**Navigating Marginalities: Masculinities in Israel’s Waste Disposal Industry**

**Introduction**

Most waste disposal and garbage collection workers in Israel are blue-collar men, usually from communities marginalized by the Israeli hegemonic mainstream (Kaplan 2009). This article concerns people in the waste collection chain, including truck drivers, bin preparers, and disposal workers. In Israel, as in other parts of the world, waste collection is a precarious and onerous field of employment (Housman 1997; Rogers 2000; Hudson 2001; Hamilton et al. 2019). The already tough conditions are rapidly worsening due to privatization and the introduction of indirect employment contracts (Benjamin 2015). The literature dealing with the sociology of labor relations is limited regarding employee perspectives (Terkel 1974, Walsh 1975; Rich 1996; Burelle and Monterrat 1985; Perry 1998; Nagle 2013; Hamilton et al. 2017). Moreover, there has been little focus on the overlapping marginalities of waste workers. Fried (2014, 2021) discussed the policies of solid waste disposal and devoted some space to describing the experiences of these workers in Israel. His study presents social analysis along several identity axes, including an analysis of non-hegemonic locations along axes of non-hegemonic masculinity.

Urban garbage trucks are usually run by a team that includes the driver, the waste worker, and the bin preparer. In Israel, these workers tend to be Palestinians, Mizrahi Jews, and African migrants who experience marginalization due to various factors such as their ethnonational origins, blue-collar status, social class, and age. In this paper, I analyze the hierarchy that governs these teams of waste workers. I consider waste workers’ perceptions of their occupation and the social impact of their ethnonational origins. I analyze how they perceive and are perceived by the people they encounter during their shifts. I consider the pay gap between African migrants, Palestinians with job permits, and Israeli-Palestinians. I look at the perceptions of waste workers regarding notions of masculinity and analyze intersectional identities that characterize waste disposal workers. Issues of masculinities and gender, labour relations, as well as ethnonationality are at the heart of this paper.

The first part provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks of masculinities in Israel, while the second part details the materials and methods used in this ethnographic study. The research methods include participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and auto-ethnography.

Ellis (2011) describes auto-ethnography as an approach that aspires to describe personal experiences as a way of understanding cultural experiences. This approach is valuable here given my personal background as the daughter of a Mizrahi-Jewish father who worked as a waste disposal truck driver for three decades in indirect employment. His experiences and a challenging socioeconomic reality were formative experiences for me. As a child, I joined him on the truck and observed his social encounters, work practices, difficulties, and how he established a sense of self-respect within his occupation.

The third part focuses on intersectionality and hegemonic/non-hegemonic masculinities. I delve into ethnographic material to analyze the masculine marginalities of five waste disposal workers representing diverse identities. I discuss how they navigate their identities to shed light on the multi-layered marginalities experienced by waste disposal workers.

I suggest that there has yet to be intersectional research from a feminist perspective on the people involved in waste disposal and even less on how this arena shapes masculine identities in ethno-nationalist contexts. Thus, this article will address a gap in theory and research.

**Masculinities in Israel as an intersectional perspective**

*Repertoires of national hierarchy*

In the Israeli context, scholarly attention has been paid to issues of masculinity and its intersection with various aspects such as the military, labor market, and visual culture (Lomsky-Feder 1998; Kaplan 2009; Sasson-Levi and Misgav 2017; Hirsch 2017; Dekel 2022). However, there remains a significant lack of ethnographic studies. Such studies are necessary to explore the intersectionality of social positions and identities and how they shape masculinity across diverse social spheres that have received less scholarly attention. The dearth of studies in this field poses a problem in comprehending the diverse manifestations of masculinities in different social categories, including age, class, ethnonationalism, religion, and more. Sabras –first-generation Israelis– (Oz 2000), the “Halutz” (pioneers) of the past (Roniger and Feige 2009), blue-collar soldiers (Sasson-levy 2003), and “combat soldiers” are all seen as symbols of Jewish masculinity in Israel. They are culturally inseparable from notions of national pride and physical power. This hierarchy reflects hegemonic Israeli culture, and these repertoires align with Israel’s racialized national hierarchy (Lahav-Raz 2020).

