

Gender Equality? Attitudes towards Equal Opportunity for Women in Higher Education among Israeli Muslim Males

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THE BASIC ASSUMPTION of the paper is that Israel is practically a bi-national State, where the Arab minority constitutes approximately 20% of the population. The Arab minority is now in an interim state – it is passing from a traditional, collective way of life to a modern, individualistic one. Israeli Arabs recognize the fact that education is the key to socio-economic status. Part of the social change is the growing dominance of women in secondary and higher education in the Arab sector. Women now constitute approximately two thirds of Arab students in the Israeli institutions of higher education. The article sets out to explore the impact of education and religiosity of Israeli Muslim males on their attitudes towards women's right to pursue higher education. The main finding of the research is the wide support for women's right to higher education. Religiosity and education of the interviewees have been found to impact their attitudes.

Key Words: gender equality; equal opportunity; higher education; Jews; Arabs

Studying was a type of shock for me [...] to suddenly be learning philosophy, psychology, areas of which we had never heard

Popper-Giveon and Weiner-Levy (2010, 135)

LITERATURE AND THEORY REVIEW

The Arabs of Israel: The General State of Affairs in the Fields of Education, Employment, and Income

Israel is a bi-national country by virtue of the composition of its population. It has a Jewish majority and an Arab minority. On the eve

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of Independence Day 2012, the population of Israel numbered 7.881 million, including 5.931 million Jews (75.3% of the population) and some 1.623 million Arabs (20.6% of the population) (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012a). The Muslim population is the largest group of Israeli Arabs. In 2011, it numbered 1.354 million, from among some 1.611 million Arabs (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012c, tables 2.2, 2.7), i. e. approximately 84% of all Israeli Arabs. In this context, it is notable that there has been a socioeconomic disparity between Muslims and Christians throughout the Middle East for over a century. Christians have a higher coefficient of education, boast higher women's status, lower infant mortality, higher urbanization coefficient, and are more exposed to the West (Okun and Friedlander 2005, 164). This disparity exists in Israel as well (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012b); however, it is not the subject of this article.

The Israeli Arabs are a minority not only numerically but also sociologically. The stratification pyramid of the Israeli society was described as early as the early 1980s as a 'tripartite ethnic order' topped by Ashkenazi Jews, with Eastern Jews in the middle and Israeli Arabs at the bottom (Semyonov and Tyree 1981). The statistical data show that in all fields of education, employment, and income, there are large disparities between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority.

Thus for example, while the education median for both groups – Jews and Arabs – was identical and reached 12 years of schooling in 2011 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012c, table 8.73), the *distribution* of education was very different: 48.8% of Jews aged 15+ had had 13 or more years of schooling, while only 21.8% of Arabs in this age group had had similar schooling. In contrast, only 7.6% of Jews had had 8 years of schooling or less, versus 21.3% of Arabs.

The disparity between the two population groups is also evident in the proportion of high school students who successfully complete their matriculation exams, which are the entrance ticket to the Israeli schools of higher education. Of all Jewish high school students who took the matriculation exams in 2003, 70.2% passed. During the next eight years, some of those who had failed completed the exams, and by 2011 the proportion of those who had earned a matriculation certificate from among all 2003 high school graduates had reached 77.9% (Cen-



tral Bureau of Statistics 2012c, table 8.29). Among Arab high school students who took the matriculation exams in 2003, only 57.3% passed. During the next 8 years some of those who had failed completed the tests. But by 2011, the proportion of those who had earned a matriculation certificate from among all 2003 high school graduates was much lower than in the Jewish sector. It had grown to only 66.6%.

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When comparing the eligibility for matriculation certificates among the two population groups of 17 years olds, rather than among all those who took the exams, the differences between the two groups diminish. In the Jewish sector, 51.8% of all 17 year olds were eligible for a matriculation certificate, while in the Arab sector, 45.9% of all 17 year olds were eligible (Haviv 2008, 4). In any case, the data show that at least half of Arab teenagers manage to pass the matriculation exams. Another important point illuminating the differences concerning the state of affairs regarding high school education in the two population groups in Israel can round out the picture. Not all matriculation certificate recipients are eligible for admission to universities. In order to be admitted to schools of higher education, it is necessary to uphold the so-called 'threshold requirements.' These are composed of what is defined as the 'quality of the matriculation certificate,' manifested in students' marks, as well as the results of psychometric exams (Ayalon and Shavit 2004). Of all those who took the matriculation exams in 2002, 65.2% passed the universities' threshold requirements in 2010. However, the differences between the two sectors of the population were weighty: in the Jewish sector, 71.1% of all those eligible for a matriculation certificate fulfilled the threshold requirements of universities; in the Arab sector only 35.9% did so! (Central Bureau of Statistics 2011b, 4). In other words, most Arabs with matriculation certificates do not fulfill the universities' threshold requirements and cannot continue to earn a higher education.

