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Women and Work: From Collective to Career

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IN THE BEGINNING

On the eve of World War I, even before women's right to vote had become a public issue, women pioneers within the Labor Zionist movement organized to fight for the opportunity to do "men's jobs" such as building houses and paving roads. Women's demand for a share of the scarce jobs was legitimated in terms of their right to contribute to the creation of the new society. The rhetoric of motives was couched in collective not individualistic terms: It was an ideology not of personal entitlements but one of social obligations, not of equal opportunity for individual advancement, but of commitment to a collective shaped by the ideal of social equality. In fact "career" was a pejorative term implying that the individual put his or her personal success above the needs of the collective. After statehood (1948), this collectivistic ideology translated into public policy. On the one hand, it was pronatalist, encouraging women "to be fruitful and multiply" in order to replenish the Jewish people, but it also enabled women to combine having a family with employment. It was a family-based policy that did not involve a commitment to provide women with equal opportunity for better paying jobs and advancement.

FOLLOWING THE CREATION OF THE STATE (1948-1968)

While there are no figures available, the proportion of women in paid work prior to 1948 was probably greater than in the years following. The major (although not only) reason for the decline was the mass immigration of Jews from countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Between 1948 and 1955, over 400,000 new immigrants came to Israel, increasing the population by approximately one-third. For the immigrant women, the combination of a patriarchal family structure which traditionally sheltered women from public life, early age of marriage, a high birth rate and a high rate of illiteracy, were not conducive to employment. Furthermore, the economy could not absorb such a large number of immigrants into the labor force. Government employ-

ment policy was directed at creating jobs primarily for men, not women. With a view to modernizing the economy, labor-intensive industries with simple technologies, such as textiles and food processing, were introduced to the new development towns, opening employment opportunities for women. Although women's employment was not a priority, the absorbing society regarded the entry of immigrant women into the labor force "as a first sign of successful adaptation to Israeli society" (Honig and Shamai, 1978: 405).

During the 1950s and even into the 1960s, attitudes towards women's employment correlated strongly with ethnic origin. Jews from Europe and the English-speaking countries were more favorably disposed and less burdened with children (Hartman, 1978) than those from the Moslem countries. The latter, as well as the Arab population, tended to confine women's roles to the family. A number of laws, such as universal compulsory education, a minimum marriage age of 17 and monogamy, undermined both the traditional structure of the community as well as traditional cultural norms.

AFTER THE SIX DAY WAR (1967): NEW OPPORTUNITIES

A number of developments during the 1970s led to the accelerated entry of women into the labor force. There was a growth in demand for workers to fill the jobs created by the expansion of financial, insurance, community and other services. Many of the new jobs were in occupations in which women were already represented. Between 1973 and 1980, the net increase in the civilian labor force was 161,000 persons, and the public and community services alone had a net growth of 98,000.

By the mid 1960s, the immigrant population had been absorbed into the labor force. The creation of new military units to service the territories conquered in the Six Day War, the extension of army service for men from two to three years (and for women from a year and a half to two years), as well as the growth of the universities, combined to reduce the available supply of men in the civilian labor force. Between 1964 and 1969, the proportion of men in the civilian labor force dropped from 77 percent to 70 percent. The shortage of qualified men made employers more predisposed to hire women for the types of jobs previously filled by men (Israeli, 1983).

At the same time, a number of factors combined to increase the supply of women who could be drawn into the labor force. These included an increased level of education among women, the drop in the birth rate among Jewish women from Moslem countries and "the coming of age" of the baby boom generation. Furthermore, attitudes among the more traditional sectors of the population became less resistant to the idea of women's employment. Among the Arab population, the association of "modernity" with Jewishness and thus with a loss of Arab identity, which had intensified the resistance to change in women's status, was weakened by the encounter with Palestin-

ians in the occupied territories, which led to the realization that women's inequality was not a Jewish-induced problem, "but rather an issue of indigenous concern to Palestinians" (Mar'i and Mar'i, 1985: 255). The new job opportunities, especially for more educated women, provided an incentive to work outside the home. In addition, the growing economic value for the family of providing education for women was an incentive to keep girls in school.

