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Summaries

Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman

Polygamy and the Yemeni Jewish Family:
Transformations in Mandatory Palestine

Until the mid-nineteenth century, polygamy was practiced among Yemeni Jews even after their immigration to Palestine. In this paper, I explain the social and cultural context of this phenomenon and elaborate on the process that led to its elimination. The discussion illuminates the tension that beset the community in its encounter with social values and legal practices that condemned plural marriage and presents test cases of interpersonal dynamics in polygamous families. I argue that the diminishing of polygamy represents the empowerment of women that began in mid-nineteenth-century Yemen and continued among Jews who migrated to Palestine. This development ensued from the growth of women's economic contribution to the family and their cognizance of new legal systems that benefitted them. Thereafter, Yemeni women acted to protect their rights within the polygamous institution in which they were trapped or in resilient opposition to its incidence. Therefore, I argue that Yemeni women's resistance to the institution of polygamy was a leading determinant of its decline. In addition, my analysis points to the support given to women's protest by the Yishuv leadership and its women's organizations, foremost the Association of Hebrew Women. The Association's activists helped specific women who were "at risk" of polygamy and worked in the national arena to amend Article 181 of the British Mandate Penal Law that prohibited polygamy. The discussion also emphasizes the crisis that befell Yemeni men who wished to adhere to their old custom of plural marriage, which rested on religious law that considered the polygamous family a legitimate lifestyle.

Idit Ran

From a Kibbutz Home to a Group of Homes: The Transformation of Family
and Home Perception in the Kibbutz during the 1960s and 1970s

The unique relationship that developed in the kibbutz between "family" as a social construct and "home" as a spatial entity sheds light on the evolving dynamics between the social and the spatial order. In the first decades, the kibbutz community served as an extended family for the members and the entire kibbutz acted as a dispersed "collective home". Over time, however, a gradual transition toward emphasis on the nuclear family and individual households occurred. This article juxtaposes the dual perceptions of family within the kibbutz—nuclear and extended—to the dual perceptions of home as private and collective. It analyzes evolutionary processes over time and shifting balances among these components. Central to the discussion

is how the kibbutz's dual perception of home and family shaped gender relations, resulting in a spatial-gender divide that prompted a struggle for change. The research findings indicate that despite the attempt to undermine the typical model of the modern urban private home, similar patterns eventually emerged in the kibbutz. The spatial division that developed within the "kibbutz home" resembled that of the private home, with women primarily confined to enclosed and regulated indoor spaces while men occupied areas extending along the boundaries and in open space, fostering connection with the outside world. This spatial division not only reflected gender inequality but also deepened and reproduced it. Consequently, it became a catalyst for kibbutz women to advocate for the strengthening of the nuclear family and the private household in their aspiration to the autonomy and authority that the broader kibbutz context denied them.

Guy Bruker and Amalia Sa'ar

"Our Rabbi is a Father": Caring Fatherhood as a Script of Masculinity among Pilgrims to Uman

The annual pilgrimage to Uman, Ukraine, during Rosh Hashana is the key event of the year for Breslov Hassidim. It is an exclusively male event, in which fathers are encouraged to visit Rabbi Nachman's grave in the company of their young sons. In the absence of mothers and older sisters, fathers find the round-the-clock care for the children challenging but are excited about the opportunity to spend quality time with them. In this article, we draw on participant observation and forty interviews with men who traveled to Uman with young sons to reveal a unique script of caring masculinity that combines hands-on care with fatherly religious pedagogy under the holy aegis of a mythological father (Rabbi Nachman). The pilgrims experience this as a precious opportunity to fulfill a cultural ideal that is unattainable to them in quotidian life. As such, it offers partial compensation for the patriarchal deficit that characterizes their daily lives, much as it does to men throughout the global North, who struggle to accommodate contradictory demands as providers, partners, and parents, and therefore fail on the caring front. We argue that, although the caring masculinity that occurs during the pilgrimage does not reverse haredi gender roles, it exudes a dynamic quality by combining traditional conservatism with pragmatic innovation. The paper offers a unique insight into haredi fatherhood and augments the cumulative ethnographic literature on fatherly roles in diverse cultural settings.

