



Domestic Violence in Arab Society: A Comparison of Arab and Jewish Women in Shelters in Israel

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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to address a gap in the literature by determining prevalence, specific types of violence, and risk factors of intimate partner violence (IPV) among Israeli born Arab women compared with Israeli born Jewish women. The following measures were compared: demographic and socioeconomic measures; measures relating to the characteristics of the violence, that is, the three types of violence (physical, emotional, and verbally threatening), sense of danger, and history of violence in childhood; family support levels; and perpetrator characteristics. The sample consisted of 154 Israeli born Arab women and 149 Israeli born Jewish women who were staying in shelters for victims of domestic violence in Israel. A comparison of the two groups revealed that the Arab women were exposed to more physical violence and received less family support than did their Jewish counterparts. The proportion of Arab perpetrators with access to weapons was higher than that of Jewish perpetrators, whereas the proportion of police complaints against Jewish perpetrators was higher than that against Arab perpetrators. Arab women were also younger, less educated, and less a part of the workforce than Jewish women. The contribution of the woman's age to the variance

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in levels of physical violence was negative and significant. In contrast, the contribution of her sense of danger, and various perpetrator characteristics, was positive. Moreover, the interaction between sense of danger \times ethnicity contributed significantly to levels of violence. This study extends the existing knowledge about the contribution of ethnicity as one of many variables that play a role in the lives of women who are victims of domestic violence and highlights the need to develop, in particular, unique individual, community, and social interventions for Arab women in Israeli society.

Keywords

domestic violence, culture, ethnicity, Arab women, Jewish women

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a phenomenon that transcends religion, nationality, and culture. The incidence of IPV among women worldwide is estimated to range between 10% and 69 % (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). The World Health Organization (WHO; 2013) has reported that industrialized countries tend to have lower rates of IPV compared with nonindustrialized and newly industrialized countries, indicating that this social problem—to varying degrees—is found consistently across cultural settings and countries (García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006).

In Israel, violence against women exists among all sectors of the population. However, the literature highlights three particular ethnic groups in Israel—Arabs, immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU), and immigrants from Ethiopia—as being particularly vulnerable to IPV. These three groups are all characterized by patriarchal norms that legitimize IPV (Ben-Porat, 2010; Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005; Haj-Yahia, 2000). When teasing these groups apart, though, it becomes clear that it is Israeli born Arab women who stand out for having the highest rates of IPV relative to their proportion in the Israeli population, which is 21%.

The findings of a survey conducted by Daoud, Sergienko, and Shoham-Vardi (2017) emphasized the serious situation of Arab women in Israeli society. At the time of the study, conducted among women of childbearing age in Israel, marked differences were found in the prevalence of IPV among Israeli born Arab, Israeli born Jewish, and Israeli immigrant Jewish women (67%, 27%, and 30%, respectively). Types of IPV (i.e., physical, verbal, and social) and recurrence of IPV were significantly higher among the Arab women than among the women in the other two groups.

Eisikovits, Winstok, and Fishman (2004), in the first Israeli national survey on domestic violence, found at the time of their study that 32% of the

Israeli Arab women had experienced physical violence compared with 11% of the women in the overall Israeli population. The same survey also revealed that the lowest level of domestic violence was carried out against Jewish women and the highest level was carried out against Arab women.

A review of the research that has been conducted on violence against Arab women indicates that besides the data that underscore the seriousness of the problem, very few attempts have been made—relative to studies on violence against women from other societies—to look at the specific types of violence used against Arab women and the specific risk factors that contribute to IPV in this population (Daoud et al., 2017; Hammoury & Khawaja, 2007; Maziak & Asfar, 2003).

