



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

UNDERSTANDING THE 'QUEEN QUEER' PHENOMENON  
OF WOMEN WORKING AT MALE-DOMINATED JOBS IN  
LEBANON: DEFYING THE '3AIB' MYSTIQUE VIA  
REDOING GENDER?

by  
MAYSA MUSTAFA SHAWWA

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for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies  
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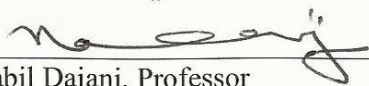
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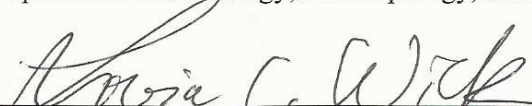
Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Nabil Dajani, Professor  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies

Advisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Sari Hanafi, Professor  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies

Member of Committee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Livia Wick, Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies

Member of Committee

Date of thesis/dissertation defense: July 11, 2013

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Signature

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Date

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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Maysa Mustafa Shawwa for Master of Arts  
Major: Sociology

Title: Understanding the ‘Queen Queer’ Phenomenon of Women Working at Male-dominated Jobs in Lebanon: Defying the ‘3aib’ Mystique via Redoing Gender?

This thesis explores the phenomenon of Lebanese women working at male-dominated jobs. It examines women’s motives for working at traditionally-perceived men-only job sectors, the hurdles these women workers face, and the influences of the job tasks on their gender roles and identities. I used qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Through purposeful sampling, I conducted in-depth interviews with 18 women managers and women workers and these were: 2 policewomen, the manager of Queen gas station and 3 female employees, the manager of Banet Taxi, 4 AUB security officers, the first woman to head the Beirut criminal court, the only female pilot at Middle East Airlines, a female plumbing manager, 2 female drivers, a female vegetable vendor using a cart, and a manager of a pastry and bakery shop. I used sociological theory on the social construction of gender, doing and undoing gender, gender socialization, and other theories to explain the findings.

The findings show that a lot of women working at male-dominated jobs don’t reject traditional gender values and roles. They seek to appeal as much feminine as they could, consider household duties as their sole responsibilities, and some even perform womanly-associated work duties at their professions. The interviewees’ perceptions of their gender roles and identities vary. One group of women don’t see any differences between men and women; another group see that there are gender differences, consider their workplace as a totally masculine one, and adopt masculine-related tasks; a third category of women who see that there are gender differences, but perform work responsibilities that they consider more suitable to women; and another who blend both traditional masculine and feminine identity performances. The hurdles the women face are people’s demeaning comments and legal-based and institutional discriminatory policies. The reasons for these women to work at male-dominated jobs are financial necessity, their preference of such types of jobs, their desire to challenge patriarchal ideologies, and their inspiration from men close to them who previously worked at such jobs.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Research Context

“Don’t they respect themselves? Have morals vanished from our society?” screamed the facebook post into my ears hurting my feminist radar. The comment was directed to women working at the only women-run gas station in Lebanon, Queen gas station. Queen but queer, I thought.

The online debate I engaged in smeared comments that attested that women aren’t “suitable” for such “masculine jobs”. This online stigmatization of women workers has several manifestations. Whether demonstrated in practices of gender discrimination against these women or masqueraded in the society’s patriarchal gaze, directly or indirectly influencing women’s career duties and choices, women in traditionally-ascribed “masculine” jobs face many hurdles.

She approaches the car. His eyes looking suspiciously, he attempts to turn on the engine and to leave before anyone notices him.”Can I help you, sir?” breaks the silence and shatters with it the first wall of cultural shame. His plan to escape the vicious circle of “*3aib*” (shame) fails. She walks and pumps gas into his car successfully. Managed by Samar Dakdouk since February 2011, Queen gas station has created work opportunities for women in Sidon and neighboring areas (Anderson, 2012).

Powerful but bizarre, last year women started joining the Internal Security Forces in Lebanon drawing a new image of Lebanese women contrary to the stereotypical image

of Lebanese women as “glamazons”. In 2012 around 500 female police officers were employed and in 2013 another 500 policewomen will be recruited (el Hajj, 2013).

Their pinkish ties gleam under the gruesome stares of the bystanders... but the stares cannot fracture the invisible tie between their wheels and them. They carry on driving women according to the customers’ routes. Women taxi drivers, as a concept, defy the stereotypical view of seeing the taxi industry as a male-dominated sector. “Banet Taxi”, launched in March 2009 by the entrepreneur Nawal Fakhri, has gained widespread notoriety and has endowed a new identity to the taxi industry.

Women “knights”, the protectors of AUB, stroll its campus at night challenging the conventional concept of seeing security guards as a profession reserved solely for men. Plumbing, mechanics, and piloting professions may also be seen as male-only jobs in Lebanon. However, recently women are starting to “invade” these jobs. Drain aid plumbing services, run by Amal Abi Khalil, has strived to challenge the negative stereotypes associated with the image of a plumber and has been thriving since the year 2002 (Yossef, 2004). Women are increasingly entering judging careers where in 2011 the rate of female judges was expected to reach 60% of total number of judges (UNDP, 2008).

Despite Lebanese women pioneers are entering non-traditional jobs, only 23% of the participants in the workforce in Lebanon are women (Yaacoub & Badre, 2011). One of the obstacles is that women are expected to occupy traditional jobs like teaching, nursing, etc (ILO, 2004). The suitability of the profession to women is evaluated by the society on the basis of being in line with women’s roles as mothers and housewives and

this is in fact possesses a barrier in front of women's full incorporation in the labor force (Booth & van Ours, 2012). Women are traditionally and contemporarily perceived as wives and mothers. Their first job to occupy, as approved by the society's norms, is their homes (Chatty & Rabo, 1997). The occupational segregation based on gender might relate to reproducing the unconscious view of women as homemakers to tasks and professions associated with that in the job market (Pan American Health Organization, 2010).

Worldwide, certain sectors of the economy have been dominated by either of the gender and thus been labeled as feminine or masculine depending on which gender monopolized it. Occupational segregation is still prevalent today where men and women work in different types of jobs (Ninth session of the UPR Working Group, 2010). Women are concentrated in jobs that are stereotyped as convenient for women such as nursing (Bullock, 1994). In Lebanon, the services sector, which is perceived as suitable for women's "natural" skills, is in the grip of women workers (Torress-Failler, 2010). Furthermore, Lebanese women workers seize only 5.1% of managing positions in the job market (UNDP, 2008). Occupational segregation according to gender is significant in Lebanon, with women working more as office employees, service workers, unskilled workers, and professionals compared to more men working as managers and skilled workers (UNDP, 2008). Hence, women in Lebanon are embracing low-paid jobs and are kept away from high managerial positions.

This paradoxical scene aroused my interest to study what motivates Lebanese women to engage in "masculine" jobs. The phenomenon of women workers in "masculine" jobs has caught my attention for further exploring its implications within the

complex Lebanese society and workplace. What constraints do these women face while performing their work tasks? Does the male-dominated job field influence these women's gender roles and identities?

Lebanese labor market is characterized by low economic activity rate with high unemployment rates for women (Central Administration of Statistics, 2009). The unemployment rate in Lebanon dropped gradually to 6% in 2009, but remained high for women and youth. Unemployment rate for Lebanese women is 10%, double the unemployment rate of Lebanese men. Women constitute 23 percent of the labor force in Lebanon (World Bank, 2010).

The economic situation in Lebanon is still stuck in quicksand. At the end of the year 2012, Lebanon still carried the burden of US \$57.7 billion of gross debt (International Monetary Fund, 2013). Lebanon's 2012 real GDP growth anticipated by the World Bank at 2.8% was revised downward to 1.7%, which is weaker than the average growth of the MENA region anticipated at 3.4% (Zawya, 2013). The dire economic situation in Lebanon in general and its repercussions on the job market may affect the job choices of men and women.

## **B. The Significance of the Study**

Lebanon is ranked 122<sup>nd</sup> out of 135 countries in the 2012 Global Gender Gap Index which raises a lot of questions on gender equality and women's rights in Lebanon. According to this index, Lebanon ranks 125<sup>th</sup> regarding economic participation and opportunity with a score of 0.442 on a scale from 0 to 1, where 1 is equivalent to equality between men and women (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012). Looking at other gender gap sub-indexes in this 2012 report, Lebanon ranks 107<sup>th</sup> with a score of 0.09 regarding

the gender gap in terms of acquiring high positions like legislators, senior officials, and managers. This means that only 8% women in relation to 92% men occupy high positions (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012).

The situation is not that different when it comes to women's occupying government and parliament positions. The current Lebanese Cabinet doesn't include a single woman. In fact, Lebanon is ranked 131<sup>st</sup> regarding political empowerment gender gap sub-index with a score of 0.010, which is almost negligible (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012).

Regarding women's rights, the Human Rights Watch World Report 2013 indicated that the Lebanese parliament hasn't yet signed the law for protecting women from domestic violence. A parliamentary subcommittee in August 2012 amended the bill and restricted protections regarding the provision dealing with marital rape. Recently in January 2013, the ongoing debate about the right of Lebanese women to pass their nationalities to their husbands and children was met with a rejection of interpretations of the present law governing this matter (Human Rights Watch World Report, 2013).

In April 1997, Lebanon acceded to CEDAW, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, with reservations to some of its articles (Zalzal, 2010; Sabat, 2010). Although Lebanon acceded to international conventions like CEDAW; yet, the confessional, social, and political norms still possess hurdles to the full translation of these conventions and confront their implementation (Sabat, 2010). These norms may alter the process of translating the conventions (Sabat, 2010).

Therefore, this study is significant amid these circumstances to examine the meaning of the entrance of women workers to "masculine" jobs and whether it's

considered a defiance strategy to the patriarchal Lebanese system and to domestic violence. In fact, economic empowerment of women could contribute to eradicating domestic violence against them (Koustuv, 2011; Stark & Buzawa, 2009).

The study highlights the phenomenon of women workers in male-dominated jobs, offers insights into women economic participation in the Lebanese society, and raises questions on gender discrimination practices against women in the workplace. The study can be a basis for guiding initiatives to empower women economically and create more work opportunities for them in various Lebanese economic sectors. It accentuates on this phenomenon for future enhancements regarding achieving acceptance of the Lebanese society for women to work in such “masculine” jobs. The study reflects women workers’ aspirations and experiences and helps advocate for adopting a code of conduct that explicitly rejects gender discrimination.

### **C. The Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to examine the challenges Lebanese women face while working in male-dominated professions or what’s traditionally looked upon as “masculine” jobs and the gender discrimination practices they might be exposed to. It also highlights the type of tasks Lebanese women in masculine jobs perform; some conform to the old stereotypes through reproducing them via adhering to the traditional feminine job duties and others dismantle them.

This study analyzes the driving forces behind Lebanese women’s involvement in these jobs. By exploring the experiences of Lebanese women workers in masculine jobs, the Lebanese labor law, and the role of economic and social institutions whether in motivating women to enter these jobs or eschewing them away, this study sheds the light

on how this phenomenon manifests economic empowerment of women and contributes to understanding of the mechanisms of undoing and redoing gender in a non-stereotypical way.

The study employs qualitative data collection and analysis methods and follows an analytic induction research design (Merriam, 2009). Data for this study was collected from individual interviews with women managers and women workers. I chose 1 to 4 women workers from each designated male-dominated profession. The criteria used for choosing the interviewees of this study were the relatively-recent entrance of women into male-dominated jobs or being the only woman performing this peculiar male-dominated job in Lebanon. Redundancy was accomplished after conducting 18 interviews.

Sociological theory on social construction of gender, doing/undoing/redoing gender, gender socialization, capital, stigma, and other theories were consulted to enrich the analysis method and explain the findings.



## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **A. Revisiting Social Construction of Gender Theory**

In order to frame the subject under study, it is important to examine the theory of social construction of gender to understand the society's ascribed meanings and attributes used to categorize a certain job as feminine or masculine. Feminist theorists maintain that gender is a social construct which is continually constituted and reconstituted by human social interactions (Acker, 1990; Berger & Luckmann; 1966, Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994; Thorne, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Lorber (1994) explained that each society assigns different responsibilities and roles for men and women from birth. In fact, gender roles constitute a set of society's expectations for men and women depending on their "fixed" sexual identity (Cramer, Million, & Perreault, 2002; Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Hogg & Levine, 2010).

This idea stems from Eagly's social role theory which explained how a gendered division of labor establishes gender behavior differences and congruent stereotypes based on one's gender status (Eagly & Wood, 1999). She explored how the placement of men and women into naturally-molded social roles contributes to gender stereotyping and to the production of different gender-based power structures (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Thus, the subordinate role of women vis-à-vis the dominant controlling role of men shapes the sex-specific skills and behaviors that in turn define each gender's distinct roles at home and at the workplace (Eagly, 1987). In different cultural settings, the society anticipates

women to be submissive and passive. According to Connell (1987), three structures of gender relations pertaining to sexual division of labor, power, and cathexis which refers to the sexual and personal relations, are instrumental in understanding hegemonic masculinity and its relation to “the institutionalization of men’s dominance over women”(Demetriou,2001, 341; Ferree, Lorber, & Hess, 2000).

The gender division of labor is a manifestation of patriarchal capitalism whereby patriarchy under capitalism has moved from the private to the public sector (Calasanti & Bailey, 1991). Thus, women are led to occupy unpaid or less paid jobs whether at the household or in the labor market and hence preserving gender inequality. Assigning women to low wage jobs in the labor market makes women dependent on men, as Hartmann (1976) argued. Hartmann (1976) stated that the gender division of labor is influenced by the labor market and vice versa. The capitalist mode of production is emphasized in Marxist feminism’s explanations of the gender division of labor and in women’s subordination in the job market. Marxist feminists posit that gender oppression is a product of class oppression. According to Marx, class divisions are responsible for women’s oppression (Giddens, 2006).

