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A Qualitative cum Quantitative Approach to Construct Definition in a Minority Population: Reasons for Divorce among Israeli Arab Women

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The paper describes the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a preliminary definition of the construct, the reasons for divorce among Israeli Arab women. The qualitative methods consisted of personal interviews and a focus group, the quantitative method of Trochim's concept mapping. The combined approach was adopted in the wake of skepticism about the ability of research instruments developed in the West to study Western populations to provide valid and reliable assessments of non-Western groups. A culturally sensitive definition of the construct was sought as a first step in the design of a culturally sensitive research instrument for a study of divorce among Israeli Arabs to be carried out by a number of Arab and Jewish scholars in Israel.

The findings support the authors' initial intuition that the reasons that lead Israeli Arab women to divorce are different from those that motivate middle class Western women. While the latter tend to be motivated by emotional reasons, from poor communication and desire for self-fulfillment, the Muslim Arab women who divorce are moved by really extreme marital misery brought on by a high degree of physical violence, sexual torment, emotional abuse, and/or the mental illness or addiction of their partners, as well as by the active intervention of their in-laws to break up their marriage.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the need to anchor social and psychological research of minority or ethnic populations in the culture of the group under investigation (Hughes et al., 1993; Hui & Triandis, 1989; Sasao & Sue, 1993; Seidman, 1993; Sue, 1991). Noting that culture affects every stage of
the research process, from the formation of the research questions through the interpretation of the data, researchers have called for the development of culturally sensitive research methods, which take into account the values, belief systems, and behaviors of the population under study, as well as its place in and relationship with the dominant culture in whose midst it lives (Hines, 1993; Hughes & DuMont, 1993; Maton, 1993; Tran, 1992). Researchers who have dealt with issues involved in minority or ethnic oriented research have proposed a variety of general approaches (Hughes & DuMont, 1993; Hines, 1993; Sue et al., 1982; Zane & Sue, 1986) and struggled valiantly to design studies tailored to the culture of particular groups (Milburn et al., 1991; Zane & Sue, 1986).

This paper belongs with those that offer concrete suggestions for the design of a culturally anchored research study. It focuses on one aspect of such a study: the formulation and definition of constructs, which is one of the critical phases in the development of measures. As Hughes and DuMont (1993) note, “Cultural norms, values, and experiences influence the relevance of a set of constructs to respondents, the range of behaviors and ideas that are valid indicators of the constructs, and how respondents interpret items employed to assess them” (Hughes & DuMont, 1993; p. 776).

The constructs were required in order to design a research instrument for a study of divorce among Israeli Arabs to be carried out by a number of Arab and Jewish scholars in Israel. The study, which is still in process, aims to investigate the reasons for, patterns of coping with, and adjustment to divorce in this community. It focuses on the Arabs of Jaffa, which is a low income, mixed Jewish-Arab area of Tel Aviv and home to about 15,000 Arabs and 35,000 Jews. For practical reasons, both the study and the development of the study instrument began with Arab women, and men will be incorporated at a later stage. But the principles are the same.

The constructs in question were the causes of, coping with, and adjustment to divorce. They were defined using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative tools consisted of personal interviews and a focus group, aimed at learning inductively from the study population how it itself
defined these constructs. The collection of information from the target group served as the first step in Trochim's concept mapping (Trochim, 1989a). Using Trochim's approach, the data were then subjected to quantitative analyses: cluster analysis and multidimensional analysis. Since the purpose of the paper is not to explore the constructs themselves but rather to illustrate the application of the method, the description here is confined to the reasons for divorce so as to avoid repetition.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of divorce among Israeli Arabs, including the state of the literature, and of aspects of Israeli-Arab culture that might affect Arab women’s motives for divorce. It then discusses the problem of studying divorce in this community, the need to first define the key constructs, and the choice of Trochim's concept mapping, a combined qualitative—quantitative method, to do so. The paper focuses on the description and findings of the mapping, and ends with a discussion of their implications and limitations.

