



AL-Raida ^{مجلة} الرائدة

magazine

Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, LAU
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Young Arab Women

ABOUT IWSAW

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) was established in 1973 at the Lebanese American University (formerly Beirut University College). Initial funding for the Institute was provided by the Ford Foundation.

OBJECTIVES: The Institute strives to serve as a data bank and resource center to advance a better understanding of issues pertaining to Arab women and children; to promote communication among individuals, groups and institutions throughout the world concerned with Arab women; to improve the quality of life of Arab women and children through educational and development projects; and to enhance the educational and outreach efforts of the Lebanese American University.

PROJECTS: IWSAW activities include academic research on women, local, regional and international conferences; seminars, lectures and films; and educational projects which improve the lives of women and children from all sectors of Lebanese society. The Institute houses the Women's

Documentation Center in the Stoltzfus Library at LAU. The Center holds books and periodicals. The Institute also publishes a variety of books and pamphlets on the status, development and conditions of Arab women, in addition to *Al-Raida*. Eight children's books with illustrations, and two guides, one of which specifies how to set up children's libraries, and the other which contains information about producing children's books, have also been published by IWSAW. In addition, the Institute has also created income generating projects which provide employment training and assistance to women from war-stricken families in Lebanon. The Institute has also devised a "Basic Living Skills Project" which provides a non-formal, integrated educational program for semi-literate women involved in development projects. Additional IWSAW projects include The Rehabilitation Program for Children's Mental Health; Teaching for Peace; and the Portable Library Project. The latter project was awarded the Asahi Reading Promotion Award in 1994. For more information about these or any other projects, write to the Institute at the address provided.

ABOUT AL-RAIDA

Al-Raida is published quarterly by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) of the Lebanese American University (LAU), formerly Beirut University College, P.O. Box 13-5053, Chouran Beirut, 1102 2801 Lebanon; Telephone: 961 1 867618, ext. 1288; Fax: 961 1 791645. The American address of LAU is 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1846, New York, NY 10115, U.S.A.; Telephone: (212) 870-2592; Fax: (212) 870-2762.

PURPOSE AND CONTENT: *Al-Raida's* mission is to enhance networking between Arab women and women all over the world; to promote objective research of the conditions of women in the Arab world, especially conditions related to social change and development; and to report on the activities of the IWSAW and the Lebanese American University.

Each issue of *Al-Raida* features a File which focuses on a particular theme, in addition to articles, conference reports, interviews, book reviews and art news.

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SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES: We seek contributions from those engaged in research, analysis and study of women in the Arab world. Contributions should not exceed ten double-spaced typed pages. Please send a hard copy and a diskette. We reserve the right to edit in accordance with our space limitations and editorial guidelines. Submissions will not be published if they have been previously published elsewhere.



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of the Institute for Women's Studies
in the Arab World
Lebanese American University
P.O. Box 13-5053
Chouran, Beirut,
1102 2801 Lebanon
Telephone: 961 1 867618, ext.1288
Fax: 961 1 791645
e-mail: al-raida@lau.edu.lb

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Cover - Picture Credit: Ayman Mroueh

Why an Issue on Young Arab Women?

■ Mona Fayad

Professor, Psychology Department, Human Sciences and Literature Faculty, Lebanese University

Adolescence is considered one of the most essential phases in the life of a person; it separates between two extremely vital phases in one's life, namely childhood and adulthood. Most studies all over the Arab world show that the average percentage of youth below the age of 20 has reached one third of the population. This implies that attention to this age group is highly essential because of the demographic weight it represents – over and above the fact that adolescents are going to be responsible for the future of the Arab world in the coming years. Herein lies the importance of concentrating on this category in order to examine its characteristics, attributes and problems. Moreover, focusing on the youth is of essence given that UNESCO's 2003 report indicates that the number of illiterate people in the Arab world added up to 70 million, of whom two thirds are women and girls. Not to mention the 40 million unemployed individuals who mostly belong to the youth category. Thus, there is an urgent need to work with and for youth (particularly girls/women) in order to improve their status. This will reflect positively on the future of the region. How are teenagers faring in the Arab world? What do they think of and what are their aspirations? Who are their role models? What is their position vis-à-vis marriage, work and reproduction? Researchers will benefit from the data collected during the fieldwork for the study on *Arab Adolescent Girls* prepared by the Center for Arab Women for Training and Research in Tunis. Below are several of the findings arrived at:

Late Marriage Age

Numerous changes are taking place all over the Arab world, especially regarding the status of women. Several reports from various Arab countries unanimously indicate a delay in the age of marriage. In Morocco, and based on the reports of the demographic survey conducted, one can conclude: "The first age of marriage is mounting. In 1960 it was 18 years but nowadays it is 27 years. Moreover, the use of contraception rose from 8% in the sixties to 60% at present." Late marriage is on the rise in Tunisia; it amounted to 29.2 years for women and 32.5 years for men, i.e. marriages are contracted at an average of 16 years after puberty. Late marriage is also increasing in Lebanon where the average age of marriage is 29 years based on the official statistics yielded in the 1996

study conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

It is worth noting that Yemen is the only country in the sample where an early marriage age among men and women is abundant. Despite the fact that a qualitative improvement has occurred in the average age at first marriage, namely 23.73 years for both sexes (25.35 for males and 21.94 for females). Yet, the reality of the matter is that early marriage is still a problem within Yemeni families. Furthermore, an early marriage age is still a problem in the Gulf countries. Even though Bahrain managed to attain an increase in the average age of marriage, the improvement is a slight one, namely 21.9 for the year 1990 and 22.3 for the year 2000. One of the explanations why early marriage age is required and sustained is the fact that the countries of the Gulf in general are still in favor of segregation between the sexes.

Celibacy is no longer viewed as something out of the ordinary in the Arab world. Hence, if someone is celibate that does not necessarily imply that he/she is a homosexual. Nowadays, there is a new trend that views marriage in a critical and speculative manner. This is due to the fact that many of the family problems surrounding marriage have started to surface. Not to mention the latest developments that have altered the role of the family on the one hand and the requirements of the individual within the family on the other.

The Meaning of Marriage and Securing the Parents' Approval

Over and above the delay that has occurred in the age of marriage, the Tunisian survey indicates a change in the patterns of marriage and the way it is now contracted. We notice that endogamous marriages are lessening with each coming decade. This signifies a decrease in the matchmaking efforts exerted by family members eager to marry off girls. In 1971, 89% of marriages were endogamous whereas in the last decade the number fell to 72%. This implies that the new generation is more inclined to view marriage as a personal matter rather than a communal affair where the final decision is in the hands of the family. This trend also highlights the emergence of the individual who is an independent entity and relies on his/her judgment and opinion in his/her personal

decisions. Love and understanding between the couple are the determinants in such marriages and not the interest of the family. Yet, it is worth mentioning that marriage, in traditional societies, is usually viewed as a communal and social matter determined by the interests of the two families involved.

Based on the findings one could conclude that there are some who oppose the concept of marriage and others who impose conditions prior to getting married. Many girls refuse the idea of marriage all together if these conditions are not fulfilled. Moreover, marital and familial problems might discourage girls from getting married or fantasizing about marriage – something that is expected from teenagers. Yet, most of them think that marriage is inevitable and "nice," especially when love is involved. What becomes apparent is that love is of essence. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, girls nowadays have certain conditions that ought to be fulfilled if they are to accept the suitor. Among the requirements are reaching an agreement on who is in charge, and on the level of freedom and independence the girl will enjoy especially if she was raised within an educated or urban family or sometimes both. Some girls require their future husbands to be cooperative. One of the respondents refused to follow in the footsteps of her mother who used to exhaust herself due to her double burden, namely working inside and outside the home. These questions remain: Are women less eager to compromise given that they no longer fear remaining spinsters? Besides, how does that affect demographic growth? How does this affect the family?

Motherhood

Opinions differ among teenagers when discussing the issue of motherhood. Yet, none of the girls in the sample was as affirmative in their refusal to conceive as Ashraf who fails to see himself as a father. Even though Rafif used to see eye to eye with Ashraf when she was younger, she recently started contemplating the idea. She has no idea how many children she wants; all she knows is that she wants a lot of them. Reem, who was barely 15 when she was interviewed, admitted that the idea did not even cross her mind. She asserts: "Every young person, when asked, might tell you they don't want to get married and have children. Yet, at the end of the day they all do it. As far as I am concerned I really don't know." Motherhood is still viewed, in poor environments, as an absolute necessity. Zeinab affirms: "Motherhood transforms a woman into a mature and balanced individual." However, there were girls among the respondents who knew beforehand exactly how many children they wanted to have: "I do not want many children, one or two is enough."

Work Inside and Outside the Home

The contrast is striking when talking about domestic work, especially among youth of different social and educational backgrounds. No differences were detected on the basis of religion or place and area of residence (urban/rural). Girls coming from poor families accept the traditional division of labor between the sexes. They rarely question the unfairness and only one of the respondents asked: "Why doesn't he serve

himself?" Educated girls, whether they belong to the urban milieu or to the rural, affluent and educated class, demand to be treated equally, whereas most poor girls have no notion of what equality means or stands for.

Most teenagers in the sample who pursue their education and are in their secondary school years are adamant about pursuing their higher education. Moreover, they are eager to work and get married in the future. As far as the poor teenagers are concerned most of them left school at an early age. Despite the fact that they dream of working, it is all "talk" given that they are not working hard enough to realize their dreams nor are they prepared for such a step. It is worth noting that some of the poor girls in the sample pitied women who worked outside the home. Their position is influenced by the traditional and agricultural societies they belong to and that made it possible for women to dispense of the hard work they used to carry out in the fields.

The position of boys vis-à-vis housework is still vague and unresolved. In theory boys belonging to educated and well-to-do families refuse the traditional division of labor and are more willing to assist with the housework. For example, Ashraf is for total equality between the sexes, yet, he preaches more than he practices. And there are some men who complain about women's much exaggerated need "to be equal with men."

Feeling Monitored and Discrimination Against the Sexes During Puberty

Girls, in general, put up with being monitored and endure strict surveillance by their parents. Based on our findings, most of the arguments and clashes that arise within the family stem from the way girls dress and their desire to go out. Most teenagers argue with parents on issues regarding freedom of movement, yet boys go out more freely and parents are more lenient and tolerant with sons. Moreover, girls are often questioned about the nature of their relationships with boys.

Hence, we find that rural families watch their children closely and are more overprotective in general. The family's economic status plays an important role in increasing or decreasing the meddling of parents. Besides, belonging to a conservative and traditional family is another factor that affects the youth's mobility and freedom. For instance, Rani, who belongs to an urban conservative family, is closely watched; however, he admits it is bearable. Whereas girls from popular and poor backgrounds are severely monitored, they are not allowed to go out unaccompanied and are prohibited from wearing improper and indecent clothes. Hence, most of the disputes and conflicts are related to freedom of movement and dress, and occur mostly in rural areas that are generally very conservative – like most Arab societies.

Body, Appearance and Sports

Based on our research we recognized that most boys take care of their physical appearance, strive to be physically fit and

pay attention to the way they dress. Most often they realize that they don't need to diet, all they need is to work out in order to remain physically fit. Through sports men aspire to acquire the perfect figure and rarely do men contemplate plastic surgery. Being slim and fit are necessities among teenagers, be they male or female. However, one has to admit that females are more obsessed with their weight than men. Moreover, unlike women who often diet to attain the perfect figure, men concentrate on sports and prefer to exercise. Many of the girls interviewed admitted that they do not eat dinner so as not to put on weight. Besides, a lot are thin and fit, yet they still insist on taking extra care of their figure. Nadine is the only plump girl who is content with her figure and has accepted the fact that she is overweight. Her brother, on the other hand, often asks her to pay more attention to her weight problem and encourages her to diet.

Role Models

A father who is successful and holds a good job such as an army officer or a university professor, is usually considered a role model or hero by his son. Sometimes a maternal uncle, usually living abroad, who is a successful businessman or an athlete, may also serve as a teenager's idol or hero. For girls, mothers are their role models especially if they belong to popular and poor backgrounds. Yet, most of the time a teenager's role model is a teacher. Herein lies the importance of the school and the faculty in the life of the teenager. Thus, it is imperative to provide education for all and to train the faculty thoroughly. Moreover, special emphasis ought to be given to the choice of schoolbooks and to sex education.

Yet, based on the research undertaken we realized that in poor backgrounds, the youth tend to identify with a famous female/male singer. The massive proliferation of television programs, artistic and musical in nature, that have burst upon the Arab world drawing huge audiences is worth investigating given that Arabs from different backgrounds and communities spend their evenings glued to their television sets watching these programs. What is the purpose behind such programs? Why do the youth of both sexes pass time watching them? Is it because of the loneliness they suffer? Or because of the frustration that has resulted from the many defeats the Arabs have experienced? Or is it because of the absence of hope, or because of the prevalence of autocratic regimes? If some of these programs represent what is presently "fashionable" in art and singing, and if we agree that a few enjoy an average artistic level then soon they will become the norm. Every new trend in society raises a lot of objections at first; however, with time it becomes accepted and develops into a characteristic of the period. (Let us not forget that the classical songs sung by Abdel Haleem Hafez and some of his contemporaries, such as Shadia, were called "taqateek" (or very light popular music) in the beginning given that the songs were considered light music in comparison to *tarab* or authentic Arab music.) The trend nowadays is to invest in programs that

host the latest "clip singers" who, instead of capitalizing on their talent, take advantage of their physical attraction to promote themselves. These artists are bold to the point of vulgarity. Instead of art the audience is entertained with flesh. Pornography and the willingness to strip have replaced talent. The question remains: What do these programs represent for the viewer? What do these phenomena symbolize? Do these programs really represent the ideal for the youth in their behavior and aspirations?

Are the youth in the Arab world divided into those who view light artistic programs and others who follow religious programs aired on the satellite channels? The latter programs also have their heroes and heroines, such as Amr Khaled who promotes the nominal religious symbols, namely wearing the veil yet dressing in modern clothes, and praying and fasting yet putting into practice all aspects of modernization.

Friendship Between the Sexes

The higher one climbs the social ladder, the more recurrent the interaction between the sexes and the more probable and possible the friendship between them. Friendship between the sexes is a privilege only educated and affluent girls enjoy. Poor girls are more reserved and unapproachable when discussing the subject. Sometimes just mentioning the subject is frowned upon.

Music and Reading

Listening to music is a youth distraction par excellence and is sought universally. Youth listen to all sorts of music depending on age and social class. Yet, one must admit that music nowadays is part and parcel of a teenagers' life, with some unable to imagine life without it. Unlike music, reading is practiced by the select few and is seen as an obligation by most young people. It is crucial to investigate the reasons behind such a serious crisis and work on finding a rapid and serious solution if we are hoping to improve our deteriorating position on the international scene.

Violence

Domestic violence was detected as a problem the young suffer from. The violence ranges from verbal to psychological to physical abuse. Some of the young people interviewed admitted that domestic violence existed in their families but it was mostly verbal violence. Among certain families battery was also used when the respondents were young. Yet, many affirmed that the beatings lessened with the passage of time and became practically non-existent at the onset of puberty. However, such is not always the case given that three cases were detected where battery and abuse were more prevalent and consistent than the rest of the cases. It is worth mentioning that psychological and verbal abuse is mostly prevalent among poor families. Moreover, mothers more than fathers make use of verbal abuse and upper class fathers do not employ violence.

Translated by Myriam Sfeir

Miss Lebanon or Miss Habalon*: Beauty Queens and Reality Television

■ Riad Kobaissi

Journalist

Is it reality television or realistic television? This question demands an urgent and necessary answer when "our beauty queens" become the subject matter of such television, especially since the beauty queen no longer represents a fantasy creature, a flawless role model for young women in terms of her behavior, actions, and activities sponsoring the disabled, children, and elderly. Instead, our beauty queen has become a topic of inspection, at least before she became a beauty queen. Before becoming a queen, she underwent a difficult experience with her fellow candidates. She underwent that experience on air and on live broadcast on a daily basis 24 hours a day. She and 15 contestants showcased their intelligence and education directly on live television. This is what makes it crucial to distinguish between reality television and realistic television.

Nadine is the beauty queen, "our" beauty queen. She is also the holder of a "political position" that never fails to believe in conspiracy theory - the theory that all her female colleagues conspired against her. As for her first runner-up, Lamita, she made a record rebellious exit on air and left the stage without congratulating her com-

* Habalon in slang means stupidity

petitor. But this is the same Lamita who is elegant, peaceful to the extent of sarcasm in days fraught with problems and fights among contestants and the one with earth-shattering replies that made a kilogram of cotton weigh less than a kilogram of metal. Apart from Nadine and Lamita, 14 potential beauty queens had their daily lives aired on live broadcast television. These daily lives encompassed excursions of gossip, grudges, envy, deception, and a resort to famous sayings that turned Maurice Awwad into a contemporary of Gibran Khalil Gibran, and Nelson Mandela into a character of anonymous time and place.

Is this reality or realistic representation? Are we before a micro-society that sums up the young Lebanese woman's reality, or are we before 16 female fashion models? If we admit, for argument's sake, that we are before a representative sample of female models — that is, if we admit that these 16 represent a large segment of Lebanese females in their attitudes, behavior, and nature, this would force us to admit that we have entered the media reality phase where distinction is no longer possible between billboard girls and any random young female passerby. However, though this assumption gains strength from observation and shallow-level commen-

taries, it becomes uncertain upon a deeper understanding of the reality television program format and upon a more accurate observation of the nature and extent to which everyday girls identify with television reality girls.

Because any attempt to analyze this phenomenon from a theoretical perspective remains mere speculation not based on tangible reality, exactly as air devoid of oxygen, the best approach for analysis and consideration remains the field observation approach; that is, acquiring views from those most influential and subject to being influenced by this phenomenon – young women. According to young female university students (belonging to the middle class and pursuing their studies at the Lebanese American University), what we are trying to understand does not apply only to reality television and its consequences but actually outlines the nature of the controversial relationship between the female and reality television.

Wendy, a female university student, did not hesitate to repeat the phrase “it’s depressing” when asked about her view of the beauty queen selection experience via reality television. Her statement stems from the following: This program confirmed that the more Lebanese a girl is in her social upbringing, the more shallow she is, concerned only with appearance; that is, the Lebanese young woman continues to be a prisoner of her social context, which refuses to view her outside the “be pretty and stay silent” perspective. Farah insisted on repeating that phrase in French before she added to her speech a group of phrases of the type “the most important is internal beauty” and “education is paramount” in an attempt to ridicule the actions and pronouncements of the latest Miss Lebanon contestants. Farah is majoring in Trade Sciences, and she continued: “Terrible failure, mindless girls who earned a diploma in madness. All they care about is rehearsing the questions and how to answer them during the event and they forgot to answer the most important question: What are they doing in life?” Farah allowed herself to answer the question: “All they seek is men chasing after them.”

Regardless of the accuracy of Farah’s description, her answer raises another question: To what degree does this apply to young Lebanese women in general? In other words, if we admit that these girls have no concern in life other than seeking men chasing after them, does this apply to the image and reputation of the young Lebanese woman in general? Farah, in turn, refused to accept this comparison. Yet her colleague, Yasmina, a Hotel Management major, noted that the young Lebanese woman loves appearances and yields to the media’s stereotypical image of herself. The gist of the discussion between Farah and Yasmina is that both believe that Miss Lebanon contestants represent 70 percent of Lebanese

young women. This belief, however, did not worry Rasha, a Communication Arts major. Rasha does not doubt the shallowness and naïveté of the majority of the program’s contestants, yet she refuses to view them as acting prototypes because the realism of their television reality is doubtful. Rasha thus undermines the realism and natural behavior of what we viewed in the Miss Lebanon daily life episodes, particularly since nothing confirms the realism of what they show or removes the “theatrical acting” feature; as such, it is not possible to view these models of doubtful realism as representative, even though Rasha herself does not deny that the young Lebanese woman generally identifies with many of the behaviors aired on the daily journals of “our beauty queens”.

The above does not mean that all those interviewed object to that aspect of the program. Maya, an Economic Sciences major, has a different opinion. To her, the mission of Miss Lebanon contestants is not representing the young Lebanese woman, saying: “It’s not their business to represent the young Lebanese woman.” In her view, they are participating in a program in search of fame and “reality TV” facilitates and accelerates that search. As for the manifestations of gossip, envy and hatred, these can be attributed to the high-pressure conditions to which the contestants were subjected, “24 hours a day at home, what else can girls do?” That is, Maya attributed contestants’ psychological instability to their boredom. Though Maya does not deny that the program has negative aspects, such as specifying unrealistic physical attributes for contestants, which might define the feminine image by imaginary features, she classifies this negativity as belonging to the empty half of the glass.

While Farah and her colleague Yasmina chatted about Miss Lebanon news, Yasmina told Farah sarcastically about the social activities of the recently elected Miss Lebanon, Nadine Njeim, who opened a hair salon. Farah replied to her: “But the hair salon is great” then went silent for a while and added: “Really, I mean it. The hair salon is great.” Of course, Farah and Yasmina consider themselves among the 30 percent who do not seek money and fame. As for Maya, she says: “But girls are jealous. That’s why they criticize the program.”

Is it reality television or realistic television? Not even scientific statistics can accurately answer this question. When Woman becomes the exclusive topic of this television, the answer becomes more complicated. And what is even more complicated than that is that we live stranded in a reality where the thin line between television and truth is almost invisible. Between Farah and Maya is a television, a television that resembles nothing but itself.

Translated by Hania Jurdak

Recent Publications

- Antobus, P. (2004). *The Global Women's Movements: Origins, Issues and Strategies*. UK: Zed Books.
- Bello, W. (2004). *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy*. UK: Zed Books.
- Billson, J.M., and Fluehr-Lobban, C. (Eds). (2005). *Female Well-Being: Social Change Around the World in the 20th Century*. UK: Zed Books.
- Gee, M. (2005) *The Flood*. UK: Saqi Books.
- Halliday, F. (2005). *100 Myths About the Middle East*. UK: Saqi Books.
- Hussein, A. (2005). *Kahani: Short Stories by Pakistani Women*. UK: Saqi Books.

Announcement

Sign-on letter Calling on Governments to Universally Reaffirm and Implement the Beijing Platform for Action
We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organizations, networks, and parliamentarians from every region of the world, representing great political, social and religious diversity, underline the importance to us and to women worldwide of the ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 30-year Anniversary of the First UN World Conference on Women, held in Mexico in 1975.

Noting that the objectives of the ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly are to identify achievements, gaps and challenges in their implementation and emphasizing the need for high-level governmental participation at the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), we urge governments gathered at the 49th Session of the CSW to:

1. Universally reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome of the 23rd UN General Assembly Special Session (Beijing +5);
 2. Re-commit to immediate national level implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome of Beijing + 5;
 3. Recognize that the realization of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals depends on achieving the human rights and empowerment of all women, the attainment of gender equality and full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;
 4. Commit to incorporating these into the discussions and outcomes of the Millennium Summit at all levels.
- <http://www.peacewomen.org/campaigns/countriesindex.html>

Seminar

Arab Regional Training Seminar on National Youth Policy in cooperation with the International Council on National Youth Policy (ICNYP) and UNICEF, Beirut - Lebanon.
27-29 September 2005

Venue: UN House, Beirut – Lebanon.

The overarching objective of the Seminar is to strengthen the capabilities of both governments and leaders of youth organizations of the 23 countries in the Middle East to design, implement, evaluate and re-direct a national youth policy and programme of action.

More specifically, the Seminar will promote alliance building among stakeholders and enable them to:

1. Identify the priority problems facing youth and society in their country;
2. Discuss proposals for solving those problems with the full participation of young people and their formal and informal structures;
3. Agree on a coherent set of proposals and promote their implementation;
4. Network and share good practices among governments and NGOs;
5. Undertake assessments (short and medium-term monitoring and consequent adjustment of programmes en route) and periodic longer-term evaluation and modifications.

Films

Satin Rouge

Modern day Tunis. Lilia is a settled woman and an attentive mother. She believes her daughter, Salma, is having an affair with Chokri, a musician in the ‘Red Satin’ cabaret. A new world opens up to her that is repugnant yet tempting.

Doing it

Four young women who grew up in four radically different environments explore one topic: their sexuality. Taboo subjects such as sexual harassment, masturbation, and HIV/AIDS disclosure are addressed with refreshing candor.

Lebanese Short Films

Ca Veut Dire Quoi Quand C'est Bleu?

Michele is receiving some friends for a farewell dinner because she is leaving the following day to the United States of America to pursue her studies. Or maybe not...

Une Visite

A woman draws a comparison between her husband and her lover: the husband who, with time, is becoming less interested in her, while the lover is caring and passionate.

Xtra L

The subject of women’s sexuality is still a forbidden topic in our society.

Thus Spoke Fatima

"... I do not recall the day of my circumcision. I have no recollection of the physical pain I was made to suffer. But what has remained engraved in my memory and what I can never forget, is the agony and affliction I began to feel when I grew up and became aware of the horror inflicted on my body, of the physical amputation I was submitted to, an essential part of my femininity had been cut off from me and tossed away.

"Beyond the physical mayhem, I felt that my whole nature as a woman had been disrupted and stained. Naturally, my realization of the horror wrought upon me did not come about spontaneously or directly without asking questions. But, over time, and little by little, I began to understand and my psychological suffering increasingly grew.

"After circumcision, I was to be put to another kind of torment. At the age of ten, I was taken to a village and left to the care of a ruthless female servant equipped with all conceivable instruments of torture. We were a group of girls, from eight to ten years old, and we had to undergo the tantalizing experience of fattening as if we were geese. We were awakened every day at 5:00 a.m. and placed before jugs containing one liter of milk each. The exercise was to have each one of us drink, under tight control, between 30 and 40 liters of milk a day.

The servant held in her hand a kind of wooden tongs that she would apply to the fingers of any girl who stopped drinking. And the clamp would grow tighter and tighter until, unable to bear the pain any longer, the reluctant girl drank up again. If any one of us threw up what she had drunk, frequently she would be forced to drink the amount of milk that she had vomited.

I shall never forget the case of a friend of mine who drank herself to death. Her body suddenly blew up. Frightened by her death, I become more obedient and, soon, grew into one of the fattest girls in the group. We used to crouch, bending over our jugs of milk, so swollen and so benumbed that we would urinate on ourselves in that position. We were also forced into skin-stretching exercises to leave more room for fat to develop on our bodies. The first stage of this fattening process went on for sixty days. Then I went back to my father's house where the stuffing continued steadily. But my stomach had, by then, grown large and I developed an ever greater craving for food. By the winter of the following year, the second phase of the fattening process began.

What is all that for? In our society, fat means beautiful: Ok! But that is not all. The other purpose behind fattening is to

turn the young girl into a docile creature, ready for the marriage imposed upon her. I, personally had the privilege of belonging to the first generation of Mauritanian girls that went to school. And, although my shape and corpulence made it difficult for me to walk between house and school, I was firmly resolved to continue my education. And so I did, assisted by continued physical exercise to lose some weight and move along with greater ease.

But try as I might, I could not escape from the third and more damaging kind of violence: forced marriage. I was given in marriage to a man much older than me. A marriage that ended in divorce, leaving me with children that I love. But, in a sense, I felt and still feel as if I were a beast. Because that which makes a woman a woman, my femininity was stripped away from me when I was only forty days old. The various forms of suffering I had to endure developed in me a strong desire to resist. I went to school. I tried by all means to make something of my life. I fought the effects of forced fattening by pursuing a diet, doing regular exercise and getting involved in all sorts of physical activity even though my body still bears witness to the crime I was a victim of.

I have gone over the anguish of premature marriage and inevitable divorce. I even feel capable of starting a new and happy life. But the worst of all forms of violence I have borne, and the one for which I have found no cure is circumcision: the loss of that essential and irreplaceable part of my body and of my femininity, and the cause of an inner pain that never lets up.

Frequent drought in Mauritania has somewhat alleviated the ordeal of the girl-fattening tradition. Fortunately enough, only a few families still stick to that tradition. Some progress is also being seen in the social attitudes toward marriage. I do not want my daughter to go through the suffering I have seen. When she was born, I fought tooth and nail against her being circumcised. I stood firmly against the diktat of the family elderlies who declared that, with no excision, the new-born girl would not be one of them and would have no right to eat from the same plate as the rest of us.

As far as I am concerned, one thing's as sure as hell: we must do our very best to ensure that the future generations be spared the violence we were put to: no to mayhem, no to the loss of physical integrity, no to impaired femininity, no to fattening and turning our girls into helpless creatures saleable and marriageable at the free will of the others."

Fatima from Mauritania
(Public Hearing, Women's Court: The Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence Against Women)

From Lebanon

Arab Youth Directory

The idea of establishing a specialized website on Arab youth NGOs was raised in view of the shortage in communication and cooperation among NGOs at the national and regional levels with concerned official bodies, and with the United Nations System in general. The website, entitled: Arab Youth Directory (AYD) aims to serve as a platform for those involved to connect and network, to coordinate efforts and projects throughout the region, to establish partnership, and to exchange experiences and good practices. The long-term objective of this project is to enhance youth NGOs' capacity building, and to empower them to participate in the formulation and implementation of youth policies; and to enable them to develop mechanisms for national and regional cooperation. The potential for regional cooperation, particularly through networking of youth organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, is considered essential and will contribute to establishing the necessary mechanisms for youth development.

ESCWA is keen to broaden the scope of the Arab Youth Directory. Through the questionnaire posted on the Website, AYD would allow NGOs, official bodies and United Nations agencies to introduce themselves, and their youth related activities and projects. A number of such concerned stakeholders have already completed the questionnaire and are covered within AYD. For update purposes, ESCWA wishes to encourage all involved stakeholders to access the questionnaire key link, and complete and submit the requested information in order to be included on-line within the Directory. The Chat Forum of AYD is accessible to all, it provides users with the opportunity to interact directly with civil society groups, youth NGOs, youth related official bodies, and young people themselves regarding pertinent and priority youth issues and concerns. AYD will continuously maintain itself as the forum for updates, comments, suggestions, and challenging debates.

<http://www.escwa.org.lb/ayd/more2.asp?ID=1>

From Sudan

Sudan: Systematic Rape of Women and Girls

"In our culture, it is a shame, and women will hide this in their hearts so that the men do not hear about it," A woman interviewed by Amnesty International

Alarming reports about the systematic rape of hundreds of women by the government backed armed militia, the Janjawid, have been coming from Darfur region in western Sudan over the past months, demonstrating the need for the international community to step up its pressure on the government. The Sudanese government must take urgent steps to address the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Amnesty International said today. (15/4/2004)

"The cease-fire agreement of 8 April is an important step but remains largely insufficient, if the government does not immediately give access to humanitarian agencies and international human rights monitors. This must include monitors who are trained to deal with issues relating to sexual violence. We have

received countless reports of women being raped by the Janjawid militia. The long term effects of these crimes can be seen in countries like Rwanda where many women and children remain traumatized and live with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, following the systematic rape during the genocide 10 years ago. We have also received unconfirmed reports that many women and girls have been abducted to be used as sexual slaves or domestic workers," Amnesty International said.

Villages were attacked in the Tawila area, between 27 and 29 February 2004. Residents and outside humanitarian aid workers, including the United Nations (UN), reported the systematic rape of women and schoolchildren. The former Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Mukesh Kapila said: "All houses as well as a market and a health centre were completely looted and the market burnt. Over 100 women were raped, six in front of their fathers who were later killed".

