

Chapter 4: Factors of Family Conflicts

Introduction

If what has been addressed in the previous two chapters regarding the traumatic experiences of war and forced displacement on the one hand and the challenges and pressures on the family on the other can be described as indirect conflict factors, this chapter will focus primarily on direct factors. These factors can be categorized along two dimensions. The first set of factors are internal, i.e. linked to the characteristics, structures, and functions of the family, i.e. the context from which the family came from. The second group of factors is externally dictated by the war and the new German context. While these two dimensions can be conceived as separate theoretically, they cannot be completely delineated from each other in terms of their interaction and mutual influence in provoking conflicts within the family. Since this chapter revolves essentially around the Syrian family, it was necessary to provide a quick overview of the traditional and customary characteristics and perceptions of the family in Syrian societies, which is sometimes not without generalization that ignores the different dynamics that families coexist or deal with. So, I will try to present the different points of view very briefly.

It is common in the Arab/Syrian environment that people's lives revolve around the family, regardless of ethnic and religious diversity.³³² In the Arab world, marriage to start a family is therefore not only an individual matter but a decision for the whole family, and the association is often between two families rather than between two individuals.³³³ This importance accorded to the family manifests itself in many ways, starting with the extended family in general and parents in particular, exerting pressure on their adult offspring (males or females) to get married to start a family at an early age. Those who delay the formation of the family are looked upon

332 Barakāt, *Al-muġtama' al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, p. 171.

333 Christa Salamandra, *A New Old Damascus. Authenticity and Distinction in Urban Syria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 54.

of being the subject of the suspicion of their families and their society.³³⁴ Hence, getting to know someone's family and his relatives is a cornerstone of the individual's identity, as El Guindi put it.³³⁵

Some researchers classify the Arab/Syrian³³⁶ family as an extended family heading towards the nuclear family.³³⁷ However, this state of orientation remains complex in the Arab world,³³⁸ as the nuclear family maintains a network of relationships with relatives and their families of origin. Therefore it remains "with extended family despite its legal, residential and economic independence."³³⁹ Thus, the Arab/Syrian family in its nuclear state is similar to extended families, although it is apparently classified as a nuclear family.³⁴⁰

Some studies generally describe the traditional Arab family, including Syria, as a patriarchal family, in which the father holds authority and power over financial resources. It is also a manifestation of this patriarchalism that the children belong to his family and are given his family name and not that of the mother. In addition, the family resides in the house where the husband's father's family lives, not with the wife's family. It is considered socially and customarily unacceptable in Syrian communities for a husband to live in his wife's family home. As a result of this patriarchal authority, other family members – wife and children – are expected to obey, respect,

334 The physical integrity of the author of this document was questioned by some of his relatives due to the fact that he did not get married. Social customs in the area I come from frowns upon postponing marriage until after thirty or beyond.

335 Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil, Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. 164.

336 Despite the multiplicity of ethnicities in Syria, such as Kurds, Armenians, Circassian, and others, Arabs are the majority in Syria, and family structures and functions in general are similar in other ethnicities.

337 Barakāt, *Al-muġtama' al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, p. 193; Muṣṭafa Ḥiġāzī, *Al-'usra wa ṣiḥḥatuhā an-naḥsiya (Family and Mental Health)* (Markaz aṭ-ṭaqāfi al-'arabī, 2015), p. 16; al-Aḥras. p. 24.

338 Barakat quotes Bruther and Diab in their study of social changes in the Arab East, according to whom the percentage of nuclear families in Damascus in the 1960s rose to 59%, and 9% of marriages lived for a limited time with the husband's parents. Barakāt, *Al-muġtama' al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, p. 194; Edwin Terry Prothro and Lutfy Najib Diab, *Changing Family Patterns in the Arab East* (American University of Beirut, 1974), pp. 66–70.

339 Ḥiġāzī, *Al-'usra aa ṣiḥḥatuhā an-naḥsiya*, p. 16.

340 Barakāt, *Al-muġtama' al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, p. 195; Hisham Sharabi, *Muqadimāt lidirāst al-muġtama' al-'arabī* مقدمات لدراسة المجتمع العربي (Introductions to the Study of Arab Society) (ad-dār al-mutaḥida lililnašr, 1984), pp. 34-35.

and comply with the husband's/father's orders.³⁴¹ It is also a societal custom in Syria for a father to name his eldest son after his father and then, later, to lose his real name socially and be nicknamed by his eldest son's name, for example, Abu Omar.

This patriarchal characterization of Syrian families is to an extent stereotypical and is not far from overgeneralization.³⁴² It overlooks the debates and contradictions that individuals face in their life contexts. As Hammoudi explains in his comparative anthropological study on power in Arab societies in Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt, the situation of parents in current societies has become complex and faces economic and social failures that have shaken their sovereignty within the family.³⁴³ Because of the structural changes in society with the establishment of the nuclear family, the orientation of women towards work, and the spread of education and migration, this patriarchy has been subjected to major transformations that have softened it. However, the role of male - father or brother - coupled with obedience and power in exchange for the submission of family members to this power is still present, and the father's position within the family has remained essential, according to sociologist Barakat.³⁴⁴ A recent quantitative study that highlighted the place of women in Syrian society confirms Barakat's claim: "[D]espite the relative improvement on the levels of education, health and living conditions of women in Syria before the crisis, institutions, networks, and values have often carried a dominant male character, as Syrian society lives this contradiction between strengthening the status of women and another trend that would like to exclude them and marginalize their role."³⁴⁵

The Syrian family, in my point of view despite of its diversity at the level of ethnicity, religions, and sects, cannot be separated from two contexts that have contributed to the formation of these characteristics and previous perceptions. The first is the Arab milieu in which it is located and to

341 Barakāt, *Al-muġtama' al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, p. 179; Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, pp. 29–32; Hiġāzī, *Al-'usra wa šihhatuhā an-naḫsiya*, p. 16; Léon Buskens, 'Recent Debates on Family Law Reform in Morocco: Islamic Law as Politics in an Emerging Public Sphere', *Islamic Law and Society*, 10.1 (2003), 70–131, here p. 75.

342 Abdellah Hammoudi, *Aš-šaiḫ wa l-murīd (Master and Disciple - الشيخ والمريد)*, übersetzt von 'Abd al-Maġīd Ġuḥfa (Dār Twbiqāl lil-Našr, 2010), S. 19.

343 Ibid.

344 Barakāt, *al-muġtama' al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, pp. 181, 195; Orna Cohen and Rivka Savaya, 'Adjustment to Divorce: A Preliminary Study among Muslim Arab Citizens of Israel', *Family Process*, 42.2 (2003), 269–90, here p. 217.

345 Ismail et al., p. 51.

which most Syrian communities belong. The second context is religion in general, particularly Islam, which is the religion of the majority in Syria and played a role in shaping the family: in the functions assigned to it and through the legislative provisions relating to the family. This was later reflected in the multiple family laws in Syria. The interaction of these three dimensions: the contexts of the Arab/Syrian environment, religion, and the law on the family, will shape this chapter, reviewing the factors of family disputes related to these dimensions on the family from within and then the interaction of the family with its characteristics, functions, and structures formed in previous contexts with the new Germany environment. However, the discussion will not overlook other dimensions, which may sometimes intersect with the previous dimensions and are no less important than these three dimensions, such as the political dimension, when the family presents them as a problem in these conflicts.

4.1 A Theoretical View of Conflict Factors – Dominance Masculinity

The scientific study of masculinity has progressed dramatically in the twentieth century.³⁴⁶ Analytic psychology has addressed this topic, demonstrating that both masculinity and femininity are products of often unstable psychological settlements. Later, the Frankfurt School shifted its focus to “authoritarian personality”, combining social analysis and psychoanalysis to trace the development of masculinity and its role in building the foundations of democracy and fascism. Feminist theories have embraced this form of argument but with a focus on “patriarchy” rather than the class as the structural background.³⁴⁷ At a later stage, the framework for action on masculinity evolved into the concept of “social role”, which had developed through anthropology since the 1930s and became the common concept of the social sciences, eventually leading to the concept of “sex roles”³⁴⁸, understood “as patterns of social expectation, norms for the behaviour of men and women, which were transmitted to youth in a process of ‘socialization.’”³⁴⁹ Ethnographic/empirical studies of sex roles have given a whiff of

346 For more details on this development, see Raewyn Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 3–6.

347 Ibid., p. 7.

348 See more, Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 22.

349 Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, p. 7.

realism to the abstractions of role theory,³⁵⁰ and they also challenged the generalizing and simplistic theories of masculinity.³⁵¹ However, role theory has been criticized on the grounds that “a theory based on ‘expectations’ or norms gives no grasp on issues of power, violence, or material inequality. It misses the complexities within femininity and masculinity, and it offers very limited strategies of change.”³⁵²

Regardless of the many theoretical trends that have attempted to understand masculinity, Marcia C. Inhorn, in her study of masculinity in the Arab world - Lebanon and the UAE -, believes that any ethnographic study of masculinity must begin with Connell’s theory of “hegemonic masculinity”, due to her great influence in general on masculinity research.³⁵³ This is a concept that Connell introduced into discussions of masculinity “to deal with relational issues – most importantly, the connections between the differences and hierarchies among men, and the relations between men and women.”³⁵⁴ Connell embraced the gender relations approach³⁵⁵ because it offered “a way of understanding the different dimensions or structures

350 Connell summarizes the most important empirical conclusions from this research on masculinity as follows: 1) Multiple masculinity: There is no single pattern of Masculinity that is found everywhere. 2) Hierarchy and hegemony: As masculinity has hierarchical relationships, some are dominant and others are marginalized or subordinated. 3) Collective masculinities: Masculinity patterns transcend the behavior of individuals to institutions such as workplaces and others. 4) Bodies as arenas: Men’s bodies are not biologically determined by the patterns of masculinity, rather they are dealt with and given outlets and pleasure according to the status of both males and females in society; therefore bodies are considered as arenas for creating gender patterns. 5) Active construction: Masculinity is produced using the resources and strategies found in a particular social environment and therefore is not programmed into our genes. 6) Internal complexity and contradiction: Masculinity is not static, and it is in a state of internal and external tension. This tension is an important source of its changes. 7) Dynamics: Masculinity changes under different circumstances. For more insight into these conclusions, see Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, pp. 10–14.

351 Ibid., p. 9.

352 Ibid., p. 18; Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. 25–27.

353 Inhorn, p. 41.

354 Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, p. 23.

355 Connell suggested a four-fold model of gender relations that he used in his books: power relations between men and women, production relations or division of labor, cathexis or emotional relations, symbolic structures. For more details about these models, see *ibid.*, pp. 24–26, 42–46; Connell, *Gender. In World Perspective*, pp. 76–85.

of gender, the relation between bodies and society, and the patterning or configuration of gender”³⁵⁶, as she wrote.

Bourdieu also addressed the dominance of masculinity and the interrelationship between sexes in the social sphere on a large scale in his writings. Therefore, this study will rely heavily on his conceptualizations. Bourdieu sees that human beings behave according to subconscious tendencies in various aspects of life. In his theory, the structural forms of an environment, such as material resources, produce what is referred to as the “habitus”.³⁵⁷ The habitus is “understood as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.”³⁵⁸ Accordingly, Bourdieu views the constituent divisions of the dominant and exploitative social relations between the two genders as falling “in two different classes of habitus, in the form of opposed and complementary bodily hexis³⁵⁹ and principles of vision and division which lead to the classifying of all the things of the world and all practices according to distinctions that are reducible to the male/female opposition.”³⁶⁰ Bourdieu understood the relationship between the two genders as the representation of a dichotomy between an “active” man and a “passive” woman.³⁶¹ This symbolic domination renders the separation between both sexes normal and deeply rooted in the unconscious. “The particular strength of the masculine sociodicy³⁶² comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two operations: it legitimates a relationship of domination

356 Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, pp. 23–24.

357 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, p. 72.

358 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

359 “‘Hexis’ in Bourdieu’s work is reserved for the externally perceptible ensemble of permanently acquired body postures and movements.” Gerhard Fröhlich, ‘Habitus Und Hexis: die Einverleibung der Praxisstrukturen bei Pierre Bordieu’, in *29. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie, 16. Österreichischer Kongress für Soziologie, 11. Kongress der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Soziologie* (Centaurus-Verl.-Ges., 1999), pp. 100–102.

360 Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 30.

