step in starting a family is finding someone who is willing and able to start this family with you; a wife.

Of all participants in this research five were already married back in Syria and requested for a family reunion.[37] Four requests were admitted and one was rejected, because the IND (the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service) was not convinced the couple was actually married. Another family reunion ended in a divorce. The other participants are not married yet, but as their personal dreams and aspirations show; there is a desire to do so, to start a family.

The latter ones declare that as a Syrian refugee it is not so easy to find a woman in the Netherlands. One reason for this is explained below:

'Women of my age (32) *have expectations. They expect a man who is ready: who has a good job, who earns a lot of money and who has good friends. I am not ready yet. I am just like a child and I have to start all over again. All Syrian men have this same problem. Women expect*

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[35] (Author's interview with Ahmed, 08-05-2017)
[36] (Author's interview with Sayid, 11-04-2017)
[37] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017)

that you are ready with everything, that you have work and that you are without troubles, not afraid and not depressed.' [38]

According to the respondent the difficulty he experiences in finding a woman is related to age, as he goes on with his clarification:

'For Syrian boys it is far less difficult to find someone. They go to school and meet a lot of people there and in that way they come into contact with women. Women above 27 are more difficult to approach.' [39]

Although most men do not comment on whether they prefer to marry a Syrian woman or a Dutch woman, the complications regarding these two different groups are according to the respondents partly the same (as discussed above) and partly different.

A first complication in finding a Syrian woman in the Netherlands is that in Europe far more male Syrians arrived than females. So there is a lack of Syrian women to marry with. Furthermore five respondents point out that Syrian women who came to Europe act in a different way than they did before.[40]

'Men are talking about that so many Syrian women do not want to marry here nowadays. They are criticizing the women. Like "why do they not want to marry?" The most want to study now and just live.' [41]

'Syrian girls are different here. They do not want to marry and they do not have the plan to get a relation, but they see possibilities they did not have in Syria. They can study, work and not marry. You can do anything here. Syrian girls are also not so interested in Syrian men and guys. They want Dutch guys. However Dutch boys are cold and are not interested.' [42]

With regard to approaching Dutch women (and Dutch persons in general) the participants face other problems. The problem most mentioned has to do with commonly held opinions and prejudices about male refugees. In the interviews almost all men mentioned they have the feeling people are afraid of them. In their words this of course does not apply to every Dutch person, but according to their stories the general picture of male refugees is mostly negative and this has unfavorable consequences for their interactions with native (female) inhabitants. [43]

'Look you are in another country and you do not know what people are thinking of you. You know, especially with the bad reputation of refugees and so on. And refugees, some refugees do

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[38] (Author's interview with Marwan, 10-05-2017)
[39] (See 38)
[40] (Author's interview with Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017)
[41] (Author's interview with Burhan, 17-05-2017)
[42] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)
[43] (Author's interview with Sayid, 11-04-2017 ; Tarek, 20-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Marwan 10-05-2017)

strange things, like what happened in Germany. They raped girls. So the image is a bit negative now. Not, of course not of everybody.' [44]

'Somehow here I feel that some people are afraid of me. When they see that I am a stranger or I cannot speak Dutch, they are just a little bit afraid of me. Some of them when they ask "where are you from?" "I am from Syria." Well okay it is done. They do not want to communicate with you. It is a little bit hard I guess.' [45]

In reaction to this negative images one respondent described how some Syrian men when they approach a Dutch woman refuse to admit they are from Syria. According to his story they tell women they are from Italy or Spain or anything but Syria.[46]

Another difficulty mentioned by participants is their lack of knowledge regarding social rules of human interaction in general and particularly interaction between men and women.[47] Respondents explain they do not know how to behave towards women in this country and what is considered normal with reference to relationships and intercourse. They for example find it hard to interpret what is actually meant by what a woman is saying or behaving like.

Of course not all the men I interviewed experience the same difficulties with regard to the creation of an own family. As noted above four who were already married in Syria applied for family reunion and succeeded in bringing their wives and children here. Syrian men in the Netherlands who are single, especially the relatively older ones (above twenty-five), mostly articulated the urge to find a woman and the frustrations associated with this search. The difficulties discussed above particularly apply to them. Generally spoken the younger participants expressed less concerns about the search for a wife.

5.3. The Ability to Provide

As concluded in the previous chapter another social expectation to meet for Syrian men is the provider's role. Being a provider in this context means taking care of the needs to secure the family's well-being. Within this role different elements can be distinguished. The elements most referred to in the academic debate are on the one hand providing physical protection and safety for the family and on the other hand taking care of material needs.

It is relevant to consider that in Arabic societies the definition of family is relatively wide. This means the provider's role in most cases not only has to be performed with regard to one's own wife and children but there is also a responsibility towards other family members, especially one's parents and younger siblings.

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[44] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)
[45] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[46] (See 45)
[47] (Author's interview with Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017)

By far the biggest difficulty concerning the ability to provide is for most men that they *were*, or in the majority of cases *are*, separated from their family over a longer period of time.[48] They considered it too risky for their family to make the dangerous journey to Europe or did not have enough money to make the journey with all family members at once. Therefore the vast majority of men decided to come first and then at a later moment (try to) bring the family. Whether the situation was temporary or there is still no sight of change, all men describe the situation of separation from their family as difficult. During the time separated the man feels responsible but at the same time unable to directly take care over the family's needs, simply because he is not physically there to help and control the situation.

'Yes it was completely unsafe. Actually my head was always thinking about them. What are they doing? Because it was a little bit risky, I was always afraid that they would get arrested by the government. (…) I could not really do anything. When I was there it was at least I lived with them. But when I was here I felt a bit guilty about that I could not really help. Especially because you know the situation is getting even worse, everything. And here you can enjoy everything. I mean the electricity and the life and walking the streets. Even walking for them was a bit dangerous.' [49]

'There were some moments I was really … I was depressed a lot. But I could do it of course, to live alone here. It was so hard, during some moments. (…) When I was here I had to think about my family the entire time. What are they doing? How are the girls and the family? You are already worried if they go to a city in the neighborhood. Now they are in another country. (…) The hardest was that I could not be with them when the war was getting close to Hama. I was here and I could do little. That was very difficult for me. I tried to keep myself busy, because it is difficult not to constantly worry about what is going to happen.' [50]

What helps most men to stay in contact with the family during the time of separation, is the use of social media. Internet, WhatsApp, Viber and Facebook are described as very helpful ways to stay connected with family members on a daily base.[51] It is also mentioned how social media make every attack and every fight visible. This visibility creates the possibility to stay informed about local situations in Syria. However at the same time contact with the family and a high visibility of the events that are taking place enlarge anxieties and concerns of the ones who arrived in Europe and make men feel powerless because they are not able to act on what they see and hear. As one man explains regarding the contact with his wife:

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[48] (Author's interview with Ahmed, 08-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Rifat 03-05-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017)
[49] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[50] (Author's interview with Tarek, 20-04-2017)
[51] (Author's interview with Ahmed, 08-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2016 ; Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017)

'I always was afraid when I heard that something bad happened. Always when I was talking with her, I heard something like bombs. She lives near to the mountain where there is a military base camp above it. So you always hear bombs from there.' [52]

Now that most of the respondents are in the Netherlands for a couple of years, a distinction can be made between the ones who accomplished to bring their family here and the ones who did not. The former are mostly men who asked for a family reunion with their wives and children who still lived in Syria or young men who were permitted to reunite with their parents because they (or their siblings) were under the age of eighteen at the moment of arrival in the Netherlands.[53] These men feel of course very satisfied that they have their family with them again, but there is more. As the example below shows, in their personal stories about the reunion there can also be recognized elements of the provider's role.

