

# Israeli Women in the Work Force

Dafna Nundi-Izraeli

At the end of 1975, the Israeli Government established a Prime Minister's Commission chaired by MK Ora Namir to study the status of women in Israel 'and to make recommendations for advancing equality and partnership between men and women in all aspects of life'.<sup>1</sup> For two years the approximately ninety members of the commission heard testimonies, studied research reports and were exposed to the work of similar commissions in other countries. In February 1978 the commission submitted its report containing 241 policy recommendations. The report dropped like a pebble on placid water, sending ripples through the system in ever widening circles of influence.

The information that had been systematically gathered about women 'in all aspects of life' undermined the long-standing myth of sex equality in Israeli society. For decades the legacy of the road-building pioneer women of the 1920s, the career of Golda Meir, the economic independence of women in the *kibbutz*, and compulsory military training for women all bolstered the belief that Israel had achieved a level of sex equality unsurpassed by other modern societies. Israelis were resistant to a re-examination of the facts. The commission did just that.

The report pointed to the high proportion of women among the illiterate, the high level of occupational segregation by sex, both in the civilian and the military economies, the large earnings gap between men and women, the prevalence of sexism in the

\* D. Nundi-Izraeli is a sociologist and teaches in the Department of Labor Studies, Tel-Aviv University.

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *Commission on the Status of Women*, Jerusalem, February 1978 (Hebrew). A second, more comprehensive report was submitted in August of that year.

educational system and mass media, the inadequacy of services necessary to enable women to combine domestic and market work, the token representation of women in positions of political power and their absence from positions of economic power.

Other studies undertaken at the time re-examined the founding myths of Israeli society regarding the role of women in the process of national reconstruction. They revealed the strong opposition women had faced to their demands for equal rights to jobs and immigration certificates, for legal reforms and for representation in emerging political structures.<sup>2</sup>

The status of women in Israel is complex and marked with blatant contradictions. Israeli women are educated in the spirit of modern achievement-oriented values which emphasize the right of each individual to develop his/her unique potential and to a job based on his/her unique abilities and preferences. But, at the same time, strongly held traditional values ascribe roles on the basis of gender, emphasizing the centrality of the family, and supporting the sex division of labor which makes women responsible for daily child care and domestic chores. Many collective labor agreements contain special privileges for working mothers (not granted to working fathers) both reflecting and reinforcing the primacy and centrality of the woman's family roles.

The value placed on family life embodies a set of beliefs about the appropriate roles of husband and wife. Social norms invest the husband with the obligation and prerogative to be head of his family and its major reliable source of income and prestige. This is more than a description of reality, it is the expression of how things ought to be. The man whose wife's achievements exceed his own is often the object of public sympathy, sometimes even disdain. Popular belief holds that a 'happy marriage' requires that a wife hold a less prestigious and lower-paying job and that her work be defined as less important for the family than his. At the same time social norms reward women who achieve a social identity of their own and social status based on their own achievements, independent of those of their husbands.

The mixed messages of the modern and the traditional place women in a double bind that, as we shall see, has important ramifications for their behavior and position in the economy.

### *The Changing Patterns of Women's Participation in the Labor Force*

During the 1970s, women were the economy's major source of new workers. Between 1970 and 1980 female labor force participation increased from 29.3 to 35.7 percent and among

<sup>2</sup> D. N. Izraeli, 'The Zionist Women's Movement in Palestine; 1911-1927', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, July 1, 1981.

Jewish women over 17 years of age it reached 40 percent.<sup>3</sup> In 1980 there were 481,200 women employed or actively looking for work, 61.6 percent more than in 1970. They comprised 36.5 percent of the total civilian labor force in Israel.

The growth in female participation came at a time of declining participation rates for males, so that women's contribution to the net annual increase in the work force between 1970 and 1975 was over 50 percent; between 1978 and 1979 it was approximately 70 percent.

Women joined the labor force in response to the demand created by the economic expansion following the Six-Day War in 1967. In its aftermath, the development of industry, the universities, and services both public and community, as well as finance and business, increased the demand for labor. At the same time growing military and defense-related needs absorbed men from the civilian sector, shrinking the pool of those available for the civilian economy. In most cases the demand came from occupations such as teaching, social work, and clerical work where women already had a foothold. In others it came from occupations previously closed to women such as bank tellers, where, unable to attract men in sufficient numbers, employers were forced to hire women. This proving satisfactory, they became more receptive to hiring women. The shortage of labor during the seventies opened opportunities also to older women who had previously encountered difficulty competing with younger women for jobs.

The expanded demand for labor coincided with the growth in the supply of women seeking employment. This growth, in part stimulated by the increase in attractive job opportunities, was also the outcome of changes in the age structure and educational attainment of the female population. The proportionate increase in female labor force participation was not uniform over all sectors of the population. As we shall now see, it varied with age, ethnic origin, education and marital status.

