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A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Arab Women Leaders' Stories

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Résumé de l'article

This article describes application of a psychological-narrative inquiry method to socio-cultural research. The Listening Guide method is used to identify patterns in life stories of Arab women leaders in Israel. The first study examines the stories of ten women leaders in Arab public schools. The second and third studies are part of research investigating female Arab managers working in educational and welfare systems in Israel. The Listening Guide method reveals the construction of the narrators' personal, social and professional lives and how life stories are translated into reality-altering action in the narrators' society.

NARRATIVE WORKS
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

The Listening Guide: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Arab Women Leaders' Stories

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This article describes application of a psychological-narrative inquiry method to socio-cultural research. The Listening Guide method is used to identify patterns in life stories of Arab women leaders in Israel. The first study examines the stories of ten women leaders in Arab public schools. The second and third studies are part of research investigating female Arab managers working in educational and welfare systems in Israel. The Listening Guide method reveals the construction of the narrators' personal, social and professional lives and how life stories are translated into reality-altering action in the narrators' society.

This paper presents three studies investigating the personal and professional development of female Arab leaders in Israel, mainly in the national education system, over the past 15 years. Our knowledge about this population is still scant. Only in the last decade have women become a significant factor in the Arab education system. In our studies, we seek to hear the women's personal stories and to understand these stories as representing Arab women's struggle to achieve positions of leadership (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shapira, 2005; Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2010, 2011). This takes into account presumptions concerning human society known as "relational psychology" (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2004, p.157), a theoretical paradigm developed to study the self in relation to others, particularly among women (Lewis & Bernstein, 1996).

There is a central debate among scholars regarding methods for analyzing narrative identity creation, depending on whether it is expressed through "big" or "small" stories. Bamberg (2007, 2010) challenges over-emphasis in biographical research via long life narratives (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2007). "Small"

stories, in contrast, are intentionally focused and brief. They recount everyday, perhaps even seemingly trivial, incidents which relate to a specific situation, and which are used to illustrate an aspect of identity (Bamberg, 2010; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Freeman, 2011; Schachter, 2010).

Since our studies relate to "small" stories, we chose the qualitative and narrative Listening Guide method. This article begins with a description of the evolution of narrative research and the Listening Guide, and how it is used in the current research on Arab women leaders in Israel's education system. We then present a review of our three studies, and how the Listening Guide is used to interpret the narrative stories of Arab female leaders in Israel.

Narrative Research

The use of stories for the study of social reality became prevalent by the early 20th century in the fields of history, anthropology, and psychology. Later, biographical methods were marginalized and a positivist paradigm became dominant in the social sciences (Tuval-Mashiach & Spector-Mersel, 2010). Interest in narrative research was revived in the 1970s, thanks to the struggle of previously ignored and silenced social groups to make their voices heard. A new interpretive approach began to crystallize, and representation of "reality" changed to presentation of perceptions about an investigated social phenomenon, through stories, interpretations of stories, and theories that guide the interpretation.

Narrative research based on in-depth interviews transforms the relationship between interviewee and interviewer to one of speaker and listener. This is a conceptual shift from a traditional question-and-answer format to one in which interviewees express their stories in their own voices, and the researcher actively listens (Chase, 2005). This approach to listening raises certain questions relating to the "voice": who is speaking to whom? Which stories does the narrator tell concerning her relationships, and in what socio-cultural context?

The Listening Guide

With these questions in mind, researchers Brown and Gilligan (1992) created the Listening Guide in cooperation with colleagues. It is associated with the psychology of culture and anthropology. They

describe it as a method of "psychological analysis that draws on voice, resonance, and relationship as ports of entry into the human psyche" (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2004, p. 157). Each person has a distinct voice or manner of communication that transforms her inner world from something unheard and unseen into something heard and seen.

