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Retail Organizations and Minority Women's Employment

Globally Themed Organizations as Labor Market Intermediaries: The Rise of Israeli-Palestinian Women's Employment in Retail

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This paper examines the labor-market incorporation of minority women. Industrial transformations and the expansion of service and retail have increased women's labor-market participation, but there remains a large variation between minority women groups, where multiple boundaries may hinder labor-market integration. Past research has explored the role of formal labor-market intermediaries in overcoming social boundaries. But a precondition for labor-market intermediation is that majority employers perceive minorities as potential workers and minorities perceive the majority as potential employers. In this paper, we expand the concept of labor-market intermediation to include the social construction of groups as legitimate economic actors, and examine the role of organizational structures in this social construction. Using a comparative analysis of two Jewish malls and nearby shopping streets, and based on 190 interviews with various actors, we show that while supply of workers and demand for work are necessary factors, they are not sufficient for explaining the incorporation of Palestinian women into retail labor markets. Instead, we point to the unintended effect of the globally themed organization of the shopping malls on the erosion of social boundaries and the formation of consumption relations between Israeli-Palestinian women and Jewish employers, which turned into employment relations.

Introduction

Women's and minorities' employment has risen significantly over the past decades. Industrial transformations, in particular the expansion of retail and service, eroded gender boundaries by creating a supply of and demand for female workers (Juhn and Potter 2006; Goldin 2006). Yet, employment gains from industrial shifts vary greatly for minority women, who face multiple social boundaries that hinder their labor-market integration (Charles 2011; McCall

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2001; Fernandez and Su 2004; Read and Cohen 2007). Theories of demand and supply often fall short of explaining such variations (Charles 2011).

This study examines how industrial transformation shapes the employment opportunity of intersectional groups using an instructive case study of the employment of Israeli-Palestinian women in the Jewish economy. Despite salient gender and ethnic boundaries, Israeli-Palestinian women's labor-force participation rose from 5 percent to about 30 percent between 1985 and 2010 (ICBS 2011). Most of these new jobs are in the retail industry and within this industry, in standardized, globally themed shopping malls. The employment of this highly segregated ethno-gender group in jobs that require daily interactions with men and the wider Jewish population marks a sharp break from their past labor-market and daily experience.

We use a comparative research design and a relational theory of inequality (Latour 2005; Roscigno and Wilson 2014) to explain the labor-market integration of segregated minority women. Studies have shown that labor-market intermediaries, such as temporary-help agencies, staffing firms, or social networks, facilitate minorities' employment when social boundaries are high (Fernandez 2010; Autor 2008). Yet, for such intermediation to occur, employers must first perceive minorities as potential workers and minorities need to perceive the majority group as a potential source of employment. Where segregation is high, this may not be the case.

In this paper, we expand the concept of labor-market intermediation to include the social construction of groups as economic actors, and we examine the role of organizational structures in this process (Vallas 2003; Kalev 2009; Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000). The rise of large, standardized organizations has historically opened new opportunities for excluded groups (Wilson 1978; Dobbin and Sutton 1998). We argue that the emergence of globally themed retail malls has had the unintended consequences of eroding ethno-gender boundaries and enabling economic relationships between Israeli-Palestinian women and Jewish employers, an effect absent from localized, personalized retail organizations. Notwithstanding the negative impact of retail employment and consumerism on gender segregation, exploring the intended and unintended mechanisms by which organizations shape employment opportunity contributes to research on stratification and intersectionality, as well as to a sociology of remediation that moves beyond understanding the social forces that shape inequality to exploring those that reduce it.

Industrial Change and Minority Women's Employment

Labor-market research has mainly focused on three processes: supply, demand, and matching workers to jobs. Most accounts of changes in women's employment show how industrial and social transformations gave rise to new supply-and-demand dynamics (Juhn and Potter 2006). According to Goldin (1990), the new service industries offered women part-time jobs while keeping the gendered division of labor, which changed men's and women's preferences toward women's work (Hakim 1995; Goldin 1990). Demand-side explanations stress

employers' growing need for labor, leading them to hire new groups of workers (Oppenheimer 1973; Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2001; Smith and Ward 1984; Reskin and Roos 1990).

Notwithstanding the importance of supply and demand processes, they often fall short in explaining variations in the labor-market experience of different groups of women under the same structural transformations (Charles 2011; McCall 2005; Browne and Misra 2003; McCall 2001; Read and Cohen 2007; Mandel and Shalev 2009). Explanations that focus on gender boundaries overlook intersecting social boundaries—spatial, ethnic, religious, or national—that affect women's daily economic lives (McCall 2005). For example, while the rise of the service industry and changes in the urban economy in the United States expanded white women's employment, they simultaneously hindered the employment of black women (Browne 1997). Similarly, the employment of East Asian women was facilitated by markedly different processes than the ones promoting Western women's (Brinton 2001). An intersectional theory of inequality argues that to account for minority women's labor-market experiences we need a contextualized approach that examines local processes that (re-)configure the multiple social boundaries shaping minority women's economic activities (Charles 2011).

A third approach to labor-market research focuses on matching mechanisms that facilitate supply-and-demand dynamics (Fernandez and Su 2004; Sorensen and Kalleberg 1981; Granovetter 1995). Influenced by Granovetter's (1973) groundbreaking research, studies have examined how labor-market intermediation, through employment agencies, referral-based recruitment, consumption-to-work recruitment, or informal social networks facilitates the matching between potential workers and employers and shapes employment outcomes (Mouw 2002; Autor 2008; Fernandez 2010; Kazis 2004; Stovel and Shaw 2012; Williams and Connell 2010). Others have shown that a group's lack of social contacts can prevent access to jobs that otherwise show high demand for their human capital (Kasinitz and Rosenberg 1996; Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo 2006). It appears, then, that the above-noted intermediaries have a harder time connecting between groups that do not perceive each other as relevant economic actors, establishing that relevance is a precondition for intermediaries to connect workers to jobs.

A Relational Approach to the Construction of Labor Markets

We expand our understanding of labor-market intermediation to include the social construction of groups as relevant and legitimate economic actors, and we examine the role of organizational structures in this social construction (Dobbin and Sutton 1998; Vallas 2003; Kalev 2009; Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000). Taking a note from Wilson's (1978) thesis on the role of industrialization and the rise of corporations in opening employment opportunity for minorities (Dobbin and Sutton 1998), we argue that the rise of large, standardized retail organizations has opened new opportunities for minority women's employment.

