

## 7 | Inequality and Changing Gender Roles

A major source of social inequality involves gender roles and statuses. Differences between men and women in access to resources and in translating resources into jobs and income are key aspects of disadvantage for women. Gender differentials in autonomy and control, in independence and decision making, are conspicuous signs of how distinctive spheres of activity become disadvantageous. The extent to which power in the workplace, within households, and in political and cultural institutions is shared equally between men and women indicates the treatment of gender as difference unattached to disadvantage.

### Gender and Inequality Theory and Mixed Expectations

Changes in gender roles have been part of the revolutionary shifts associated with the modernization of industrialized societies. Along with the transitions toward nuclear family structure and living arrangements that are not family based, there have been major transformations in the roles of women inside and outside families and the beginning of changes in the roles of men in households (among others, see F. Goldscheider and Waite 1991; F. Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2014). How are gender-role changes related to the revolutionary socioeconomic developments that have characterized Israeli society? How are they linked to changes in the family, in ethnic distinctiveness, and in population processes? How are gender differences connected to social and economic inequalities and to political and religious institutions in Israel?

There are indications that greater equality between men and women is emerging in some spheres in Israel and that the empowerment of women has increased. At the same time, evidence abounds documenting the continuation of traditional gender differences in everyday life and the discrimination against women in key economic, political, and cultural institutions of the society. My focus is on the differences between women and men that can be understood as indicating gender inequality. We

would expect that increased educational attainment and participation in the paid labor force would broaden the scope of women's activities, provide access to better jobs, and increase their control over their own lives. As Israel's population and economy expanded and diversified, some of the constraints on women's activities should have decreased, and new opportunities should have opened for sharing equally with men. As universalistic criteria of achievement and merit filter through the society, women should have equal access to societal rewards and compete more equally with men.

Similarly, the centrality of the nuclear family, the reduction in family size, and the control over reproduction that have come to characterize Israeli society should have led to a reduction in the domestic roles of women, creating greater access to work opportunities outside the home and thereby expanding women's roles beyond mothering, child care, and housework. With all these changes, combined with marriage at later ages and an elaborate welfare system to care for parents and older relatives, women should increasingly have time within the life course to better take advantage of outside work opportunities and convert their educational advances into well-paying jobs (i.e., equal to working men). In turn, the monetary rewards and the greater economic autonomy associated with these activities should reduce the economic dependency of women on men. In general, increasing affluence and changing domestic technology should result in lessening the time women spend on household care; life-course changes (e.g., increases in the time spent in school, marriage at later ages, and decreasing family size) should increase the time available for non-family roles, particularly for work in the formal economy.

Education, money, technology, and the changing opportunity structure in the labor market set the stage for alterations in women's non-family roles. They combine with changing values emphasizing autonomy and independence to shift the status of women away from family activities and tip the balance toward more-equal sharing between men and women. Although there has been a shift toward individualism, Israel remains a family-oriented society with high priorities placed on gender-segregated family roles. Working outside the home and having a small family do not automatically extricate women from the control of their families, husbands, or fathers. When women work in part-time jobs, in gender-segregated occupations, and retain responsibilities for household

activities, working outside the home may extend gender inequality and result in a “double burden” on women, rather than their empowerment and increased independence from the control of men and from their dependency on families. This double burden may be exacerbated if women are unable to translate their years of schooling into jobs comparable to those of men and if they cannot successfully compete for employment outside traditional gender-segregated roles because they lack access to primary sources of power.

Educational attainment, occupational concentration, and economic discrimination are all part of the puzzle in understanding the role of gender in Israeli society. There are other facets related to this issue that are institutional and cultural. How do political and religious institutions deal with issues of gender? Are there forms of ideological commitments or legal discrimination against women that shape and reflect how Israeli society reinforces gender differences? Are there values and attitudes that are shared by significant sectors of the population that define women’s and men’s roles as different and are used to justify discrimination, inequality, and continued subordination? How have the various political transitions in nation-building and the shifts in the centrality of the military affected gender roles? The answers to these questions focus attention on the ways that specific institutional features of Israeli society may have shaped gender inequalities.

Cutting across issues of gender stratification, institutional structures related to gender, and attitudes and values about the roles of men and women is the changing ethnic and religious composition of Israeli society. This is a particular feature of Israeli society that has an important role in shaping gender issues. The differing ethnic origins of the Jewish population represent different exposures to the openness of their societies of origin to women’s employment, status, and roles in society and the family. Ethnicity is connected to different levels of education and types of jobs, to resources people have, and to how they are used. Immigrants whose origins are from Western and European societies have been exposed for longer periods of time to greater gender equality and to values and attitudes that were more open to a wide range of roles for women. Israelis of Western origin were socialized in their homes and in schools with images of women who had access to the world outside families and whose commitments to gender equality and independence were valued.