Generally speaking, Arab women living in Israel experience a quite complex political status compared with their Jewish counterparts. One particular difference between them, in the context of domestic abuse, is manifested in the barriers that Arab women encounter when they utilize services—for example, language barriers, inaccessibility of professional services, and stigmatizing treatment (Erez, Ibarra, & Gur, 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2007). These difficulties are exacerbated by social norms that call for Arab women to endure violence, a situation which ultimately leads to their isolation and lack of support (Haj-Yahia, 2002). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the two groups would present a different exposure to and experience of IPV, and therefore, in this study, we sought to fill a gap in the literature by determining prevalence, specific types of violence, and risk factors of IPV among Israeli born Arab women compared with Israeli born Jewish women staying in shelters in Israel.

The following measures were compared: demographic and socioeconomic measures; measures relating to the characteristics of the violence, that is, the three types of violence (physical, emotional, and verbally threatening), sense of danger, and history of violence in childhood; family support levels; and perpetrator characteristics. In addition, we examined the overall contribution of the research variables to explaining the variance in violence as well as the unique contribution of ethnicity to explaining this variance.

Theoretical Background

IPV has been attributed, in varying degrees, to societal, cultural, and individual factors. Archer (2006), for his part, saw cultural variables as playing a key role in IPV and—after analyzing different cultural factors in 16 different countries—discovered that IPV had a greater prevalence in collectivist countries than it did in individualist countries. In fact, culture not only seems to play a role in determining who will likely perpetrate and/or be a victim of IPV but also how the perpetrator will perpetrate the abuse and how the victim

will endure/react to this abuse (Yoshioka & Choi, 2005). Because much of the research on IPV has been conducted in the more highly developed countries, it is important to keep in mind the ideas of Johnson and Ferraro (2000), who cautioned against imposing Western ideas about human relationships on other cultures. One way to avoid doing so is by examining the specifics of the IPV in a variety of countries and cultures, an examination which may enable us to know whether existing theories hold true across cultural settings (Terrazas-Carrillo & McWhirter, 2015).

The social structure of Arab society, in contrast to that of Jewish society in Israel, is patriarchal and collectivist. That is to say, male dominance over women and children is generally accepted, as reflected in the justification of violence by husbands against their wives and children (Haj-Yahia, 2000, 2002). The patriarchal characteristics of Arab society are also expressed in the lack of social support, and sense of isolation was experienced by women who are victims of domestic violence; in other words, many Arab women seem to prefer to stay in abusive spousal relationships than be forced to cope with the rejection they would endure from society and family members if they left (Adelman, 2000; Haj-Yahia, 2002). And, indeed, studies conducted in Israel have shown that Arab women report receiving less support from family members when dealing with the problem of domestic violence than do Jewish women (Al-Krenawi, 1999b; Morrison, 2004). In addition, studies conducted in Israel have shown that Arab women reported a greater sense of feeling that their lives were in danger from their intimate partners than did Jewish women (Al-Krenawi, 1999a; Morrison, 2004). These findings are consistent with the results of studies conducted among Arabs who reside in the United States as well (Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona, & Ballout, 2010).

It must be kept in mind that the overall situation of Arabs in Israel is a complicated one, owing to their minority status in the country and the tensions between them and the Jewish population. This political situation and the discriminatory policies of successive governments have negatively affected the Arabs' socioeconomic position: The Arabs have lower education, lower income, and are more likely to be unemployed (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013) than are their Jewish counterparts (Carmi & Rosenfeld, 1992). As for domestic violence, findings on violence against Arab women indicate that both men and women with lower levels of education and a lower occupational status tend to adhere to patriarchal norms and justify violence against women (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker, & Ghachem, 2003; Haj-Yahia, 1998a).