In March a *shaikh* told the UN that, in Mornei in Western Darfur, up to 16 women per day were being raped as they went to collect water in the river bed (wadi). Women had no choice but to continue to go to collect water despite the threat of rape, because they feared that their men would be killed if they went instead.

The extent of the problem has yet to be fully established, as one refugee woman in Chad told an Amnesty International researcher in January: "women will not tell you easily if such a thing happens to them. In our culture, it is a shame, and women will hide this in their hearts so that the men do not hear about it."

Women make up a disproportionate number of internally displaced people, who have sought refuge in urban centres in the region. There they come under the control of the Janjawid and government forces and are at continued risk of sexual attacks. They also suffer chronic food shortage because of the Sudan government's delays in allowing humanitarian access to the region. Currently only an estimated 50 per cent of internally displaced people have access to humanitarian assistance.

"Humanitarian access and protection of civilians must not be conditional on developments in the peace talks in Ndjamen. The international community must put added pressure on the Sudan government to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas of Darfur and to allow the deployment of international human rights monitors to the region," said Amnesty International.

The organisation is also concerned that the UN fact finding mission headed by Bacre Waly Ndiaye, head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York, has not been granted access to Darfur, suggesting that the government is not serious about addressing the human rights crisis in the region.

In the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court rape is a war crime and crime against humanity. Sudan signed this statute and the international community must ensure that it abides by its international legal obligations. Finally, it is time that any cease-fire agreement and any political agreement commit the participants to fully respect the human rights of women.

Amnesty International is running a global campaign to end violence against women. For more information and news related to the campaign "Stop violence against women" visit: <http://news.amnesty.org/mav/actforwomen>

<http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGAFR540382004>

**Film Festival:
Women and Sexuality (June 28-30, 2004)**



The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Lebanese American University - in consultancy with Beirut-DC - held its Fifth Annual Film Festival from June 28-30, 2004. The festival's program included short films by students from various universities in Lebanon that tackled issues such as premarital sex, body image, and relationships. The festival also screened two documen-

taries that openly address the killing of female prostitutes in Iran and the AIDS virus in South Africa. Last but not least, four feature films from Egypt, Tunisia and Spain were screened. The films and documentaries selected are directed by several renowned directors, such as Pedro Almodovar, Moufida Tlatli, and Raja Amari to mention a few.



**Seminar/ distance-learning course entitled "Gender Mainstreaming and MDGs - The role of universities",
December 6, 9 and 15, 2004**

IWSAW was the coordinator for the seminar/ distance-learning course entitled "Gender Mainstreaming and MDGs - The role of universities" organized by the World Bank Institute on December 6, 9 and 15, 2004. The sessions included students from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Pakistan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia. The Lebanon group included students from LAU, AUB and Haigazian University. The December 6 seminar was held at the LAU conference room; Irwin Hall, and the other two at the World Bank office, UN building, Riad El-Solh Square, Beirut. The aim throughout the sessions was to provide university students with an opportunity to exchange opinions and ideas on the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), and to discuss the role they could play in achieving these goals.

Young Arab Women

Youth represent an important sector of the Arab population. More than half the 250 million people in the Arab world today are under the age of 25. Given that the youth are the future and are a force to be reckoned with, identifying their problems and needs is a key element in ameliorating their conditions. Arab youth are plagued by very many ills, namely high unemployment rates, deteriorating public education, wars, social marginalization, health and reproductive problems, gender oppression, and sexual violence against young women to mention a few. The purpose of this issue of *Al-Raida* is to highlight the situation of youth in the Arab world.

The issue begins with the Executive Summary of the Second Arab Women Development Report, published by the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), on Arab adolescent girls. The main aim of the report is to examine the future of Arab women by highlighting the conditions of teenage girls. It calls for raising the level of women's participation in decision-making. Adib Nehme sheds light on the situation of adolescents in the Arab world and examines how they are affected by modernity and globalization. Shafiq Shuaib takes on the issue of Lebanese youth with all the complexities such a category entails. Ali Harb, on the other hand, reflects on the youth, whom he considers a new human factor in a changing world, by questioning what moves the young? Of what do the young dream now? How do they think? What do they look to? What motivates them in the midst of the rapid changes, sudden mutations and radical transformations? Khawla Abu Baker tackles a taboo subject that is rarely

discussed in the Arab world. In her study on sexual abuse within the family, she highlights the role the family plays in the perpetuation of sexual abuse. Mary Kawar, on the other hand, draws attention to the importance of women's work and how it empowers women. Kawar, in her article on young single working women in Jordan, describes how employment has ameliorated young women's lives. The importance of education, internships, and work experience in the United Arab Emirates is addressed in the study entitled "Educating Ms. Fatima". The issue also contains an article on "Urffi Marriage in Egypt" where the author compares it to cohabitation.

Mona Fayad writes about puberty and the onset of menstruation and how that affects girls in the Arab world. Talal Al-Atrash focuses on the conditions of Syrian girls where he portrays the active role young women are playing in their quest to achieve gender equity. Over and above that, this issue contains a feature article about the Ishraq Project that aims at educating and entertaining out-of-school girls as well as a short write up about educating Moroccan girls in rural areas. A presentation by OXFAM tackling early age marriage in Yemen is also included.

This issue of *Al-Raida* also contains a write up about two prominent Lebanese women working in the media. The Millennium Development Goals are also discussed in an attempt to establish gender equity. Last but not least, the issue contains three book reviews: an autobiography, a journal, and a third that tackles the issue of mental health.

Mona Fayad



The Second Arab Women Development Report

Arab Adolescent Girls: Reality and Prospects

Executive Summary

■ CAWTAR

The Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) sees this report on *Arab Adolescent Girls: Realities and Prospects* as a preliminary, exploratory study that will lead to further studies in a field that is still not sufficiently investigated in the Arab region. The main aim of this report, particularly the field study included in it, is to look into the future of Arab women and draw the attention of decision-makers and those working to extend women's participation in the development process, to the possibility of positively affecting this future, particularly the possibility of raising the level of women's participation in decision making. This is to be achieved by identifying handicapping factors and dealing with them through effective policies and interventions in the early stages of their formation.

Accordingly, and in cooperation with the work team, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research planned the project and the report so as to realistically meet the research and practical needs of the field of adolescence in Arab societies. Qualitative dimensions therefore acquired much importance in the study of the situation of female and male adolescents because they allowed for their voices to be heard as clearly as possible, without ever excluding other dimensions expressed by quantifiable indicators.

The first part of the report includes a general introduction; the second part includes a field study involving seven Arab countries, namely: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. The qualitative study is based on interviews with female and male adolescents, in which different aspects of their lives were presented and analyzed. The interviews were analyzed according to the following six themes:

- Identity and self-representation
- Puberty, reproductive health and love
- Family relations
- School and work
- Adolescent culture and behavior
- Attitudes and values

Part three contains conclusions and recommendations. The last part of the report includes an analysis of statistics and human development indicators in Arab countries, with an attempt to extract from these indicators whatever is relevant to the subject of adolescence, in addition to statistical tables.

A special publication entitled *Rainbow: Testimonials of Arab Adolescents* has also been prepared. It contains a

presentation of selected biographies from the seven countries as well as a summary of all the interviews conducted in the context of the national field studies.

The following are the major findings of the report beginning with the results of the analysis of the final part.

Arab Adolescent Girls: Quantitative Indicators

1. Human Development Indicators in Arab Countries

This part includes a follow-up on the human development indicators and the economic and social indicators in Arab countries. In line with the method of presentation adopted in the First Arab Women Development Report entitled *Globalization and Gender: Economic Participation of Arab Women*, issued by CAWTAR in 2001, indicators specific to each Arab country were presented separately, then in averages for the four sub-regions, namely: the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the Mashreq countries, the Maghreb countries and the less developed countries (LDCs), in addition to a general average for all Arab countries including some comparisons with other world regions.

From these indicators, it became clear that the Arab region still occupies the same positions on the world development scale: that is, in a better position than sub-Saharan African countries and the LDCs, but in a position lower than that of the Latin American region, East Asia, and the transition-economy countries. Arab countries were divided into: the high development level (the GCC countries), the middle development level (the Mashreq and Maghreb countries, except Iraq), and the low development level (the LDCs and Iraq). Indicators also showed important economic, social and human disparities between the sub-regions, and sometimes between the countries, which require a greater effort particularly in the study of the features that characterize each group of countries and lead to different development priorities.

Furthermore, this part includes recent attempts to devise human development indicators. This includes an examination of the First Arab Human Development Report, and also looks at the joint work of the Economic and Social Committee for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)¹ in this area. Both these attempts at producing Arab human development indicators take into consideration the economic, social

and human dimensions, and support the idea of grouping Arab countries into sub-regions, at comparable levels of development, and on the basis of these various elements.

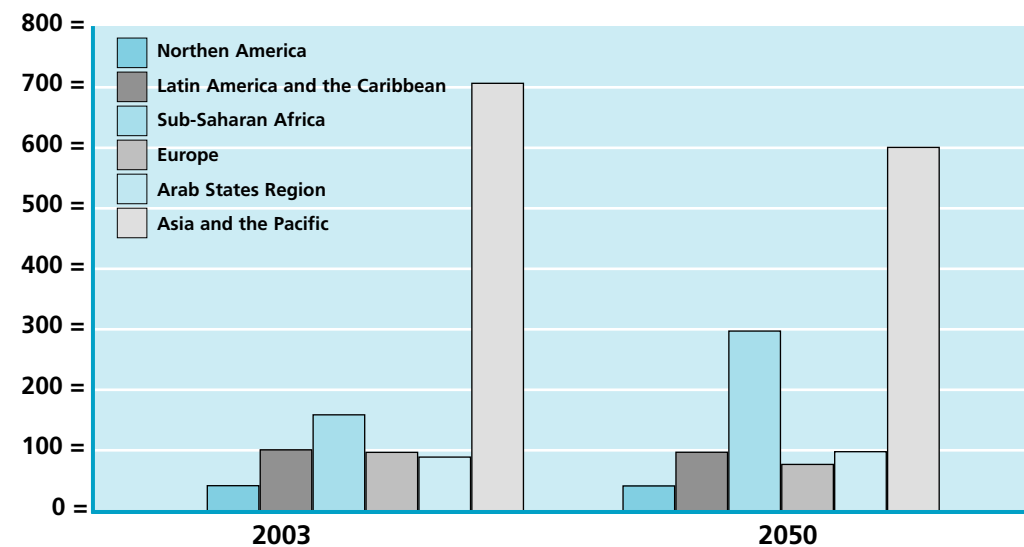
2. Female and Male Adolescents: Basic data

In their search for statistical data on female and male adolescents, work teams encountered major difficulties. What was available was drawn from statistical data generally published on the basis of a five year age-division, or by level of education. In the statistical part of the report, the 15-19 age group and the secondary education level were chosen as the two divisions that are closest to

the age group involved in the field study in the seven countries (i.e. the 15-18 group). Below is a presentation of some of the data on female and male adolescents, which can be examined in detail in the statistical appendices.

The number of female and male adolescents in the 15-19 age group in Arab countries rose from 23 million in 1990 to

Adolescent Population by Region, 2003 and 2050



Source: UN Population Division in UNFPA Report State of World Population 2003 Investing in Adolescents Health and Rights

This part also covers the various human development indicators used internationally (e.g. the Human Development Index, the Human Poverty Index, and the Gender-Related Human Development Index) in addition to indicators related to population, education, health, the economy, living conditions, environmental issues, basic rights and communication.



31 million in 2000. This number is expected to approximate 35 million in 2010, and 41 million in 2020. Concerning the proportion of female and male adolescents in the total population of Arab countries, it has increased from 10.3% in 1990 to 11% in 2000. However, this percentage is expected to decrease to 9.9% in 2010 and to 9.7% in 2020. Female and male adolescents are unequally distributed among Arab countries, depending on the size of the population in each of these countries. Egyptian adolescents represent one fourth of the total Arab adolescent population, while both Algeria and Sudan count 11% of all Arab adolescents respectively, Morocco counts 10% and Iraq 8%. That is to say that, approximately two thirds of the female and male adolescents live in five Arab countries, all of which suffer from difficult economic conditions, and three of which suffer from wars or internal conflicts.

The data included in this part present some of the general characteristics of female and male adolescents in Arab countries in accordance with available statistical indicators. Doubtless, this is a partial image that points to a clear shortage of consistent, complete information. One of the main recommendations of this report is to provide this type of information.²

The major recommendations of this chapter are as follows:

- Build a database and set up a list of indicators specific to female and male adolescents in Arab countries through:

- **Why is it that I am responsible for household chores? Must I be a servant because I am a girl?**
- **Why is it I cannot be friends with young boys? It seems like friendship is not allowed and I don't understand why.**
- **The supervisor is always waiting for us by the door if we are late and asks us to cut our nails if they grow long.**
- **Why is it that I must wear a hijab? And that it is forbidden to enjoy youth?**
- **And that girls cannot go out unaccompanied? I must say I do not like this situation.**
- **I was agitated and caused trouble. My father's words hurt my feelings and my mother slapped me in the face without even giving me a chance to explain myself. I felt terrible and like I didn't belong in the house.**
- **I have never had any sexual relations with a girl, and this will not happen outside of a legal marriage be it a regular long-term marriage or a temporary *muta'a* marriage.**

Sara, 16 years, Bahrain

Mahmoud, 18 years, Bahrain

- Regular evaluation and monitoring of the use of data on female and male adolescents.
- Endeavor to unify available data on female and male adolescents through the development and distribution of statistical guidebooks on definitions, indicators and criteria, and the organization of training programs and exchange of experience so as to generalize the unified use of these guides.
- Encourage the production and development of data on female and male adolescents by researchers outside of the area of specialized statistics, and provide them with the technical, statistical support necessary.
- Develop more relevant indicators and apply better-suited methodologies in describing the reality of female and male adolescents in the Arab region.

Part I: The General Framework

This report deals with adolescence as a modern social phenomenon and as a condition generated by the interactions between adolescents and the physiological, cognitive and psychological transformations they go through when they reach puberty on the one hand, as well as the surrounding social, economic, and political factors, and their institutions, ideologies and value systems, on the other. Adolescence, with its characteristics and problematics, is thus a dynamic condition, in the sense that any change in the factors affecting either one of the two parties involved in the equation (the individual and the society), results in a different description of the problematics and characteristics that define adolescence in any given society and time.

1. The Emergence of Adolescence

The theoretical framework of this study includes a historical presentation of the emergence of adolescence and its association with modernity and the advent of individualism in European societies. It also includes a presentation of the different approaches used in the study of adolescence, more particularly the physiological, psychological, educational, anthropological and sociological approaches. Indeed, understanding adolescence and its various dimensions and levels requires the use of a multidimensional approach that, on the one hand, corresponds to the complex nature of adolescents' lives and behaviors that shape their personalities as individuals and as members of a community. On the other hand, this approach must also address the idea that adolescence is a social phenomenon that constitutes an area of common interest to psychology, education and sociology. Based on this, the report adopted a combined approach using a methodological and scientific synthesis of the necessary elements that guarantee a coverage of all the dimensions and levels of the phenomenon.

This introduction also includes an analysis of the problematics associated with the transformation of Arab societies from traditional societies to modern ones. Moreover, it tackles the structural transformations that made these societies sway between tradition and modernity, in the sense that they are neither traditional in the traditional sense of the word, nor modern in the modernist sense. The introduction also clearly distinguishes between modernity and globalization, considering the latter as a factor of social division that compounds vertical binaries in societies, and strongly affecting both female and male adolescents.

One of the basic themes of analysis in this report is the emergence of the individual with an individualized identity, given that it is one of the core features in the definition of adolescence. The question was raised concerning the extent to which it is possible to address this issue in Arab societies, and whether anything has come up in the field study conducted in the context of this report that confirms or denies its applicability. In this respect, every effort was made to avoid projecting preconceived notions onto the matter and to steer away from unfounded generalizations in this report.

2. The Emergence of Individualism

The emergence of individualism is also one of the most

Monitoring ICPD Goals-Selected Indicators

	Reproductive Health Indicators		
	Births per 1,000 women aged 15-19	Contraceptive Prevalence	
		Any Method	Modern Methods
North Africa	36	47	42
Algeria	16	64	50
Egypt	47	56	54
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	7	40	26
Morocco	25	50	42
Sudan	55	8	7
Tunisia	7	63	51
Western Asia	47	47	28
Iraq	38	14	10
Jordan	27	53	38
Kuwait	31	50	41
Lebanon	25	61	37
Palestine	94	-	-
Oman	66	24	18
Saudi Arabia	38	32	29
Syrian Arab Republic	34	36	28
United Arab Emirates	51	28	24
Yemen	111	21	10

■ **I would not follow the example of any particular person. I would choose to act because of an idea, not because of a person.**

Achraf, 18 years, Lebanon

■ **I think marriage traps people. I like living in a disorganized way, well maybe not disorganized – but not fixed.**

■ **A girl can only turn down a suitor before becoming engaged. After the engagement, it's not appropriate to leave a fiancé.**

■ **I became a problem for my family. You feel like a stranger if you get married then come back to live with your family.**

■ **My sister says: Even if the Pope told me to drop out of school, I wouldn't. I tell her: Don't leave school and don't get married.**

■ **I used to even write poetry to my husband and read to him because he doesn't read very well. Now, I am disgusted, I don't write any more.**

Zeineb, 18 years, Lebanon

important outcomes of modernity. Adolescence is also crucial as a recent phenomenon associated with the very social and cultural transformations that led to the shaping of the modern individual. However, excessive use of the concept of individual has, in turn, led to other excesses, making it a mythical concept more than an expression of a real state. This applies to the modern European societies themselves, which often criticize this concept as mythical. This must be taken into consideration while studying the period of adolescence and its relation to the emergence of individualism in Arab societies where transition to modernity has been a complex and incomplete process.

■ **I became sexually active two years ago... but having sexual relationships requires experience, and I try to avoid it to stay clean.**

■ **...Someone wrote my name on the board, and I became some kind of a criminal at school.**

■ **To the researcher: What type of sex do you want me to tell you about, legitimate or illegitimate?**

■ **I love taking risks and being adventurous, especially when it has to do with saving or helping other people.**

■ **Sometimes I think about emigrating clandestinely... I dream about visiting Germany and hope I will become a famous football player.**

Jihad, 18 years, Tunisia



Indeed, in Arab societies female (and male) adolescents are considered to be influenced by the concept of “individual as consumer” produced by globalization, more than by the “individual as citizen” produced by modernity. Distinction is seldom made between these two concepts, and reactions are consequently divided into two diametrically opposed sides. Some identify with the consumer type of globalization, and others with an absolute rejection of the values of both globalization and modernity, due to the inability to distinguish between them, often resorting to seclusion within a strict concept of cultural specificity.³

Belief in the existence of a simple linear transition from “a society without individuals” to a society in which the individual holds a central position is misguided. Some kind of hybridization in values and concepts has, indeed, taken place. Therefore, it is difficult to associate the individual with modernity and to describe the other values as being traditional. We can say, however, that the mixture of elements from individual culture with elements from the culture of the community is a modern combination, to the extent that individual values contribute to the transformation of community values. The community elements in this combination cannot be described as traditional because they too belong to modernity and have been reformulated and transformed so that they now constitute a part of a sui generis structure. And, instead of assuming that individualism is achieved at the expense of the relation between the individual and the institution and in complete severance from it, we should say that

Rights Denied by Child or Early Marriage

Early marriage of girls undermines a number of rights guaranteed by the convention on the rights of the child:

- the right to education (Article 28).
- the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, including sexual abuse (Article 19) and from all forms of sexual exploitation (Article 34).
- The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24).
- The right to educational and vocational information and guidance (Article 28).
- The right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas (Article 13).
- The right to rest and leisure, and to participate freely in cultural life (Article 13).
- The right to not be separated from their parents against their will (Article 9).
- The right to protection against all forms of exploitation affecting any aspect of the child's welfare (Article 36).

Source: UNFPA - The State of World Population 2003

individualism requires a redefinition of the meaning of this relationship.⁴

Consequently, approaching the issue of adolescence in Arab societies from the perspective of the emergence of the individual, in the truncated sense of the word, that is, without taking into consideration the social and historical dimensions of this concept, can lead to partial understanding and to projections that would deprive the study and its conclusions of objectivity and consistency with reality.

The theoretical framework included in Part I seeks to avoid exactly this pitfall by providing extended presentations, analyses and comparisons. This part has managed to clarify the social and historical characteristics that are specific to adolescence in Arab societies on the one hand, and the degree of interaction with, and influence of, the global context in the two stages of transition to modernity and globalization, on the other. It also reinstates the place of adolescence within contemporary world history, as is the case in Western Europe.

Part II: The Field Study and Analysis of the Contents of the Interviews

This part includes an analysis of the contents of the interviews conducted in seven Arab countries on the basis of six themes that form the chapters of this part. The main results are as follows:

Chapter One: Identity and Self-Representation

This chapter examines the methods and means used by female (or male) adolescents to build their self-identity and self-perception. Female and male adolescents repeatedly use the term “normal” in describing themselves. They did not give much importance to the components of outward appearance and beauty, focusing more on the moral, behavioral and relational aspects. They also often credited themselves with positive attributes without seeming to critically look at themselves, and resorted to comparisons with siblings, relatives and friends in defining their self-identity. There was also an overlap between their self-perception and the others' perceptions.

Another dimension that was made clear in this chapter is adolescents' inability to express themselves consistently regarding the self and temporal continuity. The present was the only existing time for these adolescents whereas the past was mostly an unpleasant memory.

Construction of individual projects, however, is often associated with the availability of the cultural, social and economic resources for female (or male) adolescents and

their families. This raises the issue of independence in contemporary societies. Contemporary societies are in fact characterized by delayed social autonomy because adolescents have already been granted the means to enable them to achieve better development and growth. This is paradoxical. Children mature physically, emotionally and intellectually earlier than in the past. But they are more dependent on their parents, and become independent at a much later age than in the past.⁵

The field study shows that the process often followed by female and male adolescents in forming their identity and crystallizing their self-image differs depending on the objective social and economic conditions, on the life experiences that affected them, as well as on the means they possess to direct their choices and deal with the problems and difficulties they encounter.

The paths that female and male adolescents follow in building their identity can be classified into three types: first, a path that is considered “obedient” and prepares the adolescent to be a full member of the traditional family group; he/she internalizes their standards and values, adopts their visions and judgments, and believes in the necessity of agreeing with them so as to achieve tranquility and avoid all causes of tension and aggravation. Close integration in the family group leads to the marginalization of the peer group's influence in the building of the personality of the adolescent who, in this case, becomes more like adults in terms of his/her behavior and values.

The second path consists of leaving the beaten tracks and “rebellious” against adults by rejecting their ideas and views and by criticizing their attitudes, thereby making sure to fashion a distinctive personality. This rebellion may not necessarily and spontaneously lead to the building of an independent personality or to contributing to social change, except if other favorable circumstances become available. Sometimes female and male adolescents seek “uniqueness and distinction by exaggerating their conformity to, and integration with, an imposed youth culture. They resist being described as different. To them, the highest achievement is for one of them to embody a given group value,”⁶ even if this value is different from those of adults. However, full integration in the buddy group hinders the crystallization of individual projects, because the latter means distinction from the group to which the adolescent belongs.⁷

The third course is reconciliatory. It takes into consideration both internal and external changes. Here, the female (or male) adolescent resorts to respecting the standards of the family and society, while personally contributing to the shaping of a distinctive identity and

avoiding clashes.

Each of these courses is characterized by the fact that reflexive thinking about the self holds a different position for the female or male adolescent. In the first path, where the individual almost fully identifies with the family group, self reflexive thinking is limited. This thinking increases in the third path where the female or male adolescent seeks to reconcile the ego and the other, and culminates in the second, associated with avoiding that the individual personality melt into the group. However, in all cases, social comparison plays a central role. The ego image is constructed based on the “significant” other or the “generalized” other as reference, through imitation and obedience, or through relatively distancing oneself from the judgments of others, or completely severing from them and attempting to build one's identity and crystallizing one's personality away from stereotyped attitudes and prejudices.

The Major Recommendations of this Chapter are:

- To consider the forming of a unique and innovative personality capable of free and independent thinking as a primary educational goal in society's relations with female and male adolescents. This would be compounded with the development of specific patterns of relations within the structures of families and schools that complement each other in achieving the goal stated above for the creation of a balance between the individual, society and the intermediary entities, based on cooperation and interaction.
- To reconsider the strict age and gender hierarchy in society, its institutions and culture including the achievement of an institutional, legislative and cultural reform that takes into consideration contemporary developments including children's early intellectual and cognitive maturity, so as to prepare them for roles and for greater participation than what they usually get.

Chapter Two: Puberty, Reproductive Health and Love

This chapter covers several different subjects. It first addresses the process and memories of puberty, and the female and male ways of dealing with its early manifestations. It then addresses adolescents' views concerning sex, love and friendship, as well as marriage and the choice of partner and his/her characteristics. The chapter focuses particularly on the different ways in which female and male adolescents experience and react to the period of puberty, communication between parents and children, and parents' roles in preparing the latter for the physical and psychological transformations they are about to face.

The chapter does not deal with the process of puberty as a unique and independent factor in the definition of ado-



lescence, but as one of the interconnected and intertwined factors that form adolescence. Indeed, the roles and behaviors accompanying adolescence cannot be attributed to one single factor.

They naturally result from complex multi-leveled elements. Puberty and adolescence constitute a type of “bio-social chemistry” that generates qualitative situations that cannot be considered as the result of individual factors; rather, adolescence itself exists only thanks to, and as a product of, this “chemistry.”

In Arab societies, it is necessary to put the process of puberty and its interactions in the context of the general social transformations as well as the changes in values that have occurred in the last few decades, particularly those related to marriage and relations between both sexes. The most important of these transformations, which are directly related to the subject of this chapter, is perhaps the increasing delay in marriage age, which has become a major phenomenon in most Arab countries. For the young generations, average age at marriage varies between 25 and 30 for females and males in most of these countries. This raises the average time span between puberty and marriage to over a whole decade, sometimes two decades, a period during which prevailing values and customs and the laws in force do not allow the establishment of open and stable sexual relations among the two sexes.

This issue did not really exist for previous generations, when only a few years separated the age of puberty from marriage (in addition to social life being less complex than it now is). This new situation exerts pressure on the situation of female and male adolescents, on their conceptions of relations between the sexes, on what types of relations are acceptable or prohibited, and on their conceptions of marriage.

In the female and male adolescents’ testimonies, disagreement emerged concerning their respective view of the process of puberty, and on sexual matters in general. While discussion over puberty among male adolescents led naturally to the discussion of sex, it was, except in a few cases, different with female adolescents. In general, we can say that responses in both groups were brief, which showed adolescents’ unease and embarrassment when they talk about these topics.

Responses point to a mixture of difficulty and ignorance of sexual matters and reproductive health. Discussions also reveal the narrow space reserved by families for discussing sexual matters and reproductive health, due to the parents’ lack of readiness to assume their roles as transmitters of knowledge and to prepare their children

to access a new phase in their lives. This particularly applies to fathers, as mothers seemed to be more able to assume this role – particularly with girls – informing them, at a particular age, about the start of menstruation and how to deal with it. Judging from some of the testimonies concerning teachers’ reactions, it is likely that there is also an important shortage of information among teachers on these questions. This is one more reason that encourages female and male adolescents to seek the help of friends, older siblings, media, books and magazines (the good and the bad), and films to obtain information on sex and reproductive health, which may not always be scientific.

Some of the testimonies indicate that the traditional system that prevailed in previous decades may have contained traditional means of communication which were more effective in their socio-historical context. They also stress that embarrassment, shyness and avoiding to talk about sexual matters within the family, represent a somewhat modern phenomenon, whereas puberty was traditionally the object of celebration.

The field study reveals the existence of a clear disagreement between female and male adolescents over everything concerning sexual behavior and reproductive health. It also emphasizes the fact that discrimination on the basis of gender acquires new and more important dimensions with puberty, which supports the conclusion that, for women and men, social roles become more clearly defined with the formation of sexual identity. The study further showed that constraints on female adolescents sharply increase, particularly in conservative families, to the point of withdrawal from school and the imposition of early marriage. In general, female adolescents expressed a greater interest in emotional, moral and behavioral aspects in the person they love or desire to marry, while male adolescents showed greater interest in sex and beauty in their life-partner. The majority of female and male adolescents consider that the choice of partners must be their own, with parental consultation but with respect for the personal choice of the person directly concerned, even though it doesn’t seem to be always guaranteed, especially for female adolescents.

The Major Recommendations for this Chapter are:

- Integration of health awareness, protection from accidents, reproductive and mental health, and sex education in educational programs, and ensuring that schools are a safe channel for the provision of scientific and sound information in these matters.
- Organizing training sessions in these subjects for teachers, counselors in educational institutions and associations which deal with adolescence.
- Devoting innovative programs targeting social milieus

where early marriage is still widespread, for the purpose of curbing and eradicating this phenomenon, and setting up partnerships with active bodies and with government and judiciary authorities for the purpose of imposing a minimum age for marriage.

- Conducting advanced research on the phenomenon of delayed marriage age, as a forced choice resulting from economic and social conditions, and from certain social habits and their consequences on the female and male’s bodily and mental health, and on social situations and behavior.

**Chapter Three:
Family Relations**

The interviews indicate that both female and male adolescents give great importance to family. Female adolescents are generally more strongly attached to their families than male adolescents. For boys, other areas of interaction are available outside the family, whereas for girls, family is the only available institution, particularly in milieus that limit girls’ access to the public realm. The adolescent’s relation with family and parents can be described as relatively conflictual but limited by an “understanding” attitude towards parents on the part of the adolescent, with a few cases of absolute obedience or open conflict.

The chapter examines the female and male adolescents’ relations with both parents, with fathers and mothers individually, and with male and female siblings and relatives. It also examines the impact of family break-up on children, control over female and male adolescents’ behavior, areas of disagreement with the parents, and discrimination between girls and boys within the family. The chapter concluded with “a typology” of different families and a definition of some of their common characteristics, and the extent to which they contribute to the building of female and male adolescents’ personalities.

The analysis of female and male adolescents’ testimonies, shows that not all families contribute equally to the process of identity building, and that female and male adolescents succeed in building their specific individual personality, and their independence only when a set of conditions and resources are available. It seems that two types of resources, namely economic and cultural resources, play a major role in forming the profile of Arab families.

In general, it seemed that the majority of female and male adolescents live in families that have a greater tendency to follow a traditional family type in which roles are clearly distributed on the basis of age and gender. But other types of families exist, ranging from the more traditional type (which gives a greater role to the extended

family and tribal structure, particularly in Yemen), to a type that is more influenced by modernity and modern living patterns. There are also behaviors that are more influenced by “consumer” globalization, particularly among the younger generations.

Families seem to be more affected by the historical and social conditions of the country than by the other issues addressed in the report. While it is possible to draw prototypical profiles of the Arab family, identify the transformations they experience and the exchanges likely to occur between them, these families seem, according to adolescents’ testimonies and to the other sources of the study, to tend towards three poles that are highly dependent on the characteristics of individual countries. First, the development of the Arab family seems to be attracted to the pole of the traditional patriarchal family which is more frequent in Yemen where the tribal structure is strong and the extended family still has an important role and a strong presence in the nuclear family, a situation which deeply affects female and male adolescents. The second pole is that of the modern family which agrees more with the characteristics of the Lebanese and Tunisian societies. Mention should be made here of the difference between these two countries. Lebanon is characterized by cultural idiosyncrasies and social relations that put it ahead on the level of social and cultural practices more than on the level of legislations and laws. As for Tunisia, the legislative, legal framework is considered to be more advanced than it is in Lebanon and more advanced than what prevails in the Tunisian social culture itself.