The state of Israel has been shaped as a “nation in arms” (Ben-Eliezer 1995), encoding a connection between masculinity and militarism since its foundation. This social construction has persisted throughout the country’s history, as Israel transitioned from a population in conflict to a nation actively engaged in security. This connection between masculinity and militarism has evolved into various forms, remaining significant in contemporary Israeli society. The dual engagement between military and civilian life creates a unique dynamic in Israeli society, blurring the boundaries between military and civilian masculinities (Lomsky-Feder et al. 2008).

*Blue collar workers: hierarchy in tension*

In the Israeli labor market in general, and “blue-collar” work in particular, there is a constant tension within the hierarchy of masculinities, which places privileged Jewish white men of Ashkenazi descent at the top, Mizrahi-Jewish men in the middle, Palestinian men below, and African migrant workers at the bottom of the social hierarchical ladder (Shafir and Peled 1998; Kemp et al. 2010; Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005). The marginalization occurs within subordinated groups in and out of the waste disposal industry. Therefore, it is impossible to think about masculinity separately from how it intersects with social hierarchies, structures, and conditions. The combination of these factors constructs cultural perceptions of masculinity (Connell 2005).

This paper focuses on cross-marginal men (who embody multiple marginalities) involved in the waste collection chain, including mainly Mizrahi-Jewish, Palestinians, and African migrants, each group with unique characteristics. Within these groups, Mizrahi Jews, Sephardic Jews with origins in the Middle East and North Africa, occupy a subordinate societal stratum compared to Ashkenazi Jews with European origins. Mizrahis hold the lowest socioeconomic positions within Israeli Jewish society as a collective (Chetrit 2000). Mizrahi-Jewish masculinity is shaped by experiences of immigration from Muslim-majority countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa in the mid-20th century and being cut off from their previous sense of belonging. These men faced a changing social reality and were marked and treated as socially inferior and marginalized by the elitist hegemony of the Ashkenazi mainstream. However, some resisted, particularly through the activism of the Israeli Black Panther Movement (Cohen and Shemesh 1976). One-and-a-half-, second- and third-generation Mizrahi-Jewish men have become “sharp-toothed” agents of protest (Shochat 2003; Dekel 2013). There is a connection between different Mizrahi masculinities and class and diverse and fluid identity definitions among Mizrahi men exist (Baruch 2016). The first and second generations of Mizrahi-Jewish men in Israel were often employed in blue-collar jobs, including waste disposal work (Bernstein and Swirsky 1982). This occupation is sometimes passed down from father to son in Mizrahi communities.

The social construction of masculinity among Middle Eastern Muslim men is heavily influenced by their class and the opportunities open to them. Their ethnicity, rural or urban background, and religiosity further condition their agency in shaping their masculine identity (Gerami 2005). Studies in postcolonial contexts suggest that men often respond creatively to their marginality and reframe what it symbolizes (Morrell and Swart 2005). Additionally, the connection between class and masculinities has become more flexible and fluid over time (Morgan 2005). In Israel, Arab masculinity can be divided into three major categories: Islamic masculinity, which perceives the global West as a cultural threat to society and family values; modern secular masculinity, which questions the global West; and dynamic and pragmatic masculinity, which chooses to manage daily reality and avoid clear-cut ideological positions (Monterescu 2003).

Palestinian citizens of Israel experience a strong sense of emotional alienation, deeply embodied in their experience as an ethnonational minority group, along with ambivalence toward the state and the services it provides. Most Palestinian workers are blue-collar workers (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005). Palestinian Arabs face discrimination as a minority group. They are disempowered, marginalized from political culture, and face barriers to accessing job opportunities (Zureik 2023). There is a difference between Palestinians and Israeli Palestinians, the latter being Israeli citizens belonging to the permanent Arab minority living in Israel (Smooha 2019).