Theorists who have studied crime, violence, and policing in minority groups, and in the Israeli Arab world specifically, have argued that gendered racism and racialized sexism play a role in shaping victim, police, and

authority responses (Adelman, Erez, & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003), perhaps resulting in increased crime rates. Moreover, Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2007) had suggested that the political conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is a factor in the militarization of policing which may reinforce rather than ameliorate ethnic prejudice, racism, and discrimination and, again, lead to higher crime rates in this sector. And, indeed, in recent years, public figures in the Israeli Arab population have called on the legal authorities in Israel to take action against the sharp increase in the use of illegal weapons, substance abuse, and criminality among Arab men (“Manhigim batzibur ha’aravi,” 2005), as revealed in a national survey conducted by the Israel Anti-Drug Authority (2011). According to the survey, 4.6% of Arab youth used psychoactive substances compared with 1.9% of Jewish youth. In addition, Israel Police data indicate that there has been an increase in crime in the Arab community in Israel despite an overall decline in crime in Israel in general (Israel Knesset, Center for Research and Information, 2010).

Research Questions

In light of all of the abovementioned factors, the following research questions were posed:

Research Question 1: What are the differences between Israeli born Arab and Israeli born Jewish women with regard to the prevalence and specific type of violence (physical, emotional, and verbally threatening), sense of danger, and history of violence as a child?

Research Question 2: What are the differences between Israeli born Arab and Israeli born Jewish women with regard to their sociodemographic characteristics, the characteristics of the men who perpetrate violence against them (access to weapons, drug use, and criminal activity), and family support levels?

Research Question 3: How will the research variables contribute to explaining the variance in domestic violence among Israeli born Arab versus Israeli born Jewish women, and how will the interaction with ethnicity contribute to explaining this variance?

Method

Sample

The current study was part of a larger study conducted by the authors. The sample of participants in the present study was drawn from a larger sample of

506 women who were staying in 12 shelters for victims of domestic violence in Israel. The larger sample included 149 Israeli born Jewish women, 154 Israeli born Arab women, 125 women born in the FSU, and 78 women born in Ethiopia. Participants for this larger sample were chosen out of a total of 1,409 women who applied to shelters between September 2009 and April 2014. After eliminating the women with cognitive impairments or pathological conditions as well as those who left the shelter within 7 days after arrival—as we felt that the ones who left would not be representative of the sample as a whole—data were collected from 526 women, and the response rate was 68.97%. Twenty women were excluded from the research sample due to completion of less than 42% of questions. Therefore, the final sample included 506 participants.

To examine the current study's research questions, we selected from the larger research sample only the Israeli born Arab women (154) and the Israeli born Jewish women (149), for a total of 303 women, and did not include the women who had immigrated from the FSU or Ethiopia. These 303 participants ranged in age from 19 to 73 ($M = 32.84$, $SD = 8.99$). About 51% of them were married, 26% were unmarried, and the rest were separated or divorced; 80% had children; and about 40% had worked during the past year. The women had been living with domestic violence for periods ranging from less than 1 year to 54 years ($M = 9.34$, $SD = 8.26$).

Instruments

Demographic questionnaire. This questionnaire included data on the women's background characteristics: year of birth, place of birth, ethnicity, religion, years of education, family income level, employment status, and number of children.

Level of violence. This questionnaire was developed by Eisikovits et al. (2004) in the first Israeli national survey on domestic violence and includes 12 items that measure different types and frequency of violence: verbal aggression (e.g., cursing, insulting, yelling), psychological/emotional abuse (e.g., controlling, domineering, stalking, attempting to isolate the woman, limiting her contact with family and friends, preventing her from accessing resources), three items of physical assault (e.g., breaking things, moderate physical violence, severe physical violence), and sexual assault (forced intercourse). For each of these items, the women were asked to rank the frequency of abuse in their relationship with their partner on the following scale: 1 (*one-time*), 2 (*once a month or less*), 3 (*2-4 times a week*), and 4 (*daily*). Oblimin-rotation principal components analysis yielded three main factors that explained the

variance in the data: physical assault (three items), psychological abuse (five items), and threats (four items). For the three factors in the questionnaire, one overall score was calculated for overall frequency of violence. The overall Cronbach's alpha reliability of the instrument used in this study was .81.