**Background Issues**

**Divorce Among Israeli Arabs**

The last few decades have seen a rise in divorce rates in traditional societies, including that of Israeli Arabs. Data published by Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics indicates that between the 1960's and mid-1990's, the divorce rate almost doubled among Israel's Arab families, from 0.5% to 0.9%. This trend is confirmed in personal conversations between the authors of this paper and several Arab informants: the President of the Muslim High Court of Appeals (the Kadi, Ahmed Natur), which hears appeals of divorce cases that had been settled by lower level Muslim religious courts (the shar‘ia courts); directors of social services departments in three Arab municipalities; and several Arab social workers in the social services department of the Tel Aviv municipality.

The study in question was prompted, first and foremost, by the recognition that it is important to provide social services for the increasing number of Arab men and women who divorce. Since divorce on any scale is a relatively new phenomenon in this population, there are virtually no social services specifically
aimed at helping those who undertake it. To design such services, though, it is obviously necessary first to know more about why the couples in this community divorce and how they cope with and adjust to the break-up of their marriages.

Literature on Divorce

The existing literature is of little use. Most of the literature on divorce deals with the multidimensional changes divorce wrecks on the family unit, focusing on its implications for both the adults (e.g., Arendell, 1987; Burns, 1992; Holden & Smock, 1991) and children (e.g., Arditi, 1992; Wallerstein, 1991) involved. Studies in Israel follow a similar pattern (e.g., Cohen, 1991; Dattner, 1987; Luxembourg, 1987; Pasternak, 1989; Smilansky, 1990). Virtually all of the studies, including those in Israel, were conducted mainly on middle class families from western cultures and utilized research tools that were developed specifically for western men and women.

The studies suggest a range of reasons for divorce in the western world, including the growing acceptance of divorce and liberalization of divorce laws; unresolved interpersonal conflicts, manifested in such things as emotional rejection, poor communication, and problems in role division; the husband and wife developing in different and non-complementary directions; negative feelings and defensive, obstinate, and non-interactive behavior (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Cherlin, 1981; Easterlin, 1980; Gottman, 1994). When women’s reasons were queried separately, these tended to be related to the desire for greater personal fulfillment, lack of effective communication with their husbands, conflicts over the division of roles in the family, and unsatisfying sex with their husbands.

Whether the same or similar reasons motivated Israel Arabs in general and Israeli Arab women in particular to get divorced could not be known. Despite the rising incidence of divorce among Israeli Arabs, no research has as yet been conducted on divorce in this community. Nor has much, if any, research been done on divorce in other traditional communities, from which we might have extrapolated. A computerized search carried out by the authors failed to produce any large scale, empirical study of divorce in traditional societies.
There are a number of small studies of divorce in several developing countries (Russia, Moskoff, 1983; Poland, Lobodzinska. 1983; India, Amato, 1994). These highlight the specific impact of each country's particular legal, social, cultural, and economic realities on the divorce experience, including the reasons that prompt divorce.

The literature on divorce in the United States in different periods and among different socio-economic and ethnic groups similarly points to the impact of environmental factors on the divorce experience. This literature shows that American women in the 1940's (when divorce rates were lower than they are today) were more likely to cite non-support or their husband's alcoholism, while women in the 1970's were more likely to cite factors like communications problems and differences in values (Kitson & Sussman, 1982); that women of lower socio-economic status give more material reasons for divorce, such as physical abuse, their husband's drinking, and financial problems, while middle-class women are more likely to give emotional reasons such as their husband's lack of love and infidelity (Levinger, 1966; Burns, 1982; Kitson & Sussman, 1982, Cleek & Pearson, 1985), and that women born of Mexican parents, whether in America or Mexico, were more likely to cite infidelity as a cause of divorce than women born in America of American parents (Parra et al., 1995).

The message of these studies is that the divorce experience is anchored in the society in which it occurs, and knowledge about divorce in one society is not necessarily generalizable to another, even where the societies are may have many features in common.

