The Untold Story: Violence Towards Female Partners among Immigrants from the Caucasus in Israel

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Abstract

Most Jews from the Caucasus region, about 60,000 people, arrived in Israel during the 1990s. The Caucasian community retained a unified and united social and organizational structure, even after immigration to Israel. The inferior social status of women among Caucasian Jews was created and determined based on the relationship of the Caucasian community with its patriarchal social environment. Exclusion, alienation, and concealment of women in the Caucasus were central patriarchal mechanisms, whose purpose was to preserve men's status through the "protection" of women's dignity. In order to examine how Caucasian men and women in Israel perceive the legitimacy of internal and external supervision mechanisms in cases of domestic violence among the Caucasian family, we interviewed married men and women (*n*=34 interviewees) aged 24-40. This qualitative study found that men described violence against female partners as a legitimate and common phenomenon in Caucasian society, but found it hard to clearly define the limit of this violence and who determines the limit, thus leaving this decision in the hands of the man himself. Men who were asked to define violence, or to give examples of extreme violent incidents, referred to physical violence only and did not discuss verbal, mental, sexual, or financial violence. This "untold story" also prevents women who suffer this kind of violent abuse to define themselves as victims or to convince their close, familial environment that they are victims of violence. These social patterns produce a level of justification, guilt-neutralization, and high levels of forgiveness towards violent behavior within the family, as well as a lack of tolerance or legitimacy for turning to external supervisory bodies.

Keywords: Caucasian community, domestic violence, police, Israel.

1. Introduction

Historians believe that Caucasian Jews were expelled from ancient Israel during the Babylonian Exile. The exile drove these Jews to Persia and Mesopotamia. Between 531-579 CE they were sent to the Caucasus region as settlers, to strengthen the Persian Empire's hold over the area. During the 19th century, the Russian Empire took over the Caucasus. After this conquest, the Caucasian people began to rebel under the leadership of Imam Shamil. During that time, many Jews were partially assimilated, and adopted the customs of the Islamic people around them (Ibragimov, 2004)[1]. To survive their hostile and alien environment, the Jews adopted their neighbors' customs and merged with their social environment. At the same

time, the Jews did not give up their unique character, and chose to live in remote locations so that they could continue to maintain their Jewish lifestyle. As a result, Caucasian Jews were nicknamed "Mountain Jews".

The customs "adopted" that were similar to those of Muslim communities included the avenging of the death of a relative through a "blood feud", placing family honor above any other value, buying or kidnapping women, *etc.* After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the Caucasus became an inseparable part of the Soviet Union. For more than 70 years, the Caucasus was under Communist rule, which significantly affected the lifestyle of its entire people, including the Jews. The government's involvement in an individual's life was at a maximum, in an attempt to undermine and change many of the existing social institutes, to create "a better world". This created a unique integration of a Jewish-Muslim culture under totalitarian-Communist rule. The unique characteristics of these "Mountain Jews" were added to the characteristics of civilians living in a totalitarian country (Ibragimov, 2004)[1].

The Caucasian Jews lived on both side of Caucasus ridge, thus according to customary geographic division, some were considered to be from Asia and some from Europe (Bram, 2010)[2]. The Caucasus is a wide region with great ethnic and linguistic versatility (Bram, 1999)[3]. Although this includes several different communities, during their immigration to Israel the Caucasian Jewish community was, at least in the eyes of Israeli society, considered a single entity.

Most Caucasian Jews, approximately 60,000 of them, came to Israel during the 1990s. They joined a small group of about 15,000 people who came to Israel from Caucasus during the 70's (Bram, 2007)[4]. These immigrants settled mostly in small to medium periphery settlements, which were dealing with a difficult social-economic reality of their own. The tendency of Caucasian immigrants to remain tight-knit manifested in various visible ways, both in terms of wider Israeli society and its institutes, and in terms of Russian immigrants who brought with them an Orientalist distinction between a "white" Russian nationality and those of other, non-white people who "suffer from cultural retardation", including those from the Caucasus.