Public policy facilitated combining work and family life. A body of legislation and collective agreements provided working mothers with mandatory 12 weeks maternity leave with nearly full pay; the right to take up to a year's leave without pay, protection from dismissal due to pregnancy; shorter working hours in the year following childbirth, and in the public sector, also for those with young children. In the 1970s, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare subsidized the building of day-care centers, creating tens of thousands of places for children of prekindergarten age. In the 1970s, when government policy was to encourage women to enter the labor force, particularly the factories in the development towns, fees were graded to the mother's income, rarely amounting to more than a quarter of her gross earnings. While the policy reinforced the view that childcare is the wife's responsibility, the low rates provided an economic incentive for women to go to work. In the 1980s, when unemployment was on the rise, fees were linked to the per capita income of the total family. This more egalitarian policy did not affect women's participation in the urban areas but made employment less feasible for the low earning women in the development towns.

The school day, only four to five hours long through most of elementary school, was not lengthened. In fact, under the pressure of budget cuts in the 1980s, teacher hours were reduced and the school day made shorter still. As we shall see, this meant that while married women could take a job, they were constrained from pursuing a career.

Changes in the tax regulations during the 1970s substantially increased the incentives for women to participate in the labor force (Honig and Shamai, 1978). The 1975 tax reform introduced a credit system for working women to compensate for the extra costs of housekeeping and child care. However, reductions were based on the number of children and not on actual costs incurred as the result of women's going to work. The reforms were an incentive only for women with higher earnings. For the majority, earnings were below the taxable minimum, so that the credits were not relevant to them.

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES ON WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The following data summarize some of the key trends in women's labor force participation. (Unless otherwise indicated, all statistical data are taken from the publications of the Central Bureau of Statistics: Statistical Yearbook

Israel and Labor Force Survey for the relevant year. Except in tables and specific exceptions, all numbers were rounded to the closest digit.)

Participation Rates

Between 1954 and 1989, the proportion of women aged 15+ in the civilian labor force grew from 21 percent to 40 percent. Women constitute 38 percent of the total civilian labor force in Israel. The growth in women's participation came at a time of declining participation for men, so that over 60 percent of the new workers in the past two decades have been women.

Age

Since the 1960s there has been a continuous decline in participation rates among younger women aged 15 to 24, due largely to the prolongation of education and partly to the deepening of military recruitment. In 1970, peak participation was by the 18 to 24 age group; in 1975, it was the 25 to 34 age group; and by 1984, it had shifted to women 35 to 44. This upward drift reflects the growing tendency for younger women to remain in the labor force as well as for older women to enter it. The proportion of married women going to work grew from 26 percent in 1968 to 46 percent in 1988. Among Jewish women, it reached 51.7 percent. The presence of small children has become less of a deterrent to women's employment in recent years. In 1987, almost 60 percent of all ever-married Jewish women whose youngest children were between two and four years old were in the labor force. The level of participation is significantly lower for Arab and Druze women. The pattern of their age distribution is similar to that of Jewish women in 1970—with participation peaking at 18 to 24 and then declining with marriage or the birth of the first child.

Ethnicity

Labor force participation varies among the ethnic and religious groups. It is higher among Israeli born than among foreign born. Among the former, it is highest among women whose fathers came from Europe or America (61%), and lowest among women whose fathers came from North Africa or Asia (46%). These differences may be attributed primarily to differences in educational attainment: Women of families from Europe or America are on the average more educated. The participation for Christian women is 22.3 percent, for Druze women 11.6 percent, and for Moslems 8.5 percent.

Education

Education is the best single predictor of women's labor force participation. The more educated a woman is, the more likely she is to be in the labor force. This applies to Arab women as well as for Jewish women, although the effect

of education for the former is not as powerful as it is for the latter. The lower participation rates of first and second generation women from Asia or Africa become negligible when we compare women with the same levels of education. Furthermore, among women with 16 years or more of education, participation rates are the same as for men (approximately 77 percent).