Aspects of Israeli Arab Culture that Might Affect the Women's Motives for Divorce

It was reasonable to suspect that Israeli Arab women's motives for divorce, affected by the culture in which they lived, might not necessarily be the same as those of their western counterparts. The literature on this population generally agrees that Israeli Arab society has been in the throes of a transition from a traditional, patriarchal society, with the extended family at the center, to a modern, more liberal society, where the individual is less dependent on the family for self-identification and economic
survival (Al-Haj, 1987, 1989; Haj-Yahia, 1995; Rosenfeld, 1981). In recent years Israeli Arab women have become increasingly well educated and have joined the workforce in increasing numbers (Al-Haj, 1987, 1989). Like women elsewhere, some earn better than their husbands and are the family’s major breadwinners. At the same time, Arab society in Israel, as elsewhere, is still patriarchal, and women are low in the family hierarchy (Avitzur, 1987; Haj Yahia, 1994; Shokeid, 1993). The gap between women’s importance in the family economy and the respect and satisfaction they may attain at work, on the one hand, and their inferior status at home, on the other hand, could be expected to be a source of dissatisfaction and marital tension. At the same time, their newly acquired education and earning power apparently enable these women to contemplate breaking loose of their husbands and setting up on their own, which was not possible in the past. (The role of women’s increased education and economic independence in the rising divorce rate in Israeli Arab society seems to be quite similar to that in Europe and the United States). On the other hand, Arab women are still defined by their families and community largely as wives and mothers and respected or not for their functioning in these roles. Divorce is still not considered legitimate. An Arab woman who undertakes divorce can expect considerable social criticism and even sanctions, including by her parents and relatives. In effect, she loses her place in society. Together, these various factors can be expected to create their own particular blend of inducements and deterrents to divorce, and, thereby effect the motives that lead Arab women to take the step.

The Problem for Research

The lack of information made it very difficult to embark on a study. Namely, we could not know whether the existing research tools, which had proved reliable and valid with western populations, would provide valid findings and whether their constructs would be relevant and meaningful to the target population. Other than the relatively few studies based on personal interviews (i.e., Ponzetti Zvonkovic, Cate & Huston, 1992), most of the studies reported in the literature employ checklists, with each item pointing to a possible reason for the respondent’s separation or divorce. These checklists are somewhat problematic in themselves, in that
the number and content of the items vary from checklist to checklist. Moreover, a glance at the findings suggests a disconcerting lack of correspondence between the weight given to certain types of reasons in the checklists and the degree of their endorsement. But their main problem for our purposes was their transferability across cultures. The items in the checklists tended to stem from a certain prior familiarity with the population from which the respondents came. The familiarity may have been obtained by prior study of the population (i.e., Gigy & Kelly, 1992), previous checklists designed for a similar population (i.e., Burns, 1984), or a combination of previous checklists and information provided in the literature (Davis & Aron, 1988). We could only suspect that the outcomes of such measures would be as dubious as those of other studies of ethnic groups based on tools designed for and by mainstream western cultural groups (Hines, 1993; Hughes & DuMont, 1993).

Nor did we have any published theory or empirical findings which we could use to construct a research instrument. We needed to gain enough knowledge about the population to design a study instrument that would include the relevant variables and in weights that accorded with their importance or marginality for the population.

Method

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Following the advice of various authors who urge that the best way of obtaining reliable knowledge of a different population group is to combine qualitative and quantitative methods (Hines, 1993; Jick, 1979; Maton, 1993; Sells et al., 1995; Wiener et al., 1994), we decided to adopt a multi-method approach. Qualitative methods, it has been noted, provide information that can be used to improve the formulation of survey questions and to structure questionnaire formats to fit the way particular groups organize concepts (Hines, 1993). According to Hughes, Seidman, Williams, (1993), qualitative methods provide broad description and deeper understanding of phenomena from participants' own perspectives, while quantitative methods temper researchers' biases and emphasize reliability, validity, and the search for parsimonious
solutions. The combination, they indicate, enables researchers to learn about the non-mainstream cultural groups they are studying and at the same time to utilize the rigorous methodologies that are necessary for hypotheses testing and replication of findings.