Traumatic life events in childhood. Two traumatic childhood events were presented to the women (i.e., "As a child, did your parents hit you?" and "Did you witness violence between your parents?"). Participants were asked to state whether they had had either of these two experiences using a "yes/no" format.

Questionnaire about the perpetrator. This questionnaire examined the characteristics of the perpetrator on the basis of the following questions: "Did he work during the last year?" "Does he use drugs/alcohol?" "Does he have access to weapons?" "Has he ever undergone psychiatric treatment?" and "Have police complaints been lodged against him for crimes other than domestic violence?" Responses were based on a dichotomous scale (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*).

Perceived risk to life questionnaire. This single-item questionnaire—based on a study by Gal (1994), which assessed the sense of stress and danger among Israelis who had been exposed to terror—measured the woman's sense of danger in her relationship. In the present study, this measure was adapted to assess the women's perceived sense of danger in the context of exposure to domestic violence. Participants were asked, "In your relationship with your partner/the person who harmed you, to what extent have you felt that your life is in danger?" Responses were based on a 10-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*to a very great extent*).

Family support. This variable was measured via a single-item questionnaire. The women were asked, "To what extent does your family support you in dealing with the violence you experience when you are at home with your partner or the person who has harmed you?" Responses were based on a 10-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*to a very great extent*).

Procedure

The study was conducted at 12 out of a total of 13 existing shelters in Israel for victims of domestic violence and their children (an additional shelter was built after the end of the study). Of the 12 shelters, two are for Arab women, one is for religious Jewish women, and the rest—including the one shelter that did not participate in the study due to building renovations that were taking place there at the time—are for mixed populations of women.

The research team included both Arab and Jewish researchers who in the first stage of the study held meetings with the directors of the shelters and their supervisor at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services. In these meetings, the aims of the study were defined and adapted to expectations about what specifically would be examined. In the second stage of the study, each shelter appointed a coordinator—that is, one of the staff members who worked at the shelter on a daily basis—for the project. These coordinators received the full support and backing of the research team, and it was they who approached each woman within the first 2 weeks of her arrival at the shelter to ask her if she would agree to fill out a questionnaire. Each woman was assured, individually, that the findings would be anonymous and confidential and that the responses would not be accessible to the shelter's staff. The research coordinators then distributed the questionnaires to those women who consented to participate in the study. Completed questionnaires, which were self-administered, were returned to the coordinators in a blank envelope so that the shelter staff would not be privy to the responses and the women's privacy would be maintained. The coordinators returned all completed questionnaires to the research team.

To obtain data from the Arabic-speaking women, the questionnaires were translated into Arabic by two Arabic-speaking social workers with expertise in the field of domestic violence, each of whom translated the questionnaires separately. Afterward, on the basis of the two translations, they developed one uniform version of the Arabic questionnaire about which they were in agreement. The study was authorized by the Research Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services and by the Ethics Committee of the School of Social Work at Bar-Ilan University.

Results

In the first stage of the analysis, to examine whether the two groups of participants differed with regard to the variables examined in the study, we compared the characteristics of Arab women who had experienced domestic violence with the corresponding characteristics of Israeli born Jewish women in the same shelters: that is, measures of domestic violence as well as measures of the women's sense of danger, family support, variables relating to the characteristics of the perpetrator, and sociodemographic characteristics. Table 1 presents the differences between groups as revealed by χ^2 tests for the categorical variable and by *t* tests for the continuous variables.

As shown in Table 1, significant differences were found between the two groups.

The Arab women experienced more physical violence than did the Jewish women. They also witnessed or experienced higher rates of violence during

Table 1. Characteristics and Measures of Domestic Violence and Support Among Israeli Born Arab and Israeli Born Jewish Women Who Are Victims of Domestic Violence.

