

Racism, Militarisation and Policing: Police Reactions to Violence against Palestinian Women in Israel

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ABSTRACT: This article moves beyond the discussion of police racism to a broader account of the militaristic racism of policing in Israel. The highly permeable boundaries between the military, society and the political conflict all affect how violence against women is policed. Focusing on case studies of police officers' perceptions of abused Palestinian Israeli women — members of an ethnic and indigenous minority — this paper considers key features of the policing of violence against women in a militaristic context and during a continuous political conflict. Police officers' philosophies and actions in law enforcement concerning violence against women are critically scrutinised. The findings indicate that while some aspects of cultural difference between the indigenous ethnic group and the majority are relevant to policing, focusing predominantly on the 'cultural characteristics' or 'ethnic traditions or rituals' of the policed population and denying the effect of the political conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as a factor in the militarisation of policing can reinforce rather than ameliorate ethnic prejudice, racism and discrimination.

Introduction

There has been little discussion of the policing of violence against indigenous women suffering from the traumatic effects of politico-historical legacies and state discrimination. Using the sociological perspective that an indigenous ethnic minority is a social construction allows us to analyse how race and ethnicity and police reactions to such identities are articulated within the police force, an analysis taking us into a territory long neglected by criminologists (Holdaway, 2003; Smith, 1997). Here I describe and analyse socio-political processes leading to differential outcomes of policing violence against women. I believe that we cannot reform police prejudices and discrimination only through studying outcomes, but that we also need to study how these outcomes are produced through law, policy, routine behaviour and the use of police discretion towards an ethnic minority.

Factors commonly cited as underlying the policing of abuse of women in peacetime include patriarchal social structure and male domination and control of women (e.g., Dobash and Dobash, 1992) and police masculinity or tendency to identify with the batterer. In the context of war, studies have highlighted such factors as the symbolic meaning of violence against women in terms of conquest or the painful impact of violence on victims and their communities

(Enloe, 2000; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003). Little scholarly attention has been directed to the policing of violence against women in countries that are simultaneously at peace and at war, or to the complex political context in which a substantial portion of the country's citizenry is considered a fifth column or is suspected of identifying with or aiding the 'the enemy'.

Israel is one such country. Its history and political circumstances render it a unique context for analysing the policing of violence against the female members of its major indigenous/minority Arab/Palestinian community. Israel's unique geopolitical situation provides an additional dimension for intersectionality analysis (Crenshaw, 1991) of violence against minority/indigenous women. As I demonstrate here, under such circumstances, culturalisation of violence serves not only as a convenient means of normalising the violence (e.g., Adelman, Erez and Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2003) but, more importantly, of depoliticising the relations between the two conflicted communities. This further weakens the protection of abused women as police responsibility toward a large segment of the population is neutralised.

Most studies on policing have shown a clear discrepancy between written law and its actual application. The concepts of ethnicity and racism and politicisation of policing sensitise us to this distinction and, ironically, are essential for understanding the policing of an indigenous/ethnic minority. Therefore, to set the scene, I first briefly chart the history of ethnic relations pertaining to the Palestinian population in Israel. Next, the results of a current study are presented to demonstrate how officers' negative/biased and sometimes racist images of Palestinians affect their reactions. Data analysis highlights the role of culturalisation in law enforcement and the prominent role played by militarisation and national security concerns in policing practices. Resorting to these 'focal concerns' of police work in Israel weakens legal protection for Arab/Palestinian women and renders their safety precarious and uncertain. Such results are important because they indicate in sharp focus processes of discrimination and racism in the world of everyday policing. Next, I examine the implications of the militarisation of social control agencies and its likely detrimental effects on human rights issues in conflicted areas. Finally, I argue that, while some aspects of cultural difference between various ethnic groups are relevant to policing, overemphasis of these differences or their total nullification may jeopardise the welfare and, in some cases, the lives of abused women.

Militarism, Militarisation and Violence against Women

Endemic to violence against women is a corresponding move to silence them: like the proverbial three monkeys, patriarchal politics do not want to see, hear or speak of the violence enacted on women's bodies and psyches. This perpetual attempt to negate the voices and narratives of women, who suffer external political violence as well as internal patriarchal oppression, is further aggravated in conflict areas where material strife, political unrest or war foregrounds the existing tensions of a gender-biased world. The crude institutionalised violence against women in conflict areas that is denied by patriarchal

structural powers has made the victimisation of women invisible in the social and political analyses of conflict zones.

These acts of silencing become acute in a militarised zone, for everything comes to be 'controlled by, dependent on, or derives its value from the military as an institution' (Enloe, 2000, p. 281). Feminists from all over the world — from South Africa, South Korea, Serbia, Chile, Zimbabwe, Japan, Israel, India, Palestine, the United States, Algeria and other countries — have learned that militarisation not only increases violence against women by internal and external political and social forces, but also endangers vulnerable social groups by embedding them in a complex nexus of oppressions over and beyond the obvious and material violence (Albanese, 2001; Chung, 2000; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1998).

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, political unrest started before 1948, continued following the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, increased during the first Intifada (which began in December 1987) and has intensified during the last ten years, especially since the second Intifada (which began in October 2000). The militarised social space and the domineering nature of the military system has intensified, dichotomised, and rigidified masculine and feminine categories (Albanese, 1996; Mojab, 1997) and increased violence against women.

The militarisation of society achieved through the naturalisation of militarism and the invisibilisation of human history/suffering (for more details see Enloe, 2000; Luts, 2002) affects gender relations and violence against women. Militarisation is never gender-neutral. Enloe (2000) claims that it is a personal and political transformation that relies on ideas about femininity and masculinity. Militarism is a container of ideas about the army and militarisation is the process by which individuals or systems either become dependent on or controlled by the military and its values, beliefs and presumptions.

