

## **Ethiopian And Bedouin Pre-Service Teachers' Perception Of The Woman's Figure And The Leader's Figure**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article explored Bedouin and Ethiopian pre-service teachers' perception of the woman's figure and the leader's figure. It was conducted in a qualitative-interpretative research method. The research population consisted of 38 pre-service teachers learning towards a B.Ed. degree. The research tools included an open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview and the data were content analysed. The findings show that the pre-service teachers of both cultures perceive the woman's figure in a similar way whereas the female leader's figure is perceived differently. Information about the way the pre-service teachers perceive themselves as women and leaders might empower them and promote the understanding and relation between the educating system and the educational and social field.

**Keywords:** Gender and Education, Gender in Teacher Education, Female Leadership in Education, Ethiopian Education, Bedouin Education.

## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Report about the situation of women around the world presents the differences in the status of women versus that of men from eight aspects: population and families, health, education, work, power positions and decision-making, violence towards women, environmental effects and poverty. The Report illustrates an increased equality between the genders in part of the topics. For example: studies and education, health and playing a part in the economy. Nevertheless, it shows that regarding the issue of violence towards women, no meaningful change has transpired, causing severe agony to women worldwide. Moreover, there is still a lot to be done in order to reduce the gaps between the genders as far as power positions and decision-making are concerned. This issue is very important and strongly impacts women's status and conditions in all the other fields (Banjo, 2004; Connell, 2011; Mizrahi, 2012; Mohammed, 2012; United Nations, 2012; UNESCO, 2012; Amnesty International, 2013).

The assumption underpinning this study is that the key for changing the inequality between men and women is gender education. Intervention programmes, workshops, projects and study programmes dealing with the issue of gender from a systemic aspect would entail a new perspective and feminist thinking related to the position and role of both genders in society. Children's education should start at early age, mainly in conservative and patriarchal societies. This would teach the girls and boys that daughters and women are also capable of shattering the 'glass ceiling' and can lead and affect (Sharabi, 1998; Herzog, 2005, 2010; Gilad, 2007; Abu-Rabia-Qwider, 2008; Mohammed, 2012).

This study explored the way pre-service teachers [hereafter – students] perceive the woman's figure and the woman-leader's figure. Teacher education programme which include courses, seminar courses, workshops and gender-oriented programmes will enhance the students' awareness of gender perceptions at the personal level and as educators of the future. Gender education is the key to a sustainable equal society.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1 Gender Stereotypes

Due to stereotypical perceptions, people tend to assign to both genders features and roles characteristic of the male group versus those which characterise the female group. The professional literature engages extensively in the processes which lead to the conception of gender stereotypes and their impact on both genders. (Butler, 1999; Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Most researchers concur that socialisation plays a central part in the acquisition of characteristics and behaviours suitable for the gender classification of every man and woman. Family, community, communication media and education system constitute socialisation agents that perpetuate gender-oriented stereotypes (Malach-Pines, 1997; Baron-Cohen, 2006; Gilad & Millet, 2006).

As far as choosing a profession is concerned, various studies indicate that both women and men view themselves as engaging in occupations which reflect their personal preferences (Acker, 1990; Sáinz & Eccles, 2012). These preferences are shaped already at young age through the process of socialisation. In that process, certain values are attributed to gender roles characteristic of women and men. These values lead women and men to choose 'feminine' and 'masculine' functions accordingly. During their initial socialisation process at home and at school, women are encouraged to learn a profession considered as 'feminine' e.g. teaching, education and office services (Cha, 2013; Cohen, 2013; Hasson & Dagan-Buzaglo, 2013).

From the aspect of characteristics, studies point out features perceived as typical of men versus those which are typical of women. This distinction between 'feminine' and 'masculine' characteristics is manifested by textbooks and children's literature (Malach-Pines, 1997; Naveh, Elad & Ran, 2003). Many textbooks and children's stories depict men as heroic, brave, wise, strong, successful, persevering and charismatic. Conversely, women are described as weak, dependent, submissive, easily sobbing, renouncing and unstable. These stereotypical descriptions evoke readers' automatic reaction to the described figure and reinforce overall stereotypical perceptions of woman and man groups (Kaufman, 1976; Avrahami-Einat, 1989; Ben-Zvi-Mayer, 1995; Meller, 2001; Gilad, 2007).

## **1.2 Processes of Shaping Gender-Oriented Perceptions**

Long before students join academic frameworks of teacher education they have been undergoing processes of shaping perceptions of gender as well as of other issues of education. According to Even (1986), students, like any adult learner, arrive to the learning environment with their 'experience backpack'. This 'backpack' constitutes learners' identity card and it includes: "History, culture, values, attitudes, philosophy, religion, hopes, dreams, gender, skills, competences, education, beliefs and life experience" (Evan, 1986, p. 22). These components are rooted in the students and affect their personal development as well as their learning and teaching processes. A study conducted by Nettle (1998) found that students' attitudes change following courses and intervention programmes. Conversely, Kagan (1992) indicates stability in students' attitudes; hence, these education programmes do not entail any change in students' educational attitudes. Nevertheless, Kagan (1992) underscores that perceptions of adult learners can change as a result of focused learning and of training comprising experiences which undermine their beliefs.