In addition to the normal difficulties any immigrant must face (for a detailed description of the adaptation difficulties of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, see Kurman & Ronen-Eilon, 2010)[5], the immigrants from the Soviet Union and particularly the Caucasus faced additional difficulties, which stemmed from cultural differences between the society they left and the society into which they had immigrated. The transition of immigrants from the former Soviet Union into a country with a democratic system, which emphasized individual freedoms and freedom of choice, was quite difficult for those unused to these concepts. In the Soviet Union, the state took care of a citizen's basic needs like employment and accommodation, while in Israel the citizen must take care of these things himself, and not every person has guaranteed employment. Many immigrants experienced a significant reduction in their professional and personal status, and dealing with the free market and an affluent consumer culture was very difficult for them (Zilberg, Leshem & Lisak, 1995[6]; Markowitz, 2001[7]; 2013[8]).

Both education and the character of relationships in a typical Soviet family are authoritarian and different compared with those in Israel. Obedience and good manners in the home and in educational institutions were considered as central values. These requirements created a two-faced culture, which encourages a "double self". In this two-faced culture, a person's inner or authentic side usually remained hidden or blocked, even from close family members, while the visible aspect behaved according to expected norms. These cultural characteristics added more difficulties to immigrants trying to understand and assimilate Israeli social norms, and led to various types of adaptation difficulties (Kurman & Ronen-Eilon, 2010)[5]. Cultural characteristics, such as free self-expression, straightforwardness and candor, the direct and open attitude of Israeli youth towards authority figures *etc.*, were considered inappropriate and threatening, and colored interactions between the receiving society and the immigrants with segregation and suspicion, both socially and institutionally.

In addition to the social characteristics that developed during the Communist era, immigrants from the Caucasus have, as discussed, unique customs and behavioral codes, which developed out of the synergy between Jewish and Muslim cultures; hybrid (Sharaby, 2008)[9] liminal (Turner, 1969)[10] identity affects immigrations in Israel. Most Jews in the Caucasus lived in rural communities, comprised of extended, patriarchal families. After their immigration to Israel, the extended family ceased to exist in its original format in most settlements, but the grand authority of the father or the male head of the family remained (Ibragimov, 2004)[1]. The authority of men and adults were expressed in behavioral norms that required humble and obedient behavior from youth towards their elders and from women towards men. Despite the allegedly egalitarian attitude of the Communist regime, Caucasian families maintained their traditional lifestyle in which the father of the family was the main provider, usually working in an independent occupation, while enjoying a high social and familial status.

It seems that the multitude of conflicts, and the attempts to Islamize the Jews, made the Caucasian people more prone to seclusion and segregation, designed to protect their unique characteristics. This segregation continued to characterize the Caucasian people even after their immigration to Israel.

The interaction between Caucasian Jews and Israeli society, which was based on different social values and perceptions, led to different kinds of conflicts and confrontations between the receiving and immigrant societies (Markowitz, 2010)[11]. Caucasians in Israel became well-known for their "hot temper", and made a name for themselves as people who are not afraid to use violence at levels which, to Israeli natives and immigrants from other parts of the Soviet Union, seemed extreme and unreasonable. In addition, many Caucasian immigrants arrived with few financial means, and lacked the relevant professional qualification needed to obtain work in Israel. This reality led to the fact that, as with Ethiopian and other communities, the Caucasian immigrants found themselves closed in the geographic, social, and economic periphery of Israeli society (Edelstein, 2000[12]; Bram, 2007[4]).

As discussed, the Caucasian people maintained a united and unified social and organizational structure even after immigrating to Israel. The Caucasian Jews tended to settle together in *villageses* and urban neighborhoods, and maintained the unique customs and characteristics of the Caucasian ethnic group. For generations, the Caucasian community was led by local leaders, "presidents" or "*Kovkho*". They were elected by the community, and took care of it by acting in a managerial, supervisory, and judgmental capacity within the community. It is important to note that the Jews in the Caucasus refrained from petitioning the government, since they preferred to stay away from non-Jews, and did not want to give them a reason to get involved in their affairs. The totalitarian Communist regime only added to the Jews' distrust and suspicion of the establishment. The nation that was accustomed to being a unified, autonomous unit did not approve of the Israeli establishment's attempts to get involved in its affairs, and to offer formal supervisory systems in place of the non-formal mechanisms operating and directing the daily lives of community members. As observed in other closed cultural communities in Israel (Haj-Yahia & Sadan, 2007[13]; Shoham, 2006[14]), community leaders are involved not only in general community fields but in every significant matter and event occurring within the nuclear and / or extended family.