Black masculinity in Israel (including the Jewish Ethiopian community, which is not part of this study) manifests similarly to other parts of the world: “Representations of black men are clearly a social construct, founded on gender-racial stereotypes. In the United States, for example, common stereotypes draw either on the myth of a powerful and frightening virility of black men that inevitably leads to sexual violence, incarceration, disease, or drugs, or else of a prodigious athleticism or musical genius” (Dekel; 2022). In Israel, common representations mark them in contradictory terms as either passive or powerful. They are negatively represented in Israeli media, sometimes casting them as perpetrators of violence against women and only occasionally as positive men leading successful lives (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; Dekel 2022). African migrants face additional challenges, including low status and labor rights, placing them at the bottom of the hierarchy.

*Intersectionality and Masculinities*

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term “intersectionality” to describe identities that comprise several intersecting axes of oppression, with gender constituting one key axis. Masculinity encapsulates multiple dimensions of identity (Willis 1977), and power relations create and reproduce distinctions between different groups of men (Hirsch 2017). Bourdieu’s contribution to how gender and gender relations are embodied in the body, the habitus, is significant. As are the different practices that organize the social world of men, their patterns of thinking, and actions expressing their socialization, all of which mean that “masculinity” is contingent and context-bound. The sociological study of masculinity adopted an intersectional approach rather than viewing men as an unvariegated mass from the outset (Sasson-Levy and Misgav 2017).

As a pioneering scholar in masculinity studies, Connell established the concept of hegemonic masculinity in her work. The dynamic approach to masculine patterns and the multifaceted nature of masculinity reinforce the repertoire of manifestations of masculinity. For instance, non-hegemonic masculinity can be observed within different social classes. (Connell 2005, 2009). Furthermore, there is no complete match between hegemonic social positions and hegemonic models of masculinity. Non-hegemonic masculinity might embody certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity and their power relations, reproducing hierarchies among men (Connell 1995; Hirsch and Kachtan 2017). There is a constant tension between marginal and hegemonic masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

The critical discussion about masculinities reveals that hegemonic masculinity is different from hegemonic dominance. For this reason, some groups give legitimacy to hierarchies between social groups of men, and others do not (Messerschmidt 2012; Connell 2014). However, it is better to understand masculine practices as organized by a contradictory repertoire of cultural models that cannot include an “equal self” masculine existence (Hirsch 2017). Hybrid masculinity is a critical concept that examines contemporary forms of masculinity. It involves the symbolic distancing of men from hegemonic masculinity while situating alternative masculinities as more meaningful in terms of their “marginal worth.” By redefining the hierarchy of masculine identities, hybrid masculinity offers a new perspective on gender and power dynamics. It sheds light on the complex ways in which men navigate their identities, challenging traditional gender norms and promoting inclusivity. This critical review of hybrid masculinity contributes to understanding contemporary society’s diverse and evolving masculinities (Bridges and Pascoe 2014).

# *Occupational Precarity*

The commodification of labor power originated during the early stages of the Industrial Revolution in Europe when laborers began to sell their labor as if it were a commodity (Benjamin 2006). Thomas Humphrey Marshall’s essay *Citizenship and Social Class* explored social rights in Britain, including worker protection and the right to economic welfare (Marshall 1964). Over time, the protection of workers’ dignity and liberty, and the responsibility of the state and employers to ensure these rights, became increasingly recognized, with a greater understanding that the human beings providing labor power must not be overlooked (Benjamin 2007; Rabin-Margalioth 2009). However, research literature indicates that individuals from marginalized identity categories are often less protected and are more likely to have their rights violated (Radin 1996).

Occupational precarity signifies a lack of social mobility and stability, an insecurity that affects one’s income, lifestyle, and social and professional identity (Han 2018; Standing 2014). This condition is not limited to a particular historical period but is a recurring human experience. Even so, due to globalization and its impact on politics and finance, individuals have limited control over their circumstances, and their ability to predict changes that may affect their status is restricted. Scholars like Hirst and Thompson (1999) emphasize the persistent inequality within the contemporary international capitalist order, suggesting that globalization fails to deliver its promised benefits, and a significant portion of the population remains excluded from the advantages of globalization, such as social choices (Schor 2005). This argument opposes the viewpoint of Anne-Marie Slaughter (2004), who argued that globalization has reduced poverty and deprivation in developed and developing societies (Amadi 2020).