Military culture and its norms regarding masculinity, sexuality, violence and women are conducive to rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence (Morris, 1996; Enloe, 2000; Hansen, 2001). What remains relatively unexplored is violence against women outside the military base, within a society that experiences a pervasive military culture that militarises domestic violence, violence against women, and the policing of domestic violence (Adelman, 2003). Adelman (2003) has studied Israeli militarism and militarisation and their effects on domestic violence in Israeli society, explaining how in Israel

the boundaries between the military and society are highly permeable, even ambiguous. It is commonplace to hear Israel referred to as a 'nation of soldiers' or a 'people in uniform' where 'everybody serves in the army'. (p. 1121)

Some see Israeli society as partially or totally militarised (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari, 1999), while others regard the Israeli army as performing non-military work that constitutes it as a civil institution (Kimmerling, 1985). I argue that the incorporation of civic aspects into the army and the militarisation of society not only affect domestic violence in Israel, but also the way in which agencies of

social control react to and deal with violent crimes, particularly crimes committed by or against politically 'threatening' social groups.

Jewish History, *Al-Nakba* and the Militarisation of Israeli Society

Contemporary Israeli militarism is not only a product of past history but also a result of current factors, including alliances with Britain, the United States and other nations. These have all forged the current Israeli use of force, security, and defence to construct a militarised society. Moreover, the history of European Jews, the Holocaust, the Nazi attempt to exterminate European Jews, the Jewish gain of political power (including the emergence of competing military and political organisations such as Haganah and Irgun), and the vision of the Zionist movement all advanced militarism while leading to the establishment of the State of Israel in Palestine (Shapira, 1992; Kimmerling, 1985). The creation of the state, which was conducted through the military, caused Palestinians to lose their lands, to leave their homes for fear of atrocities, to lose connection with family and property and to become refugees in other countries, and resulted in many Palestinian deaths. Thus, the Israeli state was and continues to be a primary source of structural, symbolic, physical, and militaristic violence for Palestinians. Palestinians therefore refer to the creation of Israel as *al-Nakba*, the catastrophe.

While the army has constituted the core of the Israeli collectivity, the Palestinians' dream became the hope of returning to the Land of Palestine and reuniting the scattered families. Counterposed hopes and dreams are at the core of the current tension. Israel is further militarising its power while the Palestinians are building resistance movements such as the one apparent after the first and second Intifadas.

The Palestinians who managed to remain in their homes in 1948, whom we refer to as Palestinian Israelis, needed to carry the pain of their *Nakba* and loss, but also to survive in the Jewish state. The militarisation of Israeli culture, economy and social life and the advancement of the defence industry affected their economic, legal and social life. They were restricted in their movements, suffered from the jurisdiction of a military administration from 1948 until 1966 (Kretzmer, 1990), do not receive equitable resources, budgets and services (for example, in education, welfare and health care), and their ownership of property is subject to state scrutiny and confiscation (Rabinowitz *et al.*, 2002). Despite the fact that since 1966, Palestinian citizens in Israel were governed exclusively by Israeli civil law, the fact that they have also been subjected to inequality and discrimination becomes readily apparent when comparing them with their Jewish Israeli counterparts (for an in-depth discussion, see Lustick, 1980; Rabinowitz *et al.*, 2002). Adelman (2003) concludes,

Jewish Israelis tend to be suspicious of the Arab sector's loyalty to the state: Arabs cannot be trusted, it is said, to look out for the best interests of Jews. This is based, in part, on Arabs' familial, social, economic and political links with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and fear that

Palestinians in Israel will turn on the state by enacting or facilitating terrorism. (p. 1128)

This situation has resulted in the marginalisation of Palestinians within the Israeli state, as well as their discriminatory treatment by central state and social institutions (for more details see al-Haj, 1995; Ghanem, 2001; Zureik, 1979).

Living in a militarised society as an indigenous ethnic minority group generally affects violence against women. Violence against Palestinian women in Israel is especially affected since these women are part of the group that is perceived as 'threatening state security'.

Policing Violence Against Palestinian Women in Israel

To analyse the policing of violence against Palestinian women in Israel, it is necessary to understand the historical and political background affecting the relation between the state of Israel and its Palestinian citizens. It is also necessary to analyse closely the characteristics of the Arab/Palestinian family and society.

As shown above, the continued violence, conflict and mistrust between the Israeli state and the indigenous Palestinians have created a very tense atmosphere, and in this context the law and its enforcement system have become agents of state oppression. This was clearly seen in October 2002 when 13 Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel were shot and killed by the police force (for more details see the Or Report, August, 2003, at http://or.barak.net.il/inside_index.htm). The tense political situation has turned the police into a militarised/central state security apparatus mobilised to provide security, despite the existence of a strong military power.

This animosity has situated the Israeli police in a paradoxical context, which exerts conflicting expectations upon it — between serving the state and its democratic values, on the one hand, and protecting, serving and securing vulnerable individual citizens (including abused Palestinian citizens), on the other. This complexity is disavowed by social control agents when dealing with violence against individual Palestinian women, for they stress their 'objectivity' and ability to react to such violence according to the Israeli law.

As for the existing legal response to violence against women, despite the passage of the Law for the Prevention of Violence in the Family (1991), the law enforcement response to violence against women in general, and violence against Palestinian women in particular, has been limited and de-historicised (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2000). Agencies of social control have not looked at the legacy, history and context surrounding violence against women, but have rather imported Western models of intervention that cannot be blindly applied to the various ethnic groups in Israel. Moreover, the increase in reporting violence against women, the increased number of arrests, the changes in police policy and the difficulties and dangers in calling the police all remained unexplored (Adelman *et al.*, 2003; Erez and Shalhoub-Kevorkian, forthcoming; Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Erez, 2003).