Lorber (1994) argued that the Western society approves and empowers gendering by claiming that it is an innate and natural process whereby the distinct physiological characteristics men and women are born with determine their different behaviors and roles. She built on Simone de Beauvoir’s concept of gender socialization process to elaborate how women learn to be feminine and men learn to be masculine. She contended that the feminine and masculine distinctive characteristics are socially learnt and thus gender is acquired.

Gender socialization, influenced by socializing agencies, hence is a vital concept that highlights the process of learning the society's defined gender roles (Giddens, 2006). Crucial socialization agencies in the Arab world, as different scholars have indicated, include the family and kinship loyalties that contribute in constructing gender expectations particularly with regard to family honor (Ghoussoub, 2001; Salamandara, 2004). An aspect of gender socialization is the domestication of women whereby women are confined into the informal work sector; the household and its associated duties, and men, on the other hand, are equipped with tasks related to the workplace. Women are domesticated into the "second shift", a term used by Arlie Hochschild to refer to the household and childcare responsibilities. Hochschild (1989) documented how women are overwhelmed with household tasks and indicates that few men share these responsibilities equally with their wives. Even when wives are employed, West and Zimmerman (1987) indicated that most housework and childcare responsibilities are done by women.

The gender socialization process thus defines gender roles and gender-stereotypic expectations (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Rogers, 1980). Gender expectations for individuals are further strengthened by the socially recognized gender statuses (Acker, 1990). In this respect, individuals learn the expected gender role they should play in society, act, and react in an expected way in adherence to the gender role they possess thus preserving the gender order (Lorber, 2010). For example, women and men occupying the same job are expected to perform differently (Eagly, 2011).

## **B. Feminizing and Masculinizing Jobs**

Gender is embedded in the norms, behaviors, and structures of organizations and institutes including workplaces. Kanter (1977) attributed work behavior differences to organizational structure differences rather than sex-linked characteristics (Acker, 1990). She argued that socialization hinders male-lead organizations from seeing women as equals and thus they prevent them from occupying senior and managing positions (Kanter, 1977).

The stereotypical image of women as naturally possessing caring capabilities and men as the sole breadwinners helps in perpetuating the gender occupational segregation via reproducing these gender ideologies to jobs and to tasks associated with gender characteristics in the workplace (Anker, 1998; Harb, 2010; Mills, 2003). Thus, feminizing or masculinizing a given job sector is based on these stereotypical characteristics the society associates men and women with to predict their abilities and performance in a given job (Anker, 1998). Cooking, washing, and cleaning duties are traditionally perceived to be done by women and maintaining the unconscious view of women as in charge of these responsibilities in workplaces might “housewife-ize” the job tasks the managers assign women with. Gender socialization of men and women into the “appropriate” expected gender roles through social interactions is directly connected to the dominant discourses of society (Butler, 1990; Giddens, 2005; García-Gómez, 2011).

According to Foucault (1977), discourse, power, and control in society are interrelated concepts. He referred to discourse as beliefs, practices, statements, and systems of thoughts that systematically construct and regulate the social world by the power of rules (Foucault, 1970; Giddens, 2005; Abu Lughod, 1999). Discourses

including patriarchal discourses are learned through social interactions and maintained via the positive and negative sanctions system whereby a certain behavior is strengthened or restrained (Giddens, 2005). Thus, dominant discourses remain powerful through retaining their dogmatic 'nature' and normalizing them (Kanter, 1977).

However, alternative discourses could emerge when individuals challenge the taken for granted discourses and this is evident when individuals reject or modify the social expectations for their gender roles (Connell, 1987; Kanter, 1977; Giddens, 2005). In fact, feminist theorists (e.g. Connell, 1995; West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987) conceptualized gender as a product of individual's interactions that either retain or challenge orthodox ideas about gender identities.

An example of defying society's discursive gender expectations of women workers is the notion of women working at masculine jobs, albeit the phrase "masculine jobs" is traditionally constituted by the society.

### **C. Doing and Undoing Gender**

This defiance strategy which attests the idea that individuals are active agents in creating their own gender roles is echoed by West and Zimmerman's theory of "doing gender". West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that gender is a product of constant and unavoidable social doings. Building on Goffman's "scheduling of gender displays" concept which refers to behaving in a gendered manner based on society's traditional perceptions of gender in certain situations, West and Zimmerman (1987) further

generalized these gendered interactions to all social occasions where it is impossible to avoid being interpreted as masculine or feminine.

West and Zimmerman (1987) depicted the gendering process as a continuous activity that entails constituting differences between men and women. Thus, gender roles are in a continuous change (Glenn, 2001; Lorber, 2010). The gendering process leads individuals to appropriate gender ideals, gender symbols, and gender identities. For example, the mechanism of doing gender reinforces the division of labor through allocating the symbolic and the actual household products to each gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The importance of the symbolic notions of gender, incorporated in various social contexts, lies in defining the meaning of a man versus that of a woman (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). Osmond and Thorne (1993) argued that a real man might be perceived as having the following attributes, “tough, emotionally inexpressive, and the breadwinner” whereas a real woman might be stereotyped as having opposite characteristics like being emotionally expressive.

Constructing gender divisions in the family, the labor market, and the state and reinforcing these divisions through gender-related symbols contributes to generating gendered social structures (Acker, 1990). Thus, the product has a gendered identity that shapes one’s “gender-suitable” work choices, self-presentation, etc... and failing to place people in an appropriate gender identity makes us socially adrift (Lorber, 2010).

Debating that West and Zimmerman’s gender-doing approach in fact reinforces conformity to gender roles by some theorists, an approach of gender undoing was needed for advocating change (Deutsch, 2007). Judith Butler (2004) explored the concept of

“undoing gender” and the ways by which people dig deep into the normative gender roles in order to reshape hegemonic structures of power through their agencies. According to Butler (1999), gender should be undone when misused by one group to overpower another in a pursuit to dismantle the gender system. She moved from the concept of undoing gender to question the meaning of gender. Butler (1990) argued that the term “women” doesn’t designate a common identity with fixed attributes.

“...the term fails to be exhaustive...because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out “gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.” (p. 31).

She added that time plays a crucial role in forming a gendered self where one’s gender identity is maintained through the repetition of illusionary gender performances. Thus, gender is performative representing an effect of the very subject it appears to portray (Barker & Yockney, 2004). Put in the words of Butler (1990), she explained the unfixed gender “core” as follows,

“If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (p.42)

As the social construction of reality underlines, the individual’s social construction is subjective and determined by various social and cultural factors. The

social construction of gender branches from the social constructionism approach which questions assumed natural gender characteristics and dispositions and considers them as products of learning processes (Beall & Sternberg, 1993).

My analysis of the interviewees' answers was guided by these theories. These theories contextualized my findings and framed them for further understanding the influence of gender and identity on the tasks these women engaged in and the repercussions of masculine tasks on women's identities.



## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The reviewed literature constituted a well-researched account of the constraints women workers face in Lebanon with an emphasis on the legislative, socio-cultural, and institution-related factors that contribute to women marginalization in the labor force. The chapter is composed of an introductory overview of women workers in Lebanon in addition to three main subsections concerning the difficulties women workers face in Lebanon: the constraints within the labor-related laws and conventions in Lebanon, the socio-cultural obstacles in Lebanon, and the hurdles associated with the Lebanese work institutions.

Lebanese female workers during the period directly preceding the Lebanese civil war between 1972 and 1975 were mostly agriculture workers, servants, professionals mostly teachers, and industrial and office employees as well (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005; Lorfing, 1980). During the civil war, women as men suffered economically and some women became the sole breadwinners due to the loss of male providers, thus the rate of women participation in the labor force increased (Atallah, 1998). In the late 1980s and 1990s, the dire economic situation pushed both men and women to work in order to thrive financially (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005). The economic participation of women has increased from 17.5% in the early 1970s to 21% in 1996 (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005; UNDP, 1996). Only 23% of the participants in the workforce in Lebanon are women and these female workers are found to be better educated than male workers (Dah, Abosedra, & Dahbourah , 2006; World Bank, 2009).

The Lebanese labor market is characterized by low economic activity rates with high unemployment rates for women (Yaacoub & Badre, 2011). Scarcity of jobs and the wage gap between men and women among other factors explain the low levels of women economic participation (World Bank, 2009; The Arab Human Development Report, 2005). Unemployment rate for Lebanese women is 10%, double the unemployment rate of Lebanese men (World Bank, 2010).

The concentration of Lebanese women in the services sector remained high (Tailfer, 2010). Recently, Lebanese female workers mostly work as office employees, service workers, unskilled workers, and professionals (UNDP, 2008). Lebanon ranks 107<sup>th</sup> out of 135 countries regarding the gender gap in terms of acquiring high positions like legislators, senior officials, and managers with a score of 0.09 on a scale from 0 to 1, where 1 is equivalent to complete equality between men and women. This means that only 8% women in relation to 92% men occupy high positions (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012). This fact is equivalent to global trends where men are over-represented in managerial positions whereas women are mostly concentrated in the services and sales sectors (ILO, 2012).

Marginalization of women workers in Lebanon is not a new phenomenon. In fact, Abisaab (2010) described how marginalization became part of Lebanese working women's identities throughout the period he examined from the nineteenth century to the late 1990s. He stated that whether women allied themselves with nationalist, socialist, or labor movements, they soon became marginalized the moment they were perceived to be no longer as useful activists.

## **A. The Failure of Labor-related Laws and Conventions to Maintain a Discrimination-free Work Environment**

The inapplicability of the Lebanese Labor Law's provisions in addition to some discriminatory articles and the slow implementation of the conventions calling for nondiscrimination in employment along with the absence of a proper monitoring system penalizing those in charge of gender discrimination still contribute to the marginalization of female workers. Although Lebanon has ratified conventions related to women's economic rights and amended some provisions in its Labor Law to ensure nondiscrimination between men and women regarding pay and employment, still some provisions fall short to secure complete women's economic rights. In this regard, Talifer (2010) called for a substantive equality since the formal equality brought by the laws can't generate a real equality for women because of the lack of an adequate monitoring system and follow-up procedures to guard the implementation of the provisions. The discriminatory practices that the Lebanese laws still fail to deter include unequal wages, relatively short periods of maternity leave, and other discriminatory provisions against women.

### ***1. Gender Pay Gap***

Allocative, valuative, and within-job wage discrimination are three types of discrimination that involve wage gaps between men and women (Peterson & Morgan, 1995). Allocative discrimination refers to the situations where women are assigned to lower wage jobs; valuative discrimination concerns jobs held traditionally by women

like nursing which are less paid than other occupations held traditionally by men; and within-job wage discrimination involves women in the same occupation that are paid less than men of same positions (England, 1992; Peterson & Morgan, 1995).

Economists and feminists have different explanations for gender pay gap (Anker, 1998; England, 1992). Neoclassical economists and human capital theorists emphasized the differences in human capital acquired by each gender where women might have lower education levels and intermittent economic participation (Anker, 1998; Blau & Kahn, 2007; McGregor, Still, & Dewe, 1996). Labor market segmentation theorists maintained the existence of segregated occupations by gender based on natural differences in skills between men and women and the roles of women as mothers which require flexible work hours for women, thus discrimination against women is the result (Anker, 1998; England, 1992). Feminists, on the other hand, highlighted the effect of gender stereotypes and bias against women on the types of jobs women are expected to engage in and on the low wages for women-crowded jobs (Anker, 1998; England, 1992).

Worldwide, the gender wage gap has declined in most countries during the economic crisis in 2008-2009, but it does not mean necessarily an improvement for women's situations (ILO, 2013). For example, in 2009 the gender pay gap dropped since men's wages decreased (ILO, 2013). In some Middle Eastern countries like Syria a large number of women worked in the public sector where wages were 1.5 times more than those in the private sector and thus women were paid more than men (ILO, 2013). In most Arab countries, women's wages are less than those prevailing to men especially in the private sector (Arab Human Development Report, 2005).

In Lebanon, men's wages are higher than women's in general despite the fact that women might maintain more human capital; for example, with respect to attaining higher education achievement. In contrary to the explanation brought by neoclassical economists and human capital theorists, a study by Dah ,Abosedra, & Dahbourah found that Lebanese women of the same educational attainment as men earn less than men with women earning 71% of what men earn on average. At the highest level of education attainment, which is "Level IV," females outnumber males where the achievement is 29.3% for females compared to 12.8% for males (Dah, Abosedra, & Dahbourah, 2006). The study showed that in Lebanon a man is expected to earn 50.53 % more than a female where both achieve the same first level of education; at the second level a man is expected to earn 44.92 % more than a female; 36.62% more than a female at the third level of education; and 34.85% more than a female at the fourth level of education (Dah et.al, 2006).

In fact, Lebanon ranked 84<sup>th</sup> out of 129 countries according to the 2012 Global Gender Gap Report in terms of gender wage equality with a score of 4.43 where 7 refers to total pay equality with men and 1 to no equality (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012). The decline in wage equality between men and women in Lebanon in 2012 was among the main reasons that Lebanon moved four spots back on the Global Gender Gap Index where it ranked the 70<sup>th</sup> in the gender wage equality sub-index in 2011 (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012). According to a recent study in 2008 by Jamali, Sidani, & Kobeissi, the gender pay gap in Lebanon doesn't comprise a great concern for both men and women specifically in the banking, nursing, and higher education sectors even

though a gender wage gap was detected in the educational sector (Jamali, Sidani, & Kobeissi, 2008).

Lebanese labor law doesn't discriminate between the genders regarding work pay and acknowledges equal pay between men and women, but companies still pay women less (Atallah, 1998; Rawas, 2002). The 1965 decree in Lebanon maintained a fixed minimum wage with equal remunerations for both women and men whenever engaging in the same kind of employment (Atallah, 1998; Doughan, 2006). Tailfer (2010) observed that the absence of interpretation and application of the Labor Code's principles that advocate for gender equality at the workplace render them ineffective. It is crucial to note here that the labor legislations governing work conditions and workers' rights in Lebanon include:

“- The Lebanese Labor Law issued on September 23, 1946 with its seven chapters, two supplements, and preliminary provisions which designate the employer, the hired individual (employee or worker), the intern, the syndicate, and the institution.

