

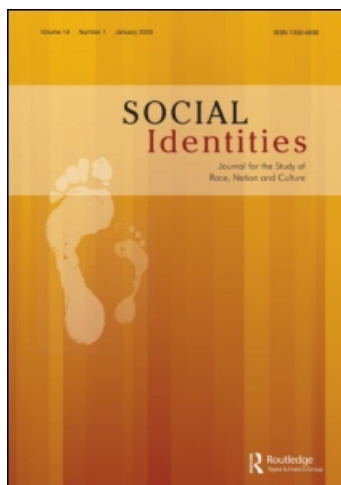
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Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder ^a; Naomi Weiner-Levy ^b

^a Ben-Gurion University, Israel ^b David Yellin Academic College, Jerusalem, Israel

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Identity and gender in cultural transitions: returning home from higher education as 'internal immigration' among Bedouin and Druze women in Israel

Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder^{a*} and Naomi Weiner-Levy^b

^a*Ben-Gurion University, Israel;* ^b*David Yellin Academic College Jerusalem, Israel*

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This paper examines the phenomenon of the return of Bedouin and Druze women from studies in Israeli universities to their homes and culture, focusing on the perspective of the psychological changes they experienced in their identity. Entering the university, located in the Jewish-Israeli space (in central cities in Israel), constitutes entry into a new and different cultural world that exposes these women to values and norms different from those of their culture of origin. The identity formed as a result of their encounter with and exposure to a world that was unfamiliar to them and the return thereafter to their villages entail changes in gender identity. Not only are they 'different' from the way they were before they left; they often feel like 'internal immigrants' within their own culture. A deeper understanding of these effects would enhance comprehension of the emotional processes and identity changes undergone by women from non-Western cultures who obtain higher education.

Keywords: identity; higher education; cultural transition; Bedouin; Druze; women

We have become strangers in a world where we thought we are at home. (Lynd, 1958, p. 46)

Introduction

Higher education among women from Palestinian minority groups in Israel has become a focus of research only in the past five years (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2006, 2008; Erdreich, 2004; Weiner-Levy, 2006). The phenomenon of acquiring higher education among Bedouin and Druze women is new and research on the issue is therefore also relatively recent. This paper examines the phenomenon of the return of Bedouin and Druze women from studies in Israeli universities to their homes and culture, focusing on the perspective of the psychological changes they experienced in their identity.

Contrary to other ethnic groups throughout the world, Palestinian minorities in Israel, including Bedouin and Druze, live for the most part in geographic spaces/areas separate from the Jewish population. They lead their lives based on their local and cultural norms. Entering university, located in the Jewish-Israeli space, constitutes entry into a new and different cultural world that exposes these women to values and norms different from those

*Corresponding author. Email: sarabab@zahav.net.il

of their culture of origin. The identity formed as a result of their encounter with and exposure to a world that was unfamiliar to them and the return thereafter to their villages entail changes in gender identity. Not only are they 'different' from the way they were before they left; they often feel like 'internal immigrants' within their own culture.

Most studies conducted on the education of Palestinian women (from various sectors) in Israel has focused mainly on the difficulties accompanying these women upon their entry into Israeli universities (Pessate-Shubert, 2003; Weiner-Levy, 2008) and during their studies. These studies explored education as an opportunity for the advancement of women and as an agent of change in their personal lives.

This study, different from others, examines the phenomenon of returning from higher education from a perspective of two minorities living at the margin of the Palestinian minority in Israel, removed from mainstream Palestinian society. Although many studies on education emphasize positive facets of education on women's lives, there have been no studies that explore dynamic changes of identities in patriarchal societies as a result of individuals acquiring education. This study examines the intrapersonal dynamics educated women experience, a facet usually silenced in the relevant literature.

Druze and Bedouin societies differ from other Palestinian groups in Israel in their social-cultural structures. While Palestinian society in Israel is mostly rural or urban, Bedouin society is tribal in its structure, inhabiting the southern Negev Desert region, dispersed as tribes far from one another. Druze society lives in the northern villages and holds an esoteric religion, their language and extended patriarchal family life is similar to that of Palestinians. Druze and Bedouin are considered part of the Arabs in Israel, but are also rejected at times by the wider Palestinian society for their different way of life – for the Druze, rejection is due to their participation in the Israeli army service. These difficulties are additional to those they encounter from the state, that cannot accept the demands of the Bedouins to keep their lands, and periodically expropriate their lands.

Comparing differences and similarities of transitions in identity and intrapersonal dynamics of Bedouin and Druze women will contribute to understanding paths and internal processes educated women in 'marginal groups' undergo, and to further comprehend the place of higher education in their lives. The findings that will be presented are taken from two different researches conducted separately – during the time the research took place, the authors were unfamiliar with each other and with each other's research. Sarab, one of the researchers, is part of Bedouin society, and studied women from her culture, and Naomi, a Jewish woman who is part of the hegemonic Western stream in Israel, studied women from the Druze minority. The similarity of findings surprised us and were viewed as a triangulation of the findings that repeated themselves, despite the differences between the researchers.

