

# Sentenced to Commute: Indigenous Young Women at a City University<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*This study unveils the city from the perspective of young, indigenous women, undergraduate students who commute to a city university from remote, traditional communities. Relying on in-depth interviews with 22 Israeli Druze women, natives of Galilean locales, it explores their daily transition to and from the city. The analysis divulges key issues worth attention: the respondents' use of temporal frames to organize their experience of transition, the effects of place and mobility on how they negotiate their identity following their interactions with the urban way of life and, finally, a comment on the spatialization of multiculturalism is conveyed.*

## Daily commuters and the multicultural city

Multiculturalism is a term mentioned with regard to non-hegemonic groups, most commonly: immigrants, national minorities and indigenes. It refers to the decent response to the socio-cultural heterogeneity of the demographic composition in specific places (Song, 2010). Most typically, cities are such diversified places attracting many who seek to benefit from their qualities as trading hubs, marketplaces, industrial complexes, transportation nodes, governmental cores, foci of political activity and centers of service provision. Cities are also the location of many institutes of higher

education—the pivot of the current study. Urban multiculturalism is largely evaluated by spatial separation into neighborhoods so that social groups, usually ethnic and racial, are sorted into various parts of the housing market. This is largely explained by prejudice and discrimination against such groups and by own-group preferences to maintain distinctiveness within specific urban parcels (Clark 2002; Krysan and Farley 2002; Massey and Denton 1993; Yinger 1995). This common focus on spatial segregation dismisses the temporal impact of daily dynamic, misreading additional forms of segregation across the urban space. Some recent research has noted that racial and ethnic transformation of urban tracts occurs through employment. As many urbanites move to their places of work, where they meet people from different socio-cultural groups who live in other neighborhoods, their commuting disrupts the known segregated order of the housing market, yielding additional urban patterns of segregation (Blumen and Zamir 2001; Ellis, Wright and Parks 2004).

However, as a focal point for various activities, the city also attracts many, employees and others, who reside beyond the metropolitan limits. Not only does this flow of incoming people increase the city's day-population, it also intensifies its diversity, portraying new, short-lived, hard to measure and unexplored spatial patterns of interactions and segregation. One well-acknowledged familiar daily influx is that of ex-urban employees who re-enter the city for employment purposes. Another relatively ordinary flow of incomers is that of university

students who have not located to the city and commute regularly from their remote, often rural, neighborhoods. This study explores such a case, tackling multiculturalism from the less common perspective of daily migrants. It turns the light on their reality, focusing on the experience of indigenous young women who, in their pursuit of higher education, re-enter the city and experience its spirit while adding to its multicultural characteristic.

In the last decades, in most developed societies as well as in many developing ones, a remarkable boom in higher education has been largely centered on women. Higher education increases the chances of women to upgrade their earning potential and enhances their social capital as well as that of their family and community (Becker, Hubbard and Murphy 2010). In developing societies in the Arab world these advantages often provoke a paradox, challenging the traditional confinement of women to the home environment and the strict supervision over their movements and social contacts. This study explores the experience of young women, undergraduate students, who live in this paradox. It conveys the perceptions of Israeli Druze women who dwell in remote, semi-rural, traditional communities and commute to a city university. Previous research on Arab Palestinian women in the Israeli system of higher education focused mostly on long-term processes of identity re-construction after their university period and homecoming. The current study highlights their university period, exploring their present actuality as students. Following their commuting to and from the city, this study seeks to

unveil their accumulative experience of frequent urban encounters and habitual fluctuations between these two, traditional and modern, gendered worlds. After considering the status of Israeli Druze women and methodological issues, this experience is conveyed and then analyzed with reference to multiculturalism in the city.

### **Druze in Israel**

The Druze people of the Middle East reside in Syria, Lebanon and Israel where they exist as small minorities with no national aspirations. They make up a small, traditional and religious community whose origin is unclear. Today it is common to identify Druze with Arabs because of some similar ways of life: customs, popular beliefs, dress, food and language. However, alongside some unique cultural traits, their esoteric religion (evolved in Egypt about one thousand years ago) separates them from their neighboring Arabs. To protect their mores and maintain their distinctiveness the Druze tend to live in isolation, mostly in small, mountainous villages away from national centers. Solidarity with the Druze collective is very strong and includes powerful ties between patriarchal, patrilineal clans that rank women at the bottom of social hierarchy (Dana 1998, 49; Farraj-Falach 2005; Firro 1992; Katz 1990; Layish 2000). In Israel, some 123,000 Druze comprise less than 2 per cent of the national population and only 10.1 per cent of the Arab citizens minority (82% Muslim), residing in 16 mountain locales. Living in isolation, Israeli Druze have shaped a rural, conservative and close-knit community that strictly preserves its

religious and traditional values with strong clan solidarity (Al-Krenawi and Graham 2001; Dana 1998; Hassan 2011).

Israeli Druze are a recognized, autonomous religious group with a separate education system where Druze heritage is integral in the curriculum. Unlike the majority of Arab-Palestinian citizens who are exempt from military service, military conscription for Druze men is compulsory following agreement between the state and the community. As a result, individuals and locales are entitled to some lawful privileges, such as, subsidies in housing, infrastructure investments, construction and welfare benefits. Existing research has tended, mostly, to illuminate Druze involvement in the Israeli political system. Studies of Druze multiple-identity in connection with their Israeli and Arab identities show that the majority adheres to the Arab identity component and dissociates itself from the Palestine narrative, while considering Druze Israeliness as a real, non-instrumental identity (for detailed discussions see Nisan 2010; and Yiftachel and Segal 1998). Unlike many Arab citizens who live in cities and in semi-urban locales close to urban centers, Druze tendency of separatism confines most of them to isolated, rural locales. As a result, the ability of Druze women to rely on modern ideas of equality and negotiate the traditional gender regime and the patriarchal constraints it imposes on their daily lives barely exists. The effect of this dissociation from urban life has been noted, though not researched, by few scholars and only with regard to Druze involvement in the Israeli labor market (Kirschenbaum and Goldberg

1992; Hassan 1992) and not with their level of education. In recent years, however, Druze emphasis on schooling has yielded a rapid increase in schooling, including tertiary education for women.