Researchers have shown that consumption reconfigures boundaries between identity groups (Zukin 1998) and that retailers' consumption-to-work recruitment

methods transcend boundaries between leisure and work (Williams and Connell 2010; Pettinger 2005; Warhurst and Nickson 2007; Zelizer 2005). We argue that the transition from localized, personalized retail to globally themed shopping malls enabled the erosion of ethno-gender boundaries and expanded employment opportunities for excluded groups.

Organizational Structures and Group Relations

Theoretical insights about the role of organizations in shaping gender and racial stratification can be traced back to the early 1980s (Kanter 1977; Wilson 1978; Baron and Bielby 1980). Empirical research has focused mostly on how formalized bureaucratic personnel structures shape opportunities (Bielby 2000; DiPrete and Soule 1988; Dobbin 2009; Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006; Reskin and McBrier 2000; Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Skagge 2010; Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs 1999). Others have shown that organizational structures that are not directly related to personnel decision-making, such as the organization of production or the business model of service, also shape gender and ethnic inequalities (Acker 1990; Nkomo 1992; Vallas 2003; Smith-Doerr 2004; Kalev 2009; Willimas, Muller, and Kilanski 2012; Fernandez 2001). Studies have shown that organizations that are based on a rigid division of labor deepen the segregation and devaluation of women's and minorities' jobs, strengthen negative stereotypes, and limit their ability to accrue relevant human and social capital (Kanter 1977; McGuire 2000; Vallas 2003). In contrast, when the production or service is based on collaborative structures, intergroup contact and interactions expand, group boundaries and stereotypes decline, and women and minorities get opportunities for visibility and promotion (Smith-Doerr 2004; Kalev 2009). Social psychologists have indeed found lower prejudice in social contexts that de-emphasize group boundaries (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999) and promote common identity (Kramer 1991; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). The notion that organizational structures can reconfigure group boundaries receives supports in consumption research as well.

Retail Organizations as Labor Market Intermediaries

The sociology of consumption points to two important ways in which retail organizations shape social boundaries. First, retail sites often act as social mediators, facilitating new relationships between people and goods (Holt 1995) and between social groups (Zukin 1998). By using retail practices and maneuvering across consumption sites, social actors generate distinct social identities and reshape social boundaries (Miller et al. 1998; Zelizer 2005; Cohen 2004). This is especially the case as consumption organizations have become standardized around global cultural themes, offering social arenas where social boundaries can be temporarily diffused and diverse groups can interact with one another, constructing "a collective memory of commercial culture" (Zukin 1998, 828; Zukin and Maguire 2004; Miller et al. 1998; Zelizer 2005). Second, retailers actively participate in constructing clients as labor-market actors through

consumption-to-work recruitment (Williams and Connell 2010). Retail work typically involves bad pay and working conditions. Yet, retailers often recruit among their middle-class clients who can engage in “aesthetic labor” and appeal to similar audiences (Warhurst and Nickson 2007; Williams and Connell 2010). On the clients' end, although overqualified for such jobs, they often develop a preference for working where they shop, feeling deep acquaintance and comfort with particular products and retail spaces (Cohen 2004; Pettinger 2005).

Based on these boundary-reconfiguring features of retail work, between identity groups and between leisure and work, we examine whether the organization of retail in globally themed malls acts as a labor-market intermediary: first, the organizational emphasis on standardized cultural themes blurs ethnic group boundaries and facilitates social relations. Second, these new social relations among products, employers, and consumers blur the boundaries between consumption and work, leading employers to view minority clients as potential workers, and minorities to view retail as a potential workplace. We examine these arguments using the case study of Israeli-Palestinian women's employment in retail organizations.

Israeli-Palestinian Women at the Intersection of Gender and Ethnicity

Our research focuses on Palestinians who are citizens of Israel, rather than the larger population of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. Israeli-Palestinians comprise approximately 20 percent of the Israeli population, numbering over a million and a half, and are mostly (83 percent) Muslim (ICBS 2011). In the central part of Israel, Israeli-Palestinians are a minority in the midst of a majority Jewish population, while in the Northern peripheral parts of Israel they are a numerical majority, though still a sociological minority (ICBS 2011).

As an ethno-national minority, often perceived as an internal threat to the Jewish majority (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003), Israeli-Palestinians are disadvantaged in all aspects and are highly segregated from the Jewish majority in terms of housing and labor markets (Lewin, Stier, and Caspi-Dror 2006; Monterescu and Rabinowitz 2007). The result is a dual economy with a Jewish-dominated main sector and an impoverished Palestinian sector (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1993; Haidar 2009). Other politico-economic processes, however, also had considerable impact on the Palestinian minority (Rosenfeld 1968). Recent years have witnessed a small, but growing, somewhat less impoverished Israeli-Palestinian middle class (Dagan-Buzaglo and Konor-Attias 2013). This social group presents slightly lower levels of residential segregation and higher levels of education and engagement in Western culture and consumption (Kanaaneh 2002; Monterescu and Rabinowitz 2007).

Israeli-Palestinian women have traditionally experienced economic disadvantage both as women and as a national minority, and this is reflected in their low labor-market participation. Researchers offer two explanations: supply side accounts emphasize patriarchal restrictions on Palestinian women's participation in the economy (Offer and Sabah 2011; Khattab 2002); demand-side explanations stress discrimination and ethnic boundaries between the

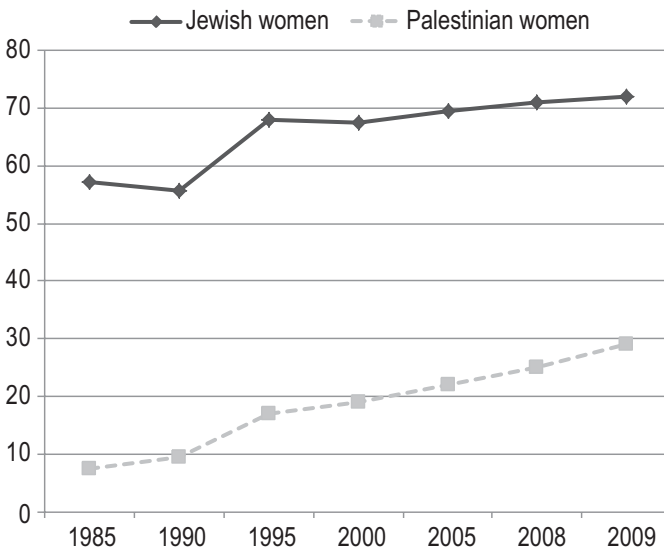
Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority (Haidar 2009; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1993; Kraus 2002). Almost no research has attempted to explain the recent upsurge in Israeli-Palestinian women's employment (but see Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992).

