

Perceptions of the 'Proper Family' in Palestinian-Arab Society in Israel as Reflected in Family Members' Drawings

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Abstract: Family lives in Palestinian-Arab society in Israel have undergone considerable changes in recent decades. These changes have made it difficult to understand what is meant by *family* in everyday life. The aim of the present study is to examine the differences in the perception of the family and the image of “a proper family” through drawings created by Palestinian-Arab women and men in Israel (n=106). This can be analyzed as a prism of discussion regarding how people identify what is expected of families. It also raises the question of “family boundaries” in contemporary Palestinian-Arab society in Israel and what is recognized as family relationships. The drawings’ analysis included a set of questions regarding both the content—the theme of the drawing, main situations, characters, and symbols—and the forms, composition, and colors used. Reading the drawings visually illuminated various perceptions of a family as expressed by the participants. This visual content analysis enhances sociological comprehension about the desirable family life in light of gender relationships, family size, and domestic everyday practices which negotiate the global and the local.

Keywords: Palestinian-Arab family, family members, doing family, visual content-analysis.

Family lives in Palestinian-Arab society in Israel have undergone considerable changes in the recent decade, that is, an increase in marriage age, a decrease in fertility rates, and an increase in education rates and women working outside the home (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2017; Meler, 2017; Sa'ar, 2020; Sabbah-Karkaby, 2020). Although the family is still a dominant social institution in Palestinian-Arab society in Israel, marriage and fertility patterns are changing (Sabbah-Karkaby & Stier, 2017; Zoabi & Anson, 2017). These changes in the family pattern and their implications on women’s opportunities are not detached from trends both in Israeli society and in other Western societies (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2020; Ruspini, 2015). Simultaneously, over recent decades we have also observed a complex array of changes and continuity in family and private life (Lück & Ruckdeschel, 2018).

Analyzing the change in the Palestinian-Arab family in comparison to other European societies has made it difficult and even impossible to grasp what ‘family’ means in their everyday life by an objective, pre-defined set of criteria (Lück & Castrén, 2018). The aim of the present study is to examine the various voices of the ‘proper family’ perceptions as they are expressed through drawings done by Palestinian-Arab women and men in Israel. Through this examination, we highlight individuals’ subjective cultural concepts. In doing so, we apply Roseneil et al.’s (2020) theory dealing with understanding citizenship through the sphere of intimacy. Recent studies have shown the significance of looking carefully at individual family

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trajectories in order to understand practices and perceptions on the micro-level in addition to focusing on policies that shape family structures on the macro level.

Recent studies (Abu-Baker, 2016; Meler, 2017; Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2020; Sa'ar, 2020) have begun to explore variations of family patterns and gender ideology which reflect an in-between situation of the Palestinian-Arab society. Family structures have shown simultaneous trends of conservative patriarchal society together with Western modern patterns characterized the majority of the Israeli society.

Our study follows previous studies (Lüčka & Castrén, 2018) that have shown the importance of empirically describing the specific configurations of the family, as indicated by subjective and cultural concepts in contemporary societies. Intimate life practices and everyday experiences reflect social and cultural relationships. Therefore, there is a special interest in linking the fabric of intimate lives to civil status by focusing on a minority group that has experienced discrimination and exclusion (Smootha, 2019). Our study adopts Roseneil et al.'s (2020) theory while focusing on drawings of the “proper family” of Palestinian-Arabs as an indigenous minority group which reveals this group’s identity in Israel today in a post-colonial civic situation.

Providing the participants with the opportunity of expressing their thoughts and feelings towards the “proper family” we expected to find some ideas which are in line with post-colonial theory. As suggested in previous studies (Abu-Baker, 2016; Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2020; Meler, 2017; Sa'ar, 2020; Sabbah-Karkaby & Stier, 2017), Palestinian-Arab women and men in Israel operate in a binary and stable world in which multiple identities—ePalestinian versus “Israeli, Arab versus Western, traditional versus modern, rural versus urban, patriarchal versus liberal—hence, their life experience can be interpreted as anchored in the fluidity allowed by hybrid spaces. As members of the minority group, they are not only exposed to the mechanisms of inequality and supervision but also challenge communal and family forces and live in a social context that is also affected by educational and employment opportunities (Meler, 2017; Sa'ar, 2020). Moreover, there is value in shedding light on the heterogeneity and contradictions between conceptions, which could add to the understanding of conflicts within societies regarding the “proper” perception of the family (Lück et al., 2015).

The idea of asking people to draw the “proper family” corresponds with Morgan’s (1996) concept of a “doing family.” This concept, according to Zarhin et al., (2022), recasts the sociological understanding of family as a reified structure or institution to which individuals belong, into something that is actively and creatively “done.” In line with Morgan's concept, in the present study, “family practices” refers to 'activities that family members engaged in among themselves and the visual images they create in their drawing which formulate their concept of the “proper family.” By drawing these practices, they affirm, reproduce, and sometimes redefine the image of the idealized family.

The Palestinian-Arab Family in Israel

Palestinian-Arab society in Israel serves as an example of an underprivileged, patriarchal society and a deeply divided national minority (21.1% of the population) within Israeli society (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics [ICBS], 2022a; Smootha, 2019). Family lives in Israel, including the lives of Palestinian-Arabs and those in other post-industrial countries, have undergone considerable changes during recent decades. However, while this group is characterized by a wide range of socio-economic and political characteristics, the socio-cultural aspects are relatively homogenous and more traditional than in Jewish society (Sabbah-Karkaby & Stier, 2017). As an ethno-religious community (Sezgin, 2017), Palestinian-Arab society in Israel has developed its own personal status system and perceptions regarding family practices

stemming from religion-based traditions enforced by the State that, for political and ideological reasons, employ a lack of intervention practices.