In regard to employment, the data show that 84.2% of Jews in the main employment age group of 25–54 are part of the civil workforce. In contrast, a mere 55.6% of Arabs in this age group are part of the civil workforce (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012c, table 12.1) – almost 30% (!) less than Jews. Data on a wider age group – ages 22–64 – was processed in 2007 and showed that among the Jewish

TABLE I Wage per hour in NIS (New Israeli Shekel) by sector and education for 15–64 year old employed males, 2007

Category	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Arabs	25.7	26.8	28.2	33.3	55.4
Jews	35.5	38.6	39.7	47.2	73.4
Difference	27.6%	30.6%	29.0%	29.4%	24.5%

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NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) no high school education, (2) high school education without matriculation, (3) full matriculation certificate, (4) non-academic tertiary studies, (5) academic studies. Adapted from Jabarin (2010).

males the rate of employment was 75.7%, while among the Arab males it was 68.6%. It should be noted that ten years earlier, the employment rates in both sectors had been identical (Haviv 2008, 5). Moreover, 41.1% of Jews who were employed in 2011 belonged to one of the three most prestigious occupations – academic occupations, career and technical professions, and managers, while among Arabs this only held true for 23.2% (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012c, table 12.18). In contrast, while 7.1% of Jews employed were defined in 2011 as nonprofessional workers, 12.3% of Arabs employed were included in this category. When combining the three blue collar occupations at the bottom of the Central Bureau of Statistics classification of occupations, it is evident that in 2011 they comprised 20.2% of all Jewish employees, but 51.7% (!) of all Arab employees.

Finally, the data show that among the two population sectors – Jews and Arabs – there are large income disparities. For example, in 2007 salary differences between the two sectors for various levels of education ranged from 25% to 30% for males (Jabarin 2010, 15).

A study conducted at the Bank of Israel showed that in 1987–2005 there was a rising trend of wage differences per hour between the Jewish and the Arab sector when considering people with similar traits. While the difference was 12% in 1987, it had risen to over 25% by 2005 (Sussman and Friedman 2008).

In light of all the above, it is not surprising that the household income in these two sectors is extremely disparate. While the net monthly income of an average Israeli household was NIS 11,354 in 2009 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2011, table 5.28), in the Arab sector it was



TABLE 2

Measures of (net) income for households headed by an employee, by population group, for 2006–10

Year	Total measure	Jews	Arabs
2006	100	106	59
2007	100	106	60
2008	100	106	59
2009	100	106	58
2010	100	106	59

Adapted from Central Bureau of Statistics (2012d, 19).

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TABLE 3

The relative weight of Arabs and Jews in the various deciles, 2009 (in %)
Adapted from Central Bureau of Statistics (2011, 297).

Decile	Arabs	Jews
First	44.6	55.4
Second	33.4	66.6
Third	18.3	81.7
Fourth	13.6	86.4
Fifth	8.8	91.2
Sixth	(5.5)	94.5
Seventh	(3.6)	96.4
Eighth	..	98.5
Ninth	..	98.3
Tenth	..	99.3

only NIS 7,778 (Gharrah 2012, 80). Household measures of income show a major consistent difference between the two sectors, the Jewish and the Arab, from 2006 to 2010 (table 2).

As a result of this radical difference, the distribution of the two population groups in the various deciles is not directly related to their relative weight in the population. The Arab sector has a much larger weight in the two bottom deciles than the weight of Israeli Arabs in the entire population. These are in fact the two deciles comprising the greatest proportion of the Arab households. In the three top deciles the Arabs are not statistically represented. Even in the seventh and sixth deciles their weight is negligible (table 3).

