

Prolonged Co-Generational Living: The Case of Israeli Arab Parents and Their Emerging Adult Children

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Abstract

*Parents' feelings and attitudes toward **Prolonged co-generational living**—emerging adult children (young adults in their mid-late twenties or more) living at their parents' home, are the topic of this qualitative study. The research population included 14 Israeli Arab parents (seven mothers, seven fathers, from different families) who have at least one child age 21-30 living with them. Findings from the semi-structured, open interviews indicated that Arab parents highly valued family reputation and expected their children to respect social norms, including leaving home only upon marriage. At the same time, parents themselves support marriage at a later age than traditionally accepted. This blend of new and old is discussed in relation to the Arab society in Israel, which shows a gradual openness to modernization while maintaining traditional values and culture.*

Keywords

emerging adults, prolonged co-generational living, social expectations, family relation, parents' attitudes, a society in transition, culture and tradition.

1. Introduction

Emerging adulthood is a stage of the life in which young people, age 18-30 experience an in between period, between adolescence and adulthood. As they become more independent and explore various life possibilities, emerging adults undergo a period of search for self-identity, lack of stability, and a deferment of assuming long-term commitments. During this time they change occupation and workplaces, experiment with different partners, and adopt changing worldviews, all the while delaying marriage, parenthood, and professional and career decisions (Arnett, 2000, 2001, 2004; Juang & Silbereisen, 2001; Shulman & Ben-Artzi, 2003; Shulman, Feldman, Blatt, Coken & Mahler, 2005). In this article we will discuss the shift in the relationships between emerging adults and their parents including the ramification of prolonged co-generational living: a state in which emerging adult children live at their parents' home sometimes until their mid-late twenties or even more. The focus in this study

will be on the Israeli Arab parents, who belong to a society in transition, which moves gradually from conservative traditional values (and an expected early age of marriage and leaving parents' home), toward, modern, liberal, Western values, in which Early marriage has become less common (Cohen & Savaya, 2003).

1.1 Relationships of Young Adults and Their Parents

The relationships of parents and children change over time, shifting from an asymmetrical relationship regarding authority and influence in childhood and adolescence, to a more reciprocal, equal, and symmetrical relationship between adults (Buhl, 2007; Tanner, 2006). This transition represents a profound change in the family life, as it signifies a gradual shift in the way parents and young people view each other. Preferably, the parents learn to see their child as an autonomous individual (Aquilino, 2006), and no longer as a child who needs close attention, care, and supervision. At the same time, young people learn to see their parents not just as their parents, but as persons, individuals with their own needs, weaknesses, and life histories (Aquilino, 2006; Birditt, Fingerman, Lefkowitz, & Kamp Dush, 2008; Vassallo, Smart, & Price-Robertson, 2009; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). When the parents reach old age, another change takes place, as the parents may receive support from their adult children (Buhl, 2007; Noack & Buhl, 2004).

However, shifting of the center of balance is not always easy or smooth. In some cases, the change in conflictual (Clarke, Preston, Raksin, & Bengtson, 1999), although conflicts tend to decrease as the children enter adulthood, especially after they move out of the parents' home (Berman & Sperling, 1991; Buhl, 2007). In cases where the young adults are financially dependent on the parents when they are considered "adults" in other respects, relationships may be tense (Aquilino, 2006; Vassallo et al., 2009).

1.2 Emerging Adult's Residential Status

Such tensions are especially prominent when young adults continue to live with their parents, a situation which is more prevalent now than in the past (Arnett, 2001, 2004; Aquilino, 2006; Settersten & Ray, 2010; Vassallo et al., 2009). Recent data reveal that over 50% of 18-24 year-olds in Europe and the United States live with their parents (Coleman & Brooks, 2009; Kloep & Hendry, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), a situation caused by prolonged education, the high cost of living, or the real convenience in delaying coping with economic issues. In some cases, parental separation anxiety (Kins, Soenens & Beyers, 2011), or disturbances in the process of separation-individuation (either by parents or adult children) may be the force behind the grown child leaving home (Kins et al., 2011; Kloep & Hendry, 2010).