Ola Abu-Hasan Nabwani

Work, Family, and Everything in Between: A Look at Muslim, Druze and Christian Women in Israel

In this study, I focus on women's work and the institution of the family among the Arab citizens of Israel, drawing gender, generational, and ethno-religious comparisons among Muslims, Druze, and Christians. I aim to examine how these communities have been affected by globalization, which led to diverse attitudes about women's paid work, individualization processes, and changes in family patterns and gender relations. Halim Barakat's theory argues that alongside the dominance of traditional family patterns representing trends of preservation, there are also patterns in Arab society that challenge this dominance and represent trends of change. Barakat, however, like many researchers in the field, neither addressed the issue empirically nor examined differences among ethno-religious groups within the Arab population. Thus, this study aims to analyze the work–family issue among Arab citizens of Israel with special focus on Muslim, Druze, and Christian women. The results, based on the ICBS *Israel Social Survey* (2019), show that there are egalitarian attitudes regarding the advancement of women in the labor market, with women more than men and younger more than older generations supporting more egalitarian processes. This is due to willingness among Muslims, Druze, and Christians to promote equality as long as it remains within the institution of marriage. This indicates that the ground is ripe for an equitable development policy that will strengthen Arab women's access to quality jobs near their places of residence, thereby enhancing gender equality.

Yoa Sorek, Fida Nijim-Ektelat, Anat Gilad, and Avigail Segal

Open Adoption in Israel: Processes in the Formation of Identity and Sense of Belonging

Few studies have examined the perception of self-identity among adoptees and their sense of belonging in a state of open adoption. In this article, we attempt to bridge the gap on the basis of findings from a longitudinal study of the first cases of open adoption in Israel, commissioned by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security and carried out by researchers from the Myers-Joint-Brookdale Institute. The longitudinal research explored the perceptions and insights of adoptees, adoptive parents, and biological parents regarding the influence of the model on processes of self-identity formation and the development of a sense of belonging to the adoptive family. It consisted of two studies that included eleven adoptees born to eight biological families and adopted by ten adoptive families. The first, conducted in 2010–2011, included forty semi-structured in-depth interviews; the second, undertaken in 2020, comprised thirty-one interviews. The interviewees' responses revealed three main themes. The first two are intertwined and suggest that

the model may promote processes of self-identity formation and development of a sense of belonging while potentially complicating the same processes, especially at particular points in time. According to the third theme, the attitude of biological parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees toward this model, and the convergence of all three sides of the adoption triangle, are likely to impact identity-formation processes and sense of belonging. Implications for future research and practice are suggested.

Tal Meler and Shlomit Oryan

“But I Really Am Different from ‘Them’...”: Doing Motherhood as Identification Positionality Work among Jewish Women in Mixed Jewish-Arab Families in Israel

The number of ethnic-religious-national mixed families in Israel has been increasing in the past decade. In the socio-political context and the fraught framework of majority-minority relations in Israel, Jewish-Muslim mixed families often experience alienation and deal with daily complexity in their family relationships. In many ways, their daily family lives cross boundaries and encounter crossroads of religion, gender, and ethno-nationality, thus challenging the socio-cultural-gender and national perceptions of both societies. This article is based on qualitative interviews with Jewish women married to Arab-Palestinian men in Israel, who are also mothers. We examine the way these women use practices that construct their motherhood and femininity, seeing them as a prism for examination of the negotiations the women conduct with their partners regarding their identity and the raising of their children. Although all the participants live in mixed families, they do not follow a single family pattern; instead, they exhibit a multiplicity of identities stemming from the positioning of their status, education, religiosity, place of residence, and occupation. In their daily lives, these women deal with the construction of their feminine identity within wider family circles and negotiate their identity as women, partners, and mothers. The article makes its contribution by emphasizing the implications of macro-social elements for the construction of patterns of family, gender relations, and motherhood by making the women’s presence known and their voices heard. These women inhabit family structures that, while uncommon, are of significance in illustrating the diversity that exists within mixed families in Israel.