Cultural concepts regarding family patterns that are rooted in public opinion stem from cultural and structural constraints. These constraints, which are more restrictive in patriarchal societies, impose gender-based expectations in all life aspects. They also affect gender opportunities and practices, gender division of roles, and gender relations. Special attention is given to family size (number of children) and preference for males over females. Some of these constraints relate to a collectivist ethos centered on the significance of a large family as a power resource that stems from their minority status (Meler, 2017; Sa'ar, 2020; Sabbah-Karkaby & Stier, 2017).

Moreover, Palestinian-Arab society is a unique case study of family life and gender relations. It makes it possible to study the home arena in a society that has undergone important social and economic changes while patriarchal norms still shape the private and public domains. As such, it may broaden our understanding of how socio-economic changes among women and men have the power to alter gender roles, family relationships, and gender inequality (Sabbah-Karkabi, 2021).

The Present Study

The present study focuses on the concept of the “proper family” as reflected through the drawings of individuals of contemporary Palestinian-Arab society in Israel. It examines the meanings of “proper families” by looking at what and who they include in their visual definition of family. This can be analyzed as a prism for the discussion regarding how people identify what is expected of families, how attitudes develop, how desirable family lives are, and how gender relationships are realized. It also raises the question of “family boundaries” in contemporary Palestinian-Arab society in Israel by asking what is recognized as family relationships. This analysis may be an adequate research tool for thick description (Geertz, 1973) and a study of culture that may help to increase the recognition of the diversity of family and household forms and domestic arrangements and of the normative assumptions behind many of the more dominant versions of the family (e.g., Morgan, 2020).

Methodology

This study is based on a multi-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. We proceeded in two stages; firstly, we used questionnaires to identify concepts of the family in society as well as their prevalence, which included aspects concerning personal family background. The questions were concerned with family practices of marriage and birth, education and employment, and detailed questions about partners and children—all of these represent practices with major social and economic implications. The survey was distributed after obtaining the approval of the Ethics Committee of our college. In the second stage, we examined these concepts as represented in the drawings created by the participants. The entire methodological approach was adopted from Lück et al. (2018).

Participants

The sample included 120 Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel, 38 of whom were men (32%) and the rest women (68%). Participants were recruited during 2016-2017 from urban and rural Arab (62.6%) and mixed (37.2%) towns in northern Israel using a snowball sampling method that started simultaneously from several sources through different research assistants. Each such sequence or chain of interviewee recruitment began in one town in an attempt to

guide the recruitment towards diversity in the degree of religiosity, age, occupation, and education. At the end of every meeting, the research assistants asked for a recommendation to meet another friend, so via the snowball method, additional interviewees were located. The mean age of all respondents was 37.19 (42.10 for men, 35.85 for women). Education distribution was similar for men and women: 60% reported having an academic degree, whereas the rest reported elementary or secondary school education. Most were married (87.2% of men and 80.2% of women), and nearly all with children (72.8%).

Research Tools and Data Analysis

In the current article, we focused on the qualitative part of the entire research. In this part, the interviewer provided the participants with six colored pencils and a blank sheet of paper and instructed them as follows: “Please draw your image of what constitutes a ‘proper’ family” (e.g., Lück & Ruckdesche, 2018). Then, 106 participants added a drawing to their questionnaire and these stand at the core of the present article.

The data contained two separate branches: the questionnaire provided both statistical information and the visual one (i.e., the drawings). The questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS software (SPSS IBM V.25.0 2018 release). The statistical data can provide standardized survey information to explain some realistic trends among the participants. The qualitative data, however, captures several crucial aspects of conceptions by individuals, which can be considered a thick description, that is not accessible by any other method (Geertz, 1973).

Visual, non-verbal activity by participants of studies such as the one discussed here enables the freer expression of thought and concepts compared to verbal ones, which can sometimes be experienced as difficult (Piperno et al., 2007). Drawing provided the study with the advantage of offering a means of expression detached from the pattern of questions and answers. It bypassed anxieties and hesitation regarding the state of the study, the requirement to answer something in response to a question, thus giving place to unconscious rather than conscious content (Malchiodi, 2004). Similar to a qualitative-narrative methodology, which seeks to examine life stories in order to formulate meanings related to them (Spector-Mersel, 2010), we treated the drawings as narratives containing different meanings that should be decoded.

The drawings were evaluated and analyzed by the two authors. In the first stage, we examined the prominence of indicators in each drawing. Analyzing them, we first asked ourselves what was drawn and tried to understand what perception of the family was expressed (content) and how it was executed (shapes/forms/colors, composition, and so forth) (e.g., Lück & Ruckdesche, 2018).

In analyzing the drawing, we used visual content analysis (Rose, 2012) containing both a set of questions regarding the images and a set of categories based on thematic observation (Charmaz, 2003). The process began by both authors carefully observing the drawings and thinking of their potential contribution to understanding the research subject matter. In the second stage, the authors discussed the drawings while sorting them according to themes and central motifs which were identified in them. At the third stage, the authors tagged the drawings into divided categories, under primary and secondary headers. A set of questions was established based on both the research query and the drawings: Who were the family members? Who belonged to the family? What were the daily routine practices? What was the meaning of togetherness practices? What could symbolize family ties? (e.g., Morgan 2020).

After the first stage of getting familiar with the drawings, the two authors discussed their observations, comparing their initial comprehension of them as well as their potential interpretations of them to the research query. The authors listed the main characteristics of the drawings and then agreed on several dimensions or codes, which seemed mostly compatible

with the drawings' analysis. Rose (2012, p. 101) stressed that, "if the coding of images is carefully formulated, content analysis can indeed be used to interpret the cultural meaning of images." These codes were found prevalent: technical implementation, location of family members (space– inside/outside), the composition of the family, characteristics of specific family members, relationships between family members, focus, setting, symbols, and verbal text.

In the second stage, following Lück et al. (2018), groups of similar drawings were coded and interpreted together as a category. The concepts expressed in the drawings were analyzed for common patterns and then placed side by side and interpreted together. The analysis of many similar drawings together was taken as slightly stronger evidence for shared cultural perceptions of family in Palestinian-Arab society in Israel.

