"Career Women" or "Working Women"? Change versus Stability for Young Palestinian Women in Israel

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The attitudes of young Palestinian spouses regarding women's employment and their other roles as housewives and mothers shape their marital relationships and psychological well-being. In Arab society, as elsewhere, the work or career of women cannot be discussed without relating to dominant attitudes to family, marriage, divorce and other social and cultural contexts and norms. Yet the particularities of the Palestinian society in Israel, living as it does in several interfaces with different norm systems (Israeli Jewish secular society, Israeli women's movements, westernization and globalization in their local version — as well as changing attitudes within Palestinian society itself), produce extra social pressure on the traditional attitudes which now must come to terms or clash with social change and external influence. Whereas 20 years ago a good match and marriage for Palestinian women was socially considered as their ultimate "career," today, among other signs of social change, there are young Palestinian academic women, albeit a small group to date, who do not share their society's traditional views of marriage and notions of "careers." This article aims to track the changes occurring in the attitudes of these few young Arab women that lead them to behave differently from the cultural expectations of their society. It also aims to shed light on the concepts of marriage and being single (divorced or unmarried) among young Palestinian women in Israel, on their expectations from their relationship with their spouses and the influence of marriage on their careers.

The data and examples used here are drawn from the content analysis of 28 therapy cases dealing with couples and 17 therapy cases dealing with married women. All the wives were either students in higher education institutions and universities or professionals. Their ages varied between 20 and 49 years. All the husbands were professionals, and their ages varied between 23 and 52 years. Although the information is derived from therapy sessions and not from interviews directly aimed at investigating attitudes and positions, counseling is nevertheless a social context in which subjects concerning social change are also discussed. Moreover, the contents of therapy sessions are actually a rare opportunity to learn about the attempts to

bring about social change in the face of the forces of social stability in the life of Palestinian families in Israel, since interview discussions of such matters are usually influenced by social desirability while discussions in therapy are authentic and mostly uncensured.

Within the changing Arab world, including that of Palestinians in Israel, young career women place themselves in direct confrontation with the traditional norms of marriage and society by introducing different concepts of women's duties or lifestyle. This clash often results in a rapid burnout either in their careers or in their marriages. Since the authority and legitimization these young women refer to are those of Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian career men or Israeli and Western career women, they have to invest much of their energy and time in negotiating the politics of power within Palestinian families, whether their own young ones or their extended families on both sides of the marriage. The problematics and complexity of this sociopolitical context will also be discussed here.

The category of Palestinian career women is an exclusive group. Although about 24 percent of Palestinian women above the age of 15 are registered as being in the work force,[1] it cannot be assumed that about a quarter of Palestinian couples share family roles and duties equally as a result of women's engagement in waged work. Palestinian women have found, as elsewhere, that adding work outside of the house to their lives does not necessarily entail a systemic change in the operation of the household. While Palestinian women share family income responsibilities with men, men refuse to change their traditional social roles and their cultural allowances, and in this they are strongly supported by social, political, historical, cultural and religious norms. Thus, regarding women's participation in the work force two concepts have developed to reflect the tensions and strains which they face due to this social pressure: "working women," which applies to most Palestinian women who work outside of the home, and "career women," which is rarely used either by the women themselves or by Palestinian society, and yet refers to Palestinian women who in some sense model their "work" on the Western liberal notion of "career."

The emerging small group of young "career women" are mostly acquainted with each other through being trained in the same institutions or meeting in the same social groups. They live in towns and villages, mainly in independent accommodations where they are able to maintain their own lifestyle.[2] They are establishing a new subculture in which they are seeking answers to such essential existential questions as family structure, a woman's relationship with her husband, the meaning of motherhood, the type of relationships a woman should have with her extended families, cross-gendered friendship (in traditional Arab culture women are not allowed to have male friends) and the housewife's duties. They are reexamining and redesigning Palestinian women's

personal and social concept of self. Since social change is brought about through individuals, this study shows that Palestinian career women pay a high psychological and social price for their desire to restructure self and society.

The Meanings of Family, Marriage and Divorce

According to the Arab psychosocial structure, the perfect and absolute unit is the family, not the individual. Islam, which is the core of Arab culture, considers marriage an essential developmental stage in an individual's life. The prophet Mohammed measured marriage as equaling half of the total religious deeds in a Muslim's life. He commanded all Muslims to marry, saying: "There shall be no chastity in Islam." Parents or custodians have to help those who are not able to marry for financial reasons in order to protect Muslim society from prostitution and other deviations.[3] Leila Ahmed argues that the family laws legislated in Islam reorganized gender relations and authority roles between men and women. This reorganization continues to influence the status of women in Islam in modern times.[4] Marriage contributes to the growth and stability of Arab society through the family unit.[5] Marrying in the Middle East is therefore a universal behavior: about 97 percent of adults are married. The remaining three percent include those who have been widowed and divorced.[6]

It is believed that marriage, as a psychosocial developmental stage, furnishes the individual, male or female, with wisdom and maturity. It is the apparatus of the ultimate change in an individual's status from irresponsible youth to manhood and womanhood. In spoken Arabic a woman is called *bint*, which literally means "girl," until she has sexual intercourse for the first time, immediately after her marriage. Therefore, women who remain single are described in spoken Arabic as "girls" not as women. A 17-year-old young married woman is expected to be psychologically and socially more mature than a 30-year-old unmarried woman. There is no parallel term for young unmarried men in the language.

Arab societies socialize women to regard a marriage opportunity as a "train that passes just once in a woman's lifetime." Each year after the age of 20 is viewed as crucial for a woman with regard to marriage. This is also the period that is vital for career building. It is a commonly held belief that a match is the individual's destiny which God arranges for him or her. An unmarried woman who refuses a good match will be severely blamed, even if she has no inclination towards the match at all. An Arab proverb reflecting the collective social consciousness states that "a shadow of a man is better than a shadow of a wall," meaning that a man in a woman's life is the best social support for her future. Arab women throughout history have suffered from very bad

marriages, but have stayed married given that the alternative, being divorced Arab women, is considered the lowest status in the hierarchy of Arab family and society. Old single women, those who were never married, suffer from negative social judgments. The Arabic language reflects these social judgments by describing women's status according to the age at which they marry: young women are called *'azbaa* (not yet married). This term is used in most Arab countries for women under the age of 30. For unmarried women over 30 years old the term used is *'aanis* (old single woman). Applying this term to a woman implies that she no longer has any chance of marrying. The fact that there is only one word to describe the unmarried status of men, *'azib* (bachelor), indicates that they may decide to marry at any stage of their lives.

