

Marriage Patterns Under Occupation: A Longitudinal Study of the West Bank of Palestine

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This paper investigates the effects of the Israeli occupation on the rates of marriage and marital homogamy in the occupied Palestinian territories. The protracted occupation has limited movement of the population of the West Bank by means of hundreds of internal checkpoints manned by the Israeli Defense Forces. At these check points the complex system of identity cards and travel documents are used to severely restrict the flow of people, goods, and services throughout the West Bank. This has resulted in highly localized marriage markets for men and women. We hypothesize that the places that the Israeli occupation has caused the greatest isolation will have lower marriage rates, higher levels of women never-married by age 35, and lower marital homogamy. Because of changes in the nature of the occupation over time, we anticipate that these rates of marriage, singlehood, and marital homogamy will show increases in places where the impact of the occupation has grown less and decreases in areas in which the impact of the occupation has increased.

This study uses data from the Palestinian Censuses of 1997 and 2007 conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Since political difficulties have prevented Palestinian Authority access to the 2007 Census data for the Gaza Strip, this paper is restricted to the occupied West Bank. The 1997 census collected data for 407,265 households and 1,873,476 individuals in the West Bank. The 2007 Census collected information for 414,575 households and 2,279,095 individuals. Public use microsample census data are available on a 20% sample of the enumerated households and individuals. Data on the households and persons in the household rosters are used. We will look at the experiences of men and women age 15 to 35 years in each period.

Prior research using the 1997 Census and earlier demographic surveys has shown that the marriage prevalence of marriage among Palestinian women with advanced education is low and marital homogamy is less common. These discordant marriages increase with the women's age (Khawaja and Randal, 2006). Halabi (2006) documented a gap between the marriage chances of single men and single women that increases with age. Variations in marriage patterns exist across the three governorates (North, Central, and South), with the North having the highest proportions of never-married women in late thirties (21.1%) followed by the Center (15.7%) while the South had the lowest proportions (8.0%).

This project extends this prior research by specifically identifying the impact of the

Israeli occupation on 33 local communities in the West Bank (rural, urban and refugee camps in each of 10 geographic areas, and linking the intensity of the occupation to the localization of marriage markets. We will extend the data for a ten years period during which the Israeli occupation became more restrictive in many places, and some communities experienced economic decline. We will determine the impact of the Israeli occupation, and changes in the occupation between 1997 and 2007, using information for each community on a) the number of Israeli checkpoints, b) ratio of the proportions of the population age 18- 29 to persons age 30-54 who are unemployed (to measure intercohort deterioration in opportunities for work), c) the prevalence of school enrollment among children ages 6 to 13 (primary school), 14 to 18 (secondary school), and 19 to 24 (post-secondary school) that measure opportunities for human capital investment, and d) the ratio of the percentage of persons age 20-29 with completed secondary education to the percentage of persons age 30-39 who have completed secondary school (to check for lack of growth or deterioration in human capital investment). We will use these indicators to rank order (or create an interval scale of) the impact of the Israeli occupation on each place.

Our paper examines three outcomes: a) ever-married vs. never-married, b) the proportions of men and women remaining never-married by age 39, and c) the homogamy of spouses in regards to age, education, and employment status. We will first examine the prevalence of marriage for men and women across the 30 separate communities for the two census years. We will calculate marriage rates for each community in 1997 and 2007 using synthetic cohort techniques (once we have inspected the data to make sure this is appropriate). We will examine variations among the communities in the percentages of men and women never married by age 35-39, looking at community variations separately for men and women and then at the community variations in sexual disparities in lifetime singlehood. Finally, we will examine variations among places in the level of marital homogamy for currently married men and women (standardizing for age).

This phase of the analysis should provide evidence about whether higher intensity of the Israeli occupation in different places leads to a localization of local marriage markets, reductions in rates of marriage, greater numbers of women and men single for life (and whether impacts are greater on women), and reductions in marital homogamy. In a second phase of the analysis we will estimate discrete time hazards model of marriage using the measure of intensity of the Israeli occupation as an independent variable with controls for the usual socioedemographic factors. Logistic regression models will be used to examine the effects of the same factors on lifetime singlehood and marital homogamy.