Higher education and cultural shifts

Most female Arab activists consider education an essential component of human capital development and nation building (Amawi, 1996). Studies that examined the effects of education in Arab society found that it had a positive impact on individual lives and on society as a whole (Ahmad-Fauzia, 2001; Araf, 1994; Arnhold, 2000; Baburajan, 1998; Katjavivi, 2000). Scholars also note that education leads to greater involvement in the labor market and in public activities (As-Sadawi, 1988), newfound empowerment (Bubtana, 2000; Perry, 2000) and development of independent thinking patterns (Whalley, 1988). Furthermore, educated women influence changes in the status of women in their

communities (Weiner-Levy, 2006), play a more active role in their choice of a partner (Meller, 2000, p. 43) and encourage marriage at a more mature age (Moghadam, 1993).

These studies do not examine internal transitions and pain that the inevitable losses entailed (Lucey, 2003), overlooking the interpersonal dynamics and identity transitions associated with processes of change, adoption of an alternative path and separation from one's previous lifestyle. A more thorough understanding of these effects would enhance comprehension of the emotional processes and identity changes undergone by women from non-western cultures who obtain higher education.

University as an academic place has meaning beyond the role of providing knowledge or education. This approach (see Barnett, 1988; Bourdieu, 1988) sees academic education as a process of an encounter between knowledge, society and culture through practices that influence an individual's identity, constructing, conceptualizing and using academic knowledge to shape the identity, as well as the encounter with different values and culture that make the person reexamine his or her values and perspectives and deals with the new values (Okonji, 1988).

Barnett's and Bourdieu's approaches are suitable for post-modern thinking. The impact of university on identity according to these scholars (Sarup, 1996) sees identity formation as a changing, heterogeneous and conflictual process. The term 'identity' no longer refers to a permanent essence that is constructed from inner will and is similar to itself beyond time and place, but to multiple identities that are located in every person, and are influenced by the cultural and social surroundings and by the diverse knowledge the person is exposed to. This knowledge affects the conceptualization of the 'self' and the individual's identity construction.

Exposure to diverse knowledge violates the belief in 'good' and 'true,' a belief that was impacted in the past by the homogeneous supporting group that defined what is 'true' for the individual. Following the intensified exposure to the different (either through travel or electronic communication), socially coherent circles become indistinct and widespread beliefs are questioned (Gergen, 1992).

Higher education among Palestinian Arabs in Israel

Higher education in Israel reflects power relations in the wider society, which also serves to reproduce the cultural hegemony of the majority. Majed Al-Haj (2003) shows in his study that the 'dominance of the majority extends from the wider society into academia' (p. 352). In this respect: 'a gap exists between the social structure, which is divergent and multicultural, and the formal culture and Higher Education, which is basically Jewish western oriented and devoid of any multicultural concept' (p. 352). University studies entail exposure to a new culture, society and knowledge. Academic institutions support the dominant ideology and the instruction offered therein follows the assumptions and values of the prevailing discourse. University space and the cultural and social discourse it creates for the student were discussed by Bourdieu (1988), who maintains that their significance extends beyond that of imparting knowledge or education. He does not perceive university knowledge as 'pure science' alone but rather as cultural knowledge that is influenced by a specific socio cultural context and shapes it accordingly.

Arab students gain unique experience during their university studies. The universities are almost the only place in Israeli society where Arabs and Jews meet on an equal footing (and even there the starting blocks are not equally aligned). Separate educational systems keep Arabs and Jews apart during their studies in primary and secondary school, they meet only at university. This encounter is an important factor in the consolidation of Arab

students' civic identity and their relations with the Jewish majority. From these gaps, two worlds are created and thus engender a dichotomy between the Arab culture and the Israeli-Western culture and a feeling of living in two worlds. At university, Arabs are at times disadvantaged in different spheres, for example, financial difficulties that stem from the fact that most Arab families live below the poverty line. Difficulties in renting houses outside the campus, and in adjusting to new demands and academic languages, English and Hebrew (Al-Haj, 2003).

This study focuses on the first Druze and Bedouin women students who opted for higher education, entering Jewish, secular institutions that espouse Western norms. At times, the trip to the campus marked the first time these young women had ever left their villages alone. Studying at university and their presence on a coeducational campus constituted their first experiences in an alien society with its own dominant culture and individualistic inclinations. Exposure to a different lifestyle and culture and acquisition of academic knowledge combined to create complex realities that affected the women's identity profoundly, especially following their return to their villages. The implications of crossing social borders and exposure to new norms and values will be examined briefly, focusing on identity transitions.

The context: Druze and Bedouin in Israel

Druze minority

Western scholars are divided regarding the ethnic origins of the Druze – a traditional religious community that began to develop in Egypt about a thousand years ago (Adan, Azam, and Wolf, 1979; Falach-Farraj, 2005). Some say their origins are Middle Eastern, Persian, Turkish, Indian or even European, while others claim the Druze are Arabs, based on similarities between the two peoples in style of dress, foods, customs, popular beliefs and language (Layish, 1985; Dana, 1988, p. 49). Nevertheless, the basic foundations of the Arab nation are lacking in the Druze world (Dana, 1988) and the esoteric Druze religion is distinct from Islam. The Druze have suffered severe prosecutions through their history from Muslim societies, and therefore inhabited the high mountains of Syria, Lebanon and Israel, isolated and remote from national centers (Abu Az-al-Din, 1985, in Dana, 1988; Falach-Farraj, 2005). Some 100,000 Druze reside in 16 mountain villages in Israel. Druze settlements in isolated areas have forged a rural, conservative and close-knit community that preserves its esoteric religion and cultural values meticulously.

The Druze (as opposed to the Bedouins) hold an independent unique elementary educational system in their villages, their high schools shared with other surrounding Arab villages.

