

**Attitudes Towards the Status and Rights
of Palestinian Women in Israel**

Women Against Violence
Women Rights Project



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Dr. Hunaida Ghanem, Chief Researcher

Nohad Ali, Quantitative Research

Ibn Khaldoun Association – Arab Association for Research and Development

Ghada Abu Jabir – Nejim, Research Editor, Director of Women Rights Projects

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Ghada Abu Jabir – Nejim, Research Editor, Director, Women's Rights Project, WAV

Translated by: **Richard Ratcliffe, Kanz Consulting**

Designed and produced by: **Wael Wakeem**

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Foreword

Since the founding of the Women Against Violence Association in 1992, we have endeavoured to study closely the facts surrounding Palestinian Arab women in Israel and to collect all available information and statistics on them, in an attempt to clarify their reality and situation in various spheres of life: in the violence that is practised against them, in employment, in education, in law, and so on. We have strived to interpret this reality, as it is depicted before us through this data. Despite the substantial difficulties in obtaining and gathering this information, it has been easier to enumerate these facts and statistics. Yet the central task has remained tied to the interpretation of this reality, and to the clarification of its causes and of the hidden loci of difficulties facing women on the path to their development in the practical world. This is the greater task, and the hardest one before us.

Despite the Association being an active part of our society, where we belong to it, we work with it, we understand it, we live and breathe its distinctive conditions, all of the interpretations that we presented here are the product of long experience and struggle within society, personal and collective, by the members and staff of the Association.

Over the course of more than 10 years of community work and individual support for women, with and across broad sectors of our society, we have witnessed the changes that have occurred in social attitudes towards women's issues, and we have seen an evolving pluralism in these attitudes, and the

development of differences and variations between geographical regions, between sectors of society, and between generations. Increasingly, we felt that we had to develop a dream that had been with us for years, to develop a means of recording the specific attitudes of society towards Arab women's issues, and to present a precise description that included all the distinct variations in these attitudes. This was with the following aims:

- 1.To explore the actual attitudes of society as expressed from the mouths of individuals in society, and not as would perhaps be more agreeable for us to understand them or analyse them.
- 2.To record these attitudes and analyse them so as to provide a source of reference for us in understanding this reality in which we work and are active as an Association.
- 3.To invest this information and dedicate it towards the development of future plans and practical programmes which will help us to schedule our priorities and focus our activities so that we are able to realise the social change for which we aspire.
- 4.To develop a practical reference, that will be an essential reference for wider associations, institutions and individuals to understand the attitudes of our society, the Palestinians in Israel.
- 5.To set down a point of comparison that can be utilised in the future and revisited in order to investigate the extent of the effects of different activities on our society.

Accordingly, the idea evolved to conduct the below research which we proudly place in your hands. The vision of the research developed and crystallised over a period of more than two years, until we were able to actually put it into action, thanks to the support that was extended by the European Union to our Women's Rights Project. The research formed a significant part of this Project, which relied closely on the results of the research to develop the core tenets of the first media campaign of its kind in our society. The Campaign was launched in July 2005, and lasted for a period of three months. It was accompanied by a broad media coverage. The results of the research were also central to defining the contents of the documentary film, 'Forgotten Scenes',

which was also produced by Women Against Violence as part of the Women's Rights Project.

It is our approach and firm understanding that Palestinian women's reality is essentially shaped by the influence of two fundamental factors: on the one hand, the attitude of society towards women's issues and rights and its handling of the social, economic, political and cultural changes that are occurring; and on the other, the role of the State in all its institutions and executive and legislative arms and policy makers. This is the emphasis of the findings of the research also. Accordingly, we must also focus our work on the third dimension on which the Women's Rights Project worked, to advocate and pressure the State to change the reality of women.

As a result of this research, we were also able to achieve the goal which we set ourselves at the beginning. By translating the book into both English and Hebrew, and reaching out to the widest possible audience of offices and institutions and decision makers at the governmental level, and agencies of civil society, locally and globally, we have been able to deliver a true picture of our society and its attitudes without falling once more into the snare of orientalist studies which describe our society without examining its statements and ideas, and treat it as an essentialised unit, homogenous and conforming, which has no plurality of perspectives, and no hope for change.

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7. Mr. Ramzi Hakim
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The Project's Steering Committee accompanied the project from its inception, and its members' feedback and comments and their participation in discussions was of the utmost importance in shaping the details of the project, and of the research in particular.

While the Association, together with the members of the Steering Committee, drafted the research programme and the details of the public opinion survey, beyond this we maintained academic and intellectual freedom by granting the Researcher Dr. Huneida Ghanem complete authority over drafting the analysis of the research findings. Thus the research expressed as a whole both the vision and understanding of the Association, and especially the researcher's vision and analysis of the collected data. Moreover, we see in this endeavour a serious contribution towards developing feminist studies and showcasing Arab feminist researchers to the world and to our society. Accordingly, we extend our warmest thanks to the research team:

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There are many friends of the Association, and a large number of staff who had an impact on this work, through the valuable observations they made. We

extend a heartfelt thank you to all of them.

We modestly hope that we have succeeded in Women Against Violence in contributing a new brick, that might become a pillar for understanding our reality, for building our aspirations upon, and for bringing about the change we seek.

Aida Touma-Sliman
General Director
Women Against Violence

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Part 1

Introduction

This research presents the attitudes of Palestinian society in Israel towards different women's issues and women's rights. It does so by following the attitudes expressed in a group of open interviews, and in discussions in specially assembled focus groups, as well as the results obtained from a comprehensive survey. Through these means the present research merges together both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

The aim of this merger is firstly to get to know via the survey the different attitudes towards women's issues and their prevalence. Secondly, through the interviews and focus groups, to develop a deeper understanding of the attitudes towards women's rights, through exploring the expressions, and concepts, and worldviews which society fashions in forming its attitudes. Accordingly, the present research is a phenomenological study, since it studies the phenomena as they are understood and expressed by the research participants, and makes its analysis on this basis. Using a phenomenological approach means focusing on the lived reality of the research subjects, and the way they conceive and interpret it. (Bogdan and Taylor 1975, 2) It is a type of research distinguished by its commitment to looking at attitudes, actions and customs from the perspective of the research subjects themselves.

This research's reliance on a combined methodology of quantitative and qualitative techniques, derives from our firm belief that there is a fundamental deficiency in the studies dealing with social attitudes towards Palestinian women's rights in Israel which steer away from engaging with social attitudes towards women's issues. Despite the existence of different statistical pictures, research on the status of Palestinian women in Israel remains a pawn of intense deliberations on the Palestinian minority in Israel, describing them as a political, national and ethnic "problem". Among the results of this situation has been to postpone discussing the details of the complex reality of society, and to treat the minority as a single bloc for research, in the possibility of understanding analysing it through a group of key paradigms, such as

modernity – traditionalism, Palestinian – Israeli, separation – integration, extremism – moderation.

Even when women are included research on their reality is conducted , especially in Israeli academia, within a group of orientalist assumptions which explore their reality with a suspicious neglect of the role of the state, and focus on the patriarchal culture of the society. Often they treat women's reality as an attribute of tribalism (Ginat and Khazanov, 1998), or as an indicator of the problems in the transition to modernity (Landau, 1993, 17-24), or as a mark of the depth of macho culture and indeed its independence from nationalism or politics (Kressel, 1981). Alternatively, women are included on the margins of research into the conditions of Israeli women (Gal, 2003, 98-111). Nonetheless, the few Israeli women researchers who have begun to explore the reality of Palestinian women have demonstrated relatively untraditional positions and have made links between society, nation and subjugation (Saar, 2004; Herzog, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). However, researches on the reality of Palestinian women remain constrained by Israeli academic conventions which prevent them from criticising the racism of the state, and instead concentrate on the patriarchy of society.

Palestinian intellectual output in Israel, given the small number of books, has remained meagre and incapable of producing comprehensive theoretical perspectives on the situation of Palestinian women, or their status as part of an oppressed indigenous national minority, living under the oppression of a patriarchal society and of a racist state.

Considering this deficiency, the following research tries to provide a comprehensive overview on the status of Palestinian women, and to uncover the modes of thought and attitudes in society towards Palestinian women's issues in Israel, and to go further than existing researches in linking social positions both to a patriarchal culture and to the relationship with the State.

Palestinian Women in Israel: An Overview

A brief glance at the situation of Palestinian Women inside Israel shows that they still occupy the lowest positions on the socio-economic and political scales. The proportion of Palestinian women in Israel aged over 15 in employment in 2002, does not exceed 17.3% (State of Israel, 2004). The proportion of women depends on religious affiliation: While the proportion of employed Christian women is 39%, the proportion of Muslim women working does not exceed 14%, and the proportion of Druze women working is no more than 19.2%.

By comparison, the proportion of employed Jewish women is 53.8% (State of Israel, 2002). These proportions are directly influenced by the lack of work opportunities in Arab areas, and by the systematic neglect with which the state treats these areas (Ghanem, 2004, p.85). This is in addition to the lack of available day care centres to take care of the children in the event that the women decided to go to work. Statistics published in 2003 indicate from among the 1,700 day care centres currently under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, which care for children aged 0-3, there are only 36 day care centres in the Arab sector. Similarly, the number of Arab children out of the total 82,500 children absorbed by these day care centres is 1,750 children only, or 2% of the total. (Sikkuy, 2003)

In addition, working Arab women continue to suffer from stark discrimination. A 1998 research carried out by the Arab Association for Human Rights on the conditions of women employed in the private sector in the Nazareth area found that 61% of employed women surveyed were paid less than the minimum wage, and 72% of the women were working without any legal contract. Only 35% of the women surveyed were paid for overtime.

In the social sphere women also continue to suffer oppression and discrimination. On the whole, it is women who are required to maintain severe social behaviour, and to respect the division of labour determined by patriarchy. They are denied their inheritance rights, even those rights afforded them in the Sharia, and they are held responsible for the reputation of the family, and for the preservation of the values of honour. (Hassan, 1999, 227) This does not, however, prevent women from being victims of sexual assaults. This has become clear through the work of Siwar Centre (the Arab Women's Movement to Support Victims of Sexual Abuse), where around 250 Arab women annually approach the associations and centres that help victims of sexual abuse. 60% of cases are women who suffer sexual abuse within the family.

The Palestinian feminist movement in Israel has documented over the last 20 years (1984-2004) eighty three cases of women being killed in the name of so-called "family honour."¹ Among the victims, 25 of the women had gone to the police before they were killed. Manar Hassan has suggested (ibid, 290) a group of factors which lay the foundation for violence against women, and especially for honour crimes in Palestinian society in Israel: the support of the state for tribalism in order to ensure the loyalty to the state of family heads; the law, which deals with cases of so-called family honour killing with a certain

¹ The Women Against Violence Association have published a list of the 83 names of women who were killed in the name of "honour crimes" between 1984 and 2004.

understanding and tolerance; the behaviour of the police, since in cases where a girl flees her home for whatever reason, she is often brought back to her family by the police, who require the family to promise not to harm her, only to find that many girls subsequently become corpses within a matter of hours.

While there has been a certain transformation in the police's treatment of issues of violence against women in recent years, the structural position of the police in the State remains as a tool of control oppressing the Palestinians. The negative view of the police, and of its historically oppressive role, which reached its zenith in the October events of 2000, when 13 Palestinians were killed by police fire, has made the police a suspicious body for women suffering from domestic violence. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2004) discusses the consequence of the police's position as one of the state instruments maintaining security in Israel both on the way the police treat violence against Palestinian women, and also on the women's suspicious view of the police. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (ibid) points out that the relationship between Palestinians and the police is loaded down as a result of long experiences of the partisan and discriminatory roles that the police have played since the establishment of the state. This is apart from the fact that the police handle issues of violence against Arab women clumsily. On the one hand they expect the police to be just towards the abused woman, as they should be, and at the same time the security of the state prompts them to segregate, to marginalize and even to punish the Arab / the "Other".

Despite this, in 2003, the police recorded over 1,700 complaints made by women who had been subject to domestic violence. In 2004, 1,539 cases of domestic violence were recorded. These statistics do not present the full, true picture of the extent of violence directed against women, since many victims keep quiet about the fact or turn for help or advice to non-governmental organisations. In recent years, the Women Against Violence Association in Nazareth recorded an increase in the number of women victims of physical or sexual violence contacting the Centre. In 2003, the Centre recorded approximately 327 cases, ranging in sexual, psychological and physical harassment, who requested social or legal advice (CEDAW, 2005). In 2004, the number of women who approached the Centre increased to 421 cases, an average of 35 approaches per month. This represented an increase of 32% on the total number of approaches in 2003.

It was further elaborated in the statistics published in WAV's report that 257 of the women had been subject to physical, verbal or material violence, 160 of the women had been exposed to sexual abuse or harassment, 54 women had

requested legal or other advice, 72 approaches were made by professionals that value the centre's capacity for treating such cases. This was in addition to 69 women who had approached the Centre previously whose cases were still being followed up with in 2004. (WAV, 2005) The report showed that 61% of those abused sexually were raped. In 59% of these rape cases, the rapist was either known to the victim, or was a member of their family. In 42% of the cases, the rape happened in the home of the victim. This kind of assault is especially dangerous, because it shatters the victim's perspective towards the institution of the family, including the roles of father and mother and the relations inside the family and the familiar notions of boundaries. Further in 48% of the cases of sexual abuse that reached the Centre, the victims were under the age of 18 when they were abused (ibid).

It seems that Bedouin women are the Arab women who are worst treated. This comes from a context of deteriorating economic conditions, coupled with an increase in polygamy. Alean Al-Krenawi and Rachel Lev (Al-Krenawi and Lev-Wiesel, 2002) highlight the link between violence and polygamy, since husbands in polygamous marriages are found to practise violence more freely than husbands in monogamous marriages. Often it is the first wife who is exposed to the greater level of violence.

In the field of education, the situation of Arab women in Israel continues to be far from satisfactory. The illiteracy rate among women is as high as 14%.² For higher education, the proportion of women who graduate with a BA degree is 7.1%, compared to 19% among Jewish women (CEDAW, 2005). Statistics are not available on the number of Arab women who receive doctoral degrees, but it seems that their proportion is not recorded as a percentage due to their scarcity.

In addition to the injustices which Arab women in Israel live with, and which Arab men also suffer from (if to a lesser extent), Arab women continue to suffer from political discrimination. To date no Arab woman has succeeded in being elected to the Knesset, with the exception of one representative of the Zionist party Meretz. Despite women realising some successes, and elevating the demand for equality even within the parties³, women continue to be unrepresented within any Arab party. Khawla Abu Bakr observes that until 1996 no woman participated in the establishment of any political movement or party, and that in this year only Miriam Marai participated in the establishment of the "Arab List for Change", and she was listed third on this Knesset list.

² By comparison, the illiteracy rate among Jewish women is 4.5%, among Arab men 6.2%, and among Jewish men 2.5% (Alternative CEDAW Report, 2005)

³ In 1996, the National Assembly (Balad) raised the slogan "A free woman and a happy people". For more information, see (Abu Baker, 1998)

However, on the eve of the elections, her candidature was cancelled. Similarly, among local authorities, to date only one woman has managed to become Mayor, in Kufr Yasif (Abu Bakr, 1998, 57).

Statistics also indicate an institutional marginalisation of Arab women on the part of the State. Arab women form only 1.3% of board members of government companies in 2004, while Jewish women form 37% of public company directors. (CEDAW, 2005)

It is well known that Palestinian women in Israel are the sector of society most affected by discriminatory state policies against the Palestinian minority in Israel. The lack of suitable workplaces in the villages and towns, or of industrial zones, in addition to the scarcity of day care centres, and the lack of a public transportation network to and from Arab localities, and the fact that more than 40 Arab villages remain unrecognised, which means that they are denied basic infrastructure and services, all represent a serious impediment to the chances to change the status of Palestinian women.

Research Questions

The research revolves around five key questions, which form the basis for secondary questions:

1. What are the types of social pressure maintained in society to preserve the prevailing balances of power which entrench the subordination of women and transform without their active participation politically, socially or economically, and without achieving their rights?
2. What are the prevailing attitudes in society towards specific issues of women's rights, such as the right to work, the right to education, the right to protection from violence, and the right to political participation?
3. What are the issues where society shows a willingness to countenance change, and those where it refuses to countenance any form of change? What kind of change is appropriate, and what are the most preferable means for achieving this?
4. What are the attitudes towards violence against women, and to what extent does society consider this a legitimate means to "educate" or to "solve disputes"? What solutions does society consider appropriate to help women escape from the vicious cycle of violence?
5. What is the degree of knowledge in society about the services that are available to help victims of violence, governmental and community (including those services run by different feminist associations)? What

is the attitude towards the use of such services? What services are most acceptable to the community? What is the general view of society on the discourse and working methods of the women's associations?

Accordingly, the research hopes to provide an informational base on the attitudes of society towards women's issues, which can be drawn upon to build strategies for work to bring about change in their status. This is through:

1. Uncovering the societal priorities concerning raising the status of women, and its needs from the community perspective.
2. Understanding what steps and activities to increase the awareness of the community about women's issues (including violence against women) are required to realise this change, and to encourage work to change the reality, including methods to overcome some forms of social pressure, methods to marginalize women by the society itself, or a marginalisation resulting from the policies of the state.
3. Identifying groups who are ready to accept change in the status of women, and those who refuse it.
4. Providing information and statistics to professionals in the area (community and women's associations, and local and national authorities) to help them design appropriate programmes for the needs of society and to develop services that are suitable to these needs in quantity and quality.

Research Methodology

The research depends on a number of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These include: focus group discussions, open and in-depth interviews, and surveys.

Focus Group Discussions: 9 focus groups were chosen. The groups comprised of between 8 and 14 participants (male and female). They were compiled in the following manner:

1. The first group included politicians (present and past Knesset members, local mayors and political activists)
2. The second group included religious leaders (men), lawyers specialising in religious law, and lawyers specialising in human and civil rights laws.
3. The third group included social workers, those working in the field of social welfare, and those working in the field of education.
4. The fourth group included journalists from a number of newspapers and broadcasters from local radio and television.

5. The fifth group included activists of women's and feminist groups drawn from a variety of different approaches.
6. The sixth group included male and female students of higher education.
7. The seventh group included housewives and unemployed women.
8. The eighth group included women factory workers.
9. The ninth group included female high school students

It is worth observing that the proportion of positive responses to our invitation to participate in the focus groups varied between the groups. For example, the politicians had the lowest level of participation, while the group of women's activists were more engaged. The place where the meetings were held varied. Some of the groups met in the Galilee, some in the Central Triangle or Jerusalem.

The focus groups discussions were used to establish perspectives on human rights and women's rights discourse, and the perspectives and behaviour of the participants on the issues mentioned in the research goals. The results were also used to crystallise questions for the quantitative survey. In addition to using the discourse which was suggested as an entry point for answering the research questions.

The participants for each group were chosen according to specific characteristics and common attributes, ensuring representation for different types of thought, and for those who have the ability to influence the status of women (such as community activists, women's activists, religious figures and community leaders, activists in the media and in building public opinion, local and national political leaders, women and men from the community, and others).

Open-Ended Interviews

36 interviews were conducted with men and women from different sectors of society. The interviews were distributed accordingly:

1. Jabha Knesset Member, Mohammed Baraka, United Arab List Knesset Member, Talab Al-Sane
2. Religious figures representing the three main Arab faith communities (Druze, Muslim, Christian).
3. Community activists, political activists, women's activists.
4. Male and female academics.
5. Male and female students at institutions of higher education
6. Self-employed businessmen and businesswomen, employed men and women, housewives.

Survey

A questionnaire of 173 closed questions was distributed to 1,200 participants. The survey included 1,200 persons aged 18 and over from approximately 30 Arab villages and towns or mixed cities. To undertake the survey, 9 clusters were chosen including the following localities: Bedouin villages in the Galilee, Bedouin areas in the Negev, Druze villages, mixed Arab localities, Christian villages, Arabs living in mixed Jewish-Arab cities, Arab towns, Arab local councils in the Triangle, and localities under the auspices of regional councils. When choosing the localities we took into account a number of factors such as geographical position, the socio-economic condition of the locality, the locality's size, the religious affiliation of the residents and the proximity of the locality to non-Arab location. Those surveyed represent a national sample of Palestinian residents inside the Green Line. The research sample was chosen randomly in every locality from among those who have the right to vote in Knesset elections. The questionnaire was conducted in Arabic, through an interview conducted face to face with the respondent in their own home, and with extreme care taken that no third party was present. Even in cases of absolute necessity (such as interviews with girls from the Negev) where another person was present, we ensured that he did not interfere with the answers to the questionnaire, or influence the respondent. The questionnaires were filled out between December 2004 and January 2005. Maximum standard deviation was 3.7%.

The surveyors were supervised daily by the researchers in the field. By the end of the research, they had been accompanied in every village and town in over 40% of those surveyed, despite the fact that generally this supervision does not usually exceed 25% in surveys.

Surveyors were instructed ethically to be aware of our understanding of the importance and sensitivity of the research, as well as the objectivity of the research, and its ethical importance. Despite the sensitivity of the research, there was a satisfied response from the surveyors. We succeeded in reaching more than 76% of those on the main list. In addition to this, for 67% of those surveyed, it was our first contact with them. This is a very high proportion according to academic criteria for this kind of research.

Ultimately, the research is based on 1,197 questionnaires, because 3 questionnaires were cancelled from the sample for purely technical reasons.

Parts of the Research

The research is divided into four main sections. The introduction reviewed the structural status of Palestinian women in Israel, the research goals, questions

and methodology. The second section will review different theoretical approaches which theorise the unequal and oppressive relations between men and women. This section is split into three chapters. The first chapter includes a review of the most important feminist trends, and the most important concepts on which they depend. The second chapter focuses on studies which deal with the status of Arab women. This chapter leads into a discussion on the status of Palestinian women in Israel. The third chapter presents a theoretical framework for understanding their status as part of Arab society with its national and historical characteristics.

The third section of the research is a presentation of the research results, which the field survey, focus groups and in-depth interviews uncovered. The fourth section includes a summary of the principal findings of the research.

Part 2

Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1:

Feminist Studies and the Question of Gender Differentiation

Introduction

Feminists distinguish between sex, regarded as a biological given, and gender⁴, as a social identity, and where gender is regarded as the result of power relations within society. Oakley (Oakley 1972) defines gender as “that understanding unconnected to sex, since the sexual identity of every man and woman is built on social and cultural bases.”

Gender as a social identity does not mean only the identity of women, it also means the identity of men. Thus Jan Flax (Flax 1990, 139) says: “Men and women are prisoners of gender, in different but intertwined ways. Even though men seem to us in many cases to be those imprisoning, or at least those protecting the patriarchal social system, we cannot deny the fact that their existence is also governed, by the social role which is demanded of them as men.”

Simone De Beauvoir was one of the first feminists who showed a philosophical research interest in the individual’s gendered identity, describing it as the

⁴ A note on translation: There is not an agreed translation in Arabic for either the word “gender” or “feminism.” Gender is sometimes translated as *hawiyā jansawīya* (sexual identity), *naw’ ijtimāi* (social type), or *jansawīya*. Feminism is translated by a number of different terms, such as *haraka al-taharur al-nasawi* (women’s liberation movement). Kamal Abu Deeb translated it as *unuthuwiya* (feminism) to distinguish, as English does, between feminism and femininity (*unutha*). In this research, the terms *jansawīya* and *naw’ ijtimā’i* were used to mean the English word “gender”, and *al-janusa* or *mujanas* to represent the English term “gendered”. *Nasawīya* was used to refer to the term feminism.

consequence of the social reality in which we live, characterising it in her book “The Second Sex” (1953) with her famous phrase, “a person is not born as a woman, but made into one.”

Yet apart from observing that the social roles of men and women are formed from the social fabric and mutual relations within it, there is no answer to the essential question: Is there a possibility of an altered, just reality in which men and women live in equality? If the answer to this is affirmative, how do we reach this reality? This question has been the essence of feminist work, and has formed the driving factor in present and past feminist discourse. It is what we try to define in this part of the research.

This section of the research is divided into 3 parts. The first part reviews the most important writers who have dealt with the issue of women’s emancipation, from its first appearance in liberal thought, then in socialist and radical Marxist thought, and finally in postmodernist thought, and post-colonialist studies. Due to the importance of post-colonialist studies and their direct bearing on the reality of Palestinian women, this section will be treated more expansively than the earlier perspectives.

The second part will explore the discussions and studies specially focused on Arab women. Subsequently it will provide a preliminary review of the literature which have concentrated on the relationship between the status of women and religion. Then it will consider the social studies which deal with the status of women through their relationship to the mode of production, patriarchal system and cultural heritage. This part has been treated more expansively in order to discuss concepts that we felt were helpful in order to understand the status of Palestinian women in Israel, such as notions of honour, and rural and patriarchal culture, and the patriarchal structure of the family, as well as tribalism. The third and final part of the section sets out a theoretical position which understands the status of Palestinian women as part of Arab society with its own characteristics, within the Jewish state. This part draws on the framework of concepts which were reviewed in the previous parts.

Women’s Issues from Liberal Thought to Post-modern Thought

The roots of the feminist movement stretch back to the eighteenth century, and the liberal demands that accompanied it for the emancipation of the

individual. The basic struggle for the first feminists, who were known as the first liberals, was to obtain legal and political equality for women within the framework of bourgeois liberal democracy in Western Europe and North America. This thought emphasised at that time the vital importance of the citizen's participation, and the importance of equality between citizens before the law, and of granting them individual rights, despite the fact that this was not extended to the majority of residents, since exceptions were made for women, the poor, slaves and a number of minorities. Men were considered guardians of women. Women did not inherit property. They were not able to control what money they earned, or who would be the guardian of their children after divorce (Tucker, 1995). Rapid economic development led to the dominance of a culture of the survival of the fittest, or of he who is able to enter the market, and compete and make profits. In this field women were considered to be delicate beings, weak and unable to control their feelings, or to think in a rational language. Accordingly, it was their constricted role to provide a warm refuge for men, far from the struggles of the marketplace. Men were considered to be social creatures, rational and strong, able to compete in the public sphere (ibid).

The first liberal feminists began from the example of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), who argued that women are not mentally inferior or superior to men, or more connected to nature. Rather the differences between the two sexes are a result of the role that education plays. (Wollstonecraft, 1975, 23). This was developed by modern researcher Christine Di Stefano (Di Stefano, 1990, 67), who argued that women in the eighteenth century were unjustly denied their right to respect. This was denied on the basis of the assumption that they were mentally inferior to men, and more tied to nature.

The struggle of the old liberal feminists continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They focused on achieving equality in civil rights and legal equality and on the demand for the right to vote, and to enter educational institutions. There was a development in the thought of modern liberal feminists in the twentieth century, those who would later be called the "social welfare liberals." (Tucker, 1995)

Modern liberal feminism, which has lasted from the beginnings of the twentieth century until today, emphasised that the state plays an important role in the formation and crystallisation of gender differences. Thus it focused

its work on law and politics. This work was built on the demand for complete equality before the law, and the right to equal participation in politics. They also demanded that the state should take an active role in promoting women's status, through affirmative action for women, in order to compensate for the differences that had accumulated over long centuries of oppression and discrimination. (Tucker, 1995)

Modern liberal feminism affirms that biological differences between the two sexes are incidental, and that the present differences are a result of social conditioning, laws and dominant opinions. Accordingly, they arrived at the same approach as the old liberals, and focused on the legal sphere, considering that change in this sphere for equity for women would lead, by necessity, to a change in the status of women in the other areas of life (Centre for Women's Studies, 1995, 18-20). Nonetheless, this liberal thought was exposed to much criticism by feminist theorists of Marxist, socialist, radical, post-modern and post-colonial backgrounds.

Marxist feminism argued that the status of women in the economic system and its relationship to the modes of production was the basic cause of their oppression and it doubted at the same time the benefit of liberal thought, arguing that it was the product of the bourgeois interests of the women of the comfortable classes, and did not address the real interests of women. Fredrick Engels was the first who defined a Marxist position on gender issues in his "The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State," when he published his book in 1884. Engels traced the historical roots of women's subjugation. He linked in it the subjugation of women to the spread of private property and male monopoly over it. Engels began this by tracing the origins of the family, then analysing the material dialectic, hypothesising that humanity lived in the beginning in a state of "primitive communism", in tribal groups, where authority in society and in the family was in the hands of the mother. Following from this, the relations of production were simple and elementary. The economy was based, in its first historical stage on hunting and gathering fruits, and property was collective. Work was shared according to age and sex. Despite this women did most of the work and central power was concentrated in her hands. (Haidari, 2003, 74)

In the second stage, with the development of the agricultural mode of production and the transformation towards raising livestock, agriculture and

pastoralism, private property appeared. Labour was divided in a new way. Men became responsible for striving to provide the family's daily bread, and women became responsible for domestic affairs. At this point, blood ties began to play an important role, and the "patriarchal" family was formed. The appearance of the patriarchal system caused women to lose their status and authority (ibid). Thus for Fredrick Engels the essential need to liberate women rested on emancipating them from family burdens and involving them in productive work in the public sphere. This demanded a transformation of domestic duties into public works, like public kitchens or laundries, and establishing kindergartens for children. (Tucker, 1995)

The concentration of Marxist feminism on the role of the mode of production in determining the nature of women influenced the approach of socialist and radical feminists, who saw the need to pursue a two-tracked approach to the oppression of women. Accompanying the economic analysis there should be a social analysis of the patriarchal structure. Socialist feminism saw that the patriarchal system was the product of the capitalist system, and that the two systems were mutually reinforcing. Accordingly, their struggle was not solely against capitalism, but against the patriarchal system also. They added that the capitalist system produced for women a state of alienation from themselves. Accompanying their feelings that they are unable to determine their fate are ongoing social processes. Socialist feminism considered that the absolute division between the public sphere and the private sphere (Rosaldo, 1974) was the product of capitalist thought, which distinguished between paid and unpaid work. Socialist feminism also criticised Marxist feminism's neglect of issues such as women's right to their own body in sexual relations or childbirth. (Centre for Women's Studies, 1995, 22-24)

Socialist thought also criticised the liberal position. Socialism considered (Jagger 1983, 1994) that the idea of the independent individual leads to a political theory, which thinks that nothing exists except for the self, and added that any person is part of a local community, and that our aspirations and choices are formed and crystallised through a relationship with this community.

Modern and traditional liberalism regarded the patriarchal system and the subjugation of women from the premise that they were the product of a long history of laws discriminating against women. By contrast, Marxist and socialist feminists focused on patriarchy as a system formed and supported

by the capitalist economic system which divided work by gender. Radical feminists considered patriarchy an arbitrary and tyrannical system in itself, which discriminated between individuals on the basis of their sex, which worked historically in order to increase men's advantages and accumulation of the sources of their power (Tucker 1995).

Radical feminists believe that men's subordination of women is the most important and most powerful form of subjugation. They consider it the model for all other forms of oppression. They argue that sexual oppression came first, and then in its wake national, class and racial oppression followed. Kate Millett in her book "Sexual Politics" (1970) observed that "sex" is the organising pillar of politics, because the relationship between male and female is the essential framework through which other power relations are crystallised, and that as long as the image of patriarchal oppression is not eradicated, then all other forms of oppression, whether class, national or racial, will also remain. In other words, any genuine eradication of other forms of oppression requires in the first instance the eradication of male oppression of women (Tong 1989, 95-96). Millett explains that patriarchal ideology works through exaggerating the sexual differences between male and female, to emphasise the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity. This ideology is passed on through social institutions, such as the church, school, university and the institution of marriage and family. These institutions work to justify and reinforce women's dependency, and cause women to internalise their feelings of inferiority to men. Thus the patriarchal system not only uses ideology and cultural hegemony, but also relies on different means to create hatred and fear in order to secure itself.

Like Millett, Marilyn French has also emphasised that the patriarchal system is the founding father for other forms of oppression, and that sexual discrimination precedes all other forms of discrimination. She adds that the ability to legitimise masculine domination leads on to the possibility of legitimising and understanding other forms of social and political oppression. French argues that humanity once lived in a distant era in a state of communion with nature, and they saw themselves as a small part of a great whole existence. Their role was to make their lifestyle accord with this existence. She adds that ancient human societies seemingly lived in matriarchal social groupings, where the mother played the central role in determining the survival policies of the group, within the context of a harmonious relationship with nature, which was

then a friend to society. However, as society expanded, it encountered a lack in food resources, and nature began to be transformed notionally from a friendly source of food into a source of toil and scarcity. It became necessary to plough, clear and dig the earth so that it would give food. The relationship with nature deteriorated with the interventions of men who developed different methods aimed at liberating themselves from nature's upheavals and struggles. As men's dominance over nature increased, the gap between the two widened, until the relationship between man and nature came to be characterised by alienation rather than coordination, by distance rather than proximity, and even by enmity and fear. French adds that with the rise of men's feelings of enmity towards nature, there swelled a desire for masculine domination over women. They were linked in their imagination due to women's procreative role, like nature. With men's desire to dominate nature and its twin, woman, patriarchy was created, as a domineering, pyramidal social system built on strength and control. (Tong 1989, 100-102)

Radical feminists argue that the only differences between men and women are those relating to childbirth. Women get pregnant and give birth. Accordingly, they ask the question: How is this difference translated into a comprehensive system of women's subordination and male oppression? For radical feminists the ties of women to the processes of childbirth, breastfeeding and raising children, and considering them part of the natural course of life was nothing more than a means to isolate women from the public sphere and to concentrate social power in male hands (Tucker 1995). Thus radical feminists focus on the female body as the site of men's domination, Through its control, exploitation and misuse, men have been able to manifest the extent of their domination over women. Radical feminists have focused in their programme on changing the control of reproduction, and sexual activities, and emancipation from abuse, from physical beatings to rape, and have conducted campaigns against a complicit media. (ibid)

Radical feminists concentrate on sexual relations in society, since they regard sex as a central topic in the institution of masculine domination. Violence and the need to dominate produce a routine through which acceptable and proper sexual behaviour is defined. They add that violence against women is instituted in sexual relations through social norms about sex that men "by their nature" lean towards violence and domination and that women, "by their nature" lean towards passivity and submission. Male domination and female submission

can be transformed into an overbearing ideology on sexual relations, which is subsequently transformed to an ideology imposed on other social spheres. Thus Catherine MacKinnon argues that sexual relations are the essence of male power and that gendered relations built on the dominance of men find their roots in heterosexuality, such that all of the role models and images of women have their roots with reference to sexual relations. The source of feminine “tenderness” is the sexual relationship. Domination of her only occurs through something ‘firm’ (man). (Tong 1989, 110)

Radical feminism was not only a trend which challenged into the gender / sex system and explored the complex relations of patriarchy. Rather it also drew ways of stepping beyond this patriarchal domination. The radical feminist trend in particular proposed a number of methods for emancipating women from the prison of “femininity.”

Yet radical, liberal, Marxist and socialist feminist thought have all been subject to critique by post-modern feminism. This feminism considered that admitting the idea that gender was only a biological identity was mistaken. They focused on the essential role that language plays in producing sexual and gender identities. Postmodern feminists see that sex and gender are originally political and symbolic meanings, and that our lives are put in context by the influence on us of cumulative and conflicting theories, discourses and narratives. Accordingly, even a discussion of the binary attributes of men vis a vis women is simply one of the old forms of metaphysical terrorism.

Judith Butler disputed in her book “Gender Trouble” the classical typology on which feminist studies had relied, between nature/culture and sex/gender. She considered that the personality of the individual, whether man or woman, was itself the reactionary myth that it was necessary to overcome, since the individual is a group of floating and shifting codes which continually play off social differences, and where the discussion of any core essence has become impossible. Butler hypothesised that gendered identities are in essence a product of language. Therefore she rejects the possible existence of any *a priori* essence preceding language, hypothesising that language is a system of meanings formed by the continuous repetition and performance of individuals. (Butler 1990)

For Butler, language is a tool of power and control. Power works through it to produce the norms, models and categories which divide the world and produce

conditions for belonging and legitimacy. The matrix of meanings which crystallises reality produces forms of a specific existence, considering them natural or desirable, and denies other forms. This means that each element works also as a benchmark for admission to the specific group. Accordingly, language includes practically the combination of open and internal meanings, which are the essence of the system of values and hierarchy of the whole.

Butler reviews the manifest form of gender. We see that distinguishing between the sexes as a natural, biological given of the identity of women or men, and gender as a group of roles and social meanings tied to this natural identity, is a distinction constructed essentially from social hypotheses which want to divide between the legitimate and illegitimate, and which aim to distance those who are undesirable from society's perspective. Thus "sex" is a model through which the body is transformed into part of the matrix of cultural meanings. "Natural" sexual identity is formed through cultural forms which work on the body and consolidate it and manifest it as though it has meaning in itself. Social power acts on the body through knowledge, technology, through what is forbidden and permitted, legal arrangements and language which create the illusion of a natural sexual identity, and a primordial male or female archetype, and which form gender. (ibid) In pointing to the role of those in power play in consolidating identities Butler asks: Who is represented by language? Who is excluded from the collective and who is included? What policies are excluded or even cancelled from the field of action even as possibilities? (Butler 2001, 30)

Butler points out that the meaning of human activity generally and linguistic activity especially does not spring from the primary meaning that the speaker intends, but rather from the essence of the activity (words for example) which conveys a general known form and which has a given social meaning. This means that there is not an independent, social self which acts as a source for this meaning, but that the self is always mediated via cultural forms, which give an organised shape to this meaning. These discursive forms are consolidated via different discursive forms, and the human being is known as a self. This theory supposes that the identity of men and women is an identity derived through performance, an identity built out of modes of behaviour.

The work of Butler on language coincides to a certain extent with the studies of the French post-structuralist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (Kristeva 1985),

especially on the process of self-formation, which supposes the existence of a permanent tension between non-verbal spheres such as emotions, and language. Kristeva argues that the self is perpetually in-formation, or “in-process”. This means that any attempt to define an individual’s identity is the work of Sophists. Kristeva supposes that people are on a permanent trajectory of change, but she affirms that they are also permanently in a position “abjected” by language and society, which set for them rules. This means that our selves are always in formation, and they live in endless process. Accordingly it is not possible that they can be integral, but different, mutually differentiating.

At the same time Kristeva in contrast to Butler, is aware of the dangers that would result in the case of full adoption of the post-modernist discourse by the women’s movements. Except that discussions about the existence or not of identity, or that gender identity is the product of “abjection” and “performance”, and that it is only the product of linguistic forms, effectively send feminist demands to the abyss because they conclude that feminine identity does not exist, and nor does gender. Rather these notions are only linguistic products, and they are accordingly imaginary! Therefore since she is aware of this, Kristeva proposes that women adopt with a new awareness a female identity, describing it as a compound identity. (Kristeva 1986, 209)

The feminist critic Teresa De Lauretis (De Lauretis 1986,15) suggests an identity formed from a series of differences, which vary and do not deny sexual, racial, economic and cultural differences. Yet given the wide variety of these differences, and in light of the tension over a common denominator to group them all, and in light of the post-modern vision, Kristeva suggests that feminism is a process which should pass through three stages and modes of operation:

- First, women should demand entry into the “symbolic system”⁵ (or into the cultural world). This is liberal feminism with its demands for equality.
- Second, feminists should reject the symbolic system (or the demand that they take up an existing role within the existing system) in favour of a new freedom built on recognition of

5 The “symbolic system” is a concept taken from the French intellectual Jacques Lacan. She intends by it entry into the world of language, which is a masculine, phallic world. Kristeva intends that the liberal feminist movement demanded that they be first part of the social system which denied them.

differences (the discovery of new forms of the ego through language). This is radical feminism.

- Third, women should reject the polar divisions between male and female, and consider them to be an illusory, metaphysical polarity, which produces pure identities built on polarities such as man and woman, male and female.

Thus feminism in its final form is a feminism which begins with the existence of differences and mutual differentiation. Indeed it supposes from the outset that existence today is comprised of unending margins, decentred and without models of one identity.

The importance of post-modernism, which began in France, lies in the fact that it opened a new field for the critique of sociological theories in general and of theories founded on the central role of the ego, whether this centre was male, western and of a certain class. This helped in sharpening post-colonial criticism. Thus its contribution is fundamentally methodological. It contributed to the building of a pluralistic and complex theory, and supported the fragmentation of the gendered social structure, the analysis of language and its role in building differences, and the refusal of ready made polarities, and the integral images for oppression.

Post-Colonial Feminism

The questions raised by Western feminism, which focused on the differences between gender and sex, considering them the basis of the fundamental social oppression which afflicted women throughout the world, affected many women researchers and intellectuals in the Third World, and in oppressed and marginal communities in America who classified themselves as part of the third world. (Third World US Feminism)

Post-colonial feminist discourse (Bhabha 1994; Anzaldúa 1991; Mohanty 1991) depends on an understanding of the relations between the two sexes, on situating sexual oppression within the context of the effect of colonialism and European colonialists on the East, and their effects on consolidating a distinctiveness of the feminist movement in colonised societies, as a movement which was formed in the context of the colonial struggle. Post-colonial discourse offers a dynamic view of relations between the coloniser and colonised. It does

not assume the unilateral influence of the coloniser, but goes beyond this to suggest a complex vision of influence which makes the discussion about an original culture impossible. Internal migrations (from villages to towns and shanties) and external migrations (for example to Europe) and the changes in the modes of production and cultural and economic globalisation have all played a decisive role in creating hybrid cultures, which are neither Eastern nor Western.

These researchers considered that treating gender oppression in isolation from other forms of oppression, and then developing from it a plan of action that aimed to meet the needs of women throughout the world, regardless of their ethnic, racial and class affiliations was a partial and inappropriate treatment, focused on the European self (Westocentric) and ethnocentric. Instead they demanded the opening of horizons to a complex new theoretical understanding of the differences between the sexes, at the same time uncovering all the other forms of oppression, whether class, ethnic, racial or national oppression, and their interaction in producing the special characteristics and varied experiences of women. Feminists critical of Western thought do not doubt the importance of the sex / gender paradigm in social oppression, but they refuse to consider it the only paradigm of oppression. McClintock (McClintock 1995) explains that race, gender and class are not fields of separate experience existing in isolation from each other, and they are not able to be put together as separate blocks like in the game of lego. Rather they exist together, and despite each other. They exist through mutual intertwined relations, even if relations of clashes and conflict. Therefore the Indian intellectual Chandra Mohanty (Mohanty 1991, 51) was able to dismiss Western feminism and called for the development of a third world feminism, depending on two equal paths, an internal criticism of dominant western feminism, and the establishment of strategies for an independent feminist work that is original historically, economically and culturally.

Jayawardena points out in the introduction of her book on the notions of feminism and nationalism among women in the Third World that the platform and demands of the feminist movement in these countries are in essence an integral part of the process of national emancipation for which its peoples are struggling. The feminist schools and the emancipation of women in these societies is the product of the complex reality which the women of the colonised peoples of the third world live, and they are not a foreign idea imported recently

from the experience of women in Western societies. (Jayawardena 1986)

The Palestinian researcher Nahla Abdo argues that it is pointless to try to arbitrarily divide between the national struggle and between the feminist social struggle when we talk about the viewpoints of the national liberation movements of peoples who fell under the force of foreign colonialism (Abdo 1991). Yet while it is illogical, in this context, to consider the social oppression of women outside of the context of her national and class oppression, while she belongs to a people who are all the prey of colonialism. It is also just as naïve to consider that the victory of the national liberation movements against colonialism heralds an immediate victory for women and the women's cause. The interference of factors of social, class and national oppression, and their interaction in a controversial and constructive manner together show up clearly in the situation of Palestinian women in general, and of women belonging to the oppressed classes in particular. Thus it is appropriate to trace the importance of understanding the relationship between the aforementioned forms of oppression, and the discursive interaction between them, when talking about Palestinian women's issues (Makawi 2002).

Naira Al-Tawhidi (Bahloul 1998, 151), the Iranian intellectual summarises the demands of Western feminists with the following four concerns: economic independence through work outside the home, political equality, men and women being held to the same moral criteria, and cancelling stereotypes about the nature of the two sexes. Tawhidi asks: "What is the base of feminist awareness for Iranian women?" She answers with words that could apply to Palestinian women: "In Iran, as in other colonised countries, the women's cause is mixed very strongly with the issue of national identity, which leads to the mutual influence of national and women's liberation, or of feminism and nationalism." (ibid)

Bahloul also mentions that the interlocking of women's emancipation and national liberation was a decisive factor in the formation of Arab feminism, and that this applies on more than one level. Many of them typify the danger of the interlocking between a people's attempt to confront their colonial occupier, through the construction of a "national identity" built on language, values, customs, religion and culture, and between women who are given the task of "protecting the national identity", since women are portrayed in nationalist discourse as the mothers of heroes and defenders, "nurturing" within them a

love of the nation, and teaching them an appreciation of the past and folklore and the nation (Bahloul 1998, 152-153)

In addition to the interlinkng of women's emancipation with national liberation, women of the third world suffer from a deteriorating standard of living to the point where it no longer covers their basic needs. A member of the parliament in South Africa expressed this situation well when she said that women's movements in the West demand to get out of the kitchen in order to enter the public sphere, while women in the Third World demand that in the first place they have a kitchen. Women suffer from the deterioration in living conditions more than men, due to the distinctions which they enjoy, as a result of the patriarchal social structure, and male preference in the labour market, in addition to the lack of support networks providing employment opportunities for women or to take care of their children during their hours of absence.

The Palestinian researcher Nahla Abdo (Abdo 1995, 37-40) criticises the insensitivity of Western feminists in understanding the needs of Arab women. In this regard she summarises the developmental prescription which Western liberals offer women in the Third World, and which presupposes an awakening to the social conditions of women via two principles: Firstly, economic, requiring the integration of women into different economic sectors, and looking to development via concepts of costs and benefits, and opening up to the market. Secondly, she summarises the belief of Liberal intellectuals that "women are in charge of their own destiny", and that gender depends on the individual, as an individual and not on the collective.

Rita Giacaman disputes the hoped for benefit of women's increased awareness of gender, instead of working to change the material conditions in whose shadow women live. (Giacaman 1995, 37) She asks:

"What is the benefit of increasing women's awareness of gender for poor rural women in order to encourage them to demand their rights of inheritance according to Islamic Sharia law, if all the structures, customs and traditions lead to the loss of the network of social and family protection, and even their ability to live, when women undertake this activity."

Middle Eastern feminist thought has been directly influenced by criticism initiated by African American women writers in opposition to liberal feminist

thought, which concentrates on women's equality as individuals within the framework of Western democracy. These feminists considered that factors of race, class, nationalism, and sexual preferences to be the basis for collective forms of oppression which white women do not experience, due to the distinctions which they enjoy as part of class hegemony (Lord 1984; Sandoval 1991, 2000; Andaluza 1994; Hooks 1991; Hurtado 1994, 1996)

Therefore Aida Hurtado (Hurtado 1994) proposed directing feminist analysis in the United States towards a new theoretical approach based on understanding differences and privileges between different racial groups. Hurtado affirms that an attempt to repeat a feminist plan of action which does not take differences and privileges into account is a plan that is destined to fail. Black and coloured women for instance not only suffer from sexual oppression, but also class oppression, since they form the majority of the working class in the United States. Hurtado argues that different minorities are positioned at various distances from the white man (the power holder) in the United States producing differing subordinate models according to their relative distance or proximity to him. The white man did not need black women for childbearing and the continuation of the race, since white women were suppressed in essence to perform this role. Therefore the non-utility of non-white women created a situation of distance between black or coloured women and the centre of power of the white family, while white women sit within the circle of the white man. This proximity means that white women are oppressed in a different way to black and coloured women.

Black and coloured feminists' rejection of liberal feminist thought is accompanied by a rejection of primitive Marxist thought, which considered economic emancipation a condition for the emancipation of women. In her book "And I, Am I Not a Woman? Black Women and Feminism", Bell Hooks rejects the demand of some feminist movements to take women to work outside of the house, considering it a condition for their emancipation. Hooks reflects that women of the working class always worked outside of the house in jobs that did not confer any status or importance, and they did not receive an acceptable material return for it. Hooks also disputes the notion of a "feminist experience" or shared feminist problem for all women, that is unconnected to issues of socio-economic status. Instead, Hooks suggests the construction of a new authentic feminism built on an awareness of differences as the foundation for its success. She sees that US reformist feminism which works to reform

certain laws, and is tied to white women, works in reality to develop a narrow sector of women and to support them within the present system. This is at the expense of the interests of the majority of other women. Hooks adds that liberal feminism has been transformed into a call to improve the social status of white bourgeois women within the present system. This is accompanied by the acceptance covertly or sometimes openly of a wide class of oppressed and exploited women doing the “dirty” jobs, which they refuse to do. Liberal feminism is transformed by this according to Hooks (Hooks 2002, 18) so that it is not only the partner and ally of dominant patriarchy which discriminates on the basis of gender, but it has also undertaken to maintain a dual lifestyle, where white women are equal to men at work, and at home they are equal according to their interests.

Accordingly, the building of “sisterhood” means the rejection of liberal feminism, and the struggle against all forms of patriarchal social injustice. It is only possible when women of the dominant classes relinquish their power to exploit the weak feminist sectors. Women’s use of class power or racial privilege in order to dominate other women stands as a sure impediment to “sisterhood.”

Instead of this, Hooks suggests an intense struggle against sexism, class discrimination, colonialism and capitalism. Hooks calls for the establishment of a network of sisterhood, as the basis for social solidarity. She demands that white women working with black women should first of all oppose and reject oppression. She demands that men working with women should essentially be feminists. Despite Hooks seeing building a “solidarity of struggle” as a difficult task, it important and even necessary. Hooks defines feminism as a movement to end discrimination on the basis of sex, and to end sexual exploitation and oppression (ibid). The struggle against discrimination based on sex is impossible if it is not accompanied by a struggle against all other forms of oppression. This is the opposite of what liberal feminism demands which is equality with men within the current system. It is because a system like this exploits workers, blacks and minorities.