In Western society, leaving home has been traditionally understood as an important component of entering adulthood, yet recent research revealed that emerging adults' accommodation arrangements were not the core element of their self-developmental tasks (Kins et al., 2011; Yanir, 2007). According to Kins et al. (2011) it is important to pay attention to the reasons and the processes behind the

emerging adult's residential status. Whether or not young adults live with their parents, is not a sole indication of their successful or unsuccessful managing developmental tasks, and "there are cultural differences in expectations and traditions of young people leaving home and becoming independent" (Kloep & Hendry, 2010, p. 818). However, whatever the reasons for such living arrangements, in a Western-oriented society these arrangements impact upon parent-child relationships as they prolong parental responsibilities later into life than in previous generations. Furstenberg (2010) saw a difference in parent-child relationships according to the child's life circumstances: Relationships between parents of children in their mid-twenties who reside with the parents, are better if the children are studying, working, or searching for work than they are if the children are having difficulties to find future direction toward independence. In all cases, mutual accommodation of parents and their children during the children's path toward adulthood requires adjusting to new patterns of interaction to meet the new demands of all members in the household (Yanir, 2007). At this stage, the parents (age 40-60), are also dealing with the challenges of midlife, which include assessment and evaluation of one's gains and losses (DeVries, Kerrick, & Oetinger, 2007), physical decline, increased awareness of time running out, and the recognition that not all personal goals would be reached. Added to these are illnesses or death of parents, friends, and relatives and changes in sexual drive and activity (Colarusso & Nemiroff, 1987). The parents also have to combine between their own work and desired activities, the support they provide to their grown offspring and caring for elderly parents (Fingerman, Pitzer, Chan, Birditt, Franks, & Zarit, 2011; Gautun & Hagen, 2010).

1.3 Parents and Emerging Adults in the Arab Population in Israel

The present study was conducted in Israel, which is a multiethnic, multinational and multicultural state. The largest ethnic group (some 80%) is Jewish and within it there are subgroups of immigrants from all parts of the world, living in what is, overall, a modern society with a Western orientation. The Arab population mostly Muslim—is the nation's largest minority, about 20% of the population (Inter agency task force on Israeli Arab issues, 2013). Arabs in Israel are a society in transition, gradually moving from being a society with higher level of commitment to family and community values, one that was mainly agricultural, conservative, traditional, collectivist and closed, toward a more urbanized, modern, liberal, Western society (Cohen & Savaya, 2003).

According to the traditional Arab culture, the daughters in Arab families leaves their parents' house when they get married and moved in with their husband, close to his extended family. Cohabitation outside marriage is still uncommon. A son lives with his parents until marriage, and as a married man lives with his wife and children in his family's compound (Peled, 2013). Marriage is perceived as a way to become an adult, including the responsibility that comes with adulthood. In traditional families, parents encourage their children to marry—and begin living an adult lifestyle—when the children are in their early twenties. Marriage is believed to be a social mechanism that prevents undesired social behaviors (Abu Baker, 2012).

According to the Israeli central bureau of statistics (2013), the age of marriage has gone up in the Arab population, a change similar to that in the Jewish secular population in Israel and in the Western world since the 1990s. We can assume that the delay in marriage in the Israeli Arab society is not pursued as an explicit goal, but is a secondary (probably unintended) consequence of aspirations for pursuit of higher education and financial independence. Nonetheless, the average age of marriage in the Arab population is still lower than that of the Israeli Jewish secular population (Arab men—26.5, Jewish men—28.3; Arab women—21.2, Jewish women—25.9). Because young Arabs are not required to serve in the army (which 18-year-old Jewish Israelis are), many of them seek employment or turn to pursue high education when they turn 18. Therefore, it is possible that the difference in marriage age derives not only from cultural and traditional values, but also from the difference in the civic duties. In addition to the delayed age of marriage, Arab parents are facing other aspects of modern Western life with regard to their adult children. In a slow and gradual process, more young Arabs are questioning the traditional values held by their parents—values that include emphasis on the individual's family of origin, with less importance accorded to one's achievements. Traditional values which extol conformity and social norms are beginning to give way to values such as individuation, autonomy, and uniqueness (Alfasi, 2014; Azaiza, 2013). As such, more young Arabs, men and women alike, are perusing education and career, and tend to move out of the parents' home before they get married (Abu Baker, 2012). In addition, married couples in younger generations choose to give birth to fewer children in comparison to their parents and grandparents, Husbands tend to take more part in household chores and children rearing, and wives have begun to participate in family decision making more than in previous generations (Haj Yahia-Abu Ahmad, 2006). The parents in the current study are 45-65 years old, a group constituting proximally 13% of the entire Arab population in Israel (Gharrah, 2013). In general the Arab community has undergone a process of modernization and internalization of Western values (Sharabi, 2014). The roles of men and women in Arab society in Israel have changed significantly as more women began pursuing higher education and started working outside the home. The position of men, who had been in the Arab traditional family at the top of the family's hierarchy, was undermined when women started contributing to the household finances, and with the family's growing exposure to Israeli Jewish society. However, as it is a society in transition, we learn that women's status in the family hierarchy is still rather low and they are still expected to be submissive to their husbands, parents-in-law and parents (Cohen & Savaya, 2003). Moreover, according to the I-agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues (2013) there are also significant gaps between Arab and Jewish citizens in Israel, in almost all socio-economic measures, despite ongoing progress.