'I was arranging everything and I was really active in this part. I could arrange everything. Even the house could be ready before they came. All the procedures, I mastered everything.' [54]

In contrast to this, men who did so far not succeed in bringing their whole family to Europe often come to the realization that this situation of separation may be infinite. [55] For them there is no prospect of reunion in the near future. Their request for family reunion is rejected or they were not eligible in the first place. Among these men, there are a lot who lost hope to see their family members or loved ones again.

'I feel responsible, because I left them there while they are old. First I wanted to bring them to the Netherlands, but now I can not realize that. I thought I go to Europe and earn money and then they can come. But I can not realize that. I hope to see them again, but maybe I will never see them again.' [56]

5.4 Exercise Power over Women and Children

The last prerequisite for Syrian men, as formulated in this chapter, is related to authority. According to social norms a man should be able to have authority over his woman and children. As reported by the majority of respondents, to exercise power over women and children is experienced to be more difficult in Europe than in Syria. [57] Men and women explain that men in general feel disempowered by the rules and observances of institutions. Some Syrian men

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[52] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[53] (Author's interview with Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[54] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[55] (Author's interview with Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017, Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Ahmed, 08-05-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017 ;)
[56] (Author's interview with Marwan, 10-05-2017)
[57] (Author's interview with Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Sara 18-05-2017 ; Marwan, 10-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017)

feel they are no longer in control over their own family, because they are constantly kept an eye on by others.

'After he arrived here, he felt that he has less power even weak, that he is weak. And his thoughts are changing everyday as he gets to know the laws and rules of the Netherlands. He feels like he has less power less powerful and he feels also that even his son, does not really belong to him and he cannot control his son, because of the rules. So he feels like he is less powerful.' [58]

'The problem with the AZC (asylum centre) *is that everybody knows you cannot say anything to your child. Because the child tells the COA* (central agency for the shelter of asylum seekers) *"my dad is having problems" or "my dad is hating me" or "he uses violence against me" it is going to be a problem for the dad. So the dad cannot say anything. He could just watch his kid, without doing anything. (...) He knows that he will be protected. Not his father is going to do anything against him, not his family, not anyone.'* [59]

Of course this does not apply to all men. Logically it particularly applies to those who already married a woman and have children. During the stay in an asylum centre these feelings of disempowerment are most noticeable. There is little privacy, the family life mostly takes place in the public atmosphere and there are several institutions to be reckoned with.

In contrast to feelings of disempowerment of Syrian men, respondents say that women in the meantime often feel empowered. Respondents explain women in general feel more protected by the law in the Netherlands and become aware of rights they have here which they did not have before. [60] As one woman explains:

'Women also feel that the law is supporting them, in Syria the laws are very bad especially for women. You cannot.. even the society is supporting men. (...) Here women feel that they are protected by society and also they are able to make their own lives.' [61]

5.5. Sub-conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to answer the following sub-question:

3. To what extent do the (current) living conditions of male Syrian refugees *correspond* or *contrast with* the dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in the Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

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[58] (Author's interview with Shayma, 18-05-2017)
[59] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[60] (Author's interview with Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017)
[61] (Author's interview with Sara, 18-05-2017)

So far no one succeeded in getting access to a paid job and income resulting in financial independence. A few men are doing an internship or volunteering work, the vast majority is at home without any kind of work. The older the men in general are, the more they experience their unemployment as problematic. The findings of the second paragraph show that among men who arrived in the Netherlands as single, it is considered very difficult to find a woman in the Netherlands to start a family with. Especially the relatively older ones articulate the urge to find a woman and the frustrations associated with this search. Furthermore all men confirmed to find it hard to deal with the inability to take care of the family members during the time of separation from the family. For some men this was only a temporary situation, for the majority this situation might be infinite. Regarding the ability to exercise power over women and children, it can be concluded that due to laws and institutional control Syrian men here experience a feeling of disempowerment. This is especially the case during the stay in asylum centres. Women in contrast to men seem to feel more powerful and protected in the Dutch society.

In consideration of the above it can be concluded the participators in this research face actual difficulties regarding the attempt to live up to the four dominant masculine norms focused on in this chapter. It turns out in most cases men do not succeed in meeting the expectations of what real men are like, how they should act and represent themselves to others.

Within the group of participants especially relatively older men (above twenty-five) seem to experience the inability to conform to dominant masculine norms as problematic and are more pessimistic about their future possibilities. The relatively younger ones (under twenty-five) articulate less concerns about their prevailing circumstances and future prospects. This outcome can be explained if you take into consideration that the older a man is, the more he is in general expected to behave like an adult and demonstrate he is a mature man. Moreover most participators above twenty-five already built their lives back in Syria and experience there current situation as a serious setback.

The previous chapter and this chapter together investigated what the hegemonic masculine norms for Syrians are and to what extent men are able to meet these societal expectations. The results indicate that male Syrian refugees who fled to Europe in most cases face difficulties in their attempt to live up to the masculine norms. In the following chapters it will be investigated how men react to these difficulties. How their inability to conform to dominant norms affects their personal construct of masculinity.

6 Overcompensation

6.1. 'He is becoming worse'

Shayma arrived in Europe a couple years ago, she came alone and travelled ahead of her family. In Europe Shayma asked for a family reunion and succeeded in bringing her man and son here. Since the family reunion she encounters a lot of problems with her husband. She explains her husband goes through a difficult time and finds it hard to deal with his new living situation. It appears to be almost impossible for her husband to find the same kind of work he had in Syria and this influences his confidence in his own worth and abilities. *'In Syria he was like responsible for everything. I was also working, but he felt he had a better job and he was financially more.. his salary was bigger. He felt like he owned everything, because he could support us financially. After he arrived here, he felt that he has less power and that he is weak.'* [62] She points out it is hard for him to share his difficulties with others, because showing his weakness will make him feel even less powerful. Shayma describes how her husband's situation influences his behaviour towards her and her son. According to Shayma his behaviour changed in an attempt to feel that he is powerful and protective again and has authority over them. *'He is becoming worse. He is going back to ideas that he before never believed in. My husband was not like religious in Syria and he was not telling me do this or do not do that or do not wear make-up. But now he starts to do that. I think men do that to feel that they are in power again.'* [63] Because of the problems she currently experiences with her husband, Shayma is thinking about divorcing her man. She explains for a woman it is easier to have an own house and life in Europe than it was in Syria.

6.2. Empirical Findings

The story of Shayma does not stand on its own. Empirical findings of this study show that in an attempt to reassert their masculine identity men are prone to overcompensate for their 'lack of masculinity' in particular ways. Overcompensation is defined here as an "excessive reaction to a feeling of inferiority, guilt, or inadequacy leading to an exaggerated attempt to overcome the feeling." [64] During the conversations about this matter men are mostly referring to others than themselves, what immediately exposes the sensitivity of this topic. Being more conservative than before, trying to exercise control over minor family affairs and behaving in a violent way are named as compensating responses to the incompetence to live up to masculine norms. [65]

From the conversations it appears that a combination of feelings of disempowerment of men and empowerment of women in the new living situation are the main reason for compensatory behaviour. In some cases this results in a serious increase of controlling the wife's behaviour.