Table 1  
*Percentage of Women in Civilian Labor Force by Age  
 1970-1980*

Age Group	1970	1975	1980	1983
14-17	18.1	11.3	10.9	8.7
18-24	44.9	40.4	39.9	37.2
25-34	32.6	44.2	52.6	55.1
35-44	31.9	40.6	50.1	53.5
45-54	33.9	36.8	41.7	45.4
55-64	22.1	22.4	26.0	26.4
65+	5.0	6.0	6.6	5.9

Source: *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1975, p. 295; 1981, p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> The term Labor Force refers to all persons 14 years old and over employed or actively looking for work. The data in this section are derived primarily from the *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1981, v. 32. Only some 20,000 or 12 percent

*Age:* the 1970s saw a decline in the proportion of pre-army-age girls and of 18-to-24-year-olds in the labor force, attributable largely to the prolongation of school education. The largest increase occurred among 24-to-35-year-olds, where between 1970 and 1980 participation rates grew by 62 percent. This growth cannot be attributed to a rising marital age, as the median age of marriage for women has been relatively stable for almost three decades standing at around 22 years. The period 24 to 35 is, therefore, also one of maximum fertility when child care responsibilities are most demanding. The proportion of women aged 35-44 increased by 57 percent and of older women to a lesser degree (see Table 1). The age curve for labor force participation reaches a single peak around the age of 30, declines only very gradually until 40 and then drops more sharply. This curve differs from that for the female labor force in the United States which has a second peak at about forty. This difference may be attributed to the relatively higher educational level and lower marital stability of American women aged 35-44, factors conducive to labor force participation.

Table 2  
*Percentage of Jewish Women in Civilian Labor Force  
 by Ethnic Origin*

<i>Country of Origin</i>	1954	1961	1971	1980	1982
Asia-Africa (AA)	14.9	22.5	25.1	32.5	33.9
Europe-America (EA)	24.7	31.5	34.1	37.3	37.3
Israel	27.4	38.2	38.8	45.8	47.7
Father Israeli (II)		34.8	33.5	39.5	40.0
Father Asian-African (IAA)		37.3	37.9	40.2	42.1
Father European-American (IEA)		41.4	39.6	54.2	52.8

Source: *Labor Force Surveys, 1954, 1961, 1971, 1980.*

*Ethnic Origin:* comparing changes in labor force participation between the major Jewish ethnic groups, we find that during the last decade women of Asian-African origin entered the labor market at a much faster rate than other ethnic groups. Nonetheless their proportion remains lower than that of European-American or Israeli-born women. Among the latter, those whose fathers were born in Asia-Africa have lower participation rather than those with fathers born in Europe-America, although in both cases participation rates for the Israeli-born are higher than those for their foreign-born mothers.

To what can we attribute these ethnic-linked differences? In the early 1960s the lower participation rates for women born in Asia-Africa could be explained in large measure by two factors:

---

of the non-Jewish women are in the civilian labor force. An understanding of this population requires a separate analysis not covered in this article.

their higher fertility rates and the cultural norms brought from their country of origin.<sup>4</sup> These norms defined women's employment outside the home as a violation of tradition and morality, as well as a sign of lower social class. By the early 1970s, however, the effect of both these factors had declined. The younger generation had undergone a drop in fertility rates (which today are identical to those of women of European-American origin) as well as a change in social norms. Current differences are best explained in terms of disparities in the level of education. When members of ethnic groups with similar years of education are compared, the differences in participation rates are greatly reduced. As the proportion of second-generation women of Asian-African origin completing high school and entering the university increases, we can expect greater equality in participation rates among ethnic groups.

*Education:* years of formal education is the best single predictor of female labor-force participation. The more educated a women is, the more likely she is to be employed. The female labor force is on the average more educated than the male labor force, the median years of schooling being 12 years and 11.1 years respectively.

Table 3  
*Percentage of Men and Women in Civilian Labor Force  
 by Years of Schooling: 1971-1980*

Years of Schooling	1971		1980	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
0	10.3	59.9	10.6	42.9
1-4	15.8	75.6	14.1	57.4
5-8	25.0	77.6	23.3	71.2
9-10	}36.0	}60.7	31.1	56.4
11-12			43.3	60.7
13-15	}61.2	}71.2	61.3	69.0
16+			77.9	76.7

Source: *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1972, p. 310; 1981, p. 327.

The difference in participation rates between men and women is greatest among those with 8 and less years of education, but almost negligible among those with 16 and more years of education, where 76.7 percent of the men and 77.9 percent of the women are in the labor market. At this level of education, participation rates are even higher for Israeli than for American women. The availability of ever-increasing numbers of educated women, therefore, makes it likely that the upward drift in female labor force activity will continue as long as the economy continues to demand workers of higher educational achievement.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. Hartman, *Roles in the Economy and in the Family of Jewish Married Women in Israel*, Research Report, Tel-Aviv University, 1978.

*Marital Status:* in 1961 the proportion of non-married women in the labor force was greater than that of married women (36.1 and 25.7 percent respectively). By the mid-1970s this situation was reversed. The proportion of non-married working women had declined as more single women continued their education and stayed out of the labor force, while the proportion of employed married women had increased. In 1980 39.4 percent of all married women were in the labor force and they comprised 68 percent of the total civilian female labor force in Israel.

The stability of the marital relationship and the presence of children both influence women's decision to go to work. In 1980, 56 percent of divorced women were in the labor force - 17 percent more than married women. Between 1973 and 1979 the rate of divorce per 1,000 non-single Jewish women between 15 and 49 grew from 5.3 to 7.3. With the trend toward a higher divorce rate we may expect to find more women in the labor market who are the major breadwinners in the family.

The more children a woman has, the less likely she is to enter the labor force with the strongest effect occurring with the third child. In addition, the younger the smallest child, the less likely a woman is to go to work with the strongest effect occurring for children under the age of three. These findings are not surprising. What is interesting is that the presence of small children has become less of a deterrent in recent years. In 1980 65.4 percent of all non-single Jewish women with youngest child aged 2-4 were in the labor force and among women with 13 and more years of schooling the figure reached 76.4 percent. Having small children appears to be less a factor in the decision to enter the labor market than in the number of hours worked, choice of occupation and employment sector.

