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Amalia Sa'ar; Taghreed Yahia-Younis

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Masculinity in Crisis: The Case of Palestinians in Israel

AMALIA SA'AR and TAGHREED YAHIA-YOUNIS*

ABSTRACT *This paper argues that the Palestinians in Israel are undergoing a deep crisis of masculinity that is at once a reaction to, and a reflection of, their collective situation. Notwithstanding some important benefits that accrue to them as citizens, they are subjected to structural violence, which includes policing, racism, and discrimination. Their socio-economic conditions are poor, and their sense of identity and cultural vitality are on the defense. The paper describes several coexisting scripts of hegemonic masculinity and their inbuilt tensions and reads the seemingly inward-turned wave of violence as emanating from blocked paths to masculine performance.*

Despite the abundant literature on Palestinian women, the discussion of Palestinians as a national collective tends to be blind to the double role of gender, and particularly of masculinity, as a model of and model for the production of cultural meaning. Masculinity therefore is an apt site for a critical reading of the situation of Israeli Palestinians, whence to view the vulnerable side of what is usually considered the hub of power and control.

I. Introduction

Over the past decade, and increasingly since the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising (*intifada*) in October 2000, the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel seem anxious about growing violence inside their localities.¹ Violence erupts over boundaries of plots of land, due to shared ownership, or over municipal politics. But increasingly it just breaks out during quarrels between youngsters, sometimes even children, which then create a factional dynamic that quickly draws entire extended families or even clans into circles of ongoing attacks and counter attacks. In this paper we document a cumulative sense of moral predicament that is created by numerous stories of aggression in the local press. We examine what seems to be a discourse on crisis and interpret it, paying close attention to language and symbolism, as a discourse on *masculinity* in crisis. Although we could find some

*Amalia Sa'ar is a cultural anthropologist at the University of Haifa. E-mail: saaram@soc.haifa.ac.il; Taghreed Yahia-Younis is a Political Sociologist. She is a post-doctorate fellow at the University of Haifa. E-mail: taghreed@013net.net

¹ A note on terminology: as critical scholars writing on issues pertaining to identity, we acknowledge the impossibility of a neutral term for this national group, whose location is fraught with contradictions. In order not to reify any specific title and to draw attention to the shifting and contextual character of identity, we have chosen to alternate between several local and external titles (Palestinian-Arabs, Israeli-Palestinians, the Arabs Inside, the Arabs of '48, and Arabs).

statistical support to the local impression of increasing violence,² we do not attempt to engage in 'objective' assessments of whether violence in the Palestinian-Arab communities in Israel has actually been on the rise. Internal aggressions are quite common among communities all over the world that suffer poverty, marginalization, and exposure to state and racial violence. The members of such communities are frequently convinced that the scope of the violence is *objectively* enormous – certainly greater than in the past or in comparison with other places, although they cannot know this 'for a fact'. As Jean and John Comaroff show for the case of South Africa, the application of statistical measurements to crime rates does not necessarily produce neutral evaluations, since the very procedures of counting and defining facts tend to be embedded in the discourse that imagines the phenomenon to be grave.³ Our focus, instead, is on the discursive construction of crisis and relapse.

In the most basic sense the discourse on violence that seems to be getting out of hand is a discourse on collective identity. Not surprisingly it is fraught with gender undertones, which only rarely are articulated explicitly. For one thing, the fact that the perpetrators tend almost invariably to be males is never remarked upon as such, yet the discourse is rich in symbols of masculinity and occasionally even includes explicit discussions of proper manhood. Emphatically, the discourse is about collective morality, not men per se. By analyzing it in terms of masculinity we use an *etic*⁴ term in order to bring to the surface an unmarked component that we consider to be one of the organizing schemes of collective identity. We therefore hope to contribute to ongoing scholarly efforts to unearth the underlying gender aspect of the political economy of Israeli Palestinians.

A Constructionist Approach to Masculinity

Our approach to masculinity is guided by the constructionist theory of gender. Treating masculinity as a social construction has several implications, which are by now well-established in feminist literature. We review them here stenographically, borrowing from Robert Connell's presentation merely to position our analysis.⁵ In any given cultural context masculinity is never singular. Instead, various models of masculinity coexist and inform one another.⁶ These models are hierarchical and compete for hegemony. Yet despite their self-imagined differences, in the Israeli–Palestinian context, as in many other places,

² A quantitative study conducted in fall 2005 by the Center for the Study of Crime, Law and Society at the University of Haifa found that the Arab citizens of Israel are concerned about violent crimes in their residential communities, including car accidents, drug-related offenses, and the use of arms, at much higher rates than Jewish citizens. The majority of the violent cases, this survey revealed, occurred among neighbors, family members, or residents of the same community (Personal communication from Dr. Badi Hassissi who conducted this survey, 4.1.2006). For more on violence inside Arab communities, see www.arabs48.com

³ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff. 2006. 'Criminal ac/counting: Quantifacts and the production of the unreal', Talk presented at the University of Haifa, May 2006.

⁴ The terms '*etic*' and '*emic*' are widely employed in a variety of social science disciplines to denote a distinction between an outsider and insider perspective on knowledge, respectively. They were originally coined by Kenneth Lee Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of Structure of Human Behavior* (The Hague: Mouton Rawl, 1967).

⁵ Robert W. Connell 'Arms and the Man', in Ingeborg Breines, Robert Connell and Ingrid Eid (eds.) *Male Roles, Masculinities and Violence: A Culture of Peace Perspective* (UNESCO, 2000).

⁶ See also Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (eds.), *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London: Routledge, 1994); Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson (eds.) *Constructing Masculinity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

they share a formidable interest in maintaining patriarchal and heterosexist principles.⁷ Thirdly, alongside the competition between various options masculinities are also divided, in the sense that masculine identities embody tensions between contradictory desires or practices. A fourth important aspect of masculinities is that they are collective. Masculinities are sustained and enacted by individuals, but also by groups, institutions, and cultural forms such as the mass media. Fifth, there is no necessary or automatic link between masculinities and men. Notwithstanding their strong exclusionary nature,⁸ masculine identities, images and ideologies may be enacted by men *and* women, although at the level of individual experience they are likely to affect men more acutely. Next, like gender more generally, masculinity is embodied, which opens a space for performativity. People do not 'have' gender. Rather, masculinities and femininities are things that people 'do'.⁹ In this respect, Esmail Nashif argues that Palestinian men tend to *overdo* their gender, and he marks 'overmanning' as a ritualistic response to the crisis of male productivity in the Arab world.¹⁰ Another important corollary of the performative aspect is that in practical reality, any heuristic models of masculinity are translated into nuanced and located scripts of action. The notion of scripts here is borrowed from the work of Carol Stack and Linda Burton on the ways in which kinships are realized 'on the ground'.¹¹ Masculine scripts, as opposed to models, by their very nature create ongoing tangles of subjugation and subject-making. All too often such scripts involve different forms of aggression/victimization. As Connell notes,¹² the source of violence is probably the ongoing active construction of masculinity rather than the end state. Last but not least, masculinity is created in specific historical circumstances. Along with the emphasis on performativity and scripts, this last point highlights the possibility of change, which is embedded in the very tensions and contradictions of masculinity.