'Aanis, widows and divorced Arab women, all of whom lack a relationship with an official spouse, are required to abstain from sexual relationships and avoid all social scandals. However, these three types of "single women" are differentiated by the social support they receive and by the deference granted to their situations. Widows are given the most social sympathy, while divorced women and *'aanis* are treated as though they are to blame for their status. All three groups of women have great difficulty in finding a spouse of their own age and social status; most will remain without a husband for the rest of their lives.

The rate of divorce among Palestinians in Israel is very low in comparison to that among Jews in Israel and other Western societies. In the 40 years between 1955 and 1995, the divorce rate increased from 0.7 percent to 1.2 percent among Muslim families, while among Christian families it remained at about 0.1 percent.[7] Arab women in the Middle East are blamed for their divorce, since the culture of the Arab family expects a married woman to understand her husband's needs and psychology.[8] A woman who has been divorced is therefore treated as a woman who has failed in her most important mission, and the very term "divorcee" sometimes connotes disgrace and condemnation. Although Islam encourages men to marry divorced women, society mostly relates to them as untouchable.

A divorced woman with children can rarely remarry as long as her children remain in her care. If she wishes to marry, she has to place them in the custody of her own or her ex-husband's mother. As a result of the high divorce rate that existed in the early years of Islam, a woman's relationship with her husband was neither stable nor secure in comparison with her relationship with her children. Consequently, Arab women are socialized to look to their children as a more fundamental, secure and lasting source of love than their husbands. Men are expected to protect their families rather than to love their children, shielding them from any harm or shame. Social norms empathize with men who, for various reasons, are not able to raise their children or show them their affection, while harshly criticizing mothers who decide to

relinquish their child custody rights. Fathers are able to move from one marriage to the next, leaving their children in the custody of their ex-wives or their own mothers, while social norms prevent women with children from moving on in the same way.

A divorced woman has no chance of marrying a man who has never been married. Usually a much older divorced or widowed man may see her as a potential marriage partner. Arab society accepts this degradation of a divorced woman's status as a natural result of the loss of her youth. Therefore, the majority of Arab women who file for divorce are aware that this decision entails a sentence to stay unmarried for the rest of their lives, a prospect that convinces the majority of women to accept their bad marriages as their destiny. The alternative is not much better, unless, of course, they suffer from a very abusive marriage. The percentage of single divorced Arab women in Israel is higher than that of men as a result of the remarriage of divorced men to previously unmarried women.[9]

After a divorce, a woman is expected to return to live with her family of origin (the blood family, rather than the family of the spouse). In cases where the woman has custody of her children, she has to accommodate herself and them to the new conditions. The wealth of the woman's family of origin determines whether she may continue living as an adult with children or whether she must return to live as a dependent "child" in her family's home. Divorce, therefore, deprives Arab women of their relative independence as adults, consequently lowering their economic status. For the most part, women who live in all-Arab towns continue to live with their children in their own residences, without being forced to go back to live with their families of origin. It is believed that in comparison to divorced Arab women who live in the villages, these women are more educated and have better access to the jobs available in Arab towns, factors that allow them to remain financially independent. All the women in Al-Krenawi and Graham's study (151 women) reported that their families of origin limited their freedom to make social contacts and forced them to inform their families regarding their movements.[10]

The average age difference between married couples is about 10 years,[11] which preserves the superior status of men in terms of education, profession, income, social and psychological maturity and political power. The age gap institutionalizes gender inequality, and reproduces it in the Arab family. Arab society is very much divided in its opinion about gender roles, which are determined by tradition, customs and social norms. As a result of the changes that have occurred in the last 50 years in Israel as well as in the other Arab countries, such as the rise in the standard of women's education, wage labor has come to be regarded as a quantitative or technical, not a fundamental, change in traditional social values.[12] These changes have not caused a revision in the politics of the distribution of power within the family or in social norms.

A "healthy" family structure continues to be based on the paradigm of men as providers and women as housekeepers. Despite the fact that, as noted above, about 24 percent of Palestinian women in Israel over the age of 15 are enrolled in the civilian labor force, no deviations can be found from the traditional gender roles of men and women among their families. Of the 28 husbands interviewed in this study, none took responsibility for any housework. Six of the 28 earned less than their wives, either because they were in an internship training period or because they were unemployed. Husbands regarded activities such as keeping the baby quiet while the mother cleans, serving themselves food or ironing their own clothes as helping with household chores.

The History of Paid Labor for Palestinian Women

For many years, poor Palestinian women, like all poor Arab women, worked for most of their lives in the fields or as domestic servants in other women's houses. Poverty in the Middle East created generations of land workers and domestic servants who exchanged their labor for food and shelter.[13] Rich women had to avoid paid work in order not to damage their husbands' status as the providers for their families, and such women involved themselves in volunteer work if they wanted to contribute to the community.[14]

Schooling in Palestine was as rare for women as it was in the rest of the Arab world until the 1950s.[15] In the early 1930s and 1940s less than five percent of Palestinian women completed secondary school education, most of whom were Christian. The vast majority of these graduates worked as teachers in girls' schools, while some of them were asked to work in neighboring Arab countries such as Lebanon and Syria. Indeed, the figures of the first Palestinian unmarried teacher *'aanis* are still part of the narrative of their communities. The employment contracts during the period of the British Mandate forbade women who married to continue working in the school system. Therefore, families of origin, as well as young bridegrooms, associated a Palestinian woman's marriage with her ceasing to work. This condition suited the Islamic norms which state that a husband should provide for a woman's needs.

Until three decades ago Palestinian society continued to condition marriage on the woman quitting her job. Wealthy bridegrooms had to promise the brides' families that they would let them "sit" at home, meaning that they would be "ladies," not "working women." At about the same time, rich and middle-class families started to allow their daughters to continue to higher education, but for the sake of education, not a career. Palestinian women who embarked upon academic studies, a category that has been always very marginal,[16] found upon graduation better marriage matches but did not form a category of career women.

The compulsory education law legislated in Israel in 1951 turned the Ministry of Education into the main employer of educated Palestinian women, both those who had been trained as teachers and those who had not. Women's jobs became a female issue rather than a family or a social one. "Working women"[17] had to find ways to combine their dual responsibilities: their families and their jobs. The possibility of combining a teaching job, with its short hours, with all the traditional housewife's duties convinced many parents to encourage their daughters to become teachers. Many women who had been trained for other jobs transferred, after retraining, to teaching. As a result, the main profession of educated Palestinian women became only an adjunct of their traditional jobs as housewives. Women teachers use their time together at school to share with each other knowledge of the most efficient ways of managing their housework and cooking duties. It was their duties at home that prevented women from becoming leaders at work.