Taking a part-time job is the dominant mode by which Israeli women attempt to juggle the dual responsibilities of home and work. The proportion of women working part-time (less than 35 hours a week) grew during the 1970s and reached 42 percent in 1980, compared to 15.8 percent of men. Part-time work among blue-collar workers is less frequent than among scientific, academic and other professional workers who have greater opportunities for part-time employment.

Part-time work is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it enables married women to enter the labor market and cope with potentially conflicting role expectations. Unlike in many other Western countries, part-time workers in Israel may acquire security of tenure and are entitled to the social-security benefits granted by law or union contract to full time workers. On the other hand, the limited opportunities for training and promotion in most part-time jobs lead women to discount their aspirations and under-utilize their potential.

Selecting a traditional female occupation is another mode of combining family and work careers. Occupations which rely heavily on a female labor force are more likely to be structured to accommodate the demands of the domestic schedule. Teaching, for example, is synchronized with the school calendar. A popular quip has it that the two best things about teaching are July and August. The underlying cynicism of the comment reflects the fact that teaching is often sought more for its extrinsic than intrinsic rewards: 18 percent of the female labor force work as school teachers or principals.

A third related tactic to reduce the conflict between two worlds in which women work, is taking employment in the civil service or *Histadrut*-sponsored community services where the collective agreement between the employer and the trade union grants mothers (only) of two children under 14 the right to work fewer hours a week at the expense of the employer. While championed by the women's organizations within the *Histadrut* as a major achievement for women, such privileges, it is argued, have a boomerang effect. They make women less attractive for senior positions and reinforce the image that it is not worth promoting them.

Studies show that female high-school students have a definite primary commitment to becoming wives and mothers and to assisting their husbands to advance in their careers.<sup>5</sup> The great majority also plan to work outside the home. They believe that they will be able to successfully combine homemaking and market work. Women who aspire to non-traditional occupations, however, have lower expectations of achieving their occupational goal than those who aspire to traditional female occupations.<sup>6</sup> Given the strong traditional sex division of labor in the home, the insufficiency and high cost of alternative child-care services,<sup>7</sup> and the short school day (from 8 to 1 during most of primary school), many of these women, when the time comes, will 'choose' to limit their investment in the labor market to a part-time job. Most will also narrow their occupational choice to fields in which part-time work is available or to traditional female jobs. Expecting that they will have to respond to the demands of their domestic roles, women shy away from high-commitment jobs whose responsibilities they fear they will not

<sup>5</sup> R. Bar-Yosef, A. Bloom and Z. Levi, *Perception of Women's Roles Among 17-Year-old Girls*, The Institute for Work and Welfare, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1976.

<sup>6</sup> R. Shapira and H. Etzioni-Halevi, *Who Is The Israeli Student?*, Am Oved, 1973 (Hebrew).

<sup>7</sup> In 1979 there were over 100,000 women in the labor force with at least one child aged five years or less, but only 35,000 places in day care centers. Almost half of these were reserved for children of welfare families among whom the labor force participation of women is relatively small.

be able to fulfill. Partners to these expectations, employers are frequently restrained from offering them the opportunity to try.

### *The Decision to Work*

For the married woman, the decision to go to work outside her home is in essence a decision to substitute hours spent producing goods and services in the home as well as leisure, for the time spent in the labor market. Three kinds of factors inform that decision: family wealth, including husband's earnings and income from other sources; incentives such as women's potential earnings, type and number of available jobs as well as the availability and cost of alternative forms of child care; and personal preference, including the wife's attitudes towards housework, her occupational aspirations, her desire for economic independence, the importance she attaches to a mother's being at home with her child, and her husband's attitude towards her employment.

Traditionally, except for cooperative settlements, the husband's earnings had a deterrent effect on his wife's labor force participation; the more the husband earned the less likely the wife was to take a job outside the home. The relationship reflected the expectation that the husband be the main provider for his family and only economic necessity justified a woman's entry into the labor market. Among Israeli women with nine years or less of education husband's earnings as well as their own potential income are the two major factors that explain their decision to go to work. Most jobs available to less-educated women provide neither an attractive wage nor many psychological advantages so that given the alternative, that is, an adequate husband's income and/or supplementary social security and welfare grants, they are more likely than educated women to stay at home. These considerations explain the finding from a random sample of 600 Jerusalem women aged 18-63 that those who had worked prior to marriage were less likely than those who had not worked, to stay in the labor market after marriage. The pre-marital workers in the study were also the least educated and those who had held the least attractive jobs.<sup>8</sup>

Among women with more than the compulsory nine years of schooling, education offsets the deterring effect of the husband's income and is the best single predictor of their labor-market participation. The more educated woman has a greater incentive to work since she is more likely to have access both to a better paying and a more interesting job than her less educated counterpart. What is particularly interesting, however, is the

<sup>8</sup> L. Efroni, *The Social and Economic Factors Affecting Married Women's Decision to Work in Israel*, Hebrew University, Work and Welfare Research Institute, 1976.



finding that in Israel education has a stronger impact on a woman's decision to go to work than either her own potential earnings or her husband's income.<sup>9</sup> For a large number of educated women with small children, employment is even of questionable economic utility. After deducting expenses of alternative child care and domestic goods and services, the additional costs of clothing and travel incurred as a result of employment, as well as the loss of her husband's tax reduction, the woman is not infrequently left with a meager net profit from her work. It appears that growing dissatisfaction with the full-time homemaker role and economic dependence as well as the social and psychological benefits of employment, propel educated women to enter the labor market, even when we would expect their low earnings to deter them.