Characteristics	Israeli Born Arab Women		Israeli Born Jewish Women		Statistical Test of Difference
	M	SD	M	SD	
Age	30.44	6.67	35.04	10.54	$t(305) = -4.47^{***}$
Women's years of education	9.85	2.83	12.36	2.47	$t(305) = 8.07^{***}$
Women's employment status (% employed)	31%		50%		$\chi^2 = 11.83^{**}$
Partners' employment status (% employed)	59%	1.13	62%	1.16	$\chi^2 = .17$
Income level ^a	1.77		2.01		$t(305) = -1.59$
Characteristics of violence					
Psychological abuse	2.81	1.03	2.98	0.95	$t(305) = 1.47$
Physical violence	1.79	0.95	1.42	0.79	$t(305) = 3.52^{**}$
Verbal threats	1.47	1.05	1.26	0.91	$t(305) = 1.82$
Sense of danger	6.85	3.41	6.54	3.19	$t(305) = 0.55$
Abuse in childhood (% abused)	49%		31%		$\chi^2 = 11.56^{**}$
Witnessed violence in childhood	55%		34%		$\chi^2 = 13.34^{***}$
Family support	3.13	3.09	4.61	3.57	$t(305) = 3.71^{***}$
Characteristics of perpetrator					
Access to weapons	43%		17%		$\chi^2 = 22.83^{**}$
Drug or alcohol use	44%		39%		$\chi^2 = 0.57$
Psychiatric treatment	19%		27%		$\chi^2 = 2.46$
Police complaints	29%		47%		$\chi^2 = 8.92^{**}$

^aIncome levels: 1 = up to NIS 3,600, 2 = NIS 3,600-7,000, 3 = over NIS 7,000.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

their childhood than did the Jewish women. Moreover, a significant difference between the two groups was found with regard to family support: The Jewish women received more family support than did the Arab women.

In addition, the Israeli born Arab women were younger than the Israeli born Jewish women and had lower levels of education and employment rates. A significant difference between the groups was also found with regard to the characteristics of the perpetrator: The Arab men had more access to weapons than did the Jewish men, whereas the rate of complaints to the police against Jewish men was higher than the rate of complaints against Arab men.

In the second stage of the analysis, to examine the extent to which the research variables including ethnicity explained the variance in the levels of

physical violence that were found to differ between the two groups, we examined the relationship between all research variables and calculated Pearson's correlations. Significant correlations were found between levels of physical domestic violence and the following variables: woman's age, income level, and her sense of danger. No significant correlation was found between the levels of physical domestic violence and the woman's receipt of family support. In addition, Spearman's correlations were calculated to examine the relationship between physical violence and the dichotomous research variables. A significant correlation was found between levels of physical violence and the following variables: perpetrator's access to weapons, use of drugs, and police complaints lodged against him. Physical violence did not correlate significantly with the woman's employment status, experience of abuse during childhood, or witnessing of violence during childhood (see Table 2).

Finally, hierarchical regressions were carried out in three steps with the variables that correlated significantly with levels of physical violence. In the first step, the women's sociodemographic variables were entered; in the second step, variables relating to the perpetrator and the women's sense of danger were entered. In the third step, to examine the unique contribution of ethnicity to levels of physical violence over and above the contribution of other variables, the interactions between ethnicity (Israeli born Arab women vs. Israeli born Jewish women) \times all research variables were analyzed using a stepwise regression method. Table 3 below presents the results of the two regression analyses.

As shown in Table 3, the combination of variables entered in the first step contributed significantly to the level of physical violence. After controlling for other sociodemographic variables, the woman's age contributed significantly to physical violence: The younger the woman was, the higher the levels of violence. In addition, ethnicity contributed significantly to explaining the variance in physical violence: Israeli born Arab women experienced more physical violence than their Jewish counterparts. Of the perpetrator variables, which were entered in the second step, access to weapons and psychiatric treatment as well as police complaints lodged against them—plus the women's sense of danger—contributed to explaining high levels of physical violence. The variables entered in this step added 31% to explaining the variance in levels of physical violence. Finally, in the third step, the interaction between ethnicity and perceived danger was found to contribute significantly to explaining the levels of physical violence. This interaction added 2% to explaining the variance in levels of such violence: $b = .13, p < .001$ for Israeli born Arab women and $b = .07, p < .05$ for Israeli born Jewish women. Figure 1 describes the sources of the interaction.