The role and reactions of the police are further complicated when they interact with a Palestinian/Arab cultural background, based on the principles of collectivity, tribalism and social homogeneity (Dwairy, 1998; Sharabi, 1975). In the collective Palestinian society, the social order is hierarchical, patriarchal and fixed, and individuals must adhere to the directions given by those with higher standing on the social scale (Sharabi, 1975). These traditional patriarchal elements emphasise the importance of customs and tradition, while maintaining stability and harmony in the hierarchy of social relations (extended and nuclear) (Barakat, 1985). Juxtaposing this collectivist culture with the legacy of the political history in Israel/Palestine affects how Israeli police react to violence against Palestinian Israeli women.

Hence, despite the economic and political changes that have occurred in the Palestinian Israeli family, the family is still considered the central unit in economic, social and religious spheres of life and a source of support, unity and cohesion that can support the individual socially, economically and politically. It plays a crucial role in providing assistance and services (such as mutual support in child rearing, mutual protection, financial support and employment) that in modern states are to be provided by formal social agencies. Family members are expected to be committed to the importance and value of the family's reputation, protection, and unity, and this may require putting aside their own personal, needs, aspirations and desires. This is especially true for women who are expected to protect their family's 'reputation and honour', and for mothers whose happiness should be solely determined by their children's happiness, growth and success. Thus a woman's success or failure in marriage, child rearing, personal behaviour and life choices is considered as the failure or success of the family.

Women who are victims of violence may receive support from their families, but they may also be blamed for their victimisation and may be perceived as blackening the family's reputation and as allowing scorn to be heaped upon their families (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2000). This tendency to blame the abused woman or to demand the sacrifice of her life for the sake of her children prevents women from seeking protection, shelter or support both within and outside their family. Fear of disclosing abuse is aggravated when the state, the only source from which help can be sought, is considered politically problematic and is not trusted by members of the society. This situation clearly traps Palestinian women and girls, for while they are aware that their families are expected to help, protect and support them, they also know that if they need to seek outside help and disclose their abuse to state officials, they may be ostracised and banned from their society. Although such fear may increase the vulnerability, frustration and helplessness of Arab women and children, it also provides an easy way out for official service providers (including the police), allowing them to absolve themselves of their legal responsibility and abstain from helping women.

The combination of a collectivist orientation, patriarchal social structure and values, and the previously sketched political complexity and militarised context has placed Palestinian Israeli women in a particularly difficult predicament. Because many communities consider abuse of women as part of the private sphere of life (Okin, 1998), there is a preference for community input in

finding acceptable solutions in policing violence against women. Informal intervention is also a preferred way of addressing the abuse, as it serves the interests of all parties concerned — the perpetrator, the families of both perpetrator and victim, their community, and the police. The victim, however, is often excluded from the negotiations on her behalf (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2000; Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Erez, 2002).

It is also apparent that the militarisation of the police as a state organisation has added more complexity to the already very complicated context. The militarised masculinity that focuses on dominance, violence and control causes a rejection of any feminisation of socio-political responses (Stiehm, 1989). Thus, to analyse the effect of the militarised context on policing violence against Palestinian women in Israel, I address the following issues: (1) how the police use militarised ideas to react to violence against women; (2) how such militarisation affects the victims and the victimisers; (3) how militaristic policing silences women; and (4) how militarism creates a context of ethnically discriminatory and racist policing.

Methodology

The data presented here are part of a larger project in which police officers ($n = 375$), both Jews and Palestinian Arabs, who work in the central and northern parts of Israel and in East Jerusalem (areas in which large Arab populations reside) were surveyed about various policing concerns and practices (the data were collected between 1998 and the summer of 2000). The questionnaire administered to officers addressed the enforcement of all crimes, including domestic violence calls. It inquired about police priorities, ranking of crimes in terms of their level of harm, and officers' views on policing violence against women or the best practices in handling complaints in the Arab and Jewish communities in Israel. Of the 375 police who responded to the survey, 60 officers (7 Arabs; 53 Jews) were randomly selected for in-depth interviews. The interview schedule included more detailed questions about their views on the best policing practices in responding to various crimes, and vignettes describing various cases of violence against women commonly occurring in Israeli society, in both Arab and Jewish communities (see also Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Erez, 2002; Erez and Shalhoub-Kevorkian, forthcoming). The names of the victims in the vignettes were interchangeably marked as either Jewish or Arab. The officers interviewed, like all police officers, enforce domestic violence laws that apply to all citizens of Israel, whether Jewish or Arab.

In analysing the data I acknowledge my positionality (Abu-Lughod, 1990) and remind the readers to consider my standpoint (see Gelsthorpe, 1990; Cain, 1990). The investigation and the analyses were conducted through my own eyes and the responses and narratives were subjected to my own interpretations. However, as Miller, quoting Dubois (1983) suggests, a rejection of the notion of 'objectivity' does not mean a rejection of the concern for being accurate (Miller, 1999, p. 237).

Results

The Police Identity — How Police Officers Relate to Policing the Abuse of Women

The responses of the police officers highlighted the dilemma in which police officers find themselves when responding to violence against women in the Palestinian Arab community. They revealed how police used ethnic identity, cultural stereotypes, and political beliefs to shape their responses to abuses inflicted upon women. In addition, the data underlined the tensions inherent in attempts to uniformly implement police policy in responding to violence against women in a patriarchal Palestinian/Arab community and a highly volatile political atmosphere.

Rank, position or professional specialties did not significantly affect the police officers' responses. Rather, their answers reveal a uniformity of perception that appears to have developed out of a historical and national context. These perceptions lock the officers into binary oppositions of victim/victimiser and domination/resistance, frequently causing concerns or fears that, in turn, evoke a response of control/protect/subdue. Counterposed to the generally uniform police response is the Palestinian Israeli community to which this policing is applied, a community characterised by internal plurality, heterogeneity and diversity.

