"We are not free here…"
Palestinian IT Students’ Intentions to Migrate or to Stay

Max Karpefors
The Palestinian information technology (IT) sector is growing, yet an ongoing migration of IT professionals and graduates is taking place – both in shape of student migration and labour migration. Through group, pair and individual interviews, this thesis investigates highly skilled IT students’ intentions to stay in or to leave Palestine after graduation. The study puts the individual in the center of the analysis focusing on a micro-level perspective while examining professional outlooks and factors affecting migratory and stay decisions. The findings highlight the impact of the university, the IT sector, the Israeli occupation and gender norms. Moreover, the study reveals a clash between aspirations and reality in professional outlooks, a lack of freedoms, and show significant support for the impact of macro-level factors in migratory decision-making (Alberts & Hazen, 2005). This thesis also addresses the call for a human face in skilled migration (Favell et al., 2007), and provides insights to an under-researched region in the skilled-migration literature.

Keywords: student migration, skilled migration, decision-making, information technology, Palestine

Supervisor: Micheline van Riemsdijk.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
This thesis is a result of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (SIDA) MFS program, and I am grateful to Uppsala University for granting the fieldwork of this study. I would also like to address gratitude to the following people. First, to my supervisor Micheline van Riemsdijk who has encouraged and helped me throughout this study. Second, to staff and chairs at the four Palestinian Universities for generous hospitality and for giving me the opportunity to conduct my fieldwork. Finally, to all students who have shared their opinions, experiences and future plans with me – without you, this study would not have been possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 5  
1.1 Aim & Research Question 5  

2. BACKGROUND 6  
2.1 An Occupation and Plenty of ID Cards 6  
2.2 A Growing IT Sector, Yet Emigration 7  

3. CONTEXTUALIZING SKILLED MIGRATION 8  
3.1 A Brief Introduction to Migratory Motives & Aspirations 8  
3.2 Student Migration in the Limelight 8  
3.3 A Female Perspective – Gender, Career and Family 9  
3.4 Migration – A Human Right? 10  

4. METHODOLOGY 10  
4.1 Choice of Universities and Informants 10  
4.2 Interviews 11  
4.3 Observations & Informal Chats 12  
4.4 Research Ethics 12  

5. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS 13  

6. FINDINGS & ANALYSIS 13  
6.1 Scholarship – A Ticket Abroad? 13  
6.2 The Options of Palestine 16  
6.3 Migration under Occupation 19  
6.4 Man or Woman? It Does Matter 21  

7. A NOTE ON FINDINGS 24  

8. CONCLUSION 25  

REFERENCES  

APPENDIX I: List of Informants  
APPENDIX II: Interview Questions  
APPENDIX III: Short Questionnaire  
APPENDIX IV: Informed Consent Sheet
1. INTRODUCTION

Good people leave the country, maybe for Jordan, the Gulf, maybe the US (…). I have a friend who finished engineering here and he went to work in Silicon Valley. And a colleague went from here directly to Google [in Europe], from this computer center [at the university]. Two amazing people, imagine these two nerds, what are they going to do here? (Amir, 2018-02-21)

Amir is a former university student, currently an information technology (IT) professional employed at one of the top universities in Palestine. In contrast to his friend and colleague mentioned in the quote, he has never been abroad and he cannot travel outside of Palestine because of his origin from the Gaza Strip and the implications of that – citizens of Gaza can barely travel due to the hostile relations between the Gaza strip and Israel (Shlaim, 2014). Although he wants to stay in Palestine with his family, he says, he would at least want to have the freedom of movement and maybe travel abroad for a few years. He is staying in Palestine, and his friends are leaving Palestine for opportunities abroad – a spot-on example of international migration of the highly skilled, a phenomenon that researchers have paid more and more attention to during recent years (Findlay & Cranston, 2015). But the quote also says something about the domestic outlooks for highly skilled IT graduates. It raises questions about the opportunities and challenges facing Palestinian IT graduates while leaving the universities’ comfort zone. It also raises questions about the ones leaving, what drives and motivates them, what are their aspirations, what hinders them, and in the end, what makes them leave.

Geographers have approached the subject of migration of highly skilled with companies, nations and regions as starting points, but this research has focused too little on the migrants and their decision making (van Riemsdijk & Wang 2016; Favell et al, 2007), their careers (Al Ariss et al., 2012), students’ initial decision to migrate (Szelényi, 2006) and skilled migration from a female perspective (Kofman, 2000). This thesis investigates reasons and determinants behind migratory and stay decisions among highly skilled Palestinian IT students – with the individual in the center of the analysis. In doing so, the study is carried out qualitatively and addresses IT students’ future plans, providing an empirical study of students close to graduation from four well-known universities in the West Bank, Palestine. As upcoming graduates they are in a transition phase between student and IT professional, and thus, have ideas and plans for their professional future in the local or global knowledge economy. As Palestinians they live with limited freedom, limited movement and limited access to resources due to the Israeli occupation. This form a unique situation for the IT students, and this thesis is about their decision-making to migrate or to stay. In addition, this group will be the future of the Palestinian IT sector and their professional future plans should, therefore, be paid attention to. Especially since IT and the so-called creative class including IT professionals is said to be vital for a prosperous knowledge economy (Florida, 2012).

This thesis makes the following contributions. First, it provides a so-called human face to skilled migration and skilled students on a micro-level (Favell et al, 2007). Second, it pays attention to a region almost invisible in the skilled-migration literature. Third, it pays attention to the significant role of macro-factors in the micro-level perspective in migratory decisions (Albers & Hazen, 2005).

1.1 Aim & Research Question

The aim of this study is to understand the motives behind migratory or stay decisions among
Palestinian university graduates within the field of information technology. To investigate this, the following research questions are chosen:

- How are IT students and graduates describing their professional outlooks?

- What are the core factors in their decision to stay in or to leave Palestine after graduation?

- What does these factors tell about international skilled migration?

2. BACKGROUND

Before digging deeply into the future plans of the Palestinian IT students investigated in this study, it is important to understand the context: an Israeli occupation, a growing IT sector and an ongoing skilled emigration.

2.1 An Occupation and Plenty of ID Cards

The status of Palestine is contentious. The state of Palestine is recognized by 137 states – including Sweden in 2014 – while exceptions include the US and many western countries (PMO, 2018). In the UN, Palestine is regarded as a so-called ”Non-Member Observer State” (UN, 2012). However, this thesis follows the Swedish definition of Palestine which includes the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem (Regeringen, 2018).

Palestine is under Israeli occupation – an occupation with illegal settlements (UN, 2016) – that took shape in the aftermath of the Six Day War between Israel and its neighbors in 1967. Before the war the West Bank and Gaza were occupied by Jordan and Egypt respectively (Shlaim, 2014). The occupation creates difficulties in mobility between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, between Palestine and Israel, and accordingly, between Palestine and the rest of the world (B’Tselem, 2017 A). In connection to the Second Intifada, which was a Palestinian uprising against Israel in the beginning of the twenty-first century, Israel built a separation barrier, famously known as the wall, separating Israel and the West Bank serving as a security measure according to Israel (Shlaim, 2014).

The barrier, which is mainly built on Palestinian land is considered illegal under international law (ICJ, 2004) and has crossings that require permits or the ”right” ID card for Palestinians to pass through. Palestinians living in Jerusalem are either Israeli citizens (often referred to as Arab Israelis or Israeli Palestinians) or Palestinians without Israeli citizenship but with an Israeli ID card, the blue ID, which allows access to Israel and the West Bank. They are regarded as permanent residents of Israel but lack Israeli citizenship and passport. Palestinians living in the West Bank, on the other hand, hold the Palestinian ID card, the green ID, with no default access to Israel. They need valid approval(s) from Israel to enter Israel and Jerusalem (Tawil-Souri, 2011). These approvals are needed to go abroad since Palestine has no airports, therefore, their citizens mainly travel from Israeli or Jordanian airports. Furthermore, West Bank inhabitants have a passport issued by the Palestinian Authority that provides visa-free access to 37 countries which could be compared to the German passport providing visa-free access to 177 countries (Henley & Partners, 2018). Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip also hold a Palestinian ID and the Palestinian passport (Tawil-Souri, 2011). However, it is almost impossible to enter and to leave Gaza due to the blockade that took place in 2007 as result of the hostile relations between Hamas, ruling Gaza, and...
the Israeli government (Shlaim, 2014). Moreover, a large Palestinian diaspora population exists, including refugees in many neighboring countries (Sulieman, 2006). Jordan is one of those, and Palestinians with a relative with a Jordanian citizenship can in some cases obtain a Jordanian passport.