Table 2. Pearson's/Spearman's Correlations Among Research Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age		.04	.06	.02	-.13*	.06	-.13*	-.11	.09	-.04	.02	-.02	.04
2. Education			.20***	.00	-.13*	.19***	.01	-.09	.05	.02	.09	-.04	-.06
3. Income level				-.10	-.14**	.18**	.06	-.11	.00	-.02	.10	-.10	-.13*
4. Sense of danger					.47***	.00	.25***	.15*	.03	.14*	.00	.02	.04
5. Physical violence						-.05	.36***	.16**	.16**	.19**	-.03	.05	.05
6. Family support								.07	.12	.11	.08	-.43***	-.37***
7. Access to weapons									.06	-.06	.01	.13**	.11
8. Use of drugs and alcohol										.12*	-.01	.00	.01
9. Psychiatric treatment									.01	.10	.12*	-.12	.02
10. Police complaints											.02	.00	-.03
11. Employment status												.00	-.01
12. Abuse in childhood													.49***
13. Witnessing violence in childhood													

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regressions to Explain the Variance in Levels of Physical Domestic Violence.

	Physical Violence				
	β	SE B	B	ΔR^2	F
Step 1				.06*	3.32
Ethnicity	-.14*	.09	-.02		
Age	-.12*	.00	-.01		
Education	-.07	.01	-.01		
Income level	-.02	.03	-.02		
Step 2				.31***	31.03
Access to weapons	.18**	.09	.31		
Drug or alcohol use	.01	.08	.02		
Psychiatric treatment	.19**	.09	.27		
Police complaints	.18**	.08	.25		
Sense of danger	.51***	.01	.13		
Step 3				.02*	5.3
Sense of danger \times Ethnicity	-.17**	.02	-.5		
R^2				.39*	

Note. The table only presents the interactions that were found to be significant.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

As shown in Figure 1, among both groups of participants, the greater the woman's sense of danger, the higher the levels of physical violence. This contribution, however, was more significant for Arab women than for Jewish women.

Discussion

In the current study, we wished to acknowledge the role of ethnicity as a factor worthy of analysis in the context of domestic violence. Indeed, our findings have provided more information regarding the specific profile and needs of Arab women who are victims of domestic violence, in comparison with their Jewish counterparts.

An examination of the differences between the two research populations revealed that regarding the characteristics of violence, the Israeli born Arab women had greater exposure to one specific type of violence—that is, physical violence—than the Israeli born Jewish women did before they arrived at the shelter. A closer examination of the regression analyses revealed that ethnicity contributed significantly to explaining this variance in physical violence. The