### **Druze women**

The patriarchal nature of the Druze community in Israel has been meagerly researched and, similar to other characteristics, much information has been extrapolated from research on Muslim women which attenuates Druze distinctiveness where, for example, religious proscription of polygamy most prominently singles out Druze women. Nevertheless, women's status is low and social control over them is especially tight. They are obliged to obey the men of their extended family and to assume housework and child-rearing (Farraj-Falach 2005; Hassan 2008; Layish 2000). Women's behavior greatly determines the reputation, "honor", of their entire family and hence their chastity must be demonstrated by modest clothing, limited individual mobility, male chaperonage in public places and, in many cases, also by refraining from driving and physical exercise (Dwairy 1998; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992; Farraj-Falach 2005; Weiner 2004, 2008).

Although in Israel, higher education is considered important and has raised self-awareness among indigenous women (Pessate-Schubert 2003), cultural barriers still constrain Druze women's access to institutes of higher education (Weiner 2004 and 2008). Adherence to traditional cultural practices is greatly affected by locales' distance from the metropolitan center of Haifa. This cultural geography has determined the expansion of higher

education among women in recent years. In the late 1980s, despite stringent forbidding by religious traditional leaders, several Druze women from the two Carmel vicinities, on the outskirts of Metropolitan Haifa and a ten minute drive from the University of Haifa, broke through patriarchal hindrance and attended higher education. Leaving their home neighborhoods, often unescorted, and studying in the company of men, these women contravened traditional norms and they encountered powerful opposition, at times even ostracism of their families and excommunication from the Druze religion (Falach 1991; Weiner 2004)—a punishment ordinarily reserved for murderers and adulterers. Approximately a decade later these trailblazer women were followed by young women from their Carmel vicinities and, a few years later, young women from the more remote, rural and traditional locales in the Galilee joined them. Over the years, higher education slowly gained legitimacy, yet some Galilean communities still disapprove of higher education for women. Today some 80% of high school Druze female students aspire to higher education (Farraj-Falach 2005, 61) and, within higher education, female Druze students outnumber their male peers.

Most research attention to Druze women is centered on their education. Tertiary education, especially at universities, presents Western culture to Druze women and equips them with new perspectives on their own needs and values regarding the place of individuals in the family and society. University teaching differs greatly from the traditional methods common in the

rural schools, promoting intellectual curiosity and academic independence, and legitimizing the questioning of taken-for-granted knowledge and arguing with authority. As the effects of this openness extend beyond academic texts, university women students also challenge patriarchal authority and norms common in their own community. They illustrate their university period as a time of intense individual change and as an opportunity to discover their true “inner selves” and restructure their identity in a more individualistic way. Their reconstructed, new identity is fragmented and divided between covert and overt components: the covert, suppressed identity is constructed by Western, more individualistic norms, while the overt, openly-expressed identity manifests traditional cultural norms common in their semi-rural home communities. The overt component regulates the identity displayed in public and this observed femininity involves modest clothing and adherence to traditional gender roles (Weiner 2004).

Indeed, this identity reconstruction reflects the paradox of higher education for women in developing societies where increasing the likelihood of women’s earning and of the community wealth might not keep the need to preserve specific indicators of women’s (lower) status and identifiable pointers of the traditional gender regime which are often considered as a brand-marking symbol of the distinctiveness of the whole community. The potential of space to unravel this paradox is important though hardly recognized in these studies of Israeli Druze women and their Arab Palestinian peers. Distances and

the nature of movements between places may influence the flexibility of patriarchal control, although the need to travel to a city university from small, isolated, rural communities seems to work against such flexibility. Only one study of Bedouin women identified chaperoning and religious clothing as instrumental means that legitimate entry to the modern, Jewish space of the university, but consequences are discussed as a long-term process the effect of which appears mostly after finalizing university studies (Abu-Rabia-Queder, forthcoming). Thus the spatialization of everyday life, of how distances and movements turn into a matter of daily decision-making and daily practices within the “big” pattern that conditions attendance at higher education, is generally overlooked. This study seeks to unveil how such performance of routine transitions structures the daily reality of young Druze women students who move between their traditional home communities and the modern city where their university is located.

### **The city, the university and the research setting**

To illustrate the setting of the current study about the daily transitions of young Druze women we have to rely on studies about Arab-Palestinian students. Previous studies have hardly concentrated on Druze students in Israeli universities. Considering the focus of the review on Druze and two important similarities between Druze and Arab-Palestinian female students, their minority language, that is, Arabic as the mother tongue, and living under strict patriarchal regime, some relevant

insights can be derived from research on Arab-Palestinians. Israel, which defines itself as a modern, democratic and Jewish state, granted equal rights to Israeli-Arabs at its inception, including the affirmation of Arabic as a formal language. However, Hebrew evidently dominates the entire spectrum of life outside indigenous locales and this almost guarantees a serious disadvantage at the level of higher education for graduates of the Arabic language based secondary education. This structural disadvantage generates an enduring confusion and a tendency toward collective separatism on the part of Israeli Arab-Palestinians alongside the view of university education as an important path to upward mobility, at least for individuals (Rabinowitz and Abu Baker 2002). While, today, many young Arab women are encouraged to become university students, they are still marginalized by the socio-cultural strategies of a traditional society which, in the last few decades, has selectively adopted modern influences. Primarily, gendered cultural norms encourage women and men to maintain their distinctiveness from each other; women are inculcated from childhood to give precedence to their families’ and clans’ interests and curb their individuality (Haj 1992; Hassan 1991; Rapoport, Lumski-Feder and Masalha 1989; Sa’ar 2001; Shokeid 1993).