2. The Social Status of Caucasian Women

The degraded social status of women among Caucasian Jews was designed and determined based on the relationship between the Caucasian group and the patriarchal society surrounding it. Caucasian Jews adopted the custom whereby, when a man wishes to marry, he sends his parents to the woman's parents and they decide upon the issue of marriage, without the bride-to-be have any say in it. Schuster (2005)[15] even describes incidents where engagements were formed when the partners were mere infants. Their parents, who were usually very close friends, decided on the engagements for various interests – such as social and financial – and the young couple had only to satisfy their parents' wishes. After the bridegroom's parents obtain the consent of the bride's parents, they must determine the value of the dowry that the bridegroom must pay. Note that, traditionally, these marriage

arrangements were made when the parties were around 14-18 years of age. The young age of the couple, their immaturity and lack of experience often led to a great many conflicts.

Since Caucasian culture absorbed the basic values of Muslim culture, which revolve around issues of honor and shame, considerable cultural and social efforts were invested in protecting a woman's dignity and humility before and after her marriage. The women were required to live a lifestyle that was mostly centered in the home, and to reduce contact with foreign outsiders to a minimum. After the age of 12, she was prohibited from contacting any of her peers, so as to maintain the family honor of the bride-to-be. The formal education of women, or even basic literacy, was considered unnecessary. The exclusion, alienation, and concealment of women in the Caucasus acted as central patriarchal mechanisms, whose purpose was to preserve men's status through the "protection" of women's dignity.

As among Muslims, after the wedding a woman would move into her husband's home, and accept the role of running the household under her mother-in-law's close supervision. As observed in various collective Muslim communities, it is older women-- who serve as socialization agents and supervise the strict preservation of masculine code of honor—who carry out the actual supervision of women. The woman and her children usually lived in a separate room, where most domestic tools were also stored. The men enjoyed unlimited control over the family, which was led by the father. Women were not allowed to participate in any meals with guests, or to intervene in conversations among men. A married woman was also not allowed to contact men in any way, even if they were members of her extended family. Jewish women in the Caucasus were completely excluded from public and religious discourse, and were not allowed to participate in prayers at the synagogues, which were intentionally built without the *Ezrat Nashim* (women's quarter).

Women were judged by their submissiveness and obedience. Marriage commenced at a very young age (14), and the woman was considered her husband's property; she must take off his shoes, wash his feet, and provide him with anything his heart desired. The wife must serve her husband and please him. The husband's wishes were considered "holy" and the wife must meet every expectation. Her complete submissiveness and subjugation to her husband were mostly obtained through her seclusion from other familial support systems. This would create the extended family structure, which was based on cooperation, work distribution, and joint property. The subjugation to the father of the family applied to his married sons as well, who had to ask for his approval in every significant matter (regarding the source of authority and strength of the extended family in Muslim society, Haj-Yahiya and Sadan, 2007)[13].

The distribution of roles and the patriarchal-gender hierarchy that characterized Caucasian Jewish society continues to exist, in some form or other, to this day. The traditional habits were better maintained among Jews from villages and the periphery, but their affect is apparent even among citizens of large cities. Although the process of interacting with the modernization, individualization, and accelerated neo-liberalization characteristic of Israeli society since the 1980s (Fogiel Bijaoui, 2005)[16] led to a decrease in the need and tendency to live within the extended family structure, Caucasian Jews continued to maintain this living structure. The financial dependency between family members has also decreased, but close connections remained among family members, and the central role of the head of the family was maintained.

Understanding the supervisory power via familial frameworks among Caucasian Jews requires reference to another term – "*patronomy*". The term patronomy refers to a type of wide framework that existed in a single family, and which formed a group comprised of several families. Each such family was an independent familial cell, but the family members still believed in an obligation for mutual help, financial assistance, and ideological unity within the wider framework. At the head of the patronomy was an honorable person who served as the head of a council, formed of the fathers of the smaller family units. The members of the patronomy were obliged to undertake mutual protection and maintain order and safety within the group. Patronomies usually consisted of 30 to 70 people. A complex network of primary, unmediated connections among the members of this wider group was

sustained, and preserved their obligation to the group as a whole, and intensified the inner supervision mechanisms which served the group and the wider family in particular (Dymshits, 1999)[17].