Methodology

This paper is the product of an ongoing exchange between two ethnographers of Palestinian society inside the Green Line, one of whom (Taghreed Yahya Younis) is also a member of this society, while the other (Amalia Sa'ar) is a member of the dominant Jewish-Israeli society.¹³

Through our ongoing research, which actually focuses primarily on Palestinian women, we have observed a certain process that is happening to masculinity. To test what we thought was going on, we set out on a systematic reading of the most widely selling Arab newspapers over a set period of time. During September–October 2005 we sampled eight weekend editions of three newspapers: *Al-Sinnārah*

⁷ Edna Lomsky-Feder and Tamar Rapoport, 'Juggling Models of Masculinity: Russian-Jewish Immigrants in the Israeli Army', *Sociological Inquiry* 73(1) (2003), 114–137.

⁸ See Michael Taussig, 'Schopenhauer's beard' in Berger, Wallis and Watson (eds.), *Constructing Masculinity* (1995), pp. 107–114 on the role of secret knowledge in masculinities.

⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁰ Invited talk, MADA center, Haifa, November 2005.

¹¹ Carol B. Stack and Linda M. Burton, 'Kinscripts', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 24(2) (1993), pp. 157–170.

¹² Connell, 'Arms and the Man'.

¹³ Taghreed Yahya-Younis has been carrying out participant observation in her own native village at the center of the country. Amalia Sa'ar did anthropological fieldwork in two urban Palestinian communities inside Israel, in 1992–93 and in 1997–99.

and *Kull-al-'Arab*, which are independent, and *Fasl-al-Maqāl*, which belongs to the secular-nationalistic Tajammu' party.

To gain some sense of time-depth, and to make sure that what we found was not bound to the particular late summer season, we then sampled four winter weekend editions of the earliest year for which each of these newspapers could supply us with copies. The early issues all date back to the 1990s, which is when the Arabic printed press in Israel started flourishing. Until the mid-1980s locally printed Arabic newspapers were very limited. One prominent exception is *Al-Ittihād*, a daily that belongs to the Israeli Communist Party (and the subsequent DFPP coalition that came to include it). A strictly party-line newspaper, *Al-Ittihād* has a somewhat different character from the independent papers, and even from *Fasl-al-Maqāl*, which was first issued when the landscape of Arabic newspapers had changed and became more diverse, less politicized, and more 'yellow'. We did not sample *Al-Ittihād* because we looked for items with a community focus and even a gossipy character. We likewise did not sample the two Islamic-party newspapers *Al-Mithāq* and *Sawt-al-Haq wa al-Huriyah*, whose distribution is relatively smaller.

When scanning the newspapers, we left out the sections on national and international politics, sports, and economics, where masculinity is omnipresent to the point that it is largely transparent. Instead, we focused on the sections on family and community affairs, as well as on the culture section, and looked for direct and indirect comments on masculinity and on crisis. Note that at the stage of data collection we already had quite a clear idea, because of our ongoing reading of the local press, that there is a discourse on crisis, and that this discourse is imbued with images and underlying motifs of masculinity. To reiterate, we came to this idea through our ongoing involvement with Palestinian society. Our reading, accordingly, was target oriented, rather than completely open-ended. We explicitly looked for direct and indirect expressions of masculinity. In the analysis, we used the notion of *interpretive package*¹⁴ to identify an underlying frame and the set of condensing symbols used to invoke it.

The paper unfolds as follows. After a brief background section on the Palestinian citizens of Israel, we use ethnographic literature as well as our own research to sketch scripts of Palestinian masculinities and point out some of the tensions that they produce. We then review the local discourse on crisis, and highlight the masculine elements that inform it throughout. This section is based almost exclusively on our sampling of newspapers articles. Through the material presented in these two sections we argue that the state of masculinity among the Palestinians in Israel poignantly embodies their collective predicament. In masculine terms, the intense violence that seems to be hitting the Arab communities inside Israel is a response to blocked options. On the one hand, militaristic-heroic masculinity, which surrounds them through the practices of Palestinians in the PA and of Israeli Jews, is a path not available to them. On the other hand non-violent forms of productive patriarchal masculinity, notably the possibilities to accrue political and economic power, are also largely limited, because of class and national discrimination against them.

¹⁴ William A. Gamson, and Hanna Herzog, 'Living with Contradictions: The Taken-for-Granted in Israeli Political Discourse', *Political Psychology* 20(2) (1999), pp. 247–266.

Background on Palestinians in Israel

The Palestinian citizens of Israel number roughly 1.3 million people, or 20% of the citizens of the state, with a majority of Muslims (82%) and two smaller groups of Christians and Druzes (9% each).¹⁵ Although their Israeli citizenship grants them certain rights and opportunities, notably through education, welfare, and the right to vote and appeal to the courts, they are nevertheless structurally discriminated against.¹⁶ Palestinian Israelis are over-represented in poverty and are concentrated in the lowest socio-economic echelons,¹⁷ with soaring rates of unemployment among men over 45 years of age.¹⁸ Their residential areas suffer from stalled urbanization,¹⁹ which entails among other things, under-developed infrastructure, unemployment, and housing shortages. Strikingly, patriarchal clans have largely retained their powerful position in municipal politics²⁰ despite far-reaching changes, such as nuclearization of households, a changing power-balance between genders and generations within families, a rise in women's education and earning power, relative entitlement to individual civil protections, and an overall shift to cash economy.

As to gender relations, the situation of Israeli-Palestinian women is complex and even contradictory. They navigate between multiple patriarchies, notably the family, the state, their ethnic or religious communities, work places and different community institutions. This potentially intensifies their oppression.²¹ However, the different power regimes often compete and conflict with each other, which drives wedges and produces tensions in the broader gender order, in turn creating constant, if fleeting opportunities for women to expand the scope of their entitlement.²² Over the past half century or so, Arab women in Israel have registered dramatic achievements. Their level of schooling has risen spectacularly, and the average number of children per woman has dropped significantly. Their freedom of movement has increased and their presence in the public sphere has become ever more salient. At the same time, their participation in paid employment remains grossly low, compared with both Jewish-Israeli women and women in neighboring Arab countries, and their participation in formal politics is negligible.²³

¹⁵ Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002.