It is likely that the upward trend in female labor force activity will continue as women get more formal education. Even the rise in the rate of unemployment that occurred in the second half of the 1980s did not lead to a decline in the rate of women's entry into the labor force. On the contrary, unemployment brought new recruits, as housewives never before employed were spurred by economic need to seek paid work. As a consequence, however, unemployment rates among women increased at a faster rate than for men, and the gap in unemployment rates between men and women, which until recently was consistently around two percent (lower for men), widened.

TEACHER, SECRETARY, NURSE: GENDER AND THE STRUCTURE OF OCCUPATIONS

In Israel, as elsewhere, the occupational distribution of women is very different from that of men (Table 1). As in almost all industrialized countries, women are concentrated in a small number of large, female dominated occupations. In 1983, 73 percent of the women were concentrated in three of the ten aggregated occupational categories: semi-professional and technical workers, clerical workers and service workers. Every second woman was employed in one of the following eight occupations (out of a list of 90): teachers and principals, social workers and probation officers, nurses and paramedical workers, bookkeepers, secretaries, typists and key punch operators, general office workers, and sales workers. In other words, women are concentrated in the middle status occupations with a smaller proportion than men in either the high or the low status occupations.

A large proportion of the female labor force is concentrated in the academic, semi-professional and white collar occupations. However, in all institutional spheres—political, military, economic, educational, religious and cultural—the higher the position, the smaller the proportion of women. For example, in the universities, women constitute 42 percent of the instructors, 31 percent of the lecturers, 17 percent of the senior lecturers, 8 percent of the associate professors, and only 4 percent of the full professors. In Government service they constitute 51 percent of those employed but only about 11 percent of those in the top five ranks of the administrative hierarchy and only 20 percent of those at the top of the professional hierarchy (Toren, 1987).

Two developments which in the U.S. were instrumental in moving women into higher positions, affirmative action legislation and the decision of career-oriented women to delay childbirth, did not occur in Israel. Consequently,

Table 1. Employed Persons by Occupation and Sex: 1972 and 1987.

Percent women in occupation		Occupation	Percent Distribution			
1972	1987		1972		1987	
			Women	Men	Women	Men
		Total	100	100	100	100
33.5	38.9	Scientific and academic workers	5.9	5.5	9.5	9.4
54.6	58.7	Semi-professional and technical	19.3	7.1	23.4	11.2
7.4	13.9	Administrators and managers	(0.7)	4.2	2.4	9.0
52.0	65.5	Clerical and related workers	24.1	11.3	32.7	12.5
26.0	32.1	Sales workers	8.2	8.3	5.0	5.5
54.0	58.4	Service workers	21.5	8.6	17.3	9.9
17.0	16.2	Agricultural workers	6.1	8.5	0.5	2.3
11.2	12.7	Skilled workers	11.2	38.2	7.6	34.8
15.7	18.9	Unskilled workers	3.0	8.1	1.7	5.4

women have usually moved into middle and higher level positions only where the competition with men became less intense, either because men left the occupation, as occurred in education, or because there was a rapid expansion of the occupation, as occurred in personnel management and training, marketing and public relations. Both conditions were evident in the State Attorney's Office. In recent decades, men have left for more lucrative private legal practice, and there has been a growth in the number of positions for attorneys in the Office. In 1984, women constituted approximately 41 percent of the lawyers in Israel and 61 percent (123 of 203) of those in the State Attorney's Office. They also constituted 20 percent (64 of 321) of the judges, compared to 8 percent in 1976. Women responded to the new opportunities by increasing their investments in University training in nontraditional fields. For example, between 1974 and 1988, the proportion of women among all students enrolled in law increased from 32 percent to 41 percent; in business and administration, from 12 percent to 30 percent; and in medicine (including dentistry), from 20 percent to 41 percent.