The respondents are students of the University of Haifa. Haifa is the third largest urban area in Israel, the population of which exceeds half a million, nearly 10 per cent of the national population. The city is situated on Mount Carmel, and its range of influence includes the Northern District where Israeli Druze

live. Haifa is one of a few Israeli cities where Arab-Palestinian and Jewish citizens live together, and it is known for its comfortable coexistence. A magnet for many students from the north, the city affords young Arab-Palestinians, especially women, a relatively free social environment (Kashua 2004). As a result, the University of Haifa is the only research university in the country where the percentage of Arab-Palestinian students (23%) is higher than its percentage in the Israeli population (almost 20%). The number of women students, especially young women, has risen dramatically in the last decades and today they make up over 65% of the Arab-Palestinian students on campus. As a result, the University of Haifa is a unique Israeli arena with a long tradition of teaching mixed classes of Palestinians and Jews (Safir, Nevo and Swirski 1994). Hence, the choice made by many scholars to focus on Arab-Palestinian students of the University of Haifa is not surprising, but this is the first study that focuses on some parts of the experience of Druze women.

### Methods

Considering the complexity of this situation, we asked how they reckon with the decision to commute to the city and how they feel about their experience of daily transitions to and from the city. The study relies on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 22 young Druze female students. The respondents' fathers are mostly skilled blue-collar workers (11) and self-employed (9), usually outside the locale (18) in urban vicinities, and the men in the immediate family (fathers and brothers) assumed military service. The respondents describe the economic

situation in their families as "relatively good" and "a little better than average" which is supported by the fact that none were involved in paid work. While these characteristics imply openness to the outside, modern world, the fact that the majority of their mothers (19) are full-time homemakers and that all the respondents said that they spend a considerable amount of time doing domestic chores in the immediate and the extended family, indicates the prevalence of the customary gender regime and women's focus on their traditional roles (see also Fogiel-Bijaoui and Bechar 2003; Seginer, Karayani and Mar'i 1990). At the time of interviews the respondents were 19-21 years old, second- to fourth-year full-time undergraduate students at the faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences, Education and Law at the University of Haifa. They all lived with their birth families in their native neighborhoods in three Galilean Druze locales, the most distant being about 60-80 kilometers from the University of Haifa and an 80-130 minute drive each way. Thus, this group of respondents represents a relatively long and bothersome commute and the interviewees are well acquainted with this experience of daily transitions.

Interviews were conducted in Arabic (the Druze mother tongue) by two young, female Druze peers (as part of a wider research project about the effect of higher education) previously unacquainted with the interviewees, at a place chosen by the interviewees (usually off-campus), lasting about ninety minutes. Interviewees were re-approached (by the same interviewer on campus or via phone) to verify the impressions gained in the course of the interview. This matching was valuable in

enhancing our access to such relatively intimate information (Bhavnani 2004; see also the discussion in Wolf 1996). Interviews were recorded, translated and transcribed; the text was analyzed by the authors with the help of indigenous young women in a process of double verification across cultural boundaries within the research team. Taken together we believe that these measures assure high-quality, authentic information.

### **Transition to the city through time frames**

The experience of transitions is primarily and most prevalently structured in temporal terms. Time represents itself as a manifold array made of various frames, serving as a high-level apparatus by which reality is sorted. It embraces daily transitions as a two-way, concrete occurrence, and a sense of passing through time that implies mid- and long-term processes. Typical interviews started with daily concerns, and then long-term processes, which contextualize daily transitions, were expressed. This order indicates that sorting out daily occurrences is a more pressing issue for the interviewees while dealing with long-term processes is a much more transparent and comprehensive undertaking.

The “management of time” is a term often used to describe day-to-day routines and occurrences which are largely structured around commuting to and from the university. Daily transitions are foremost about handling the routine as university students. The respondents attend the university four to five days each week and distinguish their “university days” from their “home/family days”. University days are described as a

“chain of sprints” and the respondents say that they feel like participants in a “race” or as attempting to “grow wings”. The daily routine is quite similar for all respondents who start their day very early in the morning aiming to reach the classroom in time for the earliest lecture (8:30 am).

I wake up at about five thirty [am] to catch the first bus. My mother has already prepared some hot beverage for me and I grab a pita [bread] or a sandwich or a cookie to eat on the way. I have to dash. I arrange all my stuff the evening before, not to waste “sleeping time” in the morning. If I miss the bus the whole day gets messy and stressful. It’s better to be on time for the first bus, then you can relax. I have to take my big bag which is quite full and heavy, especially in the winter [when] it is annoying, [because of] the cold, the wind and the rain, it’s easy to be late and sure, you’ll be late often. If I take the second bus I’m late. And also I spend the whole ride with those [students] who slept over, most [of whom] are not very good [students]. I am not like them, I am a good student, though I am from a [distant] village. I’m not in one of these “nothing” [low-level], though closer, colleges. (Rim)

University students are distinguished from college students by their ability to handle the burden of long commuting. Clearly, space is considered to be a barrier for the students’ academic achievements and wellbeing. Evidently, spatial mobility is constrained by two institutional times. The first is determined by the city university. Besides the need to study and prepare academic assignments, its daily effects are felt in the evening before the commute, when the students

do all their non-academic preparations. University institutional time clearly sculpts the morning waking time and other arrangements so as to enable the interviewees to fit into another institutional time which is scheduled mostly by commercial considerations of the public transport service. Meeting the time constraints of the, usually two, public transport schedules facilitates the students' capability to synchronize their transition from their domestic setting to that of the university. Five of the respondents are regularly driven by a family member (father) to a nearby bus station on the main, intercity road where many buses heading to the city central station stop. Without parental help the mornings of these students would be extremely stressful because of the scarcity of public transport in their village as compared to the neighborhoods of most of the other respondents.