361 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

362 “A sociodicy is a structured attempt to justify the social order in spite of its manifold injustices... In short, sociodicies are the narratives of the dominant, imposed on the dominated, so that the dominant might continue to dominate.” Victor Shammass, ‘Sociodicy: Notes on the Thought of Pierre Bourdieu’, 2023 <<https://criticallegalthinking.com/2023/09/06/sociodicy-notes-on-the-thought-of-pierre-bourdieu/>> [accessed 30 January 2025].

by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction.”³⁶³ Connell points out in this context that “[b]odies have agency and bodies are socially constructed. Biological and social analysis cannot be cut apart from each other. But neither can be reduced to the other [...]. There is a loop, a circuit, linking bodily processes and social structures.”³⁶⁴ Thus, “[g]ender is a specific form of social embodiment. Gender relations form a particular social structure, refer to particular features of bodies, and gender practices form a circuit between them.”³⁶⁵

Although the factors of conflict that will be reviewed in this chapter are different and manifold, it is possible to put a general framework for most of them, which is the theory of masculinity. This theory and its familial, social, political, and legal representations in the Arab context were the subject of study of many Arab researchers.³⁶⁶ When it is approached in the Middle East or the Arab world, masculinity in general is depicted with “self-stereotypy”, in which Orientalism played a major role in shaping it, followed by selective representations in the West of the Arab male in the media, in addition to some generalizing writings, as I previously mentioned above, that all place the Arab or Middle Eastern man in the mold of a hegemonic masculine man. However, this image has become “backward”, “old-fashioned” and “traditional”, as the anthropologist Marcia C. Inhorn indicated.³⁶⁷ The chapter will, therefore, attempt to present the different models of the masculine personality that stand in complex relationships of domination and subordination to each other, and it will explore the changes that occur in this masculine character through the relations between spouses within Syrian families in the German context.

To understand these complex relationships in the new context, it should be noted that, from my point of view, the patriarchal system or dominance of masculinity³⁶⁸ in Syrian societies reveals, in general, through the concept of “obedience” “الطاعة at-ṭa‘a”, which is one of the main features of male domination in society. It manifests itself in three dimensions:

363 Ibid., p. 23.

364 Connell, *Gender. In World Perspective*, p. 67.

365 Ibid., p. 68.

366 See, for instance, Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*; Yāsīn, *Azmit al-mar'a fi al-muḡtama' al-dukori al-'arabi*; Barakāt, *Al-Iḡtirāb Fi At-Ṭaqāfa Al-'arabiya*.

367 Inhorn, p. 55.

368 I consider that the two concepts in this context signify the same meaning, giving that the patriarchal system has no meaning without hegemony rooted in it and helping it to continue.

- 1) In societal culture, where the role of women in the home is determined as taking care of the household and children. Their role is confined to the private sphere, and their role in the public sphere is restricted. In return, the role of men lies outside the household and is determined in working and bread-earning for the family.³⁶⁹ It is therefore socially degrading for a man to participate in housework.³⁷⁰
- 2) In personal status laws:³⁷¹ A man's obligation is to pay maintenance or provide for his wife, and the wife's right to maintenance is revoked if she refrains from having sexual relations with the husband or if she works outside the home without her husband's permission, etc. In this manner, obedience in return for maintenance is indirectly enshrined in laws.³⁷²
- 3) In religious rulings. This patriarchal power is supported religiously by carrying the meaning of "qiwāma"³⁷³ قواممة or "qawwāmūn"³⁷⁴ in Islam on "head", "leader", or "protector" and thus portraying the relationship of men and women as a patriarchal hierarchical authority.³⁷⁵ A similar concept is also deep rooted legally and socially in other religions and sects.³⁷⁶

369 These roles have economic implications that will have direct consequences for conflicts in the German context, which will be discussed below.

370 Barakāt, *Al-Iḡtirāb Fi Aṭ-Taḡāfa Al-'arabīya*, p. 118.

371 The obligation of the husband to maintain the wife is provided for by most personal status laws of other communities and religions, for example: Article 177 of the Greek Orthodox Community Act, Article 34 of the Orthodox Syriac Act, Article 31 of the Evangelical Denominational Courts Act.

372 § 71 para. 2, § 73 para. 1–6 of the personal status law.

373 One study relied on the concept of "guardianship" as an analytical framework establishing male authority and working on sexual division to work in all political, economic, and religious fields in Arab countries. The focus was on women's domestic work to monitor the opportunities and coercions generated by this concept. See Rabī'a an-Nāsirī, *Al-qawāma wa at-taqṣīm al-ḡinsī lil'amal an-nisāī al-manzilī bidūn aḡr* (*Guardianship and Sexual Division of Women's Domestic Work without Pay*) (Collective for Research and Training on Development).

374 Qur'ān 4:34. See some translations of this concept, الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ، <<https://alro7.net/ayaq.php?langg=english&source=4&aya=34>> [accessed 24 November 2021].

375 For more details on this concept, see Azizah Al-Hibri, 'Islam, Law and Custom: Redefining Muslim Women's Rights', *American University International Law Review*, 12.1 (1997), 1–44, here pp. 28–33.

376 These manifestations of masculinity do not differ in other religions or communities in Syria, as laws of other sects and religions derived from the teachings of religion or sect are entrenched in many of their articles. For example, Article 33 of the

At the same time, these three dimensions cannot be separated from the great role of the state, its institutions, and its policies, which may ally with religious institutions to perpetuate - or *vice versa* - the status of women. It also legislates laws through judicial institutions. In addition, its marginal policies, especially in the countryside, with low standards of living and education, contribute to perpetuating a culture of marginalization for women and preserving customs and traditions that preserve the dominant positions of men.³⁷⁷ “Clearly, masculinity cannot be isolated from its institutional context, including the state, the workplace or labor market, and the family”³⁷⁸, as Inhorn wrote.

The question that arises in the context of this study is: What happens to this power and this patriarchy when families are in a crisis of forced displacement not only from their homes but also from the social context with which this male system coexisted? How will they behave within a new German context, which is quite different from that of the original one?

I am fully aware that “the research should attempt to go beyond description (whether statistical or ethnographic) and try to understand why families have certain forms and characteristics in certain circumstances”, as William Young and Seteney Shami write in the context of their critique of purely descriptive terms like “patriarchy” that are made without explanation. What I try in this chapter is to provide explanations for the penetration of this system into family structures and functions through the lens of conflict.

I argue that the collapse of the patriarchy in all its representations, be they family, social, economic, legal, cultural, religious, and political, in the German context is the reason for which various factors of marital disputes have arisen within Syrian families in Germany. Patriarchy, although weak and subject to many recent changes and fluctuations within Syrian societies, has remained present and pervasive in most aspects of these societies. Fieldwork data have shown that most of the factors that led to marital

Orthodox Syriac Personal Status Act states: “The wife is obliged to accompany her husband after the contract, and she must accompany him to any place wherever she is [...]”, and Article 46 of the Armenian Orthodox Community Act: “The man is the head of the family and its legal and natural representative. A man must protect his wife and the mirror must obey her husband.” Such material, which demonstrates a man’s jurisdiction and leadership in the family, is numerous in multiple personal status laws.

377 For more insights, see Al-Rasheed, pp. 15–17.

378 Inhorn, p. 43.

disputes were in one way or another linked to this patriarchal system. This explains why most divorce applications for these disputes were made by women.³⁷⁹ “Statistics tell us that more than 90% of divorces are requested by women, not men, which never means that they are the cause of divorce, but that they are the ones who initiated the legal proceedings for divorce”, as Berlin-based lawyer Ġalāl Amīn said in an article.³⁸⁰

The new context of the family revealed the paradoxical logic of masculinity that had permeated Syrian societies. It also demonstrated the effects of patriarchy on both women and men and also highlighted the previous spontaneous preparations granted to the system. The Syrian families were living with this patriarchy in the Syrian context without showing any contradictions, as female submission in Syrian societies was “spontaneous and extorted”³⁸¹ in Bourdieu’s words. Indeed, through the values and norms associated with it in the Syrian context, this system played a role in maintaining official marital ties.³⁸² What happened later was that the perception of gender relations associated with this system entered a restructuring phase among many family members. These perceptions were later reflected in behaviors assisted by the new German context, leading to clashes and cracks on the surface within these families. However, the research did not rule out important external factors, which have indirect links to the rift of that system and played a major role in fueling these conflicts. These factors cannot be separated from the internal factors associated with the

379 All disputes that ended in divorce with those interviewed during field work were at the request of the women.

380 Statistics are intended through his personal experience in dealing with such issues and are not official statistics. See Ġalāl Amīn, ‘Izdiād ḥālāt aṭ-ṭalāq baina al-qādimin ql-ḡudud: T’aṭur ṭaqāfi ām mumārasah lilḥuriaya?’ (‘Increasing Divorce Cases among Newcomers: Cultural Influence or Exercise of Freedom?’), *Abwab* <<https://bit.ly/3DYdysX>> [accessed 8 July 2021]. See also Sāmia Lāwnd, ‘Tazāud ḥālāt aṭ-ṭalāq bain al-lāḡi’in as-sūriyn’ (‘Divorce Cases are Increasing among Syrian Refugees’), *Geiroon* <<https://www.geiroon.net/archives/139577>> [accessed 8 July 2021].

381 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 38.

382 Of these criteria, for example, the status of divorced women, to which the “culture of shame” adheres and which is viewed negatively by society, thus refrains many women from seeking divorce so as not to be “divorced”. In addition, pressures are exerted by the family, especially males, to prevent women from separation from her husband. So, her decision is not just hers, it’s about the whole family. To expand around that, see Faṭīma az-Zahrā’ aš-Šāfi’i, *Ṭaqāfat al-’aib fi ḥayatinā al-yawmiya* (*Shame Culture in Our Daily Life*) (Dar al-’adham, 2012), pp. 110–111, 116–117; Ann Al-Naḡdawī, ‘Aṭ-ṭalāq al-’āṭifi fi al-muḡtama’ al-’urdunī’ (‘Emotional Divorce in Jordanian Society’), *Al-’ulūm Al-’insāniya Wa Al-’iḡtimā’iya*, 45.4 (2018), p. 55.

characteristics and structures of the family. Chief among them the effects of the Syrian war on the members of these families and the effects of the German context itself in all its dimensions.

Bourdieu noted that the revolution of feminist movements cannot change this male dominance by bringing about a change in awareness and will. For this change to occur and to achieve a break in the relationship of complicity, which occurs through the predispositions granted by the dominated victims to the dominant, there must be “a radical transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions”, through which the dominated “take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves.”³⁸³ The question in this context is whether these radical shifts in social conditions in the new German context have brought about changes in the predispositions governing the hegemonic relations of members of the Syrian family, especially women. That is what this chapter will try to examine.

“Another cause of the growing conflicts within Muslim families is the cultural, social and economic unrest caused by migration from a relatively conservative Middle Eastern society”³⁸⁴, wrote Mathias Rohe and Mahmoud Jaraba in their qualitative study of different Muslim communities in Berlin. Many persons from largely patriarchal societies suffering from war and conflict have migrated to a relatively open society in which men and women enjoy equal rights. The most important reason referred to for familial strife seems to be the changing understanding of the roles of men and women.³⁸⁵

Based on the many factors referred to, I will classify factors for familial conflicts into internal and external determinants. These determinants then will be thoroughly discussed and analyzed based on data collected from the field.

383 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 42.

384 Mathias Rohe and Mahmoud Jaraba, *Parallel Justice. A Study Commissioned by the State of Berlin, Represented by The Senate Department for Justice and Consumer Protection* (Senate Department for Justice and Consumer Protection, 2015). pp. 109–110.

385 Ibid.

4.2 Internal Determinants of Conflict Dynamics – Clouds in Syria Rained in Germany

Marital disputes within the Syrian family generally take three directions: 1) Coexistence with these disputes and maintaining the marital bond between the parties. 2) Ending the marital relationship with divorce. 3) In a few cases, these conflicts escalate to violence that may amount to murder, the victims of which are often women.

Statistically, divorce and violence may be one of the biggest indicators of the escalation or decline of these conflicts. However, ongoing disputes that do not result in the separation of spouses within the family are difficult to track statistically, making it challenging to assess their impact. Therefore, in a qualitative study on Jordanian society, the so-called informal “emotional divorce” was studied and “represented in the dissatisfaction with the marital relationship by one or both parties.”³⁸⁶ So, it is not important to focus on any results associated with quantitative studies. What is important is to highlight the factors of these conflicts in the German context for a deeper understanding, based on qualitative data.