In contrast, Israelis from Middle Eastern societies originated from communities characterized by high levels of gender segregation. They were more likely to have been socialized in families emphasizing the centrality of the place of women in the domestic economy, their responsibilities as mothers and wives, and their subordination to male power. In general, among Jews of Middle Eastern origin, women were more dependent on men and subordinate to them, and women’s roles were located in separate spheres of activities. Ethnic divisions among Jews may be associated with gender differences in the extent of employment outside the home, in levels of education, and in different levels of commitment to family values. The critical questions are whether socialization and educational exposure in Israeli society results in greater equality between men and women in diverse spheres of activity and whether there is a tendency toward convergence in gender differences among the Israelis born of different ethnic origins.

In this chapter, I follow these mixed theoretical orientations and sketch in broad strokes the different contexts in which gender matters in Israel. I assess how changes in Israeli society have resulted in patterns of greater gender equality in different social activities. First, I review issues of education, labor force, and occupational concentration. I then turn to gender factors in military, political, and religious institutions and the role of women in contraception and abortion decisions as indicators of the relative independence of women from families and from men. Together, these pieces of the puzzle provide clues about the relative autonomy of women of various backgrounds in Israel and the trajectory of gender-role changes. These changes fit into the broader themes of demographic and ethnic changes in the context of nation-building.<sup>1</sup>

Three cautions need to be highlighted as a backdrop to this assessment of gender inequalities in Israel. First, the pace of change in gender relationships is expected to vary among ethnic groups and is linked to length of exposure to Israeli society. The diversity of Israel’s population has implications for understanding the dynamics of change in the society as a whole. The study of the intersection of gender and ethnicity becomes critical in assessing the direction and intensity of changes. Second, the reduction and elimination of the gender gap in one area—for example, education—does not necessarily imply the absence of gender differences in other areas of social life and vice versa. Likewise, gender discrimination

in one area does not necessarily mean discrimination in all areas. Each of the major areas needs to be examined directly rather than by inference. As with indicators of socioeconomic inequality, variation in the extent of gender inequality is expected among the spheres of social life. Third, the reduction in the gender gap in any area cannot always be linked directly to the emergence of new egalitarian norms. Legal and behavioral equalities between men and women do not automatically correlate with norms of gender equality or the empowerment of women. Similarly, differences between men and women do not necessarily imply structural discrimination, gender-biased state policies, or intentionality. My focus is on forms of gender differentiation and the gender dependencies that have emerged in Israel that are both legacies of the societies of origin and sustained by Israeli society.

### The Narrowing Gender Gap in Education

Increases in educational attainment have been among the most powerful changes that have characterized Israeli society since the 1950s (chapter 8). Have these increases been spread equally among men and women? There is clear empirical confirmation of the narrowing of gender differences over time in educational attainment. Overall, in 2012, average (median) education of Jewish Israeli men and women was identical (13 years). The proportion with 16 or more years of education was also identical (28%), with almost similar patterns for young and older ages. The average difference between men and women had favored men by 1.5 years in 1961, by 1.3 years in 1972, and by one year in 1983 (Nahon 1987, appendix table 1; also C. Goldscheider 2002, table 7.1). Examining some of the details in 2012 shows that the percentages of men and women with 16 or more years of schooling were about the same (28% and 27%, respectively). These levels were about 10 percentage points higher than for men and women in 1999. Most of the gender differences in educational attainment are characteristic of the oldest age cohorts, with smaller gender differences for Jews than for Arabs.

Although the general level of education among Arabs in Israel is lower than among Jews, the gender gap in years of schooling among Arabs ages 15 to 35 has moved dramatically in favor of Arab women: 18% of Arab men age 25–34 in 2012 had 16 or more years of education compared to 26% of Arab women. In contrast, among those 65 years and older only 2% of Arab

women had 16 or more years of education and only 5% of them age 55–64 had that level of education. Arab men had higher educational levels than Arab women among the older ages with the respective proportions 8% and 15%. In 2012, 17% of Arab men age 65 or older had no education compared to 56% of Arab women.<sup>2</sup> These data convey four patterns of importance: (1) all groups, men and women, Jew and Arab, have increased their level of education in the last decades; (2) Jewish men and women have increasingly become similar in educational level with women exceeding men's education in the youngest age group; (3) Jewish educational levels continue to exceed levels among Israeli Arabs; (4) the gender gap among Arab Israelis of all ages has been reduced considerably and reversed (Arab women have higher average educational levels than men) in the youngest age cohort. Inferred from the cross-sectional patterns is the different timing of the closing of the gender gap, which is earlier among Jews than among Arabs. The narrowed educational gap has been influenced in large measure by Israel's educational policy that opened schooling opportunities to both boys and girls, and for Arabs as well as Jews.