Nahida,[18] a 35-year-old teacher, refused the job of supervisor so that she could arrive home an hour before her children to prepare their meal. Later, when a very young male teacher accepted the job, she felt very humiliated. She was sure that her husband would not have helped her succeed in the new assignment had she accepted it. She became very passive-aggressive towards him.

While Palestinian women started accepting their new dual roles, as housekeepers and as paid professionals trying to supplement the family income, men did not discuss modifying their roles socially in accordance with these changes. Social discussion during the last two decades has moved from treating women's work as a family shame and making excuses for it to seeing it as a family necessity. Young Palestinian men prefer to marry "working women" who have permanent jobs. However, the social discussion has never raised the issue of changing the role of Palestinian men, especially of those whose wives work in paid jobs.

Despite the fact that families of origin and husbands benefit financially and socially from the work of Palestinian women, they continue to control decisions concerning women's right to work. Families who fear the misconduct of their daughters force the latter to quit their work and stay under their controlling eyes at home. Husbands who judge that their wives are incapable of combining their two jobs, as housewives and as paid professionals, intimidate them and forbid them to work.

Hamid, a 28-year-old farmer, argued with his wife, Siham, a 25-year-old teacher, and told her to quit her job when she asked him to help with the household chores. Siham had two babies and her hands were full with home and professional duties. She was deeply depressed and suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome. Had Siham agreed to quit her job she would have had to accept living from her husband's low income and relinquish any possibility of

being financially independent. Although she had to put extra effort into managing her dual duties, Siham found that her job enabled her to make plans for her future. Cleverly controlled by social norms and the traditional division of labor, such "working women" believe that their success lies in the very fact of "going out to work."

The goal of most Palestinian professional women that emerged in the 1970s was to convince their families and communities that they were able to serve in their dual jobs. Women wanted to continue working, despite the harsh responsibilities they thus took upon themselves: first, because work was their primary means of self-expression, and second, because the workplace provided women with an opportunity to meet socially, which is an important component in the culture. For many women, it is the only place where they may meet educated adults with whom they are able to share their ideas. Third, and most important, even though men did not double their responsibilities as women did, they began to respect "working women." Deep down they understood the importance of women's contribution.

Shadi, a young trainee lawyer, physically and psychologically abused his wife who worked as a secretary and was the major breadwinner at that time. Shadi agreed in therapy sessions that he appreciated his wife's work "outside and inside the home." Then he explained his abuse against her as "her fault, since she constantly wants to remind him that she gives him his pocket money, making him feel ashamed of himself as a man."

The second generation of professional women have been raised in communities that were influenced by the first generation of "working women." While the belief that Arab women's main job is "the husband and the children" is still dominant among the second generation, a very small new category of career women who have different ideas is emerging from this group. Among this category one may find young Palestinian women in their mid-twenties and early thirties who are in the process of academic training, are interns, or in the very first years of their career and who are driven by the ideology of career development. They work in jobs such as medicine, the media, art, law, computers, architecture and science. They expect from themselves to work long hours, to compete on the market, to remain up-to-date in their area of profession and to invest in their own career development. This is the first flowering of a Palestinian "yuppie" category in Israel. Palestinian society has integrated young men who belong to this category into the mainstream of political, economic and social leadership, accepting their norms and new westernized lifestyle. However, the case is not the same for young women.

New Expectations from Marriage

Young Palestinian academic career women have been obliged to change their own concept of partnership in marriage in order to combine marriage and work. They would not be able to be lawyers, doctors, community development planners, school principals and so on were they forced to be home before lunch like their mothers and aunts. Change is not easy for this group, since the only role models they have are Jewish and Arab men in the same professions or Jewish and Western women. Change is also not easy for their partners since the model they have for the Palestinian "working woman" is the traditional combination of housewife and "working-until-lunchtime professional."

In Palestinian society it is important that an individual follows the traditional gendered path.[19] When an individual decides to design his or her own personal path, social opposition will follow. Mechanisms such as rumors and public criticism, and social sanctions such as boycott and psychological or physical violence are used against people who attempt to individualize. While these mechanisms are used against both men and women, the intensity, amount of violence involved and the length of time of the sanctions exercised are greater in the case of women. Sawsan had been accepted to medical school. At that time she was already engaged to Basem, who needed money for their forthcoming marriage. He convinced her to postpone the decision to study to a later period. Sawsan started working, had two babies and was eager to go back to school. Basem abused her psychologically and socially, since he had not succeeded in completing his own higher education. Seven years later, Sawsan went back to school without consulting Basem. He complained to her brothers, who beat her severely and prevented her from leaving her home for a month.[20] Basem claimed that a woman who decided to enroll at the university without the permission of her husband might secretly conduct herself in an antisocial manner. Hence she had to be controlled.

Sawsan decided to stay in school. She threatened her brothers and husband to complain to the police if any of them beat her again. They all boycotted her, including her husband who moved to another room in their house. Sawsan had to work for her living and for her education expenses. Meanwhile the arrangement with her husband seemed the best social solution for her career and for her children.

Society expects young Palestinian career women to take the future structure of their families into consideration when they plan their career. Young women doctors or lawyers are challenged by their own families of origin or by their spouses to change their desired specialization so as to fit the traditional role of housewives and mothers. For young husbands and their families of origin and the career women's families of origin this narrative is "normative."

Palestinian career women face aggressive social rejection of their role for two main sociocultural and political reasons. First, a comparison between women's and men's career decisions connotes a discussion of equal rights between the two genders. This debate is the most dramatic in the Muslim and Arab world, leading to a direct clash between the sacred meanings of the Islamic laws concerning gender differences and the secular interpretations of the law. A woman who claims equality may be charged with challenging God's words and His will. Husbands, even very modern ones, are able to use this verdict to control their wives' intentions of enjoying complete equality in their marital life. Second, Palestinians have an ambiguous relationship with Israel and the West. On the one hand, it was the British Mandate, the establishment of the State of Israel and the influence of the Western media on Palestinian culture that brought about an intensive acculturation process from the beginning of the twentieth century.[21] On the other hand, Israel and the West are conceived as the "enemy," as the force planning to erase the magnificent Arab culture. Throughout the history of cross-cultural influence between the Arab world and the West, Arab women have been attacked for adopting Western fashions, manners, ideas and lifestyles. Palestinian career women have been attacked by their husbands, families or friends for "collaborating with the West," which means being "traitors to their own legacy." No similar accusation is used by the society against acculturated or "yuppie" Palestinian men.

