

Women Lead Change:**Training Volunteers for a Rape Crisis Center/ Hotline in Taibeh*****Ruth Barzilai-Lumbroso****Introduction**

The purpose of the project described herein is twofold: First, the establishment of a support system and rape prevention programs for victims of sexual violence among the Arab Palestinian community in Israel. Second, to examine the potential relevance of the Western/ feminist model for support of victims of sexual violence for Palestinian women in Taibeh, and the potential for Jewish-Palestinian cooperation with regard to projects concerning women in general, and treatment and prevention of sexual violence in particular. The general conclusion, as will be demonstrated throughout the paper, is that such cooperation is not only possible, but essential for both Palestinian and Jewish women in Israel. Furthermore, it is also concluded that the Western feminist model of establishing a rape hotline and / or crisis center for support of women exposed to sexual violence can be adapted to Palestinian women in Israel,

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provided that it is adapted with cultural sensitivity that allows flexibility, particularly with regard to the feminist ideology underlying the establishment of rape crisis centers.

In an article that discusses theoretical and practical aspects of feminist research, Sherry Gorelick maintains that “Feminist research must be part of a process by which women’s oppression is not only described, but challenged... research must be done ‘from the standpoint of women,’ taking ‘the everyday world as problematic,’ and beginning from women’s ordinary, everyday experience.”¹

Indeed, the need to combine feminist research and theory with feminist practice and activism is the source of this project and the starting point of the author. It follows, therefore, that research on women, particularly from the point of view of public policy, should combine academic research capabilities with feminist activism to influence and improve women’s everyday lives. This paper demonstrates this as it portrays and analyzes a project carried out in the Arab town of Taibeh, Israel with regard to treatment and prevention of sexual violence against women.

As will be illustrated, this Jewish-Palestinian joint project was initiated by women committed to and involved in treating victims of sexual violence and working toward prevention of this social crime, committed primarily against women. The project centered on the training of Arabic-speaking volunteers for a rape crisis hotline and for sexual violence prevention programs in junior

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high and high schools,² and served as a case study for the research presented herein.³

HaSharon Rape Crisis Center [HRCC] is located in Ra'anana, and serves the entire Sharon population, including the Arab communities of the area. The decision to train Arabic-speaking volunteers for a rape crisis hotline was primarily the outcome of two factors: 1. Frequent calls received at HRCC's hotline from Palestinian women living in the area; 2. The understanding that it is necessary to provide support for victims of sexual violence in Palestinian society by Arabic-speaking volunteers who share the victim's cultural background. The training program implemented in Taibeh was designed for rape crisis centers throughout Israel, and is in use by most of them. Only minor changes were initially planned, mostly with regard to cultural and linguistic differences. The program was carried out in full cooperation, by an Arab Palestinian and a Jewish instructor.

The research entailed the documentation of all stages of the project, beginning with the initial idea, followed by interviews and training of potential hotline volunteers and prevention education instructors, and ending with the successful completion of the hotline training program. The followup program-prevention through education-was not fully documented and merits additional research.⁴

The research has analyzed the findings, evaluated the extent of the project's success, and reached conclusions with regard to the establishment and operation of a Western feminist-modeled rape crisis hotline or center

for women in Taibeh. Having used the training of volunteers in Taibeh as a case study, I believe that many of the conclusions drawn therefrom and the recommendations based thereon could also apply to other Palestinian populations in Israel.⁵

The general intention with regard to consciousness-raising concerning treatment and prevention of sexual violence, and the gaining of skills and knowledge with regard to supporting victims of sexual violence and educating toward its prevention among the project participants, was successfully fulfilled. Consequently, it is anticipated that treatment and prevention of sexual violence against women will become part of the agenda of individuals and policy-makers in Taibeh. It is also expected that the paper documenting the need for establishing a support system for victims of sexual violence will be used by policy-makers for other Palestinian populations in Israel.

Palestinian Women in Israel: A Brief History

Palestinian women in Israel are doubly marginalized, both as female members of a patriarchal society, and as Arab women belonging to a national minority in a country in which the majority of the population is Jewish, and in which they do not enjoy civil equality. The intersection between sources of national, class, and social oppression of women in the Palestinian case are evident, and it would be “irrational to treat the social oppression of women separately from the class and nationalist oppression.”⁶

Dr. Huneida Ghanem of Hebrew University indicates two characteristics of the status of Arab women in Israel: life on the margins of Israeli society on the one hand, and on the margins of Palestinian political identity on the other. Arab Palestinian women in Israel, therefore, live on the margins of both the state and the national group to which they belong.⁷ That is not to say that the status of Palestinian women in Israel is stagnant. On the contrary, the social position of Palestinian women is constantly changing. The change is characterized by a process of drawing away from their traditional roles in the private sphere, and integrating into the public sphere in increasing numbers. Most scholars point to the fact that changes in the status of Palestinian women are related to larger processes of change that Palestinian society in Israel is undergoing.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, almost all Palestinian political and organizational institutions collapsed, and the social and economic structure was shaken and altered. Arab men, in particular, became more vulnerable as a result of the loss of income (re)sources, prolonged absences from home (due to work), exposure to a foreign culture, and their encounters with Jews—both men and women—whose behavior was foreign to them, and due to their dependence on Israeli rule and the threat therein to their national identity. In this situation of national crisis, the Palestinians clung to their traditional culture, resulting, among other things, in the tightening of social control of women. As in other historical cases in which national identities were threatened, control of women became a measure for the minority

society's capacity to protect itself and its uniqueness. Women were assigned the role of maintaining and transmitting the Palestinian culture, while their ethnic and national identity was believed to have been safeguarded through the "protection" of women's bodies, which in turn ensured the preservation of men's honor.⁸

During the 1960s, women's increased level of education, as a result, *inter alia*, of the state's enforcement of mandatory education laws on the Palestinian population, conducted their entry into the labor force and their adoption of Western patterns of life and culture, which began to undermine the authority of the family. Palestinian women began joining various women's organizations and, although they had been viewed as the keepers and transmitters of traditional culture, they also became agents of social change.

It is often argued that up until 1967, changes in participation patterns of Palestinian women in the public sphere were highly objected to among the Palestinian population in Israel, because women's participation in the public sphere was seen as a result of the "negative" influence of Jewish society. Following the Six-Day War and their renewed encounter with their fellow Palestinians in the West Bank, Palestinian citizens of Israel discovered that "the woman question" occupied a large portion of Palestinians. Hence, the demand for women's equality could no longer be dismissed as a Jewish influence.

The 1967 war then, according to scholars of Arab society in Israel, was a turning point in the process of the reconstruction of Arab-Israelis' identities as Palestinians, which in turn facilitated women's access to higher education, to the job market, and to public activities.⁹ Furthermore, scholars point out the growing gap between the ideology that reinforces the superiority of men over passive and submissive women and everyday reality. They argue, rather, that the status of women within the home is getting stronger, and that women are gradually playing more important roles in decisions related to their families and households.¹⁰

Arab women citizens of Israel are not a homogeneous group. They live in a variety of cities, towns, and villages throughout Israel, including unrecognized [by the state] villages, mixed cities, and within secular as well as a variety of religious communities (Muslim, Christian, Druze).¹¹ However, despite their diversity, Arab women, part of the national minority of Palestinians who comprise approximately 20% of Israel's population, share the experience of the harshest consequences of discrimination: as members of a minority group and as women regulated by their society's perceptions with regard to the status of women and the social rules and customs that govern them.¹²

Palestinian Women in Israel and Sexual Violence

The term *sexual violence* comprises a range of sexual acts or behaviors forced on women, or men, without their consent, such as harassment on the street or in the workplace, the public exposure of sexual organs, incest, attempted rape,

rape, gang rape, and more. One in every four Israeli women is sexually abused at least once before the age of 18, and according to evidence compiled by women's organizations who support victims of sexual violence, it is estimated that 70% to 90% of the cases of sexual abuse or violence are committed by someone known to the victim, such as a family member, boyfriend, or other community member.¹³

The causes for sexual violence against Palestinian women in Israel are fundamentally similar to those in other patriarchal societies. Namely, in most societies that see women as men's property, women are physically, sexually, psychologically, economically, and socially dominated by their male relatives, and sexual violence against them is a recurring social phenomenon. These social circumstances affect the ability of women who have been sexually abused to seek immediate help as well as long-term treatment, because in patriarchal societies, violence against women is often socially legitimized, influencing the judicial and social welfare systems, and even blamed on women themselves, who feel shame and guilt for being abused and for reporting it.

Up until a decade ago, violence against women in Israel was largely considered a private matter that had to be dealt with within the domestic sphere, especially among the Arab population. Only in the last several years have various women's organizations begun to bring such matters to public attention and to seek various support means for sexually abused women.¹⁴

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According to the Israeli Authority for the Advancement of Women, in 2003, out of a total of 3,190 sexual violence complaints lodged, only 225 were from Palestinian women. In 2004, out of 2,999 incidents reported in total, only 201 were submitted by Palestinian women (7% and 6% respectively). However, these statistics do not reflect the actual incidence of sexually violent acts committed against Palestinian women, because many women do not report these abuses to the police out of fear and shame.

Among the Palestinian women who do seek help, some turn to women's rights organizations and independent hotlines. Women Against Violence (WAV), a Palestinian women's rights NGO based in Nazareth, has recorded an increase in the number of calls received at its Crisis Center for Victims of Physical and Sexual Violence in 2003 and 2004 (327 and 377 cases respectively).¹⁵ The difference in statistics between those provided by the Israeli Authority for the Advancement of Women and WAV points out the significant role played by women's NGOs in the Palestinian community with regard to treatment of sexual abuse.