Examinations of educational changes among men and women of different ethnic-origin Jewish populations confirm these conclusions. The gender gap in years of schooling among foreign-born Jews is largely confined to and accentuated among those from Asian and African countries, but the gap has declined among them as well. By the 1980s, there was a very small gender gap among the Israeli-born Jewish population. A beginning shift toward a reduced gender gap in years of education may also be discerned among Moslems and Druze in the 1970s, consistent with the broader changes that were occurring among Moslems in that decade (see chapter 4). By the end of the twentieth century, trends are discernible toward greater similarity in numbers of years of schooling attained by young Israeli Moslem men and women.

A detailed study of cohort changes in education describes what it refers to as “the spectacular change” in educational attainment among Arab women. The research evidence documents the substantial transition to completing high school and the *bagrut* (a high school certification required for entrance to universities) and the increased participation of Arab women in postsecondary education. This reflects the opportunity structure among Arab Israelis and the large demand for teachers for the expanding Arab Israeli population of children, particularly when significant

numbers of the teachers at the elementary school level are women. There has been a general reduction in gender differences in various dimensions of the educational experience among Israeli Arabs and in the transition to postsecondary education, but the levels remain relatively lower among Arab than Israeli Jewish women (Friedlander et al. 2002a, 2002b). In 1999, 23% of Arab Israeli women completed 13 or more years of education, identical to the proportion among Arab men, but this contrasts with over half of the Jewish Israelis who completed at least 13 years of education. Thus, at the same time that the gender gap in educational attainment within each of these two ethnic categories has been largely eliminated, the ethnic gap *within* gender categories has remained very wide. The level of educational attainment at the upper end of the educational distribution is more than twice as high among Jews than Arabs for both men and women.

### Working Women

#### Juggling Part-Time Employment and Families

Are the changing gender gaps in education an indication of a reduction in gender differences in other areas, and do they point to a move toward egalitarian relationships in Israel, as in other more-industrialized nations? Tendencies toward similar educational levels by gender are likely to have implications for spheres of both work and family. Indeed, one of the direct implications of the closing gender gap in education is the connection to the labor market, in particular, how educational attainment is converted into quality of employment for men and for women. At the simplest level, we can document the increasing educational levels of employed women over time and the relative education of employed persons and men. When we examine the educational level of employed persons between the 1960s and the end of the twentieth century, we note that the percentage of employed women with higher levels of education (defined as more than 13 years of schooling) increased from 15% in 1963 to 54% in 2000; the proportion with less than an eighth-grade education who were employed declined from 45% to 4%. As of the 1970s, employed Israeli women had a higher level of education than employed men, suggesting that employment may be more selective of women (the more educated) than of men. Fewer women than men who were in the labor force had low levels of education, and more had higher levels. Increased educational levels raise the quality of women's labor-force activities and pose directly

the question of whether the labor-force participation rate of women has increased.

Indeed, the evidence is clear that there has been a dramatic increase in the labor-force participation of women in Israel from less than 30% overall until the 1970s to over 50% in the twenty-first century. The increase reflects the increased levels of education of women, the changing labor market structure in Israel, the changing ethnic composition of the population, and family-size changes. The increase has been most striking in the working patterns of mothers, the opening up of opportunities for part-time employment, mainly in the service sector, and the greater availability of child-care facilities. In earlier cohorts, women entered the labor force before marriage and before bearing children, withdrew as they were raising their young children, and reentered when their children grew up and were in school. Life-course employment patterns of Israeli women resembled an M-shaped pattern, with changes and variations due to the timing of marriage, childbearing, and child rearing. Replacing the M pattern was an emergent inverted U-shaped pattern—women entered and remained in the labor force through the childbearing, preschool, and schooling years of children, exiting from the labor force like men at retirement. The first sign of the transformation from an M to an inverted U was among Israelis of European and American origins; more recently, the switchover has characterized Israelis of Asian and African origins. Labor-force participation rates of Arab women remain significantly below those of Jewish women (see also the review and documentation for an earlier period in Ben-Porath 1986b).