Hooks adds that revolutionary feminism means, among other things, emancipation from colonial and orientalist theories, which adopt issues such as female circumcision in Africa and the Middle East, or the sex clubs in Thailand, or the veiling of women in Islamic countries from the outlook of “liberal feminism.” Hooks observes that many Western feminists treat female circumcision as a “barbaric, uncivilised” practice, and they raise sexual

discrimination in these cases as though it is more violent and bigoted than anything in the United States. Hooks considers that this view is fundamentally mistaken. Instead she proposes a feminist theory that is liberated from colonialism, that is in the first place grounded in the relationship between the different forms of gender discrimination and their relation to women's bodies. Such a feminism would, for instance, be grounded in the relationship between female circumcision in Africa and the eating disorders which threaten the lives of women (and which are the direct product of the demand for a slim body as the model of beauty) in Europe and America. Such a comparative analysis would emphasise sexism in the United States (ibid, 55). It would not presuppose an acceptance of differences at the end of the critical feminist demand, because such a demand is itself, according to Audrey Lorde (Lorde 1984), a reformist path which disregards the creative and fruitful role of differences between groups, because differences must not be just acceptable. Indeed, differences must be viewed as a product of a live dynamics which can express our radiant creativity. Differences in this context are interconnected and mutual differences between different agencies, who enjoy equality and recognition of their importance. Through their acceptance, it is possible to realise an agency that is able to change. Audrey Lorde suggests (Lorde 1984) building alliances between marginal and oppressed groups, the poor, blacks, and whoever else knows that survival is not an academic discourse, but a daily suffering. Such alliances between different marginalized sectors is able to produce a subaltern centre of power against the hegemonic patriarchal system, because change, according to Lorde, is impossible "while authority and its instruments are practised inside the home." It is practised always through contradictory instruments outside the home. In the language of Lorde the rejection of the tools of authority, is not only a political tool of struggle, but goes beyond this. As Chilla Sandoval points out (Sandoval 2000) it goes to the break up of the tools of hegemonic theory in an American and European discourse centred on the self, and to the adoption of analytical tools which work to problematise this discourse.

In "The Methodology of the Oppressed", Sandoval proposes embarking on a theoretical revolution established to produce a subaltern awareness. Sandoval draws on the studies of Franz Fanon, Homi Bhaba, Audrey Lorde, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others in order to draft her theoretical revolution. Most important to Sandoval is establishing the concept of "critical awareness" as a tool of struggle (Sandoval 1991, 12-14). In the course of her research on women in the Third World, she explained

that this awareness is linked to the synthesis “between and within” of four forms of subaltern awareness: awareness of “equality and rights”, revolutionary awareness, “enhancement” awareness, and “separatist” awareness. The use and mobilisation of these tactics of struggle is linked to rejecting the limits of choices in the form of struggle. Instead, it must always follow the most suitable and preferable tools for present needs. Critical awareness does not imply a change in the strategic goals of the feminist movement, but the creation of temporary allegiances with sectors with whom they have particular shared interests. Hurtado in 1985 explained that revolutionary feminism is inherently a critical social model arguing: “When a coloured woman reaches adolescence she will have developed informal political skills to deal with the interference of the state.” Therefore the political skills which coloured or black women adopt are different to those which white liberal women adopt or those which extreme feminists pursue. The coloured woman has always behaved as though she is part of a secret guerrilla movement which is trained through the daily life struggles in confrontation with the state. (Hurtado 1989) Similarly, Cheri Moraga (Moraga 1981) defined the feminism of the Third World in America as guerrilla warfare, since it is a way of life and a means of survival. She added, characterising daily experience as provisional on overcoming daily difficulties of: “How we measure and determine what we have to say, and what not to say, and when, and what we have to do, and how, and with whom we can cooperate and build friendships, and with whom we cannot.” (ibid)

The camaraderie between women belonging to marginal and oppressed classes as Lorde (ibid) suggested also means a camaraderie between women who do not share a common language, culture, race or ideology, and do not agree on a single solution. Yet their allegiance creates a subaltern power to the powers of the centre and the hegemonic culture. (Anzaldúa 1981)

Thus “Critical Tactics” mean *inter alia* the empowerment of threatened groups by following methods which seem at first to be taken from the orientalist’s dictionary. One of these methods is “arbitrary closure” of identity as discussed by Stuart Hall (Hall 1998) or “strategic essence” in the language of Gayatri Spivak (Spivak 1991). Arbitrary closure of identity means putting limits to group or individual identity to protect it from melting into hegemonic cultures, or as Spivak suggested (ibid) the transformation of group identity in an aware fashion into an “essential” identity. Minorities and colonised peoples are accustomed to a colonial language which deals with their identities on the

basis that they are fixed, immovable and unable to adapt to the changes of modernity. This language looked at the identities of non-European peoples through an orientalist lens such that they suited its imaginary conceptions of the East, and did not necessarily express their reality, to the extent that this imaginary picture of the East was transformed into unshakable truths. Thus Spivak (*ibid*) suggests adopting a process of “essentialization” of identity, and awareness as a means of resistance.⁶

Spivak does not propose using the tool of strategic essence in order to provide a cover of legitimacy for submission to the language of the coloniser or to justify the permanent adoption of its concepts. In the Palestinian context in Israel, adopting this strategy means acceptance for example of an “essential Arab Palestinian” identity with the complete awareness that there is nothing essential or pre-existing. Because the Palestinians in the context which they are struggling for their very existence are only able to “freeze” the essence of their identity, and to affirm it as something essential. Any other choice would mean falling into dissolution and being transformed into a scattered society unable to collect itself in order to struggle for its rights. This strategy is especially important for the struggle of Palestinian women in Israel operating in the shadow of a white feminist movement (in its majority and character) which sets the agenda and does not take into consideration the particularities of the Palestinian women’s reality in Israel. In most of the Palestinian feminist movements there is the use of an “essential identity” vis a vis women and men, or national identity as a tool to prevent their disappearance within the Ashkenazi Jewish feminist movement, and to create certain boundaries to distinguish them particularly in light of the structural differences between the two groups.

⁶ “Essencialization” means exhibiting an intentional social closure of identity, and exhibiting it as though it was a fixed immovable identity, which has a permanent essence and core. We find an example of this usage in sociologist Yehuda Shinhav’s (Shinhav 2003) adoption of the term “Eastern Jews” to indicate the Jews from Arab countries (Arab Jews), given his complete knowledge that the concept “Eastern Jews” is an Ashkenazi term which aimed to cut the relationship between the Eastern Jews, their history and their Arab cultural belongings, and to make the identity “Arab Jew” an impossibility. This aware usage, as a means of strategic essence” means endorsing the concepts and their usage as a tool of resistance in service of the oppressed and their interests by attributing them with new meanings.

Chapter 2:

Arab Women's Social Status

Between cultural and social analysis

Introduction

Studies dealing with gender differences in the Arab and Islamic world all agree that Arab women occupy an inferior position in the contemporary social structure. The studies differ in their explanations for this inferiority and its underlying causes.

The roots of the discussion on the status of Arab women and their social position go back to the end of the nineteenth century, a period that witnessed the struggle between the Western colonial powers, as well as the beginnings of the discovery and learning about the Other.

Qasim Amin is considered one of the first Arab intellectuals to wake up to the oppression that Arab women were living in at the end of the nineteenth century. His book "Women's Liberation", published in 1897, is considered the "formal" beginning of the discussion on the emancipation of women as part of the national liberation project. Yet this does not mean that this was the first time the women's cause had been raised. He was preceded by writers such as Hind Nofal, founder of a monthly woman's magazine in 1892 (Baron 1999, 9). However, their impact was not as widespread or as invigorating as the books of Qasim Amin. The impact of his books went far beyond the borders of Egypt and the Arab regions into Islamic states such as Iran. The Iranian intellectual Afsia Najm Ebadi (1999, 105) has observed that the issue of women's education gained favour with the publication of his book "Women's Liberation," its first complete and detailed treatment in Iran.

Qasim Amin (Qasim 1989) was the first to demand women's education, and unveiling, and that they should be granted the right to sue for divorce. It can be

observed that women did not reveal their faces until after the 1919 revolution, that the first girls high school was only established in 1925, and that some of his demands concerning limiting men's freedom in divorce have not yet been implemented. This is enough to underline the boldness that characterised Qasim Amin, and his role in creating a social awareness of women's reality.

Qasim gave a psychological, political and historical analysis of the deterioration of women's conditions. He reviewed a long history of political despotism in the region, its social legacy, and its effects on all social institutions including the institution of family. He criticised the partisan religious explanations of *ulama* and jurisprudence, arguing that: "No one can deny that the religion of Islam is moving away from its origins today or that the *Ulama*, with a few exceptions whose hearts God has enlightened, have played with it according to their whims until they have become a trembling joke." (Amani Saleh et al 2001, 59-60) Amin also rejected vehemently justifications arguing that the differences in social status between men and women were due to natural physical and mental differences between the two sexes. He argued (ibid, 329):

"If men are superior to women in physical and mental faculties this is only because they have been occupied in work and thought for long generations, while women, denied from using these mentioned faculties of theirs, and compelled to stay in a state of decay, are different in strength and weakness at the expense of times and places."

The statements of Qasim Amin came in contrast to the prevailing social views at the end of the nineteenth century and earlier, which assumed that differences between men and women were attributable to natural differences between the two sexes, and in contrast to religious apologists who insisted that religion organised relations between the two sexes on the basis of the natural superiority of men and weakness of women. In this approach, he was followed subsequently by Inji Aflaton, Hoda Shaarawi, Nabawiya Musa⁷, and Malak Hafni Nasif.⁸ A group of associations were founded which aimed to promote women's situation such as the "Association for the Promotion of Young Women" which was founded in 1908 and had Islamic goals, the "Intellectual Association for Egyptian Women" which was founded in 1914 and included among its founders Hoda Shaarawi, who was the most prominent feminist leader in the 1920s and 30s, as well as the woman writer and intellectual May Ziyada. Other associations followed them such as the "Association of Egyptian

7 The first girl to gain a high school matriculation certificate in Egypt. (see Ahmed 1999, 185)

8 The first woman to write regularly for the ordinary non-women's press. She published her articles in the newspaper of the secular liberal Umma Party. She wrote under the pen name "Researcher of the Desert." (for more information, see: Ahmed 1999, 185-186)

Women's Renaissance", the "Association of the Mothers of the Future" which was founded in 1921, and the "New Woman's Association" (1919). Further a series of lectures to female Egyptian university students was held where Hoda Shaarawi gave the inaugural lecture in 1908. (Ahmed 1999, 186) The political role of women was prominent from the beginnings of the twentieth century with women as political participants and members of political organisations parallel and supporting the men's parties, and as participants in political demonstrations. (ibid)

Despite the gains that the women's movement realised under the leadership of Hoda Shaarawi, and in particular the declaration of education in 1923 as a constitutional priority, and the passing of compulsory education for girls and boys in 1925, it was the demands of women for more freedoms which exposed them to criticism from a number of sectors of society who saw in these demands the influence of Western colonial thought. This produced two clear trends in conflict over the religious explanation of the status of women. The starting premise of the first trend was the classic religious apologist view which depended on biological differences to explain the different roles, while the second trend took a critical cultural view linking the differences in roles to power relations and networks and regarded religion as one of the tools of social hegemony, exploited by men via partisan apologist readings. Despite the fact that the historical roots of this dispute stretch back to the ends of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it still continues in force today. We will now discuss it in the following section.

Culturalist Analysis: Religion and Gender Differences

Culturalist analysis was concerned with attempts to study or legitimise the status of Arab women arguing that it was the product of a fundamental and ahistorical cultural structure, that was independent and unconnected to socio-political conditions. We find that culturalist analysis often relates any social practices to religious or cultural roots. It is not restricted to Arab scholars, but also encompasses the full gambit of orientalist thought which treats the East as a world governed by a frozen essential culture.

Al-aqqad represents one of the most prominent intellectuals to interpret the status of Muslim Arab women through linking it to fixed religious ethnographic factors. In his book "The Female Companion Daughter of the Companion" (published in 1943), Abbas Mahmoud Al-aqqad considered the life of Aisha, daughter of Abu Bakr, taking her as an introductory legitimisation for his theoretical approach to the issue of women's emancipation in Islam. Al-aqqad

stressed that Islam gave authority to men on the basis of natural differences between men and women. He considered that Islam viewed “women’s role within the home” the proper role for them to fulfil. Al-Eqad traced the gendered division of labour in the religion back to essential differences between male and female. He said (Al-Eqad 1943, 47-48):

“Women and spirituality: This is the very measure to which the division is due... All that is individual or spiritual, voluntary or wilful is closer to the creation of men; and all that is relative or bodily, organic or compulsory is closer to the creation of women... Thus it is correct when it is said that women are natural beings and are not moral beings.”

Al-aqqad considered women to be natural beings, firstly because of their role in childbirth, and secondly because of the resemblance between their temperament and nature. They are quickly excitable and emotional. Nature is inconstant and unexpected, and women are likewise. They are the Other. Men, however, are moral and rational beings, able to think rationally. They are like culture to nature. Men’s strength springs from persistent purposeful work, originally in order to control nature and refine it. It was his ability to control nature which produced civilisation.

Al-aqqad tried to prove women’s inferior status through many of his books, such as “The Second Person and Women” (1912), “The Female Companion Daughter of the Companion” (1943), “This Tree” (1945), “Women in the Quran” (1971). These books are considered a primary source for many of our contemporary writers who treat the information it presents as factually correct, built on legitimate grounds and correct rational proof. Bushra Qabeesi (Qabeesi 1995) summarised these principles in the following three points:

1. Man preceded woman in creation and thus in status and degree.
2. The difference between the two sexes is a natural, biological difference, and is unaffected by history, men or social conditions.
3. Men are superior to women in all spheres: cooking, clothes design, physical capacities and intellectual capacities.

The position of Al-aqqad does not differ from the legitimising positions of Islamic fundamentalist theorists. We find expression of their most important positions in the early books of the leadership of the fundamentalist movement. In his essay, “Social Justice and Islam” Said Qutb took great interest in the issue of women’s position within the family and society. Despite his assertion that Islam treats women and men equally, we find that his analysis is built on the assumption of men’s superiority, observing the biological and psychological

advantages they enjoy. Therefore his interpretation was in favour of men and against women on issues of inheritance, acting as a witness and guardianship. Nature had freed men from the toils and cares of motherhood. This was so as to direct his sexual and mental energies towards social issues, which helped him develop his rational side. While the concerns of motherhood and domestic chores consume women, and this is what nurtures their emotional side. Accordingly women need counsel and support from men. (Abd Al-Wahhab 1999)

Similarly, Hassan Al-Banna affirmed that the lack of equality between men and women that is stipulated in the Quran in some circumstances derives from the natural differences “which inevitably exist between men and women.” (Al-Banna 1994, 7) Al-Banna adds that the fundamental role of women springs from their biological essence and their role in child birth and rearing (Al-Banna 1994, 11-12). Thus it is necessary to limit their education to “what they need for their duties and to perform the role for which God created them: taking care of the home and raising children.”

Further Al-Banna observes that Islam has forbidden mixing between the sexes, viewing it as a real danger for men and women. Mixing pushes us towards, “the loss of reservations and bad intentions, the corruption of souls and destruction of houses, the distress of families, experiments with crime, and the softening of morals and yielding of masculinity that this mixing necessitates does not stop at the boundaries of delicacy, but goes beyond them to the boundaries of effeminacy and weakness.” (ibid, 12) Al-Banna arrives at the fact that Islam forbids women from revealing their bodies, from being alone with someone or associating with him. It permits them to pray at home. It considers sight one of Satan’s arrows, and she is denied from carrying a bow similar to a man, “For it is said after this that Islam does not determine public duties for the sanctity of women.” (ibid, 12) Some fundamentalists have further emphasised the prohibition on mixing to the degree that Mutawalli Al-Shaarawi announced in his weekly televised sermon that, “As long as a husband enters his wife and exposes her privacy, she has no right to refuse, protest or rebel against any of his rightful advances.” (Abd Al-Wahhab 1999, 177)

Concerning women going out to work, Al-Shaarawi has clarified: “whoever wants women to leave their duty transforms things from the way they should be.” Al-Shaarawi, who became more and more prominent on the Egyptian television screens during the Sadat era, and gained broad community influence, explains: “The role of women at home is more noble than the role of women outside it. Men deal with worldly things in their role. Farmers deal with raising

cattle and animals, labourers deal with tough materials, but women deal with the noblest thing in existence, people, and a woman who does not want to believe in this duty is a failed woman.” (ibid)

Fundamentalist Islam considered feminist demands for emancipation with suspicion and mistrust, since they regarded these demands as tantamount to cooperation, aware or otherwise, with the colonial West, being dazzled by the Other, and an attempt to copy it through imitating its culture.⁹

Thus Salwa Al-Khammash criticised the image of women that religious ideas drew in the minds of men. She observes that they represent women as a weak creature whose errors should be feared. She must be protected body and soul, covered from prying eyes, and a man must be her guardian, who has the right to enjoy her, whether she is his wife, a servant or slave girl, and whether this enjoyment is confined to one wife or many, he has the right of obedience. (Al-Khammash 1981) She asks: How is it possible that Islam is not accused of favouring men when it is based on texts which express a male perspective, and on the understanding that “a woman is something for enjoyment, reserved for the involvement of men in the patriarchal world?” Thus women are reified to become one of men’s properties, a property one should treat with caution, because its presence engenders the presence of Satan, and the occurrence of disputes, upheavals and chaos. The verses of Al-Sabah observe that the presence of Satan is inseparable from the presence of women, because every sexual act requires the meeting of four elements: man, woman, Satan and God. When a man meets a woman, she loses her mind and her self-control. It is a meeting with the Devil. Therefore we find that Al-Bukhari and Al-Ghazali both have texts insisting on the imperative of repeating the name of God during the sexual act. There is no doubt according to the verses of Al-Sabah that relationships such as these which Islam embraced have led to considering woman herself as a devil. Perhaps we can express the picture of the verses of Al-Sabah of these relations through summoning the saying of Al-Diyalimi: “The Muslim believer suffers from schizophrenia since two contradictory powers attract him, God and women.” According to Al-Diyalimi, we can substitute women with Satan if we say that: “The true split from which the believer suffers is the split between God and Satan, or between submission to God’s teachings and following the desires which women offer him.” (Afrfar 1996)

At the beginning of the twentieth century there appeared some liberal Arab women intellectuals who rejected the legitimisation of gender differences by

⁹ Indeed some went as far as to mistrust the whole feminist movement in its entirety, regarding it as an agent of Zionism and colonialism, such as the book of Mohammed Fahmi Abd Al-Wahhab (Abd Al-Wahhab 1979)

religious – biological arguments, since they considered these justifications the product of partisan male thought, and not a product of religious thought. Instead they proposed a rereading of religion on a neutral, human basis. Malak Hafni Nasif, known as the al Badia researcher, is considered one of the first women to reject the religious legitimisation of the subordination of women. She affirmed the necessity of social reform to reform the reality of women. In essence, her discourse depended on a call to reform Muslim society and Muslim women through religion, by activating its principles and values, and reinterpreting and rediscovering the arbitrariness of previous interpretations. She considered that religion is based on justice and it is free from any prejudice or injustice towards women. (Amani Saleh et al 2001, 61-63)

The book of Nazira Zein Al-Din, “Uncovering and the Veil” (1928), is considered an important marker in the development of a discourse on women and religion. She refuted sayings such as that women are less disciplined than men and that the veil was a guarantee against disobedience. Zein Al-Din raised rational and religious objections which depended on new interpretations of the Quran and Sunna. Similarly, she rejected the most prominent religious interpreters of the contemporary period, the interpretations of the religious and legal scholars. Her rejection emphasised the differences between the scholars in their interpretation of the verses concerning the veil. She found more than ten different interpretations, each of which depended on stories for which there was no proof. Then she decided to return herself to the Quran and the Sunna to build up her own religious knowledge in this regard. Zein Al-Din faced up to the task of reviewing those interpretations and opinions of scholars on which society relied in isolating and despising women, particularly after they had been turned into the folk wisdom of established culture. Different views were exposed to her revision and to the revision of some inclusive scholars. Zein Al-Din founded her opinions on realising a just status for women around a group of key statements (Amani Saleh et al 2001, 66-68): Firstly, that the renaissance of Muslim women would not be realised without the renaissance of Islam, and that the emancipation of women is dependent on the emancipation of the Quran and true Sunna, in principles, spirit and text, from the prison of rigid readings which have been attached to them arbitrarily and mistakenly. Secondly, that the cause of women is dependent on the break up of the culture of tyranny and subjugation. Thirdly, that the road to religious and in particular social reform, is via the cause of women through works of religion and mind and by activating them together in rational works in religion.

Nabawiya Musa responded to male opinions that legitimised gender differences as natural with religious embellishments, arguing that the difference did not go

beyond reproductive role. She wrote in 1939 in her book “Women and Work” (Hilal 1998, 67):

“Males and females do not differ except in their reproductive role. If it were true that the natural instincts of a she cat were different those of a tom cat, then it would be correct to say that men and women are different in their mental capacities. But to date no scientist has yet claimed that a she cat likes to jump or play or hunt mice while a tom cat is characterised by seriousness and composure, and does not harm mice or try to steal meat... Men say that their bodies are bigger, their muscles are stronger, and the size of their brain is larger. They conclude from this a variety of differences unconcerned with natural laws. Yet while a bull is larger in body than a cow, it is not better in any sphere connected to intelligence.”

Amina Al-Said, who opposed the interpretations legitimising the subordination of women, also agrees with this perspective, since she argued that Islam was the biggest social revolution in women’s history. It attempted to turn the degraded state of women head over heels, recognised complete rights for women, armed them with economic independence in its widest meaning, and liberated them from the guardianship of men in everything connected to fundamental rights... Indeed it called for her participation in arranging affairs of religion and politics. (Al-Said 1967)

By contrast, the Moroccan Farida Binani has followed from the mid 1980s until the present day a method resembling that of Nazira Zein Al-Din (1998), the methodology she proposed in 1928, when she presented her new feminist interpretations of Islam rejecting the classical male interpretations, and an attempt to find humanist and egalitarian formulae which support her feminist-Islamic theory. Farida Binani sees the essential need to reconsider Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and to deal with it “as a reading” from a particular perspective. Binani argues: “If we truly considered jurisprudence, we would see that it is only reasoning to understand the Sharia texts and interpret them, which any individual is able to discuss. Likewise any human scholarly interpretation comes from the creativity of the human mind... Every reading is profane... This is what a number of scholars emphasise, whether at the beginning of their writing or at the end.” (Binani 1993, 23)

According to Binani, the issue is latent in giving an alternative historical explanation to hegemonic jurisprudence in favour of men, and in fixing a conceptual framework that does not depend on the question of what are the rights of women in Islam or what is the status of women, or what are the

differences between them and men, but goes beyond this to break up the authority producing the male interpretation of religious texts. This is what Fatima Mernissi proposes in her book "The Political Harem" (2002) where she reviews part of the Prophet's hadith which diminish the value of women to vessels bearing interests, and bearing a male bias of some transmitters such as Abu Bakra. There is no doubt that an idea such as this found a tenacious challenge from the traditional orthodox intellectuals. Yet it also influenced many Arab intellectuals of the necessity to ground feminist thought within an Arab and Islamic social context.

Leila Ahmad emphasises in her book "Women and Gender in Islam" (Ahmad 1992) that the subordinate perspective on women, and their seclusion and veiling is not part of Islam, but derives from the appropriation of the customs of some of the peoples with whom the Arabs mixed after they had joined the Islamic states. Fatima Mernissi agrees with Ahmad that the oppression of women is the product of historical rather than religious conditions, which often derive from the dominance of some of the Caliphs who belonged to cultures that had oppressed women before Islam, such as Omar Bin Al-Khattab, or from the personal interests of some of the transmitters of the hadith, such as Abu Bakra, who is known for relating many of hadith which belittle the value of women.

The works of Leila Ahmad and Fatima Mernissi have highlighted that the problem is not inherent in Islam as a religion *per se*, but in both its biased patriarchal interpretation, and the effects created by colonialism. Leila Ahmad reveals how colonialism exploited feminist concepts in its attacks on the culture of the Islamic world in order to legitimise its attack of this world. In this context, Ahmad criticises the call of Qasim Amin at the end of the nineteenth century for the emancipation of women, considering that it also carries with it a concealed demand for the adoption of Western culture (ibid, 152-153). She adds: "Neither Islam nor Arab culture are the critical issue. Rather it is only those laws and customs existing in Arab Islamic societies, which express exploitative, patriarchal interests and an indifference or even hatred of women. The issue in essence is a just and humane treatment for women, neither more nor less. This is not an issue of the good points of Islam or Arab or Western culture." (ibid, 167-168)

Ahmad disagrees with those feminists who call for a confrontation with Islamic culture or local culture, and draws her arguments from the experience of Western feminism. According to what she sees, there is no call for opposing cultural and religious issues. She observes how Western women suffered

similarly for centuries of male domination and social wrong. Nonetheless, to date no one has suggested that the only option for western women is to rid themselves of Western culture and to adopt another culture. Thus she asks: Why then do we suppose that the only option open to Arab women is inherently to get rid of Arab culture and adopt Western culture?

The discussion of Leila Ahmad comes as a response to the accusations thrown at the Arab feminist movement that it is a product of the colonial intervention in the Arab and Islamic worlds. This is to say that it is tainted with collaboration with the modes of thought that have worked to oppress these worlds. Yet Ahmad's demand, which rejects the impulse to put the Arab feminist movement in polar opposition with those calling for authenticity and a maintenance of heritage, is an idealist's demand unsupported by reality. Splitting between feminist demands on the one hand, and cultural and religious issues and the related questions of authenticity on the other is an impossible division. Raja Bahloul observes that while there was a clear path by which the western feminist movement and western culture passed without a clash, such a course is not open to feminists in the Arab world: "Western societies have passed through the modern era and the era of Enlightenment which overcame many ideas and feudal and old aristocratic traditions. When feminist thought began to appear in the West, Western women were living in a culture that had many of the necessary concepts which gave it legitimacy, such as rationalism, equality, freedom and individualism. It was not possible for anyone to accuse women of cultural rebellion when they demanded equality or humane treatment. Hilal explains that the difference between the conditions of the Arab and Western feminist movements lies in the fact that many of the concepts and beliefs which govern relations between men and women in the Arab world remain entrenched, and belong to the pre-modern era. Their claims continue to sustain and incite the protests which enjoy a wide audience. They stand fully prepared to fight the feminist demands with cultural and religious arms, regardless of whether these are based on mistaken interpretations of religion and cultural heritage or otherwise." (Bahloul 1998, 139-140)

Similarly, the writer Anwar Majid suggested in his article "The Politics of Feminism in Islam" (Majid 1998) that Arab women should not rely on western philosophy in their attempts to challenge prevailing theories that have accumulated in the twentieth century, but should create a liberatory model that is authentic to Islamic history and the Quran as a means of creating a revolutionary Islamic feminism. Majid argues that the process of authenticating feminism within a local Islamic context should be wary of falling into westernisation, since the reliance of feminist thought on external

foundations leads to the feeling among the majority of people in Arab and Islamic society that it is thought that is imported and imposed. This feeling leads to them enclosing themselves around prevailing ideas, rather than being open to new ones.

Majid proposes to overcome this notion of westernisation by an indigenous approach which goes beyond both traditional Muslim thinkers in Islamic thought and Western feminist theories. However, Majid does not solve the problems, but rather makes them more complicated. This is especially in light of globalisation and the changes that accompany it on a local level, and which make it extremely difficult to isolate the local from the external or to control without others the values a society wants.¹⁰

The approach of both Mernissi and Majid have provoked the resentments of a number of cultural critics, since they focus on a unilateral analysis which makes the link between religion and its patriarchal readings and the low status of women without looking at the effect of economic conditions or the mode of production on women. This prompted Halim Barakat to observe that the approach of Mernissi is one that ignores economic factors, or the mode of production, or the role which tribes and families play in their relationship with women's status (Barakat 2004, 261). Suad Joseph (Joseph 1998) meanwhile criticises Anwar Majid for his drift into essentialist generalisations, where he talks of "Islam" or "Islamic governments" and ignores the differences within these categories, and explains all cultural behaviour in the Middle East, in all its varieties, according to "Islam."

Social Dynamic Analysis

A number of social scientists who work on gender disparities in Arab society have reflected that a narrow focus on the religious or cultural factor without seriously considering economic or social factors is wrong methodologically since it gives this oppression static, essentialised foundations. Halim Barakat points out that research on women's status which revolves around a religious perspective on her social role, and which does not take into consideration social factors, the mode of production, or the role of culture or the modern state in producing gender differences, remains as an interpretation of Arab women's status vulnerable and incomplete, tending either towards idealism or

¹⁰ It is also worth observing that globalisation has led both to the reduction of distances and the transformation of the world into a global village, but also to strengthen the tendency towards the local and self-enclosure. This finds clear expression in the increase in religious bigotry and national chauvinism. Thus a picture of women almost naked in the images of video clips can be seen next to images of veiled women. It is worth pointing out that the process of globalisation is also accompanied, as described by the sociologist Zigmund Bauman (Bauman 2000) by a contrary process of "localisation", clinging to authenticity which has transformed women into its embodiment in spirit and body.

caricature. Instead of this, he proposes a methodology of social dynamics in order to understand the status of Arab women. This would go on to consider the overall system, the division of labour, participation in production and in positions in the social structure as independent variables, and that culture, from religious heritage, customs and traditions, and personal inclinations as dependent variables, or a superstructure of legitimisation and hegemony, of which the subordinate status of Arab women is the product. (Barakat 2004, 251-260)

This part of the research depends on the dynamic methodology which Halim Barakat proposed. In so depending, we will review a number of the factors which we believe are of central importance to understanding the status of Arab women. They are as follows: the patriarchal system and patriarchal family structure, the division of labour and the *a posteriori* creation of social spheres such as the division between public and private, policies of subordinating the body and monitoring it through behavioural codes, customs, traditions and legitimising values, including those of religion, which legitimise the patriarchal system, and the role of the state, considered as a patriarchal institution which legitimises the subordination of women by engendering citizenship.

Patriarchal System – Historical Overview

A number of anthropologists have followed the development of the patriarchal system in Arab society from the pre-Islamic era to the present day. William Robertson-Smith was among the pioneers of historical anthropology in this sphere. In his book, “Family and Marriage in the Lands of Ancient Arabia”, which was published over a century ago, he pointed to the wide prevalence of a matriarchal system among the ancient Arabs of the Southern Arabian peninsula. Robertson-Smith based his theory on a group of historical documents and archaeological remains on the history of the ancient Arabs in the Southern Arabian peninsula, to point out the importance of women and their status. Robertson-Smith made a link between the matriarchal system and totemism, since he believed that totemic societies were matrilineal rather than patrilineal societies, and the worship of animals, plants and natural images was known among a number of Arab tribes. For instance, we notice that many tribes related themselves to their totems, such as Bani Hilal (“Sons of the Crescent”), Bani Shams (“Sons of the Sun”), and Bani Badr (“Sons of the Full Moon”). It is also noticeable that Arabic differs from many languages in that it treats many natural phenomena as feminine, such as sun, sky, earth, water, peace, tribe, state, people, and government. The goddess Manat was worshipped by the tribes Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj, while the Thaqif tribe worshipped the goddess

Al-Lat. These goddesses borrowed their femininity from the belief of the Arabs that they were the daughters of God. Similarly, some Arab philologists observe that Al-Lat is the feminine form of Allah. Researchers indicate the remains of matrilineality through noting that the expression “umma” (people) derives from “umm” (mother), and that the tent was always the property of the woman and not the man, meaning that it was the man who would come to it/her. (Al-Haidari 2003, 243-244)

G. A. Wilkins noted in his book “Matriarchy Among the Arabs” that for a long time the ancient Arabs did not have a real father for any of their sons. This was because of the wide prevalence of communal marriage and the spread of the matriarchal system (Al-Haidari 2003, 231). Hadi Al-Alawi adds that the Arabian Peninsula was known in its pre-Islamic past for its “primitive communism” in a number of aspects, and especially in its collective ownership of women. This remained in a number of forms of marriage¹¹ which continued until the arrival of the Islamic system (Al-Alawi 1995, 10-11). Zahir Hattab points out that the transition from the hunter gatherer stage to animal husbandry helped to spread new social relations based on collective ownership, since property belonged to the tribe as a whole. This ownership developed until it became centralised in the hands of the head of the tribe by virtue of his position and authority. Through this the social structure developed and with it fathers became real fathers. Due to the collective ownership of the means of production, there arose marriage between cousins in order to keep the inheritance within the family, and keep affiliation within the tribe itself. (Hattab 1980, 18)

Ibrahim Al-Haidari observes that pre-Islam Arab women enjoyed a certain level of freedom, since they were able to expose their face while covering their hair, and they could travel alone with men. Similarly, women had a cultural status, since they were poets and sages and soothsayers, and it was one of women’s duties to host people when her family were not present. In addition, they would share supporting warriors at war, providing them with moral support. (ibid, 233)

Despite the fact that the prevalence of forms of matriarchy among the Arab tribes pre-Islam does not indicate that this was the dominant model among

11 The Arabs knew a number of different forms of marriage including *Istida'* marriage which connected a married woman to another man from a healthy and courageous family in order to produce children that would have his attributes. Additionally, the Arabs knew *muta'* marriage and *musharika* marriage. The child born to a *musharika* marriage took the name of his father who was decided by the midwife. The Arabs also knew *maft* marriage. This was when the eldest son married the wife of his deceased father if she was not his mother. Similarly *badal* marriage was widespread. This was when a man would say to another, “give me your wife and I will give you my wife.” This marriage would occur via an exchange of wives without a brideprice. (For further information, see Al-Haidari 2003, 233-34)

all the Arab tribes in reality. Some Arab tribes were distinguished by their males' dominance and by the low and inferior status of their women. In many Arab tribes different forms of women slaves and servants existed, whom were captives through war or purchased. Similarly, some men would pawn their daughters and wives in exchange for loans which they took from debtors. In addition, many of the Arab tribes denied females any inheritance, and the female was even considered in times of economic difficulty to be a burden, and they would bury her alive at birth, since they thought of her as unfruitful and an economic drain. (ibid) With the revelation of Islam and the dissemination of new social practices, a number of practices which diminished the value of women, such as the burying of female babies, were brought to an end. Yet at the same time the remnants of the matriarchal system were also brought to an end, and a group of laws were instituted based on the customs in certain patriarchal tribes, granting guardianship to men. (Al-Alawi 1996, 35)

Men's guardianship of women gained its legal mandate in Islam via Verse 34 of the Sura of the Women: "Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and as to those whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great." This was read by interpreters to mean that guardianship was to be the speciality of men due to their superiority over women in mind, resolution, decisiveness, insight, strength, holy struggle (*jihad*), fasting, prayer, prophecy, the Caliphate, Imamhood, calling to prayer, sermons, marriage and divorce. Similarly, they carried the names and they had the beards and the turbans. Interpreters saw these privileges as manifestations of legitimate male guardianship and its provisions, and manifestations of nature and its provisions, supposing them to be the origin of male authority and its justification. (Al-Alawi 1996, 35)

The Patriarchal System in Contemporary Arab Society

The Palestinian sociologist Hisham Shirabi hypothesises in his book "Patriarchy and the Problematic of *Takhalluf* ("Backwardness") in Arab Society" that: "The structures of patriarchy in Arab society have not been replaced or updated over the course of the last hundred years. Rather they have become more deeply rooted as fraudulent modern forms. Thus the Arab Awakening or Renaissance which the nineteenth century witnessed was not only incapable of fragmenting the forms of patriarchy and its intervening relations, but rather it shored them up, through the so-called modern awakening, to provide solid

grounds on which to produce a new and faulty kind of culture/society, or the novel patriarchal culture/society, many examples of which can be seen in our own time.” (Shirabi 1987, 22) Thus the patriarchal structure of society remained according to the Egyptian researcher Shireen Abu Al-Naja, focusing its essential subordinating gaze towards women as a body. For Abu Al-Naja, the manifestations of modernity in terms of dress and women going out to work and study have not changed the reality of women’s position, nor society’s modes of thinking (Abu Al-Naja 2003, 11).

Hisham Shirabi reflects that patriarchy is entrenched within all Arab social structures, and thus throughout society as a whole. Thus it is not only the Arab family, but Arab society that can be characterised as a pyramidal, patriarchal society, wherein a patriarchal society is built on the father’s control of the family. His concerns are the concerns of society. The father is the axis around which the family is organised, both naturally and nationally, since the relationship between a father and his children, like between a ruler and ruled, is a pyramidal relationship. The will of the father in both contexts is absolute. This is expressed in a family and in society with a kind of silent consensus, built on obedience and oppression (Shirabi 1987, 22).

Suraya Torki and Hoda Zureik trace patriarchy and its hegemony back to the male desire to “control” the female body, due to its role in the reproductive process, and the male desire to guarantee the production of new members of the collective who will continue the bloodline of their fathers. Suraya Torki and Hoda Zureik point out that: “If a woman’s body is the vehicle for bringing new members to renew the family and ensure its continuation, and if the family is the basic building block of a society which depends on patrilineal ties to mark boundaries between one family and the next, then protecting the body of a woman and treating it as though it was the property of her husband is the only way of guaranteeing that the boundaries between families are not trespassed, and the only way of safeguarding the family as the unit of social formation, or of distributing wealth, power or social status. Therefore protecting this body is the responsibility of the family as a whole.” (Torki and Zureik, 1994)

The Arab Family as a Unit of Social Reproduction

According to Halim Barakat, the family forms the nucleus of the patriarchal social structure. It forms a unit of social production, and in addition, it is patriarchal since it is centred on the authority and responsibility of the father. It is pyramidal, where the father sits at the top of the pyramid, and the division of labour and the allocation of roles is made on the basis of gender and age. (Barakat 2004)

Arab and orientalist researchers have termed the Arab family an “extended family”¹², or a “patriarchal” or “patrilineal” family, since it has a tendency for marriage between relatives and permits polygamy.

Halim Barakat defines the extended family as a family that in general has three generations all living under the same roof, the husband and wife, and their children, together with the parents of the husband and perhaps even his siblings or other relatives. This produces an interlocking mesh of relationships, interests and property. By contrast, the nuclear family is a small family where only the husband and wife and their children live together under the same roof. (Barakat 2000, 385-388)

The notion of family (the word for family in Arabic, *a'ila*, is derived from the verb *a'la*, *yu'ilu* which means “to help”) indicates relations of assistance and mutual dependency, and it reflects the economic role of the family. Another word for family in Arabic is “*usra*”. Zahir Hatab observes its similarity to the verb “*azara*” (to support) and links the word to the notion of mutual assistance. In both cases, the meaning points to a mutual obligation in different spheres, and to relations of cooperation and mutual trust. (ibid, 363)

Samir Abdu argues that the Arab family is characterised by the pivotal role of the father, his assiduous and stern supervision of his children, young and old, and his governance of their most intimate affairs, including even their choice of friends. Accordingly, it is embedded in Arab consciousness that obeying one's parents is one of the most important pillars for happiness within the family. The obedient son or daughter is a source of pride, while the rebellious child is a source of shame. Abdu adds that the process of being raised in a family affirms in many different ways the nurturing of feelings of family belonging. From childhood, the individual is taught loyalty and zeal for the family, and the belief that its interests should come first, and that his or her own interests and wishes must submit to the wishes of the family. (Abdu 1985, 8-9)

The role of the family was particularly central in the villages, due to the agricultural mode of production which depended on shared family labour in the field, and due to the restricted sphere of the village, which was often in fact formed by an extended family, who would all know and be attached to each other, and would sometimes interfere in each others' business to maintain a firm oversight of individuals. The village knew individuals' manners and movements and would elaborate interpretations for them, which could lead to attitudes of disdain and enmity. Accordingly, family and ethical problems

12 Regarding the changes in the structure of the extended family, see Torki and Zureik, 1994.

would develop, the worst of which were revenge attacks and blood feuds. (ibid, 10-11) Within the family frame, as a duty of membership, the individual is not only responsible for his own personal behaviour, but also for the behaviour of all the other members of the family. Thus the behaviour of a young woman behaving in a manner considered unacceptable, did not merely harm the girl, but also reflected negatively on all the other members of the family, and harmed them deeply. It is in this context that Halim Barakat suggests that we should understand honour crimes: "Since they are, in these situations, a desperate attempt on the part of the family to regain their honour within the small community to which they belong, such as the neighbourhood or the village." Similarly, it is possible to understand crimes of revenge, since every member of the family of the killer is considered responsible for the killing, and not the killer alone. Thus if the killer disappears, his crime can be transferred onto any other member of his family. (Barakat 2000, 363)

The Arab family is distinguished by the fact that it is a pyramid based on gender and age. Halim Barakat argues that the subordination of the younger members and the subordination of women are the pillars of an Arab patriarchal family. In this regard, we see that a girl's marriage is a family matter more than it is a personal matter. Accordingly, marriage among paternal cousins is predominant, whereas a marriage between individuals from different religious groups continues to be a very rare event. Tradition does not allow girls to bring up or speak frankly with their families on the subject of marriage. Tradition stipulates, according to Samir Abdu, that it is the family of the groom, and not the family of the bride, who act to choose a suitable bride for their son. Abdu adds: "Upon marriage, a young woman becomes the property of her husband. He enjoys her, and treats her as he wishes, and utilises her in service and in service of his parents and brothers and sisters... The culture of village society used to look at women as though she was something for purchase, or for bodily ownership. For her husband, she is effectively a receptacle for him to satiate his sexual desires and sow his seed. Thus, she is a servant who takes care of the household tasks and carries out the demands of her husband and his family." (ibid)

Similarly, Nawal Al-Saadawi likens the relations between men and women within the patriarchal system to the master-slave relationship, since they occur on the basis of men's domination over women as completely as a master dominates a slave. Al-Saadawi writes (Al-Saadawi 1974, 110): Men buy women with their dowry, and the marriage contract documents in its very first clause that the wife is the property of her husband. She is obliged to be completely obedient. If she were to defy him, complain, fall ill, or grow feeble, then the

man can sell her with his inalienable right to divorce. Al-Saadawi (ibid, 167) adds that the emancipation of women is only part of the emancipation of the whole of society from the capitalist system.

The situation of Arab women is increasingly complicated by the synergy between patriarchy and tribalism and their moral codes, which distinguishes it from the forms of patriarchy familiar to feminist intellectuals in the West. While patriarchy is taken to mean the organisation of social life around the father, with him at the centre of the organisation, tribalism goes beyond this structure so that the head of the tribe becomes the central figure and loyalty to the tribe becomes the most important value. Therefore issues of marriage and divorce go far beyond being internal affairs which only concern the immediate family and become a topic that concerns the whole tribe. Abdallah Al-Ghadhami observes that in Arab society the tribe forms an ontological discipline which extends beyond its role in organising individuals' social life to transform their thought processes.¹³ Thus we can see that some Arab societies have not been able to relinquish the tribe and tribalism even in their state-society relations. For instance, in Yemen, the tribe continues to enjoy a power that is sometimes superior to that of the state, and to challenge the central authority in Sana. (Barakat 2000, 359)

In recent years, the patriarchal family in Arab society has been exposed to a number of transformations. These have led to changes such as women going out for paid work, internal and external migration, increases in the levels of education and decreases in illiteracy rates, as well as the direct consequences left by the processes of globalisation, and changes in those local values connected to the traditional family and its role. The researchers Soraya Torki and Hoda Zureik have observed the value changes in Arab families and their relationship to political and economic developments. Their study shows an increasing liberation in some aspects of the lives of women and youths corresponding to the feminist and secular changes for the Arab family, which have led to a tangible and instant transformation in the universe of values. This has led to a shift in the family model from work based on hereditary occupations to paid labour and the possibility of earning an independent income, and to the transformation of the family from an extended family to a nuclear family, which has led to a reconfiguration of social values from the collective to individualist.

¹³ Abdallah Al-Ghadhami argues that Arabs are unable to conceive of reality except within the metaphor of the tribe, since it is the fundamental organisational unit of Arab life and thought. See: Abdallah Al-Ghadhami, "The Tribe as an Ontological Category" *Al-Hayat Newspaper*, 21 April 1997; see also: Barakat 2000, 358-359)

Similarly, there has been a change in the notions relating to women and their bodies. The separation between women and men has begun to collapse due to the increase in women going out to work and study, and the notion of modesty (“*hishma*”) has begun to be exposed to some changes resulting from the direct interaction of the two sexes. Nonetheless, the concept of honour (“*sharaf*”), strictly tied to the sexual respectability of women, remains a central tenet in the prevailing social values, and it seems that it has been the value least affected by the structural changes. (Torki and Zureik 1994)

Barakat observes that the participation and consultation and incidental changes that have occurred within the family are increasing the democratic relations within Arab families at present. However, he admits that phenomena such as these continue to be limited when compared with the ambitions of the younger generations. And many examples of preferential treatment or discrimination or domination on the basis of gender and age continue to be firmly rooted in many aspects of daily life, and particularly in issues of inheritance and the provision of work opportunities. (Barakat 2000, 383)

Constructing the Social Sphere and Subjugating the Body

The male patriarchal system is founded on the construction of a gendered division of social spheres. It is constructed through the division of the social sphere into the public sphere, a male domain, and the private sphere, a female domain. Michelle Rosaldo (Rosaldo 1974) argues that the social sphere is split in two, into the public sphere, which is connected to the world of men, and the private sphere, which is connected to women. Rosaldo argues that this binary division is worldwide, and it forms a cultural tool for organising relations between the two sexes. Rosaldo defines the private sphere as those “minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organised immediately around one or more mothers and their children.” (Rosaldo 1974, 37) By contrast, Rosaldo defines the public sphere as the activities, institutions, and partnerships which link, organise, arrange, and classify groups of mothers and children.

The intellectual Hassan Hanafi discusses that this division is more severe in traditional societies. Hanafi writes the following: “In traditional conservative societies women live caught between absence and presence: complete absence during the day, and a prominent presence at night. In public life, women are absent from morning to evening. They do not move around the roads, they do not attend meetings, they do not speak in debates. Their voice and their presence, indeed their existence is a source of shame. It is better to wish death for them than to wish for them life. They are the source of shame for society,

and its point of weakness, and they have been a source of temptation (for their artifice is great) for its men, from Eve who tempted Adam and caused him to be expelled from the Garden of Eden, to the mistresses of the night and peddlers of desire who thwart the propriety of men, male innocence, and the patience of saints. This is the old inherited duality between *al-thahir* and *al-batin*, between the revealed and the concealed. Men are the manifest revealed, and women the hidden concealed. The remaining familiar linguistic polarities follow on from this, such as: *haqiqa* (fact) v. *majaz* (metaphor), *muhakkam* (arbiter) v. *mutashabih* (suspect), *mubin* (explication) v. *mujmal* (summary), *mutlaq* (free) v. *muqayyad* (bounded), *amm* (public) v. *khass* (private), *amr* (authority) v. *nahi* (prohibition) etc.” (Hanafi 2004)

Fatima Mernissi uses the polar division between the public and the private to illustrate the status of women in the Islamic world. Mernissi declares the world of the *umma*, the Islamic community to be the public sphere of the masculine, as against the private world of the home, which is the sphere of the feminine. According to Mernissi, the world of the Islamic community is characterised by the fact that it is the world of power and religion, whereas the domestic world is the world of sex and the family. It is this polar division which determines who has power and who rules.

Mernissi traces the polarity of the world of the *umma* or the public world, and the private women’s world in Islamic societies back to a certain vision of women’s sexual desires. She goes back to the classical religious vision which was established by religious thinkers with patriarchal inclinations, such as Al-Ghazali¹⁴, in order to show that society saw women as a being who is unable to satiate her sexual appetite, and accordingly, who needs to be watched over closely and kept isolated. Mernissi considers that this vision marked the image of women and was a source of their oppression. It was not a product of the Islam that the Prophet Mohammed had envisaged, but the product

14 We can discern Al-Ghazali’s image of women from the following text: “Without exaggeration, it is universally said in the literature on women, that she should be the base at the heart of her house, stuck by her spindle. Her going out should not be frequent. She should speak little to her neighbours. She should not visit them except on necessary occasions. She should remember her husband in his absence, and seek his happiness in all her affairs, and not betray him in soul or possession. She should not make a friend of her house without his permission, and when she goes out with his permission then she should be concealed in old clothes, and she should seek empty places rather than busy streets and markets. She should be wary that a stranger might hear her voice, or get to know her personally. She should not make a friend of her husband’s acquainted with her needs, rather she should deny to anyone who thinks that she knows him, and he knows her. Her concern should be the righteousness of her business, and the management of her house, devoted towards her prayers and fasting. If a friend of her husband’s asks to enter at her door, and her husband is not present, she should not admit him, and she should not even respond to him verbally, out of concern for herself and her husband. She should be content with her husband and with what God has given her. She should give his rights priority over her rights and the rights of her relatives. She should be pure in herself, ready at all times for him to enjoy her if he wishes. She should take care of her children, keeping guard over them, and she should be short of tongue in cursing her children or answering her husband back.” (Cited in: Oferfar 1996, 91)

of subsequent male interpretations. (Al-Mernissi 2001, 15-16) Mernissi also observes that societies which segregate women and monitor them closely imagine, inherently, that women's role is "active." While those societies which do not practise such surveillance of women and do not impose regulations limiting their behaviour, consider her to be "passive."