2.2 A Growing IT Sector, Yet Emigration

Palestine and its autonomous regions have a small but expanding IT sector (Abudaka, 2016), and there is hope that the IT sector will continue to prosper. Yahya Al-Salqan, chairman of the Palestine IT Association of Companies, states that the ICT sector (hi-tech sector) is our main hope for an innovation- and knowledge-based economy (2016, p. 18) and the Editor of This Week in Palestine, a weekly English-language magazine in Palestine, Tina Basem, writes: High tech and information technology have been hailed as the way out of Palestinian dependence on foreign aid (2016, p.3). One reason that the IT sector can grow is because of outsourcing and access to the global market, and Palestinian companies provide international companies with software and IT solutions (Tucker, 2012). But one main obstacle for the IT sector is the occupation, which is assumed to have contributed to large economical losses since its restrictions inhibit development. For instance, import restrictions of tech equipment, movement restrictions of people and goods, and telecom spectrum restrictions. The latter one caused a long delay for mobile 3G connection (World Bank, 2016) which finally became accessible in January 2018.

In parallel to a growing IT sector, all universities in the West Bank and Gaza have computer science departments (Abudaka, 2016) and are together graduating approximately 2000-2500 students within the field of IT annually (MoHE, 2018; ibid.). But at the same time, graduates face high unemployment: 17.6 percent in the West Bank and 45.8 percent in Gaza because of a lack of jobs (Abudaka, 2016). Yet, the general employment within IT and Engineering is slightly lower than many other fields and the unemployment for females, in all sectors, is much higher than for males (PCBS, 2017), which is partly due to a patriarchal society and that women marry young according to Al-Jazeera’s Harry Fawcett (2018).

The Swedish engineering magazine NyTeknik reports that it happens that graduates in the IT field leave Palestine for other opportunities abroad, such as in the Gulf Countries (Salomon, 2017). This migration is partly confirmed by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics’s first, and so far the only, migration survey published in 2011. Their survey shows the most common destination countries as Jordan, the US and the Gulf, and the most common motives to be: studying (34.4%), improving living conditions (14.6%) and better job opportunities abroad (13.7%) due to lack of jobs in Palestine (PCBS, 2011). Another sign of the emigration is documented in a report about the IT sector in Palestine published by the Palestine Economic Research Institute which states that one of the threats for the Palestinian IT sector is the loss of highly-qualified individuals to markets abroad, i.e. ’brain drain’ (Tucker 2012, p. 47).

The loss of skills, and the brain drain explicitly, has been discussed and investigated previously. Jaafari (1973) investigated the migration of Jordanian and Palestinian skilled professionals and students in the 70s, their reasons to move to the US, and if they were likely to return. He identified three main reasons. First, the higher quality of universities and education in the US. Second, better job opportunities in the US and opportunities for personal development which, mentioned by some informants, later could be an asset for the home country when returning. Third, political conditions, such as instability and occupation. The reasons mentioned are relevant but the
The concept of brain drain, however, is regarded passé by scholars (see e.g. Stark, 2004). The next section will review more recent research and theory.

3. CONTEXTUALIZING SKILLED MIGRATION

The previous section raised some Palestine-specific motives for migration, however, international migration occurs due to a myriad of reasons. Since the students in this study are (or soon are) in the transition phase between student and IT professional, literature on student migration and highly-skilled mobility is reviewed, where migratory aspirations, motivations and reasons form the core of the theoretical framework. This chapter will also discuss challenges and hinders in order to provide an enriched understanding of the migration processes. But first, it will examine why international migration occurs.

3.1 A Brief Introduction to Migratory Motives & Aspirations

A highly skilled migrant is an individual holding a higher educational degree or equivalent skills within a field moving temporarily or permanently to another country (Iredale, 2001). Much research about international migration has focused on low-skilled migrants, but these theories do not completely hold for high-skilled migrants since these two groups have different mobility flows and different reasons, conditions and opportunities for migration (van Riemsdijk & Wang, 2016). Traditionally, labour migration has been explained as a result of economic motivation (Massey et al., 1993). However, today the explanation regarding highly skilled migrants is more complex and could be described by many factors, such as: job opportunities, political environment, career, cultural and language similarities, wage, stage in the life of the migrant, welfare, valuation of the migrant’s skills, benefiting the migrant’s family and personal characteristics (van Riemsdijk & Wang, 2016).

Baruch and Forstenlechner (2017) investigate why international migrants move to the Arabian Gulf, paying attention to movement of self-initiated expatriates, meaning that the migration is on their own initiative. Their findings show that money was the primary migratory motivator followed by, for Westerners, career opportunities, and for Muslims, cultural similarities. Other reasons were to obtain work experience, adventures and unique opportunities (ibid.). The literature on self-initiated expatriates is recently developed and it is not completely clear how it distinguishes from company-led migration, but from its perspective, the migrant’s career is the migrant’s own responsibility (Al Ariss et al., 2012, p. 93). Obviously, factors depend on the individual and his or her spatial context and what the host country has to offer the skilled migrant – or in this case: the skilled Palestinian IT student.

3.2 Student Migration in the Limelight

To study is the most common motive to leave Palestine (PCBS, 2011). While students are a large group within international migration flow they are paid little attention in the literature (Findlay, 2011). Yet, they should not only be regarded as students since they also can be family members, workers, future workers, refugees or asylum seekers (King and Raghuram, 2013). This is one of many reasons why student migration should not be seen as an isolated event. Findlay et al (2012) argue that student migration should be understood within a wider life-course perspective in regard to students’ life-plan aspirations. This implies that pre-migration and post-migration factors are vital
for migration decisions.

This is, for instance, visible in Alberts and Hazen’s research (2005) on international students studying in the US and their aspirations and decisions whether to stay in the US or to return to the home country after completed degree – so-called *return migration*. Except for some national differences, the findings show that professional, societal and personal factors matters. The students tended to discuss migration in relation to a life-plan, such as discussing impacts of family, opportunities or political freedoms.

Another study carried out on students in the US is Szelényi’s (2006) article *Students without borders? Migratory decision-making among international graduate students in the US*. The title refers to that some students could be seen as borderless since they are referring to future plans taking place across national borders. Szelényi suggests (p.74) four factors affecting the initial migratory decision as well as post-graduation plans. The first factor found is *the international context surrounding students' daily life and education*. The second one highlights *social ties* and pays attention to how professors, relatives and friends have had an impact. The third one is *the influence of states and state institutions*, and fourth, *the role of personal professional interests and aspirations*.

Regarding the pre-migration decision, Findlay et al (2012) highlight the aspiration for so-called *word class* universities and education as a factor. One reason for this is because it can be an opening for an international career. Beine et al (2012) also show the importance of the ranking of the university, and the cost factors in the destination country. Moreover, they find that students are more likely to move to a country with more country nationals, highlighting the importance of migrant and diaspora networks. From a human capital point of view, Rosenzweig (2006) suggests – from the assumption that migration is economically motivated – that international student migration happens because of, either, a lack of education facilities in the country of origin or, because student migration can be a way to escape poor educational return in the home country.

Conclusively, there are many reasons for student migration and, as King and Raghuram (2013) highlight, the student interplays between multiple roles. One role is the gender role, which can affect the migrants agency.

### 3.3 A Female Perspective – Gender, Career and Family

Castles et al (2014) highlight *feminization of labour migration* as a current trend in international migration. Traditionally, women have been migrating due to family reunion or for low skilled jobs, but there are more and more women migrating for white-collar and knowledge jobs (ibid.). Du Plessis and van den Bergh (2012) suggests that the career success of these skilled migrant women depends on their phase in life and their social support. However, skilled migrant women with career development might be hindered by structural factors such as prejudices and stereotypes (Al Ariss et al., 2012, p.98). Another structural factor could be gender norms, this is visible in Raghuram’s research (2004) on Indian women working in the United Kingdom’s IT sector. The interviewed women experience struggles of both being IT professionals and taking care of households – a clash between career aspirations and traditional gender norms.

Suto (2009) also analyzes skilled women who have re-settled, but in Canada, in so-called compromised careers. These women have completed their degrees in their countries of origin and expected their skills, education and experience to be transferable over nation borders, yet some of them struggle to find jobs related to their profession, and instead, become unemployed or part-time employed. Another research contribution regarding post-migration experiences is Meares’s (2010)
interviews with women moving from South Africa to New Zealand; a move from professional work into un-employed or under-employed work, resulting in more family and household work. De Haas and Fokkema (2010) raise the importance of the family and its intra-household relations in migratory decision making and power inequalities within a household – children and women may be in an inferior position towards husbands and fathers.