**Concept Mapping**

The major procedure used to define the concepts in question was concept mapping (Trochim, 1989a). This is a multi-method procedure, in which data are gathered qualitatively and analyzed quantitatively. It has applications in organizations, in business, in planning services and in many other areas (Caracelli & Riggs, 1994; Knox, 1995; Trochim, 1989b; Trochim et al., 1994; Savaya & Waysman, 1995; Wiener et al., 1994). In the social sciences, concept mapping can be used to help articulate a theory, provide the basis for measurement, or serve as a basis for analyzing research results (Trochim, 1989a). To give some examples of its scope, Trochim (1989b) reports on the use of concept mapping to set the goals of a multi-cultural summer camp, to plan university health and employment services, to design training programs for professional community workers and volunteer mental health workers, to identify issues for a student assembly to address, to design a graduate course in measurement, to restructure a company's personnel utilization, and others. Here we show how concept mapping was used to identify and group the relevant variables in the causes for divorce among Arab women.

Concept mapping involves five steps: 1) a two-part preparatory stage to determine the focus of the mapping and select the participants in the process; 2) generation of statements relevant to the focus; 3) sorting of statements into groups and rating each statement's importance; 4) creation of a visual concept map based on the sorting and analysis of the ratings; and 5) interpretation of the concept map. Since these steps are described in detail by Trochim (1989a), we will focus here on their application to our purposes.

1. Preparation:
   a. Focus: The mapping focused on the reasons for, coping with, and adjustment to divorce. We confine our discussion here to the reasons.
b. Selection of Participants: Participants for generating the statements were drawn from a list of Arab women who had divorced in the Moslem religious court in the mixed Arab-Jewish town of Jaffa in 1993–94. A social worker employed in this court extracted names from the list on the basis of the following criteria: the woman’s willingness to reveal her personal story, her articulateness, and, in particular, the social worker’s assessment that participation in the study would not harm the woman in any way. After compiling a list of 15 names, the social worker contacted the women and asked them whether they would be willing to be interviewed for a study on divorce in the Moslem community. Nine agreed, four to individual interviews and five to a group interview, which formed a focus group.

The small size and unrepresentativeness of the sample are common features of qualitative studies. Additional reasons for them in this context include the Arab cultural interdiction against disclosing family problems to outsiders and the extremely sensitive nature of the subject for these women because of the lack of legitimacy for divorce in their culture despite its increasing occurrence.

2. Generation of statements:

The statements were generated in individual interviews and a focus group. The interviews were carried out in the women’s homes and lasted about two-and-a-half hours on average. An Arab social worker was present at all the interviews and took an active part in them. The women were asked three main questions: What were your reasons for divorcing? From where did you draw the strength to go through the divorce? What does adjusting to divorce mean in Arab society and how did you adjust? The interviews were tape recorded, after permission was obtained from the interviewees, and transcribed by a research assistant.

Focus groups have been proposed as an effective way of anchoring scientific knowledge about social and psychological processes in the norms, values, and experience of the population under study (Hughes & Dumont, 1993). Among other things, focus groups can identify constructs that have been completely omitted from a conceptual framework but that are important to a group’s experiences, as well as the identify items used to measure each construct. Focus groups emphasize participants’ perspectives and allow the researcher to explore the nuances and
complexities of participants' attitudes and experience (Morgan, 1993; Race et al., 1994; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

The focus group for this study was made up of the five divorced women who preferred to participate in a group interview. The focus group session was held in a marriage and family counseling center in Jaffa and lasted about two hours. It was led in Arabic by an Arab professional with training and experience in working with groups. She made use of a set of semi-structured guidelines based on the points that had arisen in the interviews. The discussion was separately recorded on tape recorder and taken down by an Arab woman, who later translated it into Hebrew. The transcript was checked by the focus group leader, who confirmed its accuracy.

The two sets of transcriptions were both read separately by each of the authors, as well as by seven professionals who served as sorters (see below). Each reader separately culled all the statements that indicated a reason or motive for divorce. Only the statements that were considered reasons by eight out the nine readers were included in the study.

By the end of the qualitative stage, 36 statements of reasons for divorce were generated.

3. Sorting the statements into piles:
Ordinarily the sorting is done by the same people who provide the information (Trochim, 1989a). In this instance, we were reluctant to ask the already overburdened women to invest the necessary time and energy to do it. Moreover, not all of the women were sufficiently literate in either Arabic or Hebrew to do the sorting. We thus approached seven Arab social workers who agreed to perform this task. All of the statements regarding the reasons for divorce were written down on cards by the researchers, one statement per card. Each of the sorters was given a complete set of cards and instructed to arrange them in piles in whatever way made sense to them, so long as there was more than one pile and fewer than 36.