However, the public-private binary split has since the 1980s begun to face a lot of criticism. In this regard, Judith Butler points out the need for caution in using this polarity, since, despite the way formal politics – i.e. politics over the public institutions that are able to take decisions concerning society – worked until the not so distant past to exclude women, we find that women were always participants in the non-formal political work done behind the social or familial veil, and formed important factors in the process of political development (such as helping activists, organising fundraising campaigns, or even guiding the activities of some politicians and leaders from behind the scenes). Accordingly, despite the model of gender segregation, we find that the women of the Middle East were close to political power. Fundamentally, this goes back to the use of many indirect methods to get beyond their segregation. (Tucker 1993)

Similarly, Shireen Abu Al-Naja considers that the split between the public and the private both was and remains a patriarchal tool which relies on distancing the private from the course of social discussions, and depicting it as a mode of habitation, whose events are hidden, and a place of emotions, excitement, and the place of family and property. By contrast, the public is ascribed as the place of disclosure and rationality, of decision-making and of state. Therefore, Abu Al-Naja sees the need to challenge this categorisation. She uses feminist novels to point out the presence of the public within the private sphere, and vice versa. In her book "The Concept of Homeland in the Thought of Arab Women Writers," she suggests that when women write about their homeland, they start from their own personal lives, or from the private sphere, in order to break down the chimeric boundaries standing between them and the public sphere. (Abu Al-Naja 2003)

Abu Al-Naja refers us to women's novels about the nation, such as those of Ahlam Mustaghanimi, Saher Khalifa, Hanan Al-Sheikh, and Fadwa Tuqan, and she asks: How should women writers rethink the uncontested division between the public and the private? She argues that this is through a synthesis of the public and private to form a new space, or rather an old space newly highlighted. (Abu Al-Naja 2003, 18-22)

In addition to this, the division between the private world and the public world is a cause of mistrust, especially in societies that are politically oppressed, such as Palestinian society, Iraqi society, Irish society or Palestinian society in Israel. Accordingly, the feminists who criticised the public-private polarity supported the idea that the private or personal is public, because it is problematic politically. The methodical practices of authority lead to the dissolution of the boundaries between the public and the private, and to the mixing of the two spheres, especially in light of the politicisation of the private sphere and its expropriation. Among the many issues that could illustrate this is the subject of citizenship and delimiting who is granted citizenship according to ethnicity. For example, the Jewish Israeli state limits for its citizens who can become their life partner by refusing to grant citizenship to the husband or wife or children who descend, either themselves or their parents, from Palestinian origins outside of Israel. The Arab woman or man in Israel married to someone from the West Bank is exposed to legal prosecution, to the extent that their spouse can be subject to expulsion from the house in the middle of the night. In this regard, the State plays a role which is not insignificant in politicising the private and transforming it into the public. Indeed it portrays it as an ultimate form of the public. Similarly, there is no doubt that in the liberty and legitimacy of the practices which the National Insurance Institute undertakes, where it investigates bedrooms in order to see whether a married couple is living together, are among the ugliest forms of the expropriation of the private.

In addition to this, the division between the public and the private is a class-ridden concept of the first order. Generally, the women of the poorer classes would go out to work, whether in factories or in houses, while the women who remained at home would be those women who had sufficient economic support to be spared working outside of the house. There is no doubt that the structural changes through which Arab societies are presently living have led to an instability in the division between the public and private. Yet they have not negated this ontological division which links between the public and men, and the private and women, nor the religious and subordinating roots which exist for this split.

The Male Cultural Store: Honour and Reputation

The issue of women's sexual behaviour is considered to be one of the most problematic topics, since sex is considered to be sacred. Accordingly, in Arabic slang, a woman is called "*hurma*" (inviolable), which means she who is prohibited to men other than her husband. It is from here that we get the word "*hareem*" which refers to the female sex in general.

Similarly, a group of associated values around the female body, such as “*sharaf*” (honour-dignity), “*ard*” (honour-good reputation), “*ar*” (shame-disgrace), “*ayb*” (shame-shortcoming), and “*hashma*” (modesty), form a base of reference for social behaviour, and are employed as mechanisms acting directly on and through women’s bodies, and aiming to construct gender relations, and to determine social behaviour for both genders. Women carry a group of linguistic signifiers which serve to sustain their inferiority vis-à-vis men. Sex represents a key field for defining the behaviour of men and women. Often this is expressed through discussions on the nature of women which use concepts such as “the sanctity of motherhood”, or “pure love”, or “chastity”, or “dignity”, or the sanctity of sexual relations, or conversely notions such as “the artifice of women” and their desires, or considering women the source of all discord.

By contrast, discussions of men’s sexual appetite start from the premise of its power, and from the premise that lasciviousness for men is an unalterable and natural characteristic. Ibn Qiyam Al-Juziya even wrote with reference to polygamy: “Allah has restricted the number of wives to four, and permitted the ownership of an unlimited number of slave girls. This is a mark of his complete grace, of the completeness of his Revelation conforming to wisdom, and of his compassion and welfare. Marriage is demanded for all to quench their desires. But there are some people who are dominated by their carnal appetite, and for whom one woman is insufficient. Thus Allah has permitted them to marry a second, and then a third and then a fourth.” (Al-Haidari 2003, 279)

As opposed to the overpowering sexual image of men, women are required to protect their bodies, because essentially these are the property of men. They are forbidden from revealing their body before marriage, or in the context of relationships that are socially illegitimate. Women who step outside the social construction of their passive role are exposed to punishment. The values of honour, reputation and virginity are key values in affirming the status of men and women.

Peter Dodd (Dodd 1973, 40) observes that one can understand most organisational forms within the Arab family through understanding the concept of “*ard*” (honour) as the value of social surveillance and for legitimising the patriarchal structure of the Arab family. Dodd reflects that “*ard*” is a social value that predates Islam, rather than a product of it, and it is a value that has lasted to the present day. *Ard* is usually translated into English as “honour”, though this translation has provoked reservations among some specialists. For instance, Ahmad Abu Zeid (Abu Zeid 1965, 256) has argued that translating *ard* into English as “honour” is problematic because the English word honour

is closer in meaning to the Arabic “*sharaf*” than it is to the associations of the notion of *ard*. *Ard* is a specific kind of *sharaf*, a kind of honour that is only affected by the sexual behaviour of women. Accordingly, it is a value that one can only lose; one cannot gain or regain it. By contrast, *sharaf* is linked to the behaviour of men and women, and neither one of them is spared of its obligations. Moreover, it is usually a value that can be acquired. Certain behaviours or important successes can bring *sharaf* to someone, can be an honour to him; while it is only possible to lose *ard* through improper behaviour by women. Moreover, when *ard* has been lost, it cannot be regained.

Lila Abu Lughod argues that *sharaf*/honour is both an ontological and a behavioural code, since it has mental and practical attributes. In its first aspect, it is an order of values, definitions, symbols, and concepts which define and explain the phenomenon. In its second aspect, it guides and motivates social action, and organises through concepts, processes and mechanisms surveillance and punishment. One of the most important mechanisms for imposing the social system organised around honour is public surveillance and placing women commonly beyond the gaze of society. There is no doubt that concepts such as “*haki al-nas*” (what will people say) and “*suma*” (reputation) are tools for public surveillance, and are used for punishing women whenever they step beyond the boundaries of propriety. (Abu Lughod 1986)

Yvanna Haddad discusses that men’s *ard* is not connected to the actions of the men themselves, but to their ability to control women and monitor their behaviour. *Ard* is a value extrinsic to men because it is dependent on the behaviour of women in their family, and these women’s preservation of their virginity and modesty. Moreover, the main part of women’s role in preserving the family’s *ard*, is in not doing something; it is only concerned with preserving her virginity. (Haddad 1980, 51) Yet according to Kitty Warnock, men do not even grant women respect for successfully preserving the family *ard*, since it is understood as given that they should. (Warnock 1990, 23-24) Abu Zeid distinguishes between two kinds of shame, *ar* and *ayb*. He argues that *ar* represents a greater degree of shame than *ayb*. *Ar* is a classical Arab concept connected to violating the restrictions on sexual behaviour on the part of the woman, with consequences ensuing for the individual and the group. By contrast, acts of *ayb* are confronted by an immediate response towards the individual that perpetrated them, without affecting the whole group, which is satisfied by rebuke and reproach, and which aims to ward the individual away from his or her action. (Abu Zeid 1965, 246) Acts that flagrantly step beyond the socially determined behaviour for women in all spheres connected to the sexual act are “*ar*”, and are met with a harsh, violent response, that sometimes

goes as far as actual death, killings known as honour crimes, or symbolic death, such as confining the woman to the house, not letting her out, or physically beating her.

Honour crimes have been defined as: “the killing of an innocent (female) soul due to social concepts, which differ from one society to the next, and from one period to the next, and which sanctify the connection between honour and women, and the purity of their conduct from any suspect or illegitimate relationship with a man, which would justify the killing of the female, to wash away the shame (*ar*) and protect the so-called honour.” (Zaghaba 1998, 1)

In 2003 a number of honour crimes happened in Jordan, such as when a man stabbed his daughter twenty-five times, killing her because she had refused to tell him where she had been during a three week period away from the house. In 2002, a man killed his sister after he saw her “talking to a strange guy at a wedding reception.” In 2001, another man killed his sister “after he saw a man leaving her house.” In none of these cases, nor in the scores of “honour” killings like them that have occurred in Jordan over recent years, was the perpetrator sent to prison for more than six months. (Human Rights Watch 2004)

Official global statistics show that in eight out of ten cases of honour killings in traditional societies, the victim is innocent of the allegation made against her. This is revealed by post-mortem autopsies of their bodies, which highlight two shameful facts: first, that the woman was killed while still a virgin; and second, that ignorance still runs rife in these societies. It is clear from official statistics in Jordan that approximately 25 honour killings are recorded in Jordan each year, which represents 25% of all murders committed annually. Moreover, human rights groups and women’s rights groups in Jordan observe that there are many crimes which are neither publicised nor discovered. (ibid)

The meaning of “honour” in society is defined by social interests, which change with the shifts in the balance of power within society. It is the most powerful or the dominant class who define the meaning of society’s interests. Since throughout most periods of history men have been, and remain so today, economically more powerful than women, they have imposed on women a definition of honour that suits them and their interests. The meaning of honour, with regards to women, is almost entirely confined to sexual purity. (Khadar 2002; Al-Zayyat 1993, 166) As a result of this, the contradictions which encapsulate women’s existence are highlighted, in the duality of dealing with her body: on the one hand her body is regarded as impure; and physical relationships outside the institution of marriage are a mortal sin and the

gravest of offences for which she deserves to be reviled. A woman's body has its temporary disturbances of impurity, and yet with that, the body itself enjoys an unparalleled importance. It is surrounded with rites and shrouds. To impinge on it is to impinge on the sanctity of the family, or the tribe, and to violate its honour. Its punishment is death, to cleanse the shame, and done so under the protection of law or with its facilitation. (Khadar 2002)

Nadera Shahloub-Kevourkian offers an interpretation for honour crimes, arguing that they are a kind of sexism since women become murder victims for the simple reason that they are female and no other. Thus femicide is not limited to one society and not others. (Shahloub-Kevourkian 2001) Kevourkian observes that men's claim to propriety over women is the principal cause of violence by men in situations linked to sexual relations. Beyond this, she points out that a number of studies which suggest justifying femicide "in defence of honour" make these crimes extremely resilient, since the justification extends to cover a wide field of problems. Kevourkian suggests giving a new definition to femicide to indicate "all forms of violence which cause perpetual fear among women and girls, a fear that they might be killed in the name of 'honour.'" (ibid, 21) Thus the concept which Kevourkian adopts for femicide indicates the journey which an abused woman embarks upon to the region of death or on the way to death, which covers a wide area, beginning with the feelings of the victim that she is under the threat of being killed and ending with the loss of her life.

Kevourkian divides this region of death into four sectors or types: The first type depends on the victim feeling that she is under the threat of being killed, despite the fact that no verbal or physical act has been done to her. Often a woman who belongs to this sector is fearful of any startled response from her family if they discover that she was the victim of sexual assault or rape, or that she has lost her virginity. The victim here is prepared to take any step, including marriage with the rapist, for a solution without creating a scandal. The second type is when the victim is faced with verbal and non-verbal death threats, such as by brandishing a knife in a threatening manner in front of her. In the third type, a physical act, such as stabbing or strangling, is directed at the young woman, but without it resulting in her death. The fourth type is the actual murder of the victim.

A study done by Kevourkian on Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza showed that the highest proportion of women (as identified by the women themselves) who were threatened with being killed in the name of family honour were women from the villages (18), followed by women from the towns

(9), then the refugee camps (6), and then the Bedouin (1). In another part of the survey, discussing the prevalence of gossip and the spread of rumours, the number of women who expressed the feeling that they were threatened was (9) in the villages, (6) in the towns, (1) from the refugee camps, and (0) from the Bedouin. We also find that the proportion of village women who expressed the feeling that they were under threat was highest (11). It was (5) in the towns, and lowest in both the refugee camps and among the Bedouin (0). (Kevourkian 2001, 42)

The Role of Society in Producing Polar Spheres

“We used to dream of a nation and that we would live, from day to day, by our writing. Then we began to dream that we would not die, from day to day, because of our writing. We used to dream for a nation, we would write and die for it. We began to write for the nation and die in its arms. At the beginning, we used to dream that we would go to the West and come to be famous writers abroad. Today we have become so. Our dream has come to be simply to go home to our nation and as far as possible become nobodies there.”

(Mustaghanami 1996)

“The personal is political.” Such was the call issued by the wave of feminism at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. It came founded on a challenge to social, philosophical and political theories and embarked on deconstructing the image of the state’s political system, and the meaning of a democracy that does not penetrate the exploitative relations on which the personal sphere is built, and the direct impact of the public on the private. This call is urged by Joanne Landes (Landes 1998), professor of history and feminist studies at the University of Pennsylvania, in her feminist book: *Between Public and Private*, which sharply criticises the focus on the Public / State and the neglect of the private sphere, and what is organised within it, obscuring the experiences of women, and preserving power relations within the family. (Abu Al-Naja 2003, 25)

If these protests arose in the West in order to democratise the public and the neglect of the private, in the Arab world they came in order to reveal the intertwining of the exposed Public with the precious private and its suspicious control of it. As Fatima Mernissi observes in her book, “*Fear of Modernity: Islam and Democracy*,” the endorsement of separation, which the fundamentalist movements and the state make for women’s issues, safeguards their interests in times of crisis. Fatima Mernissi writes: “Forbidding interaction between the two sexes, and calling for the separation of men and women as a political means

to combat a crisis, is not something new in Islamic history. Rather it is part of our heritage, of the heritage of the State, and those in opposition who lay claim to the past to deride women are not presenting anything new in this regard. Whenever a Muslim Sultan was suffering from a crisis, or was threatened with famine or popular uprising, he would always begin to implement two measures at the outset of any corrective strategy, to destroy the store of alcoholic drinks, and to ban women from going outside or using the same forms of transport as men." (Mernissi 1994, 195) In her book, "Arab Women and the Male Bias of Authenticity," Mai Ghassoub points to the same problem since women were locked away under calls for cultural independence and authentic identity in the face of the imperial West. (Abu Al-Naja 2003, 26)

When Arab feminists raised the slogan, "the personal is political," they were aware that both the role of the state in organising family relations through the law and constitution and engendering citizenship, and also the actions of the state (or of the political movements of opposition who wish to govern the state, and who are thus states-in-waiting) to inculcate women's nature and to legitimise their subordination through concepts which refashion the notion of authenticity and load it onto the bodies and clothes of women. They take women to symbolise the nation, considering them homologous, and cause the state to be the nightmare of women's emancipation rather than its means of realisation.

The link between women's status and the state has become the subject of much feminist research recently. These studies have observed the importance of linking women's status and their oppression not only to the patriarchal family culture but also to the structural oppression within the state, and the role which state institutions play in consecrating the subordination of women and exalting patriarchal values.

In this regard, Nadia Hijab suggests discussing gender with reference to citizenship in the widest sphere. She suggests developing a more precise analysis and understanding of the principal challenges, and thinking through the perils of the various kinds of resistance which confront attempts to establish gender equality in Arab society. Hijab argues that putting a conceptual framework which focuses on the concept of citizenship constitutes a firm basis to mobilise for change towards empowering women. (Hijab 2002)

Suad Joseph (2002) defines citizenship as those legal measures which delimit the subjects of a state from other states. Joseph adds that these measures reveal the criteria of citizenship, and citizens' rights and duties in relation to the state. Classical thought on citizenship formulates the citizen as an autonomous

individual, neutral of any cultural or gendered perspective. Recent research, however, has highlighted the ongoing means which make the citizenship project a gendered one, whether in its practices or in its texts. As Yoval-Davis (Yoval-Davis 1991, 1993, 1997) points out the notion of neutral citizenship is no more than a myth readily confuted by reality.

The problem of inequality in citizenship forms one of the factors which sanctify the subordination of Arab women, and reflects the paternalism of the state. Thus for example, Arab states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia still deny women the right to vote, and the representation of women in all political bodies in Arab states continues to be lower than in any other region in the world. Despite the fact that the number of female Arab parliamentarians has almost doubled in the past five years since 2000, reaching 6.5% of total deputies whereas it was previously 3.5%, we find that the proportion of Arab women in parliament still falls far short of the global average which currently stands at 15.7% of all members of parliament. (Report of the International Parliamentary Union) The highest numbers of Arab women parliamentarians are in the parliaments of Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan, while this representation is considerably reduced in the Gulf states. On occasion the situation can be reduced to chambers that are solely for men, such as in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.¹⁵ It seems that a gendered citizenship is prevalent in most Arab states, since the laws play a role in legitimising inequalities between the two sexes by justifications resting on the family, religion, history or on other cultural traditions. (Hijab 2003; Joseph 2002) A brief glance at the laws adopted in the Arab world shows glaring discrimination, generally along three fundamental legal axes: the law of citizenship, laws of personal status, and penal codes.

In Lebanon, the citizenship law continues to discriminate between men and women in how it confers citizenship on their descendants. "Every person born to a Lebanese father, wherever he may have been born, will be considered Lebanese." Thus Lebanese law ties itself to paternal blood. Accordingly, a Lebanese mother is not able to confer her citizenship onto her children. Ironically, Lebanese law grants a foreign born mother who has gained Lebanese citizenship the right to confer it on her children under 18 if she lives on after the death of her husband, but it denies this right to a woman of Lebanese origin. In Kuwait, the electoral laws continue to entirely disqualify women from casting their vote in elections, or from running as a candidate for public office. Similarly, in the laws of personal status, the law stipulates that less weight should be attached to the testimony of women before the court. It is the father who

¹⁵ A summary of the report was found at the BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk>, dated 3 March 2005

confers citizenship on his child according to the version of Islamic *Sharia* law implemented in Kuwait. Further, women face discrimination in rulings over divorce and inheritance when implementing the regulations of the personal status law. Women are forbidden from freely marrying under the age of 25, without the consent of their legal guardian, who is usually either their father or one of the judges, and there are restrictions limiting women's rights to marry non-Kuwaitis. Further the minimum age of marriage is different for men and women (17 years for men, and 15 years for women). Polygamy is still permitted and practised, while the legal institutions treat issues of "cleansing shame" with tolerance. Moreover, despite the fact that women have constituted the majority of graduates from Kuwaiti universities since the 1970s, and form about a third of public sector employees in Kuwait, they hold less than 10% of managerial positions. (Arab Women's Assembly 2005)

In Egypt, women are still discriminated against in issues of adultery. The law stipulates that the punishment for an adulterous wife should be imprisonment for a maximum of two years, and this sentence applies wherever the act of adultery took place. Whereas an adulterous husband is punished with a prison sentence of no more than six months, and that specifically in the case when he is caught in the act in his marital bed. Article 237 of the Penal Code states that, "whomever surprises his wife in the midst of an adulterous act, and at that time kills her and the person with whom she was *in flagrante*, will be punished with imprisonment instead of hard labour, whether this is for life or for a temporary period." It is made clear in this article that the husband who catches his wife in the act of adultery enjoys the excuse of extenuating circumstances, whereas the wife who her catches her husband in the same act does not. (ibid)

Differences of class and ethnicity among women in the Arab world lead to fissures in their ranks and an obstacle to any united feminist action towards changing the legal and political status of women within the framework of the state. Since religious, class and ethnic affiliations *inter alia* often play more important roles than gender in determining forms of citizenship, and the degrees to which women benefit from it. Accordingly, we find, for instance, that for women belonging to the ruling class their class interests prevail over their interests as women, and they align their loyalties with men from their class or religion or family, preferring these loyalties to solidarity with other women. (Hijab 2003; Yoval-Davis 1997)

Hence we can summarise this section by saying that Arab women live in the shadow of a comprehensively patriarchal society where the family forms the nucleus of social organisation, and the state forms the modern mechanism for its reproduction. The patriarchal system is focused on a group of cultural values

and customs and traditions which legitimise and regulate it, and depends on a division of roles and constructed social spheres which link women to the private sphere and men to the Public sphere. Paradoxically, this patriarchal system is immersed in the private and it builds relations of domination within it. In this regard the state forms a modern patriarchal mechanism intent on reproducing gender relations based on the subordination of women and the concurrent exaltation of men.

Chapter 3:

Palestinian Women in Israel: Theoretical Overview

The present research starts from the premise that it is not possible to understand the status of Palestinian women in Israel or to understand their needs, or the means to develop a methodology dependent on ready-made theoretical models developed to a large extent in different social contexts. This does not mean the complete rejection of these theories. Rather it means that we should work to “weave” certain ideas and analyses into the particular context of the Palestinians in Israel.

Studies concerned with the status of Arab women have generally been interested in the role of the family, of values, of religion, of the mode of production, and of the state in producing and reproducing the subordination of women. Researches that have dealt with the status of Palestinian women in Israel have depended either on an empirical approach, or on taking a culturalist position highlighting values and politics without linking them together in the particular context of the Palestinians in Israel. Rarely has a comprehensive theoretical framework been outlined that draws the links between women’s status and relations in various fields of power: the historical-national field, the political-ethnic field, the cultural field and the economic field.

The particularity of indigenous societies is often concealed living within states that in many cases were formed on their destruction. These groups were transformed within them into minorities within their own states. The Palestinians in Israel are a representative example of an indigenous society that was turned from a majority in their own country into a significant minority. Like other indigenous groups, they came close to annihilation, as did the first nations of North America or the aborigines of Australia. Moreover, they hold

the citizenship of the state that was established over their expulsion and the expulsion of their national dream. They share the interstices created by it, by the interaction of factors of institutional authority, class and ethnic oppression, and cultural and patriarchal oppression shaping women's status.

The present research proposes conceptualising the status of Palestinian women in Israel as a product of the interaction of a group of factors of the "racial structure"¹⁶ of the state and the alienation from their original context that it has produced for Arabs, belonging to a national minority which lost its urban centres and was reduced to living in the shadows of a state established on the debris of their nation, situated on the margins of citizenship and of (a plundered) nation, reduced to living in settlements with a rural cultural core lacking any economic centres of their own and surviving off the scraps of production in the Jewish economic centre. It is the family that formed the social institution wherein all these relations of power have been woven. The continual symbolisation of women follows from life in a state known as the State of the Jewish people and in the shadow of the perpetual struggle between the Palestinian dream and its reality, transforming them into a cipher for nation and social values.

16 Different sociological studies in Israel tend to describe it as an ethnic state, and its democracy as an ethnic democracy. They rarely regard it a racial state. This is produced in practical terms by recoiling from using concepts of race and racism in the Israeli psyche linked to Nazism on the one hand and anti-Semitism on the other. This can be seen clearly in the definition of the word racism in the Hebrew dictionary of Ibn Shushan, the most widely used dictionary in Israel: "Racism – theory of race, criminal fantasy that the Aryans were the most superior race and were permitted to practise genocide on all other races who were considered lower and worthless, racism was one of the principles of Nazism and was used as a basis for unfettered anti-Semitism and the annihilation of the Jews." This definition, as the Mizrahi social scientist Aharon Yitzhaki observes (Yitzhaki 2003, 33), not only effaces the meaning of racism, but it negates the existence of one of the most widespread phenomena over the last few hundred years, and the accompanying treatment of other minorities such as the segregation of blacks in Rhodesia and South Africa, slavery in America, and the treatment of the indigenous inhabitants at the hands of the European colonialists. Most importantly, it prevents an accurate understanding to uproot racism in Israel, and transform discussions about Israel and racism in the hegemonic discourse into *tabu*, fixed for posterity. We should add to this that the ethnic structure of the State of Israel is rooted in Zionist ideology itself since it began to think about establishing a Jewish National Home in Palestine. It was established by a symbolic ethnic cleansing, and from there proceeded to a real cleansing of the Palestinian people who were living in the country, considering them less organised and primitive. This was discussed by Yehuda Shinhav at a conference on Colonialism and Post-colonialism, organised by Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem in 2005, who said that: "When the Zionists raised the slogan, 'A land without a people for a people without a land,' they were not blind and could not see that there were indigenous inhabitants living in the country. They knew this well. But they saw these individuals as something different from a fully formed society with its own aspirations. For the Zionists, they were individuals with a simple sociological composition, and without national consciousness or collective interests. Accordingly, it was legitimate for the Zionists to establish their homeland expressing a collective, national and politically-developed dream at the expense of individuals whose national structure was not present. We can find the best clarification for this in the structure of the state today, since the state considers itself to be the State of the Jews, and it conditions full citizenship on racial origin of the individual by use of the definition, "Who is a Jew?" to place barriers between Jewish and Palestinian groups on the basis of blood, and not on any other basis. Thus the use of ethnicity is no more than a euphemisation of the racist reality which can be grasped by a quick tour of reality. This is especially clear if we take into consideration that the difference between the two is the fact that 'race' emphasises a common origin for the collective, expressed in biological essences, and feelings of supremacy; while 'ethnicity' basically translates into a collective of common origin with its focus on cultural diacritics and historical heritage, without necessarily translating these into feelings of essential superiority.

In this framework, together with religious values and beliefs and family customs and traditions, culture forms a hegemonic tool for legislating and legitimising social conduct, including all the views on women's role and status. In depending on this model, the view of women's status is not an essential given. Rather it is a dynamic perspective linked to the structural changes in the status of Palestinians within the state, whether this is a transformation of the state into an egalitarian state, or a change in the mode of the Arab economy and its forms of employment.

On the Margins of Citizenship and Nation

The special characteristics of the status of Palestinian women in Israel stem both from living on the margins of a state founded on the debris of their Palestinian homeland, and from living on the margins of Palestinian political identity, or living both at the edge of a state and of a nation. (Ghanem 2004) The situation of Palestinian women differs from the situation of Arab, African, Asian or European women, since most of these women live in states that do not openly discriminate between their inhabitants on the grounds of their racial, religious or ethnic affiliations. The state is considered to be in theory a state of its citizens, though the reality of implementation differs from country to country.

In the national sphere, the Palestinians belong to the Palestinian people, yet they do not participate in its decision-making or the struggles aimed at realising Palestinian independence. This is due to their citizenship in Israel. At the same time, Palestinians live in Israel at the edge of citizenship; they are not completely in, and they are not completely out. This is due to it being a "racialised citizenship," where the state is a tool in the service of the national interests of the Jews, and considers them to be its overriding target. To this end it uses a number of methods to subjugate and control the Palestinians in Israel, which act predominantly on their individual and collective interests.

Palestinians in Israel are reconfigured in this process into a "double exception." They are an exception to the Palestinian people by virtue of their Israeli citizenship, and an "exception" to Israeli citizenship by virtue of belonging to the Palestinian people. They live at the edge of a (fragmented) citizenship, and on the margins of the Palestinian people in a state of structural liminality. (Ghanem 2004)

Living at the brink, in a state of liminality, is living in a decentred sphere, in a reality full of inscrutability lacking of clarity of vision. Desires and powers pull the individual in this state back and forth, leading to his self-conception of his status. Among the Palestinians in Israel, the individual lives between his desire

to realise his identity, wherein his citizenship (which he did not choose in the first place) stands as a barrier before him; or to realise his citizenship, wherein “his race”¹⁷ and his blood stands in his way. This state produces feelings of alienation from reality, and feelings of weakness over one’s capacity determine one’s collective or individual fate. In many instances, it also produces an aversion to political work, a submission to reality or a belief in the impossibility of change, and sometimes even a lack of will for change.

The condition of living on the brink is for Palestinians in Israel a product of the forced historical changes which they have passed through. In the wake of the 1948 Nakba the remaining minority were less than a society, and more than a community, less than citizens (in comparison with the Jews) and more than mere subjects (officially). As Zakaria Mohammed writes: “The Palestinians were in their homeland, but they were strangers in it. Their experience resembled the experience of the Palestinians in the camps and in the West Bank. They were living outside and estranged, but also in friction with the Other. The Palestinians remained inside their homeland and outside of it, because the homeland had transformed into the state of an Other; the Palestinian scene had transformed into a pile of debris, with a new state established on it.” (Mohammed 2002, 81) From the Nakba until the lifting of military rule, the Palestinians lived largely as an “invisible” minority (Jaggar 1983, 74), cut off from the Arab world and the remnants of the Palestinian people, and separated also from the Jewish public. In addition, the Palestinians were almost completely “eradicated” (Turner 1979, 18) as a nation and as urban communities. As far as the Jewish ruling establishment was concerned, they were enemy citizens “due to their common interests with the Arabs across the borders” (Usatzki-Lazar 2002), while they were “eradicated” in the eyes of many Arabs with the accusation that they had collaborated with the Jewish state. This pushed the Palestinians in Israel to be marginalized (Young 1990, 53-54) on a number of levels. (Ghanem 2004)

The abolition of military rule in 1966 and the occupation of the remainder of historical Palestine in 1967 helped to soften the edges of this marginalisation, since the geographical borders of separation were turned into borders that could be overcome and crossed. They were crossed in very real terms by marriages between relatives from the West Bank and inside Israel, especially from the region of the Little Triangle, by the entrance of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories into the Israeli labour market, and the transfer of many Palestinian intellectuals from Israel to work in the West Bank, and especially

¹⁷ Scientists agree that “race” is in biological terms an illusion, and that the concept indicates a socially constructed meaning. Race is the belief in the existence of core characteristics that are unchanging through history, and distinguish human groups. This belief produces a tendency to racial supremacy which ascribes negative attributes either essentially or biologically to the Other, and considers them inferior, while ascribing positive attributes to the group of their own belonging. (See: Foucault 1997)

in the universities there. This was accompanied by a new burst of involvement with the institutions of the Jewish state, whether working or studying at university. The borders were transformed into borders that could be crossed in both directions towards the Jews and the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. This was accompanied by an entente in both directions.

Yet it did not mean that the borders disappeared and the Palestinians in Israel were turned into full partners. On the contrary, it contributed to institutionalising the state of between-ness in which they were living, and turned the Palestinians in Israel in the language of the Israeli establishment into a bridge for “peace”, while the PLO saw in them essentially a power of electoral pressure. In these two guises, the Palestinians in Israel were not a legitimate and complete part of either of the two entities. Rather they were a minority living on the edge, without full integration or full exclusion. This is the state that characterises Arab women and women in other societies. (Ghanem 2004)

A state of between-ness, in the situation of women, in their methods of struggle, and in the possibility of articulating them directly leads to a group of interlinked problems:

1. The state relied on a series of methods aimed at controlling the Palestinian minority in Israel. The most important of these was forming alliances with the traditional tribal leaderships, and accordingly encouraging forces known for their opposition to cultural change, especially in issues connected with the status of women.
2. The structural disjuncture between national belonging and living in a state founded on plundering this national dream created problems in turning to state authorities to combat those customs which discriminate against women.
3. The conflict between the state and sense of national affiliation creates a difficulty in settling some issues that are directly linked to the status of women. For instance, the issue of reproductive health for women, represents one of these problems, since Palestinian women represent both a national treasure considered as the source of future generations of citizens, and a demographic problem for the state. Indeed encouraging family planning and lowering the birth rate among Arab women has become a national and political imperative going far beyond the implications for women’s health.¹⁸

¹⁸ Of course, this does not contradict the reality of a reduction in the birthrate among Arabs, but it presents problems in entering this kind of discussion.

4. The continual state of struggle, combined with the national injustice which the Palestinians in Israel live, creates feelings of living in a state of perpetual national emergency where energies must be conserved for the fundamental cause, the struggle for national rights, and there should be a temporary compromise on demands for internal reform. This means treating women's issues as a secondary and not an essential concern. It is possible to put this point alongside the position taken by the nationalist movements for comprehensive liberation, who did not divide between women's liberation and national liberation, but rather merged them together to become one project rather than two.

5. The condition of being between and decentred creates a socially complex situation. The individual is transformed into searching continually for a centre with which he can be in solidarity and which will give meaning to his human experience. Within a hegemonic culture of defeat, and of feelings of alienation from what has followed this defeat, the minority was transformed into scattered groups lacking common bonds to draw them together. A resident of the Galilee had no organic common denominator with a resident of the Negev with which to feel that they shared the same fate. Thus the minority was transformed into a society that was tied on a negative rather than a positive basis. What tied it was the discrimination against them, their distance from full citizenship, their lack of budgets, the high rate of unemployment, and a rising crime rate etc. In this context, an individual retreats to his or her primary relationships to feel the warmth and support that s/he does not meet in the institutions of the state. This makes the work of the feminist movements more difficult, because it means that there is no representative body for the Arabs able to support their cause and create a discourse that is able to reach different sectors in society. In addition, the lack of a sense of common interest means that it is impossible to find one discourse that can be directed at all.

In addition to the strategic effect of the state of between-ness on the status of Palestinian women, there was the lack of towns and urban culture and the hegemony of rural culture. This left a residue effect on social culture and collective behaviour, especially in views concerning the status of women.

Effect of the Nakba: Urban Loss and the Hegemony of Rural Culture

Generally, towns form the sphere of production for high culture, and consequently for the production of social change. According to Halim Barakat, the town determines firstly the economic, political, administrative, social,

cultural, religious and entertainment occupations for more than the sum of its inhabitants. The plurality of urban occupations leads to an opening of the horizons for establishing social relations and creating formal relations of work that transcend traditional relationships of the first degree, which characterise relations in the village or among the Bedouin. (Barakat 2000) Antonio Gramsci suggests that: "Perhaps the relationship between the town and the countryside can be studied in its cultural forms." He adds that the rural agrarian mode of production produces conservative cultural values which tend towards domination and towards attaching greater significance to social status and hereditary values, while the modern city produces a varied culture which pursues innovation and is affected by it, and orients itself towards the future, so that it is more open to change. The Palestinian intellectual Faisal Darraj adds that the rural mentality produces individuals fascinated by social status and by the accumulation of the capital of social acceptance. (Darraj 1996, 47-48) Thus the destruction of Palestinian towns and villages in the 1948 Nakba was to mean a strategic impediment to modern Palestinian thought.

Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal (Kimmerling and Migdal 1999) point out the role which the Palestinian cities played prior to 1948. Jaffa formed a Middle Eastern cultural centre. The development of trade and the exchange of goods with other cities led to the appearance of a social and cultural mix known for its plurality and variety. With it Jaffa became a cultural centre, resembling closely the European cities of the Mediterranean.

With the loss and destruction of the cities, the women's social organisations which had been formed in Palestine were also destroyed. This is a point that often escapes researchers, even the Arabs among them. The fact that Arab women in Israel belong to Palestinian society not only means that they share customs and traditions and cultural values, both historical and present, but more importantly it means that Palestinian women were as a group afflicted by the loss of the experience and gains of the Palestinian women's movements, which were destroyed with the Nakba. This meant the destruction of all the work of the feminists to that point, and beginning the work again from nothing.

Palestinian women had begun attempts to organise socially and politically from the beginnings of the last century. Their history dates from as far back as 1906 with the first attempted Palestinian women's organisation, when the Orthodox Women's Organisation was founded in Acre, and a branch was opened in Jerusalem. The founders of this new organisation called for the emancipation of women, for equal rights between the two sexes, and to do voluntary community

work. (Kawar 1996) In 1929, the first Palestinian Women's Conference was organised in Jerusalem, and around 200 women participated. The Conference focused mainly on the stormy political conditions of Palestine at that time. Its resolutions included a condemnation of the Balfour Declaration and resistance to Jewish immigration into Palestine. The Conference selected three committees to work on providing help to the orphans of martyrs, on collecting donations to support the national struggle, and on organising vocational training for women. (Jad 1991) With the 1948 Nakba, the loss of the city and the destruction of social and political movements, the experiences of these women leaders and their social aspirations were also buried. In a Palestine that had become Israel, there only remained a threatened minority living in villages, with a rural culture, which was originally undeveloped and with limited economic opportunities.

With the loss of their land¹⁹ as a result of the Nakba and of the systematic expropriation, the Palestinian peasants lost in practical terms their most important economic and organisational pillars. This turned their rural culture from an organic culture which had reflected their way of life and mode of production into a group of values out of touch with their present reality. It was a culture living on the echoes of the dynamics in Jewish society, not one producing its own internal dynamics, influenced not influencing.

Rural culture differs from urban culture, due to the differences in the way of life. Usually the focus of social organisation in the village is around the extended family. Indeed many Arab villages are a group of extended families who live in their own neighbourhoods, which are named after them.²⁰ The extended family is formed from nuclear families who all share the same home and trace themselves back to the same patriarch. (Barakat 2000, 217-218) The relationships within the family are close and zealous. This zeal is based on ties of blood, and proximity, and unity in a shared fate, and a tendency to prefer collective values over individual ones. In addition to this, the rural mentality causes individuals to be fascinated by social status and exchanges of respect. In rural culture the family forms an important pillar of value orientation. Its internal structure is organised on the basis of age and gender, to form a patriarchal pyramid, where the father usually occupies the top of the hierarchy, and following him

19 Whether this was by explicit confiscation or by transforming work on it, so that it was insufficient to meet the subsistence needs of the family.

20 The town of Um El-Fahm in the Central Triangle is an excellent example of this, since many of the neighbourhoods have the same names as a family, so that we have the Jabarin neighbourhood, the Mahajane neighbourhood etc.

in status are the males, then the women, and then the children.²¹ On the one hand the values of *ard* and *sharaf* (honour), and on the other mutual assistance and responsibility constitute important values in preserving the patriarchal and hierarchical structure of the family. Dependency on the land to earn a living, combined with the importance of the values of *ard* and *sharaf* produce a tendency to prefer endogamy (between first cousins) in order to preserve the land and prevent it from going to other families.

Until the Nakba, Palestinian villages were economic and social units whose members worked together in order to ensure their livelihood. Work was divided according to capacity. Women's duties in this context did not stop with housework, but extended to include work in the fields, gathering wood, and tending the animals.

As a consequence of the crucial importance of land to the life of the village, the value of devotion to the land was the most important value for the peasants. It was his roots and the source of his social position. Indeed land was the most important element in forming the worldview of the peasants and their folk memory. It provided them with poetic images and an unconscious psychological store. (ibid) The peasants derived from the value of the land their view of women, whom generally they saw as a symbol of the land, and thus of the Homeland. There is no doubt that this relationship drew its symbols from the productive role of the land: fertility and unlimited giving.

Yet the Nakba led to the destruction of the Palestinian coastal cities, to the extinction of urban culture from the social landscape, and to the destruction of the class structure of society and the expulsion of the educated and bourgeois classes. The village and its culture thus became the only active social model. After 1948, no more than 170,000 Palestinians remained in Israel, the majority of them living in villages. They did not represent a tenth of the Palestinian people at that time (Kiman 1984), and they lived in a state of deep insecurity and unease. The cities, such as Haifa, Jaffa and Acre had been emptied of their

21 A look at the heritage of rural folk culture points to a contradictory content on women. If the saying is about a mother, then on most occasions it is positive. However, if the saying is about a woman as a female, then it is usually negative. This can be seen most clearly in a number of folk sayings such as, *Lama qaluli walad atashad hili wa atasanad* "when they said to me it's a boy, my strength shook and I prayed," or *Sabah al-haya wa-la sabah al-banyia*, "Morning of snakes, not a morning of daughters", or *Al-bint ima jabrha wima qabrha*, "For a daughter it's either compulsion or the grave," or *Masayib al-dunia arba: al-din wa law darahim, al-bint wa law Miriam, al-ghurba wa law mil, al-sul wa law weyn al-tariq*, "There are four tragedies in the world: religion without money, a girl without modesty, absence without heartache, and a question without a solution." Folk culture also has a wide array of sayings connected to honour. The most prominent of these say: *Thinteyn yujabin al-mawt: al-ard wal-'ard*, "Two things are worth dying for: land and honour", or *Illi btmu walitahu min husin niyatu*, "He who kills his daughter has the best of intentions." Among the positive images of mothers there are: *Rihat al-um bitlim*, "a mother's smell gathers [the family]" or *Al-janni that aqdam al-umahat*, "Heaven is under mothers' steps." The most important challenge remains to strengthen the positive images and give them a wide legitimacy at the expense of the negative images.

original inhabitants. The new state had worked to remove from sight all signs which indicated that the bustle of another culture had been there just a few months earlier, and to house the new immigrants in the abandoned homes. They also changed the Arab names of the streets to the names of the founders of the Zionist project, and destroyed mosques and churches. (Benvenisti 2000) Feelings of terror and insecurity predominated among the minority who remained. This minority was the severed remnants of a defeated people, as Azmi Bishara categorises them. (Bishara 1993) Table 1 below shows the dramatic change which befell the Palestinian urban landscape following the Nakba.

Table 1

Number of Palestinian residents in Israel, 1947-1948²²

City	Pre-Nakba	Post-Nakba
Jerusalem	7500	3500
Jaffa	70000	6300
Haifa	71200	2900
Lod and Ramle	34920	2000
Nazareth	15540	16800
Acre	15000	3500
Tiberias	5310	-

Source: Lustick 1985, 43

The Nakba and demographic destruction of Palestinian society in 1948 led to the destruction of that society's class structure. The educated and bourgeois classes had been expelled. The main occupations of the minority who remained were as follows (Dabbagh 1990, 12): farmers of small holdings (a proportion of whom were without land), wage labourers (these formed the majority of residents in the villages and mixed cities), and white collar employees (the majority of whom were employed in the Arab councils or in the local education sector) and petty trades. This trade depended on Arab consumers.

The effect of the Nakba did not stop at the destruction of the cities; it was also a watershed for the organisational structure of the villages. Whereas before the Nakba the villages had been characterised by their basic dependence on work on the land, in the wake of the Nakba they were transformed into a marginal annex to the Israeli economy. Azmi Bishara observes that Arab villages were transformed in the act of the Nakba and in their simultaneous marginalisation and coerced modernisation to become, "a source of workers rather than a source of employment, and they were transformed into dormitories rather

²² For Nazareth and Jaffa, the numbers also include those internally displaced who were expelled from their homes, but remained within the borders of the Jewish state.

than markets, into existential refuges which offered a return to the bosom of deep social relations, and denoted a tangible homeland for the estranged.” (Bishara 2000, 29)

Living in a state that oppressed Arabs and marked their citizenship on the basis of racialised deficiency, and with the structural neglect of the socio-economic needs of Arabs that derived from this, as well as the remains of destruction of Palestinian society left behind by the Nakba, all led to the transformation of the Arabs into a marginal group without any political, economic or intellectual capital able to compete and effect change within the State. The culture and what came to be its symbolic values, from where we do not know, came to be denoted as the only collective capital active among Palestinians. This caused a state of confusion in dealing with it, because on the one hand it was considered “the last barricade to preserve our identity,” and on the other it was the first accused of backwardness.

Women, Homeland and Nation

From the outset of the Palestinian resistance to British colonialism and the Zionist invasion in the 1920s, Palestinian women’s participation in the community’s public sphere, that is to say outside of the home, was essentially derived from their participation in the national struggle. Their social struggle became an integral part of the general movement for national emancipation. From the beginning, Palestinian women activists confronted the issue of whether to put the national cause before all other social causes, including the emancipation of women from male oppression within society. Despite the fact that some interpreters put the blame on the traditional structure of Palestinian Arab society at that time (Kuttab 1993), this does not explain the inability of the Palestinian revolutionary leadership to understand the interconnected dimensions of the different elements of oppression. For instance, while Arab women’s activists in a number of parts of the Arab world, such as Tunisia and Egypt, were concerned with social issues such as the right to vote and outlawing polygamy, at that time Palestinian women were demonstrating against the Balfour Declaration and Jewish immigration to Palestine. (Hiltermann 1991)

It becomes clear to us from looking at nationalist and patriotic culture that women occupy an important role in it. They are the “Mother of Future Generations”, they maintain its “honour,” and they embody its “authenticity.” When Palestinians lost their homeland, and experienced to expulsion and oppression, they drew from a well of gendered cultural motifs to express their feelings and fears. The land had not been occupied but “raped”, the homeland

had been “violated,” and the “honour of the nation” plundered. The cultural image of women was transformed into an important source for the formation of their self-image.

Julie Peteet (Peteet 1991) and Rosemary Sayigh (Sayigh 1993) observe that the symbolic connection made between the idea of women and the idea of the nation, and the use made of women as a symbol for the nation by liberation movements such as the Palestinian movement which does so voluminously, is an extremely important issue in engendering affiliation to nationalist groups. It is associated with imposing forms of behavioural surveillance over women in the name of the nation and in the name of progress. This seemed clear in the imposition on women of certain kinds of dress during the first Intifada or in the transformation of wearing the veil into a form of struggle in Iran and Algeria. It is also possible to see expression of this today in the increasing numbers of Palestinian women in Israel, and especially in the Little Triangle, putting on the veil and relating it to the desire to preserve their distinct identity from Jewish women.²³

Nationalists, reformists and leaders, observes Qasim Amin, employed women to create an idealised picture of their societies. Amin goes to observe that it was the interest of the “nation” that required educating girls and integrating them into the labour market, as well as to change their clothes and involve them, symbolically, in the political process as slogans of modernity. (See: Amin 1989; Hijab 2002; Ahmed 1992)

Nationalist language in the Palestinian context was transformed into a language laden with rural and patriarchal values. In this context, women became synonymous with land and with homeland, and a plundered homeland became a homeland that had been “raped”, “captured”, “permissive.” The poet Rashid Hussein expressed this collapse in his poem, *She and the Land*, when a woman reproaches her fiancé for selling land to the Zionists in order to pay her dowry. (Hussein 1990, 456)

*You took the vegetable gardens from their hair
And you sold the tresses of their olives
You cheapened in the market the display of plains
And betrayed the loyalty of their nurseries
And ripped apart the teats of their lemons
You sold the tresses of their olives!
Do you betray a mother who nursed you so as to protect my honour?*

²³ This will be discussed in detail in the Part 3 of the report, analysing the research Results. See the section: Women’s Dress.

Despite the fact that the relationship between woman – homeland is widely used in nationalist cultures and is not restricted to a particular culture (Yuval-Davis 1997) its particularity in the Palestinian condition is manifested in the transformation of an engendered language of *homeland* into a language of *culture* which is premised on transforming its cultural capital into a tool for change, rather than to sanctify established images.

The transformation of women into a metaphor for homeland helped to project women as a cipher for nationalism. With this, they became a “stronghold” in the struggle over their dress, their appearance, their ways of speech, and their conduct. In a question put to one of the educated respondents in the survey on his perspective on so-called “family honour”, he responded:

“They once asked one of the Eskimos: Why do you still live in an igloo, when the people in all the neighbouring countries live in skyscrapers? The man answered: “Mister, we stick with the igloo so that the world doesn’t end...” Despite the fact that I don’t believe that maintaining certain practices and sticking with them will prevent the end of the world, it is preferable in our reality today to preserve certain values like “family honour” in order to preserve our existence.”

In the shadow of the economic weakness in which Palestinians in Israel live, the political, national and cultural marginalisation, the state of nationalist confusion, and the inability to achieve success, *culture* and its values has been ideologically charged as a goal in itself, preserving it means preserving the homeland itself.

It is in this context, I venture, that women’s voluntary return to the veil should be understood. The return to religion that the Arab world is witnessing in general, as is Palestinian society in Israel, should be considered a means of “resistance” in the face of weakness and a language of to “resist” the diffusion of the culture of the Other. The return to a culture of patriarchy and tradition is a curling up inside our shell and an admission of powerlessness to confront, and of society’s lack of attributes to be able to compete in other spheres.

Similarly, the symbolism of the relation between women and homeland in the Palestinian context in Israel raises problems for the work of feminist organisations. Attempts at addressing issues of the oppression of women and calling for change are governed by the fact they fall into a confrontation with a discourse at odds with the culture, and these organisations are treated with suspicion, or even considered on certain occasions to be participants in the

“enemy’s” war to subjugate the Palestinians. These problems are not limited to Palestinian women in Israel alone. Rather women throughout the third world share them. However, the matter becomes more complicated when these organisations are compelled to work with Jewish feminist organisations for support on specific causes, and within this work are required to confront conservative, traditional and religious sections of Palestinian society.

Part 3

Results

Introduction

As we mentioned in the introduction, the research relies on a mixture of three research tools, that are both quantitative and qualitative: in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a quantitative survey. The results which each research tool produced were analysed, then triangulated and compared. Then the results were presented in a collage compiled of the different data.

The aim in using quantitative research methods as well as qualitative methods was to be as precise as possible. Quantitative research helps in translating social reality into the language of numbers. It furnishes us with a picture of the prevalence of certain attitudes and of which groups tend to take a certain position over others. However, one of its most important problems is that it limits respondents to a small group of choices, from which they are compelled to choose one, and without the chance to express their attitude in detail. This is aside from the ease with which they can take a position, without explaining the meaning of this position for them. This was clear to us in the responses to the general questions, such as attitudes towards implementing international covenants relating to realising complete equality between the two sexes, where the proportion of those agreeing exceeded 86% of those surveyed. This is an astonishing figure if we take into consideration the reality which women are living.