Morning transition is also indicative of class, including issues such as economic background, mode of commuting, personal expenses and family support. All respondents reported on satisfying occasions when they are driven by a family member "door-to-door", from their home to the university. These are rare occurrences and unaffordable by their own, "above average", families:

Public transport [to the university] costs a lot, more than 70 shekels [20 US\$] per day to go back and forth. My mother prepares some food and a vacuum flask with coffee and a bottle of water that I take but it's a long day and I often buy some snacks. I don't work because they [family] want me to excel and know that travelling so many hours each day is really tiring.

I also need time to study at home. So they pay a lot for me to go to the university in the city and I am grateful. (Arin)

Although none of the respondents holds a driving licence, and none actually knows a young Druze woman who drives her own car to the university, either occasionally or regularly, all do share a fantasy of commuting by their own self-driven car:

I wish I had my own car, it's so less stressful, makes you free not sentenced [constrained] to the bus. Having your own car to go to the university it's almost like living in the city, you can be yourself, go where nobody knows you. Just knowing that changes you much more than going to the university with some [familiar] people. But I couldn't ask my father to also pay for this [out of home residence], it would break his heart to turn me down for something that could really ease my studies, make me an even better student. (Arin)

Although class nuances are mostly associated with the pricey commuting, the respondents recognize this costly transition as only one part of their comfortable status as full-time students that burdens their families. They try to reciprocate by physical efforts such as travelling in overcrowded buses, carrying their heavy luggage all around during their long university days, consuming less expensive food and, obviously, by aiming towards high academic achievements, including association with students of similar academic aspirations (see an excerpt from Rim's interview quoted earlier). Yet their experience induces a wish for a less

constrained existence with regard to the institutional time of the transport service and social control (as expressed by Arin), but not necessarily with regard to the university institutional time. The latter triggers this imaginary flight to the city, away from their native neighborhoods. The inaccessible car clearly epitomizes autonomy as the benefit of potential exercise of anonymity and individualism which are characteristic of city life. Seven respondents are more direct, contrasting the city with their home locales:

I usually wake up a few minutes before my mother checks on me and think about the day. I think about how I need to hurry to catch the first bus to the [inter]city and catch the city bus; how it is going to be overcrowded and move slowly through the jam-packed, noisy streets and the smelly smog. It is different from what we have at home, not frightening, but intriguing. [City] people can come and go as they like, wear what they want, talk to whoever they wish and have coffee with anybody. They are not recognized and labeled [by passers-by]. I think this place suits me. I often ask myself whether I could move, really separate from my life and live in the city, alone [independently], having a job, an apartment, and new friends. But this is too expensive a dream and my family could never pay for such an undertaking. (Maysloon)

Notably, the respondents refrain from explaining the contrasting circumstances that inspire such fancies of flying away as a liberating step. Although this refraining may be related to a wide, taken-for-granted understanding of the restrictive regime in the home environment, it also attests to the respect they have for their

native culture and to the importance of family ties and approval. The reports on such fancies are withheld by financial concerns and even Maysloon aborts her outspoken desire to experience city life, which would rely on her own independent income, for that reason. Very interestingly, gender, though unmistakably implied, is not brought up directly with regard to these socio-economic and mobility concerns of the morning bus ride. It is, however, tackled most prevalently with regard to the evening ride.

### **The evening transition to the home**

The evening commuting is usually very tight and demands coordination of several passages between different means of transport. Latest buses on campus are strictly timed 10-15 minutes after the evening lectures (18.00 and 20.00), which barely leaves enough time to reach one of the bus stations on campus.

Missing the [last] bus is not an option. It means that my father or my older brother has to drive to the city, to the university, about one hour each direction, to drive me home. It's unthinkable. Now [normally] one of them has to drive to the main road and pick me up at the bus station, but this is only about half an hour altogether, not two hours. The second [intercity] bus drops me off on the main road and it's late and the service is slow [infrequent]. I call home about 15 minutes before my stop, and my brother leaves to wait for me. There is little light and it is quite frightening for a girl [young woman] alone at night on the road and they [the family] don't want me to wait because it's dangerous. It's better not to be [seen] alone, to be waited for. We [women]

have to be careful. What if a [male] student or somebody else is already at the station? People [might] think we are together and talk [gossip]... By the time of the spring semester it is not so terrible because the night comes later and he [her brother] waits for me only after the last lecture. But winter nights are terrible. Not only do I have to pay attention [coordinate] to call home on time when on the bus and see nothing outside, it's also very cold, windy and often rainy. So it's really better that he waits. It could have been better to drive my own car but this is a dream for most unwedded [young, female] students. Also for me even if we [the immediate family] are modern, not religious. ... This is my last year [at the university] and I never miss the [evening] bus... With all these layers of clothing, the heavy bag and the crowded corridors, I have to be quick though I'm tired. Sometimes I skip the toilet to be on time for the bus, and remember, it's a long ride. Honestly, I'm careful not to drink during the last class. (Belkis)

Belkis touches upon most of the issues mentioned by the other respondents. It is indicated that, similarly to the morning commuting, the institutional schedules of the university and of at least two more public transport services shape the journey back home. Means of commuting appear to be very important and, while driving a private car is mentioned and dismissed immediately as irrelevant for women, being driven in a private car by a family member is an important component, typical of the evening transition. In this context several other aspects are emphasized: physical discomfort, tiredness and climate hassles are accumulated over the night-darkness

and the deserted environment. These signify moral panic and generate a sense of vulnerability and insecurity in the young women upon their late return to their distant locales. To reduce the perceived risk and the panic it raises, evening commuting is also constrained by the personal time of men, usually brothers, who chaperon the women for the last part of their journey. Although seemingly personal, the chaperons' time is also largely institutional: it represents the family whose men provide the chaperonage and whose evening schedule incorporates this need to care for the family women. The chaperons' time is also embedded in the second institutional time, that of the community by which the circumstances for chaperonage are determined. Clearly this moral panic is gendered, centered on the protection of women's modesty (sexuality) as a signifier of the family reputation and "honor". Phrases such as, "because we are girls", "especially important for women" and "only for women" were often voiced as indicators of this concern.