First of all, it must be said that these conflict factors in their German context cannot be separated from the characteristics, structures, functions, and conflict factors within the family in its Syrian context, as I indicated above. In the words of Imam ‘Umar, “The cloud that was in Syria rained here in Germany.”³⁸⁷ This section will therefore review the factors of family disputes through the family’s interaction with the new German context and the implications and developments that this interaction has inflicted on the family.

4.2.1 Gender roles

Gender in Syrian societies largely defines the roles of both men and women in the family. Inside the house, the man often expects obedience and the execution of his orders, while he works outside the house to secure the family’s livelihood. In return, women obey their husbands in matters related to the household, but they play a major role in the upbringing of children.³⁸⁸

386 Al-nağdawī, p. 46.

387 Nuremberg, 14 January 2020.

388 Barakāt, *Al-Iğtirāb Fi Aṭ-Ṭaqāfa Al-‘arabiya*, p. 118.

The societal beliefs based on these divisions support “structural barriers that impede the achievement of gender equality within the family.”³⁸⁹ This is not confined to the Syrian society but is also common in other parts of the world where such cultural beliefs with regard to the roles of men and women are still adopted.

Due to the vast difference in the definition of these roles between Syrian and German society, unrest began to take place in the roles of spouses within the family after the family came to Germany, leading to disputes between the two parties, because “[e]veryday life is an arena of gender politics, not an escape from it”³⁹⁰, as Connell wrote. Mahmoud, whom I met at a Nuremberg café, pointed to this change and the comparison between “here” and “there”:

“In Syria, the concept of the relationship for 70 to 80 percent of people is that of a sexual nature or that she [i.e. the wife] cooks and I [i.e. the husband] work, but when people arrive here, the role of the pivotal man whose task is to ensure basic life requirements disappeared. He is no longer the man that the women depends on [...] they became equal [...] he receives the 400 Euro, I [i.e. the wife] also receive the same from the German government. We are both renting the house. It becomes normal for divorce-related problems to occur.”³⁹¹

Women used to be excessively dependent - some refer to her as being pampered - on men for day-to-day household matters, adds Nada, whom I met along with her husband in her house.³⁹² This dependency relationship started to fade away in the German context as the wife’s role outside the family system, i.e. in the public sphere, has changed, because she is required, like a man, to learn the language, attend integration courses, and seek employment. This is a role that has put pressure on her between home affairs and childcare, and it means the loss of her “pampered” status within the household. Bourdieu noted that the increasing number of working women “could not fail to affect the division of household tasks and therefore the traditional male and female models, which has no doubt had

389 Janice M. Steil and Liora Hoffman, ‘Gender Conflict and the Family’, in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution. Theory and Practice*, ed. by Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, and Eric C. Marcus (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), p. 231.

390 Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 3.

391 Nuremberg, 16 October 2019.

392 Nuremberg, 8 December 2019.

consequences for the acquisition of the sexually differentiated dispositions within the family.”³⁹³

Husbands/fathers have lost their roles outside the household when they have become unemployed, which in turn has affected their authority to make decisions about home affairs, and they felt that their role in the family has become questionable. The new reality involved new household burdens, such as caring for children, cleaning the house, cooking, etc., that were usually considered to be culturally unacceptable for men to do in Syrian societies, because these actions conflict or threaten the husband’s masculine identity that is rooted in society, as Morton Deutsch points out.³⁹⁴

As a result, the image of an arranged marriage that divides roles inside the house (allocated to women) and outside (allocated to husbands) changed. During my visit to Salmā (separated twice, first in Syria and second in Germany) for an interview, her sister, who married in Germany, was also visiting her.³⁹⁵ During our conversation about the great responsibilities of the wife in Germany, I noticed how Salmā became cynical of her sister, who divides household chores such as cleaning, cooking, etc. between her and her husband equally. Salmā, as she pointed out, likes to do housework as a wife, even though she worked in Syria, but the image of the tasks of the house that women in Syrian societies bear has remained rooted in Salmā’s mind in both societies.³⁹⁶

Raġa’, who is about 40 years old and a separated woman whom I met in the café with Amina and her sister to talk about the causes of conflicts within families, stated that one of the reasons “is that the nature of life has changed, the nature of the marital relationship has changed, that is, the husband was accustomed to the fact that his wife often stays at home. Here she does not have time for her child or her husband. They are both equal. Like the husband, she wants to go to work as well, and she has to.”³⁹⁷ In the context of Syrian societies, women were not left alone to carry out household chores, and many of those interviewed confirmed that they often

393 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, pp. 89–90.

394 Morton Deutsch, ‘Introduction’, in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution. Theory and Practice*, ed. by Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman, and Eric C. Marcus (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), p. 2.

395 Salmā may have asked her sister to come in consideration of social norms in not receiving men (the researcher and a mutual friend of mine) alone at home.

396 Nuremberg, 20 March 2020.

397 Nuremberg, 24 February 2020.

relied on the parents of the husband or wife (i.e. the extended family) in some of these responsibilities, yet by migrating to Germany they lost this support, which placed an additional burden on them. In the face of these new pressures and burdens, wives may have expected a decrease in their domestic work, especially since the economic burden of the family is no longer the sole responsibility of the husband.³⁹⁸ They felt, with the social aid that they receive along with their children, that they are partners in the household economy. This expectation was not realized because of the male identity of the husbands who feel degraded by household work. They expect wives to take care of both family duties and them, which in turn is consistent with the obedience they are accustomed to.³⁹⁹ On my frequent visit to Imad's house and other couples, I noticed how he relied on his wife for all the housework, from providing hospitality, to preparing and serving food, to carrying pots into the kitchen after it was finished, something that was the subject of quite a bit of grumbling expressed by his wife several times in front of me.

In a qualitative study that tried to observe the impact of displacement on masculinity⁴⁰⁰ among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it was found that responsibilities and gender roles are changing because “men and women

398 Theodore N. Greenstein, 'Economic Dependence, Gender, and the Division of Labor in the Home: A Replication and Extension', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62.2 (2000), 322–35, here p. 333.

399 In a qualitative anthropologic study on the causes of divorce in the town of Tora in Jordan, the researcher concludes that from the point of view of divorced (couples), who are often the decision makers in divorce, it is the wife's failure to obey her husband, such as frequent departure from home, excessive freedom, and lack of interest in family duties and her husband. In another qualitative study that monitored emotional divorce, the researcher emphasizes the agreement of all interlocutors. However, the husband's personality is one of the most important reasons for this type of divorce. In a master's thesis monitoring the causes of divorce from the point of view of divorcees, she concluded that a man's authoritarianism, dictatorship, and the husband's severe anger at home were one of the most important reasons for the rise in divorces. Aiman aš-Šbūl, 'Al-mutağairāt al-ih̄timā'īya wa aṭ-ṭaqāfiya lẓāhirat aṭ-ṭalāq' ('The Social and Cultural Variables of the Phenomenon of Divorce'), *Mağalat Ğami'at Dimašq*, 26.3–4 (2010), p. 683; Al-nağdawī, p. 52; Mahitāb 'Abo Zint, 'Aṭ-ṭalāq, 'asbābuh wa nata'iğuh min wġhat naẓar al-muṭalaqāt' ('Divorce, Its Causes and Consequences from the Perspective of Divorced Women') (ğāmi'at an-nağāh al-waṭāniya, 2016) pp. 70–71.

400 The author uses the concept of 'protest masculinity' as collective practices by marginalized men who are fighting for their authority and status. These male protests take the form of violent or non-violent aggressive behaviors towards women and children. Tuzi, *Forced Migration and Gender Relations*, p. 9.

are required to act in accordance with the new ‘settings’⁴⁰¹, which in turn has changed power relations. Changing power relations, if not observed by the parties, leads to disputes between them.

A qualitative study of the needs and challenges of refugee youth in Germany - Syrians and others - has reached the following conclusion: “The displacement situation changes gender roles within the family. This supports or leads to new conflicts within families.”⁴⁰² One of the supervisors of a refugee reception center in this study points to men’s clash with new German norms, especially those relating to women, so women are told that they do not have to live with previous norms. As a result of these clashes, he concludes: “I have also experienced a lot of divorces.”⁴⁰³

Not only have gender roles, such as practices and work, occurred within and outside the family, but they have affected the authority of both husband and wife within the family, which will be addressed below through the effects of the external German context on the relationship of the parties.

4.2.2 Economic factors – economic alienation⁴⁰⁴

As a result of the men’s and women’s status in Syrian societies, the roles of work have been divided culturally, legally, and religiously. A man is responsible for supporting his family, whereas the woman has to take care of the affairs of the household.⁴⁰⁵ This division of work is rooted in “the division of productive activities with which we associate the idea of work.”⁴⁰⁶ These divisions were established through the family and the entire social

401 Ibid., p. 6.

402 Iris Dähnke, Irina Linke, and Birte Spreckelsen, *Geflüchtete Männer in Deutschland* (Bundesforum Männer, 2018), p. 69.

403 Ibid.

404 “When a person loses control over his creatures, products and property, he is employed for the benefit of others rather than stealing them for his own benefit. In other words, the human being becomes subject to other entities.” For more on this concept and its applications in the Arab context, see Barakāt, *Al-Īgtirāb Fi Aṭ-Ṭaqāfa Al-‘arabiya*, p. 37.

405 It should be noted that women’s participation in the labor market in Syria was about 18% in the latest statistics before the Syrian crisis, and due to this small percentage they depended heavily on the husband economically. See, Al-Ġumhūriya al-‘arabiya as-sūriya, *Al-barnāmaġ al-waṭani lil‘amal al-lā‘iq* (Al-lā‘iq, Al-barnāmaġ al-waṭani lil‘amal, 2008), p. 3.

406 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 47.

system.⁴⁰⁷ As a result of this system, the power and parenthood of men within the family have been largely linked to this factor, as he is the source of livelihood, and therefore the family depends on him for their livelihood. In return, the husband awaits obedience from his family members, who should follow his instructions.⁴⁰⁸ In contrast, given the determination of the role of women in the home, they, in turn, will have to rely heavily on men economically.⁴⁰⁹ Even if she works, most jobs do not pay women to enable them to be economically self-sufficient.⁴¹⁰

The distribution of these roles in this way leads to two contradictory outcomes, such as the contradictions arising from the gender status of both men and women in Syrian societies:

- 1) As a deterrent to official divorce. Women's economic dependence on men limits their choices. This, therefore, affects their decision to separate from their husband in the event of marital disputes between them.⁴¹¹ This economic exploitation of women is the most important factor in determining their relatively subordinate status in society.⁴¹² Therefore, women suffer from "economic alienation"⁴¹³, which represents a "clear class struggle in the distribution of professional activities between men and women. They are always given secondary, or marginal work [...]. [A woman] remains dependent on a man who monopolizes basic business, allowing him to extend his influence over her", as Ḥiğāzī wrote.⁴¹⁴
- 2) As a cause of marital disputes. Poor economic status leads many couples to live with the husband's family, which increases parental interference

407 Ibid., p. 57.

408 Annika Rabo, "Doing Family": Two Cases in Contemporary Syria', *Hawwa*, 6.2 (2008), 129–53.

409 Barakāt, *Al-Iğtirāb Fi At-Taqaḫfa Al-'arabiya*, p. 118.

410 Salamandra, p. 52.

411 Al-nağdawī, p. 55.

412 Ḥālıda Sa'ıd, *Fi al-bad'i kan al-muṭanna (Dualism from the Start)* (Dār as-saqı, 2009), pp. 78–81; Barakāt, *Al-muğtama' al-'arabı al-mu'āşir*, p. 188.

413 Ḥiğāzı refers to three expropriations of women: economic alienation, in which women's economic dependence on men is manifested, sexual alienation, where women are reduced to the limits of their bodies, and ideological alienation, in which women are convinced of their inferiority towards men. Muştafa Ḥiğāzı, *At-taḫalluf al-iğtimāı – Dirāsa fı sikülüğüya al-insān al-maḫhūr (Social Backwardness. A Study in the Psychology of the Oppressed Person)* (Casablanca: Al-markaz At-ṭaqāfi Al'arabı, 2005), pp. 211–219.