The Listening Guide is a framework through which they reviewed transcribed interviews multiple times, focusing each time on another aspect of the narrator's life (Gilligan et al., 2004). These are called "listenings" rather than "readings" because listening necessitates active participation by both the narrator and the listener (p. 159). The multiple listenings reveal the multiplicity of voices and faces found in stories and provide "ways into the complexity of voices and relationships" (p. 26). While this method is universally applicable, it is associated with feminist research and takes into consideration how the predominant social reality in which power belongs to men is expressed in the relationships that affect girls' and women's lives (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). It is based on the assumption that the silencing of women and girls is an inseparable part of human culture, and so in order to uncover the meaning of their words it is necessary to search for irregular reading techniques.

The Listening Guide offers "a pathway into relationship rather than a fixed framework for interpretation" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 22). The authors suggest that the way "into relationship with another is through the avenue of voice and we have built into our method the space for a woman or girl to speak in her own voice" (p. 22). As described by Gilligan et al. (2004), the Listening Guide is the product of dissatisfaction with the previously accepted norms of qualitative data analysis, which did not enable use of multiple sets of coding for the same text, and therefore reduced the inner complexity of mental processes to fixed categories.

Previous research using the Listening Guide focused on individuals' relationships and connections. Additionally, this method stems from psychoanalytic theories derived from the clinical methods developed by pioneers such as Freud (1962) and Bruner (1987). The Listening Guide has been used by many researchers interested in the human mind and relationships, particularly those who wish to elucidate an individual's many voices through multiple readings of transcribed research findings (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 158).

Although the Listening Guide has generally been applied to psychological studies, we chose this tool as the most suitable to examine the socio-cultural aspects of the lives of female Arab leaders in Israeli

society. Conventional research and data analysis methods are too restricted to properly conceptualize the empowerment processes intertwined within the personal, social and professional lives of these female leaders in a changing society (Coleman, 2011; Crawford, 2009).

The choice of a narrative genre was based on the assumption that through their stories the women give meaning to their life events as they perceive them, revealing a picture of their world (Mishler, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988). Through the telling of their narratives people are able to organize the "tale" of their lives into an organized whole and to grant each event its position and meaning according to order of importance (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Mishler, 1986; Ochberg, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1988). A holistic picture emerges from the story that describes the individual's development within the various systems of her life. Analysis of these stories (Chase, 2005; Gilligan et al., 2004; Mishler, 1995) facilitates the formation of a rich and wide perception, explaining the studied phenomenon in depth (Stake, 2005). The introduction of new information on the lives and work of women through narrative study has undermined previous definitions, and continues to influence and alter the basic foundations of educational discourse (Casey, 1997). What binds all these threads together is researchers' interest in the ways that people provide understanding and meaning through language.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) describe four types of listening for stories obtained from their interviews: (1) listening to the tale, the skeleton of the story that maintains its spirit and the main content of the events as they were expressed in the interview; (2) listening to the narrator's perception of "self"; (3) listening to the ways in which the individual talks about her relationships; and (4) listening to the way in which the individual experiences herself as part of her social and cultural settings.

This method is suitable for research concerning an individual's life span because it permits the narrator to illuminate her life as a comprehensive whole. The use of the method enables identification of empowering events dispersed within women's biographies, personal development in their social context, and professional development as expressed in their life stories (Arar, Shapira, Azaiza, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2013).

Women Leaders in Education

The phenomenon of female leaders in education only gained wide recognition in the social sciences in the second half of the 20th century. Several studies of women leaders in which researchers used an active listening approach found that, when freed from a classic question and answer interview format, the women did not differentiate between stories about their work and stories of inequality and discrimination (Chase, 2005; Coleman, 2011; Crawford, 2009). Despite their growing participation in the workforce, women still face social and institutional barriers and challenges to achieving leadership positions (Coleman, 2011; Shakeshaft, 1989). Reviews of research on this subject identify general themes that concern women educational leaders, such as relational leadership, spiritual leadership, social justice, and learning-based leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Klein et al., 1985). Case studies of women in educational leadership roles found their individual career paths were influenced by their experiences with their families, in school and in college (Hall, 1996).