Moreover, the responses to more precise questions on specific attitudes showed a contradictory picture. For instance, 37.9% expressed an understanding for beating one's wife in a case where she had left home without the permission of her husband. This contradiction is one of the problems of quantitative research which reduces attitudes to numbers, and individuals to percentages, and confines them to a number of undetailed options. Accordingly, the respondent is drawn towards adopting the attitude which seems at first glance to stand out, but often backtracks when entering into the practical implications of this position.

Quantitative research does not treat the individual as a complex world. Rather

attracts him/her as a group of factors, that can be translated into numbers. accordingly, our resort to the in-depth interviews and focus groups aimed to overcome many of the problems which the quantitative research had created. This was in addition to using it as a tool to explore more deeply the social attitudes which were revealed by the quantitative research, the survey.

Qualitative research is characterised by its pursuit of a comprehensive view of reality, since the research subject, whether a individual or an institution, is not abridged into a pure variable, or an isolated factor, but is treated as part of the entire phenomenon. By contrast, quantitative research abridges reality to those variables which are deemed to influence our understanding and analysis of reality. Qualitative research is valuable for exploring more deeply the attitudes of respondents as individuals, and to understand phenomenologically the way in which they construct through them their world and worldview. (Taylor and Bogdan 1975, 5) The basic strategy for qualitative research is to understand reality from the perspective of the research subject. The survey was a means to reach a quantitative description of attitudes, and a tool to identify the correlation between attitudes and the social background of respondents. However, the aim of the qualitative research tools, the focus groups and the open-ended in-depth interviews, was to understand reality with its intricacies and constructions as expressed by the interviewees. As Bryman explains (Bryman 1988, 12), quantitative research is committed to understanding the reality, attitudes, actions, and values from the perspective of the interviewees.

While some problems sully quantitative research, qualitative research is not spared them either. The principal and most important problems are concealed in the different expectations which it develops in the interviewee and researcher. A successful interview demands an active participation and self-exposure on the part of the interviewee. This is something that depends to a large extent on the individual ability of the researcher to create a comfortable atmosphere and complete trust to enable the interviewee to respond. There are no guarantees of success, especially when personal and sensitive questions are being asked, such as on attitudes to sexual relations before marriage, which could create a tension that impedes the interview.

Using the two methodologies, quantitative and qualitative, was inclusive, since wherever fears were raised by the problems of the quantitative research, the qualitative research helped out, and when we faced the problems of the qualitative research, the quantitative helped to overcome them. Thus the final picture is a collage mixing the results of all the research tools.

Chapter 1:

Attitudes towards Arab Women's Status

Distinguishing Between 'Respect' for Women and 'Rights' for Women

In her definition of women's status, the sociologist Nadia Hajjaj Youssef (Youssef 1978, 76) makes a distinction between two different elements: 'rights for women' and 'respect for women'. She explains: "Using these two different expressions as synonyms produces error and confusion, since in reality they have an inverse relationship with each other. We often see women who enjoy a large measure of respect in a society that grants them few rights, while they enjoy the right of equality in societies where they compete with men, and where relatively-speaking they are not granted much respect."

In addition to this important distinction, we should also note the importance of distinguishing between attitudes towards specific tactical rights, and strategic rights. The research on attitudes to women's issues has shown that there is a clear distinction in public attitudes towards women's rights on two levels: the tactical level, represented by the liberal attitude to rights issues related to the right to education, the right to work, and the right to be protected from violence and to raise awareness of women's rights in these areas; and the strategic level, represented by the firmly rooted cultural codes which ensure the dependency of women on men, and not upsetting the patriarchal social system, and represented by the deeply rooted attitudes to the division of roles within the home. For instance, despite positive attitudes towards women's work and education, we find that going out to work is not accompanied by a parallel belief in the need to share in household tasks. Moreover, women's employment remains contingent on them not entering into what are considered masculine spheres of work, such as truck driving, or jobs which require managerial positions or decision-making, such as company directors and trade.

Accordingly, it is important to distinguish between these levels, since an expression of respect and of someone's estimation of women does not necessarily reflect a social desire to radically change social roles. Indeed the opposite is true. This can be seen clearly in the results of the research and the manifest contradictions between a number of different attitudes. It is clear that social attitudes have not reached the point of fully accepting equality. Society is still says that it is ready to "permit", to "give", to "accept", thus appointing itself as responsible for the behaviour of women. Accordingly, the wish for change remains constrained by the preservation of "red lines", and practically revolves around patriarchal values associated with women's conduct.

It should also be pointed out here that the distinction of attitudes between a respect for women and women's tactical and strategic rights was present in the thinking of the majority of interviewees. A man who expressed his profound belief in women's right to education was sometimes not prepared to agree that this woman should go out to work, justifying this by the importance of focusing on her role as a mother, and respecting it as her primary and most important role. Among the results of the research was a focus on the importance of *sharaf* (honour), considering it the most important social value that must be preserved, without this contradicting the attitude of the majority of interviewees who were ready to offer any support to a young woman who had suffered sexual abuse, whom they considered to be a victim. This attitude, despite the fact that it is natural, contradicts the traditional perspective which prevailed in the past, and which held women responsible for any assault she suffered.

The existence of complex and contradictory attitudes, sometimes within the same person, points to the fact that an individual is not fixed or defined, but a being who lives a reality that is complex and dynamic. S/he does not see it on the basis of a contradiction between black and white, whether s/he is for or against, but sees and expresses it through a mesh of attitudes required by his present needs.

It is also worth pointing out the differences in respondents' answers according to sex, geographical area of residence, level of education and their socio-economic status. The results of the quantitative research reveal statistically significant differences which indicate that attitudes towards women's rights correlate positively with a rise in the level of educational achievement, and the respondent's monthly income. It also revealed more accepting and positive attitudes towards women's rights among the residents of the North when compared to the South and Centre. This is in addition to the statistical and

qualitative differences of more liberal attitudes among female participants in the research vis-à-vis male participants.

Positive attitudes towards empowering women in education, employment, protection from assault, and freedom of movement, do not mean that Palestinian society in Israel has overcome all the obstacles and beliefs related to the social roles entrusted to the two sexes. This research also highlights the deep rootedness of a whole host of values and social beliefs which stand at the heart of preventing women from realising their full human dignity. It shows that notions associated with behavioural codes, like honour and reputation continue to be fundamental codes that enjoy wide support, and are considered red lines that cannot be crossed. Accordingly, an understanding of social acceptance for women’s rights cannot be gained except in the context of linking it within the hegemony of established patriarchal thought, rather than outside it, and viewing it as a reformist and reconciliatory approach within the confines of patriarchy, rather than against them. This seems clear from the near unanimous positive attitudes towards women’s right to education against the split attitudes over granting her complete freedom. All this will be developed subsequently.

Levels of Satisfaction with Arab Women’s Status

The research reveals the existence of a certain satisfaction with the status of Arab women. Around 64% of respondents expressed their satisfaction with the status of Arab women. The attitudes of men and women were to a large extent comparable, with a small difference not exceeding 4%. Around 36% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the status of Arab women in Israel. (Table 2)

Table 2

To what extent are you satisfied with the status of Arab women in Israel today? [figures in percentages]

Response	Men	Women	Group
Completely satisfied	9.8	7.8	8.8
Satisfied	57.6	52.8	55.3
Dissatisfied	26.3	31.5	28.9
Completely dissatisfied	6.3	7.9	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey revealed that the highest levels of satisfaction with women’s status

are in the Negev. 75.3% responded that they were completely satisfied or were satisfied with Arab women's status. This compared with 64.2% in the mixed cities, 65.7% in the Little Triangle, and 62.4% in the Galilee. By contrast, 24.7% of respondents in the Negev expressed their dissatisfaction or their complete dissatisfaction with the status of women. This was expressed by 35.8% of respondents in the mixed cities, 34.4% in the Central Triangle and 37.5% in the Galilee.

Table 3

To what extent are you satisfied with the status of Arab women in Israel today? (by geographical distribution) [figures in percentages]

Response	Galilee	Triangle	Negev	Mixed cities
Completely satisfied	6.1	8.3	28.2	10.1
Satisfied	56.3	57.4	47.1	54.1
Dissatisfied	30.7	27.0	16.5	29.4
Completely dissatisfied	6.8	7.4	8.2	6.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The research showed differences in the level of satisfaction with women's status according to the respondent's level of education. 72% of those who only completed elementary school expressed their complete satisfaction or satisfaction with the status of Arab women, while 52.9% of university graduates held the same position. There was an even more marked difference between those two groups among those expressing dissatisfaction. 28% of those who had only completed elementary school expressed their dissatisfaction or complete dissatisfaction with the status of Arab women, compared with 47.5% of university graduates. This result shows the effect of education on awareness of women's status. This could be connected to the role that further education plays in presenting alternative social perspectives to the traditional perspective on the role of women.

Table 4

To what extent are you satisfied with the status of Arab women in Israel today? (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Response	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
Completely satisfied	10.6	10.3	3.4
Satisfied	61.4	54.9	49.5
Dissatisfied	24.0	26.4	39.9
Completely dissatisfied	4.0	8.5	7.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey reveals a broad consensus among respondents over the need to realise equality between the two sexes in some spheres, and not in all of them. This tendency appears clearly in the sphere of equality in education. 95% of respondents expressed that there should be equality in this field, among them 81.1% emphasised that there should be complete equality. 90.2% saw the need for equality in wages and in employment. 93.8% felt that there should be complete equality or equality in protection from violence or assault. The proportion of those who identified the need to ensure equality in personal freedoms dropped however, where 68.6% felt there should be equality or complete equality in this sphere. 72.3% felt there should be equality or complete equality in political representation.

Table 5
To what extent should there be equality between men and women in the following areas?
[figures in percentages]

Area	Complete Equality	Equality	Partial Equality	No Need for Equality	Total
Education	81.1	13.9	3.8	1.2	100.0
Personal freedoms	44.6	24.0	25.4	6.0	100.0
Political representation	48.9	23.4	19.1	8.6	100.0
Protection from violence or assault	79.5	14.3	4.8	1.4	100.0
Equality in wages and employment rights	74.2	16.0	6.9	2.8	100.0

The research shows that granting complete equality between men and women in fields such as education or protection from violence is not particular to any one sector of society. Despite the differences, 91.3% of those who consider themselves to be very religious support giving women equality or complete equality in education, 95% of those who consider themselves to be religious take the same position, 96% of those who define themselves as quite religious, and 96.4% of those who regard themselves as not religious.

Table 6

**To what extent should there be equality in education?
(by level of religious identification) [figures in percentages]**

Religious Identification	Complete Equality	Equality	Partial Equality	No Need for Equality	Total
Very religious	75.8	15.5	6.2	2.5	100.0
Religious	76.4	18.6	3.8	1.2	100.0
Quite religious	85.2	10.8	2.8	1.2	100.0
Not religious	86.2	10.2	3.3	0.3	100.0

Attitudes towards equality in the right to education do not vary greatly with the age of the respondent, apart from a certain variation that can be seen between the cohort aged 62 and over and the younger cohorts. It seems that the proportion of those who agree with complete equality in education falls with advancing age. 82.6% of those aged between 18-28 responded that they are in favour of complete equality, while this figure dropped to 72.7% among those aged 62 and over.

Table 7

**To what extent should there be equality in education?
(by age) [figures in percentages]**

Age	Complete Equality	Equality	Partial Equality	No Need for Equality	Total
18-28	82.6	13.0	3.4	1.0	100.0
29-39	82.2	14.9	1.8	1.0	100.0
40-50	81.8	12.5	5.1	0.6	100.0
51-61	79.3	11.4	7.1	2.1	100.0
62 and over	72.7	18.2	6.8	2.3	100.0

There is a small variation in attitudes towards complete equality in personal freedoms according to religious identification. 68.3% of those who consider themselves to be very religious expressed that they agreed with granting equality or complete equality between men and women in personal freedoms. 63.9% of those who consider themselves religious, around 71.3% of those who refer to themselves as quite religious, and 71.8% of those who identify themselves as not religious express the same attitude.

Table 8

**To what extent should there be equality in personal freedoms?
(by level of religious identification) [figures in percentages]**

Religious Identification	Complete Equality	Equality	Partial Equality	No Need for Equality	Total
Very religious	47.8	20.5	24.2	7.5	100.0
Religious	38.0	25.9	28.5	7.6	100.0
Quite Religious	47.2	24.1	25.6	3.1	100.0
Not Religious	49.2	22.6	21.6	6.6	100.0

The research reveals that the younger cohorts express more positive attitudes towards complete equality in personal freedoms than the cohorts of more advanced years. This can be illustrated by the fact that 48.3% of respondents belonging to the 18-28 age group agreed with granting women complete equality in personal freedoms, while this figure dropped with age. Among the 29-39 age group, 45.9% agreed. This rose slightly to 47.2% among the 40-50 age group. This rise does not distinguish this age group, because if we group those supporting complete equality and those supporting equality, we find that the figure reaches 66%, compared with 71.2% for the 29-39 cohort. The proportion supporting complete equality drops to 39.3% among the 51-61 year olds, and reaches its lowest level of support (29.9%) among those aged 62 and over. This illustrates clearly that the younger cohorts are more liberal and more accepting of change than those of more advanced years.

Table 9

**To what extent should there be equality in personal freedoms?
(by age) [figures in percentages]**

Age	Complete Equality	Equality	Partial Equality	No Need for Equality	Total
18-28	48.3	22.5	24.2	5.0	100.0
29-39	45.9	25.3	23.1	5.7	100.0
40-50	47.2	18.8	28.3	5.7	100.0
51-61	39.3	26.4	26.4	7.9	100.0
62 and over	29.9	28.7	31.0	10.4	100.0

These results show society to have a liberal perspective on equality between men and women. This is a perspective which does not differ in principle with the religious perspectives which start from an egalitarian view of the respect between men and women, but does differ in attitudes towards issues of women's rights. For instance, one of the participants in the focus group

discussion among religious figures reflected on the attitude of Christianity to women's issues:

“Ecclesiastical law, at least for Catholics, is very clear on the issue of equality. Women and men enjoy the same rights and duties. The only difference is in the issue of the priesthood. A woman cannot become a priest according to the orthodox churches. The theological doctrine is based on the fact that Christ was a man, so only men are allowed to become priests.”

Similarly, one of the Muslim religious figures expressed a liberal Islamic perspective, which does not deny that there can be equality between men and women:

“There is no right that Islam forbids to women. There is not one right. Islam gave women the right to enter any sphere. For example, in our town there are seven mosques. When Ramadan comes, one of the mosques is made available for the women. One woman leads the others in all the prayers, with the exception of Friday prayers and the khutba (sermon). A woman is excluded from becoming a judge, apart from in the Hanafi school, yet she has the right to be the governor of a region, but not to be Caliph.”

Sheikh Mawaffaq Tarif elaborated a position no less liberal and respectful of Druze women's status, stating:

“The Druze faith considers women to be something holy... The rights which they are granted today, women had with us over a thousand years ago. We granted them long ago... In religious terms, women have half of what men have... Women own half of what men own.”

The attitudes of the religious figures express a positiveness towards women and a respect for them that approaches sanctifying them. This sanctity is something that they emphasised during the interviews also. Yet these attitudes do not imply giving women full rights as men, as is clarified by the distinction between respecting women, and giving them their rights.

Most of the results of the research pointed to the difference in answers and disparities according to the respondents' geographical area of residence. Those who were most enthusiastic for the implementation of complete equality were generally residents of the regions where women lived in the most oppressive social conditions. 47.4% of respondents from the Negev expressed their complete agreement with relying on international covenants which give women complete equality. 42.5% of respondents from the mixed cities, around

40.5% of respondents from the Galilee and 29.3% of respondents from the Little Triangle expressed the same attitude.

Table 10

International Conventions start from the principle of equality between all individuals in society, and stipulate that women should enjoy complete equality. What is your opinion on this?

(by geographical distribution) [figures in percentages]

Response	Galilee	Triangle	Negev	Mixed cities
I agree strongly	40.5	29.3	47.4	42.5
I agree	45.9	52.4	32.6	54.9
I disagree	11.0	15.4	15.1	2.7
I disagree strongly	2.6	2.9	4.7	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

We also find a contradiction between the level of religious identification and its connection to attitudes towards relying on international conventions to safeguard the principle of equality between men and women. 47.2% of those who identify themselves as very religious strongly agree with these conventions for equality between men and women on the declarative level. This is a more enthusiastic attitude than those who are not religious, since 43.4% of them expressed the same attitude. This is to say that it is the very religious who are the most enthusiastic for women's equality. At the same time, there is a high proportion of the very religious, 19.5%, who disagree or strongly disagree with this proposition, as compared with 8.5% of those who are not religious.

Table 11

International Conventions start from the principle of equality between all individuals in society, and stipulate that women should enjoy complete equality. What is your opinion on this?

(by level of religious identification) [figures in percentages]

Religious Identification	I agree strongly	I agree	I disagree	I disagree strongly	Total
Very religious	47.2	33.3	14.5	5.0	100.0
Religious	30.2	51.8	14.2	3.8	100.0
Quite Religious	41.8	48.0	8.9	1.3	100.0
Not Religious	43.3	48.2	7.5	1.0	100.0

These results seem bewildering at first glance. What they suggest is that those most supportive of equality between men and women are the residents of the

Negev, and those who are most enthusiastic for complete equality are those who are most religious. Yet both results are confounded by reality. The women most oppressed and most exposed to physical humiliation are the women of the Negev. Statistics indicate that the most severe conditions of women wronged are in the Negev, and the level of satisfaction with women's status contradicts the bitter reality that women live there. The most poorly treated women are the women of the Negev, and yet they reveal the highest level of satisfaction with women's status. "Adnan", a community work activist in the Negev, depicted the desperate situation of women, presenting the following statistics:

"About 44-45% of women in the Negev are illiterate, as are about 16% of young women aged 18-24. Similarly, the proportion of girls aged 18-24 who have the Bagrut matriculation certificate is about 11%. Concerning the health statistics in the Negev, more than 50% of women suffer from some form of anaemia, and more than 53% have infections of the urinary tract, and there are similar figures for other illnesses. All these illnesses are in essence a result of a lack of awareness of health issues and the frequency of childbirth. By the time a woman reaches 30 years old, she could be a mother to 10 children at least... Socially, there are many issues that are forbidden in Islamic law, which are permitted and legitimate according to tradition, such as the badal (exchange) marriage, which is considered a widespread practice in the Negev. For example, someone who wants to get married offers his sister "in exchange", or a father who wants to marry offers his daughter "in exchange", and she marries another old man. This is all forbidden according to religion. In addition there is the prevalence of marriage between relatives which produces a generation with disabilities. Despite knowledge of the subject and the intrinsic danger in marrying relatives, and confining the bride to men within the tribe, we find that if a young man does not marry a girl from his tribe or family, then she stays a spinster. The greater tragedy is that there are university graduates, women with BA degrees who are faced with two choices: either marry within the tribe to someone who is less capable than them, or marry over someone as a second wife."²⁴

Similarly, the in-depth interviews revealed that religious zealotry plays a part in denying women their right to move or practise their daily lives. Here we can share the story of "Khulud", a young woman from a very religious family from a village in the Galilee. She was denied a high school education to prevent her from mixing with boys. This young woman speaks about the relationship between her being denied a high school education and the religious zeal of her

²⁴ See the statistics in the Introduction.

father.

“My father got to know a new friend. This friend was the Imam of the mosque, and he was a very religious man. He got very close to my father and was able to convince him that mixing is haram and that it was forbidden for girls to mix with boys. He began to talk about this in his Friday sermon and in the religion lessons, especially because where we live there is only one school which is mixed. This sheikh began to tell the parents lots of stories which happened at school. My father was one of the people near to him at that time, and he became for him an example. The words of this person became for my father like words descended from heaven. He believed in him without discussion. It was difficult to change his mind.

This sheikh would speak about how it is forbidden for girls and boys to mix. He demanded that girls should be stopped from going to school, which means that elementary education was enough for the girls to learn until eighth grade because it was mixed. When I finished ninth grade my father demanded that this should be enough education for me. Because in his opinion I needed to stay at home. When he asked me this I got crazy. I hadn't imagined that something like this would happen to me. In this way he would destroy my future. I had wanted very much to continue learning, even though I wasn't one of the best at studies. But I was able to learn some subject, and so guarantee my future. In the beginning my relatives tried to get involved, but my uncles, for instance, didn't help me... They supported me leaving school.

When the school year began, my father forbade me from going to school in the first week of tenth grade. After one of the teachers from the school intervened and came to convince my father, he agreed in the end that I could go to school. That was 10 days after the beginning of the year. So I finished tenth grade. After that my father demanded that this should be enough education for me. In fact even before the end of tenth grade he began to prepare me psychologically for this. It affected me a lot, and stopped me from studying properly. So I did not get good marks at the end of the term. My thoughts were always caught up in the fact that in the end I wasn't going to complete my studies. So I wasn't able to concentrate on studying. So in the end I submitted because I didn't want to repeat the problem that had happened the previous year.”

It is extremely important here to note that denying “Khulud” from completing her high school studies was not done out of a belief or religious conviction that educating girls is forbidden. The argument of her father and his attitude was not based on the importance of education, but rather on its conditions. It was

not based simply on a desire to forbid her, rather the young woman spoke in detail in her interview about the sadness of her father, because he wanted her to study, but within clear conditions such as no mixing between boys and girls, and women not exposing themselves in front of men. In practical terms his attitude indicates the importance of distinguishing between the abstract belief in a right in principle, and the possibility to implement it, or between a utopian attitude and translating it into tangible reality.

How Do We Assess the Status of Palestinian Women in Israel?

The discussions in the focus groups and in-depth interviews revealed the existence of two contradictory attitudes towards how we should assess the status of Arab women. The first is a vertical historical approach for the status of women, relying on the past as the key witness and starting point, to demonstrate the changes that have occurred to women's status. This is set against a horizontal social approach which knits its attitude to changes through a reading of women's present reality by viewing the social environment and assessing the adjoining wrongs to women.

Vertical Approach: Between Past and Present

The trend which expresses its satisfaction with the achievements of Palestinian women in Israel depends on a vertical, historical approach. It draws its positive assessment of women's status from the great progress which Arab women have made in recent years compared with their previous situation. It is an attitude that does not necessarily express its resignation and acceptance of present reality. As far as it can, it also expresses a certain optimism for the historical development which the situation of women has witnessed. This attitude was expressed by "Salim", one of the Druze participants in the religious figures and lawyers focus group, through a personal story he gave. We print it here for the markers it includes:

"My wife wanted to complete her high school studies, but the Elders threatened to cut off my family if that happened. So she was forced to stop her high school studies, even before university. In the end, she did her Bagrut exams in the external curriculum, and she got into university. This happened later, after we got married, within a few years. Today she is a university academic with an important position. I look at her journey as an individual. And I treat her as a case study to follow and draw upon. There has been an amazing release among us. From a situation when it was forbidden for a Druze woman to drive a car, to today when a large portion of our girls drive cars. Education

used to be denied to girls, but today a large portion of them study. The opening up today is astonishing. If you went to the universities you would find that Druze women are in the colleges of medicine and law and are studying any other subject.”

The story cited above shows that the status of Palestinian women in Israel is generally assessed positively in comparison with their situation in the past, since the majority of women were not able to study or work or go out freely. The past is the key witness to the terrible reality of women previously. To a certain extent this is correct. If we take into consideration that positive progress has happened, generally there has not been a change in the basic values of the patriarchal system, but rather their entrance into spheres which confer good social status like academic education, or employment which requires an academic education. Of course, in the past women did not abstain from work, in the textile workshops, the fields, factories, or in the home. However, work like this was not considered to have any social value, as the attitudes of “Miriam” reveal:

“Arab women in society and especially the girls of the new generation live a great progress and improvement compared with girls in the past... If we go back in time, and if we look at women in the past, we see that most of them didn't work... We see them confined to their homes. Girls of the new generation are distinguished more by their “openness”, since they can go out to work, and they can reach high positions in society...”

This quotation clarifies that women going out to work and to study are a tool to improve their social status. If we take into account the political condition of the Palestinian minority in Israel, and the restriction on the possibilities for social advancement, in education firstly, and in economic gain secondly, we find that in practical terms women have entered these fields for the social capital they can gain to help raise their social standing and the status of the family to which they belong. This does not necessarily express a fundamental transformation in the view of women's role in society, but is part of the process of liberalisation of the Arabs and the Middle East which finds expression in the proportion of women who are educated and employed.

Horizontal Social Approach

The feelings of satisfaction with the situation of women encounter other contradictory feelings that express a dissatisfaction and frustration. This approach found expression in the perspectives of a third of the respondents. The feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration derive from the humble scale of the changes, and the sense that these changes do not deeply impact the status

of women and their structural position. One of the focus group participants, “Rawiya”, expressed this when she spoke of the continual comparison between the status of Arab women in the past and today. She said it was a fundamentally problematic comparison:

“The question is: Do I as a woman want to continue comparing myself with how my grandmother was or how my mother lived? Of course, if I looked at how the life of my grandmother, and then my mother, was, and then looked at myself and my daughter, I would be sure that we are progressing in lots of areas. But this is in a situation where we were living in families who learn from the experience of the past and respect the dignity of women as women. But in reality not all families are like this. And not everyone sees this as something good. In certain places, a mother can be educated, but because of many different social and economic factors, we find that her daughters are denied this right for a number of reasons, including religious fundamentalism, including economic reasons, and including social reasons.”

The transformation of the social reality and the increase in the proportion of educated women do not mean that society is living through a sufficient process of change. These changes can be purely cosmetic, without affecting deep change. They can be simply quantitative changes, without being translated into a qualitative change. This is what “Afaf”, one of the women’s activists, expressed:

“There are quantitative differences, but not qualitative differences between the situation of women today and their situation in the past. Today they are allowed to go out in order to study. But at the end of the day, it is difficult for them to work in the private sector, so [they take a job] with the Ministry of Education. They accept this because it allows them to go home at one o’clock on the dot, and they can prepare lunch at the right time. Their job guarantees that a better groom will propose to them, so it also raises their status and price. Also who said that women are calling out to work? Most of the women where we live do not work, and there’s maybe only 20% who are for women working.”

This non-translation of quantitative change keeps the changes in the status of women at the surface level, without shaking the patriarchal social structure and the division of gender roles. This was discussed by “Lana”, also a feminist activist.

“It is very important to distinguish between two types of change. It is true that a very great change has occurred to women from 1948 to today. It is a change that has been discussed and written about

in lots of researches. But it's important that we distinguish between qualitative change and quantitative change. The statistics show that there has been an astonishing change in the rise in the average number of school years, and in the proportion of women working, and in the rise in women's incomes. And statistics also show that there has been a great change in Arab women. This change is in proportions. But has there been a qualitative change? Has there been a change in ideas? In values? In principles? In how women look at themselves? In how men look at them? In how society looks at them? Has there been a qualitative change? In my opinion, the distinction is important, because I see that the difference is huge. The quantitative change is very clear, but the qualitative change, in my opinion, is to this day not as clear as it should be."

The unchanging view of women and the unchanging social division of gender roles, and their implications for the subordination of women and the domination of men, makes the changes that have occurred, of women going out to work and study, and the freedom of movement, superficial changes which do not affect in any profound way the view of women in society, and do not help to change the value given to women's work and education. Women's employment has become in this regard an additional source of income to improve the economic situation of the family, and does not have a value in itself. It is a source of secondary support. Women remain responsible for the housework, even if they go out to work. So they often try to find work or employment that is not too onerous, and that will allow them to manage their time, between their roles as mother and housewife first, and as worker second.

The question remains in the context of this research: It is not whether society supports granting equality to women, but what does it mean by the equality that it wants for them, and what are its contents? And to what extent is the equality that society wants for them transformed into a tool of oppression and legitimisation of the subordination of women? What are the points where society believes that it has achieved women's equality and respect, but at the same time, oppresses women and legitimises this discrimination?

This question is a result of the gulf between the attitude which society expressed towards its support for gender equality, even among religious leaders who do not see any serious impediment to it, and between practice. If everything was so fine and dandy in this picture, then why should reality be so fundamentally different if it were not bad? Why are women oppressed and suffer from a cultural heritage that treats them as inferior beings, and for sure worth less

than men? Why do women feel on many occasions that they are somehow alienated from themselves, and that they live their lives as beings defined by their relationships with men, rather than themselves. In the words of “Laila”, a woman who works as a nurse:

“From childhood, girls are under someone. They are never an independent person. Despite the fact that their rights in Islam are full and complete, they live their lives as the daughter of somebody. At some point after that, they become the sister of somebody, then the wife of somebody, and eventually the mother of somebody... The girl dies without being known herself, without her name being known.”

The image derived from the survey and from the statements of the religious leaders seem so far to be rosy, if not idealistic. The detailed exploration that we present below of specific attitudes, provides us with a rather different picture. Society agrees to women’s rights while these are unclear and without detail. But its attitudes start to retract as the meaning of equality is spelt out. The picture is not pitch black, but for sure it is not rosy either. Indeed the optimistic and rosy results on society’s high level of readiness, which went beyond geography, religious affiliation and gender, depend on a value dispute over the meaning of equality, since each respondent holds a personal and cultural image of the meaning of equality. This meaning can be quite contradictory to the general principle of equality, such as the unconditional right to freedom of movement and conduct. This is something that we shall explore in the following sections of the research. A complex and layered picture will be revealed of the meaning of equality and its limitations.

Chapter 2:

Social Attitudes towards Specific Rights

Women and Education

Published statistics indicate a continual increase in the proportion of girls obtaining high school certificates and degree certificates. Recent years have recorded a noticeable increase, to the extent that more girls are obtaining these certificates than boys. The proportion of girls gaining their Bagrut certificate among Palestinian women in Israel reaches 51%, compared to 39% among boys. From the overall review of the number of university students in Israeli universities in the academic year 2002/03 and the number of students obtaining university degrees, published by the Israeli Central Bureau for Statistics, it is clear that: for Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral studies in the academic year 2001/02, 54.1% of the total Arab student population in the universities are female students, while the overall proportion of female students (Jews and Arabs) is 56.5% of the total student population. Arab females represent 56.1% of all Arab students studying for a Bachelors degree. This representation drops to 45.1% among Arab students studying for a Masters degree, and drops further to 25.8% of Arab students studying for a doctorate. At the same time, the proportion of female students pursuing further education towards an ordinary degree reaches almost 70%. (State of Israel 2004)²⁵

The survey revealed that the most important factor influencing the status of Arab women is education, followed by the woman's strength of personality, and then the woman's work. 84.7% of respondents considered that women's status is positively affected by her level of education. 79.4% felt that the strength of her personality plays an important role in improving her status. This proportion

²⁵ It is important to point out that these statistics relate to male and female students at institutions of further education in Israel. Thus they do not include a large number of predominantly male Arab students who study abroad. Males exceed females here due to the social restrictions imposed on girls travelling to study abroad.

dropped to 70.4% for the influence of women going out to work. By contrast, 51.3% of respondents felt that a woman being married positively affected her status, while only 50.1% asserted that her being religious played a positive role in determining her status. These results show the overwhelming importance that society attaches to education.

Table 12

To what extent do each of the following factors affect the status of Arab women? [figures in percentages]

Factor	Positively affects	Does not affect	Negatively affects	Total
Being married	51.3	38.5	10.2	100.0
Working	70.4	18.0	11.6	100.0
Being educated	84.7	12.6	2.7	100.0
Being religious	50.1	35.2	14.7	100.0
Having a strong personality	79.5	15.4	5.1	100.0

While the research showed no statistically significant differences in the assessment of the positive affect of education or the importance of women having a strong personality according to the socio-economic status of the respondent, the research did show a statistical difference according to socio-economic status in responses to the effect of a woman being religious on her status. 41.4% of respondents whose income exceeds a monthly average of 6,500 NIS²⁵ felt that a woman being religious positively affects her status, while 49.1% of those of average income felt that this influences her status positively, and 54% of those with a lower than average income felt that a woman being religious positively affects her status. The statistical difference between the first and last group is 12.7%.

Table 13

To what extent does a woman being religious affect the status of Arab women? (by income) [figures in percentages]

Income	Positively affects	Does not affect	Negatively affects	Total
Average monthly income greater than 6,500 NIS	41.4	39.2	19.4	100.0
Average monthly income 6,500 NIS	49.1	37.2	13.7	100.0
Average monthly income less than 6,500 NIS	54.0	32.8	13.2	100.0
Overall	50.0	35.0	15.0	100.0

²⁵ 6,500 NIS is the average net monthly income for an Arab family in Israel.

It was also clear that the cohort of youths was the age group that least considered a woman being religious to positively affect her status. 45.1% of the 18-28 year old age group agreed with this proposition. The proportion agreeing rose with age: It was 46.6% among 29-39 year olds and 55.4% among 40-50 year olds. It rose to 58.6% among 51-61 year olds, and reached the highest figure of 62.5% among those above the age of 62.

Table 14

To what extent does a woman being religious affect the status of Arab women? (by age) [figures in percentages]

Age	Positively affects	Does not affect	Negatively affects	Total
18-28	45.1	37.7	17.2	100.0
29-39	46.4	38.8	14.8	100.0
40-50	55.4	28.0	16.6	100.0
51-61	58.6	31.4	10.0	100.0
62 and over	62.5	29.5	8.0	100.0

It is clear from looking at the answers in relation to gender that women attach primary importance to education. 88.2% of female respondents felt that education should be considered as a positive influence, as compared to 81.2% of men. 87.6% of female respondents felt that strength of personality is a factor that positively affects women's status, compared with 71.7% of men. This is a difference of almost 16%. 76.6% of female respondents considered going out to work to have a positive effect, compared with 64.3% of men.

Table 15

To what extent do each of the following factors affect the status of Arab women? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Factor	Positively affects		Does not affect		Negatively affects	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Being married	54.0	48.5	38.0	39.0	8.0	12.0
Working	64.3	76.6	20.9	15.1	14.8	8.3
Being educated	81.2	88.2	15.1	10.2	3.7	1.7
Being religious	52.2	48.1	32.3	38.0	15.5	13.9
Having a strong personality	71.7	87.6	21.0	9.8	7.3	2.5

Education as a Tool of Resistance

The importance of education springs from considering it in oppressed and poor societies as the only "capital" available in order to raise one's social status.

In the loss of traditional forms of work and with the impact of global economic changes, education has become the way out to an alternative. In the words of "Ahmad"²⁷, a married man and the owner of a boutique:

"Education, whether for girls or for boys, is essential to guarantee a good life... There is no longer any work in agriculture, so certificates are the only alternative and way of guaranteeing a respectable and blameless life. A degree is a weapon to confront life's changes."

Education is, according to the everyday expression, a weapon to protect against the un-known future. It guarantees a more effective role for women in raising their children. This is in addition to the impact it can have on changing the economic situation of the family. In the words of "Sami", one of the interviewees, who works in commerce:

"In my opinion, educating women is very essential, and is like a weapon... The economic situation today causes men to see the importance that their future wife is educated and employed. This is in order to support the family. Also in order to raise the children and to help them do their homework. For example, if an educated guy marries a girl who can't read or write... and goes out to earn his living all day... and the children come home from school with their homework and ask her for help, then she won't be able to help them at all. So they will wait for their father to come home from work to help them. Because of this educating women is something essential and very important."

Women going to study is no longer a debatable issue amongst the majority of conservative, religious or liberal circles. To a large extent, it has become a settled matter. Moreover, religion has come to be a source affirming women's right to an education. As "Samir", a religious man in his mid-forties who works as a carpenter, said:

"Islam is tolerance, love and giving. Islam is religion. God, may he be praised, said, "Read..." "Read in the name of your God who created you." So we have to read, or to learn... God did not limit reading to men, and he did not excuse women from it... The religion encourages the teaching of boys and girls equally. Islam is logical. There is a lot of logic in it... God gave us a brain to think with. If you give a girl the chance, then she can reach the highest positions, and with this she raises the level of society and her family."

Education resonates in oppressed societies, and in national minorities such

²⁷ Names in this report have been changed with the exception of religious leaders and politicians whose attitudes go beyond personal attitudes and are public attitudes.

as the Arab minority in Israel, since it is among the most important of the few available means for social advancement or for an individual to raise their socio-economic status. Its importance increases among Palestinians in Israel due to the lack of other possibilities for social advancement. In the wake of the land expropriations, and the transformation of the peasants into workers, and the lack of a developed economic infrastructure, education has become a tool to improve reality. Its importance increases among women due to the lack of work opportunities before them. Young men can finish high school and go to work in one of the Jewish factories or to available jobs in Jewish towns. However, due to the patriarchal social structure, women cannot pursue these jobs, and their opportunity to advance is contingent on them following the path of higher education, which on the one hand guarantees them a social status, and on the other a good livelihood.

Education: Between Slogan and Practice

Despite the positive return that comes from women going out to work, it is worth also noting that this demand does not mean a complete acceptance of women as equal beings. Women's study remains conditional on a host of conditions which the family or the wider environment impose on her. For example, the education of Druze girls is still limited to the universities near to her place of residence, as "Ameer", who is a member of the Druze faith, explains:

"There is a very high proportion of [Druze] girls who go to study. This is something that would have been forbidden 3 years ago... We prefer that the place of study be nearby... In Haifa all subjects are available... Today we have a project to build a college to give an opportunity to the girls specially, and also to guarantee the practice of their right to education..."

The desire to limit women's education to nearby places stems from the fact it offers the possibility of returning home after studies, to their families, since staying away from home overnight is still unacceptable for many families, as "Rashid", father of two daughters explained:

"I trust my daughter... I give her my complete trust, but because of my fear for her I refuse to let her sleep outside of the home... I can't get my head around the thought of a father who allows his daughters to study outside of the country, and not only in Jerusalem... I'm not against studying in the Islamic college, or in Al-Quds university, as long as she doesn't sleep outside of the house."

Even allowing girls to sleep outside of the home is tied to whether there is a chaperone from the family who is able to check up to ensure the women's behaviour

and that they do not transgress the red lines that the patriarchal system sets down. Mohammed, father of two girls in high school, expresses this attitude:

“Either she chooses to study in a place like Jerusalem, which allows me to be around... Or any other place near to the house like Haifa, so that she can come home every so often or every day... I will not agree to her studying in Beer Sheva, because it is far away. I will agree to her being in Tel Aviv. I agree to her studying anywhere where one of the family can be near her. But if it’s not possible for us to be sure of the situation, then she has to choose somewhere near to home.”

Even if a father agrees to his daughter studying and living far from home, he remains apprehensive and fearful for her, or more exactly, worried that she will stain her reputation, as “Ahmad” explains:

“At the university, I don’t accept my daughter studying in the room of some boy until late at night, until say one or two o’clock in the morning. I don’t accept them going to isolated places away from people. I don’t approve of them going to the cinema together. But I don’t mind them going to the cinema in a group, composed say of four girls and four boys. I don’t mind them sitting together in the cafeteria...”

Society regards education in principle as one of the rights of women. Yet this does not mean that it is an unconditional right. It is a right that is given or taken, it is denied her or granted to her, according to circumstance. In placing these conditions, society treats education as a concession in favour of girls. “Allowing” girls to study and sleep outside the home comes with a group of controls which aim to ensure that men are still in control, as “Ahmad” adds:

“I’ve given the girl my trust from the beginning, simply in allowing her to go to university... I lay down red lines for her... and I test her all the time she is outside home... I visit her, and I ask her about how she is doing, I warn her... Of course, I don’t spy on her...”

Society does not suffice in laying on women the burden of the customs and traditions that fundamentally oppress her, it also ultimately refrains from letting women out of the gaze of direct surveillance, so as to secure the greatest degree of control over women and to manage their lives as dependents. Accordingly, it resolves that its daughters should not need to sleep outside of the home. It insists that she should come home daily, as “Rashid” states:

“I support her studying in Jerusalem on the condition that she comes home every day. I am ready to take her every day... I’m against her staying away from home. I’ve visited Jerusalem University, and I know what goes on there... A girl with bad morals can corrupt a thousand

other girls. I know that there are girls from religious families who study at Jerusalem University... But this is not acceptable for me."

The study reveals that education is a right that is accepted, but conditioned. Essentially it is conditioned by the fact that it should not become a tool to confuse traditional roles or the conduct expected of women. Women should not transgress the traditions, customs and traditional practices, and they should prevent themselves from changing. She should receive a degree without possessing a new social value. In the words of "Ameer":

"Things which are granted to women today, were granted by us to our women in practical terms in the distant past... There is no doubt that we have our special characteristics in terms of customs, and traditions and the "conservatism" which we take care to conserve, like dress, propriety, protecting honour, protecting customs and traditions which do not contradict the things I mentioned, like development and science and so on. But I'm sorry to say that a lot of science and civilisation is translated wrongly. I'm sorry to say that many of us copy the West in our behaviour... This is a description of Druze society and Arab society in general. If a girl was studying she would start to wear foreign clothes, Western clothes, shameless clothes... We oppose this, and we stress the importance of holding on to our customs and traditions, and choosing the good and beneficial things from the West, like science and other things that can benefit our society... But at the same time, we have to hold on to our customs and traditions... This is the general picture of the situation today..."

It is not so strange that "trust" is transformed in the social context to be a kind of burden that women bear on their backs. Instead of trust being a source of strengthening the self, it has been translated in practice to construct the behaviour of women. This is what one of the female university students said, who was able to go to study at a university in the South after she received support from her brother who also studies in the same place. "Sana" says:

"Yes, this [trust] does put a lot of responsibility on me. First I have to return the support and responsibility that my family have given me in things that will raise their heads up high and their reputation, that means preserving the things I came with from the village. I also need to preserve the reputation of my brother who lives here. This is a big responsibility. Another thing is the hopes that they have for me since I have gone out to live away from home. Their hopes and expectations are very high in everything, and even in choosing my life's partner. They expect me in the end to choose someone educated who has a high status, and they wouldn't let me settle with someone uneducated. This is

something I have experienced. I had this kind of experience when I fell in love with a certain guy who was not educated, and I wanted him to be the one for me, but my family didn't agree to this."

It seems that the acceptance of women's right to education within the dominant patriarchal culture is as a tool to "protect women", and to provide them with a weapon to "confront" unknown circumstances. It is less a comprehensive recognition that it is an inalienable right than a tool to strengthen young women within the dominant patriarchal system, as "Ahmad" explains:

"A woman's degree is important for her, for my daughter, and not for me... It is a weapon, and an admission ticket into society and society's marketplace... She is given an independence by working with a university degree, whether as a teacher, or doctor, or pharmacist, or lecturer. After a university education, a person's understanding and thoughts change. Being alone, and far away, and getting to know university students who are aware, influences the way you think, it broadens your mind...it gives you life experience. The perspective of my daughter when she goes to university in her first year will be different compared with later years. She will know to distinguish between right and wrong, between white and black, and between red lines and orange lines..."

A woman's education is essentially a weapon that she is supposed to use when exposed to difficulties in life, especially if she marries an unsuitable man, or one not able to perform the roles expected of him, as "Samir" elaborates:

"Today, compared to the past, we see that there are few families who marry their daughters off aged 17 or 18... Today Arab society appreciates the importance of a girl's degree and her education as a weapon for her in the future, and in her marriage... For example, if it's her misfortune to marry an unsuitable husband, then she will still be able to go out to work to support and provide for her children."

Treating education as a weapon means that it is used according to need, exactly as weapons are on the battlefield are. It is an important weapon because, as the research has shown, it also helps to fortify women's personalities. If we bear in mind that 79.5% of respondents believe that a woman's strength of personality is one of the most influential factors in improving women's status, we see that education is one of the means that helps in this. Yet a problem that should be noted is that strengthening a woman's personality within the context of a patriarchal societal culture does not mean developing women's skills or enhancing her self-confidence in isolation from this culture. Strength

of personality is more explicitly a code for the preservation of reputation and the implications it has for following idealised archetypes of women. This is discussed by “Iham”, a male sociology student who is critical of the “weak personalities” of the girls at university:

“The criticism that I would make is of the girls’ weakness of personality. By which I mean I criticise girls for weak personalities, and not for strong ones. There are many girls with weak personalities who quickly abandon themselves to a guy’s words or a guy’s good looks... Or they take advantage of the fact that they are far away from their families and can be free in the way they behave with guys... This is happening a lot at university, in schools, at college, and also in our homes, whether the girl is single or married... But if a girl has self-confidence, and has a strong personality, then she will fear for her honour, and her respectability, and her dignity.”

Accordingly, education is not used as a tool for strategic social change, but to regulate it as a weapon for women in a world both of “temptations” and insecurity. This construes education itself as an additional tool employed to shore up the patriarchal system rather than to change it. This attitude is discussed by “Rana”, a female university student, who talks about society’s perpetual surveillance of the behaviour of the female students to ensure that they do not violate what is considered acceptable behaviour for them as females:

“Many times someone can be confident in what they do, and so allow themselves to stay up late, at parties, or studying late into the night... But at some points, you get tired of the talk and people’s criticism of you that you will end up alone and miserable... and you will not be included in the group.”

The threat of being excluded, or the perpetual threat to a girl’s reputation, is an active tool in disciplining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour of a girl because she is a woman. Regulating education in the patriarchal system explains the fact that it is not always translated into work or a job to earn their living. This attitude is explained by “Rashid”:

“I like the woman to be female, a woman in the full meaning of the word, educated, but she shouldn’t work... I am ready to pay her a salary for staying at home... I don’t believe in women going out to work outside of the home... I support them studying, but I completely oppose her going out to work. Women should be responsible for the home and her husband. Going out to work is at the expense of her home, and at the expense of her children’s rights... Always. And from what I hear from my friends whose wives work, they are not able to take care of

their families' needs, to take care of the children and the family... which means that some men end up having to do the housework."

Education can be viewed as one of the most important factors affecting the status of women, but in itself it is insufficient to transform structural relations between the sexes. Education broadens women's sphere, and extends her space to move, but on its own it is not enough. Especially if we take into account the fact that it is not available for all women, as "Lana", a feminist activist, explains:

"In my opinion, education has allowed a large proportion of women to take a different path. But at the same time, there are many women who are denied the chance to study. From this we reach other issues. I taught for a while in schools in the Negev. I saw that causes of oppression due to national discrimination and other kinds of discrimination were preventing the girls from getting to university. But if a number of girls from the Negev get to university, this is not the factor that is going to lead to a revolution. There are cases that prove this. A number of Bedouin girls who studied at university have married as second wives. So we can see that it is not education that will lead to a revolution; it's a key, but it's not guaranteed to open the door. So we have to look for other issues which can help us bring about this revolution."

For oppressed groups, education is one of the ways open for social advancement, and it is one of the tools that can be used to convey to a group values which restore to women their violated human dignity. But education on its own is neither sufficient nor available to all. Moreover, women getting an education within an oppressive patriarchal society sometimes contributes to deepening the gap between educated women and men oppressed by the state. It can become a cause of frustration and alienation, especially if the women are forced to return to their village or tribe and accept the "inevitable", a marriage arranged by their family. Thus it remains necessary that formal education is accompanied by work to change the prevailing values and customs in society through awareness-raising programmes, and more importantly by work to change the economic injustice in which the community lives and which acts to multiply the oppression oriented towards women, and by work to reduce the oppression and discrimination which Arab society is exposed to by the State.

Women and Employment

Despite the mythology, women going to work is not something new. Women always participated in agricultural work, and they shared the work in the fields alongside the men. But they did not get directly paid for this work. Rather

the yield was shared among the family, and generally it was the men who governed financial matters. Thus what is new is that women have started to work outside of the family in areas of employment such as working in the educational system, or in the health system, or in the professions, as doctors, lawyers and engineers, or to do office work as secretaries, and this is aside from manual fields of work that do not require any professional knowledge, such as in agriculture, or textiles, or factories.

The transformation to paid professional employment is inciting a change in the community's modes of social relations. Women no longer work in the presence of their families and under their supervision. They have moved to new spheres, independent of direct family monitoring. This has given them more freedom and space to move. Accordingly, women's employment has come to be considered by some as a key to strategic change, that it will lead in the long run to a transformation in the socio-cultural values that discriminate against women. Knesset Member Jamal Zahalqa reflected that women's employment is a key whose importance outweighs any other factor:

“I believe that the key to change is women's employment, that they work independently. There is a difference between women working on the family agricultural holding, where she works in practice but does not receive a wage, and when she earns a wage, which is her property, and has her own bank account, and is able to step outside of the family bounds.”

The research revealed that women's right to employment enjoys a high level of social legitimacy. 77.8% of respondents expressed that they strongly agreed or agreed that a married woman's employment contributed to improving her family's situation. 22.2% expressed their disagreement or strong disagreement with this statement.

Table 16

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “An employed married woman improves her family's situation because she works”
[figures in percentages]

Extent of Agreement	Proportion
I agree strongly	27.9
I agree	49.9
I disagree	16.8
I disagree strongly	5.4
Total	100.0

The research revealed a gender difference in attitudes towards married women's employment. 72.4% of male respondents expressed that they strongly agreed or agreed that a married woman's employment contributed to improving her family's situation, while 83.8% of female respondents held the same attitude. By contrast, 28% of males expressed their disagreement or strong disagreement with this statement, as compared to 16.2% of females. This difference highlights that employment has come to be a widely supported demand among women.

Table 17

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "An employed married woman improves her family's situation because she works" (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Extent of Agreement	Male	Female
I agree strongly	21.3	34.7
I agree	50.7	49.1
I disagree	21.6	11.9
I disagree strongly	6.4	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Similarly, 88.7% of university graduates expressed the belief that women's employment contributed towards improving their family's situation. 76.2% of high school graduates, and 73.8% of those who completed elementary school agreed or agreed strongly with the proposition. While 13.3% of university graduates, 23.8% of those with high school education, and 26.3% of those with only elementary school education disagreed or disagreed strongly.