414 Ḥiğāzı, *At-taḫalluf al-iğtimāı*, p. 211.

in the details of the couple's lives, and as a result their disputes intensify. Work is also regarded as a man's identity, which in turn is linked to the negative or positive view of society.⁴¹⁵

In the German context, the husband wants to maintain his authority and place within the family by maintaining control over financial resources from the German government as aid from Job Center, ignoring the fact that the legal and social context for women and children has changed radically from what it was in Syria. The following question arises here: How do the social assistance system provided by Job Center or funds provided by the family fund (Familienkasse) to support children play a role in fueling conflicts between the parties?

The husband's loss of work, his reliance on social aid, and the sense of threatening his status and authority lead to a significant pressure on him, reflected in his actions with his family members. Moreover, the wife's knowledge of her rights to demand a share of the husband's income is reflected in three dimensions:

- 1) Absence of impediments to divorce. One of the most important obstacles to formal divorce for women in Arab societies, in general, is the economic factor as I have pointed out, and with Syrian women receiving financial resources in the form of aid from the German government, women feel freer to decide to divorce without fear of want and need. In other words, the barrier that prevented them from seeking divorce from their husbands has been eliminated. This means that the factors of separation between them were present before the couple arrived in Germany, and these factors may be linked in one way or another to factors of previous conflicts within Syria. Ğanā points out the importance of this reason in conflicts and says: "The material factor is the one that ruined the relationships between couples. Now most women think like this: Now I have financial independence (salary).⁴¹⁶ If the husband treats his wife and his children badly [...], she will question why should she stay under his care [...] the job center will give her a

415 Anthony Keedi, Zeina Yaghi, et al., *A Qualitative Study on War, Masculinities, and Gender Relations with Lebanese and Syrian Refugee Men and Women* (DM Gender Group, 2017), p. 20; Zint, p. 136.

416 All those interviewed use the word "salary" instead of social aid, perhaps because they, especially men, deny classifying themselves as dependent on others and live on state aid. There is also the possibility that this is because of the system in which aid is paid, which resembles that of companies and institutions with their employees.

salary and she can later find work and provide for her children as she does not need him anymore.”⁴¹⁷ This brings us back to the authoritarianism of the man in the house and to his position, which he refuses to change, as reasons stimulating and supporting conflicts in the context of the material independence that women have enjoyed in the German context.

- 2) Disputes over financial independence and matters related to allowance. Another type of dispute that arose between spouses is the wife’s demand for her financial independence,⁴¹⁸ the opening of her own bank account independent of that of the husband’s, and the organization of the household budget. This is one of the most important factors for marital disputes within Syrian families, as Imam ‘Umar⁴¹⁹ and Imam Aḥmad⁴²⁰ pointed out, stressing that many of the conflicts that come before them are related to financial issues. Here we have two contradictory points of view between husbands and wives, as the interlocutors have shown. Interviews show that, from the wives’ point of view, husbands have become stingy and do not give their wives any of their financial rights. They exert control over these finances without granting them a share. From the husbands’ perspective, wives have begun demanding these financial rights without recognizing that they also have obligations and responsibilities in contributing to household expenses. The wives expect to be treated as they were in Syria, where the husband fully provided for them without requiring them to bear any financial responsibility. However, the financial aid granted to the husband alone is never sufficient to cover all household expenses. This contradiction in trends has caused many conflicts between spouses.
- 3) Sending money to help parents in Syria: The majority of the population in Syria is now living below the poverty line because of the war, which has necessitated assistance from family members living abroad. Many of those interviewed spoke of providing such assistance to their families in Syria. What arises from this situation is that by the husband’s

417 Nuremberg, 26 October 2019.

418 When the two parties sign the aid receipt papers with the employee responsible for them, the two parties can choose to deposit the aid in one account (the husband’s) or in two separate accounts, i.e. in the husband’s account and the wife’s account; husbands often choose to deposit in their account only. The same applies to child’s benefits.

419 Nuremberg, 14 January 2020.

420 Nuremberg, 20 December 2019.

control over the family's financial resources he can sometimes send some assistance to his family when money has been saved. In return, the wife demands that her family members also be helped with these funds. Because of the lack of money or the husband's feeling that he is dominant, her demand may be rejected, resulting in disputes between them, often ending with the wife asking her husband for her financial independence. Pastor 'Adnān refers to such a case that ended in the couple's divorce due to their continuing differences over their share of the money and the wife sending aid to her family without her husband's knowledge, which led to her being beaten in one of these disputes, to the intervention of the police, and to the end of their divorce case.⁴²¹

Fāṭima mentions one of her classmates in her language course and how she "fought with her husband over a bank card: Why do you have a bank card and I do not have one? [...] You know [i.e. talking to me] that the guy takes responsibility for his mother, sister, family, I mean he is obliged to send money to his mother [she refers to the wife's protest]. Why did you send it to your mother [i.e. husband's mother], not to my mother!"⁴²² Fāṭima's attitude during her account of her friend's incident with the vision of her husband was that she objects to the wife's first argument by insisting that the husband "was the one who was spending on her" in Syria, so why is she now asking him for her independence. She objects to the second argument that the wife is "a girl [i.e. a female], there are her male brothers, who are involved in spending on their mother." Fāṭima is a model for many women coming from Syrian societies. In addition to her adoption of economic alienation of women, she adopts ideological alienation in which women are "convinced of their inferiority towards men, and firmly believe in their [the men's] superiority, in their control over women, and the latter's subordination to men." In other words, "she accepts her status, the position of oppression she suffers as part of her nature, she has to accept it, and adapt her presence by imprisoning her"⁴²³, as Hijazi wrote. Many of the women who were interviewed blamed wives for provoking marital conflicts, because they were convinced of their previous status in Syrian societies.⁴²⁴ This conviction is further reinforced by the insistence

421 Nuremberg, 28 January 2020.

422 Nuremberg, 27 October 2019.

423 Ḥiğāzī, *At-taḥalluf al-iğtimāī*, p. 217.

424 A position also referred to by Rabo in her study of the Syrian family in urban and rural areas, and she concluded that, although women know about men's mistakes in

of husbands in maintaining women's economic and ideological alienation status. Fāṭima's husband 'Adnān comments about the incident, which his wife recounted: "Unfortunately, this demonstrates a lack of reasoning on the part of women, because it is the man who brought her and her children to Germany." This view of 'Adnān - and like him other interlocutors who shared the same opinion - is also part of his dominant masculine nature in society, which sees himself responsible for the woman/wife, ignoring the great work that the wife was doing inside the house from managing its affairs to raising children, because the fact that "women's domestic labour has no monetary equivalent does indeed help to devalue it, even in their own eyes"⁴²⁵, as Bourdieu wrote.

The general orientation of a segment of women towards this economic independence has undermined men's control on the one hand, but on the other hand it has led to numerous conflicts within the family. Although the economic independence is not real because of its reliance on social aid conditional on preparation for the job market and demanding job searches, it has revealed such multiple conflicts. In the years to come, if women enter the labour market and thereby challenge the patriarchal system, which wants them to stay home, more conflicts may arise. Greenstein and Davis's study, which attempted to monitor the effects of women's power and prestige on divorce rates, revealed that women's labor force participation was associated with high divorce rates.⁴²⁶

4.2.3 Cultural-religious clash

The Syrian and German contexts cannot be separated when discussing cultural-religious factors, nor can these be separated from the status of both men and women in both communities. The cultural-religious factors are reflected in positions of acceptance or rejection of change, and the clashes arise from the conflicting opinions between the spouses towards these positions. In chapter three of this research, when talking about the changes

the family, they often blame other women. See Rabo, "Doing Family": Two Cases in Contemporary Syria'.

425 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 98.

426 Theodore N. Greenstein and Shannon N. Davis, 'Cross-National Variations in Divorce: Effects of Women's Power, Prestige and Dependence', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 2006, 253–73, here p. 269.

in the Syrian family, I noted that women were more receptive to cultural and religious changes than men, which in turn created a kind of tension or conflict between the demands and orientations of the two parties. Syrians in general and men in particular were afraid of the cultural/religious threat, which then triggered a more severe reaction in their treatment of family members as a defensive mechanism against this threat.⁴²⁷ When asked if his role as a husband and father has changed between Syria and Germany, Ṭāriq replied: “This issue is up to the woman, I mean, the husband is a husband, whether he is in Syria or he is in Germany, but it is usually the woman who wants to come here and say that ‘I have rights!’ This question should be asked to a woman. Ask her: How do you find yourself in perspective of your husband? Is it the same thing as when you were in Syria?!”⁴²⁸ Ṭāriq indirectly rejects the idea of his change, but he sees that it is women who have changed in the new reality. Many interviews reveal disputes between spouses caused by religious/cultural clashes between the two parties; the desire of one, often the wife, to change and adapt to the new society; and the other’s rejection of this change.⁴²⁹

Rāma recalls how a Christian family close to them disintegrated as a result of these clashes. The man was accustomed to his authority inside the house in Syria, especially since he came from a tribal society where men had great status and authority. When he came with his family to Germany, he lost control over the family, and his wife rebelled against him. Things became worse because his son had a child from a relationship outside marriage. As a result, the father left his family in Germany and returned to Syria.⁴³⁰ Imād also tells of a family he knows where a husband divorced from his wife because she removed the headscarf, which is something the husband rejected. However later he came back to his wife and had to put up with the new change.⁴³¹ Relatedly, Fāṭima points out how a mother of four daughters wanted along with her daughters to take off the ḥiğāb, but the

427 Hindy, p. 25.

428 Nuremberg, 13 October 2019.

429 In fewer cases it is the opposite, i.e. the wife refuses to change the husband. Some imams pointed out how some wives clash with their husbands as a result of abandoning certain religious/cultural values, such as drinking alcohol or using drugs, etc.

430 Nuremberg, 13 October 2019.

431 Nuremberg, 12 October 2019.

husband refused, and the disputes between them escalated as he beat her. She filed a complaint against him, after which they separated.⁴³²

On the other hand, Amīna also recounts some of the incidents she witnessed, involving disputes between spouses over issues relating to the disrespect of past values and norms by wives, and how these disputes then evolved into husbands beating their wives. She thus adopts the view that the women violated the previous values and norms, in other words, that they are the ones to blame in this case. Because of the high occurrence of such incidents, Imam ‘Umar ranks the cultural clash within couples as one of the most important factors of family disputes. In his view, the husband “refuses to change. He refuses to believe that he is now in another society. He behaves with the same mentality as when he was in his country, whether Syrian or Iraqi or I do not know what, he still insists on this mentality, and this causes suffering; he controls his wife and controls his children and controls their studies and their income, and whatever they do they reach the stage of explosion.”⁴³³ Regarding one conflict in which Imam ‘Umar was involved in order to help solve it, he points out how a major conflict between two spouses took place and led to the wife’s request for divorce. The wife wanted to put a ring in her navel, which the husband rejected completely as he saw it as an imitation of Western values and a violation of the values and norms on which they were raised. Although Imam ‘Umar criticized the dominance of men, in this context he indirectly criticizes the position of the wife who wanted to get divorced from her husband because of such an attitude. Couples generally feel that the family must maintain the previous religious/cultural norms they grew up with. Because of the effects of the German context, some members of families – wives or adult children mostly – abandon some of these norms. The man then feels that his authority, on which the family was founded and under which obedience from his family members is expected, is threatened, thus generating numerous conflicts between family members in general and between spouses in particular.

4.3 External Determinants of Conflict Dynamics

External factors have played an important role in breaking up and undermining patriarchy on the one hand and in influencing people’s behaviour

432 Nuremberg, 27 October 2019.

433 Nuremberg, 14 January 2020.

on the other. Accordingly, new cultural norms and values have emerged that have brought about significant changes that have contributed to the reshaping of the identity of newcomers. These changes were not at the same level, and therefore their consequences for relationships within the family were diverse and different.

4.3.1 The impact of war and forced displacement – violence as a “defense” mechanism

Many Syrian families have experienced the most severe bombings of modern times, and the Syrian war has been the most costly contemporary war financially and, more importantly, at the human level. Many people suffered losses in human lives and personal belongings. In addition, some members of these families, mostly men, were arrested and tortured, leaving significant physical and psychological scars on their souls. The second chapter of this research portrays the causes of displacement through the accounts of the people themselves. In this section, I will only present its direct effects in fueling family conflicts.

