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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN ISRAEL

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1. The Contradictions of Women's Status.

In the early 1970s the typical Israeli response to the new wave of feminism then gaining momentum in the United States and Western Europe was - "here we have no such problem". Israelis were confident that they had already achieved equality between the sexes. Their confidence was not unfounded. Israel was one of the only countries where a woman served as head of state, and the only state where women were recruited to compulsory military service.

The belief in the existence of equality, was reinforced by the collective memory of the women pioneers and the role they played in the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland during the first decades of the century. While recent scholarship (Bernstein, 1987; Izraeli, 1981) has challenged the myth of gender equality in pre-State Israel, a number of achievements attributable to the struggles of the founding mothers, had significant positive long term effects for women's opportunities. For example, the positive attitude then established towards women's employment outside the home and toward the use of day care centres for the very young eliminated important potential constraints on married women's labour force participation.

Beginning in the early 1970s, Israelis were made aware that gender inequality was in fact widespread through the activities of the small but highly visible feminist movement and then through those of the Prime Minister's Commission on the Status of Women, established within the framework of the U.N. decade on women, (Izraeli, 1988) "The problem of the status of the woman" as the issue of gender inequality is called in Israel, became an item for discussion on the public agenda.

The status of women in Israel is complex and overlaid with contradictions. The contradictions stem from some of the unique features of Israeli society: Secular humanist ideology coexisting with religious clerical ideology, institutionalised in a dual legal system that assigns powers to both secular and clerical judicial authorities (Radai, 1983). Women are conscripted to compulsory military service but their opportunities for mobility are limited and the state of continuous belligerency between Israel and the Arab neighbours enhances the cult of masculinity. It also puts pressure on women to sustain the traditional family as a refuge from insecurity (Peres and Katz, 1981). While occupational achievements have become an increasingly important channel for status attainment and women are encouraged to invest in higher education and occupational training, they are excluded from the major personnel pools (senior military officers, political party functionaries and kibbutz leadership) from which persons are recruited to senior positions (Izraeli, 1988a) while public policy encourages large families as a major solution to the "demographic problem".

Israeli women are educated in the spirit of modern achievement oriented values which emphasise the right of all individuals to develop their unique potential and to select a life course in keeping with their unique abilities and preferences. At the same time, Israel is a family centred society with no institutionalised role for the single woman. The question that contemporary women elsewhere ask - "to have children or pursue a career" is foreign to the Israeli cultural repertoire where the assumption is that work and family will be combined. Marriage and child-birth are rarely postponed beyond the late twenties, even among the most career oriented women. The contrasts within Israeli society are reflected in the data collected by Peres and Katz (1984) who demonstrated that in terms of commonly used indicators of modernisation such as level of urbanisation, and industrialisation, Israel is a modern, economically developed society. In terms of family related indicators such as marriage, divorce and birth rates, however, it resembles more the traditional and less economically developed societies.

It is against the background of these contradictions that the changing patterns of female labour force participation, the strategies women use to juggle work and family life, public policy regarding women's employment and the impact of all these for equal opportunity, are here analysed.

2. Patterns of Female Labour Force Participation.

The growth in female labour force participation.

Between 1969-1987 the number of women in the civilian labour force increased from 277.3 thousand to 586 thousand and the percentage from 28.6 to 38.9%. Although women constituted less than a third of the total labour force during that period, they contributed almost 60% of its net growth and were the major source of new workers.

The increase in female labour force participation was the result of a number of related developments which came to a head during the 1970s. The rise in the standard of living and the expansion of financial, public and community services following the 1967 war, created a demand for additional workers (Weinshall, 1976). While Arabs from the administered territories met the need for additional unskilled labour, there remained a shortage of qualified males to fill the new clerical, administrative and professional positions. Many of the new job openings permitted part time employment, or were concentrated in the public sector where work schedules could be better synchronised with school day schedules.

At the same time, a number of factors reduced the rate of growth of the Jewish male civilian labour force. The expansion of the professional army and the extension of compulsory military service from two to three years siphoned off potential male labour; the increase in university registration extended the moratorium on labour force

participation and the aging of the population further curtailed the pool of available labour.