- The Law of the Organization of Syndicates under Decree 7993 issued on April 3, 1952.

- The Law of Social Security issued on September 26, 1963 under Decree 13955 and its attempt to provide communal and social security” (Doughan, 2005, p 54 ). It is important to mention them in order to examine their provisions and identify whether they are discriminatory towards women workers or not.

The Lebanese Labor Law excludes government employees, domestic workers, rural employees, and others according to its article number 7 (Doughan, 2005; Lebanese Labor Law, 1946). Excluding these sectors from being governed by the Lebanese labor

law will not allow workers in these aforementioned categories to benefit from the labor law's provisions including provisions pertaining to equal gender pay.

The inapplicability of the labor law reached also some private sectors as some private institutions failed to provide employees with family and transport allowances as stipulated under the law and did not register them with the National Social Security Fund (U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2012). A study by the Lebanese Social Affairs ministry (2008) showed that only 24.7% of workers in Lebanon are covered by the National Social Security Fund whereas 51.7% of workers are not covered by any kind of health insurance.

## ***2. Maternity Leave Period***

Another explanation of the contradiction between what the legislative body calls for and the dire economic gender equality in Lebanon is that Lebanon has been slow in implementing the conventions calling for nondiscrimination in employment and at the workplace even though it has ratified them (CEDAW, 2004; Younes, 2006). Lebanon has ratified conventions related to women's economic rights issued by the International Labor Organization including the 1951 Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) in 1977 which governed equal pay for men and women workers (CEDAW, 2004; ILO, 2012; Younes, 2006). It has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996 as well as reserved and acceded to certain articles like article 9 (2), article 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) and (g), and article 29 (Association Democratique des Femmes du Maroc, 2009; Zalzal, 2009).

Its article 11 specifically tackled women's employment rights and focused on elimination of discrimination against women through providing equal employment opportunities, equal pay, and equal benefits with male workers in addition to non-discrimination on the grounds of marital status. Article 11 of CEDAW also stipulated that the state shall forbid any discharge of women workers on the basis of pregnancy and maternity leave and shall provide protection to pregnant women working in professions considered harmful. The article also declared that the state shall encourage procurement of social services needed to maintain a balance between job and house duties for parents (CEDAW, 1979).

However, the convention's entry into effect came late. Following the civil society's calls and women organizations' lobbying for introducing a number of amendments to the Labor Law to correspond to CEDAW's articles and other labor conventions, improvements were made to the Lebanese legislation in the year 2000 (Chemaly, 2011; Doughan, 2005; The Lebanese Council of Women, 2009). Through the introduction of law 207 in 2000, the provision of article 26 of the Lebanese Labor Law that banned women from working at night in the industrial sector was canceled and was replaced by a provision that prohibits any gender discrimination by the employer (Chemaly, 2011; Doughan, 2005; Lebanese Labor Law, 1946). Still, there is no mention of penalty in case of gender discrimination according to article 26 (Younes, 2006).

Articles 28, 29, and 52 that concern maternity leave and dismissal of pregnant women were amended also by law 207. The provision of the amended article 28 extended the period of maternity leave from 40 days to 7 weeks and that of article 29 entailed the full payment to women during the period of maternity leave and declared the



prohibition of dismissing women during that period (Chemaly, 2011; Doughan, 2005; Haidar, 2007; Lebanese Labor Law, 1946). In 2011, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the official national mechanism responsible for realizing women's advancement and gender equality in Lebanon, prepared a bill to further extend the period of maternity leave to 10 weeks and submitted it to the Lebanese Parliament, but it is still in a pending state (Hammieh, 2012; Lebanese League for Women in Business, 2011). The period is also still shorter than the period specified by the Maternity Protection Convention 2000 number 183 which Lebanon has not ratified to this date, and which specifies a maternity period leave of 14 weeks. Article 52 (1) which was also introduced by law 207 prohibited the dismissal of women workers during the period of pregnancy (Chemaly, 2011; Doughan, 2005; Lebanese Labor Law, 1946).

### ***3. Discriminatory Provisions***

In 2001, law number 343 was issued to insure gender equality regarding retirement and dismissal procedures (Doughan, 2005; Haidar, 2007). In 2002, article 14 of the National Social Security bylaws was amended to include that the word "the insured" refers to women and men employees without any discrimination between them (Haidar, 2007; Papadopoulos, n.d.). However, gender discrimination is still observed within this article since male spouses covered by the National Social Security Fund can grant this coverage to their unemployed wives on an unconditional basis whereas it is not the case with employed female spouses (Lebanese League for Women in Business, 2011). In 2011, the National Commission for Lebanese Women prepared a bill which

grants the female employee covered by NSSF the right to unconditionally pass the coverage to her unemployed husband, but it is still in a pending state at the Lebanese Parliament (Lebanese League for Women in Business, 2011; The Lebanese Parliament website, 2012).

Although those amendments comprise a progress towards achieving economic gender equality and constitute an improvement in attaining women's rights, amended laws continue to discriminate against women (Doughan, 2005; Haidar, 2007; Lebanese NGO Forum, 2000). Both the failure to penalize those who violate the laws and the absence of a proper monitoring system to ensure the prohibition of any economic gender discrimination possess a hurdle in implementing these laws. For example, the lack of adequate follow-up procedures have neither ensured the protection of female domestic workers in Lebanon nor guaranteed the economic nondiscrimination towards them albeit the fact that the Labor Ministry issued a standard employment contract in 2009 for them which includes the rights of the employees and establishes the maximum number of working hours (Ninth session of the UPR Working Group, 2010). Also, the migrant domestic workers are excluded from labor law protections under article 7 of the Labor Law (US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2011). One of the initiatives that should be taken to protect female domestic workers in Lebanon is to ratify and implement the provisions pertaining to the Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and their Families and The Slavery Convention (Ninth session of the UPR Working Group, 2010).

The Lebanese Labor Law still contains a set of articles which explicitly entrench and preserve the discrimination against women despite the amendments made. For

example, article 27 of the Labor Law prohibits employing women in certain jobs and industries considered harmful to women as listed in Annex No.1 of the present law (Lebanese Labor Law, 1946). These exaggerated protective measures might be counteractive since they officially forbid women from performing some non-risky jobs they are able to do such as operating driving engines and working in alcohol production firms (Abisaab, 2010; Doughan, 2005).

## **B. The Role of the Socio-cultural Factors in Restricting Women Work Force**

### **Participation**

Not only Lebanese laws fall short on maintaining women's economic rights, but they also fail to protect women from rape and domestic violence practices. According to Article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, if the rapist marries his victim the state will not prosecute him (Human Rights Watch, 2011; The Lebanese Parliament website, 2013). Degrading articles to women like article 522 prevail in Lebanon and are justified by social norms which cherish honor instead of justice. In fact, the internalization of patriarchal thoughts within Lebanese laws contributed to institutionalizing patriarchy and authority into everyday practices and behaviors (Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001).

Stemming from patriarchal ideologies, stereotypes were important features that shaped women's working conditions and career choices till this time (Abisaab, 2010). Abisaab (2010) provided numerous examples of women being deprived of work or restricted to certain types of work because of gender-related stereotypes. At certain point, Abisaab (2010) mentioned that women were perceived to have "nimble hands" and this

made them more suitable for the tedious work of sorting tobacco leaves. Furthermore, he mentioned that men were looked upon as naturally possessing the skills for mechanical work; that's why automation was in favor for men over women and justified the layoff of women employees at the time it was introduced (Abisaab, 2010). These examples among others marked the patriarchal hegemony nature of the workforce and it still persists in contemporary Lebanon albeit in various ways.

Patriarchy, argued Joseph (2002), is constructed at different sites including at the economic, social, familial, and political dynamics and continues to de-privilege women and juniors. Economic patriarchy, in particular, establishes that men are responsible financially for the family whereas working women are considered as helpers and one of the consequences of this stereotypical view is that higher-positions are controlled by men (Joseph, 1996). Patriarchal ideologies contributed to domesticating women through defining their primary roles as maintainers of household duties and through refraining from encouraging women to participate in the paid labor force (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005). Some Lebanese women even don't consider working and prefer to stay at home (Tailfer, 2010). A recent study mentioned that Lebanese women are subjected to economic abuse and that these abuses are mostly practices of men banning their wives from working or limiting their work hours (Usta, Makarem, & Habib, 2013). Given the intrinsic role of gender in social organization, the primary role of women, which is signed by patriarchal discourse and emphasized by Lebanon's value-systems, has been marriage and childbearing (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005). Behavioral expectations of women as future homemakers are instilled in the socio-cultural and patriarchal environment of Lebanon (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005).

Within the patriarchy discourse, honor and shame act as tools of authority that constrain women economically, politically, and socially (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Ouis & Myhrman, 2007). Women are perceived to be in need for protection including protection of their honor and this affects women's career paths (The Arab Human Development Report, 2005). When women travel alone the family's observance of women's honor might be threatened; thus, the family might ban its female members from traveling or living abroad alone. Even personal status legislation in some Arab countries prevents women from traveling alone without their fathers' or husbands' permission (The Arab Human Development Report, 2005). Barring women from migrating alone or from working abroad is a discrimination against them in obtaining desired employment opportunities abroad (The Arab Human Development Report, 2005). In fact, the 2009 Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey carried out by the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics in collaboration with UNICEF showed that between 2004 and 2009, 76.3 percent of those migrating from Lebanon were males (Central Administration of Statistics, 2010).

Although women workers in Lebanon are well-educated, they don't follow the same pattern of migrating or seeking better employment opportunities abroad as their male counterparts and thus accept low-paid jobs in Lebanon (Dah & Abosedra, 2006; Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005). Tailfer (2010) pointed to the migration factor, a product of patriarchal ideologies, as a hurdle hindering women from fully accomplishing their career aspirations. Whereas women graduates face unemployment locally or are employed in low-paid professions, their male counterparts migrate and find jobs abroad. In fact, women depend on men in sending remittances and they largely stay in their

original countries (Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan, & Pessar, 2006). As more of the Lebanese population becomes professionally skilled workers, less are available to meet the demands of jobs like construction and other kinds of jobs which are poorly paid jobs (Tailfer, 2010).

### **C. The Obstruction of the Prevalent Sexist Practices and Policies of Lebanese Companies of Women's Career Development**

The stereotypical views of women are translated to discriminatory practices against them at the workplace which constrict the professions' abilities to employ and retain competent women (Gossett & Williams, 1998; Padavic & Reskin, 2002; Rutherford, 2001). For example, allocating men to higher and better-paid positions on the premise of stereotypically viewing men as more efficient and more suitable in exercising power and taking decisions than women is a product of male primacy and male culture (Charles & Grusky, 2004; Maddock, 1999).

Bobbitt-Zeher (2011) examined women's experiences with discrimination in employment and studied the interconnectedness between the policies of the workplace institutions and gender stereotyping. The study revealed that gender stereotyping was prevalent among almost two-thirds of the narratives studied. The study also found that women were perceived as inferior and inappropriate for a given job in a male-dominated career and were often labeled as "invaders" (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

Sexism is manifested in the discriminatory practices the Lebanese institutions and firms are engaged in like the biased industries' practices in recruitment, payment, and

promotion and their policies regarding unequal opportunities for development (Tailfer, 2010; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). Gender pay gap and discriminatory promotions policies exist in certain companies in both public and private sectors in Lebanon (Dah, Abosedra, & Dahbourah, 2006).

### ***1. Glass Ceiling***

Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine (2005) found that among the constraints women managers face in various occupations across Lebanon is the absence of corporate developmental assignments which are however granted to male managers to prepare them for senior leadership positions in their companies. Women managers also indicated that they were isolated from formal and informal networking. This prevented them from having the same opportunities as their males' coworkers and constituted an obstacle for their upward movement towards senior management positions (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005). For example, in the Lebanese banking sector precisely, women managers were mostly assembled at entry level positions and few were climbing the managerial ladder and reaching senior positions (Dah, El-Kassar, & Dah, 2009; Jamali, Safieddine, & Daouk, 2006). A study that used a sample of 2120 employees from the Lebanese banking sector found that the chances of upward movement ,specifically from middle to top management, for a male is 9 folds that of a female (Dah, El-Kassar, & Dah, 2009). Even after 20 years of employment some women managers stayed in middle positions (Jamali, Safieddine, & Daouk, 2006). Only 8% of surveyed micro and small enterprises were headed by women (ILO, 2007).

Attaining top managerial positions for women is still a global problem where the progress rate for women achieving senior management positions is considered slow (ILO, 2004). Smashing the glass ceiling which refers to the invisible barrier to reach high managerial positions requires eschewing gender stereotyping through changing the prejudiced views that associate masculine traits with managerial positions, introducing more family-friendly policies for companies, and providing equal development and mentoring opportunities for women (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). Considered prevalent worldwide, glass ceiling applies to women who are hamstrung from advancing in their careers because they are women (Connell, 1987; ILO, 2012; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987; Robbins & Coulter, 2012).

Despite men's monopoly of senior management positions in the banking sector in Lebanon, some positive trends were detected in the Lebanese banking sector regarding its ability to provide a gender-equal work environment (Jamali, Safieddine, & Daouk, 2006). In addition to the absence of equal opportunities to women at certain companies, the lack of friendly policies and services for married women and mothers at some Lebanese companies also impede women's progress at work and restrain them from fulfilling their fullest potentials (Jamali, Sidani, & Safieddine, 2005). Family-friendly policies that help women maintain an equilibrium between work and house duties like providing childcare facilities, flexible work hours, and adequate benefits would help increase women's commitment towards their work (Arab Human Development Report, 2005; Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012; ILO, 2004; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).