Penny Johnson wrote of the war, violence, and asylum experienced by Arab families: “The economic, social, and moral dilemmas of women and their families in sustained conflict are heightened to a great degree when families become refugees, either internally (internally displaced persons or IDPs) or outside their country as refugees or forced migrants.”⁴³⁴ When I ask Sulaimān about the causes of family disputes, he states that, “in a period of war, life was destroyed, everything was destroyed. So, the war dismantled everything that is old; I mean it is not possible, or very difficult, to find someone who is still thinking in old ways. The war has caused a frightening rift for everyone and the general environment. I mean, what was not accepted in Syria, it became normal and traditional on the street.” Sulaimān gives some of the examples he observed, including a coup against the customs, traditions, and societal values that prevailed before the war. In other words, the war dismantled many societal values and traditions, which in turn affected the values and traditions of the family, which is one of the most important social structures in society.

434 Johnson, pp. 473–474.

Ágyad, whom I met many times at home as I was involved in solving his unrelenting problems with his wife repeatedly – by virtue of my friendship with him –, was arrested in Syria three times before coming to Germany. During the interviews he blamed his wife for raising these problems, but he made no secret that his imprisonment and torture in Syria had greatly affected his psyche and actions, which in turn impacted his relationship with his wife, as illustrated in his extreme anger and impatience with some of his wife’s behavior.⁴³⁵ Some of those interviewed tried to treat the “psychological trauma” condition, as in Nirmīn’s case. Her mother, Suzān, recounts that the horror of the bombing, the destruction they witnessed, and the threat to their lives several times is the reason why the relationships of family members (both between spouses and between parents and children) are no longer the same after they have come to Germany.⁴³⁶

Speaking about the causes of conflicts within Syrian families, Imam Aḥmad points out:

“My analysis of the subject is that psychological pressures through war, whether on men or women, even on children, psychological pressures that we have all been through, are very difficult, affecting the husband’s psyche and the psychology of the wife, meaning that the husband has reached a stage where no one can bear anyone, I mean a small problem that is growing and becoming big. It means great pressure. There are people who lost their mothers, their brothers, and their uncles. Some of them arrived here through the sea and they faced deadly dangers to get over here.”

He also recounts one of the incidents when a husband divorced his wife over a trivial clash while he was driving his car.

One of the most important consequences of the effects of war and displacement is the spread of violence, especially against women. In many instances, women were used in the Syrian war as instruments of pressure, humiliation, and violation of opponents’ honor, which is considered one of the most precious cultural values of the family. This is a representation of the masculine mentality prevailing between the conflicting parties in Syria.⁴³⁷ This violence has spread in one way or another to the family as

435 Nuremberg, 10 October 2019.

436 Nuremberg, 3 December 2019.

437 ‘Alyā’ Aḥmad, *Wāq’ almar’at as-sūriya fi al-azma ar-rāhina (The Reality of Syrian Women in Modern Times)* (bayt al-muwāṭin lilnaṣr wa at-tawzī, 2014), p. 49.

a reflection of that reality of external violence. Tuzi wrote in this context: “Throughout the Syrian refugee crisis, domestic violence appeared as the most common expressions of protest masculinity. It ranges from psychological to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.”⁴³⁸

Violence is often treated as one of the reasons for divorce or separation of spouses; it is not seen as a result of other conflicts that have led to it. Data revealed numerous cases of violence in which wives, some of whom had been interviewed, the majority, however, of interlocutors’ acquaintances or observations, had been subjected to violence. German laws on domestic violence are strict, and husbands often refrain from practicing it against their wives for fear of legal consequences. Nonetheless it remained a practice that sometimes took on a severe retaliatory character including some cases of homicide that took place in various cities in Germany. In one case where Agyad requested my intervention to resolve a conflict between him and his wife Rāma, the police car was roaming under the building looking for the house where there was a problem. Apparently, one of the neighbors had reported to the police the loud noises of the couple. When I arrived, I noticed redness around Rāma’s neck and hands. It seems Agyad was trying to silence her so that the police would not hear the loud screaming. While I was trying to calm both sides, Agyad seemed to be outraged and at the height of his anger, and he exclaimed, “If we were in Syria, I would have slaughtered her and stepped over her.”⁴³⁹ I found Rāma crying and showing me the traces of his hands on her body, and despite her wish that the police would come, plus her verbal threats to her husband to call the police, she did not do that.

During Rāma’s interview, she referred to many incidents of violence and recalled her husband’s previous attempts to silence her. This was at the beginning of her arrival in Germany, and she was not knowing that there was a police force to protect her from this violence. “I thought he was trying to silence me so that no one could hear the sounds. I did not know he was afraid of the police.” The concerns of the police were not only for himself but for his daughter (who is from another divorced wife) to be taken from him by the Youth Office (Jugendamt). What was shocking while I was with them was his threat to his wife that, if he lost his daughter, “I will kill you and return to Syria or go to prison [...]. I do not care what will happen.”

438 Tuzi, *Forced Migration and Gender Relations*, p. 9.

439 Often this term is used as a threat in Syrian dialects, not in the true sense of the word.

Ágyad may not have meant what he said at that time because of his rage and him losing control over himself, but the cases of extreme violence that occurred in Germany are clearly illustrated by this incident.

There is also the incident of Abu Marwān, who killed his wife while broadcasting this incident live via Facebook to send a message to the general Syrians, in which he stated, “What I did is an act of deterrence to every woman who thinks of separating from her husband and taking the children from him, after the husband sells all his property and loses everything to get her to Germany.” What he did was “the end of a brave man.”⁴⁴⁰

This violence, especially towards wives, calls for seeking its causes and understanding its motives, especially among men. The data collected highlight many factors that are difficult to separate from the violence during the war, the material and moral losses to which they were subjected, and the journey of forced displacement to other countries, which in turn dismantled gender positions based on masculine domination. As a result, the husbands felt the loss of control and dominance, they feared that their authority and place within the family would be removed; in other words, they felt threat to their masculine identity on which they grew up and which they exercised throughout their lives as an axiom imposed by reality with all its representations around them, from family to school to religious, economic, and political institutions, all of which were built progressively to increase the power and dominance of men. The husband/father will therefore resort to violence as a defensive mechanism to maintain his or her status within the family. This defensive mechanism is not only linked to the threat to his status and image in front of himself but also takes into account in large part the fear of “what will people say about me!” expressed by some interviewees, i.e. the position and reputation of the husband in front of his family and the society to which he belongs. A man’s loss of the “family identity” he knows, and the loss of his economic and social capital, all of that will make him lose his balance, prompting him to try to replace what he has lost with violence against those who are weaker and with less power. The oppression situations to which men are subjected exacerbate their internal hatred, which may explode at any moment. “Violence is the last weapon to restore something that has been lost to oneself [...]. Violence is the last possible language of communication with reality and with others

440 I watched the video that was deleted from most social platforms because it contained manifestations of violence. I have referred to some of the messages he has mentioned. For some details of the case, see Hepfer and Gonzalez.

when one feels helpless [...] and when his conviction is rooted in the failure to persuade others to recognize his being and his value”⁴⁴¹, as Hijazi wrote. Imam ‘Umar pointed out that one of the women was asked by the employee at the Job Center if her husband was beating her. The question was posed in front of the husband. The employee said to her that she could seek assistance from them or other organizations if that happened. As a result, when the husband arrived at the house, he beat the wife and told her, “now you can go to complain.” His violence is an indirect result of his sense that the employee is threatening his authority and challenging it, and he wanted to prove to his wife that no one could threaten his status, dominance, and control within the family.

Many adult children interviewed noted their parents’ frequent anger at home because of the pressures they are now experiencing after losing everything. A study conducted in Canada confirms the impact of these traumas on marital relations in Canada and how they have widened the gap between the spouses.⁴⁴² In some cases, the transmission of bad family news and what is happening in Syria continues to affect marital relations in some cases observed during fieldwork.

Psychological pressures relate not only to painful experiences, such as war and the journey of displacement experienced by individuals, but also to anxiety and fear of the unknown, of the challenges and obstacles they face in the future country, of discrimination or racism, language learning, job search, of the threat and disappearance of cultural identity.⁴⁴³ These aspects were discussed in the previous chapter.

4.3.2 German context – new environment effects

Imam ‘Umar said:

“Migration makes you face new challenges [...] the challenge of living in a new society, i.e. a society radically different from the original society from which man emigrated, culturally different, religiously different, linguistically different, this difference makes the immigrant person face

441 Hiğāzī, *At-taḥalluf al-iğtimāī*, p. 165.

442 Baobaid et al., p. 29.

443 Ibrahim Aref Kira and Pratyusha Tummala-Narra, ‘Psychotherapy with Refugees: Emerging Paradigm’, *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 20.5 (2015), 449–467, here pp. 452–453, 460.

a conflict [conflict of existence]. Let us put it this way, how can I find myself faced with something that is totally different from the thing I grew up on, and lived on?”

The German context has played a major role in reshaping Syrians in general and women in particular for their identities. In this section of the chapter I will point out some of the dimensions that played this role in reshaping the new identity of the arrived, and I will look at the clash that has taken place within Syrian families as a result of this process.⁴⁴⁴

4.3.2.1 Legal dimension

Given the presence of Islam as a religion in the public life among Syrians in general, Article 2 of the Constitution of Syria states that “the religion of the President of the Republic is Islam”, and the second paragraph states that “Islamic jurisprudence is a major source of legislation.”⁴⁴⁵ However, “[l]aws do not operate in a vacuum and have to be understood in context, not only its historical and socio-political context but also its cultural context.”⁴⁴⁶ Therefore, the mixing of social/religious norms in Syrian societies will be reflected in the Constitution and in family laws in many ways. I will refer here to three main points relating to the Constitution:

- First is to emphasize the importance of the family, as the Constitution states that “the family is the nucleus of society and the law preserves its entity and strengthens its ties.”⁴⁴⁷
- Second: To emphasize that marriage is the basic form of family establishment, the Constitution stipulates that “the state protects and encourages marriage and removes the physical and social obstacles that hinder it.”⁴⁴⁸
- Third: The state guarantees freedom of religion and religious communities in Syria, as the constitution states that “the personal status of religious communities is protected and observed.”⁴⁴⁹ Personal status laws

444 Nuremberg, 14 January 2020.

445 § 1, para. 1–2 of Constitution of Syrian Arab Republic.

446 Esther Van Eijk, *Family Law in Syria. A Plurality of Laws, Norms, and Legal Practices* (Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), Faculty of Humanities, 2013), p. 115.

447 § 20, para. 1 of Constitution of Syrian Arab Republic.

448 § 20, para. 2 of Constitution of Syrian Arab Republic.

449 § 3, for. 4 of Constitution of Syrian Arab Republic.

affect a person's personal life and regulate his or her family relations in the event of his or her death, so compromising them is a clash with religious/social norms of people's private lives. In order to avoid any social/religious clashes, this privacy of Syrian societies has been maintained by successive regimes. This is based on the "system of sects" that France⁴⁵⁰ established during its mandate in Syria.⁴⁵¹ In the result there are two things: 1) We find a diversity of personal status provisions in Syria, where there are eight personal status laws,⁴⁵² which explains the text of the previous article of the Constitution. 2) These laws are derived from various religious and sectarian laws in Syria. It is the result of a nature that observes the personal status of religious communities.

Despite several amendments to personal status laws, they remained essentially conservative in the privacy of religious communities and sects in Syria. Kinship, descent, and religious status have played a major role. Van Eijk noted this through her qualitative study of Syrian personal status law, writing that "[k]inship or descent through the father's lineage is a key feature of patriarchal Arab families" and that "[k]inship determines one's religion and with that also one's status in family law."⁴⁵³ As a result, she believes that the patriarchal family model in Syria is generally enshrined in all personal laws, be it Muslim or Christian.⁴⁵⁴ Syrian family laws, therefore, face a lot of criticism as discriminatory between men and women⁴⁵⁵ and for maintaining patriarchy or men's authority in the family.⁴⁵⁶ It also maintains

450 This legal pluralism has existed since the Ottoman era when the imperial authorities recognized the right of the various sects, the 'millets', to regulate their internal affairs. For more details, see Annika Rabo, 'Syrian Transnational Families and Family Law', in *From Transnational Relations to Transnational Laws* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 33.

451 Van Eijk, p. 2; Da'd Mwsā, *Qawānīn al-aḥwāl aš-šaḥṣiyya fi sūryā (Personal Status Laws in Syria)* (Beirut: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2018), p. 84.

452 For Muslims, Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Evangelical Denominational, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Eastern Church, and Religious Community System.