¹⁶ As'ad Ghanem, 'State and Minority in Israel: The Case of Ethnic State and the Predicament of its Minority', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21 (1998), pp. 428–448; Sammy Smooha 'The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State', *Nations and Nationalism* 8(4) (2002), pp. 475–503; Gershon Shafir, and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Fifty-four percent of Palestinian children in Israel are poor (www.arabs48.com); see also Alisa Lewin, Haya Stier and Dafna Caspi-Dror, 'The Place of Opportunity: Community and Individual Determinants of Poverty among Jews and Arabs in Israel', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 24 (2006), pp. 177–191.

¹⁸ Ahmad Sa'di and Noah Lewin-Epstein, 'Minority Labour Force Participation in the Post-Fordist era: The Case of the Arabs in Israel?', *Work, Employment and Society* 15(4) (2001), pp. 781–802.

¹⁹ Rasem Khamaisi, 'Urbanization and Urbanism in the Arab Settlements in Israel', *Ofakim Be-Geographia*, 64–65 (2005), pp. 293–310 (in Hebrew).

²⁰ Majid Al-Haj, 'Social research on family lifestyles among Arabs in Israel', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 20 (1989), pp. 175–195; Majid Al-Haj and Henry Rosenfeld *Arab Local Government in Israel* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990); Taghreed Yahia-Younis and Hanna Herzog, 'Gender and kinship-based discourse during primary elections held by hamael to select candidates for local authorities in Palestinian-Arab localities', *State and Society* 5(1) (2005), pp. 1077–1104 (in Hebrew).

²¹ See also Suad Joseph, and Susan Slymowics (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle East* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

²² Amalia Sa'ar, 'Contradictory location: assessing the position of Palestinian women citizens of Israel', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 3(3) (2007), pp. 45–74.

²³ Taghreed Yahia-Younis and Hanna Herzog, 'Gender and kinship-based discourse'.

Since this paper focuses on a crisis of masculinity and the various forms of violence that this crisis entails, it is pertinent to note that women are frequently exposed to severe measures of domestic and sexual oppression.²⁴ By and large the state acts as a passive or active preserver of patriarchal control and male domestic violence.²⁵ However, over the years women's organizations have challenged the state to provide protection for women threatened with death and suffering domestic abuse, as well as to promote women's rights generally, mostly through the court system and legislation.

Lastly, the Israeli-Palestinian social field is informed by several meta-narratives, including modernity, national identity, cultural authenticity, Islamic morality, and liberal entitlement. All these are distinctly modern, and despite the various epistemological contradictions among them, in their institutional forms they all reinforce male domination. These narratives yield several models of masculinity, all of which claim hegemony, and which are then translated into scripts of conduct.

II. Scripts of Palestinian Masculinities

Several authors to date have presented grounded analyses of Palestinian masculinities. Julie Peteet and Esmail Nashif,²⁶ writing a decade apart, present ethnographic material on Palestinians living under occupation who are exposed to extreme measures of physical and mental oppression. Focusing on men who had been imprisoned, beaten and tortured, they both describe practices and rituals that are intensely centered on male bodies. In both their analyses, masculinity is gained through endurance of severe physical and mental pain. Individual bodies comprise arenas of personal agency; subjects evince great courage and creativity, but at the same time reenact – hence merge into – the collective national body. The most significant finding in both studies is that practices of masculinity serve to transform humiliation into empowerment. Peteet interprets the public relating of confrontations with Israeli soldiers as rites of resistance, which transform not only the individuals who tell them, but also the larger social structure. Nashif shows how prisoners use their bodies as means of communication and for building communal relations within and without the prison. In these depictions, the condition of violent occupation is critical to the construction of masculinities that enshrine militaristic notions of active and bloody combat.

Establishing a new model of anti-colonial masculinity, Joseph Massad observes,²⁷ is a much more complicated endeavor than its colonial counterpart.

²⁴ Nabila Espanioli, 'Violence against women: a Palestinian woman's Perspective; Personal is political', *Women's Studies International Forum* 20 (1997), pp. 587–592; Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 'Law, Politics, and Violence against Women: A Case Study of Palestinians in Israel', *Law & Society* 21(2) (1999), pp. 189–221; Ilza Glazer and Wahiba Abu-Ras, 'On Aggression, Human Rights, and Hegemonic Discourse: The Case of a Murder for Family Honor in Israel', *Sex Roles* 30 (1994), pp. 269–282; Muhammad M. Haj-Yahia, 'Beliefs about Wife Beating among Arab Men from Israel: The Influence of Their Patriarchal Ideology', *Journal of Family Violence* 18(4, August) (2003), pp. 193–206.

²⁵ Manar Hasan, 'The Politics of Honor: Patriarchy, the State, and the Murder of Women in the Name of Family Honor', *The Journal of Israeli History* 21 (2002), pp. 1–37.

²⁶ Julie M. Peteet, 'Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence', *American Ethnologist* 21 (1994), pp. 31–49; Esmail Nashif, 'Attempts at Liberation: Body Materialization and Community Building among Palestinian Political Captives', *Arab Studies Journal* XII(2)/XIII(1) (2004/2005), pp. 46–79.

²⁷ Joseph Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism', *Middle East Journal* 49(3) (1995), p. 477.

Differently from Peteet and Nashif, Massad's project is not to portray Palestinian masculinities as such but to explore the hegemonic position of masculinity in the generic Palestinian national agent. Using political speeches and legal and political documents, rather than ethnographic observations, the agent that Massad depicts is still quite similar to what his colleagues recorded. Ideally, and notwithstanding important attempts to construct a gender-inclusive category, this agent is healthy, young, and male, and is measured by his willingness and ability to fight and sacrifice. However, the glorious fighter is not the only image active on the scene. Responding to the fact that many Palestinian men have not been involved in military clashes, particularly if they live in exile or have become work-migrants, the national agent is also a provider and a nurturer. 'He *pays* for his brother's and sister's education... *takes care* of his parents... *raises* his children... and *dreams* of returning to Palestine'.²⁸ In other words, 'he' is also a bourgeoisie in the making.