Findings

The objects shown in the drawings can be divided into four categories:

1. Human figures directly connected to the family (parents, children, pets); indoors/outdoors composition of the family at home (e.g., house, domestic space containing furniture, living room, kitchen, TV) or outdoor spaces (e.g., garden or land near the house or further away, trees, flowers, sun, clouds, birds, car, recreation facilities for children).
2. Alternative family patterns (singles, single mothers, same-sex families).
3. Symbolic objects (heart-shape, circles, hands).
4. Symbolic objects from nature, usually trees sometimes schematic pedigrees.

Table 1

The Four Categories of the Objects

Human figures directly connected to the family – indoors/outdoors	76
Alternative family patterns: Single women or single mothers	7
Symbolic objects	12
Symbolic objects from nature usually trees, sometimes schematic pedigrees	11
Total	² 106

The Nuclear Family

Previous studies (Abu-Baker, 2016; Meler, 2017) showed that despite the intensification of secularization, urbanization, education, and salaried employment, the extended family continues to constitute the principal source of support and supervision. Family relationships in Palestinian-Arab society as they emerge from these studies are still typified by interdependence and a low level of differentiation centered on a collective family identity that underscores the importance of preserving family ties (Abu-Baker, 2016; Meler, 2017; Sabbah-Karkaby, 2020). Consequently, individuals are evaluated primarily according to family affiliation.

However, our research has highlighted the establishment of the nuclear family pattern. According to Lück and Ruckdeschel (2018), drawings can indicate which constellation of people constitutes the family; and indeed, unlike family patterns prevalent in research in Palestinian-Arab society, the drawings emphasize the nuclear family with no mention of the

² 14 study participants answered the questionnaire and did not draw a picture.

presence of a large social network or inter-generational relationship. Figure 1 represents a typical drawing of the category of a figurative nuclear family.

Figure 1
A Schematic Nuclear Family of Five



Nuclear families do not associate with other family relatives. An extended family is explicitly present in only 3 drawings, which are non-figurative, while a tree symbol replaces family figures. A sentence attached to the image indicates the different generations of family figures. In most drawings (76), all figures belong to the nuclear family. Moreover, of these 76, in 14 drawings, the emphasis was on an intimate couple only.

Figure 2
An Intimate Couple with Pets

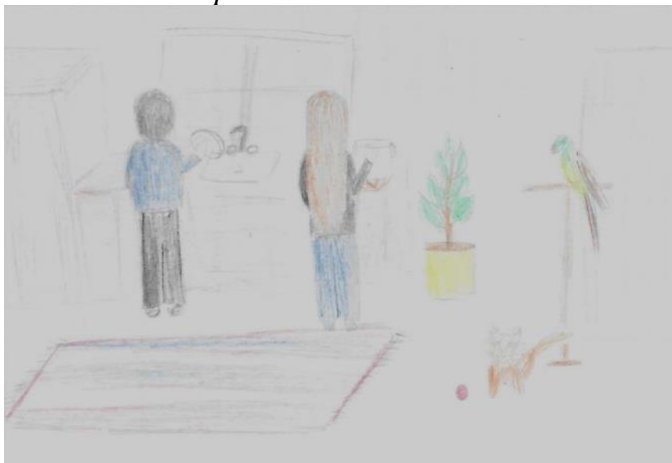


Figure 2 depicts an intimate couple without children. The two share kitchen chores, facing the sink, and showing their backs to the viewer. One can understand the deep sense of intimacy between them by keeping their close presence to each other while they tend to their meal or dishes. The carpet, plant, parrot, and dog all convey a pleasant atmosphere of domestic cozy intimacy. The fact that the figures do not face the viewer keeps them detached from him/her and reinforces the sense of their intimacy.

Roseneil et al. (2020) emphasized that the centrality of the couple norm is at the heart of how intimate life is organized, regulated, and recognized. They indicate that the couple has been validated and conventionalized so as to be perceived as the very essence of “normative,” with notable implications on intimate lives in Europe.

Another issue emerging from Figure 2 was the presence of pets. Only five of all the drawings in this category indicate a pet: a dog, cat, or parrot. We understood this as the very first sign of the inclusion of pets as part of the family, in contrast to Jewish society, where a quarter of all households own pets (Gur-Mizrachi, 2021). The lesser presence of dogs in the “proper family” picture indeed supports the Islamic religion, which perceives the dog as an impure animal. The absence of pets in the drawings contradicts social trends in other Western societies where raising a pet has become more prevalent, and the tendency to keep animals inside rather than outside the home is growing and strengthening (e.g., Charles, 2014). Furthermore, recent literature on human-animal bonds indicates that pet keepers regard household pets as members of the family unit and often use a language of kinship to indicate these interspecies connections. These are, in a sense, 'post-human families' that are more than human (Zarhin et al., 2022). Drawing on these, therefore, we can argue that in the Palestinian-Arab family today pets are not considered legitimate family members (e.g., Lück & Ruckdeschel, 2018).

Table 2
Subdivision of the Drawings in Which a Family Appeared

Subdivision	
An intimate couple	14
Conventional families:	16
Minimalist schematic drawing	
Conventional families:	12
Figurative depictions	
Family at home	18
The family in the garden	16
Total	76

Children as a Key Component of the Family

The State of Israel identifies with a pro-Natalist ideology that elevates the roles of parenting and emphasizes the benefits of having children (Donath, 2017). Despite the decline in fertility rates in Israel, the State of Israel is still defined as a family society where children are a key element in the family (Donath, 2017; Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2020; Zoabi & Anson, 2017). In 2019, fertility rates in Israel were higher than the OECD average (3.01 vs. 1.6, respectively) (ICBS, 2021). There are ethno-national and religious differences in relation to fertility rates in Israel. In 2018, fertility rates were 3.16 among Jews; 3.37 among Muslims; 1.9 among Christians; 2.10 among Druze (ICBS, 2021).

Therefore, we can assume that the drawings will also reflect the understanding that the “proper family” will be expressed by parent-children relationships, and indeed the drawings show that a normative Palestinian-Arab family is a family with children.