3. Methods and Qualitative Finding

To examine how Israeli-Caucasian men and women perceive the level of legitimacy of the inner and external supervision mechanisms acting *vis-à-vis* the Caucasian family and in particular the woman in the family, we interviewed married men and women (34 interviewees), aged 24-40. All the Caucasian interviewees immigrated to Israel after the age of 18. The participants were not selected at random, but rather using the "snowball" method (Denzin & Lincolen, 2000)[18], where a friend recommends the interviews to another friend, based on a willingness to cooperate and be interviewed on a subject that is considered internal and sensitive among group members. The interviews were conducted by a student of Caucasian ethnicity, who "used" his connections and unmediated acquaintance with the group's system of norms and unwritten codes.

Among the men interviewed for this study we found three main themes: violence towards women was perceived as an everyday issue; calling the police to deal with violent events was considered irrelevant and even offensive; while the traditional solution of turning to other men was viewed as the ultimate solution.

3.1 "It Can Happen With Anyone"

Almost all men (17) interviewed, except three, considered violence towards their female partner a common and everyday matter that should not be given any special attention. Participants considered violence among spouses – from the husband to the wife, of course – as part of the normative discourse that develops within a familial framework, "it can happen to anyone and in any family".

Participants were divided in their opinion regarding the level and boundaries of legitimate violence. Most agreed that "*whether the wife is the cause or not, as long as the violence does not 'cross the line' it's definitely tolerable*." When asked to define violence, the interviewees' comprehensive tendency was to ignore other types of violence, such as sexual, emotional, or financial violence, and instead referred to the use of physical violence only. None of the interviewees considered limitations, exclusion, barring women from knowledge or education, seclusion, oppression, or humiliation as expressions of violence.

3.2 Involving the Police is Irrelevant and Offensive

To understand the hegemonic social perceptions within which a Caucasian woman must make her decisions, we asked men to share their opinion on women who go to the police and file a complaint about violence by her partner. Despite their life in Israel and their integration within the Israeli social fabric, all participants were unanimous in their opinion that the law enforcement system is an irrelevant supervision mechanism for them, and that it could even be devastating when used to solve issues between partners. Describing the police interference in cases of domestic violence, participants used extreme expressions such as "complete destruction", "ruin of the family", *etc.* Involving the police was perceived to be irrelevant, and even harmful and hostile.

Turning to the police was described by participants as a negative long-term process as well. Police intervention was considered to prevent any possibility of rehabilitating the family and social order. Breaking the balance and the social order by adding an outside supervisory entity such as the police was thought to harm the moral and normative infrastructure of the entire ethnic group, and its ability to supervise the individuals within it.

All interviewees considered the woman's family as an appropriate, efficient, and only recourse for mediating between spouses. "Turning to the family" refers, of course, to other

men such as siblings, parents, or other male relatives of the wife. However, some participants believed that in extreme situations where the woman's life was at risk, involving the legal authorities was allowed.

3.3 Who Can Assist?

The men in the wife's family are perceived as the first and most meaningful supervisory group, one that can, according to those who participated in the study; act alongside with the violent spouse. If the men of the wife's family cannot help mediate in the matter, one may call on central and respected people within the community. Referring to the men of the wife's family serves at least four main functions: it permits the protection and strengthening of the patriarchal masculine hegemony, thus protecting the social-gender order; it protects the honor of the family because "the matter stays within the family"; while referring to other men in the extended family allows the wife to ask for help without being confronted with other loci of power, or social perceptions regarding external, alternative supervision agents, and it does not present a dangerous threat to the nuclear family, the protection of whose integrity is a main value among internal supervisory bodies.

Some participants commented that respected community individuals prohibit turning to the police for help in issues defined as internal family matters. Protecting the status of the internal supervisory bodies through supervision and control over contact with formal institutions, whether through mediators or by subjugating the referral to the approval of community authority figures (Even-Yossefzon & Koren, 2007[19]; Kaplan, 2003[20]), is characteristic of various closed communities in Israel. Kibbutz regulations, for example, demand a common majority decision in a gathering of members in order to call the police for issues between members (Shoham, 2006)[14].

All of the men with whom we spoke believe that the cultural change needed in order to take on the norms customary in Israel, as well as giving up the norms that were common in Caucasus, is not a positive process, and that it is important to continue to protect the social axioms they brought with them from the Caucasus. The men estimate that women do not have the will or the ability to change the social reality in which they live. According to them, even the women who are exposed to violence "*share the same thoughts*", "*a good woman knows what's expected of her*", "*a good wife will not do anything that will harm her husband or her family*", and some believe that family and community obligations, along with physical fear or social contempt from a woman's family and the rest of the community, will prevent a woman from turning to the police and filing a complaint about domestic violence.