In another publication, still on Palestinians living under occupation (in the Palestinian Authority), Penny Johnson and Eileen Kuttab note that Peteet's interpretation that 'the beatings (and detentions) are framed as rites of passage... with critical consequences for political consciousness and agency' does not seem to apply in the second *intifada*.²⁹ The much greater presence of death and injury during the latest eruption of fire, they write, has produced an emphasis on martyrdom. Against the guerilla-type images of courageous protestors, who nevertheless stay alive (!), which were popular in the first *intifada*, the second uprising is much more brutal, and accordingly masculinities endorse ever higher levels of violence. The leadership at once uses and is hostage to the power of insurgent young men, but without changing the relations between them. Consequently, Johnson and Kuttab argue,

[t]he crisis in masculinity is not resolved through popular resistance, and indeed increased militarism is perhaps the only 'solution' that is offered. As the *intifada* continues... the crisis becomes more militarized and even more restricted in its participation, except as recipients of increased Israeli violence... Power is fragmented and disassociated with the community...³⁰

In striking contrast to the bleak context in which masculinities are constructed under occupation, Daniel Monterescu frames his ethnographic account of Palestinian masculinities *inside* Israel as part of an attempt to understand the world of leisure. Poverty and unemployment notwithstanding, life in Jaffa, where he did his research, emerges as the extreme antithesis to the ordeals of the former group. According to Monterescu, the dominant cultural categories in the lives of Arab men in Jaffa are constituted within a framework of strangeness, in 'a mixture of dense daily coexistence interwoven with deep cultural distance'.³¹ Too familiar with the Jews/occupiers yet too disempowered to attempt violent resistance against them, the men that Monterescu describes seem to spend their days toying with stereotypical images (woman, homo, loser, Westerner/Jew), against which they attempt to construct themselves as proper men. Arab men in Jaffa are helpless

²⁸ Ibid., 478 emphases original.

²⁹ Penny Johnson and Eileen Kuttab, 'Where Have all the Women (and Men) Gone?', *Feminist Review* 69 (2001) p. 35.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 35–6.

³¹ Daniel Monterescu, 'A city of Strangers': The Socio-Cultural Construction of Manhood in Jaffa', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 1(1) (2001), p. 163.

because the old patriarchal order has lost its power yet in the new, ethnic state-patriarchy their gendered advantages are useless. Compared with the descriptions of masculinities among Palestinians in the PA, the complete absence of militaristic components is remarkable. Instead, Monterescu tells us, strategies of masculinity in Jaffa are patterned after two mutually exclusive ideological poles: Islamic and secular. The first dreams of returning to the old patriarchal norms while the second offers the concept of relative gender equality.

In another ethnographic exploration of masculinity among Palestinian Arabs inside Israel, Rhoda Kanaaneh looks at the quite exceptional category of men who volunteer for the Israeli security forces, which include the police, the military, and border patrol. These men, who number several thousands, are usually seen as traitors in the Palestinian community, especially if they serve in the military. The discourse on their denigration, which is heavily gendered, reveals much about local understandings of masculinity. Besides being cursed as sons of prostitutes, these volunteers 'are attributed a superficial, individualistic, immature, pubescent masculinity... [and seen] as needing the military to bolster their weak masculinities'.³² Because the Israeli military apparatus is geared, first and foremost, *against* Arabs, the Palestinian citizens are by definition excluded from its masculine culture. They cannot cash in on the invaluable symbolic capital that accrues to army veterans – tangible material benefits, important connections, and above all, entry into the inner circle of Israeli citizenship – because they are not invited to participate in the first place. They do not receive a draft order. However, even those who do serve, whether because they volunteer or if they happen to be Druze (the only ones who do get drafted), they still remain marginalized. To counter their stigmatization, Arab soldiers emphasize particular components of masculinity, the economic benefits that will allow them to fulfill the role of provider. 'The response of many of the criticized men is that theirs is a pragmatic masculinity, not formed by outdated notions of national taboos but, rather, aimed at advancing their families or themselves as current or future family providers'.³³

Of course, neither the café-goers in Jaffa nor the men who join the Israeli security forces are 'representative' of what Massad refers to as the Palestinian national agent.³⁴ Rather, they are particular cases that signify stopping points on a continuum of options and ideals. Intriguingly, both constitute radical opposites to the hyper-militaristic scripts portrayed for Palestinians in the PA. Not that the components of the latter, particularly bodily strength, fighting fitness and sexual prowess, are absent from Arabs in Israel. Their presence is evident, for example, in the constructions of masculine sexuality among homosexuals in Jerusalem, where racialized attributes such as 'black' (i.e., Arab origin), muscular, working-class, and young are considered extremely erotic and sensual.³⁵ The gap between the portraits drawn by Monterescu and Kanaaneh and those presented earlier possibly indicates the absence of an institutionalized cultural path to militaristic masculinities among the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens. In our interpretation, the appearance of growing internal violence is a response to this void.

³² Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh 'Boys or Men? Duped or 'Made'? Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military' *American Ethnologist*, 32 (2005, 2), p. 263.

³³ *Ibid.*, 270.

³⁴ Joseph Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine'.

³⁵ Jehuda Sofer, 'Testimonies from the Holy Land: Israeli and Palestinian Men Talk about Their Sexual Encounters', in Arno Schmitt and Jehuda Sofer (eds.), *Sexuality and Eroticism among Males in Moslem Societies* (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 1992), pp. 105–112.

To be sure, there are other scripts of hegemonic masculinity too. Devout Islamic masculinity is probably the one most rapidly growing in popularity. This masculinity draws on classical sources, namely verses from the Qur'an and Hadith, which are adapted by contemporary religious leaders who highlight certain verses or stories and give them priority over others. Notwithstanding its own stake in authenticity, Islamic masculinity, like any masculinity, is neither static nor monolithic. The ongoing preoccupation with the desired balance between authentic culture, modernity, and claims for women's advancement and gender equality has yielded new forms of patriarchal masculinity among the Islamists also.

Secular education is another important resource for successful masculine performance. Educational credentials are not necessarily seen as contradictory to virtuous Islamic masculinity, and may well be construed as complementing it. However, among a whole generation of secular, progressive intellectuals they often do represent a counter-model to the former. A column titled 'man of the year', which appeared in several of the newspapers we sampled for this research, featured some pertinent examples. Most of the men who were celebrated as success stories were highly educated professionals, whose achievements were noted as a source of communal pride. For Israeli Palestinians, as for other minorities, education and success as white-collar professionals bear great symbolic value, because they are regarded as keys to social mobility. For some, although not for all, they also entail endorsement of ideas of gender equality.

In a piece emphasizing individual achievement and contribution to the community, an inspector of special education was chosen 'man of the year' for his important contribution to the Arab educational system.³⁶ Note that this type of successful masculinity is emphatically anti-heroic and in fact controversial. Educational inspectors are tainted because of the stamp of approval that they get from the Israeli security apparatus. Their success, therefore, is somewhat reminiscent of the narratives of those who volunteer to serve in the military or the police. They are responsible, hard working, pragmatic, and most probably socially and politically conservative. They may become quite influential, but they can hardly embody national pride. Success in Israeli academia, which is considered relatively independent, is much rarer and much more lucrative. In 1996, on his promotion to the rank of professor, sociologist Majid Al-Haj was quoted as saying, 'I regard this as an achievement of my people and my society, especially [in light of the fact] that my society has given me more than I ever gave it. Any academic achievement of an Arab is an achievement for his people'.³⁷ A decade later Al-Haj was appointed Dean of Research and deputy president at the University of Haifa. This appointment to one of the highest offices ever held by an Arab in a national Israeli institution received wide press coverage. One commentator described Al-Haj as 'this self-made man from the East [who] has managed to climb up the academic ladder right to the very top and thereby raised our heads up high'.³⁸

A third path to successful masculinity, admittedly reserved for the young and healthy, but very glorious, is that of football players. Football seems to be attractive for two major reasons. It offers some substitute for the absent option of militaristic muscle masculinity, which both Palestinians in the PA and Israeli Jews

³⁶ *Kul al-'Arab*, 5.1.1990.