Statistics provided by Israeli rape crisis centers indicate that only 20% of all victims of sexual violence report their experiences to the police, and that the bulk of these reports do not reach the judicial system due to lack of evidence. Many victims of sexual violence choose to remain silent about the crime committed against them. Young and unmarried women, in particular,

often keep incidents of sexual abuse a secret for many years.¹⁶ There appear to be several major reasons for Palestinian women's tendency to avoid reporting crimes of sexual violence to the police:

1. The social stigma attached to women who have been sexually violated. As mentioned earlier, Palestinian society regards sex-related issues as private matters, and holds women responsible for lack of sexual chastity, sometimes to the extreme of physically harming those involved in sexual "misconduct". Women, therefore, find themselves in impossible situations of being unable to seek help for sexual crimes committed against them for fear of being harmed on the basis of "family honor". Such fear is all the more real for Palestinian women living in closed communities, such as small villages, because quite often the social worker or other officials they turn to may be related to them.¹⁷ Not all women in the various Palestinian communities in Israel are aware of the existence of rape crisis centers, to which they can turn to receive confidential support and assistance.
2. Many women are unaware that sexual violence is a violation of their fundamental rights and that it is against the law, and accept it as part of the female experience (particularly women raped by their spouses, who wrongly believe that being sexually available to their husbands is one of their duties as wives).
3. Lack of courage and emotional strength to undergo the ordeal of reliving the physical and emotional pain of sexual violence while reporting it

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4. Fear of the attacker and anxiety over jeopardizing the unity of the family, as well as concern that the family will react with disbelief. Women who experience sexual harassment at work tend not to report it for fear of losing their jobs.
5. The language barrier: Many women are unaware that some rape crisis centers offer assistance in Arabic. In cases that are reported and in which complaints are filed, prosecutors don't adequately prepare women for the proceedings, and the court does not supply necessary Arabic interpreting services. Needless to say, reporting sexual violence, particularly seeking help for it in a language other than one's native tongue, undermines one's confidence and ability to express oneself.¹⁸
6. The attitude of the police to complaints of sexual abuse: Not having specific instructions on how to deal with cases of sexual violence against women leaves the handling of these cases to the judgment of random officers on duty, who usually have neither cultural nor gender-sensitive training on the subject of violence against women, and are thus unprepared to deal with such cases. As such, police officers sometimes try to persuade women to reconcile with their spouses, medical examinations are not always carried out, complaints are not immediately investigated, and cases are often dropped.¹⁹
7. The shortage of female police investigators in the Palestinian community results in a situation wherein in most police stations that serve the community, victims of sexual abuse who wish to report the crime are interrogated by

male police officers. Most women are uncomfortable reporting cases of sexual violence to male investigators, particularly because of the many intimate and graphic questions asked regarding the attack. In the case of Palestinians in Israel, the male police officer may very well be a relative of either the victim or the offender. Such a situation may undermine the willingness of women to report the abuse, as well as the willingness of the officer to investigate it.²⁰

Rape crisis centers throughout Israel attempt to remedy such problems through the mediation of women. Volunteers in such centers support victims through phone calls, meeting with them and their families, and accompanying them to hospitals, police stations, and court hearings. Whereas the recruitment of female Palestinian police officers may assist in encouraging women to report sexual crimes, it does not seem to be a feasible option at this point, leaving the treatment of women who have suffered sexual violence in the hands of various civil-social organizations.

The Rape Crisis Center as a Support System for Victims of Sexual Violence: The Western Model

The establishment of rape crisis centers was one of the outcomes of the anti-rape movement, in turn an outgrowth of the feminist movement, which began its activities in the US in the late 1960s. The aim of the movement was to respond to, prevent, and eventually eliminate rape from American society.²¹ In order to achieve these aims, it was argued, the rape culture prevalent in

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America in which “sexual assault is tolerated, violent and sexual images are intertwined, women are blamed for being raped, sexist attitudes prevail, and male sexual privilege goes unquestioned”²² had to be terminated. Needless to say, the anti-rape movement’s aspirations were not fulfilled, and rape culture so defined continues to prevail in both the Western world as well as in the Middle East.

The anti-rape movement also assumed the role of educating the public by re-conceptualizing the notions of rape, rapists, and rape victims. Susan Brownmiller’s *Against Our Will* (1975) was the first book to present rape as an experience shared by women of all social backgrounds. Raising consciousness about rape in the public sphere became one of the movement’s central activities, and one of the first issues on its agenda was the redefinition of rape “as the ultimate expression of male dominance over women - as violence they face merely for being female.”²³ The politics that evolved from this new understanding of rape surrounded two major concerns: establishing rape crisis centers to support rape victims, and reforming rape laws.

Rape crisis centers were established throughout the US in the 1970s, and were very integral to the feminist movement, particularly its radical branch, during those years. Radical feminism defined gender relations as political relations, because they are based on power.²⁴ They also maintained that men’s sexual control over women is the source of women’s social subordination, and that women’s perceived personal problems are in fact political, because they are shared by all women as a group.

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These new theories, brought together under the slogan “the personal is political”, evolved into the ideology and practice of consciousness-raising groups, in which women were able to come together and speak about personal, intimate, and even painful experiences. Such consciousness-raising groups, designed to enable women to autonomously and collectively determine the problems that should be addressed by the movement, sprang up throughout the US and provided female spaces in which women were able to discuss their life experiences freely and without judgment. It was within such discussions that the issue of rape repeatedly emerged as part of women’s life experiences. Eventually, women came to realize that this experience, which they had previously interpreted as a personal matter, had political roots, because it was so common. These discussions enabled thinking about and formulating solutions and treatment options for rape victims, and the consequent development of the radical branch of the feminist movement into the “anti-rape movement.”

Brownmiller explained that she began seeing rape as a serious social problem for women when a member of her consciousness-raising group brought in a feminist periodical that contained a first-person account by a woman who, hired as a stripper for a bachelor party, was gang-raped by the groom and his friends. That evening, three other women in the group described their experiences of rape or attempted rape. This group eventually founded the New York’s Women’s Anti-rape Group in 1971, which in turn created the city’s first rape crisis center. Similarly, the first center in the Los Angeles area was established following the rape of one of the activists at the Crenshaw

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Women's Center. It is interesting to note that all of the radical feminist groups referred to themselves as 'cells' or 'squads', almost underground terminology, and that all centers and hotlines were established in response to women's personal experiences.²⁵

It was in these consciousness-raising groups that the new definition of rape, as well as the necessary treatment for it, began to emerge. Women who shared their personal experiences spoke of the humiliation and shame they experienced at the hospital, or the traumatic questioning they encountered when reporting their experiences to the police. The personal stories told at consciousness-raising groups also introduced the participants to the different types of sexual abuse women encounter, such as date rape, gang rape, rape by family members, spousal rape, attempted rape, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and more. Most importantly, women who participated in consciousness-raising groups began to understand that rape was not a crime committed by perverts, but rather a social phenomenon related to gender-based power relations, that is, to the exercise of power by men over women.²⁶ Consciousness-raising groups, then, transformed women's private experiences into public, political matters.

The decision to form an all-female organization of volunteers to respond to the needs of rape victims was based on the idea that it was necessary to create an information and support service and to accompany women in crisis to medical examinations and police stations; to undertake community education on rape, and on the idea that women were most capable for such

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activities because rape was a crime committed primarily against women. The main idea behind the centers was that women help other women who have experienced sexual violence regain control of their lives, and was based on radical feminist ideology that emphasized women's empowerment and self-help.

The first rape crisis center was established in Washington, D. C. in 1972, and became the model for future centers. The Washington center also published the pamphlet *How to Start a Rape Crisis Center*, which presented guidelines for setting up such a center. The first center offered an emergency phone service; discussion groups for rape victims; transportation to the police or hospital; emergency housing for women who had been assaulted; information for victims of sexual assault concerning reporting the crime and sexually transmitted diseases; helping victims regain control of their lives by enabling them to decide the steps necessary for them to take following the assault; and public information and education on rape.

Like many radical experiments of the 1970s that employed the principles of participatory democracy, the centers were designed to operate as female collectives wherein all members shared responsibilities and made decisions jointly and non-hierarchically. By the mid-1970s, the collective structure had been replaced by a more traditional one with a director, a board of directors, and state funding. In other words, centers became more institutionalized, and evolved from radical feminist organizations into mainstream institutions, dependent on state funding for their continued operation.²⁷

Rape Crisis Centers in Israel

The ten rape crisis centers that operate throughout Israel function on the basis of volunteers who staff a 24-hour national hotline (1202) seven days a week. The centers provide victims of sexual violence with emotional support as well as legal assistance. Volunteers escort women to police stations for the purpose of filing complaints and to court hearings, as well as to hospitals for medical treatment. In addition, volunteers meet victims, their family members, partners, or any one else supporting them for the purpose of empowering the victims, and strengthening their individual support resources. The centers also mediate between the victims and various authorities dealing with their cases, and attempt to maintain their rights as women, as humans, and as victims of a criminal offense.

Moreover, most centers operate support groups for girls and women who have experienced incest and sexual abuse during childhood, as well as for women who have been raped or sexually assaulted as adults. These groups, led by professional therapists, provide a safe haven where women can process the implications of the assault they have experienced, a place where they can face the trauma and the memory, as well the pain and feelings of guilt and shame that society imposes on them. Meeting other women who share similar experiences has indeed, proven to be a source of empowerment in the healing process.

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As a result of their commitment to effecting social change and to raising public consciousness of sexual violence and its social roots, rape crisis centers in Israel also operate education programs, intended mostly for adolescents. Workshops for junior high and high school students raise such issues as gender relations, dating practices, and relationships during adolescence, respecting others' limits, and establishing a relationship based on consent. These activities are complemented by workshops for the educational staff in schools. Besides consciousness-raising and change of behavior patterns with regard to gender relations, boys and girls are encouraged to seek help if they had been assaulted or abused.²⁸

Of the ten rape crisis centers that operate throughout Israel, three serve the Palestinian community: one in Haifa, one in Nazareth, and one in East Jerusalem. The HRCC also receives calls from Palestinian women in the area, but does not yet operate a hotline in Arabic. The centers in Haifa and Nazareth together receive approximately 250 calls per year. The Haifa center, which serves both the Jewish and Arab communities, reports that approximately 20% of all calls are from Arab women.²⁹ These centers' statistics indicate that most cases reported by Palestinian women and girls are of incest or rape by an acquaintance. It must be remembered, however, that the cases brought to the attention of rape crisis centers constitute only a small percentage of the actual cases of sexual violence in the Palestinian community, because many women choose to keep sexual abuse a secret rather than expose themselves to the inquiry and judgment of their families, neighbors, and communities.³⁰

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The Arab community's reaction to sexual violence against women does not essentially differ from that of any other society. It appears that despite obvious changes in the status of women in the Palestinian society, women are still required to safeguard their own "honor" and "dignity", and are still considered responsible for maintaining the family's "honor". As such, even when sexual abuse is forced on them they are perceived as the guilty parties. Fearing the consequences of revealing their sexual "encounters", which may entail grave social consequences or physical damage, they cannot expose the abuse and seek support. In contrast, viewing violence against women as a social phenomenon that is the responsibility of society as a whole, rape crisis centers in Israel argue that social treatment of this problem, as well as public struggle against it, will lift the heavy onus of responsibility for the violence from women themselves, and will enable them to seek the social and professional help they deserve and need.³¹

The following statistics, provided by rape crisis centers in Haifa, present information concerning Arab women and their inclination to seek the help of rape crisis centers in 2003 in various cases of sexual assault.³²

Type of Assault			Nazareth
Rape	190	10	70
Attempted rape	25	0	26
Gang rape	16	9	5
Sexual abuse in childhood	14	1	0
Sexual abuse in adulthood	11	2	0
Paternal incest	72	0	4
Sibling incest	20	0	2
Other incest	80	3	5
Sexual harassment at work	53	1	9

Theoretical Framework

The paper draws its recommendations from research conducted during the training program in Taibeh that served as a case study. A case study entails a detailed examination of one or more cases by means of a method found appropriate for the specific research. Its purpose is the thorough understanding of the subjects of the research in their natural environment, in order to understand the complexity and the context of what is being studied.³³ It should be noted, however, that although the conclusions and recommendations derived from this particular case study hold true for women in Taibeh, I argue that various aspects thereof can be applied to Palestinian women in other communities in Israel.