While still rather low, the labor-force participation of Israeli-Palestinian women age 22–60 has risen from about 5 percent in 1985 to almost 30 percent in 2011 (figure 1). At the same time, the occupational distribution of Israeli-Palestinian women has shifted (figure 2), wherein in recent years, Israeli-Palestinian women are increasingly incorporated into Israel's retail and service industry, now accounting for almost 20 percent of their employment (ICBS 2011). This occupational shift represents a move from employment in the Israeli-Palestinian economic enclave, mostly in the public sector, to the private sector dominated by the Jewish majority (Yonai and Kraus 2001; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1994).

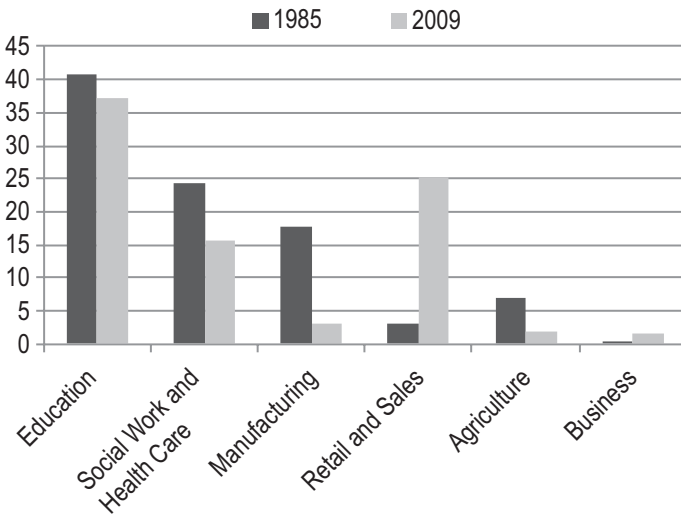
The Mall: A Global Consumer Enclave

The rise of Israeli-Palestinian women's employment has occurred alongside the expansion of globally themed consumer malls in Israel. The first facsimile of the US shopping mall in Israel opened in 1983. Thirty years later, Israel boasts over 250 malls (ICBS 2010). These malls, and the national and international retail chain stores populating them, present a new organization of retail, offering a cosmopolitan, standardized, closed-space consumerism, competing with the older, mostly smaller shops on urban shopping streets (Carmeli

Figure 1. Labor-force participation rates of Jewish and Palestinian women in Israel (1985–2009)



Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Labor Force Surveys (1985–2009)

Figure 2. Employed Palestinian women by economic sector (1985–2009)

Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Labor Force Surveys (1985–2009)

and Appelbaum 2004). Breaking from hitherto segregated leisure patterns, the Israeli-Palestinian middle class has become immersed in this new consumer culture (Kanaaneh 2002; Gilboa 2008). Researchers argue that these new consumption patterns have helped Israeli-Palestinian women obtain social power and status in their communities (Kanaaneh 2002; Sa'ar 2004). We argue that the organization of retail in globally themed malls also enabled the erosion of ethno-gender boundaries and the construction of a new labor market, where Israeli-Palestinian women and Jewish employers are mutually perceived as legitimate actors.

Data and Analytic Strategy

To examine the role of globally themed consumer malls as labor-market intermediaries, we use a comparative case study of two pairs of retail sites; each pair consists of a globally themed mall and a nearby shopping street. These retail sites serve both as consumption sites and as labor markets.

The two pairs of retail sites are located in different parts of the country: one in the northern periphery of Israel in the Jewish town of Carmiel, and the other in the central metropolitan area surrounding Tel Aviv, in the Jewish city of Kfar-Saba. Carmiel is poorer than Kfar-Saba in terms of average income (6,100 NIS versus 8,624 NIS monthly). Importantly, our case selection was such that all retail sites are surrounded by nearby Palestinian towns and villages that can be crudely defined as middle class, albeit significantly poorer than the Jewish middle-class communities (ICBS 2010).

The comparative case approach and the cross-case analysis enable us to identify various socio-economic mechanisms underlying social change and

conceptualize new theoretical directions (Small 2009; Yin 2009). Our comparative approach is dual. First, we compare two retail sites—malls and shopping streets—that have similar characteristics but differ in one factor and in the outcome of interest (Skocpol and Somers 1980; Eisenhardt 1989). While the malls and shopping streets offer the same jobs and are located in similar proximity to an Israeli-Palestinian population center, Israeli-Palestinian female workers populate shopping malls as clients and sales workforce and are all but absent from retail in the shopping streets. Labor-market characteristics that are similar across retail sites cannot provide a sufficient explanation for the difference between the cases. Such a *pattern matching* strategy enables us to establish internal validity that indicates the social mechanisms at work (Yin 2009). Second, we add a geographical dimension to our comparison, where we compare two pairs of retail sites in the center and in the northern periphery. Here, we employ the opposite logic; factors such as geographical location that are *dissimilar* across the same retail sites cannot provide a sufficient explanation for similar outcomes. This dual comparison allows us to account for a wider range of factors that may affect Israeli-Palestinian women’s employment and enhances generalizability.

Table 1 presents the distribution of shops in our research sites. The four sites are very similar in terms of the jobs they offer, mostly retail sales. Whether stores are open on Saturday is an important labor-market factor, as there are legal restrictions on the employment of Jewish workers on Saturdays, which creates a demand for non-Jewish workers. In three of our four retail sites, there is no demand for Saturday employment.

The main difference between the two types of retail sites lies in the organization of consumption they offer. The malls are dominated by relatively standardized, globally themed stores, which are rare on the shopping streets. They are highly regulated and centrally managed closed spaces, providing a semblance of isolation from the urban environment, filled with Western music, English-language signs, and Western-oriented brands. The shopping streets, in contrast, are open spaces, integrated into the urban fabric and unregulated by central management. They offer mostly (though not exclusively) unbranded goods, sold in smaller shops.

Data Collection

Our data sources are an employers’ survey, semi-structured interviews, and observations at retail sites. We collected quantitative data on the workforce

Table 1. Characteristics of the Four Retail Sites

		Number of stores	Type of stores in percents			Open on Saturday	Percent of globally themed stores
			Clothes	Food	Other		
Carmiel	Mall	50	71	12	17	Yes	97
	Shopping street	91	65	20	15	No	15
Kfar-Saba	Mall	65	72	14	14	No	100
	Shopping street	174	70	23	7	No	20

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Palestinian Women Interviewed (numbers and percents)

Religion	Education			Age group			Family status			
	Less than high school	High school	Academic	Total	18–24	25–35	35+	Total	Married	Have children
Muslim	6	24	7	37	23	11	3	37	24	9
	16%	65%	19%	100%	62%	30%	8%	100%	65%	24%
Christian	0	11	8	19	9	7	3	19	11	6
	0	58%	42%	100%	47%	37%	16%	100%	58%	32%
Druze	0	3	2	5	2	3	0	5	4	0
	0	60%	40%	100%	40%	60%	0	100%	80%	0
Total	6	38	17	61	34	21	6	61	39	15
	10%	62%	28%	100%	56%	34%	10%	100%	64%	25%

composition in a 2012 survey that covered 80 percent of the establishments in the four retail sites. Nonresponding managers were of stores similar to those that were included in the sample.