Direct figures of children or symbols of children appeared in 88 of the 106 drawings. However, beyond the fact that children are a key component in the family, one can learn from the drawings about changes in perceptions regarding the size of the “proper family.”

Similarly, Lück and Ruckdesche (2018) identified the family as a “Talcott Parsons type” *nuclear family* of father, mother, 1-2 children. The analysis of the drawings shows that a family with 2 children is perceived as a proper family type, according to the participants. This was a surprising finding since it is below the average within Palestinian-Arab society and below the average fertility rate in Israel. The fertility rate of women in Israel in 2020 was 2.90 children, lower than in 2019 (3.01) and 2018 (3.09). Nevertheless, it is still higher than the average

number of children per woman in OECD countries with 1.16 children in 2019. The fertility rate of Jewish women and others is 2.88, similar to Palestinian-Arab women with 2.82 (ICBS, 2022b).

Table 3

Number of Children in the Drawings

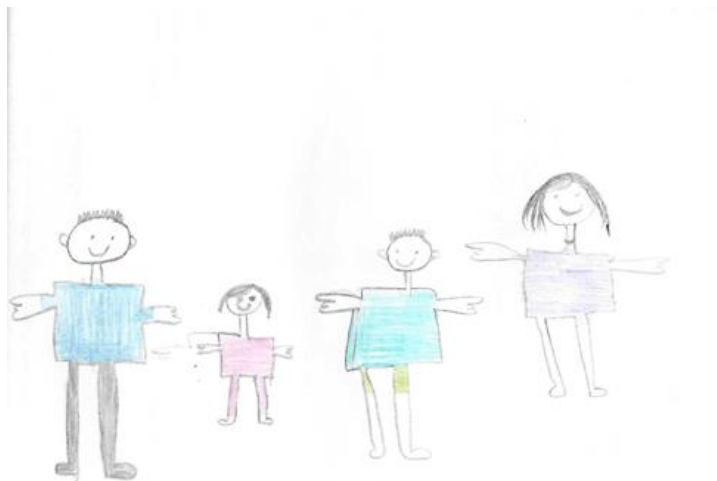
Number of children	Number of drawings
0	4
1	14
2	37
3	18
4	10
5	4
8	1
Total	88

Another issue relating to children's figures depicted in the drawings has to do with gender. There are both boys and girls in 57 of the 88 drawings containing children.

The fact that most of the drawings where children appeared had a mixed composition of the sexes shows that the combination of having both sexes is perceived as a "proper family." Figure 3 represents a 'symmetrical' ideal nuclear family with one boy and one girl.

Figure 3

A Schematic Nuclear Family of Four



Two important recurring characteristics in many drawings were revealed in Figure 3: a son as the oldest and matching colors of the same gender clothes—mother and daughter in pink or purple, while father and son in light and dark blue. In 16 drawings, only boys appeared, while in 12, only girls. In 17 of 88 drawings where children appeared, their age varied, with a boy or a girl as firstborn. In 13 drawings, a boy was the firstborn, while only 4 showed a firstborn girl.

The analysis of the drawings indicated that the participants live in surroundings that encourage differential gender friendship and a gender preference for males. Part of the gender differentiation in society is based on the principle of preference accorded to male offspring. This preference perpetuates itself and is also evident in their drawings.

Table 4
Gender Distribution of the Children

Gender Distribution	Mix (Girls+Boys)	Boys	Girls	No Specific Sex	Eldest Son	Firstborn Daughter
Number of Drawings	57	16	12	3	13	4

Another dimension of gender differentiation involves drawing in different colors as a way that manages gender division. In 14 drawings, there were different colors for each gender regardless of age (mothers and daughters dressed in red or pink, fathers and sons - in blue or green). It was generally evident that sons are described similarly to their fathers and girls similar to their mothers. The resemblance is seen in attire, style, and colors, as well as in hair. The colors red, pink, and purple are typical of females, while blue is typical of males. Another feature is mothers holding hands with daughters and fathers holding hands with sons.

While recent decades have seen numerous changes in the family institution in other Western countries, including individualization processes, these do not exist to the same extent among certain social groups in Israeli society and, as such, are defined by Fogiel-Bijaoui (2020) as processes of distinct individuality.

Other family patterns, known in the research literature as “new families” or “postmodern families” reflect the assumption that society establishes the right of personal choice allowing alternative family frameworks which are based on independent life paths (single-parent, same-sex, LAT, single, childfree, and so on). These patterns exist alongside the heterosexual normative family, based on two parents raising their children in one household, only in distinct social groups in Israeli society (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2020).

As emerges from the drawings, the “proper” Palestinian-Arab family in Israel maintains a heteronormative framework that is rather conservative and lacking variability. A heterosexual couple as the main element of a family (figures or symbols) appeared in almost all of the 106 drawings. Alternative postmodern families of single women or single mothers appeared in only seven drawings (Figure 4). This does not reflect the significant change occurring among Palestinian-Arab families in Israel; the proportion of single-parent families has risen, currently reaching about 11% of all Palestinian-Arab families in Israel (ICBS, 2021), consistent with the trend in Israeli society as a whole and with data from the Western world (Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2020). Nevertheless, as seen in the drawings, it was not part of the prevailing “proper family” image. One drawing depicted a single woman with an untypical look (a young blonde woman dressed in trendy tight clothing, holding a dog on a leash), and the rest (6) single mothers with their children.

In terms of the drawing composition, they are divided according to the themes mentioned in the whole article: children of both sexes, preference for sons, the house as a source of family, smiling figures, and use of a symbol of a heart. The invisibility of a single-parent family as an ideal image resonates with similar findings from other Western societies. Similarly, Roseneil et al., (2020) claimed that although the couple-norm has changed over time and varies between places and social groups, the good citizen and the socially integrated, psychologically developed and well-functioning person is one who is part of a couple.