453 Van Eijk, p. 118.

454 Ibid.

455 Such as patriarchy in divorce. See Mathias Rohe, 'Islamisches Familienrecht in Deutschland im Wandel', in *Beiträge zum islamischen Recht XI*, ed. by Irene Schneider and Thoralf Hanstein (Leipziger Beiträge zur Orientforschung 34) (Frankfurt: PL Academic Research, 2016), p. 77.

456 Mwsā; pp. 2–3; Rābiṣṭ an-nisā' as-sūriyāt, *At-tamūz fi qawānīn al-aḥwāl aš-šaḥṣiyya fi sūryia (Discrimination in Personal Status Laws in Syria)* (Rābiṣṭ an-nisā' as-sūriyāt, 2009), p. 8.

a “family ideology” that regulates family life in a standard way, which expects the wife to obey and perform her homework in exchange for the man’s support for his family.⁴⁵⁷ These social/cultural/religious implications affect not only the enactment of laws but also their enforcement. Through widespread corruption and nepotism in Syria’s justice systems, family relations and patriarchy play significant roles in granting greater rights to men at the expense of women in many respects while enforcing the law.⁴⁵⁸

Thus, as is the case with all modern countries, Syria has inscribed “all the fundamental principles of the androcentric vision in the rules defining the official status of the citizens.”⁴⁵⁹ The Syrian state has been keen to establish masculinity or the patriarchal family through its institutions, particularly with regard to family laws,⁴⁶⁰ to make “the patriarchal family the principle and model of the social order interpreted as a moral order, based on the absolute pre-eminence of men over women, adults over children.”⁴⁶¹

4.3.2.2 Legal Protection

As Syrians move from this complex and intertwined legal situation with Syria’s multiple standards to Germany, the clash in this aspect is clearly emerging with the new laws. Germany is a state where the law enjoys great independence and integrity. Men and women are considered equal in rights, as stipulated in the German Constitution.⁴⁶² In another separate paragraph of the Constitution it states that every mother deserves the protection and care of society.⁴⁶³ Women in general and mothers in particular

457 Van Eijk, p. 120.

458 In one case a wife was beaten, her nose broken, and the children were taken from her by the husband. When the wife turned to the police and paid bribes to arrest her husband, although this was her right, the husband paid more to the police, took the children and fled. In another case, a woman was stripped of her property after the death of her husband. See Alghoul, pp. 18, 20.

459 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 87.

460 Anthropologist Annika Rabo wrote, “The Syrian state gives equal access to education for both boys and girls, and salaries and social benefits in the public sector are equal for men and women. But there are many other policies and routines which serve to underline the ideal patriarchal family.” Rabo, ‘Syrian Transnational Families and Family Law’. p. 34. See also Rabo, “‘Doing Family’: Two Cases in Contemporary Syria’.

461 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 87.

462 § 3, para. 2 of German constitution.

463 § 6, para. 4 of German constitution.

are therefore particularly protected by the majority of State institutions. This has generated a strong feeling among Syrian women in general with regard to this protection after their arrival in Germany, especially since the law in Syria is either in some aspects related to the personal status law, which does not equate men and women, or its enforcement is subject to the norms and structures of patriarchal societies, apart from corruption in the judicial system often biased to the strongest authority, thus often biased towards men, as I mentioned above. Ğanā refers in this context, “I know many people who were divorced [...]. Because I [i.e. the wife] have arrived in Europe, you [i.e. her husband] can no longer oppress me anymore [...]. I feel that the law was on my side, I feel strong.”⁴⁶⁴

Data revealed two contradictory gender-based visions regarding the legal dimension. In general, husbands believe that women “have a confusion between the concept of freedom and laws on one hand and the concept of when to use this freedom and laws in the other hand and what are my rights and duties.”⁴⁶⁵ Consequently, they believe that there has been legal exploitation by wives against their husbands, daring to file complaints against them to the police even if the complaint did not have its legal justification.

Wā'el recounts how his wife accused him at the police station of beating her, which he allegedly did not do, but that one of her friends instigated her to complain against him to take custody of their two children after they decided to separate.⁴⁶⁶ Sāra tells of one of the wives who separated from her husband following multiple complaints against him, one accusing him of beating her and another of raping her. Sāra points out that this wife beat herself and then accused her husband of doing so in order to separate from him. The separation took place, and the husband subsequently returned to Syria, leaving his wife and daughter in Germany. Imam 'Umar recounts another case:

“A man swore that his wife had lied to the police and had told them that he had hit her, even though he had never hit her and had never done anything to her. They disagreed on something [...] she wounded herself and accused her husband of doing it. She took advantage of the law; she used this cover immorally.”

464 Nuremberg, 19 January 2020.

465 This is Aġyad's view, and that view is shared by many husbands.

466 Nuremberg, 7 January 2020.

At the opposite end of this vision, many wives believe that, because of the oppression and humiliation of some wives, they were able today to reclaim some of their rights by the law, which may also take on a retaliatory character. Speaking about the causes of the conflicts, Amīna recalls that “the woman is the one who exceeded the limit, the woman here, when she came here, had a deep hatred”, and when I asked her why this hatred, she replied “that her husband is not good with her.” Imam Aḥmad recalls one of the cases before him, in which one of the wives took money that her husband brought from Syria, took his children, and filed a case against her husband, after which he was informed that he was forbidden to approach her, and the reason is also quoted as “revenge of the days she lived in Syria with him” because of his ill-treatment of her.

4.3.2.3 Effects of different family laws

There exists another aspect of the legal dimension that encouraged spouses in general and wives in particular to make the decision to separate without fear of the consequences of the decision. This factor relates to the differences in Syrian and German family law, especially in both divorce and custody.

Syria’s personal status law states that “the subject of divorce is a woman in a valid marriage, or an iddat ‘mu’tadda مُعْتَدَّة’ (waiting period) of a revocable divorce.”⁴⁶⁷ This means that divorce is a right of a man who can exercise it towards his wife. He can delegate this right to her, i.e. give her the right to divorce herself.⁴⁶⁸ Because the unilateral divorce right is granted to husbands only, it was not easy for women to obtain divorce. Women used to resort to Mukāhla’ah “Khul” (agreed divorce, whereby a woman initiates the process of divorce through courts)⁴⁶⁹ or to ask a judge to rule for separation.⁴⁷⁰ The problem of Mukhāla’ah is that it imposes the approval of both spouses as a condition for the separation. “Each of the spouses has the right to retract his approval before the other party gives his agreement.”⁴⁷¹

467 § 86 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

468 § 87 para. 3 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

469 For more about this concept, see Al-Hibri, pp. 21–24.

470 Separation is possible in very special cases, such as infectious diseases or physical illnesses that prevent sex, the long absence of a husband (more than one year), his imprisonment, or his inability to maintain his home.

471 § 96 para. 2 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

Seeking separation through a judge of court requires the presentation of proofs related to sickness, absence, or the inability of the husband to spend and provide for the wife,⁴⁷² or the proof that one party has inflicted harm on the other in a way that renders the continuation of normal marital life impossible.⁴⁷³ That is, separation through a judge cannot be resorted to at the wife's unjustified request.

Amīna points out these difficulties: "It is easier to die than to try to obtain divorce through a court. There is no judge who would rule for her in less than five to six months, or in seven to eight months as she needs to present proofs, and wait for the court to report her request to the husband, they must attempt to report to him four times [...]. All of this mean endless torment." However, despite the husband's ability to prolong the period, this is not the determining factor in women's reluctance to file for divorce. Even as the husband procrastinates, the duration of obtaining a divorce document in Germany may be longer than in Syria.⁴⁷⁴ The judge gives the parties in Syria at least a month in the hope of reconciliation,⁴⁷⁵ while German law requires the actual separation of the couple for one year - and may last up to three years - before starting divorce proceedings, unless "the continuation of the marriage would be an unreasonable hardship for the petitioner for reasons that lie in the person of the other spouse."⁴⁷⁶

Through the data, it appears that the economic, social, or legal consequences of a divorce application are the determining factors in abstaining from filing for divorce. The most important of these factors in this context can be noted as: 1) The lack of economic autonomy of women in general. This factor has been discussed. 2) Fear of shame culture, in the words of Imam Ḥālīd, "the problem of societal perception." This factor will be discussed below. 3) Loss of custody of children. Because this factor is linked to the legal dimension, it will be discussed in this context.

Raġā' did not want to emigrate and come to Germany. But because of conflicts with her husband, she changed her mind; the reason, she recalls, is "my husband's threats that he will take the children." Raġā' also adds, "You know, the law in Syria is always with the man, there are always bribes, and

472 § 105, 106, 109, 110 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

473 § 12 para. 1 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

474 It appeared in some cases of interlocutors in which the couple has separated that the party wishing to secede has resorted to the legal courts in Syria to obtain a divorce.

475 § 88 para. 1 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

476 § 1565 para. 2 of German Civil Code.

the woman in the marital relationship is always oppressed. The husband can take the children. Not like here [i.e. in Germany], where the woman controls her husband [...]. And without a doubt, the children will be with the mother.” Raġā’ recognizes the significant differences between Syrian and German law with regard to custody not only legislatively but also in the integrity of law enforcement.⁴⁷⁷

In the context of the Syrian personal status law with regard to this aspect, it is necessary to differentiate between custody (*ḥaḍāna*) and the guardianship (*wilāya*). The Syrian Personal Status Act amended by Law No. 4 of 2019 states that “the right of custody is for the mother, then to the father, then to the mother’s mother [...] then to the father’s mother [...] then to the sister [...] then to aunts from the side from the mother, then for aunts from the side of the father.”⁴⁷⁸ This article shows that the right is primarily limited to females, with the exception of the father included in this new amendment.⁴⁷⁹ The custody right ends by completing the boy/male or female⁴⁸⁰ 15 years of age.⁴⁸¹ The new Law 20, which includes amending some articles of the Personal Status Act on this article, added an important paragraph, namely that after this age the teenage child chooses to stay with one of his parents; therefore the father no longer has the right to demand the extradition of the child to him after the end of the custody period as stipulated in Article 146, the third paragraph of the previous law.⁴⁸²

Although Syria’s personal status law does not have a specific definition of custody, Article 137, which provides for the conditions of the custodial parent, notes that there should be “the ability to raise, care for, and preserve the health and morality if the child under their custody.” Although there

477 Many other legal materials could be exploited in the father’s favor, such as the removal of custody from the mother by marrying a foreign man, for example, as stipulated in Article 137.

478 § 139 para. 1 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

479 The duration of the custody has been significantly amended. Law 59 of 1953 provided for “the custody period ends with the completion of the 9-years-old for the boy, and the 11-years-old for the girl.” Article 146 was then amended by Law 18 of 2003 to become “custody ends with the completion of the 13-year-old for the boy, nd the 15-year-old for the girl.”

480 Most laws for other religions and communities in Syria indicate that the custody period for the mother ends with the completion of the boy seven years and the girl nine years. See, Article 130 of the Armenian Orthodox Community; Article 82 of the Evangelical Denominational Courts; Article 182 of the Greek Orthodox.

481 § 146 for. 1 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

482 § 146 for. 3 of Syrian Personal Status Law, Law No. 19.

is this right of the mother to custody, which appears to be a victory for a woman's right to her children, it is unfair to the child by denying him the care of his father and his presence in his life.⁴⁸³ It also involves an extension of the masculine symbolism that sees childcare - especially as it includes breastfeeding, which is a female job - as a cultural act, and therefore custody in the early stages of a child's life was legally considered a female task.⁴⁸⁴ What indicates that this victory is illusory is that the guardianship over the minor is always for males. It is the right of the father, then the grandfather, and then the male agnate.⁴⁸⁵ The guardianship includes "the power to discipline, provide medical care, educate, direct to money-paying craft, consent to marriage, and other matters of care for the minor."⁴⁸⁶ As long as the guardianship includes power, it is a male task that is usually not owned by females. This guardianship applies to Muslims and non-Muslims, contrary to custody that is usually determined by multiple personal status laws.⁴⁸⁷ This reflects the patriarchy that permeates Syrian societies.

In contrast to this legal reality in Syria, women generally found not only protection and care in Germany but the legal safety of not losing their children. German law as a rule grants joint custody to parents.⁴⁸⁸ If they disagree, the court decides on custody, which may be for the parents or one of them, primarily on the child's interest.⁴⁸⁹ This means that women are generally almost certain that they will have custody if the husband is violent with them or their children, a gap that some women have tried to use either legitimately or illegally with their husband to obtain custody.⁴⁹⁰

483 Of course, the father has the right to see his children through *irā'a* (إراءة). However, the law does not regulate how the right to visit and see is actually implemented, leaving it to customs and traditions (Art. 148 para. 1). See Van Eijk, pp. 142–143.