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[62] (Author's interview with Shayma, 18-05 -2017)
[63] (See 62)
[64] Definition by Merriam-Webster
[65] (Author's interview with Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017)

According to the respondents these men start to behave in a more suppressive way than they did before.

'Some men start to nitpick. Some men start to nag. "Your arms, look at your body. You have way to much make-up. You have this, you have that. You have to wear a headscarf."' [66]

'In the AZC I was always helping the COA with translating, because I can speak good English. So I hear a lot of stories from people who refused to send their wives to school. Because they do not want her to communicate with strange men.' [67]

Stories concerning violent behaviour do exist but are less prevalent and in all cases formulated in an ambiguous way. [68] Because of the sensitivity of the topic it was also as a researcher difficult to directly ask about this issue during the conversations. Therefore it is important to be careful with drawing conclusions regarding the use of violent behaviour.

What in the meantime can be concluded is that in most stories classified as a reaction of overcompensation a family reunion is involved. Respondents explain that after family reunions take place most problems between couples occur. On the one hand problems are caused by the changes in the behaviour of the husband, as described in the story of Shayma. On the other hand the female response to this behaviour sometimes adds to the emergence of a precarious situation. Respondents describe that in the Netherlands a lot of Syrian women feel safe enough to rise up against their man, a feeling they did not experience in Syria.

'They know they are going to be safe. Because they know, if they would ask for the divorce that somebody can protect them. If the husband refuses or if he starts making problems or if he was not a good guy, if he talked to her in a bad way or he hit her in some way, she knows here that she could have protection.' [69]

'Here women feel that they are protected by society and also they are able to make their own lives. And men of course will not accept this, because of their ego. Especially men who came by family reunion.' [70]

According to the stories told, divorces among Syrian wives and husbands are a very common result of changing dynamics in the couple's relationship.[71]

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[66] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)
[67] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-04-2017)
[68] (Author's interview with Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-04-2017)
[69] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-04-2017)
[70] (Author's interview with Sara, 18-05-2017)
[71] (Author's interview with Shakour, 13-04-2017 ; Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-5-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Mohammed, 26-04-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017)

6.3. Theoretical Findings

The academic relevance of this research proves that we can speak of a topic that has largely been overlooked and neglected in the academic field. However this does not imply there is no existing knowledge at all about the subject of men's gendered identities in relation to conflict. This is not the first research in the conflict studies field focusing on the gap between dominant masculine expectations and the reality wherein men live; a reality that often exists of poor living conditions and somber prospects, and how this gap influences men's constructs of masculine identities. Valuable research about this topic is done by Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis (2006) ; Hollander (2014) ; Mungai & Pease (2009) ; Poynting, Talar & Noble (2009) ; Jansen (2008) ; Kabachnik (2012) ; Connell (2005) ; Dolan (2003) and Jaji (2009).

The work of some of these academic studies shows similarities with the empirical findings described in this chapter. Although the authors do not make use of the term 'overcompensation' or a similar term, they describe a same kind of reaction. The studies show that in an attempt to reassert a masculine identity men are prone to compensate for their 'lack of masculinity'. Overcompensation in a lot of cases exists of demonstrating physical strength and toughness, conflict-stimulating attitudes and violent behaviour (towards women).

Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis (2006) investigated the effects of changing gender roles in rural Kenya, due to social-economic developments and conflict, on the well-being and behaviour of Kenyan men. The developments resulted in an eroded capacity of men to support the household while at the same time the role of women in providing for the household increased. The authors found that men felt marginalized and disempowered by this new gender roles and these feelings often led to frustration. Feelings of frustration and impotency at their turn resulted in an increase of alcoholic consumption, depression, violence against women, and more father-children related conflicts. Especially the latter two can be seen as (physical) ways for men to compensate and reassert their masculinity in the household. As Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis mention: "Men's efforts to reassert themselves, include in some cases, turning to violence to reassert their masculinity" (2006, p. 220).

Dolan (2003) has done a comparable study in Northern Uganda and his study shows similar results. According to Dolan a context of violence and conflict in Uganda causes that men are unable to live up to expectations of the dominant model of masculinity in society and are also unable to break out of these expectations, because not conforming to the norm can be dangerous especially in conflict situations. These inabilities cause "widespread feelings of fear, intimidation, humiliation, frustration and anger, which are often expressed in violent behaviour against self and others, in the forms of alcohol abuse, suicide attempts and domestic violence, and also in conflict between civilians and military" (Dolan, 2003, p. 11). Dolan goes even a step further than Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis when he argues that not only a context of conflict and war challenges men in living up to expectations about being a male, but frustrations about the failure to meet these expectations at their turn will reinforce the societal instability and violent context (2003).

Hollander (2014) also focused on the African continent and studied how colonialism, Christianisation, armed conflict, suppression and economic decline caused significant shifts in gender relations in Kiliba, a small place in South Kivu, Congo. According to Hollander "in a situation of political, social and economic crisis, it became increasingly difficult for men to live-up to societal expectations of what a man is supposed to do and who he is supposed to be" (p. 61, 2014). He calls this situation *thwarted* masculinity. In his study he distinguishes and explains two different ways in which men tried to deal with the inability to meet the societal expectations of what a man is supposed to be and do. One of these ways in which men reacted shows similarities with the findings of Dolan (2003) and Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis (2006). "They responded with the one masculine feature that they had not lost, their physical strength. Especially in families where women became less obedient and submissive, violence was often used to restore order." (2014, p. 63-64).

Poynting, Talar & Noble's study (2009) differs from the previous ones regarding the focus on Lebanese men migrating to Australia instead of African men without a migration background. However their findings are comparable with the findings discussed above. The authors argue that the vast majority of Lebanese men felt unable to realise their ideal of masculinity in Australia (being an adventurous breadwinner) because of unemployment, feelings of alienation and experiences of economic and social exclusion. According to Poynting & others this often produces a state of *wounded* masculinity. This *wounded* masculinity leads to situations in which men are tented to "reassert their power in the domestic sphere to compensate for their lack of power elsewhere" and try to compensate their masculine self-images by "greater toughness, physical strength and sexual prowess" (2009, p.141). Poynting and others describe this reaction as a way to gain "compensatory respect" and link their study with what Connell defines as "protest masculinity, intended to recover a sense of power in the face of social and economic marginalisation" (2009, p.149 ; 2005).

The findings of the different authors discussed above show an overlap in the way men react to situations in which they are unable to conform to the hegemonic model of masculine identities in society. The studies show that in an attempt to reassert their masculine identity some men compensate for their failures in a physical and/or violent way. Violent behaviour is most of the time directed at women in a domestic atmosphere. By acting in a violent way and showing physical strength men try to regain their 'lost' respect.