³⁷ *Fasl al-Maqāl*, 16.12.1996.

³⁸ *Al-Sinnārah*, 21.10.2005.

exhibit so vigorously, yet which Palestinians inside Israel are barred from realizing. It also offers potential entrance to a high-earning career in a lucrative branch of mainstream Israeli sport. Thus, one 'man of the year' was Arab footballer 'Abas Suan, who was chosen to play in the Israeli national team and won individual fame when he scored some critical goals.³⁹ Notwithstanding the ecstatic joy and pride that enveloped Suan and other Arab players, and which reached another peak when the Arab team Abna' il-Sakhneen won the State Cup in 2004, the participation of Arabs in Israeli football continues to invoke blatant expressions of racism, which are hurled even at the most celebrated players.

III. Masculinity in Crisis? Reading Gender Undertones in the Discourse on Crisis

As we explained in the introduction, in our reading of the printed press and our listening to people's daily talk, Israeli Palestinian Arabs are engaged in a discourse on crisis. In particular, people are preoccupied with what seem to be unprecedented levels of violence. In this section we review the central themes that recurred in the newspaper sample, concentrating on the various forms of violence. All the clusters of narratives that convey crisis allude directly or indirectly to gender morality, and more specifically to masculinity. We therefore suggest that they be read as a commentary on masculinity.

Outlining the Major Themes of the Discourse on Crisis

The major narrative packages are as follows. One is a narrative on loss of morals/transgression of cultural boundaries. This cluster, which positions the West and 'Western culture' as the primary source of pollution, includes topics such as the unduly sensual appearance of pop singers. Somewhat countering the first cluster, a second narrative package adopts a rational-secular approach to social problems. This package includes the appeal to experts, such as psychologists or educators, who prescribe methods of anger management or dialogical child upbringing. A third cluster encompasses the issue of violence against women. Here opinions are commonly pitted against one another that condemn such violence as barbarian and those that support it on grounds of cultural propriety. Significantly in this cluster, the concept of domestic abuse has expanded to include spousal abuse alongside 'honor' killings, as well as aggression among males of different generations. Communal violence is yet another narrative package. It includes a range of topics, from road rage that leads to death and injuries, through ethnic/religious riots and clashes, to criminal violence and severe vandalism. Fifth, juvenile violence emerges as yet another growing source of preoccupation. This cluster includes not only what has normatively been termed juvenile delinquency, but also school children carrying knives and using abusive language, and what appears to be a growing license to offend teachers. Because of space limitation, we will not elaborate on each of the five clusters. Instead, we dwell on domestic male violence and on communal violence. We will then integrate the other topics into a presentation of some of the prominent masculine

³⁹ *Al-Sinnārah*, 7.10.2005.

symbolism that informs the discourse, as well as into an extended case study presented in the discussion.

Domestic Male Violence

A central aspect of violence and masculinity is violence against women, which ranges from physical, mental, and sexual abuse to murder. The cultural option of taking women's lives has undergone some challenges and changes, yet all in all, women and girls in different sectors of the population remain at risk, in some places higher than in others. Although no official figures can be had from official state authorities, documentation from feminist organizations indicates that women and girls continue to be killed. Importantly, over the past fifteen years or so, Arab feminist organizations have made significant progress in challenging state authorities regarding their incompetence in defending women at risk, and in winning growing segments of Arab public opinion against the practice. Yet ironically, while 'honor' killings may have gone down *in some sectors*, the risk to women's lives has not diminished. In fact, it has magnified, since in addition to the cultural license to murder by blood relatives, husbands too, who in the past would have been at risk of retaliation from the same blood relatives, have now joined the circle of potential killers. The traditional killing of women to preserve the 'honor' of their kin group is now joined by killing in a so-called 'romantic' setting.

Still on the scene of gendered and sexual violence, public discourse is increasingly concerned with spousal abuse, which is portrayed in the press in graphic detail. Physical and sexual violence is particularly likely to get coverage, probably because of its sensational aspect and because it activates professional intervention more than mental or spiritual abuse does. Reported cases of husbands' aggression during the months we surveyed include the use of fists, knives, poison, or a rope (in one case). Sexual assault within marriages, previously impossible to spot because of the norm of men's unconditional entitlement to their wives' sexual services, is now increasingly reported. One newspaper article, for example, described a case of a man who raped his wife in front of their children.⁴⁰

Alongside the diversifying implications for women, domestic violence operates in other directions as well. Parental abuse, which until recently was also largely unmarked, because it was seen as a legitimate extension of parental authority, now receives headlines. The state law for Defense of the Underage and the Helpless is likewise gaining in popularity, although people still worry about its potential encroachment on parental authority. Newspapers report severe injuries of children at their fathers' hands, in some cases through the use of firearms. One article gave the story of a father who, during an argument with his son over the latter's alleged descent to crime, pulled a gun and started shooting in the house.⁴¹ The opposite case, of sons attacking their parents, is seemingly still quite rare, but violent nevertheless. One article reports a youngster who, following an argument with his father brought his friends, one of whom had a licensed gun. They fired into the house and set the father's two vehicles alight. Domestic violence of that kind, it should be noted, happens within nuclear families, but also among extended relatives.

⁴⁰ *Al-Sinnārah*, 7.10.2005.

⁴¹ *Al-Sinnārah*, 7.10.2005.

Communal/Religious-based Violence

Fights that erupt in the communities often assume an added religious tone. However, because religious factionalism is a highly sensitive issue (it is often regarded as an Israeli divide-and-rule ploy to weaken its Palestinian citizens), such tones are not always expressed explicitly. Religious motives tend to reverberate in criminal or other framings, and vice versa. Hence, religious-based vandalism may serve as a pretext to unleash violence of any of the kinds enumerated above. In one case a man entered his next-door neighbor's garden and shot five family members who were standing there, seriously injuring them. Although the shooter was Christian and his neighbors Muslim, the explanations given by the wounded family to the many who came to express their shock and dismay insistently avoided the option of religious motives. Instead, they said, it was a case of a minor neighbors' dispute, which took a tragic turn for no logical reason whatsoever. Besides dismissing the shooter as a low-life, the arguments persistently focused on the outrageous ease with which people get to own firearms.