The expanded demand for labour coincided with the growth in the supply of women available for employment. Supply grew in response to a number of changes. There was a reduction in family size (Ben-Porath and Gronau, 1984) and changes in the age structure of the population, especially among Jews originating from countries of the Middle East and North Africa, increased the proportion of women of labour force age. Furthermore, the spread of formal education among this population, which had immigrated en masse in the 1950s, with very high illiteracy rates among women, increased the number of women equipped with both technical skills demanded by the market as well as the motivation to capitalise on their educational investment through employment (Gronau, 1974). In addition, the number of women university students had grown considerably and had increased at a faster rate than that of male students. In 1969/70 women constituted 38.1% of the recipients of an undergraduate degree, in 1983/4 they were 49% (CBS 1986b).

Public policy facilitated the entry and continued employment of women with small children. In the early 1970s, the number of day care centres was tripled as part of government policy to encourage female labour force participation so that by 1980, 57% of the two year olds, 89% of the three year olds and 97% of the four year olds were in some pre-school setting. In most cases the service is subsidised and payment graded to parents' income. The inadequate supply of suitable alternative child care, however, remains a major constraint on women's labour force participation.

Legislation which was geared to protecting the working mother was also instrumental in encouraging labour force participation. For example, the Women's Work law (1954) forbade an employer to fire a woman for reasons of pregnancy. The law granted a woman the right to be absent from work for up to 40 hours for health reasons related to her pregnancy at the employer's expense. It granted compulsory maternity leave for 12 weeks with pay and optional maternity leave for up to one year with-

out pay. A number of collective labour agreements allowed mothers to take special sick leave to care for children. The collective labour agreements covering all Histadrut (The General Federation of Labour whose economic arm controls 35% of the economy) and government workers, provided that mothers of small children may work one hour less a day at the employer's expense (provided they work full time and not when shorter summer hours are in effect). In 1988, the Equal Opportunity in Employment Law transformed maternal rights to leave without pay and sick leave to care for dependents into parental rights.

The privileges granted to mothers make women less attractive to employers. This, however, is at least to some extent offset by the fact that military reserve service, currently up to 60 days a year, until approximately the age of 55, is required only of men.

The Prime Minister's Commission on the Status of Women (1978) noted that protective legislation, which had been considered an important achievement for women in the 1950s and 1960s, in the later 1970s appeared to be depriving women of economic opportunities and served as a disincentive for employers to hire women for more lucrative jobs. The legislative trend in recent years has been away from protective legislation while still preserving women's options on the assumption that equal obligations can be demanded only when women will have equal opportunities. In 1986 the Knesset amended the Women's Work Law and eliminated prohibitions on employers to hire women for night work but preserved women's right to refuse to work at night. In 1987 it passed the Equal Pension Age law equalising pension age for men and women at 65 while preserving women's right to earlier retirement.

Characteristics of the new labour force.

The new female labour force came disproportionately from the ranks of the more educated, and the married as well as from women who were somewhat older than those who had entered in the 1960s. In 1986, among those with 16+ years of education 77.2% of the men and 75.6% of the women were in the civilian labour force; 38.3% of the

Table 1:
Civilian Labor Force by continent of birth, sex and years of schooling (1984)
Continent of Birth

Years of Schooling	Jewish Women		Non-Jewish Women	Jewish Men
	Israel	As-Af*	Eur-Am*	
Total	48.9	34.8	37.8	62.7
0-4	(13.1)	15.2	8.4	41.8
5-8	30.0	29.1	19.5	63.9
9-12	42.3	49.6	38.8	60.2
13-15	66.1	66.4	58.7	70.1
16+	82.7	82.3	73.4	77.0

*As-Af = Asia-African, refers to Jews primarily from Moslem countries of the Middle East and North Africa.
Eur-Am = Europe-American both Eastern and Western Europe.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics. Labour Force Surveys 1984.
Special Series No. 780 p. 95 and p.231

female labour force compared to 27.5% of the male labour force, had 13+ years of education. The female labour force is on the average more educated than the male labour force.