These shifts in the occupational distribution of women, which changed the gender character of some 67 occupations (Cohen et al., 1987: 104) are characterized by contradictory trends. On the one hand, many of the occupations in the community service and clerical fields that were female dominated a decade earlier, became even more segregated, as their expansion attracted more women and the low level of pay pushed men out or into more senior jobs. On the other hand, a number of high-status professional and traditionally male-dominated occupations, such as law, medicine, accounting, pharmacy, and specializations within management such as marketing and

personnel became less segregated as their expansion created a demand for workers and the insufficient supply of qualified men forced employers to accept women. This was especially true in the less financially lucrative public sector, which in Israel employs approximately 40 percent of the labor force.

DISCRIMINATION AND THE EARNINGS GAP

The law requiring equal pay for equal work for men and women was introduced in 1965 and amended in 1973 to include work that is essentially equal. Nonetheless, women continue to earn less than men. The most comprehensive study of gender differences in earnings to date (Efroni, 1980), conducted among civil servants, found that women earned 78 percent of what men with similar characteristics earned, and furthermore, if women were compensated for their education, training and experience at the same rate as men, their income would indeed be two percent greater than that of men. Though the seniority gap between men and women in the civil service has decreased in the last decade, the earnings gap has deepened. In 1978, women's hourly earnings were approximately 78 percent those of men; by 1988, they had decreased to 71 percent those of men (Efroni, 1988).

Efroni explains the gender difference in earnings primarily by the lower rate of return that women receive compared to men for their human capital resources. Employers discriminate between men and women in essentially similar jobs by means of differential allocation of fringe benefits such as overtime payments, telephone and car allowances (which can account for 40 percent of the take-home pay), and in the assignment of different job titles for what is essentially the same work. Furthermore, as elsewhere women are discriminated against in promotions to more lucrative jobs (Shenhav and Haberfeld, 1988).

Women are less able to take advantage of career opportunities than men. Although over 90 percent of the families in which the woman is employed depend on her income to maintain their standard of living, neither the division of labor within the family nor the social institutions which service the family are well adapted to the needs of a dual earner family with children. Social norms regarding women's responsibilities for care of the home and children, as well as for many of the tasks which link the family to services in the wider society, operate to encourage women to forego potentially higher income jobs for those with shorter and more convenient working hours and locations close to home. For their part, employers assume, not always incorrectly, women's reluctance to take on added responsibilities, and often overlook those who, with some encouragement, would be ready to do so. Unfortunately, the growing number of aspiring women prepared to make the necessary sacrifices become the victims of employer discrimination.

BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

Working mothers are constrained to develop special strategies to balance work and family obligations. They gravitate to part-time jobs, jobs close to home and those which are synchronized with the children's school schedule, such as teaching, or that have flexible working hours, such as nursing. Studies of work values among the adult population (e.g. Gafni, 1981) find that "working hours" or "working close to home" are more important job characteristics for women than for men. A study of sources of job satisfaction among 137 physician couples (Izraeli, 1988a) found that for women (but not for men), overall satisfaction with work was correlated with satisfaction with the opportunity afforded by the job to integrate home and work. Whether or not men are satisfied with how well they integrate work and family, it does not affect their overall satisfaction with their jobs.

Part-time Employment

The most prevalent strategy is part-time employment. With the increase of married women in the labor market, the percent of women working part-time (less than 35 hours a week, including preparation) increased from 30 percent in 1970 to 42 percent in 1987, and among scientific, academic and semiprofessional workers, the proportion is closer to 48 percent. Seventy percent of part time workers are women. The average working week is 29 hours a week for women and 40 hours for men. Part-time work is often more a matter of having to balance family and work than an indication of lack of commitment to work. For example, a study of a comparable sample of some 900 men and women managers (Izraeli, 1988b) found that the higher men rated on a measure of work involvement, the more hours a day they actually worked. Among women, the level of work involvement did not affect the number of hours a day they worked. The assumption was that the latter was more influenced by situational constraints.