Table 18

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "An employed married woman improves her family's situation because she works" (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Extent of Agreement	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
I agree strongly	25.0	27.1	33.2
I agree	48.8	49.1	53.5
I disagree	18.7	18.4	10.1
I disagree strongly	7.5	5.4	3.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

65.1% of respondents felt that preventing those in charge from sexually harassing their workers strongly affects the protection of women worker's rights, while 58.6% of respondents felt that providing advice to women workers

on how to secure and protect their rights strongly affects it. 55.6% considered that pressuring employers and demanding that they strive for women's rights at work strongly affects the protection of their rights. It is clear that the guarantee that there should be no sexual harassment of women at work was rated as so influential, in part because of the importance of securing a comfortable atmosphere for women to work in, but also because it is linked to the cultural importance of the preservation of honour.

Table 19

To what extent does each of the following factors affect the protection of women's rights at work, including equality in wages and employment opportunities, in your locality? [figures in percentages]

Factor	Strongly affects	Affects	Does not affect	No effect at all	Total
Pressuring employers and demanding that they strive for women's rights at work	55.6	38.9	4.6	0.9	100.0
Providing advice to women workers on how to secure and protect their rights	58.8	37.0	3.8	0.4	100.0
Preventing those in charge from sexually harassing their workers	65.1	29.8	3.9	1.2	100.0

Women's employment is seen as a tool that gives them independence, and opens up for them opportunities to do new things socially, as "Salwa", who works as a hairdresser explains:

"In terms of economics, when a woman has a job which pays her a salary, then she becomes economically independent. It's very important that she has her own car and a driving licence... Because of her job she has economic independence, which allows her to do more than if only her husband was working... If a woman stays at home all day and doesn't help in supporting the family, then she is weaker, and she will not allow herself to do things because their economic situation depends only on the man."

The highest proportion of respondents felt that the provision of childcare facilities during working hours while women are out at work is the factor that most affects whether women go out to work. 74.8% of respondents felt that this has a large effect, while 18.7% felt it has an average effect, around 4.4% felt it has a little effect, and 2.2% felt it has no effect. After this factor came the belief in

the importance of the agreement of her husband or family. 74.5% felt that this has a large effect, 16.4% felt it has an average effect, and 4.9% felt it has a small effect, while the proportion who considered it to have no effect was only 4.7%. Following this, in order of perceived importance as an influence on whether women work were: the work opportunities available in the area with 58.9%, the quality of qualification that women have 58.2%, the economic situation of the family with 56.7%, the material recompense for working with 46.9%, the proximity of work to the home with 46.3%, and finally the acceptability of women's employment among neighbours and relatives, which had the lowest proportion at 13.6%.

Table 20

To what extent does each of the following factors affect the possibility of women going out to work? [figures in percentages]

Factor	Large Effect	Average Effect	Small Effect	No Effect	Total
Acceptability of women's employment among neighbours & relatives	13.6	23.7	23.8	38.9	100.0
Proximity of work to the house	46.3	32.2	11.7	9.8	100.0
Agreement of husband or family	74.5	16.4	4.9	4.2	100.0
Material recompense for work	46.9	40.0	9.0	4.1	100.0
Quality of qualification that women have	58.2	32.6	6.5	2.7	100.0
Economic situation of family	56.7	33.8	7.1	2.4	100.0
Work opportunities available in the area	58.9	31.0	7.1	3.0	100.0
Provision of childcare facilities during working hours	74.8	18.7	4.4	2.1	100.0

Attitudes to Employment: Between Social Restrictions and State Impediments

The statistics show clearly that women's employment is affected by the socio-political reality in which Arab women live. The lack of necessary infrastructure, such as the provision of childcare facilities, presents an obstacle to women's options to go out to work. The fact that childcare facilities are considered to be the most important factor affecting whether women go out to work resonates with statistics published on the lack of child care facilities in Palestinian villages and towns in Israel, particularly for the 0-3 age group, which point out the size of the structural obstacles existing. At present there are 1,600 day care centres

in the state, of which only 25 are in the Arab sector. (Boulos 2003) In practical terms, this means that many women who are mothers of young children are compelled to stay at home due to the State failing to provide organised places for childcare during their hours of work.

The lack of day care centres and suitable provision of childcare facilities during working hours not only affects women going out to work in itself, it also has an impact on the relationship between the possibility of a woman working and the actual agreement to it of her husband and his family. A working mother is forced to look for alternative childcare arrangements, and often the alternative is either her family (i.e. her mother) or her husband's family (i.e. her mother-in-law), which obviously has a significant impact on their attitude to her working. Accordingly, it does not seem surprising that the factor whose influence most closely matches the provision of childcare facilities should be the agreement of husband or family. This does not mean that the matter only hangs on the provision of childcare facilities, but it is one of the factors that has a residual effect. Besides, the agreement of the family and husband is a factor which enjoys the greatest importance relative to other factors, attributable to the patriarchal social belief that women's movements are not something that only concerns them, but are a family matter decided by her father or husband, as the social and family point of reference for decisions.

The in-depth interviews and focus groups highlighted the fact that women's employment, which seems at first glance to be accepted in principle and not to be opposed by the majority, is approved and accepted only with a host of conditions in place, such as the need to work and the type of work. It does not necessarily express a belief that employment is an unconditional right for women, but rather is a product of need. It seems that men and youths have come to expect that their wives will contribute to the family finances. One of the teachers talked about how his male students believe in the importance of marrying a woman who has a job that does not get in the way of her work as a housewife, while helping out financially. This is what "Abdel Qadir", who works as a teacher, explained:

"When I go into the 12th grade, and I hear how the next generation thinks about women, I end up leaving dumbfounded. I think how is it that this generation who are now in 12th grade and in a year's time will graduate into the wide world, how is it they still think that the utmost their wives should be is a school teacher so she can bring him a salary, and not because they believe deep down that it's her right to work and choose?"

Similarly, “Mohammed” talked about the same attitude:

“In principle, I’m not against girls studying, and I’m not against them working within a positive framework, like being a school teacher... As a woman, she is better than men at dealing with children. For the younger children or in elementary school, I’ve noticed from following my own children that a female teacher is better than a male teacher. She’s the one that offers care and compassion. Also I support the work of a woman who needs to work because her husband is ill, or was struck by some paralysis. But it shouldn’t become a social phenomenon.”

This quotation raises one of the biggest problems that confront women who work abnormal hours, such as in journalism, or medicine or nursing in hospitals, or who work in restaurants, since women’s employment is accepted in principle provided that she finds a job where first and foremost she can perform her household duties. This is the role that is expected of her socially, and that many women have internalised also. One of the women who works in the media observes that women’s internalisation of their role as housewife is essentially what leads them to look for work during hours where they are able to juggle between their job and between being a housewife, and where they are able to go home at two o’clock to prepare food for their children and husband. As Afaf explains:

“Many women have the feeling that their work [should be] until two or three, since they have to be at home.”

The respondent adds women who internalise the social expectation of her to be a housewife, paradoxically become complicit in the oppression of women who want to work long hours. The women become fearful and doubtful of society’s appreciation of their work. “Samah” who used to work in journalism and was required to stay late at work, expressed the following:

“At one point I was working until 8pm. People always asked how? It was incomprehensible. Women themselves make the woman who is interviewing them feel that she is selling her children short, and her household short. But I do believe that a woman who goes out to work takes care of her household and her children. Perhaps no better, but no worse than a woman who sits at home.”

The expectation of women that they should be first and foremost mothers and housewives is accompanied by a marginalisation of the family role of husbands. Women are responsible for raising the children, and the husband is only an external supervisor. Society talks as though only women or mothers are responsible for raising children, and that their husbands have no role to play.

Thus women's employment has come to be acceptable, but conditional, as we have stated previously, on their ability to subordinate it to their primary duties as housewives. Those jobs that are most approved of in this regard are those that allow them to be away from home for the least amount of time and do not get in the way of their work at home. So instead of being mothers and housewives, women's work has doubled: they are now mothers, housewives, and employees.

Given the expectation that women first and foremost be housewives, whether a woman goes out to work depends not only on her own aspirations, but is dependent by the level of support these aspirations receive from her surrounding environment, as "Laila" explained:

"A change is not possible if only women want it. [Whether a woman is] a teacher or a doctor, she still [has to get] the agreement of her husband for her to go out to work... There is not one woman who is prepared to have battles at home in order to go out to work if their husband doesn't agree to it."

In this light, a woman going out to work has become a challenge laden with difficulties, not because women face problems at work or with its demands, but because she comes to work laden with social pressures and family demands, as "Laila" added:

"Whoever wants to start out in any field faces a number of difficulties. These are: (1) a religious husband or conservative mindset, (2) the in-laws who criticise everything, (3) the neighbours who are watching her... So a woman who tries to go and progress at work does so at a personal cost. No one is going to take away from her her duties as a mother, as a housewife or as the only cleaner or kitchen worker in the house."

Women's employment has become contingent on their ability to do the housework, to take care of the children, and to convince their husbands and surrounding environment. It can also rely on the fact that she does not step outside the conventions of "obedience" to her husband. As "Rashid" reflected, saying that he is in favour of women's employment within certain limits and when necessary:

"Is it right that a woman should leave her home and her husband and her children for the sake of working. I'm not against them working, but in times of need."

Rashid elaborated on the concerns that accompany women's employment, pointing out that the main concern derives from the transformation of women

into independent actors, dispensing with the traditional role that men had fulfilled through their work and control of the family finances:

“A woman being economically independent makes her have no need of a man, or of the tie between them... a woman being economically independent makes her more free... Her work and her economic independence make her just like a man.”

“Rashid” criticises the effects associated with women going out to work except in cases of necessity, making his point in the language of religious and traditional idioms that see it as the fundamental role of men to provide for the family, and the role of women to take care of the children and house and her man’s needs. He explains:

“I condemn this (a woman going out to work who doesn’t need to). On what grounds is she doing it? She’s not like a man. If she’s like that, so why did she choose to get married? In years to come will women be opposing the fact that men don’t give birth, and be demanding that they have pregnancies exactly like them? It’s the man’s duty to provide for his family and home, and the money the woman has is hers and she’s free to do what she likes with it. According to Islam, a man is charged with providing a woman with food, a house, suitable clothes, and respect inside and outside of the home. I accept material independence through opening a business, but not if she leaves the authority of her husband.”

The key to understanding views opposing women’s right to work as a human right and not linked to economic need remains the fear of change in the traditional role division between men as providers and women as provided for, and what this could mean for the transformation of women into beings who challenge their subordinate status, from beings who should obey their husbands – men.

Employment as a Right: Conditional on Not Upsetting Domestic Roles

The home is tied, culturally and socially, to being the female sphere. The house is the “woman’s kingdom” or even the “woman’s empire.” Accordingly, the discharge of duties within it, and attending to affairs there is the traditional work of women *par excellence*. She is the home’s owner and the man is its guest. As a guest, it is his right to find every means for comfort there (especially since he is paying the costs of his stay).

Accordingly, an acceptance of women’s employment does not mean accepting its associated changes to the division of domestic duties, or men’s readiness

to take a more active participation in household tasks upon their shoulders. Rather the opposite is true. Due to a lack of social awareness, women's employment can become a burden rather than a means to self-realisation, as "Lana" explains:

"Going out to work can be a double-edged sword. For instead of women only having on their shoulders responsibility for the house, it means that they have on their shoulders responsibility for the house and their job, and in the end, their salary is not theirs personally, but is also spent on the house. And if the other members of the family, the husband and sons are not prepared. The sons should help their mother with the housework, and it should not be that she comes home, prepares food, and cooks, and they eat and go, and she's left to wash the dishes."

"Shams", a working woman, talked about the difficulty that working women face as a consequence of domestic duties not being divided up between spouses. She said:

"The problem for Arab women is that there is no support or help from the men. This means that she goes out to work for 8 hours or 6 hours, and comes home where there is no help for her. This causes pressure and it causes for her great frustration."

Employment for women, especially for married women means in practice doubling her workload, since after coming home from work she is required to perform alone the role of domestic worker, so that it falls on her shoulders to prepare the food and do the housework. "Shams" expressed this when she reflected:

"The responsibilities increase on the shoulders of a woman who works. This means that a woman who works, even if she has the same qualifications as her husband and she works in the same field – they could both work as teachers – he comes home and goes to sleep, and she works... It's the minority of men who feel for their wives and support them either morally or practically."

The survey shows how deep and dogged society's belief is in women's traditional role. 69.9% of respondents felt that preparing food is one of the mother's duties, while 1.3% felt that this is the role of the father. 71.2% of respondents considered that housecleaning and clothes washing are part of the mother's job, while 0.7% consider this to be part of the father's role. By contrast, 28.8% felt cleaning to be the job of both spouses. A similar proportion felt that preparing meals was also a joint duty. In contrast to this deeply traditional perspective on the traditional role division between men and women, 91.0% of respondents

believe that taking care of the children's behaviour is the role of both spouses. 91.4% expressed the view that the number of children in the family is a joint decision, while 79.8% of respondents believed that decision-making over properties has to be shared.

Table 21

Who in your opinion should do the following household tasks?
[figures in percentages]

Task	Father	Mother	Mother and Father	Someone else in the family	Total
Cleaning the house and washing the clothes	1.3	69.9	28.8	0.3	100.0
Preparing meals	0.7	71.2	28.0	0.2	100.0
Helping the children with their homework	2.3	16.5	80.9	0.3	100.0
Taking care of children's behaviour and helping solve problems	1.8	7.0	91.0	0.2	100.0
Planning the number of children in the family	6.4	2.1	91.4	0.2	100.0
Making decisions over Family's property	18.1	1.6	79.8	0.5	100.0

Responses to the division of household tasks varied according to the gender of the respondent. While 75.7% of males felt that housecleaning is the mother's role, this proportion dropped to 63.4% among females, a difference of 12.3%. By comparison, while 35.8% of women suggested that housecleaning is the responsibility of both spouses, this figure dropped to 22% among men, or a difference of 15%. The proportions were similar with regards to responsibility for preparing meals. 76.5% of males felt that this was the mother's duty, compared with 65.8% of females, and while 22.5% of males believed it to fall on both spouses, 33.6% of females did.

These statistics indicate that values related to the division of domestic roles and the continuing belief in traditional roles for women still have a hegemonic hold in the community, particularly among men who are the principal beneficiaries from this division.

Table 22

**Who in your opinion should do the following household tasks?
(by gender) [figures in percentages]**

Task	Father		Mother		Mother and Father		Someone else in the family	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Cleaning the house and washing the clothes	2.0	0.7	75.7	63.4	22.0	35.8	0.3	0.2
Preparing meals	1.0	0.3	76.5	65.8	22.5	33.6	0.0	0.3
Helping the children with their homework	2.8	1.9	18.8	14.2	78.4	83.4	0.0	0.5
Taking care of children's behaviour and helping solve problems	8.5	4.2	1.7	2.5	89.7	93.1	0.2	0.2
Planning the number of children in the family	23.4	12.8	2.3	0.8	74.0	85.7	0.3	0.7
Choosing how to vote in the elections	14.5	10.1	1.7	1.0	83.2	87.9	0.7	1.0

The orthopraxy of social values related to the gender division of household roles means that men helping out with them can provoke astonishment from the surrounding environment. Even a child can tell that household tasks are women's work, or in the words of one of the participants in the research: "My brother went to the sink to do the washing up, and his daughter began to call out, 'My father is like the women.'"

This role division has been rooted in people's mentality to such an extent that even women have come to see it as a part of nature, and not culture. As "Raha", one of the employed women expressed:

"I say that a woman is a woman and a man is a man. That's my view... So if for example I went to visit people and I saw the man presenting the guests with refreshments while the woman was seated, I would think less of the man – you can criticise it because you're not used to this."

The feelings of astonishment from men performing tasks that are traditionally classed as feminine are not limited to a particular class. Even educated women, aware of the importance of both spouses sharing the tasks, sometimes confront deep down reservations towards this. "Umayma", a lawyer who is used to

working longer hours than her husband reminisces:

“When I was first married, he picked up a washing basket in a natural manner and wanted to take it outside to dry the washing. I remember it was the first week. The first thing I thought was: Should he take it outside, or should he not take it outside? Will people see him drying the washing or not? I thought because women are the most restrictive of themselves in all of our society. In the end I said to myself, be quiet, and don’t say anything to him. Let him do it, because he is doing something right.”

Attitudes towards the division of household tasks correlate very clearly with the respondent’s level of education. Those with a university education expressed more liberal attitudes towards sharing domestic tasks, while the views of those who only completed elementary school were more severe. 84.0% of those with only elementary education believe that cleaning the house is the responsibility of the wife, compared with 71.6% of those who completed high school. This proportion drops to 50.7% among those with university degrees. Similarly, 87.4% of those with only elementary schooling feel that preparing meals is the wife’s responsibility, compared with 73.9% of those completing high school. This figure falls to 48.6% among university graduates.

Table 23

Who in your opinion should do the following household tasks? (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Task	Father			Mother			Mother and Father			Someone else in the family		
	Elem.	High	Univ.	Elem.	High	Univ.	Elem.	High	Univ.	Elem.	High	Univ.
House cleaning and washing the clothes	0.9	1.1	1.7	84.0	71.6	50.7	14.8	27.1	47.3	0.3	0.2	0.3
Preparing meals	0.3	0.5	1.0	87.4	73.9	48.6	12.3	25.2	50.3	0.0	0.4	0.0
Helping the children with their homework	2.2	2.5	2.1	27.2	15.9	5.5	70.4	81.2	92.5	0.3	0.4	0.0
Taking care of children’s behaviour	3.4	1.2	1.0	13.0	6.5	1.4	83.6	92.0	97.6	0.0	0.1	0.0
Decisions over family property	24.4	19.9	7.8	2.2	1.2	1.7	73.5	78.2	90.1	0.0	0.7	0.3
Choosing how to vote in the elections	21.3	12.0	3.1	1.2	0.4	3.1	76.9	86.5	93.2	0.6	1.1	0.7
protecting Family members	24.4	16.5	7.8	1.9	1.8	1.7	73.1	80.9	89.8	0.6	0.9	0.7

The correlation between liberal attitudes towards employment and level of education derives from the fact that a lot of educated men are married to educated working women and so know firsthand both the material value of women's employment and its contribution to improving women's status, and also the difficulties that working women have in taking care of all the household tasks without their husband helping out. Accordingly, university educated men are more understanding and liberal in their attitudes towards helping out with domestic chores.

Employment as a Right: Depending on Type

One of the results of the research was that there is a significant tendency to categorise jobs as more suitable for men, and more suitable for women. For instance, 48.9% of respondents considered that working as a company director is a more suitable job for men, while 1% thought it a more suitable job for women. 50% thought it suitable for both men and women. Similarly, 39.4% felt that working in a textile factory or a cannery is a more suitable job for women, while 7.8% thought it suitable for both men and women. A clear instance of considering work as masculine was working in commerce, since 58.9% of respondents felt that it is a job more suited to men, while 1.1% thought it more suited to women. This gendered perspective was even clearer in the case of driving. 84.7% felt that men are more suited to being a bus driver, while 1.3% felt that women are more suited, and only 13.7% felt that it was suitable for both genders.

One of the interesting results in the survey was that 83% of respondents considered that working in education is suitable for both men and women. What is interesting in this is that education in particular has begun to be transformed into a profession "for women", due to the possibility of juggling between its demands and the demands of home. And yet, it is still considered socially to be a profession suitable for both sexes.

Table 24

**To what extent are the following jobs suitable for men and women?
[figures in percentages]**

Job	More suitable for women	More suitable for men	Equally suitable for both	Not suitable for both	Total
Services, cleaning, catering	20.5	22.2	49.3	8.0	100.0
Teaching	11.2	5.7	83.0	0.1	100.0
Nursing	21.8	8.3	69.7	0.2	100.0
Company Director	1.0	48.9	50.0	0.1	100.0
Professional (Lawyer, Doctor, Engineer)	0.9	23.3	75.6	0.2	100.0
Factory Work (textiles, canneries)	39.4	7.8	50.9	1.9	100.0
Commerce	1.1	58.9	39.7	0.3	100.0
Bus Driver	1.3	84.7	13.7	0.3	100.0

It is clear that the jobs considered to be more suitable for women, such as teaching, nursing or working in textile factories or canneries, are those jobs that do not threaten men's position as the decision makers or the power holders in the public sphere. Rather they situate women in jobs where they are not decision makers, where the decisions are made for them. Jobs where decision making power is concentrated, such as being company directors, or the power to control transactions, such as commerce, or to control large machinery, such as a lorry, are considered more suitable for men. These are jobs that can be described as needing a high degree of control and rationality, and an ability to compete in the economic marketplace, in addition to involving contact with male social spheres where the rules of surveillance that operate in official institutions, such as schools, health clinics or textile factories, do not apply.

A woman who works in commerce or who drives a bus or a taxi is forced to go down into the public street. Her dealings are not only with men of all social backgrounds, but pointedly with strange men whose behaviour cannot be predicted towards women in a world that connects the street on a cultural level with the sphere of men. Even a woman who comes out into it to transport someone or to sell something remains a guest, rather than someone who has a right to be there. "Her kingdom", as we discussed earlier, is the home, and so she should behave in the street according to the rules of the host, the male, in terms of dress, manner of speech, and gaze, which should be lowered. Women in public space – the street are guests and not its rightful owners. The proper behaviour of guests is required of them: they should not upset the

existing order. Thus they should minimise as much as possible the space they take up, and limit their prominence there. In this context, where the street forms the archetypal male sphere, power relations between men and women are intensified. It is here that freedom of movement and prominence, or more precisely freedom of conduct is a right reserved for men only. Accordingly, driving buses, or the right to use the street and not pass through as a guest on it, is one of the things that provoke most astonishment and even refusal.

The obstacles confronting women are not limited to social expectations and cultural challenges. In addition, structural impediments resulting from the discrimination which the Palestinian minority in Israel face also play a pivotal role, since the lack of nearby places of employment, or convenient transportation, the paucity of day care centres, and the cutbacks in funding for Arab local authorities have all led to serious obstacles for Arab women's entry into the labour market.²⁸

Women and Political and Community Work

Historically, politics was linked to being part of the male public sphere, while the home and family were the female private sphere. The issue of equality for women in political participation is a modern cause in the world, and the product of the leap in thinking made by the Enlightenment on the worldwide system and individual rights and on the hierarchical reality of gender relations. Thus the history of political struggles is a history of the struggle of unrepresented classes and ill-treated minorities, and women in order to join the representative political system (Herzog 1999, 307) Yet worldwide women are still far from achieving equal representation, with the possible exception of the Scandinavian countries.

Women's Political Participation in the Context of a National Struggle and Rural Mentality

Within Palestinian society in Israel, politics is still considered to be a job for "men" and a male sphere. Women's entry into politics is rare and it encounters difficulties. As "Nadera", a female political activist, discussed:

"I am part of a political movement. There were local elections, so we went and I was the only woman in the meeting. We formed a committee and they chose some of them (the men). So I said: 'And not me?' They said: 'You can't sit with the men and negotiate with them.' So I said: 'Who told you so? Do you decide for me? Why not me?'"

²⁸ This topic will be reviewed in greater detail in the chapter on "Arab Women – Between State Racism and Social Patriarchy."

Women's proportional representation in parties and political movements falls as one rises through the representative ranks. While women participate in the party grassroots, generally they do not reach the highest representative positions. This is clear in the fact that only one Arab woman, and even then with a Zionist party, has ever been able to enter the Israeli parliament. Despite the fact that the Arab parties generally stress the importance of gender equality, they continue to hold back from implementing equality for women in representation. Rather women who display leadership skills and a political commitment are often confronted from within their party. This is because:

“Even if you were active and committed, the moment that you ask to be a representative and to be in a decision-making position, then [the party] doesn't take into account your history or how active you were. When I wanted to propose myself as a candidate in a progressive party I faced this. And everything that I wanted to get rid of from my personality was used as criteria to accept or not accept my candidature: my family, my denomination, my religion. I, someone who doesn't care about denomination, or religion, or family, I began to discuss issues of religion, and family, and neighbourhood. They calculated if I was married or not. They calculated if I would be able to bring in family votes or not, and so if I merited being part of their election list or not!”

Compounding the national reality which Arab women live as part of the Palestinian minority in Israel and the hegemony of patriarchal rural thought are the complexities of women's entry into the first ranks of parties. The issue of women's participation is treated as though it is a secondary social issue in the ocean of the national struggle, and that addressing it comes at the expense of the primary issue, the issue of equality. In addition to this, the Arab parties, who are competing in practical terms for the same constituency of Arab votes do not want to “risk” proposing a woman who is unable to secure the votes of her family or tribe, which would be almost certain if they propose a man. Moreover, even if a woman succeeds in entering the first ranks of a party, which is to be expected eventually as an individual case, problems remain in transforming the parties into a shared field of work for men and women to advance equality, since the interrelationship of party political work and tribal social relations reduces the success of an egalitarian party project.

In addition, within nationalist thought women embody the self-image of the collective: she is the mother of the people, and it is her duty to guarantee the continuation of the Nation through her reproductive role and through raising children on a love for their nation and a sense of identity belonging. Thus women are considered a symbol of the borders of the Nation, and of the respect for

them. (Yuval Davis 1993) On the basis of this perspective, the participation of women in the collective is not only limited to the private sphere, but this role is also magnified. This magnification is accompanied by feelings of participation in the collective which softens the sense of discrimination resulting from the engendering of the public and private. (Herzog 1999, 330) With the matrix of tribalism, nationalism, and rural patriarchal culture, Arab women are transformed into a reserve of votes; they support and do not participate.

In spite of all this, in the research society expressed an acceptance towards women's political participation. 78.0% of respondents expressed their support or their strong support for women's involvement in political and community work, while approximately 22% expressed their opposition or strong opposition to it. Despite the positive nature of this statistic, a comparison with another statistic in the research, on attitudes towards political leadership remaining in the hands of men, shows that the acceptance of women's political participation does not imply consent to the transformation of the political field into a field where women participate on equal terms. 45.4% of respondents in the survey expressed their agreement or their strong agreement that political leadership must stay in the hands of men, while 73.2% expressed their readiness to vote for a list headed by a woman. These attitudes indicate that society is perfectly ready to absorb some changes, but that it continues to be hesitant, if not to refuse outright that these changes lead to a fundamental change in the patriarchal structure.

Attitudes towards the types of work that should be adopted and attitudes towards women's political participation correlated positively with gender and economic status. While 70.2% of men expressed their support or their strong support for women's involvement in political and community work, 86.0% of women expressed their support or strong support for it. 29.8% of men were in opposition or strong opposition to this, while 13.9% of women were. Accordingly, it seems clear that women see the imperative for their involvement in the political field, while men seem to be more hesitant. This is to be expected because political activity is not only a means of social change, but is also considered a source of respectable social status.

Table 25

To what extent do you support women's equal participation to men in political and community work? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Extent of Agreement	Men	Women	Overall
I agree	51.5	53.1	52.3
I agree strongly	18.7	33.0	25.8
I disagree	22.6	10.7	16.7
I disagree strongly	7.2	3.2	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Women's involvement in politics, under the shadow of the belief according to traditional patriarchal thought that politics is a male vocation, and of the implications this involvement has for gatecrashing into the public sphere and clashing against a fundamentally male world and its decision making power, all causes obstacles to be placed before an aspiring woman politician. "Naila", a politically active woman, expressed the following:

"My children suffered from their mother working in politics... Because there is disagreement on this issue... She doesn't work as a teacher, or as a nurse, but she works in politics... In the past, it was easier for an oriental man to accept the services of a woman teacher or a nurse or a secretary, but it was extremely difficult for him for a woman to be a politician and to have her own independent opinions... and the chance to be elected. In my opinion, this is also the attitude of oriental men today. The clearest proof of this is lack of any women councillors or any positions for elected women."

Women entering elections to be Mayor of a local authority can be incomparably more problematic than standing as a candidate in parliamentary elections, since the social, familial and patriarchal relations, and patriarchal values, causes a woman's candidature, especially in the most traditional villages, to be exposed to derision and failure. Accordingly, the Knesset Member Talab Al-Sane explained that a woman candidate for the Knesset or to become Mayor is acceptable in principle, but it is not practically possible to implement.

"For instance, suppose I want to nominate a woman as candidate for Mayor of a local council... what are the chances of success? It's not enough that I believe in this idea as an individual. We have to investigate the extent to which this society is ready to accept the idea. All the time you see that society is not prepared to accept this idea, you won't have an initiative for it. Because in any initiative, no one wants it to end in failure. This issue requires bravery, and there will not be a precedent or someone to take the initiative. People look for the easiest

route. In the easiest route, you say: 'Why should I get involved and take on issues that are socially unacceptable, and be an exception? I want to be in line with the grassroots, with things they are accustomed to.' Moreover, we see that exceptions are extremely rare in our community. During the period of elections I have never seen an Arab woman candidate to be Mayor or a member of a local council."

The distinction between the idea of women's participation in politics being acceptable in principle and the lack of practical implementation offers an explanation for the high proportion of support for a woman's candidature in the survey, and the complete lack of any women in positions of leadership. This does not mean that the situation is not open to change, but it points to the obstacles that must be overcome. Women have means of pressure to change reality, as Knesset Member Talab Al-Sane explained:

"There is also a role for the extent to which women are prepared to support the status of a female representative as a woman. Since we notice that on many occasions there is something like a conflict. Every woman wants the others to fail. Many times, rather than the success of any one woman being the success of all of us, the dominant thought is, 'If I can't succeed, why should she?' And then we are all the same."

It is women's responsibility not to accept reality, but to work to organise themselves and distance themselves from internal struggles, by forming pressure groups:

"Arab women represent 50% of society. If they decided that they were not prepared to vote for a list with no women, or a list that did not guarantee women's representation in an advanced position, then this would apply some pressure. But there is no lobby like this. We should be not prepared. We should have a position that we make public, that we are not prepared to vote for lists that exclude Arab women, or then we will exclude ourselves and abstain from voting."

Similarly, the research revealed a positive correlation between the attitudes of social groups with their level of income. Those with higher incomes expressed a more liberal attitude towards women's participation in politics. 58.8% of respondents with a higher than average income (more than 6,500 NIS per month) expressed their opposition or strong opposition to keeping leadership positions in the hands of men. 61.7% of those with average monthly incomes expressed the same position. This figure dropped to 50% among those who defined their monthly income as below average.

**Table 26: To what extent do you support women's equal participation to men in political and community work?
(by level of income) [figures in percentages]**

Extent of Agreement	Above Average Income	Average Income (6,500 NIS)	Below Average Income
I agree strongly	22.0	17.8	13.3
I agree	36.8	43.9	36.7
I disagree	25.1	25.7	34.1
I disagree strongly	16.1	12.6	15.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey showed that the methods seen as most suitable for empowering women's access to political representation are to increase social awareness. 88.0% felt that raising society's awareness of women's right to political participation could be a useful or very useful method. 86.4% believed that including women in the current electoral lists and parties would be a useful or very useful method. 85.2% thought that each list or party allocating a certain quota of guaranteed seats for women would be a useful or very useful method. After these methods, came the issue of forming a women's bloc within the existing parties, with 65.7%; and forming an Arab women's electoral list, with 58.1%. Women threatening to boycott the elections obtained the lowest support with 37.5%.

Awarding the highest rating to raising social awareness points to the fact that the fundamental problem for women's participation in representative politics and political leadership is essentially connected to a lack of social awareness. As we have stated previously, this is linked in turn to the belief that women's main role is in the private sphere and not in the public, as a housewife foremost, and then as a worker able to combine successfully her job and her domestic duties. For this belief politics is the male sphere *par excellence*. Thus society has to work to change its cultural values relating to this perspective.

Table 27

Which of the following methods could help in raising the proportion of women's political participation in Arab local and national politics, including their representation in the Knesset?

[figures in percentages]

Method	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful	Oppose this method
Including women in current parties and lists	36.7	49.7	9.4	4.2
Forming a women's bloc within the existing parties	25.9	39.8	25.4	8.9
Forming an Arab women's electoral list	25.1	33.0	25.0	16.9
Women threatening to boycott the elections	12.8	24.7	30.1	32.4
Each list or party allocating a quota of seats for women	38.7	46.5	9.5	5.3
Raising society's awareness of women's right to political participation	50.1	37.9	7.9	4.1

Chapter 3:

Women and Cultural Values

Ard and Sharaf: Honour as a Red Line

The Tunisian sociologist Abd Al-Qadir Arabi has commented on the current gulf in Arab societies between the trappings of modern materialism on the one hand, and a cultural backwardness on the other. He states: “The societies are consumers of the material paraphernalia of modern civilisation without producing it. The contradiction within them screams out, between the trappings of materialist consumer civilisation, and the hierarchy of values and different concepts which predominate in these societies. This contradiction is embodied in a number of issues such as views on women and their role... views on the socialisation of boys and girls, and polygamy.” Arabi adds astutely that, “a society that does not produce materialist civilisation will not be represented by its values. Rather it will become more conservative and hold fast onto its diacritical customs and traditions, considering them to be values that are eternal and essential.” Arabi also writes that at the heart of the cultural regime, stand the values, customs, traditions and representations aimed at preserving the unequal power relations between men and women, since the woman’s body represents a sphere through which she passes mechanisms of social regulation and subjugation, and its form becomes fixed and a caricature; its realisation conditional on the model which the patriarchal system defines. (Arabi 1999)

As we discussed earlier in the introduction to this part of the research, it does not inexorably follow that just because a society expresses positive attitudes towards specific rights, such as the right to education or work or protection, it will necessarily express liberal attitudes on issues concerning the central cultural codes on which patriarchal society is based, and especially not towards those codes whose transgression is considered a revolt against this

system, such as *ard* and *sharaf*. While attitudes towards specific tactical issues can be considered as responses to economic developments and to an imposed material modernisation, preserving the patriarchal values associated with women's behaviour and their bodies is reconfigured as a tool of resistance to the melting point of Westernisation, particularly in societies experiencing colonial and cultural threats and alterity. Women's bodies are reconfigured as a map, encoded for nationalism and the boundaries of the collective, and as diacritical indicators of authenticity and the preservation of identity. Their behaviour is reconfigured as means of proof of belonging to the nation or of Arab essentialism. Accordingly, resting on their shoulders is the fact that they should remember always to observe customs and traditions, as "Sami" expresses:

"A woman has to respect the Arab customs and traditions that we live with... She has to understand what is expected of her, and not try to get away from these values... She has to be wary of transgressing issues which are red lines for her, like honour (sharaf). Because an Arab understands this to be a dangerous issue and very sensitive... We can notice today that young women in society are going too far in some things, like what they are wearing, the way they talk, and things which they could understand wrongly... So they have to discuss it in a rational, organised way, without overthrowing or rebelling from men, from their husband or their father."

When cultural values associated with preserving customs and traditions are placed next to proofs of "Arab" identity, then women's struggle for emancipation is turned into a cultural struggle between authentic "Arab" values and "alien" values, and a woman who attempts to effect change through her behaviour or clothes is fundamentally rebelling against the collective identity, and even threatening the borders of the collective defined by her dress. "Rula", one of the interviewees at university, commented on her frustration with the similarity in dress between Arab and Jewish girls at university to the extent that it is hard to tell them apart. She said:

"I expected [when I came to university] that the Arab girls would be conservative, because we come from traditional Arab villages, and the situation is not like it is with the Jews. But I saw something quite different. I'm not saying that girls have to wear the veil, but not such tight clothes. They should wear respectable clothes. But I don't see this here. The proportion of girls who wear sexy clothes is high, so much that I can't tell the difference between Jewish and Arab girls."

The constant reiteration was made in many of the interviews, as expressed

by one of the male interviewees, “that women are Arabs first of all, and they should not forget it.” Accordingly, it falls on their shoulders to play the role that is expected or even “required” of them. This matter has to be transmitted to them via socialisation, treating their conduct as part of an authentic and Arab cultural identity.

The subjugation of women in traditional patriarchal culture by drawing the boundaries of behaviour is considered a “means of protection” which aims to organise women’s behaviour because they are unable to do so without it. Women, with their “emotional nature” and “irrationality”, are led by their emotions to the abyss and decay, as “Rashid” expresses:

“Women’s warmth and emotion leads the family and society into the abyss. Not because their thoughts are impure, but because women are emotional and it is hard for them to refuse things. Life needs boundaries. You have to put boundaries for girls so that they know the meaning of life.”

The argument that women need boundaries **because** they are women is an essentialised product of an inferior view of them, regarding them as beings who are unable to protect themselves, or to measure their conduct according to their context. It is part of the stereotypical view that considers women to be irrational creatures, exactly like children, moved by their feelings and not their minds. Yet some values, such as honour and reputation, gloss over their pivotal role in the patriarchal social structure, as a means of drawing and defining women’s conduct through using the female body as a field for their transmission. A father can be ready for his daughter to go to China on the condition that she preserves her honour. Similarly, barriers can stand in front of her completing her education, which are often motivated by fear for her reputation.

Reputation is one of the means of surveillance most active in society. By right of its symbolic capital in patriarchal society a woman is forbidden from performing certain roles. She is expected to talk in a certain manner, and her entire behaviour is measured against certain criteria. “Rania”, one of the interviewees expressed the following in her interview:

“It’s really, really difficult to be a young woman in my village, because the society where I live is really closed. A girl who goes outside of the village alone will be watched. Lots of eyes will watch her. And they will be looking at her disapprovingly. For example, the first time in my life that I went to the cinema to watch a film was when I came to Jerusalem... I was really scared, scared that someone from my village

would see me, scared that a guy would see me and tell who I was and that I had been outside the cinema at one or two o'clock in the morning. It's a lot of pressure, because you want to enjoy your life, and enjoying life means that I do things that are forbidden or unacceptable. But in the end I was going to see exactly the same film I would see in my room, but with a larger group. But I was still so scared."

"Ahmad" explains that the fears come from regarding Arab women as an easily corrupted being. She is a white sheet that is stained by everything:

"A girl is something very sensitive, like a white sheet... What happens to a white screen if it is exposed to dust?"

The comparison between a woman and a white sheet is rich in symbolism. The sheet is a light cloth, easily torn, which must be used with care, and white is the symbol of purity and cleanliness. It is a clear colour and if it is stained or faded it cannot be concealed. What a "white sheet" means is a simile that emphasises the importance of its preservation. The moment that this white sheet is soiled is the moment when the family's reputation as a whole becomes in doubt. Indeed reputation is everything for a young woman. Were she to lose it, it is as though she has lost her whole world, as "Ahmad" explains:

"A girl is not like a boy... I am ready to educate my son abroad, but not my daughter... Reputation is like a treasure for the girl... If she does wrong, a girl and her reputation are affected... And reputation is everything!"

A woman's reputation is transformed within the patriarchal cosmology into the key to women's status and the family's chart. If her reputation is sullied, the whole family is sullied and not just the woman. Yet here it is worth noting the language used to describe family honour and describe women as its bearers. It is a 'white sheet', it can be 'polluted', or it is 'glass', or anything 'breakable'. These metaphors indicate the ease with which it can be violated and at the same time the impossibility of restoring matters to how they had been prior to its violation. Shattered glass cannot be repaired, even if we wanted to. Ahmad explains:

"Arab women are easily broken. Anything shatters them. And Muslim Arab women more and more so. The most important thing is honour. If your honour is 100% then all the other issues can be overcome, like talk and rumours, short dresses, hairstyles, driving a jeep, and opening an office."

It seems that the fragility of women over honour is an "Arab cultural trait",

since it distinguishes Arab women from other women. If they do not safeguard it, they not only lose at the level of their relations with men, but they also lose at the existential level of their relation to national identity and authenticity.

Thus it is not surprising that we find that the survey attached the greatest importance to customs and traditions in determining Arab women’s status, next to the mentality of men. 83.3% of respondents considered that men’s mentality hinders to a large extent or to an average extent the realisation of gender equality, while 82.7% felt that customs and traditions hinder gender equality to a large extent or to an average extent. 71.8% felt this was the case for women’s lack of economic independence. This was followed by 67.7% for the hindrance of women’s biological nature, 63.8% for religious values, and 55.3% for the state’s policies towards the Arab minority. The primary importance that is attached to the role of customs and traditions and men’s mentality explains to a certain extent the difficulty in changing male concepts related to how a woman should behave, as “Ahmad” elaborates:

“Honour is a high value... I support women’s independence in dress, but I completely reject the idea that she should have an immoral relationship with a boy, or that she should talk with some boy who is trying to chat her up and seduce her. She and her friends have to select the boys in their group... They have to get rid of the foxes and the wolves.”

Table 28

In your opinion, to what extent do each of the following factors prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? [figures in percentages]

Factor	To a large extent	To an average extent	To a small extent	Have No effect	Total
Religious Values	31.1	32.7	14.1	22.1	100.0
Social Customs and Traditions	47.1	35.6	10.6	6.7	100.0
Men’s mentality in Arab society	47.7	36.1	12.0	4.2	100.0
State policies towards the Arab minority	24.5	30.8	21.5	23.2	100.0
The biological natures of men and women	32.0	35.7	15.8	16.5	100.0
Women’s lack of economic independence	37.1	34.7	17.5	10.7	100.0

61.6% of respondents from the Negev felt that customs and traditions

influenced to a large extent the non-realisation of complete equality between men and women in Israel, while 48.4% of respondents from the Galilee, 45.1% of respondents from the mixed cities, and 36.1% of respondents from the Little Triangle expressed the same opinion. It should be noted out that the observation by the residents of the Negev that customs and traditions are one of the factors that has the most negative impact on women's status does not have to mean that society is resolved to change them. This observation could simply be an acknowledgement of an objective reality that customs and traditions are the most significant mechanisms working to produce and reproduce unequal relations between the sexes.

Table 29

To what extent do customs and traditions prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? (by geographical distribution) [figures in percentages]

Extent	Galilee	Triangle	Negev	Mixed cities
To a large extent	48.4	36.1	61.6	45.1
To an average extent	36.3	38.5	29.1	30.1
To a small extent	9.5	19.5	3.5	8.8
Have no effect	5.8	5.9	5.8	15.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The research revealed that attitudes towards customs and traditions correlate with respondents' socio-economic status. Those with higher incomes expressed a more supportive attitude towards the proposition that customs and traditions constitute an impediment to women's equality. 57.5% of respondents with above average incomes (6,500 NIS per month) felt that customs and traditions hinder women's equality to a large extent. This figure dropped to 49.1% among those with average incomes, and fell further to 43.1% among those with below average incomes.

Table 30

To what extent do customs and traditions prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? (by level of income) [figures in percentages]

Extent	Above Average Income	Average Income (6,500 NIS)	Below Average Income
To a large extent	57.5	49.1	43.1
To an average extent	30.8	36.5	37.2
To a small extent	6.3	8.5	12.2
Have no effect	5.4	5.9	7.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The results showed that there is a correlation between respondents' attitudes and their level of education. 37.2% of respondents with only elementary education believed that customs and traditions prevent to a large extent gender equality. This figure rose to 48.8% among those who had completed high school, and reached 54.8% among university graduates. 11.1% of those with only elementary education believed that customs and traditions have no effect on equality between men and women. This number fell to 5.9% among those completing high school and further to 3.4% among university graduates.

Table 31

To what extent do customs and traditions prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Extent	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
To a large extent	37.2	48.8	54.8
To an average extent	37.2	36.1	32.7
To a small extent	14.5	9.2	9.2
Have no effect	11.1	5.9	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

While respondents clearly identify the significance of customs and traditions in securing women's inferior status in society, views differ with regards to the significance of religious values. Among respondents from the Negev, 18.8% felt that religious values negatively affect to a large extent women's status, 42.4% felt that they affect to an average extent, and 27.1% suggested they have no negative effect. Among respondents from the mixed cities, 27.7% felt that religious values negatively affect to a large extent, 25.9% felt that they affect to an average extent, while 31.3% argued they have no negative effect. Similar

attitudes were expressed by the residents of the Little Triangle, since 28.8% felt that religious values affect to a large extent, 30.3% that there is an average effect, and 26.4% that there is no effect at all. Among respondents from the Galilee, 34.2% felt that religious values have a large detrimental effect on women's status, 33.7% felt that they have an average effect, and 18.8% that they have no effect.

Table 32

In your opinion, to what extent do religious values prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? (by geographical distribution) [figures in percentages]

Extent	Galilee	Triangle	Negev	Mixed cities
To a large extent	34.2	28.8	18.8	27.7
To an average extent	33.7	30.3	42.4	25.9
To a small extent	13.3	14.4	11.8	15.2
Have no effect	18.8	26.4	27.1	31.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Attitudes towards the impact of religious values correlate positively with respondents' socio-economic status. Those who had higher than average incomes displayed a tendency to consider religious values an impediment to women's equality. 37.4% of those with above average incomes expressed the belief that religious values detrimentally effect to a large extent the realisation of women's equality, while this proportion dropped to 34.3% among those with average incomes, and fell further to 27.8% among those with below average incomes.

Table 33

In your opinion, to what extent do religious values prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? (by level of income) [figures in percentages]

Extent	Below Average Income	Average Income (6,500 NIS)	Above Average Income
To a large extent	27.8	34.3	37.4
To an average extent	35.1	33.6	25.7
To a small extent	15.2	13.3	10.8
Have no effect	21.9	18.8	26.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Respondents' answers also correlated with level of education, though to a lesser degree than was the case for responses to the significance of customs and traditions. 59.6% of respondents with only elementary education believed that religious values present an obstacle to a large or average extent to achieving equality between men and women, while this rose to 64.4% among those with high school diplomas, and reached 67.8% among university graduates.

Table 34

In your opinion, to what extent do religious values prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Extent	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
To a large extent	27.8	30.9	36.3
To an average extent	31.8	33.5	31.5
To a small extent	13.6	15.0	12.7
Have no effect	26.8	20.6	19.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

74.2% of respondents with only elementary education felt that the mentality of the men in the family have a detrimental effect to a large or average extent on the possibility of achieving equality between men and women. Among those with high school diplomas, this proportion rose to 85.6% and reached 91.2% among university graduates. The difference between them and those with only elementary education was 17%. This is a large disparity, and underlines the clear relationship between education and women's status.

Table 35

In your opinion, to what extent does the mentality of men prevent the realisation of complete equality between men and women in Palestinian Arab society in Israel? (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Extent	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
To a large extent	39.7	47.3	58.2
To an average extent	34.5	38.3	33.0
To a small extent	18.5	10.7	7.5
Have no effect	7.3	3.7	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The overwhelming importance that is attached to customs and traditions and the male mentality derives partly from the hegemony of patriarchal culture, and partly from the role which men play in ensuring the production

and implementation of patriarchal values. Since patriarchal culture which considers women as the standard bearer of honour anoints men as protectors and responsible for ensuring its non-violation. The codes of conduct form its expression in the concepts of reputation and honour, codes based and focused on the production and reproduction of patriarchal cultural hegemony. Essentially, women suffer from the hegemony of these values, since responsibility falls on their narrow shoulders for propriety in their behaviour, in their manner of speech, in their style of dress, and sometimes even in their thought, so as to socially construct roles for the two sexes.

The effect of the hegemonic patriarchal culture is not limited to one half of the population. It also infuses all women, including those who battle for gender equality. Moreover, refraining from challenging these codes of conduct and accepting them is an important element in gaining social legitimacy, and thus the ability to work with society. "Afaf" explains this dilemma:

"Reputation, and name, and dress are [restraints] that I feel 'on my skin.' For example, in one of the women's courses which I organised in my village before Ramadan, some of the women asked me if they could smoke outside. Despite their presence as a group formed from 10 women, is this not social control? Or is it also a result of their choice?... We take care of people's feelings out of embarrassment and fear..."

Placing women's behaviour continuously under a microscope and the overriding importance attached to preserving reputation act strategically to the detriment of women's options and ability to move. A woman who is employed or a student does not direct her energies merely towards meeting the requirements and commitments demanded of her by her field of activity, but also finds herself in a direct or indirect confrontation with a group of traditional arrangements and customs which require her to conduct herself according to a group of principles. "Aya", one of the female high school students, discusses this impasse:

"The problem is in our generation. We can understand each other fine. But the problem is that even if we study we will still live in the same society. There is a picture of the ideal girl that society imagines, from certain morals that a girl cannot break. And when a girl breaks these rules, even if she believes that what she is doing is right, then society puts a big X against her name."

Attitudes Towards Honour Crimes

One of the issues that most clearly highlights the dichotomy in attitudes towards women's issues, depending on the type of issue raised, and whether the issue

is related to specific rights and respect, or is connected to a whole worldview towards the discriminatory relations between the sexes, is the dichotomy between the emphasis on women's rights to work, to education, to develop a strong personality, and the tolerance and positive attitudes this implies, and between an understanding of killing in the name of so-called "family honour" and the decisive role of honour and reputation, as was discussed in detail, particularly in the interviews. 11.2% (126 persons) responded that they strongly understood a killing in the name of "family honour", and 19.5% (224 persons) said that they understood it. That is to say that 30.7% of the respondents expressed an understanding for honour killings.

Nonetheless, it is important to note the gender difference in answers. 25.1% of male respondents expressed an understanding for honour killings, and 12.8% expressed a strong understanding. Thus 37.9% of men supported understanding such killings. While 13.0% of women expressed an understanding for honour killings and 9.1% expressed a strong understanding. Hence 21.1% of women supported understanding such killings. The difference of 18.8% between men and women points to a split in views between men and women towards honour crimes. It suggests that the killings are essentially a male tool, and that its legitimacy among women is diminishing.