*The Arabs in Israel and the Positioning of Women in Their Midst:
The Socio-Cultural State of Affairs*

As stated, Israel is in practice a bi-national country, where the Jewish sector has a higher level of affluence than the Arab sector. The latter

is defined as a community in transition from a traditional collective life style to a more modern and individualist life style (El Ghannam 2001; Braun-Lewensohn, Sagy, and Roth 2010). The credit for attaining this stage of transition is owed to two factors – global processes experienced by the entire Arab world and strong relationship with the Jewish population of Israel (Seginer and Mahajna 2003). As a rule, most Israeli Arabs live in their own towns concentrated in three geo-cultural areas – in the Galilee, in the ‘small triangle,’ and in the Negev (Al-Haj 1995). In 2006, only 9% lived in mixed cities such as Haifa, Acre, Upper Nazareth, etc. (Khamaisi 2009). This residential separation is a result of national and cultural factors (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1994), as well as historical and political developments (Rosenfeld 1988). Arab towns are small; the largest number several tens of thousands. They are relatively distant from major urban centers and lack the necessary infrastructure for development. This was true in the 1990s (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992) and was also true in the first decade of the 21st century (Soen and Aizencang-Kane 2004, 22).

Although, as stated, the Israeli Arabs are in the midst of a transition from one life style to another, they are still defined as a traditional society. Obviously, similar to other countries in the Middle East, they are deeply influenced by the Islamic culture (Khattab 2002; Abu Baker 1998; Afshar 1997; Terhorst 1995; Taraki 1995).

The transition of the Arab society in Israel from one lifestyle to another is manifested in several spheres (Arar and Abu-Asba 2010). The change in the role of the *hamula* (the extended family) in society is most conspicuous. The power of the *hamula* is gradually diminishing and, at the same time, the autonomy of the nuclear family is increasingly liberated from the dictates of the *hamula* and acquiring the right to determine its own priorities (Daoud 2002; Daoud 2009, 6). At the same time, another transformation is occurring following the direct and indirect contact with the society of the Jewish majority. The latter is generating social ways of organization that are more egalitarian than those customary in traditional society (Kulik and Ryan 2005). Moreover, the Arab society is undergoing processes of modernization that encompass a larger sphere of employment (Drori 1996); reduced childbirth and consequently the diminishing of family size (Kulik and



Ryan 2005); the emergence of a more liberal and democratic set of values replacing the traditional set (Arar and Rigby 2009); growing appreciation of education as awarding social status and changing the image of the Arab society (Arar and Abu-Asbah 2007); and finally – accelerated processes of urbanization, accompanied by massive abandonment of agriculture and rapid development of trade, services, and small industry in the Arab sector (Al-Haj 1999; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992).

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As part of these transformations, a dynamic shift in women's status is evident as well. The Arab society is advancing towards embracing a more egalitarian ideology in matters of gender, although this equality is much more limited than among the Jewish sector (Ali and Gordoni 2009). The developments occurring in this sphere – although slow – are particularly interesting in light of the fact that traditional Arab society is by nature patriarchal and hierarchical. Gender is extremely significant and, according to the traditional conception, a woman is first and foremost a daughter, a wife, and a mother (Gerner-Adams 1979; Kulik and Ryan 2005; Fast-Schubert 2005). As Youssef (1972, 152) wrote:

In the Middle East supervision of women is monopolized by the sharia system and isolation of women is legitimized by concepts of family honor and family appreciation. Thus, institutional mechanisms operate efficiently to isolate women from the various alternatives external to the marriage framework and they also prevent them from taking part in public activities involving contact with members of the other sex.

As emphasized recently by a researcher of the Muslim society, Muslim girls are taught from early childhood that their main role in life is to marry, have children, and be housewives (Wharton 2005).

Furthermore, Arab women are doubly marginalized in the Israeli society. One process of marginalization comes from the fact that Arab women in Israel – similar to Arab men – are part of the disadvantaged Palestinian minority. The second process originates from their gender – from the fact that Arab women are inferior and disadvantaged

[140] within the Arab society by virtue of being women (Karkabi-Sabah 2009). Thus, Arab women may be said to be inferior both among the Jewish society and among the Arab society. In stricter terms, some have spoken of the double oppression experienced by Arab women in Israel – on one hand, the experience of what Danny Rabinowitz has termed a ‘trapped minority’ (Rabinowitz 2001), governed by the Jewish majority, as stated above; on the other hand, the oppression rising from the patriarchal structure of the Arab society, which involves issues of domestic violence, family honor, polygamy, etc. (Abu-Rabiah-Quider and Winner-Levy 2010, 9).

At the same time, as stated, there have been recent changes in the women’s status. The age of marriage has risen (Al-Haj 1988), women are increasingly given the right to autonomously choose their spouses, they take part in the decision making processes in the family and in the public sphere (areas from which they had previously been excluded). In the last local authorities’ elections, which took place in October 2013, there were 165 women candidates in 44 Arab local authorities. What is more, a survey taken just before the elections revealed that 82% of the Arabs in principle supported women’s candidacy (Hourri 2013; Hilou 2013). Women’s entrance into the world of higher education has already given them an advantage over men, just as in the Jewish sector (Reches 1993; Shapira and Hertz-Lazarovitz 2004). Moreover, upper-middle class Arab women who live in mixed cities have the benefit of an alternative life sphere, which lets them voice objections, protest, and change, versus the traditional lifestyle (Herzog 2009).