The role of waste is significant in shaping the discourse on urban visibility and promoting public health and sanitation services (Fried 2021). Nevertheless, Israel’s waste management and cleaning labor market is known for its vulnerability, particularly for workers in low-wage sectors, such as sanitation services. For many poor heads of households, this work is their only option, and they are forced to endure precarious and discriminatory working conditions to maintain their livelihoods (Maor 2012; Talit 2012). Moreover, these workers sometimes feel ashamed of their work (Benjamin et al. 2011; Doron and Jeffrey 2018). Most of these workers are employed through contractors and occupy the lowest tier of the employment pyramid (Mundlak2004; Rubinstein2012).

There is a lack of data about contract workers in Israel, further exacerbating their vulnerable position. In the job industry, waste work is considered a low-status and low-wage occupation (Nagle 2013; Doron and Jeffrey 2018), mainly occupied by marginalized blue-collar men. Each local authority employs many teams, often through an external contractor. Local municipalities are responsible for maintaining proper sanitation standards and regular waste collection from urban areas. However, in some cities, such as Jewish central cities, waste disposal workers are considered privileged, and their working conditions are better than in peripheral locations. Unfortunately, many municipalities use indirect employment through outsourcing contractors to ensure workers’ rights (Konor-Attias and Liberman 2017).

Nevertheless, the local authority may not finalize the working conditions between the hired contractor and the waste disposal workers, especially in peripheral and poorer cities. The growing use of outsourcing in waste is part of the neo-liberalization of the public sector (Bondy 2012). Indirect employees, particularly those living in the geographical periphery of Israel, face double discrimination twice: firstly, by the local authorities that do not supervise the working conditions provided by contractors, and secondly, by contractors who deduct portions of their wages.

Precarious practices and limited opportunities for excluded social groups characterize indirect employment. While direct public sector employees have greater representation in workers’ unions and better working conditions, indirect employees suffer from low wages and a lack of job security. This leaves them unable to participate in decision-making processes, demand their rights, or have their voices heard, resulting in a lack of social and work security (Mundlak 2004). Furthermore, waste workers may not comprehensively understand the broader impact of their work on a large scale (Nagle 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic heightened the demand for waste workers in Israel and globally. With people staying at home due to quarantine measures, there was a surge in consumption and, consequently, an increase in waste production. This put immense pressure on waste disposal workers. The relationship between the Israeli government’s policies and the local authorities was also significantly affected, leading to the development of creative solutions to manage the situation. However, this left the workers with a limited capacity to resist governmental policies (Bondy 2012). Despite the increased public attention on the waste disposal industry during the pandemic, it has not resulted in any significant economic or social benefits for the waste workers.

**Methods**

This article employs intersectional analysis to explore the lived experiences of municipal waste disposal workers in Israel and the waste collection process using ethnographic research. The research methods used are participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and a reflexive approach (Aktinson and Hammersley 1998; Ellis et al. 2011; McIntosh and Morse 2015).

*Participants and Field*

This article focuses on five waste disposal workers who represent a diversity of multi-marginal masculinities in terms of ethnonationality, age, gender, socioeconomic class, and occupational status. These include a Mizrahi-Jewish waste disposal driver, a Palestinian-Muslim waste disposal driver, a Jewish driver who immigrated from the former USSR, a Palestinian waste worker with a temporary work permit, and an African migrant bin preparer. All five workers are between 35 to 64 years old.

I joined the urban waste removal system as the daughter of a father from a Mizrahi family who worked as a garbage truck driver for many years. Thus, my aim was, on the one hand, to approach the topic from an ethnographic and feminist reflexive research perspective and, on the other hand, to take an active part in urban waste-disposal work in two comparable locations: Ramat Gan and Ramat HaSharon. Both cities are central but differ from one another demographically and geographically. Moreover, a significant variable for this study is that the city of Ramat Gan mostly hires direct employees while Ramat HaSharon opts for contractors. These factors influence the waste disposal workers in terms of their labor conditions, marginality, and precariousness.