The impact of education and ethnic origin on labour force participation is shown in Table 1 which reveals the following: The more educated a woman is, the more likely she is to be in the labour force. This applies to Arab women as well, although the affect of education is not as powerful as it is for Jewish women. The lower participation rates found for first and second generation Jewish women from Asia-Africa become negligible when we compare women with the same levels of education. Among women with nine and more years of schooling, female participation rates in Israel are best predicted by years of schooling and are less responsive to women's potential earnings than in the U.S. (Gronau, 1974).

While education is the best single predictor of female labour force participation, being married and having children became increasingly less of a deterrent. In 1986 more than 51% of married women aged 25-44 were in the labour force compared to less than 26% in 1967. In addition, 60% of all Jewish mothers with youngest child aged 2-4 were in the labour force and for mothers with 13+ years of education, the rate reached 81%. (CBS 1987 tables 11/6 and 11/7).

The growth in participation rates of the more educated and the married is reflected in the changing age structure of the female labour force. From the data in Table 2 we observe that in 1970 the labour force participation of women peaked between 18-24 years and then declined sharply. The majority of the work force was non-married and women tended to withdraw upon marriage or the arrival of the first child. By 1975 labour force participation peaked at around 30 and declined more gradually than in the previous period, reflecting the greater continuity of women's labour force participation.

The majority of the new female workers came from among married women in the major childbearing years. Through the early 1980s participation rates for 25-34 continued to increase but in 1986 female labour force participation peaked at around 40 years. The latter development reflects the greater continuity of women's labour force participation over the life cycle, as well as the fact that middle aged women are more educated than they were

a decade earlier and that employers are more ready to hire them.

3. Women's Employment Strategies.

In response to the demands of the domestic sphere women typically adopt a number of strategies to juggle family and work life:

Part-time jobs.

Working part-time (less than 35 hours a week) is the most prominent solution (Izraeli, 1983). In 1986, 43% of the women and 16% of the men worked part-time. Women worked on average 29 hours a week and men 40 hours. Seventy per cent of part time workers are women. The growth in the proportion of married women in the labour force increased the proportion of women in part-time employment. The share of full-time employment among Jewish women declined from 57.4% in 1970 to 44.4% in 1980, and the share of part-time employment increased from 30.5% to 40.4% - the balance is unemployment or temporarily not at work (Ben-Porath and Gronau, 1984:12). The proportion of women working part-time among scientific, professional and technical workers (approximately 50%) is greater than among clerical and industrial workers (approximately 32%). This finding suggests that part-time work is a matter of expedience for many women rather than a reflection of low commitment.

In the short run women are not penalised 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, which on average, constitute approximately 50% of the cost of a worker to the employer.

Female niche.

A second strategy is to select occupational niches which permit the woman to control the hours of her work. For example, a study (Zimmer and Halperin, 1978) of the occupational specialisation of medical physicians found that, with the exception of pediatrics, 83.4% of the women but only 38% of the men specialised in fields which independent judges rated as high on permitting time control.

Convenient and congenial working hours are among the major attractions of the Civil service where in 1988, 58% of those employed were women (Efroni 1988) and

Table 2:
Percentage of Women in Civilian Labour Force by Age, 1970-1986

Age Group	1970	1975	1987
Total	29.3	31.6	38.9
14-17	18.1	11.3	9.1
18-24	44.9	40.4	38.7
25-34	32.6	44.2	54.8
35-44	31.9	40.6	58.9
45-54	33.9	36.8	50.1
55-64	22.1	22.4	26.1
65+	5.0	5.0	6.8

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1975, p. 295, 1988 p.335.

where women constitute 71% of the pharmacists and 57% of the lawyers (Civil Service, 1987:177) compared to 46.2% and 40.6% respectively, in the labour force.

Israeli women benefit from the unique occupational structure of the public sector where more than 50% of the female labour force is employed. Comparing the public sector with the core (primary labour market) and periphery segments (secondary labour market) of the labour market, Lewin-Epstein and Stier (1987) found that "workers in the public sector -- both men and women -- enjoy the most advantageous arrangements; they earn the highest income on average of the three sectors (they also have the highest level of education) despite the fact that they work fewer hours per week than other workers" and have greater job stability. They also found that women are discriminated against in all three sectors. Despite the large proportion of women in government service, they constitute only approximately 11% of those in the top five ranks of the administrative hierarchy and 20% of those in the top of the professional hierarchy.