1.4 Research Scope and Objectives

Studies of the parents' perspective on their children's transition to adulthood revealed a paucity of studies on the effects of family transformations on parents (Kloep & Hendry, 2010; Vassallo et al., 2009), and a focus on the views and experiences of the emerging adults (Cherlin, Scabini, & Rossi,

1997; Galland, 1997). Furstenberg (2010) clearly stated that researchers know very little about how either young adults or their parents manage this longer period of co-residence and economic dependency, yet have studies and gained knowledge the timing of home-leaving and its demography. According to Hendry and Kloep (2007), the psychological adjustment of parents in their 50s or 60s is affected by the way they handle young people's prolonged dependency eventual home leaving, and these also affect parents' future relationships with their adult children (Kloep & Hendry, 2010). Looking away from the general phenomenon of emerging adulthood, the present study will examine a specific society—Arabs in Israel. As mentioned above, this is a society in transition, and as such, there is a mixture of traditional values and new behaviors. Thus, modern life has dictated a delay in age of marriage. At the same time, children are expected to live with their parents until marriage, so that the age of leaving home is delayed. So far we are not familiar with other research on Israeli Arab parents' feelings and thoughts in relation to this transition. In the current study, we aimed to gain an in-depth look at the situation and learn about Israeli Arab parents' feelings and experience regarding this prolonged co-residing with their emerging adult children.

2. Method

2.1 Participant Characteristics

For this qualitative study, we interviewed 14 Arab parents (7 mothers and 7 fathers), representing 14 families. The number of participants in this study is in accordance to Creswell (1998) who defined a range number of participants regarding phenomenological studies. All interviewees live in the same Arab town in north Israel, each representing a family. At the beginning of each interview, the parents were asked to give some demographic details regarding themselves and their families.

The parents' age was 48-60 ($M = 55.21$, $SD = 3.68$) and each had had 3-4 children ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.12$), all were married and had at least one child age 19-30 who still lived at home. All participants owned their homes, had a high-school education, and six of them (two fathers and four mothers) had Bachelor degrees. None of them was dependent on their children because of a disability of some kind. Five of the fathers worked full time (education, business, and transportation) and two were retired. Five mothers worked full time as teachers or secretaries, the other two did not hold jobs.

The mean age of the emerging adult children, was 25.35 ($SD = 3.22$). A total of 9 children from 5 of the 14 families were married and had left home: The daughters lived close to their husbands' families, the sons lived with their wives very close to the parents. Two families have one child each at university, and these two children were financially dependent on their parents and supported by them. Nine families had all the children living at the parents' homes. Most of the emerging adult children had jobs (mostly part-time jobs such as waiting tables, customer service, and salespeople in shops), most of them were also students or were planning to start pursuing academic studies in the near future.

2.2 Sampling Method, Procedure, and Data Collection

An ethical approval for this qualitative study was received from the Emek Yezreel Academic College's Ethics Committee. The snowball method was used to reach participants for this study, beginning with two parents with whom the researcher was acquainted. These participants referred the researcher to others who met the criteria – having at least one child age 18-30 who lived at home. Participation was voluntary, and participants were guaranteed confidentiality, and were also told that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. The one-on-one interviews were conducted in Hebrew, and took place in the participants' homes, at their convenience. Each interview was conducted by one of two graduate students of education, who were trained for this study and were supervised and guided by the researcher. The 45-70-minute interviews were audio recorded with participants' permission.