The two cities provide an important contrast in the waste disposal model, both environmentally and in terms of labor relations. Ramat-Gan owns its waste disposal trucks, while Ramat HaSharon uses a contractor’s trucks and services. This distinction affects the workers’ sense of belonging and their self-perception of their occupation. Comparing the waste disposal workers of the two cities has allowed me to examine differences and similarities in the workers’ perceptions of their masculinity, ethnonational identity, social class, labor relations, and age.

*Data and analysis*

Data was collected from five teams and trucks, three drivers, one waste disposal worker, and one bin preparer (out of ten trucks, ten drivers, and 45 waste workers interviewed as part of a wider research project). All the names used to refer to the waste workers in this article are pseudonyms. The research also included semi-structured interviews with the men. This study challenges canonical research methodology and the representation of others by treating research as a political and explicitly social action. Furthermore, it is conducted from a feminist anthropological perspective, which aims to provide accessible knowledge about waste disposal workers themselves. This method includes not only analytical insights but also a socially responsible approach that ethically represents their views and opinions, such as political observations, recognizing diverse perspectives and viewpoints, critical self-awareness, and other similar concepts, while still operating within a humanistic framework (Lather 2013; Motzafi-Haller 2023). The mixed research methods used in this study allow for a deep analysis of a diverse sample of waste disposal workers in Israel and the social and cultural structures within which they operate.

**Findings**

*Marginalized masculinities of waste disposal workers in Israel*

Waste disposal workers occupy different statuses within their profession. The truck driver is most often considered the highest-ranking member of the team, responsible for driving, safety, and shift coordination. The bin preparer is responsible for setting full bins on the pavement’s edge, sometimes also replacing them after they are emptied. The waste disposal workers who hop on and off the truck to empty the bins vary in seniority and experience and work in teams, usually on a fixed urban route.

**Roni** is a 46-year-old Mizrahi-Jewish waste disposal driver who has worked for the Ramat Gan municipality for two years. He comes from a challenging socioeconomic background. Roni was a convicted criminal who was rehabilitated, has turned his life around, and has lived as an observant Orthodox Jew for a few years in the Hassidic tradition. Roni is a tall and vital man with fantastic social skills and the ability to reach out to people. He deals with health challenges, but he is physically strong these days and maintains a positive outlook on life. Despite his present secular lifestyle, Roni still observes Jewish traditions. He is divorced twice and is a father to three children from two different marriages. Roni’s father was also a waste disposal worker, and he followed in his footsteps to find therapeutic relief from his depression and get back on his feet.

While Roni appreciates the daily routine that his work provides, he struggles to make ends meet due to the low pay and limited shifts. After paying his expenses and taxes, he barely has enough to live on. Roni has an enormous debt to the National Insurance Institute, and his bank account was confiscated as a result. He relies on his elderly mother for support, and if he did not live with his partner, he would have to move in with his mother. He says that the framework and daily routine his work provides is more important than the unfair work conditions (Radin 1996).

Despite his precarious situation, Roni remains a kind-hearted person who is always willing to help others, especially those in positions of social or physical weakness. Working in the waste disposal industry provides order to his life and keeps him from getting involved with criminals. However, bureaucratic challenges and health issues weigh heavily on him, and he must use a special device to monitor his breathing while sleeping. Roni complains about the confiscation of his bank account, which prevents him from having any money. Roni’s multifaceted identity as a Mizrahi-Jewish man, second-generation waste disposal worker, ex-convict, and someone who deals with physical health challenges makes him a multi-marginalized man.

In spite of the hardships he faces, he maintains a positive attitude towards life, thanks to the support and positive attitude of those around him. His experience shows how non-hegemonic masculinity can shape aspects of hegemonic masculinity (Hirsch and Kachtan 2017), such as resilience, resourcefulness, positiveness, and strength. In addition, it can also demonstrate hybrid masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). Another waste disposal driver from a different ethnonational background, age, and religion, Hafez, provides an interesting comparison with Roni.

**Hafez** is a 59-year-old waste disposal truck driver who is an Israeli citizen of Palestinian origin and a Muslim. He has been working as a waste disposal truck driver for the past 15 years in Ramat HaSharon city, located on Israel’s central coastal strip in the south of the Sharon region. Hafez comes from a family of farmers and was born and raised in Qalansawa, an Arab-Israeli city. Hafez lost his mother at the age of ten. He is a diabetic, prioritizes his health, and tries to maintain good habits. As a religious Muslim, he attends mosque every Friday. Hafez values his family and small farm and tends to avoid socializing in coffee houses and public events.