*Husbands:* the husband plays an important role in a wife's decision regarding taking a job outside the home, the size of her job and the intensity of her career commitment. Depending on the man she marries, a young woman's occupational plans and preparations may be invalidated, modified or receive the support needed for eventual fulfilment. A recent study of conjugal balance of power among lower-middle and middle-class urban couples revealed that a much higher proportion of husbands share in the decision making about the wife's employment than do wives in decision making about the husband's employment.<sup>10</sup> These findings suggest an asymmetry in perception of the right to autonomy and the obligation to take the other into consideration on the one hand and the right to control and the obligation to accept direction on the other. In a study of Israeli high-school girls, 34 percent of the respondents said they believed a husband has the right in every case to object to his wife's employment. An additional 46.5 percent said he had this right in certain circumstances, and only 19.5 percent said he had no right to object to her going to work.<sup>11</sup> While daughters of more educated parents granted this right somewhat less often than those of the less educated, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

When a husband is launched on a career ladder where the ceiling is high and late, there are strong social pressures on the wife to forego or postpone her own career development. At higher socio-economic levels and especially in academic, professional, managerial, political, and military work, occupations are structured as sequences of positions involving increasingly

<sup>9</sup> R. Gronau, *Israeli Married Women: An Economist's Point of View*, Hebrew University, Research Report, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> R. Katz, *Power in the Family: the Impact of Resources and Cultural Background on the Conjugal Balance of Power*, Ph.D. Thesis, Tel-Aviv University, 1980, p. 46 (Hebrew).

<sup>11</sup> A. Tomer, *Promoting Girls Toward the Study of Technical Subjects*, Henrietta Szold Institute, Jerusalem, 1976, p. 83 (Hebrew).

greater responsibility and rewards. Upward mobility frequently also requires that the husband complete his university degree or continue towards an advanced degree or diploma. Since the family as a whole has much to gain in income and prestige from the husband's increased effort and ultimate success, the wife is motivated to support her husband and is psychologically restrained from demanding his greater involvement in the time-consuming daily responsibilities of home and child care.

With the exception of those with access to intensive use of hired help or parental assistance, successful integration of a domestic and a work role requires the husband's active cooperation. While few husbands today actively object to their wives' employment outside the home, the number who 'consent' and even pay lip service to encouraging it, is many times greater than the number willing to share in the responsibility for the daily chores, those which cannot be put off to the evening or weekends. When someone has to stay home with a sick child, when the maid or nanny doesn't show up, or the refrigerator, stove, washing machine or telephone technician is due to arrive sometime between 8 and 4, or a parent is invited to attend the school *Hanukkah* party, there is widespread consensus that it is the wife who will do so. Considering that women earn less than men and that their opportunities for advancement are more limited, this is not an irrational expectation. But it is precisely because employers believe that women give greater priority to family demands, and are the first to respond to home pressure for their time, that they are reluctant either to invest in them or to consider women serious career potential. Single women, however, are not spared. For the employer a single woman is a potential wife and a married woman a potential mother, and a mother a risky investment.

### *The Earnings Gap*

In 1964 the *Knesset* passed the Equal Pay Law declaring that 'an employer shall pay the same wage to a working woman as he would pay to a man at the same place of work for the same work'. In 1973 the law was amended to read 'or for work which is essentially equal', thus broadening its application to include work which, by implication, is also equal in value. Similar laws exist in most industrialized countries. Equal pay for equal work has an appealing simplicity - so appealing that it has been irresistible to legislators. Yet, nowhere has legislation resulted in a significant closing of the wage gap. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, in 1980 the gross income per hour from wages and salary of an urban female employee was 80 percent that of an urban male employee. The income gap varies with the economic branch and occupation. For example, in industry

women's income was 66 percent that of men and in public and community services it was 86 percent. Among scientific and academic workers, women's income was 82 percent that of men.

Why do women earn less than men? Israeli economists explain the difference primarily in terms of sex differences in 'human capital'. Human capital refers to such factors as formal education, on-the-job training, accumulated experience, and work continuity, which presumably reflect the worker's productivity and consequently economic worth to the employer. According to this theory, the more human capital a worker accumulates, the greater his/her economic contribution or productivity and, therefore, the greater his/her income. The general thrust of the argument is that women earn less than men because they invest less in on-the-job training, accumulate less years of work experience, and work more intermittently because of the need to care for children.

Tested empirically, however, the theory of human capital fails to explain a large proportion of the earnings gap between men and women. Gross, using data from 1975-76, found that when the effects of education, experience, ethnic background and number of weeks worked per year were controlled for, there remained a residual unexplained variance in the earnings of men and women of 64 percent in the private sector and 57 percent in the public sector.<sup>12</sup>

Efroni compared the earnings and rank of a random sample of 1700 men and women in the civil service, controlling for the effect of a large number of variables believed to influence a person's human capital.<sup>13</sup> These included years of formal education, type of education, years of work experience, and professional experience, extent of work continuity, additional training including the number and duration of the courses attended. She also examined the influence of ethnic origin, marital status, and number and age of children. She found that when all these variables were held constant, women's average earnings were only 78 percent that of men and their average government rank only 76 percent that of men with the same labor market characteristics.

An analysis of this finding revealed that women receive a lower return for the same labor market characteristics than do men. When Efroni used the rate at which men were remunerated for their labor market characteristics as the basis for comparison, she found that women's gross income was on the average 22 percent less than was due to them based on their human capital.

<sup>12</sup> E. Gross, *Women's Wages in the Commercial and Public Sector*, Bank of Israel, unpublished report, 1980 (Hebrew).

<sup>13</sup> L. Efroni, *Promotion and Wages of Women in the Israel Civil Service*, Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, 1980 (Hebrew).