3.4 What Do Women have to Say on the Issue?

To understand how Caucasian immigrant women perceive the issue of domestic violence towards a female partner, 17 Caucasian women who immigrated after the age of 18 were interviewed. Among these women, we found the same main components that we saw in the men, but we also found a variable level of ambivalence towards the phenomenon of violence.

3.5 "It Happens to Everybody"

All the Caucasian women interviewed reported that domestic violence towards a female partner is a common phenomenon. All used the same reduction mechanism we saw in men, one of miniaturization and trivialization of the violence – "*it can happen to anyone*", or "*it happens to everybody...*"

However, while some considered this an issue related to the woman's own behavior ("*whether she is treated violently or not depends on her and her alone...*"), others avoided this explanation, which is based on "victim blaming", and defined domestic violence as something negative that one must learn to live with: "*it is wrong to raise a hand against your wife, but there's nothing you can do, it just happens within the group*".

3.6 "Involving the Police is a Social Suicide"

The strength of supervision among the Caucasian community has led to a very high level of agreement with the preferred methods for supervision in cases of domestic violence towards a female partner. The wives, whose social identity and status are measures according to how they manage their homes and families, are fully committed to this role. This situation leads them to search for alternative ways to decrease the personal distress they experience. Nearly all the women interviewed shared the opinion that referring to external supervisory bodies, such as the police or social service authorities, is not an option. Few believed that social services could be approached in cases of financial distress, but that one must be careful not to involve the authorities in nuclear family affairs.

Even among the women, the law enforcement system was perceived as an irrelevant, foreign and dangerous entity. "...*the police should not be involved no matter what, the family is sacred and any intervention will destroy it…*" "*The institution can help a woman get by in life, but this means the destruction of a family...*".

Women are willing to accept approaching the police only in very extreme cases, but they find it hard to define what is considered extreme enough to "permit" the injury to the family and the ethnic group that would follow the involvement of the police and even social services. Even among women, the "untold story" was prominent, and they mostly focused on physical violent acts and did not refer at all to other kinds of violence. Women considered approaching the police as a kind of "*social and familial suicide*", as one participant phrased it. "*A woman should suffer as much as she possibly can and only then may she consider going to the police...*" "*A woman who goes to the police, her husband will never forgive her and her family will be ruined.*" According to them, the decision of whether to ask the police for help reflects the wife's endurance. The stronger the woman, the more she will be able to avoid involving the authorities about violence against her. After all "*turning to the police will lead to devastating consequences for the wife...*"

The members of the extended family, and mostly those who enjoy a high social or economic status in their community, are perceived as those with appropriate and adequate authority to intervene in such matters. The men of the extended family have taken upon themselves the role of informal supervision, which had been in the hands of, and enforced by, highly-regarded community members, back in their country of origin. As mentioned above, both men and women consider filing a complaint at the police to be "treason" against the partner and family, while the partner considers the police intrusion into to his "area of responsibility" to be a direct injury to his dignity ,and an admission of his inability to manage his own affairs. Note that when a complaint is indeed filed with the police, news of such an encounter spreads quickly among the community members, since gossip is one of the most efficient informal supervision tools in a closed community. An unsuccessful encounter affects not only those involved in that specific incident, but projects onto other community members as well.

3.7 "Victim Blaming"

Preserving uniformity and social solidarity is greatly assisted by the complementary technique of victim blaming. The violence inflicted on the wife is explained as a result of her behavior, her characteristics, and her choices. A woman who cannot fulfill her various roles in the familial unit in a satisfying manner leads her husband to use violence in order to "educate" her.

Along with this victim blaming narrative, we did not find any accompanying, bypassing, or parallel reference that considers the fault of the husband. All interviewees, men and women alike, told a wider etiological tale which considers the violence towards the wife as the fault of her own family, a family that failed to properly educate that woman, and to qualify her to fulfill her various roles with loyalty and obedience. The high level of familial obligation, and the need for supervision and education demanded from the wife's family turn the woman's behavior into a story of shame and failure involving the whole of the wife's family of origin.

Since according to the value hierarchy of this ethnic group, family honor is a supreme value, when this value is injured one can expect that the level of support the woman receives from her family members will be limited and restrained. The wives, from whom most support systems are blocked, learn to grin and bear it. A good wife is one that remains quiet, who has learned to give up her desires and ambitions for the sake of preserving family unit, the honor of her own family, and that of her husband's.