Hafez is a short, sharp, and focused person with a small beard and a beautiful, deep gaze. I met him a few hours after a terror attack perpetrated by a young Palestinian in the center of Tel Aviv-Yafo. Whenever there are terror attacks perpetrated by Palestinians, levels of racism and violence towards Arabs in Israeli public spaces increase. Despite having Israeli citizenship, Hafez, like other Arab citizens within Israel, suffers from the stigma of being identified with Palestinians living in the occupied territories. A night before one of our mutual shifts, there was a shooting targeting Israeli Jewish citizens in the center of Tel Aviv-Yafo. The streets were closed, and tensions were high due to several recent terror attacks executed by individual Palestinians. This event happened in an atmosphere of tension following a wave of terrorist gun violence in Bnei Berak, Hadera, and Beer Sheba a few weeks before Ramadan.

Despite this climate of fear, I would meet Hafez on the truck in the early morning, and we would discuss the atmosphere, the complex reality, and the political situation. Due to the tension, dozens of male Palestinian contractor workers who usually cross the security barriers of the occupied territories into Israel were prevented from crossing. That morning felt the same. I asked Hafez if he was worried about the Israeli public around, and he said that this situation was a mess. He said: “Every time a terror attack happens, it takes us all 300 steps backward. It generates hatred, destroys livelihoods and opportunities, and makes everyone alert and suspicious.”

During that shift, Hafez worked with a very young Palestinian waste disposal worker who had apparently succeeded in crossing the checkpoint. The worker did not speak Hebrew but was incredibly efficient. In this field of work, the most marginalized people are the first to be hurt. Hafez was worried but acted in a very sensitive manner towards the young temporary waste worker who looked like a 15-year-old teenager. He explained that the situation generated actual danger for both of them as they worked among Jewish citizens. He shared that once, after a terror incident, he had to call the police to save himself from a violent racist event. That morning, he felt the same and even asked his son not to go to his day job to avoid expected troubles.

Hafez has experienced racism and violence on account of being an Arab. Once, when he was working in a regular waste disposal shift during a tense moment in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a 16-year-old Jewish boy, a neighborhood resident who knew him, approached and asked, “What the hell are you doing here lousy Arab?! Go away right now!” Hafez immediately reported the incident to his work manager, who called the local municipal police. After that incident, he took some time off to rest. On another occasion, when Hafez was working as a Coca-Cola company truck driver with an Israeli license number sign and drove near a Palestinian village, he was targeted by Palestinians who believed he was Jewish.

Hafez is proud of his work as a waste disposal truck driver and remains grateful for what he has despite his low wages. While Hafez is known to be functional, he may come off as unfriendly to Jewish-Israeli residents in the city where he works. He is focused on his job and generally does not interact with others outside of his co-workers. Given the multi-marginal context and the current state of political and cultural tension, it is understandable that Hafez does not aim to elicit local empathy. This description is enhanced by Hafez’s privileged position as compared to Amjad, whose story follows. As Connell’s (2005, 2009) argument goes, non-hegemonic masculinity can comprise different classes. Amjad’s experience is another example of marginal waste work intersecting with citizenship issues. It reveals how a lack of freedom of movement between Israel and the occupied territories affects men working in this field.

**Amjad** is a 39-year-old waste disposal worker from Tulkarm, a Palestinian city in the West Bank. He lives during the weekdays in Qalansawe, an Arab city in the Central District of Israel, and visits his family in the West Bank on weekends. Amjad has a temporary job permit and has been working in the waste disposal industry for six years as an indirect employee in Ramat HaSharon. He collects various items during his shifts, including clothing, computer equipment, and furniture, among others. He takes some items home with him to his family in Tulkarm and sells what he cannot use. Amjad is married and has six children, and his eldest son, aged 18, is also employed by the same contractor as a waste disposal worker in Israel. Education is crucial to Amjad, and he spends a lot of money on private lessons for his young children. He is determined to provide his children with a better education than he had, especially given the challenges of poverty under the restrictions of the Israeli occupation.