6.4. Sub-conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to partly answer sub-question four:

4. How do male Syrian refugees react to their ability / inability to live up to dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

Findings show that a common response to being unable to conform to pre-flight notions of masculinity is a reaction of overcompensation. This compensatory behaviour can take different forms. Previous research has shown that men in this scenario are prone to demonstrate physical strength and toughness, conflict-stimulating attitudes and violent behaviour (towards women). The empirical findings correspond largely with previous research: men are likely to reassert their power in the domestic sphere to compensate for their lack of power elsewhere. They for example become more conservative than before and their attempt to exercise control over family affairs increases. However an increase of violent behaviour, an outcome often referred to in the academic debate, cannot be deduced from the empirical results. Moreover what is not mentioned in previous research is that women in their current situation often feel strong and safe enough to rise up against the compensatory behaviour of their husbands, what frequently results in a divorce.

7 Escapism

7.1. 'Basically this still is his life'

Kinan came to the Netherlands together with his younger sister. Because his sister still was underage when they arrived here, she could ask for a family reunion. Now his parents and younger brother also live in the Netherlands. His mother finds the new situation kind of interesting, she is learning the Dutch language very fast and doing well. According to Kinan she has a big network of Syrian and Dutch people and is very busy. Kinan explains for his father it is far more difficult to deal with the new situation, because he is very aware of what he lost during the war. *'My dad, he had a restaurant, he was the owner. His work was pretty good. The restaurant they started, was like their success in their life. (...) The family was a kind of famous family let's say because of the success, the restaurant was famous. This was basically my father's life. He was completely into work, thinking about the restaurant and staying there all the time.'* [72] During the war the restaurant was collapsed and completely demolished. In the end his family had to flee and leave the place behind. Kinan explains his father finds it hard to deal with the changes in his life, that he is not okay with the current situation and therefore talks about the past all the time. *'He still tells a lot about the restaurant now. Like "we were doing that. And that was a success and that was good." Yes, and I can imagine that, because for him it was like his whole life. And eh.. yeah basically this still is his life.'* [73]

7.2. Empirical Findings

According to Kinan his father is referring a lot to the life and successes he had in the past, in order to deal with (neglect) his current living situation. The story of Kinan's father does not stand on its own. This strategy to cope with changes in the living situation is referred to by different respondents when they tell about their own family members. According to their stories, men cling to (masculine) identities of the past, by bringing back to life memories of a no longer existing reality and / or are wishing to go back to the place they left.[74] I classified these kind of responses to changes in the living situation as reactions of escapism. Escapism is defined here as an "habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine".[75] These men do not adapt to the new situation or demonstrate compensatory behaviour. Instead, they hold on to stories and identities of the past as a way to hare away from the problems and difficulties they currently face.

'Some of them are still living in that dream. Which is, for me is an illusion. Because you cannot create a relationship with a place you do not know anymore. So you are creating a relationship which is an idea. You are not a citizen there, you live here. (...) So I think, it is an illusion.' [76]

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[72] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[73] (See footnote 72)
[74] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Sara 18-05-2017 ; Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Rifat)
[75] Definition by Merriam-Webster
[76] (Author's interview with Sara, 18-05-2017)

'He talks about going back to Syria. He wants to go back and he tries to go back, because he thinks it is a better place for him and he does not cope [with the situation] here.'[77]

The stories of male Syrian refugees explicated above, are one possible response to the new living situation that can be referred to as a reaction of escapism. However this type of reaction can be expressed in multiple ways. Other behaviour I came across and labelled as a form of escapism is the (start of the) use of drugs and alcohol. [78]

'Some of them start using like a daily habit. (...) They start to do a lot of drugs. And they just start their lives with things that will never help them. (...) It destroys something for some of them. Some of them could get through it, some of them could not. I have a friend, he started even to smoke every day. He could not study, he could not do anything. When you go to his place, it is always a mess. He is just sitting and smoking weed, he did not even pay his house renting.' [79]

This story is confirmed by another respondent ,[80] According to him a lot of Syrian guys started to drink beer, wine and / or whiskey after they arrived in the Netherlands, despite the fact they are Muslim. Or they spend entire days smoking marijuana. The respondent also shared his thoughts about the reason for their daily use:

'It is a tough reason. Because some.. we have one of them in our group or maybe three. When you ask him about that he will say "I do not like my life, I am far away from my life, my family and friends."'[81]

He elaborates on their explanations by saying they are depressed and it is their way to cope with the consciousness of what they did have in Syria but do not have any more in the Netherlands.

7.3 Theoretical Findings

The studies of Jansen (2009) and Kabachnik (2012) both pay attention to migrant men who attempt to neglect or ignore their current situation by clinging to a past history.

Jansen's study focuses on Bosnian refugees who fled to Western states. He starts by describing the difficulties they faced during their flights and in the countries of asylum. Besides war traumas and the separation from loved ones he particularly pays attention to changes in living circumstances due to a drop in wealth, status and recognition. He proceeds with explaining that according to his findings women more so than men were "willing and able to take on such

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[77] (Author's interview with Shayma, 18-05-2017)
[78] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[79] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[80] (Author's interview with Zain, 02-05-2017)
[81] (See footnote 80)

challenges considering their lives 'transplanted' and determined to start over again from the bottom of the economic ladder, (…) coping problems were especially sharp amongst men." (p. 186). This finding is consistent with the work of other authors who argue refugee women are in general better able to adapt to new living situations than men are and are more likely to be employed (Franz, 2003, p. 147 ; Gilliland et al., 1995; Al-Ali, 2002: p. 254; Korac, 2003). Jansen then starts to explain how the common living situations of migrant men (especially their unemployment) produces difficulties for men to live up to what they consider as masculine and how Bosnian men in general response to their impotence to act as 'a real man' according to their own standards. Jansen reports "many spent their days engaged in conversation with like-minded male fellow refugees, recalling the superiority of their previous lives in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (p. 187). The main argument of the article is that men attempt to hold on to their previous ethnic and social identity by continuously referring to the past and their lost status and position. In Jansen's words the most common coping mechanism amongst male Bosnian refugees is: "stubbornly cling to their remembered personhood, located there where they recalled having counted as someone, and misplaced in resettlement" (p. 195).

The coping mechanism of Bosnian migrants as discussed by Jansen can be described as an attempt to ignore and forget their current (frustrating) situation of unemployment and a low social status by holding on to the past and relive the memories of the social status, respect and identity they in fact left behind in Bosnia. Kabachnik's study on Georgian internally displaced people (IDP) partly shows similar findings.

Kabachnik just like Jansen concludes that women were able to adapt better than men to the experiences of displacement and trauma and new living conditions. Furthermore he explains "In Georgia, hegemonic masculinities are captured by the ideal of the man as breadwinner. However, many Georgian IDP men cannot meet these expectations. Some lack skills and training or cannot secure employment opportunities. For others, the trauma of displacement became embodied and reflected in their deteriorated health, alcoholism, disability, or continued psychological trauma" (2012, p. 777). This led to what Kabachnik refers to as *traumatic masculinity*. What Kabachnik mentions as most striking and an important result of his research amongst Georgian IDP men is that these men tend to spend a lot of time hanging around with other displaced men. According to Kabachnik this hanging around with each other "not only enables identity formation but also allows IDP men, with a shared experience of displacement and memories of Abkhazia, to discuss the past, tell stories, and to reformulate their masculinities. (…) Their narratives show that they remember, unproblematically and with nostalgia, their past and thus they reaffirm their hegemonic masculinities" (2012, p. 784). Kabachnik argues clinging to memories of the past is a way to avoid the current inability to live up to masculine expectations, however he argues that this 'hanging around together' serves more than one function. According to Kabachnik by hanging around with each other, the men create ideas that they are unable to take control over their situation and in this way victimize themselves but at the same time create feelings of 'camaraderie and solidarity'. In this way Kabachnik argues these "activities have also gained a therapeutic power and meaning" (2012, p. 785).