Table 36

What is your opinion of killings carried out in the name of "family honour"? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Response	Men	Women	Overall
I understand	25.1	13.9	19.5
I strongly understand	12.8	9.1	11.2
I don't understand	32.2	32.2	32.2
I strongly don't understand	29.9	44.8	37.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Respondents' attitudes towards honour killings also vary with level of education, geographical location, and socio-economic status. 43.3% of those who only completed elementary school expressed their understanding or strong understanding for honour crimes. 29.1% of those with high school diplomas expressed their understanding or strong understanding. This figure dropped to 20.5% among university graduates.

Table 37

**What is your opinion of killings carried out in the name of “family honour”?
(by level of education) [figures in percentages]**

Response	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
I understand	25.0	19.0	14.8
I strongly understand	18.6	9.2	5.7
I don't understand	30.1	34.4	29.7
I strongly don't understand	26.3	37.4	49.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Similarly, the survey revealed that more affluent groups express less understanding for honour killings. 22.1% of those with an above average income (+ 6,500 NIS per month) expressed their understanding or strong understanding for honour crimes. 21.4% of those with average incomes held the same view. This proportion soared to 36.4% among those with below average incomes.

Table 38

**What is your opinion of killings carried out in the name of “family honour”?
(by level of income) [figures in percentages]**

Response	Above Average Income	Average Income (6,500 NIS)	Below Average Income
I understand	15.5	15.3	22.4
I strongly understand	6.6	6.1	14.0
I don't understand	31.9	33.6	31.8
I strongly don't understand	46.0	45.0	31.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey showed that attitudes towards honour crimes do not differ greatly among respondents residing in the Little Triangle, the Galilee or the mixed cities. However, attitudes do vary in the Negev where 52.7% expressed their understanding or strong understanding of so-called honour killings. By comparison, 29.4% of respondents from the Galilee expressed their understanding or strong understanding, 38.3% of respondents from the Triangle, and 23.0% of residents from the mixed cities, where honour crimes had the lowest approval rating.

Table 39

**What is your opinion of killings carried out in the name of “family honour”?
(by geographical distribution) [figures in percentages]**

Response	Galilee	Triangle	Negev	Mixed cities
I understand	20.0	18.0	20.3	14.4
I strongly understand	9.4	10.3	32.4	9.0
I don't understand	32.2	40.2	20.3	28.8
I strongly don't understand	38.4	31.5	27.0	47.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Honour Crimes: Between Religious Reservations and Social Understanding

The in-depth interviews revealed parallel attitudes among all the religious figures condemning honour crimes. This condemnation was voiced by the Muslim Sheikh Kamal Khateeb, by the Druze Spiritual Guide Mawafaq Tarif, and by the Archdeacon Father Atallah Hanna. Shekih Kamal Khatib explained the Islamic position:

“This matter is condemned in Islamic law, it is condemned completely. Why? Firstly, the person who can carry out any killing, who we call the punisher, is her guardian. This is not a matter for anybody, or for the brother of the woman who did wrong. You can consider the brother or the father himself to be her guardian, but he has become her guardian according to passions and emotions, not according to Islamic law. The guardian of all of us is the Muslim ruler, and it is for him to order punishment to be inflicted on a particular woman or man. I do not have the right to inflict punishment on anyone, even if, God forbid, she were my sister. This is the meaning of the fact that the Sharia does not permit anyone whose sister has done such a thing to inflict punishment on her. Rather the legal guardian must do so. Secondly, there are regulations in Islamic law for inflicting punishment. We need to have not just one witness, nor two, or three, but four.”

Sheikh Mawaffaq Tarif explained the Druze position:

“We are against violence and against killing, or what are called honour killings, or killing for other reasons. We forbid it and we condemn it within the religion. Killing in the name of family honour is forbidden religiously... According to our faith, the punishment is eternal excommunication for anyone who commits an act like this.”

Father Atallah Hanna offered a similar religious position:

“We completely reject killing for whatever reasons. We absolutely do not accept killings in the name of honour, or in any other name.”

The problem is that a woman's honour is compromised also when a woman talks to a man without any family kinship connecting them, or when she marries someone her family are not happy with, and is not only tied to the loss of virginity. If a woman is described as a “white sheet”, she can pay the price of this with her life, if she takes a path that is not to her family's liking. Ruba, one of the women's activists in the South, mentions the story of the murder of an unwell young woman.

“A few months ago, a girl aged 19 was killed who suffered from psychological problems and physical violence from her brother. It drove her to run away to another family. Simply because she had run away from home, the idea was that she had run away with a boy, or because she wanted to sleep with someone. Even though the girl ran away because of the violence from her brother... After she was killed by her brother, and they did the autopsy, they found that the girl had been a virgin. When she found out, the mother put white flags on her house and other houses to declare the innocence of the family's honour.”

Raising a white banner is a custom practised in the South, done in order to exonerate the reputation of the girl after she has perhaps paid the price for her behaviour with her life. Despite the fact that the victim did no more than try to protect herself from the repeated violence of her brother, the decisive issue was the fact that she had run away from home and rebelled against the authority of the brother who had been abusing her, and considered her chattel obedient to his control who should be made to submit by all means available, including violence and humiliation. This is something that remains acceptable as long as society gives the right of control to men. Indeed what is unacceptable is the rebellion against this, and the attempt to save herself. Raising the white banners aims to prove that their honour remains important even after the girl was killed. Honour is the family's capital and not an individual's.

Yet it is also important to point out here that honour killings are in many cases perpetrated in order to cover crimes that were committed for other reasons, whether material reasons or due to internal disputes within the family. Using the pretext of honour killings attempts to justify these crimes, to have them understood by society, or to claim judicial clemency. Yet the tragedy is that it is a type of murder which finds justification in the first place.

The high level of legitimacy for honour crimes, among more than half of the

respondents in the Negev raises difficult questions about the quality of life of women in the shadow of an unwritten law that sanctifies their murder, and the implications this has for a patriarchal system that is not only produced by the hegemony of patriarchal culture, but also reserves the right to practise femicide as its ultimate sanction. It is femicide rather than the execution of a criminal who deserves punishment, for it is tantamount to obliterating a body that does not deserve to live. The tragedy of killings in the name of so-called “family honour” is concealed in its reworking as the “law of the father.” Women are not killed simply because, for instance, they have lost their virginity, rather this can be the result of stepping outside of any of the values or red lines that a certain family defines. “Ra’fat”, one of the male university student interviewees, talks about the murder of a woman in his village:

“This woman was married to a man from outside the village... Her husband was an alcoholic... The wife used to receive intense beatings and violence from him... This woman divorced him while she was pregnant... She went back home, but also there she did not find a natural reception from her family... So she gave birth to a child, and chose to live in a Jewish area... There she built her own life, which could be understood by the community as a lifestyle that was too free, and a rebellion from its values and norms... Many rumours surrounded this woman that she was an adulteress, or was a woman who did not go according to the norms and values. It led in the end to her brother looking for her for 4 years or more until he was able to find her and convince her to come and visit the village on the pretext that her father was ill. In the end, she was killed in front of the cheers of the large crowd from the village supporting what her brother did...”

This woman was not only killed physically. She was killed first socially by her exclusion from society and her categorisation as among those who do not deserve to live, at death’s doorway before being killed. Killing her in front of an assembled crowd who applauded her killer and considered him a hero was no more than the coronation of the conventional belief in the patriarchal system which says that women are under accusation, and must prove their propriety always through their behaviour and bodies, prove that they conduct themselves according to the charter of the dominant system.

It is important to point out here that sometimes an act which is disgraceful in the eyes of one family can be for another family quite natural. One of the women who has a long experience in community work reflects on how her brother stopped her from buying a Mercedes on the grounds that it was shameful. This is what she said:

“I had money and I wanted to buy a Mercedes, but my eldest brother was against it. This was because driving a Mercedes is shameful because a woman who drives one has to be either driving her father’s car or her husband’s car. So I asked, ‘If my father and my husband have gone and they didn’t have a Mercedes, does that mean I don’t have the right to drive one?’ ‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘So that people don’t say, “So and so is driving a Mercedes.”’ I was convinced by his point of view and I no longer wanted to buy a Mercedes.”

The results of the survey show that a Palestinian woman’s preservation of her virginity before marriage is still considered a very important social tenet. In the event that a husband discovers his bride is not a virgin, divorcing her is seen as acceptable and finds broad understanding within society.

Respondents from different geographical regions expressed an understanding of men getting divorced in the event that they discover after marrying their wife that she had already lost her virginity. 76.8% of respondents from the Negev expressed their agreement or strong agreement with such a divorce. 68.6% of respondents from the Galilee, 62.9% from the mixed cities, and 55.7% from the Triangle expressed a similar attitude.

Table 40

“If a man marries a girl and then discovers that she is not a virgin, it is natural to divorce her.” (by geographical distribution) [figures in percentages]

Response	Galilee	Triangle	Negev	Mixed cities
I strongly disagree	8.9	11.1	11.6	17.7
I disagree	22.5	33.2	11.6	19.5
I agree	35.9	31.7	22.1	31.9
I strongly agree	32.7	24.0	54.7	31.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey revealed a statistically significant correlation between attitudes towards men getting divorced if they discover that their wife has already lost her virginity and the respondent’s socio-economic status. Those who have higher incomes demonstrated less understanding of such divorces. Only 5.7% of those with low incomes strongly disagreed with the statement, while 17.6% of those with high incomes did so. 38.6% of those with low incomes strongly agreed with divorcing a bride who was not a virgin, compared with 19.8% of those with high incomes.

Table 41

“If a man marries a girl and then discovers that she is not a virgin, it is natural to divorce her.” (by level of income) [figures in percentages]

Response	Above Average Income	Average Income (6,500 NIS)	Below Average Income
I strongly disagree	17.6	11.7	7.5
I disagree	30.2	23.4	21.1
I agree	32.4	37.0	32.8
I strongly agree	19.8	27.9	38.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Attitudes to virginity also varied according to level of education. 20.3% of those with only elementary education expressed their disagreement or strong disagreement with a man who divorces his wife because she was not a virgin on their wedding night, compared with 32.2% of those with high school diplomas, and 52.6% of those with university degrees. 79.9% of those with only elementary school education expressed their agreement or strong agreement with the proposition. This figure dropped to 67.7% among high school graduates, and further still to 47.4% among university graduates.

Table 42

“If a man marries a girl and then discovers that she is not a virgin, it is natural to divorce her.” (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Response	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
I strongly disagree	5.0	9.9	17.5
I disagree	15.3	22.3	35.1
I agree	38.1	34.2	27.8
I strongly agree	41.6	33.5	19.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Despite the mitigated tolerance of honour killings that society expresses, its preferred method of dealing with the pregnancy of an unmarried girl is to marry her to the man who got her pregnant. 90.9% of respondents indicated that a suitable solution or a very suitable solution is to marry her to the man who got her pregnant. 79.8% supported approaching the social services for help. 76% supported punishing the man who got her pregnant. 53.5% supported punishing the woman, and 68.1% supported an abortion. It is important to point out here that the acceptance of some approaches does not preclude others, that having an abortion could also be accompanied by punishing the girl and man. What is interesting in these results is the fact that

punishing the man who caused the pregnancy received a more support than punishing the woman. Ironically, this result is not born out in reality, since in most cases the woman is punished. It could be that the cause for this does not necessarily derive from wanting to support the woman as much as it is an expression of a stereotype of women which, as we reviewed, regards them as more emotional than men, who are seen as more rational beings who calculate their actions. Most importantly, the woman is the “property” of her family. If she gets pregnant outside of marriage, then the matter is effectively an assault on the family as a whole.

Table 43

If an unmarried girl from your family became pregnant, which of the following methods would be most suitable in your opinion to deal with the situation? [figures in percentages]

Method	Very Suitable	Suitable	Unsuitable	Very Unsuitable
Having an abortion	38.4	29.7	18.3	13.6
Approaching the social services department	41.8	38.0	12.9	7.3
Punishing the girl	21.4	32.1	29.3	17.2
Punishing the man who got her pregnant	42.5	33.5	17.3	6.7
Marrying her to the man who got her pregnant	70.4	20.5	4.1	5.0

These statistics reveal that society uses killing as a last resort, when the attempt to deal with the subject by other available means has failed. The survey showed that the option of marrying the girl off is seen as the most suitable method. This does not mean, however, that punishment is widely rejected. 53.5% still consider it to be suitable or very suitable, even if it is seen as one of the least suitable methods, or at least if other methods, such as marriage or abortion prove successful, and particularly if the family are able to keep the affair concealed within the nuclear family.

Women’s Dress: Between Drawing the Boundaries of the National Collective and Objectifying Women

Dress forms one of the tools for legislating gender relations. Tackling the issue of dress goes beyond the practical dimension of clothes to a religious and political discussion. Views differ among religious figures on the most suitable

form of Islamic dress, but there is broad agreement, if not unanimity, that the faith imposes a compulsory dress code on women. Often this dress code is defined as covering one's head and wearing a *jilbab*, a flowing tunic. Despite the fact that the Palestinians in Israel belong to various faiths, including Muslims, Christians and Druze, there is a consensus on the importance of women wearing "modest" clothing, even if the precise meaning of this differs from village to village. Prior to the 1948 Nakba, Christian women used to cover their faces, and covering one's face was considered to be the dress code of urban women, compared to the peasants' dress in the villages where women left their faces uncovered. With the transformation from covering the face and the traditional peasant clothing, the modern styles of dress in the village and the town, and among all the different faiths have all come to resemble each other. Yet the issue of women's dress, especially Muslim women's dress, has come to occupy the minds of religious leaders and conservatives who have come to see in the issue a departure from customs and religious values and a kind of Westoxification, a "blind imitation of the West." In the shadow of the institutionalisation of religion, and the transformation from a people's religion into a political religion, the ability of religious parties to impose religious dress has been transformed into a banner of their popularity and success.

The fundamentalist religious movements explain the importance of covering the female body according to Islam, since in essence it aims to protect women. This is because a woman's body is a valuable body whose exposure is inconceivable. Sheikh Kamal Khatib expounds this attitude:

"I say to any sister, and to any woman wherever she may be, that her body is in essence an expensive pearl, and usually an expensive pearl is hidden... This means that if I had some gold, I would not put it in front of you on the table or in front of anyone who comes into my home. For sure, I would hide it in a place where it will not fall into every pair of hands. A woman's body is, I consider, an expensive pearl which must be guarded well. A pearl, and where is a pearl usually found? In an oyster, which is not easy to break into. Not every old creature in the sea is able to break the oyster to get hold of the pearl. I believe that this oyster has to be guarded well and protected. First, before conservative clothes she has to think in the right way. She should take pride in her body, and say this is my property. She must not take it and show it off in the square and sell it freely when she knows that there are many hungry wolves in the street. I'll mention a simile, which is the butcher. He doesn't display the meat which he sells in the street, because then no one would come to buy it. So I say to women that their body – is it their private property, yes – but she does not ever have the right to fritter it away so easily."

This attitude expresses a deep vision that deals with women on the grounds that they are a body, that should be preserved and hidden, or displayed and marketed like a commodity. Yet underneath this statement, the notion of women as human beings is conspicuous in its absence. Whether the subject is presented from the perspective of dealing with their bodies as a rare pearl that must be hidden away, or a glorious pearl that must be shown off in beauty contests, the overriding logic is the same. It is the reification of women into a body, whose value and image is determined according to the requirements of others.

Furthermore, in the wake of the dynamic media revolution and the entry of satellite television into almost every home, young women are confronted by a flood of video clip images of women depicted as bodies for display or images of women who are respectable and conservative and have their heads covered. It has become as though women have simply two reductive choices before them: Either dress like pop stars, or wear the veil. "Afaf" laments:

"How come for a whole people there are only two choices? Either Nancy Ajram or Omru Khalid. There is nothing in between. The focus of the media, the allocation of the resources, and most messages aimed at young people, women and society in general, all portray these two choices."

The inherent problems of dealing with women as bodies are manifested in the social pressures that are produced around the ideal way of treating these bodies, and in the extent of attention and personal and collective energy which is spent in order to present these bodies as is appropriate and proper. This is discussed by "Raida", aged 16:

"My father is not religious, and only recently started fasting in Ramadan. He doesn't pray. But when I used to go to my grandfather's house, my mother's father, my uncle would be there and he is a very religious sheikh. I would see in his eyes a contempt for me. I used to feel that I was an insect. He would be saying to me: You are the only one among all the girls of your uncle who dresses like that. It was the same thing with my grandfather. He used to tell me all the time to become religious. My big sister doesn't wear the veil, and my grandfather is angry with her and doesn't speak to her. We are three girls in the house. My big sister does not agree with wearing the veil, and she says that this is the limit. She said: 'They want me to wear it and I don't want to because I am not convinced, and because I want to go to university, and this is not acceptable to me. I don't want to change everything in my life for the veil.' Everyone in my grandfather's house got angry with her,

and they don't speak to her. She says that I am not prepared in order to make my uncle happy or anyone else. I want to become religious for true religious reasons, and not to make someone happy."

In contrast to the pressure that some young women face to wear the veil, others face a contradictory pressure demanding them to give up the veil, because it doesn't accord with their husband's attitude or mood, as "Dua", who is in the 10th grade at high school reflected:

"If there are families who force their daughters to become religious, in my family the situation is the opposite. My mother, for instance, became religious a few years ago, and all the time there is a discussion going on between my mother and my father, because my father doesn't accept it. My father doesn't accept the veil."

The crux of these experiences remains, however, not the type of dress, but the social legitimacy afforded to treating a woman's body as a subject which other individuals in the family can interfere in and decide. They investigate it, and draw its image, and define how it should be exposed. Dress thus becomes a tool to gain social legitimacy and acceptance. As "Ruba", a community work activist in the South explains:

"We would like society to change to accept any culture from outside like private clothes... Personally I wore the veil so that society would accept me."

The subject of dress does not relate only to the pressure placed on women to conform, but dress itself is also transformed into a means of evaluating the women who wears it. It has become an indicator of a propriety worthy of blessing. "Afaf" elaborates:

"How truly happy others are when they bless everyone who takes up the veil because they have left the camp of the mad and joined the wise. How are your feelings when you face these criticisms and perpetual comments proselytising that whoever wears the veil is prettier and better."

Women's dress has been transformed in the Middle East in particular, but throughout the Islamic world today into a subject whose consequences go beyond traditional discussions about women's clothing. Entering into it, not only concerns its suitability or unsuitability for development, but has become the site of agonistic claims and has accumulated psychological, cultural, political and religious meanings. Engaging with the subject of the veil today has come to mean concurrently engaging with questions related to globalisation,

the attack on Islam, and national identity. For the Palestinians in Israel, the veil has been transformed in some instances into a representative symbol of identity. This is discussed by “Ruwaida”, a young woman who wears the veil.

“I am proud of myself when I walk in Hadera and they stop me and search me. Or for example, when I go with my cousin who is not religious and they search me and not her. I feel honoured because I want to preserve my identity and my religion. So let them search me every metre and not every two metres. I feel more free in these clothes. When I’m in my religious clothes they can distinguish me that I’m Arab and Muslim. But those girls who don’t wear religious clothes, no one distinguishes them.”

Style of dress in societies under threat has become an idiom for expressing not only religiosity, but also alterity, and reaffirming collective identity. Accordingly, the problems of engaging with this subject are made complicated because the discussion does not stop at women’s freedom to choose the clothes that suit them, but goes beyond this into discourses on the relationship between dress, identity, and the national struggle.

What is undoubted is that the global events which have worked to produce an equation between Islam and terrorism, as well as the oppression practised by the state against the Arab residents of the mixed cities, has served to activate the phenomenon of a return to religion and the veil. The veil has become a “political statement”, and a hidden transcript of resistance to the condemned image of Islam. “Kifah”, an activist in Lod and Ramle explains:

“There is a phenomenon spreading in the town these days, which is that women are becoming religious and wearing the veil. It is a product of the pressure which is concentrated on them. The world points accusing fingers at Islam and Muslims... The situation is difficult throughout the world. In addition to this, the situation of the town has left us with the feeling that we can’t lose anything... Getting close to God helps us psychologically. This is the least it that can be done... “

Women’s retreat to religion and the veil is a product of the pressures they live under as a part of an oppressed minority, and with their religious affiliation. Customs and traditions have become a stronghold for some sections of society, to protect and to use in order to preserve the collective identity. An activist from Lod and Ramle described the relationship between the loss of the homeland, institutional oppression by the state, and the return to customs and traditions. “Kifah” recounted:

“A family of 1,000 Palestinians who remained here after 1948 scattered

their properties. There were many in their family... This was considered a catastrophe for all who remained here after 48. Arab society in Ramle, in its 1,000 individuals, felt that they had no effect on the modern civilisation that surged into the neighbourhoods of Ramle after 1948, which pushed them to preserve more their minority, and to hold onto their customs and traditions... All of the customs and traditions, like the women's issue, and dress, and work are a response to what is happening... Watching the behaviour of the Jews caused them to enclose women more and more..."

The return to customs and traditions is a coping mechanism for oppressed groups who have lost their economic and cultural capital, and have only their symbolic capital remaining. It affects in the first place the status of women who become the oppressed of the patriarchal system as well as the oppressed of the racist system of the state and citizenship. "Kifah" adds:

"The issue of customs and traditions has become very important, because if you've lost everything, they are all that is left for you to preserve. This affects the situation of women in society. Which is to say that the situation today is different and is getting worse. These days there is a confusion in the behaviour of the new generation of youth who look at the way the world is changing, not only in term of clothes and appearances, but are also going out with boys. This is something which is happening in the towns, which leads to the younger generation losing their sense of belonging, which was frustrating anyway..."

Through the contact with Israeli society, and the foreign cultures seen on their television screens, and the oxymoron of feelings they produce in the desire to imitate and the feeling of threat, the obsession with women's bodies and their exposure has become a means of imposing the boundaries of the collective. Certain styles of dress can be imposed on women by their families. As "Kifah" adds:

"Mostly, women do not become religious through their own free will, but because their father or husband forces them to... I know cases of guys looking for religious girls to get married to... There is pressure on women from men, they force women to become religious... The return to the veil is the product of the current depression in general..."

Founding women's clothes on male patriarchal values puts obstacles in the path of educating girls in a way that suits their human and personal aspirations, as "Afaf" reflects:

"There is a possibility, for my daughter not to be different from a boy

due to how I've raised her, but due to the conditions of society she is different. Her upbringing was different, but we all belong to the same society. For instance, she is upset with me because I don't do my prayer duties. One day she said to me, 'You have to fast, so that you don't cause me a "scandal" in the village.' Yet she is not upset by the fact that her father does not pray or fast. So we can see that even in religion, its lessons and duties are seen as the duties of women and not only the duties of men. The fact that my daughter, who could differentiate between the terms Israeli Arabs and 48 Arabs²⁹ from the second grade, lives under such social pressure. It is a product of the speed she has come to live these pressures. So she is insistent that I fast so that I don't cause her a "scandal"."

The results of the survey indicate that putting on or not putting on the veil is broadly considered to be a subject where the woman has to decide for herself, since over 80% of respondents indicated their agreement that it should be a subject for women to decide. Yet, as we have discussed, this "personal" decision is essentially the product of a host of pressures which can be applied in indirect and unobtrusive ways, and which can also be symbolic and as a consequence of the surrounding atmosphere. "Salma", a female high school student, expressed the following:

"My family went on the Haj when I was in ninth grade. When they came home from Saudi they had become very religious. They dressed me in a jilbab (a long tunic) when I was in tenth grade. I wasn't convinced with this at that time. I was influenced in my views by my mother that the jilbab is more protective than a shirt and trousers or a skirt. This was even though I didn't wear tight clothes and the school shirt I used to wear used to reach my knees almost and cover everything. But today I am convinced that the jilbab is not only a religious dress, I'm convinced that it's more protective for girls."

Similarly, "Raja", a high school student who has chosen to wear the veil, said: *"The previous year I hadn't been thinking about becoming religious. I used to wear short clothes, short skirts, sleeveless tops. More than one person brought the subject up in front of me: What do you think about becoming religious? And I thought about it, and thought that they were right."*

The importance of women's dress and its fetishisation as a collective and family concern combines with the prevailing view on the importance of women

²⁹ It would seem that she means by this the distinction between the political meaning of the term 'Israeli Arabs', a term which negates national their identity, and 'Arabs 48' which keeps it.

preserving their reputation and adhering to the ideal image that society delineates for her, as an upright and conservative woman.

Table 44

**To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
[figures in percentages]**

Statement	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Total
A woman has the right to decide whether to wear the veil or not	40.7	39.9	9.8	9.6	100.0
If a man discovers his bride is not a virgin it is natural for him to divorce her	32.4	33.7	23.4	10.5	100.0
The notion of women's freedom is an imported Western concept	12.0	23.9	40.1	24.0	100.0
The essential role of women in society is to be a mother and housewife	24.2	33.7	28.3	13.8	100.0

Attitudes towards women's right to choose whether or not to wear the veil varied with to geographical location. 26.9% of respondents from the Little Triangle expressed their strong disagreement with the proposition, and 16.3% expressed their disagreement that wearing the veil is a personal choice. Thus 43.2% of respondents from the region were opposed to women having the right to choose whether to wear the veil. By comparison, 26.8% of respondents from the Negev expressed their opposition or strong opposition to the statement. This figure dropped to 12.8% among respondents from the Galilee, and further to 10.8% in the mixed cities. This large gap, especially between the attitudes of the mixed cities and the Galilee and the Little Triangle, is perhaps linked to the religious heterogeneity in these regions, compared with the homogenous practice of Islam in the Triangle. Similarly, the difference between attitudes in the Triangle and in the Negev could derive from the fact that demotic religious practices are most widespread in the Negev, while religion is much more institutionalised and thus more rigidly orthodox in the Triangle.

Table 45

“A woman has the right to decide whether to wear the veil or not.”
(by geographical distribution) [figures in percentages]

Response	Galilee	Triangle	Negev	Mixed cities
I agree strongly	43.9	19.2	51.1	54.4
I agree	43.3	37.6	22.1	34.8
I disagree	8.2	16.3	10.5	5.4
I disagree strongly	4.6	26.9	16.3	5.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey also revealed differences between the perspectives of men and women in women’s choice of dress. 45.2% of female respondents agreed that women have the right to choose whether to wear the veil compared to 36.3% of male respondents. Similarly, for men’s natural right to divorce their bride in the event they discover she is not a virgin, while 6.2% of men disagreed, 14.8% of women rejected this proposition. Moreover, while 37.4% of men agreed strongly with such a divorce, 27.5% of women did. This difference in perspective between men and women is perhaps dependent on the fact that women are the direct victims of such a divorce, and that her virginity is an important issue for ensuring and preserving men’s dominance over women.

Table 46

Attitudes to the Veil, Divorce and Women’s Freedom
(by gender) [figures in percentages]

Attitude	Agree strongly		Agree		Disagree		Disagree strongly	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
A woman has the right to decide whether to wear the veil or not	36.3	45.2	41.5	38.1	11.9	7.6	10.3	9.1
If a man discovers his bride is not a virgin it is natural to divorce her	37.4	27.5	36.9	30.6	19.6	27.2	6.2	14.8
The notion of women’s freedom is an imported Western concept	14.8	9.3	27.9	19.8	38.1	41.9	19.3	29.0

In this table it is also worth observing the gender difference in perspectives over the notion of women’s freedom. While 42.7% of men expressed their

agreement or strong agreement to the proposition that women’s freedom is a Western concept, only 30% of women shared the same attitude. While 29% of female respondents expressed their strong disagreement with the statement, only 19.3% of male respondents did.

Attitudes towards a woman’s virginity or lack of it varied according to age. The younger age groups expressed a greater reluctance to condone divorce in the case of a bride discovered to have already lost her virginity. Among those aged 18-28, those who disagreed or disagreed strongly with the proposition was as high as 37.5%. There was a similar proportion of 38.9% among the 29-39 age group. This dropped to 30.6% among the 40-50 year olds, to 27.5% among the 51-61 cohort, and fell to only 16.3% among those aged 62 and over. This shows clearly the gulf in attitudes that exists between the young and older generations.

Table 47

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “If a man discovers his bride is not a virgin it is natural for him to divorce her”?
(by age) [figures in percentages]

Age	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Total
18-28	32.3	30.2	25.3	12.2	100.0
29-39	29.8	31.3	26.1	12.8	100.0
40-50	31.2	38.2	20.8	9.8	100.0
51-61	39.1	33.3	32.2	4.3	100.0
62 and over	36.0	47.7	10.5	5.8	100.0

Women and Marriage

Among the factors that most contribute to the success of a marriage, 98.1% of respondents consider that mutual respect between the married couple influences or strongly influences the success of the marital relationship, 95% consider a woman’s freedom to choose her life partner, 94.9% that the man and woman have equivalent qualification in education, 76.1% consider a woman going to study or work, and 67.1% identify women’s acceptance of their role solely as a mother and housewife. Below this, 57.7% saw as influential or strongly influential whether the woman was more educated than the man, and 47.8% identified the impact of a woman earning more than her husband.

Table 48

How do each of the following factors influence the success of a marital relationship? [figures in percentages]

Factor	Strong Positive Effect	Positive Effect	Negative Effect	Strong Negative Effect	Total
If a wife is more educated than her husband	12.1	45.6	34.4	7.9	100.0
Equivalent qualification in education between husband and wife	47.8	47.1	4.5	0.6	100.0
If a wife earns more than her husband	10.2	37.7	42.2	9.9	100.0
The woman going out to study and work	25.8	50.3	19.9	4.0	100.0
The wife accepting her role as a mother and housewife solely	25.5	41.7	27.8	5.0	100.0
Mutual respect between the couple	76.5	21.7	1.5	0.3	100.0
If the girl was free to choose her life partner / husband	64.5	30.5	3.9	1.1	100.0

Marital Age

The majority of respondents (54.6%) felt that the ideal age of marriage for women is between 22-25 years old, while 35.8% thought it to be 18-21 years old. Thus in theory more than 90% of Palestinian society believes that the ideal marriage age for women is above 18. The survey also reveals that there is a clear difference between the preferred marital age for men and for women. 72% of respondents felt that the best age for men to get married was over 26, while only 8% suggested that this was the ideal age for women. It is worth pointing out that there is possibly a link between the supportive attitudes towards educating girls and the notion that 22-25 is the ideal age for women to get married, since this is the age at which a girl finishes her university or post-secondary education.

The preferred marital age for men and women is as follows:

Table 49

In your opinion, what is the most preferable age for men and women to get married?
[figures in percentages]

Age	Men's marital age	Women's marital age
17 and under	0.1	1.5
18 – 21	3.5	35.8
22 – 25	24.4	54.6
26 and over	72.0	8.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 50

In your opinion, what is the most preferable age for men and women to get married?
(by respondent's gender) [figures in percentages]

Age	Men's marital age		Women's marital age	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
17 and under	0.0	0.2	11.7	1.3
18 – 21	4.1	2.9	40.7	30.9
22 – 25	29.1	19.4	51.5	57.7
26 and over	66.7	77.6	6.1	10.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Attitudes to girls' marital age also correlated with level of education. 50.8% of those with only elementary education felt that the ideal age of marriage for women was 18-21. By comparison, 68.1% of those with university degrees felt that the most desirable marital age is 22-25, as did 54.1% of high school graduates, and only 42.8% of those with only elementary education.

Table 51

In your opinion, what is the most preferable age for men and women to get married?
(by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Age	Men's marital age			Women's marital age		
	Elem.	High	Univ.	Elem.	High	Univ.
17 and under	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.1	0.3
18 – 21	6.5	3.1	1.0	50.8	36.6	18.0
22 – 25	31.4	25.3	15.3	42.8	54.1	68.1
26 and over	61.8	71.6	83.7	4.9	7.2	13.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Marrying Close Relatives

The widespread notions of reputation and honour and the high level of social legitimacy attributed to them explain the attitudes towards marrying relatives, and towards underage marriages and polygamy. The survey revealed that 35% of respondents support marriage between close relatives, while 65% are against them. Thus approximately a third of respondents are in favour of marriages between relatives. This is a very high proportion, especially in light of the fact that knowledge of the genetic diseases that can result from marrying close relatives is now widespread, as are its associated awareness campaigns. Nothing accounts for it apart from the hegemony of rural patriarchal culture which encourages and supports endogamous marriages whether in order to preserve family property, or due to the traditional precedence of paternal cousins to have first claim on the hands of their uncle's daughters.

Table 52

**What is your attitude towards marrying close relatives?
[figures in percentages]**

Attitude	Proportion
I support strongly	4.3
I support	31.0
I oppose	39.8
I oppose strongly	24.9
Total	100.0

Attitudes towards marrying close relatives correlated with age in the sample. The younger cohorts were more likely to express a disinclination towards marriage between close relatives than the older age groups. While 32.8% of the 18-28 age group supported or supported strongly marrying close relatives, this figure rose to 38.8% among 51-61 year olds, and reached 54.7% among those aged 62 and over. Accordingly, there is not just a gap, but a gulf of 22% between the attitudes of the youngest and oldest segments of society.

Table 53

**What is your attitude towards marrying close relatives?
(by age) [figures in percentages]**

Attitude	18-28	29-39	40-50	51-61	62+
I support strongly	2.7	4.1	5.3	6.0	8.3
I support	30.1	28.9	29.2	32.8	46.4
I oppose	40.1	43.2	39.8	38.1	26.3
I oppose strongly	27.1	23.8	25.7	23.1	19.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Similarly, the results of the survey revealed a positive correlation between attitudes to marrying close relatives and level of education. 45.4% of those with only elementary school support or strongly support marriage between relatives. This proportion drops to 33.8% among high school graduates, and further to 27.5% among those with university degrees. By contrast, 54.6% of those with only elementary education expressed their opposition or strong opposition to marrying close relatives, compared with 66.2% of those who completed high school, and 72.5% of university graduates.

Table 54

**What is your attitude towards marrying close relatives?
(by level of education) [figures in percentages]**

Attitude	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
I support strongly	7.7	3.7	1.4
I support	37.7	30.1	26.1
I oppose	35.8	38.9	45.4
I oppose strongly	18.8	27.3	27.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The phenomenon of marrying relatives is especially prevalent in the Southern region of the Negev, since Bedouin girls are often forbidden from marrying outside of the tribe, and sometimes even from outside of the family. The issue of their marriage becomes a family or even a tribal concern, instead of it being a personal affair. This is discussed by “Hiba”, talking about the reality of women in the South:

“If no one from the same tribe or family marries a girl, then her fate is to be a spinster. The biggest tragedy is that there are university graduates with BA degrees who are confronted by two choices: either to marry someone from the same tribe who has less capabilities than her, or to marry over someone as a second wife.”

Restricting a girl to the choice of the tribe places her in a dispirited reality. She either submits or rebels in a context where there is no possibility of discussion. Either the young woman experiences the most important choice of her life, alienated and oppressed; or if she rebels, then she can be threatened and a outcast. As “Ruba” explains:

“There are many girls who can’t stand this contradiction. One true story is of the life of a girl whose tribe decided when she was young to marry her to her cousin in the future. This girl finished 12th grade and went on to study English at the university. At the university she made friends

with a number of girls which widened her horizons and her thoughts. Her cousin meanwhile left school after the 8th grade and went to work. He was assured that his marriage to his cousin was fixed. When she finished her university studies, they wanted to marry her to her cousin, but she refused... knowing that there was another youth who had asked for her hand. Despite the fact that he was more suitable for her on an intellectual level, her family refused him... The girl was determined that she was not going to marry her cousin. So overnight she disappeared from the village and fled abroad where she has been since 1994.”

Polygamy

Israeli law forbids a man from marrying more than one wife, and to do so is a punishable offence under the law. Despite this, some men continue to get around the polygamy law with impunity, either by not registering the marriage within the Israeli ministries or marrying without any official marriage certificate, or officially recording the marriage by a different term, such as girlfriend, or partner.

In addition to the social legitimacy attached to marrying close relatives, society still expresses an understanding for men who take more than one wife, though attitudes do vary according to the reasons for doing so. 65.1% of respondents expressed their understanding for a man who marries more than one woman in cases where his wife cannot conceive. 49.1% of respondents expressed their understanding for a man who marries more than one woman in cases where his wife is afflicted with a terminal illness. 13.3% of respondents had sympathy for a man marrying more than one woman when he is materially affluent, and only 10.6% of respondents could comprehend a man who marries more than one woman in cases where “his wife” only gives birth to girls.

Table 55

To what extent can you understand a man who marries more than one woman in each of the following cases? [figures in percentages]

Case	I really understand	I understand	I don't understand	I really don't understand
If his wife cannot conceive	28.0	37.1	13.5	21.4
If the man is materially affluent	3.1	10.2	23.2	63.5
If his wife is afflicted with a terminal illness	16.0	33.1	23.2	27.7
If his wife only gives birth to girls	3.3	7.3	21.0	68.4
If the man's job is far from his home	3.8	6.8	24.4	65.0

Table 56

To what extent can you understand a man who marries more than one woman in each of the following cases? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Case	I really understand		I understand		I don't understand		I really don't understand	
	Male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
If his wife cannot conceive	32.8	23.3	38.2	35.8	10.4	16.7	18.5	24.3
If the man is materially affluent	4.8	1.4	12.9	7.4	27.5	19.0	54.8	72.3
If his wife is afflicted with a terminal illness	17.6	14.3	37.0	29.2	21.9	24.6	23.5	31.9
If his wife only gives birth to girls	4.6	2.0	9.1	5.4	23.8	18.1	62.4	74.5
If the man's job is far from his home	4.5	3.0	8.3	5.4	29.1	19.6	58.1	72.0

Society's attitude towards polygamy does not differ greatly from the attitude of traditional religion, or more specifically of traditional Islam since the Druze and Christian faiths forbid the practice. According to Islam, polygamy is acceptable within certain conditions. These are explained by Sheikh Kamal Khateeb:

"The basic form of marriage in Islam is monogamy, and not polygamy. Polygamy is another option for circumstances that the Sharia details"

clearly. If these circumstances call for marriage to a second or a third wife, then Islam does not forbid this. But within precautions, the most important of which is the issue of justice between the wives.”

The traditional religious view, like the traditional social view, starts from the needs of the man as needs that are implicitly understood. By contrast, it falls on women’s shoulders to provide for these needs. Thus society’s attitudes legitimise men, within certain contexts, to marry more than one woman. It is his goal and the starting point of his cultural formation. “Hiba”, from the Negev, observes that polygamy is prevalent across all groups in the region:

“Even the college graduates practise polygamy... His first wife was his cousin, and his second wife was a teacher from the North after he became a schools inspector with a position and was educated.”

Table 57

To what extent can you understand a man who marries more than one woman if his wife cannot conceive?

(by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Educational Level	I really understand	I understand	I don't understand	I really don't understand	Total
Elementary	34.2	38.8	8.0	19.0	100.0
Secondary	29.7	36.0	13.3	21.0	100.0
Academic	17.3	37.6	20.3	24.7	100.0

There are not substantive differences across the age groups in attitudes towards taking a second wife in a case where the first cannot conceive. In fact it was the middle aged cohorts who expressed the least understanding of this scenario. 64.9% of 18-28 year olds expressed an understanding or great understanding for such a second marriage. This dropped to 63.3% among 29-39 year olds, and further to 59.1% among 40-50 years. Subsequently, it rose again to 72.9% among 51-61 year olds, and remained stable at 72.8% among those aged 62 and over.

Table 58

To what extent can you understand a man who marries more than one woman if his wife cannot conceive? (by age) [figures in percentages]

Age	I really understand	I understand	I don't understand	I really don't understand	Total
18 – 28	28.4	36.5	14.0	21.1	100.0
29 – 39	26.4	37.2	15.2	21.2	100.0
40 – 50	25.6	33.5	14.2	26.7	100.0
51 – 61	39.3	33.6	7.1	20.0	100.0
62 and over	23.9	48.9	11.4	15.9	100.0

Despite the religious stipulations governing polygamy, we find that society does not rely essentially on the religious text, but manoeuvres wives around, and treats them as though they were men's private property. "Hiba" narrates:

"This situation reflects how the husbands treat their wives, as though they were dealing with animals. For example, if you are good today, so then I will do something nice for you and your children. And if you're not good, then I will punish you with a second or a third wife. You don't do me any favour and I have the right to choose. There is no natural relationship here like that between a married couple. And when he gets angry, or there is a problem between them, then he goes to his second or third wife... Every wife has around 10 children, and there are many true stories told of fathers who do not know the names of all their children... There is the story of one man from a particular family who was married to 3 or 4 women who was taken with a particular young girl, and decided he wanted her, and when he followed up, found out that she was his own granddaughter."

While uneducated women pay the price of the spread of polygamy, educated women find themselves paying the price of tribal custom which rejects exogamy and refuses to marry a girl outside of the tribe. "Hiba" relates:

"Almost, in the majority of houses that I've gone into, the phenomenon of polygamy has reached there. One man married to four women. In my personal opinion this phenomenon is the cancer of our society. According to Bedouin laws and customs it is impossible for a girl to be married to another family. So to "protect" the girl, she is married off as a second wife or a third. Up to now this is the solution for girls who have been to college. They don't have a choice. This phenomenon has become legitimate in our society in the eyes of male college graduates."

Underage Marriage

Underage marriage continues to present an obstacle to the development of Arab women's status. It seems that one of the principal causes standing behind the spread of this phenomenon among girls is the blatant discrimination from which women continue to suffer, which is linked to treating women via a nexus of patriarchal values centred on shame and concealment. 77.3% of respondents considered that the notion of concealing the girl is the most important factor contributing to the prevalence of underage marriage among girls. 75.2% of respondents considered that parents' fear that their daughters would not marry has a significant effect or a very significant effect in the prevalence of the phenomenon. 68.7% of respondents indicated that men's desire to marry younger girls to be a factor that has a significant or very significant effect in the spread of juvenile marriages.

Table 59

In your opinion, to what extent do each of the following factors lead to the spread of underage marriages among girls? [figures in percentages]

Factor	Very large effect	Large effect	Small effect	Very small effect	No effect	Total
Men's desire to marry younger girls	35.9	32.8	20.5	6.3	4.5	100.0
Parental fear their daughter will not marry	33.1	42.1	16.9	5.0	2.9	100.0
Notion of "concealing" the girl	38.9	38.4	14.1	6.1	2.5	100.0
Difficult economic conditions	20.3	33.4	23.1	12.2	11.1	100.0
Young women's fear they will not marry	30.8	34.4	23.0	8.3	3.5	100.0

In patriarchal culture, concealment is considered one of the most important tools which regulate gender relations. It upholds the meaning of honour and the imperative of protecting it, and concealing their girls constitutes a family aim. It is only ended with a husband who in turn protects the woman and "conceals" her honour. Accordingly, it is considered one of the most important factors influencing the prevalence of underage marriage.

In addition to this, its implications are that when the family are confronted with a choice over whether to educate a son or a daughter, they see that the girl's future will inevitably be within a context of her concealment, they prefer to educate the son, as "Lana" explains:

"The system is clear. In studies boys are preferred over girls, especially if the economic situation is tight."

Given the policy of discrimination against females and the preference for educating males, as well as the profundity of the concept of concealment, the glass ceiling of girls' own ambitions is lowered, and marriage becomes the fate which she has to dream of, and joys curtailed to its formalities orient the fantasies of young girls. "Laila" discusses this:

"A girl does not have many possibilities. Her perspective becomes simple, because her culture is simple. Her only concern is getting married, and to whirl and dance at her wedding."

In this context, a woman's greatest failure is not to get married and to remain single. She is exposed to a negative social view, which describes her as a "spinster", and does not rate her successes because her primary role is to be a mother and wife. Her success is evaluated foremost by her ability to exemplify this role, and then comes estimation of her academic and other successes. "Ikram", an unmarried female social worker aged 35, reflects on this view:

"Today you can find women who are 35 or 40 and are unmarried, but these women are successful in society and successful in their jobs. They know how to deal with their society and to work out an understanding between its values and their values. However, such a woman who is 40 years old and still unmarried has a lower social status because there is no man standing beside her. Whatever her social status is, all her achievements in society, and all her life within society and adopting or not adopting its values, this is not the problem. All the time that there is not a man standing next to her, then she is inadequate."

"Ikram" adds:

"It's as though society is saying to the woman, whatever she's achieved all the while there is not a man standing behind her, and it doesn't matter whether he is weak or not weak, supportive or not supportive, it's not important, a woman remains deficient all the time she is unmarried."

Divorce

Respondents' views and sympathy towards women's requests for a divorce in different situations were split. 56.7% of respondents expressed sympathy or great sympathy for a woman requesting divorce if her husband is mentally ill, while 42.3% did not understand or really did not understand such an action. 79.7% expressed sympathy or great sympathy if the woman was beaten by her husband. 67.1% expressed an understanding for requesting a divorce if the man took a second wife. The lowest level of sympathy was afforded to requests

where the husband was sexually impotent. Only 39.5% expressed a readiness to sympathise or greatly sympathise with a woman's request in such a situation, while 60.5% said that they had little or very little understanding for such a situation.

Table 60

To what extent can you understand a woman who requests a divorce in each of the following situations? [figures in percentages]

Situation	Great sympathy	Sympathy	Little sympathy	Very little sympathy
If her husband is mentally ill	27.5	29.2	21.5	21.7
If her husband beats her	41.6	38.1	13.6	6.7
If her husband is sexually impotent	15.1	24.4	38.5	22.0
If her husband beats the children	27.5	29.3	25.2	18.0
If her husband takes a second wife	40.3	26.8	17.6	15.3
If the couple are not suited together	36.8	34.8	20.2	8.2
If her husband has an affair	39.4	27.1	19.5	14.0

Sympathy towards women's requests for divorce varied according to gender. For example, 49.8% of women expressed great sympathy for a woman's request for a divorce in a situation where her husband beats her, while 33.4% of men concurred the same position. Similarly, 50.3% of female respondents expressed great understanding for a woman requesting divorce if her husband marries a second wife, a view shared by 30.3% of male respondents, or a difference of 20%. There was a clear disparity also in situations of violence towards the children, where 33.0% of women felt great understanding for women requesting a divorce, and only 21.9% of men, hence a difference of 12.1%. Interestingly, however, there was very little difference in attitudes towards women requesting a divorce when the man is sexually impotent. 15.8% of women and 14.4% of men expressed great understanding in this scenario.

Table 61

To what extent can you understand a woman who requests a divorce in each of the following situations? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Situation	Great sympathy		Sympathy		Little sympathy		Very little sympathy	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
If her husband is mentally ill	25.0	30.1	27.2	31.1	22.9	20.2	24.9	18.5
If her husband beats her	33.4	49.8	42.4	33.8	15.3	12.0	9.0	4.4
If her husband is sexually impotent	14.4	15.8	25.2	23.6	37.4	39.5	23.0	21.1
If her husband beats the children	21.9	33.0	28.2	30.5	28.5	21.9	21.4	14.6
If her husband takes a second wife	30.3	50.3	29.8	23.8	21.3	13.9	18.6	11.9
If the couple are not suited together	33.1	40.7	36.7	32.8	20.1	20.1	10.1	6.2
If her husband has an affair	30.1	48.6	28.8	25.5	22.5	16.6	18.6	9.3

In cases of divorce, the overwhelming majority of people still prefer resolving the issue in Islamic *Sharia* courts rather than civil courts. 77% of respondents answered that it was preferable to follow the judgement of the religious courts, while 23% suggested it was preferable to go to a civil court.

Table 62

In cases of divorce, which laws should be followed in matters of maintenance and custody of the children? [figures in percentages]

Law	Overall
Civil Codes	23.0
Religious Laws	77.0
Total	100.0

Attitudes towards which legal code should be followed in cases of divorce correlated with respondents' level of education. A mere 14.8% of those with only elementary education suggested that it was necessary to follow civil laws, while 20.9% of high school graduates agreed. This proportion rose to 36.7% among university graduates.

Table 63

In cases of divorce, which laws should be followed in matters of maintenance and custody of the children? (by level of education) [figures in percentages]

Law	Elementary	Secondary	Academic
Civil Codes	14.8	20.9	36.7
Religious Laws	85.2	79.1	63.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Similarly, the survey revealed a correlation between respondents' attitude towards implementing civil or religious laws and their socio-economic status. Those with an above average income were more clearly inclined to implement civil law than those with lower incomes. 30.8% of those with high incomes expressed their support for the implementation of civil law, compared with 29.3% of those with average incomes (6,500 NIS per month). This dropped dramatically to 17.9% among those with below average incomes.

Table 64: In cases of divorce, which laws should be followed in matters of maintenance and custody of the children? (by level of income) [figures in percentages]

Law	Above Average Income	Average Income (6,500 NIS)	Below Average Income
Civil Codes	30.8	29.3	17.9
Religious Laws	69.2	70.7	82.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The survey also shows that attitudes towards the implementation of civil or *sharia* law in divorce cases are influenced to a certain extent by age. The younger and middle aged cohorts in the sample expressed a greater acceptance of using civil codes. 26.0% of the 18-28 age group expressed such an acceptance, as did 28% of the 40-50 year olds. Beyond this age, however, the proportion of those willing to sanction the use of civil courts in divorce cases dropped to 18.7% among 51-61 year olds and 11.5% among those aged 62 and over.