In summary, consideration must be given to the complex circumstances of the Arab women – particularly the Muslim women: on the one hand, changes denoting modern life and well-being, such as reduced fertility and smaller families, increasing higher education, rising employment, and greater involvement in the public life; on the other hand, a lack of gender equality within the family and ongoing restriction of their activities in society (Manna 2008).

The transformations occurring among women in the Arab sector in Israel must be perceived in light of this fact. In this context, it is notable that a high point in regard to the education of the Arab women in Israel was the government historical decision to introduce coed (rather



than separate boys' and girls') schools in this sector. At the time, this decision did not result from philosophical, ideological, or pedagogic reasons, but rather from practical reasons and severe shortage of Arab teachers. In time it had a significant effect on the level of education of Arab women in Israel (Al-Haj 1995).

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As stated above, there is a significant difference between education in the Arab sector and in the Jewish sector, in favor of the Jewish sector. However, this state of affairs becomes more complex when the gender variable is included in the equation. In 2007, for example, the weight of Arabs with poor schooling (0–8 years) was very high in comparison to the weight of Jews with poor schooling. However, the weight of women with poor schooling in the Arab sector – 33.7% – was much higher than that of men with poor schooling – 25.7%. In contrast, although the rate of those with tertiary schooling in the Arab sector was much lower than in the Jewish sector, the weight of educated women in this sector was *not* less than that of educated men: among both it was 22.3% (Haviv 2008, 2). This datum reflects the massive entrance of the Arab women into the educational system. Already in 2007, Arab girls had a significantly lower rate of high school dropout (7.4%) than boys (12%) (p. 3).

A survey conducted in 2003, based on a representative sample, showed that an overwhelming majority of the Arab women in Israel supported higher education for women and their right to work. Interestingly, 88% of the Arab men were in favor as well (Daoud 2003, 195). A survey held by the Women against Violence organization showed that some 95% support the right of women to education, while 82% support their right to work (Daoud 2002, 91). Another study, also held in the first decade of the 21st century (Elias 2008), dealing with perceived gender views of the Arab teenagers in Israel, showed that girls have modern and liberal attitudes towards women's roles. At the same time, the study showed that schooling and religious affiliation or religiosity are mediating variables that influence attitudes towards this topic. The higher the schooling, the more egalitarian the attitudes; the lower the religiosity, the more egalitarian the attitudes. The more educated and the more secular were much more supportive of women's egalitarian roles.

TABLE 4 Distribution of undergraduate students at universities by religion in select years during 1990–2011

Category	1990	1996	2000	2004	2011
Total students	46,519	68,696	74,194	78,561	125,000
Jews (%)	93.3	93.0	91.0	87.0	86.4
Arabs and others (%)	6.7	7.0	9.0	9.8	13.6
Of these, Muslims (%)	3.7	3.8	5.4	6.3	6.8

NOTES Adapted from Fidelman (2009, 6) with supplementary data for 2010 from Central Bureau of Statistics (2011b, 4).

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Nonetheless, it is notable that there were several restrictions of attitudes in favor of equality of women. Affluent families often objected to their daughters’ working, even at a professional career. Only gradually has this approach changed.

The memoirs of one of the Arab teachers are very informative in this respect (Elias 2008, 91–2):

In the 1950s and 1960s there were significant limitations on what women could do. I graduated from high school and many girls in my class became teachers. I wanted to be a teacher too, but my father objected. He objected to women working outside the home. At that time only women who needed money worked. Our financial circumstances were fine, so father asked me: ‘Why do you need a job? Do you need money?’ He also said: ‘You can study and get an education.’

In the last generation, there has been a constant rise in the relative weight of the Arab students in schools of higher education. In 2011, the Arabs constituted 11.0% of all students at various types of schools of higher education (27,400 students). That year, they constituted 13.6% of all undergraduate students at universities (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012c, 4). The increase in the relative proportion of the Arab students at schools of higher education in the last generation is evident from table 4.