Figure 4

Single Women (Single Mother and a Woman Owning a Dog)

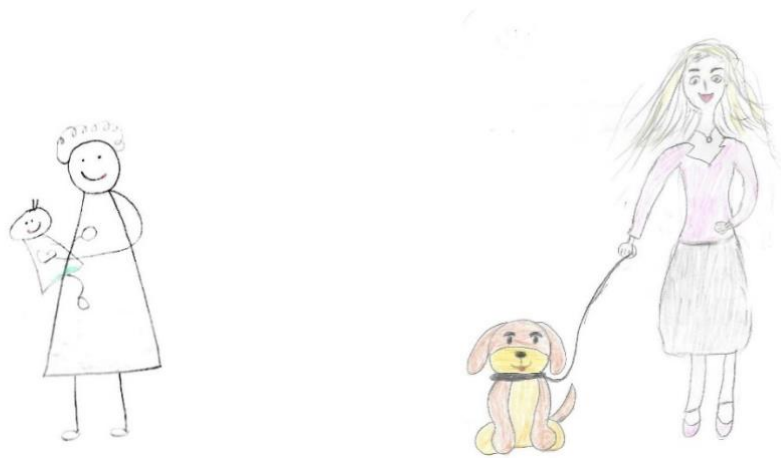


Figure 5

Mother Returning Home and a Dog as Part of the Family



In addition, Morgan (2020) claimed that until the middle of the 20th century, there was frequently a tendency to identify the family with a conventional heteronormative model consisting of mother, father, and children. However, over the past fifty years, there has been increasing recognition of the diversity of family, household forms, and domestic arrangements (Morgan, 2020). Yet, in the present study, the heteronormative model is the only one presented.

However, despite the heteronormative model of the many drawings, one stood out in the way it gives insight into an alternative family model. Ostensibly, as we have shown so far, it is a drawing showing a couple of parents and their two children, where the son appears as the eldest. However, the drawing implies a different division of roles, where the father appears as the one who looks after the children (at least in the moment that is perceived as proper), and the mother is portrayed as someone who has returned from outside/work. In addition, in the drawing, a dog appears as part of the family, whereas, as mentioned above, a pet appeared in only a few drawings.

The image of 'Mom comes home from work and Dad takes care of the kids is a kind of alternative image of the Palestinian-Arab family in Israel with low figures of Palestinian-Arab women in the labor market. In fact, Palestinian-Arab women are the group with the lowest employment rate in Israel. Although the data indicate a steady increase in the rate of Palestinian-Arab women employed in the last decade, the rate of employed persons is still very low. Recent data on the employment rates of Palestinian-Arab women indicates an increase. The employment rate of Palestinian-Arab women aged 25-64 reached 40.5% in the fourth quarter of 2021. The overall employment rate of women in Israel in 2021 was 55.7% compared to 61.8% among men (ICBS, 2022c).

Sabbah-Karkabi (2021) argued that although the Palestinian-Arab household has undergone important social and economic changes, patriarchal norms still shape the private and public domains. Patriarchal gender contracts still define obligations and entitlements, and accordingly, men are entitled to women's unpaid domestic labor and service. The low figures of Palestinian-Arab women in the labor market are affected, although there is a more equal division of roles between the sexes. However, gendered weakness still remains inherent in the Palestinian-Arab family in Israel. Similarly, Sa'ar (2017) argued for a gender contract that encourages Palestinian-Arab women to refrain from participating in the labor market. Few expressions of the gender division theme appeared in the various drawings, among them: the father returns home from the public sphere (probably) while the rest of the family members (mother and children) are at home, or in a family situation where the father is reading a newspaper and the mother is in the kitchen.

Cooking is a gender role usually assigned to women and contributes to the perpetuation of traditional gender roles in families. Moreover, it is a key element of the socialization of women in Palestinian-Arab society in Israel (DeVault, 1991; Gvion, 2006). A mother next to a dining table or cooking in the kitchen appeared in only 3 drawings. In a few others, a mother was depicted taking care of children or holding a baby. Perhaps this is an indication of changes in gender roles in the family, with the mother granting herself some personal time and space aside from mothering, or it could be related to the participants' drawing abilities to capture a complicated movement of the figures. Most drawings captured a static moment, more representative than realistic.

Home Sweet Home

Home represents the family's place of residence, the territory, the intimate, emotional, and physical space. More than the physical dimension, home is a place embodying emotional aspects; it is a safe, sacrosanct, life-giving space (Lotman, 1990). Family practices take place in spaces defined as homes and at time periods when family members are present together (Morgan, 2020).

The custom in the Palestinian-Arab family in Israel, whereby the married couple moves to live near the husband's parents' house, has remained almost unchanged, thus preserving the traditional prevalent patriarchal pattern. This practice is also due to natural population growth, which meets a national policy of restrictions and of reduction of land in Palestinian-Arab communities (Meler, 2015). This situation does not allow young couples to establish homes in neutral spaces, reinforcing the cultural pattern of patrilocality.

In 34 drawings, a house occupied the central place. The image of the house appears as a separate unit that does not imply an extended household of common yards and other relatives living in geographical proximity. Houses appear as iconic images embodying a natural association of a signifier with a real building providing a place to live, as well as an artificial association of signifiers such as a dining table symbolizing togetherness (Zerubavel, 1997).

Among 34 drawings that incorporated the drawing of a house, 15 depicted a family scene inside the house. In most of these drawings, the dining table took center stage with the family eating around it or with the family sitting together in the living room.

Figure 6

Dining Table as a Central Element of Family Life



In Figure 6, the five family members are described as standing by the dining table, which is ready for them to sit at for a meal. The sentence that appears on the drawing originally appeared in English and not in the original Arabic (mother tongue), accompanied by a symbol of a heart (unlike other drawings to which various words in Arabic were sometimes added). This may indicate a sense of alienation, referring to a situation with a more universal language of symbols, the position of the family situation beyond the local-native context.