Table 65

In cases of divorce, which laws should be followed in matters of maintenance and custody of the children? (by age) [figures in percentages]

Law	18-28	29-39	40-50	51-61	62+
Civil Codes	26.0	22.7	28.0	18.7	11.5
Religious Laws	74.0	77.3	72.0	81.3	88.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chapter 4

Violence Against Women

Oscillating Between Rejection and Legitimacy

“Violence is any act, deliberate or unintentional, perpetrated by any means against a woman as a woman that inflicts on her injury or humiliation, directly or indirectly, and causes her psychological, sexual or physical suffering whether through deception, threat, exploitation, harassment, hatred, punishment or any other means, and the denial and degradation of her human dignity or moral sanctitude, or the belittlement of her personal security or self-respect, or the impairment of her mental or physical faculties. It fluctuates along a range from verbal insult to actual killing. Violence against women can be practised by individuals or groups or institutions, in an organised and unorganised manner, and it is a global phenomenon.” (Siniora and Abd al-Hadi 1994, 2)

The majority of respondents expressed a position of zero tolerance towards domestic violence. Nonetheless, a not insignificant proportion can still sympathise with wife battery on occasion. 36.8% expressed their understanding or their complete understanding for beating women in some circumstances if she does not take close care of her children. 37.9% expressed understanding or complete understanding of domestic violence on some occasions if she leaves her husband’s house without informing him. While 26.6% expressed their understanding or their conditional understanding in the event of a dispute breaking out between the couple. 22.2% held the same position in cases of a dispute with the husband’s family.

Table 66

To what extent can you understand a man who beats his wife in each of the following cases? [figures in percentages]

Case	I can understand	I understand in certain circumstances	I can't understand
If she is an unsuccessful housewife, e.g. doesn't keep the house clean, or doesn't cook well	9.6	18.1	72.3
If she does not care about the children	13.2	23.6	63.2
If she leaves the house without telling her husband	12.4	25.5	62.1
If she refuses sometimes to have sexual relations with her husband	7.9	15.8	76.3
If a dispute breaks out between her and her husband	6.6	21.0	72.4
If a dispute breaks out between her and her husband's family	5.9	16.3	77.7

The fact that a woman leaving home without the permission of her husband, or neglecting her children are seen as the most comprehensible causes of wife beating is to a large extent a consequence of the social expectation that she is essentially a mother and a housewife, where she performs her role as a wife by obeying her husband and submitting to his will before leaving the domestic sphere, and where she performs her role as mother by taking care of her children. Departing from these roles is a derogation of her most important functions.

It is important to note here something of a contradiction between the expressed lack of understanding for beating a wife who refuses to have sexual relations with her husband (76.3%) and the attitude that society expresses by failing to consider forcibly having sexual relations with one's wife as tantamount to rape. 23.4% of respondents felt that a husband forcing his wife to have sexual relations with him should not be considered as rape, since this is one of the husband's rights. 35.4% felt that while the husband did not have the right to do so, it should not be considered rape. Thus 58.8% felt that a husband forcing his wife into sexual relations with him does not constitute rape, and 41.2% regarded this as rape. In spite of the fact that in the eyes of the law, a husband forcibly conducting sexual relations with his wife is statutory rape, society does not consider it so.

Table 67: Some married women complain that their husbands force them into having sexual relations with them. Does a husband have a right to do so, or does this constitute rape? [figures in percentages]

Sexual Rights	Overall
This is one of the wife's obligations to her husband	23.4
He does not have a right to do this, but it is not rape	35.4
This is rape	41.2
Total	100.0

It is also important to note that there was a difference in attitude between men and women as to whether a husband forcing his wife into sexual relations with him constituted raping her. 28.5% of male respondents felt that this was one of the wife's obligations, as compared to 18.3% of female respondents. 35% of men considered it rape, as compared to 47% of women.

Table 68

Some married women complain that their husbands force them into having sexual relations with them. Does a husband have a right to do so, or does this constitute rape? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Sexual Rights	Men	Women
This is one of the wife's obligations to her husband	28.5	18.3
He does not have a right to do this, but it is not rape	36.5	34.5
This is rape	35.0	47.4
Total	100.0	100.0

This disparity derives to a large extent from the view of a married woman's role. Her role, to satiate her husbands needs and be obedient to him is not only a part of the prevailing patriarchal culture, but also a religious injunction drawn from the Quran. Verse 34 of the Sura of the Women gives authority to men: "For those women whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them." This is a view also shared by Christianity. It is made clear in Chapter 5, Verses 22-25 of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ also is the head of the church. Christ is, indeed, the Saviour of the body; but just as the church is subject to Christ, so must women be to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it." Ultimately, a woman who refuses to obey her husband is considered to be rebelling against religion itself.

It is important to note that beating women not only enjoys great male legitimacy, but is also understood by women themselves, even though they are the direct victims of this violence. 33.3% of women expressed a certain understanding for beating a wife if she does not pay close attention to the children. 32.4% expressed a certain understanding if she had left the home without informing her husband. By comparison, 43.3% of men expressed understanding or a certain understanding for beating a woman if she had left the home without informing her husband, and 40.1% if she does not take close care of the children.

Table 69

To what extent can you understand a man who beats his wife in each of the following cases? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Case	I can understand		I understand in certain circumstances		I can't understand	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
If she does not care about the children	15.1	11.3	25.0	22.1	59.9	66.6
If she left the house without telling her husband	16.3	8.4	27.0	24.0	56.7	67.6
If she refuses sometimes to have sexual relations with her husband	9.3	6.5	18.7	12.9	72.0	80.6
If a dispute breaks out between her and her husband	8.3	4.9	23.7	18.2	68.0	76.9
If a dispute breaks out between her and her husband's family	6.3	5.6	20.0	12.6	73.7	81.8

This tolerance of beating women when they do not take care of their children properly or leave the home is to a large extent linked to women's expected role, which is to be a housewife and mother, and where the responsibility is on her shoulders to take care of the family sphere, and to submit to the authority of her husband within it. Thus leaving the house without the permission of her husband is to step outside of this authority, it contradicts the notion of concealment and its implications of obedience to the decisions of the husband, the authority figure in the family, and it threatens his wide-ranging prerogatives. Similarly, inattentive care of the children is a failure at the heart of her socially-expected role, to raise the next generation and be responsible for their growth. If she has neglected this, then she could upset the whole division of duties

between men who take care of the economics and work in the public sphere, and women who work to raise the next generation in the private sphere. In this division a woman can be forbidden from taking decisions about when she leaves or where she is going. She is an appendage of the man who decides when and whence she can go out. As “Rashid” explains:

“A woman is a disgrace... So there has to be someone who discerns and is responsible for her. And to prevent suspicions her husband has to know if she leaves the house.”

When asked about their knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women, 58.5% of respondents said that they personally knew of cases of domestic violence. 28% said that based on their own experience, they know that domestic violence exists 1 or 2 homes out of 10, while 15.8% suggested it existed in 3-5 out of 10 women, and 14.8% believed it to exist in more than 5 out of 10 homes. 41.5% responded that they had no personal knowledge of the phenomenon.

Table 70

Based on your own experience, how prevalent is violence against women? [figures in percentages]

Prevalence	Overall
1-2 homes out of 10	28.0
3-5 homes out of 10	15.7
More than 5 homes out of 10	14.8
I don't know	41.5
Total	100.0

Protecting Women from Violence

Opinions were divided over viable methods that women can use to deal with issues of violence. The most popular method was to seek support within the family or from a local Elder. 87.9% expressed their support for this option, and 54.9% their strong support. The least approved option was for the woman to leave home. 22.3% of respondents supported this, among them only 9% gave it strong support. 55.5% approved of banishing the man from the house, while 44% opposed this, and among them 15.8% opposed it strongly. 62.9% expressed their support for approaching the social welfare services. Similarly, 65.7% were in favour of turning for help to the services provided by women's organisations. The proportion in favour of approaching the police dropped, however, to 33%, while 67% were against this option.

Table 71

To what extent do you approve of using the following methods to protect women who are exposed to violence on the part of their father, brother or husband? [figures in percentages]

Method of Protection	Strongly approve	Approve	Disapprove	Strongly disapprove
Leaving home	9.0	13.3	31.4	46.3
Complaining to the police	12.4	20.6	27.6	39.4
Complaining to the social services department	24.1	38.8	18.2	18.9
Approaching the support services provided by women's organisations	24.5	41.2	16.6	17.6
Requesting family involvement or of a local elder	54.9	33.0	8.0	4.0
Banishing the violator from the house	23.5	32.0	28.6	15.8
The woman protecting herself by any means	28.7	40.6	21.4	9.3

Many of those interviewed emphasised the importance of gradualism in dealing with violence against women. It was clear that approaching the police should be the last option. Shekh Mawaffaq Tarif rejected approaching the police until all other means of solving the problem within society had been tried:

“I emphasise that a chance should be given in the beginning before going to the law, or that the police should pause for deliberation before acting on the accusations... or pressing charges. They should give the chance for us to do what we can. We have a meeting with the Minister of Internal Security and the Chief of Police in this regard... These issues have the law... We ask from them at least to demand from the commanders of the police stations in our sector that they give a chance first, for the many good people who try to resolve problems...”

Reservations were also expressed over women leaving home. This was considered a solution that could complicate things more than helping to rectify or solve the problem. This position was elaborated by Sheikh Kamal Khateeb:

“If a certain woman complains of a certain situation and goes to a feminist association. With all due respect to everyone, the solution here is not in quickly advising the woman to leave her home and get out of it, with the attitude that: ‘You shouldn’t worry about anything if he’s beaten you... We have a refuge for battered women in a certain place that no one knows about except us!’ No, this is not the solution. I don’t believe that the solution should be dealing with a problem in the house

in this way. There is a solution that the Sharia sets out, that might help this woman and that might not: "If you fear for a split between the two of them, then send them a wise man from his family and a wise man from her family. If they want to restore peace then, God will bring them success." I believe that there are solutions before other forms of treatment, before taking the woman out of her home and taking her to the centre for battered women. I do believe that there are men who deserve to be imprisoned and not visited because they don't deserve to have wives. But this is not something to be implemented in every case. This is not implemented on all the problems brought to the social services in the local council – that they advise the woman that the solution is to go to the police."

Some stories, which can seem intractable and that no solution is possible, can be solved by avoiding the involvement of the police in the case. Sheikh Mawaffaq Tarif tells one of these stories:

"I treated another case which revolved around a dispute between a young man and his wife. The couple had got either one or two daughters... There was violence in the family, which caused the wife to file a complaint against her husband with the police... knowing that her husband was an important employee... So this behaviour from the wife would negatively affect the husband and could well lead to him losing his job... A while after, when I tried to arrange a settlement between them... her father came to me requesting that I settle things between them... The meetings went on for a long time, and mostly would continue into the late hours until after midnight... In the beginning, I thought that the case was impossible to solve because they both wanted a divorce... as if it was something complex. But after a number of meetings with both sides we were able, thanks to God, to bring them close to each other... I will never forget the view I saw when I took the wife back to the house of her husband, when feelings of love and yearning were displayed, and both sides were chatting to each other... and through them they began to cry and to ask themselves how did we ever come to make these complaints? Here was the problem, because the case became complicated when the police got involved, since with the police it seemed set in stone, and we weren't able to act in spite of the fact that the problem had been solved... We had to give them the chance to live a new life... If the law remains in this form, then there will not be any opportunity to bring about a reconciliation within the family... If this persons was sacked from his job because of the complaints that his wife made against him... I cannot be too critical of what will happen

in the future when he confronts her with the accusation that she is the reason he got sacked... So issues contradict the law.”

The reservations over involving the police or approaching professional institutions to solve problems related to domestic violence connects with the prevailing patriarchal culture which views domestic relations as a private matter which should be solved within this sphere, and should not be discussed openly in the public sphere. The notion of concealment also means buttoning up and keeping quiet. Appealing for help from the police is diametrically opposed to this, and produces “scandal” and public chatter over the relationship between the man and the woman. Marital problems happen and they have to be dealt with, but their solution should be with resort to the available societal mechanisms, whether help from the family, or the involvement of Elders or religious figures. Notably all, however, are male.

Sexual Abuse and its Treatment

Sexual Abuse within the Family

The research revealed a difference in the level of support for steps a woman should take in the event of suffering abuse between suffering physical and sexual violence. Contrary to the hesitation that respondents expressed in approaching the police in cases of physical violence, respondents expressed broad support for police intervention in cases where a young woman experiences sexual abuse within the family. 68.5% of respondents expressed their strong support or average support for a woman going to the police in such a situation. 78.5% expressed their strong or average support for a woman going to a social worker. 74.5% were similarly supportive of a woman turning to a woman’s association. By comparison, 39.1% of respondents advised strongly or to an average extent that the woman keeps quiet on the subject for fear of shame, 40.4% held the same position for fear of the dissolution of the family.

It should be observed here that the answers indicate a certain confusion among the respondents, since the advice to go to the police inherently prevents her from keeping quiet about the subject. Thus a small proportion of the respondents, at least 10% advised the woman both to go to the police and to keep quiet about the fact for fear of the shame.

Table 72

If a girl or woman is being sexually abused by one of her relatives, to what extent would you advise her family to take the following courses of action? [figures in percentages]

Course of Action	Strongly support	Average support	Little support	Do not advise
Going to the police	53.6	14.9	10.7	20.7
Turning to a woman's association for advice and support	49.1	25.4	14.4	11.1
Approaching a social worker	56.0	22.2	13.4	8.4
Keeping quiet for fear of the shame	24.5	14.6	13.3	47.6
Keeping quiet for fear of the family breaking up	25.1	15.3	12.9	46.7

Sheikh Mawaffaq Tarif felt that sexual abuse requires police intervention, unlike physical abuse, where one should try to solve the problem through the immediate community:

“For acts of violence like rape, the police must intervene, and they must punish whoever commits them with the toughest possible punishments as well as giving him treatment.”

Despite his support for police intervention, it does not mean that he agrees with removing the girl from the house in the event that her abuser is a member of her family, as Sheikh Mawaffaq Tarif adds:

“I’m against removing the woman from the house to live in an institution... Rather it is the abuser who should be removed from the house.”

One of the interesting attitudes that came up in the research was the claim that sexual abuse within the family is a product of the changes that have happened within Arab society, and linking it to the discontinuation of the practice of separating the two sexes, even within the household, as Sheikh Kamal Khateeb elaborates:

“The Prophet, praises be upon him, says in one of his hadith: “O you who enter among the women. They said, O Prophet of God, did you not see the heat? And he said, The heat is death.” So I say in my book, that day the Prophet, praises be upon him, cautioned even the relatives of the husband to keep clear of the wife, because many wrongs lie in waiting. I relied on the statistics that 72% of all abuse occur from within the family circle. So why do we not follow the stipulations of the sharia? Why do we not say that the brother being free with his brother’s wife

*is haram? That the cousin being free with his cousin's wife is haram?
Or that the friend being free with his brother's wife is haram? I say this
with resonance. I believe it and I implement it."*

This perspective contradicts somewhat the statistics on incest, which record that most cases of abuse, and certainly most abuses of minors are committed on the majority of occasions by someone who according to the *sharia's* rules is permitted to mix with the girl, such as her father or brother. The Women Against Violence association documented in their mid-year report in 2004 that the highest proportion of sexual assaults were perpetrated by someone from within the victim's home, which amounted to 43% of all assaults. In a very high proportion of assaults (64%) the assailant was known to the victim, or was a member of her family or her husband.

Sexual Abuse by a Stranger

In cases where a woman suffers a sexual assault by a stranger, societal attitudes are distinctively clearer in their consensus over the necessity of approaching the relevant authorities to ask for help in supporting the victim and in punishing her assailant. 70.9% of respondents indicated that they would advise the victim or strongly advise them to go to the police. 12.2% did not counsel doing so. 63.1% strongly advised going to see a social worker. Around 58.9% counselled approaching women's associations for advice. On the other hand, 26.0% strongly advised keeping the matter quiet for fear of the shame. 37.2% strongly advised beating the attacker, while 30.9% did not advise doing so.

Table 73

If a girl or woman is sexually abused by a stranger, to what extent would you advise her family to take the following courses of action?

[figures in percentages]

Course of Action	Strongly support	Average support	Little support	Do not advise
Going to the police	70.9	11.5	5.5	12.2
Turning to a woman's association for advice and support	58.9	21.5	11.5	8.2
Approaching a social worker	63.1	19.4	10.4	7.1
Keeping quiet for fear of the shame	26.0	14.8	12.5	46.8
Beating the assailant and punishing him	37.2	19.3	12.6	30.9

Women Against Violence observe in their 2004 report that a noticeable increase has occurred in the number of families approaching the Centre whose

children have been subject to abuse. The Association records 18 cases out of a total of 160 approaches were from families whose children were exposed to an attempted sexual assault or attempted rape. During the treatment of these cases, the families accompanied their children through the medical and psychological treatment, with the assistance of the Centre's staff. While this increase needs monitoring, and verifying that it is not a one-off rise and will continue subsequently, it is an expression of the attitude of the majority of the interviewees as laid out in the in-depth interviews, who reiterated the necessity of supporting the woman who had been attacked, and considering her as a victim who needed to be stood alongside, to help her get over the shattering psychological effects. "Ahmad" reflected on this importance, with reference to dealing with the situation if his own daughter was abused:

"[In such case] my daughter would be the victim, like being hit by a car... It's hard even to think about the subject... It is hard for me to bear even the thought that such an attack could happen to the closest people to me... I can't predict what would be my response towards this event. It's a nightmare for me."

The sexual assault and what it means in terms of the deep violation of the victim is a nightmare also because of its implications for the future of the girl, and its effect on her reputation and the reputation of the family, and its violation of the most important cultural values represented by honour. Accordingly, many of those who were interviewed in the course of the research expressed that it was impossible to deal with the situation simply through the methods of punishment available to the police. They saw the imperative of physically punishing the assailant, as "Ahmad" adds:

"It is hard to wish such an act to the enemy... such an act is the most dangerous in the world. It's very dangerous. I would use every available means in the world to wipe the abuser from the face of the earth."

Another of the interviewees responded to the same question by saying that he would take revenge: "I would take vengeance on the abuser, and on his family."

However, next to this attitude, we find an attitude doubting the wide prevalence of sexual assault, and especially doubting that it is a problem for Muslim women in particular. This is an attitude that blames the victim, even though it is ready to support her. One of the interviewees expressed it as follows:

"There are very few Muslim women who are raped... There is no need to make a big issue out of the subject... I am sure that society should embrace her and support her... I will support her as a person who

has been abused and has not sinned... Though if she were properly committed [to her faith] she would not have been abused. But despite this, she has to be supported and embraced according to our values and principles.”

The Activities of Women’s and Feminist Associations:

Attempting to Overcome Reality

Palestinian women’s and feminist organisations in Israel have taken it upon themselves to work to promote Arab women’s status and advance it to a social status founded upon respect for their human dignity and their individual and group rights. The participants in the focus groups and the in-depth interviewees made a series of suggestions which could help to develop the professional work of the women’s associations and centres. These proposals can be divided into specific and structural suggestions. The structural proposals included three main suggestions: making the distinction between practical and strategic goals and feminist goals, defining a strategic vision for the women’s movement, and dividing up the work among the associations and centres. Specifically, a group of principles were proposed, the most important of which was to raise awareness within society among both women and men.

The Structural Level

(i) Making the Distinction Between the Practical and the Strategic, the Women’s and the Feminist

Maxine Molyneux (Molyneux 1985) makes the distinction between strategic interests and practical interests, and between women’s interests and feminist interests. The notion of women’s interests presumes a group of interests based on biological commonality, but which depend on a group of factors such as class, ethnicity, and gender. By comparison, feminist interests are those that develop women (or men) without any relations to social situation, and directly relate to indicators of gender and its attributes. Accordingly, feminist interests can be strategic or practical, and each of them are derived through different means, and contain a group of different meanings of the feminist self. (ibid, 232) Moser defines feminist strategic needs as those needs which discriminate against women as a result of their dependency on men. These needs differ according to situation, and are linked to the division of roles, and power and control. They can include legal issues, domestic violence, and women’s control of her body. Confronting strategic needs helps women to achieve the most equality, and to change the values and customs which reinforce her dependency. Often feminist strategic needs are described as though they are the core of a feminist discourse which works to eradicate women’s oppression.

However, Moser (Moser 1992) suggests that strategic feminist action can be complicit in ignoring the demands of women's daily lives. She proposes, following Molyneux, first working on the practical needs of women. She describes these needs as those which discriminate against women within the framework of their accepted social role. They do not go beyond traditional role divisions or women's dependency or their inferior status, because they provide answers to her immediate needs within a particular context. These needs are practical since they revolve around limitations in the quality of life, such as providing water, health care or employment opportunities. Molyneux (Molyneux 1985, 233) points out that practical needs do not lead into strategic goals such as women's emancipation or equality between the sexes, and they do not go beyond the existing modes of dependency, despite the fact that these needs are mostly a direct result of these modes.

(ii) Defining a Strategic Vision

Female and male participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews emphasised that the most important task confronting the women's movement is to define their strategic vision, so that all the organisations don't drown doing practical programmes alone. One of the feminist activists, "Lana", reflected as follows:

"It's important that we have a strategic position which explains what are our goals and our practical position on implementing what we want. In my opinion, many of the feminist groups and movements, even globally, have drowned in their practical position and forgotten the strategic position. These movements have forgotten that as well as the practical side, they should be reaching a point further than this. So we have to decide how far we will go and in what way."

Adopting a strategic goal does not mean only working for long term goals. Rather it means that the women associations and concerned centres orienting their activities and projects towards the realisation of their strategic goal. Preceding this, there should be an assessment of the real needs of Palestinian women in Israel, and qualitative distinctions made between these needs. "Lana" adds:

"In my opinion, in spite of the fact that there are feminist associations, we still don't yet reach the real needs of women. Despite the fact that there is a lot of work in one issue, violence, other issues are missed out. And these issues are concerns in the Negev and the Triangle. They include denying girls an education, the issue of polygamy... We can't imagine that there are issues like these, and this comes from a number

of reasons, which go back firstly to the effect of Jewish women on part of us, and secondly to the fact that most activists are educated and economically independent which leads them to call for work on the concerns of their close environment. And these issues are completely different from the ones in their own environment.”

(iii) Building Synergy Among the Programmes of Women’s Associations

One of the things that would help in improving and developing the work of women’s and feminist associations is the creation of synergistic programmes between these centres. Rather than devoting all their energies on a certain activity, the associations should take all the different needs and allocate the roles among themselves, so that their programmes are complementary rather than clashing or intensively working in one area to the exclusion of others. This would so prevent competition over the same sources of funding, or concern for certain groups of women and not others. One of the current field activists expressed her criticisms of the current programme of women’s activism:

“Firstly, a part of us, though they are only a small group, tries to work on the same issue, which leads to competition. Secondly, the resources are very limited. This leads to competition over the material resources, for funding... In my view, the real work, which is not happening at the moment, is to develop new forms of women’s organisations. Today the traditional NGO model is prevalent, and it is a group that works on projects that are suitable for the interests and agenda of the funder and their suggestions. For example, I suggest that there should be new forms of organisation for women, like organising women on the basis of sector, women farmers and other workers, women who belong to a certain professional sector. There should also be unions established to treat and find answers for practical needs. As an organisation, this will lead to a kind of empowerment. We are lacking forms of organisation or a women’s movement that will gather around a certain shared interest for a certain group.”

Specific Suggestions

94.4% of respondents felt that projects which work to combat violence against women and attempt to provide active support to its victims are suitable or very suitable projects. Similarly, 95.9% felt that projects raising the awareness of individuals about women’s rights to be projects that are suitable or very suitable. Following this, 93.1% expressed the same attitude towards projects strengthening women’s personality, and 93.5% towards projects which offer advice on laws which protect women’s rights. There was less, though still substantial support, with 85.3%, for projects which work to change state laws

and take measures to protect women's rights. 14.8% felt that this type of projects was unsuitable.

Table 74

Women's associations do various activities to improve the status of women and protect their rights. Which of these activities do you consider to be suitable for improving the status of women in your locality?

[figures in percentages]

Activity	Very Suitable	Suitable	Unsuitable	Very Unsuitable
Awareness raising projects for individuals on women's rights	58.2	37.7	3.5	0.5
Projects that strengthen the woman's personality	54.2	38.9	5.9	1.0
Projects which offer advice on the laws that protect women's rights	54.6	37.9	6.7	0.8
Projects which work to change state laws and take measures that protect women's rights	45.4	39.9	12.5	2.3
Projects which work to combat violence against women and offer active help to its victims	63.2	31.7	3.4	1.6

Participants in the focus groups and interviews repeatedly emphasised the importance of addressing activities, courses and raising awareness events, to both sexes and not restricting them to women only, because the problem is not oppressed women's awareness of their reality, so much as helping to change the mindset of male power holders, who if they are not worked with, will strive to maintain their status and power:

“The penetration of male society by the feminist organisations must in my view be strategic and specific. This is very important... It's central. It's not only raising the awareness of women... so that women revolt and act against men... which means it's ok for her to revolt, but she destroys her home. We don't want to destroy her home. We want for her to feel that she has power, she has awareness, and she can handle her men or the men around her to a certain degree, and it does not destroy her from the outset. So we have to work on the men who are around her. This is how we help her. Not throwing her into the middle of the sea without teaching her how to swim. This is not enough. In my opinion the feminist groups have to work on the men, and not as is currently happening.”

Similarly, one of the male participants stated the importance of developing

programmes for raising awareness that are not limited to women, but aimed at both sexes:

“We learn how to be lawyers and doctors and engineers, but we don’t learn how to be husbands or wives or how to be companions with the other sex. We have to do all this by instinct. So why not form discussion groups even if only to raise these issues, such as the relationship between husband and wife, father and son, parents and children?”

Male and female participants in the research also indicated the importance of working to raise the awareness of both sexes, so as to prevent a gulf developing between their ways of thinking, or creating a deeper sense of alienation among women who are aware of their reality but unable to change it. “Ranad”, a female social worker, expressed her fears of awareness and empowerment projects which only work with women:

“There is something which scares me when we talk about examples from the field. One of the things that I have been thinking about to myself a lot, and that I have also been thinking out loud is that if I take a certain group, or women who in my view are oppressed, and I teach them something new. I will take the examples of the sex education that we have found just recently. I take girls in 12th grade and I give them a workshop on the issue of sex education and we tell them that this is your personal business, and then six or seven months later I have four girls killed. I am speaking about this a lot at the moment. And I raise it because it is important that we put down criteria for the things we want to talk about. How important is it that we talk about these things or not? If I will have the power when I want to establish a lobby or women’s councils? If my brother will not be waiting for me when I get home, or my husband or cousin, telling me this and that, and maybe I will be exposed to certain things? Is there anything like this going on?”

“Nasreen”, who works in the mixed cities, raised some of the problems that she has encountered as a result of implementing feminist empowerment projects restricted to women:

“Everyone knows the mixed cities. What is the situation of someone living in the mixed cities? First of all they are an Arab, and they have their customs and traditions. Secondly, they are exposed to the whole situation of the Jews. The Jewish managers require us to establish programmes that correspond to those in the Jewish sector. Yet they put an Arab girl into a bitter internal struggle: Should she do what society requires of her and have a ring on her finger by the age of 18, or should she choose a different future? This is very important, and I raise it

because I am very fearful. It has already happened with us. We took a certain group of girls and did an empowerment course with them. Unfortunately, four of the girls in the group fled to refuges for battered women when they had opposed something like marriage or had wanted to go out to work and had found themselves in a conflict with their family..”

A number of participants suggested the importance of working on awareness raising programmes from childhood, and not beginning with later age groups, when an individual's personality is already formed:

“From my work with toddlers and from working with their parents, in my opinion work has to start from early childhood, even before three years old, because the process of holding girls back begins at this age. ‘This is a girl; it means she is nothing.’ ‘I have the right to look at her from above, because she is nothing.’ ‘I am a boy. As a boy, I am something big.’ We even notice it in the small things, such as if a boy takes off his clothes once he will be forgiven by the family. This means that in the minds of the family and the children that it is ok for him to do it. But the girl has to be hidden always. Nothing of her should be exposed. I’m not saying that she must be exposed, but the issue is what the thing says. The thing says that you are allowed even to stand in the street, and to take care of your needs in the street. Here we look at girls as though they are nothing even in games. Even at a young age we ask boys are you crying like a girl? This is a subordination of women from a young age, and a shame. If we want to work, we have to begin from there.”

This view that work with children should begin without treating them differently on the basis of gender and without reinforcing the feelings of superiority or inferiority among each gender, is elaborated by work to reinforce feelings of a humanism that is neither gendered nor denied to one party. It can be worked for through day care centres, and then continued subsequently by offering guidance courses to day care centres teachers and parents, and then teachers, on the ways of working with the upcoming generation.

It is worth noting that the respondents expressed positive attitudes towards participating in activities organised by women's and feminist organisations and centres. 71.2% expressed their support for women from their family participating in the activities of feminist groups, while 19.6% expressed their reservations, and 9.3% expressed their opposition. Attitudes towards this did vary with gender. While 80.5% of women expressed their support, only 61.9%

of men did. While 14.9% of women had reservations, 24.2% of men did, and while 4.6% of women opposed, 13.9% of men did so. This suggests that women identify it as justified and needed, and want to participate in changing their reality more so than men.

Table 75

Do you support women from your family participating in the activities of these associations? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Level of Support	Men	Women	Overall
I support	61.9	80.5	71.2
I have reservations	24.2	14.9	19.6
I oppose	13.9	4.6	9.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

When asked whether they were prepared to help volunteer or donate to a feminist association, 43.1% suggested that they were very prepared to do so, 37.9% that they were prepared to do so, 16.2% that they were not prepared to do so, and 2.8% that they were absolutely not prepared to do so. Again there were gender differences between the opinions of men and women, since women expressed a greater enthusiasm for volunteering in a feminist organisation. While 38.0% of men expressed that they were very prepared to contribute, 48.4% of women were. While 18.7% of men were not prepared, and 3.8% were absolutely not prepared, only 13.7% of women claimed that they were not prepared and 1.7% that they were absolutely not prepared.

Table 76

Would you be prepared to volunteer or donate to these associations to help develop their work or intensify their activities? (by gender) [figures in percentages]

Readiness to Support	Men	Women	Overall
Very prepared	38.0	48.4	43.1
Prepared	39.5	36.2	37.9
Not prepared	18.7	13.7	16.2
Absolutely not prepared	3.8	1.7	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chapter 5

Arab Women – Between State Racism and Social Patriarchy

Throughout this research the State has been the ‘present absentee’.³⁰ The participants did not hold it directly responsible for women’s status. Most of the research subjects, male and female, would announce: “We are part of an oppressed minority,” or “we are a minority in a state which discriminates against us,” and then proceed, largely without comment, to talk about the subordinate status of women in society, or about values and customs and traditions, or the importance of raising awareness and working with different social sectors, or the role of women’s employment, or the importance of education. They would elaborate on all of this, and all the while the State would be absent from the discussion.

If we imagined ourselves doing the same research in another area, in Jordan for instance, or Egypt, or among Jewish society, would the state also be so absent? Would it be possible to talk about improving women’s status without reviewing the role of the state and its institutions and ministries? We doubt as much. The state is never absent, unless it has been learned through deep experience that it cannot be a reference point that can be depended upon. Yet it is absent essentially because the expectations of it are humble, extremely humble. And when it is present, it is as a cloud’s shadow quickly dispersing before the discussion of issues where we hold the reins of power and initiative, such as society, culture, values, customs, and perhaps political representation.

³⁰ Translator’s note: ‘Present absentee’ is an Israeli legal category derived from the Absentee Property Law. The present absentees are those Palestinians deemed *de jure* to be absent from their property and villages to allow their expropriation, even though they are *de facto* present in the State of Israel. Approximately one quarter of the community are ‘present absentees’. It is also a popular idiom for indicating an invisible presence.

How should we understand then the absence of a discussion on the role of the State, when it is the state that drafts racist laws such as the Citizenship Law, which threatens not to grant citizenship to the children of women married in the Occupied Territories, or which deports in the middle of the night women married within the Green Line whom it did not agree to grant family reunification, and when it is present in force in separating a woman forcibly from her relations with her family who live behind the wall, and when it is the state that plans how to block the Arab demographic threat represented by the Arab woman's womb?

The fact is that the Arabs' experience of the state explains to a large extent this taken for granted absence. It is present mostly to oppress, and absent when matters relate to performing its role as a state and not as a military power. It is absent when it comes to helping to provide places of employment for women, or bringing schools to the unrecognised villages. It is absent when it comes to adequately funding the Arab schools (though it is present when it comes to laying down the curriculum). It is absent when it comes to providing organised transportation from Arab villages to the metropolitan centres, so reducing the possibilities for women to go out to work. It is absent when it comes to supporting the role of day care centres or even establishing them, which piles up the obstacles before employed women. Essentially, it is absent at the times when its presence is wanted; and it is present at times when people would wish for its absence.

The absence of the state finds expression in the institutional oppression to which the Palestinian is exposed in his or her homeland, in the rising rate of unemployment, especially among women, in the scarcity of opportunities which the state provides for women's employment, as well as the non-provision of the network of support for women's employment, such as day care centres and childcare facilities. Statistics indicate that Arab villages are the areas where unemployment is most concentrated. The unemployment rate among Arabs this year has reached 13.4%, compared to 9.8% among Jews. The proportion of Palestinian women employed in 2001 was around 22% of women aged between 25-54. Among Jewish women of the same age, the proportion employed was around 77.3%. This is comparable to the proportion of employed Palestinian men in Israel (77%). According to the CEDAW 2005 report, this proportion dropped among Arab women aged 15 and over (who number 374,800) in 2003 to 17.3%. (State of Israel 2004) In both cases, the figure remains lower than the proportion of women employed in Egypt or Lebanon, whose ranks in 2000 reached 30% of the total workforce, and also less than the proportion of women employed in Jordan, which in the same year was 25%. (World Bank 2002)

These statistics demonstrate that Palestinian women in Israel have among the lowest levels of employment, whether they are compared with Arab women or Jewish women. The proportion of Palestinian women working is less than the general average for the Middle East and Africa combined, which is 25%, and itself is the lowest regional proportion in the world.

If we compare between society's agreement in principle accepting women's employment, as it is expressed in this research, and the reality of women's employment, it becomes clear that the desire to work is impeded by a host of structural and political factors which do not see Palestinian women as a legitimate target group for their programmes. By dint of belonging to an oppressed minority, Palestinian women are affected firstly by the oppressive policies of the state and its fraudulent practices towards this minority, since the majority of Arab localities lack suitable work opportunities. In 2004, only 3.2% of the industrial zones supported by the Ministry of Industry were situated in Arab areas, and this Ministry allocated only 10% of its budget to support and develop industrial zones in the Arab sector. In addition, Arab regions lack public services such as organised transportation from the Arab villages to their neighbouring cities, and similarly do not provide day care centres which could guarantee a secure place for children while their mother is at work. (CEDAW 2005)

While the state is considered the main employer for Jewish women, it still declines to offer a similar level of employment for Arab women. In Arab villages there are almost no governmental offices or companies able to absorb women, and as a result of this the proportion of Arab women working in the public sector is far lower than the proportion among Jewish women. The total number of women working in the public sector in 1972 was 45,920, of whom only 3,290 were Arab women, or 7.2% of the total number of women employed in this sector. By 1983, the number of women employed in the public sector had reached 104,165, of whom only 8,900 were Arab, or 8.9% of the total. By 1995, the total number of women working in the public sector in Israel was 184,640 women, of whom 25,200 were Arab women, or 13.6% of the total. (Boulos 2003) It is worth noting that 82% of the Arab women employed within the public sector are employed by the Ministries of Health or Education. The others are distributed within five other Ministries, though there are no Arab women in the Ministries of Science, Internal Security, Transport, National Infrastructure or Tourism. (ibid)

This creates a reality ripe for exploitation, where there are few employment opportunities for anyone. Women are harmed the most by this situation, since

they have to suffice themselves with looking for work within their available confines, within the village or town in which they live, and since on many occasions they have to suffice themselves with wages far below the minimum wage and under appalling work conditions.³¹ Thus not only does the state work to marginalize Palestinian women, it also acts to eradicate the structural opportunities for a renaissance in women's status. Due to its oppressive policies against the Arabs, published statistics report that the Arabs are the poorest segment of society. The proportion of people officially classified as living under the poverty line is 37.6% among the Arab population, compared with 13.5% among the Jewish population. This is after the contributions of social benefits from the National Insurance Fund. Prior to the allocation of benefits, the poverty levels are 31.3% of Jews and 52.8% of Arabs. (Sikkuy 2003). As "Kifah", an activist in the mixed cities reflected:

"The deteriorating economic conditions of Arab society shake the social structure, for men and women, and this contributes to the oppression that finds expression in the continually deteriorating situation of the Palestinians in the mixed cities. If the situation of Arab men is so tough within the city, which brings to life this image of weakness and fragmentation, then inevitably the situation of women will be weaker and more precarious."

Thus Arab women in Israel not only confront a social legacy that treats them as a lower class than men, and as creatures whose behaviour needs to be monitored and care taken to make sure they don't depart from the gendered role prepared for them, they also wear on their skin the meaning of belonging to the oppressed Palestinian minority. They are denied employment because the state does not create work opportunities in their localities, they are denied education since they live in unrecognised villages that lack schools. Education, as a socially accepted right, enjoys a theoretical importance in society, and yet in practice is not available to all women. Women who live in the unrecognised villages, especially in the South, are denied the opportunity of an education. "Hiba", who was able to complete her studies since her family lived in Beer Sheva, explains the phenomenon:

"My cousins are unrecognised. This is reflected on the ground by the fact that my cousin can't complete her high school studies, since there is no high school. So her dream is now to be able to complete her studies until 9th grade; whereas my dream is to get a doctorate!"

Beer Sheva, as a Jewish city, offers women a host of supporting institutions,

31 For more information, see the 1998 report of the Arab Association for Human Rights

so a woman's glass ceiling there is raised, while a woman who lives in the unrecognised villages is denied her right to complete her high school education. Because she is female in a male society, and a citizen short of rights, she is denied the chance of making a profound transformation in the course of her life. The state's abstention from creating employment opportunities, its conspicuous interference in preventing the recognition of some villages, and acting to impoverish them of institutions, works in reality to postpone the options for changing women's status to an indeterminate point in the future. Thus it contributes to the prevalence of the phenomenon of underage marriage, since a woman who is living without the option to study or work, staying permanently at home, finds herself restricted to two monological choices: to get married, or to wait to get married. "Hiba" expands:

"Education is a fundamental right. People in the Negev are denied it... The families do not refuse to send their sons to complete their high school education in the neighbouring recognised villages. But for traditional reasons, like girls travelling with boys on the same bus, parents prevent their daughters from completing their education outside of the village, even while knowing that the boys [on the bus] are their cousins... This is the basic reason for girls staying at home after 9th grade."

Here it is worth observing the scale of discrimination between Arab and Jewish schools. A survey conducted by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics revealed that the state allocates 12 times more funds per pupil to Jewish religious schools than it does to Arab schools, since it allocates 10,700 NIS per pupil to Jewish religious schools, compared to 862 NIS per pupil to Arab schools. One of the results of this neglect is that 5% of Arab students who end their high school studies continue on to further education, compared to 53% of students from economically established Jewish localities, and around 20% of students from development towns. (State of Israel 1990)

The absence of the state in this situation is not the absence of a bad ruler, rather it is an active absence, via the expropriation of the possibilities for change in women's social status. Denying women an education is an active intervention to close of the paths before them for obtaining a high level of education, and to send them down the road to an early marriage. It remains to observe that this active absence of the state is an absence which isolates a structure for the oppression of women and activates factors that reinforce her subordination. The interaction of a conservative patriarchal society with a racist state contributes to accumulate the structural obstacles in front of women's emancipation, and keeps them prisoners of an exploited reality.

Part 4

Conclusion

Women across the world continue to suffer from social, political and economic exploitation, even if the form of suffering, how acute or flagrant it is differs from one society and class to another. Despite the fact that the majority of states in the world have adopted international conventions that prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, these conventions remain theoretical projects far more than they are practical ones. This is particularly the case in societies living in conditions of political upheaval or continuing national struggles, where women have come to bear the burden of the oppressed collective identity and the patriarchal system. This is the situation that Palestinian women endure, including Palestinian women in Israel.

The present research proceeds from the premise that the status of Palestinian women in Israel derives from her belonging to a patriarchal society living in a state which discriminates against it as an indigenous national minority. The research hypothesises that Palestinian women in Israel face three levels of oppression: oppression on a national basis as a part of the Palestinian minority, oppression on the basis of gender within the Palestinian community to which they belong, and oppression as part of a community of women living within a militarised macho state. In order to understand women's status, the research relied on three research tools, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies: in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a quantitative survey. The results provided by each method were analysed, and then cross-checked together. The aim in using quantitative as well as qualitative methodologies was to achieve the highest possible level of precision.

The research revealed that Palestinian society in Israel is a society composed of many varied and differing perspectives in their estimation of women's status, their social role, the ideal shape of relations between the sexes, the best means to improve their status, as well as their views of the mechanisms of social control.

In their analysis of Arab women's status, two basic perspectives were prominent: a view that relies on a vertical historical approach that positively evaluates women's status today by enumerating all their present achievements, and comparing it with their reality in the past; and a horizontal approach which casts doubt on this providential perspective, and considers that the great transformation that has occurred is only a cosmetic change and has not penetrated to the heart of patriarchal relations of control. It argues that the observable changes are only quantitative, and have not yet shaken the cultural legacy which treats women as an inferior being.

The research discovered that attitudes towards women can be divided into attitudes that refer to rights for women, and attitudes that refer to respect for women. It revealed that a declaration of respect for women does not contradict the aspiration to continue controlling them. The man who expressed his strong respect for women, or the religious figure who held women up as a paragon, and reiterated the importance of honouring her, were not prepared to affirm the imperative of equality between men and women.

Similarly, the research revealed that attitudes towards rights can be categorised into two classes: the class of specific rights, and the class of strategic rights. While specific rights are seen as offering an answer to the changes in society and the demands of modernity, strategic rights relate to the relationship between the two sexes in the patriarchal system, embodied in the control over women through values and cultural codes such as honour and reputation, and through the household division of roles.

The research showed that society expresses a broad willingness to acknowledge specific women's rights, such as the right to education, or employment, or to protection from violence. Yet it is still unwilling to accept these rights unreservedly, and expresses its conditions through a host of accompanying demands which *de facto* act to consolidate the patriarchal system by failing to affirm a woman's right to freedom of movement, or to control her own body, or to establish relationships based on complete equality with men. The patriarchal concepts concerning reputation and honour and comprehending domestic violence, and even in some cases femicide, remain a kind of insurance schemes guaranteeing the reproduction of relations of domination between the two sexes.

It should be noted that attitudes varied on many occasions according to the respondent's gender, geographical location, level of education, socio-economic status and age. Those who were most educated and those who were youngest

were the most inclined to adopt positive attitudes towards women's rights. The research also revealed a clear correlation between socio-economic status and liberal attitudes to women's issues. Further, the more affluent groups showed more understanding of women's rights than others.

It is possible to say that the right that afforded the highest level of support and legitimacy was women's right to education. More than 95% of participants affirmed the necessity of granting equality or complete equality to women in education. The discussions that occurred within the focus groups and interviews highlighted that education has come to be considered a "weapon" for women to protect them from the upheavals of time and to guarantee them a respectable job that will provide them with a livelihood in the future. However, education is not an unconditional right. It is a right fenced in by a protective patriarchal network, such as the imperative of the girl maintaining acceptable behaviour at university, or sometimes the condition that she does not sleep away from home, and studies and returns home daily. Despite this, we find that education is the only right to enjoy high levels of social legitimacy and acceptance.

Following it was the acknowledgement of the imperative of protecting women from violence and assault. More than 93% felt that equality should be guaranteed for women in protection from violence. Yet if we take this result at face value, it seems to contradict the understanding around 40% of the sample had for killings done in the name of family honour, or the similar proportion who condoned wife battery on occasion, such as if the wife left home without informing her husband or neglected her children. This tension could spring from the contradiction between the participants' desire to identify with both universal humanist values and their deeply rooted customs. The latter prevail when the question is posed in direct rather than in general terms.

All in all, these were among the most important results of the research, since participants expressed enthusiastic attitudes towards specific positions, and expressed opposition to some of their manifestations in the survey. For example, 45.4% of participants in the survey expressed their agreement or strong agreement with the necessity of political leadership remaining in the hands of men. Yet 73.2% also expressed their readiness to vote for an electoral list headed by a woman. It is worth reiterating the importance of distinguishing between a strategic attitude and a tactical attitude, since a list that is headed by a woman entering the elections alongside other lists that are headed by men, does not imply a shake up of the whole patriarchal system, but rather the absorption of feminist work within its framework. Whereas a root change in

the composition of political leadership from a male leadership to a leadership shared by men and women is something quite different, and goes to the heart of the transformation towards an egalitarian rather than patriarchal society.

Thus there remains a readiness to accept women's rights as long as these rights do not act to change male control. In fact, society wants to see a woman in the Knesset or on the local council. 85.2% of the research participants felt that if each list or party allocated a certain quota of seats reserved for women, it would contribute to raising the proportion of women in Arab politics, local and national, and including their representation in the Knesset. This is to imply that women should work within the patriarchal frame and not outside it, since the means of political activism to raise women's share of political representation that enjoyed least favour was the threat of a women's boycott, which was supported by only 37.5% of respondents.

Women's right to work enjoyed a high level of legitimacy. 82.6% of research participants expressed their agreement that a woman has the right to work if she so desires. 77.8% expressed their strong agreement or agreement with the proposition that the employment of a married woman contributes to improving the family's situation. Some even considered women's employment a key to social change which will lead in the long run to a transformation in the social and cultural values that discriminate against them.

Yet similar to education, the acceptance of women's right to work is not unconditional. At first glance, it remains accepted on the proviso it is accompanied by a package of other factors that are not always linked to the woman, or society, but often to the state, such as the provision of workplaces nearby, or childcare facilities, or the provision of good employment conditions, or organised transportation to their places of work if these are far. Similarly, women's employment is acceptable on the condition it does not transgress the gendered structure of employment. Jobs such as being a truck driver, or commerce, or directing a company remain forms of employment that are deemed unsuitable for women. The best professions are those that allow women to successfully manage their basic role as a mother and housewife, in the eyes of patriarchy, such as teaching, or jobs which do not demand long working hours. Those women who work in the independent professions, or in jobs that demand irregular hours such as journalism or politics, face social pressures which burden them with feelings of guilt that they are not fulfilling their primary duties as mothers and housewives.

In addition to this, an acceptance of women's employment outside of the home

does not mean an automatic acceptance of the redistribution of domestic roles. Chores such as preparing meals and housecleaning continue to be seen as women's work, even if the woman is employed. This means in practical terms that a woman who goes out to work doubles her burden; in addition to being a housewife, she becomes an employee also.

The jobs that are considered more suitable for women, such as teaching or nursing, or working in textile factories or canneries, are jobs that do not threaten men, since they remain the decision makers and power holders in the public sphere. In fact, these jobs situate women in positions, where they do not make decisions; they receive them. Jobs that concentrate decision-making power within them, such as managing a company, or control over transactions, such as trade, or control of large machinery, such as a lorry, are considered more suitable for men. These are jobs that are characterised as needing a high level of self-control and rationality and the ability to compete in the marketplace. In addition, they encompass interactions with male social spheres which do not follow the rules of surveillance provided by formal institutions such as a school, a health clinic, or a textile factory. A woman who works in trade or who drives a truck or a taxi is compelled to go out into the street, and to deal not only with men from all social backgrounds, but also with strange men whose behaviour towards women, in a world that culturally associates the street with the sphere of men, cannot be predicted.

The positive attitudes towards women's rights to education, employment, and protection from assault and violence do not mean that Palestinian society in Israel has overcome all the obstacles and beliefs related to the social roles attributed to the two sexes. The research also revealed the rude vitality of a large group of values and social beliefs which stand at the heart of denying women from realising the dignity of their full human personality. The research demonstrated that concepts related to behavioural codes such as honour and reputation are still fundamental codes that enjoy wide support. They are regarded as red lines that cannot be crossed.

Accordingly, an understanding society's acceptance of women's rights cannot be gained without linking it to the hegemony of established patriarchal thought, rather than as something outside, and characterising it as a reformist and even conciliatory approach within rather than against the boundaries of patriarchy. This can be seen most clearly by juxtaposing the near unanimous positive attitudes towards women's right to education next to the divided attitudes towards granting them complete freedom.

Regarding attitudes towards marriage and divorce, 98.1% of participants felt that mutual respect between the couple was influential or very influential in the success of a marital relationship. 95% felt that the woman's freedom to choose her life partner was among the most important factors contributing to the success of a marital relationship. 94.9% felt that the man and the woman having similar educational qualification contributed to the success of a marital relationship. 54.6% of respondents suggested that the most appropriate marriage age for a girl is between 22-25, while 35.8% felt that 18-21 was most suitable.

The survey revealed that there is a clear difference between society's preferred marriage age for men and women. 72% of respondents felt that the most suitable age for men to get married is over 26, while only 8% suggested that this age was the most suitable point for women. 77.3% of respondents felt that the notion of concealment is the most important factor influencing the prevalence of underage marriage among girls, while 75.2% suggested that families' fear that their daughters will not be able to get married also has a strong or a very strong influence in the prevalence of this phenomenon. 68.7% also indicated that men's enthusiasm for young brides was a factor that had a strong or very strong influence.

65.1% of respondents could comprehend a man taking more than one wife in cases where his first wife could not conceive. 49.1% could comprehend if his wife was afflicted with a terminal illness. 13.3% could comprehend if the man was materially affluent, and 10.6% expressed an understanding if the "woman" gives birth only to females.

The views of the survey participants were divided over the extent of their sympathy in situations where a woman asks for a divorce. 56.7% could sympathise or strongly sympathise with a woman's demand for a divorce in situations where her husband was mentally ill, though 42.3% did not sympathise. 79.7% expressed sympathy in the event that the husband beat the wife, while 67.1% sympathised in the event that the man married a second wife. The scenario of a divorce request that received the lowest level of sympathy was if the man was sexually impotent, where only 39.5% suggested they could sympathise or strongly sympathise with this, and 60.5% expressed little or very little sympathy.