Consuming large amounts of alcohol as a response to the inability to meet gender based expectations, is not only referred to by Kabachnik (2012). Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Paul Francis (2006) and Dolan (2003) mention alcoholism and alcohol abuse as frequent coping strategies.

7.4. Sub-Conclusion

Just as it was with the previous chapter, the aim of this chapter is to partly answer sub-question four:

4 How do male Syrian refugees react to their ability / inability to live up to dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

Empirical findings show a possible response to the inability to conform to masculine norms is a reaction of escapism. Some men are inclined to cling to (masculine) identities of the past, by bringing back to life memories of a no longer existing reality and / or are wishing to go back to the place they fled from. Another manifestation of escapism among male Syrian refugees is the (daily) use of alcohol and drugs.

These discoveries do largely correspond with previous studies. However it appears, there are also differences between the empirical and theoretical findings. Previous studies emphasize that recalling superior lives and identities of the past particularly should be interpreted as a group activity, a coming together of like-minded men. This conclusion is neither supported by the empirical findings nor refuted.

Furthermore regarding my own findings I think it is important to be careful with statements about *excessive* alcohol consumption, alcohol *abuse* and *alcoholism* as referred to by Kabachnik (2012) ; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis (2006) and Dolan (2003). The empirical findings indicate the use of alcohol and drugs, although it is difficult to draw a boundary between consumption and *excessive* consumption. Therefore I should stay away from claims about drugs *abuse*.

8 Adaptation

8.1. 'Maybe if I am not working, I will take care of her.'

After his father died, Zain and his little brother decided to flee from Syria and come to Europe with the Netherlands as final destination. A decision a lot of people already made before them. Zain left his mother, younger brother and his sister who was already married behind. Since his arrival Zain is convinced it is his own responsibility to adjust to the new situation in order to make his life work in this place. '*We are here, we have a great opportunity to work and to have a woman.*' [82] He tells how he did not learn how to do domestic tasks in Syria, but how living alone here changed that and made him realize what it was like for his mother. '*I learn cooking and cleaning and all those things, because here I am living alone. I think it is great, because it makes me feel what kind of job my mother was doing for us. It was, if I can say very hard work for her, because we were six people or seven people and she worked the entire week for us, cooking and cleaning the house, cleaning the clothes and yes a lot of things.*' [83] Zain explains he has no preference for marrying a Dutch woman or a Syrian woman, but when he will marry a woman he will take his new ideas and awareness with him: '*So if I can find a woman maybe I will make the same life between me and her. Maybe if I am not working I will take care of her. Because I know what is like to work the whole day.*' [84]

8.2. Empirical Findings

I will refer to the personal story of Zain as a story of adaptation. I first and foremost introduce the concept of adaptation to make a clear distinction with the other types of reactions discussed in the previous chapters. Where overcompensation and escapism can be seen as ways to fight the inability to conform to the pre-flight notions of masculinity, reactions of adaptation must be seen as certain forms of acceptation and ways in which this acceptation is expressed in the behaviour of Syrian men in the Netherlands. Adaptation is defined here as "adjustment to environmental conditions". [85]

Just like Shayma's and Kinan's story, Zain's story does not stand on his own. Respondents argue that in order to make the new situation work, men are prone to adjust their behaviour. [86] According to their stories this especially seems to apply to relatively young men.[87] Examples of adjustments which challenge the dominant gender norms are changes in beliefs about what is the correct role distribution between husband and wife. These are perceptions about who should work and is financial responsible and who should take care of domestic work.

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[82] (Author's interview with Zain, 02-05-2017)
[83] See footnote 82
[84] See footnote 82
[85] Definition by Merriam-Webster
[86] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Sara 18-05-2017 ; Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017 ; Kinan 19-05-2017 ; Mohammed 26-04-2017)
[87] (Author's interview with Sara, 18-05-2017 ; Shayma, 18-05-2017 ; Kinan 19-05-2017)

Furthermore there are behavioural changes mentioned regarding the way men and women interact with each other.

'I had a Dutch girlfriend here. So I noticed like, even the girl behaves completely different. I think this helped me a lot with thinking about things. (...) I changed a bit. Because of, I mean, I just understood this person is grown up in a different place so she has different thoughts. So I have to deal with them. I have to understand really well what is the culture and how it goes to deal with that.' [88]

'That is why I like the Netherlands, because in the Netherlands a man does not have to do everything. We are drinking coffee right? A cappuccino. You are paying, that is beautiful isn't it? It is good for me. But in Syria it would be very, a little bit strange. Men are always taking initiative. They are men and they have money and it is also about giving respect. But here it is disrespecting if I say "No, you are a woman."' [89]

Four respondents explain that they were or are without a wife in the Netherlands and because of that they had to learn how to take care of domestic tasks as cooking, cleaning the house and looking after the children.[90]

'I never cooked in my life, but now I am a very, very, very good cooker. My friends come to me and say "Ammar please can you cook for us, because we are so hungry?" My mom she is the best cooker I have ever seen. So if I want to cook anything I always call here and say "Mom how can I do this and this?" She is always telling me. And I discovered that I am a very good cooker. And I do very delicious things.' [91]

It is however the question whether these changes in behaviour regarding domestic tasks have a permanent or rather temporarily character. What happens after a husband and his wife are reunited or when someone finds a partner in the Netherlands? As one respondent explains:

'I found a good job, but it was a volunteering job in a computer company. But because of my daughter I did not get the job. Because they told me "you have to work very late, until six o'clock sometimes." So I told them "how can I then take care of my daughter, because she will come back from school and she cannot find anyone." (...) I like that company and I will try to contact them, now that we are staying together. So my wife can take care of the children.' [92]

What furthermore should be taken in consideration is that a small amount of respondents already explicitly distinguished themselves from the dominant masculine norms back in Syria. In their words they were already modern and not very typical Eastern men. [93]

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[88] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[89] (Author's interview with Mohammed, 26-04-2017)
[90] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017 ; Rifat 03-05-2017 ; Sayid 11-04-2017 ; Zain, 02-05-2017)
[91] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-05-2017)
[92] (Author's interview with Rifat, 03-05-2017)
[93] (Author's interview with Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017 ; Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Ammar, 10-05-2017)

'I do not think I am changing a lot. I am still living my normal life. I am not a very Eastern man, I am very open towards these things. So I can do anything, the woman can do it. Taking care of the children, cooking, changing the diapers of the children, it is okay for me. There is not a thing especially for the man an especially for the woman.'[94]

8.3. Theoretical Findings

The work of a few academic studies shows similarities with the empirical findings described in this chapter. Although the authors do not make us of the term 'adaptation', they describe a same kind of possible reaction to the inability of men to live up to dominant masculine standards.