Marriages among Academic Palestinians

The group comprising academic Palestinians find their spouses in a variety of ways. They may meet as colleagues in academic institutions or while studying in different institutions, sometimes in different countries. They may meet as colleagues in a work place or be introduced to each other by family or friends. The families of origin of this group are more open to allowing the young to develop a relationship before the official engagement. This is a real change in comparison with traditional family practices which still do not permit the young couple to meet alone before their wedding day. The attitude of young academic couples towards premarital sex varies. While a small group finds it natural to discover their sexual feelings towards each other in the pre-engagement period, the majority, mainly comprising women, find that they are under unwelcome pressure from their partners to agree to engage in premarital sex. The compromise frequently chosen is sexual games without penetration, so that the woman may save her virginity for the wedding night. When hesitancy exists, or when the woman's refusal is clear-cut, the main cause is the attitudes of traditional and religious women towards premarital sex.

In rare situations, parents know that their children, both young women and young men, are engaging in a premarital sexual relationship and condone

it. Among the 28 couples in the study, two sets of parents knew about a premarital sexual relationship and showed their consent by allowing their daughter's boyfriend to sleep overnight in their house. But most parents prefer that their children abstain from premarital sexual relations. Religious parents forbid all physical contact in the relationship before marriage, regarding it as a sin and disastrous misconduct. The stance of the parents influences how the women's behavior is judged when marital problems occur. Ghada, the eldest daughter in a religious Christian family, was involved secretly in a sexual relationship with her fiancé, Habib, three months before their marriage. When marital problems started, mainly as a result of Habib's suspicion that Ghada was having an extramarital affair at her workplace, she was not able to share the reason for Habib's suspicions with her family.

Among the couples mentioned above who become acquainted before marriage, no one meets his/her future partner in a natural setting. Those who live on the same campus are far removed from their normal lifestyles in their villages and towns. Such couples live in a kind of utopia, which does not help them learn about each other's attitudes regarding real life. After marriage, the couple usually resides in the husband's community. At this stage, they examine their relationship as a couple for the first time. Any disagreements usually take place at this stage of the marriage, followed by disappointments in cases where the couple does not succeed in bridging the gap between their different points of view.

Maha met Anees in their first year of study at university. They developed their relationship for about a year and a half, and were then engaged for another year and a half. During that period they engaged in a sexual relationship. Anees convinced Maha that they should be independent in their personal decisions and not influenced by their families of origin or traditional social roles. When they married, Anees' father forced him to become involved in the family business, changing all his plans with Maha. Anees was an only son who felt obliged to obey his parents. Maha felt that their life on the campus had been a lie. Anees claimed that a person should adapt to his environment, blaming Maha for being childish and selfish.

Many young Arab women assume that an educated man should hold gendered egalitarian attitudes. The traditional figure of the authoritarian husband is symbolically called in Arabic *si sayyed* (the master). The *si sayyed* is characteristically harsh, brutal and closed, believes in gender segregation and in male supremacy, using all females in his family to serve his needs. Young Arab women see young educated men as being the opposite of *si sayyed*. They are mainly attracted to men who have graduated from European universities on the assumption that a person who has studied in the West must have learned Western norms regarding women's equal rights.[22]

Management of Premarital Problems

Any declared relationship between an Arab couple is regarded as the first stage of preparing to marry and establish a family. Arab society does not condone temporary relationships where both sides declare that they will be together for a while and then move on in their lives, as is common for teenagers or young people in their early twenties in the West. Any relationship between males and females is measured as a potential for marriage. Therefore, a major component of any relationship between the sexes is the consideration of marriage.

Because marriage in Arab society is an agreement between two families of origin, the two sides soon become involved in an intensive social relationship parallel to the one developing between their children. When a disagreement between the young couple occurs, the parents from both sides work towards solving the problem. Only in rare situations, such as when serious incompatibilities are discovered which lead them to believe that the dispute is incurable, do parents encourage their children to break the engagement. Families of origin are often wary of gossip told about them or about their children by the family of the opposite side or by the community. They put all their energy into helping their children accept problems and disagreements as part of the normal relationship between any couple. It is typical for the families of origin to bring forward the marriage date, believing that marriage has the power to cure premarital disputes.

The breaking of an engagement is more likely to be accepted if it has been broken by the man rather than the woman. Men's reasons for breaking an engagement are usually related to difficulties in reaching a satisfactory bond with the fiancée or her family. Young women's reasons for breaking an engagement are usually related to discovering that their fiancé is not the partner they desired. In the majority of cases they will not be supported by the people around them. Older women play a crucial role at this stage, convincing the young woman not to break the engagement with a variety of arguments. They may persuade her that every woman has the ability to change any man according to her design, or they may share stories of their own or others' marriage problems as the life wisdom each woman has to have in order to preserve her marriage. The young woman may be reminded that Arab women appreciate women who suffer silently, trying to solve their problems or accepting them, without making any social noise about their situation, influenced by the *mastura* (tight-lipped) psychology.[23] She may also be warned that the price a young Arab woman may pay for breaking an engagement is to remain unmarried for the rest of her life. She should therefore solve or accept her problems and refrain from breaking the engagement.

These interventions confuse many young women, who decide to remain in the relationship despite all the disadvantages they discover. Mona, a 32-year-old teacher, said that four months after her engagement she discovered that her fiancé, Ahmed, was narrow-minded and wanted to control her. However, because she had agreed to be involved with him in sex games, she was afraid that he would tell others of this, ruining her social reputation. She married Ahmed and their problems have been exacerbated over the last seven years.

Career Husbands' Attitude to Equality in Marital Life

Young Palestinian career men usually have difficulties in understanding the source of marital problems. They regard themselves as being very different from their fathers' generation and from other non-academics of their own age. They maintain a Westernized lifestyle, which is reflected in the appliances and furniture in their homes, their up-to-date fashions, their recreational activities, and so on. They believe that the "freedom they allow" their wives shows the type of norms they embrace. Nonetheless, many of these educated men retain traditional or religious attitudes.

Ahmed, a 35-year-old civil engineer, compares himself with his father, who was a civil engineer and never shared details about his work, his finances or his social life with his wife. The father expected his wife, who was a teacher, to serve and obey him completely. Ahmed claims that he treated his wife Mona in a more democratic way but that she did not respect how he related to her. He believes that Mona wanted to abuse the margins of freedom he was willing to grant her, trying to veil activities or relationships she had. Ahmed compares himself with Mona's brother, an uneducated worker who physically abused his wife for not obeying his orders.