Features of the increased labor-force participation of Israeli women over time may be summarized as follows:

- 1 The proportion of Israeli women in the labor force was 2.7% in 1955, and it increased to 4.7% in 1999. The increase was sharper for women ages 35 to 54, among which fully seven out of ten were in the labor force in 2010, more than 2.5 times the participation rate in 1955.
- 2 As the number of children age 14 and under in the household increases, the proportion of Jewish women in the labor force decreases; as their children get older, the proportion of women in the labor force increases. Over 60% of the women with their youngest child below 1 year of age worked, compared to 80% for children ages 10 to 14.

- 3 Israeli women of Asian and African origins are less likely to be in the labor force than those of European and American origins, reflecting differences in family formation and educational background and different priorities about the balance of family and work, particularly among mothers with young children. Israeli women of all ethnic origins with the same number of children at home and the same level of education have similar labor-force participation rates.
- 4 The different levels of education that characterized the women of these different Jewish ethnic groups and the resultant higher rate of labor-force participation of Israeli women of Western origin indicate that Asian- and African-origin Jewish women contribute less financially to the household. Hence, the household incomes of Israelis of Middle Eastern origin are lower than those of Western origin, even when husbands have the same occupations.
- 5 The more years of schooling completed, the higher the rate of labor-force participation. The differences are quite impressive: from a labor-force participation rate of 15% among married women with low educational levels to 70% among those with 13 or more years of schooling. The pattern is no less characteristic of those with and without young children at home. Among those with infants at home, 28% of the least-educated women work, compared to 71% of the most-educated women.
- 6 Having household help at home enhances the labor-force participation of Israeli women. Though 53% of the women without help at home work in the labor force, 66% of those with 16 or more hours of help work outside the home. Having help is a reflection both of educational level and of resources available and does not include assistance from family members. The causal direction of this association is not clear, since women work because they have access to and are able to afford child-care assistance, and women obtain child-care assistance because they work outside the home.
- 7 Women are considerably more likely to work part-time than are men. From the 1980s to the early 1990s, about 15% of Israel's civilian male labor force was working part-time. During the same period, the percentage of women engaged in part-time work was closer to 40%, over 2.5 times higher than that of men. There has been a trend, although not linear, toward an increase over time in the proportion of working women who work part-time, from about 30% in the 1950s and 1960s, to

35% in the 1970s, and to 40% in the 1980s and 1990s. At the same time that the percentage of women participating in the labor force has increased, the proportion working part-time has increased as well.

### **Occupational Concentration, Feminization, and Discrimination**

The increase in the labor-force participation of Israel's women clearly documented in these official data reflects the expansion of the Israeli economy and the demand for more-educated workers, particularly in the public sector and in financial and business services.<sup>3</sup> At the same time that an increase in the participation of women in the formal labor force has occurred, an almost complete feminization of certain occupations had also taken place (Ben-Porath 1986a; studies cited in Azmon and Izraeli 1993). This pattern appears in the detailed specific-occupation categories, not in the crude occupational distributions. This highly gender-segregated job structure can be documented in a variety of ways. In 1990, for example, three-fourths of the female labor force was employed in only 3 of the 9 major occupation categories, and one-half was concentrated in only 8 of 90 occupations (Azmon and Izraeli 1993). This has changed somewhat in the twenty-first century as educational levels of women have increased and new job opportunities have opened.

There are, therefore, three interrelated dimensions of the labor discrimination against women in Israel: (1) men and women in the same job are differentially treated; that is, women with similar characteristics and skills as men are promoted less and rewarded less for similar jobs; (2) there is a concentration of women in particular jobs; that is, a process of feminization of particular occupations has occurred, in which the fringe benefits of particular jobs are less when they are occupied by women; and (3) part-time workers have significantly fewer benefits than do full-time workers, and women are more likely than men to have part-time jobs.

Even in those industries in which the criteria of promotion and salary are presumably based on merit and achievement, gender factors seem to operate. In one study of scientists in one large Israeli industry, research demonstrated that Israeli men and women experienced differential rates of promotion to the detriment of women. Although there was no direct discrimination in the wages of men and women scientists, women professional employees experienced salary discrimination. Since promotions

affect wages, discrimination in promotional practices resulted in gender discrimination in wages (Shenhav and Haberfeld 1993). The number of women on a career track in academic jobs is small and concentrated in the lower echelons of the academic scale. There is little pay difference within the scale, but the different jobs of men and women result in a discriminatory pattern (see Toren 1993).