The officers' views on how to police abuses inflicted upon female Palestinian citizens of Israel homogenise and standardise these women through their underlying assumptions about the 'other' and use 'national security', 'culture', 'religion', and/or 'gender' to support this standardisation. For example, in addressing police priorities in responding to various crimes, an officer in charge of a detective unit stated,

Dealing with crimes that are related to the political situation is our main role and has priority. Everything else can wait — less domestic violence, more battered women or more drugs ... this is all irrelevant ...

An Arab police officer stated,

The problem is that policing in Israel is not policing in Europe; here we need to be alert all day long, we need to check every car that we suspect, every man that we think might threaten social stability ... In Israel we rely on social institutions to solve abuses against women ... and we only deal with serious cases ... policing is learning how to prioritise and delegate responsibilities ... our rules and orders are very clear ... and we do prevent crimes against women ... otherwise you would find a much higher rate of women murdered ... but first comes first.

A senior female investigator commented,

The fact that our national security issue is of main concern is a given ... we live in a very crazy area, no area is as crazy as the Middle East. Yet, prioritising our work shouldn't happen ... we ought to take care of all problems and address all kind of crimes. I would say that only in the Jewish populated areas we should have more personnel to deal

with national security issues, and more police patrol cars ... because the bombing only takes place in Jewish areas ... Their (Arabs') areas are safe ... they actually do not need us as much ... their culture helps them to protect themselves.

Asked if the resources allocated to the abused Arab woman in Israel are similar to those allocated to their Jewish counterparts, this woman officer answered,

I am not sure about that ... maybe in our side we refuse to allow men to hit or abuse women, and therefore we give more police services to Jewish women ... and we also train more people ... it is harder in their side, their community does not ask for more attention and services in this issue ... unless they are willing to learn from us.

The Jewish police officers repeatedly related to the 'Jewish side' as 'our side' and to the Palestinian Arabs as the 'other side'. Situating 'them' and 'us' in a militaristic, war-related manner not only militarises the police's perception but also their analytical frame of reference. This tendency to see Palestinians in Israel as belonging to the other (negative) side was further expressed by almost half the respondents (26 out of 60), who explicitly or implicitly claimed that only if the 'other side is willing to learn', 'is willing to change', 'is able to challenge their culture' or 'could be less affected by the Islamist fundamentalism', can the plight of Palestinian Israeli women be improved. One female police officer who has worked in the police force for over fourteen years told us,

Although, in Israel the security problem is our main concern, yet in Arab-populated areas the police don't worry about security issues, therefore they invest more in domestic and local affairs ... the problem is not national security, but the Arab's primitive way of looking at women ... and their refusal to cooperate with the police if and when violence against women is discussed.

The ways in which the Palestinian population is categorised, classified and labelled tend to affect the methods of analysing violence against women and responding to them. This is indicated by the statement of one police officer:

The issue of internal security is very important ... and cases of violence against women are not that important ... Take for example the case of a woman from the Arab village who calls while crying and screaming for our help. When we reach her, she changes her mind, and refuses to cooperate ... Do you think I would leave an internal security problem, to deal with a primitive woman like that?

Although most officers, whether Arab or Jewish, used various rationalisations for their lack of intervention in incidents of violence against Palestinian Israeli women, Arab police officers more often stressed the obligation of the abused women to defend their respective communities and blamed female victims for their abuse. Anger towards women who appeal to the police for help is very apparent in the following statement of one officer:

Some women come to the police to file a complaint ... but it is all a game ... a show ... the woman makes me feel so angry ... for she is doing a disservice to the Arab sector ... Arab society offers [a] million ways of helping abused women ... the police should take care of more important crimes ... mainly problems of internal security.

Finally, both Jewish and Arab police officers revealed a consistent pattern of negligence in helping abused Arab/Palestinian women by claiming a willingness to help, but stating that a lack of time and the priority of the security issue did not permit it.

In summary, police officers justify their reluctance to address female Arab/Palestinian victims of abuse by pleading lack of time, the overriding need to defend their respective communities, and blaming the victims themselves. In addition, Jewish police officers frequently rationalised their unwillingness to help abused Palestinian women by politicising and/or culturalising their responses. The politicised responses ranged from invocations of the priority of working on 'threats to national security' to the claim (made by three respondents) that 'they [Palestinians/Arabs] do not deserve our energy ... let them solve their own problems'. Responses were culturalised by perceiving gender abuse as an Arab cultural value, thus marking it as 'their culture' or by derogating the Palestinian/Arab community through calling it primitive.

Arab police officers chose additional ways of justifying their responses. Over half of them (four respondents) raised more concerns about Israeli security than Jewish officers, which could reflect their fear of being considered unfaithful to the police's militaristic values, a mode of survival as an ethnic minority in the police force. Given both their internalisation of the dominant, 'acceptable values' and their need to act as 'protectors of the patriarchal Arab culture', they refused to make abuses against women a public issue. Whatever the explanation for such reactions and perceptions, the Arab police respondents repeatedly used terms such as 'terrorist bombing attacks', 'locating and arresting terrorists', 'disturbances of the peace', 'internal security', 'emergency calls' or 'emergency conditions'. Despite the small number of the respondents, I believe that their political, cultural or gender biased justifications indicate the need for further study of the socio-political context and its influence on the police's perception and behaviour. It also raises the question of the effect of the militaristic context of Israeli-Arab relations in regard to the correlation between the police officers' responses and their ethnic identities. The question remains, do militaristic values become so internalised that they become invisible within the system, strategies and structures of the various social control agents?