All these examples show the negative impact on migrant women’s careers and gendered difficulties linked to migration, here theorized as compromised careers (Suto, 2009), under-employment (Meares, 2010) or deskilling (Man, 2004). However, migration can also be a way to get away from patriarchal structures and to obtain new rights and freedoms (Phizacklea, 1998, cited in Castles et al, 2014 p.62). Yet, there are more aspects on freedoms and rights which will be discussed in the next section.

3.4 Migration – A Human Right?
The access to regular migration can be seen as a lottery of birth since there is a large difference between countries, especially from a visa perspective (IOM, 2018 p. 173). Citizens of stable and developed countries can travel without visas to about 85 percent of the world’s countries, while citizens of less stable, less developed and more fragile countries with low scores on the Visa Restrictions Index (see Henley & Partners, 2018) are restricted, having problems entering transit and destination countries (IOM, 2018). Regarding skilled migrants, they can in general circulate and travel across borders relatively easy, having more migration opportunities and facing less restrictions than low-skilled migrants (Pécoud & De Guchteneire, 2006 p.69). As with skilled migrants, this also applies for students (Rosenzweig, 2006). Moreover, researchers discuss the role and extent of agency in migratory processes, for example whether migrants – mainly forced migrants or refugees – can select particular destination countries or not (McAuliffe & Jayasuriya, 2016).

4. METHODOLOGY
This study is carried out through a qualitative triangulation method, which means that multiple methods are used in order to collect data to increase understanding (Carter et al, 2014) and enhance the credibility of research with a more rigorous design (Patton, 1999). The main method is interviews with Palestinian IT students, and a complementary method is observations, mostly in the shape of informal chats with students and university staff at Palestinian universities. Regarding the interviews, one could argue that individual, pair and group interviews are also different methods, regardless, they provide a more comprehensive understanding of the situation of being a Palestinian IT student close to graduation.

The field work was carried out during January, February and March 2018 in Palestine. This chapter describes the information-gathering methods, how they were conducted, and ethical considerations. But first, a short note on the choice of the universities and participants.

4.1 Choice of Universities and Informants
To carry out this study, students from four universities, all located in the West bank, have been interviewed. The universities were chosen because they are all well known and highly ranked within Palestine, and located in different large cities in the West Bank. This arrangement provided a
geographical spread which is appropriate due to different characteristics of the cities in terms of, for instance, the impact of the occupation, religion and available IT sector. The universities and their locations have made the sample of students more diverse, with a wider variation of voices, opinions and future plans represented. Yet, this study is not representative for the whole of Palestine since there are more universities in the West Bank, and universities in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem are not included because of limited access respectively delimitation of the time frame of this study. Still, two informants are from Gaza and Jerusalem since they are enrolled in the selected universities. However, the goal is not to say something about Palestine in general, the goal is to get a micro-level analysis of [migratory] decision-making as Szelényi (2006, p. 65) puts it, in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the migratory decision-making among Palestinian IT graduates.

Contact with the universities was established through email. Permissions to conduct interviews were approved orally or in writing from deans at each university. Regarding the selection of informants, most of them are close to master’s graduation or bachelor’s graduation, and hence, have started to consider their post-graduation plans. All students are studying computer engineering, information technology, computer science or similar, and will be referred to as student(s). Moreover, four of the informants are graduates, and currently employed at the universities. Each informant was asked to fill in a short questionnaire (see Appendix III). Details of the informants can be found in Appendix I. Practically, these informants have been selected in different ways, usually with professors as gatekeepers providing informants (Hay, 2016). For one group interview, the informants were selected by a professor; for another group interview the participants were asked to participate voluntarily through a Facebook post; for some other interviews, participants were invited during encounters at universities’ facilities; many of the master’s students signed up voluntary because of an email announcement by a professor; and lastly, four participants were selected through the snowball sampling where informants have recommended other informants (ibid.).

4.2 Interviews

Since it is difficult to quantify individual decision-making and underlying reasons for migratory decisions (de Haas & Fokkema, 2010), interviews have been conducted. These interviews are the main information-gathering method. In the beginning, mostly group interviews were conducted in order to obtain a broad understanding of the situation for IT students and their post-graduation outlooks. These group interviews usually consisted of discussions between the participants, sometimes with disagreements, complementing each other or providing different perspectives on the same issue. Thereafter, mostly individual and pair interviews were conducted in order to obtain more in-depth and personal reflections.

Every interview was recorded with a voice recorder (ethics are discussed in section 4.4) with the informant’s consent. At one university, anonymous informed consent sheet were used in order to be allowed to conduct interviews (see Appendix III). The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way because it gives the opportunity to follow up interesting sidetracks while at the same time holding on to a structure (Dilley, 2000). The interviews began with a background of the informant(s) and followed an interview guide (see Appendix II) which was formed according to four pre-selected key themes: professional future plans; personal aspects of plans after graduation; politics and domestic issues that might have influenced the post-graduation plans; and questions regarding region, destinations and place in relation to leaving or staying. Through an individual pilot interview at Uppsala University, the interview guide was tested which resulted in re-
structuring of questions, and some questions were clarified. The pilot interview was an opportunity to prepare and obtain some interviewing experience. In total, one pilot interview and 15 real interviews – 4 group interviews, 4 pair interviews and 7 individual interviews – with 35 informants have been conducted.

The interviews were held in English; neither the informants nor the interviewer were speaking their mother tongue. The English level of the informants has overall been good, resulting in smooth interviews. But during some group interviews, it has happened that participants experienced language struggles and were helped by fellow informants. This is problematic in terms of participation – some informants have had issues raising their voice and expressing themselves properly due to a language barrier. This also raises another drawback, as students without English proficiency are completely excluded from this study. Yet, despite these two issues, the interviews were conducted in English since a majority of the informants were used to English and spoke it well. And once again, the aim is not to say something about Palestine in general because the sample is too small – the main goal is to capture meanings and processes of migratory decision-making.

4.3 Observations & Informal Chats

As mentioned, interviews are the main source of empirical data in this study. Observations have also been conducted to provide complementary data as a step in the triangulation methodology (Carter et al, 2014). The observations can be seen as an informal complement to the formal interviews (Hay, 2016) and they are mostly in the shape of informal chats.

This opportunity to attend lectures, and to encounter with students and staff in their daily environment, has mainly resulted in two outcomes. First, the investigator has had informal chats with staff, lecturers and students – with informed consent since all participants were informed about the study. This has been an asset since people tend to speak more freely, openly and relaxed in comparison to a more formal interview setting. During, or straight after, these chats notes have been taken to remember what was said, the date, place and general impressions and what was said and discussed.

4.4 Research Ethics

When engaging in interviews and social interactions, ethics and power need to be considered. First, all interviews were conducted at the informants’ universities in order to remain in a familiar environment. Second, all informants are anonymous and names mentioned in the thesis are pseudonyms. Even though the research aim is not really sensitive, topics and opinions could emerge during the interviews that are sensitive due to the occupation and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. According to a high-positioned employee at one of the Universities (2018-01-22), students neither trust Israeli nor Palestinian authorities and are afraid that anything said can be used against them if a recording ends up in wrong hands. Therefore, the transcriptions do not contain any full names nor the consent sheets (Appendix IV) or questionnaires (Appendix III). Third, Hay (2010, p.32) states that there might be a power relation between the interviewer and the informants because of different speaking positions. On the one hand, me and my informants have a reciprocal relationship because we share our current situation as university students studying IT. On the other hand, we have an asymmetrical relationship because the informants are living in a low-income country under Israeli occupation with limited freedom while I am not. The informants’ reality might be difficult for me to relate to and is, therefore, something that I have tried to be aware of while conducting the interviews and designing the interview questions. One way to respond to this issue has been to ask about informant’s opinions of the interview and the interview questions and whether
it could have been done differently (Hay 2010). This resulted in new questions, for instance, questions regarding the impact of marriage, gender and IT careers.

5. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

In short, this study aims to shed light on migratory decision-making and professional outlooks. The empirical material is analyzed in order to find patterns that affect students’ professional aspirations and factors that have influenced migratory and stay decisions. The analysis is carried out with the individual in the center of the analysis, in similar vein to Szeléni’s micro analysis (2006). In addition, a macro-level perspective is vital for a deeper understanding of the micro perspective (Alberts & Hazen, 2005). In other words, I aspire to bridge the micro and the macro as Kelly (2013, p.85) puts it by keeping the individual in the center of the analysis while both investigating present structural and personal factors.