With respect to household chores, it is rare for any Palestinian man, even those who are second-generation academic Palestinians, to grow up sharing full responsibilities for household chores with the females at home. Arab families are for the most part confused by the type of socialization they have to give their male children. Public Arab opinion does not educate men to do any household chores nor does it appreciate men who do, regarding them as "womanly." Young husbands do not share the household chores unless they have been asked or forced to by their spouses. These arguments, which can last hours, or in some cases years, prompt a reexamination of gender roles, duties and status in Arab culture and societies. However, the results of these arguments/struggles are mainly kept in the private realm, which means that the process has no effect on the whole category of working women.

The need to take care of children and household chores is a major factor in the development of Palestinian women's careers. However, its importance is underestimated, since each woman believes that its influence on her career pertains only to her, and is not a general problem.[24] Some academic men offer

financial solutions to the dispute over their household duties either by hiring a *woman* to do all chores that the husband is asked to do by his spouse or, alternatively, by supporting the family financially while the wife takes a break from her job for several years to raise their babies. The latter offer may seem a generous one from the husband's point of view; however, it ruins the wife's professional self-esteem and chances of furthering her career. An example of a dual-career family, where the husband was a specialist doctor at a hospital and the wife was a lawyer, highlights how the solutions themselves can become the major problem in a couple's life. Majeed convinced his wife Mervat that she could not claim equality in developing her career since that would involve spending most of her time at work and leaving their two children unsupervised. After two years of constant aggressive arguments, she was convinced to work from home, a decision that was not good for her career, causing her to lose many of her clients who did not feel comfortable coming to see her in her home. Mervat suffered from depression and ended up cutting off her relation with her estranged husband, although continuing to live under the same roof for the last four years.

When young academic Palestinian career men compare themselves with other men, they judge their own behavior as being very democratic and egalitarian. They use the term "I allow my wife" without being aware that it is precisely this kind of thinking that is a symptom of controlling intentions. They defend their stance, saying that they are neither understood nor appreciated for the changes they have brought about in their families. An accountant furiously asked his wife, a young nursing student: "Did your father allow you to have a driving license? Did he allow you to obtain a private car? Do your brothers or father do any chores at home?" When she answered "I didn't choose either of them as my spouse," he answered, "You do not appreciate what you have been offered in this marriage. You do not want to be the wife of somebody who respects you; you do not want to be free within marriage, but rather on the loose on your own."

The main reaction of academic husbands, who see themselves as reacting democratically to their wives' complaints, is anger, frustration and the belief that the wife is "looking for problems." When they discover that their wives are serious about solving the equality problem or alternatively, want to end the marriage, they are too proud to accept part of the responsibility for the situation. Some refuse to be involved in counseling in order to emphasize that the wife is the one who needs to correct her marital behavior.

Mechanisms of Controlling Social Change

Social change involves the details of daily life. In therapy for couples people negotiate components of their tendencies towards social change versus social

stability. It is important to pay attention to mechanisms that help or hinder these opposing tendencies.

Traditional Meals

Because most restaurants in Israel are too expensive for the majority of Palestinian families, who are mainly middle and low class, most families cook their own daily meals. Career women are more accustomed than others to eat out or to buy their meals, which is unusual behavior for traditional Arab women, who spend hours every day preparing every meal from scratch. Keeping all the traditional dishes on the daily menu of Palestinian families is one of the mechanisms used to control women's time, energy, creativity and career development.

The first generation of "working women" never complained publicly about having to prepare food. They were proud to convince their environment that they were capable of combining "home and work." In order to succeed with their goals, they worked without break from dawn to late at night, without being able to develop their careers further. The new generation dares to spend more money on prepared food and invest longer hours at work. This reality is new for the first generation and their sons, the husbands of the new generation. Criticism is usually expressed against "the younger generation who do not want to work hard." Husbands who "agree" to eat out or to buy prepared meals use their consent as another way of claiming that they are "helping" and supporting their career wives.

Children

An Arab couple is expected to start having children immediately after marriage. Over the last 30 years, the average number of children in the Palestinian family in Israel has decreased from five to three. Women with career expectations, but who were brought up in traditional families or are married to men with a traditional orientation, will be under pressure to have two to three children within the first five years of the marriage. Career women who put their career development first postpone motherhood for an average of five years. This latter group faces personal questions, criticism, and interference in their own personal decision. Most people assume that a medical problem is preventing pregnancy. Husbands who agree to delay having children believe that they are offering important help to their wives. In Arab families, it is difficult to find a couple who prefers career development at the expense of not having children at all.

When children are born to a young career couple, it is mainly the women who take care of them — one or both grandmothers, other female relatives or women who work in child-care centers. The career mother has to orchestrate babysitters. A young student who had one baby immediately after marriage

and then twins within another year became a mother of three before she finished her degree. Her husband continued with his plan, developing his new career as a lawyer, while the wife's mother, who was a teacher herself, took care of the three babies. The student's sisters and aunts were an important part of the team who brought up the babies. It was very hard for the student to focus on her studies since orchestrating all the details was more than she was able to handle. Her mother suggested taking the babies to live with her, freeing her daughter psychologically to concentrate on her degree.

Gendered Judgment of Professions

The status of professions is judged by the gender of the professionals rather than the importance, rarity or other rewards of the profession itself. Thus, the job of a husband who is a teacher is appreciated more than that of his wife who is a doctor. In the reverse case, if the husband is a doctor and the wife a teacher, the higher status is accorded to the man's profession Since all professions occupied by women continue to be regarded as "women's work" without the added social rewards men win for their professions, women are placed in a frustrating double bind.

Young Career Women vs. Young Working Women: Two Case Studies

Each of the following cases of two women who turned to therapy represents one pole of the scheme: the very career-oriented young woman who puts her own career before her marriage, and the society-oriented young woman who puts social norms and traditional marriage before her career. An analysis of both cases will follow.

Nuha

Nuha was a 27-year-old young woman married to Saleem, a 32-year-old wealthy medical specialist. She was brought up in a democratic home in which both parents worked. Her mother, an energetic and dominant woman, maintained all the traditional female roles as a housewife. The parents allowed Nuha to study towards a degree in art and photography in Western Europe. She met her husband two years before graduating during one of her visits home. Saleem studied medicine in another West European country. His father was a wealthy doctor and his mother was a retired teacher. Although his mother had worked as a teacher for about 30 years, she bore the main responsibility for housekeeping and child care. Her wealth enabled her to hire constant help from other women in her village.