Because of their burdensome commuting, ex-urban students who try to make the most of their university days usually stay late which integrates such a late, anxious ride into their routine. Reflecting on this evening anxiety, the interviews resort to irony and even cynicism:

It is not only that these [daily] journeys are tiring for me, they are also more expensive for my family than dorm living. During the first year some of us [female friends] even indicated it to the parents, to show how we [the family] can save money, make university less

costly. All received the same response saying that “some things are worth more than money such as our tradition, values and honor” and that “women and daughters that respect their [religious-traditional] origin don’t fancy city living, where sinful episodes are a daily matter”. Isn’t it funny? I voice my opinion to my parents but not outside [publicly]. So I respect their view and go [commute]. I’ll never be disrespectful, immodest [because] that might hurt them. (Ranna)

Apparently class nuances and economic concerns are tied in with social control and the need to commute daily in order to avoid the peril of the urban lifestyle. Yet, it is attested by all the respondents that some criticism, individualism and sense of autonomy are expressed indoors, within the confines of family privacy. This gap indicates how gender is negotiated within the context of modernization, where processes within the family are muted in order to protect the social consensus outside, in the community public space. This negotiation is discussed later.

Similar to the morning bus, being confined for a long ride with only vaguely familiar fellow-passengers—women and men, yields opportunities for mixing. Following her description of the morning bus, where socializing with students of high academic aspirations seems important, Rim conveys the different atmosphere of the evening ride:

You meet a lot of new [young] people on the bus and it’s nice. You are still “city pretty” [voiced in Hebrew “*Yaffa La’ir*”, see Amira below] and a little bit droopy, and the evening is dark. If you are not too tired, you can talk with

new people [unknown male students]. It’s fine because you are never alone on the bus and must be careful not to chat with them for long because you’re not really unfamiliar... You know how it is for women, people always know people who know people who know you and your family. It is *not* [her emphasis] like you are walking alone in the city and there is little chance to meet acquaintances. On the bus you meet a lot of new people who speak your language and you are relatively free to look, talk and laugh, and then you can meet later on the campus, elsewhere in the city. It’s surely not easy but possible even if I myself never did such a thing, especially with someone who is not like me [Druze]. Anyway, as you get closer to home, you have to arrange your clothes to [suit] the home [community milieu] and call your brother to come and meet you and, even if you have a nice chat with someone, he knows your family watches you, and soon you get off. You are a “good” girl. You can continue later on facebook, but you have time to think if you are interested at all. (Rim)

Thus, evening commuting becomes a discrete arena for mixing and matching opportunities where social control, though existing, is not as tight as usual. It is interesting to note not only that considerations for mixing on the evening bus are different from those on the morning bus, but performance of social control such as re-dressing to affect a modest appearance and coordinating chaperonage are used to “correct” random flirting on the bus. The respondents are familiar with a few cases of romantic relations that had originated on the evening bus and tend to clarify

that, normally, young Druze women follow the code of chastity and separate themselves from strangers. This latter emphasis reflects the Druze tendency of separatism from non-Druze Arabs with whom they share a mother tongue. Segregation from the Jewish majority differs because, as Amira implies, it is embedded in their dependence on institutional time:

I have to catch the bus and don't have time to talk with the teacher and others [students] when the class ends. This is bad mostly when we [students] have to do team tasks. [As a result] I can work only with other Arab [female] students, and it turned out that we [Druze] usually study together and sometimes with [Arab] Christian [female] students. Many [Jewish] students want to work with us [Druze] and we want to work with them, but it's hard, we never have time to hang around and do things together with them so we stick to each other. (Amira)

It is indicated that the evening pressure not only incapacitates personal preparations but it also purges discussions with teachers and cooperation with other students. While separatism is maintained, academic achievements and aspirations suffer.

It is, however, noteworthy that, though common, commuting *to* the home does not always imply a late bus ride. The respondents reported that at least once a week they return home earlier, in the afternoon:

On Tuesdays it turned out that I have some time to do what I like. Usually I go to the mall [at the central station

where she takes the intercity bus] and I walk around window-shopping, watching the people in the cafes, going in different directions. It seems like a big mess but it's not, everybody goes somewhere, nobody is lost. I like to watch all kinds of people: old, young, children, Arabs, Jews, tourists... I look at the women wearing beautiful, fashionable clothes, some wearing tight T-shirts and shorts; they are lovely though they look so naked. Sometimes I ask myself if I could walk like that on the street, not at home [neighborhood], of course, but elsewhere around the world. I wear trousers and it's fine, but never tight jeans. When I'm there [in the city], I try to make myself prettier, modern, to be fit for the city. I put on some make-up, lipstick, arrange my blouse...

[She re-presents her body: tightening her blouse, opening the top button, hanging her coat on her hand, shaking her head to let the hair fall freely, stretching her body upright and wearing a big smile.]