As mentioned earlier Hollander (2014) in his study about *thwarted* masculinity distinguishes and explains two different ways in which men tried to deal with the inability to meet the societal expectations of what a man is supposed to be and do. The first type, discussed in a previous chapter, focuses on the physical strength emasculated men use in an attempt to reassert their masculinity. The second form of reaction discussed by Hollander concerns men who effaced themselves by lowering their self-expectations. "Inability to live up to societal expectations and the shame derived from it caused them to move into the background and become inconspicuous. (…) They went out to do petty jobs that they traditionally considered to be far below their status. They accepted that they no longer held the hegemonic position in the family" (Hollander, 2014 p. 62). Admitting that what they themselves earned was not enough for their entire family, these men encouraged their wives to also find a job outside the house and earn an income. Furthermore most of the wives got a say in how to spend the money and thus decisions were more than before made together (Hollander, 2014 p. 64). These men thus adapted to the situation by accepting a new gender order, in which their role in the household changed, adjusting to the new living circumstances.

Mungai and Pease (2009) found similar results during their study after the migration of African men to Australia. They conclude that "men felt that many of their problems stemmed from the differences in cultural understanding about masculinity and manhood (…) and the challenges they faced in translating the experience of manhood forged men to adjust to the new living situation in order to make the settlement a success." This adjustment included mainly changes in the domestic work and financial matters such as being able to take part in domestic tasks, child care and sharing (financial) responsibilities (Mungai & Pease, 2009). For most men such changes meant they had to invent a new life and identity for themselves. According to Mungai & Pease many men have met these challenges successfully, and adapted a renegotiated form of masculinity. However others found it difficult and for quite a lot it has led to a family breakdown (p. 112).

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[94] (Author's interview with Burhan, 17-05-2017)

8.4 Sub-conclusion

Just like the two previous chapters the aim of this chapter is to partly answer sub-question four:

4. How do male Syrian refugees react to their ability / inability to live up to dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

Empirical findings as well as theoretical findings show that a common response to the inability to conform to masculine norms is a reaction of adaptation. Where overcompensation and escapism can be seen as ways to fight the inability to live up to the hegemonic model of masculinity and changing gender roles, reactions of adaptation must be seen as certain forms of acceptance. Empirical and theoretical findings indicate that possible adjustments are changes in attitudes towards the roles and responsibilities within a family and behavioural changes regarding the interaction between men and women. What the existing literature does not point out is that this particularly applies to the younger generation. Furthermore empirical findings imply it should be questioned whether these adaptations have a permanent or rather temporary character. This seems to differ per situation. Moreover it is important to be aware of the fact some migrant men feel they did not have to adapt their perceptions and behaviour when they arrived in the Netherlands, because their way of thinking already fitted the new situation.

9 Preservation of Masculine Identities

9.1. 'I spent three weeks to arrive here, they spent thirteen hours'

Tarek arrived in the Netherlands in 2015. He considered it way too dangerous to bring his two little children with him during his journey to Europe, for this reason his wife and children stayed behind in Syria. '*We had no other choice than that I would leave. We had to split. I had to undertake the dangerous and difficult journey. The danger, the little boat, the cold and the refugee camps. Thank god I managed not to cry in the presence of the children'.* [95] Once in the Netherlands Tarek had to wait almost a year before he and his family were reunited. Tarek explains this is a long time, but he is very satisfied and happy that he could create the possibility for his family to come to the Netherlands in a safe way. *It is long waiting, but compared to others it is good. And to bring them by plane and to fly for thirteen hours and be here safe. Yeah I spent three weeks to arrive here, they spent thirteen hours.*[96] Regarding the difficult period when he and his family were separated, Tarek does not blame himself. He explains he could not do anything about it and it was for a good reason. *It is not about give the responsibility on myself. Everybody knows our story, and that we did not have a choice. And I am here to make a future for them. (…) So I came here to see at least see my daughters go to school. Now all the girls in my village who are twelve should go to the middle school. Because we do not have this school in my village, then they should travel to another village, which is eight kilometres but there are three borders for the army there. And people are not feeling safe to send their girls. So we do not have girls now studying anymore in my village. (...) I do not want my daughters to stop after basic school. These are things that I really wanted to leave because of it.'*[97]

9.2. Empirical Findings

The previous chapters focused on experiences of refugee men who felt emasculated and clarified three possible responses to these feelings and frustrations. This chapter differs from the other chapters in a way that it demonstrates how the difficult living situation of refugee men also creates possibilities for these men to see themselves as the family's saver or rescuer. The story of Tarek shows how he as a man took the responsibility for his family. He undertook the dangerous trip to Europe and created the possibility for his wife and children to come here in a safe way. Because of his courage and perseverance his daughters now have the opportunity to go to school and to have a bright future. Besides the experiences of Tarek, there exist comparable stories in which refugee men tell about their personal successes of providing safety and other needs to the family.[98] I refer to these stories as experiences of preservation of masculine identities. Preservation is defined here as an "act to keep something the same or of

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[95] (Author's interview with Tarek, 20-4-2017)
[96] (See footnote 95)
[97] (See footnote 95)
[98] (Author's interview with Sayid, 11-04-2017 ; Tarek, 20-04-2017 ; Shakour, 13-04-2017)

preventing it from being damaged".[99] These stories show how grievous events in some cases give men the possibility to keep on seeing themselves as providers and protectors of the family.

The story of another respondent is comparable to Tarek's story, because he also emphasizes he succeeded in guaranteeing safety for the family. However at the same time the story differs.[100] The man explains he did not want to leave his family behind in Syria. Therefore he was working very hard to save money to bring his entire family here. He collected money until he had enough for them all:

'In little groups I sent them to Europe. First my brother in law and then two by two. I was the final one and arrived in the Netherlands in May 2015. There we had to stay at many different places, but now the entire family lives here together.' [101]

He continues by telling how his plans and actions secured the safety of all his family members. Because of him, no one is in danger anymore.

'I brought them to a peaceful place, so in that way I am satisfied. (…) I did not let them see any bad actions from the Syrian regime, I assured their safety, no one is hurt.' [102]

Where the previous stories of preservation of masculine identities specifically focus on the danger in Syria and during the journey to Europe, other Syrian men shared their experiences regarding the ability to provide their families with material needs and support in the Netherlands. [103] As one respondent explains:

'I was really happy about it. I was arranging everything and I was really active in this part. I could arrange everything. Even the house could be ready before they came. All the procedures, I mastered everything. Get through everything, so I knew of everything how it works. So I was like just arranging everything for them, so when they arrived everything would be..' [104]

Two other respondents mentioned how they are able to save some money in the Netherlands and send it to family still living in Syria. In this way they support family members there and try to provide them with necessaries. [105]

'Sometimes I can save some money for my family. Then I send the money and they are very happy. So I save a little of money from a little of money I got every month. So, so yeah they are happy and for me I feel like eh for example if I buy a new laptop or a new television I feel like

[99] (Cambridge Online Dictionary)
[100] (Author's interview with Shakour, 13-04-2017)
[101] (See footnote 100)
[102] (See footnote 100)
[103] (Author's interview with Ammar, 10-5-2017 ; Burhan, 17-05-2017 ; Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[104] (Author's interview with Kinan, 19-05-2017)
[105] (Author's interview with Rifat, 03-05-2017 ; Sayid, 11-04-2017)

guilty, because I feel like this money can also go to my family, not to buy a laptop or a television. (...) In fact they are depending on me.' [106]

The stories above demonstrate that specifically in times of crisis, these men succeed in helping their families and in some cases even are able to guarantee the safety of family members. According to their narratives in this way their masculine identities remained partially untouched.