Various studies throughout the world have discussed the different aspects of women's leadership and women's role as managers. Blackmore (1998) critiques the politics of educational policy which stalled programs aimed at increasing gender equity in school administrations. It has been found that women tend to exhibit a more inclusive and democratic style of leadership, and that this may run counter to prevailing norms so they find they must adopt a more "masculine" style of leadership (Blackmore, 1998; Embry, Padgett, & Caldwell, 2008; Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Oplatka, 2001). Minority women, such as Aboriginals in Australia and New Zealand, face extra hurdles. They may be expected to have solutions for long-entrenched problems in their communities, and feel they must "walk in two worlds" to succeed professionally (Fitzgerald, 2006).

In the last decade there have been studies on women in managerial roles in developing countries. Women in Ghana and Tanzania anticipated discouragement, particularly from male colleagues (Akuamoah-Boateng et al., 2003). In Ethiopia, state and religious indoctrination hold women back from sustaining their own discourse and independent agendas for professional achievement (Biseswar, 2008). Women in Turkey have made few inroads into educational leadership as they don't fit expected norms (Celikten, 2005).

Women's Status in Arab Society in Israel

Arab society in Israel is similar in many ways to other developing societies in that it identifies largely with traditional values, including gender roles (Aburabia-Queder & Oplatka, 2008; Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shapira, 2005; Khattab & Ibrahim, 2006).

At the end of 2013, the Arab population in Israel, according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2014), numbered 1,694,000 individuals, representing the country's largest minority (20.7% of the country's population). The Arab minority lives mostly in localities separate from the Jewish majority, or in one of the multi-ethnic cities. The Israeli public school system consists of an Arab language sector and a Hebrew language sector. Most Muslim, Christian and Druze Arabic-speaking students attend Arab language schools. Nevertheless, there is almost daily contact between the two populations through work, trade, and education (Arar & Shapira, 2012).

The Arab population is heterogeneous, with various cultures, ideologies, regional differences, religions, tribes, clans, and social strata represented (Totry, 2008). Each of the main religious sectors of the Arab national minority (Muslim, Christian, and Druze) are influenced by internal processes of modernization, external processes relating to their contact with Jewish society, the Jewish-Arab conflict, and the status of the particular religious group within the community. A historic overview testifies to a gradual increase in the number of Arab citizens studying in higher education and an improvement in the status of Arab women (Al-Haj, 2003). Increased acquisition of higher education among Arab women has led to the "feminization" of the Arab teaching profession and a few women have attained managerial positions in the education system (Addi-Raccah, 2006; Shapira & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2009) and in other areas, especially welfare services.

Nevertheless, they still are far less represented than women are in Israeli-Jewish society. In 2001, women constituted 19% of elementary school principals in the public Arab language sector and approximately 8% of Arab high school principals (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002). By 2012, they constituted 33% of all principals in Arabic schools. In contrast the proportion of women principals in the Hebrew language (predominantly Jewish) school system in 2012 was 67% (Balas, Givoli, Haiman, & Ofarim, 2012).

Studies of women in the Israeli-Arab education system indicate that promotion of women to managerial positions involves many

difficulties (Aburabia-Queder, 2006; Addi-Raccah & Ayalon, 2002; Khattab & Ibrahim, 2006; Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2010, 2011). Women's ability to improve their status at work is restricted by cultural norms, which protect the patriarchal social structure and which stipulate that women should work and live in their local family and community environment (Abu-Baker, 2008; Sa'ar, 2011). Women who have been appointed as school principals are still the exception, though they are equally or even better qualified than their male colleagues (Arar & Mustafa, 2011; Shapira, 2006; Shapira & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2009).

There is a lack of research on the personal and professional growth of Arab women managers and their management style in the socio-political context of Arab society in Israel. This gap in knowledge motivated us to investigate the life stories of female teachers and principals in the Arab education system in Israel.