Bedouin minority

The term 'Bedouin' derives from the Arabic word '*badia*,' which means desert, i.e., the Bedouin's dwelling place. The Negev Bedouin are Muslims in their religion and are part of the Palestinian Arab people who remained in their country after the 1948 War which created the State of Israel, and today they constitute part of an ethnic minority within Israel, numbering approximately 140,000 people. In 1948 the government moved the Bedouin who remained in the Negev to a restricted military zone around the city of Beer Sheva and they lost access to the limited schooling that was available before 1948. Under military rule, the government provided only minimal education services: most schools had

only four grades and attendance rates were low, especially among girls. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s the Israeli government has been trying to pressure the Bedouin in the Negev to leave their villages and resettle in seven urban localities. These towns, built for the Bedouin population, rank presently at the bottom of the government's socio-economic index, making them the poorest in Israel, and lacking many basic services. The Bedouin have been reluctant to abandon their traditional lands and in 1966, it is estimated that only about 56% of the Bedouin lived in the seven urban villages (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

The other half stayed on their lands in 'unrecognized villages' (not marked on any map), in a move considered illegal by the Israeli state. Those remaining on their lands did not benefit from any basic services, such as running water, electricity, sewage or schools (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Bedouin schools lacked basic educational facilities as libraries, laboratories and teaching equipment. Often overcrowded and understaffed, poorly built, badly maintained or simply unavailable, schools for Bedouin children offered fewer facilities and educational opportunities than were offered other Israeli children. It was not until the late 1970s that two high schools were built in two recognized villages. Very few women from this study learned there; the rest had to attend Arab or Jewish boarding schools in northern Israel, far from patriarchal control. It was not until 1988 that the first female Bedouin was admitted to university in the Negev region. By 1998, only 12 women had finished their bachelor's degrees, the author of this paper being one of them (Negev Center for Regional Development, 2004).

Women's status and higher education in Druze and Bedouin cultures: Comparative aspects

Male domination is legitimized in Bedouin and Druze societies by two cultural codes primarily affecting the lives of women: the sexual and the collective.

Sexuality plays a dual role in a woman's life. As a vehicle of procreation, she is both marginalized and important. Her primary reproductive role emphasizes her connection to uncontrolled nature, which restricts her ability to be morally equal to men. But her procreative power also makes the woman the center of homemaking and the bearer of tradition; as such, she is highly protected by Bedouin traditional law, and any offense against her may lead to revenge by her collective male kin (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

Similarly, girls are not permitted to interact with the male public sphere. The need for modesty is reflected in the concept of *tahashum* (shamefulness and self-control), which requires modest, traditional dress of girls and women alike. In this context, the veil is meant to defend females from sexual harassment (Abu-Odeh, 1993).

Although higher education in Israel is considered a key indicator of social change and has increased self-awareness among indigenous women (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2006; Pessate-Schubert, 2003; Weiner-Levy, 2006), women's access to education in certain ethnic groups, such as Bedouin and Druze society, is still limited.

Because of this stringent application of cultural prohibitions and political-historical constraints, female education in Bedouin society began only in the late 1980s (in 1998 there were 12 female Bedouin students in academia as compared to almost 200 in 2002).¹ Bedouin women's entry into the public sphere is a new issue, accompanied by struggles within their patriarchal society. During the mid-1980s the first Druze village women who applied to university breached traditional norms and gender roles by leaving their villages unaccompanied² and studying in the company of men. They encountered powerful opposition, at times even expressed in the ostracism of their families and excommunication from the Druze religion (Falach, 1991) – a punishment ordinarily reserved for murderers and adulterers³.

Over the years, higher education slowly gained legitimacy. Today, at the turn of the century, female Druze and Bedouin students outnumber their male counterparts. Nevertheless, some communities, both Druze and Bedouin, still prevent women from obtaining higher education.

Research methodology

Our study belongs to the comparative research approach that emphasizes uniformity among variety (Sztompka, 1979). In contrast to the usual comparison between national states, we would like to compare two gender-ethnic marginal groups in the same country that are considered part of the Arab society/culture. We would like to examine a phenomenon among two sub-ethnic groups in Arab society in Israel in order to strengthen this phenomenon's validity and existence.

Our study follows an endogenous model. According to this model: 'both the possible causes and the possible effects are seen as located within the country being compared' (Alapuru, 1985, p. 22). This study uses units of analysis 'where the interest is to investigate how social phenomena are systematically related to characteristics of the countries researched' (Qyen, 1990, p. 6).

The comparison is between Bedouin and Druze women, who both belong to a society that is defined in the literature as 'Arab,' 'Palestinian' and 'patriarchal,' usually defined as a monolithic culture. Our goal is to break the ethnic-national-cultural boundaries of these definitions by creating and examining another discourse of sub-identities inside the same cultural boundaries. We offer a different look, a micro-perspective inside the macro-culture by showing its complexities and difficulty through a common experience.

Through the issue of higher education and shifting identities we want to examine how these two groups of Bedouin and Druze women, that hold the same status ('first women') and are located geographically in different areas in the same country, experience and define their identities as educated women. From the micro-level analysis we offer an understanding of what is universal about this phenomenon among marginalized ethnic groups (Qyen, 1990).