2.3 Research Instrument and Data Analysis

This is a qualitative phenomenological study, designed to gain in-depth understanding of parents' experience regarding communication with emerging adult children who live at home. A semi-structured, in depth non-directive three-question open interview (Dor, 2013) was conducted with each participants to gather descriptions of their experience, and were supplemented by follow-up questions (which varied according to the development of each interview). This tool enables interviewees to expand and clarify their answers, and to give examples and full description of their experiences, thoughts and feelings. It enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth look at parents' experiences in relation to their interactions with their emerging adult children and to develop each interview according to contents raised by the participants (Groenewald, 2004; Waters, 2016).

The first interview question was a general one—How would you describe your overall feelings regarding the fact that your son/daughter lives at home? The next two questions had a narrower focus: In your opinion, are you coping with any difficulties that are related directly to the fact that your child is living at home? And finally, are there any benefits or advantages to having your emerging adult child living at home?

The interviews were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003), so as to derive distinct themes regarding each of the questions. To establish thematic reliability, two researchers began by separately searching for systematic, recurring, visible, and direct content; they referred back to this content by frequency of appearance and their interpretation of their significance to the interviewees. The researchers then reviewed the content, found that they were in agreement, and proceeded to divide the content into groups, identify prominent themes, and label each theme.

3. Results

The findings were analyzed according to their contents, with the general answers to Question 1 described here. The themes derived from the two focused questions are listed in Table 1, by parent's gender.

Table 1. Themes Identified in Every Question, by Parent's Gender (Absolute Numbers)

Question	Theme	N = 14	
		Mothers N=7	Fathers N=7
Are you coping with any difficulties that are related directly to the fact that your child is living at home?	Uneasiness with social criticism	5	3
	Arguments over diverse gender expectations	6	3
	Heavy household chores	3	2
Are there any benefits or advantages to having your emerging adult child living at home?	Enjoying the relationship	6	4
	The family's good reputation	5	4
	Delayed age marriage	7	4

Note. Some of the interviewees suggested more than one theme per question.

Question 1. How would you describe your overall feelings regarding the fact that your son/daughter lives at home?

In answer to this question, the parents mentioned mainly positive feelings. In general, they expected their children to stay with them at home until they are married, and besides directing their children toward marriage at the appropriate time, they had no intention to rush things. Children living at home until marriage was how things should be, and they might even have felt embarrassed if their children were to act against social norms and leave home for reasons other than marriage or pursuing higher education. The parents also enjoyed the opportunity to get some help around the house, and to interact with their children as adults.

The general nature of the answers to Question 1 gave way to specific accounts of difficulties and benefits that parents feel in relation to their children's' living at home:

Question 2. In your opinion, are you coping with any difficulties that are related to the fact that your child is living at home?

As seen in Table 1, three themes were derived from the content analysis of the answers to this question: Uneasiness with social criticism (5 mothers, 3 fathers); Arguments over diverse gender expectations (6 mothers, 3 fathers); Heavy household chores (3 mothers, 2 fathers).

Uneasiness with social criticism. The parents are aware that social norms and social expectation influence their entire behavior, and that these norms play a major role in their own worldview and impact their relationship with their children. They reported that at times they argue with their children about their children's preferences or behaviors, as the children are more open to new technology and social media; other issues include the choices that the young adults make which are not appropriate to traditional Arab society. The parents cannot always give a rational reasoning regarding what is acceptable and what is not, but their uneasiness with social judgment that they might be exposed to, led them to keep saying that "this is how things should be". Here are few examples from interviews with the mothers:

The other night I told my son: "Now the whole neighborhood heard how late at night you came home." He told me that he didn't care what other people thought or heard. But I do care. It worries me.

Another participant said:

We have a society with certain expectations. I can't live without considering it. I won't be comfortable if my son would live on his own, unless he is out as a student far from home.

The parents tell how they ask their children to consider social norms and live accordingly. They usually educate their children according to norms as they were educated by their own parents. It hard for them to accept the changes in times and this difficulty brings about arguments between them and their children.