Militarised and Racist Police Reaction to the Ethnic Identity of the Victim and the Offender

To analyse our data, my co-researchers and I first attempted to group the responses to identify models of responses to violence against women that could be applied to most incidents, regardless of the severity of the abuse or the ethnic background of the victim. We identified some basic outlooks that elicit

different ways of reaching what is, in the end, the same discriminatory response.

Police respondents used ethnic and cultural justifications to nullify and neutralise the importance of dealing with abuses inflicted upon women. They also used religious, economic, and even theoretical explanations to neutralise their responsibility for intervening and/or helping abused women.

This process is illustrated by interviewees' comments on a vignette about a young woman who, weeping, addressed the police, explaining that her husband had torn up her books to prevent her from continuing her education. Over three quarters of the respondents tended to indicate that the police should help if the victim was a Jewish woman, while the opposite was found when an Arab name was used.

The discrepancy between the responses decreased when respondents were given additional case-studies using the same technique of changing the name and ethnicity of the female victim (Palestinian vs Jewish). The worse the abuse, the less difference there was in police officers' readiness to respond based on the ethnic identity of the victim. This was at least in part due to the fact that the officers were more willing to address the more severe cases (i.e., physical abuse, rape, femicide). However, discrepancies correlated with the ethnicity of the victim remained in the way they reacted to the cases. This is illustrated by the reactions to the following vignette.

Shira/Samira called the police to ask for protection from her husband, who was holding a knife and was about to kill her. The police reached the crime scene and found that, in full view of the entire family, the husband had already stabbed his wife, inflicting a serious cut on her arm. When the police decided to arrest the husband, the family members intervened, and promised and committed themselves to take care of the wife and her family. After this vignette, the respondents were asked, 'If you had come in the patrol car, would you leave him, arrest him or take other actions?'

When the victim was an Arab woman (Samira), the respondents' responses fell into four major categories:

1. Allowing the family to take responsibility for and deal with the case themselves (more than half).
2. Five respondents said they would have arrested the whole family for wasting the police's time (an answer that was not given when the victim had a Jewish name).
3. Arresting the husband with the option of releasing him on bail (almost one third), keeping him until the trial, or discussing the subject with welfare agencies.
4. Talking to the family, staying for a while and trying to calm them down, and then leaving the place.

This willingness to discuss the case with the family, blame the victim or 'solve the problem' in a more 'culturally-sensitive manner' warrants serious inquiry regarding who classifies what is criminal and what is normal or deviant in terms of women's behaviour and others' attitudes towards them.

When the female victim was Jewish (named Shira), responses were characterised by unilateral reaction, equally divided between three options:

1. Arresting the husband and sending the woman to a shelter for abused women.
2. Arresting the husband and calling the welfare department to help in deciding on the next step.
3. Arresting the husband and opening a criminal case against him while consulting with prosecutors.

Further discriminatory responses were given in the vignette of a raped minor brought unconscious to the police station. When the victim was called Rifka (a Jewish name), police officers were not willing to use their discretionary power; they stated that rape is rape, and one should deal with it as such. Yet when the raped girl was called Manal (an Arab name), 15 respondents asked questions such as whether 'she wanted to sleep with the guy and then fainted' or whether 'she agreed to sleep with him and then realised that her family would kill her for "staining family honour" so she pretended to be unconscious', and raised many other similar scenarios.

The remaining vignettes showed quite clearly that police officers tend to be more lenient towards offenders when dealing with Arab victims. If the case involves serious physical, sexual, or long-term abuse, the majority of the police officers react more severely, over-criminalising and punishing. One of the most disturbing findings was the language used when relating to a woman/victim or a man/offender with an Arab/Palestinian ethnic background. Only four of the respondents reacted to the cases without any ethnic and/or racist tendencies. In contrast, the vast majority of the police officers used one or more racist concepts to characterise the victim, the offender or their community, ranging from calling them 'primitive', 'backward', or 'stupid', to defining their actions as based on 'their mentality', 'their criminal culture', 'their violent upbringing', 'their primitive minds', 'their backward women', and 'their backward culture'. In conclusion, the broadly accepted racist perceptions inhibit, if not prevent them from fulfilling their protective and policing duties.

'The Other Side' — Policing in Terms of Security Considerations

The officers' responses showed the tendency of the police to create a meta-narrative that reductively interprets all the complexities of the reality of Arabs/Palestinians in Israel. Respondents revealed an almost pragmatic/rigid position regarding policing in Israel. For example, they were asked, 'The role of the Israeli police differs from that of other police in the world due to the unique political situation ... Do you agree? Explain'. All respondents replied positively, explaining that the police's main concern is the security issue. They continued (typical responses from 4 officers),

Unfortunately, Arabs are the ones involved in terrorism and terrorist acts, therefore we need to have a very strict security system that protects us from them.

You should remember that all terrorists are Arabs, although not all Arabs are terrorists ... but we need to keep an eye on them.

Most terrorists come from Arab populated areas ... so we need to be careful with them ... so that you can sleep well at night.

[I]n the areas where Arabs and Jews live together ... one needs to be very careful ... these are the areas where there is a much greater likelihood of conflicts and fights, we need to protect our community.

Can the Israeli police protect this 'other' Arab community when their attitude towards it is as revealed below by officers' responses to 'Potential Terrorist'? The majority of the responses in this category were in the same vein as the answers given above, but they are sometimes phrased in more 'politically correct' or indirect language:

The police ought to address all kind of crimes, including political crime ... Terrorism affects Arab and Jewish citizens in the same manner.

Israeli police ought to address all the needs of all its citizens in an equal manner ... Of course ... dealing with the Arabs is also a security police issue.

The police's role is to prevent any violation of the law of the State of Israel. Of course dealing with Arabs is something that we are mostly trained for.