To explore the mechanisms shaping workforce composition, we conducted semi-structured interviews with employers, workers, and clients at the four retail sites, as well as with mall managers. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using the data-analysis software ATLAS.ti. The first author conducted 61 in-person interviews with Israeli-Palestinian saleswomen at their workplace. Most interviews ranged between 40 and 60 minutes and were conducted in Hebrew, a language in which all of our interviewees were sufficiently fluent. The interviewer's own position in the field, as a young middle-class Israeli Jewish male, was hard to ignore. Normally, an Israeli-Palestinian woman would not be sitting and talking to someone with this background. But our interviewees were happy to talk and take part in academic research. It is possible that we were able to interview only women who had positive experiences in their jobs. Our interviewees, however, seemed to have varied experiences, and they openly shared negative work experiences and complaints related to pay and autonomy at work in both the malls and the shopping streets.

The majority of women (90 percent) interviewed were 35 years of age and younger, with a high school diploma and above (90 percent), and married (64 percent), though only a quarter had children. We interviewed Muslim as well as Christian and Druze women to represent religious/cultural differences (table 2). We were able to interview approximately 60 percent of

the women we approached. Based on what we could observe, decliners were similar to our interviewees on these characteristics. Interviewing only employed Israeli-Palestinian women is consistent with our research goal to understand the effect of the organization of retail on minority women's employment by comparing between the malls and the shopping streets.

To gauge the employers' perspective, we conducted interviews with 32 Jewish store managers. Of the managers we approached, 73 percent consented to be interviewed, and these interviews were held in the store or in a nearby café. Managers were asked about the daily management of a retail store, their relationships with their clients, and their recruitment practices. The sample includes managers of various ages, genders, Jewish ethnic backgrounds, and different store sizes and types. Managers that refused to interview had similar characteristics to those interviewed. Insight into the daily mall operations and their business strategy was gained from interviews with the mall managers or their representatives. Finally, we randomly chose 90 Jewish consumers from all sites for a brief interview about their consumer experiences and about sharing consumption space with Israeli-Palestinians. Consumers were approached during different days of the week and at various locations at the retail sites. Data from the 2011 Israeli Labor Force Survey and the Israeli Income Survey (ICBS 2011) are used for constructing some of our independent variables.

Measures

Israeli-Palestinian women's employment

Our outcome variable, employment of Israeli-Palestinian women, is measured as the proportion of Israeli-Palestinian women among workers at each of the four retail sites, based on the store managers' survey. We combined all job categories, although most Israeli-Palestinian women were employed in sales jobs and only a handful in supervisory positions.

Organizational forms and the formation of labor markets

To capture the erosion of ethno-gender boundaries and the construction of new labor markets, we examined three processes, using interview data: (1) Israeli-Palestinian women's perceptions of the malls and the shopping streets as consumption sites; (2) the social relations between Israeli-Palestinian women as clients and Jewish store managers; (3) the recruiting preferences and practices of store managers.

Supply-side factors

Education is measured, based on interview data, as less than high school, high school, and academic degree. Hebrew fluency was measured based on interviews. Cultural preferences toward work in retail were measured using interview questions regarding Israeli-Palestinian women's reasons for seeking employment and their families' stance regarding their decision. Answers were coded for key emerging themes, as discussed below. Data on monthly pay in

these jobs were gathered from store managers, and were cross-checked with employees.

Demand-side factors

Employers' demand for low-skill labor was derived from interviews with Jewish employers and supplemented by data from the 2011 Israel Income Survey (ICBS 2011). Mall managers and all store managers were asked whether they had a preference for Israeli-Palestinian women specifically and why.

Findings

We first present the share of Israeli-Palestinian women's employment at the four retail sites, establishing the association between a globally themed organization of retail and ethno-national employment. We then examine various explanations for this association. We show that necessary supply and demand conditions are present, but they are not sufficient for explaining the ethno-national workforce composition, as they do not vary across retail sites. Instead, we point to differences in the dynamics of socio-economic boundaries across forms of retail organizations.

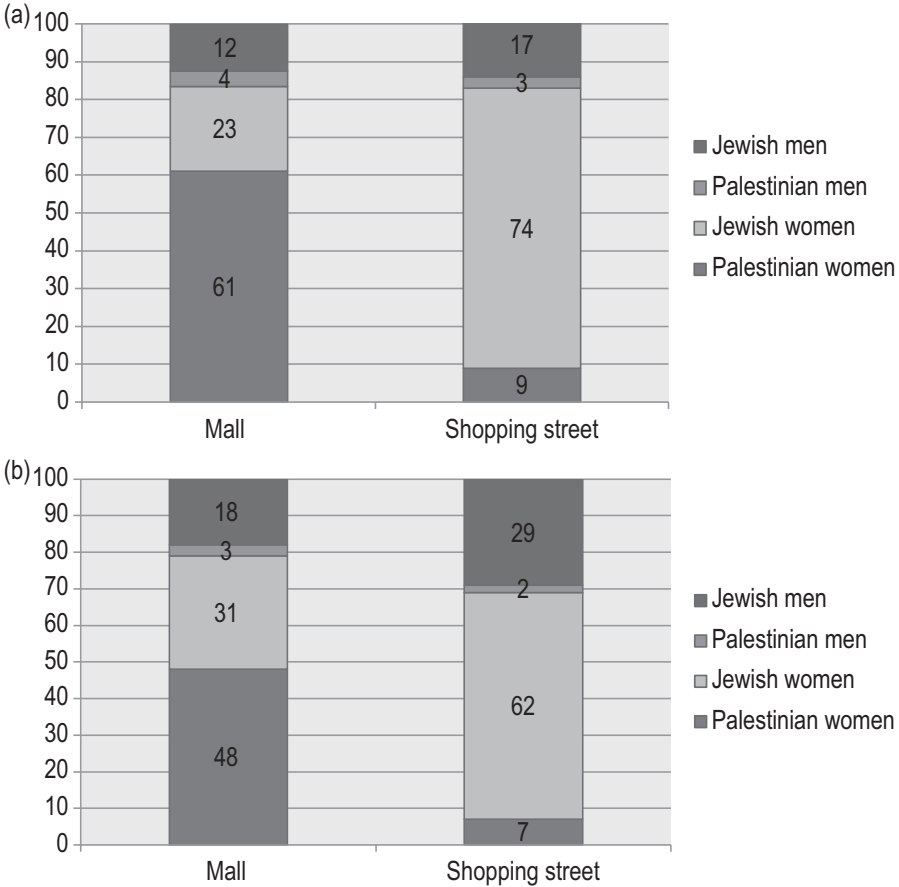
Palestinian Women's Employment across Two Types of Retail Organizations

Figures 3a and 3b present data on the workforce composition at the four retail sites. While Israeli-Palestinian women are largely absent from the workforce in the shopping streets, as has always been the case, they make up half of the workforce in the Kfar-Saba mall and almost two-thirds in Carmiel's mall. Notably, the proportion of Israeli-Palestinian women among the malls' employees far exceeds their share in the populations within commuting distance of these labor markets (ICBS 2010).