## ***2. Sexual Harassment at the Workplace***

Other institution-related practices deemed discriminatory involve the verbal and sexual harassment which women suffer from at the workplace. In the European Union, 40-50% of women have reported being sexually harassed in their workplaces in its various forms (European Commission, 1998; Komsan, 2009; U.N., 2006). In Asia-Pacific countries, 30-40% of women reported being harassed whether sexually, verbally, or physically (U.N., 2006). In the Arab world, women suffer from sexual harassment at the workplace (Arab Human Development Report, 2005; Glacier, 2006). In some Arab societies, sexual harassment, especially in the workplace, became a habit and despite the increase in reporting sexual harassment many sexual harassment cases go unreported because of the culture of shame which intimidates the victims (Hamdan, Abd Al Fattah, & Al Shalan, 2013).

In Arab penal codes, sexual harassment is not punishable by law and thus not considered a crime per se unless it overlaps with the sex crimes mentioned in other provisions in the Arab penal codes (Arab Human Development Report, 2005). Women are both victims of the laws and the society which blames them for their own sexual harassment by accusing them of seducing men and causing their sexual harassment (Kramarae & Spender, 2000; Ouis & Myhram, 2007).

In Lebanon, harassment including sexual harassment exists at the workplace. A 2004 survey about micro and small enterprises in Lebanon by the Consultation and Research Institute showed that the greatest constraint women entrepreneurs suffered from in Lebanon was personal harassment (ILO, 2007). A study about women's status in the

Lebanese healthcare sector revealed that 45.1% of respondents recognized the existence of sexual abuse, harassment, and mistreatment female nurses experience and 56.6% of respondents talked about verbal abuse, verbal harassment and verbal mistreatment of female nurses (CESTAS, 2009). Since harassment at workplace especially sexual harassment is a global problem, the majority of multinational companies have introduced policies to curb it through preventive and punitive measures (Morgan & Gruber, 2011). Although some companies in Lebanon might have policies that prohibit sexual harassment, many cases of sexual harassment go unreported (Daoud, 2012; Gatten, 2012; NOW, 2011).

Female domestic workers in the Middle East are exposed to different kinds of abuse including sexual harassment (ILO, 2005; Kuptsch, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007). One third of sixty cases pertaining to abuse of female domestic workers investigated by Middle East Watch Women Rights Project in Kuwait included rape or sexual assault by their employers (Anderson, 2000; Jureidini, 2006). In Lebanon, many migrant female domestic workers are not allowed to go outside the house without someone accompanying them while ironically they get sexually exploited in the house by male members of the family through sexual harassment, abuse, and rape (Jureidini, 2006).

Since punitive provisions that explicitly punish perpetrators of sexual assaults are lacking in Lebanon and in an attempt to fill this legal void, Nasawiya, a feminist collective, among other civil society groups are pushing for adopting a draft law against sexual harassment whether at work or elsewhere (ILO, 2007; Gatten, 2012). Among the initiatives made to fight sexual harassment in Lebanon whether at work or elsewhere was

“The Adventures of Salwa” campaign, led by Nasawiya. The campaign succeeded in launching in 2011 a booklet entitled “Salwa’s Guide to Fighting Sexual Harassment” offering guidelines on how to fight harassment in addition to introducing a sexual harassment support line to receive personal stories of sexual harassment and offer the victims legal, moral, and other needed support (Nasawiya, 2011).

Bearing in mind the challenges and the constraints working women face in Lebanon due to the legislative, the institution-related, and the socio-cultural factors linked to the society’s patriarchal views, the thesis addresses following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What are the legal, social, and cultural barriers that women face while working in traditionally-labeled masculine jobs?
- **RQ2:** What are the reasons that drive women to work at male-dominated professions?
- **RQ3:** Do women working in male-dominated careers face discrimination?
- **RQ4:** What are the perceptions of women regarding the influences of the masculine work duties on their gender identities and vice-versa?

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

#### **A. Qualitative Research Method**

To carry out this study, I utilized qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Qualitative methods are adequate for studying unexplored topics (Britten, Jones, Murphy, and Stacy, 1995; Creswell, 2013; Grant, Ward, & Rong, 1987), investigating new phenomena (Chamberlain, 2009; Creswell, 2013), understanding a certain social group (Creswell, 2013), and empowering individuals (Creswell, 2013; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). This method was helpful in elevating the voices of the interviewees in this study and in bringing more elaborate and meaningful insights to the issue. Creswell (2013) mentioned that qualitative researchers emphasize on the meanings and themes the participants generate about a particular issue for the purpose of understanding it from the participants' perspectives.

The instrument used to collect data in this study was semi-structured interviews. Interviews are suitable for learning about the participants' experiences, interpretations, and perspectives especially when it is hard to observe their behaviors (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative interviews fit well this study as it explored and interpreted the motives behind Lebanese women's involvement in traditionally-labeled "male-only" jobs, the constraints the interviewed women faced, and their perceptions about the influence of masculine-based work tasks on their gender identities. Moreover, in-depth interviews enhanced learning about women workers' experiences with undoing

gender roles and understanding their use of integration and confrontation strategies at their “masculine” workplaces.

I conducted 18 interviews with women workers and women managers. My initial target was to conduct 25 interviews, but not all women that I contacted accepted to be interviewed. In order to compensate, I conducted interviews with other women possessing similar characteristics. Since I simultaneously collected and analyzed the data, I noticed the recurrence of certain ideas and hence themes started to emerge. Upon the completion of 18 interviews, it was clear that no new information will be revealed if more interviews were to be conducted and thus data saturation was achieved at 18 interviews.

## **B. Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

When deciding about the adequate sample size in qualitative research, several scholars argued that data saturation is an intrinsic determining factor (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Mason, 2010; Morse, 1995). There is no agreed- upon fixed qualitative sample size (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009); however, the redundancy and repeatability of themes are key in determining the size of the sample. In this study, redundancy was accomplished after conducting 18 interviews. I chose 1 to 4 women workers from each designated male-dominated profession in addition to the woman manager, in case it was applicable. A male-dominated job is a job where women constitute 25% or less of the total job sector (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). In Lebanon, few women work at airline piloting, policing, gas pumping, cab service, security, plumbing, forensic judiciary, and vegetable vending professions. Thus, they are considered male-dominated

careers. The criteria used for choosing the interviewees of this study were the relatively-recent entrance of women into male-dominated jobs or being the only woman performing this peculiar male-dominated job in Lebanon.

Through purposeful sampling, I interviewed women workers and managers that started recently working at male-dominated jobs and these were: 2 policewomen (of sergeant ranks), Gilberte and Samar, the manager of Queen gas station Najat Kaddoura and 3 female employees there: Fawzieh, Hanan Amin, and Sabrine Assayes, the manager of Banet Taxi: Nawal Yaghi Fakhry, and 4 AUB security officers: Haifa Ghazzo, Ilham Arabi, Sara Shami, and Zahraa Hleihel. Just a year ago in 2012, the first unit of female police officers in Lebanon started their training. Previously, there were only two female ISF members out of 25,500 members. Two years ago, Queen gas station, the only gas station which recruits women in Lebanon, was launched in Sidon. In March 2009, Banet Taxi, the first company to employ only women as drivers, started serving only women passengers. In 2008, AUB employed the first female security officer.

The sample also comprised of the first and/or the only woman to work at certain male-dominated jobs. These women were Judge Helene Iskandar, the first woman to head the Beirut criminal court, Rola Hoteit, the only female pilot at the Lebanese airlines company, Middle East Airlines, and Aida Itani, the first believed-to-be female plumbing manager in Beirut. Thus the sample amounted to 14 women in total. In order to increase the sample's size, I conducted 4 more interviews with women having the same desired characteristics. Since none of Banet Taxi female drivers agreed to be interviewed, I interviewed 2 female drivers from outside the company: Lina Al Assir, who drives children to school and Olfat who drives a Mona Cool bottled water delivery van.

Additionally, I interviewed 2 other women working at male-dominated jobs: Majida Bazz, a female vegetable vendor using a cart, and Lamia Hallak, the manager and the only worker of a pastry and bakery shop.

The study's sample was intentionally made to include women from various professions so that it could be representative of different economic sectors in Lebanon. I recruited the participants via direct solicitation by phoning them or by meeting them at their workplaces. To get their approval for conducting interviews with them, I briefed them on the research study, emphasized their voluntary participation, and outlined the benefits and risks of participating, in addition to explaining issues related to confidentiality. Those who approved to participate signed consent forms for that matter.

Interviews lasted around 30 minutes on average. I conducted them in Arabic because not all women knew how to speak English well or express themselves in English. Furthermore, the language expresses and carries the essence of a certain society with its value-system so it was better to use Arabic when interviewing the women in order to enhance my understanding of their experiences.

### **C. Research Instrument**

The research instrument employed in this study was the interview guide which included 11 interview questions (See Appendix A). The guide consisted of three categories; the first category included questions addressing the difficulties women face while working at male-dominated jobs, the second incorporated questions exploring the reasons for women to work at male-dominated jobs, and the third constituted of questions

examining these women's perceptions of their gender identities at such jobs and their experiences with doing and undoing gender.

To answer research question one regarding the obstacles women working in male-dominated jobs face, I analyzed the interviewees' answers to questions 1 through 6. To answer research question two on the main reasons women workers join these jobs, I interpreted the interviewed women's answers to question 8 of the interview guide. To answer research question three that aimed at investigating about discrimination faced by women working at male-dominated jobs, I scrutinized the interviewees' answers to questions 1 through 7. To answer research question four about these women's gender identities, I analyzed the women's answers to interview questions 9 through 11.

#### **D. Data Analysis**

Regarding data analysis, the process I followed was in accordance with that proposed by Merriam (2009) and Marshall and Rossman (1999). I first transcribed the voice recordings and notes into electronic documents. The interviews were voice-recorded digitally and the recordings were saved on a password-protected personal computer in order to assure the interviewees' privacy. Some interviewees were uncomfortable with recording the interview, so hand notes were taken instead. The voice recordings and hand notes were treated confidentially.

After reading the data several times, I started reducing and sorting it to different themes and categories with simultaneously checking the usefulness of the identified themes. The literature review and the theoretical framework were both consulted in this



process to determine the relevancy of the themes. In order to attain credibility, I sought for different explanations regarding the initial themes in order to achieve a comprehensive approach to various interpretations. I revised the themes and categories and searched for different perspectives from the interviewees' answers (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Morash & Haar, 2012; Thomas, 2006). This approach is recommended for establishing credibility of qualitative inductive analysis (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). According to Marshall (1998), searching for alternative explanations should be addressed in a qualitative research. Diversifying the sample would also contribute to achieving credibility. Instead of focusing only on women Internal Security officers for example, the study's sample consisted of women from other masculine jobs. Moreover, I took into consideration factors such as social desirability bias that might affect the validity of the research. In order to deal with social desirability bias, I phrased the interview questions in a way that they don't suggest any negative/positive behaviors as suggested by Salkind (2010).

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the 18 qualitative interviews with women employees and managers working at male-dominated jobs. Each section answers one research question and is supported by an analysis of interviewees' answers. The first section explores the difficulties associated with male-dominated professions. The second section identifies the reasons which drive women to choose "masculine" jobs. The third section scrutinizes discrimination against women working at these careers. The last section examines the interviewees' perceptions concerning the influence of masculine-based work tasks on their gender identities.

## **A. RQ1: The legal, social, and cultural barriers that women face while working in traditionally-labeled masculine jobs**

### ***1. Socio-cultural Hurdles***

#### ***1.1. The “3aib” Factor***

The most predominant challenges interviewed women workers and managers in male-dominated professions faced were of socio-cultural nature. The most common socio-cultural related challenge the interviewed women mentioned was others’ derogatory comments and talks that demeaned them and stigmatized them as working in jobs not adequate for women and which, in their views, are shameful and dishonoring for women. For example, Haifa Ghazzo, an AUB security officer, expressed,

I used to hear comments like, ‘why are you coming here? It’s not your work. It’s a men’s work. Are you going to ‘sheeli 2izzeer mn 2il beer?’ [Are you going to pull out something significant out of the well? This proverb communicates the idea pertaining to whether women are able to do any difference.]

Rola Hoteit, the first and only female pilot at the Middle East Airlines, said that she still hears sexist comments from passengers. She said, “I was in a flight to Abu Dhabi just two days ago and when passengers heard my voice and recognized it as that of a woman, they started freaking out. ‘a woman pilot, a woman pilot’, I heard them saying.”

Other types of bashing remarks the interviewees heard included those admonishing and warning women of losing their feminine looks since they are engaging in masculine jobs. Samar, an ISF member who hails from Aley, Mount Lebanon explained that people in her neighborhood don’t accept such type of work for women and

that she often heard her neighbors saying that police work will make her less feminine. Her decision to join the Lebanese Internal Security Forces was met by an objection from her parents who were concerned about her femininity and about being unable to get married, but she was able to convince them later on that holding a gun and working at prisons won't affect that.

Olfat, who drives a Mona Cool bottled water delivery van, endured disrespectful gestures and mockery from bystanders. She said, "When I started work, people would stop at the streets, laugh at me, and put their hands on their mouths to hide their chuckles... The first month was very annoying." Nawal Yaghi Fakhry, owner of Banet Taxi pink cabs which are driven by women and cater for women, also mentioned that she had to deal with people's talks and with slanders and rumors as well. She said,

Men felt we are invading their business. They said that Banet Taxi can't thrive in this business. They [taxi companies owned by men] considered themselves as leading in this type of jobs and thought women cannot compete with them. In corporations and banks, women have a very important role and when Banet Taxi was launched, they [men] felt that women have interfered in their business. [Taxi] companies initiated rumors about us to harm our business. They started saying that we are banned from going to hotels to pick our clients or drive them there because we are women. In fact, not a single hotel banned us. Also they said we closed. A taxi company even invented that I used to work in his company and that I stole it from him. They severely attacked and defamed me.

Fakhry claimed that some taxi companies didn't resort to slandering only but also turned to malicious acts to the extent of using her own employees to hurt her.