3.8 Seeds of Change

Among the women interviewed, we can find the first signs of change that have begun to gnaw at the never-ending obligation towards hegemonic masculine perceptions. Two participants were willing to stand against the patriarchal, paternalistic system and claimed that "*a man's violence against his wife is no longer appropriate in a modern, civil society*". However, these women also explain that "*the conflict between the norms of Israeli society and the norms of the [Caucasian] ethnic group are one of the main reasons for conflicts between spouses.*" The position of women in the Caucasian ethnic group is very similar to that found in Shalhoub-Kevorkian's study (2003)[21] regarding the perception of Palestinian women towards involving the police in violence towards female partners. However, while Shalhoub-Kevorkian argues that some of the resistance is related to the general approach towards the Zionist occupier and the Israeli Police as a representative of that institution, the refusal of Caucasian women to involve the police is based on cultural and gender issues.

The cross-gender consensus, which takes the option of approaching the police or social services for help in cases of violence and expels it from the legitimate set of responses, , is weakened when women are asked to try to define the difference between legitimate and illegitimate use of violence. While most men consider physical violence towards a female partner as a normative behavior, approximately one third of the women reject this behavior. Despite their rejection, some of them still blame the women's behavior. Men, who described violence towards female partners as a legitimate and common phenomenon in Caucasian society, found it hard, however, to clearly define the line and who determines it, thus they leave this judgment call up to the men. Men who were asked to define violence or give examples of extreme violent situations referred to physical violence only, and did not talk about verbal, emotional, sexual, and financial violence.

Unlike the seeds of change that can be found among some Caucasian women regarding the legitimacy of violence within the family, we found virtually no change in their stand towards external supervision systems. Women were devoted to maintaining the social characteristics of the closed community, which self-monitored everything that happens within it. All interviewees, men and women alike, believed that solutions to problems such as domestic violence towards female partners must be sought within the close family, and reject the involvement of institutions in their lives.

4. Discussion

The cultural characteristics of the Caucasian ethnic group in Israel, their hybrid identity and patriarchal familial structure, the low status of the wife, the involvement and complete responsibility of the extended family, all derive from the social, hegemonic assumptions of a Muslim community which served for generations as a "cultural envelope" for this Jewish community. The lack of trust in official institutions was imprinted in the Caucasian group throughout its history, alongside the norm than family honor must be maintained at any cost.
Increasing awareness of the issue of domestic violence during the past two decades has led to changes in how the law enforcement system deals with such severe violations. The main change in police policy was to employ stricter enforcement and to emphasize deterrence, while involving community institutions. Alongside these changes in police procedure, a great many efforts had been made to combine various bodies, such as social services, *etc.* in the treatment of domestic violence within a family unit.

The Israeli Act for Prevention of Domestic Violence (1991) was mostly affected by laws legislated in Western countries, and by different models developed in those countries. The laws, the social services, and intervention models developed are applied according to the individualistic tradition of Western societies.

These laws and services aim to provide abuse women with a high-level and effective solution. However, implementing them without cultural sensitivity to the background of the abuse woman can have the opposite consequences than those expected. Insensitive use of these tools may be devastating and, in some cases, may even cost the woman her life.

The Israeli Act for Prevention of Domestic Violence is a universal law which serves all families in Israel, but certain ethnic groups within Israeli society do not accept it as sympathetically as the rest of the population. To apply the law means intervention in the families' lives, invading their privacy and threatening the authority of those who manage the power foci within these societies. The law is perceived, among men from the Caucasian community, in most cases, as a foreign, punishing law instead of a protective and deterring one. The men consider the law regarding domestic violence to be irrelevant and even dangerous. A woman from the community who turns to the police for help will be ostracized from the community and accused of subverting the stability and wholeness of the family.
That there is a difference between different cultures in their perception of violence and in their attitude towards abuse women and violent men is particularly important in discussions regarding violence against women in Israel's Caucasian community. The basic social assumptions regarding the Caucasian woman's status and her roles in the familial unit within this community as well are profoundly different from the common perceptions in democratic, Western society (Shoham, 2012)[22]. The institution of the family in the Israeli Caucasian community even now carries out essential tasks which complement the formal authorities in everything regarding education of children, friendship, support, and social care.