Despite being a Palestinian worker who does not live with his family and works in challenging conditions, Amjad considers himself lucky compared to Palestinians without job permits in Israel. He uncomplainingly works the longest shift line in the city, nearly seven hours. He tries to maximize his side jobs by finding valuable items to sell. Amjad’s team includes Hillel, the driver, and Saleh, a Palestinian bin preparer. Although Saleh also has a job permit, he is still underprivileged compared to Amjad because he cannot speak Hebrew. While Hafez, the Israeli-Palestinian driver mentioned earlier, faces different layers of marginality: age and health conditions.

Amjad is a fashionable and stylish man, far from the stereotype of a waste disposal worker. He has a positive and communicative personality; he speaks fluent Hebrew, and the Israeli-Jewish residents of Ramat HaSharon appreciate him. He is likable and willing to accept less favorable working conditions for the chance to make more money in creative ways. These characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Hirsch and Kachtan 2017) place Amjad in the theoretical frame of hybrid masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). To demonstrate another kind of marginality in the “mosaic” of masculinities, Hillel represents the former USSR as an ethnonational origin within Israel. He works in the same team as Amjad and has the identity of a migrant. In addition, he is a relatively old worker who suffers from a stigmatized “outsider” status in his social encounters.

**Hillel** is a 64-year-old Jewish immigrant driver from the former USSR, born in Uzbekistan. Hillel maintains his Russian-Soviet cultural repertoire (Lerner 2011) and currently lives in Petah Tikva, a city in the Central District of Israel. He is married and has three children, one of whom, unfortunately, is dealing with advanced cancer. Hillel is also a grandfather. He has been working as a driver for his entire life but only got into the waste disposal industry six years ago. He is a big man, a former smoker who suffers from heart health problems and moves slowly without hurrying. He is an indirect employee, and his wages are very low. His wife works as a hospital nurse, and the taxes she pays are equivalent to a third of his salary. Hillel considers waste disposal work to be just a way to make a living, not a profession. He has experienced discrimination, especially in recent years due to his Russian origins and accent. He still speaks poor Hebrew and is treated poorly by impatient, fluent Hebrew speakers. He is frustrated with being judged and keeps saying, “I am not Russian; I am from Russia!” His identity as an immigrant adds another layer of marginality to his status and ethnicity (Shumsky 2001). Despite his working conditions, Hillel finds joy in his professional identity as a truck driver. He served in the Russian army in the past and later as a driver in the IDF. He believes that ethnonationalism and class issues are strong in the waste disposal industry. He says that social cliques of waste disposal workers exist in many cities in the country, especially in privileged ones. He once tried to apply to the Tel Aviv-Yafo waste department and was asked to pay thousands of NIS just to get on the waiting list. According to Hillel, most indirect employees in Israel are Israeli Arabs, which he believes has to do with the relative socioeconomic status of the municipalities in which the waste workers are employed. If the city is highly ranked, it means there is money to employ “high-quality” workers, meaning Jewish. Sometimes, even direct municipal workers are Jewish.

In contrast, low-ranked cities often hire contractors to operate municipal waste disposal services. These contractors employ their own workers, pay them minimum wage, and hire whoever wants to work. Often, these workers are multi-marginal, like Palestinians or African migrants. Their working conditions are precarious, and they have no choice because they have very few options. Hillel’s future pension will not allow him to retire at the age of 67, as determined by law and relatively common among Israeli men. He understands that he will have to keep working and not retire.

Hillel’s experience as a waste disposal driver is not positive. He faces a lack of respect for his work from those around him and deals with daily complaints from residents about the noise and traffic caused by poor infrastructure despite this having nothing to do with his work. Even after finishing his workday, when he goes home and parks the truck, his neighbors complain about the smell of the empty and washed truck. The waste disposal truck has negative connotations and suffers from a negative public image. To anchor Hillel’s marginal masculinities to the central argument of this article – each layer of marginality is a challenge to navigate.