Masculine Symbolism

Three objects that recur in the discourse on a violence got out of hand, and which are particularly laden with masculine symbolism, are arms, cars, and dogs.

Arms. Private ownership of arms by Palestinian citizens has visibly been on the rise. Men own personal pistols, rifles, and even missiles and bombs. Some of these arms are held legally, mostly through employment in the security forces or as civilian guards (an underpaid occupational branch that has grown exponentially with the latest wave of suicide bombings). Others are obtained illegally, through involvement in criminal activity, including the smuggling of arms and drugs across the borders. A growing number of news items report chance fights in which the participants are quick to draw arms. Quite often these fights end up in injury, or even death. Yet as some of the commentaries emphasize, such unfortunate developments are not necessarily premeditated. It is simply that people are unaware of the severe consequences of carrying and pulling guns. More often than not, such violent incidents entail similarly violent retaliation attempts.

Cars. Although driving and even car ownership has long been an activity open for women, it continues to be regarded as a male sphere. Women's attitude to driving is constructed as functional. Considering the distances between communities and the bad public transportation, women's driving is often seen as the safest and most efficient path to their participation in the public domain. Men's driving, on the other hand, is invested with value and gender identity. Among young adults, ostentatious driving with music blaring from the car radio is a common ritual of display. Speeding, especially in narrow alleyways, represents virtuoso control of the vehicle and of space. Older men too tend to invest a disproportionate part of their income in their cars. Lastly, the maintenance, fixing, buying and selling of cars, including of cars owned by women, are nearly exclusively male activities.

Driving-related violence has several aspects. The most common, which results in fatal accidents, is a tendency to drive too fast, irrespective of road conditions, and not obeying traffic laws. Another particularly tragic aspect is the high

incidence of small children run over by cars being driven in reverse inside villages. A third type of driving-related violence is road rage. Drivers may consider overtaking as an offense to their honor and attempt 'retaliation' by driving faster, running the other driver off the road, etc. Some traffic laws, such as yielding the right of way, are considered a particular affront to manliness. In fact, among young adult males unruly driving is a common masculine performance. Another corollary of road rage is the apparently expanding phenomenon of 'taking the fight outside the car'. Fiction writer Sayed Kashua relates the following exchange between an intellectual who lived in Jerusalem for many years and his brother, who is initiating him upon his return to the village,

You are driving in a narrow road, a car is coming toward you and there is no room for both of you, you immediately back up. Even if he only needs to back up one meter and you need to back up a hundred, *you* will be the one who backs up. Because it can end up in shootings, depending on who is sitting in the car. You are driving in the street and two cars are blocking the road because the drivers are talking to one another through the window? Wait silently. Don't dare honking! Wait until they finish their conversation. Even if it takes them an hour, you just wait silently and when they let you pass, smile and say thank you.' Ashraf is laughing as he recites to me the lexicon of survival.⁴²

Dogs. Last but not least, training attack dogs and walking them in public seems to be one of the latest male fashions. One newspaper article that was dedicated to this trend was among the few that explicitly named men and masculinity. The fascination with these dangerous dogs, according to the explanation given in this piece, lies in the sense of control and power that they provide for their owners.

We raise these dogs in order to satisfy machismo (*al-matshoism*) . . . People say that they want the dogs for defense purposes, but the real goal is different. The dogs make for a display of masculinity (*al-rujula*) [and youngsters raise them] to be in line with their friends from the neighborhood or from school. As one dog trainer said: 'We raise these dogs because they make us feel men and powerful. I can walk the street with this dog knowing that no one will challenge me, or the dog will attack him'.⁴³

Masculinity, Violence and Nationalism

Notably, the growing public discourse on the alarming rates of violence makes constant links between aggressions that emerge from, and are directed at the community, and what is portrayed as spirally growing national and global levels of aggression. American-British aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq has stirred acute resentment. But mostly, Israeli aggression against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and lately against Lebanese civilians has been a permanent source of pain and anger. The daily practices of watching these aggressions live on TV, and the mixture of strong antagonism and helplessness that they arouse, surely affect the local atmosphere of license to violence.

But probably more than the violence 'out there', which is present through the media, a necessary aspect of the violence within the Arab communities is the much more direct and personal context of civil discrimination and national exclusion. Indeed, the national defeat of the Palestinians, and the personal and communal

⁴² Sayed Kashua, *Let it be Morning* (Tel Aviv: Keter 2004), p. 31 (in Hebrew).

⁴³ *Al-Sinnārah*, 2.9.2005.

losses that it entailed, has been a constitutive element in the collective consciousness of the Palestinians, within and outside Israel. However, compared with the grand narrative of *al-nakba* (the tragic defeat of 1948) the current discourse on crisis bears a distinctly ordinary character. It likewise digresses from the highly political tones that have characterized local debates and increasingly shifts attention from external oppression to internal behaviors and world views.

The highly gendered character of the Palestinian national discourse has been widely documented.⁴⁴ Our analysis, therefore, draws on a rich interpretive legacy. Yet whereas for the most part the discussion has focused on dramatic articulations of femininity and masculinity, our focus is on mundane and often anti-heroic versions of the same phenomenon. In the larger discourse on Palestinian destiny and identity, the Arabs of 1948 occupy a precarious position. For better or for worst, they do not live under occupation, even though as an indigenous minority they are not granted full citizenship, nor do they live in exile from their homeland. They likewise have not been able to participate, culturally and economically, in the broader Arab-Middle Eastern region, and their reunion with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza has seen interruptions and has been riddled with significant and multiple gaps. Within this context their discourse on crisis, and the images of masculinity that embody this discourse, tend to assume a somewhat ordinary character, compared with the dramatic representations that feature in parallel Palestinian expressions.

In the hyper-nationalistic Israeli-Palestinian scene, violence is a central mode of behavior, yet within this complex, the Arabs inside are left with no defined role. Despite their Israeli citizenship they are not drafted into its armed forces. At the same time, as official citizens of the state they cannot join the organized Palestinian resistance either. They are at once potential traitors to their national group and a potential fifth column within their state. Considering the restricted space allowed for their collective expression, Israeli-Palestinian Arabs do not have legitimate, institutionalized channels for militaristic-violent masculine performances. They can neither identify with Israeli national military heroes nor endorse openly Palestinian heroes, whose very glory is derived from their resistance to Zionism and later to Israel. This blocked path is important for the interpretation of the local concern about growing communal violence that seems to have encroached ever closer to home.