In the event of a divorce, it seems that the overwhelming majority still prefer going to an Islamic *Sharia* court rather than a civil one. 77% of survey participants felt that one should follow the prescriptions of the religious court,

while 23% suggested one should follow the civil code. It should be noted that the preference for a civil or religious legal code correlated with level of education, since only 14.8% of those with basic elementary education felt it important to use the civil code, compared with 20.9% of high school graduates and 36.7% of those with higher education degrees.

The research revealed that society identifies customs and traditions (82.7%) and men's mentality (83.8%) as the most influential factors on women's status. Intriguingly, religious values and biological nature were the factors that society felt to have least influence. This suggests that society is aware that the problem is not contingent on women's biological structure, as various traditional and fundamentalist polemicists have argued, nor in religious values as others have claimed. Rather it lurks in the culture, in its values and customs, and in the male mindset which is formed in the shadow of this culture.

Yet this acknowledgement does not mean a rejection of this culture. We find clear expression of this in the attitudes revealed in the focus groups and in-depth interviews where the recurring refrain was of the importance of respecting the culture, and the imperative of being bound to the culture's red lines. The attitude finds expression in the emphasis on the special qualities of Arab culture vis-à-vis other cultures in its care for honour and reputation and its behavioural discipline. Attitudes to cultural values concerned with women's behaviour are interposed with factors of external influence, and especially the relationship between the group and the Other, in the shadow of feelings of being threatened, and fear over identity, whether the Other is Israeli with its culture, or the West in its different guises, colonial, cultural, or US imperial. Women's dress and behaviour have been transformed into a form of struggle to teach and tell apart the group boundaries, and to put up a barricade of alterity before the threatening melting pot of other cultures.

The research revealed a complex position towards violence against women and how it should be treated, that was indecisive to the point of being contradictory. On the one hand, 93.8% of respondents identified the importance of working to combat violence against women and girls, including physical and verbal violence, and considered it to be a social problem. Similarly, more than 79% of respondents expressed sympathy for a woman's suing for divorce if she is subject to violence from her husband. Yet on the other hand, this attitude is opposed by the attitude towards honour crimes, where around 40% of research participants could comprehend killing in the name of the family's honour, and 58.8% considered that a husband forcing his wife to have sexual relations with him, even if it is not entirely acceptable, does not constitute rape.

Moreover, views were split over the appropriate methods that can be used by a woman to deal with domestic violence. While the method that received the widest support was to turn for help to a member of the family or an Elder (87.9%), the least supported method was to leave home (22.3%). Many of those interviewed stressed the importance of gradualism in dealing with violence against women within the family. It was clear that the option of going to the police in a situation of physical violence within the family did not enjoy a great deal of support in this context, since only 33% agreed to it.

Nonetheless, the research highlighted a difference in the levels of support for steps that a woman might take if she is exposed to sexual rather than physical violence. Contrary to the hesitation that participants expressed over approaching the police in situations of physical violence, they expressed strong support for police intervention in situations where a girl is exposed to sexual abuse within the family (53.6%), and similar support for approaching a social worker (56.0%), or approaching a women's association (49.1%). In the case of a woman who is sexually assaulted by a stranger, the proportions rose again, such that 70.9% strongly advised going to the police, 63.1% advised going to a social worker, and 58.9% going to a women's association.

For the women's associations and society's awareness of the services available to support victims of violence, participants in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviewees made a series of suggestions which could help to develop the professional work of the women's centres and associations. The proposals ranged from specific to structural suggestions. The specific suggestions included the imperative of working to raise society's awareness with both sexes and not just concentrating on women since it creates an estrangement between the genders and deepens the gap between them. Similarly, some suggested the importance of holding awareness raising courses for men on women's rights, and supporting women's education, and opening day care centres and providing places of employment. On a structural level, participants stressed the importance for feminist organisations distinguishing between practical goals and strategic goals, and women's goals and feminist goals, elaborating a strategic vision for the feminist movement, and dividing up the workload between the different associations and centres.

The survey showed that 62.6% of respondents had knowledge of the existence of the feminist associations, and 53.8% indicated that these associations are active or sometimes active in their locality.

Among the most interesting, if also to a large extent understandable, results of the research was the conspicuous absence of the role of the state in influencing women's status. Participants did not hold it greatly responsible for women's status. As we have indicated, participants would announce at the beginning of the discussion, "We are part of an oppressed minority," or "we are a minority in a state that discriminates against us," and then with rare exception would proceed without comment to discuss the subordinate status of women in society; values, customs and traditions; the importance of raising awareness and working with different groups; the role of women's employment; the importance of education. They would elaborate on all these, while the state remained absent.

If we compare society's agreement accepting the principle of women's employment, as was expressed in this research, with the reality of women's employment, it becomes clear that the desire to work is hindered by a number of political and structural elements which do not see Palestinian women as a legitimate target for their programmes. Palestinian women, as part of an oppressed minority, are afflicted by the oppressive state policies and unjust practices towards this minority. The majority of Arab towns and villages continue to lack suitable employment opportunities or public services such as organised transportation from Arab villages to the neighbouring towns. Similarly, childcare facilities that guarantee a safe place for children during their mother's working hours are not available.

Hence Arab women in Israel not only confront a social legacy that treats them as beings of a lesser order to men, and as creatures whose behaviour requires monitoring to ensure that they do not depart from the gendered role prepared for them. They also feel the full weight of what it means to belong to the oppressed Palestinian minority. They are prevented from working since the state does not create places of employment in their locality. They are denied an education if they live in an unrecognised village which lacks a school. Education, as an accepted right, which enjoys an importance in principle within society, is not available to all women, who are consequently denied the chance to seriously transform the course of their lives.

The state's abstention from creating employment opportunities, its conspicuous interference in preventing the recognition of some villages, and acting to impoverish them of institutions, works in reality to postpone the options for changing women's status to an indeterminate point in the future, and contributes to the prevalence of the phenomenon of underage marriage, since a woman who is living without the option to study or work, staying permanently

at home, finds herself restricted to two choices: to get married, or to wait to get married.

The absence of the state in this situation is not the absence of a bad ruler. Rather it is an active absence, via the expropriation of the possibilities for change in women's social status. Denying women an education is an active intervention to close off the paths before them to obtain a high level of education, and to send them down the road to an early marriage. This active absence of the state is an absence which isolates a structure for the oppression of women and exacerbate factors that reinforce her subordination. The interaction of a conservative patriarchal society with a racist state contributes to accumulate the structural obstacles in front of women's emancipation. It keeps them prisoners of an exploited reality.

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2005 Survey

Attitudes Towards
Women's Issues

2005 Survey

“Attitudes Towards Women’s Issues”

My name is and I work as an interviewer, at the Ibn Khaldoun Association, on behalf of a number of Arab researchers at Haifa University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. These researchers are conducting a comprehensive research on the attitudes of the Arab community in Israel towards women’s issues. Your participation in this survey allows you to express your opinion on the issue. Your name has been randomly selected for this research. Your answers will not be shared with anyone else and will only be used for statistical purposes. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that you will be asked. We thank you, in advance, for your participation, which is essential for the success of the research.

1-4 Serial no. _____

Women’s Status

5. To what extent are you satisfied with the status of the Arab woman in Israel today?

	1. Completely satisfied	2. Satisfied	3. Dissatisfied	4. Completely dissatisfied
Men	9.8	57.6	26.3	6.3
Women	7.8	52.8	31.5	7.8
Percentage general	8.8	55.3	28.9	7.0

To what extent does each of the following factors affect the status of the Arab woman?

6. Being married	1.Positive effect	2. No effect	3.Negative effect
Men	54.0	38.0	8.0
Women	48.5	39.0	12.5
Percentage general	51.3	38.5	10.2

7. Being employed	1.Positive effect	2. No effect	3.Negative effect
Men	64.3	20.9	14.8
Women	76.6	15.1	8.3
Percentage general	70.4	18.0	11.6

8. Being educated	1.Positive effect	2. No effect	3.Negative effect
Men	81.2	15.1	3.7
Women	88.2	10.2	1.7
Percentage general	84.7	12.6	2.7

9. Being religious	1.Positive effect	2. No effect	3.Negative effect
Men	52.2	32.3	15.5
Women	48.1	38.0	13.9
Percentage general	50.1	35.2	14.7

10. Having a strong personality	1.Positive effect	2. No effect	3.Negative effect
Men	71.7	20.7	7.7
Women	87.6	9.8	2.5
Percentage general	79.5	15.4	5.1

11. In cases of divorce, which legal code should be followed in order to determine issues of alimony and child custody?

	1. Civil law	2. Religious laws (Sharia, Church law, etc.)
Men	20.	80.0
Women	26.2	73.8
Percentage general	23.0	77.0

12. To what extent do you consider the prevailing practices of society in the division of property and in cases of inheritance to be fair?

	1. Very fair	2. Fair	3. Unfair	4. Very unfair
Men	10.6	35.3	43.1	11.0
Women	4.7	35.5	41.7	18.1
Percentage general	7.7	35.4	42.4	14.5

13. Do you know of any international conventions or treaties that deal with the protection of women's rights?

	1. Yes	2. Yes, slightly	3. No
Men	21.6	38.8	39.6
Women	17.9	46.3	35.8
Percentage general	19.8	42.5	37.7

14. The International Conventions are founded on the principles of equality for all members of society, and state that women should be able to enjoy full equality. What do you think of this proposition?

	1. Totally agree	2. Agree	3. Disagree	4. Totally disagree
Men	31.3	51.4	14.1	3.2
Women	47.0	42.8	8.3	1.9
Percentage general	39.1	47.2	11.2	2.5

In your opinion, to what extent do the following factors prevent the realisation of full equality between men and women in the Palestinian Arab society in Israel?

15. Religious values	1.Large extent	2.Medium extent	3.Small extent	4.No effect
Men	29.5	30.5	15.3	24.7
Women	32.8	34.8	12.8	19.5
Percentage general	31.1	32.7	14.1	22.1

16. Social customs and traditions	1.Large extent	2.Medium extent	3.Small extent	4.No effect
Men	44.3	35.9	11.3	8.5
Women	50.0	35.1	10.0	4.9
Percentage general	47.1	35.6	10.6	6.7

17. The mentality of men in Arab society.	1.Large extent	2.Medium extent	3.Small extent	4.No effect
Men	42.4	40.2	12.2	5.2
Women	53.2	31.8	31.8	11.8
Percentage general	47.7	36.1	12.0	4.2

18. State policies towards the Palestinian minority.	1.Large extent	2.Medium extent	3.Small extent	4.No effect
Men	23.3	28.9	21.1	26.7
Women	25.8	23.7	21.7	19.8
Percentage general	24.5	30.8	21.5	23.2

19. Biological differences between men and women	1.Large extent	2.Medium extent	3.Small extent e21.7xtent	4.No effect
Men	31.3	36.6	15.7	16.4
Women	32.6	34.8	16.0	16.6
Percentage general	32.0	35.7	15.8	16.5

20. Lack of economic independence for women	1.Large extent	2.Medium extent	3.Small extent e21.7xtent	4.No effect
Men	31.8	36.2	19.7	12.3
Women	32.6	33.1	15.3	9.1
Percentage general	37.1	34.7	17.5	10.7

To what extent do you think equality should be realised in each of the following areas

21. Education	1. Total equality	2.Equality	3.Partial equality	4. No need for equality
Men	78.0	15.9	4.5	1.7
Women	84.3	12.0	3.0	0.7
Percentage general	81.2	13.9	3.8	1.2

22. Personal freedom	1. Total equality	2.Equality	3.Partial equality	4. No need for equality
Men	37.0	25.0	28.9	9.1
Women	52.3	22.9	21.9	2.9
Percentage general	44.6	24.0	25.4	6.0

23. Political representation	1. Total equality	2.Equality	3.Partial equality	4. No need for equality
Men	45.3	22.7	20.9	11.1
Women	52.5	24.1	17.3	6.1
Percentage general	48.9	23.4	19.1	8.6

24. Protection from violence and assault	1. Total equality	2.Equality	3.Partial equality	4. No need for equality
Men	73.4	18.8	6.0	1.8
Women	85.7	9.8	3.5	1.0
Percentage general	79.5	14.3	4.8	1.4

25. Equality in pay and employment rights.	1. Total equality	2. Equality	3. Partial equality	4. No need for equality
Men	69.7	17.2	9.1	4.0
Women	78.9	14.7	4.7	1.7
Percentage general	74.3	16.0	6.9	2.8

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

26. Women have the right to choose between wearing or not wearing the veil	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	10.3	11.9	41.5	36.3
Women	9.1	7.6	38.1	45.2
Percentage general	9.7	9.8	39.8	40.7

27. It is only natural that a man who marries a young woman and discovers that she is not a virgin would divorce her.	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	6.2	19.6	36.9	37.4
Women	14.8	27.2	30.6	27.5
Percentage general	10.4	23.4	33.7	32.4

28. Women do not work enough on improving their status.	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	5.3	28.8	54.0	11.9
Women	11.3	28.8	48.3	11.6
Percentage general	8.3	28.8	51.2	11.8

29. It is preferable for political and economical leadership to be in men's hands.	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	8.7	35.4	34.4	21.5
Women	23.8	41.4	26.0	8.8
Percentage general	16.2	38.4	30.2	15.2

30 Women's liberty is an imported Western concept.	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	19.3	38.1	27.9	14.8
Women	29.0	41.9	19.8	9.3
Percentage general	24.1	40.4	23.8	12.0

31. Women should have the right to go out to work, if they wish to do so.	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	7.4	16.6	46.2	29.9
Women	3.6	7.3	44.5	44.5
Percentage general	5.5	11.9	45.4	37.2

32. A woman's main role in society is to be a mother and a housewife	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	10.2	26.2	34.8	28.8
Women	17.5	30.7	23.4	19.5
Percentage general	13.8	28.4	33.7	24.2

33. No society can progress without women's active participation in building and developing it.	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	4.8	17.1	40.3	37.8
Women	2.9	9.9	41.8	45.5
Percentage general	3.8	13.5	41.1	41.6

34. Arab parties should put the advancement of woman's status at the core of their agenda.	1. I strongly disagree	2. I disagree	3. I agree	4. I strongly agree
Men	5.5	13.8	51.2	29.5
Women	3.5	4.7	48.9	42.8
Percentage general	4.5	9.3	50.1	36.1

What impact do you think the following activities have on women's status?

35. Working to increase the number of educated women and girls.	1.Very positive	2.Positive	3.Negative	4.Very negative	5. No impact
Men	58.2	37.3	2.8	0.5	1.2
Women	70.1	27.4	1.2	0.5	0.8
Percentage general	64.2	32.3	2.0	0.5	1.0

36. Providing more employment opportunities for women.	1.Very positive	2.Positive	3.Negative	4.Very negative	5. No impact
Men	43.2	42.2	9.4	2.2	3.0
Women	59.7	34.6	3.2	1.5	0.9
Percentage general	51.4	38.4	6.3	1.9	1.9

37. Providing information on women's rights and ways to demand these rights.	1.Very positive	2.Positive	3.Negative	4.Very negative	5. No impact
Men	41.7	45.1	7.7	2.2	3.4
Women	57.9	35.1	4.1	0.7	2.2
Percentage general	49.8	40.1	5.9	1.4	2.8

38. Working to increase the proportion of women elected to local councils.	1.Very positive	2.Positive	3.Negative	4.Very negative	5. No impact
Men	30.7	36.9	18.6	5.6	8.1
Women	39.4	41.7	9.8	3.9	5.2
Percentage general	35.1	39.2	14.2	4.8	6.7

39. Amending laws to provide better protection for women's rights.	1.Very positive	2.Positive	3.Negative	4.Very negative	5. No impact
Men	39.7	41.5	11.6	2.3	4.8
Women	54.0	39.0	4.1	1.0	1.9
Percentage general	46.8	40.3	7.9	1.7	3.4

40. Women's economic independence.	1.Very positive	2.Positive	3.Negative	4.Very negative	5. No impact
Men	31.5	38.7	20.3	4.7	4.8
Women	48.3	37.4	9.0	2.7	2.6
Percentage general	39.9	38.0	14.7	3.7	3.7

41. Working towards changing social concepts which harm women's status	1.Very positive	2.Positive	3.Negative	4.Very negative	5. No impact
Men	47.5	42.2	5.8	2.2	2.3
Women	61.1	32.7	3.4	1.5	1.4
Percentage general	54.2	37.5	4.6	1.9	1.9

Family and the Standard of Living

42. What is your attitude towards consanguineous marriage?

	1. Strongly support	2. Support	3. Object	4. Strongly object
Men	4.0	33.6	40.1	22.3
Women	4.5	28.6	39.4	27.5
Percentage general	4.2	31.0	39.8	24.9

To what extent can you comprehend a man marrying more than one woman under each of the following circumstances?

43. When a wife can't bear children.	1. Strongly comprehend	2. Can comprehend	3. Can't comprehend	4. Really can't comprehend
Men	32.8	38.2	10.4	18.5
Women	23.3	35.8	16.7	24.3
Percentage general	28.0	37.1	13.5	21.4

44. When the man has the economic means	1. Strongly comprehend	2. Can comprehend	3. Can't comprehend	4. Really can't comprehend
Men	4.8	12.9	27.5	54.8
Women	1.4	7.4	19.0	72.3
Percentage general	3.1	10.2	23.2	63.5

45. When the wife is chronically ill	1. Strongly comprehend	2. Can comprehend	3. Can't comprehend	4. Really can't comprehend
Men	17.6	37.0	21.9	23.5
Women	14.3	29.2	24.6	31.9
Percentage general	16.0	33.1	23.2	27.7

46. When a wife gives birth to females only	1. Strongly comprehend	2. Can comprehend	3. Can't comprehend	4. Really can't comprehend
Men	4.6	9.1	23.8	62.4
Women	2.0	5.4	18.1	74.5
Percentage general	3.3	7.3	21.0	68.4

47. When the man's work is far from his house.	1. Strongly comprehend	2. Can comprehend	3. Can't comprehend	4. Really can't comprehend
Men	4.5	8.3	29.1	58.1
Women	3.0	5.4	19.6	72.0
Percentage general	3.8	6.8	24.4	65.0

48. In your opinion, what is the ideal marital age for young women?

1. Under 17
2. From 18-21
3. From 22-25
4. 26 and above

	1	2	3	4
Men	1.7	40.7	51.5	6.1
Women	1.3	30.9	57.7	10.1
Percentage general	1.5	35.8	54.6	8.1

49. In your opinion, what is the ideal marital age for young men?

1. Under 17
2. From 18-21
3. From 22-25
4. 26 and above

	1	2	3	4
Men	0	4.1	29.1	66.7
Women	0.2	2.9	19.4	77.6
Percentage general	0.1	3.5	24.4	72.0

In your opinion, to what extent do each of the following factors lead to underage or early marriage among young girls?

50. Men's desire to marry a young girl.	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent	5. No effect
Men	30.4	33.1	25.0	6.8	4.7
Women	41.4	32.6	16.0	5.7	4.2
Percentage general	35.9	32.8	20.5	6.3	4.4

51. Parental fears that their daughter will remain unmarried.	1.Very great extent	2.Great extent	3.Little extent	4.Very little extent	5. No effect
Men	31.2	41.2	18.4	6.1	3.0
Women	35.0	43.0	15.4	3.9	2.7
Percentage general	33.1	42.1	16.9	5.0	2.8

52 The concept of protecting their “daughter’s honor”	1.Very great extent	2.Great extent	3.Little extent	4.Very little extent	5. No effect
Men	37.2	38.5	15.4	6.5	2.3
Women	40.5	38.3	12.7	5.7	2.7
Percentage general	38.9	38.4	14.1	6.1	2.5

53. Harsh economic conditions.	1.Very great extent	2.Great extent	3.Little extent	4.Very little extent	5. No effect
Men	18.3	33.8	24.7	12.2	11.0
Women	22.3	32.9	21.5	12.2	11.1
Percentage general	20.3	33.4	23.1	12.2	11.1

54. Young women’s fear of not getting married	1.Very great extent	2.Great extent	3.Little extent	4.Very little extent	5. No effect
Men	30.6	33.7	23.8	8.1	3.8
Women	30.9	35.1	22.3	8.4	3.2
Percentage general	30.8	34.4	23.0	8.3	3.5

How does each of the following factors affect the success of marital relationships?

55 If the wife is more educated than the husband.	1.Affects very positively	2.Affects positively	3. Affects negatively	4. Affects very negatively
Men	11.8	44.1	52.8	8.0
Women	12.4	46.9	32.9	7.8
Percentage general	12.1	45.6	34.5	7.9

56. If there is parity in educational qualification between the man and woman.	1.Affects very positively	2.Affects positively	3. Affects negatively	4. Affects very negatively
Men	45.5	48.5	5.3	0.7
Women	50.1	45.7	3.7	0.5
Percentage general	47.8	47.1	4.5	0.6

57. If the woman's income is larger than the man's.	1.Affects very positively	2.Affects positively	3. Affects negatively	4. Affects very negatively
Men	9.8	34.8	43.8	11.8
Women	10.5	40.6	40.9	8.0
Percentage general	10.1	37.7	42.2	9.9

58. If the woman goes out to study and work.	1.Affects very positively	2.Affects positively	3. Affects negatively	4. Affects very negatively
Men	22.2	48.2	25.0	4.7
Women	29.5	52.3	14.8	3.4
Percentage general	25.8	50.3	19.9	4.0

59. The woman accepting her role solely as a housewife and a mother	1.Affects very positively	2.Affects positively	3. Affects negatively	4. Affects very negatively
Men	30.0	43.7	22.8	3.5
Women	20.9	39.7	32.8	6.6
Percentage general	25.5	41.7	27.8	5.0

60 If there is mutual respect	1.Affects very positively	2.Affects positively	3. Affects negatively	4. Affects very negatively
Men	74.7	23.1	1.7	0.5
Women	78.3	20.1	1.4	0.2
Percentage general	76.5	21.6	1.5	0.3

61. If the woman is able to choose her life partner/husband.	1.Affects very positively	2.Affects positively	3. Affects negatively	4. Affects very negatively
Men	62.2	32.5	3.8	1.5
Women	67.0	28.3	4.1	0.7
Percentage general	64.5	30.5	3.9	1.1

To what extent can you understand the woman asking for divorce in each of the following cases?

62. If the husband is mentally ill.	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent
Men	25.0	27.2	22.9	24.9
Women	30.1	31.1	20.2	18.5
Percentage general	27.5	29.2	21.5	21.7

63. If the husband is violent towards his wife.	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent
Men	33.4	42.4	15.3	9.0
Women	49.8	33.8	12.0	4.4
Percentage general	41.6	38.1	13.6	6.7

64. If the husband is unable to fulfill his sexual duties	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent
Men	14.4	25.2	37.4	23.0
Women	15.8	23.6	39.5	21.1
Percentage general	15.1	24.4	38.6	22.0

65. If the husband is violent towards his children	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent
Men	21.9	28.2	28.5	21.4
Women	33.0	30.5	21.9	14.5
Percentage general	27.5	29.3	25.2	18.0

66. If the husband marries another woman	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent
Men	30.3	29.8	21.3	18.6
Women	50.3	23.8	13.9	11.9
Percentage general	40.3	26.8	17.6	15.3

67. If the wife and her husband are incompatible	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent
Men	33.1	36.7	20.1	10.1
Women	40.7	32.8	20.2	6.2
Percentage general	36.8	34.8	20.2	8.2

68. If the husband has an affair with another woman.	1. Very great extent	2. Great extent	3. Little extent	4. Very little extent
Men	30.1	28.8	22.5	18.6
Women	48.6	25.5	16.6	9.3
Percentage general	39.4	27.1	19.5	14.0

Who do you think should perform the following domestic tasks?

Task	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
69. House cleaning and laundry				
Men	2.0	75.7	22.0	0.3
Women	0.7	63.4	35.8	0.2
Percentage general	1.3	69.6	28.8	0.3

70. Preparing meals	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
Men	1.0	76.5	22.5	0
Women	0.3	65.8	33.6	0.3
Percentage general	0.7	71.2	27.9	0.2

71. Helping the children with their homework.	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
Men	2.8	18.8	78.4	0
Women	1.9	14.2	83.4	0.5
Percentage general	2.3	16.5	80.9	0.3

72. Watching over sons' and daughters' behavior and helping them with their problems	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
Men	2.2	7.8	89.8	0.2
Women	1.5	6.2	92.1	0.2
Percentage general	1.8	7.0	91.0	0.2

73. Deciding on the number of children that they want to have.	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
Men	8.5	1.7	89.7	0.2
Women	4.2	2.5	93.1	0.2
Percentage general	6.4	2.1	91.4	0.2

74. Decision-making over family properties.	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
Men	23.4	2.3	74.0	0.3
Women	12.8	0.8	85.7	0.7
Percentage general	18.1	1.6	79.8	0.5

75. Decision-making over voting in elections.	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
Men	14.5	1.7	83.2	0.7
Women	10.1	1.0	87.9	1.0
Percentage general	12.3	1.3	85.2	0.8

76. Protecting family members.	1. Father	2. Mother	3. Both parents	4. Other family member
Men	21.1	2.2	75.7	1.0
Women	12.0	1.5	86.0	0.5
Percentage general	16.6	1.8	80.8	0.8

Employment

To what extent do each of the following factors affect the possibility of women going out to work?

77. The neighbors and relatives accepting that the woman goes out to work.	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	13.2	24.4	25.5	36.9
Women	14.0	22.8	22.2	40.9
Percentage general	13.6	23.7	23.8	38.9
78. The proximity of the workplace to her home.	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	46.8	35.3	9.7	8.3
Women	45.9	29.2	13.7	11.3
Percentage general	46.3	23.2	11.7	9.8

79. Parents'/husband's approval	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	76.4	14.0	5.2	4.5
Women	72.8	18.8	4.6	3.9
Percentage general	74.5	16.4	4.9	4.2

80. The job's financial returns	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	42.7	41.2	11.2	5.0
Women	51.3	38.7	6.8	3.2
Percentage general	46.9	40.0	9.0	4.1

81. The woman's qualifications and capacities	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	56.1	34.1	6.5	3.3
Women	60.4	31.0	6.6	2.0
Percentage general	58.2	32.6	6.5	2.7

82. The family's economic status	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	52.5	37.8	6.7	3.0
Women	61.0	29.6	7.6	1.9
Percentage general	56.7	33.8	7.1	2.4

83. Employment opportunities available in her locality.	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	58.6	31.9	7.1	2.3
Women	59.4	30.3	6.9	3.7
Percentage general	58.9	31.0	7.0	3.0

84. Availability of childcare for her children during her working hours.	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3. Little extent	4. No effect
Men	73.5	19.8	4.2	2.5
Women	76.3	17.5	4.6	1.7
Percentage general	74.8	18.7	4.4	2.1

To what extent do the following vocations suit both men and women?

85. Domestic work such as cleaning in hotels	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	23.8	22.9	45.7	7.6
Women	17.3	21.5	53.0	8.3
Percentage general	20.5	22.2	49.3	8.0

86. Teaching	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	11.3	7.5	81.2	0
Women	11.1	3.9	84.8	0.2
Percentage general	11.2	5.7	83.0	0.1

87. Nursing	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	23.3	9.7	66.9	0.2
Women	20.3	6.9	72.6	0.2
Percentage general	21.8	8.3	69.7	0.2

88. Business management	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	1.2	54.8	43.9	0.2
Women	0.8	42.8	56.4	0
Percentage general	1.0	48.9	50.0	0.1

89. Professional (law, medicine, engineering)	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	1.2	26.3	72.3	0.2
Women	0.7	20.3	78.9	0.2
Percentage general	0.9	23.3	75.6	0.2

90. Factory work (e.g. in textiles or canneries).	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	42.1	9.5	46.3	2.2
Women	36.8	5.9	55.7	1.5
Percentage general	39.4	7.8	50.9	1.8

91. Commerce	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	1.0	64.7	34.1	0.2
Women	1.2	53.0	45.5	0.3
Percentage general	1.1	58.9	39.7	0.3

92. Driving public transport	1. More suitable for women	2. More suitable for men	3. Suitable to both	4. Unsuitable to both
Men	0.8	86.9	11.8	0.5
Women	1.2	82.4	15.7	0.7
Percentage general	1.0	84.7	13.7	0.6

93. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “A married woman’s employment improves the situation of her family”?

	1. Totally agree	2. Agree	3. Disagree	4. Totally disagree
Men	21.3	50.7	21.6	6.4
Women	34.7	49.1	11.9	4.3
Percentage general	27.9	49.9	16.8	5.4

To what extent could each of the following factors affect the protection of women’s employment rights, including equality in pay and hiring opportunities, in your locality?

94. Pressurising employers to ensure that they uphold women’s employment rights.	1. Affects very much	2. Affects	3. Doesn’t affect	4. Doesn’t affect at all
Men	48.8	43.7	6.0	1.5
Women	62.4	34.2	3.1	0.3
Percentage general	55.6	38.9	4.5	0.9

95. Providing advice to employed women on ways to protect their rights	1. Affects very much	2. Affects	3. Doesn't affect	4. Doesn't affect at all
Men	52.9	41.7	4.5	0.8
Women	64.8	32.3	2.9	0
Percentage general	58.8	37.0	3.7	0.4

96. Preventing superiors from sexually harassing their employees	1. Affects very much	2. Affects	3. Doesn't affect	4. Doesn't affect at all
Men	60.9	33.4	4.2	1.5
Women	69.5	26.1	3.6	0.9
Percentage general	65.1	29.8	3.9	1.2

Violence

Could you understand a man beating his wife in any of the following situations:

97. If a woman is an unsuccessful housewife in e.g. housecleaning or cooking.	1.Understand	2.Understand in some cases	3. Don't understand
Men	10.4	19.9	69.7
Women	8.8	16.2	75.0
Percentage general	9.6	18.1	72.3

98. If she doesn't take proper care of the children.	1.Understand	2.Understand in some cases	3. Don't understand
Men	15.1	25.0	59.9
Women	11.3	22.1	66.6
Percentage general	13.2	23.6	63.2

99. If she goes out without informing her husband.	1.Understand	2.Understand in some cases	3. Don't understand
Men	16.3	27.0	56.7
Women	8.4	24.0	67.6
Percentage general	12.4	25.5	62.1

100. If she refuses to have sexual intercourse with her husband on occasion.	1.Understand	2.Understand in some cases	3. Don't understand
Men	9.3	18.7	72.0
Women	6.5	12.9	80.6
Percentage general	7.9	15.8	76.3

101. If they quarrel with each other	1.Understand	2.Understand in some cases	3. Don't understand
Men	8.3	23.7	68.0
Women	4.9	18.2	76.9
Percentage general	6.6	21.0	72.4

102 If there is a quarrel between her and her husband's family.	1.Understand	2.Understand in some cases	3. Don't understand
Men	6.3	20.0	73.7
Women	5.6	12.6	81.8
Percentage general	5.9	16.3	77.7

103. In your own experience, violence against women is prevalent in

1. 1-2 households out of 10
2. 3-5 households out of 10
3. More than 5
4. Don't Know

	1	2	3	4
Men	30.1	15.6	13.0	41.3
Women	25.9	16.0	16.5	41.7
Percentage general	28.0	15.8	14.7	41.4

104. Some people believe that violence against women and young women, including physical and verbal abuse, is so widespread that it constitutes a social problem, which the entire society must seek to combat. Do you agree with this attitude?

1. Totally agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Totally disagree

	1	2	3	4
Men	44.9	47.4	6.9	0.8
Women	60.3	35.0	3.3	1.4
Percentage general	52.5	41.3	5.1	1.1

To what extent do you support recourse to the following course of action in order to protect a woman who is subjected to violence by her father, brother or husband?

105. Leaving home	1. Totally support	2.Support	3. Object	4. Totally object
Men	7.5	11.5	31.7	49.3
Women	10.6	15.0	31.1	43.2
Percentage general	9.0	13.3	31.4	46.3

106. Complaining to the police	1. Totally support	2.Support	3. Object	4. Totally object
Men	10.6	19.6	28.1	41.7
Women	14.3	21.4	27.1	37.2
Percentage general	12.4	20.6	27.6	39.4

107. Complaining to the social services department.	1. Totally support	2.Support	3. Object	4. Totally object
Men	20.5	38.2	21.3	20.0
Women	27.8	39.4	15.0	17.8
Percentage general	24.1	38.8	18.2	18.9

108. Turning for support to services provided by women's organizations.	1. Totally support	2.Support	3. Object	4. Totally object
Men	20.4	39.4	21.1	19.1
Women	28.7	42.9	12.2	16.2
Percentage general	24.5	41.2	16.6	17.6

109. Requesting intervention by the family or a dignitary in society.	1. Totally support	2.Support	3. Object	4. Totally object
Men	57.5	33.1	5.8	3.7
Women	52.5	32.8	10.3	4.4
Percentage general	54.9	33.0	8.0	4.0

110. Removing her assailant from the house	1. Totally support	2.Support	3. Object	4. Totally object
Men	21.5	32.5	30.3	16.0
Women	25.6	31.5	27.2	15.7
Percentage general	23.5	32.5	28.6	15.8

111. The woman protecting herself in any possible way	1.Totally support	2.Support	3. Object	4.Totally object
Men	20.1	42.4	27.0	10.6
Women	37.3	38.7	15.9	8.1
Percentage general	28.7	40.6	21.4	9.3

112. Some married women complain about their husbands forcing them to have sexual intercourse. Does the husband have the right to do so or should this be considered as rape?

1. This is one of the wife's duties to her husband
2. He is not entitled, but this does not constitute rape
3. This should be considered as rape

	1	2	3
Men	28.5	36.5	35.0
Women	18.3	34.3	47.4
Percentage general	23.4	35.4	41.2

In case a woman or a young woman is subjected to sexual abuse by a relative, to what extent do you advise her family to adopt each of the following courses of action:

113. Going to the police	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	53.7	15.2	9.2	22.0
Women	53.6	14.6	12.4	19.5
Percentage general	53.6	14.9	10.7	20.7

114. Approaching a feminist organization for advice and support	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	45.1	25.9	16.7	12.4
Women	53.3	24.7	12.2	9.8
Percentage general	49.1	25.4	14.4	11.1

115. Approaching a social worker	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	53.6	23.0	14.2	9.2
Women	58.5	21.2	14.7	7.6
Percentage general	56.0	22.2	13.4	8.4

116. Keeping it a secret for fear of shame	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	25.0	16.4	13.5	45.1
Women	23.9	12.9	12.9	50.3
Percentage general	24.5	14.6	13.3	47.6

117. Keeping it a secret for fear that the family might break down	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	26.1	16.5	13.3	44.0
Women	24.2	14.1	12.3	49.4
Percentage general	25.1	15.3	12.9	46.7

118. Supporting the victim to protect herself as she sees fit	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	45.4	32.5	14.2	7.9
Women	56.7	26.4	11.2	5.8
Percentage general	51.0	29.5	12.7	6.8

In case a women is subjected to sexual abuse by a stranger, to what extent do you advise her family to adopt each of the following courses of action:

119. Going to the police	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	69.8	11.7	4.7	13.9
Women	72.1	11.1	6.3	10.6
Percentage general	70.9	11.5	5.5	12.2

120. Approaching a feminist organization for advice and support	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	54.8	22.2	13.0	10.0
Women	63.2	20.6	9.9	6.3
Percentage general	58.9	21.5	11.5	8.2

121. Approaching a social worker	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	59.8	20.9	10.9	8.5
Women	66.6	17.7	10.1	5.6
Percentage general	63.1	19.4	10.4	7.1

122. Keeping it a secret for fear of shame	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	27.1	15.9	12.7	44.2
Women	24.9	13.6	12.1	49.4
Percentage general	26.0	14.8	12.5	46.8

123. Beating and punishing the aggressor	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	39.4	18.3	13.4	29.0
Women	35.1	20.2	11.8	32.9
Percentage general	37.2	19.3	12.6	30.9

124. Supporting the victim to protect herself as she sees fit	1. Great extent	2. Medium extent	3.Limited extent	Don't advise
Men	53.5	28.4	11.7	6.4
Women	63.0	22.4	9.2	5.5
Percentage general	58.2	25.4	10.5	5.9

125. What do you think of killing within the context of what are termed “honour killings”

1. Understand 2. Understand very much 3. Don't understand 4. Don't understand at all

	1	2	3	4
Men	25.1	12.8	32.2	29.9
Women	13.9	9.1	32.2	44.8
Percentage general	19.5	11.0	32.2	37.3

If an unmarried young woman from your family were to get pregnant, what would be the most appropriate way to handle the matter?

126. Having an abortion	1.Very appropriate	2.Appropriate		4. Totally inappropriate
Men	36.1	31.2	17.4	15.3
Women	40.8	28.1	19.2	12.0
Percentage general	38.4	29.7	18.3	13.6

127. Approaching social services department	1.Very appropriate	2.Appropriate	3.Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	37.1	39.8	14.1	8.9
Women	46.6	36.1	11.7	5.7
Percentage general	41.8	38.0	12.9	7.3

128. Punishing the young woman	1.Very appropriate	2.Appropriate	3.Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	23.0	33.9	28.2	14.8
Women	19.7	30.0	30.5	19.7
Percentage general	21.4	32.1	29.3	17.2

129. Punishing the man responsible for her pregnancy	1.Very appropriate	2.Appropriate	3.Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	45.5	33.4	15.7	5.4
Women	39.6	33.4	19.0	8.0
Percentage general	42.5	33.5	17.3	6.7

130. Marrying her to the man responsible for her pregnancy	1.Very appropriate	2.Appropriate	3.Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	72.9	17.8	3.3	6.0
Women	68.1	23.1	4.9	3.9
Percentage general	70.4	20.5	4.1	5.0

131. Helping the young woman as she sees fit	1.Very appropriate	2.Appropriate	3.Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	48.7	37.8	8.4	5.2
Women	59.9	31.9	4.8	3.4
Percentage general	54.2	34.9	6.6	4.3

Political and Community Activism

132. To what extent do you support women's equal participation with men in political and community activism?

1. Support 2. Totally support 3. Object 4. Totally object

	1	2	3	4
Men	51.5	18.7	22.7	7.2
Women	53.1	33.0	10.7	3.2
Percentage general	52.3	25.8	16.7	5.2

133. Do you support a policy of affirmative action in hiring women for administrative positions in local councils, schools and commercial companies?

1. Support 2. Totally support 3. Object 4. Totally object

	1	2	3	4
Men	39.0	15.4	38.2	7.4
Women	49.7	27.1	19.9	3.2
Percentage general	44.4	21.2	29.1	5.3

134. Are you prepared in principle to vote for an electoral list headed by a woman?

1. Yes 2. No

	1	2
Men	65.1	34.9
Women	81.4	18.6
Percentage general	73.2	26.8

Which of the following strategies could contribute to increasing the number of Arab women involved in local and national politics, including their representation in parliament?

135. Women's involvement in existing lists and parties	1. Very effective strategy	2. Effective strategy	3. Ineffective strategy	4. Very ineffective strategy
Men	34.4	94.1	11.8	4.7
Women	38.9	50.3	7.1	3.7
Percentage general	36.7	49.7	9.4	4.2

136. Establishing women's blocs within existing parties	1. Very effective strategy	2. Effective strategy	3. Ineffective strategy	4. Very ineffective strategy
Men	22.6	36.0	29.9	11.5
Women	29.3	43.6	20.9	6.2
Percentage general	25.9	39.8	25.4	8.9

137. Forming an Arab women's party	1. Very effective strategy	2. Effective strategy	3. Ineffective strategy	4. Very ineffective strategy
Men	20.0	26.5	30.1	22.5
Women	30.4	39.5	18.9	11.3
Percentage general	25.1	33.0	25.0	16.9

138. Women threatening to boycott the elections	1. Very effective strategy	2. Effective strategy	3. Ineffective strategy	4. Very ineffective strategy
Men	9.2	21.7	34.1	34.9
Women	16.4	27.7	26.0	29.9
Percentage general	12.8	24.7	30.1	32.4

139. Every list or party reserving a quota of seats for women	1. Very effective strategy	2. Effective strategy	3. Ineffective strategy	4. Very ineffective strategy
Men	36.1	46.2	11.4	6.3
Women	41.5	46.7	7.6	4.2
Percentage general	38.7	46.5	9.5	5.3

140. Raising society's awareness concerning women's right to appropriate political representation	1. Very effective strategy	2. Effective strategy	3. Ineffective strategy	4. Very ineffective strategy
Men	28.4	21.7	29.5	20.4
Women	32.5	24.9	25.6	17.0
Percentage general	30.4	23.4	27.5	18.7

141. Are there any active associations or organizations in your locality working on improving the status of the Arab women in Israel?

1. Yes 2. Occasionally 3. No 4. Don't know

	1	2	3	4
Men	28.4	21.7	29.5	20.4
Women	32.5	24.9	25.6	17.0
Percentage general	30.4	23.4	27.5	18.7

142. Have you heard of any other organizations or associations outside of your locality working towards improving the status of the Arab women in Israel?

1. Yes 2. No

	1	2
Men	61.7	38.3
Women	63.6	36.4
Percentage general	62.6	37.4

143. What is the source of this information?

1. Haven't heard
2. The media
3. One of their activists
4. Through my participation in one of their activities

	1	2	3	4
Men	34.4	44.9	16.1	2.3
Women	28.7	42.3	19.4	72.0
Percentage general	31.6	43.6	17.8	4.2

The women's organizations carry out various activities to improve the status of women and protect their rights. Which of these activities do you believe to be suitable for improving the status of women in your locality?

144. Programmes to raise social awareness of women's rights	1. Very appropriate	2. Appropriate	3. Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	51.5	42.2	5.6	0.7
Women	65.1	33.2	1.4	0.3
Percentage general	58.2	37.7	3.5	0.5

145. Programmes through which women and young women gain stronger personalities	1. Very appropriate	2. Appropriate	3. Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	45.7	44.5	8.0	1.8
Women	62.9	33.2	3.7	0.2
Percentage general	54.2	38.9	5.9	1.0

146. Programmes that offer advice on laws that protect women's rights	1. Very appropriate	2. Appropriate	3. Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	46.9	42.4	9.4	1.3
Women	62.5	33.4	3.9	0.2
Percentage general	54.6	37.9	6.7	0.8

147. Programmes that work on changing state laws and procedures to protect women and their rights	1. Very appropriate	2. Appropriate	3. Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	38.2	41.6	17.5	1.3
Women	52.6	38.2	7.3	0.2
Percentage general	45.4	39.9	12.5	0.8

148. Programmes that help combat violence against women and offer concrete support to victims of violence.	1. Very appropriate	2. Appropriate	3. Inappropriate	4. Totally inappropriate
Men	57.1	36.3	5.0	1.7
Women	69.4	27.2	1.9	1.5
Percentage general	63.2	31.7	3.4	1.6

149. Do you support the participation of women and girls from your family in these organizations' activities?

1. Support 2. I have reservations 3. Object

	1	2	3
Men	61.9	24.2	13.9
Women	80.5	14.9	4.6
Percentage general	71.2	19.6	9.2

150. Are you prepared to volunteer or contribute to these organizations in order to develop their work or intensify their activities?

1. Very prepared 2. Prepared 3. Unprepared 4. Unprepared at all

	1	2	3	4
Men	38.0	39.5	18.7	3.8
Women	48.4	36.2	13.7	1.7
Percentage general	43.1	37.9	16.2	2.8

151. Do you agree with the statement: "Promoting Arab women's status in Israel is the responsibility of the entire society, not only of women"?

1. Totally agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Totally disagree

	1	2	3	4
Men	45.2	45.2	8.0	1.8
Women	55.7	39.1	4.7	0.5
Percentage general	50.3	42.1	6.4	1.2

General questions

152-153. Locality _____

154. Gender: 1 Male 2 Female

155-156. Age (years) _____

157. What is your religion?

1. Muslim 2. Christian 3. Druze 4. Other

	1	2	3	4
Men	80.4	9.2	10.4	0
Women	79.9	9.6	10.3	0.2
Percentage general	80.2	9.4	10.3	0.1

158. In religious terms, do you think of yourself at present to be:

1. Very religious 2. Religious 3. Quite religious 4. Not religious

	1	2	3	4
Men	10.2	30.4	26.7	32.7
Women	17.0	36.7	27.8	18.5
Percentage general	13.5	33.5	27.3	25.7

159. In terms of adhering to customs and traditions, do you consider yourself to be:

1. Conservative
2. Quite conservative
3. Not conservative
4. Not conservative at all

	1	2	3	4
Men	56.3	39.4	3.4	0.1
Women	61.9	36.0	2.1	0
Percentage general	59.0	37.8	2.7	0.5

160. Marital status

1. Single
2. Married
3. Divorced
4. Widower/Widow

	1	2	3	4
Men	27.4	71.9	0.5	0.2
Women	23.1	71.0	2.2	3.7
Percentage general	25.2	71.5	1.3	1.9

161. How many children do you have?

1. Unmarried
2. Married but without children
3. 1-2 children
4. 3-4 children
5. 5 children or more

	1	2	3	4	5
Men	25.2	5.2	19.2	25.2	25.4
Women	20.5	4.4	20.1	27.3	27.7
Percentage general	22.8	4.8	19.6	26.2	26.5

162. Level of education

1. No education
2. Studied in 'Alkuttub' or elementary school but didn't finish it
3. Finished my elementary education
4. Studied in high school (technical or university entrance) but didn't finish
5. Finished high school
6. Studied in a college or university but didn't finish
7. Finished my studies in a college or university and received a Bachelors

degree

8. Finished my studies in a college or university and received an Masters degree
9. Finished my university studies and received a Doctoral degree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Men	2.2	3.9	17.4	19.1	32.7	9.4	12.8	2.3	0.2
Women	8.3	4.6	18.5	10.7	33.1	11.9	12.4	0.7	0
Percentage general	5.2	4.2	17.9	14.9	32.9	10.6	12.6	1.5	0.1

163. What is your occupation?

1. Waged or salaried employee
2. Self employed
3. Soldier in compulsory military service
4. Not working but will look for a job
5. Not working and not looking for a job
6. Retired
7. Student at a university or school, young man/woman prior to military service, volunteer
8. Housewife / "Househusband"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Men	50.9	19.5	1.0	6.2	4.5	12.6	4.4	0.8
Women	26.9	5.1	0	5.7	5.4	2.0	5.9	49.0
Percentage general	39.0	12.3	0.5	6.0	5.0	7.3	5.1	24.8

164. What is your spouse's job?

1. Waged or salaried employee
2. Self employed
3. Soldier in compulsory military service
4. Not working but will look for a job
5. Not working and not looking for a job
6. Retired
7. Student at a university or school, young man/woman prior to military service, volunteer
8. Housewife / "Househusband"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Men	18.7	3.2	0	1.1	2.0	2.0	2.9	70.0
Women	45.1	24.1	1.4	5.0	3.7	15.2	1.1	4.4
Percentage general	31.7	13.6	0.7	3.1	2.8	8.5	2.0	37.5

165. The average net monthly income for an Arab family in Israel is 6,500 NIS. How does your family income compare with this average?

1. Much higher than average
2. Slightly higher than average
3. Similar to the average income
4. Slightly lower than average
5. Much lower than average

	1	2	3	4	5
Men	6.8	12.0	22.9	25.2	33.0
Women	6.4	13.1	23.5	27.7	29.4
Percentage general	6.6	12.5	23.3	26.4	31.2

Interviewer's report: Communications Follow-up

For the interviewer: This form must be filled out for every person whose name appears on the list and whom you have phoned in order to interview

166. Is the respondent from the main list or the alternative list?

	1. From the main list	2. From the alternative list
Men	78.5	21.5
Women	47.0	26.0
Percentage general	76.3	23.7

167. Number of communications you have performed (by phone or face to face) in order to conduct the interview _____

Interviewer report: Information about the interview

168. How do you evaluate the authenticity of the information you have received from the respondent?

1. Unsatisfactory 2. Satisfactory 3. Good 4. Very good

	1	2	3	4
Men	1.7	23.1	45.1	30.2
Women	0.5	23.7	44.3	31.5
Percentage general	1.1	23.4	44.6	30.8

169. Did the respondent express any reservations about the survey from the first contact to the end of the interview?

1. Yes (Circle the expression that the respondent used to express

his reservation: I am busy; I have no time; I have no knowledge or opinion on the subject; I am not sure if I want to take part in the survey; I don't trust surveys; Taking part in surveys is a waste of time; The interview contains very personal questions; In our house we don't deal with surveys)

2. No

	1. yes	2.NO
Men	17.3	82.7
Women	15.8	84.2
Percentage general	16.6	83.4

170. Did the respondent ask for information about the survey?

1. Yes (Circle the information that he asked for: The survey's objective; Who is behind it; How the participants were chosen; Who will see my survey answers)

2. No

	1. yes	2.no
Men	52.5	47.5
Women	50.2	49.8
Percentage general	51.4	48.6

171-172. The month during which the interview was conducted (write 1-12) _____

The day on which the interview was conducted (in numbers) _____

173. For office use only, Control on questionnaire

	1. Approved	2. Not approved
Men		
Women		
Percentage general	100	

Interviewer's declaration

I hereby declare that I have conducted this interview myself according to the list of names and instructions I received, and I am aware that a false declaration constitutes both a legal offence and an offence to the ethical regulations (of the University, Ministry of Education and others).

The interview was conducted on _____ at _____ o'clock

Name of interviewer _____ interviewer's signature _____

The collected information about the respondent is only for office use in order

to confirm the interview and will subsequently be destroyed.

Respondent's name _____ Address _____ Phone number (telephone or mobile phone to confirm the interview) _____