The salience of ethnic boundaries

This employment pattern is echoed in interview data on ethnic boundaries. Both Jewish employers and Israeli-Palestinian women express sharp differences in the salience of ethnic boundaries between the shopping streets and the malls. Shopping-streets employers, in both Kfar-Saba and Carmiel, expressed strong negative sentiments toward employing Israeli-Palestinian women. Two-thirds of these owners/managers bluntly claimed that they would not hire Palestinian women. Some explained that Palestinian women have poor Hebrew-language skills or that their customers would not like to be served by a Palestinian. Others were blunter: "They're fat," "They smell," "They don't know how to dress," and "I would die before hiring an Arab" are just a few examples. These responses reflect the prejudice and stereotype-based discrimination toward Palestinians prevailing in the Jewish labor market (Steiner 2013). Likewise, almost all Palestinian women interviewees felt uneasy and unwanted when they

Figure 3. Workforce composition at (a) Carmiels retail sites (N = 570) (b) Kfar-Saba retail sites (N = 1,113)



Source: Employers Survey.

Note: Within each pair, differences are significant at the level of $p < 0.01$. The difference between the two malls is significant at the level of $p < 0.1$.

entered Jewish localities in general, and specifically when looking for work in Jewish businesses. Of the women interviewed, 70 percent shared personal experiences of prejudice, insult, and discrimination.

In sharp contrast, store managers in the malls expressed a preference for Israeli-Palestinian female workers. Most (69 percent) stated in interviews that they specifically look for Israeli-Palestinian employees, and prefer them over other groups because of their higher commitment and greater flexibility. Similarly, 82 percent of the Palestinian women interviewed referred to the mall as a friendly place, where they feel at home and free, often contrasting it to the nearby shopping streets. Taken together, the workforce composition and interview data point to high ethno-national employment segregation across retail sites. In what comes next, we examine what may account for these differences.

The Mall as a Labor Market Intermediary

Our interviews portray a process wherein, unlike the nearby shopping streets, the mall symbolizes an extra-territorial safe harbor for Israeli-Palestinian women and a Palestinian place for their families. These symbolic dimensions of the organizational structure of retail facilitated the creation of economic ties across ethnic boundaries. This led simultaneously to the construction of Israeli-Palestinian women as a viable labor supply—with a preference for work and relevant human capital— and to the construction of mall employers as having a demand for such labor, which led to consumption-to-work recruitment.

The mall as a safe harbor: cosmopolitan culture and ethnic boundaries

Palestinian women reported in interviews extra-territorial feelings and a sense of equality in the malls. These were attributed mostly to the global consumer culture promoted by stores, brands, and the management of the mall. Of the women interviewed, 82 percent mentioned the international atmosphere in the malls that was created by the background pop music and the English-language signs. As Sura, a saleswoman at the Kfar-Saba mall, explains: “The music and everything makes you feel like you’re somewhere else. Not in Israel.” Another saleswoman said:

Here it’s nice and pretty, not like other places. It’s clean and organized here. You feel safe to walk here, because it’s a closed space and they don’t let weird people get in and it’s also not like other places. Here I am always welcome; I am just a customer like everyone else.

The feeling that the malls are “a different kind of place” is not merely a subjective experience of Palestinian women. Rather, it is part of the malls’ management marketing strategy of creating a cosmopolitan consumption place. This strategy, mall managers explained in interviews, was conceived in initial planning phases and is maintained in day-to-day operations. The goal was to gain popularity by appealing to consumers’ desire for international experiences, especially the American one.

The cosmopolitan extra-territorial feeling bestowed by the malls was also shared by the Jewish shoppers. Most (78 percent) Jewish mall clients we interviewed did not mind that the malls were frequented by Palestinian clientele or that they are served mostly by Palestinian women. The Jewish clientele in the shopping streets were more hesitant. Though some said they do not mind Palestinians shopping in the cities, most claimed it bothers them (53 percent), or were even blunter (23 percent), claiming that the shopping streets were not a place they want to see Palestinians.

It is possible that blurring ethnic boundaries has been an intended marketing strategy of mall designers or the retail establishments that populate them, targeting the growing Israeli-Palestinian middle class. Managers of both malls, however, stated that although they were involved from the outset in designing daily life at the shopping centers, they were greatly surprised by the attraction

the malls had for the Palestinian population and the abundance of Palestinian shoppers. As one of them explained:

Frankly, we hadn't planned this at all. We wanted to bring New York to Kfar-Saba, and having so many Arabs in the mall does not really help. Who could have guessed they would also come to the mall? We didn't even include them in our initial market research before building the mall. They just came alone.

Store managers further mentioned that there were no company guidelines regarding workforce diversity or equal employment opportunity. In fact, recruitment strategies and hiring decisions were up to the store manager.

The mall as a Palestinian space

At the same time that Palestinian women experienced the mall as an extraterritorial and international place, all interviewees, employees, managers, and clients, Jewish or Palestinian, described the mall as an "Arab place," reflecting on the fact that a substantial proportion of their customers and workers were Palestinian. According to the malls' management estimates, roughly half of the malls' earnings come from the Palestinian clientele.

The reputation of the malls as Palestinian spaces is important, as it eases patriarchal concerns among Palestinian women and their families. "My dad doesn't mind me working here because he knows I'm surrounded by people from our village," said a Palestinian saleswoman, age 17. Another said:

A woman can walk in the mall without being afraid and even though I'm a woman walking by myself looking for a job, here it's fine and no one will look at me strangely. Over there [the Jewish shopping streets] it's not like that.