Ordinarily, too, the sorters rate the importance of each item. But since the sorters were not the target population, this could obviously not be done.

4. Analysis of the sortings to create a visual concept map or maps: The sortings were entered into the Concept System
Construct Definition

computer program developed by Trochim (Trochim, 1993b) for the purpose of statistical analysis. Two analyses were carried out: a multidimensional scaling and a cluster analysis.

Multi dimensional scaling is used to organize the statements that are piled together into distinct constructs. It begins with the construction of an \( N \times N \) binary symmetric matrix of similarities for each sorter, where \( N \) is the total number of statements. Each cell is given a value of 1 or 0: 1 where the two statements represented by the cell are in the same pile, 0 where they are not. To illustrate: in our case, there were 36 statements, so each matrix was \( 36 \times 36 \). If the sorter in question had placed statements 5 and 17 in the same pile, the two relevant cells (cells 5 \( \times \) 17 and 17 \( \times \) 5) would bear the integer 1; if he or she had placed them in different piles, the cells would bear the integer 0.

The next step is to create a total similarity matrix, which shows the number of sorters placing each cross-pair of statements in the same pile. Any cell in this matrix can thus bear an integer value of 0 to the total number of sorters. In our instance, this would mean 0 to 7. To continue our example, if 4 sorters placed statements 5 and 17 in the same pile, the relevant cells in the total similarity matrix would take the number 4.

The total similarity matrix is then subjected to non-metric multidimensional scaling analysis (Davison, 1983; Kruskal & Wish, 1978) with two-dimensional solution (which is easier to work with and more useful than solutions involving three or more dimensions; Kruskal & Wish, 1978). The analysis yields a two-dimensional configuration of the statements by placing statements piled together most often more proximately in two dimensional space and those piled together less frequently further apart.

This two dimensional configuration is the input for the hierarchical cluster analysis (which utilizes Ward's algorithm as the basis for defining a cluster; Andeberg, 1973; Everitt, 1980). The cluster analysis partitions the multidimensional configuration into nonoverlapping clusters in two dimensional space, such that each cluster represents a single construct consisting of the statements that were piled together. Its purpose is to group separate statements into clusters which reflect similar concepts.

The main end products are two visual maps of the statements: a dot map representing the distribution of the statements on
the multidimensional scaling and a border map representing the clusters.

Findings

Dot Map: Figure 1 shows the relative placement of each statement in relation to all the others. Dots that are close together on the map represent items that were often sorted into the same category by the sorters, while dots that are far apart were mostly sorted into separate piles. Statements that all sorters put in the same cluster appear as dots one on top of the other. Thus, not all the statements can be seen in a two-dimensional map. Here statement 6 is hidden by statement 21 and statement 17 is hidden by statement 18.

Border map. This map presents the results of the cluster analysis. In essence, it is a dot map with a closed multi-sided figure drawn around groups of dots to create clusters in such a way that the statements within a cluster are those that were more often sorted in the same pile than the statements in the other clusters. Furthermore, clusters that are closer to each other are usually more similar in content than clusters which are further apart on the map. Since the analysis is hierarchical, the subdivision of clusters changes neither the location of existing clusters nor the placements of statements within them. The final decision as to the number of clusters to be retained for interpretation is made by the researcher based on conceptual and practical considerations.

This process resulted in the following list of seven main causes for divorce. The final concept map is presented in Figure 2.

Interpretation of the dimensionality: Since the map is based on a multidimensional scaling, the location of each cluster on the map has meaning in relation to two axes: north/south and east/west. In this map, the northern section consists largely of statements relating to violence—sexual and physical violence by the husband and physical violence by a member of the extended family. The southern section features non-violent causes: addiction, mental illness and interference by the extended family. The east/west dimension traces a movement from causes related to the extended family, through causes involving both the partners, to causes stemming from the husband’s behavior. Problems in
communication are located at the center of the east-west axis and
span the north-south route from violence to social and psycho-
logical causes.