The rituals described in the drawings essentially construct the family experience and closeness. The rituals most prominently depicted are routine activities and daily life, including (festive) meals. These findings conform with the concept of different researchers, according to whom the family institution is not only a natural order according to which individuals are connected biologically but also a system of behaviors that is shaped and constructed on a daily basis (Cherlin, 2006; Sarkisian, 2006). Additionally, according to DeVault (1991), eating is not only a physiological function, but it also has profound social and emotional implications. The work required to feed a family depends on social arrangements. The task of “feeding a family” involves a coordinative endeavor, mostly invisible, that produces family life for a household group. That is, producing the “appropriate family” through daily practices.

Eating together is not just an everyday practice but also a family ceremony and an opportunity to get together. However, in three drawings, the family is not sitting around the table but rather around the TV (Figure 7). TV changed the meaning of shared time and became a practice of “doing family” in many popular family TV series. Furthermore, according to McLuhan (1967), the tribe is no longer people around the campfire but rather family around the TV. According to McLuhan (1967), it creates a sense of unity and renewed familyism, and encourages the whole family to reconnect. The family gathers at structured times to watch television, similar to mealtimes that were previously fixed into the family schedule (Illouz, 2002). Morgan (2020) argued that the emotional space within the home is closely linked with questions of embodiment. And indeed, Gabb and Fink (2015) argued in their study on 21st-century couple relationships that “the enjoyment and rewards of watching TV and DVD box

sets are layered in meaning and were often perceived as a positive relationship practice by couples in our study” (p. 34).

Figure 7

A Television in the Living Room



Like the tribal campfire, as seen in Figure 7, the family scene shows the mother lying on the couch watching her children playing on the carpet. The TV is on, defining the living room space's atmosphere. The father is standing by the door, probably to indicate his return from work. It is interesting that both TV and father are depicted side by side, on the same plane of the composition, as if their essence could be read as similar: both bring the outdoors inside and embody a liminal essence of family togetherness itself and the world around it. The TV does not show any specific content, rather, its significance lies in its function, that is, to keep family members together. It follows Morgan (2020), who claimed that watching TV is part of a set of regular practices, a sense of embodiment in the physical closeness of family members, and the positive emotional significance of certain places (the TV room). In eight other drawings, a car was drawn as another component of the “proper family” image. Family practices are not just confined to the home. An enhanced understanding of family space takes people into cars moving between different locations (Morgan, 2020).

Modern capitalist culture creates man's dreams of always wishing for material prosperity. Consumerism as a main cultural ethos has entered the family cell in a way that has encouraged an increase in the standard of living and connected hedonism to romantic love (Illouz, 2002). Indeed, since the 1980s, changes taking place in Palestinian-Arab society have also given rise to a growing middle class (27% of Palestinian society) (Haidar, 2017 as cited in Arlosoroff, 2017).

However, Morgan (2020) continued to argue that the analysis of family space in 21st-century studies needs to be combined with a recognition of family mobility beyond the home and the family car. However, in the present study, the “proper family” is not detached from the family home. Even in the 16 drawings, where the emphasis is on outdoor activities, the house image or images representing it remain noticeable and significant in portraying the “proper family.” Most of the drawings express pastoral depictions of a family in leisure activities: children playing, a family meal, or moments of the family in the garden.

Smiling Means Being Happy and Content; Holding Hands Means Togetherness

In their previous study about families in Germany, Lück and Castrén (2018) claimed that in the drawings, the quality of relationships is very often symbolized by family members holding each other's hands as well as by smiling faces, a sun symbolizing happiness or a heart representing love. Similarly, in the present study, in most of the drawings, family members were smiling, and in many of them, they were holding hands. Furthermore, in one drawing where all figures are smiling, an inscription written below reads: "My beautiful family is a satisfied, healthy, happy, and joyful family." This aspect of smiling, happiness and togetherness as a symbol of family well-being were very visible in the next drawing.

Figure 8

A Heart-Shape Symbolizing a Loving Family



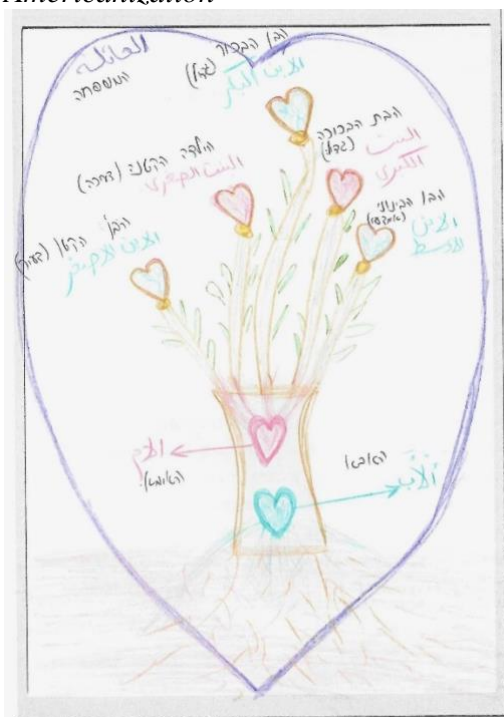
In Figure 8, parents and children are holding hands, depicted in the center of a pinkish-red heart-shaped image. They are schematically described, smiling at the viewer. The children hold red balloons to stress a festive family moment. The drawing also shows a balanced relationship between father and son, wearing shirts and pants, while mother and daughter are wearing dresses. The order of the figures, with the mother holding her son's hand and the father holding his daughter's hand, likely reinforces the sense of unity the participant wanted to present.

The image of a happy family surrounded by heart symbols and balloons (Figure 8) or just heart shapes (Figure 9) indicates consumerism culture entering the participants' visual perception. The English inscription for Figure 6 reinforces the understanding that framing these families as "proper" is influenced by the imagery of the modern capitalist world. This ethos which is far from the original and authentic set of values of the participant's world has a tremendous impact on Israeli society (Illouz, 2002). Globalization has been an influential force on Israeli society over recent decades, with many prominent elements of consumerism culture being adopted and executed (Ram, 2003). Figure 9 is an example of a plant image – a combination of a vase and a tree, that could be interpreted as a local symbol of rootedness of a family but is actually also a global symbol (heart shapes) taken from capitalist American culture.