While the availability of part-time employment, especially for educated women, contributed to their entry into the labor market, it is also a reason why women are more apt to find themselves in jobs in which opportunities for promotion or power and authority are limited. Gender differences in prestige and power in turn affect women's ability to negotiate a more equitable rate of exchange for their labor.

Female Niche

A second strategy, used also by professional women, is to select occupational niches which permit them to control their hours of work. Convenient and congenial working hours are among the major attractions of the Civil Service, where 53 percent of those employed are women (Civil Service, 1987).

Women constitute 71 percent of the pharmacists and 57 percent of the lawyers employed in the public sector (Civil Service, 1987:177) compared to 46 percent, and 41 percent respectively, of those employed in the general labor force. A study of the occupational specialization of physicians found that, with the exception of pediatrics, 83 percent of the women but only 38 percent of the men specialized in fields which independent judges rated as high on time control.

Opportunities Foregone

Constrained by the demands of the family, women have tended to juggle family and work by foregoing job opportunities or avoiding demanding occupations or occupational roles. Management, for example, has none of the characteristics which facilitate the juggling of multiple roles (Israeli, 1988). It is resistant to part-time work. Only 27 percent of female administrators and managers work part-time, compared to 48 percent of female academic workers and 51 percent of other professional and technical workers. While managers generally have more discretion to determine their work schedules than lower level participants, their workload is also less predictable and more likely to expand beyond official working hours. In addition, working overtime has important symbolic value as an expression of one's commitment to the organization. In this sense, the managerial role intrudes more sharply into the domestic time sphere than other occupational roles, causing resentment on the part of spouses and offspring and guilt in the women. This may in part explain why only 50 percent of ever-married women administrators and managers have children at home under age 14, compared to 67 percent of academic and professional workers and 74 percent of other professional and technical workers. (Since one is generally promoted into a managerial position, managers are, in addition, generally older than those employed in most other occupations.) Given the heavy demands of both the women's domestic roles and of managerial jobs, until recently the latter had less appeal to married women with children than alternative professional routes.

Late Upbeat

Another coping strategy is for a woman to keep her work simmering "on a low fire" while the children are small and to increase her investments in the workplace as they grow more independent. It is interesting to note that between 1979 and 1984, the only age group where there was an increase in the proportion of full-time workers was the 35 to 44 one. In a study of over 900 Israeli managers, 48 percent of the women and 35 percent of the men indicated that they had on some occasion refused an opportunity for promotion or held back their career advancement. The reasons for doing so,

however, differed by gender: 77 percent of the women and only 21 percent of the men cited "fear of causing harm to children" while "lack of interest in the job offered" was mentioned by 47 percent of the men and only 19 percent of the women (Israeli, 1988b). "The low fire" strategy would be a feasible solution were it not for the fact that career timetables, built as they are on the male experience, expect people to reach the height of their careers by their mid-forties, not to begin building them at that age.

THE COSTS

In the short run, women are not penalized for taking part-time jobs. In Israel, in contrast to many other countries, part-time workers enjoy the same rights as full-time workers in terms of security of tenure, social security and worker benefits. Furthermore, as Noah Lewin-Epstein and Haya Stier (1988) point out, Israeli women benefit from the unique occupational structure of the public sector, where more than 50 percent of the female labor force is employed. Comparing the public sector with the core and periphery segments of the labor market, they found that "workers in the public sector—both men and women—enjoy the most advantageous arrangements; they earn the highest income on the average despite the fact that they work fewer hours per week than other workers" and have greater job stability. In contrast to the situation in other western countries, women in Israel are under-represented in the less advantageous peripheral sector.