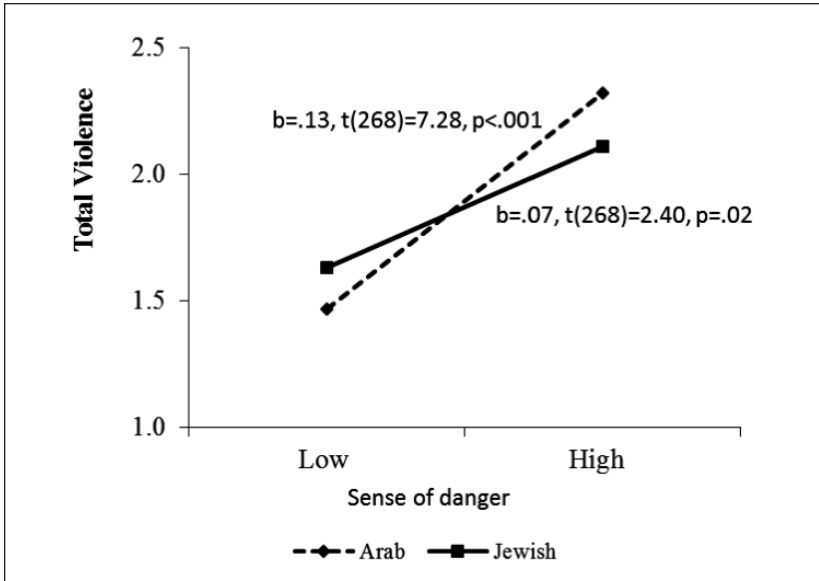


Figure 1. Sources of the interaction between ethnicity and sense of danger.

Arab women had also experienced and witnessed more violence during their childhood than had the Jewish women. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies conducted in Israel, which have compared Israeli born Arab women with Israeli born Jewish women (Daoud et al., 2017; Eisikovits et al., 2004). The ethnic gap in IPV in Israel highlights the role of ethnicity as an important component of physical violence among the specific population examined in the study.

These findings do not exist in a vacuum; rather, one must take into account the Arab minority's social class and political position and the political violence resulting from the long-standing Palestinian Israeli conflict (Clark et al., 2010). It is well known that social and structural factors in the environment affect IPV (O'Campo et al., 1995). Local-level policies implemented to address community violence also have an impact on IPV and domestic violence. If one adds to these factors the patriarchal and collectivist norms that still typify Arab society, it becomes clear that many dimensions must be considered to fully understand IPV in Israel across ethnic groups.

Regarding the sense of danger, no significant difference was found between the reports of Jewish versus Arab participants. This finding contradicts the results of previous studies conducted in Israel, which revealed that Arab women

felt their lives were in greater danger than did Jewish women (Al-Krenawi, 1999b; Morrison, 2004). One possible explanation for this finding is that the sense of danger was measured just after the women arrived at the shelters. At that point, the women in both groups were in extreme crisis mode, a factor which may account for the similarity in their reported feelings. Another explanation is that the Arab women who participated in the study may have minimized their sense of danger in light of the tremendous difficulty involved in going to the shelter in the first place and disclosing the violence that had been committed against them (Al-Krenawi, 1999b; Morrison, 2004).

Although the women in the two groups were not found to differ with regard to their sense of danger, the contribution of this variable to explaining the variance in physical domestic violence was high and noteworthy, as was the finding that the interaction between sense of danger and ethnicity contributed significantly to physical domestic violence, particularly among Arab women. This finding is especially relevant in light of the debate in the literature regarding the ability of women to predict the extent of danger that they actually face (Campbell, 1995; Dutton, 1996). Moreover, the findings of this study validate the importance of the woman's experience and show how on-target she is at predicting the real danger she is in, particularly in Arab society. This evidence is supported by the findings of several other studies that have been conducted among women who are victims of domestic violence (Bell, Bennett-Cattaneo, Goodman, & Dutton, 2008; Bennett-Cattaneo, Bell, Goodman, & Dutton, 2007; Bennett-Cattaneo & Goodman, 2003).

As for support from the family, the findings revealed that the Israeli born Arab women received less support from their families than did the Israeli born Jewish women. That said, in this study, family support was not found to contribute significantly to explaining the variance in domestic violence. In other words, although other studies have also found that women in Arab society receive lower levels of support from their families in situations of domestic violence due to patriarchal beliefs and attitudes that promote violence (Haj-Yahia, 2002), it also seems likely, at least on the basis of this study, that family support is not a main contributing factor in levels of domestic violence.

Regarding the characteristics of the perpetrator, the findings revealed that the proportion of Israeli born Arab perpetrators who had access to weapons was higher than the proportion of Israeli born Jewish perpetrators who had such access. However, the proportion of police complaints lodged against Israeli born Jewish perpetrators was higher than the proportion of complaints lodged against Israeli born Arab perpetrators. This finding suggests that the level of police intervention in these cases was higher among the Jewish population than among the Arab population and may reflect the tendency on the

part of Israeli Arabs to avoid police intervention. Such a tendency may derive from their perception of the Israeli police as being racist and either slow or reluctant to provide assistance in times of need (Adelman et al., 2003; Al-Krenawi & Wiesel, 2002; Haj-Yahia, 2002).