Listening Guide Analysis of Israeli Arab Women Leaders' Narratives

The current article covers application of the Listening Guide to three studies of professional Arab women in Israel. The first study, conducted as part of the first author's research towards an MA thesis in education, collected the stories of ten Muslim women who led changes in Arab schools (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shapira, 2005). The second and third studies are part of a larger research project conducted from 2008-2012, investigating 22 female Arab managers working in public systems: 18 managers in the education system and four working in the welfare system. The purpose of these studies was to provide an opportunity for the voices of Arab women leaders to be heard, to describe their world as part of a traditional society and culture, and to enrich our knowledge concerning the lives of women in this population (Arar & Shapira, 2012; Arar et al., 2013; Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2011). These life stories contain retrospective viewpoints on the development of these women, clarifying the ways in which they developed personally and professionally, and how they can serve as models for other women and girls.

Findings

The three studies presented demonstrate the development of the Listening Guide as a tool for socio-cultural analysis of narratives as part

of the development of our studies. We chose to present representative readings from each study, to illustrate the method.

Table 1 maps the women's life stories as they emerged from analysis with the Listening Guide in each of the three studies. The table is followed by description of the findings that demonstrate the use of this analysis method in each of the three studies.

Table 1: Mapping of the Three Studies

Study	Listenings/readings in each study	Reading presented
Women leading change in Arab schools in Israel (Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Shapira, 2005).	(1)Biographical profile of women leaders. (2) Women in education: a force for change. (3) Drumming in another rhythm.	Biographical profile of women leaders.
"They didn't consider me and no one even took me into account": Women school principals in the Arab education system in Israel (Shapira, Arar & Azaiza, 2011).	(1) The family background. (2) The political aspects of women's appointment to Principalship. (3) The way in which female principals perceived in their social and professional contexts.	(2)The political aspects of women's appointment to Principalship.
"I was always a believer, only the clothing was missing" (Arar, Shapira, Azaiza & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2013, ch. 6).	(1) Transition to traditional dress: personal decision or social pressure. (2) Traditional dress in public spheres. (3) Traditional dress from the inter-cultural aspect: reactions from Jewish colleagues. (4) The meaning of traditional dress and identity perception.	(2) Traditional dress in public spheres.

The first study:
Women leading change in Arab schools in Israel.

At the end of the 1990s, stories of ten women leaders—eight teachers and two principals in the Arabic language education system in northern Israel—were collected and analyzed (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shapira, 2005). The research tool was open-ended interview. Participants were asked to talk about the families in which they grew up, their married lives, and the professional aspects of their lives.

We employed four listenings in each interview, adapted as fitting the needs of our research. We tried to maintain loyalty to the original tool, which originated from the field of psychology, but as we progressed, we found that we avoided psychological analysis of the findings and replaced it with analysis that responded to our interest in the socio-cultural aspects.

The first reading of the transcripts focused on the stories as they were told without any interpretation. In the second reading, we listened to the "self" expressed in the interviewee's perception of her family context, both in her marital relations and in her family of origin. In the third reading, we listened to the way the interviewees experienced various relationships and how they perceived the influence of those relationships on their personal and professional lives. In the fourth reading, we attempted to understand the ways the interviewees experienced themselves as part of their social, cultural, and professional contexts.

In the current article, we choose to present only second reading: "Biographical profile of women leaders," which covers the interviewees' status in their family of origin. For more details on biographical profiles of the participants see Shapira (1999) or Hertz-Lazarowitz and Shapira (2005).

***Samira's story*.**

Samira, 28 at the time of the interviews, was an instructional leader with a bachelor's degree from the University of Haifa. (Haifa is a multi-ethnic city.) She described her father as the person who encouraged and supported her since she had been a little girl. She perceived her lifestyle as not well suited to Arab society, and she often considered leaving her village. Samira recounted:

> From an early age I have believed that a woman is no different from a man, as far as her abilities and strengths are concerned. I

> think that a woman is entirely like a man. It didn't matter to my father whether we were boys or girls. . . . He really treats us all as equal; he encouraged us to go on studying. My mother is closer to tradition, more closely tied to the earlier Arab mentality. Mother says I don't fit into our society and that with my head and style of life, I should live among the Jews.