The interviews have been transcribed, coded and analyzed to find patterns (Hay, 2016). The observation notes have also been analyzed and coded. In order to find patterns, important sections and quotes have been marked in bold with associated notes, analysis and codes written on the side. Once the first round of themes were established, the data was re-analyzed throughout the study in order to find competing patterns and other explanations and factors (Patton, 1999). Accordingly, different hypothesis of themes and patterns have been tested. Furthermore, the impact of factors will be discussed in section 7 with Mackie’s ideas on causes and conditions (1965).

6. FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The findings of this study will be presented in four sections – four themes – analyzing the students’ professional outlooks. Each theme could also be seen as an overarching structural factor having an impact on migratory and stay decisions. Within these four themes, individual factors are highlighted. And obviously, there is a large difference from student to student, and issues raised are experienced differently depending on, for instance, gender, university, and personal characteristics.

The first theme is the impact of the university since it has provided the student with knowledge, opportunities and shaped the students’ future plans. The second one, the impact of the IT sector, refers to opportunities and challenges yet to come and how the imaginaries of the IT sector may affect a decision. The third theme, the Israeli occupation, pays attention to the occupation and its affect on the daily life of the IT student including military checkpoints, travel obstacles and a lack of resources. Fourthly, community and gender expectations, addresses preconceptions about gender, IT and migration. However, all four contain elements that have an impact on the students’ professional outlooks.

6.1 Scholarship – A Ticket Abroad?

Let’s say that a master’s is a way to get away from Palestine. Yes, it is like that. And I really hate the community here – I want to go out. It is the easiest choice. As a Palestinian, if you work, you have to work like 5 or 10 years to just get the experience so that other countries will accept you, but if you go for a master’s and get a degree
there, it will be easier to travel to another country and (…) find a job in a top country in the IT field, like [the] US, Canada, Japan or China (Ali, 2018-02-06).

Ali, who has high aims for the future, is frustrated about how the society in Palestine works, the opportunities provided and the challenges of being a Palestinian student, or soon, a graduate. Firstly, he points out a lack of freedom: the difficulties of getting from Palestine without experience, and secondly, he implicitly points out the quality of the IT sector as one factor to leave. A degree abroad, especially if it is considered world class, motivates students to leave and could be a first step to an international career (Findlay et al., 2012), and Ali is one of many students interviewed planning to give that path a try.

For the academic path, the Palestinian universities play an important role since they provide students with academic experience, degrees and an entrance to the international academic community. This is vital for students planning to go for a master’s or a PhD abroad – hence providing an international context surrounding the daily life and education (Szelényi, 2006 p. 74). However, a degree abroad costs money, which might be impossible to afford for a Palestinian family since the wages are comparatively low and many students mention scholarships as the only possibility to pursue a degree abroad: Nobody leaves without a scholarship (Rana, 2018-02-06), or: If you don’t have a scholarship you will not go abroad and study; (…) cause it is too high to pay for a master’s degree (Sara, 2018-03-09), arguing that high tuition fees abroad are a hinder, except for scholarship holders since tuition fees usually are covered for them (Beine et al, 2012).

The scholarships, which could be considered as a tool to leave, are typically issued by global and local actors such as universities, organizations and institutions and generally issued to students with high grades, relevant experience and language skills. Sometimes, other factors such as religion or field of study matters – it depends very much on each specific scholarship’s requirements. However, there is a high competition and many students interviewed complain about how difficult it is to get a scholarship, and some also mention contacts as an important factor for getting a scholarship. For instance Sara and Rawda (they say this together while interrupting each other):

[It is not easy to get a scholarship]. There is constraints so… Yes, your grade at university, your GPA [Grade Point Average], and also, maybe your skills and you have too... Your language. Also you have to know someone, to know you, to help you got it if there is an opportunity for you to have it (Sara & Rawda, 2018-03-09).

Or, as expressed by Jamil:

…it is really hard to get a scholarship. Lets say, it is always about the grades, and about the connections. I mean, if you are connected with the university professors, let’s say, in the committee of this scholarships it will be much easier for you. (Jamil, 2018-02-24)

Despite this, Ali (mentioned above) is optimistic. Since his grades are good and his experience from his part-time job as a developer at a software company is relevant he estimates his chances to get a scholarship as good. But, one of the scholarships he regards as more easy to get is a scholarship that funds a master’s degree abroad, but in return, it obliges the holder to return to Palestine and teach for some years – or be fined. According to Ali, and two other high-performing students interviewed, this arrangement is unsatisfactory. These three students have one thing in common: they have no intentions of coming back to Palestine directly after a finished degree abroad – instead, they want to
spread their wings in the global IT sector, preferably in the country of their further studies. One of them, Sherin who is aiming for a PhD abroad, describes it like this:

If I liked it there [in the destination country], if I want to have a work experience there, I don’t want a contract that I have signed that let me come back here again [to teach/work] or else I have to pay a lot of money. (…) Why can’t I have 2-3 years to work, or I don’t know… have a good experience there and then come back? (Sherin, 2018-02-21).

Sherin implicitly highlights the importance of freedom after her PhD is completed – she wants to be the decision maker of her post-study plans and develop her skills instead of teaching the same subjects over and over again. However, this is just one of many different scholarships. And regarding scholarships, there is also a question of agency in the migratory process when selecting countries (McAuliffe & Jayasuriya, 2016). On one hand, high-preforming students seem to have good chances to go abroad, to temporarily migrate, as long as they fulfill the scholarships’ requirements. This makes grades, language, skills and (maybe) contacts important factors. On the other hand, [country of destination and university] depends on the scholarships that are available (Yasin, 2018-02-06). Hence, students adapt and aim for countries and universities regarded as the best available options – they do not have complete freedom to go wherever since the selection spectrum is limited.

Yet, a degree abroad is a ticket away for many Palestinians. For instance, Atef, a university professor, explains that he obtained his university degree abroad, and then worked in the Canadian IT sector for several years gaining experience before returning to Palestine to establish a family. Another professor explains that this is the case for many university-employed teachers and professors since there has been a lack, and still is to some extent, of higher education in Palestine, but also the quality of it – migration in response to poor educational return (Rosenzweig, 2006).

This is explained by Amal:

[Palestinians leave abroad to] study because of, again, the level of education, specifically in IT, master’s degrees – there are very few universities who offers master’s degrees in IT and even those courses offered are, in my personal opinion, below level. So for the quality of education. (Amal, 2018-03-09).

Amal came back to Palestine two years ago after completing a master’s degree in the UK, currently teaching at a university in Palestine. Amal applied for five scholarships, got three of them – once again showing on limited agency in selection of destination countries – and accepted the scholarship for the highest-ranked university (Beine et al, 2012), the one most world class (Findlay et al, 2012). The factor of world class seems to manifest itself in terms of quality but also in terms of prestige and recognition. As Ali describes:

If you are [staying] inside of Palestine, they [people in general] will look at you like anyone, but if you are outside of Palestine, even the same you, they will look at you like: Oh he is very good! (Ali, 2018–02-06).

He continues,

Many people [abroad have] never heard of our university and if I told them: I have a degree from it – it means nothing to them. That's why everyone that wants to go outside say: Okay I will get maybe 10 years of experience, just to cover my degree, or to get my master's to add a new university that people knows (Ali, 2018–02-06).
A present female student, Rana, confirms what Ali just said and adds: *This is one of my main plans, to cover [my CV] with a new university,* and then she continues: *Because I believe that being special in your country is better than being an ordinary person in another country, cause here we don't have a lot of people who has the experience* (Rana, 2018–02-06). Hence, one reason to go abroad is to become more unique in order to give oneself more opportunities resulting in more freedom. This is likely to be a reason why many students say they want to get experience and develop skills abroad too, because it can be a springboard for new opportunities. This confirm previous research on Palestine suggesting students migrate for more opportunities, increased personal development and high-quality of education abroad (Jaafari, 1973). Moreover, a western degree could be seen as a path to employment in industrialized countries (Iredale, 2001 p.9).

Another finding is the perceived gap between university practice, university taught knowledge, versus the often cited real practice – knowledge that is actually used and needed in the IT sector. This is stressed by many students who are frustrated about what they learn – or more precise: what they do not learn. Amir who is currently employed at one of the universities, yet thinking about pursuing a master’s degree abroad, is one of them. He says that the educational system in Palestine is classical and problematic since, for example, no web development is being taught at his university (Amir, 2018-02-21). At another university a female student who is unsatisfied with only being taught the programming language Java says,

In here [at this university], the [IT] program is not so good, because they just teach us Java, in the real world there are a lot of programming languages, and they are… people work with them more, not just Java… (Sara, 2018-03-09).

Or,

To graduate from here [a Palestinian University] we don't know anything about the market, we are surprised, the market is nothing like what we [have] studied in university, yeah, here we learn basics: Java, C-sharp, C, when we go to the market it is different (Omar, 2018-01-31).