The word "honor" was used by many interviewees when talking about the hurdles encountered in their workplaces. For instance, Majida Bazz, a vegetable and fruit vendor on a cart, stated,

My mother told me it is a shameful thing to work on the streets. They [my parents] said I don't have honor and don't have manners... When people see me on the street, they start wondering why I'm doing so. They would say if I was a respectful person, I won't stay on the street. I hear many people talking about what I'm doing in a negative way sometimes talking about my honor.

Ironically, after Bazz's husband abandoned her and left her with two daughters and a son to care for, she refused her neighbor's "offer" of lending her money on the condition that she sleeps with him. In this regard, she articulated that the most intrinsic thing for her is her honor and dignity. Articulating the importance of honor also, Sabrine Assayes, a worker at the Queen gas station, differentiated between the work she is doing and other types of jobs that might "strip women off their honor", as she described,

Sometimes I hear comments like 'how did your parents allow you to work here?' Work isn't '3aib' [disgraceful]. This is work. Indigence might prompt certain girls to go astray and work in certain jobs that don't have a good reputation. The most important thing for a girl is her honor.

Assayes tried to clarify throughout the interview that the work she is doing doesn't affect her honor although the interview questions neither explicitly nor implicitly

referred to the concept of honor. Describing her husband as having a traditional Arab mentality, Haifa Ghazzo, an AUB security officer, talked about the impossibility to share everything that happens with her at work with her husband,

This job introduced me to a lot of people. Sometimes when I go out with my husband, people start saying hi to me and my husband doesn't like that. Sometimes I forgot who these people are and then I remember that I might have seen them on campus. The nature of my work requires me to be friendly. I have to separate what I do here [at work] with what I do at house... and I can't tell everything that happens with me during my work to my husband... haha. Because he won't let me work anymore... It is not good that he knows everything. His attitude is that of an Arab... you know honor is something important... It is better to work without telling him else he makes me quit work and stay at home. I can't stand the routine. I need to work. The work is good for people's psyche and well being.

### ***1.2. Preconceived sexist ideologies and sexual harassments***

The second most common socio-cultural related challenges the interviewees mentioned were the preconceived sexist ideas about the incapability of women to perform their jobs in addition to sexual harassments experienced at their workplaces. Lina Al Assir, who drives children to school talked about her confrontation with the stereotypical idea that views women as lousy drivers, "It [My job] requires being stronger on the street...to prove yourself as a woman that is able to drive between the cars..." Haifa

Ghazzo articulated the same idea of being exposed to sexist remarks. In her case, sexism was manifested in gestures which communicated the idea that women are useless at work,

Some employees at AUBMC think I'm not doing anything. They look at me in such a way... As if saying it's not your work... Some people make you feel as if they are saying: 'you are not coming to work as security; you are just an image.' They don't say it in my face, but they make me feel that.

Chauvinist ideologies put pressure on women that in turn seek various ways to prove the society's traditional ideas wrong. Rola Hoteit said in this regard,

They [managers] put more pressure on a woman. They observe what I do more because they aren't confident that a woman can do that type of job. As pilots, we always hold examinations on a regular basis. When I commit a very simple mistake, they look at me and say, 'yes she did this because she is a woman.' The difference is when a guy does the same mistake, they overlook it, but when a woman does that, they say it is because she is a woman. They are really strict with me while they are not that strict with men pilots.

While Rola Hoteit's reaction to sexist practices was acquiescence, Gilberte's reaction was more radical. Gilberte, an ISF member, said that she didn't want to be treated differently from her male colleagues when it came to exercising duties and missions, so she chose to have a 'number 2' hair cut as a defiance strategy. She said, "I was very enthusiastic about joining the ISF to prove to people that women have the adequate capacities to work in this field and are able to protect people's rights." In contrast to Gilberte's choice of cutting her hair to look less feminine, Samar, an ISF

member also, mentioned that not being able to look feminine enough while performing her job constituted a difficulty for her.

Sexual harassments were also the second most common socio-cultural related impediments for women workers that the interviewees equally mentioned with preconceived sexist ideologies. All the interviewees who indicated that they were sexually harassed whether verbally or physically chose to ignore the harassments. For example, Sabine Assayes from Queen gas station said,

A client once sexually harassed me. He put his hand on my shoulder in an inappropriate way. It is not considered austere, but I couldn't say anything or object because the owner was standing near us... and if I said anything there would be a big fuss about it and the client is always right, so I chose to ignore.

Queen gas station's policy was somewhat lenient when it came to dealing with sexual harassment cases. Najat Kaddoura, like the women workers who spoke about being sexually harassed, said that verbal sexual harassment is a mundane thing in Lebanon,

Of course it happens that a drunken guy or an indecent one who passes by winks to women workers or comments on their looks. In this case, we interfere and we ask the harassed woman to move away for a while. If it was repeated, we talk to the guy or we call the police. But we haven't reached that level. When a customer comments on the looks of the female worker in an inappropriate way, a male worker comes and pumps gas instead of her in this case. We don't confront him. It is our duty to fill his car.



In order to constrict and avoid sexist remarks and sexual harassments, both the managers of Banet Taxi and Queen gas station, highlighted the significance of preparing their female employees well especially with respect to their attire and their behaviors.

Nawal Yaghi Fakhry of Banet Taxi said,

In Lebanon, they see a woman and think she is just a body...whatever she does she is considered a body. Whenever they see a woman... any woman, they can't but comment on her looks. Because in Lebanon gossip affects people, I must act differently in this field. Maybe if I was a teacher [referred to typical women jobs], I would be more lenient. But in such work I have to set certain standards for the female drivers to follow: to be well-dressed and not to reply to any comments.

Najat Kaddoura, manager of Queen gas station, reflected the same idea,

When we launched, we chose the girls in a correct way. Their uniform is designed in a good and modest way. It is not sexually appealing. We are not using women as seduction tools. We also worked on the behaviors of female employees. We trained them...how to talk and reply to men who harass them verbally or disturb them. We trained them about what to expect and how to confront such cases [harassments] when working in a gas station.

Most sexual harassments comprised of verbal sexual harassments like comments and also included winking and staring. Only one woman worker talked about experiencing sexual harassment of physical nature which was in the form of an unwelcome touching. The harassers were mostly clients and co-workers.

### *1.3. The burden of household duties*

Among the main socio-cultural hurdles women workers mentioned also were women's strives for maintaining a balance between household duties and job responsibilities. For example, Judge Helene Iskandar, the first woman to head the Beirut criminal court, said that she has to double the effort her husband does as she considers caring of her family is her sole responsibility. She said, "The husband doesn't handle these domestic work duties." Nawal Yaghi Fakhry expressed the same idea, "Even if a woman works in a non-masculine job, she has to take care of her house and of her children. Woman's responsibility in our society is much more than that of women in other societies." Talking about the negative side of her career, Rola Hoteit, said that as an employed woman a career would definitely affect her house and children. She added, "We don't have weekends or holidays. I feel that I'm falling short on my family obligations. "

On the other hand, Aida Itani, the manager of a plumbing store and a plumber herself, spoke very openly about her close relationship she had with her husband who passed away and indicated that her husband used to take care of household duties. She said,

I used to love him so much because he used to care about me. He used to do the cleaning and say that you are working hard and getting tired in the workplace. He used to do the laundry and the ironing. He used to clean the balconies before I wake up so that I can sit there and drink my coffee. I used to ask God that my daughter marries a person like him... but no one is like him. Our love story is

better than the most beautiful Arab film you can watch on T.V. I wasn't expecting that we once will be separated from one another.

Other barriers were found to be related to work routines. Four interviewees expressed that the work was exhausting for them. For example, Lamia Hallak, who runs a pastry bakery shop by herself, said that her job requires physical strength and that she has difficulties to bear in that respect since she works from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm without taking any break and without any assistance. Najat Kaddoura said that the difficulties she faces at managing Queen gas station are like any difficulties associated with a typical managerial position, “ [It is about] how to solve internal and external problems and how to satisfy the customers.” Nawal Yaghi Fakhry asserted that she experienced a financial-related difficulty, “Other taxi companies recruit drivers who already have their cars, but in my case I had to buy cars. Each car cost me around \$50,000 excluding the driver's salary... I didn't benefit financially.”

## ***2. Institutional and Legal-based Barriers***

### ***2.1. Discriminatory work-related policies and other hurdles***

Some interviewees pointed to the discriminatory labor law and unfair policies of the workplace institutions and companies towards women which possess an obstacle in front of achieving gender equality at the workplace. Judge Helene Iskandar said in this regard, “There are certain gaps in the policies regarding gender equality that must be worked on.” The interviewed women referred specifically to sexist policies pertaining to employment and benefits. Rola Hoteit said that many women are applying for pilot positions at the MEA, but the MEA is not employing them,

I'm surprised that the MEA is not employing female pilots. In their [recruiters'] views, women might get pregnant and thus become unproductive. If they really think about it, also men become unproductive when for example they break their legs. I think it is unfair. I think the MEA should employ female pilots.

In order to verify Hoteit's claim, I spoke to Khaled Traboulsi, Head of Operations Administration at the Middle East Airlines, who assured that very few women apply to the MEA Cadet Pilot Training Program. He said that the percentage of women applying to the MEA is less than 5%. He added that even the women who succeed in the written exams decide not to take the practical test and withdraw. At the same time, Khaled Traboulsi mentioned that there are other factors that play a significant role in the recruitment process. He said that he prefers males and that in general all companies prefer males because women become pregnant and thus they skip work. He added, "But we are not banning women from applying. They [women] are not applying. Let them apply and embarrass us."

Judge Helene Iskandar also highlighted the issue of gender discrimination in employment stating that women were banned from positions at the high judicial council and from penal judges' positions. She emphasized that women applicants used to outnumber men and more women used to pass the entrance exams, so in order to diminish women's number in judiciary they [unidentified authority] resorted to halting the entrance exams for a certain period of time using unreasonable pleas.

Judge Iskandar also referred to gender discrimination concerning the benefits judges receive. She said that she is treated as a single woman even though she is married

and is banned from family compensation whereas a married male judge is entitled to that. She added that women judges used to be barred from parental benefits concerning providing free hospitalization for their children, but they attained that right after several demands.

## **B. RQ2: Reasons for working at male-dominated professions**

### ***1. Financial Necessity***

The reasons the interviewees indicated for entering male-dominated jobs were diverse. The majority of the interviewees said that financial necessity was the main factor in performing a masculine job. Most women workers who stated that they engaged in an unskilled type of work, had minimal educational attainment, and had no career history. For example, Lamia Hallak, who runs a manakish pastry shop by herself, said that she has finished 9<sup>th</sup> grade at school and didn't graduate from high school. She added that her husband is sick and she had to support her family financially. In fact, the absence of a male supporter in her case as well as in Majida Bazz's situation prompted them to be economically active. Those women who said that financial problems compelled them to work in male-dominated jobs attested that their aim was to support their children in the first place and secure a better future for them. Lina Al Assir, who drives children to school, said, "I was in need of money. My husband could not afford to pay all expenditures. I needed money to pay tuition fees for my children's schools and the idea of driving children came to mind. I didn't think about this job from before. It is a good one."

In contrast to other women who mentioned that the financial constraint forced them to work at male-dominated occupations and who were of minimal educational achievement, Olfat who drives a Mona Cool bottled water delivery van, majored in child psychology and had previous work experience. Her inability to find work that matches

her field of study and the desperation to find any kind of job due to financial problems made her end up in driving as a profession. She elaborated,

I used to work at Dar Al-Aytam [a social welfare institution] as a care supervisor. It required that I stay at night and sleep there for three consecutive days. When my father died, I couldn't stay there. I had to be near my mother. So, I moved to work at an electronics shop. The company got a van and offered me to work as a driver. I was shocked at first, but I accepted it. I delivered products to the South and Bekaa regions. The company then went bankrupt and closed. I had to work to support myself and my mom. I applied for Mona Cool and got accepted. Mona cool offered me a 10 -tons weighing van. I used to like driving, but now I hate it. My field of study differs drastically from what I do today. I studied child psychology. For financial purposes, I worked as a driver. I had no work opportunity which corresponds to my field of study. There is no shame in that.

## ***2. Preference of this type of job***

Another reason shared by a significant number of interviewees was their preference of the type of duties associated with these male-dominated occupations. Zahraa Hleihel, an AUB security officer, described how her love of order and regulations affected her career choices, "Since I was young, I used to like the job of an internal security officer. I admired their roles in maintaining order. I didn't accomplish that [working as an internal security officer], but I did something similar to it and related to administering the law." Like Hleihel, Judge Helene Iskandsar, said that seeking justice was her passion at a young age and this motivated her to be what she is today.

Both Samar and Gilberte, ISF members, expressed their love of the police work's mission and their devotion to contributing to the society's good through performing what their job entails them to do. Samar said,

Before joining this work, I was looking forward to helping others especially women since they are not given their rights in our society and often fall victim to violence and abuse. The aspect of the job I prefer the most is helping women come forward after they might have previously been hesitant about reporting certain crimes to male officers. Often women feel less comfortable talking to men about certain issues. So being a woman, and a police officer, that they can talk to, will help a lot.

Echoing the same idea, Gilberte said that many women prefer to deal with police women and expected that the recent recruitment of women at police units would contribute in alleviating many social problems in Lebanon. "I'm very excited and glad to be part of this experience," she added.

### ***3. Confrontation of traditional ideas about women's work***

Some interviewees referred, whether implicitly or explicitly, to their defiance of the sexist ideologies and their rebellion against the Lebanese patriarchal society as key factors that influenced their decision to work at masculine jobs. Rola Hoteit recalled how her friend's sexist comments on an advertisement calling for female and male applicants



for pilot positions instigated her to apply and bolstered her vigor to continue her career in piloting once she passed the entrance exams,

It was a challenge. A friend was talking about the issue of women pilots and I told him let's both apply and see who gets accepted. He started mocking women's capabilities and said that they are women and they can't accomplish that. I passed among 2000 applicants. Only nine passed. [They were] Eight guys and me. Once I passed, I started thinking seriously about it; that I'm going to be the first female pilot in Lebanon. I'm trying to set an example. I hope that more women will enter the field of piloting and other economic sectors in Lebanon as well.