Samira's story indicates that she realizes her perception of herself as equal to males is not adequate, even if she received equal treatment from her father. As long as she lives in an Arab city, she lives in dissonance and acts in accordance with the norms of Muslim society, and not as she sees fit. One evening Samira returned home late at night after a meeting for work with a male colleague. Her father was waiting for her, and was angry at her and worried about her reputation in the village. In reporting her exchange with her father, Samira described what she said to him:

> I've stayed here not for my own sake but for yours and mother's sake. I don't want people to say that you didn't succeed in bringing up your daughter properly so that in the end she left you and went to live with the Jews, abandoning the life and customs of the Arabs. I came back so that people wouldn't point a finger at your honor and the honor of my mother and that of my sisters. But if you push me too hard, I won't hesitate to get my things and go back to Haifa.

In her explanation to her parents about why she returned to live with them, she uses what sounds like a threat. However, for someone who lived and studied among Jews, living in Haifa is a relevant option for her. For her parents it is a violation of their reputation, as they may be seen as parents who did not properly educate their daughter according to their traditions.

Hagar's story.

Hagar, 24 at the time of the interview, was studying for her master's degree at the University of Haifa. She grew up in a family of six children. Her father was an alcoholic father who physically abused her mother. Hagar rebelled against him and tried to protect her mother. When Hagar was in the tenth grade, she found out that her father was using

drugs. She was conflicted as to whether she should accept her harsh circumstances or to find a path that might lead to change and hope:

> It was a tremendous blow. It was a disaster. My mother could not divorce him. Being divorced in the Arab society gives a person the worst image. Being the daughter of a divorcee is worse than being the daughter of a drug addict; it's much more of a disgrace. Three times I was beaten because I said to him, "Enough, she [my mother] doesn't deserve it." I defended her; I don't know where I drew the courage and the strength to tell him, "I'm calling the police." I was already 21 when this happened.

Hagar, debating what action to take, knows that divorce in Arab society is the worst option for her mother and for the family. However, in the end, she dares to turn her father over to the police, an act of courage in any society, and especially in a traditional society in which rebellion against one's father is seen as a particularly extreme act.

Samira and Hagar represent two types of women dealing with the norms of a traditional society; one who has received support from her family and one who sets her path way through constant struggle. Both had to fight against traditional norms in their community/society

The second study:
Arab women leaders in public systems in Israel.

This study was the product of cooperation between two Israeli researchers: a Jewish woman and a Muslim-Arab man, who conducted in-depth interviews with female managers living in different geographical regions of Israel. Interviews were conducted in the first language of the researcher and the subjects (Hebrew and Arabic). The Arab interview texts were later translated into Hebrew. The interviews yielded detailed information about the lives of the women managers and their relationships with their nuclear and extended families, with the teaching staff in their workplaces and with the leaders of their communities. The data collected by the two researchers produced a richer and more complete picture of the phenomena studied than could have been obtained by either researcher alone. This collaboration broadened the observations of the interviewees and allowed two viewpoints of the data obtained.

Seven female school principals participated in the original research, which was based on three readings. The first reading focused on

the interviewee's family background. The second reading, presented below, related to political and social aspects of the woman's appointment to a managerial role (Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2011). The third reading describes the ways in which female principals were perceived in their social and professional contexts.

"They didn't exactly want me."

Tenders for school Principalships in Arab villages and towns tend to be accompanied by serious battles, pressures, and attempts to block the female candidates (Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2011; Arar & Shapira, 2012). The following excerpts from the interviews of three female principals (Imam, Narin and Rasmiya) relate to political and social aspects of their appointment or nomination as principals. Despite differences of their communities, there are common features in their stories

Imam's story.