Fullan (1991, 2012) stipulates that a change of education systems and educational processes occurs in three dimensions: change in materials and contents, change in teaching approaches and methods and change in beliefs and attitudes. The most complex is the change in beliefs and attitudes since people are required to change their fundamental assumptions and basic values. Sarason (1990) argues that the change process transpires on three strata: the cognitive stratum, the emotional stratum and the behavioural stratum. It is important to know what individuals think, feel and do regarding the change. Consequently the change and adjustment to it are different from one person to another. Similarly, Ben-Amos & Tamir (1995) maintain that all people pass through personal and professional development stages throughout their life. These researchers specify that among students as adult learners, awareness of these development stages is growing, accompanied by intellectual, emotional and psychological factors. Moreover, Feuerstein (1992) claims that a 'mediating' environment can change patterns of thinking at any situation and any age.

The professional literature underscores that it is important to learn and understand teachers' attitudes and beliefs in order to comprehend their behaviour in the dialogue with their pupils (Tatto, 1998; Wiest, 1998). Studies (Wideen et al., 1998) indicate that the key to a good and meaningful teaching is encompassed in teachers' personality more than in their pedagogical competence which might improve with time. According to these researchers learners believe that good teachers are not necessarily teachers at a high professional level. Rather, they are people with a positive and charismatic personality who understand their pupils and treat them as equals (Wideen et al., 1998). Teaching processes which highlight gender issues improve behaviours, change attitudes and enhance awareness of gender-oriented incidents (Gilad, 2001). As far as changes in personal attitudes and stereotypical perceptions are concerned, the change process is complex and slow. The difficulty to cope with equal opportunity in the education system stems first and foremost from the fact that it is a significantly value-based issue. Furthermore, it is primarily perceived from the

emotional aspect and only then in the rational aspect (Ben-Amos & Tamir, 1995; Shkolnik & Keinan, 2002).

### **1.3 Gender and Education**

The research literature dealing with inequality in education suggests a wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches for describing and analysing the dimensions of this issue and the effect thereof on shaping the education system. However, despite the gender changes which transpire in society and in education we still witness inequality between boys and girls from various aspects. This inequality stimulates the public debate regarding the need for changing the situation (Stromquist, 2007; Zameret-Krechner, 2013). Yona & Dahan (2013) argue that the social depth currents which are increasingly emerging in the last period both in the Israeli and in other societies illustrate the importance of maintaining the centrality of the debate about inequality in education; examining the factors for its formation; and designing ways for coping with it. Moreover, the data published by UNESCO (2003) indicate the existing gender gaps in primary and secondary education in various countries. Consequently there is a collective commitment to equality between the genders and to the promotion of the competences of each and every one without any discrimination.

Gender education is a tool of equalitarian education and of handling with gender stereotypes. Gender studies develop awareness of the formation and preservation of social, cultural and educational patterns which discriminate women vis-à-vis men. Moreover, they develop gender-oriented critical reflection associated with different values which are acceptable in society. This requires allocating a wider space for engaging in differentiation as part of actualising a just worldview. Gender studies enable an academic and value-based discourse about social issues from an important point of view which today is not included in the curricula at schools and at teacher education colleges (Gilad, 2007).

### **1.4 Gender and Education in Israel**

The Israeli education system was initially established as an equalitarian education system whereby the principle of uniform education and equal opportunities underpins the democratic concept. From a formal point of view there are apparently no differences between the material boys and girls study at school. However, in fact, there are gaps of equality between the genders (Gilad, 2007). Over the years adopting the value of equality and granting equal opportunity were assigned interpretations and meanings which have not necessarily narrowed the gaps but have even eternalised them (Gera Committee, 2002; Gilad, 2007). Teachers display a differentiated attitude towards girls and boys at school (Shachar, 1996); textbooks include overt and covert stereotypes (Gera Committee, 2002; Krasny, 2005); the communication media publish and broadcast stereotypes (Lemish, 2007); and parents have different expectations from boys and girls (Horgan, 1995; Shachar, 1996).

In recent years, the education system has considered gender studies as a highly valuable issue. It enables learning of topics associated with the building of a personal, professional and social identity in a democratic society whereby equality is a key value. Moreover, examining the way by which female-students perceive the woman's figure in general and the female-leader image in particular leads to an academic and valued discourse about social and educational subjects. This discourse is regrettably not included today in the curricula at schools and teacher education colleges (Ben-Peretz, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2002; Gilad, 2007).

This non-equalitarian situation is increasingly changing following diverse activities which promote equal education for both genders. For example, the Ministry of Education shapes its policy accordingly and implements different intervention programmes. Moreover, various bodies and organisations in the Israeli and global society initiate numerous activities associated with this issue. All these emphasise the importance of increasing awareness of and granting both genders an equal opportunity to believe in themselves and actualise their dream (Ministry of Education, 2012).