Nuha and Saleem visited each other at their different universities several times during the first year and phoned each other regularly. During the subsequent year they became engaged and married immediately after

graduating. They lived in a town near Saleem's village. Saleem finished his internship and started his specialization. Since it was difficult for Nuha to find a satisfying job close to her home, she had to go to work in one of the big cities in Israel. Meanwhile Saleem convinced her to try alternative jobs as options to her career, which she did. However she became very frustrated, feeling that she was not fulfilling herself in her field. Saleem's plans were to inherit his father's prosperous clinic in the town.

Saleem worked long hours and rarely arrived home early. In addition, he loved to socialize with his friends whom he would meet after work for sports' activities or eating out. Nuha wanted him close to her. She wanted them to cook meals and clean together, to have an egalitarian lifestyle. Saleem suggested hiring a housekeeper. Nuha never cleaned or cooked in her home, nevertheless she became withdrawn. Three years after their marriage, Nuha was constantly between jobs, trying to adapt. Without planning, she became pregnant. After a very difficult period of hesitation, she decided to keep the baby, despite her feelings that her relationship with Saleem was unsatisfactory and not developing in the direction she wanted. During the pregnancy she continued to feel lonely. She talked with Saleem several times, stating that the pregnancy was for both of them. She asked him to be a partner in the stages of pregnancy, including joining an antenatal exercise group for couples. Saleem claimed that his busy program at work and with his friends prevented this.

When Nuha gave birth, Saleem took two weeks off from work. However, he spent all the time with his friends who dropped by to see the baby. Nuha was furious. Both his mother and hers tried to convince her that Saleem's behavior was very "normal." They compared him with their own husbands and other men his age, highlighting his abilities and his unique career future. They said that they knew of no other man who took two weeks off when his wife gave birth.

Four months after the baby's birth, Nuha came to counseling. She wanted to discuss the idea of divorce, which was growing in her mind. She did not want to discuss the issue with her parents or friends, since she was sure that everyone would try to convince her that she had been wrong to make her career, her emotions and her own idea of marriage her priorities. Now, having a baby was an additional case against her. After three months in counseling Nuha came to the conclusion that she would not be able to change Saleem's norms. He was developing as a promising doctor in his field. He started working a few afternoons a week in his father's clinic and became more distant from his home. Saleem refused at this stage to participate in counseling. When Nuha asked him to join her he answered:

> I have no problem as a husband. I work, I'm not an alcoholic, I never shout at you or beat you, I never asked you to cook or to clean. I always

give you money. I gave you total freedom; I never asked how you spend your time when you are not working! Why should I go to counseling? Who among your friends lives your life? You need counseling. You need to get real.

Nuha discussed amicable divorce with Saleem. She decided to take her baby and move to one of the big cities in Israel. She rented an apartment and started a new job. Relatives and friends tried to convince her to change her mind, reminding her that her income would never enable her to live the type of luxurious life she was used to with Saleem and that she would find it difficult to remarry as a divorced woman with a child.

Nuha was convinced that the type of life she lived with Saleem made her feel like a slave in a harem. She was sure that he loved her, but believed that he did not know how to show her his love and respect. He had learned from his father to connect love with money. However, she wanted a real egalitarian relationship, which he had never learned to offer. His long working hours, his traditional family and his attachment to his bachelor friends did not give him the opportunity to focus on his marriage and on the meaning Nuha wanted for their relationship. His own attachment to his career unintentionally prevented Nuha from developing hers.

Fadwa

The Islamic family court referred Fadwa and her husband Shadi to couples therapy in an attempt to solve their problems. 22-year-old Fadwa was studying to become a high school teacher, and Shadi was a 29-year-old physiotherapist. Three months before the couple came to therapy, Fadwa had filed in the family court for an allowance for her and her baby. Fadwa was staying with the baby at her parents' home, having been forbidden by Shadi to go home after they had a big argument. When Fadwa and Shadi met in therapy they were both full of rage and the desire for revenge.

Fadwa accused Shadi of trying to control her. She felt that she had had more freedom before she met him than after marriage. Her parents both worked as teachers and were very active in the community. She had been brought up to be very active, participating in youth camps and being a member of a performing group.

Shadi was the son of divorced parents, a matter that caused him great shame among his friends, since divorce is very rare among Arab couples of his parents' age. Shadi was the first in his extended family to receive an academic education. Most women in his family did not finish high school. When Shadi studied in Western Europe, he experienced double changes in his life: while learning and adopting many aspects of a Western lifestyle, he also became very religious. Upon graduation and returning back home, he became more

traditional and religious in his daily lifestyle. He became convinced that women's freedom and equality in the Western countries destroyed the family's stability. Shadi wanted to marry an educated "working woman" who could share financial responsibilities so that he could focus on establishing his career.

A friend arranged the meeting between Shadi and Fadwa. Shadi, as a religious person, insisted upon making their engagement official. A religious ceremony took place; they were registered as wife and husband.[25] Fadwa wanted to postpone this stage, since she needed more time to get to know Shadi. She did not realize that Shadi was under stress: he wanted to have sexual relations with her but since he was religious he wanted to refrain until he had the religious legitimization. Fadwa, however, refused to have sex before the actual official wedding ceremonies. Shadi's pressure ended in their having "sexual relations without penetration." Fadwa felt that Shadi was using the opportunity to drive her to or from her university in order to have a few moments in which to force sexual relations on her. The people around her had the impression that Shadi encouraged Fadwa's education and that this was the reason for his willingness to drive her to and from school. Fadwa tried to terminate the relationship. Her parents warned her of the social reaction that could be expected, especially since officially she would be regarded as a divorced woman if she broke the engagement. They convinced her to give herself another chance. The two families of origin decided to start immediately with the preparations for the wedding, believing that the "roof" over the couple would improve their relationship.

Fadwa refused to have sex with Shadi for four months after marriage. He beat her up several times. She was too ashamed to share her reality with her parents or any of her friends. The relationship between the two became very violent, physically and psychologically. Fadwa heard from old women that a man who is sexually frustrated becomes very violent. She forced herself to start having sex with him and immediately became pregnant. Fadwa was a brilliant student who wanted to maintain her accomplishments. Also she found out that focusing on her degree kept her mind off her marital disappointment.

Although Shadi worked long hours, he was frustrated by the long hours that Fadwa was away from home. He argued that none of the women in his family ever left her home all day long as Fadwa did. She failed to convince him that he should not make comparisons between her lifestyle and that of women in his extended family. Shadi beat Fadwa, accusing her of disrespect of his extended family.