Research comparing women employed in jobs dominated by women and those more equally shared by men (and the reverse as well—men in female- and in male-dominated occupations) shows the high level of discrimination against women, measured in terms of income, particularly for women in women-dominated occupations (Moore 1993). Relative to Israeli men, Israeli women, in general, have lower-paying jobs, with lower levels of seniority and authority in occupations or industries, and are more likely to move into and out of the labor force. They are less mobile between occupations and less mobile between geographic regions than are men with comparable educational levels. Their economic networks tend to be fewer and less effective and are located in the jobs where opportunities for promotion and rewards for initiatives are fewer than those for men. When we examine the interaction of gender and ethnic origin, it is clear that Jewish Asian- and African-origin men are disadvantaged relative to European- and American-origin men, but Jewish Asian- and African-origin women are not disadvantaged as much relative to European- and American-origin women. Women of all ethnic origins in Israel are disadvantaged relative to men. In sum, gender is a more-powerful differentiator than is ethnicity in the occupational distribution within the Jewish population of Israel. Put more directly, ethnic disadvantage is less than gender disadvantage in the Israeli labor market (Neuman 1991; Semyonov and Kraus 1983; Hartman 1993; Rebhun 2008, 2010).

There is also some evidence that suggests an interaction effect of ethnicity and gender. Research has documented that ethnic differences in rates of labor-force participation and in the occupational prestige of women reflect differences in the educational, socioeconomic, and related demographic characteristics. There are major ethnic differences in the attitudes toward women working and concerning the balance of work and household responsibilities. These attitudes are likely to have an impact on the priorities assigned to work and to family among ethnic groups in Is-

rael (Hartman 1993). It is likely that this has changed in the most recent decade, but the gender and ethnic gaps have not closed.

Even though discrimination on the basis of gender is not legal, there have been no affirmative-action policies in Israel. Consequently, there has been no alteration in job recruitment by gender or in job allocation, promotion, and reward. The increase in labor-force participation of women also reflects the structure of jobs that are more likely to be part-time for women and linked to family, household, and child-care needs. In addition, research has shown that women spend twice as much time in child care as men do and are much more involved in housekeeping, whether or not they are employed outside the home. Working in the formal labor force does not decrease the time women spend on child rearing or on housekeeping (Azmon and Izraeli 1993). As a result, there is a gendered division of labor in the home as well as at work. Patterns of increased labor-force participation of women, and of combining work and family activities, generate the illusion of gender equality rather than an increasing double burden placed on women. Standards of living rise, outside activities increase, household incomes improve, and there is less pressure to remark on gender inequalities and a decreased sensitivity to gender discrimination. Together, these factors explain the absence of major protests by women about the occupational inequalities between men and women.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, jobs are often controlled by patronage in Israel, so that networks and connections are often the primary sources of information and control (Danet 1989). In jobs controlled by the state, political considerations (often gender related) are critical. A review of labor-force activities of women notes that women remain virtually absent from positions of influence within all the major economic institutions owned by either the Labor party--dominated Histadrut (the Federated Labor Union) or by the government, which together employ the majority of the labor force. The study concludes that "rather than promoting equal opportunity, current social policy tends to support a system in which the majority of women are on an often-invisible 'mommy track.' Their place in the occupational structure is paradoxical: their jobs are relatively high status, but their wages are low, and they rarely occupy the top-level positions of power and prestige" (Azmon and Izraeli 1993, 4-5). Increased labor-force participation of women has not equalized the roles of women and men inside or outside the workforce. It is unclear how

much these patterns have changed by the first decade of the twenty-first century.

### Women and the Military

Like working mothers, women soldiers are often portrayed as symbols of equality in Israel. And like the implications of the examination of the specific jobs that women have in civilian life, a review of studies of women in the military illustrates the ways their distinctive roles are indicators of discrimination. This is particularly the case since military service is often the basis for recruitment into higher-level positions in the civilian labor force. The military is a deeply gendered institution. The careers of men and women in the military are significantly different and have consequences for the status of women in general in the society (Azmon and Izraeli 1993). Indeed, the military institution of Israel and its segregation of women into separate jobs and different career paths is more likely to perpetuate gender inequality than to be a force for change in gender roles.

There are two ways in which the military experiences of women should be viewed as discriminatory. First, and most directly, the kinds of responsibilities that women and men have in the military are very different. The difference is not merely the absence of combat roles for women but, instead, it is that women's responsibilities are almost always subordinate to men and under male control. Promotion and reward in the military are less accessible to women. Second, and more indirectly, experience in the military is often the basis for recruitment for elite managerial and political positions in the civilian labor force. The generally lower ranks of women and their generally noncommand or nonmanagerial roles in the military reduce their ability to use the military (as men do) as a vehicle for job networking and recruitment in civilian life. Thus, in contrast to the gender-egalitarian image of the Israeli military, service in the armed forces more often than not reinforces the subordinate and less-powerful status of women in the society.