Opportunities foregone.

Caught in the "greedy institution" of the family (Coser and Coser, 1974), women have tended to juggle family and work by foregoing job opportunities or avoiding demanding or "greedy" occupations or occupational roles. For example, in order to work close to home, mothers forego the opportunities stemming from the readiness to travel to work. Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein, (1988) found that women who worked outside their community of residence had higher earnings and higher occupational status than did women who worked in their community of residence. Furthermore, 57% of the earnings gap between commuters and non-commuters among women, was due to the advantageous market conditions associated with commuting. Semyonov found that 46% of the economically active men in Israel were employed outside

their community compared to only 32% of the women. Non commuting women, furthermore, had a greater probability of being married and had more children on average than commuting women.

In a still unpublished study of over 850 Israeli managers, I found that 48% of the women and 35% of the men indicated that they had on some occasion, refused an opportunity for promotion or had held back their career advancement. The reasons for doing so, differed by sex: 77% of the women and 21% of the men gave as a reason "fear of causing harm to children" while "lack of interest in the job offered" was a reason given by 47% of the men and 19% of the women.

Given the greediness of the women's domestic roles and the greediness of managerial jobs, the latter, until recently, have had less appeal to married women with children than alternative professional routes. Management, has few of the characteristics which facilitate a woman to juggle her multiple roles (Israeli, 1988a). It is resistant to part-time work. Only 27% of female administrators and managers work part-time compared to 48% of female academic workers and 51 per cent of other professional and technical workers. While managers generally have more discretion to determine their work schedules than do lower level participants, their workload is also less predictable and more likely to expand beyond official work hours. In addition, working overtime has important symbolic value as an expression of one's commitment to the organisation. In this sense the managerial role intrudes more sharply into the domestic time sphere than do other occupational roles, eliciting resentment from spouse and offspring and arousing guilt in the mother. This may in part explain why only 50% of non-single female administrators and managers have children at home under age 14, compared to 67% of academic and professional workers and 74% of other professional and technical workers.

4. Sex Segregation of Occupations and Differential Earnings.

The occupational distribution of women in Israel, as elsewhere, is very different from that of men (Table 3). Men and women are concentrated in different occupations (Israeli and Gaier, 1979, Cohen et al 1987). For example, in 1986, the eight largest occupations (out of a list of 90) listed in order of size from the largest were:

women

1. secretaries, typists and key punch operators;
2. bookkeepers;
3. kindergarten and public school teachers and principals;
4. nurses and paramedical workers;
5. sales workers
6. high school and post high school teachers and principals;
7. general office workers;
8. social workers and probation officers.

men

1. Managers (except for those employed in government service)
2. electricians
3. mechanics
4. technicians
5. bookkeepers
6. retailers
7. carpenters
8. weavers

(Managers on average are also older than those employed in other occupations).

More often opportunity loss resulting from unexploited opportunities is less immediately obvious since it is the long term consequences of women's career strategies which seriously damage their competitive position. An example of such a strategy with long term effects and of the lack of symmetry between men and women in this respect is poignantly demonstrated in a study (Doenias, 1988) of the decision to go on Sabbatical in academe, among dual career couples. Doenias found that in the decision making process of whether to go on Sabbatical the men gave more weight to factors related to their own careers than to the careers of their respective wives. Women, on the other hand, gave greater weight to considerations related to their spouses' careers and were more influenced than the men, by the way they perceived their spouses' reactions to their careers, (for example perceived support), and less to factors related to their own careers. Women were less likely than men to go abroad on a Sabbatical and those who went, 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' findings contribute another dimension to our understanding of why the proportion of women narrows so radically as we move up the academic hierarchy (Toren, 1987). In Israel, university women constitute approximately 42 per cent of the instructors, 31 per cent of the lecturers, 17 per cent of the senior lecturers, 8 per cent of the associate professors, and only 4 per cent of the full professors.

Furthermore, women were concentrated in a small number of occupations while men are more dispersed. For example, the above eight occupations employ 50% of the women and only 26% of the men, respectively.