Another contributor to the comparison that aims to strengthen the validity of the phenomenon studied is the different positioning of the two writers. One of them is herself a Bedouin woman who came from the Bedouin culture and not only was the first educated woman from her tribe, but was among the pioneer women in her generation. The other is an Ashkenazi Jewish woman from the hegemonic society who turned to study Druze women, from a different culture belonging to a small minority group. Despite the two different locations and different cultures, the two authors came upon similar conclusions/findings after revealing similar phenomena in different contexts.

Methods

This study sought to interview the 'first' Druze and Bedouin women to obtain higher education, using a purposive rather than a random sampling method that samples persons who have a special interest in the matter at hand, termed 'politically important cases' by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 28).

Druze research population

Thirty-four Druze women were interviewed between 1998 and 2003. Some participants were the first to study 'unacceptable' professions, such as medicine, law, and other professions involving contact with men.

All interviewees began studying in their late teens or early twenties. They usually came from small families – clans that did not have representatives on their village councils and consequently lacked the power to award jobs and gain further status in the community.

Education was often perceived as a means of attaining such power and independence.

Interview procedure

Interviews with Druze women were conducted in Hebrew, a language in which all participants were fluent, and were held at participants' homes, as meeting in public places is not customary for Druze women.

Bedouin research population

Bedouin women interviewees were the first Bedouin women who achieved higher education in institutes of higher learning in Israel. Their ages during the study fell between late twenties and early fifties. All the interviews were conducted in Arabic, the researchers' mother tongue.

Locating the interviewees

Since the researcher is part of the Bedouin community she studies, she located the Bedouin women through her local knowledge about those women, and since they were few, it was not difficult to reach them. Some of them she knew personally and those with whom she was not familiar, she knew through other Bedouin men who studied with them. All of the interviews were conducted at the local university as a quiet place where there would be little distraction.

Interview procedure

In-depth narrative interviews were held in two sessions,⁴ for both Bedouin and Druze, although some continued for four or five sessions, seeking to obtain a rich and authentic narrative concerning different aspects of the participants' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The interviews entailed two different methods found to be mutually complementary in this study: Rosenthal's (1993) open-ended question producing a narrative life story, followed by semi-structured questions conforming with Corradi's (1991) approach, along with questions relating to specific themes not addressed in the life story, as well as necessary clarifications. These interviews are identified as ethnographic because they also involve 'discovering' and 'describing' and are aimed at uncovering and constructing women's realities (Spradley, 1979).

First women narratives

Between two worlds

Exposure to different knowledge, culture, values and norms during their studies in institutes of higher education positioned participants in a new location described as

'between two worlds' or 'on the border.' This relocation began with the new cultural exposure that took place during the start of studies and the encounter with Israeli-Western cultural values. We will examine later how these encounters affected reconstructing their identities after they finished studying and returned to their homes.

Entering a different world

Bedouin and Druze women who went to study at the university lived simultaneously in two different cultures: their culture of origin (Bedouin or Druze) and the Jewish Israeli culture. Daily contradictions between these two cultures were unavoidable, especially at the time they began to study (in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s). The women perceived these contradictions between the tribal world where they had little exposure to men, or to other tribes, and where public appearance was not allowed for women, and the university campus world where men and women from different cultures, religions and nations mingle, and meetings with Arab and Bedouin men and women from local and different tribes was possible.

One of the consequences of this exposure is reexamining gender relations and reinforcing consciousness of gender prohibitions. This consciousness appears through the encounter with both Arab and Jewish men and women students.

Laila's story is an example of raising consciousness of a Bedouin student through the encounter with Israeli culture. Laila, who had her father's permission to live in the dorms and come back home every weekend, describes the difficulty of this encounter:

I remember one day I went out of my room and my head was exposed (without a scarf), I wore trousers and a short sleeved shirt. Suddenly I saw a Jewish boy sitting over there. 'Ha!' I yelled. I ran into my room. Then I sat with my Jewish roommates and explained to them that in order for my father to give me permission to study at the university it took a long process of convincing. If, God forbid, an Arab man who works here or an Arab student sees a boy here – he will ask 'what is he doing here?' 'what brings him here?' They will start to gossip and bad rumors which will bring an end to my studying or even my death.

Galia, a Druze student, also describes the exposure to prohibitions and consciousness raising to gender norms through the interaction with a male student from her culture who studies also at the campus:

I remember I arrived a few days late, and in the class there was a (male) student from the Galilee, who turned to me and said in Arabic: I will give you the missing lessons, and I looked (turning her head to both sides) and didn't answer. After the lecture he came up to me again and asked me if I want to photocopy his lectures, and I didn't know what to do. How could I speak to a boy, what does it mean to photocopy? How? And what if someone saw me talking to a (male) student, it's forbidden. And I just took my stuff and ran ...

In addition to the encounter with the opposite sex at the university, these educated students experienced dilemmas as a result of their contacts with female Jewish students, through comparing permitted social norms for the Jewish girls that were forbidden for Bedouin students.

Fida', a Bedouin student, explains:

I was mostly surprised when I came to the university. For me it was the Western world, my first exposure to this world. But it created a conflict between these two worlds that I had to sort out. I saw how the Jewish girl acts and I always compared myself to her. I always asked what has she got that I don't have? I said, God, why does she act like this and I do not? Why are they allowed to do this and I am not? Why is it permitted to her but forbidden for me?