### **1.5 Gender in Teacher Education at the College**

The need for gender studies in general and in teacher education in particular is enhanced due to the understanding that they are relevant to all areas of life. They also allow learning issues associated with the consolidation of a personal, professional and civil identity in a democratic society which considers equality as a key value. Furthermore, providing students with a wide and extensive knowledge in the field of society and culture studies from an innovative perspective necessitates learning of the gender component as a crucial factor affecting the social-educational structuring of buildings, institutions and social and educational mechanisms (Gilad, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2012). In addition, curricula of pedagogy and didactics which encompass the gender component are relevant to teacher education colleges because students are daily exposed to distinct manifestations of social inequality. The most distinct indication of this inequality is the state of women who are the weakest link in the social texture of the Israeli and global public arena. A curriculum which includes gender aspects, demanding an examination of the power relations formed in historical and cultural contexts, determines that the existing order is not necessary and wishes to find out how it can be changed (Gilad, 2007; Safran, 2011).

Side-by-side with these factors, one cannot ignore the academic frameworks of gender and women's studies towards higher degrees, such as: B.A., M.A. as well as research faculties of women and family studies in universities and colleges (Alpert, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2002; Shkolnik & Keinan, 2002). The setting up of the Unit for Equality between the Genders in the Ministry of Education has also placed gender studies on the pedagogical agenda of the Ministry of Education, highlighting the necessity of learning/teaching of gender-related curricula. In the course of recent years, the Academic College of Education located in the south of Israel, where this study was conducted, has promoted gender studies in teacher education and in in-service training courses (Ministry of Education, 2012). The college organises courses and seminars of gender topics in different areas of knowledge. For example: 'Gender and Education', 'Women in the Arab Society', 'Women and Science', 'Being a Woman Being a Leader'. Most of the courses engage in essential issues of gender and feminism and focus on women's status in a multicultural society. The courses present feminist theories and studies of this issue, discuss changes in women's status in the Bedouin and Ethiopian cultures, presenting figures of female leaders and their endeavour. Feedbacks of the students who attended the gender courses show that the courses allowed them to look into their own world. This process transpired following discussions on central topics which are relevant to every population. These discussions underscored the unique characteristics of each culture and their impact on women's positioning and roles in both the private and public space (Gilad, 2007).

**To sum up:** Students arrive to the college carrying 'a bag' of beliefs, perceptions and general and gender-oriented values. For the purpose of developing learners with a liberal, equalitarian and democratic thinking, the curricula emphasise the gender and multicultural aspect, while encouraging the students to believe in themselves, shatter the 'glass ceiling' and actualise their personal and professional dreams.

## 1.6 Educational Leadership and Female Leadership

Studies of leadership indicate that definitions of the concept leadership are numerous and unequivocal (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bennis, 1990). However, there is wide consensus about the concept leadership as well as the competences and qualities which make a person a leader, both male and female. The studies specify the following competences as typical of a leader of both genders: ability to present a vision, personal example, cognition-emotion balance, leading changes, understanding people, organisational skills, courage and delegation of power (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bennis, 1990; Bolden, 2005; Bass & Bass, 2009). These skills and competences elucidate the changes transpiring in the role of leaders in the education system (Gavish & Friedman, 2008; Kozminsky & Klavir, 2010).

Due to the multitude of trends and the complexity thereof, head teachers face a challenge of coping in a complex, changing and dynamic world. They have to deal with a high standard of expectations and goals which do not necessarily have a common denominator and sometimes even contradict each other. Head teachers are required to possess methodological knowledge, intellectual competences and a set of values (Sergiovanni, 2006; Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarovich, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012). Discussion of the relations between leadership and teachers gives rise to the question: "Should teachers be leaders?" In the last decade more and more studies have engaged in female leadership versus male leadership. The principal issues investigated in these studies are: Are the qualities required for managing and leading organisations 'masculine'? Are there any proven differences between women and men in the management and leadership dimension? Are women built differently than men? These and other questions enhance gender differences in the management and leadership role of men and women (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Kark, 2009). Various studies (Gilligan, 1982; Chodorow, 1989; Noddings, 1999; Friedman, 2005) illustrate emotional and mental differences between women and men. The assumption is that feminine identity is developed on the basis of establishing relationships and intimacy. Hence, women have good inter-personal skills, can be understanding, attentive and empathic as well as maintain close relationships. On the other hand, masculine identity develops on the basis of individuation and boundaries. Men feel comfortable in a world whereby independence, power, control, competition and supremacy are key contents (Gilligan, 1982; Chodorow, 1989; Noddings, 1999; Friedman, 2005).

Studies conducted in recent years found that women, like men, can also manage effectively a team of employees. Similarly, women were characterised as leaders who set goals, make decisions, encourage teamwork, communicate, build trust and so on. They can fulfill leadership roles as effectively as men, although they might do it by slightly different ways than men. Flexibility which is considered a 'feminine quality', allowed women to be democratic, consider employees' needs, emphasise collaboration and prefer working in a more network-oriented and less hierarchical structure (Rosner, 1990; Eisler, 1991; Ruso, 2009). However, when their role demands it, they are also task-oriented, competitive and assertive. Women and men are capable of successfully fulfilling many functions when they are allowed to demonstrate the entire range of their competences without limitation of stereotypes (Pevoto, 2003; Kark, 2009; Krook, 2010; Sáinz & Eccles, 2012).