Comparing the distribution among occupations be-

tween 1972 and 1986 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. This development reflects the increased educational level of the population, the rationalisation of industry and agriculture and the growth in the demand for educated workers. The upward drift however, was stronger for women than for men. The new female labour force did not enter blue collar jobs nor did it make inroads into the better paid male dominated manual occupations. Some reasons for this include the availability of relatively inexpensive male Arab labour (Lewin-Espstein and Semyonov, 1987), and the attractiveness for less educated women of high paying domestic jobs. The demand for female labour came primarily from occupations such as teaching, social work and clerical work where women already had a foothold and from occupations requiring general education which were previously closed to women, such as bank tellers, where, unable to attract men in sufficient numbers, employers were compelled to hire women. In addition new occupations which initially had no clear sex label such as in the fields of computers and human resource management, were receptive to women. The few traditionally male occupations in which there was a significant increase in the proportion of women during the last decade include: pharmacists and veterinarians, managers and administrators in government and municipal services, primary and intermediate school principals, and lawyers.

The Earnings Gap:

As we have seen, women are constrained from adopting an employment strategy designed to maximise their earnings. They are also more vulnerable to employer discrimination. 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. Although on average, working women are more educated than men and are concentrated in the more prestigious occupations, between 1970 and 1983 their hourly earnings were ap-

Table 3:
Employed Persons by Occupation and Sex: 1972 and 1986
Distribution Jews

Percent Women in Occupation		Occupation	Men		Women	
1972	1984		1972	1986	1972	1986
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
33.5	39.8	Scientific and Academic Workers	5.5	8.5	5.9	8.5
54.6	60.0	Other Professional Technical and related workers.	7.1	10.7	19.3	23.0
7.4	11.7	Administrators and Managers	4.2	8.2	(.7)	2.5
52.0	61.8	Clerical and Related workers	11.3	10.3	24.1	29.6
26.0	30.2	Sales Workers	8.3	9.0	8.2	6.3
54.0	58.8	Service Workers	8.6	8.8	21.5	19.3
17.0	17.0	Agricultural Workers	8.5	6.5	6.1	1.8
11.2	10.5	Skilled Workers in Industry, Building, Transport and Others	38.2	33.2	11.2	7.5
15.7	16.4	Unskilled Workers	8.1	4.3	3.0	1.6

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, 1972, 1984, CBS, 1986 p. 316.

proximately 75% that of men. Between 1972 and 1983 the income gap between men and women had actually increased from 22% to 29%. Comparing the earnings of government employees between 1978 and 1988, Efroni found that although women had on average more seniority in 1988 than in 1978, the earnings gap increased from 21 to 28%. In other words, it seems that the earnings gap has grown continuously since at least 1972. In 1984, 80% of the women contributed less than 20% to their respective families' earnings (The Centre for Social Policy Research 1985).

The sex difference in earnings has been explained primarily by the sex segregation of occupations and by the lower rates of returns that women receive compared to men for their human capital resources. In a study of sex differences in earnings of government workers, Efroni (1980) found that were women compensated for their human capital - education, training and experience - at the same rate as are men, their income would in fact have been 2% greater, instead of 22% less than that of men.

One of the important mechanisms through which employers can and do discriminate between men and women in essentially similar jobs is in the differential allocation of fringe benefits such as overtime payments, telephone and car allowances which constitute a sizeable proportion of net earnings. Since the passage of the equal pay act in 1964, and despite persistent gender discrimination in earnings, only one equal pay case has ever been brought to the labour courts (Raday, 1983). Even though fringe benefits are a major source of discrimination, it has not yet been established whether these are covered by the law (Raday, 1983).

Anti Discrimination Legislation.

Anti-discrimination legislation, to date, has not proven to be an effective tool for increasing gender equality in the labour market (Commission on the Status of Women, 1978). The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (1981) made discrimination in hiring and training illegal and prohibited gender-specific job advertisements. As a criminal law it placed the burden of litigation on government enforcement agencies rather than on the individual, however, proving discrimination under the conditions of the law was highly problematic (Raday, 1983). To date the ministry of work and welfare which is responsible for the implementation of the law has initiated and won a number of cases against employers using sexist advertising but the deterrence power of the sanctions provided by the law has been negligible. No case was ever brought to court on the issues of discrimination in hiring and training. The failure to utilise the anti-discrimination measures to improve women's employment status is a result both of the inadequacies of the law and the reluctance or inability of employees and employee organisations to pursue the issue (Raday, 1983; Boneparth, 1985).