9.3. Theoretical Findings

To my knowledge previous studies, that focus on the same complication this case study aims attention at, do not refer to men actually being able to largely maintain their masculine identities because of their mannish deeds.

However an author I do want to mention here is Jaji (2009). Jaji's case study focuses on male refugees who fled from the Great Lakes region and now live in Nairobi, Kenya. Her first finding is that the refugee men she spoke to are indeed unable to conform to their pre-flight notion of masculinity in terms of "economic self-sufficiency, marriage, fatherhood and the ability to control, provide for and protect a family" (Jaji, 2009, p. 192). Her second finding is that this inability leads to frustration and feelings of impotency which at their turn often result in violent and criminal behaviour. This finding can be categorized as what I distinguished as a reaction of overcompensation in order to reassert a masculine identity. However, according to Jaji this is not the entire story: another response taking place at the same time is a response of male refugees constructing (positive) alternative masculinities. These alternative masculinities emphasis the strength, courage, patience and determination that are needed to survive and live in exile and thus focus on mental strength instead of physical strength. The men see their life history and current living conditions as a test of god to define the firmness of their faith (Jaji, 2009, p. 191). By creating alternative masculinities the men try to avoid to be equated to femininity or to be seen as immature again.

9.4. Sub-conclusion

In accordance with the previous three chapters the aim of this chapter is to partly answer the following sub-question:

4. How do male Syrian refugees react to their ability / inability to live up to dominant and institutionalized norms, values and behavioural patterns in Syrian society, expressing expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are?

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[106] (Author's interview with Sayid, 11-04-2017)

The empirical findings of this chapter show that in a few cases Syrian refugees actually feel able to conform to dominant expectations regarding the man's role of being a provider of safety and material needs. The stories demonstrate that specifically in times of crisis, these men succeed in helping and supporting their family members, what can be seen as an important characteristic of 'real men'. In this way their masculine identities remain partially untouched.

To my knowledge prior studies, focussing on the same complication, do not pay attention to men who are actually able to largely preserve their masculine identities in a certain way. In her case study Jaji (2009) mentions how men create (positive) alternative masculinities in order to avoid to be equated to femininity or to be seen as immature again. However the construction of (positive) alternative masculinities should rather been seen as a way to mentally deal with the inability to live up to masculine norms than feelings of actually being able to do so (as the empirical findings in this chapter demonstrate).

10 Conclusion

The first aim of this chapter is to answer the research puzzle statement, this is the main question of the research. Furthermore in this chapter I will position the research in the larger theoretical debate to explain the utility of this case study and its addition to the academic literature. Positioning this thesis in the academic debate results in recommendations for further research.

10.1. An Answer to the Research Puzzle Statement

The research puzzle that has a central position in this research is:

> **How are the personal constructs of masculinity of male Syrian refugees affected by the social and economic living conditions they face(d) after the flight and in the country of asylum, specifically in the Netherlands, from 2010 until 2017?**

In order to answer the puzzle statement I needed to investigate the three separate parts I distinguished in the operationalisation section (see chapter two). I will now come back to the sub-conclusions of the previous chapters, in which the sub-questions belonging to the three separate parts were answered. Together they unpack the entire research puzzle.

The first part of the research was concerned with investigating the dominant masculinities in the Syrian society. Empirical and theoretical findings gave insight in what are seen as the most important responsibilities for a Syrian man to take care of and what kind of behaviour is expected. The prerequisites that are considered most relevant are; 1) access to work and income resulting in financial independence, 2) the creation of one's own family, 3) the ability to provide protection and material needs for the family and 4) exercise power over women and children. Furthermore the empirical findings showed that the participants in this research try to conform to these hegemonic ideals of masculinity, either consciously or unconsciously.

The second part investigated to what extent the participants are able to live up to the dominant masculinities demarcated in part one. It can be concluded that the participants face actual difficulties regarding the attempt to comply with these norms. It turns out in most cases men do not succeed in meeting the expectations of what real men are like, how they should act and represent themselves to others. So far no one succeeded in getting access to a paid job resulting in financial independence, it is considered very difficult to find a woman in the Netherlands to start a family with, all men experienced difficulties to provide safety and material needs during the time of separation from the family and due to laws and institutional control Syrian men here experience a feeling of disempowerment. However, within the group of participants differences can be found. For example, a few men are married, the majority is not. Some men are reunited with family members, others are not (yet) reunited. Especially relatively older men (above twenty-five) seem to experience their impotency and 'malfunctioning' as problematic and are pessimistic about their future possibilities. The relatively younger ones (under twenty-five) articulate less concerns about their prevailing circumstances and future prospects.

The last part of the research was concerned with finding an answer to the question how the personal masculinities of Syrian refugees are affected by their inability to meet masculine standards. Empirical findings demonstrated that there are various ways in which Syrian refugees respond and their identities are influenced. In this research the following three coping mechanisms are distinguished: *overcompensation*, *escapism* and *adaptation*. Empirical findings of this study showed that in an attempt to reassert their masculine identity men are inclined to overcompensate for their 'lack of masculinity'. Acting in a more conservative way than before, increasing the control over minor family affairs and demonstrating violent behaviour are examples of *overcompensation*. The coping mechanism *escapism* can take various forms. On the one hand empirical findings demonstrated men are prone to cling to (masculine) identities of the past by bringing back to life memories of a no longer existing reality and / or are wishing to go back to the place they left behind. Another variation of escapism that this research came across is the use of alcohol and other drugs. Where *overcompensation* and *escapism* can be seen as ways to fight feelings of disempowerment and frustration reactions of *adaptation* must be seen as certain forms of acceptation of the inability to meet masculine norms and ways in which this acceptation is expressed. Examples are behavioural changes in the role distribution between men and women and transfigured ideas about gender norms and interaction between different sexes. Besides these coping mechanisms, empirical findings also showed how a minority of participants manages to partly preserve or recover their masculine identities. These stories demonstrated how men despite their prevailing circumstances may also experience feelings of empowerment, because of their capacity to help and support family members in grievous times.

This latter finding gives insight in how the personal constructs of masculinity of a few Syrian men remained largely untouched. However, I can conclude that the personal constructs of masculinity of most male Syrian refugees, who participated in the research, are affected by the changed living conditions after the flight and in the country of asylum, in this case in the Netherlands. Their constructs are influenced by the inability to live up to dominant norms. This research distinguished three transformations of masculine identities which can be seen as coping mechanisms.

10.2. Positioning the Research in the Academic Debate

As mentioned before in the methodological section, this research is a case study and thus focused on (the meaning making process of) a *demarcated* group regarding a *well-defined* topic in a *specific* context. Therefore the external validity of this study is limited. I am not able to make universal generalisations about my research findings. I should be careful with claims that go behind this case study, claims that are for example related to other circumstances or claims about other persons than the research population.