The third pole is represented by the influence of the pattern of consumption oriented globalization. This family conforms more with models that are widespread in Bahrain where this pattern deeply marks the behavior and relation of family members, a situation which could lead to a weakening of family ties and bring them to the edge of disintegration.

Based on the above, we can distinguish four “ideal” family models from within the three above-mentioned poles. In the traditional pole we can distinguish between traditional wealthy families and traditional poor families. Relations between these two types of family are based on traditional allegiance. It may be a work relation (i.e. the latter working for the former, particularly in the rural areas). It is generally a vertical one-directional relation. There is also the model of the globalized consumerist family which generally enjoys wealth and adopts consumerist behavior thereby imitating the globalized model and its values. Between this family and the traditional wealthy ones relations are likely based on the exchange of power and wealth interests. We also note the exist-



tence of relations of exchange between a third family model. These are middle class families which tend to be modernist. The basis of exchange here lies in the overlap that exists in the areas of professional activity, in the advanced cultural level, and in wealth particularly for the upper middle classes. Exchange is also defined on the basis of individual choices, as the values of both modernity and globalization overlap in their positive evaluation of the individual's role and personal choices. Finally, we mention the relations of exchange between middle class families which are modern and the poor families, particularly in the lower middle classes and the upper poor classes. The mechanism and channels of this exchange are achieved through education, culture and participation in political or social activities, achievements which bridge the gap between poor families and middle class ones.

These family models and common exchanges allow us to draw a general framework which defines relations of social exchange between families, and structures female and male adolescents relations, friendships, exchanges and behaviors within, and in agreement with it. Female and male adolescents are faced with the same influences (globalization, tradition and modernity) but to degrees and levels that differ from those faced by adults in general, and by their families in particular. They also have different reactions, which constitutes one of the most important foundations of what may be called the conflict of generations. The interviews clearly show that female and male adolescents are, in general, more attracted to the extreme cases than their families and parents, and this attitude is the most widespread and common one among adolescents. Indeed, from a behavioral point of view, female and male adolescents were more influenced by the "globalized" consumerist pattern.

In terms of values, however, female and male adolescents seem to be more influenced by a special form of affiliation with an inherited identity (which is more tinged with fundamentalism than with traditionalism, from the religious point of view). The influence of modernity and its values, on the other hand, seem to be limited and primarily confined to the combination of the elements of socioeconomic affiliation to the middle class, and to urban belonging, cultural openness, educational level, and political or social activity. The combination of these conditions is not always easily available. Finally, the majority of female and male adolescents tend to find a middle position that enables them to find middle solutions and to coexist with their families and society.

All of these models exist. They coexist and interact within the same countries. As explained above, they are approximate and ideal models, and real families are at varying distances from them.

As for the main problems associated with female and male adolescents' relations with their family, they essentially consist of a lack of space for dialogue within the family, and a quasi-general, although variable, discrimination between boys and girls. There are also two levels of what may be considered "a conflict of generations". The first is primary and consists in the disagreements occurring between parents and children over certain areas that are subject to severe control, particularly going out, choice of friends, and dressing – especially for girls. The second level of this "conflict of generations" takes a more crystallized form and is observable among female and male adolescents who enjoy reasonable cultural resources and feel the difference between their own perceptions and those of their parents. We should not lose sight of other cases such as the one mentioned by Sana (age 15, Egypt) when she said: "I have no time for conflicts of generations. My father, my brother and myself are busy fighting poverty".

The Major Recommendations Concerning the Family are:

- To develop relations within the family that would make it a more appropriate space for accompanying the female and male adolescent in building his/her unique personality and effectively integrating into society, by concentrating on addressing essential gaps in the family through:
 - increasing the spaces of dialogue between parents and children,
 - eliminating discrimination between girls and boys within the family,
 - developing interactive and complementary relations between family, school and female and male adolescents' friends.
- To develop programs targeted for parents, using communication media or through direct contact with them, and programs that target children and contribute to bringing forth multiple models for family construction and family relations based on dialogue and participation.
- To conduct an analytical field study of the phenomenon of family breakdown.

Chapter Four: School and Work

This chapter examines female and male adolescents' relation with school and their perceptions of their professional future. It also examines the experiences of those who enter the job market.

1. School

The chapter presents four essential functions for school, namely: the cognitive function, preparation for the job market and economic activity, preparation for social and

citizenship roles, and another function resulting from the presence of pupils in large numbers in the school institution which allows for the development of horizontal relations between them and the expansion of their scope of references. This chapter also addresses pupils' relations with their teachers, discipline systems, curricula, teaching methods, co-education, discrimination against girls in educational opportunities, pupils' behavior in school, the characteristics of popular kids, with emphasis on the great need for reforming schools and their organization, and for the modernization of teaching methods.

In addition, this chapter addresses school's major historical and social functions, as a channel and a mechanism of social modernization used to break with prevailing traditional concepts, as well as an essential contributor to the emergence of adolescence as a social category in Arab societies. Adolescence is, in fact, considered in some senses as a product of schooling. However, the study also notes that the school is facing reverse influences and that it has become more and more affected by the transformations experienced by local and world communities as a whole. This raises the issue of "the crisis of schools" as a global crisis involving the role of schools in society, as well as their cognitive and economic functions, the internal relations between the administrative and academic bodies and pupils, and schools' relations with the parents.

Schools often find themselves caught between two types of relations: in the first, traditional types of relations, priority is given to law, order and discipline. When a pupil disagrees, he/she is punished. The second type of relation gives priority to exchange and is more receptive to dialogue and negotiation. At present, the school system cannot be accepted arbitrarily and without discussion, but must be open to negotiation and be able to convince on the part of pupils. But the level of heterogeneity between schools within the same country and between Arab countries is so high that Arab societies are faced with two different sets of problems associated with school and education. There are, on the one hand, the traditional schools in the full sense of the word that separate boys and girls and result in the spread of illiteracy, particularly among girls, use bodily punishment, dictation and backward curriculums, in addition to the problems of inadequate equipments, absence of health conditions and security... On the other hand, there are problems associated with the need to move to a modern school model in terms of teaching methods, curriculums and relations. What should be mentioned here is that the effects of globalization and economic reform in Arab countries push towards a deeper gap and dualism in the educational system.

Female and male adolescents consider the school as a compulsory passageway to maturity, work and indepen-

dence. Most of them do not consider school as an attractive or enjoyable institution. They also severely criticize the top-down system of relations within school and the excessive reliance on discipline and on the use of authority in the administration's and teachers' relation with the pupils, so much so that some of them compared the male or female principal to a jailer. The interviews clearly show the decline in the symbolic importance of teachers. The latter have, according to the female and male adolescents, lost their scientific competence and their abilities to establish interactive relations with pupils. Their pedagogical methods have also regressed. Indeed, many adolescents say they did not find an ideal teacher among their male and female teachers. The interviews have also shown manifestations of violence and uncivilized behavior in schools, which brought about complaints particularly from girls.

Most female and male adolescents prefer mixed schools which, for them, represent spaces that stimulate competition and contribute to the shaping of personality. There were also some reservations regarding religious customs and values, particularly among male adolescents, and reservations expressed by female adolescents who felt embarrassed and annoyed by boys' behavior.

An issue that is common to all the countries involved in the study is the disparity that exists between public schools and private schools. In private schools, similar behavior among male adolescents was noted in all the countries, particularly as regards the widespread phenomenon of consuming tobacco, alcohol, sometimes drug use, and certain inappropriate behaviors associated with relations between the sexes. In this respect, it was clear that social factors are more influential than national affiliations. As for female and male adolescents in public schools, they are more influenced by national specificities, and consequently their behavior differed from one country to another.

In what concerns the internal reform of school systems, sufficient attention has yet to be accorded to relations between pupils, teachers and the administration. Those concerned with this reform are not sufficiently interested in developing a work system that includes "safety valves" for solving conflicts through dialogue, or in creating effective participation mechanisms for pupils to deal with their school affairs and with their personal issues at school, even though these are priorities when it comes to adolescents.

The major recommendations in this field are:

- To renew school as an institution and reshape roles and relations within it, and to grant sufficient significance to the relational aspects that are usually neglected in educational reform programs. This is to be achieved through:
 - Reinforcing the pupil's sense of affiliation to his/her educational institution and rehabilitating school as an



educational institution founded on participation rather than as a mere instructional institution where relations are limited to administrative dimensions and vertical hierarchy.

- Producing a qualitative change in teaching methods through a greater reliance on active methods, and preparing a rehabilitation program for teachers to carry out this change.
- Creating appropriate forms of creative association between teaching inside the school and the many sources of knowledge existing outside the school.
- Encouraging pupils to organize committees and clubs and to elect their representatives in order to participate in the running of the school life. School is qualified to be the first space in which pupils are trained to participate in the management of public affairs on the local or national level. This must be included in the texts regulating school life and commitment to these regulations must be guaranteed in practice.
- According sufficient importance to sports, arts and practical activities and avoiding classifying disciplines and periods into fundamental and secondary.
- Developing school's internal regulations to allow for the establishment of early warning mechanisms to detect and solve conflicts before they worsen and become conflicts between pupils, parents, administration and teachers.

2. Professional Work and the Future

To both female and male adolescents, work represents a fundamental choice in the perception of their personal future. However, their testimonies did not indicate that they give priority to work as an instrument of self-achievement; for them, work is more associated with earning a livelihood (which is the most important consideration), the achievement of social recognition, or is considered as something taken for granted, a natural path that takes man from home to school and on to work. For female adolescents, in particular, it seems that joining work is not a necessity, not only because of social considerations that prevent it, but rather because it is a matter of personal choice and depends on whether their husbands are able to earn a good enough living. Here the image of work is associated with effort and exhaustion, and often with doing work that does not agree with personal aspirations and desires.

On the other hand, pure economic logic and the logic of success based on individual aspirations are still not widespread; and this shows the influence of social, cultural and economic dimensions in the evaluation of work and the definition of choices. The major conclusions regarding professional choices are characterized by:

- The overlap of female and male adolescents' choices, especially in terms of professions associated with tech-

nology, languages, and with diplomacy. However, choices are still very influenced by a traditional division of labor between women and men, such as the preference for social professions like medicine and education for female adolescents, and the preference for engineering, enterprise and commerce for male adolescents.

- A state of confusion and indecision regarding choices exists among a part of the female and male adolescents, which is natural owing to age and to the desire and ability to pursue education, as well as to other factors.
- Some of the choices are expressions of wishes and reflect the high value given to certain professions, as well as to the social importance a title associated with higher education can give, whatever the specialization.
- The female and male adolescents' choices seemed to be realistic in certain cases or countries, and associated with school tracks or with the emergence of current jobs. In other cases, the choices reflected an orientation towards professions with high financial yield and associated with the market and modern technology (e.g. computers and commerce).
- In general, female and male adolescents do not explicitly express preference for a given profession on material grounds. In some cases, it seems that adolescents could be satisfied with a job that guarantees stability and success in the social milieu where they live, a contentment limited to founding a family, owning a house and a car, and having a good reputation and acceptable social relations.
- Despite the existence of professional choices that reflect the specificities of each society, there were common cross-national choices, particularly for specializations in computer science, commerce and marketing, and a clear continued presence of fields that allow work abroad or in diplomacy (e.g. languages, political science, and law). These conclusions call for further research and reflection on the programs and policies that aim at encouraging youth employment. These programs do not come as ready-made conceptions at a time when opportunities for their success are not sufficiently available because they are not realistic or with the choices and preferences of those most concerned.

The Major Recommendations are as Follows:

- Improve and revamp government and non-government professional orientation programs, and create new lively formats of interaction between schools and fields of economic activity.
- Develop labor legislation relative to adolescent employment, particularly through commitment to the minimum legal age of entry into the job market, the conditions of work and trainee regulations, so as to grant adolescents more rights.
- Guarantee female and male adolescents' rights to

unionize and to benefit from social and health insurance, and from other work-related benefits and rights.

- Plan intervention programs targeting youth such as income-generating projects, loans and professional training. These programs must take into consideration: first, female and male adolescents' expectations and the priority they give to the social value of work; second, the prevailing conviction among them that there is a social division of labor on the basis of gender; and third, the adolescents' preference for a stable and permanent job that provides guarantees for the establishment of special projects the results of which are not guaranteed.

Chapter Five: Adolescent Culture and Behavior

In the past, the family played a critical socialization role by providing the child and the adolescent models of interaction and different patterns of expression concerning behavior, opinions and values. Family used to be the primary reference for the models of conduct encountered by adolescents. This family role, important though it is, is gradually shrinking to the benefit of other institutions such as the school, the religious institution, and the different social and political institutions, as well as to the benefit of the peer group and friends who, in turn, form one of the essential sources for the shaping of female and male adolescents' behavior and attitudes.

Mass media plays an increasingly important role in shaping female and male adolescents' behaviors, particularly those of female adolescents. Indeed, these media have the ability to communicate messages and common contents to millions of adolescents. They are also characterized by intensity and continuity, which reinforces their cumulative impact and increases the likelihood of the messages and contents they spread being transformed into behavior. Media has acquired great power, and as such, it has the ability to provide evidence, as a reference and a reliable source of news, knowledge and behavior.

The appeal of the media which leads to a change in the patterns of behavior and customs and in what may be called the culture of adolescence, is one of the main dimensions identified by this study. It clearly showed the influence of the mixture of local environment effects with those resulting from increased exposure to the media of mass communication, as well as to the typical images that are generated by these media and are either internalized or rejected.

The contents of this chapter are divided into three themes, namely:

- Views of body and looks
- Self-isolation and friendship
- Interests and hobbies

Investigation of the first theme clearly shows that female

and male adolescents generally accept their looks. The majority of them, especially the males, expressed reservations about attributing to themselves the "quality of beauty", as if that was something undesirable. However, the majority of adolescents of both sexes say they are attentive to their looks. Slenderness was a general demand, particularly among female adolescents, regardless of the country or the social class to which they belong. As to male adolescents, they tend to keep away from obesity and expressed the desire to be taller and athletic. In order to achieve that, some female and male adolescents follow a diet, practice sports and use make-up. Some even go as far as wanting to undergo plastic surgery.

As far as nutrition habits are concerned, they are variable. And despite the emergence of a category of female and male urban adolescents who increasingly consume fast food, traditional food still enjoys wide popularity and is sometimes the unique choice, as adolescents keep away from fast food to avoid obesity. In some cases, the nutrition system is unbalanced, showing in particular an insufficient consumption of vegetables, fruits and meat in the poor milieu.

As regards dressing, female adolescents are more strictly controlled. In this respect, we note a wide variety of tastes and practices. Female and male adolescents from the middle and wealthy classes influenced by consumer behavior share a preference for modern, "globalized" clothes and international brands. Others wear usual or traditional clothes, while a minority of adolescents consider the matter unimportant. In general, male adolescents prefer informal comfortable clothes, and female adolescents prefer clothes that go along with "reasonable and reserved" fashion, thereby keeping away from "conflicts".

The second theme emphasizes the search for friendships as an essential theme in female and male adolescents' lives. For female adolescents in particular, friendships include relationships with sisters (sisters being friends at the same time) and with relatives (female cousins on both the father's side and the mother's side). Friendship between opposite sexes is limited in the poor, rural and conservative milieus. For male adolescents, the friendship circle is wider, encompassing school, the neighborhood, and relatives as well. Friends constitute the favorite group with whom several activities are undertaken, especially outside the home. However, there seemed to be a problem with sharing secrets with friends, as female (and male) adolescents tended to be reserved, except with the special friend of whose discretion they were already sure.

The third theme shows the restrictions imposed on



female adolescents who are likely to carry on activities within the home and with the family, compared to a greater freedom for male adolescents in practicing activities with friends outside the home. As for hobbies, watching TV and using the computer were particularly emphasized compared to reading and going to the movies.

Practicing sports seemed to be a male activity for those who have financial resources, while music seemed to be a more widespread activity in all ages, countries and social classes, and particularly among female and male adolescents. Musical tastes varied between inclination to listen to classical and light songs, and interest in the most recent music fads. In this respect, tastes represented an indicator of the influence of globalized waves in music and arts and of the behavior associated with them.

Finally, the female and male adolescents' most important demand in this field was the need to establish a network of institutions and infrastructures designed for adolescents in neighborhoods and villages and near residential areas which can be used at affordable costs.

The Recommendations in this Area are as Follows:

- To provide appropriate infrastructures including clubs, associations, youth hostels, sport, leisure and cultural equipment, and make them available in places close to homes, especially in rural areas and in poor urban neighborhoods, which puts them within reach of larger groups, and enable female adolescents in particular to attend them.
- To develop consciousness-raising intervention plans and programs to encourage youth to read and use or obtain information technology. This can be achieved through reduction of book prices on the one hand, and setting up information technology networks in schools and in infrastructure reserved for female and male adolescents, thereby making it possible to extend the use of modern technology by girls and low-income categories, on the other. And to develop interest in the cinema and theater among both female and male adolescents.
- To increase the effectiveness of artistic education and spread general culture, legal education, tolerance values, respect for human rights and protection of female and male adolescents, using available means and channels (schools, media, club and association networks).

Chapter Six: Attitudes and Values

This chapter examines the concepts and representations developed by female and male adolescents in their interactions with the wider society and the world, their attitudes towards public affairs and some of the important current developments in the world. The material is orga-

nized into four basic themes:

- Attitudes towards women and the social roles of women and men. This theme includes the following sub-titles: opinions regarding the current position of women, attitudes towards gender discrimination and equality, attitudes toward Western-type free relations and attitudes towards the veil.
- Attitudes towards religion and its importance in the adolescent's life and in society.
- Attitudes towards political life and public affairs. This theme includes female and male adolescents' definition of, and attitudes towards, authority, political action, involvement in social work, attitude towards wars and the events of September 11th, 2001.
- Miscellaneous attitudes concerning female and male adolescents' definitions of success and happiness, the value of money, and their attitudes towards traveling.

1. Attitude Towards Women and the Social Roles of Women and Men

The majority of female and male adolescents expressed dissatisfaction with the situation of women in Arab societies, recognizing the existence of deprivation and injustice towards them. However, this does not spontaneously lead to an attempt to change this situation (particularly on the part of male adolescents), or to an acceptance of the idea of equality of rights between men and women (an opinion that is equally widespread among female and male adolescents).

Attitudes towards the situation of women were categorized as follows:

- Clear opposition and dissatisfaction with the current

- **My mother and father love my brother and I exactly as much as they love my sister.**
- **Friendship with girls is difficult. They spend most of the time in the house, and we are always in the streets.**
- **I don't want to rush into marriage. I want to save money and travel all over the world.**

Amrou, 16 years, Egypt

- **Divorce is something scary but sometimes it's necessary. I don't know what's best.**
- **Young girls didn't used to wear hijab. Only older women working in the fields used to wear the black hijab.**
- **He who can't lie won't be able to do anything, not go out or go to any place.**
- **It's like any given man is better than any given woman. Where do they come up with this kind of talk? It can't be religion. They make it all up.**

Nahla, 15 years, Egypt

role and situation of women in society, leading to a call for equality of rights and a rejection of all forms of discrimination.

- Dissatisfaction with the current situation of women and recognition that women are generally wronged in society, without necessarily expressing the need to explicitly adopt egalitarian principles.
- Focus on the comparison of women's past and present situations, or between one society and another, to conclude that there is some kind of improvement or limits it would be better not to cross.
- Considering that women's situation is normal or natural given our customs and traditions, but without the expression of strong and firm attitudes against improvement of the situation and linking the likelihood of improvement with agreement with the prevailing social environment.
- Considering that women's situation is what it should be, often because of considerations associated with religious notions, as confining women's role to family duties towards their husbands and children is considered to be the ideal situation, anything contrary to that is considered as a departure from the right path, in addition to opposition to any attempt to change this situation.
- Adopting an indifferent or unconcerned attitude towards the issue.

There are several factors affecting these kinds of attitudes. Some of these factors are associated with the historical and social characteristics of the country concerned, which may give precedence to conservative or egalitarian attitudes. Yemen is generally a prime example of a country where responses are mainly focused on the conservative pole, and where the egalitarian pole is weaker. The opposite case is that of Lebanon, a country where the egalitarian attitudes appear to be stronger than in other countries. The second factor is gender. Indeed, female adolescents' attitudes seem to express dissatisfaction combined with a call for equality, and ultimately, dissatisfaction associated with discrete endeavors for change appropriate to customs and traditions. There are, at the same time, among male adolescents some attitudes that are stricter and more opposed to change.

The third factor is socio-cultural. Here the tendency (particularly with the combination of urban membership, social affiliation to the middle classes, and family cultural openness) is consistently to call for change and equality, accompanied by the emergence of a theoretical awareness of this necessity.

The fourth factor is religious and has a double influence: one is based on the fact that religious affiliation is a factor that helps interaction with, or rejection of, modern

culture or conservative interpretations of traditions and heritage, particularly those concerning family relations and attitude towards women. The effect of this influence can be seen in the religiously mixed countries (e.g. Lebanon). The second influence is associated with female and male adolescents who are influenced by the religious political movements or with people affiliated to these movements. These adolescents hold religious-ideological convictions regarding women, more than simply religious convictions in the traditional sense of the word, even if these convictions are presented as coherent or expressing local traditions. We note, however, that the purely "typical models" in this or that sense do not exist, except for a few very exceptional cases.

The chapter also dealt with the phenomenon of veiling in its various forms, and shows the transformation that this phenomenon has gone through and its significance in the current conditions. Indeed, while wearing the veil was formerly a social custom common to rural and poor classes regardless of religion, it has for the current generation of female and male adolescents become an expression of political and cultural identity. Indeed, the interviews clearly showed that female adolescents who wear the veil are influenced by mass media, religious movements and friends of both sexes, more than by their own parents who seemed to be more lenient in this respect. In general, wearing the veil was considered a personal matter, but female adolescents influenced by religions and political movements manifest a strict attitude ultimately calling for imposition of the veil on all girls.

2. Attitude Towards Religion

The second theme deals with attitudes towards religion and its influence on the female and male adolescent's life. The interviews show that religion is present, and strongly so, and that it plays an essential role in determining attitudes and behaviors. This description applies to all respondents, except for a few cases who considered religion as being of little importance or gave a critical view of the prevailing understanding of religion. Their attitudes range from considering religion as a special relation between man and his Creator and avoiding pretension, to considering religion as a general organizer of society and the world in all the details of life. The chapter also notes the transformation from moderate, middle-of-the-road religion to religious movements of a political character which are more widespread among the children's generation, as compared with the parents' generation. In general, it also became clear that religious culture, in the wider sense of the term, is weak, and that female and male adolescents often do not differentiate between religious provisions and social customs and traditions on the one hand, and certain political and ideological discourses on the other. Nor do they know anything about religions other than the



one to which they are affiliated.

In light of the above, the major recommendations in this field are:

- Extending access to the religious heritage of the Arab region so as to include a wider knowledge of the religion to which the female (male) adolescent is affiliated, and knowledge of other religions, to enable these adolescents to build a religious culture based on tolerance and the discovery of common aspects, a culture that helps reject intolerance.
- Developing awareness of the distinction between religion and social habits and traditions, and between political and ideological choices, in order to make sure they are not confused in the prevailing consciousness, especially among female and male adolescents.

3. Attitude Towards Political Life and Public Affairs

As regards this theme the interviews show that there is great interest in major political issues, particularly those of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and the events of September 11th, 2001, all of which were current issues at the time of the interviews. On the contrary, there is little interest in organized political action and a negative view of political parties and movements, as well as of the traditional concept of domestic policy. Regardless of their different affiliations and intellectual, religious and political backgrounds, female and male adolescents are unanimous in their negative evaluation of American politics and its pro-Israel bias. Adolescents are also unanimous in showing sympathy towards the Palestinian *intifada* and the Iraqi people. Besides, they all condemn war as morally unacceptable. However, beyond this general emotional reaction, there were no indicators concerning the availability of sufficient resources to build a practical and cohesive attitude that goes beyond what is spread by the media. The interviews also point out the great influence exerted by TV, particularly on the forming of this emotional political awareness. Many of the female and male adolescents expressed frustration at their inability to do anything to face up to the images and events broadcast on the silver screen.

Concerning authority, the female and male adolescents' views are close in defining it within a special circle generally represented by the parents and particularly the father, and within another circle generally represented by the organs of political authority. Certain adolescents hold the view that society and traditions also constitute an authority, explaining that attitudes adopted toward this authority are lenient when the parents' authority is involved, and more demanding in terms of justice and the idea of right when authority in the public domain is involved.

In general, the interviews show no radical attitudes in facing up to any private or public authority; rather, the like-

ly tendency was to express dissatisfaction, a need for dialogue and more freedom, with clear dispositions to negotiate and compromise, and indeed to adapt to the requirements of that authority.

4. Other Attitudes: Success, Happiness, Money and Immigration

On this theme, the most obvious element is the adolescents' denial of any moral value to money. Clearly manifest is also the adolescents' talk about happiness and success in the future tense, as though achieving them here and now were something totally unthinkable. Desire for traveling and emigration was strong, choice of the country of destination varied, and reasons for that were numerous, ranging from seeking a better life and curiosity to finding out about new civilizations.

The contents of the four themes discussed in this chapter show disparities in the attitudes, behavior and concepts expressed by the female and male adolescents. The first disparity refers, in one of its dimensions, to the dualism of words and deeds which manifests itself through the difference between expressed attitudes and actual behavior. This is a dualism that generally prevails in society between what is stated and should be coherent with prevailing values, and what is practiced and tolerated even when it is in disagreement with what prevails, as long as it is not elevated to the level of the value it proclaims.

- **The boys especially feel like they are men, that they can do whatever they want, they can smoke cigarettes and spend time with friends.**

Khadija, 18 years, Morocco

- **It's when I started dreaming and day-dreaming that I knew I had become a man. I started looking at women with lust.**
- **Girls want to have sexual relations more than boys do nowadays. They are becoming more and more Westernized.**
- **America is behind all the wars that are being waged around the world today.**

Hassan, 18 years, Morocco

- **They look through my pockets and ask me where I was and with whom, and what I ate and what I drank.**
- **As for violence, we are used to it.**

Fakhri, 18 years, Yemen

- **It doesn't make sense for a woman to be president here because women are weak by nature. Women should work in sectors that are appropriate and that are suitable to our Islamic traditions.**

Shadha, 18 years, Yemen

The second disparity between attitudes and/or behavior on the one hand, and concepts on the other, results from the fact that the change from the first level (attitudes and behavior) to the second level, is a complex process which requires a degree of abstraction and a higher degree of harmony between the different dimensions of female and male adolescents' personalities in various fields. This process is complex by nature and its conditions become available as the female or male adolescent grows older, and as her/his experiences and activities become more diverse.

General Conclusion

The points presented in this summary include some of the conclusions of the report and the contents of its chapters. The report itself captures some of the abundant and rich material that was available for its preparation. It is material that can be exploited in additional general and specialized analyses, and CAWTAR intends to undertake this work as part of its programs during its up-coming phase.

Doubtless, female and male adolescents' reality is richer than what is reflected in the report as well as more complex and more diverse. In this respect, and based on the contents of the interviews, the report identified the following points:

- There are general dynamics that work towards bringing female and male adolescents' attitudes and behavior closer together. The report identified four essential dynamics, namely: consumption-oriented globalization, the move to religious fundamentalism and radicalism, modernity, and the reproduction of traditional society.
- There are dynamics that work towards division and increased specificity, the most important of which being the lack of an overall culture, consumption-oriented trends, individualism and intolerance. Social, economic and cultural disparities between countries, and within the same country increase the effects of family and individual experiences on the building of the individual's personality, and of the personality of the group in a manner that differs from the more typical, general model.
- The typical models mentioned above remain closer to the ideal theoretical models. In fact, we seldom find female and male adolescents who consistently follow a model that combines specific convictions, intellectual values, attitudes, opinions, behavior and practice. As mentioned earlier, the most widespread characteristic for the majority of adolescents is the fragmentation of frames of reference.

All of this leads to an important diversity and multiplicity, as well as to atypical thinking and behavioral models. These models vary according to the different areas and dimensions that characterize the reality of adolescence.

These models vary in number also according to the number of national, family and individual experiences and characteristics, which means that typical models must be considered as theoretical frameworks that can be, but aren't necessarily, similar to potential outcomes in reality.⁸

In short, the study indicates that there are as many disparities between Arab countries regarding the subject of adolescence as there are similarities that transcend national borders and, to a lesser extent, as those that transcend the borders of the Arab region to reach the rest of the world. Adolescence is similar to the variety of worlds you find in a single country, and which, nonethe-

END NOTES

* Reprinted with permission from the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR).

1. Mohamed Houssein Bakir, *Measuring Human Development*, the Economic and Social Committee for Western Asia and the United Nations Development Program, 1997.

2. The details and relative proportions by country, and the averages by sub-region can be found in the statistical tables in the appendix located at the end of the full report.

3. According to Castoriadis Cornelius, there is the model of the individual in a democratic society where society defines the set of living rules which permit first the emergence of the individual, and second the enjoyment of a set of rights and new spaces for freedom. This model has been replaced by another. It is the model of the privatized individual, that is to say the individual who closes himself up in his narrow private environment and who refocuses himself on consumption, taking a negative, pessimistic attitude towards politics in its Greek meaning, that is to say, as a *res publica*.

Robert Bidart, "Autorité parentale et citoyenneté: La question des compétences parentales", *Nouvelles problématiques adolescentes, pratiques institutionnelles en recherche*, sous la direction de Maryse Vaillant et Jean-Paul LeBlanc, L'Harmattan, 2001.

4. Vincenzo Cicchelli, "Recomposer le sens du lien de filiation. De l'individualisme éthique au processus d'individualisation", in: *Etre soi d'un âge à l'autre: Famille et individualisation*. Tome 2, sous la direction de François de Singly, L'Harmattan, 2001.

5. Boris Cyrulnik, "Résilience et capacité d'évolution", in: *Nouvelles problématiques adolescentes, Pratiques institutionnelles en recherche*, sous la direction de Maryse Vaillant et Jean-Paul LeBlanc, L'Harmattan, 2001.

6. Alain Clemence, François Rochat, Caroline Cortolezzis, Patricia Dumont, Michèle Egloff, Claude Kaiser, *Scolarité et adolescence: Les motifs de l'insécurité*, Haupt, Bern, 2001.

7. Robert Bidart, "Autorité parentale et citoyenneté: La question des compétences parentales", *Nouvelles problématiques adolescentes, pratiques institutionnelles en recherche*, sous la direction de Maryse Vaillant et Jean-Paul LeBlanc, L'Harmattan, 2001.

8. See Appendix 1 of the full report which descriptively and extensively presents the different formats of the models of personality building, behavior and attitudes, based on the field study.



Introduction to the Study of Adolescence in Arab Communities¹

■ Adib Nehmeh

Coordinator of the *Arab Adolescent Girl Report* – CAWTAR, 2003

Our world has reached a critical stage: Children do not listen to their parents. No wonder, the end of the world is imminent.

Egyptian priest – 2000 BC²

...Young men of the Jahiliyya (pre-Islamic era) are like young men everywhere. They are not different from the others, all dolled up, and trying to show off their youth in front of girls. Young men in villages and cities... used to hang out in markets and gathering places... to jest with girls and talk to them, like any young man in this world when it comes to girls.