Female leadership embodies several characteristics: 1. When women and men are at the same management level, women are more educated than men because they have to be better in order to reach that level. 2. Different wages. 3. Loneliness at the top – women usually have no connection with the power foci. 4. The 'glass ceiling' – women are not promoted to senior executive positions due to two main reasons: a clear division between women's roles and men's roles and the fact that the leadership image is attributed to men. Hence, women executives are considered masculine

(Rabin-Margaliot, 2002; Cohen, 2006; Ash-Curlander, 2010; Cohen, 2013; Hasson & Dagan-Buzaglo, 2013).

Another issue associated with the differences between feminine and masculine leadership relates to dissimilarities between men and women in their management style. Until a decade ago, most studies assumed that women were more people-oriented and men are task-oriented. This assumption was proven correct in laboratory conditions; however, in the field, no difference was manifested. These findings might stem from the following reasons: (a) socialisation for the role blurs the differences; (b) during the classification process, women who look like men are chosen, namely women who are more task-oriented in their nature; (c) women's strong desire to achieve executive positions narrows the gaps. These studies also show that women tend to prefer a democratic style whereas men prefer an autocratic style. The reason is that women entering the male world of management fear that their authority would be undermined. Hence, they tend to involve their subordinates in the decision-making process in order to moderate their objection and increase their commitment to the final decision (Barkol, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2006; Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarovich, 2011).

### **1.7 Structure of the Israeli Society**

The Israeli society is multicultural and comprises about 8,107,000 citizens. The population consists of mostly Jews (about 75%), Arabs (about 21%) and others (about 4%). The Jewish population is divided into orthodox (about 20%) and secular Jews (about 80%). Most of the Ethiopian Jews are orthodox and immigrated to Israel during the 1980s and 1990s. They number about 140,000 inhabitants out of the entire population of Israel. The Ethiopian Jews have been undergoing considerable changes in the attempt to be integrated into society and the labour market (Gilad & Millet, 2006; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009, 2013; Gharra, 2013). The Arab population is divided mainly into Christians, Muslims, Druze and Bedouins. The Bedouins are the most conservative among the Arab society and this is manifested by tradition, customs and perception of women's role and status. The two societies – the Jewish-Ethiopian and the Arab-Bedouin – are affected by the Jews-Arabs encounter in Israel as well as by the western culture. As a result they undergo changes in every aspect of their existence and acknowledge that education is the key to life (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

### **1.8 The Education System and Ethiopians in Israel**

The absorption of Ethiopian immigrants into the different educational frameworks involved numerous difficulties. Studies of the Ethiopian community illustrate the following hurdles: difficulty in reading comprehension, social problems between Ethiopian children and children born in Israel, problems in the learning process such as independent work, initiative, imagination, concentration, request for help, teachers' attitude and a rather high percentage of 1<sup>st</sup>-graders with learning difficulties (Ben-Ezer, 2002; Millet & Gilad, 2004; Shimron, 2007). Most school teachers were not qualified to deal with the needs of different pupil populations, among them Ethiopian children. Ben-Ezer (2002) argues that most teachers lack the ability to answer basic questions related to central aspects of pupils of Ethiopian origin. Furthermore, behavioural patterns of Ethiopian pupils are tightly connected to the teachers' attitudes towards them. It is important for these pupils to feel that the teachers show interest in them, understand their difficulties and are caring and patient (Olshtain & Golan-Cook, 2009). However, only about 10% of the teachers attended education programmes and in-service training courses which engaged in the absorption of Ethiopian immigrant children in class and in the adjustment of teaching methods to them.

Moreover, head teachers claim that a successful integration and proper absorption of Ethiopian children in class depend on the will, motivation and skills of teachers in these integrating classes. This raises an urgent demand for unique education programmes which can respond to the needs of the Ethiopian pupil population (Ministry of Education, 2013).

The entirety of the changes and processes of the information revolution and the technological development obliges the education system to think in an innovative and creative way about the function of the teacher education system in preparing the heterogeneous pupil population for integration in an educated and advanced society (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Post-modern approaches call for adoption of alternative education pathways which advocate higher consideration for learners' needs, technological developments worldwide, computerised teaching methods and competition in higher education (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Putman & Borko, 2000). These new perceptions underscore the pluralistic approach of education patterns as a leading principle in the process of teacher education. Proponents of this approach stipulate that no single education programme is suitable for all learners. Rather, there is a variety of education programmes and pathways which provide a proper response to the changing needs of the learner populations from different cultures. It is necessary to educate appropriate human resources for teaching and to prepare citizens for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This requires re-examination of the essence and structure of teacher education programmes (Ben-Peretz, 2009).

