



The Arab Families Working Group

Abstract Weddings and War
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Using in-depth interviews with women and men married during two periods of sustained warlike conditions in Palestine – the first (1989-1992) and second (2000 until present) Palestinian intifadas – this paper, reporting from an on-going and collaborative research project – offers an initial analysis which compares marriage arrangements and ceremonies in the two periods to explore the following questions: Why the disregard of the material and financial aspects of marriage arrangements in the first and the careful attention in the second? Why the dismissal of the social and symbolic aspects of parties and ceremonies in the first and the pride and distinction in the second? Why the importance of nationalist activity in marriage partnership in the first and its diminution in the second? And what are their commonalities? What, for example, is “Palestinian” in marriage preparations and celebrations during these two periods with high levels of insecurity, conflict and resistance? While noting a range of factors – from individual class and social background, political affiliation, location, gender and broad historical trends in marriage – the hypothesis to explore is that the times – politics in its broadest senses as environment, power, resistance, crisis, identity, means of agency, and field of meaning – play a critical role in shaping marriage arrangements and ceremonies in these two cases, and in Palestinian society as a whole. As Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, marriage is a domain where symbolic, as well as material goods, are exchanged – identities, social and political importance, and what he even calls a “reason to live” may feature in these symbolic exchanges.