Exposure to these experiences and living in a different culture created more than once feelings of pain, as evident from Nawal, a Druze student's words:

I felt completely helpless, I had to confront things I didn't understand. It is an open society, there are parties, having fun, dancing, and you just have to sit by and watch. You are not allowed to take part in it. Do you understand? I always had to keep a distance. Until I just broke down, and I just felt: Enough! I can't go on like this any longer, I am also a young girl, and if I sit in the cafeteria and drink coffee – what could happen?! What is wrong?! Why is it a sin!? Three semesters I didn't leave my room, except to go to courses and I was very depressed . . . Being in a situation you don't belong, you can't be part of, the loneliness I felt . . .

Coping with the conflict

The encounter with new cultural values created dilemmas for the women of which values they could adopt and what values they should give up. This situation positioned them between the will to fulfill their autonomy and self-choice and cultural demands that forbid fulfilling these values when returning to their societies.

This part will focus on the question of how these Bedouin and Druze women coped with these conflicts by adopting several coping styles.

Carrying the honor code from private sphere to public sphere

One of these coping styles was strengthening and publicizing local-traditional gender codes consciously onto the Israeli campus. As Wafa, a Druze student, describes:

Although we had many opportunities to talk and get friendly with male students, we never let ourselves do it, because we had our limits, our lines, and we always imagined the feedback from the village. I also took into account my family, my family's name and honor, and . . . and the rumors . . . there was always this tension between what is acceptable and what isn't . . . I never felt I was detached from the village, there were always these bells echoing – No! This is not acceptable there, and I really had dilemmas, what I could do, what I could not do . . .

Khulud, a Bedouin student, describes the non-typical student experience she went through as a result of carrying cultural codes on the university campus. When she asked to study at the university, her father did not permit her, fearing she would be seen in public, especially in the Jewish sphere. Thus he agreed that her 17-year-old nephew would escort her to the university and would wait for her until she finished her classes at the end of the day. Even when she had to study with friends, her nephew waited until she finished.

Strengthening religious codes

Another example of carrying the code of honor to the public university sphere is shown through tight religious codes in gender issues, especially through wearing religious garb.

Safa, a Bedouin student, explains that wearing religious dress was a strategy to get her husband's family's permission to continue her education, and not risking her position within the family at the same time:

When I married I was asked to change my trousers for the jilbab (religious dress) and cover my head with the mendeel (scarf), so I would be honored according to their perceptions. So I pretended to surrender to their demands to – deceive them. I thought that the jilbab and the mendeel would not be an obstacle for my advancement in life. Would this piece of cloth be an obstacle for my development? If this is what is going to please them, I would put this cloth on my head. They felt that I surrendered to them and they behaved favorably toward me, and I could enter from this place.

From Safa's perception, it was not a surrender, but a strategy and a sort of act that would help her to continue her access to education and employment in the future.

Also Druze women put on religious dress to please society and to enable themselves to continue their education, but they also describe frustration at the gap between family and friends' evaluation of their religious garb and their own pride and evaluation of their educational success.

Rashida, a Druze student, describes this frustration:

I was careful to wear traditional clothing. I always wore a white scarf.⁵ That's what they were most proud of – my being a higher education student who still wore a headscarf – not my doctoral studies in a difficult technological field, but only that I wore a headscarf, that I preserved the values ... Do you see what I mean? ... I could say 'Thank you very much, but I don't need your respect' and not wear the scarf ... but there is an Arabic saying, 'If you want to live among the blind, you must act blind.'

Unlike Safa, who perceived traditional clothing as a tactic and strategy, Rashida's remarks express her frustration over the need to conceal a personal sense of accomplishment and the differential conceptions of pride and honor rooted in the respective cultures. They reflect disparity not only between her and her community and family, but also between her actions and her views, her conduct and her thoughts, creating inner dissociation between the will to comply and the desire to express individual ideals and thoughts.

Dual feelings and behaviors

Another strategy for coping that was adopted by Bedouin and Druze women was dual behavior according to the two cultural models in which they lived, or according to what they describe as living in 'two separated worlds.'

Sonia, a Druze student, describes the gap between this behavior in the two worlds:

The truth is that at university I ... ah ... I really lived in two separate worlds, that is, in the university it was one world, and at home an entirely different world ... like, things I could talk about with people in the university I couldn't talk about with my mother or brothers or relatives, ... When I worked at the sewing workshop – I never allowed myself to talk about university, about lecturers, tuition or anything, they could never understand, and the opposite was true too – at the university I never talked about my work at the sewing workshop.

Besides coping strategies that were adopted by these women, life experience inside and between the two cultures affected internal feelings and reconstructed new perceptions due to the new reality they faced.

The difficulty in balancing between these two worlds is similar to the illness of split personality that is described by Manal, a Bedouin student:

Sometimes I say, every Bedouin woman, especially educated Bedouin women, lives with two faces, a real split personality. In a certain situation you have to behave like this and in another, you have to behave like that. I brought a picture to my home, a picture of two faces, a happy face and a sad face, and two hands from the bottom hold these faces. I see Bedouin women's situation through this picture, especially educated Bedouin women; on one hand she is happy and wants to develop and break the barriers, but on the other she is very sad because society stresses her, these hands are society.

It is not very easy to live like this, on the edge. Safa describes the difficulty of 'playing roles' in the two realities:

You are a Bedouin woman who lives in two cultures, the very traditional male Bedouin culture, and the modern Israeli culture. I lived these two cultures and I felt the difficulty. I felt myself putting one leg here and one leg there. At the same time you want to preserve the norms you were raised by, but you believe as an educated woman that they are wrong, but because society considers them true I have to follow them.