In fact, were women remunerated at the same rate as men, their gross income would, on the average, be 2 percent higher than that of men. In other words, women have on the average greater human capital than men working in the civil service, but are rewarded at a lower rate for their investment.

In addition, Efroni found that the return to men for each additional year of experience and education was greater than the return to women. Consequently, when women were compared to men at equivalent hierarchical levels, it appears that the educated, experienced women in the higher government ranks, were more discriminated against than were the less experienced and less educated women in the middle ranks of the civil service hierarchy.

Both men and women reached their peak income between the ages of 45-50 and the earnings gap between the sexes was greater at the age of 50. Were the lower income for women the result of their intermittent labor force attachment, as economists like to explain, we would expect the earnings gap to be greatest during the childbearing years and then to gradually grow smaller as women are freed from intensive child care and remain in the labor market on a continuous basis. But this is not the case. The sex differences in earnings increase consistently over time. Furthermore, the earnings of single women who presumably are not constrained by domestic responsibilities, were more similar to those of married women than to those of men.

The human capital theory of sex differences in earnings may be criticized from another perspective. In Israel a sizeable proportion of the cost of wages to the employer (40 to 70 percent) is based on factors that are not a direct function of the worker's productivity. It is comprised of the cost-of-living allowance, various social security benefits, seniority allowance, overtime (not infrequently fictional), car maintenance, mileage, telephone allowance and other fringe benefits. While these inflate incomes, their payment is not linked to a worker's contribution to the production of goods or services.

The differential allocation of such fringe benefits as overtime payments, telephone and car allowances is one of the important mechanisms through which employers can and do discriminate between men and women. Efroni, for example, found that women in the civil service received on the average 14 percent of the car allowance and 28 percent of the overtime payments paid to men. Limiting the comparison to those who owned a car and were, by virtue of their job and rank officially entitled to a car allowance, she found that women received only 69 percent of such payments made to men. Comparing those 'entitled' to overtime, women reported working 66 percent of the overtime reportedly worked by men.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Higher-grade civil servants whose jobs entitle them to overtime payments do

Table 4  
*Employed Persons by Occupation and Sex*

% of women in occupation			Men		Women	
1972 <sup>1</sup>	1980 <sup>2</sup>		1972 <sup>1</sup>	1980 <sup>2</sup>	1972 <sup>1</sup>	1980 <sup>2</sup>
31.9	36.5	Total - percentages	69.8	63.7	31.2	35.7
33.5	36.7	Scientific and academic workers	5.7	7.9	5.9	8.1
54.6	60.3	Other professional, technical and related workers	7.1	9.1	19.3	24.2
7.4	7.7	Administrators and managers	4.2	5.5	(.7)	0.8
52	58.9	Clerical and related workers	11.3	12.0	24.1	30.2
26	30.6	Sales workers	8.3	8.3	8.2	6.4
54	57.7	Service workers	8.6	7.3	21.5	17.5
17	20.2	Agricultural workers	8.5	7.4	6.1	3.3
11.2	10.6	Skilled workers in industry, building, transport and other skilled workers	38.2	36.8	11.2	7.7
15.7	14.6	Other workers in industry, transport, building and unskilled workers	8.1	5.8	3.0	1.8

Sources: <sup>1</sup> *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, Supplement Vol. XXVII, 7, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1975.

The research evidence thus indicates that sex differences in human capital fail to adequately explain the wage gap between men and women in Israel (as elsewhere). To that end we must examine the social forces which channel women into lower-paying jobs and keep them locked into the lower ranks of organizational and occupational hierarchies where there are frequently no men to be equal to. We need to look at the way sex differences in prestige and power affect women's ability to negotiate a more equitable rate of exchange for their labor. The major issue for women appears to be less that of equal pay for the same work than that of equal opportunity to enter better-paying jobs and equal recognition for the value of the work they do.

#### *The Sex Structure of Occupations*

The occupational distribution of women in Israel is very different from that of men (Table 4). In 1980, 71.9 percent of the women were concentrated in three out of the nine global occupational categories - professional and technical workers (including

not have to prove that they in fact worked a specified number of overtime hours, or that their work load required that they work overtime.

teachers, nurses and social workers), clerical and service workers. Men are more evenly distributed among occupations with the exception of a large concentration of skilled manual workers. Comparing the distribution among occupations between 1972 and 1980, we observe that for both sexes there occurred an upward drift from the lower-status manual to the higher-status white-collar and semi-professional occupations. It reflects the increased educational level of the population, the growth in the demand for more educated workers, and the rationalization of industry and agriculture. The upward drift, however, was stronger for women than for men. Between 1972 and 1980 the proportion of the male labor force employed in the bottom five occupational categories dropped by 6.1 percent while the proportion of the female labor force in those occupations dropped by 13.3 percent.

When the nine global occupational categories are disaggregated into more specific occupational titles, we find that most men and women do not work in the same kind of jobs and that most occupations are segregated by sex. An occupation is considered segregated when the proportion of either sex in the occupation is significantly greater or smaller than the proportion of the respective sex in the labor force. Thus if women comprise 36 percent of the labor force, an occupation in which women comprise more than 56 percent would be classified as a female occupation while one in which they are fewer than 25 percent, may be considered a male occupation.

Occupational segregation by sex is so extensive that large sectors of the male and female labor force operate in separate labor markets and do not compete for the same jobs. Statistical measurement of the extent to which the labor market is segregated by sex shows a remarkably similar pattern across all industrialized countries. In general, concludes a recent report of the OECD, the most economically developed countries with the highest participation rates for women and the most developed service sectors show the highest degree of segregation.