I don't overdo it because someone [familiar] might notice me, but I do change myself a little. I feel different, freer, more myself, the real Amira, more than in the university and certainly more than in my neighborhood. I always dress nice for the university and take special things [clothes and accessories] to change into in the [public] toilets. But when I go to the mall I pay more attention to be "city pretty". Sometimes I go with a [girl] friend and it's more fun, but even by myself it's nice. It is not like going to *Hadar* or to the *Merkaz* [local business districts] where you are actually out [doors], where it's more dangerous around places [sites] which are really no good for women. Anyway, I don't have much time to wander around,

but every other week for one or two hours I feel different, like abroad.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to *Hadar* or to *Merkaz*?

Sometimes I go, but always with friends. It's interesting for me because I'm used to the village, but I feel better at the mall. I'm more comfortable to do some little shopping for myself, clothes and in the drugstore, and [costume] jewelry, and all the other stores. In my neighborhood the stuff [selection] is boring, at the university it's limited and at the mall there is everything. (Amira)

Returning home in the afternoon offers an advantage which is most often taken by the young women to encounter city life as a fourfold experience: reduced social control, exploring "improper" territories, restructuring bodily appearance, and joining consumption as a relatively private act. While all these aspects are unquestionably embedded in their "going-to-the-university", they are experienced as spatially and temporally separated from the campus life. The semi-public space of the mall seems to provide an agreeable mixture of anonymity, safety, and hubbub that enables these young women to encounter city life without seriously challenging their community conventions. Interestingly, bodily restructuring, which is admittedly an important component of the morning daily commuting, was mentioned in passing by only two interviewees. Yet it was brought up with regard to this less frequent ride which was mentioned by an additional 16 respondents. While this neglect might be related to privacy and modesty it, nevertheless, indicates the extent of social control which is felt by these young women also when

on campus where they are recognized as Druze by others, including kith and kin. It is noteworthy that all the respondents dress in a modern way yet, as they move toward the city, all slightly amend their appearance in a way which is less acceptable as modest in their neighborhood but hardly noticeable by modern outsiders. Altogether, these seemingly minor changes in representing the body at home, on the campus, and in the city, reflect variations in the sense of the gendered self which are related to place and mobility. These are discussed in the last section.

#### **Home days: transitions through the weekly and yearly frames**

Although the women's experience of daily transitions is fragmented between the morning and the evening bus rides as separated endeavors, the two are not unconnected. To explicate their connectedness, the respondents turn to different time frames that better capture the cyclic experience of their transitions—the weekly and the yearly routines. Out of the seven days of the week the respondents spend two or three days at home. They usually describe themselves as adult daughters in their parents' home:

The most important thing is to study, to prepare my academic tasks, including reading. Written assignments always come first and then reading [which is] extremely difficult and time consuming because it's mostly English [second foreign language]. Often I tend to avoid it... I know it's not right, my parents are making [financial] efforts, and I don't have to [take paid] work except during the [summer] vacation... I am

a good student, but I could do much better. [Hence]It's good that I don't live there [dorms] with all the friends and the "city fun". I would probably have studied even less, go out to wander around with friends, to spend time in the city and the [dorm's] club and so on. I do imagine what it could be like to live there but, still, even with all these annoying tours [commuting], I have more time to study at home. Here I can help my Mom at home, you know, cleaning, washing, in the kitchen. I help my aunt with her young toddlers, I do some shopping for my grandmother and help her in the house, and once a week I help some of my uncle's kids with their homework. There are many things that I do and my family counts on my help. And I spend some time, actually a lot of time, with my friends and some of my cousins. Here there are a lot of family affairs but I can always say that I have to study to avoid some of them; in the dorms you're alone [independent]... who can tell you what to do? You don't need to say you're studying to have a little peace [privacy]. (Mariam)

Mariam's description clearly identifies studying, domestic and family work, and same-sex mingling as the three most prevalent activities that dominate the students' "home days" routine. These are portrayed hierarchically so that the prioritization of studying is widely accepted. The effect of gender is noticeable with regard to the non-academic activities, such as, domestic chores, child minding, controlled social links and exemption from financial worries, which altogether structure a relatively sheltered environment for young women students. For Mariam living on campus in the city implies an alternative order

to that of her native neighborhood with regard to studying, personal autonomy, domestic work, unsupervised mingling and mobility. Although none complained about their home-days' routine, all respondents confessed envisaging such an alternative. Thus, while descriptions of daily commuting are mostly structured around practices and habits of moving *to* and *from* the city, contrasting "home days" with "university days" offers a fuller perspective of the women's transition between the two worlds.

Mariam alludes to another cyclic order that contextualizes the transitions to and from the city. The yearly order separates the university period from the four-month summer vacation. Besides the short-term ceasing of daily commuting, the most important aspect of summer vacation is the involvement of most (19 out of 22) of the respondents in paid work for three to four months. All are employed in jobs near to their homes, working as temporary shop assistants, cashiers, child minders and other types of helping jobs, often in local businesses owned by members of the extended family. While all said that they were treated fairly well at their jobs, 14 (of the 19) reported on being underpaid—below minimum wages and commented that such unlawful salaries are common among employed women in the region:

I believe that in the city people [employers] who don't know you or your family wouldn't dare to pay you less [than minimum wages] but I live here. Even those who live on campus return home for the summer vacation and are underpaid. But we usually have to work during the summer for at least three months to help the family

and save some money, not to ask [money] for every petty thing. (Rula)

Apparently city jobs appear more profitable than local ones because the typical anonymity of urban reality seems to protect against social control. At the home locales, traditional values of gender hierarchy and loyalty to the clan and to the community seem to cultivate a closely-knit reality that enables financial abuse of these (and other) employed women. Rather than expected vacation-topics such as relaxation, leisure, independent earning and occupational considerations, the ill-feeling of being financially abused dominates the “home days” experience of the employed respondents during their summer vacation. This experience also shapes their future view of themselves as employed women.