It is the long term consequences of women's career strategies which seriously damage their competitive position. An example of such a strategy and the lack of symmetry between men and women in this respect is demonstrated in a study (Doenias, 1988) of the decision of university academics to take sabbatical leave. Doenias found that in the process of deciding whether to go on sabbatical, the men gave more weight to factors related to their own careers than to those related to the careers of their wives. Women, on the other hand, gave greater weight to considerations related to their spouse's careers and less to factors related to their own. Women were more likely than men to spend their sabbatical in Israel rather than go abroad. Of those who went abroad, women were more likely to go for a shorter period of time. If we consider that the sabbatical offers a unique opportunity for the academic to establish and strengthen informal network ties, critical in a myriad of ways for career advancement, Doenias's findings contribute another dimension to our understanding of why the proportion of women narrows so radically as we move up the academic ladder.

It is difficult to assess the long term cost to women for compromising their labor market investments. For example, the readiness to travel longer distances to work increases the range of job opportunities. A recent study by Moshe Semyonov and Noah Lewin-Epstein (1988) shows that women who worked

outside their community of residence had higher earnings and higher occupational status than women who worked in their community of residence. Furthermore, 57 percent of the earnings gap between commuters and noncommuters among women was due to the advantageous market conditions associated with commuting. Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein found that 46 percent of the working men in Israel were employed outside their community, compared to only 32 percent of the women. The percent of married women among noncommuters was higher than among commuters. Moreover, noncommuting women had more children on the average than commuting women. This suggests that mothers forego opportunities associated with spatial mobility in order to work close to home.

Clearly many women accept and express satisfaction with secondary work roles in order to devote themselves to culturally valued family roles. However, for those women who out of economic need or a desire for career advancement seek more extensive involvement in the labor force, the pressures emanating from social norms and the barriers posed by family responsibilities are severe. For example, in her study of a representative national sample of 28 year old married mothers, Amy Avgar (1985) found that 45 percent of those working part time indicated that they would prefer to work full-time, but that full-time workers were considerably less satisfied with their ability to integrate family and work than were part-timers. In the same study, Avgar examined the level of women's satisfaction with different characteristics of their jobs and found that both full-time and part-time women workers ranked "satisfaction with opportunity for advancement" the lowest or near the lowest out of 15 job characteristics.

INTO THE 1980S AND BEYOND: FROM PROTECTION TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The 1980s brought a growing concern among women's groups for issues related to equal opportunity. A reevaluation of the policy of protective legislation and special benefits for working mothers, once considered a great achievement, led to the conclusion that the costs in opportunities lost were greater than the benefits. Consequently pressure was brought to bear by women's organizations and the Prime Minister's advisor on the status of women. As a result, the legal prohibition on women's night work was abolished and the pension age for women (previously 60 years) was made equal to that of men (65). In both cases, women retained the legal prerogative to refuse to work the night shift and to retire at 60—indicating the ambivalence about foregoing privileges when opportunities are in fact not yet equal. Maternal leave rights for childcare became parental rights, but the change did not apply to collective labor agreements, which provide mothers, but not fathers

of young children, the right to work fewer hours. Two equal opportunity laws came into effect in 1981 and 1988, the second more encompassing than the first, but both with ineffective enforcement mechanisms. Their value is now being tested in the courts. In most major departments of the public sector, including the Civil Service, government owned enterprises, the Jewish Agency and all the universities, a woman has been appointed to be "in charge of the status of women," a position lacking in authority and resources. Frequently the position is offered (by a male superior) to a woman without consideration of her attitudes toward feminism or her qualifications for the assignment, which is an addition to her regular job without additional compensation.

The growing importance of employment for women and women's increasing self-confidence on the job have led to rising expectations for greater rewards. Collective values have weakened in Israeli society, and women are being affected by a more individual sense of entitlement. To be "assertive" is a phrase that has entered the Hebrew lexicon as a model for women's behavior, and thousands of women have been exposed to assertiveness training. Looking to the 1990s, it appears that when the *Intifada* ends and the economy begins to revitalize (and the two are related), the issue of women's entitlement to more equal rewards for their investments in human capital and for their potential contributions to economic life will have greater probability of moving closer to center stage.

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