The perception of pluralism and multicultural education in the training patterns is manifested by the development of a unique teacher education programme designed for Ethiopian immigrants and taught at an Israeli academic college of education. The assumption underlying the decision to open a special class for educating Ethiopian teachers is the wish to offer a population from a different background, different culture and different socio-economic status an equal opportunity to learn, acquire a profession and be integrated into the labour market. Moreover, in recent years we have witnessed the growing need for educating teachers of Ethiopian origin. Out of approximately 146,000 teachers in the education system, from kindergarten and up to high school, only 236 Ethiopian teachers were integrated into the system, 66 of them working in kindergartens (Ministry of Education, 2012).

### **1.9 The Education System in the Arab and Bedouin Sectors in Israel**

Since the foundation of the State of Israel, the Arab sector has undergone changes in the field of education. During the early stage of statehood there were very few schools in the Arab sector and only a very small number of people studied in higher education institutions. The number of kindergartens and schools which catered to pupils from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> grades has gradually increased (in 2000 their number amounted to 589) and Jewish and Arab higher education studies were open to the Arab population. For a very long time girls did not go to school. However, even when this became an option for them, many years passed until higher education for women became acceptable from a social and cultural point of view (Pessate-Schubert, 2003; Abu-Saad, 2005, Ali, 2011). In 2001, 11,645 teachers worked in elementary schools in the Arab sector. 66% of them were women (as compared to 87% women in the Jewish education system at this age group). In the same year, 8,361 teachers worked in high school, out of them 38% were women (as compared to 74% women in the Jewish education system at this age group) (Statistical Yearbook of the Negev Bedouin, 2010).

When compared to the Arab sector in its entirety, the Bedouin are considered a group which has kept the tradition of the Arab-Muslim culture for the longest time. The education system of the Bedouin sector is characterised by low attainments, high dropout percentage and low number of



pupils graduating with a matriculation certificate. Another prominent problem relates to the differences between the genders: the number of male pupils exceeds that of the female pupils, the dropout percentage which is high among both genders, is particularly high among the girls and the number of male teachers in Bedouin schools is almost twice that of female teachers.

In spite of the struggles and changes in women's status in Israel, the data indicate inequality between men and women as well as the positioning and inferior standing of women as compared to men (Abu-Rabia-Qwider, 2008; Ali, 2011; Tutri, 2011). Arab and immigrant women are discriminated twice, both as **women** and as Arabs or immigrants. The inferiority of these women is clearly perpetuated. Arab women suffer from poverty, unemployment, violence and unavailable access to battered women shelters (Hasson & Dagan-Buzaglo, 1999; Abu-Sharaf, 2011). Among Arab women the rate of illiteracy is extremely high, mainly in the case of Bedouin women who suffer also from polygamy. There is a considerable increase in murdered Ethiopian women and similarly there is an increase in the number of Arab women killed on the background of dishonouring the family. No wonder this gloomy situation prevents women from growing, developing and shattering the 'glass ceiling' (Hassan, 1999, Abu-Rabia-Qwider, 2008; Zameret-Krechner, 2013).

## **Research Questions**

1. How do Bedouin and Ethiopian pre-service teachers perceive the woman's figure?
2. How do Bedouin and Ethiopian pre-service teachers perceive the female leader's figure?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research Method**

The research method of this study is qualitative-interpretive of the case study type. A case study is used in the research of teaching and learning. One of its important advantages is its ability to provide insights about events in the contexts and physical sites where they transpire. Cultural and social occurrences can be fully understood only if they are studied from the participants' point of view and from the way those actively involved see them. Data collected from the participants can in fact be depicted as insufficient. However, they definitely facilitate comprehension of the thoughts and feelings of a small group as well as of their attitude and approach (Smolicz & Secombe, 1990; Shkedi, 2005).

### **2.2 Research Population**

The research population consisted of 38 students attending the course 'To be a woman to be a leader' within the framework of gender studies. This course is part of the studies towards a B.Ed. degree at an Israeli academic college of education. There were 20 Bedouin and 18 Ethiopian students and each group studied in a separate course.

### **2.3 Research Tools**

The research tools comprised an open-ended questionnaire, a semi-structured interview and content analysis of metaphors (a verbal and/or visual text). The questionnaire was administered to all the students and consisted of two parts. The first part included items relating to various aspects of the concept 'being a woman' from the students' perspective. The second part contained items related to the concept 'being a leader' from the students' perspective. Moreover, students were

requested to express themselves as women and leaders by using a metaphor in a verbal and/or visual manner. Five students of each group were interviewed by the researcher, each interview lasting about two hours. During the interview each student was asked to answer questions demonstrating her perceptions as to the figure of the woman and the figure of the female leader. The interview built for the purpose of this study was based on the study of Millet & Gilad (2004).

## 2.4 Data Processing

According to the perception of the theory set down in the findings (Shkedi, 2005), a qualitative content analysis was performed in three stages. First the research texts were divided into assertions with which a subject started and ended; these were gathered into categories; then, the connections between the categories were examined. The analysis was done at the following levels: the single student level; the group level: Bedouin versus Ethiopian students; and the general level: all the students.