Arguments over diverse gender expectations. Parents who referred to this theme mentioned a different attitude toward sons and daughters, based on different gender expectations in Arab society. These expectations, based on nothing but social norms, can be the source of arguments. Participants described a special need to protect their daughters, worrying about damage to their reputation. That drives them to be more liberal with their sons than with their daughters, as stated by a father:

It's important to me that my daughter continues to live at home. If she wants to move out, I'll object to that. She is a woman and it's inappropriate.

And a mother said:

Each time my daughter comes home late, I worry about her: I think where she is and what she is doing. She is a girl and that's why I need to know, even at this age, every step. It's not the same with boys.

The parents admit that they cannot rationalize the different way they refer to daughters and sons. They connect it with the way they themselves were educated and just say that this how things are.

Heavy household chores. As a conservative and traditional society, household chores are almost exclusively done by women. The men refer to the heavy workload, and mention the hard work that their wives have to deal with. Both parents expect their grown children to live at home with them at this stage, and at the same time they admit that it is not getting easier. It is most difficult when the grown children are boys—parents tend not to expect boys to participate in household chores, while girls have done so since childhood. A father who has two grown children living at home said:

We love it that our grown children live with us, but to tell the truth it's my wife who has a hard time. She still spoils them—cleans their room, does their laundry, cooks a lot so that there is enough for their

friends as well, cleans all the mess when their friends leave.

This was echoed by one of the mothers:

The main difficulty I have is the work at home. So much of everything: laundry, cooking, cleaning. Constant housework. Sometimes I wish my son would marry and let his wife take care of the huge amount of clothes and shoes he buys and leaves all over.

The parents enjoy seeing their children grow up, but still taking care of their basic needs, might be not so easy at this stage. Although the children are grown, in many cases they do not feel a need to participate in the household chores. The parents refer to the burden but speak gently about it and not as a declaration of an interference.

Question 3. Are there any benefits or advantages to having your emerging adult child living at home?

As can be seen in Table 1, three themes were identified regarding this question. The themes are Enjoying the relationship (6 mothers, 4 fathers), the family's good reputation (5 mothers, 4 fathers), and Delayed age of marriage (7 mothers, 4 fathers).

Enjoying the relationship. The parents described pleasant feelings regarding their mutual time with their children. It gives them a chance to bond with them, to help them, and to be helped by them. It also gives them a feeling of security, knowing that their children are around and knowing what happens in their lives. The parents acknowledge that this is a phase in life, before the children leave home, and the parents appreciate this stage of closeness before their grown children leave home.

Family's good reputation. The participants were clear about their comfortable feeling regarding the way their family was perceived by their close society (neighbors, relatives). Having their unmarried grown children with them, gave them a feeling of security and calmness as the family conforms to social expectations and nothing interferes with its reputation. This was expressed by one of the mothers and one of the fathers:

Being unmarried means that you are still with your family. No one expects you to be any other way. To tell the truth, it's not that easy in every family. My sister's daughter left her parents' home and rented an apartment in Tel Aviv, found a job, and she comes home every two months for a short visit. My sister is worried about her, but what worries her the most is that people talk and talk...

I have 2 grown daughters. Both are college graduates. They both live at home with us. I feel comfortable around, knowing that our family is well appreciated in our community. However, the fact that they are both unmarried at this age makes me worry, it's not good to wait too much and people around us are wondering.

It is apparent that as things go as planned and as expected according to social norms, no one around has a reason to talk behind the back and to taint the family's negatively. Of course, delaying marriage beyond what is socially accepted, does not get positive reactions, and the parents expressed their awareness toward it.

Delayed age of marriage. Although the participants appreciated that postponing marriage for too long

might be problematic, in general they were mostly for it. Traditionally, Arabs married early – around the age of 20 or even younger – and the parents were aware of the possible costs that might come with it (sometimes based on their own experience). They estimate that it might be in their children's best interest, and especially for their daughters, not to rush into an immature relationship:

My daughter is 23. I don't want her to marry too soon as I did. When she was 19 someone was interested in her and in the end it didn't happen, I'm glad it didn't. Today I think it's good that they don't marry too soon. I want her to enter marriage after she has a profession, some money of her own, and knows enough about her future husband and his family.