Elaborating on the characteristics of feminist social research, Margarit Eichler argues: “Feminist scholarship is oriented toward the improvement of the status of women and is undertaken by scholars who define themselves as feminists. Hence, it is engaged rather than supposedly value-neutral research.”³⁴ Feminist scholarship, then, is not concerned only with expanding our knowledge about women and gender relations in society, but also seeks to achieve social change, particularly with regard to women.

Grounded in the belief that change from within is more effective than outside intervention, this research sought to give voice to women in Taibeh regarding sexual violence. For the purpose of combining the activist aspect of the training program in Taibeh with my research purposes, I chose to approach

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the research theoretically using feminist participatory research strategies informed by third-wave feminist theories that emphasize such concepts as identity, difference, multi-culturalism, and otherness.

As an HRCC volunteer, I felt that giving voice to women in Taibeh—who are silenced as members of a national minority and as women in a patriarchal society—by studying the training of volunteers and the establishment of a hotline would best combine my academic with my social experience. At the same time, I could not ignore my perceived identity as a Westernized Jew, very much a part of the dominant culture in Israel, studying the training of Arab women for what is in essence a Western-oriented approach for dealing with sexual abuse and its consequences for women. I believed that recognizing that albeit sharing the experience of sexual violence as women living in patriarchal societies, we may differ in our experiences with regard to sexual violence along the axis of ethnicity, religious observance and background, class, region, sexuality, and indeed culture, would assist me in exploring, together with women of Taibeh, various culturally appropriate support mechanisms for victims of sexual violence.

One of the most serious obstacles I anticipated, then, was cultural: the very real possibility that training women based on a Western model—very much a part of the radical feminist movement—may create a set of problems with regard to cultural differences. These problems, I believed, could be overcome with the application of third-wave feminist insights with regard to cultural differences, and proper cultural adaptations that the trainees themselves would identify.

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When conducting culturally sensitive research, one should keep in mind Chandra Talpade Mohanty's observations with regard to the ethnocentrism that often characterizes Western feminist research: "An analysis of 'sexual difference' in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy... leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogeneous notion of... 'Third World difference' – that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries. And it is in the production of this 'Third World difference' that Western feminism appropriates and 'colonizes' the constitutive complexities that characterize the lives of women in these countries."³⁵

Mohanty's argument points out two important issues: The first is that treating all non-Western women as a group with necessarily shared characteristics-usually referred to as "Third World women"-overlooks differences among them. The other is that applying Western feminism to non-Western women amounts to their colonization, which according to Mohanty, "almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination, and suppression."³⁶

How, then, can we formulate a potentially more culturally accurate perspective on sexual violence among Palestinian women in Taibeh, and plan appropriate support means for women who have experienced it? One option that provides a focus similar to that of Mohanty's is to employ theoretical perspectives derived from the experience of African-American feminists such as bell hooks. Like post-colonial feminist theorists, hooks' theory emanates

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from the margins of society, both as an African-American and as a woman, and seeks to integrate the discourse on racial, class, and national oppression into the feminist discourse (in order to deconstruct the Western feminist discourse and expose its role in silencing African-American women).³⁷

The feminist version of multiculturalism, developed by both post-colonial and African-American feminism, led to the formulation of an *identity politics* that enables feminist constructions based on the experiences of various groups of women, rather than on the sole experience of Western, white, middle-class women.³⁸ This culture-sensitive approach is especially appropriate for a public policy project that concerns Palestinian women in Israel, not only because of the multi-cultural nature of Israeli society, but also because of the colonial aspects of their lives as a national and a religious minority. In order to avoid what could otherwise be perceived as colonial oppression- imposing a Western-model solution for support of victims of sexual violence on a population that considers itself both non-Western and controlled by the dominant Jewish culture- a culturally sensitive methodology should be employed.

The second theoretical aspect of the project is the methodology of participatory research, found most appropriate for my project because of its common attributes with feminism. According to Francesca M. Cancian: “Participatory research is a radical type of activist social research in which people being studied, or the intended beneficiaries of the research, have substantial control over the participation in the research. Combining scientific

investigation with education and political action, participatory researchers challenge inequality within the research process, as well as in the wider society.”³⁹ Similarly, feminist research, particularly feminist social research, is concerned with improving the lives of women and eliminating gender inequality, and is therefore socially and politically engaged.

In many ways, then, feminist research and participatory research have much in common. Both employ non-hierarchical power relations, popular knowledge, consciousness-raising, and political action. The four major characteristics of participatory research are:

1. Participation in the research by community members
2. Consciousness-raising and education of the participants
3. Inclusion of popular knowledge
4. Political action

All of these characteristics are reflected in this project. The training in Taibeh was conducted by HRCC activists, including the author. It began with several sessions devoted to consciousness-raising with regard to sexual violence against women from a feminist perspective, and proceeded to introduce the participants with various support means provided in a rape crisis center for women, who have experienced sexual abuse. In addition, the training program incorporated popular knowledge and real-life examples of women’s experiences.⁴⁰

Theories of participatory research maintain that change in only one

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of the aforementioned aspects will suffice for determining the success of a particular participatory study. In the case of the training program in Taibeh, it can be argued that empowerment of the participants of the training program, strengthening their activism within the community by assisting them in their attempt to establish a rape crisis center in their community, and sharing the knowledge and experience of an established center for purposes of planning educational prevention programs within the schools, have all been achieved.⁴¹ Also, most of the stages of participatory research, which include familiarizing the researchers with relations in the community; initiating dialogues with individuals in order to understand community needs, conducting the research, analyzing the findings, and making recommendations for improvement; and achieving social transformation and furthering equality, have been completed.

However, the last phase is the most difficult to achieve, and is dependent on the long-term support of the parties involved as well as other committed social groups and organizations. Measuring the degree of success at this stage requires more time. However, achieving such goals as raising consciousness, establishing social networks, and educating are themselves extremely important.⁴²

Feminist participatory research favors a “model of collaboration to the traditional researcher/ subject dichotomy.”⁴³ It stresses the sharing of personal experiences by both researcher and researched, and obscuring the boundaries between the two entities. The feminist tendency to give voice to

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women's personal experiences enables the flow of information, advice, and personal storytelling between researcher and researched. The advantages of the reciprocal, rather than hierarchical, research model is that it entails the active participation of those being researched because it recognizes that both parties have knowledge, skills, and resources to contribute and share. Furthermore, reciprocity between researchers and researched, it is argued, actually contributes to the success of the project.⁴⁴

The reciprocal empowerment model, then, is the one that I recommend for future similar projects involving Palestinian and Jewish women in Israel. It differs from traditional models in that it emphasizes the mutuality of working together toward a common goal. This mutuality is precisely why it is considered a feminist model, i.e., it assumes that we all have something to learn from each other (as opposed to the masculine / hierarchical approach, which sees empowerment as the transmission of knowledge and power from the powerful to the powerless). The basic assumption underlying the reciprocal empowerment model is: "We both know some things, neither of us knows everything. Working together we will both know more, and we will both learn more about how to know."⁴⁵

In *Women, Power and Ethnicity: Working Toward Reciprocal Empowerment*, Darlington and Mulvaney define the reciprocal empowerment model that they propose as

"A discursive and behavioral style of interaction grounded in reciprocity initiated by people who feel a sense of personal authority.

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The personal authority aspect...provides an individual with a level of knowledge necessary to develop a heightened self-confidence that can then lead to action."⁴⁶

What is even more important, from my perspective, is that this model enables those who share certain beliefs and ideologies to overcome social, political, and even national boundaries, and to work together, openly and honestly, toward mutual goals of social change.⁴⁷ Indeed, working together for the benefit of women who have been sexually assaulted, Palestinian and Jewish women who participated in the training program in Taibeh were able to transcend national, religious, ethnic, political, and even linguistic dichotomies. These women's sense of personal authority and the female environment that facilitated free speech despite some linguistic barriers enabled the mutuality necessary for reciprocal empowerment through women's learning about each others' everyday experiences. Thus, beyond gaining knowledge on how women can provide support for victims of sexual violence, the project has also advanced Palestinian-Jewish co-existence, as Jewish and Palestinian women gained knowledge about each others' intimate lives, not only in relation to sexual violence, but in much broader terms.

The Research Process

Planning and organizing for the beginning of the training program and the research included a series of meetings with several parties and organizations as follows:

Weekly meetings with the HRCC director

We decided that I would be a full partner in all decisions concerning the project, but will not be one of the trainers, as is desirable in a feminist participatory project, so I that could document the project in detail. I accompanied the director to all meetings regarding the project, and she consulted with me, as well as with the co-trainers, throughout the decision-making process.

Meetings with Taibeh's municipal personnel

Several meetings were held with various Taibeh municipal staff, such as the head of Social Services, the head of the Education Department, and the mayor. It was decided that they would recruit candidates for the project by handing out questionnaires (in Hebrew) provided by us. The project was described as a training program for volunteers for the purpose of staffing a hotline that would provide support for victims of sexual violence in Arabic for the Palestinian population of the area, mainly the cities of Tira, Taibeh, and the surrounding villages. The initial intention was to recruit women who were municipal employees, as well as women employed in the Taibeh education system. The target was 20 women, and we set the date of February 28, 2005 for the opening of the training program.