In the midst of this general increase, young Arab women are particularly conspicuous for their forward thrust into the system of higher



TABLE 5 Distribution of Arab students by gender, degree, and school, 2008

The school	Total	Male students	Female students
Total	25,045	36.4%	63.6%
Universities	11,441	40.8%	59.2%
Open University	2,572	43.8%	56.2%
Academic colleges	4,100	56.6%	43.4%
Academic teaching colleges	6,932	14.4%	85.6%
BA – total	22,046	35.1%	64.9%
Universities	8,935	39.0%	61.0%
Open University	2,474	43.6%	56.4%
Academic colleges	4,030	56.4%	43.6%
Academic teaching colleges	6,607	13.7%	86.3%
MA – total	2,651	43.4%	56.6%
Universities	2,158	44.7%	55.3%
Open University	98	50.0%	50.0%
Academic colleges	70	67.1%	32.9%
Academic teaching colleges	325	27.7%	72.3%
PhD – Universities	348	63.2%	36.8%

NOTES Adapted from Fidelman (2009, 8).

education. For example, data show that already in 2008, their predominance among the Arab students was much greater than that of young Jewish women among the Jewish students. The weight of these young women was 64.6% of all Arab students, while in the Jewish sector, women constituted 54.6% of all students. In other words, female Arab students constituted nearly two thirds (!) of all Arab students in 2008. This predominance is evident both in undergraduate and in graduate studies. Only in doctoral studies is the situation reversed (Fidelman 2009, 8).

THE RESEARCH: EXPLANATION OF METHODOLOGY

In light of all that has been said above regarding gender-based differentiation in the Arab sector in Israel and in light of the ongoing changes now witnessed, it was decided to hold an updated survey on the attitude of Muslim males toward women's right to pursue higher education. The survey was conducted in the last quarter of 2010.

The Research Population

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The current research is based on a convenience sample. The respondents were recruited through the *facebook* network. The survey was advertised on the net and Muslims were invited to take part in it. Approximately a hundred responses were received. Telephone interviews eliminated approximately thirty of the respondents, who were either not Muslims (some were Druze, some were Christians) or underage (namely, they were still high school students). Seventy questionnaires were sent via e-mail to Muslim men, 60 of whom e-mailed them back to the author. Pre-questioning ensured that roughly half of the respondents had higher education and roughly half had full or partial high school education. In the pre-questioning stage, the author of this article also tried to ensure more or less equal numerical weight to secular and religious respondents. The sample includes 24 declared secular respondents, 33 declared traditionalists or religious, and 3 unidentified ones.

The Research Hypotheses and Questions

Three hypotheses underlined the research:

- H1 *In general, most respondents would support offering women an equal opportunity to acquire a higher education. The support stems from the recognition of the essential role of higher education in advancing the entire Arab sector, which is in a state of deprivation.*
- H2 *However, support for offering women an equal opportunity will be higher among men with higher education than among those with high school education.*
- H3 *Religiosity will also be an influential mediating variable in this context. Secular men will support equal opportunity for women more than religious men.*

Hence, the survey was meant to reveal whether there is a difference in attitude based on the respondents' education or religiosity.

Two ancillary questions were added:

- 1 Is there any link between the respondents' attitude towards gender equality and their attitude towards equal opportunity in higher education?
- 2 Is there any link between respondents' appreciation of women



and their attitude towards equal opportunity in higher education?

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 31 questions; additionally, seven questions formed an 'ID' of each respondent. It was divided into three subsections. The questions presented in the questionnaire were derived from the questionnaires previously used to explore the issues on which the current study was focusing (Revach 2001; Weinstein 1998; Cohen Schwartzman 2005; Haroe 1999; Frieman-Grayevsky 1976). Fourteen of the thirty one questions were taken from Sneijder's questionnaire (Sneijder 2002).

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The first part, which includes eighteen questions, was intended to comprise an index of attitudes towards equality between the two sexes in general. Among the questions presented were simple statements, such as 'Women should take growing responsibility for leading the search for solutions to intellectual and social current issues;' or 'Women should have the same opportunity as men to specialize in various professions,' and also statements that required a revision of the scale when processing the data by computer, such as 'Women should recognize that it's silly to try and equal men in business and careers,' or 'Women should give up the imaginary ideal of intellectual equality with men.' The alpha Cronbach coefficient of the internal consistency of the questions that compose this measure is 0.863.

The second part, intended to comprise an index of women's appreciation, includes eighteen questions. These questions include statements such as, 'On average, women are just as intelligent as men,' or 'A woman can do most things just like men.' In this batch of questions, there is also one statement that requires reversal of the scale when processing the data by computer: 'Marriages are probably happier if the husband has had more schooling than his wife.' The alpha Cronbach coefficient of this part is 0.730.