The last representation of multi-marginal masculinity is William, who represents the intersectional connection between being a migrant worker, African, and age. **William** is a 35-year-old African migrant who has been living in Tel Aviv-Yafo for the past few years. He was born in Eritrea and has a wife and two children back home, whom he works very hard to support financially. In addition to his job as a bin preparer, William also works as a dishwasher and cleaner in a restaurant to save money on food and other expenses. Because of his challenging economic circumstances as a migrant laborer, not an asylum seeker (Sabar 2010), William is a quiet, modest, and hard-working man. He is small, fast, hyper-focused, and has a remarkable work ethic. He has chosen to make immense sacrifices to give his family a better future. William does not speak fluent Hebrew. He works alongside Hafez as a bin preparer and is highly respected by his co-workers. This ability to maximize his income relates to Morrel and Swart’s (2005) argument that greater marginalization leads to greater creativity in getting by.

William’s various marginalities, including his African ethnonational identity, his status as a work migrant, his blue-collar occupation, and his temporary residence permit, place him at a disadvantage relative to others like Hafez and Amjad. Unlike William, Hafez and Amjad are privileged by their citizenship or job permits, speak fluent Hebrew, and are not men of color. They are ranked higher in the waste disposal industry as a driver and waste disposal worker. William’s temporary job permit is set to expire soon, and he will be forced to return to his country of origin, further cementing his position of marginalization.

All five waste disposal workers are marginalized in Israel due to their blue-collar occupation, which requires physical labor in all weather conditions. Each worker has a unique perspective on the increasing urban waste and its impact. From an intersectional perspective, the top of the social-professional hierarchy includes Roni, a Mizrahi-Jewish driver, followed by Hillel, a Jewish driver and former immigrant from the USSR, then Hafez, an Israeli-Palestinian driver, and Amjad, a Palestinian waste disposal worker with a job permit. At the bottom is William, an African work migrant bin preparer, who is most marginalized due to his ethnonational identity, job role, employment status, social class, and transnational status. Theoretically, it emphasizes the assumption of non-hegemonic masculinity as a challenge when it intersects with different marginalities (Radin 1996).

Despite facing the hegemonic masculine ideal that values control, domination, authority, and autonomy (Barret 1996), waste disposal workers hold a significant and fundamental occupational role that cannot be overlooked. The functioning of urban spaces would be impossible without their services. These workers sometimes distinguish themselves from others through their ability to construct their work within norms of masculinity and may even generate a heroic masculine persona, which is connected to the respect they receive and the way they perform their manhood in different contexts (Snow and Anderson 1987; Gutmann 1997; Hamilton et al. 2019).

**Conclusion**

Waste disposal workers in Israel represent a multi-marginalized group, with only a few hired in direct employment, mostly Mizrahi-Jewish, with Palestinians or migrant workers generally being employed indirectly. Their intersectional identities compound this marginalization in a transparent industry. However, within this field, a sub-hierarchy exists based on professional status. Despite the precarious nature of their work, each worker has strengths, such as age, vitality, good health, freedom of movement from and to the Israeli territory, socioeconomic status, and creativity in earning extra money with a “side hustle.” Their occupational identity is only one aspect of their complex and rich lives, although precarity is an integral aspect of their daily life. This study provides insights into waste workers’ experiences in Israel. The waste disposal occupation, like other transparent or blue-collar jobs, entails professional knowledge that can only be learned on the job and combines physical and mental endurance and attention to detail, such as placing the bin exactly at the right angle on the sidewalk. By driving a waste disposal truck through narrow streets, waste workers constantly face social interactions with the public. There is no course for studying to become a waste disposal worker despite it being a fundamental service that we cannot live without. Therefore, this non-hegemonic profession is rooted in the Global South and is another step toward balancing relationships in the global system of knowledge production (Klob 2017). This study adds to the literature on masculinity and gender studies, as well as labor studies of marginalized communities and waste disposal services in particular. It highlights the importance of intersectionality in understanding the complexities of labor relations and marginalities as a challenge and as an opportunity in waste work in Israel and vis-à-vis blue-collar occupations globally. It also highlights the strengths, resilience, and creative navigation of the system by waste disposal workers and the importance of recognizing and valuing their contributions to society.

**Notes (endnotes)**

For numbered lists

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