Imam described her appointment as principal in her community's school:

> When they talked about the candidates in the community, they said that there were seven men and one woman, but they didn't remember who she was. They used to talk about me, saying, "She can't do anything, and yet she thinks that she can take on a management position." The principal role is the highest position that an Arab can achieve. On the day of the tender, they didn't consider me, and no one even took me into account. They didn't know me, because I am a woman. Men can go out socially in the community. They can sit in cafés and market themselves, but I can't do that. They have a place where they can talk about themselves, their achievements, what they have accomplished. Nevertheless, I won the tender. But I didn't get the job. The previous principal retracted his resignation. He changed his mind because I won. He said, "How can a woman replace me? It's unthinkable."

Iman is "transparent" when speaking about running a school as a woman. She cannot publicize herself and her achievements for reasons of

modesty, because in her community, women don't make themselves visible in public. People remind her that she is a woman, and therefore she is not a relevant candidate and has no possibility of realizing her rights. On the advice of her attorney, Imam appealed and won, but the fight was not yet over:

> You feel bad when they don't want you, but you achieve the goal because you want to be there. I eventually attained the role, but I began the job already exhausted. They didn't exactly want me; they didn't open the door for me, didn't lay down a red carpet. It was all done belligerently, and after a battle, there were many wounds. They could have influenced me to react in one of two ways: either to attend to my wounds or to disregard all sorts of important things, to ignore my wounds and start afresh.

Iman describes a battle from which she emerged victorious but wounded. From this position, she must start the school year and function at her best as a manager in her community.

> ***Narin's story.***
>
> Narin applied for the tender in a neighboring village:
>
> There were 18 candidates, including one other woman, and I won the tender, despite outright opposition from the local mayor. Following negotiations and sensing that the issue would be taken to the Education Ministry, the council yielded and accepted me as principal in that village.

After succeeding as a principal in the neighboring village, Narin wanted to transfer to the school in her home village:

> In 2005, the school principal in my own village retired, and I decided to apply for the job. The tender was offered at election time. This time, the fight was even worse. The mayor here also opposed me. The Teachers Union supported him. I wouldn't capitulate and said that I would appeal to the Supreme Court. As a successful principal, it is my right to transfer to the school of my choice. The Ministry of Education supported me. I went to the

> appeals high committee in Jerusalem, where I was accepted as the next principal of the elementary school in my village.

What enabled Narin to cope and succeed in both cases was the decision to fight against the leaders of the local authority who represent the strong clans, and to reach out to the state authorities, confident of her professional skills.

Rasmiya's story.

Rasmiya describes her constant struggle in the Druze village where she is school principal, and with the establishment and associated entities that often attempted to besmirch her reputation:

> When I first became principal, it was something special; the entire village was surprised. How could a woman run the school? It wasn't acceptable, it wasn't approved, and no one would believe that a woman could run such a big school with 750 students and 50 teachers, mostly men. But I had practical experience, and the previous principal had been weak. There was a political and social reaction by everyone in the village, but inside school, I didn't feel it. I had support, including a large group of teachers from Haifa, who weren't connected to the village.

The head of the local council wished to promote his own candidate and made several attempts to obstruct Rasmiya's work in the school, attempting to turn the school parents' committee against her:

> Ministry of Education officials read the letter written by the director of the Programs and Methods department about innovations and changes and the teaching methods she had seen, and they said: "Positive innovation and changes are happening in the school." That is how I won the tender. Then the local council went to the Supreme Court. The mayor was there with a big entourage, a crowd of 23 people, ready to claim a victory in the Supreme Court. In opposition stood the Ministry of Education's legal adviser, who defended my nomination. And since then, I have been running the school.

Social resistance and political pressure.

In sum, the main motive for the objections against these women is not professional or based on a genuine examination of skills and experience, but rather stems from the threat of women entering the public sphere and playing a crucial role in the community (Shapira et al., 2011).

The third study: Clothing and cultural identity.