Although Nawal Yaghi Fakhry didn't specifically mention that her purpose for initiating Banet Taxi was to revolt against the way the patriarchal society treats women and even at certain point she denied women are being barred from doing whatever they want to because of patriarchy but because of not fulfilling men's interests, at the same time she adamantly spoke about her struggles and hinted at her confrontations with the patriarchal society to get where she aimed at. She gave a detailed account of the misogynistic based obstacles that barricaded her path of seeking good education with thorns,

When I was still young I was dreaming to get my bachelor's degree because I was living in a village and in a very conservative environment... where education is not appreciated. I struggled to attain my education and complete my studies. If my father didn't believe in what I believed in, I couldn't have reached to what I achieved today. My school in the village didn't have classes after the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I

went to another village to get my 9<sup>th</sup> grade certificate. I used to live in Bekaa. My father took me to Beirut to enroll me at a boarding school since I didn't have a place to stay at. A friend saw my father and said to him: 'you're going to Beirut to enroll a GIRL at a school?' I was 14 years old and this sentence struck me and got me wondering why people view girls in a demeaning way. I enrolled at the school and graduated. I went to Saint Joseph University in Zahle and then war broke in Zahle... I suffered and endured a lot... I was still young. Then I left and I started working at a bank and I transferred to the faculty of law at the Lebanese university. My siblings came to my house and I handled the responsibility of taking care of them. I used to work at day and study at night. I didn't attend classes; just took exams and I succeeded. So now sometimes I think about all what I did in order to work as manager of a taxi company. I had a reaction to the traditional Arab society. [I did this] just to prove to people that I can work wherever I want and stay as I am. I can prove myself in whatever I'm doing...

#### ***4. The influence of others***

Another salient theme emerged was the inspiration by a close person that led them to work in that specific job. Fawzieh, a worker at Queen gas station, said that she followed in her dad's footsteps and learned about fixing cars from him,

When I was young I used to go with my dad wherever he went. I used to learn everything he did. I liked what my dad did especially when it came to [fixing] cars and I wanted to do everything he did. I don't think there should be a

difference between what a guy and a girl do. I like this type of job. I am very happy with what I'm doing. I was with my twin brother in Australia and did some training pertaining to motor mechanics trade. I was planning to return to Australia and continue [my training], but I found this job and I'm satisfied with it.

Aida Itani was influenced by her husband to join him at his plumbing store. She said that her love of her husband, who passed away two years ago, drove her to stay with him at the store,

I started going to the store to stay with my husband, but it turned to real work. I used to work inside the shop manufacturing and receiving the products, writing bills, and answering the calls and my husband used to go outside the shop and install the products at the clients' places. I did this type of work because I loved my husband a lot. I wanted to be with him all the time.

Now she sees work as a living memory of her husband.

### **C. RQ3: Gender discrimination against women working in male-dominated careers**

Gender discrimination was practiced on two levels: institutional and personal.

#### ***1. Discrimination by the institution***

##### ***1.1. Discrimination in work tasks, in employment, and in the job benefits***

Discrimination was evident in the differences between the duties men and women workers are tasked with. For example, women workers were assigned different tasks from male workers at Queen gas station. Najat Kaddoura, the manager at Queen gas station, elaborated, “Male workers inflate car wheels. They [male workers] clean car windows. Men also are entitled to carry cash money. These tasks are specialized for men. In contrary to women, in case they [men] were holding cash money and were attacked by robbers, men can defend themselves.” Fawzieh, a worker at Queen gas station, emphasized that she used to work in Australia as a mechanic, but at Queen gas station she just pumps gas and is not allowed to perform other work duties.

The idea of protecting women was used as a plea to justify the different work responsibilities at Queen gas station. In this regard, Sabrine Assayes, a worker at the gas station, explained that women workers don't pump diesel but just gasoline whereas male workers pump both diesel and gasoline, “[This is] because diesel requires compression and it might blow up in our faces if not regulated properly.” Judge Helene Iskandar articulated the same idea saying that women judges “sometimes are not sent to far places like Hermel these days to resume working on their cases.” Insisting that she is not discriminating but taking preventive measures to protect women drivers from abuse, Nawal Fakhry stated,

I'm not discriminating between men and women. The reason that Banet Taxi's women drive women only is because I don't want to face a situation where men could use Banet Taxi's drivers for fun. Men might use us just to get into a cab with a woman; not for really needing a drive. It's neither I'm afraid from men nor I'm discriminating. Since I have few cars also I intended to make the project specialized for women. If I enlarged the project, I might change this to cater for men also. But for now Banet Taxi is for women.

One of the most salient themes that emerged in this respect was that women workers were deliberately engaging themselves in job tasks that are different from those done by their male coworkers. Haifa Ghazzo, an AUB security officer, suggested that AUB is not strict when it comes to keeping women guards work at night. She said that women security officers signed for three shifts, but that she sticks to daytime shifts. She added,

AUB mentioned that if they needed us [women security officers] at night for graduation ceremony or for elections for example, we stay at night. [However] I can't stay at night because drunken men might come at night and sometimes they attack male security officers. We don't stay [at campus] when conflicts occur. [Because] When you place a girl [woman security officer] in front of an angry man, you see that the man gets madder.

Ilham Arabi elaborated on the same idea saying that there is no discrimination regarding the tasks women security forces perform, but some women working as security guards don't feel comfortable doing the same tasks as their male coworkers, "We as

women security officers stand at parking entrances and we search cars' trunks. There is no problem in that. But at the same time sometimes deep inside me, I feel that a guy must be needed in certain situations..." Hanan Amin, Najat Kaddoura, Rola Hoteit, and Sabrine Assayes echoed the same point emphasizing that they feel sometimes men are needed to do certain tasks and not women although they might be performing the exact same work assignments. Rola Hoteit said in this regard,

Even when people go to a surgeon, they don't accept going to a woman surgeon. They find it weird. Even though I consider myself as supportive of women's causes and I have feminist ideas, I still think there are certain professions men have to do it rather than women.

On the other hand, some women workers asserted that they are doing the same tasks as their male co-workers and they are even doing a better job. This was reflected in Zahraa Hleihel's analysis of the different locations men and women security officers monitor at AUB,

We share a lot of responsibilities with male co-workers. When we did the training, I used to open cars' trunks and register cars' number plates. We do same duties. It is easier for guys because we monitor mostly AUBMC's gates but they monitor the campus's gates and the campus is more disciplined. At the hospital, there are a lot of strangers... AUB students can be punished or penalized if they did something wrong, but we can't punish or penalize people coming in and out of the hospital.

Aida Itani, however, performed tasks that required physical strength and she acknowledged that she outperformed her husband with respect to work duties. She described the efforts she did while doing her job,

I used to screw around 50 pipes per day. I used to prepare these pipes for my husband who used to work as a plumber. My husband used to produce metal clothes hangers. I used to produce 2000 of these per day. No man could do that. I used to fix kerosene gas and Lux lamps during the civil war...I used to be a better merchant than my husband. [I used to] Earn more money than him. I used to watch my husband working and learn from him, but when I knew how to perform the duties, I started to work on my own [at the plumbing store] and I became better than him.

Both Samar and Gilberte, ISF members, said that their military trainings are the same as those for men and that there is no difference in the difficulty level of physical trainings between women's and men's. Similar to them, Majida Bazz said that she started to sell vegetables on a wagon "like any man. There is no difference between a man and a woman."

Institutional discrimination didn't only involve assigning women work duties that are different from those pertaining to their male counterparts, but also included discrimination in employment and benefits. As mentioned in the previous section on the challenges women face in male-dominated professions, Judge Helene Iskandar talked about these two types of discrimination.

## ***2. Discrimination by co-workers and customers***

Some women workers indicated that male co-workers and customers interacted with them in a discriminatory way. For instance, Lamia Hallak talked about how her former employees refused to take orders from her because she is a woman,

My former employees didn't comply with my orders. Sometimes they used to skip work. I was not comfortable managing them and they didn't listen to me because they think that a woman won't have the same authority as men... They needed someone harsher. So I couldn't work with them. I'm now working alone.

Olfat recalled how her colleagues ridiculed her when she started working as a van driver and questioned her capabilities as a woman driver. Some even refused to work with her because she is a woman. She said,

A guy looked at me in a disrespectful way and said, 'A girl wants to drive and I'm sitting doing nothing? No, I don't want to join you.' Another co-worker told the guy after having a ride with me that I'm better than 100 guys in the way I drive. I've been driving since 1982.

On the other hand, Rola Hoteit said that her orders aren't refused and this is governed by international regulations: "The final decision is for the captain. According to international regulations, nobody has the right to refuse the captain's decisions. The law forces them to abide by my decisions."



#### **D. RQ 4: Women’s perceptions of the influences of their masculine work duties on their gender identities and vice-versa**

The interviewees’ descriptions of their gender identities were diverse and multifaceted. A group of women emphasized that women perform tasks differently from men since women have distinct feminine characteristics; other women stated that there is no difference between men and women in performing work duties in male-dominated jobs; and others said that women emulate masculine attributes and behaviors as they work in male-dominated careers.

##### ***1. Performing work tasks in a “feminine”, “masculine”, or “neutral” way***

One of the most common themes shared by the interviewees was that they mentioned women-specific characteristics and attributes in referring to the idea that women perform differently in male-dominated jobs. The interviewed women elicited words and phrases like, “women being compassionate, emotional, retain my femininity”. Lina Al Assir differentiated between a female and a male driver stressing that being a female driver for children entailed her to perform her job in a different way,

I talk with the students on the road back home. I’m compassionate with them. I think a man in general will not do that. He would just care about driving them home, but won’t care if they have personal problems...I used to listen to them and get engaged in their talks.

Like Al Assir’s reference to women as being compassionate, Ilham Arabi, an AUB security officer, also emphasized that the woman security officer “should be strong

and affectionate at the same time. I have to be sympathetic with the people, the patients, their families, and the students.” Nawal Fakhry also affirmed that she is a mother in the first place and “a mother can’t act like a man at work. My sentiments and mercy are still that of a mother.” Building on the claim that women are more emotional than men in her view, Rola Hoteit said,

Sometimes emotions play a significant role. We don’t overreact because we can understand that it is nothing serious for example when a baby is screaming...maybe men would overreact and ask for the crew to shush him. We can understand the emotional part of the job, but the technical, scientific, and practical parts are the same.

Although she pointed to the differences between male pilots and female pilots concerning the emotion aspect, she disregarded the differences she spoke about earlier regarding other aspects of the job. She said, “Regarding handling more issues at the same time, well, it is a matter of training and personality at the same time. It is related to a person’s capabilities regardless of gender.” Similarly, Gilberte, highlighted the latter idea expressed by Hoteit which explains that there are no differences between male workers and female workers in doing their jobs. She added that the training is tough for both men and women and “we are exposed to both physical and intellectual pressure, but it is very useful and we benefit a lot from practices.” Hanan Amin, Samar, and Sara Shami also articulated the same idea.

Some women explicitly mentioned that they had to replicate masculine qualities in order to carry out some of their job tasks. Both Fawzieh and Sabine Assayes used the

term “*yestargel*” which means to “act like a man” or “be a tomboy”. Fawzieh said, “One should ‘*yestergel*’ act like a man sometimes. But of course within limits.” Zahraa Hleihel used the same term in elucidating about her job responsibility in children kidnappings’ cases, “In situations of children kidnappings I act in different way... like a man. I would act more aggressively. Push the kidnapper... this is my duty.” Haifa Ghazzo elaborated on the same idea saying, “Sometimes I act firmly with people. For instance, on certain gates like the ER gate we have to be very firm. I become like a physically-fit man there. We [security officers] can’t let more than one person in.”

## ***2. Emphasizing and embellishing their feminine attributes***

One of the most common themes mentioned by the interviewees was their emphasis on preserving their femininity. Almost all interviewees stated that they didn’t lose their feminine characteristics and behaviors. Rola Hoteit was quick to dismiss any change in her identity as a woman, rhetorically asking “A guy at home? No way. No. Not at all. No way. I’m a wife and a mother before I’m a pilot. Being a captain, I have to be also a leader. So this strengthened my personality, but it didn’t make me less feminine.” Referring to the same idea, Ilham Arabi, Majida Bazz, Lamia Hallak, Samar, and Sara Shami said that they didn’t lose their femininity but that they now feel stronger. Samar said in this regard,

My personality became stronger. I am more courageous, firm, and more respectful to time and to duties. I became more aware of my femininity, more concerned about it, and more appreciating of the value of being feminine. Because we are

not allowed to apply makeup during work days, the first thing I do during my non-working days is to apply nail polish and take care of my hair.

Both managers Najat Kaddoura and Nawal Fakhry sought to conserve the women employees' femininity through the use of pink colors and women-associated accessories. Nawal Fahry elaborated,

I wanted to reveal the feminine part [of this company] by focusing on the uniform of my employees... with distinct feminine features of flowers in their hair and pink ties. [Although] women are driving but they are not being and acting like men. God had granted women certain feminine characteristics and I can't come and mix things up. Even though women are doing men's jobs, but this doesn't mean that they have abandoned their femininity.

Najat Kaddoura of the pink colored Queen gas station's sign, decoration, and employees' attires, said that she is managing a whole integrated project of a supermarket and a gas station where women constitute an important element. She added, "It is women-friendly and using feminine decorations would make women more comfortable. The project caters for women."

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

#### **A. Summary of Findings**

The notion of women working at male-dominated jobs doesn't necessarily mean that these women have rejected traditional gender values and roles. This is because a lot of women sought to appeal as much feminine as they could, articulated the idea that household duties are their sole responsibilities, and some even performed womanly associated work duties at masculine professions. While they engaged in male-dominated professions, some didn't seem convinced that they can handle all male jobs.