Deby Babis and Batia Siebzeher

“In the Holy Land I Built my Family”: Emergent Family Patterns among Filipino Migrant Workers in Israel

Migrant workers around the world, and especially in Israel, have become a common phenomenon in recent decades. In Israel, as in other countries, it is expected that their

stay will be temporary. To discourage settlement, policies in Israel prohibit, among other things, the formation of marital unions among migrant workers. Despite this ban, couples and families have been formed among them. Comparative research on host-country-based families and transnational families, however, is lacking. This study focuses on endogamous families within the Filipino community in Israel, exploring their unique patterns. It combines qualitative and quantitative methods, including traditional and digital ethnography from 2013 to 2022 and a digital survey with 818 participants. The findings reveal two primary family-pattern categories shaped by Israel's labor-migration laws. The first encompasses families of which all members reside in Israel, their patterns determined by each member's legal status: work-permit holders, undocumented workers, or permanent residents. The second category comprises families in which some members have returned to the Philippines. The patterns in these cases are influenced by which family members left Israel and under what circumstances: whether it was the partner, the baby, both the baby and the mother, or due to the father's deportation. These families challenge Israeli laws and regulations, which often regard migrant workers solely as laborers. The family patterns outlined in this study reflect the intersection of human needs and policies that overlook the broader consequences for individuals beyond their roles as employees operating under restrictive conditions.

Tamar Darvish, Eila Perkis, and Yoav Lavee
The Experience of Israeli Families Dealing with the First Lockdown
Following the Outbreak of Covid-19

The outbreak of Covid-19 interrupted the daily routine of millions of families around the world and in Israel. The imposition of the first quarantine to break the chain of infection led to physical separation from family members and sources of support, this caused a stressful situation that had not been experienced before, with short and long-term psychosocial and mental consequences for families. The purpose of the present study, conducted in the midst of the pandemic, is to understand how families in Israel experienced forced sheltering at home during the first lockdown. Semi-structured in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with twenty-six families purposefully sampled to represent diverse households in Israel. Family members were asked to describe their experience of shared isolation. The interviews were analyzed using the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method. The analysis revealed three central themes: *conservation amid change*—referring to changes in family life and the subsequent stress alongside the task of adaptation by maintaining a routine; *hope amid worry*—maintaining an optimistic approach toward the situation and compensating for worries; and *connection within disconnection*—dealing with the experience of disconnection from wide circles of support and the strategy of relying on family “togetherness.” The findings reflect

a process in which families sought to balance pressures and hardships with the resources and coping methods available to them, emphasizing the important role of the family as a source of support in response to extreme pressures.

Orly Benjamin

“Many Women Want to Divorce but That Isn’t Really Our Goal”: State Support for Women Interested in Divorcing a Violent Partner

A critical dimension of family policy is the extent to which a state supports women who wish to separate from a violent spouse. Such support may be provided by social workers who treat survivors of intimate partner violence. In Israel, since the Prevention of Family Violence Law was enacted in 1991, female victims of intimate partner violence have been treated by social workers in centers for the prevention of domestic violence (CPDVs). The theoretical framework proposed by McKinnon of the state’s contribution to the reproduction of violence against women is currently reflected in literature that exposes the dearth of state support for women who wish to separate from a violent partner. This argument is validated by the State Comptroller’s finding that half of the women murdered by their partners in Israel between 2004 and 2019 were known to the social services. The Comptroller’s report focuses on issues of budgeting the shelters, budgeting personnel in CPDVs, and the judicial system’s rush to release men who endanger their partners. In contrast, I offer a socio-historical explanation perspective that analyzes CPDV social workers’ approach to spousal violence. Analyzing interviews with fifteen social workers in CPDVs, I delineate a social process that indicates a preference for therapeutic care that examines applicants’ problematic behavior and strengthens the attitude toward intimate violence as symmetrical—reinforcing suspicion toward the applicant while marginalizing responses that may express state support for separating the violent partner.