It is worth noting that the following factors—perpetrator's access to weapons and complaints lodged against him to the police—contributed significantly to explaining the variance in the levels of physical domestic violence. These findings are consistent with the results of several studies that have evaluated the contribution of these variables to the sense of danger experienced by victims of domestic violence (Bowen, 2011). As the differences between the two study groups in these particular areas were not found to be significant—areas which reflect the extent of normative behavior among perpetrators and their ability to control their violent tendencies—it would appear that perpetrators of domestic violence share characteristics which transcend cultural contexts. This issue is one that deserves to be more deeply examined in future research.

As for sociodemographic resources, the Israeli born Arab women were younger and less well educated than their Israeli born Jewish counterparts, and they had less of a presence in the labor force. These findings are consistent with existing data showing such differences between the Arab and Jewish populations of Israel (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Although it is true that Arab women have begun to marry at later ages and that there is a larger number of Arab women in the labor force than before, it would appear that there are still forces that inhibit change in the overall status of Arab women. These forces seem to include a lack of equal opportunity for these women due to institutionalized (i.e., governmental) discriminatory policies against them and racism (Carmi & Rosenfeld, 1992). They may also include sociocultural factors such as the persistence of patriarchal beliefs as well as the Islamic movement's perpetuation of rigid attitudes toward women (Holt, 2003; Jad, 1998).

Summary and Recommendations for Future Research

In the current study, we aimed to draw attention to the unique role played by ethnicity in the lives of women who are victims of domestic abuse, by comparing Israeli born Arab women with Israeli born Jewish women. Comparisons were made in regard to sociodemographic resources as well as characteristics of and specific types of violence, levels of family support, and characteristics of the perpetrator. We also assessed the overall contribution of the research variables to explaining the variance in physical domestic violence experienced by these two groups.

The study had several limitations. First, it was cross-sectional; as such, the results might have been different had another time-frame been chosen. Moreover, due to the cross-sectional design of the study, causal relationships cannot be determined, and the specific nature of the sample precludes generalizations to Arab society as a whole. Another limitation stems from the fact that even though questionnaires were distributed discreetly, the women's responses may have been influenced by fear, distrust of the shelter staff, or social desirability. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that the study relied exclusively on the women's reports; we did not examine the perspectives of professionals or of the male partners. Moreover, some of the variables were measured on the basis of one item. It would therefore be worthwhile to conduct further research on this topic among additional Arab populations and among the professionals who work with them.

Despite these limitations, the findings point to the unique role played by ethnicity in the lives of women who are victims of domestic abuse and specifically in the lives of domestically abused Israeli Arab women. The study underscored the differences between the two groups in terms of physical violence, history of violence as a child, education level, employment status, and characteristics of the men who perpetrate violence against them. The differences in these variables reflect the ongoing distress of Arab women who are victims of domestic violence, alongside the relatively low level of resources available to them, which likely keep them dependent on their abusive partners. This finding highlights the importance of empowering Israeli Arab women and increasing their access to services by removing existing barriers. In addition, we found that the woman's sense of danger played an important and accurate role in predicting the violence that would be committed against her, especially in the Arab sector. Although this finding strongly supports the importance of taking the woman's perspective into consideration in both populations, it seems to be of particular importance for Arab women; their assessments of the danger they were in proved to be quite reliable measures of the actual danger confronting them.

In conclusion, the current study calls attention to the situation of women who are victims of domestic violence in Arab society and highlights the need for a further examination of domestic violence and its implications for them. At the policy level, the study also points to the necessity of conducting, in the Arab sector, individual, community, and social interventions that would include working with both men and women and with community leaders.

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