When Fadwa's parents' mediated in the dispute, Shadi complained that Fadwa was not doing her housewife's duties at home. Fadwa complained that Shadi never took care of any of the household chores. Shadi said that he was helping by buying his food and ironing his clothes, "jobs that wives should do

for their husbands." Fadwa's mother started cooking for the couple. She asked her younger daughters to clean their sister's home during the weekends. When Fadwa gave birth, her aunt took care of the baby, so that Fadwa could continue to focus on her degree. Shadi felt that Fadwa's family had too a great an influence on her life and too much free access to their home. He asked her to put the baby in the care of his stepmother. Fadwa refused. She was beaten brutally, and subsequently left to go to her parents with her baby.

In individual therapy, Fadwa confessed that she had never loved Shadi. She had built a stereotypical idea that young academic men who lived in Western countries were kind and respectful to women. She never questioned Shadi's belief system before their engagement. She never discussed their duties as a couple. Although she was very busy with her school assignments, she never asked him to help her with household chores. When he blamed her for not fulfilling her household duties, she never challenged the idea. Fadwa's dream was to have a husband who believed in an egalitarian lifestyle. The role model she had grown up with was that of her mother who was able to juggle her jobs as teacher and housewife.

Fadwa suffered much stress during her stay with her parents. They made it clear to her that if she decided to get divorced she would have to go back to live with them; she would not be allowed to live by herself. Also they convinced her that her chances of remarrying would be minimal. Her parents were concerned for their reputation in their community and for the influence of Fadwa's divorce on the marriage chances of their other daughters.

After two months in therapy, Fadwa decided to go back to live with Shadi. He presented his conditions, aimed at limiting Fadwa's sense of independence, freedom and equality. Fadwa became totally submissive. She explained that her decision was determined by several factors:

1. She had learned that it was easier for her to live with one violent person instead of living in fear of the unpredictable social violence exercised against divorced women;
2. she had witnessed several couples in her surroundings who lived in a kind of detached relationship, though remaining legally married for many years;
3. Fadwa experienced restrictions in her parents' home that she had never experienced before. She preferred to have their support and remain a married woman rather than to suffer from their restrictions as a divorced woman;
4. Fadwa concluded that she should change her opinion regarding her profession. She reflected that "I don't want to be a career teacher building other people's lives while I ruin my own. I should be flexible and be a teacher like everyone else: work a few hours a day and be able to take care of my daughter too. I don't want my relatives to bring her up while I bring up other people's children."

Fadwa was convinced that she would be more secure developing her career as a married rather than as a divorced woman. Shadi concluded the therapy sessions by stating that "Fadwa learned a lesson from this experience. Now she has to use this wisdom with her husband for the rest of her life."

Conclusion

Young Arab career women, although still a very rare phenomenon, are reconstructing the meaning of marital relationships as well as Arab women's concept of self. While in therapy, they dare to voice their personal dreams as well as their social rights.

Wives and husbands use different terms of reference to examine the social change they are looking for. Wives compare their husbands with Western men, concluding that Arab husbands are still more traditional, conservative and fanatical. Husbands compare themselves with their parents, concluding that they are very democratic and revolutionary.

Social change in Palestinian society does not proceed in a straight line. Adopting traditional norms or lifestyle or returning to religion is very acceptable to all categories of society. Yet, it has a differential influence on each gender. A young, democratic, egalitarian career Arab husband may rebel against the social change he went through, declaring that he is "returning to traditions." He will then gain the respect and support of his extended family and community for conserving the social norms without losing his option for a career. A young, democratic, egalitarian career woman who decides to rebel against the social change she went through will lose the margins of freedom she succeeded in gaining. Hence, young Palestinian career men are able to combine traditional norms with a modern lifestyle without jeopardizing their personal freedom, while young career women are not able to do so. They will pay a high price in their career life if they try to combine traditional norms with a modern lifestyle.

Social change in the last 150 years has always been both a private and a public matter. At the end of the nineteenth century ideological and social movements, led by men and women in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine, discussed ways of changing the status of Arab women through education, work and political participation. However, the political stability that most Arab states achieved by the mid-1950s shifted the focus of their societies to other existential problems such as infrastructure, economic affairs and foreign policy, rather than to gender equality issues. In particular, the revival of the Islamic movement is a new and important factor in this respect.

Public discussions on the status of women tend to become a conflict between fundamentalists, who claim to be protecting traditions and religion, and westernized elements, who claim to be protecting democracy and equal rights. Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the situation of women, as individuals, as groups and as a class, has not changed. Although a few studies have been published by Arab men regarding the status of Arab women, the struggle is still considered a purely female rather than a social issue. In Arab societies, women's movements fight for equal social rights, while movements struggling for social equality are not developed enough to bring about change in the relationship between the genders.

The main difference between academic and non-academic women lies in the type of profession attained by the academic woman, rather than in career development or lifestyle. Some Arab families stop supporting their daughters' education financially when the latter become engaged to marry. This behavior reflects these families' attitude to women's education as an economic investment that helps men — whether the fathers or husbands — attain a better income and higher social status, rather than as an investment in the women themselves. Women's education in Arab societies is not yet perceived as an investment in building a woman's personality, career and self-esteem. The majority of Arab men prefer to marry educated women for their future expected income, not for their knowledge or minds.

Marriage causes a greater social and psychological change for Arab women than for Arab men. First, while women have to move to the husbands' communities, acclimatize to the husband's lifestyle and build social relations with the husband's relatives, men stay in their own communities, being required to visit the wives' extended family only on social occasions. Second, when women move from one location to another, they give up most of the past relationships that they developed before marriage. Women who insist on continuing to live as they used to before marriage will be judged to be psychologically and socially immature. In some cases their behavior will provide legitimization for divorce. At the same time, men are allowed to continue developing the relations and lifestyle of their bachelor days. And finally, women have to interrupt their career development on several occasions during their lives: when they move to their husband's community, when they have children and when their extended families are in need of their help.

Palestinian society may have changed its opinion on the waged labor of women, but not its norms regarding men's participation in household chores. Since women are solely responsible for household chores and baby care, ambitious women who anticipate developing a career are severely restricted. The social ecology[26] under which Palestinian women live, together with the psychological stress of divorce, forces many young academic women to lower

their professional expectations from developing a career to merely being "working women."

The rapid psychological burnout of career women causes them to underrate the role of profession and work in their lives. As a result of poor ego strength and a lack of extended family support, they move from the standpoint of career women, which they adopted before marriage, viewing their profession as a main element in their personality and life, to a new standpoint after marriage that perceives the profession merely as a means of earning an income and spending a few hours every day in the company of educated adults. This group of young professional women adopts the attitude that the first generation of "working women" had towards their work and professions.