The family provides support, above all things, in case of personal, social, or financial distress. Despite the social changes that occurred after immigration to Israel, the social-gender order did not significantly change. The social expectation that the husband serves as the main source of income for the family, even if his wife works and can financially support the household, has been maintained, and the wife is still expected to take care of all the components of the family unit. A wife who does not meet all the social expectations demanded of her, or who diverges from the customary rules of behavior, will be punished in various ways by her partner. He can beat her, take away her jewelry, forbid her from leaving the house, or limit her in other ways (Schuster, 2005)[15].

The centrality of the family and the mutual family obligation, together with an unwillingness to involve external supervision bodies, may lead Caucasian women who suffer domestic violence to accept assistance and protection from her family. However, she must consider the fact that a great deal of pressure will be used to convince her to return to her husband and reconcile, even if the family members do not think the husband's behavior was justified. The family will try to hide the fact that the woman has been beaten to prevent gossip, since gossip within the community means that her family failed to educate her properly. Another solution that the woman can use is to try and influence her husband through central members of the community, such as the Rabbi or other esteemed people. Note that the status of the Rabbi within the community lost its power after the immigration to Israel, much like the reduction in status of religion leaders within the Ethiopian community (Edelstein, 2011)[12]. Turning to honored members of the community is considered a very drastic measure, since it involves someone who is external to the family, but this individual is still a part of the community. In such cases, the wife must be prepared that the definition of the problem, as well as the solutions that will stem from it, reflect the social norms of the Caucasian ethnic group and not necessarily the formal social conceptions that characterize Israeli social hegemony (Dymshits, 1999)[17].

In cases of severe violence, it is possible that the wife may seek support and intervention from social services and the police. However, in most cases, a woman who turns to these

institutions will not enjoy support and understanding even from her own family. To distance itself from responsibility for her actions, the family of the wife may even act in a more extreme fashion than other community members, and press the husband to expel the wife, accuse her of betraying her family, or make her an outcast.

The women in traditional Caucasian families are caught in liminality trap: Women are aware that they may very well gain her own family's support and protection should she ask for it, but at the same time she knows her family may press her to go back to her husband for the sake of responsibility for family unity, her reputation, and that of her own family. The pressure employed by the family may enhance her feelings of fear, anxiety, frustration, and helplessness that already exist due to her husband's violence.

The "untold story" also prevents women who suffer from these types of non-recognized violence, from defining herself as a victim, or from convincing her close family that she is a victim of violence. These social patterns produce a level of justification, guilt-neutralization and a high level of forgiveness towards domestic violence and a lack of tolerance for or delegitimization of turning to external supervisory bodies.

Despite the segregation and seclusion of the Caucasian ethnic group in Israel, women are exposed to an array of cultural messages, mostly synthetic and mainly through mass media, which denigrate domestic violence, and encourage women to involve external bodies in their distress. The goal of narrowing the gap between the levels of freedom of action available for Caucasian men and women, who inhabit a dual, contradictory cultural framework, leads some women to try and undermine the status of the man in the family. This process leads to a great many confrontations and, according to the women, enhances the willingness and motivation of the partner to use more force against his spouse, in order to protect his previous status and the old gender order.

Delving into the family structure of the Israeli Caucasian community and studying how men and women of this society think, as well as the community's wish to preserve its unique social fabric, increases the need for a unique approach when dealing domestic violence in this group. The process of mediation, with the help of an appropriate mediator who is able to speak the community's language, may be a good way to treat the issue of violence, and to significantly decrease resistance within the community for external intervention, thus preventing crises and family ruin (Lee-On, 2002)[23].

The process of mediation, which has spread into Israel in the past two decades, especially in civic proceedings, may provide an opportunity for women to tell their stories. During mediation, the parties involved share a responsibility and commitment towards the process, while the mediator provides the driving force. This method provides the parties with greater involvement in defining the problem and seeking solutions. Mediation encourages the parties to express abilities that are central for gaining control over one's life and environment: active listening, negotiation, setting priorities, and conscious compromising (Shoham, 2012)[22].

In cases of violence against women in the Caucasian group, this method has additional advantages. The process actually positions the woman as an equal during the negotiations,, thus giving her a sense of control over what is happening to her, giving her an opportunity to express herself and her demands. The process is conducted between equal partners, and not between the husband and his "possession". The contribution of mediation will greatly depend on the capability of the mediator to lead the process according to the ethnic group's cultural and social nature, without compromising the principles on which the woman's status in modern, democratic society status is based.

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