The research explored the phenomenon of transition from modern to traditional dress, especially head coverings, among Muslim Arab principals in Israel. Ten Arab-Muslim women managers participated in the study (Arar et al., 2013). Eight were employed in education and two in the welfare system. Some interviews were divided into two parts, the second of which related to the women's personal and religious identities. In other cases two separate interviews were held, with the second devoted entirely to the issues of individual identity and religiosity.

The Listening Guide lent itself well to the analysis of the interview transcripts on the social and professional aspects of this issue. The texts obtained from the interviews underwent four readings: (1) transition to traditional dress: personal decision or social pressure; (2) traditional dress in public spheres; (3) traditional dress from the inter-cultural aspect: reactions from Jewish colleagues; (4) the meaning of traditional dress and identity perception.

Here we present stories from the second reading of interviews with four Muslim female principals: Salima, Wardi, Suheir and Ibtesam (fictional names are used).

Traditional dress in public spheres.

The issue of clothing carries great symbolic significance for women in Israeli society. Some Muslim women wear traditional dress such as covering their hair, while others wear modern clothing. The very fact that Arab Muslim women undertake managerial roles deviates from the norms of their home environment. At the same time, wearing traditional dress that conforms to cultural and religious expectations in the public sphere has significance that goes beyond the borders of the local clan and community or village. These women are also involved in professional forums at various levels, and some work in environments that are predominantly Jewish or shared by Jews and Arabs. They are

highly aware of the effect of their choice of dress and each, in her own way, describes how this is perceived in different public spheres.

Salima's story.

Salima feels she profits from being a principal in traditional dress:

> It allows me to behave more freely. Our community is traditional, and it has many restrictions. When you sit with a man [while wearing traditional dress], you feel as if you are protected; your confidence increases, and you feel that, when people speak to you, they relate to you as a human being and listen to your voice and your thoughts and don't look at you [solely] as a woman and look at your cleavage. Then I feel as if I am talking as one person to another. I love being a woman. I won't surrender my femininity, and I am proud of it; but when I speak as the principal, I want people to relate to me as a professional and not as they once used to: "You look young, pretty . . . your hair!" It offends me; it really insults me. What am I, a model? I'm a professional. When you come to the school, you have to talk professionally without all these preambles. So they speak to me professionally, respectfully. They are afraid to talk about irrelevant matters. I want them to relate to me in my workplace as a professional, not as a woman.

Salima explains that when she wears traditional clothing, she receives greater respect for her professionalism, as compared the reactions to her appearance as a woman when she wore secular clothing:

> It's as if I declare that I have remained traditional although I have advanced, and it is also connected to my path, because I don't want to detach myself from my society, because I am a minority, and my affiliation is important to me. I want to belong to a particular group. I need to maintain my links with my community.

Through her traditional clothing, she declares her belonging to society, in addition to being modern and educated. Aside from these social arguments for wearing traditional dress, Salima also appears in gender-mixed public spaces. She indicated that although she needed to integrate within the Israeli sphere, she also wanted to maintain her own identity:

> I think that there are several other explanations that convince us when we dress like that, deciding to look like that. It depends, among other things on identity. You want to look like everyone else, to speak like everyone else. If you go to the university you want to be part of the Israeli experience. But nevertheless you also want to maintain your uniqueness, your identity, and that's a part of the evolution of your identity that is still not completely formed.

It is important for her to be part of the general society but also to maintain her unique identity through her manner of dress.

Wardi's story.

For Wardi, transitioning to traditional Muslim dress after she moved into her professional role seemed the natural thing to do and normal for her:

> It doesn't restrict me at all. Because wherever I go in Israel or in the world I see people with the same look. It also brings more respect for the adult woman, I mean my daughters wear more exposing clothes, they don't care and I also didn't care when I was their age; I dressed as they do. But at my age that uncovered look is no longer accepted. It's not accepted and not considered honorable. I want to respect my status and to respect my religion, so I do it. But it doesn't influence me at all. This week I wanted to go to the beach with my husband, we went there and swam in the sea as usual.