This last quote clearly shows that the police are trained as a military force for securing the state against 'terrorists'. Moreover, such responses show us that the officers interviewed in all the areas studied produced a 'unitary subject' or a 'singular formation' in their perceptions of Palestinians/Arabs. While some of the explanations and justifications given may fit a few, very specific incidents, I question whether or not that is sufficient justification for creating a meta-theory that interprets all the actions and behaviours of all the Palestinians in Israel. This is especially critical if one remembers that the data presented here was collected before the onset of the second Intifada, that is, during a period of intensive peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The framework created by this type of meta-theory makes it extremely difficult to speak of any fundamental differences within particular nationalist and ethnically discriminatory formations. One is forced to borrow at least a large part of the vocabularies, meanings and police ideology from this meta-theory. And this meta-theory, as we learn from the following sections, affects all aspects, reactions and pro-actions of policing.

Politics within Policing

In classifying the officers' ideas from the 60 in-depth interviews about the best approaches to handling violence against Palestinian women in Israel, although several response models emerged, it was difficult to categorise respondents

exclusively according to one model or another, because the many of the officers adopted several approaches or moved from one method of analysis to another, depending on the vignette. For example, when discussing the issue of responding to violence against Arab/Palestinian women in the abstract, they tended to think about the policy wording, to be less judgmental, to raise fewer stereotypical beliefs, and to suggest solutions based on the official policy of the police. However, in dealing with the concrete situations portrayed in the vignettes, their responses clearly showed political influence, cultural bias, neutralisation of responsibility, overreaction to or lack of concern for the gender issues, as well as a tendency to give psychological interpretations. The various modes in which the officers reacted to abused women and the way in which their responses changed all potentially further victimise the victim.

The National Security Priority Model

Despite the existence of various approaches, my co-researchers and I found one model shaping the overwhelming majority of the officers' responses to violence against women, which we termed the 'national security priority model'. The most salient element in respondents' reactions to policing crimes was their fear of and anxiety about 'security threats'. This is clearly reflected in the following response by one of the criminal investigators:

When we learn that a suicide bomber is planning to attack or that we need to prevent a terrorist attack, we stop thinking or functioning. I can tell you this because it happened to me two weeks ago when I learned that someone was planning to blow himself up in the area where my parents live ... so you think I was able to work, help raped women, or address other issues ... all I had on my mind was preventing such a terrorist attack from happening ... I needed to make sure that my parents were safe ...

The officers noted that they are continually concerned about the possibility of bombings and nationalistic attacks. They are exposed to warnings about security risks on a daily basis, and this, together with the reality of past attacks, inevitably reduces the significance of all other crimes.

Gender crimes seem to be especially affected, resulting in police not really viewing abused women as victims. For example, one officer stated, 'She is not a victim ... and we have security problems to deal with'. In contrast, male offenders, particularly Arab men who resemble 'terrorists', are either ignored by officers who fail to address the violence or suffer harsher treatment by the police. One officer commented, 'He [the batterer] should be imprisoned ... one less terrorist on the street ... of course I mean domestic terrorist ... Who needs a terrorist at home?'

Respondents continuously raised security concerns with comments like the following: 'we have security issues, and our nation is at stake ... liberating Arab women is not our role'; 'We should protect her, and she ends up with the help of the Islamic movement threatening the whole nation?' One officer noted,

'I can't bear to hear them speaking Arabic ... I don't understand this language ... and then I should protect her from him ... how absurd!'

Respondents also raised issues of their own safety as one of their difficulties in dealing with Arabs: 'Sometimes I fear going to their neighbourhoods ... it is risky these days'. Or: 'I am not sure whether it will be safe to enter their villages ... maybe it is an ambush ... it happened to some police officers ... they were Arab police officers and they ended up being beaten'.

The National Security Priority Model dominated the responses, with the security issue emerging as a primary concern and overshadowing all other considerations. Once our respondents felt that they could safely turn their attention to other crimes without concerning themselves with 'national security disturbances or worries', they gave their ideas about the best practices for addressing abuse of women. The responses to the vignettes uncover three additional models of reactions to violence against women in the Arab/Palestinian community.

The Inaction/Futility Model

(27 respondents followed this approach, although five of them may also be classified as following the model below. Of the 27, 21 were working on police patrols.)

In this model, responding to violence against Arab women is considered futile because of Arab cultural inferiority, and police are better off not reacting to calls for help in the Arab community. These respondents often wrote gender biased, sexist, classist, or ethnically discriminatory phrases and employed this model to neutralise their responsibility toward the victims. For example:

So what if she is a Druze woman, all women are equal in the eyes of the police — and her family will never count — if they end up killing her ... it is their mentality problem ... I will do my job as requested in the book.

Some officers made comments such as, 'The woman's looks could tell a lot about her credibility' or 'Her way of talking ... barely able to speak Hebrew ... tells you that she is primitive'. Some officers stated, 'Villagers can barely survive economically. Village women are less likely to take action, so why waste time?', or 'Women always take advantage of their situations, scream and cry and make a game ...' These responses were anchored in gender and ethnic insensitivity, which at times led to open expression of disgust towards Arab victims or offenders that justified police inaction in responding to calls for help.

The 'Culturally-Sensitive' Model

(This group was comprised 29 officers, including 5 patrol officers also included in the first model, an additional 12 patrol officers, 11 investigators and one officer whose work assignment was unknown.)