## 3. RESULTS

The research findings illustrate no differences in the students' perception of the woman's figure. The Ethiopian and Bedouin students perceive the woman as a motherly figure, born to serve the family, the children, the husband and society. The Bedouin students perceive the female leader's figure as a woman who leads the home, the family and the pupils at school. On the other hand the Ethiopian students perceive the female leader's figure as a woman who leads changes, first on the personal level leading herself and, only at a later stage, leads the community and society.

By using metaphors the students described the woman's figure as is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The students' perception of the woman's figure from the metaphorical aspect (N=38).  
*A Woman is Like...*

<b>The woman's figure</b>	<b>No. of students</b>
The world of animals	19
Occupations	9
The world of plants	6
Other	4
Total	38

All the students, without cultural difference, used various metaphors for describing the woman's figure. Half of them, 19 out of 38 students, used metaphors taken from the world of animals, e.g. ant, lioness and bird. Nine students applied metaphors related to various occupations: gardener, farmer and sailor. Six students used metaphors from the world of plants: flower and tree.

The students' perception of the woman's figure was manifested by three major dimensions: a woman is born to serve, a woman should honour and a woman is always concerned, caring and attentive. All the students, without cultural difference, concur that the woman's role is to serve others, first and foremost her family, husband, children and parents.

***A Woman is Born to Serve*****Table 2: The woman's role according to the students in both groups (N=38)**

Assertion	Student
"Get up early in the morning... cook, clean, see that meals are served on time... be busy all the time...". (Used an ant as a metaphor)	Ethiopian
"There is nothing that a woman does not do at home... she is busy all the time preparing meals, serving food, cleaning and organising the house. (Used an ant as a metaphor)	Bedouin
"Raising children is a function bestowed only on the woman and she does not think this makes her less honoured or having a lower status".	Bedouin
"... the woman should work at home... she has the skills and capabilities for that... and even if she lacks them she will learn them with time".	Ethiopian
"The wife, unlike the husband, is gentle and very patient. She is more suitable to raise the children".	Ethiopian
"... the fact that the woman is in charge of the children's education and the home, gives her a big advantage... she can have an effect on raising the children and educating them".	Bedouin
"The woman's place is at home and that's a fact. If she uses it properly she will be the strong one".	Ethiopian

Assertions illustrate that all the students who attended the course believe that the woman's place is at home. The assertions further show the students' perception that the woman should know well and be diligent in all the house chores and the children's education. Some of the students mentioned that women's role and the fact that they are in the domestic space make them powerful and influential.

***A Woman should Honour*****Table 3: Value of honour according to the perceptions of the students in both groups (N=38)**

Assertion	Student
"A woman who honours her parents and listens to them does the right thing".	Bedouin
"It is impossible to live without water and similarly one cannot live without parents and without honouring them". (Used a metaphor of a water reservoir)	Ethiopian
"Honouring the parents is an important value for me...".	Ethiopian
"...Even if I know that my father is wrong or mistaken, I will honour him and will not argue with him".	Bedouin
"I will never argue with my parents and will always do what they tell me...".	Bedouin
"Living in our society means first of all honouring my parents, people older than me, my older brothers... mainly honouring men".	Ethiopian
"... that's how we grow up... what the parent say or ask is sacred although today things are starting to change and young people are becoming insolent and laugh at their elders...".	Ethiopian

"In our society the issue of honour is extremely important... something which is part of me...".	Bedouin
"I honour my husband not out of my own will... but out of obedience... codes of society, norms of the culture in which I am living...".	Bedouin

Most of the participating students emphasised the issue of honouring the parents, older brothers or authoritative people, indicating honour as something important. Students from both groups maintain that a woman must honour her parents, her husband and her extended family.

### ***A Woman is always Concerned, Caring and Attentive***

**Table 4: The woman's qualities according to the perception of the students in both groups (N=38)**

Assertion	Student
"A woman should 'water' the children, take care that they blossom and bloom, even if she finds it difficult and has no strength". (Used the metaphor of a gardener)	Bedouin
"A woman is like a ship sailing on the water... She must always see to it that the ship sails and does not sink...".	Ethiopian
"After giving birth, it is obvious that the woman should care for the children, educate the children and also take care of the husband...".	Ethiopian
"It does not matter whether I am learning or working or both...I have to see to it that everything at home is in order".	Bedouin
"Even if it is difficult for me, I am responsible for everything which happens at home. I listen to the children, to the husband, provide all the answers, even if I am tired...".	Bedouin
"I check the children's homework, take care of their needs and see to it that there is always fresh and warm food...". (She used the metaphor of a bird taking care of her fledglings)	Ethiopian

The assertions presented in the table indicate that the Bedouin and Ethiopian students perceive the woman as a motherly figure who should take care of the children, the family and its surroundings. They all claimed that the qualities which characterise women, for example caring and concerned, are part of the essence of their nature.