These worries are valid, a mismatch between knowledge taught at universities and market needs could be one factor of migration of high-skilled professionals (World Bank: Dahlman & Utz, 2005, p.55). The mismatch may also make the IT students education less useful while entering the IT sector.

Conclusively, this section has discussed the impact of the university and individual factors connected to it. It has investigated scholarships as a ticket abroad, the attraction of foreign education, self-agency in the student migration process and an experienced knowledge gap between university and IT sector. It is clear that personal aspirations and interest are not enough to enable a degree abroad; money, grades, experience, and contacts may be door-openers – increasing agency – for students who aim for an international academic continuation after graduation. Another option after graduation is to work, and the impact of the IT sector will be discussed in the next section.

### 6.2 The Options of Palestine

For fresh students, graduates, most of them leave Palestine because they have no opportunity here – they have to work. Our market is very small and have a lot of graduates, so they leave (Tarek, 2018-02-20).
Says Tarek, who studies for a master’s degree and works with IT maintenance at his university. He hopes to keep his employment after graduation since he regards it as a safe job and he has no intentions of leaving Palestine because of his responsibility as a family father. Consequently, Tarek has multiple roles: student, IT worker and family member (King & Raghuram, 2013). These roles are obviously affecting his plans – his stay decision. In his quote, on the other hand, he mentions a small IT sector and few opportunities as common reasons to leave. These two belong to the most cited factors on why, in general, Palestinian IT professionals go abroad. Other frequently cited factors are: more opportunities and better life quality abroad, both grounded in previous research (PCBS, 2011); higher salaries; access to international IT companies; to obtain experience and develop skills; and a lack of jobs in Palestine.

On the contrary, when not talking about the general case, as with Tarek, students tend to highlight more personal factors and future concerns. Omar, who graduates in summer of 2018, explains his worries of not getting a job and the pressure of being the oldest son in his family. But he has an advantage, he says, the advantage of language. And English proficiency among migrants is found to increase the chances of getting a job in the US (Batalova et al, 2008) which is Omar’s planned destination. Here he explains his future concerns:

> I thinking of leaving very seriously. I'm the oldest of my brothers. Outside might be good opportunities. I don't have excellent English, but I'm good at English. I think that if I stay here, I don't think I will have a job. I will stay at home… That's my biggest problem. Not to have a job. That's what I'm afraid of after graduation (Omar, 2018-01-31).

Omar says he is afraid and continues to describe that he has sleeping problems and is feeling a little depressed because of his future, due to the many question marks yet to be solved. In Omar’s case, there is a clash of aspirations and dreams versus the reality of Palestine – a clash that is pressuring him, and he says that his worries and a lack of sleep is affecting his grades negatively (Omar, 2018-01-31), which may affect his chances of getting a job.

> Well, the first thing they [the employer] are looking at is GPA [Grade Point Average]. I'm working at a part time job and believe me, the interview was lame. They saw my GPA and they started surfing Facebook. (...), and they said: When do you will start working? And it was just like that (Ali, 2018-02-05).

Consequently, good grades is an advantage entering the domestic IT sector. But the unemployment (PCBS, 2017; Abudaka, 2016) that is scaring Omar is threatening many. To face this threat, some students are leaving the field of IT and start work with something unrelated to the perceived degree, sometimes causing deskilling (Man, 2004) and compromising careers (Suto, 2009), but for both genders. During a chat in a computer room at one of the universities, one female student described sarcastically in a jokey way that graduates from her program end up behind desks in supermarkets (Informal Chat, 2018-03-06). Fellow students started laughing, then admitting that she has a point and that this is the case for some students. Another example is told by Zeinab, a female student:

> Like one week ago, I went to a restaurant, and I found about 6 students who have studied computer engineering and working there. I feeling sad, and I feel disappointed a lot, a lot, a lot… because I know them. (...) And this is the case here, we didn’t find any job to work. So what to do? They have to earn money (Zeinab, 2018-01-31).
This female student describes how high-skilled workers accept reality and instead go for low-skilled jobs simply because they need money – a so-called brain waste, which happens when skilled people fail to find high-skilled jobs (Castles et al, 2014 p.71-72). Two master’s students blame the IT sector for this:

A student with a good opportunity or work here in Palestine, he will never leave. The IT sector is the hugest growing sector. [This university] graduate 50-60 students each semester, the IT sector can not handle these graduates. They [the students] look outside. Maybe for three-four months they search for a local job, then [they] apply outside (Tarek & Ahmad, 2018-02-20).

Gammage (2004, p.766) states, Migration as exit is a response to economic collapse, but a more adequate description for the case of Palestine would be: migration as exit is a response to a lack of jobs. Another way to face the threat of unemployment is to start a business, here explained by a Palestinian undergraduate student: So you can create your job, or you will not have a job (Sara, 2018-03-09). Entrepreneurship is another path after graduation, either as a response to unemployment or as a future aspiration. Actually, many students mention to start a business as a future goal. However, according to a female graduate student: [Among female students] it is common as an idea, but something applied? It's not (Samira, 2018-01-31), adding that a lack of money and support limit the opportunities.

The idea of starting a business might also exist because students worry that they will not be treated well in the Palestinian IT sector: [Abroad] they treat people like humans, not like here, here they treat you like a machine (Rawda, 2018-03-09). This kind of quotes are often referring to long working days, low salaries and little valuation of skills. Khadar, explains what he wants from a future employment:

The appreciation of work. You know some companies, I'm not going to mention names, because personally I don't have that much, what is it, experience in work…. [But] appreciation and respect is two things that I appreciate a lot. Because when you work hard, which is coming back to the idea that I'm Computer Science and he’s an Engineer – if I work harder than him, he will still get paid more than me which is, look at it, it’s really unfair you know! Look, I put more work, more things, more that.. This is where appreciation is needed, and respect: ‘Okay you are my boss, I'll do whatever you want but don’t come treat me like I'm a dog or something like that’ – which is, you know, it is not common in outside country, but it is really common here [in Palestine] (Khadar, 2018-02-24)

First, Khadar expresses concerns that he does not have the title of Engineer yet studying IT. Second, he points out the common assumption that skills are more valued and appreciated outside of Palestine. Another pull factor – besides money and opportunities – seems to be international companies, especially well-known companies. One female student says that her dream is to Work at Microsoft (Nawal, 2018-01-31). Another student, Samira, highlights the lack of these companies:

We don't have that large IT companies. Because when you just graduated and you are, like, professional or something, you would [like to] travel abroad and work at big companies like Google, Facebook, or other companies. So talented and professional people will not be here any more. (Samira, 2018-01-31)
In Omar’s case, the influence of social ties (Szelényi, 2006) in terms of successful careers inspires him, however, his relatives are US citizens:

[A relative] has the best job in the world, he is a programmer in Microsoft. I have a cousin in Microsoft and my other cousin in Apple company, so their citizenship, because they have the American citizenship, allows them to work in their companies (…) [One of the cousins] he interned in Facebook – yeah in Facebook – he worked in Facebook for one year, as an internship. Yeah, so he said: 'I have a lot of experience from Facebook, it is an amazing society in Facebook’. (Omar, 2018-01-31).

This section has discussed the impact of the IT sector, which is yet to come for a majority of the students interviewed. It has investigated common assumptions why Palestinians leave, domestic opportunities and how to get them, the fear of unemployment, bad domestic conditions and what is attracting students outside of Palestine. Conclusively, opportunities in the domestic IT sector are limited in many ways, resulting in students looking for more freedoms on the other side of the separation barrier and beyond, where the grass is assumed to be greener. The next section discusses the impact of the Israeli occupation.