I felt myself to be living in two personalities: I am the educated Safa, and the traditionalist Safa. I forced myself to adjust to these two cultures, I forced myself to behave as a traditional Bedouin woman, so Bedouin society would respect me, and at the same time to live the life I believe in.

Conceptions of these notions are reflected in the words of Rawia, a Druze woman:

I live in two worlds: One is a world that is reality, the things that happen every day in the country, in my profession, [and then] I return to the village, which is another world . . . of the women here . . . a world about how to sew this seam, how to cook, how to clean, and that's it, like, that's *it*, their entire world. I envy them.

One of the consequences of exposure to the other culture and the contradiction between the cultures that followed it was a feeling of not belonging. The question 'where do I belong?' was raised among Bedouin and Druze women in different versions: 'Am I like my mother and my father or am I a new thing?' 'If I am a new thing, do I still belong to them or do I have no contact with them?'

Najah, a Bedouin student, describes the identity crisis she experienced at the beginning of her studies at the university. She thought she could reconcile these cultures despite contradictions:

You have not seen anything else, you did not know any other thing in the world, you see new things at the university which blocks you from 100% belonging.

This description is true for both Druze and Bedouin women. Afifa, a Druze woman, says:

I found myself between the two sides. You can't be here but you can't be there either . . . [I] cannot fit into the modern world, but I also cannot come back to the village and be Afifa the village girl again.

The feeling of crisis was evident in many expressions of uncertainty, negativity and in difficult feelings, the feeling of loss and confusion raise among these women the fear of losing their identity and even the difficulty in finding their own identity that includes their own norms and values.

Iman, a Druze student, says:

At this time I don't really want children, I can't even think of how I will raise them, because I have so many things I don't understand and I have to figure out, I really don't know, I feel I have to pave my way . . .

These women, both Druze and Bedouin, who studied, simultaneously in both cultures, characterize the postmodern individual. Their feelings of pain, hybridity and life in a 'border zone' or 'cultural dissonance' are not mentioned in postmodern Western identity theories. Non-western theoreticians address the concept of hybridity in an attempt to understand and express new aspects of ethnic identity in the post-colonial realities of globalization and migration (Bhabha, 1990, 1996).

The feelings of not belonging, but not 'not belonging,' not insiders and yet not outsiders and hybridity⁶ was described by Sarup (1996), an Indian psychologist who immigrated to England. Immigrants, he maintains, often seem to be suspended in the empty space between a culture they have already left and a mode of life that stubbornly

denies them right of entry (Sarup, 1996, p. 10). Homi Bhabha (1990, 1996), who linked the concept of hybridity with political repression and inequality, describes a discourse of duality and doubleness – but not binariness, he emphasizes.

Among Bedouin and Druze women, adopting a hybrid identity is necessary since it is a sort of strategy to be accepted in their own societies with their new feminine role as ‘educated women’ who are different from the ‘common feminine model’ accepted in both societies. As women who were exposed to different new cultures, they return to their societies different. While society assumes they have not been changed, and expects them to remain as they were when they left, these women’s selves have changed; this new feminine educated self (see Erdreich, 2006) was not taken into consideration in their societies.

Otherness: ‘Like a stranger in my home’

On returning to their families and community, the women found that the various aspects of identity that emerged during their studies were not always compatible with the expectations of Bedouin and Druze society. They felt that acceptance of the Druze or Bedouin collectivist social code and gender norms distanced them, at times, from their inner selves and suppressed their personal characteristics and desires. The need to return to one’s home society varies in intensity among different cultures. For the Druze, it is absolute: Women return to share their lives with a male family member, whether father, brother or husband. The only option for leaving the village is joining a husband who works and lives elsewhere. For Bedouin women – they return to their tribes or villages as working women who hold a different identity from the one they had before going on to higher education. Thus, as educated women in their society, they have to struggle against the conflict that stems from their new status as educated women.

Entering university with its Western Israeli norms, attitudes and way of life was recalled as a ‘shock’, but at times, coming back to the Druze social environment was considered an even greater upheaval because of the changes in identity that the women underwent during their studies.

Sausan attended university during the 1990s, after education for Druze girls had already gained greater legitimacy. This did not relieve her sense of displacement on returning to her home village, however:

Getting out was a dream, an aspiration to reach something. I was motivated. It was hard, but it’s a difficulty you strive to overcome ... But now, I simply cannot adjust to the realities of coming back ... I changed in those five years. I began to see myself as responsible, independent, a person with character, with something to give. Finally, I knew that I was a person in my own right, not only dependent on others.

Rula, another Druze student, describes her self perception as different from the ‘regular woman’:

I think the regular woman who was always told what to do will never reach these dilemmas. But someone who goes out, sees the world starts to understand himself and learn different things – and his rights, but from whom will he demand his rights? From whom?

Rula, whose different identity challenges cultural schemes, experiences them as discriminating. Her identity is different from the ‘regular women’s’ identity in her village, those who had never studied. Leaving the village to go to university, the exposure to Israeli-western life style, increased her awareness and distress at her inability to fulfill these rights.