However, the above absolutely does not imply the research is of no considerable interest for other researchers or has no meaningful value regarding the academic debate. On the contrary. In the first chapter of this thesis I introduced a complication that caught my attention and

became the starting point of the research. I saw a potential dissonance between the traditional ideas of what it means to be a man in Arabic / African countries and the possibilities for refugee men to act on those traditional ideas because of the living conditions they encounter during and after their flight and in the country of asylum. One can think of beliefs about the responsibilities and role of a man in relation to his wife and family. The complication of men unable to live up to dominant masculinities was the subject matter I was interested in. I wanted to investigate this complexity, the reactions to it of the ones involved and compare the empirical findings to previous studies. In order to make the complication researchable, I applied the complication to a specific case. I chose to focus on male Syrian refugees, who fled from Syria and arrived in the Netherlands between 2010 and 2017. Although the specific case cannot be generalized, the research contains valuable information for the academic debate because of its complication, which is paid attention to by other scientists. Research about this complexity is done by Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis (2006) ; Hollander (2014) ; Mungai & Pease (2009) ; Poynting, Talar & Noble (2009) ; Jansen (2008) ; Kabachnik (2012) ; Connell (2005) ; Connell (2015) ; Dolan (2003) and Jaji (2009). The research is relevant because it is a 'tree' adding valuable knowledge to this academic 'topic forest'. Different from other studies is that I focused on Arabic refugees in a Western context, where previous studies mostly were performed within African or South American societies. Innovative is that I distinguished three transformations of masculine identities which can be seen as coping mechanisms of the inability to live up to dominant masculinities. I developed these categories through a dialogue between evidence and already existing ideas. By taking into account as well my own empirical findings as theoretical studies, I made a distinction between the categories *Overcompensation, Escapism* and *Adaptation*. This has not been done before in such a systematic way. As I will explain below, the categories will be of use in further research about men who's circumstances disable them to meet masculine standards. Furthermore the research is to my knowledge the first one paying attention to how distressing circumstances may in some cases help men to conform to masculine norms instead of damage them to do so, and thus may cause feelings of preservation or even strengthening of masculine identities rather than feelings of impotency.

Besides the addition of these inventive ideas and findings to the academic debate (topic forest), the research is valuable for another reason. As explained in paragraph 1.3. men's gendered identities in conflict and development studies have remained largely absent from academic literature and (non)governmental reports and policies. The studies mentioned above are an exception to this rule. This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate how (refugee) men also encounter problems related to their gender and sexuality and why men and boys deserve more attention than only emphasising the role they can play in increasing women's rights and gender equality.

10.3. Recommendations for Further Research

Taking into account all of the above, my first recommendation for further research is there should be paid more attention to the gendered identity of men and boys in conflict- and

development studies. Men face their own series of problems and difficulties which have to be taken in consideration as well in the academic and public debate.

With regard to follow-up research that will focus on the specific subject (complication) of this thesis, I recommend to take the three categories of transformed masculine identities into account that are distinguished here. The three coping mechanisms should be seen as an exploration of what kind of data researchers possibly will come across during their own field work. I challenge future researchers to approach these coping mechanisms in a critical way and add to them, rather than interpret them as exclusive or restrictive categories.

A last recommendation for further research is that it would be interesting to investigate the differences in experiences of male refugees and female refugees in the country of asylum. Although it was not the purpose of the research, empirical findings showed that in comparison to men's feelings of weakness and disempowerment, women often felt more secure and empowered in the Netherlands because of supporting laws and institutional rules. The same applies to the differences in experiences of relatively old Syrian men (above twenty-five) and relatively young Syrian men (under twenty-five). Empirical findings demonstrated that relatively old men in general were more pessimistic about their current situation and future possibilities. Moreover it turned out men under twenty-five were more able to adapt to the new circumstances. Further research about the differences in how men and women and older and younger refugees experience their new life and possibilities in the country of asylum may explain and confirm the findings of this research or refute them.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pragmatic definitions of theoretical concepts

Concept	Pragmatic Definition
Gender	*Gender is what society and culture teaches us about how we should behave based on our sex. (UNHCR, 2016)*
Institutionalized	*Something made part of a particular society, system, or organization* (Cambridge dictionary)
Masculinity	*A social construct expressing explicit and implicit expectations of what men are like, how men should act and represent themselves to others and what their respective positions in society are. It includes a cluster of institutionalized values, norms and behavioural patterns by which men are judged and assess themselves.*
Norms	*Standards or patterns of social behaviour that are accepted in or expected of a group.* (Oxford dictionary)
Sex	*the physical and biological difference between males and females.* (UNHCR)
Social Construct	*a social phenomenon or convention originating within and cultivated by society or a particular social group, as opposed to existing inherently or naturally* (Oxford dictionary)
Values	*The beliefs people have, especially about what is right and wrong and what is most important in life, that control their behaviour.* (Cambridge dictionary)

Table 1: pragmatic definitions of theoretical concepts

Appendix 2: Basic information of participants

Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Place of Origin
Ammar	Male	26-30	Married	Damascus
Ahmad	Male	26-30	Single	Idleb
Burhan	Male	21-25	Single	Aleppo
Kinan	Male	21-25	Single	Qalamoun
Marwan	Male	31-35	Single	Place of Origin Unknown
Mohammed	Male	31-35	Single	Countryside close to Aleppo
Shakour	Male	36-40	Divorced	Countryside close to Damascus
Rifat	Male	41-45	Married	Countryside close to Homs
Sayid	Male	21-25	Single	Homs
Shayma	Female	31-35	Married	Damascus
Sara	Female	31-35	Single	As-Sywayda
Tarek	Male	26-30	Married	Countryside close to Hama
Zain	Male	26-30	Single	Hama

Table 2: basic information of participants

Appendix 3: Topic guide

Topic	Sub-topic
Introduction of the research	- subject of research - purpose of the interview - topics to be discussed - agreements on the use of information
Introduction of the respondent	- name and age - place of origin in Syria - date of arrival in the Netherlands
Living situation (pre-flight and currently)	Regarding: - family - marital status - household - social network (friends, neighbours) - work and economic status (responsibilities) - study - activities (voluntary work, participation in associations, religious activities)
Personal values and beliefs	- personal dreams for the future - personal ambitions for the future - description of important life-events - level of satisfaction in one's life - description of what makes a man/woman a good person
Values and beliefs regarding masculinity (at a societal level and personal level)	description of societal/general expectations of men in Syria: - traditions - behaviour - norms - representation to others - education - personal position towards societal expectations - possibilities / struggles to live up to societal dominant masculine identities - response to (in)ability to live up to dominant masculine identities

Table 3: topic guide

Appendix 4: Final code categories

Code	Sub-code
Dominant gender roles in Syria	Social expectations of a Syrian man
	Social expectations of a Syrian woman
Future dreams and ambitions	Creating an own family
	Reunite with family
	Find a paid job
	Complete a study
Current situation	Concerning access to work and income
	Concerning the creation of one's own family
	Concerning the ability to provide
	Concerning control over women/children
Reaction of overcompensation	Increase of conservative behaviour
	Violent behaviour
	Increase of controlling behaviour
	Consequences of compensatory behaviour
Reaction of adaptation	Changes in role distribution
	Changing ideas about interaction between sexes
	Other adjustments to new situation
	Permanent or temporarily adjustments?
	No adaptation but continuation of modern ideas
	Experienced difficulties
Reaction of escapism	Clinging to past
	Drugs & alcohol
Untouched masculinities	Ability to provide safety
	Ability to provide material needs
Experiences of Syrian women in the Netherlands	Feelings of empowerment
	Protected and supported by the law
	Study & work
Other	Reputation of refugees
	Other quotes

Table 4: final code categories

Appendix 5: Front page photograph

A photo that is part of the 'Meet the White Helmet' project by Khaled Khatib.