This model is employed by officers when they use 'culture' to act out their prejudices about the Palestinian Israeli population. They exhibited tendencies to re-victimise women victims or over-criminalise men/offenders who addressed the police (see also Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2000). In most cases, the respondents in this group used the discourse of 'cultural sensitivity' to neutralise their responsibility and to justify a non-interventionist approach. In doing so, they either referred the victims to 'culturally' acceptable authorities (such as tribal heads or *Mukhtars*, family or village members, religious personnel) or returned abused women to their abusive families or contexts. Respondents' neutralisation of responsibility was phrased in a stereotypical and labelling/stigmatising way: 'It is better to give the abused woman to her father ... they know how to deal with each other'. 'In Druze villages men have weapons ... because they serve in the (Israeli) army ... it is better for us to stay away from internal men/women issues'. 'How would I know what kind of rituals they will come up with ... they talk about *Sullhot* (tribal reconciliation meetings), they bring *J'ahoot* (from Jaha, respectable persons); they cook for each other while fighting with each other ... such a weird culture'.

The Contextually-Sensitive Model

(This model was followed by seven officers, in addition to two who did not filter their perceptions through the national security model like the rest of the 58 respondents. Two of the nine were patrol policemen, five were investigators; the functions of the remainder were unknown.)

These police officers reacted in a contextually-sensitive manner, for they were willing to take all factors into consideration and weigh the effect of each reaction. They discussed the victim's needs, the police's formal policy, and Israeli law; in addition, they searched for and activated various resources they believed could assist the victims. These respondents stated clearly the need to combine the police's work with the legal system, the welfare system, and community support. Even though these officers were willing to examine the context from which each woman came, they were not willing to jeopardise her rights by invoking her 'culture'.

One respondent shared with us the case of a victim who was physically abused but did not have a medical report. Her husband was a well-known social figure and after filing her complaint, she feared pursuing it. The police officer took the initiative of using the contextual factor that the husband was a well-known figure and ordered him to report to the police regularly for six months. At the same time, the officer asked a social welfare worker to stay in touch with the victim and report to the police. The police officer's seriousness in reacting and willingness to construct a compromise that was both acceptable to the victim and in accordance with the official police rules and instructions helped reduce the violence.

Numerous examples such as this were described, and demonstrate that the police can help, if they are willing to listen to the victim's pain and to use existing social and legal resources to construct suitable and flexible solutions.

Discussion

Structural, institutional and strategic activities are inevitably bound up with the matrix of power. Thus, the role of researchers is to illuminate the disguised, embedded structures of power and privilege, while at the same time speaking truth to power. When studying relationships between the powerful and the powerless, as this study shows, one must be aware of the lethal power of constructing the 'subordinate other' in a way that legitimises hegemonic claims to the superior civilisation of the 'dominant self'. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said showed how the powerful have the essentialist power and reductive knowledge that define the other, especially the vulnerable other, by cultural and media-coded images and ideas that validate the violent operations of the rich and powerful. He urged writers and readers to pay 'attention to details, critical differentiation, discrimination, and distinction', hoping that such a new discipline of inquiry would produce 'a somewhat elusive oppositional mood', which in the course of time may emerge as 'an internationalist counter-articulation' (p. 311).

Contextualising Policing Violence Against Women in Conflict Areas

Strategies, perceptions, and methods of policing are not neutral, but are affected by the historical context and political factors. These shape police officers' understanding of risk and their responses to serving indigenous ethnic minority groups, such as the Palestinian Israelis discussed here. Inquiries that do not consider the socio-political and historical context of policing, including the management of power and authority in the society, are bound to provide only a partial picture and hinder our understanding of policing.

Militarism and racism are two contexts in which individuals (mostly men) adopt and adapt policies to put down, coerce and control the 'other'. When representatives of official/state agencies rely on military-based knowledge or authority in their reactions to violence against Palestinian Israeli women, they not only deny abused women their right to assistance and protection, but actually harm them. We see this when police officers shame women asking for help and force them to stay with abusive men as part of their supposed cultural, political or religious duty. Their deployment of militarised and racist political values and conditions actually endanger women victims (McWilliams, 1998).

Our case study showed that the intersectionality of security concerns, gender and ethnic context and the creation of a negative relationship between the police and an ethnic minority is usually associated with particular ideas about ethnic or race groups, as well as fundamental ideas regarding police control, including prevention of criminality (see, e.g., Holdaway, 2003). Our main concern is: how are ethnic minorities actually policed within the context of political conflict against same ethnic group?

Defining the role of police in society has never been an easy task. The police perform many functions, react to diverse audiences and serve the interests of various constituencies. They also need to comply with a range of formal and

informal, official and unofficial dictates. There is a consensus, however, that the police are first and foremost agents of the state. They represent the coercive power of the state and serve the state's interests. In doing so, they have considerable discretionary power that can be misused and even abused.

Police work is based on understanding risk and constitutes police perceptions of how to reduce risk factors (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997). The significance of risk in contemporary society (see also Beck, 1992) renders police work primarily a response to institutional demands for knowledge regarding risk, rather than a mere intervention in the lives of citizens. It is therefore necessary to understand exactly how external institutions affect the role and structure of police activities and its construction of knowledge or meaning. The 'truth' or 'reality', according to this line of thinking, is determined not by an individual officer, but rather by the values, stereotypes and classification schemes as they are framed by these institutions. Policing, according to Ericson and Haggerty (1997), is invested in wider patterns of surveillance to help monitor and reduce risk; the epistemology of policing is determined by the use of such information and computer-based communications. The dominant classification scheme shapes and moulds the way officers understand incidents, although at times risk logic may not have a direct or visible impact on a particular officer's actions.