Traditional Muslim dress is seen in the public space in Israel and around the world. As an older woman in traditional dress, after her transition from modern dress, Wardi was honored in Muslim society. At the same time, she continues to go to the beach in a bathing suit as she did in the past, thus setting boundaries between modernity and tradition.

Suheir's story.

In contrast, Suheir thought that traditional clothing was very restrictive:

> I'm not willing to believe that it's not restrictive … I'm not even willing to invest energy and thought in this issue, but it does irritate me … we live in a very belligerent and dangerous world so it's as though we want to tie ourselves to something more spiritual. But don't think that whoever wears it also prays. Most of them don't pray. It's just as though the society wants it. I don't like it, simply don't like it. It really makes me mad to see it. It's a blow, a fad in our sector. I feel that it's a fad that's becoming bad, and it's oh so strong. There are a lot of girls and women whom you suddenly see changing overnight to head coverings. And I don't believe that it's not restrictive, that I can do everything, even with a scarf on. I'm not willing to believe it.

Suheir is determined to oppose traditional dress. She does not agree that it is not restrictive, and criticizes women who always dress in religious clothing.

Ibtesam's story.

Ibtesam stressed the spiritual and social contributions of her transition to traditional dress:

> It was a surprise for many people. I felt that something was missing so I filled it in. The seed was planted in my childhood, but in high school and university I distanced myself from it a lot. My work with the community, being inside our settlement, influenced me, but slowly. Today I read, listen to sermons, I know what I want from myself. I am of course enriching myself … today I feel that I am part of the community, not separate from it, it gives me strength, protects me, makes me more respected, more meaningful, more authoritative and it only adds without subtracting anything.

Ibtisam began wearing traditional clothing out of an inner need and thus has become part of the community. This protects her and contributes to her status and ability to work professionally.

Arab women in managerial positions have professional lives that deviate from their immediate surroundings. Therefore their traditional-religious performance in the public sphere has implications that transcend the clan, the community, and the village. They are involved in

professional forums at various levels and operate in a sphere of Jewish dominance or common space. On the face of it, their religious identity is completely separate from their professional one, but in practice, the transition of Muslim managers to traditional dress and head covering is significant in all areas of their lives. Their ability to fulfill their role and make far-reaching changes, while receiving support from the community, the staff, and the family, stems from the community's respect for them and full acceptance of them. Their religious appearance is interpreted as preserving cultural norms and legitimizing women in managerial positions.

The Listening Guide: Voices of Women in Social Systems

Unlike studies that focus on the professional aspect of female leaders in educational systems (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Oplatka & Tako, 2009; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989), our analysis using the Listening Guide method provides a holistic picture of the women's relationship with their family and community in their particular cultural context as an inseparable part of the professional aspect of their lives (Arar et al., 2013; Arar & Shapira, 2016; Shapira, Arar, & Azaiza, 2010, 2011).

As narrative researchers, we aspire to transform the researcher-interviewee relationship into a listener-narrator relationship (Chase, 2005). This transition broadens the framework of our interaction with the interviewees, with active listening throughout the interpretation process.
As distinct from the use of the Listening Guide in narrative psychological studies (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al., 2004; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998), when used as a tool for our research, the Listening Guide is not used to decipher the human mind. It allows explanation of the women's relationships with their families and communities. The multiplicity of voices produced a comprehensive picture of their society and culture as it relates to these women.

The contribution of the current article stems from its ability to provide the reader/researcher with a tool for use in future studies of women's worlds and facilitates listening to their voices, as they are expressed in the different spheres of their lives (Coleman, 2011; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Analysis of life stories according to the Listening Guide can tell us much about the construction of the personal, social and professional lives of women leaders in education, the way in which their life stories are translated and galvanized into reality-altering action and

activity—in this particular case, in the Arab education system and society in Israel.

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