### ***A Woman as a Leader***

The students' perception of the woman's figure as a leader is demonstrated in Tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5: Qualities of the female leader as perceived by the students in the two groups (N=38)**

Bedouin student	Ethiopian student
Wisdom, restraint, understanding, modesty, honour, indulgence	Charisma, creativity, initiative, assertiveness, self-confidence, motivation, belief in her way, belief in her success

Table 5 illustrates that the Ethiopian students perceive the figure of the female leaders differently than the Bedouin students. The Ethiopian students pointed out charisma, assertiveness

and self-confidence as major qualities typical of the female leader. On the other hand, the Bedouin students highlighted modesty, indulgence and understanding as the major qualities of the female leader.

Table 6: Assertions about the figure of the female leader as perceived by the students in the two groups (N=38).

Ethiopian student	Bedouin student
"I want and need to undergo a change in myself before leading others".	"I lead the family... because in this way I see myself as a woman-leader...".
"It's high time that I did something with myself... all the time I took care of others and now I want to develop... be a leader...".(Used the metaphor of a beacon)	"Even if I think that I am a leader, I will not highlight it...I will honour my husband...". (Used the metaphor of light at the end of a tunnel)
"I deem it important to actualise myself and I think that I will be a leader... I am confident of myself...". (Used the metaphor of the queen bee)	"I think that I am a leader, but in our culture there is no room for woman-leaders". (Used the metaphor of an orchestra conductor)
"I think that I have to undergo a change in myself and only then to perceive myself as a leader who changes things at school and in the community".	"... at the most I will lead my children and the pupils at school... I really see myself leading my pupils in class..."
"One of the things I told myself is that a woman is a leader, her role is to generate changes in the family and in society... Not to be afraid to say which she thinks". (Used the metaphor of a lion)	"...it will take a long time for our society to change and I, as a woman leader, don't believe that I can actualise my dreams now...".
"In my opinion a female leader should be charismatic and creative... and have additional characteristics, such as: motivation, responsibility and belief in her way and her success".	"I am smarter and stronger than the men in my family and I don't allow myself to dare, be prominent, actualise what I really want to achieve".

The assertions indicate a considerable difference between the way the Ethiopian and Bedouin students perceive the figure of the female leader. Bedouin students maintain that women lead their family and the pupils in their class or at school. Unlike them, the Ethiopian students perceive the female leader as a figure leading changes, first at the personal level and then at the family, community and society level. According to the Ethiopian students, the woman should first change and become acquainted with leadership qualities, e.g. charisma, creativity, motivation, responsibility and belief in her way and her success.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The students from both research samples, the Bedouins and the Ethiopians, specified that women were born to serve the family. Their first priority is taking care of their children, their husband and the house chores. Both populations perceive that the women's place is at home, in the inner sphere. In recent years there has been in fact an increase in the number of women going to work outside the house (the older ones work mainly in cleaning jobs and the younger as teachers, kindergarten teachers, secretaries and salesladies). However, this does not prevent them from

continuing to do the house chores, take care of the children's education and 'royally' serve the husband.

This picture of obvious perceptions relating to the woman's figure has not considerably changed among the Bedouin and Ethiopian students, in spite of the fact that we are living in the 21st century. Studies show that this reality matches the reality prevalent in the different cultures and societies since the creation of the universe (Ali, 2011; Connell, 2011; Mohammed, 2012; United Nations, 2012; Amnesty International, 2013). The Bedouin and Ethiopian cultures are viewed as conservative, traditional and patriarchal, which has always been accepted as right and natural. (For example the story of Eve: "... in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" - Genesis, 3:16). (Ben-Ezer, 2002; Shimron, 2007; Abu-Rabia-Qwider, 2008; Zameret-Krechner, 2013).

In Israel, the status of Arab and Ethiopian women has changed following transformations which have transpired in the Israeli society from cultural, economic, political and social aspects. Together with modernisation, globalisation and technology, the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries affected the status of women in general and in the Arab society and among Ethiopian who immigrated to Israel mainly in the 'Moses Immigration Operation' (1984) and 'Solomon Immigration Operation' (1991) in particular. The students who participated in this study, as well as women in other studies, experience the change processes and are attempting to come to terms with these changes. Many students are wearing two hats simultaneously: the first is the home hat and the traditional role of the woman and the second is the external space hat of women who study and/or work. Nevertheless, their real voice is kept hidden in them and, according to the culture in which they are living, they speak with the 'dictated' voice and act in line with the customary social and cultural codes (Yadlin, 2004; Abu-Rabia-Qwider, 2008; Ali, 2011; Tutri, 2011; Zameret-Krechner, 2013).

The system of laws in the two cultures positions women as inferior to men. According to the fundamental assumptions of these cultures, women become the property of their husband after their marriage (both concepts: marriage and property underscore the concept of ownership). Many women find themselves harmed. This gloomy picture is depicted also in countries around the world and we learn about it from the data reported by the United Nations and the State of Israel (Litvak, 2004; Ash-Curlander, 2010; Abu-Sharaf, 2011; United Nations, 2012).