Jawad Ali – from different traditional sources³

Points in Methodology

Lately, significant attention has been given to adolescence throughout the world. It was as if someone suddenly discovered the existence of these adolescent boys and girls who represent a vital element in our families and communities. Addressing the issue of adolescence has thus become a top priority in world reports.⁴ Luckily, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) had already begun preparing its second report on the Arab adolescent girl, two years prior to the publication of the UNFPA report. In doing so, CAWTAR managed

to avoid being deemed a copycat of an international trend.

Yet, the issue is not about formalities and timing. Any original work must be unique and must have a distinctive approach that wards it off from falling into the trap of projections, idea duplication and preset analyses. It must shape its own problematique and interact rationally with the original cultural productions in all parts of the world. In our approach to the subject of adolescence in our communities, three methodological issues will be addressed:

Issue one: Adolescence should not be defined as a physiological phase (sexuality). Adolescence is not synonymous with puberty. It is not a phase of sexual transformation for the adolescent girl or boy; it is much more. It is a complete phase and a lived experience. It includes, in addition to the physiological transformation, other transformations that are equally important in mental capabilities and reflection, on the emotional level and in character building; it creates new relationships within an ever-expanding sphere. It is also a phase of absorption of knowledge, skills and behaviors, of building a set of values and ideals and of setting the cornerstones of their future social roles. These can continue unaltered

throughout one's life. In most adolescence-oriented programs, adolescents are looked at from a physiological and reproductive health point of view, while other sides are overlooked.

Issue two: It is necessary to avoid projection from the Eurocentric view of adolescence, for it makes its study heavily chained to specific priorities, problems and methodologies that do not necessarily agree with national needs and with the objective and scientific requirements of knowledge. Needless to say, Eurocentrism is not a geographical concept (especially not within globalization); it rather means projecting the views of northern developed industrial centers in setting the course of research on adolescence, especially on "other" regions of the world, outside these centers.

Issue three: Defining adolescence, pinpointing its problems, studying the subject matter and writing about it, is done by "adults" and not adolescents themselves; they are often no more than 'guinea pigs' in this context. "Adults" here are not only an age group; they represent also a social role and position in the institutions and the relational system prevailing in society. They are more inclined to express the point of view of the institutionalized reality and the static roles of individuals and groups. Adults generally see themselves, in their relationship with the relation system and social roles, as the side that considers its mission is to rehabilitate and train adolescents to get integrated into society (as shaped by adults). Therefore, they basically represent a conservative attitude compared to the general changing trend represented by adolescents.

Obviously, viewing adolescence merely through the eyes of adults, who represent tradition and the social system, or through those of adolescents (or the youth), who represent the trends for change, is rather too simplified and incomplete. Needless to say, first, adults do not represent social demographic categories that are metaphysically independent from society. Considering that "adults" symbolize the values of tradition and conservatism while youth and adolescents stand for values of change and modernization is only true in very narrow scopes. Adults are not alike in attitudes towards values and political, economic and social systems; and neither are adolescents. Attitudes in this regard are not related to age but rather to a complex set of factors (opinions, attitudes, behaviors, political and intellectual choices and pro-change or pro-status quo individual and group practices...). However, in terms of social structures, institutions and their respective roles, and also in terms of the trans-historical characteristics of the relation between generations as individuals and social age groups, we can speak of different positions and divergent roles between

the two generations of adults and adolescents. This holds true at least when it comes to family relationships, to social relations implying social roles and required training to meet their requirements, and to the extent of interaction between idealism and realism, (i.e. adapting to the status quo and giving precedence to practical and utilitarian considerations). The comparison we are making between the two generations, as to the concept of the generation struggle, express factual reality. Nevertheless, they are two relative concepts upon which the above-mentioned reservations apply.

Adolescence: A Functional Definition

Adolescence can be considered as a state born of the relational interaction between the adolescent, his/her physiological, cognitive and psychological transformations spurred by the process of sexual maturity, mental and physical development, on one hand, and, on the other, the social factors with their various institutions spanning from family and school to reach the economy and labor market, as well as the overall social organization, including political and ideological institutions and value systems. Consequently, the characteristics and problems of adolescence are a dynamic state, i.e. any change in one of the active factors of the equation (individuals and society) results in a different description of the problems and characteristics of adolescence in a specific society and historical time.

In that vein, adolescence is a social and relational state understood and shaped from both its sides: the adolescent and the society. It is quite impossible to understand adolescence and its problems as a phenomenon without first understanding society itself and its characteristics and dynamisms. It is society that shapes adolescence and every world shapes its own adolescence. The aspect of crisis that always accompanied the way adolescence is viewed springs from a determined understanding and conception of what future roles should be like for adolescents and social institutions related to their current conditions and future choices. The more conventional and conservative this understanding and conception are, the more prevailing will the value of independence and liberty be among youth (and society), and the more conflictive will the adolescent-society relationship be.

Adolescence: A Result of Modernity

Generally, the problems of adolescence have developed at a turning point during the shift from a traditional to a modern society then with changes that gradually took place, namely globalization and its repercussions.

Modernity is a comprehensive historical process that includes social and economic shifts. It also entails changes represented along with the formation of mod-



ern nations, the state, the system of political relations and the change in roles of social institutions, in addition to the cultural shift. These transformations have generated the modern individual, the modern social institutions and the dynamic relations and roles among them all. The modern concept of adolescence was born in this 'incubator' which, in spite of being an enabling environment for individual entrepreneurship, accumulated the ever-expanding role of overall macro-factors (often in the form of an invisible power) that played a crucial role in shaping the picture of the contemporary world and its basic development trends.

These characteristics, however, apply specifically to modernity as an original transformation witnessed by European communities. In the European model of modernity, families developed towards a shrinking in the patriarchal role and in absolute obedience values.⁵ These values and models emerged in a period when society was evolving, when the most powerful drive was youth-motivated advancement and renewal in general. Thus, the characteristics of adolescence are defined in these circumstances, as they are considered to take place in circumstances that help the adolescent to acquire a sense of critique and to give shape to his/her personality and personal life project in a generally supportive social environment (we do not refer here either to the numerous discrepancies existing in the individual cases of adolescents themselves or the households to which they belong).

In Arab communities, the situation is different. The historical process that occurred in our Arab communities was of a nature so different that it is difficult to call our Arab communities modern societies in the same sense as mentioned above:

"During the last century, a major change occurred in the Arab society due to its friction with the modern Western civilization. Yet this change did not lead to the replacement of the old regime with a new one. It was simply a modernization of the old without radically changing it. Thus, the neo-patriarchal system emerged along with the trans-generation civilization in which we live. Therefore, no matter how "modern" external appearances - material, legal and esthetic - of the contemporary neo-patriarchal family are, its internal structures remain rooted in patriarchal values, kinships, tribes, confessions and ethnic groups... The prevailing system in Arab society today is neither a traditional system in the patrimonial sense nor a contemporary system in terms of modernity. It is rather a heterogeneous mixture of old and modern, of patrimonial and contemporary."⁶

This reality confers to the Arab communities a high

degree of schism between the institutional and juristic aspects and the effective contents. This makes the tradition/modernity duality predominantly present especially for the youths and adolescents who find themselves amidst this inter-attraction. In general, and despite the changes in Arab families (who experienced phases of turmoil during the last decades), especially the changes following political independence, they still retain a major part of the roles they had in traditional communities, including mediation between individuals, society and the state. Social relationships in Arab countries are still "characterized by personalism and the concept of the group overshadowing the individual and society... It is the group, not the individual, which forms the common unity in social relationships and commitments... all the way up to the absence of an Arabic equivalent of the word 'privacy'."⁷ We should also not forget the great number of taboos, namely the "tabooed trinity"⁸ : politics, religion and sex, as well as the aspect of the current Arab culture that is heavily male chauvinist towards women.

"Adolescence seems like a socially unplanned phase. It is not the result of any social shift nor is it linked to an acknowledged social position; it does not even have a role. This category has often been formed by banning early marriages (or because of late marriages), generalizing education and making it compulsory. Besides, society, education institutions and families, even professional dynamics, were not prepared to deal with this new phenomenon. As for families, in spite of the emergence of some aspects of modernization in their daily life, they remain traditional and conservative. Adolescents find it very difficult to draw away from them, because families are still the primary safe and secure haven for the individual. Indeed, such an environment does not encourage the individual's blending in with the modern concept."⁹

All in all, this does not create a helpful environment for Arab adolescence and adolescents. The persistence of the family's strong role in overall political, economic and social fields, outside the boundaries of the household, hampers the course of gradual self independence that adolescence represents as a transitional phase from childhood, characterized by nearly total dependency, to independence which is supposed to be complete upon reaching adulthood and achieving the personal and family project independently of the parents' household. As for the "tabooed trinity" (politics, religion and sex), it encompasses practically all fields of interest that begin to show with adolescence. Prohibiting politics puts adolescents in front of a dead end concerning the questioning of the status quo and communal organization, participation in decision-making and the harmony between what is said and what is actually done in the public life. The religious prohibition hampers critical thinking in all issues related

to values, new culture and traditions. Sexual prohibition leads to frustration and makes everything tabooed publicly permissible in secret. It also takes away the right of the adolescent boy and girl to scientifically discover their bodies and exercise their reproductive rights; let's not forget that it keeps them influenced by the common sexual myths. As for the predominant masculinity of the society, it sets, since adolescence, the different social roles for men and women and puts the adolescent girl, in particular, under more extreme pressure, thus affecting the adolescent boy in return.

From Inachieved Modernity to Globalization

Globalization, with its effects and mechanisms, forms a unified general framework and course for the development of communities, even though they might have different positions and reactions towards globalization. With the help of the communication and mass media revolution, globalization mechanisms can go beyond national borders. This enables it to influence or even create "transnational" behaviors and concepts among the youths and adolescents, making the contemporary problems – in their final version – an internal element in all communities.

This qualitative shift results in many multi-level changes in the current conditions and in the future expectations of all demographic and social categories, especially the youths and adolescents. This is shown through new phenomena emerging among them, whether in terms of size, preponderance or quality. They can be detected in particular through their extreme manifestations (like violence and delinquency), which are a result of the sensitivity of adolescents (and youth) towards the values of the society, the efficiency of its institutions and future prospects. Consequently, the problems of adolescence (globally, regionally and nationally) are directly linked to the questions and challenges put forward by the contemporary world, which are different from those the world had faced in previous phases.

The duality of the Arab society (tradition/modernity – contemporaneity) is deepening within globalization due to the attractive nature of national and global progress. Few are the people who can live the consumer society lifestyle as advocated by globalization, while most people cannot, and they refuse it as a cultural reaction and hold on to the firmest identity in facing it. Here emerges the family-religion tandem once again as the basis of this cultural reaction. We will find, however, a role change within this tandem between modernity and globalization. In the decades preceding globalization, the family was the main hub for resisting cultural and social change. Therefore, a number of authors and researchers considered the family structure to be more coherent and it used

religion to strengthen its structure and functions.¹⁰ However, this is no longer valid in the age of globalization where belonging to a family or a tribe is insufficient to protect the individual from the influences of globalization and satellite media. Hence, once again, the importance of religion emerges as a main and crucial existential factor in building personal identity among the new generation.

This paradox is highly apparent in the Arab Gulf, where most of the communities living there are socially, economically and politically based on the tribal structure, while, at the same time, they are among the countries most affected by and affiliated with economic globalization. The Arab Gulf was also a region that witnessed global and deep shifts on many levels in no more than five or six decades. As a result, the horizons of the individual and communities opened up from the limited local scope of the tribe or clan in the era of grandfathers, to the age of globalization, oil and satellite TV stations in the era of grandchildren.

The conflict lived by the new generation here is being described as a conflict between modernity and traditions: "This generation looks at itself as falling between the institutions of the past generation, those seen as "traditional" – Family and religion, and the new and modern institutions represented by the State and the market... there is a kind of virtual consensus among the members of this generation in describing the international market as a bearer of modernity, and the communities they live in as traditional communities."¹¹ However, what is interesting also is that some of those people believe that their countries have more modernity than traditions, based on what they observe, be it the increasing importance of the role of the economy and the market or the other formal aspects of "modernity". Another side of the new generation's pitfalls (in the Gulf region) is the loss of the social and economic security that accompanied the oil boom. That has pushed individuals once again to look for security in family structures and in traditions, because these institutions do not only provide the psychological security but also the social and economic security valve in communities where investing in the state and its modern institutions has not reached the level required to ensure this security.

Yet a great confusion reigns here. The market is depicted as an equivalent to modernity. This is rather a major distortion of the content of modernity as it was indicated previously. The values of globalization and the market do not entail acceptable and valid cultural and social contents, able to form an alternative referential framework on the individual or community level. Consequently, the values of globalization and the market, in contrast to the



values of modernity, lead generally to disintegrating effects in society and polarization among the youths themselves, of whom only a well-off category can find in it individual solutions, whereas the majority will find themselves shoved to embrace a more extremist interpretation of traditions.¹²

The problems raised in communities in the oil-producing Gulf countries, for example, take on a more severe aspect than in other Arab countries, and the options prevailing in them are more characterized by inner consistency (strong and coherent tribal structure, full integration in consumer market values...). In addition, the social and political history is much simpler and its main elements can be more clearly defined than in other Arab countries. Nevertheless, the same problems are brought up in all Arab countries, and sometimes at a higher degree of complication. On the one hand, there is a variety in external influences and channels of interaction, starting from the economy and media openness up to the large-scale migration and the direct interaction between the two sides of the Mediterranean, especially North African countries and Lebanon. On the other hand, there are the social and economic situations that are different from the oil-producing Gulf countries, especially when it comes to high poverty and unemployment rates in certain countries such as Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Mauritania, and the like. This adds a very important dimension of social instability and concern about the future, directly affecting the situation of youths and adolescents. To the pre-mentioned factors, we can add the activeness of political, religious, national, socialist and liberal movements, and the situation of countries that are occupied, in a state of war, under siege or directly affected by these repercussions. All of this confirms the strong presence of globalization issues in Arab communities, which find themselves, once again, facing recent qualitative shifts, in a time where they could not, in the first place, critically cope with the first wave of global shifts represented by modernity in the last decades. Arab communities are stepping into the age of globalization from a passive position and from the position of a society that is neither traditional nor modern.

We can imagine the additional complications that adolescent boys and girls face in Arab communities following the September 11th events and amidst the "war on terrorism". They live in a region that is the eye of the globalized storm shaking the world, the value system and international relations. We must, therefore, understand why adolescents are increasingly affiliating to political movements and conflicts, why they are igniting confrontation everywhere and why they have withdrawn and retreated from public life.

Knowing the world of adolescent boys and girls well and from their own point of view is an important introduction to discovering the flaws in our communities. It is definitely an issue that goes beyond the one-sided interest in sex and sexuality, in spite of its importance.

Translated by Nadine Khoury

END NOTES

1. This text is based on the introduction of the "Arab Adolescent Girl: Reality and Perspectives" report, Center of Arab Women for Training and Research, CAWTAR, 2003
2. Diaz B. and B. Lietard-Dulac, *Contre violence et mal-être, la médiation par élèves*, Nathan, Paris, 1998, cited by Philippe Lebailly, *La violence des jeunes, comprendre et prévenir*, éditions ASH, Paris 2001.
3. Jawad Ali, *History of Arabs before Islam*, 10 volumes, Vol. 4, Dar El-Ilm Lilmalayin, Beirut, Al Nahda Library, Baghdad, Second Edition, 1977.
4. Refer especially to the UNFPA Report: *The State of World Population 2003 - Investing in Adolescents Health and Rights*.
5. "The expansion of middle classes and their liberal ideas on the educational level (no banning) lead to an educational model that gives a central role for individuals' self independence and personal opening up and to dialogue and free speech, since discussion and argumentation became one of the main rules of a family's work order.": *La violence des jeunes, comprendre et prévenir*, édition ASH, Paris – 2001.
6. Hisham Sharabi, *The Patriarchal System and the Problem of the Arab Society's Underdevelopment*, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, Second Edition, 1993.
7. Halim Barakat, *The Contemporary Arab Society – A Social Research*, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, Seventh Edition, 2001.
8. "Tabooed Trinity" is borrowed from a book title by Bou Ali Yassine. An indication of the same prohibition appears in the pre-mentioned reference for Halim Barakat.
9. Taken from the works of the Algerian team in preparation for the *Arab Adolescent Girl Report – CAWTAR*.
10. For instance, the contributions of Halim Barakat, Khaldoun Al Naqib and Hisham Sharabi highlight this issue. Sharabi gives supporting examples like the inability of religion to cancel out the common retaliation customs in the tribal structure.
11. Mai Al-Yamani, *Changed Identities, The Challenge of the New Generation in Saudi Arabia*, RIIA, London, 2000. Translated into Arabic by Ibrahim Darwish, Riad El Rayess Books and Publishing, Beirut, 2001.
12. "The comments brought up by members of the new generation increasingly express an individual moral attitude and stress upon personal achievement, in a time where the collapse of the social solidarity is admitted and pitied. The market has become like an opposite of the family; society is now better defined for youth and the terms used for evaluation have been adjusted towards the mentality of that market instead of the society" – Mai Al-Yamani, *ibid*.

The Lebanese Youth: Scattered Approaches

■ Shafic Shuaib

Coordinator of the *Arab Adolescent Girl Report – CAWTAR*, 2003

The attempt to establish civil peace in Lebanon that began a decade and a half ago, is still marked by the absence of social planning policies. According to the latest report on socio-economic conditions in Lebanon, the "official handling of social dimensions has been limited to generalities and remains governed by the assumption that social problems depend on finding solutions for economic growth. As a result, although the government's interest has shifted away from that of previous governments after the Taif agreement*, putting the emphasis on economic reform rather than reconstruction schemes, governmental policies did not change their approach to social issues. They still consider social issues to be a variable depending on expected economic transformations."¹

Although the official authorities that supervised the making of this report and licensed it have asserted that its content expressed opinions of the researchers who produced it, they recognize that public policies on social issues are lacking in Lebanon. This acknowledgement indicates that there is a problem in this respect, indeed a problem far more alarming than the statement itself. In addition, one can say that the shortage in these strategies is severe, while the need for them is increasing by the day

as a result of the growing socio-economic crisis in Lebanon. This need is mostly felt among the middle classes and the young labor force arriving in the labor market unable to find decent jobs. This in turn leads to various repercussions, among which is the massive migration of the Lebanese youth to various parts of the world.

The deficient handling of social issues and its impact, especially among the youth, is widespread in the Arab world and is not merely a Lebanese specificity. The 2002 and 2003 *Arab Human Development* reports examined these issues at length and submitted statistics on illiteracy, unemployment, living standards, educational issues, women, youth, as well as problems the Arab world is facing on issues of freedom, knowledge, and empowerment.² These socially significant figures were the foundation on which the Bush-led American administration relied to justify the "Greater Middle East" project³ without, though, touching upon the real American targets behind this scheme. The contention was: "If the Middle East advances along the same path it has followed so far, causing an increase in the number of youth who lack decent jobs and education, and who are deprived of their political rights, this shall jeopardize stability in the whole region and the common interests of the G8 members."



(Canada, France, Italy, Germany, United States of America, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Japan, European Union, Russia.)

Lebanese Young Women: Conceptual Problems

A CAWTAR Center study on teenage issues in the Arab world, based on a series of national monographs, documentaries, and analytical studies, some of which were conducted in Lebanon,⁴ revealed problems with the keys and tools to be used for the implementation of this study, mainly as to defining the “young girl” by age and in concept, along with approaching issues of interest to her at various levels, the main criteria used, and intellectual references.

Furthermore, the documentary report monitoring teenage issues in Lebanese studies, conducted in line with the monographic study, revealed an obvious weakness in the evaluation of concepts and the information structure in this field.⁵

A- The Problem of Determining the Age Group

Similar to other developing countries, the population of Lebanon is manifestly young: The population amounted to 3.1 million in 1996, among which 585,000 were young men and women, i.e. less than 19 percent of the total population.

The number of young people is expected to increase in the next twenty years to reach 714,200 in 2016, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentages of the Youth in the Total Population, 1970-2016 (Thousand/percentage)⁶

	1970	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016
Youth	376.8	585.2	612.4	628.2	655.4	714.2
Total	2126.3	3090.7	3363.5	3636.0	3897.6	4138.6
%	17.7	18.9	18.2	17.3	16.9	17.3

The tendency to use the concept of *footowwa* (adolescence) as a synonym *shabab* (youth) poses some ambiguity in specialized Lebanese studies as to age limits on the one hand, and concepts used to refer to this age category on the other.

According to United Nations estimates published in the late 1980s, the youth are those who are between 15 and 24 years old.⁷ Others consider the youth to be those aged between 17 and 24 years old.⁸ In the study “The Youth and Development”, the youth is the category of 13 to 25-year-olds.⁹ Some con-

sider that “the Lebanese young people are those who have completed the adolescence age (15 to 16 years) and have not yet stepped into psychological and socio-economic stability (23 to 30 years old).”¹⁰ Dr. Zuhair Hatab points out in the global field survey about the youth in Lebanon that the youth are those who are 10 to 24 years old.¹¹

Hence, it appears that the criteria for determining who the young people are along with the corresponding age limits reflects a series of complicated issues, involving more than simple considerations, especially when the different behavioral considerations are heeded.

B- The Problem with *Nodj* (Maturity) and *Boulough* (Adolescence, Adulthood, Legal Age, and Puberty)

It is worthy here to note the ambiguity of the Lebanese official assumptions regarding legal limits of *nodj* (maturity) and *boulough* (adolescence, adulthood, legal age, and puberty) among the youth. The Lebanese law resorts to two measures: legal maturity and political maturity. An adolescent is said to be legally mature when s/he completes 18 years of age, for s/he becomes subject to legal liability at this age and may assume public functions. As for political maturity, it is when one becomes entitled to exercise his/her right to vote in municipal and parliamentary elections; that is, at twenty-one years of age.

Along with legal maturity and political maturity, *nodj* (maturity) and *boulough* (adolescence, adulthood, legal age, and puberty) in Lebanon are determined by religious edicts. Each denomination has its own age limits at which boys and girls are considered to have become young persons. These age limits are not only different from one denomination to another, but also between boys and girls; hence, their minimum age of marriage also differs. This is obviously quite an ordeal in a country like Lebanon where there are 18 different denominations, and where personal status is still based upon religious laws.

Below are some examples of the different ages of maturity as to different denominations in Lebanon.¹²

C- The Problem with the Concept

In their book entitled *The Growth Psychology of*

Table 2: Minimum Age for Marriage..... for the Male and the Female/ by Confession

Catholic		Orthodox		Evangelical		The Islamic Shari'a	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
16	14	17	15	18	16	13	9

Adolescents,¹³ Dr. Yacoub and Dr. Dam'a Yacoub discuss the confusion that common people and intellectuals experience whenever they encounter three terms: Puberty, Adolescence, and Youth.¹⁴ Likewise, the aforementioned studies reveal much confusion in employing the concepts of *mourahaka* (adolescence) and *mourahak* (adolescent). Researchers tend to confuse between the concepts of *al-mourahak* (adolescent), *al-shab* (youthful) *al-nashe'* (young), and *al-yafe'* (adolescent or pubescent) interchangeably. As a result, the meanings of these concepts and the differences between them become ambiguous and intermingling.

This state of confusion takes another dimension in Lebanon: Lebanese law considers *childhood* to correspond to the concept of a minor, which ends at 18 years of age, as in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Furthermore, there is a number of other distinctions within each age group, such as: a minor capable of discretion, a minor not capable of discretion (15 years old), conditional work permit and prohibition from working (13 years old), exemption from criminal liability (until seven years of age) and gradual succession to

criminal liability (13 and 15 years old), to state a few. All of these distinctions are shown in Table 3 depicting the different positions in the Lebanese legislations.

D- The Predicament of Intellectual References in Lebanese Studies

The review we have conducted on the studies on youth in Lebanon shows that so far, researchers have drawn the concepts from studies on the youth conducted in the West and implemented them in Lebanon. In our opinion, this explains the ambiguities and intermingling of concepts when researchers use any one concept. These arise from the lack of careful examination and development of the concepts, and from discarding the deep-rooted socio-historical differ-

Lebanese law considers childhood to correspond to the concept of a minor, which ends at 18 years of age...

Table 3: A Comparison Between Items from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Personal Status Laws Regarding the Definition of the Child in Lebanon¹⁵

	The CRC	Lebanon	Notes
Age of adulthood	18	18	
Minor capable of discretion	Not specified	15	
Minor not capable of discretion	Not specified	12.5 to 18 for females 16 to 18 for males or true maturity	
Minimum age of marriage	Age of adulthood	9 to 15 for females; 13 to 17 for males	In reality it is 27.7 for females and 31 for males
Parents' consent to the marriage	Obligatory in all cases	Necessary for the marriage to be legal	Prevailing customs and habits could pressure and influence the choice they make especially in the case of girls
Parents' approval of the marriage	Not specified on condition that it does not conflict with the individuals' opinions and welfare	Mandatory for minors, so is the permission of the marrying clergy	Parents' will to marry their minors is often sufficient, irrespective of the minors' consent
Child custody	Not specified	It differs from one denomination to the next, but it is in general 7 years for males and 9 years for females	



ences between our societies and those of the West. The concepts used by researchers in the West emanated from objective facts, experiences, and knowledge accumulated in their societies. These conceptual tools developed in the midst of a long-term process of knowledge accumulation, accompanied by meticulous study and analysis of the trends of social change and development over several historical phases.

For instance, five centuries ago, adolescence (*mourahaka*) was an alien concept in a number of societies. These societies recognized only two life stages: childhood and adulthood. European societies only differentiated between “a child” and “an adolescent” in the 18th century, upon the invention of the steam engine. So much so that many consider that the concept of “adolescence” (*al-mourahaka*) is associated with the industrial revolution; namely, the changes it introduced to the structure of the educational system as a result of the professional needs of industrial development.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, the concept of “adolescence” did in fact originate in the 19th century, and it has been systematically linked with the working class ever since, through violence, gangs, and crimes committed in protest of the conditions imposed by the industrial world. As a result, the first surfacing of the youth was under the equation: youth=nuisance (*al-shabab/ al-iz'aj*). Later on, the changes

that accompanied the development of capitalism in Europe changed that equation making it: youth amusement and fun (*al-shabab / al-lahoo*). This new concept was fostered through the consumption values that targeted the youth and molded their behavior. It introduced a handful of changes in their dances, choices of music, dress codes, hairstyles, and the like; in other words, the concept of teenagers (*al-ilshreeyoun*). These two concepts (youth and teenagers)

and their dimensions were thus mixed and youth (*al-shabab*) became by definition associated with nuisance and fun. The youth became a category of their own; they were neither children nor adults, but somewhere in between (*beyniyoun*).¹⁷

Dr. Al Amin further states that the developments in the educational system (*al-nitham al-ta'limi*), which resulted from the socio-economic developments led by capitalism

in Europe, are behind the above-mentioned transformations in adolescence and adolescents (the youth). In fact, the transitional stage in the educational system defined that life stage between childhood and adulthood. The composite definition of youth (*al shabab*), in its age and educational dimensions, is directly related to high school and university years. This is why this stage is limited to those who are between 16 and 22 years of age. Given the projected developments in the modern educational system, the upper limit could reach 25 years.

As such, these two dimensions (age and education) define and determine the youth. If one criterion is not met, namely in the case of school or university dropouts, the other (i.e. age) is sufficient to determine a youth. As to parents of that age, they are to be discarded of this category.

E- The Youth: Meanings and Concepts in Need of Regeneration and Redefinition

1. In light of the above, we believe that crystallizing the concept of youth and its related meanings necessarily depends on the unique circumstances lived by each community throughout its socio-historical progress. Furthermore, as is the case of any conceptual and scientific product, this concept needs constant assessment and regeneration in the light of the development and change in the general conditions in the community under study. We did not encounter that as we reviewed the existing studies on youth in Lebanon. Hence, there is a need to examine the various definitions of the concepts being used, in the light of the specificities of the Lebanese society and other similar societies.

2. Social specificities cannot be overrated in today's world which is characterized by integration, openness, and communication in the framework of globalization and the cosmic village. Nowadays, deeming the developmental paths of each community to be independent and unaffected by external factors would be a methodological error and an exaggeration; so is contending that the external factors are more influential than internal ones. Neither one prevails over the other; they rather intermingle, interact, and intertwine constantly and continuously depending on the circumstances, situations, and balances of power.

3. Approaching issues related to the youth in general, and young women in particular, needs this methodological equation and efforts to avoid exaggeration. They need to head towards realizing and respecting the following: The criteria on which are built the issues pertinent to the youth are not independent entities; they ought not be pulled outside their respective social, economic, historical, and cultural milieus. They must not be dealt with and considered applicable in all places and at

all times, without discussion and inquiry. Hence, there is a need to intensify the production of monographs in this domain, given their wide range of approaches and direct scrutiny of the status quo and situations pertaining to the youth, their matters, and scopes of development.

4. In light of all of these givens and methodological necessities they impose, the question becomes: How can we re-examine the reality of the youth in Lebanon? Especially that the preliminary inspection of this reality (reviewed in the sections above) has revealed that we are indeed facing a problematic: Should one set to study the reality of the youth in Lebanon in general, or should we approach the study of young women separately? Are we actually

facing a reality in which there are two groups: “Young Lebanese Men” and “Young Lebanese Women”?

This consideration is especially significant given that young women and men in Lebanon are raised according to different sets of values, behaviors, habits and customs. These inconsistencies become particularly alarming in certain fields such as the issue of patriotism and national belonging, due to deeply rooted problematics that prevent reaching a unified perception of the history of Lebanon and that are unable to agree upon the basic patriotic givens as to concept of the state enemy, the constituents of national choices, and the relations with Arab and neighboring countries.

END NOTES

* The Taif agreement marked the beginning of the end of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990).

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15. “The Situation of Children in Lebanon,” 1993-1998 (*Awda' al-Atfal fi Loubnan*), *The Lebanese National Report on the follow up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, prepared by Adib Nehmeh, published by the Ministry of Social Affairs – the Higher Council for Childhood, Beirut, October, 1998, p. 21.

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How is the World Made, and Who Makes It? What Moves the Young? A New Human Factor in a Changing World.

■ Ali Harb

Lebanese Writer and Thinker

Of what do the young dream now? How do they think? What do they look to? What motivates them in the midst of those rapid changes, sudden mutations and radical transformations?

I will not be simplistic by saying that things are as they should be, nor by welcoming every change that takes place. But I am not an alarmist lamenting past values, as some do. Nor am I blind to the changes so as to deny what is taking place, nor to judge whatever is new as being decadent, degenerate, or negative and nihilistic.

Such a nihilistic attitude backfires. For one would ask: If there is moral decadence and cultural degeneration, how did they happen? How do we explain this decline in the midst of all those propagandists, preachers, leaders and reformers, and after all that praise and glorification of geniuses of philosophy and thought or outstanding artists and writers? How do we explain falling onto the lowest rung of that high ladder of values?

Perhaps the problem lies with what we choose and glorify, and which is not the solution or that which we seek. Therefore, it would be better, both in theory and practice, to read the phenomena and changes that constitute our

world. For what motivates the new generations is not necessarily that which motivated the young of the sixties and seventies in the last century, for example the generation of Chomsky, Sadiq Jalal al-'Adhm, Mahmoud Amin al-'Alim, Sa'd ed-Din Ibrahim and Fawwaz Trabulsi, for each generation has its own sensibilities, conceptions and changing attitudes towards constants and principles.