We conclude the description of the phenomenon with a narrative that ties together some of the main themes that have been raised thus far. In July 2005 a 60-year-old man from a large community in the Galilee was murdered in what was presented as a case of utter arbitrariness. According to the account in one of the newspapers, which dedicated a long article to the case, the man had berated a 19-year-old youngster from the same village for driving too fast in his street. Shortly after the incident, when the man was sitting on his porch, the driver returned, accompanied by his father (allegedly to hold a *sulha*, ritualistic peace making),⁴⁵ who drew his automatic weapon, shot at close range, and killed the older man in his own home. Having described the facts, the authors of the article comment, 'It is as if after he failed to kill

⁴⁴ Sheila H. Katz, 'Adam and Adama, 'Ird and Ard: En-gendering Political Conflict and Identity in Early Jewish and Palestinian Nationalisms', in Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), *Gendering the Middle East; Alternative Perspectives* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 85–105; Rosemary Sayigh, 'Palestinian Women and Politics in Lebanon', in Judith Tucker (ed.), *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 175–194; Joseph Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine'; Julie M. Peteet, 'Male Gender Rituals of Resistance'.

⁴⁵ This detail, which we learned from personal communication with the victim's relatives, was not included in the newspaper article.

by running someone over, he decided to do it by pulling a gun. As everyone knows all too well, such guns abound in the village. And they are illegal. Yet the police turn a blind eye for [they say], “At the end of the day, they kill one another”.⁴⁶ After describing the act and giving some biographical details about the slain man, the article cites excerpts from eulogies that were made on the man’s grave and from interviews with some of his acquaintances. The episode forms a dense narrative on masculinity in crisis.

The victim was a scientist who had lived in the US for many years, enjoying a highly successful career. He had married an American woman and had three children with her. After his marriage collapsed he decided to return to his land, where he married a young woman and had another son. Over the previous five years he was employed in his profession with an Israeli firm. The eulogies and personal testimonies abound with positive images of masculinity. ‘[He had a] wide and big heart, full of love, compassion, and warmth... He was modest... Always smiling... had a noble character... He was a faithful husband, always sacrificing and never complaining that he was tired. Always swift to respond when asked... never liked to boast about his credentials and his knowledge’. The manly traits that were recounted include acquired success, in the form of high educational credentials, ambition, hard work, and standing up to challenges. The allusion to the man’s rural background emphasizes his achievements (from *fellah* to a renowned scientist) and celebrates the modernistic ethos of individual upward mobility despite the odds. At the same time, individualism is balanced by a strong commitment to give back to society (his love, his compassion...). And ultimately, he ‘came back to his land’. Having left a divorced wife and three children behind is not an issue. Instead, his *fellah* background underscores his love of the soil and autochthonous roots. Lastly, he was a good spouse – always sacrificing and not complaining. Here the theme of a modern man recurs, yet the idea of the egalitarian husband is ambivalently presented as sacrifice, possibly of his traditional patriarchal prerogatives.

The portrait of noble masculinity is made all the more vivid through the denigration of the murderers (quoted from the same article):

Knifing in the back is not among the attributes of the noble and has nothing to do with masculinity... our response was a cultured response. We have followed our original morality and not allowed the blood to boil. We did not burn down houses; we did not even consider it. We did not seek revenge; we did not even consider it. We did not follow the tradition of blood revenge. We do not hold the one responsible for the deeds of another. Our avoiding revenge is not a sign of cowardice, but of strength. We refuse to sink to the animal level of the murderers and those who assisted them, and do not let our instincts rule us. God made man superior to the rest of beings in wisdom and brains. Any human being whose brain does not lead him cannot be counted among men.

And later in reference to the reactions of the murderer and his son, ‘They think of this as a sign of masculinity’.

Importantly, the lack of control that is associated here with ‘wrong’ masculinity is related to two sources. One is the young age of the driver (the age gap between the murderer and the murdered is noted several times in the article). True masculinity entails maturity, and above all self-control. A second source of failed control is related to the state, which lets illegal weapons flood the village. Also according to this version, ‘true’ masculinity

⁴⁶ *Fasl-al-Maqāl*, 2.9.2005.

means rational, pragmatic adherence to the state's law, regardless of national sentiments, instead of following the old laws of group honor and the blood feud, which have ceased to be relevant. Lastly, the argument about maturity notwithstanding, the fact that it was the young driver's *father* who allegedly fired the fatal shot cannot reduce the deed entirely to lack of maturity. Rather, this means that what this narrative presents as 'wrong' masculinity is not unanimously seen as such. Greatly to the contrary, the very fact that the authors of the article go out of their way to emphasize that 'this is not true masculinity' implies that the two scripts exercise a hold in the society.

IV. Discussion

Paul Farmer uses the term structural violence for brutality that resides in taken-for-granted arrangements, notably poverty and sharp social inequalities, where oppression results from many conditions that are both 'sinful' and ostensibly 'nobody's fault'.⁴⁷ In the case of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, structural violence entails, alongside official and latent measures of constitutional discrimination, also routine violence from state institutions and the Jewish public alike. After the state's decades-long control of its Arab citizens⁴⁸ significantly relaxed in the 1990s, the outbreak of the second *intifada* brought the process of Israeli democratization to an abrupt halt. The violent clashes that ensued following the visit of Ariel Sharon in the Temple Mount in late September 2000 sparked protests inside Israel as well, and these were violently suppressed by the Israeli police, an operation that left 13 dead and hundreds kept in detention without trial for months on end. These events, which later received the title *habbat octobar* (October gust), marked a traumatic setback in Arab–Jewish relations inside Israel. Following intense public protest, a state-run commission of inquiry (the Orr Committee) was eventually appointed to investigate the conduct of the police, yet despite its severe conclusions no indictments were ever filed, and the politicians who had been in charge lost no public credibility. For all its shortcomings, the Orr Committee did manage to inscribe on Israeli public opinion the death of 13 citizens as a regretful failing of democratic protection. It also instigated a certain rhetoric of government commitment to undertake a compensatory policy on the Arab sector as a whole (a promise that has never been delivered). Ironically, however, the settling of the October gust did not mark the end of casualties among the Palestinian citizens at the hands of the security forces. A report released by Mossawa Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens of Israel in 2004 surveys 16 more incidents which occurred after the October 2000 events. Only for two incidents were indictments filed against two security officers who had shot and killed Arab citizens.⁴⁹

Racism, or hostility on account of their national background, is another prominent experience of the Palestinian citizens of Israel.⁵⁰ A poll conducted for

⁴⁷ Paul Farmer, 'An anthropology of structural violence', *Current Anthropology* 45(3, June) (2004), pp. 305–325.

⁴⁸ Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1980).

