



The Future Perceptions of Jewish and Arab Young Women

Rinat Michael, Hala Habayib, Rachel Gali Cinamon
Tel Aviv University, Israel

Introduction

Future perceptions include one's plans, ambitions, expectations, and concerns about possible events in different life domains in the near and far future (Seginer, 1988). Examining future perceptions among young adults is especially important, since this is the period in which individuals tend to explore and establish choices in different life domains. Along with the characteristics of this developmental period, there is also variation in individuals' future perceptions due to cultural and contextual circumstances (e.g., Côté & Arnett, 2007). The current study focuses on differences in future perceptions among two cultural groups in Israel – Jews and Arabs.

Method

Participants included forty-two Jewish women aged 24-37 ($M=29.26$; $SD=3.52$) and 49 Arab women aged 20-34 ($M=22.26$; $SD=3.00$).

Instruments: All participants completed a semi-structured future perceptions questionnaire and demographic questions. The survey included two questions: (a) "When you think about your future, how far into the future can you picture yourself (e.g., 5 years, 10 years)?" and (b) "Think about the time in the future you just mentioned and describe your life at that time. Try to mention as many life roles as possible (e.g., work, family)."

Procedure: The authors separately analyzed participants' responses using Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommended thematic analysis procedures.

Results

In general, participants varied in their time horizon (the length of how far they envisioned their future in time), ranging between four months and 30 years among the Jewish participants ($M=7.08$; $SD=5.24$), and between one year and 15 years among the Arab participants ($M=6.46$; $SD=2.76$). In both samples the most frequent answer was five years.

Content analysis revealed five themes across both samples: (a) work, (b) family/relationships, (c) education, (d) quality of life, and (e) multiple role management. The Jewish participants also mentioned issues of property, residence, leisure, and pro-social activities.

Discussion

Similarities and differences between Jewish and Arab Israeli women's perceptions of their future can be understood from a variety of perspectives regarding gender roles in each culture, as well as differences in cultural identity. Career counselors who work with young adults should be aware of their clients' potential difficulty in thinking more than five years into the future. They also need to be culturally sensitive when working with individuals from diverse national origins.