If I take, for example, a country like Egypt, I think that the majority of the young men and women are no longer attracted by slogans of democracy, reform, development, civic society and human rights; not because those slogans are not correct, but because they have lost their meaning in the Arab world, especially as a result of the obstacles, failure and frustration caused by their propagators. Perhaps what moves the youth these days are other things pertaining to the world of football, song, and the screen, the world of images, design and computer programs, or travel abroad in search of work. Egypt is an example, not an exception.

Who Shapes the World?

The intelligentsia's slogans no longer stir the imagination or stimulate the mind in an original and effective manner. As proof we have the novelist Sun'allah Ibrahim's refusal

to accept his government's prize for the novel, in defense of the collapsing values or in protest against the futile policies, a refusal which was similar to a sound bomb since its effect did not extend beyond the small closed circle of the intellectual élite.

Words have lost their meaning and power and have become undelivered messages that do not attain their aim since they do not express vital issues, live experiences, strong feelings and pressing concerns. They do not define the world or participate in shaping it, for they have become deceiving and false. The reason for this is that the world is shaped and restructured now in an unprecedented different, exciting and unexpected way by forces, ideas, waves, goods, products and patterns of new and different relationships. It therefore needs a new language and different values to be instilled in the old headlines to match the changing values and renewal of forms, styles and norms. For upon entering the age of electronics and virtual reality, the digital human being and the impact of the media, new domains are formed and different human activities change in several fields. It is this change that is behind my articles about the new trends in song, media, realism television and football... For this is precisely what is happening now and what stimulates the new generations, and it is useless to ignore it, burying our heads in the sand on the pretext of defending values and constants.

Sports and Civilization

Sports have become one of the most important productive and influential sectors in industry today. This is why governments allocate to it huge budgets, equal to those of other sectors. If we take football, for example, we find that it is no longer considered a marginal activity aiming to entertain. It is rather a participation in a civilized race where whoever wins proves his merit and his legitimacy between nations. The last live example in this respect is the fact that Greece considered she had performed a great civilized feat after having succeeded in organizing the last Olympic Games (2004), and having won the European Football Cup. Greece felt she had been victorious just as if she had been waging a war. In fact I feel that what happens is quite the contrary: I do not think that people, no matter to what country they belong, now feel the exultation of victory if their country fights another and wins, with the exception of the narrow-minded ideological samples that are full of fanaticism and hostility and look for an enemy to blame for their failure and crises.

This is the case especially in the European countries where competition is civilized and peaceful. Even in the United States the opposition to the war that the American administration is waging against terrorism is

increasing day by day, in spite of the mobilization and charged atmosphere and the administration heaping up pretexts and justifications. This is a new reality taking form which reverses the belief in victory in war, according to Saddam Hussein's logic, and which will become an obsolete language, because the language of the future will change the meanings of victory and success, of competition and progress, applying them to peaceful and developmental areas. Whatever the case may be, the world of sports offers a model of cooperative management that is less aggressive and more peaceful, and thus is an ideal or a lesson that can benefit the leaders and great men in this world.

The New Trends

We notice that the song programs have invaded the young people's imagination today, as can be seen from the new trends of song with their new symbols, clips and methods; or as can be seen in the new programs like *Super Star* or *Star Academy*, and as well as what is called Reality Television which is one of the results of the image invading the scene in most countries and societies.

How else could we explain the great numbers of young people rushing to participate in the song contests, hoping to win, or at least hoping to appear in the picture and on screen, even though in a negative way.

This activity has today become the strongest incentive and drive for the youth in the Arab countries. It has become a new drug replacing religion, or competing with it in obsessing the minds and attracting the young men and women.

The song programs offer various possibilities of reflection, expression and action:

First, they turn the life of the participant upside down, even if he/she did not win the first place, as was the case with the participants in the *Super Star* series and other similar programs. The participant is made and produced the way stars are produced, thus he/she leaves the program unlike the way he/she joined it, whether in looks, appearance and clothes, besides the experience, skill, developing his/her capacities and exploiting their talent.

Secondly, the television channels participate in affording opportunities of exchange and collaboration in the Arab world. They have created a space for discussion which the advocates of Arab unity and the theorists of Arab nationalism have failed to do. In fact those people have completely destroyed the idea of discussions, whereas the television channels, through their programs, debates and artistic, literary and political interviews, participate in expanding the opportunities of unity, without theorizing



and exaggerating. For successful work, in any Arab country, whether it be an intellectual debate or an artistic program, is no longer of local interest, but rather a common Arab act of development, efficient and effective, and opens to the Arab community horizons and paths to the future more than it pulls them to the past, as do the heritage dinosaurs and the new conservatives who call for modernity and progress and who are afraid of globalization and scared to lose their identity and particularity.

Thirdly, but not lastly, the artistic programs offer the participant the possibility of expressing him/herself in the midst of the social and political pressures and restraints. They also create job opportunities which governments have failed to provide. The Jordanian Diana Karazon's success in the first round of *Super Star* was an example with respect to the Jordanian girl and created a loophole in the wall guarded by the Islamic fundamentalists who oppose art and song, and who confiscate the freedom of thought and speech.

Another example is that of the Libyan Ayman al-Attar, the winner of the second round of *Super Star*. Through decades Libya has isolated herself from the changes and developments outside, living behind an iron curtain. Ayman al-Attar hammered a nail into the wall so as to participate in lifting the siege around his country. For the first time we see on television crowds in Libya expressing their feelings and voicing their thoughts. Thus one program succeeded in doing what thousands of articles and speeches about democratic freedoms, civil society and human rights have failed to do.

This is a contemporary fact: The screen shapes the world through its images just as it opens doors and creates opportunities. Thus we see how weak and even ridiculous is the opinion of those who believe that the new programs distract the youth from national duties and crucial issues which their supporters have excelled in losing. This is what a person who thinks in a simplistic, unilateral, tyrannical or terrorist way would say, mixing between various domains. However, the one who has a structural mind sees that each of these domains and requirements does not cancel the other, since each of them has its own specification and characteristic, as well as its own influence and interaction with others.

In Spain, for example, the song and art programs do not prevent hundreds of thousands of people and youths from acting and demonstrating against the government in order to replace it. So let us not blame others. The source of the crises is not the new programs but the police of doctrines and the protectors of the unchangeable constants.

Multi-faceted Dimension

There are famous thinkers, the most prominent among them being the philosopher Jean Boudrillard, who consider globalization a fatal epidemic that eliminates the differences between societies and annuls cultural characteristics.

I, however, do not agree. On the contrary, I consider globalization to be a new kind of creativity, production, communication and exchange. It is a historical change and a mutation in civilization, as much as it is open to various interpretations and possibilities, or lines and choices.

Therefore it all depends on the way globalization is understood and dealt with or exploited, just like any other big event or new invention. We could deal with it in a negative way resulting in corruption or violence, as happened in America with those who dealt with electronic equipment at the expense of material production; or as does the Qa'ida who use the internet to facilitate their terrorist operations. However, the means and products of globalization can be used to prompt development, as in Malaysia which exploited the possibilities accompanying globalization in order to move from being marginalized into being a successful example of development and pass from a pre-modern society into an extremely modern one.

Then, too, globalization as a digital and technical revolution has offered unprecedented possibilities for plurality and diversity, or for interaction and hybridization in various fields of material and symbolic production.

This is what happened in poetry, the novel and art in general. In the past the number of poets was limited, just as there were leading poets considered to be the reference or monopolizing stardom. Today, however, there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Arab poets with a diversity in talents, visions and styles.

Naturally, this also applies to songs that have increased in number, developed and spread, thanks to the numerous satellite channels. As proof are the endless numbers of male and female singers. Diversity is not restricted to single art, for art is now practiced in plurality, where a single program includes singing, dancing, acting or mime, as was seen in the *Star Academy* program. Here the Egyptian Muhammad Attieh did not win because he had the best voice, but because of his multiple talents, excelling in more than one art. Even poetry is being influenced by this new reality where poems are recited to the accompaniment of wonderful music and sung by beautiful singers, as the poet Adonis has begun to do.

This is no longer the time when a singer would sing

standing still for an hour, but rather an accelerated, intertwined, moving era for multifold, hybrid and dynamic work. This is what explains mingling dancing with singing, and the emerging phenomenon of video clips as well as that of Reality Television.

We can also give examples of diversity in other fields, as with political and social activists all over the world. Here we notice that globalization has now created opponents that are like it. In the past world opposition was of a unilateral doctrine, camp, party, opinion and voice, as was the case in the Soviet camp. However, as is seen in the Porto Allegro conferences, opposition today is compound, plural, hybrid and rich since it is composed of groups and people belonging to various sects, trends and attitudes.

This is also seen in the seminars held to study present issues and global affairs, whether in Rio de Janeiro or Beijing, Barcelona or Alexandria, Tunisia or Beirut. They are universal seminars, not only because of their themes and contents, but due to the fact that the participants belong to various countries and nationalities, or have different specialties and trends. Therefore, dealing with globalization as if it were a scarecrow or an epidemic or absolute evil, shows an attitude which is simplistic, exaggerated and blind, as well as intellectual terrorism.

Thus we are facing a global reality becoming more and more hybrid and open. It is the point of no return, as is shown by the increase in mingling, diversity and uniqueness, the increase in universal globalized businesses, programs and activities. They are all compound in structure, pluralistic in dimension, dynamic in their rationale, and hybrid in their identity. This means a rupture in the unilateral centralized logic, to be replaced by a diversity in references, models, programs, shapes, patterns and methods.

This new reality is what scares those with a theological, unilateral centralized mind, with a mentality to glorify, praise and sanctify, and who call the cultural output and its producers geniuses, giants, scholars, heroes and leaders, as witness the names and titles given to personalities or symbols in this field or that: X's century, X's era, Master of knowledge, Lady of the screen, Star of the Orient, master of literature, prince of poets, initiator of modernity, instigator of revolution, creator of the novel, etc... But what is being produced and formed breaks this imperialist, élitist and narcissistic logic. For what is being formed now of diversity and uniqueness or fragmentation and separation means that this is no longer a time when an artist, writer or philosopher dominates an era as being the only one in his field or domain. Anyway, what did those working in culture and writing gain from this ideal-

ization besides additional discrimination, disparity, tyranny and violence, the pharaohs of politics being equal to the patriarchs of culture?

The End of the Élite

Gone is the time when the cultural élite were the custodians of minds and of the matters of truth, justice and freedom. This prophetic and narcissistic role which made its representatives consider themselves the conscience of nations and the minds of humanity, has been shaken due to the mutations, regressions and failures, starting with the collapse of the socialist camp and passing to the crisis of the new liberalism, to the failure of the Arab civilization project, to the dilemma of modern secularism, and going from the preemptive wars of the neo-Conservatives to the wars of the fundamentalist terrorists.

Today the élite can do no more than produce their isolation and weakness as long as they think in a backward, idolized, unilateral, utopian and tyrannical manner, as do the neo-Conservatives in the face of changes. Therefore the élite is no longer able to carry out their cognitive and ethical authority over people. Gone is the time when the intellectual could think for others and formulate their requests or defend their interests, as has gone the era of blind crowds who sacrificed their lives for leaders, or the country's flag, or revolutionary slogans.

Therefore, it is actually very late to talk about the fall of the élite. With the age of universal information, global network, knowledge economy, media workers, and dependence on mental forces and creative capacity in work, we have entered "the deliberating society" which is not composed of the élite and the crowd, or of the leader and the people, but rather of productive fields, active sectors and multiple legitimacies, where none have more right than others to common values and democratic freedom. Thus each is connected to truth in as much as he/she can create facts and produce truths, and each is connected to justice according to his/her share in work and production, and each has his/her share of freedom in as much as he/she shows authority and efficiency. Thus the dualism between the élite and the people is broken, and the gap between academic knowledge and general knowledge is filled, in as much as the various fields and sectors are open to one another in order to transfer skills, exchange expertise and debate common affairs and issues.

Thus in a debating society every individual shapes his/her own life so long as he/she has a specialty, and every citizen shapes his/her surroundings and society so long as he/she is productive or creative in his/her field. Each sector, in turn, is capable of dealing with its problems thanks to the specialization of its people and their participation in field work, and each sector participates in the devel-



opment of its society depending on the skills and expertise which enable it to mingle with other sectors in order to discuss the solution of problems or the development of resources and wealth.

We are now faced with the emergence of a new human factor that does not derive its legitimacy, or positive and constructive impact from its beliefs, sect or social class, but from what it specializes in and masters, or from the work and industries it excels in and completes. Thus, besides the "citizen" who enjoys his civil freedom by participating in the election of his representatives and equality before the law, we have the "performer", the specialist who knows how to exploit his capacity to create and transform, with the help of others and their participation, through work and productivity or through participating in public and particularly media debates, whether on the level of sector or state, or even on the regional or global level. Thus it is impossible to go back to the model of the "believer" or the militant who has joined a closed brotherhood or an iron ideology, unless in a way that is weak or caricatured or destructive.

Thus profession is beginning to dominate identity and to be man's/woman's passport to the building of self and the making of life. Therefore it is no longer a question of elite and people, or elitist and popular, but a matter of a space now being formed in which the elitist, tyrannical and bureaucratic relations are being replaced by another kind that are horizontal, average, exchanging and debating relations. This does not mean that elitism has disappeared. It has come to an end as a symbol and value, just as it has lost its credibility and legitimacy. Therefore wherever it is found acting with the same mentality, logic and slogans, it is the cause of more backwardness and deterioration.

The Image and its Effects

It goes without saying that we are now living in the society of the image and the scene, where the world has become exposed to flagrant nudity via multimedia: the channel, the network, the screen, the live and speaking image, as well as the cameras planted in corners, squares and public places. We cannot overlook the fabricated virtual images, for they present an enormous capacity of forming and reforming in a more complex, structured and broad manner, in a way that makes the administration of the world depend on the production of information and the structure of the image.

Whoever does not appear today in an image is less effective and charismatic, even though he might have won the race to be a star. As an example is the person who won in *Superstar* or *Star Academy*. He/she practiced his/her stardom while participating in the program, but this stardom decreased after he/she left. The image shapes the

world and rebuilds it. This is the reason for the effective role of those working in the audiovisual media, besides those working in programming and the production of excessive effects.

There are some who fear the domination of the image and its function at the expense of critical awareness, analytical thought and rational discourse. Undoubtedly, the image is not equal to a text in its conceptual power and cognitive effects. But it surpasses it in psychological effects because it possesses its own charm and seduction since it is related to the world of form, color and sense, whereas the text requires a mental process of abstraction and deduction. That is why images are used as means of clarification and information in education or advertising.

Yet here, too, one must not simplify and alarm, for the image as incident is merely a possibility. All depends on how it is interpreted and narrated, or how it is used. For on the level of interpretation it can be put to use negatively and harmfully or positively and usefully, just like the text and discourse.

I do not believe that the image will destroy the book, as is claimed in the Arab world so as to camouflage problems and conceal evil. For books are still distributed in the world by the hundreds of thousands, or rather by the millions, ranging from Marquez's novels to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, and the adventures of Harry Potter. Therefore, the claim that the image will replace the book is a lie and a cultural scandal in the Arab countries.

On the other hand, if the image conceals and deceives it is equal in this respect to discourse which is not less concealing and misleading, especially when used as a sacred authority or a rigid belief or a final theory. Humanity has suffered and is still suffering from the hegemony of the doctrinal speeches which participated in producing closed societies and human herds led by blind faith and extremist impossible and destructive solutions. On the contrary, the spread of images played a positive role in undermining the closed and totalitarian regimes, as was the case in the socialist regimes and the third world countries. Today the new propagandists among the fundamentalists and religious clerics try using both weapons to the utmost, and in the worst way: the doctrine and the image, the message and the network, thus combining the evils of both, the evils of the closed ideologies and those of the clear image.

But there is a second face to every coin. When the Jihadists use the satellite channels to broadcast their ugly savage practices, such as decapitating the innocent people they had kidnapped, this will contribute to destroying the religious claims and undermine the meaning of the-

ology, as much as it will offer the possibility of freeing the minds and bodies from the tutelage of those who give themselves divine qualities or claim a relation that connects them to God, and who believe they are God's successors or representatives or prodigies, or are speaking in His name and carrying out His verdicts.

No matter what, the problem lies neither with the image nor with the text, neither with the visual network nor with the written press, because these products have their own capacities. Thus their benefit or harm depends on the way they are used and the mechanisms operating them. Therefore what matters is what kind of relation there is with the meaning, as much as with the management of issues and projects, or identities and desires.

Risks and Solutions

Undoubtedly the phenomena and trends taking place in various fields are not the promised paradise, since there is no paradise, to start with. And those who are awaiting it will no doubt be disappointed and will have to wait far too long. In fact, these fast moving times will soon surprise them with something they do not like or will provoke in them fear and terror.

The purpose of these words is not to deny facts so as not to make the situation worse. They aim at getting us used to reading fully what is going on so that we may better understand and analyze and interfere, using prudence and careful consideration. This requires being trained to think, breaking away from worshipping forefathers, fossilized forms and tastes, or the intimidating names and models.

Not all that is happening is positive, for it has its negative aspects, its mishaps and dangers. This is the case starting from the sailing boat to the spaceship, from papyrus to the digital code, from ordinary mail with its mechanical speed to electronic mail with its light speed; in short, from the simple slow tools that are primitive in structure, motion and effect, to the tools that are complex in structure, extremely fast and exceedingly efficient.

But there is a second face to every coin: We live in an age of speed, surrounded by images, constantly expecting change, using the tools and means that become more efficient and effective the more complex they become. Yet all this has many drawbacks as well: First of all, it makes private life unbearable because it becomes exposed and bare, or under constant supervision and pursuit. Then it also means a quick rise and just as quick a fall, as we see with the lives of stars. This is why stars are quickly eclipsed. And no wonder, for whatever is light and quick is as temporal as it is ephemeral. Thirdly, it means that the devices might be exhausted before having achieved the goals, as it also means possessing a

capacity to act and affect that surpasses the capacity to anticipate and evaluate.

Frankly speaking, using tools and knowledge that provide the utmost in speed, motion and efficiency means that we are standing on the edge of a precipice, as well as it means that man is surpassed by what he produces and that this might harm him. Thus we enter a society of risk and a state strongly resembling a state of emergency. And we might have gone beyond this to provoke a catastrophe, as man's deeds foretell and forewarn, with violence and terrorism, or death and destruction.

These are the effects of extreme limits or solutions, for an extreme quickly reverses to the opposite. This is the difference.

Amid this crisis and risk we may ask: Who will save whom? And who is worried about whom?

I am not afraid to say that those in charge of managing world affairs or general affairs and desire deliverance and change are the first to be in need of reform and change, because things have gone beyond the violation of values and principles, as witness the chronic crises and sudden catastrophes.

Then perhaps the source of destruction and death might be the very values and principles they claim or call for, so long as they deal with their thoughts, identities and issues with the mentality of someone certain of himself and of what he knows, fully in grasp of affairs, authoritarian and deeming himself divine. Equal in this respect are all adversaries fighting over interests and vanities while claiming to be fighting for ideas and legitimacy, whether it be Bush or Putin, Khamenei or Al-Qurdawi, Bernard Lewis or Hasan Hanafi, Adonis or Chomsky, Nasr Hamid Abu Zeid or Abd Al-Sabur Shahin, Nawal El-Saadawi or Nahla El-Chahal. The writer of this article and his colleagues and adversaries are no exception.

Thus we deny reality in order to conceal our reality, and cling to responsibility and power after having failed to direct the world, or we claim to possess solutions when, in reality, we are the source of the problems. Let us confess that our generation has failed to manage our common affairs and produce civilized, reforming and modernizing projects. Therefore the problem lies in our own thoughts and minds, and not in the fact that our opinions and suggestions are not taken into consideration. It is not logical that we should struggle for so long and have matters get worse.

This is why I consider reversing the issue, or, at least, directing the question to those we apprehend or fear: the



youth and women, or the marginalized and minors, those who live in a hell caused by adults, leaders, chiefs, custodians, guides and those who believe they are divine and immortal with their obsessions, greed, conflicts and wars. Are the young and the marginalized capable of opening new horizons and paths that could help us emerge from the tunnel, by creating new languages, forms, rules, tools and unparalleled fields that would generate new and different relations from meanings and values, relations that would be less deifying of the self, less patriarchal, masculine, authoritarian, extremist, greedy and violent, in other words more pious, modest, feminine, lively and pacific... whether those meanings were related to God or the mind, to truth or justice, to the fatherland or the world?

One does not lose hope reading about that young Algerian woman, Samira Bellil, who died at the beginning of September 2004 after she had been for most of her short life a victim of the low world of those French of Moroccan origin, with all its misery, violence, rape and diseases. However, all was not misery and in vain. For the moment the victim came back to her senses and realized the reasons of her plight, she thought about herself and sought, in mind and deed, to rebel against her situation and change her way of life. One of the things she did was to write down her experience in a book which was published shortly before her death: *In Gang Rape Hell*. Thus Samira Bellil set a good example showing that those who

do not renounce free, independent and critical thinking can open a vent in the dark tunnel in order to change their conditions for the better.

Naturally, one should not generalize. It is not fair to judge all adults and fathers negatively and charge them with being failures. For there are always bright examples that are rays of hope, such as those who resign and do not abuse power, or those who work towards broadening the possibilities of life and enriching it, like Nelson Mandela and Mahathir Muhammad, Bill Gates and Ahmad Zawil. This is what explains the huge crowds that flocked to attend Mahathir Muhammad's lecture in the Alexandria Library in the middle of September 2004. People are thirsty to listen to successful models in construction and human development after having become fed up listening to those who can do nothing but lose causes and harvest failures with their lies of liberation, empty heroisms, used up talk and inept or false recommendations.

Translated by Nazik Yared

END NOTE

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Cross-Generation Sexual Abuse Within the Extended Family¹

■ Khawla Abu Baker

Emek Yezreel College

There are many signs indicating the presence of sexual abuse within a family. Yet, many factors stand in the way of the diagnosis and the prevention of that abuse. Among these factors are: parents' psychological health, their sexual education, patriarchal authority, and authority of adults over children. Through the following example, namely Salam's case (a victim of sexual abuse that started when she was three years old and lasted until 14 years of age), we would like to highlight the family's role in the perpetuation of sexual abuse. In addition, we want to stress the extent to which sexual abuse affects the psychological health of the victim, as well as the necessity of a systematic therapeutic plan which includes individual, family and group therapeutic interventions to secure the rehabilitation of the victim and his/her family, ensures this phenomenon would not recur in the family and would not be transferred to the next generation.

Salam: A Sexually Abused Girl in a Family Where Sexual Abuse was Transferred Through Generations

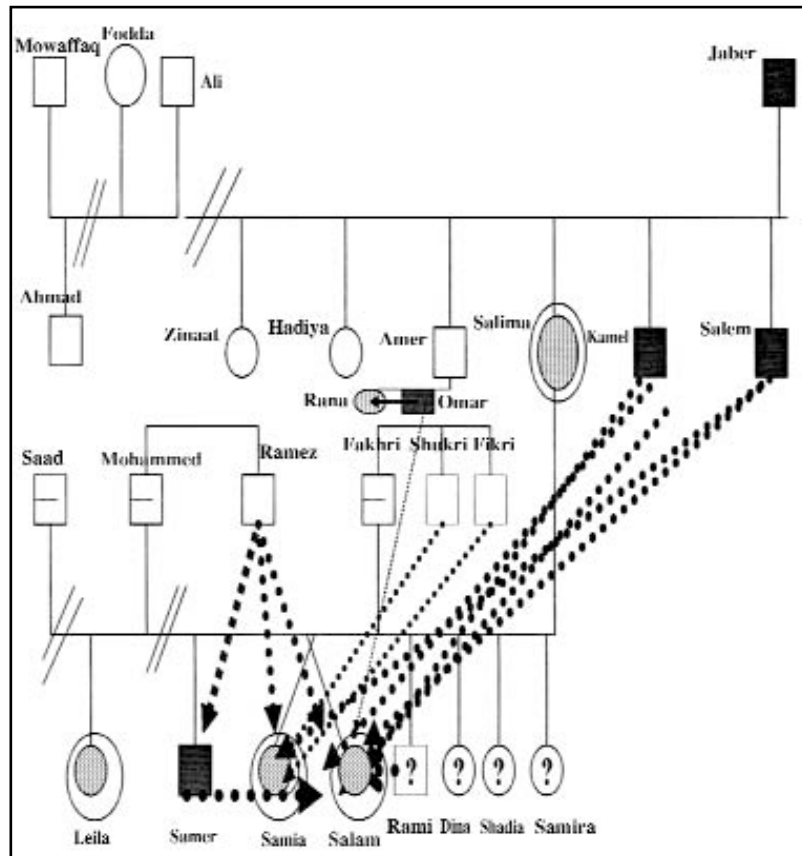
Social services took custody of Salam when she was 14 years old after she had complained to the counselor that her brother, Samer, had been raping her for three years. After the Welfare Ministry interfered, it also took custody of Salam's twin sister, Samia. At the same time, Samer,

who was 17 then, was put in a rehabilitation center after the complaint was verified, and at 18, he was moved to prison.

Salam's psychological health was very poor, as she suffered from many psychological problems:

- a. Dissociation
- b. Low self-esteem
- c. Suicidal thoughts
- d. Self mutilation
- e. Flashbacks
- f. Nightmares

Salam's body was introverted, in the literal sense of the word: She walked with her head between her shoulders, her arms wrapped around the lower part of her abdomen, and her legs close to each other. Sometimes, she covered her body with baggy clothes, while at other times, she put on daring clothes revealing more of her body than what was socially accepted. At times, she was calm and introverted, while wild and hostile at others. She used to attend school regularly for a period of time, and then be absent for another. At times her language was childish, shallow and weak; at other times it was deep and mature.² At times she was psychologically healthy, while at



and then her mood and attitudes would flow.

When her mother hung up the phone in Salam's face, the latter would get outraged, and her rage would then turn into agitation. She would fight with everybody around her and would start cursing, using sexual swear-words that she never uttered when calm. At this time, her body language also became different. She either wore revealing clothes or summer clothes in the dead of winter in order to make herself ill (self-harm); or she would lie on the ground under the burning sun, indifferent to the harm she could cause herself. Salam also changed her attitude towards the staff at the organization: She would become insolent, wild, violent and stubborn with them. Some counselors misinterpreted her reaction and felt repulsion towards her conduct.

The mother's reaction to what had happened within her family resulted from an unhealthy psychological and family environment. Not all her family members knew about the details presented although they all witnessed samples of the conduct explained here; yet, they never judged any of the following phenomena as a psycho-

logical or social illness inside their family. Everyone considered the apparent part of the phenomenon a temporary conduct. They did not know that such conduct infiltrates deeply and is transferred through generations. After meeting Salima, the mother, a few times, and treating Salam and Samia for many years, the following family history, reflected by the network of relations inside the extended family, unfolded:

In the first generation, Fodda divorced her first husband, Mowaffaq, and she was forced to leave her eldest son, Ahmed, in his father's custody. Her daughter, Salima, does not know the reason for the divorce (or she prefers to convince herself that she does not know). Later, Fodda was married to Jaber, and she gave birth to three girls and three boys. When she was pregnant with her youngest son, Salem, her husband told her that he would divorce her once she gave birth to the child, accusing her of cheating on him. Fodda was divorced when Salem was 40 days old. Then, her sons and daughters were handed to the foster care of abbeys and nursery organizations. For an unknown reason, she forgot her daughter, Salima, in the street, and the latter was not entrusted to any institution. The father used to leave for work at 5 a.m. and come back at 5 p.m. while his daughter was dumped alone in

the streets. Her father was an alcoholic, and he used to peep at women. Once he divorced Fodda, he got married; however, his wife divorced him, accusing him of sexual perversion. Today, he is married to a woman with whom he quarrels a lot due to his suspicions about her conduct. Salima used to suffer from the fact that her father peeped at her while she changed her clothes, took a shower, sat with her girl friends, or even when she slept. At 16, Salima got married to Saad without understanding the real sense of marital commitment. She got pregnant soon after, and she gave birth to Leila in less than a year of marriage. Her husband asked her to work as a prostitute, but she never realized what he had asked her, as she was naïve and simple-minded. When her relatives knew of that, they divorced her from him. Her daughter was five days old then. The little child remained in the custody of her father's family, while Salima returned to her father. Two years later, Salima got married to Mohammed, a drug dealer, and she gave birth to a boy, Samer, and twin girls, Samia and Salam. She divorced him three years later as a result of poverty and went back to her country. When her children visited their father during the summer vacation, their uncle, Ramez, sexually harassed Samer (five years old) and the twins (three years). This went on for two months without any of the family members noticing the sexual violence perpetrated against the children. When the children returned home, Samer kept imitating what his uncle had done to him. His sister, Samia, was physically stronger, and she succeeded in pushing him away a few times, so he stopped trying. However, he continued harassing Salam, who surrendered and did not know how to defend herself.

One of the major impacts of sexual abuse on children is that it renders them involved in sex in a way that is inconvenient for their age or their physical, emotional and psychological maturity. Samer was his uncle's victim, and he became obsessively interested in sex. He watched sexual pornographic movies with his friends, teenage relatives, and he used to play sexual games with them. When he became 13 years old and his sister 11, he raped her in a relative's house, which had been under construction and was uninhabited then. Ever since that date and until his sister Samia complained to the social worker, he continued raping Salam on a daily basis, hitting, threatening and cursing her.

Everything happened in a house, where the mother and her husband, Fakhri, lived, as well as four other children. How come Salima did not pay attention to what was happening? How is that she did not know that Ramez, Mohammed's brother, was not the only one who sexually abused her children, but also her brothers-in-law, Shukri and Fikri, who were still pursuing Samia, and who used to chase Salam when she lived in the house? Even

Salima's brothers, Kamel and Salem, tried to convince Samia to have sex with them, knowing that each was engaged to be married. In addition, Rami, Salam's brother, tried to rape her with the help of his cousin, Omar. Furthermore, Omar and Rami raped cousin Rana, who is Omar's sister. How could this happen without the family noticing any suspicious act, conduct, or even any imbalanced psychological state of the harassed little girls?

Salima was raised in an environment where she never felt secure, whether regarding her body or her privacy. Her father used to peep at women, and everybody knew that. However, instead of dealing with this as a psychological illness of sexual background, his surroundings forgave him and described him as a man "with a soft eye". Often, men join each other in peeping at women and girls, and they encouraged one another, whether in private homes or public places such as coffee shops, markets or parties, where their conduct was never designated as sexual harassment; though in reality, it was.

Everybody, including social workers, knew that Jaber used to be suspicious of people, and this was the main reason why he divorced Fodda. People then learned from his wife, whom he married after Fodda and then divorced, that he was a pervert. This was never verified, and we do not know how his sons and daughters, who came from the different institutions to visit him on their vacations, suffered from their father's perversion. What we know is that Kamel and Salem did not mind sexually chasing their nieces. We do not know, however, what they did to their other nieces and perhaps nephews. Yet, we do know that the grandchildren, Omar, Samer and Rami sexually abused their sisters and cousins. Therefore, it is obvious that the environment of sexual abuse, adopted by the grandfather, infiltrated into the emotional ambiance of the family, and affected his sons and grandchildren's conduct. Moreover, the victim's conduct infiltrated from one generation to another into the general ambiance of the family. Fodda is the victim of at least one sexual experience. Salima is also a victim of her father's perversion and her husband's exploitation, who forced her to work in prostitution. Another victim is Salima's daughter, Leila, who got married and then divorced, and who went on to work as a prostitute in a major city. Samer is a victim of his uncle, while Samia and Salam are victims of their first cousins. We could not gather the necessary information about Dina, Shadia and Samira since Salima feared the intervention of the Welfare Ministry.