On one side, the traditional society's expectations of women's roles and identities put pressure on women workers to succumb to these anticipations via reproducing womanly tasks to their work duties, choosing to do domestic and caretaking responsibilities, adhering to preconceived sexist ideas about women's work performance, and enduring bashing remarks about their entrance to masculine jobs. On another side, the traditional society's views of women as having frail bodies was used as a plea for the managers and the male coworkers to treat women as in need of physical protection especially protection of their honor. This was evident in the protective measures companies introduced. To avoid getting sexually harassed, for instance, managers stated that they paid attention to the women's behaviors and attires while at the same time they paradoxically didn't pinpoint to the root of the sexual harassment problem and failed to implement strict policies towards the aggressors. All women workers who experienced

sexual harassments, which was the second most hurdle women workers mentioned, trivialized these sexual harassments.

On the other hand, other women challenged the Lebanese society's gender order through defying the socially-prescribed gender roles, identities, performances, behaviors, and symbols. This category incorporated women who chose these jobs for the purpose of confronting the idea about the existence of a gendered work force of absolutely men-only and women-only job sectors whereby each gender abides by such dichotomies. The aforementioned category also included women who wanted to counteract the society's ideas about women's inefficiency to perform well in male-dominated careers.

In fact, interviewed women workers and managers in masculine jobs can be categorized into various groups that sometimes intersect by sharing certain points. One group constituted of women who didn't see any differences between men and women and didn't view their work tasks as gendered; another one saw that there are differences between men and women, considered their workplace as a totally masculine one, and mimicked masculine behaviors and attributes in order to integrate into the "masculine" workplace; a third category incorporated women who saw that there are differences between men and women, but performed work responsibilities that they considered more suitable to women to ascertain their feminine identity; and another who blended both traditional masculine and feminine identity performances .

Although the interviewees' gender identities within male-dominated careers varied, the majority of women workers stressed on their desire to look feminine even though some were performing work duties that required physical strength.

As a reaction to people's "talks" about women workers' loss of their feminine qualities and behaviors, these women reemphasized their feminine looks by dressing in an appealing way and by putting on pink-colored attires and accessories. Although these women crossed gender boundaries by entering male-dominated professions, they remained attached to the traditional society's values through enunciating on their femininities and through elaborating on the differences between women's performances and men's at masculine jobs.

People's "talks" and demeaning comments were the most common socio-cultural difficulties faced by the interviewed women. Other hurdles were related to legal-based and institutional discrimination pertaining to discriminatory policies regarding employment, benefits, and in types of work duties as well as discriminatory treatment from co-workers. It was observed that the hurdles interviewed women occupying high status jobs experienced were related to work policies whereas those faced by the interviewees occupying low status jobs were of socio-cultural nature.

The reason for women choosing such jobs was financial necessity in the first place. Others indicated that they liked such types of jobs and others wanted to enter such jobs for challenging patriarchal ideas. Other women indicated that they were inspired by men close to them who were working at masculine type of jobs.

## **B. Comparison with Literature Review**

Consistent with the literature reviewed, when examining the constraints the interviewees faced while working at male-dominated workplaces, institutionalized

discrimination, social norms and traditional society's expectations of women's roles, and sexist work policies were all referred to by the interviewed women. The most constraining among these obstacles for the interviewed women were those of socio-cultural nature. Interviewees talked extensively about the socio-cultural hurdles. While some of them showed defiance mechanisms towards the socio-cultural obstacles, still many others learned to cope with them through internalizing the social norms and the society's value-system into their daily lives.

### ***1. Glocalization and Traditional Gender Ideologies***

Recently, the trend of creating women-only corporations and businesses has been on the rise worldwide (Ex. Anonymous, 2008; Applegate, 2012; Ditcham, 2008). In the Middle East, there is a move towards opening women-only businesses and towards offering services that cater for only women (OECD, 2012). In Lebanon, such examples include the BLC bank's "We Initiative" project that promotes female entrepreneurship, Banet Taxi, Queen gas station, and others.

Banet Taxi's manager Nawal Fakhry said that she was in Thailand when the idea of creating only-women taxi cabs started to emerge. She said,

During my visit to Thailand where I was preparing for opening a beauty center and purchasing beauty products, I was accompanied by a woman driver during five days and I liked the idea. At the airport, I saw two consecutive cabs with women as drivers. At my flight back to Lebanon which took around 8 hours, I made the whole planning. I did the opening for Banet Taxi and the beauty salon at the same day.



Also, as an expatriate returning from Switzerland, Merhi Abou Merhi launched Queen gas station project in Sidon which the majority of its employees are women. Through the process of glocalization, the trend of creating specialized-women services, businesses, and institutions has reached Lebanon. In this respect, the process of glocalization involves the integration of foreign concepts into the local practices where social actors play the role of selecting these foreign concepts and discourses (Robertson, 1992).

The infusion of these various non-traditional ideas and practices into the Lebanese market and into the Lebanese society's value-system might diminish the authority of tradition. Giddens (1991) suggested that the authority of tradition decreases when individuals start being exposed to foreign and different cultural values and practices. However, this is not the case with all interviewed women workers. For example, Fawzieh, a worker at Queen gas station, accepted her fiancé's decision to quit her work when getting married,

I'm very happy about this job. I don't want to leave. I'm engaged and my marriage is after 4 months. My fiancé wants me to leave work, but I don't want to. He doesn't want me to work at all. We have been engaged for 2 years and I was working during this time, but I can't convince him to let me work when we get married. I can't but accept this. I can't do anything else. When a woman gets married, she quits work. This is how things are in his family. I'm just afraid I'll get bored especially that I'll live in Zafta, (a region far away from the city).

Fawzieh abided by the traditional gender unwritten rules that her fiancé put in front of her and thus she was ready to abandon her career life despite spending 2 years at

a glocalized women-only enterprise. This is considered a type of economic abuse women face in the Lebanese society. A recent study indicated that the behavior pertaining to men forbidding their wives to work was among the most behaviors women were subjected to as part of the economic abuse they suffered from in Lebanon (Usta, Makarem, & Habib, 2013). Another economic abuse Lebanese women suffer from is the constant pressure put by men on their wives to fulfill their household and childcare duties else they ban them from working (Usta, Makarem, & Habib, 2013).

## ***2. Work-family conflict***

Many parents face the problem of juggling family responsibilities with work (Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Hochschild, 1997). Women are expected to take the responsibility of household duties and are blamed in the first place if there is any kind of derelictions. A recent survey indicated that 75% of the interviewed female employees in the Lebanese private sector have household-related duties compared to 41% only of interviewed male employees (World Bank, 2009). In Lebanon, women face the burden of household duties and this affects their improvement at work (Habib, Nuwayhid, & Yeretian, 2006; Usta, Makarem, & Habib, 2013).

This was a major hurdle the interviewed women workers in male-dominated jobs experienced. Judge Helene Iskandar, for example, said that she has to do double the effort her husband does as she considers caring for her family including household duties and childcare is her sole responsibility. Women's statements in this study regarding the issue of handling household duties resembled those of interviewed women in Usta et al.'s

(2013) study. A woman worker quoted saying in Usta et al's study, "“Many times I have to give up meetings with clients as the household should be my priority” ” (Usta et al., 2013, 363). In another study about the nursing workforce in Lebanon which was conducted in 69 hospitals by a six-year research program headed by Fadi El-Jardali at AUB, nurses (the majority 80.9% were females) were least satisfied with balancing family and work and marriage and childcare responsibilities and this was among the most significant reasons for nurses leaving their jobs (El-Jardali et al., 2009). Working mothers struggle with this conflict and tend to be more affected than working fathers in managing family commitments and job duties (ILO, 2007; Tlais & Kauser, 2011; Watts, 2007). The absence of family- friendly policies in Lebanon, has also contributed in aggravating the problem of attaining a balance between work and household responsibilities especially for women (Arab Human Development Report,2005; Hausmann, Jamali, Sidani, & Kobeissi, 2008;Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012; ILO, 2004; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

The work-family conflict was an indication of another conflict interviewees had to deal with which was resembled in the dual roles and identities as mothers and as workers.

### ***3. An Amalgam of Women Identities in Male-dominated Jobs***

Similar to findings of other studies examining women's identities in masculine jobs (Chan, Doran, & Marel, 2010; Denissen, 2010; Morash & Haarr; 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2009), this study concludes that interviewed women maintained multiple identities and differed in manifesting them. Some chose stereotypically masculine identities, another

group chose stereotypically feminine identities, others chose to mix both and create their own complex gender rules, and yet some considered that gender is an irrelevant element to work.

A salient theme echoed by the majority of the interviewees was their emphasis on feminine attributes and women-specific qualities in doing job duties in a different manner than men at male-dominated professions. This study's finding was consistent with other studies about women's identities in male-dominated jobs like policing. In particular, the study's finding pertaining to the extension of the stereotypical nature of women as being emotional to tasks that require the use of sentiments and doing work duties in a feminine way also reflected similar findings in other studies (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012; Bystydzienski & Brown; 2012; Gleeson, 1996; Ireland & Berg, 2008; Rabe-Hemp, 2009). Interviewed women used words like "affectionate, compassionate, emotional, and sentimental" in talking about their work duties. Also this study's finding confirmed that of Morash and Haarr's study (2011) which indicated that women's unique capabilities made them more competent than men regarding tasks that needed communication skills and use of emotions.

It is important to point here that in Lebanon, women in Lebanese army were assigned to mostly tasks that suit similar duties of a mother like administrative and nursing work responsibilities (Elali, 2012). Echoing the same idea, Brigadier General Ibrahim Basbous, commander of ISF institute, said that the new experience of security officers for females would differ from that of the army and general security in the fact that women will perform military and security tasks and not just administrative work as is the case with women army soldiers (El Turk, 2012). Assigning women to feminine tasks

within “masculine” institutions like the military, which in turn obliged women to perform work in a feminine way, was reflected in other studies examining policewomen in U.S. and other regions (Belknap, 2001; Garcia, 2003; Rabe-Hamp, 2009; Strobl, 2007). During the Lebanese civil war; however, women engaged in military activity with the militias, but their participation was temporarily (Khrais, 2010; Shehadeh, 1999).

In this study, a group of interviewed women admitted that they sometimes needed to act like men and had to replicate and use some masculine-deemed traits in order to perform their work tasks. It is important to note here that these women were sometimes borrowing men’s characteristics without fully engulfing in embodying traditional men’s qualities and without abandoning feminine traits, as they described.

Confirming previous research about women’s identities at male-dominated jobs, this finding is similar to that in Denissen’s study (2010) which found that there were tradeswomen who reproduced stereotypically-categorized masculine traits and behaviors. This was also reflected in Rabe-Hemp’s study (2009) and Sasson-Levy’s study (2003). The choice of Gilberte, an ISF member, to have a “number 2” hair cut in order to defeminize herself and in order to be treated equally as other policemen was a form of mimicking a masculine trait to integrate into the masculine-structured police institution. Similarly, Sasson-Levy (2003) described how women soldiers imitated the idiosyncratic men’s identity performances through the repetition of masculine behaviors like, “[...] using foul language, wearing big, dirty uniforms, and carrying weapons, these women soldiers mimic the identity practices of the combat soldier” (Sasson-Levy, 2003, 448).

Some interviewed women, for example, considered that physical strength is a man’s trait and mentioned they had to be strong like a man in certain circumstances in

order to perform well at work. In contrast, Sasson-Levy & Amram-Katz (2007) quoted a male military commander saying that male trainees complained about the toughness of the training whereas female trainees didn't do that and posited that physical strength is a social construct and not gender-based.

Some interviewed women integrated both stereotypically masculine and feminine attributes into their work duties at male-dominated professions. Interviewees like Ilham Arabi, Fawzieh, Haifa Ghazzo, Sabrine Assayes, and Zahraa Hleihel stated that sometimes they had to act like men and be physically strong, but at the same time they mentioned that they had to be affectionate at work and act in a feminine way. Similarly to prior studies, Rabe-Hemp's study (2009) for instance, found that policewomen talked about their preservation of good looks and femininities in addition to performing masculine work duties and thus were carrying out diverse identity practices. Morsh and Haarr (2011)'s study lends credibility to this finding as it maintained that policewomen mixed both stereotypically gender traits and peculiar attributes in describing themselves and their work duties.

Other interviewed women considered gender as irrelevant to their work. These women stated that there are no differences between women and men regarding their identity practices and work tasks at male-dominated jobs. This finding resonates with other studies like Morash and Haarr's study (2011) which found that some policewomen mentioned that gender didn't possess an integral element in shaping their behaviors or work tasks. This finding was also consistent with another study targeting female Swedish armed forces which found, among other findings, that some female officers didn't see

any gender-based differences regarding work tasks (Pettersson, Person, & Berggren, 2008).

Although some women confirmed to stereotypically-defined masculine and feminine identities at male-dominated workplaces, others challenged these gender-related stereotypes and didn't consider gender a determining factor in influencing their work tasks. Thus, interviewed women resisted and reinforced gender stereotypes at the same time.

#### ***4. Sexism***

Interviewed women's emphasis on their looks and feminine characteristics ironically entrenched and strengthened sexist ideologies relating to portraying women as just images. Sexism, whether manifested explicitly via discriminatory attitudes or sexual harassments or covertly through treating women workers as incompetent, is related to gender stereotypes (Eagly, 1987; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Masequesmay, 2009; OECD, 2002). Sexism was the second most prominent constraint faced by the interviewed women which in fact is rife particularly in male-dominated jobs as documented by prior studies (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012; Dinovitzer Reichman, & Sterling, 2009; Gleeson, 2006; Haarr, 1997; Rabe-Hemp, 2009). Sexism, including use of sexual harassments and discriminatory attitudes and practices, is considered a way to marginalize women and keep them away from male-dominated jobs via creating a hostile working environment (Rabe-Hemp, 2009).

Specifically the issue of sexual harassments, form of sexism, was referred to by the interviewees at male-dominated workplaces and this finding confirms previous

research about women in male-dominated professions (Firestone & Harris, 1994; Haarr, 1997; Pettersson, Person, & Berggren, 2008; Pierino, 2007; Rabe-Hemp, 2008).