Policing in conflict areas, according to this framework, is highly problematic, because risk is perceived according to classification schemes drawn along national and cultural/ethnic lines. For example, the discriminatory use of stop-and-search powers was one of the significant causes of the Brixton disturbances between blacks and the British police. Holdaway (2003) stated,

This legal power, which could be used to effect as a crime control strategy, has been found by research to lead to consistent discrimination against ethnic minorities and formed means through which negative ideas about ethnic minorities have been expressed. (p. 55)

The prevailing police logic, as reflected in most of our interview data, contends that because the state is in danger, the police need to pay increased attention to any risks to its existence, control such risks, and carefully evaluate 'permissible' or 'acceptable' dangers. The data highlight the views of officers in the field and how they interact with other societal and political institutions. However, our study still leaves us uncertain as to how to understand comprehensively the role of the police in a society in conflict, such as the Palestinian-Israeli one, and uncertain as to how an Israeli police officer could serve the 'other'. The different approaches found here — decriminalising the abuser while culturalising the behaviour of the victim and offender, or over-policing the offender while de-culturalising his violent behaviour — reflect their confusion, to say the least.

Added to this confusion is that the emphasis on individual rights linked to the culture of individualism helps police officers analyse violent incidents as deviant behaviour in the dominant culture. However, this analysis may change when police learn about the ethnic background of the offender or victim. This is less surprising given that Israeli laws discriminate against the state's indige-

nous Palestinian citizens (Kretzmer, 1990). Thus, the declared liberal celebration of individual rights has been suppressed by a more 'communitarian' trend (Kelling and Coles, 1996) that perceives Palestinian citizens either as 'non-cases' that should not be addressed, hopeless cases that suffer from 'primitivity and backwardness', or as 'national security threats' that should be feared, punished, humiliated or ostracised.

When the policing of a political minority/indigenous ethnic group starts with discriminatory values and ends with racist militaristic ones, it becomes hard to heap all the blame on the individual police officer, or to even to identify a sound basis within the police force for policing violence against minority women. In many cases, the tendencies of the respondents in this study to individualise, culturalise or politicise explanations of violence against women are clearly reflections of confused policing.

In closing, it is vital to stress that the various examples given by the officers showed the inhumanity of social control institutions including the police (for example when the police sent a young, abused girl back to her abusive parents, or a rape victim back to her family despite her fears), making the streets a more acceptable alternative for women who are victims of violence. This sad finding raises the urgent need to address and respond to the states of confusion, racism and militarism that affect policing in areas of political conflict.

Conclusion

The current study shows that the personal is political and cannot be excluded from the field of knowledge. The personal and political legacy and resulting perception of police officers of Arab/Palestinian women cannot be separated from the context of policing, the method of constructing women's identities in Israeli and Palestinian society, the politics of representation of the Palestinian society generally and particularly with respect to the tense political conflict. A further complication, based upon concerns about the Israeli state's 'national security', further prevents utilising 'objectivity' as a mode of inquiry.

Policing, as Herbert (2000) claims, is caught within two principal contradictions. One lies between coercion and consent; the other between the desire to meet the particular needs of the individual citizen and the conflicting institutional demand to treat all equally under the law. Herbert states,

Officers are inescapably agents of the state whose foundational coercive powers must always be balanced against the need to extract legitimate consent from the governed. (Herbert, 2000, p. 118)

This study goes one step further and adds the dilemmas facing policing the 'other' in conflict areas; that is, it examines the tension between the police's just treatment of an abused woman and the police's national/state-orientated commitment to safeguard the state exercised by excluding, neutralising, culturalising and/or punishing the 'enemy/other'.

During wartime, the concurrent rise of nationalism and militarisation increase institutionalised attempts to revive patriarchal social forms and relations that place women at an increased risk of violence (see Enloe, 2000). The

events in the former Yugoslavia show that when nationalism and militarisation are heightened, the nexus of gender and ethnicity becomes significant and deadly (Albanese, 2001). Many have argued that September 11 raised the importance of the discussion on the role of the (state) police during times of 'national hardship' or 'national security threats'. One of the primary questions is the role of the police in such times, mainly the issue of 'how' policing is implemented — is state or police violence (either visible or invisible) 'acceptable' when it addresses the 'others' or the 'potential enemy'?

This question makes us stop to reflect on how the word 'violent' has been invoked in the media and how massive police and even military forces of containment have been mobilised every time there has been a 'security threat'. When the whole world witnesses passenger airplanes being deployed to destroy office towers in New York and military airplanes being deployed to rain bombs on villages in Afghanistan, and when 13 Palestinian Israeli citizens were killed by excessive police force, one ponders how social/political institutions, including the police, decide what is 'acceptable violence' and what is 'intolerable violence or terror'. Moreover, what happens when such institutions justify their use of violence to control and prevent the 'intolerable violence or terror' of the 'other'? How can such agencies be a source of redress for vulnerable and abused groups — if at all?

Social institutions, including the police and the criminal justice system as a whole, are expected to function in conflict areas or during civil strife, in spite of a long history of political conflict. Can such institutions function 'normally'? Can they deny the effects, values and power of the conflicted context? We see that under such circumstances, the context emerges as an influential factor in determining 'objectivity'. The situation is further complicated when one addresses the criminal justice system's reaction to violence against the 'other' woman. In the current study, this 'other' woman belongs to an indigenous, ethnic and political group — Palestinian Arabs — that is considered a 'national threat' to the state.

The study of the role, functions and expectations of policing during national crises, times of war, civil strife, or in conflict-ridden areas may challenge research based on a narrow conceptualisation of violence against women. Policing, as we have learned, may be easily mobilised to serve political, patriarchal and socio-cultural hegemonic interests and can be transformed into a vehicle that further abuses and endangers women. This is of particular concern to communities suffering from external political oppression and internal patriarchal control. It is critical to address both women's vulnerability in such marginalised groups, and racism, militarism and discrimination in the state's institutions. A greater understanding can configure how societies witness and experience, explain or deny, de-militarise and ethnically sensitise, and challenge or increase abuses inflicted upon women.

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