As can be seen, the causes were identified as: 1) sexual tor-
ment, manifested in either physical violence or total cessation
of the sexual relationship, 2) physical violence by the husband,
3) physical violence by a member of the extended family, 4) in-
terference by the extended family, 5) communication problems,
6) husband's addiction, and 7) husband's mental illness, as man-
ifested in bizarre behavior. Table 1 presents the items within each
cluster. One item (number 9, "There was no food or drink in the
house") did not enter into any cluster and is thus not included in
the table.

Discussion

This paper illustrates the use of Trochim's concept mapping
to define a construct—the reasons for divorce among Israeli Arab
women living in an urban, multi-ethnic community in a culturally
sensitive manner. The findings support the initial assumption that
the reasons for divorce in this society, which is in the throes of
transition from a traditional culture in which women are sub-
ordinate and divorce is considered unacceptable, are different
from the reasons proposed in the professional literature based
on populations in a liberal, western culture, where women are
more independent and divorce is accepted.

It is quite apparent from the statements generated in the
personal interviews and focus group that the emotional friction
or incompatibility that is behind much of the divorce in western
society plays a relatively small role in the breakup of Israeli
Arab families. It is also evident that these women do not leave
their husbands out of a desire for greater personal fulfillment
or dissatisfaction with the traditional division of roles. Similarly,
while problems in communication, which are considered a major
factor in divorce in the west, do figure in these women's reasons,
they are not frequently cited.

Indeed, the findings show that these women divorce mainly
in the wake of really extreme marital misery brought on by a high
degree of physical violence, sexual torment, emotional abuse,
and/or the mental illness or addiction of their partners. They also
Table 1

Seven Main Reasons for Divorce

Cluster 1: Sexual torment
6. It's shameful to say, I haven't slept with my husband in ten years.
11. He would ask me to do things that God and religion forbid.
17. He wanted to sleep with me with blows and force.
18. He wanted to sleep with me every day, three times a day, by force and beat me. He made scars around my vagina.
20. When a couple doesn't get along in bed, problems arise. He wanted to sleep with me every day, brutally. People knew—it was shameful.
21. He hasn't slept with me in ten years.
22. I didn't want [sex] every day, so he didn't give me money [for the house].

Cluster 2: Husband’s Physical Violence
7. It's shameful to say, my husband beat me with scissors and made scars on my stomach.
12. My house was full of food, money, drink, that wasn't what I was missing. But everything I bought for the house would break.... He would pull me by the hair from one end of the house to the other, drag me by the hair. He burnt my clothes, tore them.
15. My neighbors in the building didn't sleep, he would break [things], kick. I decided to run before I died.
16. My aunt saw him beat me.
25. He drank, beat, humiliated me. I went to his family, they sent me back.
27. Curse, beat.... How did he beat? Knives, a pot, cups, I would cry and go to sleep.
31. I would be asleep, he would choke me, burn me with cigarettes, here and here...
36. When my husband hit me with scissors and tore my stomach, they took me to the hospital and gave me ten stitches.

Cluster 3: Violence by a Member of the Extended Family
19. He said “your parents told me I have to beat you.”
34. From the moment he took me back to his home after the wedding, I told him that I didn’t want him and would divorce him in another twenty years. My brother came, because my husband told him, and beat me on my wedding night.

Cluster 4: Interference of Extended Family
13. His father told him “if you don’t divorce her, you’re not my son and I’m not your father.”

continued
23. He decided to divorce me because of his father's decision.
24. My father and his father had an argument and decided to break the bundle.
26. My father-in-law would tell him, "treat her like a servant".
35. I decided when he attacked me—him and his father.

**Cluster 5: Communication Problems**
3. Lack of trust between the couple leads to divorce.
4. No understanding.
5. I worked outside the house and in the house and I never heard even a word of thanks. And not only that, but he called me a cheating whore, you have a boyfriend. When it reached that point, I couldn't anymore. I said, up to here...
10. He made my life miserable.

**Cluster 6: Husband's Addiction**
1. I had a very hard time, he drank a lot, didn't eat at home, so I got divorced.
2. He used drugs. There was no food in the house, or drink. I want to dress, there's no money.
8. Alcoholic. The children saw their father drinking all the time. He would walk along the street drunk, the children would call them "the drunkard's kids", and me they called "the drunkard's wife".
28. He's like a woman in the house. Doesn't work. Shoots up. So I suffer all the time.