484 Patriarchy is clearly the law on this point in most personal status laws in Syria. For example, Article 122 of the Catholic Communities Personal Status Act stipulates that the most important rights and duties of parental authority are: breastfeeding of children, support, save, raise, discipline them, and manage and exploit their money and hopes, etc. Article 123: "Breastfeeding is for the mother. Other rights and duties of parental authority are initially with the father."

485 § 21, 170 for. 1, 2 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

486 § 170 for. 3 of Syrian Personal Status Law.

487 Van Eijk, p. 78.

488 "The parents have the duty and the right to care for the minor child (parental custody)."; § 1626, para. 1 of German Civil Code.

489 § 1628.

490 § 1628.

In addition, German law does not distinguish between custody and guardianship, as “Parental custody includes the representation of the child. The parents represent the child jointly.”⁴⁹¹ Thus, with the wife/mother’s custody, she will receive, in turn, the money provided as the child’s benefits (Kindergeld). Some of those interviewed believe that this money was also a source of conflict and a motive for obtaining divorce for some families, which brings us back to the trends on the financial issues that have already been discussed.

4.3.2.4 Socio-cultural context

The context of freedoms in German societies and the freedom from social control that existed in the context of Syrian societies helped to free families in general and women in particular relatively from the many constraints that defined the individual’s actions within the system of values and culture of the communities to which they belonged. I will refer to some of the dimensions associated with this system with regard to conflicts through data collected from fieldwork.

4.3.2.4.1 Extramarital relations

Imam ‘Umar considers extramarital relations to be the biggest cause of marital disputes, which have led many of them to divorce. These extramarital relations are difficult to observe statistically in Syrian societies; they occur, but they are hidden.⁴⁹² The one who wants to do it does not show it, especially women, as it threatens their lives and harms the reputation of the whole family. As Christa Salamandra writes in her anthropological study in Damascus: “The appearance of sexual purity becomes a form of capital for a young woman. Its absence can be disastrous for her future prospects. It can also become ammunition for opposing families to hurl at their enemies. In order to preserve their chastity capital, young women should not be seen interacting with men, particularly one-to-one, before they are engaged.”⁴⁹³

491 § 1629 para. 1.

492 “Although premarital social and even sexual contact between men and women is not unknown, discretion is key.” Salamandra, p. 51.

493 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

In addition, the Syrian Penal Code punishes infidelity with imprisonment from one month to one year.⁴⁹⁴ This cover-up and caution against its commission are gradually dissipating in the German context. Nevertheless the question arises here: What factors have encouraged these marital betrayals in the German context? Data have revealed a number of reasons that can help understand the causes of this phenomenon.

- 1) Margin of freedom, male domination. Imam Aḥmad believes that women “have exploited the margin of freedom granted to them in a spoiled manner.” Such exploitation he sees with some women in Germany who “understood [as] freedom that, even if they were married to a man, they had the right to befriend another man and betray her husband.” Imam Aḥmad recounts one of the disputes between a couple, in which he interfered to solve it. In this case, the husband complained that “his wife had a lover, and the husband was suspicious, and when he saw the messages on WhatsApp, finally, she confessed.” When Imam Aḥmad met with this wife, he tried to understand the reasons why she betrayed her husband, which led the wife to complain: “Since we were in Syria he was unjust to me, and he used to go to Lebanon for two or three months, and at the same time he put his mother with me to take care of her. In return, he did not take care of us.” Speaking about the causes of the conflicts, ‘Imād pointed out how one of his relatives’ families separated because of mutual accusations between the two parties. The wife claimed that her husband beat and insulted her, and the husband claimed that she was in relationships with other men.⁴⁹⁵

Injustice or dissatisfaction within the family is undoubtedly one of the most important incentives for a wife to seek love, passion, attention, and respect - that she does not find from her husband - outside her marital relationship, and because of the great restrictions imposed in Syrian societies, especially on women, whether in terms of gender relations with each other or by having sexual relations outside the marriage system, this was not readily available. In other words, the margin of freedom and protection for women, their exposure to injustice or “arranged marriage”, as Amīna pointed out, are factors that cannot be separated from each other. Salmā tells of two of her friends who divorced their husbands after falling in love with other people, taking

494 § 474 of the Syrian Penal Code.

495 Nuremberg, 12 October 2019.

advantage of the space of freedom they had, arguing that their husbands did not treat them properly.

- 2) Long periods of separation of the spouses. I noted in chapter two that the cost of a physical asylum trip and its seriousness often prompted men to endure the hardship of travelling to Germany, hoping to apply for family reunification and to meet with them again quickly. Because of the large number of requests, many have been delayed for long periods, some of which have reached two years or more. This long wait between the spouses prompted the parties, or one of them, to look for satisfaction with their emotional or sexual needs. ‘Imād points out that one of the husbands had a girlfriend while waiting for his family to be reunited with his family. When the Syrian wife arrived, he told her about the girlfriend. The wife forgave him and told him to forget about it. “But he confessed that he does not want to leave his girlfriend. He left his two children and wife and married his girlfriend after he divorced the Syrian wife.” The long absence has created a rift in communication between the spouses, each looking for alternatives that satisfy their needs. Imam ‘Umar states that it is not only the period of absence that played this role, but “even during the period of presence there is contact with an open society. The channels of communication are very easy, and if there is not some kind of self-censorship, no kind of caution, no kind of scruple, if we want to call it ‘religious influence’ or ‘moral scruples’ [...] – what is easier than seduction? This is also a reason for this [i.e. disputes] and then divorce.”
- 3) Long stay in asylum complexes. The stay of large numbers of families, young people, and girls in the centers prepared to receive them, where families also often lose much of their privacy, has led to the opening of channels of communication between men and women that have not been so common in Syrian societies. This has also been helped by the availability of modern technology and social media in the new context and by the absence of societal control as it existed in the Syrian context. Speaking about the causes of marital disputes while staying at the camp, Ğanā recalls that “there are betrayals, families together, men I do not know what happened to them, and women I do not know what happened to them, there are betrayals that we saw with our eyes.”

Many of the interviewers on infidelity have shown their diverse understanding of this concept, in which its connotations expand or narrow from person to person. What is infidelity at one party, such as a wife going out

with someone else alone, may be acceptable and normal for someone else. This brings us back to the social environment that these families come from, which plays a major role in defining this concept. Many of these betrayals may be emotional, not sexual, but they are totally unacceptable to some of them according to the religious and cultural norms and values on which they grew up.

Wāl has no problem if his wife “at a moment of weakness” has a sexual relationship with another man, because in his view she is “a possible human being who mistakes”, while he has a big problem if her relationship with another man is emotional. On the contrary, the majority of Syrian societies, as the interviewees have shown, consider sexual infidelity to be unforgivable, and if betrayals on “non-physical” social media have in many cases led to the separation of the couple, how about physical betrayal! Nevertheless, treason in all its forms remains more problematic when it is a woman, and what may be acceptable to men may not be acceptable to women at all. Imād comments about this and says, “Why do they look at the guy as a young man! I mean, he can do whatever he wants, but the woman, if she does this thing [i.e. infidelity], it is too much.” It is a problem that is widespread in many societies around the world, and several studies have found that “the most frequent cause of wife battering and wife killing is male sexual jealousy.”⁴⁹⁶

However, through its legal protection of personal freedoms, the new German context dismantled many of the restrictions of hegemony over women and dedicated them to not fearing the consequences of men’s jealousy; they had the audacity to reveal many of the things they feared to do in the context of Syrian societies.

4.3.2.4.2 Freedom from the shame culture

The concept of “shame” in Syrian societies is strong in attendance and derives its strength from many religious, cultural, customs, and traditional norms. Both the community and the family try to preserve them through socialization and family. Many Arab societies consider it a shame for a

496 Todd K. Shackelford and David M. Buss, ‘Cues to Infidelity’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23.10 (1997), 1034–45; see also David M. Buss, ‘The Evolution of Desire’, *PsycCRITIQUES*, 40.7 (2004); Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, ‘Evolutionary Social Psychology and Family Homicide’, *Science*, 242.4878 (1988), 519–24.

wife to divorce her husband. The attachment of the status of “divorced” to women is also a disadvantage, and this may affect the reputation of the family itself, as they are perceived to be not suitable for mingling with.⁴⁹⁷ Many women, therefore, refrain from seeking divorce or separation through court, despite sometimes her husband’s ill-treatment of her. Speaking about the causes of marital disputes, Sāmīr points out that “in Syria there are many women who live with their husbands, although there is no love for them, they live because society rejects them as divorced. Here [i.e. in Germany], society accepts her as a divorced person, and she can marry once, twice, or three times, and it is normal.” What Sāmīr mentioned is related to a trend among Syrian societies in dealing with the divorced woman, as she faces relative societal revulsion and control over her behavior after she lost her virginity. Also her chances of remarrying become very low, as it is considered culturally shameful for a single person to be engaged to her.

All these factors are barriers that prevent women from seeking divorce even if they are not satisfied or happy in their marriage. Sāra refers to this culture as follows:

“In our norms and our societies we consider her as she is a divorced woman, so no one approaches her, she becomes accountable for her trips and going out, since she is divorced and can do what she wants [i.e. sexual relations outside the marriage system] without any objection. She is not like a girl, because the girl has nothing to do with this thing [i.e. virginity prevents her] [...]. Do you understand me? So, the women had to be patient.”⁴⁹⁸

Here we have the transformation of women into a body that is a symbol or a center of honor and chastity, where women lose their freedom for their decisions, and they lose “control of the production of their own image”⁴⁹⁹ in Lee Bartky’s expression in the context of her talk about the physical alienation of female women. The German context has removed most of these barriers; societal censorship is no longer the same, women are no longer afraid to be called divorced in a culture where they see no shame for a divorced and where their chances of remarrying are more possible than before. In other words, the new context removed the heteronomy or subordination that used to form women in symbolic objects that exist for

497 Šāfi‘ī, pp. 111, 265.

498 Nuremberg, 7 December 2019.

499 Bartky, p. 42.

the gaze of others, and in turn it constituted the principle of dispositions according to which women act; as a result, however, their ability is formed to self-denigration and to embody social judgments on themselves in the form of physical embarrassment and timidity.⁵⁰⁰ Imam Ḥālid summarizes the status of women by comparing them between two communities:

“Bad talk and the traditional view of divorce in our Arab societies make women accept the state of oppression. They are afraid to be called divorced by the society [...]. They are afraid of people’s looks and talk. But when a woman comes to Germany, a society with freedom, and this view does not exist, and she knows that even if she is divorced, the state will support her and will give her a salary, with which she can lead a normal life, why then wouldn’t she ask for divorce? A woman stays with her husband in our Arab countries for two reasons: the first is that she has no source of income or livelihood except the money her husband brings, so she accepts to remain oppressed in exchange for living, eating, drinking, and living in his home. The second reason is to avoid the society’s view of her as a divorced woman.”⁵⁰¹

Salmā comes from a poor family, but because she married a financially well-off person who helped her have her own clothing store, this allowed her to mingle with the relatively “rich” class in Syria. When discussing a “culture of shame” with her, Salmā points to a very important issue, relating to the levels – intensity or weakness – of the impact of this culture according to the social class in which people are economically classified. Salmā believes that the shame culture is not practiced or applied except on the poor or needy.

“I socialised with people with different social levels in Syria. Many have no shame. They betrayed their husbands, got divorced, and remarried ten times, they do not have haram, they do not care about reputation, and they do not have it. But for poor people, you feel everything is wrong, and everything is forbidden, all the laws in life apply to them; in my opinion, I saw it like this. I mean because I mingle with both classes. You see a girl from a rich family getting divorced, and then getting engaged many times – why is this not a shame? Is she not divorced? Why is it that if a poor girl divorced – it would be a shame and humiliating, etc. Can you deny this fact?”

500 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, pp. 66–67.