The recruitment was delayed again and again, and during follow-up meetings with the men, they admitted to having been unsuccessful in convincing women to join the project. It should be mentioned here that at this point, the director

of the Hasharon center and I realized that the recruitment process was being carried out quite differently than for other rape crisis centers in Israel. First, we had men serve as intermediaries for the recruitment of female volunteers for what was to be, ideologically, an all-female operation. It was quite obvious that this was creating a problem for the women approached: not only were men involved, but they were responsible for the “outreach” process, which had been unusual in itself, because ideologically speaking, volunteers at rape crisis centers initiate their volunteering themselves. We therefore suggested handing the outreach over to one of the female employees at Social Services. The woman chosen by the head of Social Services agreed to cooperate on condition that she have full powers, and that men would not be involved in the process. This proved to be the turning point, and 17 women were recruited by May 2005. Interviews for candidates were set for May 9 and 16, 2005.

Meeting at Nazareth rape crisis center

The director of HRCC and I met with the director and support coordinator, also in charge of the training programs, at Nazareth’s center, which serves the Arabic-speaking population in northern Israel, in order to discuss with them various issues related to the training program and to cultural differences that were on our minds. For example, the fact that a “Jewish” center would train Palestinian women seemed problematic from the point of view of cultural differences and language barrier, as well as power relations within Israeli society. We wanted their input on cultural customs with regard to Palestinian women as far as opening up and talking about

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their personal lives (on which the Western training model is based), how to successfully achieve empowerment of women without challenging their society and its traditions, and what they thought of the language barrier (the training program was to be offered in Hebrew).

3. The “official” narrative was that we were “meddling in their territory” and that as Jews we would not be able to operate efficiently within the Palestinian population in Taibeh, especially because of the language barrier. The argument was that women need to learn support skills in the language in which they will be provided. However, literally behind closed doors we were told that since the centers in Nazareth, Haifa, and Jerusalem that serve the Palestinian community in Israel, cannot reach the Palestinian population in our area, it would be better for us to work with women in Taibeh than no one at all.

We also learned that the training program in Nazareth was almost identical to the one provided at Tel Aviv’s rape crisis center, which is considered one of the more radical feminist centers in Israel. The meeting with the staff at the Nazareth center also demonstrated that it had been operating quite similarly to other centers in Israel, that its operations were largely based on the Western model, and that cultural adaptations were made “on the ground” and in direct relation to the population with which the center works (for example, women in a traditional village would be given different examples of life stories with which to work than would urban, educated women, because of differences in their life experiences). What was most important from our point of view was that the ideology guiding the center was no different than that at the basis of

Jewish centers in Israel, even if it was sometimes “wrapped” differently.

Meetings with the director of the center and the co-trainers

The director, the co-trainers, and I met on a weekly basis, before and after each session in Taibeh to analyze the previous session and plan for the next. The Palestinian trainer joined the project during its initial phases for linguistic and cultural reasons, as well as for reciprocal participatory purposes. We worked in full cooperation, Hasona, the Palestinian trainer, and myself usually bringing up cultural and linguistic obstacles. Hasona demonstrated a culture-sensitive approach in the initial phases of the program, which tended to fade away as the training progressed, with Avny, the Jewish trainer, often claiming, especially during the initial phases of the project, that her sense of otherness was intensifying as we progressed. That too changed in later phases.

Personal interviews before the beginning of the training, and following the initial consciousness-raising phase

Personal interviews were held in Taibeh for the candidates who had been recruited. The co-trainers had decided among themselves to accept all candidates for the first phase of the program (consciousness-raising). The purpose of the interview was therefore to establish trust, to give the candidates some idea as to the content of the course, and to get acquainted.

It was decided that both co-trainers would interview, on the basis of

open questions, in Taibeh. During the interviews, the candidates were told about the training program, its structure, and the fact that it would be conducted in Hebrew. They were asked why they wished to join the program and what their expectations were. I also introduced myself, told them the purpose of my presence, and received blessings and good-luck wishes from all.

Following the initial consciousness-raising phase of the program, an additional round of personal interviews was conducted to examine how the trainees felt in the training program's environment and whether they wished to continue. The questions were more personal this time and had to do with how the trainees felt about discussing their personal lives intimately with other women, listening to others talk about themselves, and their future plans with regard to the program. Three women chose not to continue the program after this phase. Of the three, two sisters-in-law said they would not be able to continue the program because they found it difficult to find babysitters, and the third had to quit because she could not fit the program in with her MA studies.

Final Feedback Questionnaire

During the final session, held in one of the home of one of the trainees, I handed out a questionnaire that I asked the participants to fill out. I explained that this was necessary for my research, that it was anonymous, and they were instructed to mail them back. The questions were classified into two types: questions on what they thought of the training program and its content, and

questions regarding the cultural differences with the trainers, the program, and the language. Only four participants returned the questionnaire.

Final session and interviews with the director of the center and co-trainers

The purpose of this session was to sum up the experience we had all shared. We talked about the training program, the co-training, power relations in the group, and whether and to what extent we managed to cross national and political boundaries. Hasona felt that we had not been successful in crossing boundaries, and shared her feeling of “always having to ‘please’ the Jews...the Jewish co-trainer...I felt as if I was representing Arab women, as if I had to say, ‘yes, we are what you think we are’...I wanted to bring myself, my voice, but found myself ‘pleasing’ again and again...I always represented the poor Arab woman who has to apologize for leaving her home for work, that has to cook and clean her house...” (Final Session, December 16, 2005).

It is interesting to note that Avny, the Jewish instructor, was extremely surprised at these remarks. However, in the larger political context of the situation of Arab and Jewish women working on a joint project in Israel, Hasona’s observations made perfect sense.

Short profile of participants

The program began with 13 participants ranging in age from 20-30, all of whom were college graduates, three of whom were studying for their MA, and one of whom was studying for her Ph.D. Most of the participants

were married with children; two were unmarried; a third was engaged. Only one did not work outside her home.

Of the nine women who remained in the training program, five wore various forms of Islamic attire, and four did not. However, those who did not often expressed what seemed to me to be deeper religious beliefs than those who did.

Some of the participants came with what I refer to as a developed feminist consciousness, which surfaced as early as the first sessions, which were devoted to consciousness-raising. For example, following a quotation from Egyptian feminist Nawal al-Sadawi that was read to the group, about the early realization of her womanhood and hence otherness, there was much talk about women's status in Palestinian society and the differing treatment they and their brothers received from their parents. Nahla, one of the trainees, said, "Arab women's mental situation will not change if men's way of thinking does not change. Why do you think there are lesbians? Because of the discrimination between men and women. I hate my brother because my mother discriminated against me [vis-à-vis him]. I hate all men because of this."⁴⁸ What was striking from my point of view was that Nahla's point of view was identical to that of some branches of the Western radical feminist movement during the late 60s and early 70s who argued that lesbianism was actually the *solution* to women's oppression under patriarchy.

Many of the trainees were close friends or family members (a pair of

sisters, a pair of sisters-in-law). All of the trainees were bi-lingual (Arabic and Hebrew), and only one sometimes opted to speak in Arabic, when she found it difficult to express herself in Hebrew.

Ibtisam, one of the trainees, began the program while pregnant and gave birth during the training. She continued to attend sessions after childbirth and sometimes brought her baby along.

The training program

The training program was designed to last six months, with the knowledge that changes may occur based on the dynamics of the group. In general, we adhered to the schedule except for one session that was cancelled because only two women showed up, and during the month of Ramadan, when we held only one session, on a Saturday morning.

Part I

Six sessions devoted to consciousness-raising: what it means to be a woman in a patriarchal society⁴⁹.

Personal Interviews- Served as a time for participants to examine their desire to continue

Part II

18 sessions dealing with sexual violence and volunteers' work therein

Part III (not documented for this research)

Training of volunteers for prevention workshops in schools

Part IV (not documented for this research)

Participants formulate an educational prevention program suitable for their target population

Part V

Staffing the hotline under supervision, establishing a rape crisis center in Taibeh, running educational programs (not yet fully completed. Educational programs were implemented by two of the participants during February 2007 at a high school in Tira).

Toward the end of the program, the trainees met with the director of HRCC, when several options were discussed as to how they wished to continue operating once the program ended, and how they wished to implement the knowledge that they had acquired during our mutual project. At that point, six women committed to continuing their training for prevention through education, and all seemed to agree that they wanted to begin their volunteer work as part of the Hasharon center, and establish a day or two of staffing the line for Arabic speakers therein. Being most familiar with Taibeh and its inhabitants, the trainees took it upon themselves to publicize the operation of the Arabic hotline (November 14, 2005).

The director of the HaSharon center met with the trainees twice more- at the final session of the training, and following the end of the prevention through education program- to explain the range of options available to them with regard to supporting victims of sexual violence in Taibeh and the

surrounding area. The trainees were also introduced to the education director of the Nazareth center. The trainees expressed the desire to begin volunteering at HRCC. In keeping with the rape crisis centers' ideology with regard to empowerment of women, the newly trained volunteers were asked to schedule their own shifts.⁵⁰

Findings

The study on Taibeh demonstrated that feminist ideology's insistence on women taking the initiative for sexual violence volunteer work, because of its commitment to women's empowerment, did not yield the results desired by all of the participants in the program. As seen earlier, the process of recruiting women for the training program in Taibeh already deviated from rape crisis centers' ideology, and the training program began only after the HRCC director reached out to the community to recruit volunteers. Thus, insisting on strict feminist ideology, with regard to the new trainees' initiative in scheduling their volunteer shifts or in setting up their own hotline in Taibeh, may prove counterproductive, and flexibility in the process of adapting Western models to the Palestinian arena is advised.

The theoretical framework of the project exemplifies the dilemma between insisting on applying the Western model in its entirety vs. adapting it to local needs and cultural setting. Feminist ideology, particularly with regard to support of women who have experienced sexual violence, seeks to help women regain control of their lives. As such, it believes in enabling women to

initiate their actions. On the other hand, one of the most important principles of participatory research is to finalize the research and achieve social change. I would argue that in the Israeli setting, with current power relations among the Jewish and Palestinian populations, if we wish to achieve social change and work toward equality, particularly with regard to sexual crime/abuse, it is more important to adhere to the principles of participatory research. More specifically, while women who participated in the training program expressed their desire to establish a rape crisis hotline in Taibeh, they were uncertain as to whether they possessed the organizational abilities and financial power within their community to do so.