Nobody interpreted what had happened to Fodda, Salima's mother. If her husband cheated on her, Salima should have learned the meaning of a healthy commitment. And if the mother were a victim, the daughter should have learned how to be safe from society. No one

other times she was disturbed. She would look at herself and ask aloud: "Why did it happen to me?"

Salam used to miss her mother and long for her love, but at the same time, she was mad at her since she denied Salam's claims in order to protect Samer from jail. Her mother punished her by neither visiting nor calling her. Salam, on the other hand, tried to call her mom from time to time, but her mother used to set a list of conditions and hung up the phone, shouting: "No daughter [of mine] lives in institutions away from home."

The day when Salam contacted her mother used to be hectic. She used to prepare herself four to five hours before calling. She would raise her hopes by telling herself "This time mother will have missed me and will agree to talk to me. She is a mother after all. She surely wants to talk to me because she hasn't for a while." Then, she would remember all the times her mother scolded her... and hung up. When it was time to call, Salam's mind would be torn between contradicting thoughts. When Salam would enter the phone room, she would rotate around herself as fast as a compass needle that cannot find where North is. With the remnants of strength left, she would dial the number to hear her mother's voice,



ever talked to her about this issue that turned her life upside down.

Salima's children used to visit their father, Mohammed, during school holidays. Their visits were never supervised, although Salima knew some of the family members were drug users and dealers, and they used to host friends of similar conduct. The rupture of relations between the father, Mohammed, and his family, on one hand, and between Salima and her family on the other, made the children think that any mention of whatever happened would result in a fight between both families. Salima used to leave her children with their father's family without calling or visiting them, or even sending a social worker to check on their conditions there. Her emotional immaturity did not prepare her for the maternal role with all its responsibilities. Salima got married and decided to have children for sick childish reasons, so they were not based on maturity and readiness. Thus, she used to see comfort in her children's absence from home, a time when she never thought of her responsibilities towards them. This led the children to live a bad and dangerous experience with their uncle, without their father's or his family's knowledge. They got used to not sharing their pain with any adult or mature person.

There are many reactions which the parents did not understand and did not try to question about the change occurring in their children. For instance, Salam was happy and enthusiastic, and she turned into an introverted girl. She started wetting herself after being accustomed to using the toilet. She used to cry whenever her mother left her with her brother. At five years of age, she feared boys and men, and her mother used to mock her fear instead of trying to understand its reasons. She injured her body and she did not care about harming it ever since she turned 11 years old, and this conduct was a clear indicator of psychological instability. However, her mother only used to give her the following remark: "Are you stupid to hurt yourself?" This question was asked sarcastically and was humiliating rather than seeking an answer.

Salima was used to living in secrecy. Ever since she was born, she must have hidden some kinds of behavior from the outside world, but this lifestyle continued throughout her life. When Salima met her third husband, Ramez, she did not tell him that she had children from two previous husbands since the children had been living with foster families. This restores the history of the family Salima emanated from. After Ramez found out about her children, she hid all that was happening with them from him, as she genuinely thought that he should not "suffer" from her children's problems and should not "feel their presence". Thus, Salima's main concern was to hide the main reason for her three children's leaving the house. Keeping the

secret was what worried Salima the most in her life. This is considered one of the environmental and psychological bases characterizing families that witness sexual abuse.

The treatment of Salam's psychological state included many types of interventions, whether with her or with some of her family members. These interventions were all aimed at correcting the psychological health of the family so that they might understand the situation of sexual abuse, and in order to prevent its infiltration to the rest of the family members and the future generation. The therapeutic plan included the following interventions:

First: An individual therapy with Salam and one with her sister, Samia.

Second: Double therapeutic meetings for Salam and Samia, which continued until Samia left the institution.

Third: A group session in sexual education attended by Salam and Samia.

Fourth: An evening group session where Samia and Salam sat with girls with similar experiences.

Fifth: Individual meetings with the mother, Salima, aimed at comprehending her experience as a victim. These meetings took place in the institution and at Salima's house. It became evident that although she was an adult, she was psychologically immature, and this was proven by her conduct, where she appeared to be a girl in a critical situation. She had not had a family in the true sense since she was five years old. Later, she gave birth to children and was married three times, but she did not know how to bring up a family in the emotional and social sense of the word. Salima was behaving as a frustrated girl with her daughters and not as a mature mother. She was easily frustrated, and even tried to commit suicide three times. She took pride in these attempts in front of her kids, not aware that she might be a model they might imitate. She said: "I was so sad when I tried to commit suicide, so why should she imitate me? Did she live my life? Or is it that she was merely jealous of her mother?" She was suffering from a very difficult distortion of reality. She used to offend, using swear-words, the friendships between her daughters and young men of their age, but she did not see all the attempts of sexual abuse by her own two sons, nephew, brothers and brothers-in-law. Accepting and understanding Salima's experience was the key to making her feel safe and narrate the history of sexual abuse and neglect which were transferred from one generation to another in the same family. By the end of this step she became partially ready (due to her psychological state and her narrow-mindedness) to support the therapeutic plan. Salima's social worker used to accompany her in the sessions and support the therapeutic plan during their meetings in the town. Salima did not attend all the meetings regularly because she convinced herself that this was the way to tell everybody that she has a say and an opinion, and that not all sessions

should take place according to the physicians' schedules. Sixth: Family therapeutic meetings to treat the issue of sexual abuse inside the family. In addition to the mother, the meetings were attended by Salam, Samia and the social worker who was in charge of Salima's file.

Seventh: Consultative meetings with Salima's social worker to set an intervention plan to be carried out by the social worker, concerning the family's psychological health.

The possibility of making the biological father take part was considered, but it turned out that he spent most of his time in jail, and that he was not a positive person, so that possibility was ruled out. The situation of the family's other relatives was also studied. A cousin of the mother was found. She had five children who have graduated from college and built successful families. The social worker promised to encourage the relation between this cousin and Samia to give her a chance to get to know a healthy family in the context of the large campaign of identification and simulation.

After Salam spent some time in the institution, the situation was still not safe for her to go back to her family, and another secure frame was found.

After finishing working with the family, it is important to point out the following issues:

1. Though Salima was married three times, she ignores everything related to sexual education, starting from the reasons for the menstrual cycle and finishing with the concept of the relation with the body. Due to her psychological state, her ignorance and illiteracy, she cannot be held responsible for this issue with her daughters or sons. In this regard, educational institutions, such as schools, and public places such as clubs have to contribute in educating Salima, her sons and her daughters to help in preventing the occurrence of sexual abuse.
2. Salima's psychological capacities are very limited. Despite her good intentions most of the time, she got quickly frustrated due to the diverse psychological problems of her children and her family. Meanwhile, she was deteriorating and losing her energy. That is why she could not keep pace with her two daughters' therapeutic development on one hand, nor could she support them when they needed her, on the other. It is important here to deal with Salima as a woman who spent her youth in a critical situation. She suffered from neglect in her childhood, and she was maltreated and subjected to violence in her youth. At many points of her therapy she would regress to a situation of a child who was mistreated, i.e. she was not able to play the role of a supportive mother.
3. The partial therapy of the girls does not solve the problem inside the family, since Samer, the brother, needed therapy and he never received it inside the rehabilitation

center or in jail. Rami, too, has never received therapy, knowing that both have sexually attacked Salam, and Samer had raped her for years. We do know that Samer was a victim himself, but we are still short of information about Rami; and we don't know whether he was a victim of his environment, his relatives or others. This can be clarified with the help of a specialized social worker or an officer from the Welfare Ministry. In addition, Salima said that her daughter, Leila, divorced a man who was from her father's hometown, and she gave up her son and moved to live with her mother for a while. However, she could not manage living with her mother because, actually, she never lived with her. Progressively, she estranged herself from her, and she turned into a prostitute living in a major city. Leila was 19 years old when her sexual conduct began to fall apart: She was a girl living a critical situation, just like her mother when she was her age. Indeed, she needs therapy and rehabilitation to get her out of these infected surroundings and to let her acquire the skill to self respect.

The family needs two parents who can fulfill the role of protecting and caring for all the family members, particularly the children – Dina, Shadia and Samira. Thus, educating the parents on their role is necessary to protect the kids from future maltreatment and to rehabilitate the family unit.

It is necessary to gather as much information about each family member as possible, particularly about the childhood of the biological parents or the foster parents and how they were brought up. When planning therapeutic intervention, roles should be distributed according to the urgent need for the service, since systematic therapeutic intervention does not mean that all professionals work with the same family at the same time and during the whole period of therapy. What we mean is building a therapeutic plan which guarantees the family's needs: Teaching as an educational material and a preventive means, individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy, and the support of both parents and spouses.

Translated by Nadine Khoury

END NOTES

1. This material was inspired from Dr. Khawla Abu Baker's book *Sexual Abuses in Arab Societies: Phenomenon and Therapy*, which is under print with the support of Ashalim Association, the Welfare Ministry and Beit al-Hanan Institution.
2. Salam used to write her thoughts in a notebook and bring it to therapy from time to time. It was easy to notice "two voices" or "two personalities" writing the thoughts, whether regarding the topic, the language, the style or the expression.



Young, Single and Employed: Jordanian Women's Voices on Impact of Work*

■ Mary Kawar

Senior Specialist on Gender and Employment
International Labour Organization

There is an increasing visibility of young urban working women in Amman, Jordan. As compared to previous generations, this group is experiencing a new life cycle trajectory of single employed adulthood. Based on qualitative interviews with young women, this paper will reflect on their experiences and perceptions regarding work, social status and marriage.¹

I. The Context

Population growth in Jordan has been quite high. In terms of age structure, data reveals that up to 51 percent of the Jordanian population are in the 15-29 years age group and that 41 percent of the working population is in the same age range (Department of Statistics 1998). Indeed, Jordan, as well as some other countries of the region, are at a point in history where the largest age cohorts are between the ages of 15 and 29 years. The reason behind this is that mortality decline, as a result of improved health care has been significant, yet fertility has remained at high levels. More recently there has been a slight drop in fertility rates, a factor that will eventually

* The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the institution with which the author is affiliated.

diminish the relative weight of this age group within the population of the region as a whole (Fergues, 1995, Rashad and Khadr, 1999).²

Another recent phenomenon, which Jordan shares with some countries of the region is the increase in the age at marriage for both men and women. For Jordanian women, age at first marriage increased from 17 years in 1971 to almost 26 years in 2000 (Department of Statistics 2001). This means that young adults co-exist with their elders for longer periods of time in the same household.

Social policy and economic change have influenced the life experience and available opportunities for this young generation. Both younger men and women have had more access to schooling than their elders. For women, illiteracy rates have decreased from 48 percent in 1979 to 16 percent in 2000 (UNFPA, 2004). In fact, Jordan fares well in terms of human development indicators. According to the UNDP Human Development ranking it comes at 94 out of 174 developing countries.³

In addition, changing economic structures with growth in the manufacturing industry and technology related fields have provided these women with new work opportuni-

ties. Since the mid-nineties, Jordan has embarked on a slow and careful route into 'liberalization' and 'global integration'. These reforms are expected to attract both foreign and domestic investment and create jobs in the medium and long terms. The immediate costs, however, are borne by society in the short term in terms of higher prices, falling wages and rising unemployment. In fact unemployment rates for women were 28 percent compared with 11 percent for men (Department of Statistics 2000). In addition and despite the economic growth, income levels seem to have dropped. According to the World Bank, the number of Jordanians living below the poverty line increased by 12 percent in 12 years.⁴ In fact in 2001 the Jordanian population living under the national poverty line was 11.7 percent.⁵

The question that poses itself here is how will the above-mentioned factors influence patterns of women's employment in Jordan? Looking at the economic activity of women per se, overall rates are relatively low at 15 percent in 2001 (Department of Statistics 2001). However, these have almost doubled from 1979 where it was 7.7 percent. Looking at age specific economic participation, we find that 48 percent of economically active women, compared to 38 percent of economically active men, were under the age of 30 years in 1998. Also, it is important to highlight that the rate of growth of female employment exceeds the rate of growth of male employment (Economic Research Forum 1998). Therefore, despite low overall rates of economic participation, particularly as compared to other regions in the world, patterns of women's economic participation are changing. These changes might be a result of demographic change as more educated and single young women are available for employment. They could also be a result of expanding occupational opportunities available for women resulting from changing occupational structures coupled with increased household level need for women's wages.

II. Impact of Work on Young Women's Lives

In assessing the impact of waged work on women's lives, it is not only important to highlight the changes that have occurred as a result of external forces but also what has remained constant. One constant factor here is the persistence of the male breadwinner ideology. Despite the fact that some Jordanian women seem to be experiencing a new life cycle "niche" in delayed marriage and employment opportunities, women still need to depend on a male guardian throughout the different stages of their lives, be it father, brother, husband or son. Women with no male protection experience insecurity and therefore it is in their perceived interest to safeguard their familial networks and especially that of male guardianship.

Assuming that the male breadwinner and male

guardianship ideologies have not been substantially affected by women's employment how can one account for change? Here we need to listen to women's own voices which will reflect whether and how women are experiencing their altered positions within their household. In order to do this we will look at three factors: the impact of income earning on family relations, the impact of work on personal autonomy, and the impact of work on attitudes towards marriage and future gender roles.

Impact of Income Earning on Family Relations

Perhaps the most revealing assessment among young women were those with previous work experience, but who were unemployed at the time of the interview. Several such women stated that when they were income earners they were more involved in family decisions and felt that they were treated with more respect than their current situation. In general, it seemed that some fathers, especially those that took part of their working daughters' wages, would involve a daughter more in discussions relating to household expenditure.⁶

In most cases it seems that mothers also treated their working daughters differently from non-working children. In several cases the working daughter is regarded by the mother as the favourite. These mothers do their utmost to provide comforts when the daughter is at home after a long day's work. These comforts include having the meal ready and sometimes, among poorer families, saving the best piece of meat for them. In general, mothers who had married young and had a different life experience from their daughters, hold respect and admiration for their working daughters. Furthermore, relations with brothers are affected in instances where money gives sisters power. This is exemplified by one young woman who was unemployed at the time of the interview:

These days my brothers keep interfering in my life. They want to know where I go and who I see. When I used to work things were different. They were hard up and I used to lend them money. It gave me so much pleasure because they could never interfere in my life and I even controlled their expenses. As soon as they tried to assume the big brother role, I would threaten to not give them any more money. One day, as I was leaving to visit a friend, my broth-

Many young working women acquire friends and gain social networks at work, which is in itself a major gain for them.



er wanted to know where I was going. I said: 'Listen, one more question and you hand back every penny you owe me right now.' Now, things have changed. It is they who are working and I am unemployed.

There are also many young women who did not feel that income earning had any effect on their status within the household. Several even thought that they would be better off if they were not working:

Work has only brought me a headache. My mother expects me to do all the housework after I return from work. She thinks that since she always cared for us now its my turn to care for her. She does not realise that I am exhausted and accuses me of being lazy. All my father cares about is my money. One month I could not give him any and he screamed: 'damn you and your money.' He did not talk to me until I gave him money the following month. My married sisters continuously expect me to lend them money and give them presents. When I don't they accuse me of being stingy. Work has brought me nothing.

In short, the impacts of income earning on the role and status of young women differs from household to household. Indeed the two conflicting case studies above are both based on low-income families where young women's pay is limited. Income earning sometimes increases status, and at

other times increases subjugation. Perhaps these differences have to do with parents' adaptations to their dependence on daughters wages. Some parents, resign themselves to this fact and gratefully acknowledge their daughters' contributions, while others see this as a threat to their positions as household heads and become more authoritative. In higher income households the dependence on daughters' wages is not an issue and therefore does not pose threats to the position of males. In these cases, daughters' education and occupations become the determining factor in status. In other words, the types of daughters' education and occupations become a source of prestige for the male head. Therefore, among some middle and upper income households, an increased status for daughters connotes increased prestige for male family members within society.

Impact of Work on Personal Autonomy

The working conditions of the women interviewed varied considerably. For some, particularly those in manufactur-

ing, working conditions are strenuous with long working hours and commuting time. Others, for example those in the teaching occupations, might have better conditions. But almost all working women believe that their wages are low. In addition, very few working women were in conditions where they are receiving benefits or social security - even some of those in professional jobs. Many of the working women had little knowledge of their rights as workers; and those who did were disinclined to demand these rights. No working woman in the sample survey belonged to a trade union or any form of NGO. There is also in an absence of governmental regulatory measures for labour rights enforcements in the workplace. Work place relations also inhibit women from demanding any rights. Often, employers and male supervisors act as the fathers or older brothers and, therefore, young women remain timid in asserting any of their rights. In other words, patriarchal power relations are transferred from the home to the workplace, which acts as a deterrent to women's empowerment.

Despite the above, and compounded by the fact that very few women reported great satisfaction from their working conditions, many derive some form of self esteem and an amount of pride. Many state that despite their low wages, work is a better way in spending their time. As for their wages, those who do not control their income rarely perceive it as such and gain an amount of pride in "helping" their families. Those who control their income enjoy being able to shop, whether for themselves or others, without seeking permission.

The overwhelming impact that transpires from most working daughters, however, is an increased amount of personal autonomy whether through physical freedom or through establishing social relations outside their immediate community, usually through the workplace. When young women were asked to compare themselves with those who are not working, the immediate answer was that they are more confident and that work provides them with the opportunity to leave home, make friends and breakaway from the monotony of their restricted lives and often heavy domestic responsibilities.

So, employment has expanded young women's social freedoms. And here we have to add that physical freedom is closely linked to young women's psycho-social development and their dependence on male protection particularly in public spaces. Girls actually learn to fear being alone in certain places from a young age. Furthermore, young working women, are at a junction in their lives where their chaste reputation is of paramount importance. In fact, many young women expressed their discomfort when walking to and from work and their trepidation from unwanted attention. Therefore, public

spaces in Amman today remain ideologically constructed as male spheres and where women continue to regard themselves as vulnerable. In this context, it is of great significance that many young women feel that work has brought them an increased measure of social and physical autonomy.

Many young working women acquire friends and gain social networks at work, which is in itself a major gain for them. Women may form groups and after working hours go out to lunch together or shopping especially on pay day. They organise each other's birthdays and jointly attend engagement or wedding parties. These networks are fully autonomous from their immediate families. However, it has to be mentioned here that this social freedom must adhere to normative conservative standards of conduct. Indeed, young women's social activities are usually pre-negotiated within the household where parents should know the exact whereabouts of daughters.

Having looked at young women's physical and social freedom, we now turn to young women's personal aspirations and how attitudes towards women's social freedom affects them. Most young women have individual hopes and aspirations. These range from the seemingly simple ability to be able to go swimming to more complex ambitions such as wanting to become a politician.

The context behind this is that the acknowledged stages of Arab women's lifecycles excludes youth and single adulthood. Therefore, since youth itself is squeezed out of Arab women's life courses, young women learn to suppress their personal hopes and aspirations even if at a deep level they continue longing to realise them. Although the majority of this revolves around romantic ideals, a lot of it relates to the actual limitations on their social freedom, as revealed by the following cases:

I used to be a basket ball champion at school and my teachers recommended that I join the national Jordanian team. My parents, of course, refused. Since finishing school I have not played any sport. I have such an urge to exercise that sometimes I lock myself in my room and just jump till I'm exhausted.

My dream is to learn to drive and own a car. Do you drive? What kind of car do you drive? Can you take me for a ride?

The happiest days in my life was when I used to sing with the college music group. Singing for me is so natural. I am born to sing.

So despite the fact that many young women have gained some social freedoms they remain restricted in realising many of their expanded aspirations. The irony is that

these usually consist of things they are exposed to at school, on television or, in the case of the women who wants a car, on the street on daily basis. One factor here is that such aspirations are particular to their age group. Parents - fathers and mothers alike - have a different life experience and are likely to misunderstand and consequently block their daughters' desires. Most young women understand this gap between themselves and their parents and rarely attempt to challenge it.

Finally, it is in this way that work for many young women becomes a way of expressing themselves. Therefore, despite the fact that young women's working conditions are not satisfactory or the fact that their wages are too low to assert themselves within their households, employment opportunities remain of paramount importance at this stage in their lives. For many, it represents a symbol of their desires to become independent adults, as well as a means for filling their free time.

Impact of Work on Attitudes Towards Marriage and Future Gender Roles

Generational differences mean that parents' and daughters' attitudes towards marriage have developed in divergent ways. Generally, daughters want to be able to choose their partners and they idealize the notion of love within marriage. Most of the young women interviewed prefer to marry non-relatives so that they will have new lives outside of their communities. This contrasts with parents' attitudes where marriages are arranged and security and reputation rather than love are important. This is causing increasing conflict in households, as the following young woman explained:

My colleague at work wants to marry me. His father is dead and he does not have many male relatives. He came and visited my father and brothers four times. On two occasions his mother came and brought us gifts. Until now my father has rejected his demand. Lately, even my uncles interfered and confirmed to my father that in our family, no girl is given away to strangers. Meanwhile, I have been refusing the suitors from my family. As a result I have embarrassed my father in front of the rest of the family, as he has to give reasons for my refusal. Young people today should know each other. Unlike our parents who had no choice and had their marriages arranged at a young age, we get married to be happy.

Unlike our parents who had no choice and had their marriages arranged at a young age, we get married to be happy.



As for work after marriage, the attitudes of young women was diverse. At one level, workforce participation appears to positively affect young women's attitudes towards work after marriage. However, when attitudes towards work after having children are approached, the women's perceived 'natural' role as mothers takes precedence. A number of working women stated that ideally they would like to continue with their work until their first child. Even those who thought that women should not withdraw from the workforce as a result of motherhood would qualify themselves:

As long as a woman fulfils her duties as mother and wife she should be able to continue with work.

It is apparent, therefore, that the redistribution of gender divisions of labour is not in question for the young women. What is in question is women's perceived gender roles and ensuing dual roles and responsibilities. In addition, behind all this is the persistence of the male breadwinner ideology. According to most women respondents employment after marriage is largely dependent on their husband's consent. There is a general belief that if a husband provides his wife with her needs then it is his right to keep her at home.

Another group of women thought that it is family financial needs that should determine whether or not married women work. For example, young women thought that a mothers' employment is legitimate when it is 'for her family' or 'to help her husband.' Moreover, actually needing to work was not the ideal situation for many women. As one working woman stated:

I work hard now and I am usually tired. May God send me a husband that is able to support a family.

In contrast, when women were asked whether women with an independent income have more status and personal power within their households, the majority answered in the affirmative. Many young women had ready examples from their lives to substantiate this positive relation. One young woman recounted her neighbours' example:

It is obvious that a married woman with her own income will have a more equal relation with her husband. Our neighbour had an abusive husband. We all knew how badly he treated her. Then she started her own little sewing business at home and became successful. Now he is a different man. He respects her and consults her on everything.

Most of the young women interviewed regard their interests as bound by male protection for their future security and this includes continuous deference to male authority.

One of the consequences of the importance of male protection, however, is that the women themselves are likely to undermine the significance of their income earning or drop employment altogether in order to maintain the practical as well as emotional security derived from male consent. Therefore, a distinction should be made between young women's independent thinking and actual behaviour vis-à-vis marriage and income.

III. Conclusions

The opportunities for waged employment has transformed young women's lives in a number of ways. Although working women remain bound by the social contract of male guardianship and protection, they have expanded choices in education, employment and marriage options. As young women live for more years as adults with their families, with delayed marriage, the families have to adapt to this. Nevertheless it is at the individual level that the greatest transformations can be detected. It is the young women's increased sense of self esteem as well as their increased ability through wages to realize shared goals with their households, which in itself is an empowering factor. Young women had also gained, in a conservative society, a certain amount of physical autonomy in freedom of movement as well as establishing separate social networks, which would have been unthinkable only a generation ago.

The most striking conclusion here is that that young women have been transformed from dependents to economic assets. Indeed, female employment has provided individuals and families with avenues to improve their lives whether work was motivated out of survival or self assertion and whether wages were spent for the collective household unit or individual expenses. This in itself must have the potential to influence women's future status in society in general. Therefore, we can say that young working women in Jordan have embarked on a process of public participation and personal empowerment through their work.

END NOTES

1. This article is based on a PhD research project. The study utilised both qualitative and quantitative tools. A quantitative survey was based on questionnaires administered in face-to-face interviews in 14 locations across the city of Amman with 302 households. The questionnaire was administered to women working, unemployed or non-working below the age of 25, who were single, and not enrolled in education at the time of the interview. In addition to this, 40 households from this survey were revisited for more in-depth semi-structured interviews. This was with young women and, depending on household circumstances, other family members as well. The interviews explored family relations, income distribution and manage-

ment. This article is based on those qualitative interviews. For more on overall research see Kawar 2000.

2. The Arab region's youth to population ratio is one of the highest compared to other regions of the world. This is reflected in unemployment rates where only every third young person works in the region. Indeed youth unemployment rates in the Arab Region were 25.6 percent, the highest among all regions (ILO, 2004). According to the *UNDP Jordan Human Development Report of 2000* Jordanian youth are disproportionately affected by unemployment as 60 percent of the total unemployed are below the age of 25.

3. This human development index measures a country's achievements in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income. Source: http://www.undp-jordan.org/jordan_hdr/sound-bites.html

4. Source: <http://www.mercycorps.org/items/1026>

5. Source:

http://www.undp.org/hdr2001/indicator/cty_f_JOR/html

6. The annual average household income of the sample survey was JD 5,150 (approximately \$7300). The average monthly income of working women interviewed was JD105 (approximately \$155). There is reason to believe that the average household income was under-recorded.

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Picture Credit: Hind Adnan, 2002



Educating Ms. Fatima

■ Tim Walters, Susan Swan, Ron Wolfe, John Whiteoak, and Jack Barwind

Tim Walters: Director, Ideals Lab, Abu Dhabi, UAE, Susan Swan: Associate Professor, College of Mass Communication and Media Sciences, Zayed University, Dubai, UAE; Ron Wolfe: Professor, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky; John Whiteoak: Assistant Professor, College of Business Sciences, Zayed University, UAE; Jack Barwind: Assistant Dean, College of Mass Communication and Media Sciences, Zayed University, Dubai, UAE

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates is a smallish Arabic/Islamic country about the size of Maine located at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Though currently oil dependent, the country is moving rapidly from a petrocarbon to a people-based economy. As that economy modernizes and diversifies, the country's underlying social ecology is being buffeted. The most significant of the winds of change that are blowing include a compulsory, free K-12 education system; an economy shifting from extractive to knowledge-based resources; and movement from the almost mythic Bedouin-inspired lifestyle to that of a sedentary highly urbanized society. Led by resource-rich Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the federal government has invested heavily in tourism, aviation, re-export commerce, free trade zones, and telecommunications. The Emirate of Dubai, in particular, also has invested billions of dirhams in high technology. The great dream is that educated and trained Emiratis will replace the thousands of foreign professionals now running the newly emerging technology and knowledge-driven economy.¹

To help fulfill this dream, Zayed University was founded in

1998 as a non-residential institution of higher education for Emirati women only. With dual campuses in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the University has an enrollment of about 2500 drawn from most of the nation's seven Emirates. Students arrive with a varied educational background. The quality of (and opportunity for) education varies widely from student to student and Emirate to Emirate, depending in some measure upon the value an individual family places on educating its women, familial economic resources, religiosity, and socio-familial environment in which they grew up. Many attended private schools, an option that parents who can afford it are increasingly taking.

When these surveys were administered in 2003, a typical student in the College of Communication and Media Sciences was about 21.5 years old and usually lived among family members. That meant either being married and living with a spouse or living with parents. Only a very few from ultra-progressive families (about 2 percent) resided on their own. As a general rule, access to higher education has helped raise the age of marriage (and consequently first birth) for female nationals who are stu-

dents from the late teens to their early twenties. Only a mere handful of the College's students had children of their own. In their parent's families, College of Communication students tended to be middle children from what Westerners would consider very large families – a typical single family unit consisting of about eight children and two parents.

These students have grown up in well-off families who have had little experience of higher education. About three quarters of the fathers and mothers had completed high school or less. Fewer than a quarter came from families in which both parents had a high school education or more. Only 4 percent came from families in which both parents had college degrees. Fathers were mostly retired or worked in government jobs; only a little more than one quarter worked in private industry jobs.

About four in ten classified their family as middle class; another four in ten classified their family as upper middle class. One in ten thought their family was wealthy. Almost none of the mothers worked outside the home (Walters and Swan, 2004). Very few of the students had ever had work experience before they came to the university. A little less than half had had work experience by the time they participated in their internship, a mandatory part of their program of work at Zayed University.²

The public sector consists of government ministries, service monopolies, some education institutions as well as some health-care institutions, public safety, law enforcement and some quasi-private companies such as mass media. The private sector includes retailing, hotels, advertising and public relations agencies, construction, insurance, food and food services, and service among others. All companies doing business in the UAE – except those located in specially designated enterprise zones – must have a national sponsor. By law, he is often the 51 percent stockholder in that local enterprise. In general, public sector jobs pay better, have shorter working hours, observe prayer times, enjoy more holidays and carry more fringe benefits than private sector jobs.

Method

These data were gathered during the period from April to June 2003 on the Dubai campus of Zayed University and were designed to determine how students felt about the workplace and how being at work affected those feelings. Two surveys were administered to a group of students from the College of Communication and Media Sciences. The survey administered in April measured demographic characteristics and the attitudes and opinions of students before they went to on-the-job internships; the second administered in June measured the attitudes and opinions of students after they returned from

these internships. Students were asked how they felt about the workplace, what qualities they thought were important in supervisors and co-workers, and what they felt about work. Lastly, this study included debriefing comments gathered from student presentations given in a public forum after the conclusion of their internships. The number of pre-internship surveys was 49 and the number of post-internship surveys was 99. Questions about workplace values and qualities asked in the surveys were gathered from focus groups of seniors in the fall of 2002. In these groups, students talked about what they expected from the workplace, from their supervisors, and from their co-workers.

Before Internship Results (N=49)

By the time they were seniors, about 47 percent had some work experience outside the home, about double the percentage of students who had had such experience before they came to Zayed University. This increase partially reflected the effect of the university's World of Work program that gives students the opportunity to have the experience of work during the summer vacation. About two thirds of college students escape the stifling Dubai summer heat to vacation in the Levant or in Europe, so the number of students who participate in the World of Work is relatively small. Before taking their internships, students believed that the perfect job would be close to home, begin at 8:30 am, have about an hour lunch break, end at 2:30 pm, and require about 6.5 hours of work per day. Of those who expressed a preference about 63 percent wanted to work in a public (governmental) sector job, and about 10 percent in the private sector. The remainder expressed no preference. Before they began their internships, they believed that a fair mean beginning monthly salary should be about 8,400 dirhams.⁴

Although about a third wanted to work in a women-only workplace, about half said they would prefer a male supervisor, and about 40 percent expressed no preference for the gender of their prospective supervisor. Regardless of gender, they expected that their supervisor would have certain key qualities. (See Table 1.)

The key qualities that they identified seemed related to tender loving care (patience, fairness, support, and understanding) and management style (managing people well, being objective, and working hard).