501 Nuremberg 05 March 2020.

There is no doubt that the economic situation plays a major role in mitigating or aggravating the impact of the shame culture on the family, as the capital of the poor classes shifts from physical capital to the moral capital, which is their reputation, and the loss of this reputation means losing their place in society, thereby ostracizing them. By contrast the rich compensate their physical capital for this reputation and thus maintain their moral capital through the power they acquire through their physical capital. However, the effects of the shame culture depend not only on the economic dimension of the family but also on the religion or sect to which the family belongs or on the family title, because many families in Syria have positions of power through their political bonds or through the center of their power, like some extended tribes that own their own human and economic reservoir.⁵⁰²

4.3.2.4.3 Family intervention – and loss of extended family

In Syria, once they are married, the wife or husband are not separated from their extended families. Although the rate of couples living with the extended family in the same house has declined, the husband's or wife's family's involvement in the couple's lives does not stop. The question arises in this context: What does this intervention from the higher structure of the family, represented in parents, or from equal level, as brothers and sisters, entail for the new structure that wants to start a family (i.e. adult children/husbands and wives)?⁵⁰³ This intervention takes many directions affecting the conflict process:

- 1) Interference with the decision of marriage in which pressure may be exerted on the parties or on one of them to accept the other, often contrary to the wishes of one of them.⁵⁰⁴
- 2) Interference in the inner life of the family can come along with the type of housing, independent or with the parents of the husband, or with

502 In the previous chapter, I referred to some of the factors that influenced the process of change on Syrians, and some of those factors may be significantly related to the effects of the defect culture.

503 I mentioned it earlier; see Barakāt, *Al-muğtama' al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, p. 194.

504 Aš-Šbūl, p. 678.

the interference in the reproduction or upbringing of children, personal behavior, eating and drinking, or visits.⁵⁰⁵

Family interventions result in two contradictory trends. On the one hand, this intervention provokes disputes between spouses due to conflicting visions and interests between the parents of the husband and wife. Studies in several Arab countries have shown that the intervention of parents is one of the most important reasons for divorce.⁵⁰⁶ In contrast to this negative role of parental authority over spouses, the extended families of the parties try to maintain the marital bond, which is often exercised on women for many reasons, for example, social reasons related to the family's reputation, an economy associated with difficulties, or difficulty in bearing their expenses and the maintenance of their children.⁵⁰⁷

Data revealed that the process of family intervention became less severe in the German context due to the spatial divergence between families caused by forced displacements that led to the fragmentation of many extended families inside and outside Syria. As a result, the negative and positive role played by the extended family has diminished. However, some cases of divorce or separation of spouses have been observed as a result of negative parental intervention, i.e., interference has played a role in fueling disputes between spouses. Amīna points out how she was verbally divorced⁵⁰⁸ from her husband twice because of the interventions of her

505 Fahmī Ḥaẓawī, 'Al-'asbāb al-ḡtimā'iya aa al-ḡtiṣādiya llṭalāq fi šmāl al-'urdun', *al-'ulūm al-'insāniya wa al-ḡtimā'iya*, 34.1 (2007), p. 74.

506 Aš-Šbūl, p. 677; Al-Naḡdawī, p. 53; Zinṭ, pp. 103–104; Yaḥyā 'Abd al-Ḥuḍr, 'Asbāb aṭ-ṭlāq fi al-muḡtama' al-kuwaiti min wḡhat naẓar al-muṭallaqāt' ('Reasons for Divorce in Kuwaiti Society from the Perspective of Divorced Women'), *Al-Mḡalla al-'urduniya lil'ulūm al-ḡtimā'iya*, 5.3 (2012), p. 335; Ḥaẓawī, p. 74; Bahā' Ad-dīn Turkīya, 'Aṭ-ṭalāq fi al-quṭr al-'arabī as-sūrī min 2000–2009' ('Divorce in the Syrian Arab Republic between 2000 and 2009'), *Maḡalat Ḡami'at Dimašq*, 31.3 (2015), pp. 168, 187.

507 A quantitative study of a sample of 600 families tried to monitor the causes and repercussions of divorce in Syria, concluding that 52% of the parents' interventions directly caused conflicts and therefore led to divorce, whereas 20% were indirect interventions. The rate of parental intervention to prevent divorce was 18%. Turkīya, p. 168. The original study is quoted in Naḡwā Qaššāb and Raḡdā' al-'Aḥmad, *Aṭ-ṭalāq asbābuh wa mun'akasātih* (*Divorce. Causes and Consequences*) (al-'ittiḥād al-'ām an-nisā'i, 1998).

508 It should be noted that, in accordance with Article 36, 87, 91, 94, 119, 120 of Syrian Personal Status Act derived from Islamic law, a man is entitled to divorce three times, whether verbal or written. The wife can return to her husband after the first and second divorce, but she has no right to return to the husband after the third

mother-in-law (who came to visit them for days that may last for months) in her entry and exit from the house and in her cooking and in many details of her life, which led to her husband's suspicion of her "because of the many things she would tell about me (i.e. her mother-in-law). This led to intense disputes and disagreement. I then dressed up because I wanted to get out of the house, I wanted to go walk in the street, and then he took the oath of divorce to divorce me if I got out of the house. I am of a very stubborn type, I went out, it was the first divorce."⁵⁰⁹ The second divorce was due to her mother-in-law accusing her of not being clean and cooking her what she did not like with the intention of disturbing her.

Through these incidents we can see the process of parents interfering with the small details of the couple's lives. We witness the feelings of the husband's parents in particular, who think that the wife should respect all their wishes and not violate them. They feel like they have a right to appreciation, respect, and obedience, which is difficult for many wives to bear. This provokes many conflicts and clashes between spouses, or between spouses and parents.⁵¹⁰

Husbands also suffer from the interventions of the wife's family. Ṭāriq recalls how from the first day of his life with his wife he suffered from the interventions of her mother and how his wife was telling her mother all the details of their lives. To make matters worse, his wife is the only adult girl in her family, which has increased her family's attachment to her and their unwillingness to break up with her. Ṭāriq claims that her family pressured her heavily to break up with him and persuaded her to return to Syria with them as they did not like the situation in Germany. Because the wife was attached to her family and did not want to disobey her parents, she decided to return to Syria. Ṭāriq claims that his wife filed a divorce suit in the Syrian courts, accusing him of beating her and being stingy, although these are reportedly untrue allegations. Ṭāriq appears to be not the type to resort to violence, but I have noticed his keen material concerns, which may be interpreted as stingy, a nature that wives in Syrian societies in general hate. Ṭāriq, however, recalls his wife's crying about this decision at a meeting of

divorce until she marries another man and then divorces her, with a new contract and dowry.

509 This is a picture of a pending divorce that does not occur if the husband intends to induce anything or refrain from anything. It is considered an oath in accordance with Article 90 of the Personal Status Act, which has taken the opinion of some jurists that the pending divorce does not take place.

510 Nuremberg, 24 February 2020.

a mediator organized by his family in an attempt to resolve the dispute with the wife and her family, which he interpreted as meaning that the return to Syria was a decision made by the wife under the pressure of her father and mother, therefore not being her own decision.⁵¹¹

In exchange for this negative intervention of the parents, some cases were observed in which the families intervened to prevent divorce, as Ṭāriq's family did. Sāra also stated that her uncle had mediated and succeeded in resolving the dispute between her father and mother, but the disputes soon re-emerged and her mother filed for divorce.

4.3.2.4.4 Freedom from arranged marriage

Arranged marriage is a natural consequence of parents' interference in the life paths of their adult children. Marriage, for example, is not an individual option, as parents often interfere with the marriage of a young man and a girl, as I have pointed out. The effect on this decision is more exerted on females than on males, ranging from "giving an opinion, warning, or quarreling and severing relationships, to legally obstructing marriage, and in some communities (province, semi-Bedouin) it may amount to murder"⁵¹², as Yāsīn points out in the context of parents' intervention in exaggerating dowry to hinder marriage. This practice is lighter on the young man, but it is still often exercised, especially by sisters and mothers.

As a result of the loss of extended families and in contrast to the protection and support provided by German government laws and policies to women, some girls – especially young girls – who have married in a traditional way have found an opportunity to break free from such marriage. Sāra recounts after asking if she knew families in conflicts:

"I know a girl who said she wanted to divorce. She wanted to go out and discover life. She had married young, and had gotten kids, and now she wanted to go out and enjoy life. So, they broke up because she brought him to the police [...]. The husband was kicked out of his house, and the police told both of them it was forbidden to get close to each other [...].

511 Since Tarek's wife lives in Syria, I could not verify the husband's account of the two reasons the wife referred to in her suit against him.

512 Bu'Alī Yāsīn, *Azmat az-zawāğ fi Sūriyā (Marriage Crisis in Syria)* (Dār ibn Rušd, 1979), p. 31.

Immediately she removed the veil, she became a bad and not a modest woman, and her children became so as well 'فلتت وفتتو الولاد معها'

Sāra points to two main reasons for this divorce. The first relates to an arranged marriage, which often takes place at an early age, especially for girls. The second relates to the religious/cultural clash concerning the dress of this woman and her desire to be free from the domination or control of her husband. What is interesting about Sāra's speech is that despite her liberal and open orientation she was making social judgments derived from the standards of Syrian societies. In conservative societies, those who take off their veils become "violator فلتانة faltāna" (i.e. has no discipline by societal norms), to take over Sāra's expression, as they have violated and challenged the social and religious norms and traditions of the society to which they belong. This act is not easy to carry out in conservative Syrian societies, as it results in ruining her reputation and that of her family because of the "shame" she has provoked.

It is important to note that what helped this wife and others to make this decision is not only the desire to be free from the shame culture or social control exercised by the nuclear and extended family or society but also the general feeling of women being protected by the German police, through laws that protect women's right to such decisions.

Conclusion

Patriarchalism, which is rooted in the structures of society, seeks its justifications, and it finds in cultural, social, political, and religious norms what is prescribed for its existence, helping it to sustain and continue. As an endless rotational movement, different socialization norms are adopted between male and female as the basis for the upbringing that prepares both men and women for male power,⁵¹³ which makes the parties – male and female – predisposed for this or that action. They become the subject of predispositions for gender discrimination. Over time, these predispositions become part of their nature. This explains why a segment of women stand with the male vision against other women who demand their rights to justice and equality, as they are convinced of the role they have been given as "females" in all the family, social, economic, and political contexts in which they grew up.

513 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, p. 79.

The internal factors of conflict dynamics, whether through the reshaping of gender identity, the redistribution of roles based on perceptions of this identity within the family system, the domination of economic resources, or the control of decision-making places with regard to religious/cultural behaviour, have contributed to the fracture of this patriarchal system. These internal factors would not have taken this direction without the contribution of the external dynamics of conflict factors, from the war that caused major cracks in all social systems, values, and norms, to the new German context, which radically changed the social conditions on which this patriarchy was based, resulting in a significant acceleration in its collapse on the one hand and in fueling conflicts within the family on the other. In all its dimensions, the new context has provided an opportunity for women to discover themselves as human beings in their own right and not of others, first, and to be able to identify themselves as divorced, secondly. On the other hand, men have shown resilient in giving up the masculine advantages they inherited from their community.⁵¹⁴

Causes of conflict have emerged in the German context that have shown their effects on gender relations and on both the social and economic status of men and women. However, in return for that, some families continue to adhere to the former system, with some wives waiting for their husbands to find work to get rid of Job Centre claims for them to work. At the same time, this desire to divide the roles of the husband also continues, i.e. to find work through which to provide for the needs of his family, with his wife remaining unemployed and caring for the affairs of the house and the children. This shows the different dynamics of the family in dealing with the new reality.

Despite the emergence of these conflicts as a result of this major rift in the patriarchy, it must be emphasized that the dynamics with which Syrian families have dealt with the experience of displacement and living in a new environment are diverse and different. While past factors have affected some families in fueling conflicts, other families have had different dynamics to deal with, pushing them closer to each other rather than creating conflict. This convergence may be seen in wives telling their husbands that “I have no one else in this alienation”, as some wives expressed. It may be fictitious, driven by fear and anxiety about the unknown or by the language, cultural, and legal barriers of the new host country, as in

514 Amin.

other cases I have observed during fieldwork. Lokot, therefore, challenged the literature confirming the collapse of the social relations network in its qualitative research among Syrians in Jordan and revealed how men and women challenge and maintain these relationships.⁵¹⁵ Although the German and Jordanian contexts concerning the family differ, it is important to say that the dynamics of the family's interaction with the patriarchy, whether in Syria, in the Arab context in general, or in the new German context, are diverse and contradictory. This may be related, on the one hand, to the extent to which social transformations arising from the context in which the family lives affect the family itself and, on the other hand, to the extent to which this family accept or reject these transformations.

515 Lokot. See also in this context, Harry Goulbourne et al., *Transnational Families. Ethnicities, Identities and Social Capital* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 137.