Women who place their career development before their unhappy marriages are often those who experience burnout in their marriages and find refuge in developing their careers. They have ego strength that enables them to survive difficult decisions, often without the support of their extended families or communities. They are condemned by their society for being selfish and not behaving according to expected social norms. Their personal life experience is used in various ways by different groups within Arab society. Some point to their strength and uniqueness as leading career women, while others point to their responsibility for ruining their families.

The support of the family of origin, which is always very important for Arab individuals, becomes crucial when a person experiences psychological or social stress. Marital problems cause ongoing psychosocial stress, especially when none of the expectations of marital relations are met in real life. Families of origin prefer to convince their daughters to preserve the marital relationship, trying to save them from harsh social criticism, marginality and loneliness.

Social change is measured by changes individual people accomplish. Detailed everyday politics reveals initiators of change, their carriers, their limitations, and the psychological and social causes of the whole dynamics. Details of such negotiations of change are very rare since they usually take place in the private realm. When politics of social change are shared in the public realm they are usually presented in a summarized form, packaged in a socially desirable wrapping. A full narration of therapy and counseling sessions provides examples of detailed negotiations, thus giving a deeper insight into the nature of the politics of power within young Palestinian families and the process of social change within this society.

Education and profession — as elsewhere — have always functioned as levers for change in the status of Palestinian women. Yet, in order to gain access to education and career building, and in order to be able to sustain a career on a professional level, a wider change in the social norms regarding gender roles in Palestinian society is necessary. Women, both as individuals

and as a group, have brought about a substantial change in their own lives and in that of their communities. They now have to affect the social perception of the "working woman" and replace it with that of the "career woman."

NOTES

1 *Shnaton statisti le-Yisrael* (Statistical Abstract of Israel), No. 51 (Jerusalem, 2000), table 12.7.
2 About 5 percent of Palestinians in Israel live in extended families where two families or more live in the same household. See ibid., table 2.19. Other types of collaborative households exist among young couples in the first years of their marriage, mainly to support them financially.
3 See 'Abd-Allah al-Buchari, *Sharh al-Imam al-Hafith Ahmad Ben 'Ali Bin Hajar al-'Asqalani* (Interpretation of the Imam al-Hafith Ahmad Ben 'Ali Bin Hajar al-'Asqalani) (Beirut, 1986), p. 22.
4 Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, 1992), Chap. 2.
5 See John, L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse, 1982), pp. 13–48.
6 Philippe Fargness, "The Arab World: The Family as Fortess," in André Burguière et al. (eds.), *A History of the Family*, Vol. 2, *The Impact of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 339–74.
7 Khawla Abu Baker, *Mishpahah ve-ribud ba-hevrah ha-palastinit betokh Yisrael* (Stratification and Family Structure in the Palestinian Society in Israel), to be published as a unit of the Open University, Tel Aviv.
8 See the advice pre-Islamic mothers gave their daughters before marriage in Walther Wiebke, *Women in Islam from Medieval to Modern Times* (Princeton, 1995). It is important to note that this advice is still taught in Arabic textbooks, influencing the socialization of young adolescents, males and females.
9 *Shnaton statisti le-Yisrael*, No. 51, table 2.19.
10 Alean Al-Krenawi and John R. Graham, "Divorce among Muslim Arab Women in Israel," *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, Vol. 29, No. 3/4 (1998), pp. 103–19.
11 See Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, Chap. 2
12 See the study by Majid Al-Haj, *Social Change and Family Processes* (Boulder, CO, 1987). See also Halim Barakat, "The Arab Family and the Challenge of Social Transformation," in Elizabeth W. Fernea (ed.), *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voices of Change* (Austin, 1985), pp. 27–48.
13 See Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven, 1994).
14 The Koran states "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them." See *The Koran*, 5th rev. ed. (London, 2000), 4:34, p. 83. For the history of volunteer work in Palestine among women, see Khawla Abu Baker, *Be-derekh lo slulah: Nashim araviyot ke-manhigot politiyot be-Yisrael* (A Rocky Road: Arab Women as Political Leaders in Israel) (Ra'anana, 1998); see also idem, *Mediniyut ha-revahah ha-hevratit veha-hinukhit bekerev ha-okhlusiyah ha-aravit be-Yisrael* (The Social and Education Welfare Policies toward the Arab Citizens in Israel) (Jerusalem, 2001).
15 Education in the Middle East was segregated. The first formal school for girls in Egypt was opened in 1829, but education became compulsory only in 1952. The picture was similar in other Middle Eastern states. For detailed information, see Samira Harfoush-Strickland, "Formal Education and Training in Non-Traditional Jobs," in Suha Sabbagh (ed.), *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint* (New York, 1996), pp. 67–70.
16 The proportion of Palestinian female students in Israeli universities is about 4.4 percent in undergraduate studies, and about 1.7 percent in graduate studies. They constitute 50 percent of the Palestinian students in Israel.
17 I deliberately use the term "working women" since 100 percent of women over the age of 40 described themselves as such and not as "career women."

18 All real names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. Couples in this study are all Palestinians, Muslims or Christians who live in Israel.
19 For a detailed description of the structure of the society and its influence on mental health, see Marwan Dwairy, *Cross-Cultural Counseling: The Arab-Palestinian Case* (New York, 1998).
20 For further readings regarding cultural opinion on women battering in Palestinian society, see Muhammad M. Haj-Yahia, "Wife Abuse and Battering in the Sociocultural Context of Arab Society," *Family Process*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2000), pp. 237–55.
21 For the influence of the acculturation process on the marital lives of acculturated Palestinians, see Khawla Abu Baker, "Acculturation and Reacculturation Influences: Multilayer Contexts in Therapy," *Clinical Psychology Review*, Vol. 19, No. 8 (1999), pp. 951–67.
22 See Dwairy, *Cross-Cultural Counseling*.
23 See Khawla Abu Baker "The Meaning of Tight-Lipped Arab Women in Marital Problems," unpublished lecture, 2nd Conference on "The Psychology of Meaning," Vancouver, July 2002.
24 For the influence of family duties on decisions of pioneering Palestinian women, see Abu Baker, *Be-derekh lo slulah*.
25 According to Islamic traditions in the Middle East, an engaged couple can have the religious ceremony in which they are declared husband and wife immediately, so that their meetings have religious legislation. The wedding ceremony, after which the couple will cohabit, may take place months or years later.
26 For a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of "psychological ecology," see U. Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 45 (1977), pp. 513–30; for the development of the concept for social and cultural contexts, see C.J. Falicou, "Learning to Think Culturally," in H.A. Liddle, D.C. Breunlin and R.C. Schwartz (eds.), *Handbook of Family Therapy Training and Supervision* (New York, 1988), pp. 335–57.