Students also had expectations about what their co-workers would be like. (See Table 2.) To some extent what had happened on the Zayed University campus affected these expectations. Before going to off-campus work sites, attitudes and opinions no doubt were related to campus activities in which teamwork skills were active-



Table 1

Rank order of qualities important in a supervisor

Quality	Percent who ranked quality first (N=49)
Patient	71.4
Respects me	59.2
Fair	57.1
Problem solver	53.1
Cooperative	42.9
Creative	44.9
Understanding	36.7
Open minded	32.7
Supportive	32.7
Works hard	32.7
Active	30.6
Honest	30.6
Respects my ideas	28.6
Knowledgeable	22.4
Responsible	22.4
Listens	20.4
Manages people well	18.4
Understandable	16.3
Wise	16.3
Objective	14.3
Respects my culture	14.3

ly taught and in which group projects have become a standard part of project-based learning (PBL) experiences. Looking at the list of things expected from co-workers in Table 2 shows that a good work ethic (hard worker and working together); sharing (shares ideas and shares information); workplace etiquette (helpful, fair, and punctual); and interpersonal-type skills (respectful and listens to me) were important.

Before actually going to the workplace, students had both positive and negative feelings, reflecting two major reasons: normal apprehension about going to a new situation in which they would be held strictly accountable for their actions and output as well as their lack of practical experience. About 53 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am unsure about what to expect". Ninety-six percent expected to be held responsible for the things that they were assigned to do, and about 94 percent thought that they could manage time well in completing those tasks. Despite the fact that most thought they could manage time well, about 96 percent hoped that their internship site was flexible about that time.

One big issue among Zayed University students was that of transportation. Even though about half of College of Communication and Media Sciences students had driver's licenses and about a quarter even possessed cars, fathers, brothers, husbands, or male drivers transported many to work. Students worried, therefore, about the availability and timing of transportation and the distance to work. Dubai's notorious traffic with its horn-tooting, tail-gating, zigzagging drivers and the lack of street addresses and good maps added to the anxiety over transportation.

Only about 16 percent thought that they could not do the work, and all expected that work would be different than academics and that they would learn new things on their internship. About 90 percent thought that their academic experience had prepared them for the workplace. About a third expected the work to be difficult, but, despite that, about 98 percent expected that they would like working.

Internship students were concerned about workplace relationships. A little more than 90 percent thought that they would get along okay with male co-workers, rough-

Table 2

Key qualities of co-workers

Quality	Percent who ranked quality first (N=49)
Hard workers	81.6
Cooperative	79.6
Work together	63.3
Responsible	59.2
Respectful	53.1
Creative	51.0
Helpful	51.0
Share ideas	46.9
Share information	40.8
Listen to me	32.7
Encouraging	30.6
Divide work fairly	28.6
Effective	24.5
Punctual	24.5
Kind	20.4
Motivate each other	20.4
Patient	20.4
Prepared	18.4
Work under pressure	12.2
Faithful	6.1
Forgiving	6.1
Independent	6.1

ly 96 percent thought it would make a big difference if people on the job were cooperative, and 90 percent thought that it would make a big difference if the people were friendly. Despite considerable experience working in teams, about 60 percent hoped that most of their work was individual.

After Internship Survey Results (N=99)

After the internship experience, about 74.5 percent reported enjoying their experience to some degree or to a great degree, and about 70 percent reported that they would like to work fulltime after graduation at their internship site. (All the following percentages were the result of adding "to some degree" with "to a great degree.") About 87 percent said that work hours were flexible. Mean time that students left home for work was at about 8:00 am; mean leaving time was 3:00 pm; mode time for returning home was 2:30 pm. The mean lunch break was about 45 minutes. About 78 percent thought that the working hours were about right; about 19 percent felt that the working hours were too long. About 42 percent had their own offices. About 91 percent said that men worked at the workplace. About 73 percent report-

Table 3

Post Internship to what extent did your supervisor exhibit these qualities?

Quality	Extent as percent (Great + Some)
Respected my culture	96.9
Respected me	94.9
Honest	94.2
Supportive	94.0
Knowledgeable	93.9
Respected my ideas	93.9
Problem solver	93.0
Responsible	92.8
Understanding	92.3
Objective	92.0
Listens	90.9
Understandable	90.7
Patient	89.8
Open minded	89.8
Works hard	88.9
Wise	88.5
Active	88.0
Cooperative	87.5
Fair	84.9
Manages people well	79.8
Creative	71.6

ed that their internship experience made them more likely to get a job after graduation.

After their internships, the students increased the figure that they thought represented a fair starting salary by ten percent to a mean monthly salary of about 9020 dirhams. The minimum mean startling salary that they thought would be fair was 5000, the maximum 12,000. The standard deviation was 1246. (The total salary and benefits package that students thought was fair would have totaled about \$50,000).

Although about 86 percent felt that work was different from academic life, the overwhelming majority believed that Zayed University had prepared them for that workplace. The overwhelming majority (80 percent) said that they believed that Zayed University had prepared them for the work they were expected to do, but an even larger majority (86 percent) found work to be very different from academic life. There was "a big difference between the university and the outside world," said Alya. "Initially I was terrified," said Noora; "I felt panic at first," added Maryam.

Among the things that students learned were patience, not having high expectations, and how to better organize and manage time. Almost every intern enjoyed discovering work. "It was a good experience for me," said Wafa. "I liked the work," concluded another, and "I did not like the work environment," stated another.

Nine out of ten students found most co-workers friendly, cooperative, and helpful. Even so, the students occasionally had trouble relating to their new staff colleagues. About a quarter of students felt that co-workers were either in a bad mood or grumpy, about a quarter felt that problems existed between employees or that some employers bothered them. More than 60 percent believed that unprofessional people made life difficult. About 12 percent also believed that people treated them badly because they were interns.

Learning how to deal with people-related workplace issues was consequential for the students because they needed both to feel a "connectedness" and to have a support system. They may have felt that way because a support system has been part of their entire lives at home and at school, many of whom enrolled at Zayed University with a group of about 3.3 friends.

In addition, the University assumes a much greater in loco parentis role than is typical of the Western universities upon which it is modeled. Attendance is strictly monitored, students are not allowed to come and go from campus as they please, cell telephones are prohib-



ited, the school day is from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. These rules have been imposed in part to stimulate the creation of a work environment in the hopes of instilling the beginnings of a work ethic in students who have more likely never held a paying job. "Because all the staff (were) nationals, ...they (were) helpful," said Jeehan. "They were excellent. They treated us as employees," said Fatima. "I found only professional conduct. I was motivated by the environment. They respected my culture," said Noora of her multinational workplace.

While about 95 percent believed that work was enjoyable, it also proved stressful. About 9 in 10 agreed with the statement that "work put a lot of strain on me" and by day's end 46 percent felt as if they could not do anything more. About 62 percent believed that there was too much work to do and about 45 percent believed that her supervisor treated her as if she didn't know anything. By the end of the internship about 86 percent reported "dreading" getting up and going to work.

Work proved challenging on several other fronts as well.

Table 4
Post Internship to what extent did your co-workers exhibit these qualities?

Quality	Percent Extent (Great + Some)
Cooperative	93.7
Effective	93.7
Hard workers	93.6
Responsible	93.6
Respectful	92.7
Shared information	92.7
Divided work fairly	92.7
Independent	92.6
Creative	92.5
Encouraging	92.5
Helpful	92.5
Listened to me	91.5
Kind	91.4
Punctual	91.4
Worked together	90.6
Faithful	90.5
Shared ideas	90.4
Forgiving	89.5
Motivated each other	87.1
Worked under pressure	87.1
Patient	85.3
Prepared	84.7

One obstacle was getting to work. Even those who were not dependent upon a male relative or hired driver had problems. "My first challenge was to drive from home to work. I was lost four or five times during my first week," said Budor. Simple inexperience or naïveté with the working environment was another. "I liked the work, but I did not like the work environment," said Budor, who objected to music playing from computers, a television set that was constantly on, and people (including women) smoking. Most of all she felt lost because she "wanted to work with people, I (knew), at least with a friend." "I felt panic at first," said Maryam. "I was shy," added Latifa. "In the beginning it was hard to get used to the work environment because they were so busy," added Yasim. Sometimes just working in a multicultural workplace posed a problem. "I was the only Arab there. I felt lonely," said Alia. "They do not like to work with locals," added Fatma. Budor added, "It's hard to communicate with people from different backgrounds. It's hard to respect them."

Some were unable to adapt and merely tolerated the experience. Others were more successful. "We learned not to let problems stop us," concluded Marwah. "I learned that a smile is like a medicine for people," added Sadiyah.

Looking to the future, students had suggestions for improving the workplace experience. One was that the university should provide more practicum as part of their training. "We need workshops more than classes so we can have activities to learn about the work environment," said Sadiyah. Another way to improve placement success would be to educate parents and male spouses about the opportunities their daughters and wives would be afforded. "They wanted me to do voiceovers for advertisements. I had to get my dad's permission. He finally said yes but only because it was part of my course," said Haifa. "I had lots of work offers," added Mira, who turned them down because she was having a baby and moving from Dubai to Al Ain to be closer to her husband's family. "My husband was happy for me to do an internship because it was part of my schooling," said Nada, "but he definitely does not want me to get a job."

The relationship between the place at which students had their internship to where and whether they wanted to work after graduation was statistically significant at $p < .001$. After their internship experience, those students who worked in a private company were less likely to take a job at that job site than those who had worked in a public company. Students who worked in a private company also were less likely to say that they wanted to work at any job following graduation.

Some difference was directly due to student experience at the internship site. Students who worked in private companies believed that their supervisors were more knowledgeable, open minded, punctual, smarter, visionary and planned better than did those who worked in public companies. Students who worked in public companies believed that the supervisors were more honest, patient, and likely to listen to them. Students who worked in private companies believed that co-workers were more creative and more organized than those who worked in public companies. On almost all other qualities, they favored public company co-workers. Among other things, that meant interns believed that public company co-workers were more cooperative, encouraging, helpful, worked harder, were patient, likely to share ideas and information, and divided work fairly and could work well together under pressure.

Respondents also reported on whether they would like to work at their internship site after graduation. Those who thought their supervisor was more willing to accept criticism, active, cooperative, creative, knowledgeable, listening, made things better, and patient were more likely to want to work at their internship site than those who did not. Those who thought that their co-workers were more cooperative, creative, faithful, helpful, organized, patient, punctual, shared information were more likely to work at their internship site than those who did not. Those who felt less stressed, more knowledgeable, part of the workplace team, enjoyed the work, felt that the workplace offered a friendly environment, and felt more accepted by their female co-workers were more likely to want to work at their internship site after graduation than those who did not.

Chi square between "did you enjoy your internship" and "would you like to work there after graduation" was $p = .038$. Chi square between would "you like to work there after graduation?" and the following qualities of supervisors was statistically significant at $p < .05$ for: cre-

ates a common goal, creative, cunning, manages time well, respects my culture, self confident, and supportive. Chi square for ideas was .08, understanding was .079, and being patient was .057.

Certain qualities of the workplace were important too. Chi square between "would you like to work there after graduation?" and co-workers listened to me, co-workers were cooperative, co-workers helped me, I knew most things, I enjoyed discovering work, I dreaded going to work, and stressed were $p < .05$.

Factor analysis for data reduction and scaling using Cronbach's Analysis to examine the resulting potential scales suggested that questions in this preliminary study could be related to four categories. These were: 1) qualities of the supervisor, 2) qualities of co-workers, 3) workplace expectations, and 4) stress. Varimax rotated component matrices with accompanying Cronbach's Alphas were the following.

Chi square between "would you like to work there after graduation?" was significant at $p < .05$ for all the workplace atmosphere responses. This result suggests that students require a friendly workplace atmosphere and network as well as a supervisor who treats them well. While factor analysis using Varimax rotation successfully divided workplace atmosphere into three factors, Cronbach's Alpha was very low for each factor. When combined into one factor that might be labeled workplace atmosphere, Cronbach's Alpha was .607. This suggested that more needs to be done to develop better scales for workplace atmosphere.

Chi square for "would like to work there after graduation?", "work put too much stress on me", "I dreaded going to work", "men were in the office", and "worked in a multi-national workplace" were significant at $p < .05$. This meant that the more likely these were present at their internship site the less likely students were to

1. Qualities of Supervisor

People management skills	Loading	Interpersonal skills	Loading	Forward looking	Loading
Listens to me	.711	Responsible	.772	Wise	.808
Fair	.689	Active	.765	Visionary	.661
Self confident	.674	Caring	.684	Works hard	.592
Handles pressure well	.655	Smart	.678	Supportive	.537
Helpful	.647	Understanding	.671		
Manages people well	.646	Ideas	.626		
Open minded	.644	Understandable	.626		
Patient	.640	Manages time well	.625		
Cronbach's Alpha	.922	Cronbach's Alpha	.930	Cronbach's Alpha	.805



2. Qualities of Co-Workers When Working Together as a Team

Sharing	Loading	Work habits	Loading	Interpersonal	Loading
Team shares information	.782	Patient	.800	Cooperative	.825
Team shares ideas	.752	Punctual	.701	Encouraging	.797
Independent	.715	Prepared	.664	Faithful	.724
Responsible	.662	Forgiving	.638	Helpful	.649
Respectful	.564	Hard working	.634	Effective	.618
Cronbach's Alpha	.919	Cronbach's Alpha	.864	Cronbach's Alpha	.916

3. Workplace Atmosphere (Co-Workers)

Friendly	Loading	Social network	Loading	People at work	Loading
Co-workers were helpful	.784	Females did not accept me	.730	People were cooperative	.793
Co-workers were cooperative	.756	Treated me badly because I was an intern	.573	People were friendly	.750
Co-workers were friendly	.729				
Problems between employees	-.728				
Co-workers listened to me	.702				
Some bothered me	-.640				

want to work there after graduation. If these were to be used as stress and workplace scales around identifiable and meaningful factors, new measures should be developed to more precisely determine what was stressful about the workplace. On one level it is perhaps enough to say many found work stressful; on another, knowing more about what interns found stressful would be useful in developing on-campus training programs.

Discussion

Educating Ms. Fatima examines the attitudes and opinions of Zayed University College of Communication and Media Sciences students about the workplace before going to their required internship and after returning from that experience. The data clearly demonstrated that inexperience with the workplace and workplace environment helped create and magnify difficulties. Having trouble commuting to work, managing relationships, being uncomfortable in the workplace atmosphere – all manifestations of student naïveté – added stress to an inherently stressful situation: being the new kid on the block. Students were uncomfortable with such basics as men in

the workplace, the distractions of multiculturalism, and the hurly-burly, high-energy directness of private companies. Also painful were the expectations accompanying what were perceived as long work hours, the stress of the workplace, and perhaps, above all, being managed and supervised. Many come from privileged homes and wield considerable *wasta*, a special influence generated by the power of tribal names. Many of these “middle class” students have grown up with servants – maids, nannies, gardeners, drivers, cooks – and have been accustomed to giving orders rather than taking them. Being on the receiving end proved painful for some. Even in the University setting, students – though generally respectful of the knowledge and rank of faculty – view almost everything as negotiable. A previous survey of attitudes and opinions also showed that, when faced with stress, students were more likely to pray, eat, or sleep, rather than direct their energy towards work.

Besides such obvious workplace issues, students and the government harbor sometimes unrealistic expectations about where newly minted graduates can, will, and

4. Stress and the Workplace

Stress producing elements	Loading	Multicultural	Loading
At day's end, I couldn't do more	.822	Men were in the office	.742
Work put too much stress on me	.728	Worked in a multi-national workplace	.665
I dreaded going to work	.519	Cronbach's Alpha	.651.699

should fit into the workplace. Viewed from a Western perspective, students expected too much money and too many benefits for too little work. Government policies and pronouncements on employment, marriage, and education often operate at cross-purposes, or, at the very least, create dissonance among these students and their peers. Talk is abundant about the need to Emiratisize the labor force, but incentives for Emiratis to actually go to work are few. Housing, education, health care – even the costs of weddings – are heavily subsidized. It is proving difficult to wean citizens from the current social system that provides cradle-to-grave support.

When surveyed, students are not always candid about whether they really want to work outside the home – even in those great paying, benefit-laden government jobs. Preliminary Zayed University statistics suggest that three years beyond graduation only 27 percent or so want to be working; the vast majority yearn for hearth and home and family. While most of these women feel an obligation to help their country grow and prosper, they want to do it at home rocking the cradle – not necessarily in any workplace, and mostly certainly not in a multicultural workplace. It is perhaps too much to ask that all members of this transitional generation rear large families, manage the household, and hold down a full-time job in the private economy. They are unprepared to become the superwomen that their leaders desire.

To move forward, these students have identified several areas that they believe would help. These include more college media opportunities with practical experience with equipment on campus, more trips to media, and more orientations from women. The latter is because they require female role models to show how to combine work with family and how to navigate the workplace (Hassan, 2003). After hearing a series of career women speak at a University-sponsored Women at Work Conference in Abu Dhabi, students reflected on the messages of several female speakers. “I would like to see how she works and how she can deal with work and family,” Naeman said of one. “We know that it is difficult to balance between work and family. She is a successful person. She faced many problems at the beginning of her career but she tried to solve her problems alone, without asking for help from a man. She is a good example for me because she helped me to understand what it will take to keep moving up...”

On their part, internship employers believed that students need to learn how to succeed by going beyond expectations and making personal sacrifices such as occasionally working beyond normal hours to finish a job and to travel. They would also like these students to be unafraid to stand out in a crowd.

While all these shortcomings exist, the facts speak of the enormous progress that has been made since the founding of the country in 1971. In short order, a broad-based compulsory education system has been developed, literacy rates have climbed greatly, infrastructure has been upgraded, a new vibrant economy is developing, and Abu Dhabi and Dubai have become two of the most modern cities on earth. To continue down this pathway to progress means making nationals more workplace ready. In the stew of traditional and transitional cultures, a cooperative education model with more opportunities for experience both on and off campus might be a useful adaptation. Combining work and school more closely together, students would gain important practical experience and the university could develop more efficient programs.

END NOTES

1. See United Arab Emirates Yearbook 2002, for example.
2. See Walters and Swann, 2004; Walters, Quinn, Walters and Swann, 2003; Walters, 2002.
3. See for example, Kawach, 2004, p. 33.
4. Their estimated mean fair salary figure was without housing allowance, travel allowance, and furniture allowance, which is normally part of a compensation package for an Emirati. The pension match was 15 percent of total compensation package. Thus, the total salary and benefits package that students thought was fair would have been crudely computed at about \$45,000. At the time this research was gathered, mean per capita income in the United Arab Emirates was about \$22,000.

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'Urfi marriage, an Egyptian Version of Cohabitation?'¹

■ Ikran Eum

Department of Arabic Studies
Myongji University, Seoul, Korea

Introduction

In Egypt, the term '*urfi*' in relation to marriage means literally "customary" marriage, something that has always existed in Egypt but nowadays tends mostly to be secretly practiced among young people. Traditionally, according to Abaza,³ '*urfi* marriage took place not only for practical purposes (such as enabling widows to remarry while keeping the state pension of their deceased husbands), but also as a way of matchmaking across classes (since men from the upper classes used '*urfi* marriage as a way of marrying a second wife from a lower social class). In this way a man could satisfy his sexual desires while retaining his honor by preserving his marriage to the first wife and his position in the community to which he belonged, and keeping his second marriage secret.

It is possible to maintain the secrecy of '*urfi* marriage, not only because it is unregistered in the courts, but also because the couple typically do not establish a joint home when they are involved in this type of marriage. Living in their respective houses, they are rather bound to each other as husband and wife through the unregistered marriage contract and sexual intercourse. Thus, in the current socio-cultural context in Egypt, an '*urfi*

marriage is more likely to be perceived as a "secret" marriage.

The aim of this paper is to explore whether '*urfi* marriage is legitimate or illegitimate from the perspective of Islamic law. In addition, through introducing examples of similar marriage customs practiced in Saudi Arabia and Iran, I explore gender-specific notions of '*urfi* marriage. Finally, I analyze the reasons why '*urfi* marriage prevails among young people in contemporary Egypt, and discuss these reasons in the context of the politico-economic situations that face young people today.

In order to explore the trend, I conducted unstructured in-depth interviews with 54 individuals from the younger generation and 11 from the parents' generation, all of whom were Muslim and from Cairo's upper- and middle-classes. Among the 54 young people, 23 were male and 31 were female, and among the parents' generation, there were five males and six females. The age range of the young people varied from the late teens (mostly students at the AUC, Cairo University or 'Ain Shams University) to the early thirties (people who were in work, having completed their university education). As for the parents' generation, they had married in the late 1960s

or the early 1970s, and had had work experience following university education.

Legitimate Marriage from the Islamic Legal Perspective

Marriage, divorce, and inheritance in Egypt have been governed not by the Civil Code but by *shari'a* (Islamic law), which was codified in 1920 and 1929 as Personal Status Law.⁴ Islamic law stipulates the "fundamentals" of marriage and "preconditions" for its validity.⁵ According to the Personal Status Law, several conditions should be met for marriage to be legally bound, and these include the existence of *syghah* (form), which consists of *ijab* (response) and *qbul* (acceptance); the principles with regard to the prospective husband and wife;⁶ and the existence of a *wali* (a legal guardian) and a *maudhun* (a registrar of marriage), and *mahr* (dowry) given from a groom's side to a bride for confirming marriage.⁷ Very few religious leaders accept that a woman can marry on her own initiative. Rather, the majority of them take the view that "No marriage is valid when contracted by a woman on her own behalf."⁸ Islamic law stipulates that the *wali* should be one of her paternal Muslim male relatives (usually the father), who must be sane, mature, and '*adl* (of good character), and not be in a state of *ihram* (ritual consecration of the Mecca pilgrim) for the *hajj* (pilgrimage) or '*umra* (a lesser pilgrimage).

Islamic law also states that two witnesses must be present at the signing of the marriage contract to ensure the correctness of the conditions of marriage. They are typically selected from among the relatives or friends of each family. The two witnesses have to attest that there are no legal impediments to the marriage, such as, for example, if the couple is in a blood, foster, or affinal relationship;⁹ if a previous marriage or triple divorce exists; if there is social inequality or a difference of religion; or if temporary obstacles are present, such as '*idda* (referring to a period of waiting by the woman following a previous marriage and before becoming engaged in another marriage).¹⁰ In addition to the role of attesting the validity of the couple's marriage, the two witnesses play another significant role, which is to proclaim and announce (*ishuhar* and *i'lan*) the marriage to the public.

According to Islamic tradition and custom, announcing the marriage to the public is a way of separating "what is permitted (*al-halal*) from what is prohibited (*al-haram*)."¹¹ Traditionally, neighbors were notified of a marriage by means of gunfire, the ululations of women, henna patterning stained on the skin, and loud music in the home of the bride's parents. Today, however, in the era of globalization when highly-advanced technologies

make the interconnectedness of people ever stronger, the internet has emerged among young people as a way of publicly announcing a couple's marriage.

'Urfi Marriage and Similar Marriage Patterns in the Middle East

Nowadays, Egyptian television programs and films often deal with the theme of '*urfi* marriage as practiced among young people. Even though it is difficult to obtain an accurate sense of its prevalence because of its clandestine nature, it is thought that '*urfi* marriage is quite prevalent especially among university students, and that it threatens what seems to be an "Islamic" or "legitimate" way of marriage. The following paragraphs describe scenes from one soap opera that was showing on Egyptian television, and which caught my attention when I was carrying out my research in 2001.

In one scene, a woman who is lying in a luxurious bedroom refuses to eat a meal brought to her by her mother. In another scene, a man sits alone in a humble room suffering from heartache because he cannot meet his lover. Suddenly, he stands up and decides that he will take his lover away from the house while her mother (who opposes their marriage because of the differences in social status) is absent. The man and the woman succeed in escaping from the house. In the shadow of the Pyramids, they whisper words of love to each other in the sunset, and decide to make their relationship bound through an '*urfi* marriage.

The scene changes and a group of young men and women set off to the seaside in a rented minibus. While on the bus, they sing and drum to express their great joy. Arriving at the beach, each couple walks along the seashore exchanging affirmations of love. With their friends around them, they all act as witnesses for each other, and all sign marriage contracts. Each couple is now married, and they all head for a bungalow to consummate their marriages, except for one pair who are arguing. Having signed the marriage contract, the woman is hesitant about consummating the marriage, and the man angrily leaves her.

The scene changes again. The first couple, who have been married on that day by '*urfi* style, are outside the woman's house in the dark. They are reluctant to leave each other, but finally she enters her house after they have agreed to meet the following day.

If we analyze the scenes described in the soap opera from the perspective of legal marriage discussed in the former section, it will be obvious that '*urfi* marriage lacks some of the most important conditions required for the legitimate Islamic way of marriage, e.g., the existence of a



legal guardian, a *wali*, and a registrar of marriage, a *maudhun*. In this regard, the recent *'urfi* marriages practiced among young people have raised substantial debate concerning its legitimacy.

For instance, from a religious and legal perspective, *'urfi* marriage might be seen by some people as legitimate because it satisfies some of the important requirements of marriage, such as *mahr* and the two witnesses. In *'urfi* marriage, the marriage can be completed by payment of a minimal amount of *mahr*, such as 25 Egyptian piasters (i.e., around five American cents and three UK pence), that is offered by a groom to a bride as a symbolic gesture, and by the presence of two witnesses. These witnesses do not necessarily have to attest to marriage impediments, and in fact they can be picked at random from strangers in the street or, as the soap opera illustrated, from friends on a university campus.

However, most Cairenes perceive *'urfi* marriage as illegitimate since, in addition to the lack of a *wali* and a *maudhun*, it does not publicize marriage through

ishuhar and *i'lan*. More significantly, because the contract is not legally binding on the couple's marriage, termination of marriage can be reached through removing the contract.

From a socio-cultural perspective, many regard *'urfi* marriage, along with its similar counterparts of *misyar*¹² (ambulant, shifting, traveling) and *mut'a* (enjoyment or pleasure) marriage practiced respectively in Saudi Arabia and Iran as a form of "legalized prostitution."¹³ In the *misyar* pattern of marriage, no economic obligations are requested from the man. In this type of marriage, the woman waives some of the rights she would have in an Islamic marriage. *Misyar* marriage sometimes happens among women who are getting older and are finding it increasingly difficult to marry. Therefore, rather than remaining unmarried, they choose to marry a man who is not able to fulfill normal marital responsibilities such as financial maintenance, or spending adequate time with her.

As for the *mut'a* type of marriage, it is generally practiced among the Shi'ites in Iran, and refers to a conditional arrangement by which the period of marriage between a couple is limited. From the historical point of view, this

type of marriage was believed to prevent adultery. A mufti wrote about the origin of the *mut'a* marriage:

It was initially permitted because the Muslims were passing through what might be called a period of transition from *jahiliyya* (the pre-Islamic period) to Islam. Fornication was widespread among the Arabs before the advent of Islam. After Islam, when Muslims were required to go on military expeditions, they were under great pressure as a result of being away from their wives for long periods of time. Some of the believers were strong in faith, but others were weak. The weak in faith feared that they would be tempted to commit adultery, which is a major sin, while the staunch in faith, on the contrary, were ready to castrate themselves... thus *mut'ah* marriage provided a solution to the dilemma in which both the weak and the strong found themselves. It was also a step toward the final legalization of the complete marital life in which the objectives of permanence, chastity, reproduction, love, and mercy, as well as the widening of the circle of relationships through marriage ties were to be realized.¹⁴

In discussing the ambiguity between *mut'a* marriage and prostitution, Haeri suggests that the more educat-



Picture Credit: Ayman Mroueh

ed, urban Iranian middle-classes perceive *mut'a* as legalized prostitution, whereas the more religiously-inclined Iranians view it as an Islamic substitute for the "decadent" Western style of "free" male-female association.¹⁵ Interestingly, her discussion goes further into the various male-female perceptions of *mut'a* marriage. For instance, Iranian women confer many more meanings on *mut'a* marriage than men do, hoping for the marriage to be long lasting even if it does not become permanent.

Furthermore, while women view the *mut'a* marriage as a mechanism to facilitate a transition from their "flawed" marital status (as divorced or widowed women) to a "normal" one (as married women), men regard *mut'a* marriage as a pleasurable sport, viewing women as provisional objects who will satisfy repressed sexual needs and will take them away from the routines of daily life. In this respect, women perceive their temporary husbands as their main source of sustenance, whereas men view women as adding to their lives. Men generally assume that a woman is motivated to seek *mut'a* marriage because she will benefit from having her financial needs met, while women believe that a man marries mainly for sexual satisfaction.¹⁶

In Cairo, as in urban areas in Iran, there are noticeable differences between men and women in their attitudes towards *'urfi* marriage. For instance, while women deny the option of marrying in the *'urfi* tradition, men are more open to the possibility. This is mainly because women in *'urfi* marriages are more vulnerable to the likely termination of a marriage through the removal of the unregistered contract, not to mention the lack of the legal rights, such as *mahr* that are bestowed in Islam. Asmaa,¹⁷ a 21 year-old woman graduate of 'Ain Shams University commented:

Two conditions are required in marriage in Islam. You must write it down in your research! They are publication (*ishuhar*) and announcement (*i'lan*). *Ishuhar* and *i'lan* mean all people should know that this man is married to this woman, and these are the most important conditions in marriage. This is the basic condition in Islam. Therefore, according to *shari'a*, *'urfi* marriage is wrong. I object strongly to *'urfi* marriage because nobody knows of the existence of a marriage of that sort except the couple and it's done merely on paperwork, and lacks the most important condition in Islamic marriage, which is *ishuhar* and *i'lan*. The marriage will be terminated the minute that they tear the paper up.

As Asmaa indicates, due to the secretive nature of an *'urfi* marriage, it is difficult to prove the existence of a marriage in the courts should the marriage be terminated.

Men, however, are more relaxed towards *'urfi* marriage. Ahmed, a 27 year-old man and graduate of the Law Department at Cairo University who was unemployed at the time of the interview, described his experience:

I was once involved in an *'urfi* marriage. She agreed to the *'urfi* marriage because her father was in Saudi Arabia, which did not allow us to take steps toward formal marriage. We maintained this relationship for three months before we broke up. Two of my friends witnessed the marriage and we signed the contract, but it was over once we tore up the contract. When I first signed the marriage contract I had intended to have a formal marriage with her when conditions around me had improved and would enable me to go ahead with a formal marriage. However, after living with her for three months, I wanted to break up the relationship because our personalities did not match. When our relationship ended, I was relieved because I could escape from all of its commitments and responsibilities.

When I continued to question him about his family's reaction towards the *'urfi* marriage in which he had been involved and which he had brought to an end, he said:

When my family found out that I was involved in an *'urfi* marriage, my sister and my father were furious [his sister had taken on the role of his mother after his parents had divorced], but it was just for a short time. Usually the man's family reacts much less forcefully to this type of marriage than the woman's family.

This double moral standard towards *'urfi* marriage appears to have originated in the discourse on sexuality and the patriarchal notion of honor and shame in Egypt, in which women's honor is mainly related to a sexuality that remains tied to notions of chastity, virginity, and especially the preservation of the hymen. Therefore, if the *'urfi* marriage does not end satisfactorily with the formal type of marriage, some women, reportedly, will have the hymen surgically repaired.

According to Kandela, Egypt is becoming an Arab center for performing illegal operations for the repair of hymens. Women from various Arab Gulf countries who have lost their virginity flock to Egypt for hymen operations to enable them to marry without the risk of a scandal, or to avoid shaming their families by their misconduct before marriage. Women pay from US\$100 to US\$600 for the hymen to be restored, with the prices differing according to their social status as well as to the place of operation (i.e., depending on whether it is done in a clinic or in a private house). During the operation, a gelatin capsule containing a blood-like substance is



stitched into place so that on the wedding night, when it bursts during intercourse, the groom will be convinced of the bride's virginity.