In Israel approximately 75 percent of working women are employed in clearly 'female' occupations, 13 percent in male occupations and 12 percent in balanced occupations. Almost half the women are employed in approximately twenty occupations (out of 352) where they comprise more than seventy percent of the labor force. During the 1970s the level of segregation in most occupations increased: the 'female' occupations attracted an even greater proportion of women and the 'male' occupations became more intensely populated by men. The few male and balanced occupation categories in which the increase in the proportion of women during the 1970s was greater than their increase in the labor force included: pharmacists and veterinarians, academic workers in social sciences, managers-

administrators in government and municipal services and in national institutions, and jurists. The latter underwent the greatest change. It moved from being a predominantly male occupation in early 1970 (18 percent women) to becoming a balanced occupation in 1980 (almost 30 percent women). Most women who entered non-traditional occupations made their way into the public sector of the economy where more convenient work schedules and special time allowances for mothers attract women while the relatively low pay drives men away and into the private sector of the economy.

Following the October 1973 war when most physically able men were mobilized for months and the wheels of the economy almost ground to a stop for lack of technically skilled hands to run and repair the machines, considerable lip service was paid to the need to desegregate the technical and engineering fields. With women providing an alternative source of labor, it was argued, the economy would be more flexible and able to respond in case of another war. Except, however, for a number of limited projects sponsored by the Division for the Status of Women in the Ministry of Labor and Welfare (such as training women as bus drivers), no serious effort was made to attract women to engineering or related occupations.

In 1980, every second woman in Israel was employed in one of the following eight occupations (out of a list of 90): teachers and principals in secondary and post-secondary institutions; teachers and principals in intermediate schools, primary schools and kindergartens; social workers and probation officers; nurses and paramedical workers; bookkeepers; secretaries, typists and key punch operators; general office workers; sales workers.

Occupational segregation and the segmentation of the labor force along sex lines into non-competing groups is today widely recognized as a major factor underlying the perpetuation of sex differences in opportunity and pay. A study which compared the hourly earnings of occupations in which men were highly overrepresented with those in which women were highly overrepresented, showed that at every level of education, the female occupations earned significantly less than the male occupations.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, men employed in female occupations earned less than men employed in male occupations. Women in male occupations, however, did not consistently earn more than women in female occupations. An examination of the data revealed that women were concentrated in those male occupations which paid less than the mean paid to male occupations at each level of education. In other words, women

<sup>15</sup> The occupations were divided into six levels of education according to the average years of schooling of those employed in the occupation. D. N. Izraeli and K. Gaier, 'Sex and Interoccupational Wage Differences in Israel', *Industrial Relations*, 18-2, 1979.

earn less than men in large measure because relative to their education, they work in lower-paying occupations and lower-paying economic branches than do men.

The problem then becomes - why is it that the jobs women perform pay less than those performed by men? This is a problem not specific to Israel and relates to the status and power of women in society no less (if not more) than to characteristics inherent in the jobs women perform.

Until recently, collective labor agreements for Israeli industries which employed a sizeable female labor force had separate pay schedules for men and women in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Once these were titled 'women's work' and 'men's work'. Later, in an attempt to veil the discrimination, labels were changed to Schedule A and Schedule B, or unskilled light work and unskilled work - all euphemisms for essentially the same distinction which automatically assigned women to the lower-paying jobs. The last traces of such official discrimination were finally erased from collective agreements in 1979. The practice, however, persists. Occasionally different job titles are used for essentially the same work as when she is called a cook and he a chef, she a server and he a waiter, she a cleaner and he a janitor, she a secretary and he an administrative assistant.

Job analysis has been recommended as a means for revealing and eliminating the sex bias in the way jobs are evaluated. Following a prolonged strike at the Elite food products plants in 1972 in which equal pay for women was one of the dominant issues, it was agreed by both management and workers that a complete job analysis be implemented in all three Elite plants, beginning with the newest one in Nazareth. An independent team of experts from the Israel Productivity Institute conducted the study. It revealed that in every case where men and women did what job analysis assessed to be work of essentially equal value, women earned less than men. The greatest pay disparity, however, resulted from the way in which jobs were allocated: 96 percent of the female and only 58 percent of the male employees were located in jobs at the five lowest levels. The experts concluded that with the exception of 14 jobs which required special physical exertion, there was nothing in the nature of the approximately 68 different jobs analyzed, that required their exclusive allocation to one sex or another. Following the report of these results, plans for job analysis in the other two Elite plants were frozen. Opposition came primarily from the male dominated workers' committee. Because of high cost involved and the opposition mainly from old-timers on the workers' committee, job analysis has not been used as a tool for remedying sex biases in the way jobs are evaluated.



### *Ethnic Structure of Occupations*

Within the Jewish female labor force, the ethnic subgroups are differentially distributed among the occupations and a fairly clear pattern of occupational segregation by ethnic origin is discernible. Since data on country of origin are not available for the full list of 360 occupations, the following analysis is based on nine composite occupational categories. The aggregate categories unfortunately mask the real extent of ethnic segmentation.