Throughout the project I believed that since HRCC agreed to train Palestinian women, it should not stop at the training level, and should continue to work with the training graduates in order to help them achieve their goals. I felt, therefore, that it is necessary to adapt the feminist model to volunteering patterns in the Arab community, as well as to the political situation of Arab women in Israel. In other words, that it may be necessary to continue working together for achieving social change, e.g., the establishment of a day or two in which the hotline will provide assistance in Arabic, or establishing a hotline in Taibeh, whichever graduates prefer. Furthermore, I felt that achieving the goal of setting up a support system for women who have experienced sexual violence in Taibeh should be pursued even at the “risk” of deviating from rape crisis centers’ feminist ideology with regard to empowerment of women.⁵¹

My initial concern about cultural differences and power relations

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within Israeli society with regard to employing a Western model for providing support to victims of sexual violence for women in Taibeh, began to diminish as early as our meeting with the Nazareth center's staff, during which we learned that the training program provided at the Nazareth center, which serves the Palestinian community, was almost identical to that at other centers in Israel. My major concern focused on the extent to which the Western model of a rape crisis center, derived from radical feminist ideology and its theoretical conceptions about rape and women's position in patriarchal society, was appropriate for women in Taibeh, and whether the proposal of this particular mode of supporting women, by a Jewish center, would be perceived as cultural colonialism.

Indeed, the meeting emphasized possible differences in the language used in the actual support process provided on the hotline. But the fact that the same training program was offered to women in Tel Aviv and in Nazareth seemed to indicate that the notion of women supporting women was a universal one, and that in the case of sexual violence, women indeed share similar experiences, regardless of their national identity, language, class, or faith. It is interesting to note that the HRCC director had a different understanding of our meeting in Nazareth. In an interview with her, she explained, "The meeting in Nazareth undermined my confidence about the project. But I already had the funding for it, and I couldn't tell if I wanted to continue working on it because of that, or because [I knew] it was what women needed. What undermined my confidence was the extent to which I could offer the knowledge that I have

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to a different society, a different culture. This debate has been integral to the project throughout, and I don't know how aware of it the women [trainees] were." However, she continued, "From my experience, there is no ownership of knowledge. If someone has something to offer and what stops him / her is growth, then go for it. But there should be constant examination and sensitivity...The meeting in Nazareth placed the whole project somewhere between the desirable and the available. If I opt for the desirable, we weaken and are weakened. [What were we supposed to do] wait for a group of women in Taibeh to come and say, 'this is what we want'? I knew I had to stop sexual violence..."⁵²

During the training, the issue of cultural differences between Arab and Jewish women was raised often, especially in the first part of the training program devoted to consciousness-raising with regard to the position of women in patriarchal societies. Trainees often expressed the view that Arab women in Israel [the term used by them] encounter many limitations that Jewish women don't, and live in a much stricter patriarchal setting. At a session in which our choices as women living in a patriarchal society were debated, Maha said: "Why are you opening so many windows and doors? It is so painful..."

Deena: "This is hard for me. I never thought about things that men can do and I can't. I am a woman and I dream women's dreams, not men's...I never dreamt of being a man...Of course there are limitations, but I never thought about them...When I go out, I know when to come back..."

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Ibtisam: “When I was a girl, before becoming a woman, there wasn’t anything I wanted but couldn’t do. But now I can’t go on trips for example, not in Israel and not abroad...My husband has the final decision on if and where we will go, and I wait for the time this will be my decision...”

Relating to the national-cultural situation of Palestinians in Israel, Nouha added: “We have a common problem in the Arab population; something is missing...our religion, our behavior, it’s different for the Jews. It’s a different culture.” (June 20, 2005)

As the above quotations illustrate, albeit not accustomed to talking about them, women in the program were well aware of the differences in the social position and opportunities of men and women. They also seemed to share the belief that their social circumstances were different than those of Jewish women. They often expressed the notion that they live in a much stricter patriarchal society, and that they do not enjoy the social and individual freedom that Jewish women have. The trainees, then, often expressed their experience of the double marginality of Palestinian women in Israel, comparing their opportunities as women to both men in their society as well as to women in Jewish society.

As the training program progressed, my concerns about cultural differences diminished. This was reinforced by Hasona’s (the Palestinian instructor’s) impressions of the progress in the program discussed among us on a weekly basis. For example, when we reached the point in the training

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in which trainees were required to participate in simulated phone calls from women seeking help, a debate evolved between Hasona and myself, and Avny, (the Jewish instructor). Hasona and I argued that examples provided for simulation sessions should be culturally adapted, that is, drawn from life experiences of Palestinian women themselves; while Avny argued that simulation examples should present a variety of incidents because part of the training was to prepare women to support callers whose stories they may find shocking, and of whose behavior they may not approve. In other words, a proper training program, argued Avny, must prepare potential volunteers to support a variety of sexual violence victims, of various cultural backgrounds and convictions, without judgment.

Because we could not seem to agree as to which approach we should choose, we tried both options: culturally adapted examples, as well as some that were not.⁵³ Eventually, following several simulation sessions, Hasona was persuaded that it was the instructors' task to present the widest range of possibilities to the group in order to prepare trainees to encounter women and their experiences as non-judgmentally as possible. She also came to realize that cultural differences seemed to trouble the trainees themselves a lot less than they did us.

Having said that, it is important to note that I believe the training program was conducted sensitively, and that cultural differences were not overlooked. On the contrary, as maintained in the principles of participatory research, the participants were encouraged to contribute their input and

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thoughts as to the relevance of the instructional content to their lives. Most of the time they did not seem to think that the program was incompatible with their culture. When they did, they spoke about it amongst themselves and with us. The questionnaires that were returned to me all indicated that the trainees were not offended by any of the simulations, and that they saw in facing cultural differences a way of growing and learning about the other society. They did, however, relate to personal conflicts that some of the contents of the program raised, particularly with regard to one's sexuality and biases with regard to sexual violence. Yet, even when personal conflicts were raised, they did not seem to create antagonism, but rather were seen as a tool for growth.

Cultural sensitivity was also employed with regard to questions such as how to support victims of sexual violence in the Palestinian community, e.g., being unable to talk about their experience with family, the tendency not to report crimes of a sexual nature to the police, and dealing with the social consequences of sexual abuse. These decisions were left to the women who will operate the hotline in Taibeh, based on their knowledge and experience of their own society. This approach is both empowering and feminist, as it does not impose a solution, but rather empowers volunteers to decide what would be most appropriate for the women they are assisting.

As noted earlier, I found that many of the trainees had a well developed feminist consciousness, which I tend to relate to their level of education and their working outside their homes (and, thus, their relative financial independence) as well as to their analysis of their life experiences as women living in a

patriarchal society that is also nationally suppressed. This consciousness no doubt facilitated their ability to accept the often radical tones of the program. However, because major gaps did exist among group members with regard to issues related to feminism and sexual violence, group consciousness-raising, as conducted in the first six sessions, was doubly necessary and important.

Furthermore, during the initial phases of planning and organizing the program, Hasona, the Palestinian instructor, insisted that some Western terminology-the term *feminism* in particular-should not be used in the program for fear of cultural reservations by Arab women vis-à-vis such concepts and the distinctly Western point of view they represent. This fear was not only groundless, but as we have seen, some of the participants even expressed previously formulated feminist beliefs and ideologies and used the term themselves. [The term was not used initially but as the training progressed it was used quite freely by the participants themselves] It is therefore my conclusion in this regard that there should be no fear of raising controversial issues providing the environment is open and free and provides a sense of security among participants to express themselves without reservation.

A secure environment for all participants in a project is one of the principal characteristics of the reciprocal empowerment model. This model, adopted in this particular project “requires that the participants have enough self-confidence and respect for others to assist them without sacrificing self. The process also requires that participants be skilled in active listening to be sufficiently knowledgeable to mediate reasoned discussions that can

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create mutually beneficial outcomes. Although the process facilitates reasoned discussion, it does not entail abandoning one's own stance to avoid antagonism."⁵⁴

Avny's insistence on using material not necessarily adapted to the group's cultural background exposed the trainees to various stories they may have to deal with while staffing the hotline. At the same time, participants' self-confidence enabled them to accept training from Jewish women without sacrificing themselves and negating their culture. Also, the reciprocal empowerment approach that "focuses on mutuality works to provide a process that eliminates the potential for interactions to degenerate into traditional power-over exchanges."⁵⁵ Avny's emphasis on how much she learned and benefited from the women in the group throughout the training program, eliminated hierarchical relations that can develop in the teaching learning process, and enabled the existence of a more equal footing in a situation that could have deteriorated into one dominated by power relations characteristic of Israeli society.

Moreover, women involved in the project at HRCC benefited from the project no less than the Taibeh trainees, on several levels. Firstly, Jewish women met Arab women on their own territory, and learned much about the latter's experiences as Arab women living in Israel, their families, and social customs with regard to gender relations, sexuality, and particularly Palestinian attitudes concerning sexual violence. Secondly, Palestinian and Jewish women came together on issues shared by all women, and became

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closer for it. And thirdly, Jewish women gained knowledge with regard to supporting Arab women who call the hotline and ask for assistance.

Indeed, all of the women-trainers and trainees-developed a close relationship, which was expressed both in the questionnaires and at the final session, which took place in the home of one of the participants. All of the women who returned the questionnaires indicated that making new friends was one of the side benefits of the program. During the final session, women expressed deep affection and gratitude for the co-trainers [and myself], particularly for providing an intimate and safe setting where they could raise problems, concerns, and opinions freely, non-judgmentally, and discreetly.

I believe that this setting was made possible because of the unique personalities of all those involved, as well as because the project was concerned with issues that, at least on some levels, transcend cultural, ethnic, national, and class differences. However, given Hasona's disclosure of her constant need to "please the Jews", and following one of the discussions in which Palestinian members of the research group expressed a sense that the Jews were avoiding discussing Palestinian/ Israeli politics, it is my conclusion that a huge gap exists in the perceptions of both Arabs' and Jews' with regard to their experience in working together on joint projects, and that this gap is largely due to unequal power relations inherent in our daily existence.

Nonetheless, using the reciprocal empowerment approach, we all managed to create an environment that was based on equality and shared

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experiences, mostly as women living in patriarchal societies. That is, understanding that women can help other women support, treat, and perhaps even overcome traumas of sexual abuse, and that although our spoken language may differ, our purposes coincide, has helped us, as a group, see beyond cultural, religious, national, and political differences and conflicts.

It must be said in this regard that the project in fact demonstrated that feminism's second wave theme of sisterhood, harshly criticized by the third wave's notion of "difference," still holds merit. That is, women share experiences related to their womanhood and their inferior position in society that cross over other boundaries such as national, political, or cultural ones. Moreover, it was established that such experiences may, at times, seem stronger than national or cultural differences, and that women can come together on such issues even in unusual national, religious, and cultural circumstances such as those characterizing Israeli society.