The emergence of social ties

The fact that the malls have become Palestinian consumption spaces gave rise to new social ties between Israeli-Palestinian women and Jewish store managers. While managers from the shopping streets said in interviews that they do not value Palestinian clientele, all store managers in the malls expressed much appreciation toward their Palestinian customers, describing them as their best and most loyal. Most of them (83 percent) declared that they have modified the store appearance and inventory in accordance with trends among their Palestinian customers. Some (43 percent) claimed they established relationships with their costumers, even to the point where they have their personal phone numbers. In contrast, this quote from a privately owned store manager on a shopping street illustrates the sentiment regarding Palestinian customers there:

Even though times are quite bad and business is slower than ever, I really prefer they wouldn't come here. This is not their place.

Recall that mall managers as well did not perceive Israeli-Palestinian women as a relevant clientele when designing the mall. Yet, while Israeli-Palestinian

women continue to avoid the shopping streets, they felt secure and safe enough to frequent the mall, and mall store managers came to appreciate their business.

From consumption to work

The fact that much of the business of mall stores came from Palestinian consumption soon created a demand for Israeli-Palestinian workers, as they now possessed relevant human capital and the ability to perform aesthetic labor (Warhurst and Nickson 2007). Store managers explained they realized they should hire Israeli-Palestinian workers, as they will better appeal to their Israeli-Palestinian costumers and could better communicate with them, especially because some of their clients do not speak Hebrew. Of managers working in the malls, 82 percent claimed that clients' needs were their main reason for employing so many Palestinian women.

The two malls are constantly spotted with "Help Wanted" ads that facilitate the transition from consumption to work. Store managers sometimes approach frequent shoppers and ask them to come work at the store. "My best workers are the ones who used to shop here," claimed one manager, echoing many others; "They are attached to the product, know it and love it, and they like the store. So why not work here?" For the managers at the malls, the best training to be a salesperson in their store was to first be a customer.

Analyzing the recruitment patterns of mall store managers compared to the shopping streets further sheds light on the localized construction of a new labor market. Table 3 describes the recruitment methods used by store managers at the four retail sites and the methods that actually helped them find their current employees. In all sites, managers use four methods: storefront advertisement, employee referrals, media advertisement, and employment agencies.

The means by which current workers were actually recruited reflect the obfuscation between leisure and work at the malls. In both malls, almost all workers were recruited through storefront ads, reproducing the ethnic makeup of the malls' consumers (Williams and Connell 2010). In the shopping streets, most employees were recruited through referrals, reproducing the ethnic makeup of the local workforce.

Table 4 shows the same picture from the Israeli-Palestinian women's perspective. Over half of the Israeli-Palestinian women working in the malls found their job through notices placed on the storefront. These patterns were reflected in the interviews. One woman described how she became employed: "I didn't really look. I came here shopping with a friend and we came to my favorite store. I love the clothes and the atmosphere so I asked if they needed any help and they said yes." In other cases, the decision to work at the mall was preconceived. One Palestinian woman said: "When I first started thinking about work I immediately thought of the mall because of the Help-Wanted ads. I didn't know of any other place where they look for employees. I'm here a lot so I knew that here they have a job for me."

Table 3. Recruitment Methods Employed by the Managers at the Shopping Centers and the Shopping Streets

	Requirement methods used ^a						How workers were recruited ^b											
	Storefront advertisement		Friends/ family		Advertisement in the media		Employment agencies		Storefront advertisement		Friends/ family		Advertisement in the media		Employment agencies		Total	
Malls	Carmiel	101	68	52	11	386	103	25	0	514								
		89%	60%	48%	10%	75%	20%	5%	0%	100%								
Kfar-Saba		121	53	34	81	438	54	27	56	575								
		100%	44%	28%	67%	76%	9%	5%	10%	100%								
Shopping streets	Carmiel	28	94	6	15	59	284	12	63	418								
		24%	80%	5%	13%	14%	68%	3%	15%	100%								
Kfar-Saba		154	153	66	104	238	364	45	97	744								
		72%	72%	31%	48%	32%	49%	6%	13%	100%								

Source: Employers Survey.

^aA store can use multiple recruitment methods.

^bRelating to workers employed at the time of the survey.

Table 4. How Did Palestinian Women Working in the Malls Find Their Current Job? (N = 61)

	Advertisement on the storefront	Friends	Advertisement in the media	Employment agencies	Total
Carmiel Mall	63%	27%	10%	0	100%
Kfar-Saba Mall	54%	19%	13%	14%	100%

This consumption experience of Israeli-Palestinian women in the malls evolved into their perception of the malls as potential workplaces. Frequent visits as consumers created familiarity with the mall and its daily operations, providing interviewees with a sense of expertise in the retail work the mall offers. A 22-year-old Israeli-Palestinian woman summed it up when she explained:

When I understood I needed work I thought of no other place than the mall. Why should I work somewhere else where I don't like being in and where they don't want me? Here I feel good and safe. I am like everybody else who comes to the mall. And I also knew the job inside and out. What can be better than this—I have a workplace in which I feel good and can do something I'm perfect at. So obviously, I came looking for a job here.

Alia, 33 years old, felt she had the perfect abilities to be successful as a saleswoman in the mall:

Even before I worked here, I knew exactly what the job was and how to sell the clothes we offer here. After all I was here once a week and these are the clothes I wear myself.

Some claimed that they started working because all of their friends were working at the mall. Work was also time spent with their friends.

Hence, due to Israeli-Palestinian women's acquaintance with the malls, they gained the human capital suited for sales jobs and developed a preference for working at the mall. Likewise, store managers have come to view Palestinian women as having valuable human capital and the ability to perform aesthetic labor (Williams and Connell 2010) and better serve the Palestinian clientele. They have further discovered that these new practices do not harm their relations with their Jewish consumers, who still represent at least half of their clientele.

The findings above portray the unintended consequence of the globally themed organization of consumption. The mall, and its extra-territorial symbols, acted as a labor-market mediator, facilitating new employment relationships between otherwise deeply segregated ethnic groups. The cosmopolitan, anonymous consumer experience afforded by the organizational structure of the mall allowed Israeli-Palestinian women to accrue the kind of human capital that made them desirable employees in the eyes of mall managers. Their human

capital now included familiarity with the products and practices of the stores, and the ability to perform aesthetic labor when serving clientele with the same social origins. The organizational structure of the mall thus constructed the supply of and demand for Israeli-Palestinian female workers in these malls. Within the same industry, the nearby shopping streets retail is organized significantly differently, in more personalized and localized organizations, which have shown none of these dynamics. The next two sections show that these differences in employment patterns cannot be explained by supply- and demand-side factors, as these were very similar at all four sites.