Military service is compulsory for both Jewish men and women, but, unlike men, women are excluded for reasons of marriage, parenthood, and on religious grounds. In 1990, a little over two-thirds of the cohorts of 18-year-old women were conscripted into the military, compared to 56% in the mid-1970s. Most of the increase was due to changes in the educational and socioeconomic requirements for conscription (Azmon and Izraeli

1993). The results of a detailed study of the 1954 birth cohort show that almost all the men (94%) served in the Israel Defense Force, but only one-third of the Jewish women of Middle Eastern origin and 57% of those of Western origin served. These differences are related in part to the lower educational attainments of women of Middle Eastern origin at that time and the resistance to military service among those who are from more-religious families, which are more characteristic of this ethnic-origin group. Within each educational attainment subgroup, the percentage of women serving in the Israel Defense Force was higher among Western-origin women than among Middle Eastern origin-women. This has changed as educational levels in general have increased and ethnic differences have converged. About one-third of all soldiers are women.

What are the effects of schooling and military service on subsequent occupational attainments and social participation of Israeli men and women? A pioneering study of the links between military service and actual occupational attainments over the life course showed the importance of serving in the Israel armed service and the role of military rank in enhancing subsequent occupational prestige in the civilian labor force, net of socioeconomic background and education (Matras, Noam, and Bar-Haim 1984; Matras and Noam 1987). The army experience had a positive effect on the accumulation of human capital, responsibility, and authority in roles; it established "connections" and networks; and it provided nonfamily (or at least semiautonomous) living experiences. Military service had a significant effect on the occupational prestige scores of women but affected jobs closest in time to that period of service, with a reduced effect over time. Ethnicity remains an important factor in women's occupational prestige (unlike for men), which may reflect the role of work among Western-origin women, which is different from its role among Middle Eastern-origin women, or may indicate the use of "connections" by Western-origin women to obtain better jobs. Again, this has likely changed in the last decade in the direction of reduced ethnic differences and increased educational experience.

The argument that women's roles in the military negatively affect later traditional roles or that serving in the army is a liberating experience is an exaggeration. The effects of military service are modest at best. Many women reside at home during their military service and are likely to be engaged in gender-segregated clerical roles that are relatively powerless.

Family connections are unlikely to be fully severed by being in the Israeli military, and the liberating effects are limited as well. Taken together, the evidence seems to point to the conclusion that the military experience is more likely to reflect the society than to shape it. Service in the army is not able to help women overcome the more-entrenched and powerful effects of differential education by ethnicity and differential family background and experiences. Given the gender-segregated job allocations in the army, the closeness of army personnel to family life (as semiautonomous living), and the army's selectivity, the gender-segregated attitudes and traditional roles of the society as a whole are likely to be reinforced, rather than undermined, in this setting.

There is another aspect of the military that relates to the role of women and their place in the household. The reinforcement of traditional gender roles occurs generationally. When sons and daughters begin compulsory military service at age 18, the duties of parenting become more intense, and support roles are expected from the family.<sup>4</sup> As in the care of the elderly, these family-based support systems involve a disproportionate amount of the mother's rather than the father's time. Moreover, war and military activities in a conflict situation intensify the salience of primary relationships. The family and, particularly, the role of women within the family are emotional anchors, especially in such family-oriented societies as Israel. In the media and in informal settings, female roles are regularly portrayed during wars as supportive and expressive (Bar-Yosef and Padan-Eisenstark 1993).

### Gender, Politics, and Religion

Discrimination against women is not limited to the formal labor force, to their concentration in specific occupations, and to their service in the military. Political and religious institutions are conspicuous in their limited representation of women and their reinforcement of the separate spheres of women's activities. We have already identified some ways in which religion and gender are interrelated and how the patriarchal elements of Judaism discriminate against women (chapter 6). Here we turn to the issues of politics and gender. Although women were formally granted equal rights by the Declaration of Israeli Independence, including the right to vote, the number of women in elected positions at all levels is small. The representation of women in the highest elected offices, as

members of the Knesset, has always been small and has not increased in recent years. Over the last five decades, less than 10% of the members of the Knesset have been women. Even at the local level, less than 10% of the political officials are women, although their numbers have increased over the past decades (Azmon and Izraeli 1993, 14; see also Azmon 1990). Some research has pointed to the disadvantaged position of women in political power in Israel and the impediments that are gender related, including the fact that political power is largely controlled by men and that women are socialized into family roles (Etzioni-Halevi and Jilly 1993). Women have rarely played representative roles at the local level, in party caucuses, and in the power negotiations behind the scenes. Although there have been political parties in Israel that have focused on women's rights, they have been marginal to political power.