Table 5  
*Proportionate Difference Between Observed and Expected  
in the Distribution of Ethnic Groups Within Occupations, 1980*

	AA <sup>1</sup>	IAA	II	EA	IEA
% of total female labor force	22.9	16.7	6.2	33.6	20.6
Scientific and academic workers	-74.7	-67.7	+14.5	+30.2	+83.5
Other professional, technical and related workers	-33.2	-19.2	+17.7	- 2.7	+51.5
Administrators and managers	(-52.0) <sup>2</sup>	(-28.1)	(+32.3)	+31.3	+19.9
Clerical and related workers	-26.6	+47.9	+19.4	-11.3	+ 3.4
Sales workers	- 2.6	-32.3	- 9.7	+43.5	-38.8
Service workers	+106.1	-15.6	-32.3	-21.4	-60.7
Agricultural workers	+18.8	- 9.0	+33.9	- 9.2	- 8.7
Skilled workers in industry, builders, transport and other skilled workers	+34.5	+19.2	(-72.6)	+25.9	-74.3
Other workers in industry, transport, building and unskilled workers	+61.6	-22.2	-54.8	+33.6	(-88.8)

Source: Derived from Table XII/17, pp. 346-347, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1981.

- : underrepresented

+ : overrepresented

<sup>1</sup> For key to names, see Table 2

<sup>2</sup> ( ) indicates figure based on small sample and therefore data of high relative sampling error.

Table 5 presents the proportionate difference between the observed and the expected for each ethnic group in relation to a specific occupation. The expected is based on the proportion of the respective ethnic group in the female labor force, the observed on the actual proportion of the ethnic group in the occupation. A negative difference means the group is underrepresented in the occupation, while a positive number indicates overrepresentation.<sup>16</sup>

For example, in 1980, Israeli-born Jewish women of fathers born in Europe or America comprised 20.6 percent of the female labor force (expected) but they comprised 37.8 percent of scientific and academic workers (observed). In this case the pro-

<sup>16</sup>  $Pd = \frac{O-E}{E}$  when Pd = proportionate difference, O = observed proportion of ethnic group in the occupation, and E = expected proportion of subgroup in the occupation.

proportionate difference between observed and expected is +83.5 percent. From the data in Table 5 we observe that Israelis born of European-American fathers are the most overrepresented ethnic group in the two high-status occupational categories and the most underrepresented among service and blue-collar workers. Israelis born of Asian-African fathers are the most underrepresented among academic and scientific workers and overrepresented among clerical workers. Those born in Europe-America are overrepresented in the sales occupations but are otherwise more evenly distributed among the occupations than any other ethnic category. Those born in Asia-Africa, representing mainly the older generation of women, are most underrepresented at the top and overrepresented at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. Second-generation or more Israeli-born are strikingly underrepresented in the blue-collar fields.

The emergence of an ethnically stratified occupational structure reflects mainly the close association between ethnic origin and educational achievement. Comparing proportionate differences between 1976 and 1980, we observe a trend toward overall reduction in ethnic segregation within the female labor force. It may be suggested that with increased educational achievement among second- and third-generation Israeli women of Asian-African origin, the association between ethnic origin and occupation among Jewish women will weaken and prove far less stable than the association between occupation and sex.<sup>17</sup>

#### *The Role of the Military as a Potential Agent of Change*

In addition to its defense functions, the Israeli army has played an important role in the development of the new nation. It served as an assimilating institution for tens of thousands of often semiliterate immigrant recruits, as an occupational training center, as the implementing vehicle for pioneering new settlements, and as a major channel for recruitment of political and economic elites. It also had an important effect on the position of women. In the pre-state period of Jewish defense, women were found in most military units and there was hardly a front or dangerous point where they did not participate.<sup>18</sup> After the establishment of the state, military service was made compulsory for both men and women and equality between the sexes was one of the considerations in the assignment to units and the

<sup>17</sup> Support for this contention comes from the finding that between 1969-1976 the earnings gap between ethnic groups among women decreased from 45 percent to 34 percent. J. Weiss, G. Fishelson, Y. Artzi, *The Earnings Gap Among Women Employees in Israel 1969-1976*, The Pinhas Sapir Center for Development, Tel-Aviv University, 1980 (Hebrew).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Y. Sluski, *Sefer Toldot Hahagana*, Vol. 3, Tel-Aviv, Am Oved, 1972.

allocation of work. The two decades following independence (1948 to 1967) brought about a continuous restriction of women to 'more suitable' roles and an increase in the sex segregation of occupations. During the periods of relative calm which occurred in the fifties and sixties when fighting units were consolidated but not greatly expanded, the tendency was to 'relieve' women of the less desirable jobs - the heavy, dirty, and dangerous work - and employ them primarily in traditionally feminine tasks. In other words, the transition from a voluntary defense force to a national army which occurred after statehood, was characterized by a period of growing sex segregation and a drop in status for women, who were concentrated in the secondary jobs of the service sector. The shortage in human (male) resources following the 1967 war, which had resulted in vastly increased territories requiring defense, stimulated the army to re-evaluate its policies regarding the use of women.

The Israeli army is potentially an important agent of change in relation to the sex division of labor. First, annually it recruits the cohort of 18-year olds - both men and women. Second, the army provides training opportunities for a variety of skills, many of which have application in the civilian labor market - particularly in the technical and managerial fields. Third, unlike the civilian employer, the army is relatively independent of the preferences of the recruits and has considerable freedom to allocate them in accordance with its needs and policies.

The potential effect of the army on the sex structure of the civilian labor market lies in two factors - the one direct, the other indirect. It may train women for traditionally male occupations which they will continue to pursue in the civilian labor market. For example, for many years the army has trained women to do psychological testing and drafting. This early exposure to these fields may, in part, explain why women today comprise more than 70 percent of those employed as psychologists and draftsmen. These were also the only two exceptions to the otherwise identical list of American and Israeli occupations with 70 percent and more women. A less direct effect is through the social norms and attitudes regarding sex roles which the sex division of labor in the army may reinforce or change - attitudes which are later carried over into the civilian labor market.