The comfortable female space was mentioned frequently by the participants, who often talked about how much they enjoyed coming to the training sessions, even when they felt tired and overworked, because they knew they would be listened to, would be able to talk freely, and raise issues about which it was unacceptable to talk with friends and family. They considered Monday (the day training sessions were held) the day they looked forward to: "Monday is my *kef* ["fun" in both languages] day, I organize the house and the kids to be here at four. I can talk freely here and I learn new things" (Samira, June 20, 2005).

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In her personal interview that followed the consciousness-raising phase, when asked how it felt to talk about herself in front of the group, Deena answered: “I spoke about myself aloud. My voice heard what I was saying, and did not tell me to stop. I spoke what I felt, and I like that...I want it to be this way everywhere...to listen...not to interrupt...I was afraid to speak at first, [as] some of the trainees are my children’s teachers...I don’t speak much, I am afraid to share, but here I feel comfortable. They [the other trainees] are not afraid of what I have to say...I don’t like men...Men look out for themselves...defend themselves...men do what they want, the woman doesn’t have to do what they say.” (personal interviews July 18, 2005).

We were often amazed at the level of intimacy trainees shared, an intimacy we didn’t expect particularly because some of the women were related and often mentioned that the issues raised in the program were of the sort that Palestinian society does not enable women to talk about openly. My conclusion in this regard is that female spaces provide the opportunity for intimacy among women, not only because they are non-judgmental, but also because they produce a sense of group comfort and security that allows women to talk about matters related to their lives, knowing other women will not only understand, but will also support and make sure that the content of discussions remains among the group members only. In the words of Maha: “I felt open. My feeling was influenced by the fact that we are all women...I felt free to say what I want, I didn’t feel suppressed, probably because we are all women” (personal interviews July 18, 2005).

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This phenomenon also illustrates that certain features of both radical and Western feminist ideology and practice can be applied to other cultural settings, and may after all be universal. As seen earlier, the creation of female spaces that allow women to speak freely about their experiences regarding sexual violence and to raise consciousness regarding sexual violence against women as a social problem, were the outcome of the radical women's movement in the USA during the 1970s.

Regarding the co-training of the group by Palestinian and Jewish women, it seems that participants related to both trainers equally, although they often looked up to the Jewish trainer probably because they picked up on her experienced approach.⁵⁶ Women in the program not only respected her, but more importantly, seemed to have no reservations as to her Jewish-Western orientation, which she wore on her sleeve. For example, during one of the supervision meetings we had with the director of HRCC, an incident in which Hasona and me felt that Avny expressed insensitivity was raised. We analyzed a session during which Avny argued that our behavior is based on free choice. Hasona and I felt that some of us in the group could not relate to that because some women are truly unable to exercise free choice. It was in such cases that the significance and importance of the co-training by a Palestinian and a Jewish instructor became evident. As the training program, progressed it became evident that they played complementary roles, with Avny often taking the role of the challenger and Hasona representing the woman with whom others in the group could identify. (July 20, 2005)

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The co-trainers' corresponding roles also came up in the final session as well as in the feedback questionnaires. One of the women wrote in this regard that "Co-training by a Palestinian and a Jew brought us closer together and helped us realize that we are all human beings who are exposed to the same problems." Another wrote that Hasona helped process issues raised within the group from an Arab / Palestinian point of view. During the final session, a similar picture emerged. The women appreciated Avny for her empathy, understanding, and knowledge, and Hasona for providing a role model for Arab women to identify with, i.e., "young, married with four children, with a successful career, and always fashionable and beautiful". (Final Session, December 5, 2005)

One of the major concerns with regard to cultural differences was the language barrier, and the fact that the training was conducted in Hebrew. The language difference was perceived as a crucial problem, particularly because we were involved in the training of women for the purpose of providing hotline assistance and support on issues about which it is exceptionally difficult to talk about in any language. Language, being part of people's culture, conveys the particular culture's perceptions on issues such as sexual abuse, and the training, we felt, should be provided in the language in which support would be offered. However, we also felt that the know-how and experience accumulated at the HRCC must be shared with other communities in the area, and that co-training would eliminate some of the linguistic, as well as cultural problems that may occur. This proved true, especially as most of the participants were

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fluent Hebrew and Arabic speakers. In the rare incidents in which translation of a certain concept or notion was needed, Hasona provided it. None of the women who returned my questionnaire expressed that having been trained in Hebrew constituted a major problem for them personally, although some did express the belief that future training should be provided in Arabic.

There were various technical problems throughout the training program: The location of the training changed several times, Jewish and Moslem holidays postponed scheduled sessions, and more. When asked in the questionnaire to what extent these affected their experience, the participants all answered that beyond inconvenience, these technical issues had no effect on their participation in the program because they remained focused on the aim and not on the means. The importance of the aim for all of the women involved and the level of cooperation was reflected in the way technical problems were solved. For example, during the month of Ramadan, the group decided to continue to meet but to avoid refreshments, which were customary at the other sessions. Furthermore, we also decided to hold Ramadan sessions on Saturday mornings (the official Israeli weekend), so as to enable observant women to prepare the evening meal and have dinner with their families.

To conclude, I want to quote Sherry Gorelick, with whose words I began: “Consciousness-raising as a technique of research and political action may enable women to ‘give voice’ to knowledge that they did not know they had.”⁵⁷ When I first read that sentence, I felt a sense of patronizing in Gorelick’s words. However, having documented the training program in its

entirety, and later reading over all of the documentation, I cannot forget the woman who said she heard her voice speaking and did not stop it. I realized then that the group meetings provided women with the opportunity to express knowledge and strength they may not have known they possessed.

Gorelick also argues that “To understand the different milieu in which women experience their oppression and to trace their connections with each other, we need a social science produced by women of various social conditions (race, class, sexual preference, nationality, ethnicity), a social science that reveals the commonalities and structural conflicts of the hidden structures of oppression.”⁵⁸ I believe that my research demonstrates the commonalities experienced by women exposed to sexual violence as well as hidden structures of oppression inherent in this social phenomenon, even among women belonging to two different and conflicting national groups. It also illustrates how we can all benefit by transcending our differences and working against them together.

Recommendations

The principal claim of the paper is that multi-cultural and multi-national societies such as Israel should not give up the attempt to work on joint projects in general, and on the advancement of women in particular. Such projects can and should be carried out by researchers and activists crossing over national, cultural, ethnic and class boundaries by integrating a

combination of feminist post-colonial sensitivities and the model of reciprocal empowerment with the methodology of participatory research. I therefore urge social scientists and scholars working on social issues to implement their knowledge and research capabilities and expand their research activities to generate grass roots projects with local women and women's NGOs for the mutual benefit of both researchers and researched.

More specifically, I claim that Jewish and Palestinian women in Israel should attempt to transcend the current structures of power relations within Israeli society, as well as national, ethnic, cultural, and class differences, to cooperate on projects involving social change, with a focus on the improvement and advancement of women's social position. Such cooperation will benefit both Palestinian and Jewish women, as well as both societies, if carried out with feminist sensitivities and the implementation of reciprocal empowerment processes that enable mutual input and benefit of both parties involved in the collaboration.

As such, the following recommendations are for policy-makers, as well as social scientists, community leaders, and women's groups and organizations, all of whom should engage in various types of cooperation with regard to the status of both Palestinian and Jewish women in Israel.

1. Palestinian and Jewish women should cooperate on various projects and in joint ventures for the benefit of both communities. Such joint ventures should concern issues shared by women in both societies, such as the case

study provided in this paper, i.e., support and treatment of victims of sexual violence. It is recommended that women in both societies share their know-how and find appropriate means for treating victims of sexual violence. Arab and Jewish rape crisis centers should pool their knowledge and experience for the benefit of women who cannot reach established centers but are willing to found centers in their communities.

2. Israel is a multi-cultural society in which a national-political struggle and unequal power relations between Palestinians and Jews exist. In order to avoid reproducing the hierarchical power paradigm that characterizes Israeli society and often paralyzes the Palestinian minority, the best model for such joint projects is one that combines participatory research and the reciprocal empowerment approach. This model emphasizes mutuality of relations rather than teaching on one side and learning on the other. Assuming that we all have something to teach each other and something to learn from one another, the reciprocal empowerment model offers a give-and-take approach. This model is particularly appropriate for those of us working outside our own communities, especially in Israel, because it is non-hierarchical and enables the elimination of the Jewish-Palestinian hierarchy. In the words of Darlington and Mulvaney, “Reciprocal empowerment combines the attributes of *self-determination, independence, knowledge, choice, and action* embodied in the personal authority model with the early empowerment model’s attributes of *compassion, companionship, collectivity, consensus, and competence* to enhance *oneself*

and *others*, thereby creating an egalitarian environment that fosters *mutual responsiveness*.²⁵⁹

3. Women should work in full cooperation, crossing cultural, national, and political boundaries, and should not be deterred either by cultural differences, or by the existence of a hierarchical power relationship, provided that cooperation is handled with extreme cultural sensitivity on the part of both parties. The unequal power relations built into Israeli society should not drive us to give up the attempt to work together on matters that we share as women. Power relations should be resisted. This can be done if feminist participatory methods are applied, because they provide uninhibited and intimate female spaces in which women can talk to each other freely, listen to one another, learn from each others' experiences, and most importantly, enable the full participation of all women involved in the project. All should be able to speak; all should be listened to.
4. Policy-makers should encourage social scientists, women's organizations, and social and political activists to cooperate for the purpose of raising consciousness and treating and preventing sexual violence among Palestinians in Israel by funding such projects, and assisting women in establishing rape crisis centers or hotlines in their communities. In cases where funding is not available, women should be exposed to information regarding grants and other NGOs and institutions that can facilitate getting started and operating a rape crisis center, or equivalent, which women in the community may find more appropriate outside of official institutions

such as municipal services dominated by men.

5. Policy-makers should also encourage such institutions as rape crisis centers, various women's NGOs, social scientists, and others to reach out to the community, rather than wait for women in the community to approach them. The former should get to know their community, establish networks within it with individuals as well as various social groups, and attempt to understand the specific needs and priorities of the community, as the methodology of participatory research requires.
6. Two major concerns that should be addressed are:
 - A. The full participation of the researchees in the research itself, for purposes of promoting equality, for better understanding the needs of the community, and for enabling empowerment. Emphasis should be placed on assuring that the process is a mutual one of give and take, rather than teaching and learning.
 - B. Emphasis should be on consciousness-raising. In the case of sexual violence against women, consciousness-raising with regard to the sources of violence against women as well as available support mechanisms for victims is no less important than setting up the support mechanisms themselves. This should be done by community members themselves, who can identify the sources of sexual violence against women in their community, the various reactions to it, and the specific needs of victims. Participants in such endeavors should be told that actual support means

should be determined by them as players in the cultural and social setting. For example, the Taibeh trainees are best equipped to decide how to operate a hotline for victims of sexual violence in a closed and tight society that practices harsh taboos on discussing sexual issues, and in which people are well acquainted with one another, rendering the upholding of the principle of anonymity quite difficult.