**Cluster 7: Husband's Bizarre Behavior**
29. Where is he? Sleeping in the garbage. So I suffered. And he goes and picks up all the garbage and brings it home. And I had a beautiful house, beautiful.
30. He'd leave the house dressed and come back wearing something else. Let's say once a red shoe, and once disheveled. Once he wore a dog's collar.... Like a madman.
32. He sold the furniture, the children's clothes. From that day, I wanted to get divorced.
33. I was ashamed to go out with him. I'd go only with the children and my friends, not with him.
reveal, in some of the cases, the role of the extended family, which brought on the divorce either directly by ordering it or indirectly by provoking or perpetrating the violence that drove the women to take the step.

To be sure, these reasons bear somewhat greater resemblance to the reasons for divorce given by American women half a century ago, when divorce was less legitimate in the US, and by American women of lower socio-economic status today. This resemblance is yet further evidence of the role of cultural factors in shaping the divorce experience. Nonetheless, the pictures are far from identical. Sexual torment and the active role of the extended family in separating the couple are not cited as reasons for divorce among these American groups, and have not been noted in the divorce literature.

Clearly, a standard measure developed and validated among western women would provide a most biased picture of the reasons for divorce in the Israeli Arab population. It would probably over-emphasize irrelevant issues and under-estimate or ignore relevant ones.

The concept mapping procedure developed by Trochim enabled us to obtain a more reliable picture of the situation of these women than a purely qualitative approach. While the qualitative method of information gathering provided us with rich, contextual material, the Trochim procedure enabled a degree of objectivity not available in purely qualitative studies. The information was obtained from separate sorters, each classifying the statements of all the subjects. The findings obtained by statistical analyses represent their collective judgments, each of which is equally weighted, rather than the interpretation of a single researcher or small team, as is the case of qualitative studies.

To be sure, the fact that the statements were sorted by professionals rather than by the population under investigation, as is required by Trochim’s procedure, is a drawback. Potentially, the women might have conceptualized and grouped the reasons for divorce differently. Given the limited education of this sample (some could not read and most had not completed elementary school), however, it is questionable whether they could have done the sorting. Nonetheless, the statements the women
generated in their own words provide important culture-specific information that would not otherwise have been available to the researchers.

The use of an inductive approach based on qualitative methods which by definition look at very small and non-probability samples raises questions concerning the representativeness of the findings. We cannot know whether the reasons given by our nine subjects constitute a complete rendition, or whether other reasons would have emerged had other women been queried. Nor can we know how generalizable the reasons found here are to other Moslem divorcees in Jaffa or to the Moslem women living in the many Arab towns and villages of Israel, where the process of modernization may not be as fully underway.

But two facts point to the trustworthiness of the findings. One is that a review by the authors of the reasons given for divorce in the personal interviews and those given by the women in the focus group revealed no discernible difference between them. The other is that Arab professionals who were asked to give their views of the reasons for divorce among Israeli Arabs cited much the same causes (Cohen & Savaya, 1997).

Because of its limitations, however, we regard our concept mapping as only a first step which enables us to generate hypotheses for testing. We can now go on to prepare a research instrument to be administered to a large sample of divorced Arabs in a range of locations (i.e., urban versus rural, all-Arab versus mixed Arab-Jewish) in Israel. Each reason revealed in the concept map can be turned into one or more questions or phrased as a statement for a Likert/type response. An open question asking the respondents to state in their own words any additional reasons for their divorce can be used to reveal reasons that may not have come up in the small sample. Socio-demographic questions can be added both for a fuller picture and to enable comparison of the divorce experiences of Arab women in different social and economic strata and living in different types of communities. Following analogous qualitative studies, a similar approach can be adopted to study the divorce experiences of Arab men and of Christian Arabs in Israel. Moreover, to obtain a comparative picture to divorce in the west, we can integrate questions based on the recurrent statements made by the women in this sample.
with questions based on the literature and questions drawn from standard divorce questionnaires.

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Construct Definition


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Construct Definition