The third part is intended to comprise the main index of the study, viz. attitudes towards equal opportunities for education. It includes twelve questions. Here some of the questions are simple statements, such as, 'Women and men should be treated the same when applying

[146] for student loans' or 'Female students are more diligent than male students.' However, here too there are questions that required reversal of the scale when processing data by computer, such as, 'Women should not feel the same commitment as men to achieving an academic degree' or 'Male students take their education more seriously than female students.' The alpha Cronbach coefficient of this part is 0.797.

FINDINGS

Examination of the hypotheses in light of statistical analysis of the results (with the use of SPSS software) revealed a list of interesting conclusions, which confirmed the researcher's hypotheses.

Women's Equal Right to Higher Education

At first, the findings examining the attitudes towards women's equal right to same education as men were examined. A scale of 1–5 points was used, with 1 designating absolute agreement with the statement and 5 designating absolute disagreement. Namely, the lower the overall mean the higher the support of equality.

The Link between the Respondents' Education and Their Attitude towards Equal Right to Higher Education. The first to be examined was the correlation between the respondents' schooling and their attitude towards equal rights to education.

The researcher's hypothesis was that the attitude of both groups of schooling (higher education on the one hand, and full high school or partial high school education on the other hand) would be positive; however, the attitude of those with higher education to equal rights would be more positive than that of those with high school education. Indeed, findings reveal that the mean score of those with higher education on this measure was lower (1.694) than that of those with high school education (1.955). In other words, the support of those with higher education is indeed slightly higher than that of those with high school education. However, in order to examine whether this difference is statistically significant a *t*-test for independent samples was held. The result of this test showed that despite the anticipated direction of the results they are not statistically significant: ($t(50.2) = -0.197$,



$p > 0.05$). No less interesting than the mean score of the measure is the distribution of scores, i. e. the weight of the respondents whose support of equal rights to education was particularly high and in contrast – the weight of the respondents whose support of equal rights to education was particularly low.

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An examination of the findings among the higher education respondents showed that none of them had a mean score of over 2.50 (where a good score is 1 and a bad score in this context is 5). One third of the respondents were in the range of a very low mean score 1–1.30 (i. e., very high support of equal rights to education). Another 36.8% of the higher education respondents were in the 1.4–1.90 range. Thus, about 70% of the higher education respondents may be said to highly support equal rights to education.

Among the respondents with a high school education, 23.3% of the respondents were in the very low mean score range of 1–1.30. Another third of the respondents with high school education were in the 1.44–1.90 range. Thus, 56.6% of the respondents with a high school education highly support equal rights to education. Nonetheless, it is notable that the mean score of 23.2% of all respondents with high school education was higher than 2.5. One of the respondents had a mean score of 3.20, which is the highest in the entire sample.

These data clarify the hypothesis proposed above: it does seem that the respondents' schooling is a variable that impacts their attitude towards equal rights of women to pursue higher education. The finding is probably not statistically significant mainly due to the size of the sample.

The Link between the Respondents' Religiosity and Their Attitude towards Equal Opportunity to Higher Education. At this stage, an attempt was made to examine the correlation between the respondents' religiosity and their attitude towards equal rights to higher education. Distribution of respondents by religiosity (examined by the respondents' self-statement) showed that twenty four defined themselves as secular, twenty six as traditional, and seven as religious.

The scores of the three groups were different: 1.664 for the secular; 1.936 for the traditional, and 2.157 for the religious. Yet, these differ-

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ences are statistically insignificant. The statistical significance of these findings was examined with an F -test – unidirectional analysis of variance. This analysis showed no significant difference between the means of the three groups: ($F(2.54 = 2.59, p < 0.05)$). Despite the fact that the inclination of all mean scores is consistent and appears to show that the more religious were respondents the lower their support of equal right to education, this finding has no statistical reliability in the current sample. The mean score of the secular group was low, at 1.6644.

One third of secular respondents were in the very low mean score range of 1–1.30. Another 41.7% were in the 1.40–1.80 range. Thus, 75% of secular respondents were found to highly support equal right to education. Only two respondents had a mean score of over 2.5. No one had a mean score of more than 2.9. The mean score of the traditional group was higher than that of the secular group, at 1.9162.

26.9% of the traditional respondents were in the very low mean score range of 1–1.30 (less than among the secular). Another 26.9% were in the 1.50–1.90 range. Thus, 53.8% of the traditional respondents highly supported equal right to education, much less than among the secular respondents. Three traditional respondents had a mean score of over 2.50. One of the traditional respondents had a mean score of 3.20.