#### **A life course perspective**

References to the respondents’ past and future, though not necessarily voluminous, are found throughout the various testimonies, illustrating an additional time frame. The life course perspective is a taken-for-granted frame, serving as an underlying principal that contains the venture of university education as one part of a longer and diverse course. Samira, who was interviewed on the last week of her four-year university course, offers a retrospective view of her venture:

Sometimes when I’m alone [with no acquaintances] on the [intercity] evening bus I think about my life. I try, I need to explain myself, justify this burden. I see [adopt] a wider picture, a panorama that helps me to appreciate this long, tiring ride. My family

always emphasized education and I always tried to be good [at school]. My father always wanted me to go to the university, to have a better future as a woman and a mother. I now know what a better future means for me. Not being a homemaker who has no money [earnings]. To have a better job than just cleaning or arranging vegetables at my uncle’s grocery [where she works on vacations], and it will be more interesting [fulfilling]. My fiancé and I will make a “good” family with [higher] education and income to support our family. My mother never worked outside [the home] but I will ... have my own money and my own life. I’ll live in a [the nearby] village with my fiancé’s family. We will not live elsewhere, not even in Akko [a neighboring, medium-size, mixed—Arab-Jewish, city at the metropolitan outskirts]. But having visited the city often, watching how people live there, I learnt a great deal about how to manage my life as a modern woman who will also be a mother and who won’t stop respecting her tradition. (Samira)

The effect of the “big picture” is usually pushed aside. It typically emerged with regard to descriptions of some long moments of solitude which were occasionally offered by the long evening commuting. This broad perspective entails a strong sense of future disposition, encapsulating issues of family life with motivation for social mobility as the main benefit of university education, and depicts some differences from the typical lifestyle of the parents’ generation. Social mobility is conveyed in conventional-modern terms of occupational and income characteristics and in the more traditional terms of reputation in the community.

Like most others (19) who are engaged to be married when completing their university course, Samira realizes that the coming wedding implies migration to her partner's native locale, and predicts her future in the bosom of her Druze community. Although the option of future city residence is declined, she appreciates the input of her urban encounters to the enhancement of her future prospects as she portrays a kind of middle ground where the traditional and modern value systems are integrated. Evidently, she differentiates her "urban experience" from her "university experience" and recognizes the inconsistency between city life and the traditional life in her locale. Altogether, this "university-city" phase in her life helps her to formulate a future which is believably viable.

### Discussion

This study unveils the city from the perspective of a transient population of young, indigenous women students from remote, traditional communities, examining their experience of daily transition to and from the city. The analysis divulges some key issues that are worth attention: the respondents' use of temporal frames to organize their experience of daily transitions, the effects of place and mobility on how they re-construct their identity following their interactions with the urban way of life and, finally, a comment on the spatialization of multiculturalism is offered.

Throughout the testimonies, the most prominent issue is the intuitive tendency of the interviewees to order their activities as well as their multifaceted experience in cyclic and linear time

frames, demonstrating the interlock of the spatial and temporal dimensions (Hägerstrand 1985). The interviewees recognized two cyclic time frames by which they organize their routine, the week and the year. The weekly order separates university days from home days. University days are structured around academic activities and loaded with urban impressions. Although home days are also structured around the priority given to academic concerns, they include many more activities which are typical for young women in these Druze neighborhoods. Thus, while each daily routine is perceived as linear, the full impression of daily transitions to the city and encounters with the urban milieu is evidently captured and conveyed within the respondents' experience of the weekly cycle. This time frame enables them to process and evaluate their urban encounters against the common standards in their native neighborhoods. Most likely this lag is explained by the overtiring and exhausting routine of each university day and the relief offered by the weekly perspective.

Some correlation can be found between the weekly and the yearly cycles which separate university terms from summer vacations. It is notable that throughout the testimonies the entanglement of space and time includes common references to the effect of seasonal changes as part of the yearly cycle. Vacation, however, implies withdrawal from urban encounters and involvement in paid work close to the home. Individual earning does not necessarily entail personal autonomy, indicating the respondents' experience of tension between some "home conventions" and some "urban-

modernist" basic rights. This cycle represents the sense of moving back and forth between their two statuses: during university terms they are privileged young women who are permitted to access higher education and, in the course of that, also experience a weakening in social control and licitly encounter the urban milieu. During university vacation they are young women of the community who experience (re)intensification of social control and restricted mobility which makes them captive, exploited employees.

Unmistakably, cyclic and linear time frames are twisted together. Despite the obvious pairing of the morning and evening transitions and that each typically reflects "transitional concerns" which are contained by the other, they were described as separate, linear activities. Quotations that enclose both within the sequence of one day were hardly voiced and their correlation is articulated within the cyclic time frame of the week.

An overarching linear time frame is that of the respondents' life course. The women are aware of their current stage in the final phase of their formal education. During this (three to four year) university phase, the yearly cycle though lively and sparkling, is mostly hesitant and ambivalent. Daily transitions are entwisted with the life-course frame and, together, the twisted time frames epitomize a wavering experience of time-space expansion and compression (Katz 2001). For these young women attending the university implies access to the benefits of modernity and their world has grown bigger, practically in spatial terms as determined by their daily mobility. Their urban encounters, however,

are rather limited by the institutional schedules that prescribe their commuting procedure—temporal constraints—as nights outside the home and dormitory residence are not acceptable (for them). They are also limited by the life course frame which implies time-space (re)compression upon their graduation and home-coming, when traditional gender hierarchy will regain hold on their lives and re-confine them to the home environment (Blumen and Zinaty 2010). Altogether, going to the university shapes an incoherent experience which entails identity discontinuity. Narrating their mobility through the various time frames helps the respondents to cope with the challenge that mobility between the two places brings into their lives. In that process, the effects of place and mobility on identity (re)construction transpires.