Despite the army's close identification with the pioneering ideals of Israeli society, its approach to women is highly pragmatic and guided by considerations of efficiency and utility. The army is generally more willing to invest in training women than is the civilian employer. Two constraints, however, make women a less profitable investment than men: duration of service and reserve duty.

First, women serve only two years compared to three for men. The probability of their signing up for extended service after

completing compulsory training is considered small. While the army is able to supply inducements to attract recruits to contract for an additional period of service, until recently these were not offered to women, who were trained only for those occupations which require relatively brief induction periods. With the shortage of men of the high caliber required, however, there is greater readiness to open additional occupations to women, in some cases provided they agree to serve for an extra term of service.

Second, married women and mothers are, by law, not required to serve in the reserves. Since the Israeli army relies heavily on its reserves, it must prepare a cadre of skilled people for the future. Consequently, women are not trained for occupations for which they are deemed capable but not available in the future. In fact, even women whom the law defines as eligible are not called for reserve duty, a practice the Report on the Status of Women (1978) recommended be altered.

Despite these limitations, the shortage of educated male recruits and the availability of a reservoir of female high-school graduates combined with increasing sophistication of military technology have, in recent years, resulted in the opening of new occupations to women, as well as in more intensive use of women in higher status technical jobs such as airplane mechanics and electronic technicians. In 1976 there were only 210 out of 709 occupations open to women, about half of which were clerical. In 1981 approximately 500 out of 800 occupations were open to women, including most non-combat jobs.

The army sees women's contribution as lying in two factors. First and foremost, they free men for front-line combat duty. Its policy has been to use women minimally on the front lines and not at all for combat. Second, they perform tasks for which women are considered more suitable, such as clerical, educational, and welfare jobs. They have not been considered suitable for physically demanding jobs and for those performed in purportedly unfitting social environments. An example of an 'unsuitable' environment is one with a concentration of lower-class boys who supposedly might molest the girls. The army views itself as socially responsible for the moral integrity of its female recruits and is careful to avoid public scandal, particularly since certain religious-political groups disapprove of compulsory military training for women.

Women free men for combat by replacing them in jobs considered also suitable for women. While the replacement policy has always existed, the definition of what is suitable has come to include a wider number of occupations in recent years. This is a result both of an increase in the number of combat units following 1967 which drained existing manpower and of the introduction of new advanced technology.

The creation of new fighting units meant that a maximum number of men had to be released from non-combat jobs and this led to the more extensive use of women. Jobs traditionally closed to women were opened and others were redesigned to create a new specialization for them. For example, female recruits are trained to become naval operations officers. They participate in the first four months of a sixteen-month course for ship officers and specialize in tasks previously performed by graduate ship officers at an early stage in their professional careers. In this manner, men are freed for jobs it is believed only they can or should do and which require greater skill, while the army economizes on training and the investment in women is kept within efficient proportions. Technological developments enhance women's occupational opportunities by creating new jobs considered suitable for women or even by relocating existing ones to places where women can be safely employed.

Since the army is viewed as a mechanism for achieving national goals, pressure is exerted on it by the Ministry of Labor and Welfare to participate in solving the problem of occupational training for school dropouts. Approximately 19 percent of the females of army age are not recruited for reasons of low qualifications, and 80 percent of these are of Asian-African origin.<sup>19</sup> Their pre-army training in technical fields, followed by their recruitment, argues the Ministry, will solve both the social problem and that of the shortage of skilled workers. The army, however, which does not view rehabilitation as one of its functions, is apprehensive and has responded with only very limited efforts.

It is thus most likely that the recent thrust toward employing women in nontraditional army jobs will change some of the stereotypes about what is suitable for them and result in a wider repertoire of occupational opportunities. The impact of these developments, however, depends first on whether the army will continue its policy of greater occupational sex integration and second, on the extent of occupational continuity between army and civilian life. The latter in turn depends on both the willingness of women to pursue their army occupations in civilian life and on the readiness of the civilian market to absorb them. All these issues have yet to be studied.

### *Summary*

In retrospect we may look at the 1970s as the decade in which Jewish women in Israel made a clear commitment to working outside the home and in which the economy became strongly dependent on their employment. The proportion of women in the

<sup>19</sup> *Report of the Commission on the Status of Women, 1978.*

labor force increased steadily, especially among 24-35-year-olds and women of Oriental origin who had been under-represented among the employed. The proportion of women receiving occupational training and higher education grew to almost equal that of men. These developments did not alter the sex-segregated structure of the economy. The female occupations became more intensely feminized although women also entered several higher-status male occupations in greater numbers than before. An indication of this trend is the fact that at Tel-Aviv University in the academic year 1981-1982, women comprised approximately 50 percent of the first-year medical students and 25 percent of the students in the first year graduate program in business administration, compared to approximately 25 percent and 10 percent respectively a decade ago.

The major impetus for these changes was primarily market forces: the opportunities created by the expansion of all sectors of the economy and especially the communal and financial services as well as the growing reliance of the family on the wife's income. These changes, however, were not accompanied, as in the United States, by the emergence of a large-scale women's movement focused on raising women's consciousness of sexism in society. Nor did the existing women's organizations unite forces to pressure for meaningful equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation. Consequently, it appears that barring the effects of rising unemployment, the freezing of government positions and severe cuts in budget for new day-care centers, women will continue to enter the labor market in growing numbers. This fact alone, however, will not significantly alter the dominant patterns which make women second-class citizens in the economy: their concentration in a small number of feminine occupations and at the lower ranks of organizational hierarchies, the lower rate of return for their labor and their gravitation to part-time jobs.