Some of the parents' tolerance toward their grown children living at home can be explained by their ability to maintain their children's lives at a stage that will enable them not to get into marriage too early. This is consistent with the tendency in the young adults' generation not to marry as early as before, a tendency of which the parents often approve.

3.1 Summary of the Research Findings

Overall, most parents interviewed for this study felt good in general regarding the living at home of their emerging adult children. The interviews clearly indicate that the parents highly value family reputation: As long as the children are unmarried, it is appropriate for the entire family to appear in the community as a unit with all its members living under one roof. While referring to difficulties in relation to mutual accommodation, parents mentioned many arguments over social norms with their emerging adult children, and at the same time encouraged their children not to marry at a young age as was expected in the past.

4. Discussion

Emerging adulthood as a developmental stage has been of interest to researchers since the late 1990s. The vast majority of the studies regarding emerging adulthood have concentrated on the experiences of the emerging adults themselves (Arnett, 2000, 2001; Cherlin et al., 1997; Galland, 1997). However, in recent years a growing number of studies is focusing on the parents of emerging adults and the ways they cope with their children's transition to adulthood (Betz, Nehring, & Lobo, 2015; Mendonça & Fontaine, 2014; Shannon, Barry, DeGrace, & DiDonato, 2016).

Adding to this body of knowledge, the current qualitative study turned to a distinct group – Israeli Arab parents of emerging adults who live at home, to examine the parents' feelings and attitudes regarding the situation. Semi-structured open interviews were conducted with 14 Israeli Arab parents whose emerging adult child lived at home. The interviews followed a protocol of three main research questions, and the answers indicated that in many aspects the reputation of the family and its good name, are top priorities for the parents who favor behavior that follows social expectations. Our findings indicated that Arab parents of unmarried children expect their children to live at home, despite the difficulty of maintaining a full household. As the family has always been at the center of life in

Arab societies, it is perceived as the main social security system for its members. This includes the elderly, the sick, or disabled, and also provides a financial security net for the unemployed and other dependents in the family. According to Arab culture, the parents are responsible for their children by accompanying them well into their adult life, and the expectation is that the children will reciprocate and care for their elderly parents.

Interestingly, as parents expect their children to live at home until marriage, it is apparent that they support a delay in marriage age. Since the 1980 there has been a noticeable increase in the age of marriage, not only in Israel but also in many Arab countries such as Kuwait, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates (Hoda, Magued, & Farzabeh, 2003). Later marriage is related to higher education (Nath & Singh, 1993), protects women from early childbearing which, in turn, leads to low levels of education, a cycle of poverty, high fertility, and poor health. As part of a wide process of change that Israeli Arab society is undergoing, parents encourage their children—sons and daughters alike—not to imitate their own early marriage pattern, and to postpone marriage until perusing education and at least starting to develop a career orientation (Hoda et al., 2003).

This duality—maintenance of traditional social norms (keeping the child at home until marriage) and at the same time openness to modernization and Western values (encouraging delaying marriage age), is something that characterizes the Israeli Arab minority, a group that adheres to its traditions while going through an increasing process of modernization (Al-Haj, 1989; Azaiza, 2013; Sharabi, 2014). Although the Arab minority in Israel differs from the Jewish majority in language, culture and religion, since the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Arabs citizens have been greatly exposed to bilingualism and multiculturalism. Families experience modernization in the change of emphasis from placing the family first to respect for the individual's achievement. The changing status of women (often due to education) and the prominence of the nuclear family over the extended one are other manifestations of modernization, as are the shifts in parent-child relations (Aziaza, 2013). Education has become the most important asset for Israeli Arabs. Most have obtained their BA in Hebrew-speaking colleges and universities, and many continue to pursue higher degrees in these institutions. Arabs in Israel are highly exposed to the mass media and are in frequent contact with the Israeli Jewish population. Both these agents of Westernization have been catalysts to adopting new ways of family life, consumption habits, decrease in birthrate, and move from agrarian rural society to urban life (Al-Haj', 1989). Thus, the fact that the parents do not rush their children into marriage at an early age as in the past, might be one of these manifestation of the openness of Arab society to modernization.