The mean score of the religious group was the highest, at 2.1571. Thus, this group's support of the equal right to education is the lowest of the three groups. In this group, no one had a mean score of less than 1.80. Then again, the highest mean score was 2.90. If so, the trend indicated by the analysis of the findings in this part of the questionnaire was also compatible with the researchers' hypothesis, although the findings were not statistically significant.

The Link between Attitudes of the Respondents to General Equality between the Sexes and Their Attitude to Women's Right to Higher Education

As stated, the research used a questionnaire that examined not only the respondents' attitudes towards women's right to higher education, but also their attitude towards equal rights for both sexes in general, as well as their appreciation of women.



In light of the findings summarized above, at this stage the research sought to examine another point – the link between the respondents' attitude to women's right to equal education and their attitudes towards general equality between the sexes. The assumption was that a positive correlation would be found between the two measures. In other words, those with a positive attitude towards general equality between the sexes would also demonstrate a positive attitude towards women's right to equal education. [149]

This was examined with a Pearson correlation, which showed that there is indeed a significantly strong correlation between the two measures: ($r = 0.872, p < 0.00$).

In order to examine to what degree the respondents' attitude to general equality between the sexes predicted their attitude to women's right to equal education, a simple regression analysis was conducted ($F(1,58) = 183.603, p < 0.00$). Again, the regression showed that the respondents' attitude towards general equality between the sexes explains 75.6% of the variance of attitudes towards women's right to equal education.

*The Link between the Respondents' Appreciation of Women
and Their Attitude to Women's Right to Higher Education*

In line with what has already been stated, the research also sought to examine the link between the respondents' appreciation of women and their attitude to women's right to equal education. The assumption was, as in the previous case, that here too a strong correlation would be found between the two measures: respondents who have a high appreciation of women would also have a positive attitude towards their right to equal education. A Pearson correlation test indeed proved this to be true. A significantly strong positive correlation was found between the two measures: ($r = 0.829, p < 0.00$). Again, in order to examine to what degree the respondents' appreciation of women predicted their attitude towards women's right to higher education, a simple regression was used ($f(1,58) = 203.815, p < 0.00$). The regression showed that the respondents' appreciation of women explains 77.8% of the variance in their attitudes towards women's right to equal education.

*The Relationship between the Respondents' Education and Religiosity
and between Their Appreciation of Women and Attitudes
towards Equality between the Sexes*

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Finally, following all these relationships examined by the research, the question is whether the respondents' schooling and religiosity have a statistically significant effect on their appreciation of women and on their attitudes towards general equality between the sexes.

In order to examine the relationship between the respondents' schooling and their appreciation of women, a *t*-test for independent samples was used. This test showed a significant difference in the appreciation of women between the respondents with tertiary education and those with full high school education or less: ($t(58) = 2.005, p = 0.05$). The respondents with tertiary education had a higher appreciation of women. Their score was 2.09 (of 5) ($SD = 0.59$). The scores of the respondents with high school education were worse, at 2.37 ($SD = 0.59$). When examining the distribution of scorings in the two groups, it is evident that 56.7% of the respondents with tertiary education were in the 1.6–2.3 range. The prevalent score was 2 and it was attained by 20% of this group. Among the group of respondents with high school education, the prevalent score was 2.4. It was attained by 13.3% of this group.

The examination of the link between the respondents' religiosity and their appreciation of women was checked by means of an *F* test. Unidirectional analysis of variance indeed showed a statistically significant difference in the appreciation of women between the various groups of respondents by religiosity: ($F(2,54) = 3.205, p > 0.05$). The secular respondents' appreciation of women was found to be the highest – $M = 2.07$ ($SD = 0.51$). The traditional respondents' appreciation was medium – $M = 2.34$ ($SD = 0.55$). The religious respondents' appreciation was the lowest – $M = 2.57$ ($SD = 0.31$). The examination of the distribution of this measure showed no convergence at the endpoints. The scores of most respondents were found to be around the mean.