Women's status in the community in which they live turns them into women who serve their husbands. They provide their husbands with the services they need: sex, cooking, cleaning and having babies. This way of life emphasises the unequal power relations between women and men, as the proverb quoted above says (Genesis, 3:16). However, stemming from the man's ownership and domination over the woman, some point out that women also control: they firmly manage the children, the pots and pans and the house chores. They run the house and do everything to serve the man-husband returning from the public sphere (external labour world) to the inner sphere, where he feels that 'his home is his castle'. According to traditional cultures, the woman's existence as the man's property is her essential being and without the man she does not exist. Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* (2001), defines the meaning of subject-object relations in order to describe the power relations between men and women. According to her, the subject comes into being only vis-a-vis its opposite. The subject positions him/herself as essential and determines the other as inessential, as an object. Hence, the subject can do whatever he/she pleases, being free and autonomous. Conversely, the object is the other who has no wish of his/her own, is present around so that the subject can become essential and establish him/herself. Simone de Beauvoir argues, then, that man-woman relationship is grounded in the subject-object basis. The woman is the other, the object, dominated by the man.

As mentioned, a woman is born to serve. Perusal of the history of feminist thought and philosophy in the different cultures illustrates the existence of a patriarchal society characterised by a culture of men's domination. Men organise society and its institutions and women hardly exist. Men are identified with the external world and the women with the inner world, the home and inferiority. In spite of changes in the Israeli society, the Bedouin and Ethiopian societies are conservative, whereby division between men and women's roles is clear and women's status is inferior (Bourdieu, 2007; Gilad, 2007; Ash-Curlander, 2010).

A woman should honour – throughout history, women had no political rights, social status, economic abilities and legal protection. Women's only vocation in life was to honour men, first their father and then their husband after being married. Women linked their fate with that of men. Their existence and life were dictated by their father or their husband. All their life they had to please men, honour them and satisfy their needs and desires (Yadlin, 1996; Ben-Ezer, 2002; Abi-Rabia-Qwider, 2011; Mizrahi, 2012).

The perceptions of the students from the two groups reflect what has been said above. Although we are dealing with two different cultures, they have a lot in common regarding everything connected to their perception of the woman's figure and of her 'duties' of honouring and obeying men.

A woman is always concerned, caring and attentive – women's main capability is manifested in the emotional aspects: giving, being concerned and caring (Gilligan, 1982; Chodorow, 1989; Nodding, 1999). Hence, women are considered more suited to take care of the home, educate children and see to the needs of those around them. Women's love for their family and children enhances the legitimisation to sacrifice and increases inequality between men and women. Acceptance and internalisation of inequality and negation of the women's 'self' are viewed as valuable in the family cell and are demonstrated in the perception of most students who participated in the study. They, too, see the woman as a motherly, caring, responsible, concerned figure, as a bird protecting its young ones.

From a woman to a woman leader – conservative Bedouin students believe more in social survival and obey the tradition and culture (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Abu-Rabia-Qwider, 2008, 2011). Conversely, Ethiopian students believe that they have to generate a change in themselves and only later at the family and community level. Despite the common features of the two cultures, the Bedouin and Ethiopian, as conservative and traditional, Ethiopian students display a higher degree of determination, assertiveness and wish to change, to look as fast as possible like the entire Israeli-born population in Israel. The total involvement of Ethiopian students in the Israeli society and their perception of themselves as an inseparable part of the entire population enable them to see themselves as women who will generate a change (Kalnitzki, Millet & Cohen, in press)..

On the other hand, Bedouin students have not yet broken the social frameworks of the Bedouin society and they are imprisoned in non-equalitarian gender perceptions. Hence, the Ethiopian students believe that the I-woman comes before the services the woman provides to the family and society. This fact attests to a high self-belief and to the understanding that only they can help themselves even at a high cost to the family. The Bedouin students prefer the collective to the individual, somewhat like eliminating the I-woman in favour of the family and society.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This study of students' gender perceptions is highly important for the entire education system in general and for teacher education in particular. Knowing the students' perceptions of and attitudes towards themselves and about everything connected to women in general and female leaders in particular, might promote the understanding and the relation between the education system and the educational and social fields. Teacher education cannot ignore post-modern approaches, advocating the adoption of liberal and feminist perceptions and professing greater consideration for gender-oriented thinking, while striving to grant equal opportunities to women and men. Today, more than ever, we should know and understand different populations coming from different sectors. It is important to provide a proper response to the varying needs of the learner population from various cultures.

Exploring gender studies in teacher education and exposure of the students' perception due to fact that they are women, will empower and strengthen female learners at both personal and professional levels. Graduates of gender courses could empower and raise a generation of pupil-leaders, while granting equal opportunities to girls and boys for developing and aspiring to achieve key roles in the Israeli society as people who shape, affect and generate changes.

The way for changing our tomorrow starts in gender-oriented education, gender-based contents in teacher education and professional training, in-service training courses, changed curricula and appropriate representation of women in various sectors of the Israeli society. Gender-oriented education is important to all of us and its principles should be implemented in the education system, i.e. exposing teachers and pupils to feminist theories and encouraging criticism and independent thinking. Moreover, changing the social climate in the Israeli society will lead to real narrowing of gaps. Teachers who will develop a gender-based social view will apply it to their lives and to the being of school and the academia.

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