Sausan and Rula described their individualistic traits (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Sagy, Orr, Bar-On & Awwad, 2001) and stressed their feelings of uniqueness, self-worth

and independence of other family members. The individualistic features that emerged during their studies could not be manifested in Druze society. The Druze culture, as in similar studies in Arab and Far Eastern societies, describes the primary significance of social needs and the individual's role in achieving common objectives, at times suppressing individual desires and needs that do not conform to these collective goals and ideals (Berry, Pootinga, Segall & Dasen, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Sagy et al., 2001; Triandis, McCusker & Hui, 1990). Silencing individualistic features of independence and individual choice that were given voice during higher education, caused stress and discomfort, leading some participants to regret having sought higher education:

Imam says:

After seeing the other side ... all the things that I miss or cannot do and accomplish here ... sometimes I wish I'd never studied. I wish I'd never gone out. I wish I hadn't seen these things ... and ... I came back here and wanted to be like the other women, but it just doesn't work. I can't be like the others.

Iman's choice of words ('the other side') reflects her awareness and feeling of the different lifestyles. By obtaining an education, she had eaten forbidden fruit that yielded both benefit and pain.

Similar feelings and perspectives were also recognizable among Bedouin women who returned to their culture after they finished their higher education. On returning to their community, they had acquired values and norms of freedom and individual choice that were not acceptable in their Bedouin culture. Not capable of fulfilling these norms in their own community, they mentally felt like strangers in their own society.

Alienation became stronger also in Najla's story after she returned to her home, as she says:

It was a disaster, a real disaster, I found myself living in – imagine. All the time I lived I thought I could continue it. I thought that the Bedouin rules would not be imposed on me. I never thought that I had to obey any Bedouin law. Because I did not know the truth about Bedouin society. I imagined in my head a different culture with different norms.

As a consequence, Najla created conditioned belonging, i.e., she belonged to Bedouin society but on her own terms. She built for herself her own society and positioned herself inside it, in internal borders that are distanced from Bedouin society. Since her terms for belonging were not approved in Bedouin society, she felt 'disbelonging' and this had a price:

At my parents' house I am not a guest, I am a guest in my surroundings. I am one of you but I am not similar to you. This means that everyone should stay in his own borders. My uncles never clarified our lives. Never. Our home was our own society. I always felt that my home is my society. What happens outside my home does not belong to me, I am not part of it.

When I asked Najla, 'Where do you feel you belong?' she said, 'I see myself in my world.' 'What is your world?' I asked. 'The world I live in. It's my mother, my father, my brothers and sisters and that's it. This is my society.' When I asked, 'Do you feel part of your society?' She said, 'The Bedouin society? No. I don't define myself as Bedouin, I am Najla and this is how I define myself. No more and no less.'

The changing identities, women's positioning in the merging of their cultures, affected their interpretations of cultural-gender norms. The unequal treatment for women in their own cultures made these women critically reinterpret these norms according to the liberal⁷ values of individualism they acquired during their university period. These educated women describe their distress through their consciousness of inferiority and inequality that does not accept these unequal cultural gender practices.

Discussion and concluding remarks

Narratives of the first Bedouin and Druze women to achieve higher education show that the university environment serves not only as an academic-cultural encounter zone but also as a venue for 'internal immigration' or cultural shifts. One explanation for this phenomenon is the geographical segregation between Arab and Israeli Jewish areas. For Bedouin and Druze women, higher education means entering a different culture to which they are not usually exposed, as most institutions of higher learning are located in the hegemonic areas of the country.

The process these women experience is similar to that of transient immigrants who spend some time in another culture and then return to their culture of origin (Brislin, 1990; Segal, 1986), although several features distinguish it from other immigrations discussed in the literature (see Berger, 1997; Berry, 1990; Phinney, 1990):

This study addresses a unique context, as it concerns Bedouin and Druze women who experience dual marginality. As the first women from their society to attend Israeli institutes of higher education, they are exceptions not only at university but also in their own society, that resists accepting them as educated women. With no similar women or men as role models for them in their societies, these women found it difficult to develop a sense of belonging.

While adjustment to Israeli campus life was a formidable challenge for these young women, readjusting to and accepting their original cultural environment was all the more daunting. The resulting situation was the antithesis of those described in immigration literature to date.

It is reasonable to assume that immigrants usually experience cultural shock upon entering a new culture (Taft, 1997) and long to return to their cultures of origin. The Bedouin and Druze women indeed experienced such shock, but their return to their original cultures was even more jarring, as the 'new' culture was no longer strange to them and in fact served as their ideal in life.

Another difference between women interviewed in this study and immigrants is that most immigration literature deals with ethnic groups and families and how they cope with new cultures, whereas the Bedouin and Druze women in this study 'immigrated' to the new cultures without their families, although their families metaphorically existed as a model for absorption values, norms and legacies in their minds. Even if their original reason for attending university was only to obtain higher education, they adopted – consciously or otherwise – norms, values, skills and customs of a culture very different from their own. As such, they returned to their original cultures as 'others' who differ from their peers in several respects.

First, on their return, their status was higher; they left as girls in their late teens and returned as educated women with their own preferences and intentions, knowing what they wanted out of life. Second, their attitudes towards their original societies differed as well, as they had been educated in a culture that emphasizes individualism and free choice, accords women options and allows them public exposure. Moreover, they were no longer 'first women,' as they had witnessed many other models of educated, working women, as well as values that are not part of the Bedouin and Druze cultural ethos. In their cultures of origin, they had less individual choice or freedom and the collective code was very dominant. These women were the first to attain an education and thus were exceptions; they are educated women indeed, but their society perceives them only as 'women.'