The "proper family" was drawn symbolically by a vase with flowers; however, instead of flowers, there are symbols of hearts. Heart as a love symbol is not really an authentic Israeli symbol and certainly not an original Arab symbol. It is clear that the person who drew it wished

to convey love and affection through the heart shapes imported from a global consumer cultural order. However, the analysis of this drawing also reveals another dimension, that is, a family of five children. As mentioned above, this family size exceeds today's average in Palestinian-Arab society in Israel and appeared in only four of the 106 drawings in the present study. A "proper family" with five children seems to resonate with the traditional family model. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, there is a traditional gender division of colors: pink/purple for mothers and daughters and blue for fathers and sons. And finally, it can be understood from both the color: the blue heart, the position among the other bouquet flowers, and the accompanying words that the eldest child is male. As such, the "proper family" in Figure 9 symbolizes, more than anything, that despite the trends of globalization and the adoption of symbols foreign to the local culture, multiplicity remains, and old family practices mix with the new.

Figure 9
Americanization



“Had the Olive Trees Remember Who Planted Them, the Oil Would Have Turned to Tears”³— The Olive Tree as a Symbol of the “Proper Family”

Trees appear as the central figures in 11 of the drawings. The countryside landscape of a village as the surrounding for the proper family home is different from the suburban house image of neo-liberal Western society. These natural-oriented images are related to a sense of belonging to the land.

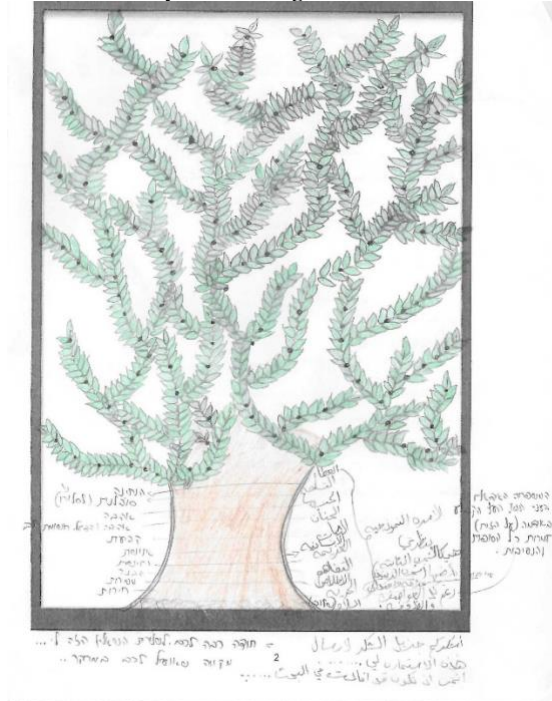
The Western family image of a “proper family” as it emerged from Lück and Ruckdesche’s study (2018), was a house with a garden as the ideal space for raising children. While this image is evident in the drawings of this current study as well, there is another feature symbolizing the “proper family” which appeared in the drawings: trees, especially the olive tree. This embodies Palestinian history, as is evident in the words of the national poet Mahmoud

³ Quote from the lyrics of the song 'The Olive Tree' (شجرة الزيتون) of Mahmoud Darwish (محمود درويش)

Darwish. The olive tree is perceived as a witness to Palestinian history and the collective memory of their generations, a witness of continuity and belonging to the land.

Figure 10

Olive Tree Symbolizing the Palestinian-Arab Family



The olive tree occupies a dominant place in Palestinian symbolism. While images of olive trees appear in Palestinian drawings of the post-Nakba period, they became dominant in the 1980s in works and have endured since then in Palestinian art (Abufarha, 2008). Artists who focused on the olive tree image are Ismael Shamout, Suliman Mansour, Walid Abu-Shakra, and Osama Saeed, to mention a few (Ben-Zvi, 2014). The subject of rootedness and attachment to the land has been naturally symbolized by the olive tree, which is an ancient tree characterizing several regions of Palestine, especially the West Bank, but also the Galilee. The Palestinian tradition of the communal olive harvest and the persistence of traditional farming practices to maintain the olive orchard all contributed to the articulation of the *al-zaytouna*, the olive tree, as the symbol of the Palestinian nation rooted in the land of Palestine. The olive tree and the olive oil are central to the daily Palestinian diet, activities, and social life. The family relates to the olive tree on many occasions, most of them festivals for the whole Palestinian village (Abufarha, 2008). Another feature of the olive tree is its long life, connecting generations of the family around it.

Furthermore, the season of picking olives has remained almost unaffected, echoing familial traditions which pass from generation to generation. The hard-physical work of the family emphasizes the roots of the Palestinians in the land. The olives, which are a central element in Palestinian cuisine, also relate to family life and practice, distinguishing them from modern consumerism of food.

For all the above characteristics, it is not surprising to find a drawing dedicated to the olive tree as a symbol of the “proper family.” The values of the “proper family” are written next to the trunk itself as the basis for the branches of the tree to grow on: giving, forgiving, love, attention, permanence, determination, understanding, loyalty, and freedom. The following sentence is written next to this list of values: “The proper family is the rooted tree (olive tree) which stands in spite of all storms and circumstances.” The drawing seems realistic in shape

and color, with both the leaves and fruit carefully drawn in a way emphasizing the respect and meaning for the image, stemming from its cultural significance.

Discussion

The present study focused on the cultural perceptions of a “proper family” in Palestinian-Arab society as they appear. The complex socio-economic reality of a national minority shaped the social and cultural fabric of Palestinian-Arab society and greatly influenced the structure of the family. Studies in recent decades (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2017; Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2020; Meler, 2017) show that Palestinian-Arab society is evolving into a more open society that absorbs external influences.

However, Lück et al. (2022) claim that among the profound changes in families in recent history, one major trend was an increasing diversity of living arrangements and family trajectories as well as socially accepted family forms, which started in the mid-1960s. The 'proper Palestinian-Arab family' as it emerged from the present study remains a heteronormative family with a preference for males. Nevertheless, simultaneously, other major changes are observable: a family is a nuclear unit, with a decline in birth rates. Western symbols are embedded in images of the 'proper family' reflecting the influence of consumerism.

