**Early motherhood among Palestinian women college students in Israel:
Their ways of coping**

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ABSTRACT

In Arab society, the subject of motherhood – especially early motherhood– has received scant research attention. Moreover, the very concept of early motherhood barely exists in Arabic and is notably absent in the professional literature on parenting and mothering. Hence, there is almost no information about common mothering styles among young mothers or the nature of the relationship between young mothers and their children. The present study addresses motherhood in Arab society in general and early motherhood among Arab mothers in particular. We examine early motherhood among Arab women undergraduate students in Israel, coping methods used, and clinical implications. The research aims to identify the norms that may be helpful or burdensome to the young women’s experience and to examine the changes that occur in their lives as they become mothers. We also seek to scrutinize the existence of family support and social solidarity, parsing the nature of that support and what it offers to these new mothers. The findings show that these Arab women students have been ill prepared and unaware of what awaited them during pregnancy and childbirth, and its aftermath. They had difficulty in accepting the fact of their pregnancy, a reluctance which exerted a negative influence on their mental and emotional state, and they were unprepared for giving birth. They felt rebellious to the point of non-acceptance of their newborn child and rejection of their own sense of maternity, bonding poorly with their infant and lacking a sense of responsibility for his or her care.