7. Western models of support for victims of sexual violence can be applied to Palestinian women in Israel, and if required by women themselves, cultural adaptations can be made thereto. Furthermore, in order to effect social change with regard to sexual violence and to empower women to establish support mechanisms for it in their community, some of the ideology may have to be applied flexibly. For example, individuals and organizations involved in such projects will need to be prepared to cooperate beyond exchange of know-how, by assisting women in the community to find financial means for the establishment of support systems, even at the “risk” of not strictly adhering to feminist ideology with regard to women’s empowerment and treatment of sexual abuse.
8. Post-colonial feminist theories critique Western feminism for what they see as the essentialization of the category of woman, for being blind to differences between and among women, and for imposing their brand of feminism on non-Western communities. Post-colonial responses to Western feminism demand, therefore, that Western feminists stay out of and not meddle in others’ business. This case study has provided an additional perspective

that demonstrates how knowledge and experience can and should be shared by various communities of women, and that women themselves should decide what is appropriate for their specific needs. Know-how could thus be shared and left up to the women of every community to decide how to use it in their particular social setting.

9. Activists should be aware that in Palestinian-Jewish co-projects, issues related to hierarchical power relations between Arabs and Jews will exist even if under the surface. Activists are therefore encouraged to address these issues, discuss them among participants in the joint venture, be sensitive to others' feelings, and assure that the project is run based on the full cooperation and participation of all involved.
10. Finally, more research is necessary on the issue of treatment of victims of sexual violence in other countries in the Arab world, for example, for comparative purposes of examining various appropriate alternatives for Palestinian women in Israel.

Concluding remarks

In the opening remarks to her article “Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender Skepticism”, Susan Bordo recounts the story of having heard a feminist historian say in 1984, “there were absolutely no common areas of experience between the wife of a plantation owner in the pre-Civil War South and the female slaves her husband owned”. Gender, she argued, is so thoroughly fragmented by race, class, historical particularity, and individual difference

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as to be useless as an analytical category. The ‘bonds of womanhood,’ she insisted, “are a feminist fantasy, born out of the ethnocentrism of white, middle-class academics”.⁶⁰

The conclusions of my research belie this historian’s observations. My findings indicate that, at least with regard to sexual violence Jewish and Palestinian women in Israel- and, I would argue, women in many other patriarchal societies-share experiences that may be treated similarly even among communities of women “fragmented” by ethnic, national, class, and religious differences. Although I do not disagree with the critique of white middle-class feminists’ ethnocentrism, I argue that this research has led me to see those aspects that do bind us as women, and on which we can work together even in societies fragmented by bitter national struggles, provided that we are informed by theories regarding multi-culturalism and apply culturally sensitive methods of research and social activism. [ultra-Orthodox Jewish women were often brought up in the various sessions in comparison to Arab women, but co-training was never suggested]

Endnotes

- 1 Sherry Gorelick (1996) "Contradictions of Feminist Methodology" in Heidi Gottfried (ed.) *Feminism and Social Change: Bridging Theory and Practice* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press), pp. 25-26.
- 2 The training project was initiated by Noa Harris, Director of Hasharon Rape Crisis Center, one of ten centers operating in Israel mostly among the Jewish population. Harris also secured funding for the training project, which was carried out by HRCC staff members in collaboration with an Arabic-speaking Palestinian instructor.
- 3 The research was also carried out by a volunteer and board member of the Hasharon Rape Crisis Center.
- 4 I did continue to follow its progress through the mediation of the instructor and the director of Hasharon Rape Crisis Center.
- 5 As of July 2006, the project has not yet resulted in the establishment of a rape crisis center or hotline in Taibeh, as initially anticipated by both the participants in the training program and by me, nor in their full integration into the Sharon center, although this seems to be what the training graduates at this point desire.
- 6 הוויידיה ע'אנם, עמדות בנוגע למעמדה וזכויותיה של האשה הפלסטינית בישראל (נצרת: עמותת נשים נגד אלימות, 1005), ע' 34
- 7 שם, ע' 68
- 8 Women's role as protectors of "national honor" is a recurrent theme in many national entities, particularly those under foreign control. See for example Partha Chatterjee (1993) *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), and Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) *Gender & Nation* (London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage Publications).
- 9 Later, the struggle against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank strengthened the legitimacy of women's public appearance.
- 10 חנה הרצוג, "זהויות בפרשת דרכים: נשים פלסטיניות אזרחיות ישראל" (טיוטת מאמר), ע"מ 2-4

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- 11 The Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel, NGO Alternative Pre-Sessional Report On Israel's Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) submitted in January 2005 to the Pre-Sessional Working Group (Web site: Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel), p.i.
- 12 Ibid. p.i.
- 13 Iman Kandalaft and Hoda Rohana, "Violence Against Women," in the Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women in Israel, NGO Report: The Status of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel (submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 17th Session, July 1997), p. 159.
- 14 Ibid. p. 151.
- 15 NGO Alternative Pre-Sessional Report On Israel's Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (2005), p. 8.
- 16 Kandalaft and Rohana, p. 160.
- 17 NGO Alternative Pre-Sessional Report, p. 9.
- 18 Kandalaft and Rohana, pp. 160-162.
- 19 Recently, women's organizations have begun to initiate training workshops for police officers working in the Palestinian community, for the purpose of preparing them for sexual violence cases.
- 20 Kandalaft and Rohana, pp. 163-164.
- 21 Maria Bevacqua (2000) *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault* (Boston: Northeastern University Press), p. 8.
- 22 Ibid. p. 9.
- 23 Ibid. p. 15.
- 24 Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (London: Sphere Books Ltd, 1972).
- 25 Bevacqua, pp. 28-33.

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- 26 Ibid. pp. 52-53.
- 27 Two years after the opening of the first center in Washington, centers were opened in 43 states, all sharing the same ideology of women working for victims of sexual violence and stressing self-help. (Bevacqua, pp. 74-79). Most of the centers today, including those established in Israel, still adhere to similar ideological and organizational characteristics. However, although derived from radical feminist ideology, not all rape crisis centers adhere thereto, nor define themselves as feminist.
- 28 The Union of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, *Report on Sexual Violence in Israel* (2002), pp. 6-7. Research on the history and structure of rape crisis centers often suggests three key characteristics of a rape crisis center: 1. Services are provided directly to survivors of sexual assault; 2. A specific and formalized procedure for assisting survivors is followed; 3. An education and training program on rape for potential volunteers is offered (Bevacqua, p. 73).
- 29 The center in East Jerusalem does not belong to the Israeli Union of Rape Crisis Centers, and does not provide statistics. The Sharon center does not statistically differentiate between calls from Jewish and Arab women.
- 30 Kandalaft and Rohana, pp. 159-160.
- 31 The Union of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, *Report on Sexual Violence in Israel* (2002), p. 6.
- 32 The Union of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, *Report on Sexual Violence in Israel* (2003-2004)
- 33 דבי חסקי-לוונטל, (2005) "להיות או לחדול: התמדה ונשירה בקרב מתנדבות". חקר מקרה במרכז לנפגעות תקיפה מינית בירושלים (האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים: תכנית מוסמך בניהול מלכ"רים וארגונים קהילתיים ע"ש ד"ר יוסף י' שוורץ), עמ' 17.
- 34 Margarit Eichler, "Feminist Methodology," *Current Sociology*, April 1997, vol. 45(2): p. 10.
- 35 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (eds.) (1991), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), pp. 53-54.
- 36 Ibid. p. 52.

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- 37 See for example bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989); *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984); *Ain't I A Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1981).
- 38 For discussion of both post-colonial and black feminism, see M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (eds.) (1997) *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York and London: Routledge).
- 39 Francesca M. Cancian (1996) "Participatory Research and Alternative Strategies for Activist Sociology" in *Feminism and Social Change*, pp. 187-188.
- 40 A more detailed description of the training program appears on pp. 11-12.
- 41 Whether the project has been successful in influencing the transformation of power relations or in having an effect on public policy makers cannot be determined at this particular point, because the hotline and educational program have not yet begun independent operation.
- 42 Cancian, pp. 188-192.
- 43 Claire M. Renzetti (1997) "Confessions of a Reformed Positivist: Feminist Participatory Research as Good Social Science" in Martin D. Schwartz (ed.) *Researching Sexual Violence Against Women: Methodological and Personal Perspectives* (London: Sage Publications), p. 134.
- 44 Ibid. 134-135.
- 45 Ibid. p. 136.
- 46 Patricia S. E. Darlington and Becky Michele Mulvaney (2003) *Women, Power and Ethnicity: Working Toward Reciprocal Empowerment* (New York, London, and Oxford: The Haworth Press), p. 2.
- 47 Ibid. p. 2.
- 48 From the point of view of feminist theory, these feelings, which derive from the personal experience of the speaker, can be classified as none other than radical feminism itself.
- 49 The word "feminism" was not used based on Hasona's recommendation that it is foreign to Palestinian women's culture.

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- 50 As of July 2006, none of the Taibeh graduates have begun their volunteer work at Hasharon, nor has a hotline been established in Taibeh. However, the women have participated in other activities initiated by the HRCC, and have begun to organize for the purpose of establishing a center in Taibeh.
- 51 My position remained a minority among the director of HRCC and the co-trainers at the time. By February 2007 the director expressed the view that it may have been a mistake on our part not to continue working closely with the graduates who had not yet established a hotline in Taibeh, nor an educational program for prevention of sexual violence among high-school students.
- 52 Final interview with HRCC Director Noa Harris, May 20, 2006.
- 53 Such as the story of the mother of a female soldier in the IDF asking for help upon reading her daughter's diary and finding out that she was being sexually abused. I found this particular story completely inappropriate and insensitive to Palestinian women, but learned a lot about Palestinian women's ability to handle the contradictions of their daily experiences when I observed the women who participated in the simulation changed the story into one they could relate to: that of a child away from home in boarding school.
- 54 Darlington and Mulvaney, p. 2.
- 55 Ibid. p. 2
- 56 This tendency was well based, because Avny was both older and much more experienced professionally than was Hasona.
- 57 *Feminism and Social Change*, p. 26.
- 58 Ibid. p. 38.
- 59 Darlington and Mulvaney, p.3.
- 60 Susan Bordo, (1994) "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender Skepticism," in Anne C. Herrman & Abigail J. Stewart (eds.) *Theorizing Feminism: Parallel Trends in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press), p. 458.