6.3 Migration under Occupation

Imagine living a life without checkpoints, without Israeli Defense Forces… Says Jamil, with a sad smile on his face, referring to an imaginary life in Palestine without occupation (Jamil, 2018-02-24). He is a 28-year-old Computer Science student, and one of the students interviewed who passes Israeli military checkpoints on a daily basis while going to the university. If a checkpoint suddenly closes, the re-opening may be tied to much uncertainty. The checkpoints are gateways to Israel and Jerusalem, and are also located in-between Palestinian villages and cities, consequently, a daily must-pass for many Palestinians. A female student, Rawda, who lives in a village near an Israeli settlement, passes checkpoints daily, describes how she once, on her way to the university, was threatened by an Israeli soldier pointing a rifle at her. The soldier aimed at her and told her to return home, so she did. During a second incident, her course literature was confiscated, and she adds that she suffers a lot from the occupation (Rawda, 2018-03-09). Rawda also says that it happens frequently that her family’s car is stopped and the family is forced to step out of the car showing IDs, for, according to Rawda, no reason (ibid.). Sherin also passes checkpoints daily and regards the occupation as a main factor why Palestinians leave and, slightly in contrast to Rawda’s experience, she adds:

If you are [active] in certain political parties they [Israel] won’t give you the permission to leave Palestine. And sometimes, being a female under occupation isn't that worse, it is worse for males actually (…) [Everyday] I pass two barriers [checkpoints], if I'm a female they [the soldiers] won’t look at me, they would not ask for my ID or anything, but if I'm a man they sometimes will let me go out of the car, take off my clothes, give them my ID and being at the cold for 2 hours. If, how to say, they are not certain if I did something or not, but I am a female, they don't care if you forgot your ID for one day – no one will ask. (Sherin, BZU-3)

Jamil again:

I'm afraid if I get out I will never come back (…) I think it is the freedom. In Palestine, if you are a Palestinian, you are not allowed to go anywhere in Palestine [which he refers to as both Israel and Palestine] (Jamil, 2018-02-24).
The instability in Palestine and the occupation are shown to be reasons to leave (Jaafari, 1973), and the argument of freedom – or the lack thereof – is frequently raised by students. During a group interview five male students completely agree on this. One of these students, Mohamed, considers it as a main reason:

We are not free here. I'm 21 years old and I haven't seen the sea in my whole life. (...) The main reason why students like to travel outside, is not the education itself, but they love to… find new customs, new activities, new traditions, new things to learn, new perspectives...(Mohamed, 2018-02-05)

Another present student, Adel, follows up:

They [Palestinians who go abroad] just want to feel free, for a few months, few years, and then get back. That’s a factor. (Adel, 2018-02-05)

It might be difficult to leave Palestine because visas are required for many countries (Henley & Partners, 2018), and an issued visa requires valid reasons to enter a new country, such as a job offer or a confirmed spot at a university. Without a “valid” reason, migration can be difficult. For example, Imam is uncertain whether she can go abroad or not:

[The occupation affects,] let’s say I didn’t get a visa abroad, I get denied for security reasons, most Palestinians get that – denied for security reasons. For example, I can't go to Jerusalem, I can’t, no, because I don’t have the permission because my dad was in jail. (Imam, 2018-02-20)

Here, the factor of social ties (Szelényi, 2006) is taking an unexpected turn since it is impeding migration, not enabling migration as it is usually described. This is a striking example on lottery of birth (IOM, 2018 p. 173). If Imam was born in another family she might already have been in Jerusalem. Or if she was born just a few miles away, on the other side of the separation barrier, as a Palestinian with an Israeli citizenship, she might have been an experienced traveller. Yet another example is Amir, quoted earlier (see 1. Introduction), who cannot travel abroad because of his origin from Gaza. Generally the highly-skilled can migrate easier than low-skilled (Pécoud & De Guchteneire, 2006), however, the advantage of skills seems to have little impact here. Omar, who was mentioned previously, also complains over the lottery of birth (IOM, 2018 p. 173). He considers his main challenge him being a Palestinian holding a Palestinian ID card. But in contrast to Imam, he hopes his social ties will help him:

I graduate this summer. Is my uncles in the USA gonna help me? I think they will, but it might be difficult for me to travel to USA. (...) [Because of] my ID… my ID won't allow me to travel abroad. (...) I think that my relatives or my network abroad helps me to travel abroad. (Omar, 2018-01-31)

And there is a migratory disadvantage of holding an ID from a low-income country with less development (IOM, 2018). Another aspect is the different ID cards: the blue, Israeli ID, and the green, Palestinian ID (described in 2.1) and their impact. For instance, a blue ID provides access to Israel and higher salaries. Nevertheless, none of the green ID holders said they wanted to work in Israel, as one student puts it: Imagine yourself in an occupied country serving the occupier? No (Samira, 2018-01-31). But Aisha, who lives in Jerusalem holding a blue ID, wants to continue to live in Jerusalem partly due to her family. She points out that there is no difference in opportunities on the West Bank if you hold a blue ID, but it makes a difference to have access to Jerusalem:
In Jerusalem [which is under full Israeli control], you have many opportunities, many companies, like Intel for example. And its gives like 20 000 NIS [New Israeli Shekel. 1 NIS is about 0.28 USD] monthly after 4-5 years experience. (Aisha, 2018-02-20)

When Imam, who also is present, hears 20 000 NIS she replies, Oh my good (Imam, 2018-02-20), since this number was unknown to her and is, in respect to Palestinian wage standards, high. The ID card system is a consequence of the Israel-Palestine conflict since Jerusalem and the West Bank are separated. That said, it is arguable that the influence of state and state institutions affect migratory decisions (Szelényi, 2006), because Israel controls much of the mobility and movement of people thus restricting freedom through checkpoints and the wall in response to the conflict and as a security measure (Shlaim, 2014).

Once again, aspirations, interests and a will to leave does not seem to be enough to leave. In this context physical hinders exist such as checkpoints and a separation wall. This section has discussed the conflict’s impact on daily life as a wanna-leave factor, the argument of freedom, the lottery of birth and differences between the blue and the green ID. Conclusively, it has discussed the occupation as a hinder for migration of the highly skilled. The next section will focus on societal gender norms inside the separation barrier.

6.4 Man or Woman? It Does Matter

If I was a male, not a female, then, after I finished my BA here [in Palestine], I would travel to have my master's in a foreign country, in a more, like, highly-rated university, and then I’ll continue to do my PhD and I would come back [to Palestine] and teaching as a Professor or a Professor’s assistant or something. Then I would have found an opportunity to teach at the university with good money. (Samira, 2018-01-31)

Instead, Samira is a female IT graduate. She has obtained a master’s degree in Palestine, not at a top university abroad – partly because her family does not allow her to travel – and she is currently working as a part-time teacher earning a salary she considers too low. Her quote shows the aspiration of world class and student migration as an event placed in a life-course plan (Findlay et al, 2012). Samira would have loved to move abroad – at least for a while, but instead, together with many other female informants in this study, she experiences that future outlooks are different between the genders. This section addresses gender issues and the family impact.

Firstly, female students outnumber male students at Palestinian universities, and women are enrolled in IT programs to a high extent. This is, actually, in many cases a result from patriarchal structures and community-based expectations, and it is already present in the choice of IT as a major.

I remember the first day, [a Professor] asked: Why do you wanna be Computer Engineers? Two-three girls answered the same thing: because it is the most suitable job for a girl. They didn't say, I like it, or, I love it, no, because it is the most suitable job for a girl (Rana, 2018-02-06).

The term suitable mainly refers to two so-called advantages for a women in the IT sector. First, the woman can work behind a desk in an office implying no needs to visit e.g. construction sites which is regarded unsuitable, and second, she can work from home. The latter one is regarded as an advantage by many female students in this study because it allows them to both be IT professionals and traditional women who take responsibility for housework and homemaking – solving the clash.
between career aspirations and household obligations (Raghuram, 2004), also shedding light on the multiple roles of an IT woman (King & Raghuram, 2013). This traditional perspective on gender expectations and female careers seems deeply rooted in the society, especially since there are many preconceptions of women and IT. One striking example is the idea that males are generally better in technology and IT. Aisha, a female student who recently won an innovation competition within IT, raises this issue in agreement with another female student Imam (they said half of the quote each in agreement):

The main idea or the stereotype here [in Palestine, is] that the male is better than the female, especially in the IT sector. (…) In hiring they prefer male over female, because females need to get married, get pregnant and stay at home (Imam & Aisha, 2018-02-20).

This is an example on preconceptions and stereotypes having a negative affect on women careers (Al Ariss et al., 2012, p.98). Five male students interviewed believe in this stereotype. During a group interview, one of them explains that, in the IT sector, the males have more expertise than the women – it is a fact (Mohamed, 2018-02-05). He then reluctantly admits that females usually have better grades, but adds that it is important to distinguish expertise and grades. Everyone agree. Another example of preconceptions appears during another group interview (2018-01-31) where six male students agree that males can handle stress better than women. The only present female student completely disagrees and argues back with herself as a counter-example. She explains that she is taking care of a child, a household, is married and still manage her studies – juggling multiple roles of a student (King & Raghuram, 2013). The male students then draw the conclusion that she is a special case while the female student shakes her head frustrated in disagreement. If these views are reflecting the society’s view on women careers it is, obviously, a hinder – limiting freedom.