The examination of the link between the respondents' religiosity and their attitude to general equality between the sexes also showed statistical significance: ($F(2,54) = 4.929, p > 0.05$). It seems, as ex-



pected, that the secular respondents had more positive attitudes to equality between the sexes – $M = 1.75$ ($SD = 0.35$). The traditional respondents were in the middle with $M = 2.11$ ($SD = 0.59$), while the religious respondents achieved the lowest score – $M = 2.25$ ($SD = 0.33$). Here too, no convergence of scores was evident at the endpoints. Most were around the mean. [151]

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the special status of the Israeli Arabs as a minority in the Israeli society, and in light of the shifts occurring within them in the transition from a traditional collectivist society to a modern individualist society, this article attempted to examine the attitudes of Muslim men to the right of Muslim women to pursue higher education. The article sought to clarify whether there is a link between the schooling and religiosity of respondents and their attitudes to this issue. The study also sought to examine whether there is a link between the respondents' appreciation of women and their attitude to the issue of women's rights to higher education; and whether there is a link between their attitude to equality between the sexes and their attitude to the issue of women's rights to higher education.

The study discussed schooling differences between the Jewish and the Arab sectors, where the former are at a big advantage over the latter. At the same time, the article indicated rapid shifts that have occurred in this sphere in the last generation. It stressed the fact that despite these shifts there are still big differences between the two sectors – the Jewish and the Arab – both in high school education and in higher education. The article also showed that concurrent with the positive change in education in the Arab sector, a phenomenon familiar from the Jewish sector is evident here as well, where females have a significant advantage over males both in high school education and in higher education. The relative weight of female students who pass their matriculation exams is larger than that of male students, both in the Jewish majority and in the Arab minority. At schools of higher education, the advantage of females over Arab males is even higher than among the Jewish sector!

The weight of schooling as the key factor, which usually makes it

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possible to predict one's place on the social pyramid, is clear today not only to professionals but also to laymen. This is true of both the Jewish and the Arab sector. However, it is much more complicated to encourage studies in the traditional Muslim society than in the Jewish society. The simple reason is that the Arab society in Israel is still mostly traditional and patriarchal, despite its rapid transformation. The place of women in this society is very different than in the western society, and even much more so as studying at schools of higher education in Israel removes Muslim women from the homogeneous ecological framework of their ethnic community and exposes them to close and intensive contact with the members of the majority. These are the circumstances that might hamper the Arab society's support of higher education for women.

Based on the findings of previous surveys conducted among the Arab society in Israel, surveys that indicated significant support of Muslims in Israel for offering higher education to their wives, the writer initiated another field study in late 2010. To begin with, he was aware that previous studies had already shown that Muslim women in Israel feel a high commitment to studying at schools of higher education (Mustafa 2007), if only for the simple reason that they perceive an academic degree as an excellent resource that raises their status in the community and promotes change (Gilat and Hertz-Lazarowitz 2009; Pessate-Schubert 2003). In addition, it was borne in mind that Muslim Israeli society realizes at present that educated women advance their entire family, and therefore educated women have an advantage in the marriage market (Shapira and Hertz-Lazarowitz 2004). Finally, it was also borne in mind that the Arab minority has a prevalent concept of higher education as contributing not only to the advancement of individuals, but also to that of the entire community (Masri-Harzallah, 2007).

The study, which posed the questions listed at the beginning of this summary, reached the following conclusions:

- Although statistically the findings are not significant, they consistently show that respondents who have tertiary education support women's rights to higher education more than respondents who have high school education.



- Both groups of respondents highly support women's right to higher education.
- Although statistically the findings are not significant, they consistently show that the respondents' religiosity affects their attitude towards women's right to higher education. The secular respondents show the most support, the religious respondents the least, and the traditional respondents are in the middle.
- The findings also indicate that those with a positive attitude towards equality between the sexes would support women's right to pursue higher education as well.
- This is also true of the respondents' appreciation of women and their support of women's right to pursue higher education. The more respondents appreciate women the more they support their right to pursue higher education.
- At the same time, the study found a significantly positive correlation between the respondents' education and their appreciation of women.
- This was also true of the significantly positive correlation between religiosity and appreciation of women: the secular respondents had the most appreciation for women, the religious respondents – the least, and the traditional respondents were in the middle.
- A significant statistical relationship was also found between the respondents' religiosity and their attitude towards general equality between the sexes. The secular respondents had the highest positive attitude, the religious respondents the lowest, and the traditional respondents were in the middle.

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As a conclusion a word of warning is warranted: One should bear in mind two of the survey's limitations. First, it was based on a convenience sample. Second, it was based on a small sample. It would be very interesting to carry out another sample on a bigger scale, including urban as well as rural areas. An attempt should also be made to cover the Bedouin population of the Negev, among whom there is a growing demand for higher education among women.

Last but not least, one of the most obvious implications of the survey is the need for Arab higher education institutions in the regions

where this population is concentrated. Such institutions will facilitate a much larger participation of young women in the higher education system, since it won't be necessary for them to leave home and study far away in unfamiliar surroundings.

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