An interesting issue that was raised by the parents was related to the different tolerance they expressed toward their sons and daughters' behavior. The relatively more liberal permissive attitude toward male emerging adults was not perceived as appropriate by the parents regarding their daughters. One can relate this to the way parents respond more harshly to girls in comparison to boys in case of inappropriate behavior (Dwairy, 2004), as women are expected to “adhere completely to the paternally

dictated norms of the Arabic family” (p. 236). When asked about it, their traditional culture was the only explanation the parents could provide for this difference. Thus, the situation in which the families confront the issue of gender equality and find themselves arguing about what is appropriate for women and men and what is not, is expected in traditional societies, but also is expected between generations. The young generation is probably more open to changes and modern views in comparison to the older one. Pampel (2011), referred to the inevitable shift toward gender equality in modern societies, claiming that these changes emerge generationally, as “changing material conditions and values tend to erode traditional beliefs, family authority and communal obligations and lead to changing views on women’s role” (p. 3). The change usually starts among nontraditional groups, the better educated, and the less religious. In the wider society its especially common among highly educated women who have a strong interest in achieving gender equality (Van Rossem, Meekers, & Gage, 2015). Gradually, this change filters through to larger parts of the population (Pampel, 2011), and can be seen as a clash between old and young, but also between the less and the more traditional.

A comparison of the views and thoughts of Israeli Arab parents regarding the situation of their emerging adult children living at home, with those of Israeli Jewish parents at the same position (Dor, 2013) reveals significant differences. Arab parents expect their children to stay at the parents’ house as long as they are unmarried, and the overall atmosphere in the home of an Arab family somewhat more accepting and nonjudgmental than in Israeli Jewish homes. Jewish parents of emerging adults who lived at home were worried about their children’s plans for the future, with tension and criticism related to various issues, as the main reasons for the children living at the parents’ home at that stage was financial (Dor, 2013). It is possible that by living at home, and hence by fulfilling the parents’ expectation not to leave before marriage, the Arab parents experience obedience from their children, which is an important value in the Arab family. A recent study (Dor & Hallifa-Yunnis, 2016), focused on the experience of Israeli Arab emerging adults who live with their parents. The findings revealed that the need to conform to the social expectation that children live in their parents’ home until marriage, gives these emerging adults a degree of comfort, as their parents are satisfied that they fulfill society’s norms. However, these emerging adults also experience constantly having to rush and find a meaningful relationship that will lead to marriage, a difficulty their parents do not see. The emerging adults also cited the difficulties created by the generational. Dwairy (2004), referred to the way Arab parents react toward inappropriate behavior of their children during childhood: “Children are expected to adhere to their parents’ and teachers’ expectations and regulations, and obedience is a central positive value in education” (p.236). As children get older, parents probably refer to their children more like adults, however it is probable that the core of the parents’ authority in the Arab family, drives the children to stay at the parents’ home as they are expected (and not to consider other options) in the first place.

4.1 Conclusions

The current research indicates that traditional values drive Arab parents to expect their children to live

at home until they marry. By doing so, the emerging adults demonstrate compliance with social norms and respect toward parents' authority. Along with this, it is also evident that modern aspects are also expressed by Israeli Arab parents, as they encouraged their children's delaying age of marriage until perusing education and starting to develop a career orientation.

4.2 Research Limitations

The present study has a limitation that stems from the personal and sensitive nature of the topic, and we must treat the responses with respect for the fact that parents may have not been completely open. In addition, this being a qualitative study with a relatively small sample, there is the question of generalizability.

The parents in the current study represent a relatively traditional society, albeit one undergoing processes of modernization. While the situation whereby emerging adults live with their parents is an important issue in modern Western society, this may not be the case here, as children are expected to live with their parents until they marry. We referred to that issue in the interviews, and the parents expressed their positive attitudes toward delayed age of marriage, but as it is a very private issue it is possible that some of the feelings were held back. Another limitation in this study relates to the fact that the findings are about families having both parents. Families with a single parent and number of children in the family could be extremely important determinants of parents' views about prolonged stay at home. However the current study does not cover these factors.

In addition to that the interviews were conducted in Hebrew (for analysis purposes). The participants were all fluent in Hebrew, but as it is not their native tongue, they may have been able to phrase their ideas more freely had the interviews been conducted in Arabic. Nonetheless, we hope that their authentic voices came through. The study presented a significant opportunity for a deeper understanding of the experience of Arab parents of emerging adults, in the extended journey toward their children's adulthood.

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