In addition to prejudices, it is necessarily to discuss gender issues in relation to responsibility and expectations in regard to community and family. One the one hand, family is the most cited reason – for both genders – why students stay, and the family as a unit seems important and highly prioritized. On the other hand, the family is limiting students’ personal aspirations:

The first thing is the mentality of the family [of the female IT student]. They think that the girl, she doesn't have to work. She has the right to study, just like a male, but she doesn't have to work. And if she doesn't find a suitable job, they [the family] will not even let her work. And there are very few exceptions. But this is the common case. (Ali, 2018-02-06)

Once again the term suitable is used in relation to what a woman is doing, highlighting the view on women in relation to work – her professional career is often regarded a family matter, and thus intra-household power relations affect migratory decisions (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). The entire neighborhood can also affect the decision. A female student Rawda explains her situation after graduation:

For me, at first, my father will let me have a choice to be a teacher, he will get me the opportunity to participate in the ministry exam to be a teacher (…) Also, I live in a village and their thought of a girl work on a company or in an office, have some… [is] strange for them, and they said it is not good for a girl. (…) [But] I don't want to be an IT teacher, I want to be in an office or in a company, but I have to change a lot of people's thoughts… (Rawda, 2018-03-9)
Here, the society and the family – especially the father – plays a key role for her future plans. During this interview, Rawda does not see migration as a realistic option and she mentions her father five times while speaking about different future opportunities and already-made choices. Obviously her father holds a high intra-household position with power (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). The impact of the family is present in many cases, for example, female students who plan to go abroad for further education tend to say that their families have approved, and vice versa. Fatima, a 25-year-old woman, who is currently both studying a master’s degree and works at a prestigious tech company in Palestine explains the difficulties of traveling as a woman:

If you travel, everyone will be mad, you will get problems. I don’t know why we have this mentality in Palestine, not only my mum, whole society – girls cannot travel. Here at [a university in a larger city], people have open mind. My brother is the most motivating in that I shall start working with my PhD [abroad, but] my mother says: No (Fatima, 2018-02-24).

Here the mother – not the father – plays a crucial role. Because of Fatima’s mother’s ”no”, Fatima plans to stay in Palestine for one year and finish her master’s degree and, in parallel, work full time while waiting for her mother to change her mind. This is despite the fact that she is 25 years old, has an education, a job and many open doors. Yet she needs the approval of her mother – yet another migratory decision as a household decision (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). The underlying reason for her mother’s current refusal is because Fatima is 25 years old and unmarried. This is how Fatima describes her current anguish of a migratory or stay decision:

PhD is 3-5 years so I have to be precise, so if I chose the study I will [maybe] not have a family. And when I’m back I’m 30 years [old] and I am currently 25 years, so they [potential husbands] will say that, that is old, they prefer younger girls, 20 years [old]. So the choice will be very critical for me (Fatima, 2018-02-24).

Marriage and pregnancy are two potential career obstacles for women explained by (mostly) female students. As Laila, who is graduating within days, says sarcastically in a group interview, most of them [female students], they complete their master’s degree, marry or stay at home (Laila, 2018-01-31). Other present female students (no male students were present) start laughing, and confirm that the statement is partly true, or at least in their town, a town considered conservative among Palestinians in the West Bank. Here is Sherin’s view on marriage:

You didn't ask me something important actually: is marriage affecting you having PhD [abroad] or not? You should have asked me about it. It will affect – in a negative way, because a lot of men don't want their woman studying abroad, going and leaving them (Sherin, 2018-02-21).

Sherin continues describing that it is not the marriage in itself that is the problem:

It is not about planning when to get married, it is about planning whom to marry, you have to pick someone who will respect your ideas, your passion and your dreams, and so on, it is actually a complicated process. (Sherin, 2018-02-21)
She continues and says that some husbands do not allow their wives to work. This, and why women sometimes are forbidden to travel, is cited as consequence of religion, culture, tradition and conservative society depending on informants, or due to a patriarchal society (Fawcett, 2018). However, all these examples show that female students may face compromised careers (Suto, 2009), un-employment or under-employment (Meares, 2010) or deskillling (Man, 2004), but not as a result of migrating – instead, as a result of staying. Therefore, a migratory decision could result in more rights and freedoms (Phizacklea, 1998, cited in Castles et al, 2014).

So far this section has focused mostly on women, for good reasons. However, many male students describe a responsibility to take care of their families, like: I have responsibility to my family, we are 12 people (…) I stay here (Tawfik, 2018-01-31), and: I feel obligated to stay here for her [mother] and for my father (Jamil, 2018-02-24). This is a reason to stay, but the male responsibility could also be a reason to leave since males are – generally – regarded as providers, and they can travel freely which eases temporarily labour migration (described in 6.2) – typically economically motivated migration (Massey et al, 1993). Male students are expected to become the family’s breadwinner:

They have to earn money. They are boys and they have to earn money, and there is a lot of responsibility they have to take into account. (Mona, 2018-01-31)

And:

In our society, or our culture, there are the guys who are the persons who are responsible to build the family, so the guys will have to work. (Ahmad & Tarek, 2018-02-20)

Consequently, the fundamental difference in expectations on the genders affects migratory and stay decisions, putting pressure on the individuals in different ways. Neither gender is free from obligations and expectations that may limit migratory realizations, especially for women. This section has provided an insights in professional outlooks from a gender perspective. It has investigated women and IT, preconceptions and stereotypes, responsibilities, intra-households power relations, marriage, and the view of males as breadwinners.

7. A NOTE ON THE FINDINGS

This thesis has examined Palestinian IT students’ reasons to stay and to leave, providing a glimpse into professional outlooks. The four themes presented above have shaped the future plans and affected migratory and stay decisions, no doubt – the question is to what extent. The simple answer is: it depends on the individual. The more complex answer is: one has to consider the impact, both of structural and personal factors, in the level of analysis. Mackie (1965) discusses the issue of causes with the concept: insufficient, but necessary part of an unnecessary but sufficient condition which basically means – without becoming too philosophical – a condition that is necessary for an event to happen together with other conditions, where each condition alone is not enough to make the event happen. It is exactly the same with a migratory decision which is likely to happen due to a myriad of factors and conditions (see section 3). This implies that many factors combined results in a migratory decision and that some factors have larger or lesser impact depending on the individual
case – or the context.

In this study, the context matters a lot – neither scholarships nor job opportunities are available in abundance, and the Israeli occupation or the patriarchal society are structural conditions affecting the individual. A Palestinian IT student who wants to pursue a degree abroad may have to consider money, grades, skills, scholarships, visas and ID, and whether the student is allowed to leave due to the occupation, and then – hope for the family’s approval. Similar factors apply to students aiming for IT jobs abroad. Therefore, reasons to migrate such as money and career (Baruch & Forstenlechner, 2017), job opportunities, welfare or personal characteristics (van Riemsdijk & Wang, 2016) may be necessary for a migratory decision, yet not sufficient enough to leave because of, for instance, the Israeli occupation. A poor educational return or a lack of educational facilities (Rosenzweig, 2006), high quality of universities abroad (Beine et, 2012; Findlay et al, 2012), influence of social ties or the role of personal and professional interests and aspirations (Szelényi, 2006) may also be necessary factors for a migratory decision, yet not sufficient enough if, for example, gender norms are hindering – such as in the shape of intra-household power inequalities (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). Hence, students in this study have similar ideas and reasons to migrate as reasons already presented in previous research and in the skilled-migration literature. Yet, they are ending up in a clash between personal aspirations and the reality which may hinder their migration, and thus, having a negative impact on career and professional outlooks. In regard to the term *self-initiated expatriates*, students may have plenty of self-initiative but do not become expatriates because of structural hinders. Comparing with Albert & Hazen’s (2005) division of migratory factors as professional, personal or societal, it seems clear that the latter group, societal factors outweigh the other two in the context of Palestine for the interviewed students – the *lottery of birth* matters (IOM, 2018 p.173).

8. CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated a number of highly skilled students and graduates at four universities in Palestine through a qualitative study. It has described some future outlooks and investigated intentions to stay in or to leave Palestine after graduation and factors affecting these decisions – highlighting the impact of the university, the IT sector, the occupation and gender norms. This thesis makes the following contributions.

First, it addresses the call for research on skilled migrants on a micro-level and their decision-making and experiences (van Riemsdijk & Wang 2016; Favell et al, 2007). Second, it sheds light on the case of Palestine with its many IT professionals in a way never done before – providing a *human face* (Favell et al, 2007) to an under-researched region in the highly-skilled literature. In doing so, it provides qualitative micro-level insights on professional outlooks nuancing and bridging earlier quantitative macro-level research on migration in Palestine (Jaafari, 1973; PCBS; 2011).