Michal Hayshrik Amossi

Reproduction of Spousal Violence in Families Living in Poverty: The Case of Maternal Responsibility among Families in the Ethiopian Community in Israel

Women of Ethiopian origin in Israel are gradually integrating into society, one-fifth having obtained academic degrees and working in various occupations as of this writing. Intimate-partner violence, however, remains highly prevalent in this community. The social perception frames this violence as a cultural issue, masking the state’s responsibility to provide solutions tailored to minority groups such as those of Ethiopian origin in Israel. The common question “Why do you stay with your partner?” implicitly blames the victim—attributing reasons for staying to

traditional cultural factors for minorities, obscuring societal failures, and creating barriers for women who wish to leave. Based on interviews with eighteen Ethiopian-origin women, we find that two main factors keep them in abusive relationships. First, their identity as mothers reflects deep concern for their children's well-being during and after separation, especially given the paramount role of motherhood in conservative societies such as theirs. The second factor centers on economic survival challenges, and difficulty in envisioning alternative housing after leaving their abusive partner, exacerbated by policies that treat the issue with disregard. These conservative norms pressure Ethiopian-origin women to endure violence silently. Beyond social codes, their maternal bonds and economic dependence on abusive partners compel them to stay, evoking guilt about children's development and financial independence. Even as the socioeconomic integration of the community progresses, the state must address unique barriers that trap Ethiopian-origin women in cycles of abuse by understanding the significance of motherhood and economic obstacles to separation for this community. To enable these women to escape their troubling situations, tailored support is crucial.

Sylvie Fogiel Bijaoui

Families and the Politics of Othering: "Non-Halachic Jews" from the FSU in Israel

Mixed families transgress legal and symbolic boundaries and threaten the social order by questioning hierarchized collective identities. Boosted by global migration flows, they are part of a rising tide worldwide. In this context, states create "strategic laws" to restrict the right of nationals to marry migrants on the basis of equal or spousal citizenship. In this paper, based on recent data and eighteen in-depth interviews, I analyze the spousal-citizenship issue for some FSU immigrants in Israel and the way they form their families—challenging the establishment's ethnoreligious discourse merely by so doing. I first explain the fact that approximately 500,000 of the 1,200,000 FSU immigrants who have reached Israel under the Law of Return are not recognized by the rabbinate as Jewish and cannot marry Israeli Jews. As religious courts have jurisdiction over marital issues for all Israelis, such a marriage is defined as "mixed" and cannot be created in Israel. I then point out that the newcomers, together with (and as part of) civil society, rely on bricolage to promote their human rights as non-halachic Jews. They feel, however, that they are second-class citizens and that their children's future will be the same. I conclude by suggesting the promotion of comparative research based on the concept of "spousal citizenship" for a better understanding of racism, nationalism, and the way religious radicalization fuels both.

Leehee Rothschild

The Courage to Be Normal: Heteroactivism in Defense of the Jewish Family

Heteroactivism is an analytical prism that facilitates joint examination of various forms of resistance to reforms aimed at promoting gender and sexual equalities, indicating their role in the global rebranding of conservative positions. In this article, I use heteroactivism as an organizing concept in order to delineate and characterize new discourses and practices that have been emerging in Israel in recent years around manifestations of resistance to gender and sexual freedom and equality against the backdrop of sexual and gender liberalization processes that Israeli society has been undergoing in recent decades. To this end, I examine content on the Facebook pages and websites of three organizations: Shovrot Shiviyon, Boharim Bamishpaha, and the Forum of Organizations for the Family. Applying critical thematic and visual and semiotic analysis, I characterize the set of justifications that these organizations invoke to resist initiatives aimed at promoting feminism, gender equality, and LGBTQ rights in Israel. I show how their activism is integrated into global processes of using human-rights discourses to glorify the heteronormative, monogamous, and couple-centered family in these oppositional initiatives and, at the same time, how they appeal to local affects and sentiments of familism, motherhood, and gender essentialism, Zionist nationalism, and primordial fears of religious and/or cultural annihilation.