In 1988, a more comprehensive Equal Opportunities in Employment Law replaced the 1981 law. The new law transferred the burden of proof of non-discrimination to the employer and provided legal weapons to fight a claims of discrimination which were lacking in the earlier law. The enforcement mechanisms, however, are still

highly inadequate. As Raday (1987) points out, for example, "administrative enforcement requires financing and hence creates costs." The new law does not even provide the means to cover such costs. The fact that there are more financial resources and organisational support as well as more feminist lawyers available to contest a case in court, than there were a decade ago, provides some cause for optimism regarding the use of the new law for anti-discriminatory litigation.

5. Conclusion.

The general thrust of public policy in Israel over the decades, has been to enable women to enter and stay in the labour market by both protecting their rights at work and creating a support system for their roles in the family. Public policy as well as the policy of the large women's organisations, however, has been based on the traditional assumption of the man being head of the family and its major breadwinner with female labour as supplementing income and of the woman as responsible for the care of the children and of managing the home. For example the major activity of the women's bureau in the Ministry of Work and Welfare is setting up child care services for working women. It operated more with the aim of improving the welfare of women, than with a vision of equal opportunity for women to gain access to income, status and power.

Israel is a highly politicised society where some 20 political parties compete for power. There are very few niches into which the arm of government does not reach and the hand of the political parties does not touch. Within the political game, which determines the allocation of resources and shapes opportunities in every sphere of life, women as a pressure group, have very little clout. Their loyalties are divided along party lines. Within the large parties they are divided among the competing factions, from which they get their support. They are rendered powerless in part by their prior loyalty to their male sponsors. The leaders of the large women's organisations, are tightly bound to the various parties either through institutionalised ties and/or through political, marital and other network loyalties.

During the last decade, the political and pseudo political women's organisations have focussed their attention on such issues as rape, wife battering and women's health. These issues tap a wide stratum of consensus that crosses party lines and in that sense are "non-political". On behalf of these issues they have undertaken activities such as battered women's shelters, which have given the sponsors considerable visibility but whose costs are manageable.

No organisation to date, has actively advocated on behalf of the issue of discrimination in the work place. Attributing importance to the problem of gender discrimination in promotion, implies a willingness to change the traditional power and status relations between men and women (Israeli and Tabor, forthcoming). Apart from the insignificantly small feminist movement, no other group has challenged those relations. Advocating the protection of women from family violence, in contrast, con-

tributes to the preservation of stable families and motherhood.

The low priority attributed to equal opportunity on the national agenda and the societal view that work is of secondary importance to women is reflected in child-care and school policy. Since the end of the 1970s government support for the building of new pre-school day centres was greatly reduced. Plans for expanding the extended school day were shelved and where introduced, they were in many cases discontinued. Under the heavy hand of budget cuts that hit hard particularly in the field of education and other public and social services during the 1980s, teacher hours were cut and "non-essential" school hours eliminated. Insufficient child-care facilities (Davidovici and Churchman, 1984) and the short school day that sends children home at varying times from noon to early afternoon, in a country where the main meal is eaten at mid'day, constrain women from increasing their investments in the labour market.

Women themselves continue to perceive blocked opportunities and sex differences in rewards as an individual rather than as a structural problem and consequently as a personal rather than as a political issue. For example, although women are rewarded at lower rates of return for their human capital than men (Semyonov and Kraus, 1983), they do not respond to this situation in terms of relative deprivation and injustice. "Instead they react to the question of fairness as if their shortages in work-related inputs are solely responsible for - and therefore justify - their income disadvantage" (Moore, 1987). This response is explained by women's tendency to compare their earnings with those of other women and to avoid comparing themselves with men. Intra-gender comparisons lead to a "scaling down" of their standards of fairness judgements, while occupational segregation by sex, a structural condition, discourages females from inter-gender comparisons. The belief in the justice of their deprivation and in the existence of equal opportunity for "competent and motivated" women in Israel as well as in the innately natural and voluntary character of women's family roles, inhibit the development of women's consciousness, a necessary precondition for social change.

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