Immigration literature (Taft, 1997) claims that when immigrants sense a gap between their culture of origin and their new culture, between the known and the unknown, it is

harder for them to make the transition. Feelings of alienation, isolation and failing to belong may be evoked, along with a sense of inability to cope with the new culture. As noted earlier, Bedouin and Druze women encounter the same experience as immigrants entering a new culture, except that the former suffer culture shock most strongly when returning to their own culture. Cultural shock occurs not only when immigrants find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings but also when they feel rejected by their new culture. The effect it has on feelings and behavior may cause immigrants to lose interest in integration, leading to a sense of alienation and isolation.

The complex 'immigration' situation faced by educated Bedouin and Druze women encouraged them to devise various means of adjusting and reconstructing their identity according to the academic context in which they studied. As their narratives indicate, exposure to higher education creates ambivalence in their lives, especially on returning to their communities. Education gave Bedouin and Druze women a feeling of independence, free choice and individualism when they were university students, but these liberal values were not welcomed in their home village culture, that does not approve of the changes in the educated women's identities. They were surprised by this attitude, apparently because what they had perceived or remembered as their culture was not what they confronted on their return. They thought they could employ the values acquired at university, but when they realized it was impossible, the gap between the real and ideal situations widened, leading to expressions such as: 'I am not a Bedouin woman, I am only Najla,' 'My society is my mother and father,' or 'I want to go to a movie; I want to fall in love and life here does not suit me.' Such statements reflect their difficulty in accepting their cultural identity and its collective values, making it harder for these women to integrate into their own society and fulfill their self identity.

The comparison of two different groups with the same 'first women' status only underscores the complex place of higher education in Palestinian women's lives in Israel. Palestinians, especially educated ones, in Israel and in other developing countries, consider education, particularly higher education, as a device for social change, a tool that advances the individual and collective political and social status of Arabs (Abu-Saad, 2001; Al-Haj, 2003). Earlier studies of education among the Palestinians did not take the gender factor into account and consequently did not examine what happens to women with higher education on return to their cultures of origin. A study by Lauren Erdreich (2004) on Muslim and Christian Palestinian women with higher education from the Galilee and Central Israel shows that they fulfill their self identity by creating diverse 'returning paths' that enable them to remain at Israeli campuses. This option is not available to Bedouin or Druze women, as they feel obligated to return to their villages and live up to their societies' expectations. The chief difference between mainstream and Bedouin or Druze Palestinian women is that the latter two communities are geographically and socially segregated⁸ from the other Palestinian communities in Israel. Their daily encounter with the larger Palestinian community is very limited, especially among the women. Consequently, the sense of alienation and not belonging is a crucial part of their experiences.

Although the two groups studied differ in geographic location, religion and extent of gender restrictions, there are many similarities between them, including the role of higher education. In the Palestinian context, education is not considered only as a means for women's empowerment and development, as described in education and gender literature, but also as a factor that alienates women from their own culture and exacerbates their social-genderial marginality. Among Bedouin and Druze women, the typical features that the literature ascribes to the marginality of educated women, such as dual roles or failure to find a spouse (see Howell, 1999; Nath, 1983; Parker-Jenkins, Haw, Irving, & Kan, 1999;

Ross, 1999), are accompanied by a harsh sense of not belonging to one's own culture, a feeling of duality ('living in two worlds') and a particularly intense disharmony between their identity as educated women and that of other female villagers who did not attend institutions of higher learning. Unable to accomplish their most difficult mission – integration of their new 'educated woman' identity into their own cultures – gives rise to a sense of alienation. This situation may well be due to their status as pioneers, as 'first women' who dared to challenge the accepted feminine role model, introducing new identities and values into their cultures.

Notes

1. Womens' Education has become accepted in many Druze and Bedouin families (although not all) during the last decade. For the young women education also provides an acceptable way to leave the villages, at least for the time of study, and a way to pave a different future and new gender roles, differing from the culturally accepted way of life. The large number of women students from Druze and Bedouin society is also due to the scholarships for these populations handed out by organizations and universities. Among the Bedouin women, higher education is considered an attribute in finding a husband.
2. A few were chaperoned by male family members (fathers, brothers or brothers-in-law) during their time at university.
3. Kinsmen did not speak to the ostracized family and avoided attending their weddings and funerals. Moreover, as the Druze believe in reincarnation, they avow that one who dies while ostracized will remain that status in lives to come.
4. Both researchers conducted their studies separately, each in her own field, but used the similar methods and interview procedures.
5. Although Druze women wear scarves and not veils, the latter item was discussed for its external resemblance and its similar traditional-social connotations. The scarves, white in color, cover the mouth but leave eyes and nose exposed. Less traditional Druze women wear scarves that cover hair but not their faces. Many of the young women do not wear scarves at all.
6. This position is not exclusive to individual identities in the age of postmodernism and globalization, although it has become more widespread as mobility continuous to facilitate cross-cultural contact (Berry, 1990; Gergen, 1991). Feelings of this type resulting from exposure to different cultures had already been mentioned relatively early in the twentieth century by Park (1928, in Berry, 1990) and Stromquist, 1979).
7. In Israel discrimination exists also against Jewish ethnic minorities and Jewish women (see Adva Center, 2004), but in this paper we brought the Palestinian women's narratives as they experienced their own exposure to individualism and choice.
8. Although in some villages in the Galilee, the Druze live near Muslims and Christians, but they continue to keep their unique life style.

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