### **Place, mobility and identity**

The need to reckon with the effects of place and mobility is a recent development in identity research and is mostly applied to international migration, transition from pre-modern to modern settings and the rise of hybrid identity (Bauman 2001; Easthope 2009; Urry 2000). This study emphasizes daily mobility, exploring the experience of indigenous young women who move from their traditional remote communities to the city with a typically modern purpose of entering higher education (Tuan 1996 "hearth" and "cosmos"; see Ley 2001). To understand how they negotiate their identity components in that chapter which is typified by diurnal transitions, the significance of place must not be overlooked. It is, however, worth

mentioning that, unlike international migrants, the respondents routinely exercise travelling by which mobility itself turns out to be a stable identity component and their hybrid identity extorts more vitality from encounters with the two places at both ends of their daily journeys.

The urban way of life (Wirth 1938) is probably the best term to capture the meaning of their daily going to the university and exposure to the city. It refers to the erosion of moral structure and community life in the traditional sense as a consequence of new division of labor, cultural diversification and socio-economic segregation which isolate individuals within the propinquity of strangers. The traditional nature of the respondents' home communities, their place of departure, was described earlier. Clearly, the respondents are situated within a broader modernization of their Druze communities. In the Israeli Druze (and Arab-Palestinian) communities this process has typically leaned on men's daily commuting to relatively close employment foci. As a result, some modern-urban features have been "imported" into the traditional-rural locales by men commuters and residential outmigration to urban centers has been scarce. Women, who were traditionally confined to the rural locales, have had limited direct encounters with modernization and its benefits and continue to perform their gender role in the traditional ways. Consequently, their adherence to the traditional gender role was ingrained into place identity, re-affirming the authentic Druze character of these locales.

Under these circumstances, the recent development of daily migration of young women to the city is tolerated, but with reservations, doubts and suspicions. This inconsistency largely shapes the way these women negotiate the urban way of life. They are curious, some even passionate, about city life, and their urban experience is typically modernist as it is set against their lives in their semi-rural home communities. It embraces some physical features such as noisiness, smelliness, throng, and some more abstract thought-provoking issues, for instance, individuality, anonymity, autonomy and, most prominently, a sense of a new moral order which is based on the slackening control on their sexuality and their discontent with their summer job arrangements. It is noteworthy that these women recognize the "liberating", modernist potential of city life for women, which is deeply seated in the urban way of life (e.g., Nava 1996). Yet they differ from the original context of the term "urban way of life" in that they have no intention of becoming urbanites. Their strong home attachment, clan and ethnic loyalty, and deep sense of community belonging renounce urban citizenship (see Maya-Jariego and Armitage 2007). Thus, the hybridity that the urban way of life phases into their identity mostly reflects this multifaceted bond to their place of departure. This somewhat overshadows the effect of their current encounters with city life, which include some minor "provocations", such as, less modest clothing and appearance, socializing with unfamiliar others, some (usually) innocent flirting, unchaperoned mingling in central streets and malls, independent purchasing of personal

things and frustration with their vacation jobs. However, the effect of the urban way of life is easily detected by their intention to modernize their future life within the community limits: they plan to marry, to have a family, to become employed mothers and assertive spouses, and then to grow to be respectful, convincing women in their communities. This order of things implies that the hybridity acquired through their current encounters with city life (and university education) is suspended, turning into a future orientation. It also unveils their identity re-construction at present by which daily boundary crossing indicates that gender and ethnicity are re-negotiated within a unitary system that involves place and time. Yet it is noteworthy that, within this unity, gender, though re-negotiated, is categorically subordinated to the ethno-cultural component as the preponderance of the life course linear time frame indicates.

Currently, however, they come to the city as day migrants who are distinguished by their appearance, that is, clothes, limited social interactions and temporal constraints, language and studying habits. Their visible foreignness and observed engagement with in- and out-daily migration embody some non-modern Druze values that they “import” to the modern-Jewish city. In that sense these mobile women challenge the binary distinction between rural and urban ways of life, infusing attributes of one milieu into the reality of the other: their daily mobility infuses modernization into their native locales and, by the same token, also diversifies the city, intensifying its multicultural character. Thus, daily transitions and city encounters do not

only hybridize their identity as Druze women, but also liquefy the place identity of their origins and destination. But this liquefying effect differs between the two places. Whereas the effects of their encounters with modern city life, especially those related to their gender, are often suspected, disapproved of, and even criminalized, within their home communities, the city milieu tolerates their apparent strangeness. In that sense it is also noteworthy that despite the “Arabic” characteristics of their observed strangeness, none of the respondents reported prejudice or discrimination against them either on that ground or as a woman. While this does not suggest that they have not experienced such harassments, it does indicate the extent of forbearance and signifies the city milieu as tolerant, supporting its multicultural characteristics. The difference between the two places, though understandable and even justified by some, shows how multiculturalism is spatialized. The entanglement of gender, education, tradition and hegemonic power relations emphasizes that, beyond multiplicity and diversity, multiculturalism involves tolerance, acceptance and inclusion as integral to its “decent” component (Song, 2010), and that this component is not necessarily policy-dependent but can also be detected as integral to routine practices of daily life. Thus the spatialization of multiculturalism is also affected by the varied maps of decency, as reflections of various systems of power relations.

Overall, this study sheds light on the viability of city multiculturalism as emerging from a transient, non-hegemonic population which is unquestionably

accepted by urbanites and other passersby with whom they fleetingly interact and share the urban space. Focusing on the urban day population, the current study skips the common disposition to map wards of residential segregation and delves into the experience of one group of this day population. Yet it is indicated that a spatial investigation of the impermanent, daily patterns is a challenging direction for future research. Identifying, documenting and mapping urban routes and spaces of multicultural encounters, indifference and avoidance across the metropolitan area are worthy of research attention. They will provide a better understanding of the city as a mosaic of social spaces and how these vary between day and night.

#### Note

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