Third, it highlights the clash between aspirations and reality in professional outlooks and migratory decisions. Many factors inspiring and motivating migration are present in this study, including, economic motivation, career opportunities, lack of domestic jobs and an aspiration for world-class education. However, these – together with a personal will, aspirations and interests – may not be enough for migration due to structural obstacles (as argued for in section 7). This clash – often visible as a lack of freedom – manifests itself in many shapes: a limited selection of
destinations for scholarships and a narrow path to a degree abroad; a constrained domestic IT sector with few jobs and companies; an occupation causing travel limitations; and a traditional society limiting plans and (mostly female) careers. This is striking, and it supports Alberts and Hazen’s (2005) argument that structural macro-level factors must be considered and evaluated in order to understand the micro-level decisions. It also supports Al Ariss et al’s (2012) argument that migrant careers – and non-migrant careers in this study – should be understood as a multi-layered and multi-faceted phenomenon. Palestine simply makes some students go for realistic future plans, as Jamil puts it: *most people settle with what they get, so they accept the reality and continue with it* (Jamil, 2018-02-24) and in contrasts to Szelényi’s (2006) students without borders, these Palestinian IT students should be understood as students with borders.
REFERENCES


Basem, Tina. (2016) Message from the Editor. This Week in Palestine, 223 (November’s issues), pp. 3.


Gammage, S. 2004, "Exercising Exit, Voice and Loyalty: A Gender Perspective on


**Internet Sources:**
B’Tselem. (2017 A), ”Restrictions on Movement” (11th of Nov).
B’Tselem. (2017 B) ”Israel bars thousands of Palestinians from traveling abroad; many other don’t even bother to make the attempt (15th of May), https://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/20170515_thousands_of_palestinians_barred_from_traveling_abroad [retrieved 2018-05-03]
Henley & Partners. (2018) ”The Henley Passport Index”.
https://www.henleyglobal.com/henley-passport-index/ [retrieved 2018-02-03]

**Interviews**
*All names on informants are made up pseudonyms (see 4.4 Ethical Considerations for more*
information on anonymity, and see Appendix I for details on informants). The interviews are ordered by date, and all students who are quoted in the empirical section are named after the date.

Interview 1, (2018-01-31). "Tawfik", 5 more students and 1 graduate.
Interview 2, (2018-01-31). "Omar".
Interview 7, (2018-02-20). "Tarek" and "Ahmad".
Interview 8, (2018-02-20). "Imam" and "Aisha".
Interview 9, (2018-02-21). "Sherin".
Interview 14, (2018-03-09). "Sara" and "Rawda".
Interview 15, (2018-03-09). "Amal".
APPENDIX I: List of Informants:

Below is a table of interview informants. No informal chats described in the method section are included here. A dash in a cell means no information. Three types were conducted: group interviews, pair interviews, and individual interviews. The black line between rows of informants distinguish the type of interviews, e.g., five students between two lines equals a group interview with those five students. Also, please note that 4 informants interviewed are not students anymore. They are former students all employed at their university and they might continue their education, but they are included in the list because they were interviewed with a recorder in an interview setting. Lastly, the interviews were conducted in the order of this list and at one university at the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Academic Year (year/total years)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer System Engineering</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>3/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer System Engineering</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer System Engineering</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Computer System Engineering</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Network &amp; Information Security</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Network &amp; Information Security</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Network &amp; Information Security</td>
<td>3/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Network &amp; Information Security</td>
<td>4/4-5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Course Level</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Graduated Status</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Computer Engineering</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Software Engineering</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Software Engineering</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Master’s in Computing</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Former student, current employee</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Master’s in Computing</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Computer Information Systems</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Computer Information Systems</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Former student, current employee</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II: Interview Questions

Background:
What is your major and why did you choose that major?
Why did you choose [a specific university]?

Theme 1: Profession
Can you tell me about your plans after graduation?
- How come?
Which factors are most important when you choose a job to apply for?
- What do you value from an employment/company?
According to you, generally, what is most important for Palestinians IT students when they choose a job to apply for?
- Difference between female students and male students?
According to you, are career opportunities different between men and women?
- Between Muslim or Christian? Between ‘Green ID’ and ’Blue ID’?
What are older students, originally from your program, working with or doing today?
- If you know, can you mention a few examples?
Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years time?
- What challenges do you see to get there?

Theme 2: Personal aspects
Have any one affected your plans after graduation?
- If so who?
Personally, do you have any plans after graduation that are not related to work?
- What factors are important/valuable for you beside work in your life?

Theme: 3: Politics and domestic issues
What is the labour market like for IT professionals in Palestine? What is the IT sector like in [your town]?
- What challenges do you see for the IT sector?
According to people I have spoken with so far, the Israeli occupation is affecting society in many ways. Are your plans after graduation affected by the occupation?
- If so, in what way?

Theme 4: Region, destination & place
Where do you want to live after graduation?
- Will this place have an impact on the jobs you will apply for?
Have you considered going abroad/stay in Palestine? (Stay and leave depend on earlier answer)
What do you believe are the main reasons for Palestinian IT students to leave Palestine?
- Why are they going to these specific countries?
- Are their different reasons between male and female students?
I have heard that students go to Jordan, the Gulf, and the US - why is that?
- Do they go to other destinations? Why?

What do you believe are the main reasons for Palestinian IT students to stay in Palestine?
- Are their different reasons for male and female students? Muslim and Christian? ”Green” or ”Blue” ID?

Are there organisations, institutions or companies that help students to leave Palestine for work or other opportunities abroad?

Final questions:
Is it anything that we haven’t talked about that you want to add?
Have I forgotten to ask you about something that you think is important about this topic?
Appendix III: Short Questionnaire

Please mark the box with the correct answer:

My gender:  
 Male [ ]  
 Female [ ]

I’m married  
 Yes [ ]  
 No [ ]

My religion:  
 Islam [ ]  
 Christianity [ ]  
 Other [ ]

I have a ”green” Palestinian ID Card:  
 Yes [ ]  
 No [ ]

I have a ”blue” Israeli ID Card:  
 Yes [ ]  
 No [ ]

Current academic year:  
 1 [ ]  
 2 [ ]  
 3 [ ]  
 4 [ ]  
 5 [ ]

Name of my major:

_____________________________________________________________________________

After graduation I plan to:

_____________________________________________________________________________

After graduated I plan to live in: (e.g. City, country or region)

_____________________________________________________________________________
Appendix IV: Informed Consent Sheet

This sheet was used at one university which required an informed consent page. This sheet together with my project was also approved by a Research Council at this university.

Interview Information Sheet

Aspirations and Professional Future Plans among Palestinians IT Students

Investigator: Max Karpefors
Master Student from Uppsala University, Sweden

Greetings!

You are invited to participate in a research project about IT students and their professional future plans. The study investigates professional future plans of highly skilled Palestinian IT students who study computer science, computer engineering, information technology or similar. The findings of this study will be presented to staff and students at Uppsala University in Sweden, and thus, increase knowledge about the situation for Palestinian IT students, the labour market in Palestine and the challenges Palestinian IT students face after graduation. Attention to these topics is important because they are too seldom covered by researchers.

Participant’s involvement in the study

The study will be carried out through interviews. The interviews will ask about why you began studying computer science, your plans after graduation and what obstacles you and other IT students are likely to face while entering the labour market. I will not ask for your name or address, and I will use pseudonyms in transcriptions, reports and presentations – it will be anonymous.

Participation is entirely voluntary. The interviews will be held in English and they are expected to take about 60 minutes. If you agree, the interview will be recorded on a voice recorder. You may withdraw from the study at any time, if so, your data will be removed from the study. You can also contact the Investigator after the interview to delete any statements made (you have the right to change answers).

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will only be made available to me and my supervisor in Sweden. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study.

Contact

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me, Max Karpefors, at m******@gmail.com or on WhatsApp (+467******).

All the best, Max Karpefors
**Consent and Short Questionnaire**

*Please mark the box with the correct answer:*

- I have read the above information:  Yes [ ]   No [ ]
- I agree to participate in this study:  Yes [ ]   No [ ]
- My gender:  Male [ ]   Female [ ]
- My religion:  Islam [ ]   Christianity [ ]   Other [ ]
- I’m married:  Yes [ ]   No [ ]
- I have a ”green” Palestinian ID Card:  Yes [ ]   No [ ]
- I have a ”blue” Israeli ID Card:  Yes [ ]   No [ ]
- Current academic year:  1 [ ]   2 [ ]   3 [ ]   4 [ ]   5 [ ]

*This study is anonymous, I therefore ask you to come up with a pseudonym which you may be referred to. It can be any ordinary name.*

Participant’s pseudonym  ________________________________________________

**Digital Voice Recording**

- I allow the Investigator to record a digital voice recorder:  Yes [ ]   No [ ]