### Families and Power Abortion and Contraception

The central role of women in families in Israel is clear, and their often disadvantaged status follows from that role. In a subsequent analysis, I detail the familism that characterizes Israeli society and show the changing importance of women in perpetuating that centrality (chapter 10). Nevertheless, even in the realm of family activity, the role of women tends to be subordinate to men. Changes in fertility in Israel have facilitated the increase in female labor-force participation that I previously documented. Among younger cohorts, almost all women have been employed in the formal labor force, and this has been correlated with their decreasing family size (chapter 10; also Matras 1986). The decrease in family size should facilitate the expansion of women's work in the paid labor force.

In a related way, an examination of the sources of fertility reduction in terms of the means by which couples have planned their family size and the number and timing of births reveals again the more-powerless role of women in Israeli society. An examination of contraceptive usage and birth control points to a concentration in the past on coitus interruptus and abortion (Friedlander and Goldscheider 1984; Okun 1997; Okun 2000). These mechanisms, in large part, place women under the control of men, their husbands, and the medical establishment. Although there is a recent tendency toward greater use of the contraceptive pill for birth control, there remains a continuing pattern of male-controlled contraceptive methods or abortion.<sup>5</sup>



Unlike in other societies, abortion is used in Israel by married women as a last resort, after less-efficient contraception has been used and when the pressure to control family size is high. For women who married in the 1940s and were living in Israel in the early 1970s, abortion was used more by those of European origin than by those of Asian and African origin, a continuation of patterns observed in their countries of origin; among cohorts who married in the period from 1965 to 1974, no ethnic differences were evident (Yaffe 1976). It is likely that the religious factor is the major differentiator of abortion patterns, with women from more-religious families less likely to have abortions.

Official estimates from the 1980s and 1990s put the number of legal abortions close to 20,000, about one-fourth the number of live births. This appears to be a reduction in the estimated 50,000 to 60,000 abortions in the late 1960s and 1970s, which was equivalent to the number of annual Jewish births. The reduction was likely brought about by the increasing use of more-efficient contraception. About two-thirds of the total legal abortions in the 1980s were performed on married women (Sabatello and Yaffe 1988). In 1999, 60% of the legal terminations of pregnancy were administered to married women, and most of those women were over the age of 30.

What emerges from these scattered data is that the pressure for fertility control results in turning to abortion, even when illegal, as a backup to contraceptive failure. The use of more-efficient contraceptive practices and the greater access to modern contraception among Jewish women of European origin results in their lower rates of abortion. In contrast, the lower socioeconomic status of Asian- and African-origin Jewish women and their large-family-size ideals are likely to result in their wanting more children, using contraception less efficiently, having less access to abortions, and aborting less often when contraception fails. Contraceptive practices and abortion, for many Israeli women, reinforce their subordinate status to men and their traditional family roles.

### Gender Equality in the Kibbutz Myth and Reality

It is not surprising that women in Israeli society have been in subordinate roles and that they have been dependent on men and the institutions men control. Israeli women share this condition with women around the world. One would have predicted that these inequalities would be more

pronounced for women from gender-segregated societies and cultures and that the trajectory of change would be toward more-equal gender roles. There are some indications that changes are occurring but that institutions, particularly those controlled by men in religion and politics, reinforce the traditional separate spheres of men and women. The emphasis on family centrality and the role of women as guardians of family values constrain the shift toward greater gender equality in the society as a whole.

One would expect that egalitarian gender roles would characterize kibbutz communities in Israel.<sup>7</sup> Founded on an ideology of equality, with an emphasis on communal responsibilities for family and work, the kibbutz should be the ideal economic and family setting for more-equal gender roles to emerge. And there is some basis for this assessment in the division of labor among kibbutz members and the shared activities in family and labor.

Yet, it is not surprising that the kibbutz falls far from the ideal of equality. What is unexpected is that research has documented greater gender-occupational segregation in the kibbutz than in Israel as a whole. This finding contrasts sharply with the expected kibbutz environment, which should be conducive to occupational equality between men and women, given the deep ideological commitment to equality, high valuation of work, an egalitarian educational system, and collectivization of household work that allows women to develop careers. Although production is not necessarily contributed to equally by gender, equality governs the distribution of income. A striking finding of that research is that occupational segregation on gender grounds is much higher than it is on ethnic grounds—gender-occupational segregation is more than double that of ethnic segregation in the Jewish population. The occupational status of women in the kibbutz is simply inferior to that of women in the rest of Israel (Neuman 1991).