Supply-Side Explanations: Education and Employment Preferences

Education

Most Israeli-Palestinian women working in the malls and in the shopping streets had a high school diploma, with no significant differences. Hence, levels of education as a supply factor cannot account for different employment patterns between the two sites.

Language fluency

All interviewees had a conversational-level fluency in Hebrew; thus, language cannot explain differences in employment patterns.

Work preferences

Cultural explanations of Israeli-Palestinian women's low employment rates often emphasize protective patriarchal preferences (Offer and Sabah 2011). Our interviews show that such explanations underestimate a strong preference toward work among Palestinian women and their communities, likely reflecting the formation of a new Israeli-Palestinian middle class. Of the Palestinian interviewees, 92 percent stated that they want to work because they need money for leisure consumption or because of the rising prices of essential goods. They also stated that getting a job was legitimated in their communities by their fathers or husbands. One interviewee gave a typical statement:

Of course I have to work. Today everyone has to work. My husband understands that for today's quality of life we both have to work and bring money for us and the kids.

The interviews also indicate that Israeli-Palestinian women are not free to work wherever they please; 67 percent claimed their husbands or fathers would not let them work in any kind of job and they themselves considered many jobs unfit for them as Palestinian women, while retail work seemed fitting.

It is possible that we observed an overwhelming preference for work in retail because we interviewed only employed women. Yet, this preference cannot explain Israeli-Palestinian women's high employment rates in malls compared to the shopping streets, which offer the same type of work.

Pay

Based on data gathered from employers at all four retail sites, the average pay in the malls is similar to the one in the shopping streets, roughly 3200 NIS monthly.

Transportation

Lack of private and public transportation in Israeli-Palestinian communities is often cited as hindering employment (Sikkuy 2012). All four retail sites we studied are connected to Israeli-Palestinian communities by means of public transportation.

Taken together, the data indicate the presence of necessary supply-side factors. Yet, given that these factors are present at all the retail sites, they cannot alone explain Israeli-Palestinian women's employment in the malls.

Demand for Workers

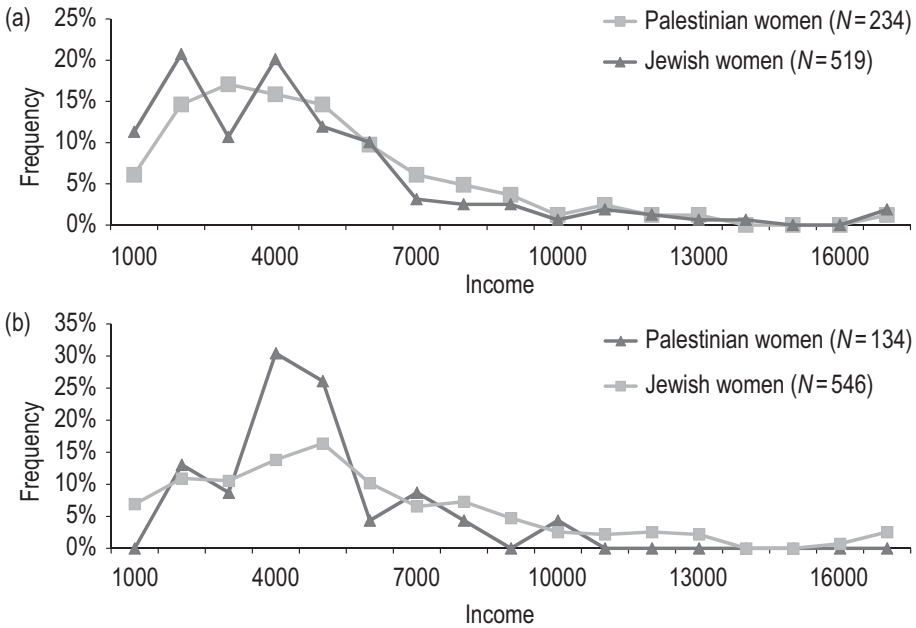
Non-Jewish workers

Shops located at the center of Jewish cities tend to be closed on Saturday, which is the Jewish rest day. In contrast, as part of their global orientation, most mall shops operate on Saturdays. A state law prohibits businesses from employing Jewish workers on Saturdays and other Jewish holidays, thus creating a demand for Palestinian workers in establishments that are open on Saturday. This may explain the difference in employment patterns. Atypically, however, the Kfar-Saba mall is closed on Saturdays. If the demand for workers to fill the Saturday shifts was the driving force for their employment, we would not expect to find a large number of Israeli-Palestinian women employed in the Kfar-Saba mall.

Low-wage labor

According to queuing theory (Reskin and Roos 1990), if the expansion of the retail industry in Israel as elsewhere (Sassen 1996) was met with a shortage of workers from the majority group, employers would tap into the underutilized labor pools, such as Israeli-Palestinian women. To examine this possibility, we compared the income of Israeli-Palestinian and Jewish women in both regions. If Jewish women in the relevant regions typically earn more than Israeli-Palestinian women, it is possible that employers in the malls will turn to Israeli-Palestinian women to fill the rising demand for low-wage workers. Figures 4a and 4b present the income distributions of Jewish and Palestinian women holding a high school diploma, in both regions. These figures show that in the Kfar-Saba area, Jewish women earn more on average than Israeli-Palestinian women (approximately 4200 NIS compared with 3500); but in Carmiel, Israeli-Palestinian women's income is similar to the comparable group of Jewish women. Based on these patterns, we would expect that more Israeli-Palestinian women would be employed in the Kfar-Saba mall than in Carmiel, with its larger supply of Jewish women for these low-wage jobs. Our findings negate these expectations. Israeli-Palestinian women are the largest group of mall employees in both regions.

Figure 4. Income distribution among women (a) Carmiel region (b) Kfar-Saba region



Source: ICBS (2010). Israel Income Survey

Taken together, supply and demand factors do not provide sufficient explanations for the employment patterns of Palestinian women; they are either similar across retail sites with different employment outcomes, or in cases of preference for non-Jewish or low-wage labor, dissimilar across retail sites with the same employment outcome. We have argued that the divergent retail employment trajectories between the shopping streets and the malls are instead due to differences in the organization of consumption.

Conclusion

This paper shows that organizational structures can act as labor-market intermediaries that shape minorities' employment outcomes. Israeli-Palestinian women present an instructive setting for studying this process, as their employment in the retail sector has dramatically increased in recent years, yet remains limited to globally themed malls.

