STATEMENT

by Prof. Nikolay Stoyanov Kolishev, D. Sc.

of a dissertation entitled "The Influence of Stereotypes and Prejudices on the Aspirations and Status of Women in Arab Society" by Lulu Ballous, submitted for the award of the educational and academic degree of "Doctor" in professional field 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral Programme in General Psychology

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation consists of four chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, and sections on methodology, findings and discussion. The first chapter presents a systematic account of the theoretical literature on stereotypes in the process of interpersonal perception and their influence on an individual's thinking and behaviour. The second chapter examines the formation of stereotypes. The third chapter analyses specific stereotypes characteristic of Arab society in Israel, while the fourth focuses on stereotypes about women in Arab society in Israel. The sections entitled “Methodology”, “Findings” and “Discussion” describe the organisation and methods of the study and analyse the results obtained. The dissertation contains scientific, applied-scientific and practice-oriented contributions that constitute an original contribution to science and are not the result of plagiarism; this applies to the dissertation as a whole.

The main strengths of the dissertation can be summarised as follows:

1. The methodological components of the study (object, subject, aim and objectives) are formulated appropriately, enabling the author to define the scope of the research precisely and to establish a logical connection between its various parts.
2. The theoretical and empirical literature on stereotypes, attribution theory, social categorisation, intergroup relations and gender inequality is competently systematised and analysed.
3. Fifty women were interviewed using a professionally designed and conducted interview process. The interviews generated information

in two research areas: 1) the influence of stereotypes relating to gender, marital status, ethnicity and occupation on women's access to education, professional development and social recognition; and 2) the experiences, coping strategies and visions of change of women from Arab society in Israel.

4. The empirical data are analysed thoroughly and consistently, leading to the achievement of two main objectives: 1) identifying recurring patterns of resilience, agency and resistance that women develop in response to structural and cultural constraints; and 2) providing convincing support for the author's thesis that “stereotypes and prejudices function as multilayered, cumulative mechanisms of social control that significantly limit the aspirations and social status of women in Arab society in Israel” (p. 8 of the dissertation abstract).
5. I would particularly like to highlight the successful approach of analysing the fifty interviews thematically and organising the findings into five overarching themes, “each of which reflects a set of meanings that recur consistently in the participants' narratives, while retaining important variations reflecting differences in social background, life stage and individual circumstances” (p. 27 of the dissertation abstract). The themes are: “Family and Social Constraints”, “Aspirations vs. Reality”, “Experiences of Stereotypes and Prejudices”, “Coping Strategies and Paths to Resilience”, and “Visions for Change and Future Directions”.

The dissertation abstract has been prepared appropriately, as it reflects the essential methodological, theoretical and empirical components of the dissertation.

The doctoral candidate has submitted four publications related to the dissertation topic, published in an electronic proceedings volume of a scientific and applied conference. The publications are of clear scientific value and are distinguished by the relevance of the issues addressed, a logical structure, precision in defining and using key concepts, the substantiation of productive practical ideas, and a highly professional language and style.

The doctoral candidate has fulfilled the minimum national requirements for the award

of the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor”, pursuant to Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Article 24, paragraph 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of that Act.

II. II. EVALUATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The scientific contributions presented by the candidate are consistent with the content of the submitted publications and demonstrate a good level of professional reflection.

I would highlight the following contributions as particularly significant for general psychology:

1. 1. An original conceptual framework for interpreting stereotypes is proposed. Within this framework, stereotypes are understood as functional configurations of cognitive, social and institutional mechanisms operating in relation to the specific characteristics of Arab women in Israel.
2. 2. A qualitative analysis of the empirical findings reveals the principal mechanisms through which stereotypes operate throughout an individual's life.
3. 3. A multilevel intervention model is proposed to reduce and overcome stereotype-based barriers to the advancement of Arab women. The model encompasses structural reform, institutional change and psychosocial support, with practical priorities formulated by the research participants themselves.

III. III. EVALUATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND APPLIED CONTRIBUTIONS

The dissertation demonstrates a well-developed ability to translate theoretical principles into appropriate practical solutions. Their implementation can contribute to effectively addressing and overcoming stereotype-based barriers to the full social integration of Arab women.

The main scientific and applied contribution is that the findings of the dissertation provide a theoretically sound basis for developing educational materials and resources to support the professional development of specialists working with Arab women and girls in Israel.

IV. IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to express my positive assessment of the systematic presentation of the theoretical material in the dissertation, the methodological rigour of the interviews, the detailed analysis of the research findings, and the overall educational and scientific value of the work. The dissertation's scientific and theoretical, as well as scientific and applied, contributions meet the requirements laid down by law for the award of the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in professional field 3.2. Psychology.

Prepared by:

(Prof. Nikolay Kolishev, DSc)