Interviewed women who indicated that they were sexually harassed deemed sexual harassment as a banal thing at their workplaces and chose to ignore it. The trivialization of sexual harassment by women in male-dominated jobs is a recurring theme in the literature (Luo, 1996; Thomas & Kitzinger, 1994; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Wirth, 2001). Sasson-Levy (2003) considered sexual harassment in masculine-labeled jobs to act as a marginalizing tool for women. She explained that ignoring sexual harassments at male-dominated jobs, which all the interviewed sexually harassed women in this study indicated that they ignored the sexual harassments, is in fact a defiance mechanism. She stated that if women “[...] react to sexual harassment by being insulted and hurt, they confirm the discourse that the harassment itself is trying to create, which constitutes women as sexual objects. Thus, when women [...] refuse to be offended, they do not allow the harassment to attain its intended exclusionary power” (Sasson-Levy, 2003, 455). At the same time and in the long run, ignoring sexual harassments and refusing to report it may render it as a norm (Firestone & Harris, 1994; Sasson-Levy, 2003).

Interviewed women had to endure negative views and comments, another form of sexism, from their male co-workers and customers. Similar to prior research, women were subjected to negative attitudes from their male colleagues and managers in male-dominated professions and this was an obstruction to their progress (Davis, 2005; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004; Morris, 1996; Sahgal, 2007). Their supervisors often questioned their abilities to perform the jobs’ duties just because they were women. This finding



aligns with the argument put by Burgess and Borgida (1999) which states that in job settings dominated by men, women are prone to discrimination based on descriptive stereotyping. Descriptive stereotyping is associated with traits women usually possess and thus in masculine jobs women are perceived to be incompetent because their traditionally perceived traits don't match those expected in such jobs (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Dinovitzer, Reichman, & Sterling, 2009). These findings contribute significantly to the literature on sexism at male-dominated workplaces (Bevan & Learmonth, 2012; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Garcia, 2003; Haarr, 2006; Rabe-Hemp, 2008).

Other types of sexism revealed in this study were institution-related where discrimination was present in the type of tasks women had and in the benefits they received in addition to preferential employment of men in some institutions. Studies have documented different forms of discrimination in male-dominated professions like discrimination in hiring (Gorman, 2005) in addition to the abundance of sexual harassment (Firestone & Harris, 1994; Haarr, 1997; Pettersson, Person, & Berggren, 2008; Pierino, 2007; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Gorman (2005) found that in male-dominated jobs the more the employers evaluate female applicants' skills and competencies based on masculine-associated attributes, the fewer women are selected. Furthermore, the presence and proper implementation of anti-discriminatory work policies play a crucial role in curbing discrimination specifically in male-dominated professions (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

### ***5. Honor and Stigma***

The abject comments the interviewees received were inundated with words relating to honor and shame. In male-dominated professions like police work women's honor is viewed as being threatened. This is because the job entails adhering to traditionally-associated masculine duties and thus women are feared to become masculine or to be defiant of traditional gender roles (Strobl, 2007).

In a "shame-oriented culture", as described by Khalaf (2009), honor is a woman's capital which strengthens traditional gender roles (Giambalvo, 2006; Strobl, 2007). Moreover, the presence of women on the streets as with the case of Majida Bazz, a vegetable cart vendor, and some employees from Queen gas station is considered something dishonorable for women. Their mere presence on the 'street', which is viewed as a masculine public space per excellence (Day, 2010; Kambouri, 2007), is regarded as a subtle mode of resistance towards the idea of monopolizing public space by men and domesticating women.

People's perceptions towards labeling a certain job as dishonoring for women differ even within a certain career sector. For example, civil engineering, a highly male-dominated profession (Watts, 2009), requires women to be visible in the public space and this makes them more prone to receive hostile responses (Watts, 2009) including those targeting their honor. On the contrary other types of engineering might not be viewed as such. Thus, women working even in a high status job like civil engineering might be regarded as dishonoring for them.

In general, this traditional perception which maintains that women are preservers of honor has been hindering women from entering labor force and disempowering them

economically (Abu–Lughod, 1999; Ouis & Myhrman, 2007; The Arab Human Development Report, 2005; Usta, Makarem, & Habib, 2013).

### **C. Comparison with Theory**

Building on Goffman’s theory of stigma (1963), some women workers in this study were stigmatized in several ways; through being viewed as women who have lost their honor and their feminine identity, as women falling short on their household duties, and as incapable women of performing masculine-labeled work tasks. Attaining the society’s “blessings” of the ability to manage domestic responsibilities amid the stigmatized gazes of being an “unfit” wife or a “disobedient” daughter was a main concern for women workers in general.

From a Goffman’s dramaturgical approach and between the “on-stage performances” or the formal interactions of women at the workplace and the backstage activities, in this case the domestic responsibilities of women as patriarchal societies allegedly associate women with, women’s identities converge and diverse to suit the gendered work spaces.

#### ***1. Chameleon Identities: Doing, Undoing, and Redoing Gender***

In this study, interviewed women were mostly doing gender in a traditional way and performing gender in a stereotypical manner through emphasizing that men and women possess different natural qualities. Whether they stated they were doing work tasks in a “feminine” way or mentioned that they sometimes had to mimic certain

“masculine” traits for performing particular work tasks, this indicates they have perceived gender in a traditional manner.

West and Zimmerman (1987) criticized how gender became similar to one’s sex where gender became “less an ‘achievement’” and more fixed and static as sex. This is significant in the case of these interviewees who saw their sex identity equivalent to their gender identity and believed that being a woman (sex) requires performing in certain ways that match their sex identity. Even though some interviewees indicated that they didn’t see any differences regarding work duties between women and men, they emphasized their feminine-associated characteristics and roles as mothers. For example, Samar ,an ISF member, didn’t consider that women possess less physical strength than men so she challenged the natural biological discourse which emphasizes men’s potent physical strength vis-à-vis women’s dire physical strength. At the same time, she expressed that she had missed her feminine self; doing her hair and applying manicure were women-associated things she became concerned more about as she described. What is interesting is that the interviewed women managers, Nawal Fakhry and Najat Kaddoura, were adhering to the gender rules of society surfing on the feminine waves and using the girly-pinkish marketing strategies.

In this study, the male-dominated workplace served as a stage for some women to elicit their natural woman-specific characteristics. Some interviewed women displayed their womanly attributes through choosing to do work duties that adhered to stereotypical women-associated set of attitudes and behaviors. For example, several women explained that because women are “naturally” more emotional they performed in a different aspect than men.

Some interviewed women had to manage their gender and act like men sometimes to behave in accordance with the new stage they were in, the traditionally-perceived masculine stage. This was consistent with West and Zimmerman's (1987) theoretical conceptualization of gender. West and Zimmerman (1987) depicted gender as a continuous product of social doings and interactions, thus gender is always changing. They also saw gender as manageable; which means that a person can modify gender based on different circumstances. Lorber (1990) stated, however, that whether people permanently or temporarily varied their gender identities, the society still assigns them to one of the already-defined sex categories. These gender labels were depicted in the codes of honor, femininity, and shame the society ascribed women with. Thus, when women "entered" male-dominated jobs, women's honor and femininity were regularly questioned. This is because honor and femininity are what constitutes the category of women from the Lebanese society's perspective and the society feels these women-defined discourses might be threatened should women mingle in male-dominated jobs and become one of the men.

Others stressed that the male-dominated career was in fact gender-neutral. Some security officers at AUB, in particular, peeled the masculine label off their job and said it shouldn't be marked as such. Zahraa Hleihel, an AUB security officer, said, "I don't think this is a man's job. The mind is stronger than the muscles. I can monitor with my mind 3 to 4 gates without using any physical strength." These women were undoing gender and dismantling the gender stereotypes and labels. They were revealing, in the words of Butler (1990), that "the inner truth of gender [which] is a fabrication" (p 42).

Another group of women paradoxically did gender in a stereotypical way and at other times undid gender and challenged the stereotypical construct. Thus, they were constantly redoing gender in their own way through filtering the traditional gender-related expectations and discourses with their agencies. Rola Hoteit, for instance, was motivated by a fixed gender stereotype which devalued women's capabilities to work as pilots to apply for piloting and she succeeded in undoing and rejecting this stereotype, at a personal level at least. She was able to redo and redefine the image of piloting profession, at least in Lebanon, as a profession that is inclusive of both women and men. Challenging gender inequality, in Hoteit's case, which was manifested through the reconstruction and the redoing of a specific gender-related stereotype, goes in line with the conceptualization of gender as something that an individual does rather than as a being, as West and Zimmerman argued (1987). At other times, Hoteit emphasized a gender-stereotype which is related to women being more emotional and the effect of this gender difference on the different work behaviors of men and women. Thus, by undoing gender stereotypes and simultaneously expressing a dominant gender discourse, Hoteit prepares the society to a new reconstruction of the identities of women workers albeit not a complete change of gender.

#### **D. Future Research**

To my knowledge, this is the first study in Lebanon to address the phenomenon of women workers in male-dominated professions. This study lays a foundation for further research exploring the growing phenomenon of women entering male-dominated professions in Lebanon. Potential studies in the future could include investigating about

sexual harassments at the Lebanese police institution since the recruitment of females at police is a new experience for the Lebanese society. Other similar studies could be more diverse in their sample and include rural women workers. Further studies might incorporate exploring specifically the constraints women managers in Lebanese or Arab male-dominated professions face.

## **E. Conclusion and Limitations**

The phenomenon of women entering male-dominated careers must not be seen as just a positive step towards eradicating gender-related stereotypes. As the study showed, some women conformed to society's molded gender expectations and reproduced gender stereotypes to their work tasks. However, due to glocalization and other factors, some Lebanese women have started to create their own de-traditionalized identities and to defy certain gender expectations about women at work. Moreover, women rights groups and civil society have also started to lobby for reformations in the labor law and to raise awareness about discrimination and sexual harassments. Their efforts should be coupled with changing the shame-culture's sexist and preconceived ideologies about women through education.

There are certain limitations in this study worth mentioning. The target was to conduct interviews with 25 women, but not all those contacted accepted to be interviewed, so I ended up interviewing 18 women. The study's findings aren't to be generalized to other women workers in male-dominated jobs because they don't represent all women workers in these jobs. The focus was on women workers in urban regions in Lebanon. Rural women workers were not taken into consideration in this study. Also

some male-dominated professions were not studied. For example, although the army is considered a male-dominated job, it was not studied since the aim was to study the recent entry of Lebanese women into male-dominated jobs. That is why we interviewed policewomen and not female army soldiers since just a year ago women were allowed to be recruited as police officers.

## **F. Recommendations**

This study highlights certain gaps in the Lebanese labor law and offers certain reformation. Some articles should be introduced to the Lebanese code of labor and other amendments should be made to it because it doesn't achieve gender equality as explained in the literature review chapter. For example, the Lebanese labor code should include articles that pertain to government employees, domestic workers, and rural employees. Article 7 of the Lebanese labor code, specifically, states that the provisions of the law don't apply on domestic workers and agricultural workers. Thus, women working at homes and in agriculture don't benefit from the law. The National Commission for Lebanese Women has already intervened officially and sent a request to the Minister of Labor in 2011 to amend article 7 in order to include domestic workers and agricultural workers. However, the proposal is still in a pending state at the Ministry of Labor. Although a new Cabinet is not formed yet, further follow-ups should take place meanwhile.

Punitive measures should be also introduced in case of gender discrimination practices. The period of maternity leave should be extended to 10 weeks as proposed by the National Commission for Lebanese Women which prepared a bill for that and



submitted it to the Lebanese Parliament, but it is still waiting approval. Moreover, exaggerated protective measures, which prohibit employing women in certain jobs and industries considered harmful to women and that might be counteractive, should be abolished in order to achieve gender equality.

In addition to suggestions for reforming the labor code, certain work policies should be improved. Controlling sexual harassment at the workplace should be done through introducing punitive and stricter measures and most importantly through ensuring these policies are implemented. Simultaneously, sexually harassed women should be encouraged to file complaints against their harassers. This may not curb sexual harassment fully since women might be self-employed and on their own like Majida Bazz, the vegetable cart vendor. However, more awareness campaigns should be done. “The Adventures of Salwa” campaign is already working on combating sexual harassment in Lebanon. But again, widening the scope of the targeted people especially those who have limited educational levels should also be an aim for this campaign. To help women workers reconcile work and household duties (women still do most of household duties in Lebanon), adequate family-friendly policies should also be implemented like providing childcare facilities.

Elimination of gender stereotypes from education curriculum, from different media-related materials like advertisements and films, and from the unwritten society’s rules (the most difficult) might seem a long approach. However, taking small steps towards introducing gender equality to the Lebanese through proper monitoring of gender stereotypes and through the introduction of more gender-related courses at schools and

universities may help in preparing the society to accept women workers in the labeled male-dominated jobs and employ more women in these jobs.

## APPENDIX A

### Category: Gender Discrimination and the Challenges for ‘Masculine’ Jobs

- 1- Tell me about your experience in what’s viewed as a “man-only” job.
- 2- What are the main challenges you’ve confronted so far or still dealing with in this domain?
- 3- Are women and men at your workplace assigned to different tasks?
- 4- How pleased are you with the job you are doing?
- 5- How respected from the society do you feel for doing this job?
- 6- How do you deal with negative views, interactions, and reactions?
- 7- Could you describe your companies’/organizations’ specific codes of conduct, laws, and policies concerning gender equality?

### Category: Reasons behind Women Joining Male-dominated Jobs

- 8- What prompted you to join this job?
  - a- Are the main reasons related to economic factors?
  - b- Do you think what encouraged you is the influence of non-traditional role models in this field?
  - c- Did you join this career because you think you’re inspired by feminist ideas?

### Category: Gender Identities: Undoing and Redoing Gender

- 9- Do you think that being a woman on this job entails you to perform differently?  
How?

10- Do you think your behaviors and identity as a woman have changed since doing this job? How?

11- Do you think that you conform to tasks related to your job that suit feminine identities?

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