The rise of a Palestinian middle class, the expansion of retail, and the resulting increasing proximity of Palestinian and Jewish communities are no doubt necessary conditions for the growth in Israeli-Palestinian women's consumption and employment, and this should be considered when generalizing from our case study. Yet, we have shown that potential supply-and-demand factors cannot fully explain Israeli-Palestinian women's employment pattern within the retail industry. A fuller account requires a contextualized relational approach

that considers the intersection of gender and ethnic boundaries (Charles 2011). Using a comparative research design, we explored the unintended and unexpected effects of the globally themed business model in retail that enhanced the employment of a socially marginalized group by providing space for transcending gender and ethnic boundaries and for the mutual construction of new economic actors and labor markets. Although we should take caution in generalizing from our cases, the patterns we have documented have several implications for our understanding of the employment of diverse groups and the ways organizations can shape social inequality.

Labor-market scholars have recognized the importance of intermediaries in facilitating supply-and-demand dynamics in contexts where social boundaries hinder the labor-market access of some groups (Autor 2008; Fernandez 2010). We have argued that to understand changes in the employment of highly excluded groups, we need to explore the upstream mechanisms of changing deep social boundaries. Minority groups may not perceive certain labor markets as a relevant source of employment; similarly, employers often hold institutionalized sets of stereotypes shaping their demand for certain kinds of workers and not others (Reskin and Roos 1990; Moss and Tilly 2003). This may be an especially pertinent issue in highly divided societies seeking integration, such as in the case of religious divisions in North Ireland, or where certain social groups, such as disabled people, are not perceived as economic actors. In such cases, opportunities for social contact and interactions in stereotype-disconfirming contexts can provide the initial conditions for new social relations that then enable labor markets to develop between otherwise segregated groups (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Green and Kalev 2008). We show that opportunities for such contact and interaction can be provided by the employing organizations, which thus become labor-market intermediaries, unintentionally improving the employment outcomes of marginalized groups (Smith-Doerr 2004; Kalev 2009). The globally themed retail organization provided a social context for contact and interaction between Jewish store managers and Israeli-Palestinian clients, which led to the construction of new socio-economic identities participating in a new labor market.

Our findings advance research on organizations and social inequality in several ways. First, while scholars have examined the efficacy of antidiscrimination laws and organizational programs for increasing women and minority employment (Skaggs 2008; Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006; Castilla 2008), we explore here the unintended consequences of organizational changes and business models that were adopted with efficiency, rather than equality, in mind. Our research joins other studies that show that organizational structures shape segregation (Kanter 1977; Vallas 2003) and that new organizational forms can unintentionally, and likely with less resistance than corporate diversity efforts, offer undervalued groups new opportunities to become visible, accrue human capital, and improve their employment outcomes within the firm (Smith-Doerr 2004; Kalev 2009). Our comparative design and the rich narrative offered by the in-depth interviews allowed us to point out the globally themed retail organization as a precondition for the retail employment of Israeli-Palestinian women. Future studies may take a more multidimensional and longitudinal approach, which

will also allow researchers to isolate the specific processes and effects of workers, employers, and communities.

Second, our findings enhance our understanding of standardization and inequality. Organizational sociologists since Max Weber have argued that standardization can reduce nepotism and inequality by removing managerial discretion and favoritism (Weber 1978; Bielby 2000). While the jury is still out on the equalizing effects of standardized personnel policies (e.g., Reskin and McBrier 2000 versus Castilla and Benard 2010; Kaley 2014), we have shown the merits of standardized organizations in providing symbolic and material spaces for interactions that de-emphasize localized ethnic boundaries. Social psychologists argue that egalitarian contexts are most conducive for stereotype-reducing social contact (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). We find that standardized cosmopolitan consumption malls, which are more formalized and anonymous organizations than the local, small street stores (Gouldner 1957), offer an extra-territorial space wherein symbols of social boundaries and inequality are removed and provide a less alienating experience for Israeli-Palestinian women as consumers and less patriarchal restrictions on their leisure and later on their employment activities.

To be sure, standardization can deepen inequalities and disadvantages if the characteristics of the dominant group are presented as universal (Nonet and Selznick 1978; DiPrete and Soule 1988; Kaley 2014). Similarly, globalization presents Western standards as universal. Yet, in the case of globally themed consumption, the business model of standardization and globalization was successful in transcending social boundaries that are rooted in the local. In this sense, our study shows that markets and business models can potentially break down social and political fetters. As a result, the usual dark clouds of globalization and consumer culture may turn out to have a silver lining for weak groups—a paradox that is often off the radar screen of most sociologists.¹

The retail industry is central to our research question not only because it has been the source of a significant increase in women's employment, but also because of consumerism's potential for reconfiguring social boundaries between identity groups (see Zelizer 2005) and class boundaries as customers become workers (Cohen 2004; see Zukin 1998). We contribute to research on consumption and employment by looking at the intersection of gender with ethnicity and by pointing to the role of a particular consumerist, cosmopolitan retail organization in transcending ethno-national boundaries and constituting new labor markets.

Notwithstanding the contribution of the retail industry to the rise of Israeli-Palestinian women's employment and the middle class more broadly, it is too early to determine whether the rise of global corporations in Israel will reduce the significance of ethnicity or gender in stratification (Wilson 1978; Jackson 1998). Sociologists of consumption have emphasized the deceptive, exploitative, and (re)segregative aspects of globalized consumer culture (Zelizer 2005; Williams and Connell 2010). The retail jobs at the heart of our analysis are mostly bad jobs, offering low pay, high turnover, and limited promotion opportunities (Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000). Mall employers may

discriminate against Israeli-Palestinian women by funneling them toward the least secure and lowest-income jobs (Pager, Western, and Bonikowski 2009). Indeed, few of the Israeli-Palestinian saleswomen were in managerial positions. Furthermore, this research points to a form of discrimination wherein two markets—the shopping mall and the shopping street—are mutually reinforcing discriminatory tastes. Employers at the shopping mall can hire Israeli-Palestinians with no resistance because prejudiced Jewish customers and Jewish workers can work and shop in the street stores. Similarly, street shop employers can exercise “taste discrimination” because they have a self-selected pool of customers and workers who prefer a “segregated” social space without any Israeli-Palestinians. The selection processes for customers and workers shape the larger social space within which employers perceive Israeli-Palestinian women as employees.²

Yet, the labor-market integration of a previously highly excluded group can begin a process of change. The relatively improved economic status of Israeli-Palestinian women may help them gain social power and promote change through their communities, organized labor, or state antidiscrimination laws. Furthermore, according to the “contact hypothesis” (Allport 1954), the visibility of Israeli-Palestinian women as saleswomen (and a few store managers) alongside Jewish saleswomen in malls that are frequented by Jewish consumers could also reduce stereotypes and promote further labor-market integration.

Notes

1. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this point and formulation.
2. We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this account and its implications.

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