About the Author

Ruth Barzilai-Lumbroso holds a BA in Middle Eastern History and English Literature from Tel Aviv University and a Ph.D in history from UCLA. Her doctoral dissertation, titled “Turkish Men, Ottoman Women: Popular Turkish Historians and the Writing of Ottoman Women’s History”, is a gendered analysis of images of Ottoman women in modern Turkish popular historiography. Ruth is currently Head of the Women and Gender Studies Unit and lecturer of Women Studies and Middle Eastern Studies at the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel, and lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya.

حالات يصعب على النساء تجنيد الأموال يجب تشجيعهن على طلب المساعدة من مصادر خارجية.

تشير الدراسة إلى أنه لا يمكن لواقعي السياسة أن ينتظروا الاستغاثات من نساء في حالات الضائقة. يجب عليهم مراجعة المجتمعات المحلية من خلال مراكز الدعم العاملة وجمعيات أخرى وتشجيعها على إنشاء مراكز دعم في المجتمعات المحلية المختلفة. ستدرس هذه الجمعيات احتياجات المجتمع المحلي والإدراكات المتعلقة بالنساء. والحساسيات الثقافية بواسطة الدراسات المشاركة. وستؤكد هذه المشاريع زيارة الوعي لدى النساء فيما يتعلق بمصادر العنف وبآلية تقديم الدعم للمصابات.

تؤكد المؤلفة أنه لا تقل زيادة الوعي لدى النساء أهمية عن إنشاء آلية مناسبة للدعم. من الجدير بأن تتم هذه العملية بالتعاون مع نساء من المجتمع المحلي لأنهن يستطعن تشخيص مصادر العنف الموجه ضد النساء في المجتمع الذي يعشن فيه. والردود المختلفة على العنف ومقدرتهن على التركيز على احتياجات المصابات.

نساء يقدن التحول: إعداد المتطوعات لمراكز الدعم / الخطوط الهاتفية الطارئة لرعاية مصابات أعمال العنف الجنسي في الطيبة.

تناول المقالة إنشاء مشاريع دعم مخصصة لضحايا أعمال العنف الجنسي ضمن المجتمع العربي الفلسطيني في إسرائيل. تبحث المقالة في مدى ملاءمة النماذج النسائية الغربية لدعم مصابات أعمال العنف الجنسي مع الواقع السائد في البلدات العربية في إسرائيل، وإمكانيات التعاون بين اليهود والعرب فيما يتعلق بمشاريع لرفع مكانة المرأة عامة ورعاية مصابات الاعتداءات الجنسية ومنعها خاصة.

تدعي المؤلفة أن هذا التعاون ممكن وحتى ضروري، شريطة أن يكون مرناً وحساساً من الناحية الثقافية. قد يمكن تطبيق النماذج الغربية لدعم مصابات الاعتداءات الجنسية عند المجتمعات العربية بشكل ناجح ومن شأنها أن تخلق التحول الاجتماعي فيما يتعلق بالعنف ضد النساء. ولكن على هذه النماذج الإيدولوجية الغربية أن تتغير وتتميز بالمرونة حسب الاحتياجات المحلية والمفاهيم الثقافية. على طريق المثال، تضطر الجمعيات اليهودية والعربية التعاون فيما بينها زيادة على تبادل المعلومات المتعلقة بإنشاء مراكز الدعم. وذلك بواسطة جمع الأموال وتشجيع النشاطات في المجتمعات المحلية، حتى إذا لم ينطبق ذلك مع المثال الأعلى النسائي الغربي الذي يعتبر المبادرة المحلية شرطاً لنشاطات مثل هذه.

لقد تم وضع مشروع إعداد النساء للعمل في مراكز الدعم في الطيبة من أجل مراكز تمارس رعاية ضحايا الاغتصاب في جميع أرجاء البلاد. وأدخلت تغييرات بسيطة فقط، لغوية شكلية خاصة، ليتناسب المشروع مع احتياجات المجتمع العربي. تصف المقالة وتحلل المراحل الأولى من تطبيق المشروع، بما في ذلك مقابلات مع المرشدات اليهوديات والعربيات، والطالبات المشاركة في المشروع. الفرضية الرئيسية للمؤلفة هي أنه لا يمكن، في دولة متعددة الثقافات مثل إسرائيل، إهمال التعاون لرفع مكانة المرأة. ومن المستحسن أن يقوم باحثون ونشيطون اجتماعيون بهذا التعاون من خلال تجاوز الحدود القومية والثقافية والطبقية مع أخذ الاختلاف بين المجموعات المختلفة بعين الاعتبار وتأسيس التعاون على المساواة. يجب على مراكز الدعم العربية واليهودية أن تبذل جهودها من أجل نساء يواجهن صعوبات بإنشاء مراكز متشابهة في المجتمع الذي يعشن فيه.

إستعملت المؤلفة طريقة البحث المشارك التي يوصى باستعمالها كطريقة بحث في دراسات مثل هذه، لأنها تمكن خلق مجال شخصي فردي تستطيع النساء الإصغاء بعضهن إلى البعض والتحدث بعضهن مع البعض عن مشاكلهن دون أن يشعرن بالتهديد. ويتبين من الدراسة أنه يجب على واضعي السياسة تشجيع مشاركة باحثات وجمعيات نسائية ونشيطات بتأسيس مشاريع لرفع مكانة المرأة، ليعملن معاً على تنمية الوعي النسائي فيما يتعلق بهذا الموضوع وتشجيع إنشاء مراكز دعم وخطوط هاتفية طارئة لخدمة السكان العرب في إسرائيل. وفي

על מרכזי הסיוע הערביים והיהודיים הקיימים לרכז מאמצים למען נשים אשר נתקלות בקשיים בהקמת מרכזים דומים בקהילתן.

הכותבת נקטה בשיטת המחקר המשתתף- מתודה מחקרית מומלצת במחקרים מסוג זה משום שהיא מאפשרת יצירת מרחב אינטימי בו נשים יכולות להאזין ולדבר על בעיותיהן מבלי להרגיש מאוימות. מסקנה נוספת של המחקר היא שקובעי המדיניות צרכים לעודד מעורבות של חוקרות וארגוני נשים בבניית תוכניות העצמה, על מנת שאלה יפעלו יחדיו להשגת מודעות לטיפול בקרב נשים ולעודד הקמת מרכזי סיוע וקווים חמים בקרב האוכלוסייה הערבית בישראל.

במקרים בהם נשים אינן יכולות לגייס משאבים יש לעודד אותן לפנות לעזרה ממקורות חיצוניים.

המחקר מצביע על כך שקובעי המדיניות אינם יכולים להרשות לעצמם להמתין לקריאות העזרה מנשים במצוקה. עליהם לפנות לקהילות באמצעות מרכזי סיוע וארגונים אחרים הקיימים ולעודדם להקים מרכזי תמיכה בקהילות השונות. ארגונים אלה ילמדו את צרכי הקהילה, את ההבנות המיגדריות והרגישויות התרבותיות באמצעות מחקרים משתתפים. הדגש בתוכניות אלה יינתן להעלאת מודעות בקרב נשים, ביחס למקורות האלימות בקהילתן ובאשר למכניזם של תמיכה לנפגעות. המחברת מדגישה כי העלאת מודעות בקרב נשים חשובה לעיתים לא פחות מכינון מכניזם הסיוע עצמו. תהליך זה כדאי שיתבצע בשיתוף נשים מהקהילה בשל יכולתן לזהות את מקורות האלימות נגד נשים בקהילתן, את התגובות השונות לאלימות ויכולתן למקד את הצרכים של הנפגעות.

נשים מובילות שינוי:

הכשרת מתנדבות למרכזי סיוע/ קווים חמים לטיפול בנפגעות אלימות מינית בטייבה.

המאמר עוסק בהקמת מערכת תומכת לנפגעות תקיפה מינית ותוכניות למניעת אונס בקרב החברה הפלסטינית הערבית בישראל. המאמר בוחן את מידת התאמתם של מודלים פמיניסטיים מערביים לתמיכה בנפגעות אלימות מינית למציאות ביישובים ערבים בישראל, ואת הפוטנציאל לשיתופי פעולה יהודים-ערביים בפרויקטים הנוגעים להעצמת נשים בכלל ולטיפול ומניעה בנפגעות תקיפה מינית בפרט.

הכותבת טוענת כי שיתופי פעולה אפשריים ואף חיוניים, בתנאי שהם מובנים עם גמישות ורגישות תרבותית. מודלים מערביים לתמיכה בנפגעות תקיפה מינית עשויים להיות מיושמים בהצלחה בקרב אוכלוסיות ערביות וליצור שינוי חברתי בנושא האלימות נגד נשים, אולם לעיתים התבניות האידיאולוגיות המערביות חייבות להשתנות ולהתגמש בהתאם לצרכים המקומיים הייחודיים. לדוגמא, ארגונים יהודים וערבים יאלצו לשלב ידניים, מעבר להחלפת הידע הכרוך בהקמת מרכזי תמיכה, באמצעות איתור וגיוס כספים ועידוד הפעילות בקהילה, גם אם הדבר אינו תואם את האידיאל המערבי הפמיניסטי הדורש שהיוזמה תגיע מהשטח.

התוכנית להכשרת נשים לעבודה במרכזי סיוע בטייבה מתבססת על תוכנית שהוכנה עבור מרכזי סיוע ברחבי הארץ. שינויים מעטים בלבד, לשינויים בעיקרם, נערכו על מנת להלום את צרכי האוכלוסייה הערבית. המאמר מתאר ומנתח את השלבים השונים ביישום התוכנית, כולל ראיונות עם המדריכות והתלמידות בתוכנית.

הטענה המרכזית של הכותבת היא שבמדינה רב תרבותית כגון ישראל, אסור לזנוח את שיתופי הפעולה למען קידום נשים והעצמתן. רצוי כי שיתופי פעולה אלה ייעשו על ידי חוקרים/ות ופעילים/ות חברתיים תוך חציית גבולות לאומיים, תרבותיים, ומעמדיים, תוך התחשבות בשוני הרלבנטי בין הקבוצות השונות ולפעול ליישום שוויוני של התוכניות.