Despite the absence of salaries and income in the kibbutz, fewer women than men have access to resources. Kibbutz men have more access than women to cars and travel and occupational training. Men are, on the whole, more autonomous economically than women in the kibbutz and have a wider range of occupational choices. Hence, fewer women acquire the expertise and seniority to become heads of departments or to achieve seniority in positions in the kibbutz. Like the military and the society as whole, kibbutz life reinforces aspects of gender inequality (Agassi 1993).

### Concluding Observations

In large part, gender inequalities have characterized traditional as well as modern societies for centuries. There are some signs of increased gender equality in Israel, relating to education and increased labor-force participation, in formal legal rights and in military service, and in ideological commitments to gender neutrality. Nevertheless, a systematic and careful look at these arenas of social life points to the unmistakable continuation of gender inequalities. There is little evidence that indicates that the reduced gender gap in educational attainment levels has been translated directly into occupational and labor-force equality. Powerful sources of continued gender discrimination in political, religious, and family institutions result in the disadvantaged status of women in Israel. Indeed, it is likely that these gender-segregated roles are reinforced by the educational system, so that similarity among women and men in the number of years of educational exposure does not necessarily imply similar educational experiences. As in the military, crude measures of exposure to equality in education should not be interpreted as indicators of gender equality.

The aim of the European-based society that formulated the reemergence of the state of Israel was to reorganize the family and work system and the religious and political institutions while reestablishing Jewish sovereignty. This reorganization was explicitly designed to include greater attention to equality among groups. The inclusion of large numbers of immigrants from gender-segregated societies added a continual challenge to these egalitarian tendencies. Yet, the mutable gender inequalities in Israeli society at the beginning of the twenty-first century are not simple carryovers from the past and from traditional societies outside Israel; they are Israel-created products. The role of political and religious institutions, as well as the role of the military, in reinforcing and, at a minimum, reflecting inequalities has become a powerful source of gender inequalities among third-generation Israelis.

No less revealing is the occupational segregation of women in kibbutzim, where control over the distribution of resources and of tasks is collectively managed. There, as elsewhere in Israel, some gender patterns are no less segregated (and the evidence suggests even more segregated) and unequal. Whether occupational segregation by gender is a reactionary response to the ideology of equality or a continuing gap between myth and reality, the fact is that nowhere in Israel are there important signs of

gender equality in major institutions. Indeed, gender relations in Israel, as well as general family processes, point to the more-traditional basis of Israeli society relative to European and American societies but also to a more-egalitarian one relative to Third World countries. Again, Israel appears to be straddling the middle at the crossroads of change.

### NOTES

1. There is an increasing social-science literature concerning gender issues in Israel, almost always defined in terms of "women's" roles. I draw on some of that research, although many of the questions that I have previously sketched require more-systematic and methodologically sophisticated studies than are currently available. For a review and collection of important materials on women in Israel, see Azmon and Izraeli 1993. Important critical assessments of gender inequalities are contained in Hazleton 1977, Rein 1979, and in Swirski and Saif 1991; in Hebrew, see Shamgar-Handelman and Bar-Yosef 1991. On the legal aspects of women's roles in Israel see Halperin-Kaddari 2003.

2. For more-detailed statistical documentation, see section 8 on education the *Statistical Abstract of Israel of 2013*.

3. I have little information about the character of the informal-employment sector. It is likely that for Jewish women the informal sector was in the past a more-prominent feature of their work outside the home. It continues to be an important feature of the Arab female population.

4. A similar pattern emerges with regard to ethnic inequalities and the absence of ethnic political protest, since social mobility has characterized all ethnic communities even as the ethnic gap in economic indicators has widened. See the discussion in chapter 8.

5. This increased parental support is in sharp contrast to the situation in the United States, where significant proportions of young adults leave home at 18 to go to college and to live away from the parental home, thereby increasing autonomy for young adults and reducing parenting responsibilities (F. Goldscheider and C. Goldscheider 1994, 1999). This has changed in the first decade of the twenty-first century in the United States with the economic downturn and increasing return of young adults in the postcollege period to the parental home.

6. On Arab family planning see Eisenbach 1986.

7. For a more-detailed description of the kibbutz as a community, see chapter 5.