Bachelard (1957/2020) believed that the houses we live in are experienced by us as homes since they are not only physical objects but rather the sum of the dreams and memories associated with them, which do not disappear even if the physical house no longer exists. The house becomes a home, our safe space, which remains with us forever through memories and dreams. Alongside these claims, Morgan (2020) noted that home, the family space, is a keyword of positive terms as a place of warmth and safety but simultaneously has generated a considerable amount of critical scholarship and negative connotations. In conducting research that asks people to draw the “proper family” we did not seek to ignore all these aspects but rather to understand at the basic level, through the drawings, what are the people, objects, material environment, and symbols that heterogeneous individuals place as images of the “proper family.”

Based on Lück et al. (2022), the argument that values and cultural-normative conceptions of how families and family biographies should look often mirrors the structural manifestations of families and of family demography. Reciprocal influences cause this interrelation: factual family demographic situations shape the subjective perceptions, expectations, and evaluations of the people experiencing them. The subjective views, again, strongly affect individual behavior.

Conclusions and Implications

To conclude, in our paper, we set out to show which culturally normative conceptions of family exist in Palestinian-Arab society. The results show certain family constellations as widely shared among the participants for their definition of the ‘proper family’ in Palestinian-Arab society. First and most commonly seen in the drawings, our study indicates that the 'proper family' is a heteronormative nuclear family of 2-3 children. This finding is fascinating and innovative since it reconfirms previous studies on Palestinian-Arab society, emphasizing the centrality of the nuclear family over an extended family unit.

Another interesting finding is related to the particular images indicating “proper families,” as seen in the drawings: family members are depicted smiling, holding hands, and surrounded by consumer symbols (e.g., hearts and balloons). According to Lück and Castrén (2018), these objects symbolize the quality of relationships. In addition, following Illouz (2002), the secularization process of love, which Western society had undergone at the

beginning of the 20th century, has been influential in connecting consumerism to emotions. Goods, as well as commercials and the discourse they create, encourage and dictate emotional practices. Our findings seem compatible with Illouz's (2002) claim that a happy family is a consumer one, which also permeates Palestinian-Arab society in Israel.

The study indicates a dynamic sequence in familial contexts as well, which are perceived as more traditional/patriarchal. The patterns of the family show a certain extent of heterogeneity in society, even among people who live in its conservative contexts, in which, as the study shows, a negotiation can be held that enables the expression of movement towards liberalism.

The present study indicates an intermediate time of change showing the relationship between the global and the local. Global family patterns penetrate local ones, which absorb different rhythms and doses of changes (e.g., Ram, 2008). As a minority, Palestinian-Arabs in Israel today experience a socioeconomic and political reality of discrimination, inequality, exclusion, poverty, unemployment, and civic alienation (Abu-Baker, 2016; Sa'ar, 2017; Smootha, 2019). The State is failing as a path to mobility and as an inspiration for civic belonging. In spite of this condition, the drawings imply that modernity is becoming an anchor for improvement, and its family patterns are adopted as symbols of the "proper family," even if they do not match the respondents' actual family framework.

Our study further suggests that despite the Palestinian Arab marginal position in Israeli society and their minority status, the interplay among social structure, culture, and agency express different shapes of the 'proper family. Moreover, this interplay suggests understanding that changes in family perceptions are slow and gradual.

The findings indicate that families that supposedly match the ideal-typical family form can also be very heterogeneous and challenge the standard definition of the family (e.g., Lück & Castrén, 2018). Moreover, people's personal family perceptions are quite diverse and often remote from common expectations. Particularly the subjective perceptions of who is part of the family network and the family's size, and the position of different family members. Therefore, understanding family lives must take into account individuals' subjective views of what their family is.

This underlines the importance of taking the plurality of family constellations into account by family counselors, therapists, and policymakers. It should also be taken into account that family lives can hardly be understood without who is part of it. In particular, while focusing on heterogeneous societies, such an analysis may emphasize that the overlap of commonly shared understandings between any various social groups within one society seems to be larger than the different understandings that are characteristic of each of the groups.

The qualitative data capture several crucial aspects of conceptions of the family that could not be included in standardized survey questions. However, the qualitative data, by itself, could not suggest a realistic idea of the prevalence of the various family conceptions or their association with sub-social groups in the Palestinian-Arab society in Israel. Choosing visual content analysis of a large number of drawings provided the study with a wide range of data. Nonetheless, interviewing each participant about his/her drawing might have enriched the interpretation of the drawings. In combination, both approaches are much stronger and reveal a quite comprehensive result. Therefore, to better achieve the goal of the present study, our recommendations for future studies are to expand it to be a comparative study among various social groups in Israel. This study may identify differences between social groups, including differences that are gradual and not just dichotomous.

Such a comparison will refine our knowledge concerning class or religious differences. Being a visual-based study of drawings, our method adopts that of visual ethnography, which is usually employed by photography and film. Expanding this tool to include the analysis of drawings contributes to widely comprehending cultural and social perceptions which are

scarcely accessible in other ways. “Images are inextricably tied up with our daily life, personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies” (Dipesh, 2015, p. 147), as the drawings of our study richly reflect. Our study contributes to the sociology of the family by identifying the images that people recognize as those of “proper families” (e.g., Lück & Castrén, 2018).

Although the present study is based on an analysis of drawings that supposedly have a static dimension of a particular moment, it is still possible to understand what people consider family practices that can contribute to this analysis and our understanding of the active roles that family members and others can play in building a home in all its dimensions (positive and negative) (Morgan, 2020). In doing so, we followed Morgan’s (2020) practices approach. As such, the term “family” is perceived less as a noun and more as an adjective referring to family life, family members, and so on. Indeed, Morgan (2020) further argued that the word family should be used as a verb so that we may explore the active work of a “doing family” and the different types of practices that constitute and rebuild the concept of family.

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