⁴⁹ <http://www.mossawacenter.org/en/reports/2004/06/040601.html>

⁵⁰ In a study of the impact of the armed conflict on women in Israel, 15% of the Palestinian respondents reported having been exposed to either verbal or physical offenses related to their national affiliation, Dalia Sachs, Amalia Sa'ar and Sarai Aharoni, 'How can I feel for others when I myself am beaten? The impact of the armed conflict on women in Israel', *Sex Roles* 57(7) (2007), p. 593.

Mossawa shows that 70% of the Jewish public thinks that the Arab citizens constitute a threat to state security; almost 34% accuse the Arab citizens of taking over their jobs and of exacerbating the poor economic situation; 22% state that they would vote for the extreme right Kach party (which preaches ethnic cleansing) if it were allowed to run for election.⁵¹ Beside routine acts of discrimination and racism, in the past few years several incidents were registered of armed terrorism against Arab citizens. In 2004, the car of an Arab MK was booby-trapped; other bombs were placed in mosques and even in some homes. In the summer of 2005, a Jewish IDF soldier stormed a bus in the city of Shafa'amer and murdered four passengers. At the level of parliamentary politics, the Arab representatives are subjected to gross de-legitimacy as partners to the coalition. Jewish politicians and religious leaders repeatedly hurl insults at them, not fearing charges of racial agitation, while Arab MKs are routinely subjected to investigation despite their parliamentary immunity. Similarly, the football fields, which as shown in the previous section are often celebrated as neutral and spontaneous sites of democratic participation and coexistence, and which many Arabs cherish as an opportunity for civic inclusion, have at the same time served as sites of blatant racist incitement.

Directions for Future Research: Comparative Analysis and the Question of Subjectivity

Before concluding, we want to point out two pertinent issues that remain outside the scope of the present paper, but which we find important to outline for future research. The first concerns a comparative outlook. One of the immediate reference groups that comes to mind is Palestinians in the PA, who despite having an internationally recognized polity remain subjected to Israeli military and economic rule. There, more extreme forms of structural violence also breed internal violence, which is again enacted through scripts of masculinity. While our paper is empirically restricted to Palestinians inside Israel, the cultural, historical and political affinities between these two groups challenges our decision to stop at the border, as it were, and calls for an initial inclusion of both in the same analytical endeavor. Notably, despite the resemblance of masculine performances, among Palestinians in the PA the scope and degree of brutality, and indeed the sense of predicament, are much graver. Not wishing to engage in ranking and making taxonomies of violence, our noting the closeness among Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line is meant to highlight the point that like in so many other cases, the political borders and their concomitant official identities are themselves part of the violent structure. Note that we do not expect that enlarging the lens to include Palestinians from the PA will in the least take the edge off the admittedly less extreme violence that preoccupies the Palestinians inside Israel. Rather, we endorse Arthur Kleinman's insistence on a broad definition of social violence that includes extremes of political violence as well as everyday forms of suffering through images, institutional practices, and cultural expectations. He writes: 'through violence in social experience, as mediated by cultural

⁵¹ <http://www.mossawacenter.org/en/reports/2004/06/040601.html>. On increased racism against Palestinians among the Jewish citizens of Israel during the years of the second Intifada, see also M. Elran, *Israel's National Resilience: The Influence of the Second Intifada on Israeli Society* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2005).

representations, social formations are not just replicated, but the ordinary lives of individuals are also shaped, and all too often/ twisted, bent, and broken'.⁵²

The second issue is subjectivity. As outlined in the introduction, masculinity is dynamic and contradictory. Concomitantly, the term 'scripts', which we preferred over 'models', better acknowledges agency and subjectivity. Nevertheless, the present paper relied primarily on printed newspaper passages, which leaves relatively little room to consider the active engagement of members of the community with whatever picture such texts produce. Complementing our data with accounts obtained through participant observation would no doubt yield a fuller and more complex picture of the intersection of violence, masculine scripts, and cultural morality. Not that the material that we did collect conveyed a static picture: the last case that was cited, for example, included a clash between masculine scripts. The declaration, 'we have followed our original morality and not allowed the blood to boil', referring to the conduct of the victim who admitted the offender into his home, apparently accepting the latter's offer of a *sulha*, ultimately invested him with moral superiority, hence subjectivity.⁵³

In the printed media that circulates among Israeli-Palestinian Arabs, the dominant moral tone creates an atmosphere of lost direction. Yet the contents of the stories also give a sense of vitality. Take, for example, the notion of wife abuse. Stories similar to those above about the brutal rape of a wife or the attempted murders of women by their husbands produce voyeuristic, sensational narratives whose moral is nevertheless complex, as they are given to diverse interpretations. Besides seemingly obvious depictions of women as victims and of men as brutes, such stories at one and the same time rearticulate the terms of legitimate male domestic violence, and re-inscribe the nexus of subjugation and moral laxity traditionally attached to women's sexuality. Then again, the very talk about rape and other forms of violence within marriage lifts the categorical ban on discussing such issues in public, even as the protagonists remain anonymous. These and other competing interpretations, which are already intimated within the printed presentations, suggest that gender morality is not simply falling apart, but may actually be rejuvenating. A future ethnographic study, therefore, may seek to document the ways in which, when translated into kinscripts, seemingly conflicting models of masculinity/femininity in effect mutually inform one another.

V. Conclusion

In this paper we explored a discourse on crisis in the printed Arabic press in Israel, and read it using gender theory. We argued that the sense of predicament among the Palestinian citizens is implicitly articulated in terms of a crisis in masculinity. Their political-economic location does not allow the realization of militaristic masculinities, which hold gross hegemony in the area, while alternative scripts of less violent masculinities are also hardly viable for them. Growing numbers of

⁵² Arthur Kleinman, 'The Violence of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence', in Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson (eds.), *Constructing Masculinity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), p. 238.

⁵³ For the ability to notice the dialectic, if charged, relations between victimization and subjectivity we are indebted to the illuminating work of Veena Das and partners in Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele and Pamela Reynolds (eds.), *Violence and Subjectivity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

men are incapable of supporting their families, men generally are barred from positions of effective political leadership, and more generally still, because of their interstitial position in the region, Palestinian Israelis are marginalized in terms of cultural production.

The contribution of this paper lies in the application of gender theory to issues of cultural morality and social order that are locally deemed collective, as opposed to being specific to women, hence in marking a layer of power dynamics that conventional studies of the *collective* affairs of this group usually leave unmarked. The notion of masculine scripts, in particular, facilitates dialectical consideration of structural components and transformative capacities, since such scripts operate as models of/model for the production of cultural meaning. While we have demonstrated destructive behaviors, and the anger and frustration that they evoke, our material also points to the potential of redirecting norms and behaviors toward more productive and plausibly somewhat less militaristic masculinities. Conceptualized in this way, masculinity comprises a timely site for critical reading of the situation of Palestinians inside Israel, as it allows a glance at the vulnerable side of what is usually considered as the hub of power and control.

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