Religious opinion in Islam with regard to hymen repair surgery is divided. One party states that repairing the hymen is not permissible at all, mainly because (a) it could lead to the mixing of heredity if a woman should become pregnant from a previous liaison, then marry another man after having the operation; (b) it would cause the individual to commit *'awrah* (by showing and exposing parts of her body to others); (c) it will make it easy for women to commit *zina* (adultery and fornication), since they know that they can have their hymen repaired afterwards; and (d) it is a kind of deceit that is forbidden in Islam.¹⁸ The other view is more flexible, saying that if a woman is innocent of any immoral behavior, it is permitted for her to have the operation in order to remove any suspicions about her chastity and morality.

Why Select 'Urfi Marriage?

The alleged prevalence of 'urfi marriage is understandable in the context of the severe socio-economic problems that affect young Egyptians. These include high and increasing rates of unemployment; the escalating economic burden of marriage as a result of high expectations of living standards, as well as the pressure and desire to maintain high standards of marital life; lack of affordable accommodation; the accessibility of sexually-explicit

materials on the internet, satellite television, and videotapes that coexist with the hostile environment towards expressive sexuality in the Islamic context; the absence of parents, who may have migrated to the Gulf area; or parental opposition to the partner chosen by their children.

According to Abaza, 'urfi marriage arises as a compromise solution for young people who negotiate between what is required by Islamic norms and sexual tensions. However, economic constraints probably represent the factor most responsible for the growing prevalence of 'urfi marriage. As for the supposedly widespread 'urfi marriage phenomenon prevailing among Cairenes, Abu Fatima who was married in the 1960s commented:

'Urfi marriage is widespread among university students. It's because they lack economic opportunities. In our generation, we did not need to have 'urfi marriage. We used to go through the marriage process step by step. It was simpler in the past. We were engaged, rented an apartment, and then got married. However, when the young people want to marry nowadays, they are expected to buy an apartment and a car, and they should also bring extra things which all require money. But they have nothing. They want to have it all, but they cannot afford to.

As the informant suggests, the desire for, and expectation of a high standard of living is inseparable from the growing prevalence of 'urfi marriage. In addition to economic constraints, the university setting also influences the decision of young men and women to marry. According to interviews, students at the American University in Cairo were less keen to marry in the 'urfi tradition. The common attitude among many AUC students was: "We don't need it, but it's very common in the Egyptian universities because they have less freedom than we have." The student's comment implies that an oppressive environment towards liberal expressions of sexuality is one of the reasons fostering 'urfi marriage in Egypt.

Far from negligible, too, are the patterns of 'urfi marriage practiced between foreigners and Egyptians, especially at tourist and resort destinations such as Luxor, Alexandria, and Sharm al-Shaikh. This type of 'urfi marriage is particularly noticeable among Western women who are less restricted from expressing their sexual desire, and young Egyptian men who are not financially ready for marriage and are therefore unable to make a formal proposal to an Egyptian woman.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, I argue that 'urfi marriage can be seen as an Egyptian version of cohabitation, although its approach to the practicing of sexual intercourse is different from what is typically found in "Western" types of cohabitation. What they have in common is the need to compromise so as to achieve a balance between meeting a couple's sexual desires and reducing the economic constraints that confront them.

In 'urfi marriage, young Egyptian couples try to conduct their relationships within the boundaries of what is considered to be "legitimate" by Islamic standards, even though several conditions are missing. In order to meet the legal requirements of marriage, as well as escaping from feelings of guilt, young men involved in 'urfi marriage today provide women with a symbolic amount of *mahr* and arrange for two witnesses who are often ran-

domly selected from among strangers. Therefore, 'urfi marriage provides a "good excuse" for young people who are trying to negotiate between their sexual desire and the legitimacy of the marriage under the name of a custom and tradition.

'Urfi marriage practiced among young people in Cairo needs further research with regard to whether it is possible for 'urfi marriage to be transferred to "legitimate" Islamic marriage, and to establish the legal position of the children born to a couple who have married in an 'urfi way.

END NOTES

email: ikran5@hotmail.com

1. This paper is based on fieldwork conducted from September 2001 to August 2002 to ascertain "how global consumerism has influenced the marriage pattern among young middle- and upper-class Muslims in contemporary Cairo". My special thanks go to the Institute for Gender and Women's Studies at the American University in Cairo (AUC), where I was affiliated as a research fellow. The Institute offered an academic home during my fieldwork period. I also thank Professor Cynthia Nelson for acting as my mentor during my residence in Cairo, and my supervisor Dr. Nadje S. Al-Ali at the University of Exeter (UK) who is continually supportive of my research. This paper, which is an integral part of my PhD thesis, was revised following presentation at the conference organized by the Korean Association of Middle East Studies in May 2004 at KunKuk University in Seoul. Many thanks go to the commentators.

2. Transliteration of Arabic basically follows the ALA-LC Romanization manual. However, in order to preserve the Cairene pronunciation of Arabic, I replaced j with g and dropped the pronunciation of q. I also omitted diacritics except 'ayn. All Arabic words, except for proper names and standard English forms, are italicized.

3. Abaza, 20

4. *ibid.*

5. The marriage contract contains "fundamentals" and "preconditions". Fundamentals are things that are indispensable, whereas preconditions are things that are not necessary as an actual part of the contract ('Uthman, 21).

6. Islamic law outlines preconditions for the husband and wife. The husband should be a Muslim. It is unlawful for a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim. The man should have fewer than four wives. The wife should be clearly specified in the contract. Men should be mature and sane. Men are prohibited from marrying if they are on *ihrām* for *hajj* or *'umra*. Men are also prohibited under Islamic law from marrying close kin. Women too should not be on *ihrām*, should not be married and should agree willingly to marry. Like men, women are prohibited from marrying close kin ('Uthman, 25-34).

7. 'Uthman, 21-47

8. *ibid.*: 35

9. Chapter 4, verse 23, of the Qur'an stipulates those relations who men are prohibited from marrying: "Forbidden unto you are your mothers, your daughters, and your sisters, and your father's sisters, and your mother's sisters, and your brother's daughters, and your sister's daughters, and your foster-mothers, and your foster sisters, and your mothers-in-law, and your stepdaughters who are under your protection [born] of your women unto whom ye have gone in – but if ye have not gone into them, then it is no sin for you

[to marry their daughters] – and the wives of your sons who [spring] from your own loins. And [it is forbidden unto you] that ye should have two sisters together, except what hath already happened [of that nature] in the past. Oh! Allah is ever forgiving, Merciful" (Pickthall, cited in Antoun, 122-3).
10. *Ibid.*, 122
11. Umran, 14
12. There has been dispute between Shi'ites and Sunnis concerning the legitimacy of *mut'a* marriage. While the Shi'ites legitimize the *mut'a* marriage, the Sunnis argue that *mut'a* is not legitimate marriage because intercourse is lawful only within the permanent marriage or slave ownership (Haeri, 61-62).
13. Abaza, 20
14. "Mut'ah Marriage", <http://www.islamonline.net>
15. Haeri, 6
16. *ibid.*: 206-7
17. All names are pseudonyms, to protect the privacy of the respondents.
18. From "Hymen Repair Surgery," <http://www.islamonline.net>

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Puberty, the Controversy Surrounding it, and the Confusion While Dealing With this Phase in the Lebanese/Arab Modern Environment¹

■ Mona Fayad

Professor, Psychology Department, Human Sciences and Literature Faculty, Lebanese University

Puberty is defined as the period when sexual maturity is achieved. This maturity does not take place over night; it is a gradual process that lasts a relatively long period of time. Biological maturity is reached upon ovulation for girls and with the discharge of semen for boys. Puberty is not over when one is able to perform his/her reproductive duties; it is a huge transformation that lasts for quite some time and involves the whole body and person.

Apart from the bodily changes, we notice several other transformations that involve all aspects of a teenager's life be they male or female. These range from discovering new cultural interests via the school, family or vocational institutions to becoming self conscious and comparing oneself to others. Moreover, during this phase the need arises to start focusing on a future specialization or profession. Besides, teenagers start understanding social roles such as mother, father, employee, director, manager and student. Hence, the realm of a teenager's existence is widened and his/her need to belong becomes more pertinent and desired. Given that this phase has a lot of future repercussions, knowing how teenagers experience puberty and come to terms with it, is very crucial.

Puberty differs between males and females socially and cul-

turally. For boys it is a simple and natural process that yields pleasure. The same does not apply to girls. This period has no benefits for girls except if they are brought up in a liberal family that respects one's freedom like the case of Raya. This freedom enables a girl to relate to her body in an open-minded and free manner. Most girls are happy to experience the first signs of puberty, yet this joy is often accompanied with a strange feeling that something "wrong" has happened. For most girls, puberty and specifically menstruation is a turbulent time that is accompanied with feelings of embarrassment and confusion such as the case of Rafif. Not to mention that for some menstruation is considered disgusting like the case of Sara, and for others there is denial that it even took place, like the case of Samira. Menstruation within some very conservative and traditional families yields more surveillance and responsibility. Besides, in certain families it goes hand in hand with wearing the veil.² Unlike girls, boys are more at ease during this phase and consider puberty to be a natural process.

Previously puberty and menstruation were long awaited, and often accompanied with celebration.³ This phase was considered the transition from childhood to youth and in turn meant the commencement of adulthood. Nowadays, the situation has changed; mothers are embarrassed and

bewildered when their daughters start menstruating. This reflects negatively on young girls who feel frightened and confused given that they are not prepared to cope with such a critical phase that will affect their future as a female.⁴ Previously the celebrations in preparation for puberty or accompanying it were staged around the same period for both girls and boys. It is important to note that the transition from childhood years to teenage years for boys was determined by the ritual of circumcision, a procedure that was usually performed on them before they reached puberty.⁵

The puberty stage these days is considered by many girls to be a fearsome one that is often coupled with distress. However, the same does not apply for boys given that circumcision has become a medical procedure that entails the removal of a piece of flesh. Circumcision is now considered a health concern and its social and ritualistic significance is dying out. My discussion with Tala proved the point that the ritualistic celebration allowed a girl to pass comfortably from childhood to puberty, just as was the case with the circumcision of boys.

Another observation that is worth mentioning is that discussing puberty with boys led automatically to discussions on sex. The same didn't happen with the girls. Puberty and menstruation for the girls I interviewed is mostly coupled with silence, embarrassment, and malaise. Raya, who is liberal and open-minded, is the only interviewee who felt in control during puberty. This stems from her artistic background given that she is interested in and has worked on the theme of the 'body' in theater and plays. Over and above that, Raya is the eldest of the sample and has ample experience in life.

How do Males deal with Puberty?

According to Ashraf and Paul, young boys learn about their bodily changes and are prepared for puberty by talking to friends, watching films, and reading reports. As far as Rany is concerned, he admits that he didn't know what was going on until he heard a lecture at school. It is important to note that there have been significant developments within some educational institutions where importance is given to sexual education. Yet, this is not always the case. Rarely do fathers discuss such issues with their sons, yet, the case of Rafik proves otherwise, even though Rafik comes from a religious and devout family from southern Lebanon. It is worth noting that some religious communities believe that discussing puberty with their children is considered a traditional and religious duty. Such a position is very progressive; yet, it is not a general rule among conservative groups.

Regarding sexual encounters males are divided into two groups: those who engage in consensual sexual relations with willing female partners just like Ashraf's case and oth-

ers who opt for masturbation or make use of the services of prostitutes. This often happens in Paul's milieu, however, Paul admits that he is still a virgin because he wants to share this act with someone he loves and not with just anyone. Mind you, there is a third group that denies engaging in the sexual act and makes no reference to masturbation whatsoever. This is because of the environment these boys belong to – one that is either very religious like Rany's family, or very traditional as is the case with Rafik and Moustapha. Most of the young men in the sample acknowledged that during puberty they experienced a transformation, they felt transposed from one phase to another. They also confessed that they were satisfied to have achieved the stage of manhood and were very pleased to have acquired the required masculine traits. As far as "acting like a man" Rami admits that he changed and started acting like a man. It dawned on him that "he ought to wake up" so he stopped hanging out a lot in the streets. It is well known that during this phase a lot of teenagers drop out of school and decide to start working. This was exactly what happened with Rami.

How do Girls Live this Experience?

This phase is viewed differently depending on the environment the girls come from and on their conditions. Tala was fortunate to experience the onset of menstruation the pleasant and traditional way. She was at school the first time she got her period and the school supervisor who is an elderly lady attended to her and congratulated her. Given that the supervisor belonged to the older generation that views the onset of menstruation as a joyful event which is cheered and applauded, Tala felt well surrounded and supported. Yet, this traditional approach is dying out. Had Tala experienced the onset of menstruation at home the situation would have been different because her mother belongs to the new generation that failed to preserve the old and traditional habits and refrained from adopting the scientific and modern habits. Tala didn't know how to behave and questioned whether she has grown up or not. Zaynab's case is no different than Tala's: as soon as she told her mother about her first period her mother was thrilled and overjoyed. Zaynab's mother immediately told her husband but avoided telling the neighbors out of fear of envy, given that this phase symbolizes the onset of the glorious phase of fertility.⁶

Raya's first experience with menstruation was positive. Her grandmother prepared her for the coming phase by telling her the story of the Red Horse.⁷ At first Raya was hesitant to talk about the subject, yet, after pestering her for answers she complied. It is worth noting that Raya belongs to the "modern girl" category; even though this group is liberal the girls still refuse to talk about intimate and personal matters in public. Yet, this does not mean that they don't talk about sexual issues all together. Raya talked very



openly about sexual matters. Raya, despite the fact that she is 'modern' and exposed, admits that at first she was embarrassed because she was developing breasts and felt the need to hide them. Yet, with time she became more comfortable with the bodily changes that were taking place and she got used to wearing a bra and started enjoying it. Moreover, she was very pleased with the way her body developed and felt that now clothes suited her better.

As far as Sara is concerned, her mother, who is of Turkish origin, was overjoyed when she found out that her daughter started menstruating. She immediately told Sara's father about what had happened. This bothered Sara a lot. Unlike her mother, Sara didn't see the need for celebration and refused to adopt the stand of her mother. Sara still refers to her period as "sickness" and she admits that she felt dirty and was very bothered and disgusted when she got her first period. Heba, who comes from a poor background and who lives in a poor district in Tripoli, was pleased that she started menstruating. Her mother was also very happy to hear the news. Heba admits that she takes advantage of her predicament to absent herself from school. Moreover, she is now more pampered and spoiled by her parents; yet, she admits that menstrual cramps bother her.

So is the case among traditional families and the elderly, yet, things happen differently within educated circles. Mothers usually don't talk about menstruation with their daughters and vice versa, as if they are embarrassed to discuss such issues. This is the case of Rafif who didn't tell anyone when she first started menstruating. However, Daad admits: "My mother was next to me and I don't remember I faced any problems." As for Reem, who comes from the Beqa', the first thing her mother asked her when she saw a stain of blood on her underwear was "where were you?" indirectly insinuating the possibility that her daughter might be engaging in an activity that might tarnish the honor of the family. Dana, despite the fact that she comes from the same environment, was the only one prepared by her mother for this phase. Maybe it is because her mother had worked as a nurse previously. Dana confesses that she wishes she were a boy and admits that she sometimes acts like boys. Moreover, she is very independent, has a strong personality and refuses to act in the traditional way. Yet, that does not mean that she rejects her femininity; she is currently living a love story that she hopes will end in marriage. Lynn was very happy to have reached puberty and admits that she was prepared for this period thanks to the girls living in her neighborhood. It is worth noting that the southern girls were the ones least prepared for puberty. One of the southern girls I interviewed claimed she had not yet started menstruating because she was very embarrassed to discuss the matter and because she wanted to avoid my questions. Yet, that does not necessarily imply that it is a characteristic of the south, but rather an

attribute of this specific environment that is mostly poor and has suffered gravely as a result of the Israeli occupation that yielded unwanted displacement. Nada's case, a Palestinian living in Ain El-Hilweh refugee camp, is no different; her mother did not care when she found out her daughter started menstruating. It is as if being displaced in a camp wipes out everything that is nice and traditional.

We notice that in traditional, poor and uneducated cultures no one discusses such issues with girls anymore. Yet, there are cultures that still highlight the importance of puberty, though discretely. Moreover, there are cultures that categorically refuse to talk about the issue and are even embarrassed to discuss it. Hence, it is rare to find parents who are willing to address issues related to puberty in order to prepare their children and help them deal with this phase. Without the support of parents and the school, teenagers are left to discover the truths about puberty from their friends or films and the like. This means that the parents have given up their duty because sex has become a taboo and something embarrassing.

The importance of puberty and the way one handles this period is of utmost importance given that it will have lasting effects on the life of this generation and its sexual and emotional experiences. After much investigation on the position of teenagers, be they male or female, vis-à-vis sex and love, it becomes apparent that their reactions and positions differ. Yet, this difference was not the result of a difference in gender, i.e. girls didn't have similar stands that were different to that of the boys. The difference was more related to rural/urban, poor/rich, educated/uneducated factors that were indicative in fostering the various positions. However, it is evident that there is acknowledgement of the prevalent gender differences existing especially in terms of what is expected of both sexes. Not to mention the Oriental society's accepting the traditional stand and discarding the possibility of premarital sex.

The findings of the research undertaken show that five of the informants, males and females, agreed that there is no difference between the sexes when it comes to sexual needs. They strongly believe that "sex is the same for both sexes." Moreover, they belong to the educated middle class that is influenced by Western education especially with regards to sexual equality. Yet, this group is also fully aware of the cultural specificities of the region and its requirements. Hence, they were against the sexual freedom common in the West given that they are aware of the customary social pressures.

There is another group of five interviewees who all agreed that there were differences among genders with regard to sex. Daad is the only group member who rejected this difference; however, she agreed that sex ought to be per-

formed after marriage. She admits that she openly talks about sex with her mother. Moreover, she asserts that the subject was discussed several times in class and with her teacher. Hence, she has no problem discussing sex given that her environment is open and encourages dialogue. Paul, however, admitted that he masturbates. Yet, he considers it to be something wrong (a misdemeanor). He often went to confession to try and get rid of this evil habit. He also admits that boys are more lustful and have more desires than girls do. Paul is affected by the prevalent habits and by the stereotypes widespread in society.

There is a third group that views sex in a very negative manner. The positions ranged from pure disgust, to regarding sex as unappealing, to hate, to believing that sex is of no use, to considering sexual activity as a requirement, to deeming sex without love as a taboo or haram even within the confines of a marriage, given that sex is "disgusting" and love is what makes it different.

The case of Lynn is worth mentioning given that she is a "tease" par excellence. The case in question expresses the average behavior of Lebanese urban girls towards sex. Yet, one has to admit that the position of Lynn is highly exaggerated and sometimes inaccurate and similar to "caricature". Lynn claims that she attracts the opposite sex: "We girls are different. Sexual relations are nice to engage in with someone we love or someone we are going to get married to. When a girl gives a boy what he wants he will leave her (an opinion she acquired from her milieu). Lynn wants a man to remain attached to her. She asserts that boys and girls view sex differently. "Young boys are like animals, they are unable to control their sexual drives. They see a woman and they immediately want to have her irrespective of everything. They get easily turned on and horny (she laughs). We girls are different. As far as I am concerned, sexual need ranks last on my scale of priorities."

Lynn disapproves of premarital sex and values virginity tremendously. She gives the example of her friend who had a sexual relation with her boyfriend though she is still, technically, a virgin. When asked what prompted her friend to be sexual with her boyfriend, Lynn asserted that it is because of her difficult family circumstances. Given that her father passed away and her mother has a boyfriend who frequents their house, there is sexual permissiveness within the family. Girls are less monitored in broken homes. There is so much laxity in such households where self-restraint is no longer required and pleasing others is no longer a necessity.

Lynn admits that her admirers are many. She claims: "I used to be mean with men, I used to be a tease. I would start talking to guys over the phone and would refuse to meet them. The purpose was to make them fond of me, and when they started becoming emotionally involved I would

dump them. It was easy and normal for me given that I didn't love them. However, with them it was different for they were in love with me. They used to pursue and follow me but I would ignore them. I am a changed person now. I regret what I did previously and am more mature and peaceful."

In contrast, we realized that rural girls express total ignorance when talking about matters related to sex. They refused to answer our questions given that unmarried virgins are not expected to know or talk about sex and sexual matters. Their answers were very reserved and they were totally understanding of their Eastern background.

Nadine, who belongs to an urban, educated and open-minded family, visits the United States of America often and she is aware that the sexual freedom allowed in the USA is not accepted in our part of the world. Nadine fully understands where this is coming from and values the requirements imposed by our culture. The most liberal of the respondents, who is 18 years old, asserted that she views sex from a liberal perspective, yet, she is also for "controlled" sexual activity if one could say that.

Based on the discussions one can conclude that there is an urgent need to introduce sex education in the school curricula. Leaving this matter in the hands of parents and schools who shy away from discussing such issues is harmful. Sex education is instrumental in protecting the youth from harmful sexual activities and helps prevent sexual harassment and abuse. Moreover, sex education contributes to sexual awareness among youth that in turn yields maturity.

Translated by Myriam Sfeir

END NOTES

1. The article is based on the data collected for the report prepared by CAWTAR on *Arab Adolescent Girls*. The names of the interviewees were changed.
2. This applies to the inhabitants of rural areas in Lebanon as well as other Arab countries where religion and religiosity are encouraged.
3. These celebrations still take place in the Island of Jerba in the South of Tunisia.
4. See: Al-Intiqal ila marhalat Al-Nodj: Maslh qawmi hawla al-Nashi' fi Misr, Population Council, New York: United States of America, Cairo, 2001. 60.6% of the girls experienced fear, shock and crying.
5. Ahmad Abou Dahhan, AL-Hizam, Dar El-Saqi, 2001.
6. Zaynab's family forced her to leave school and married her off at the age of thirteen. Her marriage failed miserably and she is still trying to get a divorce in vain.
7. The grandmother was directly involved given that Raya's mother had left the house due to family problems.



From the Country to University: Women's Path to Independence in Syria

■ Talal El-Atrache

Journalist

Over the past twenty years, Syria has witnessed a dramatic evolution of its female population, especially in rural areas. By moving to Damascus to pursue their higher education, women are gradually able to declare their independence from male domination by living on their own, hitting the job market, and providing for themselves.

Syrian society has experienced dramatic changes over the last two decades in terms of attitudes and mentalities towards women's education. Before the 1980s, the social stigma surrounding female independence and women's desire to move away from their homes made it practically impossible for young rural girls to move to the Damascus University Campus on their own; those who did were just a minority, and such early social phenomena did raise a few eyebrows. Customs and traditional roles in a male dominated society forced women to get married at a young age, and they were only to leave their parents' home to found a new one with their husband. These norms and customs contributed to the belief that higher education was useless for girls. On the other hand, the few female graduates acquired higher social status as well as respect in their hometown for securing attractive positions in public institutions. They were viewed as the

most desirable contenders for marriage as only highly educated and financially established suitors were able to ask them for marriage.

Discrimination against women is a serious problem in Syria, activists say. Many girls are denied education by parents who favor their brothers. The pro-governmental General Union of Women in Syria published a 1995 survey that showed that 35.27 percent of Syria's population was illiterate and most, 25.85 percent, were female.

Since then, the tables have turned and most girls in Syria nowadays manage to pursue their higher studies. With the passage of time, education among females has become predominant in society, leading to an increased level of competition and a real movement of liberalization. Not only has society refrained from criticizing this trend, but also it is highly supporting it these days. Therefore, the shift in values is seen as a major incentive for young girls to excel in their academic performance. The High School Diploma is perceived by young Syrian women living in the countryside as a passport to freedom and independence, paving the way for them to move to Damascus to seek their higher education and acquire their independence, thereby getting rid of male dominance.

Social Implications

Moving to the city and going to college signify major struggles and adjustments for rural girls. With the pressure to succeed, as well as the sudden and direct exposure to a different, larger society, female students are bound to experience psychological transformations in order to adapt rapidly. They find themselves mixing with all sorts of crowds. The absence of parental supervision allows them to interact with young male students.

Many girls show enough aptitude for integration and adjustment and decide they have what it takes to face the new obstacles. They do not hesitate to give in to their social surrounding and all the demands that come along, even if that means compromising their beliefs and the values they were raised with. They embrace some sort of a voluntarily split personality, consisting of being modern, trendy, open-minded, and independent in college, while reverting back to the same young, naïve, girl-next-door type of person they used to be as soon as they go back home during weekends.

In order to be allowed to study in Damascus on their own, young females have to maintain a conservative façade and keep a low profile at home. Back in Damascus, they try to accomplish their own endeavors, those of liberal, independent, and fashionable young women who can deal with all students, male or female. However, everything comes with a price tag. In Damascus, they get caught up in the demands of materialistic urban life and often fail to cope due to their generally limited economic resources. They become obsessed with fashion, hairdos, tattoos, cell phones, parties, etc.; to make a long list short, everything Western style.

Seeking Economic Independence

Many girls start looking for part-time jobs to reduce the financial burden on their family and because they feel the need to break free and rely as little as possible on their parents. However, the salaries they receive from these low-key jobs sometimes prove to be insufficient to compete with the materialistic lifestyles they lead. Encouraged by colleagues, some girls start looking elsewhere for economic well-being by seeking fast, easy, but 'inappropriate' ways of earning money.

Twenty-one-year-old Lama illustrates the drastic changes some girls undergo by telling the story of her friend of the same age, Rania. Rania is majoring in English Literature, a field that has sparked some degree of controversy among students. Most English Literature students are labeled "posh" by other students, for they are famous for their eccentric sense of fashion. Rania comes from a poor family. "During her freshman year," says Lama, "Rania was a modest girl who used to criticize

fashion and the ever-changing values that dominated university life. However, she quickly started changing. From new hairdos to new clothes, tattoos to late parties, she literally became a different person, and quickly acquired a new personality. Her relationships with men and her party lifestyle dramatically took off. She went on to spend more and more, and was always wearing the most refined and expensive clothes, which she claimed were "gifts". She was often seen being dropped off at the dorms by cars bearing military plate numbers. According to her, the people she was hanging out with were just "friends", but she did not sound convincing. One thing was certain though. She was not paying attention to her studies anymore."

Post Graduation Blues?

After graduation, some girls get so involved and accustomed to the campus lifestyle that they do not want to go back to the boring and conservative way of life they used to lead before. However, in many cases, they fail to find a job within their field of specialization, so they see themselves forced to do small jobs. With a degree in hand, some are compelled to go back home and wait for marriage, but not in the traditional way. University life has considerably changed their mentalities. Syrian women are starting to look for their future life partner on their own, and are finally free to accept or turn down suitors. During college, many get involved with someone who will later become their husband. Hence they acquire a certain freedom of choice away from family control and interference, which is exactly what rural girls desire. Twenty-three-year-old Roula, from Sweida, graduated in Fine Arts last year. Her boyfriend, of three years, decided to leave and work in Dubai so he could make some money that would allow him to ask for her hand in marriage. "After graduating, I was allowed to stay in Damascus for six months, where I was offered a job in an advertising company. After that, I had to quit because my parents asked me to go back home, where I failed to find a similarly attractive position. I had to resort to working in a fine art gallery, where I was selling portraits and paintings. But I don't mind, since I will get married to my boyfriend and be able to work and help him provide for our home."

Outlook for the Future

Despite this evolution, laws still do not favor women. Hanan Nijmeh, a lawyer and women's rights activist, affirms that Syrian laws do not offer much protection. Lax legislation on domestic affairs, such as divorce and rape, ease the path of violence against women. According to Nijmeh, "Syrian society, like other Arab societies, is a patriarchy in which there is a struggle between what is traditional and what is new. So violence against women in places where illiteracy is on the rise is



more prevalent than in areas where education is widespread." Nijmeh asserts that a woman in Syria always feels threatened by divorce, as a husband can just dispose of her without giving her any compensation. Although there are no official estimates of domestic violence or rape, activists confirm that victims are in the thousands. Mustapha Habash, Head of the Emergency Department at Al-Muwasat Hospital in Damascus, says he sees three to four victims of violence each month. Few take that step, since it draws in the police. Alia, a high school student, grew up watching her father beat her mother: "I know that she kept silent because she was afraid of getting divorced or thrown out onto the streets. That's why I want to graduate from university and get a decent job, so I won't have to face this situation in the future. My diploma will serve as a social and financial protection for me, so I can feel more secure," she says.

For better or for worse, some marriages ultimately lead to divorce nowadays. Divorce is on the rise in Syria. In the past, many wives did not have any option but to put up with male oppression. They stayed out of fear of society and because they lacked the financial resources that were necessary for their survival. Nowadays, educated

women refuse to tolerate male oppression and when faced with spousal abuse, they ask for divorce since they are able to sustain themselves financially.

Generally speaking, these are crucial times for young Syrian women as they experience a movement of liberalization when it comes to marriage. This movement is illustrated by a set of advantages and drawbacks, as well as drastic contradictions. Activists and General Union of Women (GUW) officials slam some Syrian legislation as unfair to women, but they say things have improved during the last three decades. "Though we are satisfied with the women's situation we have passed many proposals to parliament to amend unfair laws," GUW member Raghida Al-Ahmad says. "We have 26 women in the 250-member parliament and two ministers in the 36-member cabinet. There are 132 women judges and 16 percent of lawyers and 44 percent of teachers are women," Ahmad said.

Syria has had to undergo major changes and adjustments over the last two decades, and the future looks promising. There is still a lot to be done to achieve a state of gender equality; but like anything else, once you let evolution out of the bag, it is irreversible.

Bringing Sports and Opportunities to Girls in Rural Egypt

Ishraq: Safe Spaces to Learn, Grow and Play

■ Alyce Abdalla and Ray Langsten

"In Ishraq I learned to do things that were different from what I did all my life."

Rania, Ishraq participant

At the start of the 21st century social and technological changes have opened opportunities for a healthier, more productive, and more fulfilling life. But, while opportunities exist, traditional structures prevent some people from taking advantage of them. In 1999 the first representative study reporting on the lives of Egyptian youth was published. It showed that while many of Egypt's youth were getting more education and finding new lives, one group, girls in rural, Upper Egypt, continued to be disproportionately disadvantaged. These girls were less likely to be attending school than boys, and most of those who were not in school had never had any formal schooling; early marriage remained a risk; female genital cutting (FGC) was widespread. Girls worked long hours in the house and in the fields. Fears of ruined reputations restricted their mobility. In short, while for most adolescents the years of transition from childhood to adulthood bring expanding opportunities, for many adolescent girls in rural Egypt it is just the opposite.

The concept of *Ishraq: Safe Spaces to Learn, Play and Grow* grew in response to the needs of out-of-school girls

in Egypt. Save the Children and the Population Council joined forces with CEDPA (Center for Development and Population Activities) and Caritas to create an innovative program consisting of training in literacy, life-skills and sports. All four of the NGO partners had significant experience of working with youth in the Egyptian context. The Population Council took responsibility for the research and for monitoring and evaluation of the project, along with offering technical assistance for the sports component. Save the Children used its ties to the Minya Governorate to meet the overall implementation needs. CEDPA provided its ground-breaking programs on gender-awareness, healthy living, and life-skills for both girls (*New Horizons*) and boys (*New Visions*). Caritas brought over two decades of experience in implementing its participatory literacy course *Learn to Be Free*.

Government agencies have also been associated with the program: these include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Youth which provided a key contribution by creating 'girls-only' hours at the village Youth Centers, thus opening up a restricted space for the use of girls.

With the support of these partners, the Ishraq pilot project



Picture Credit: Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)



began in four villages in the Minya Governorate of Egypt in August 2001. The primary focus was on out-of-school girls between the ages of 13 and 15, with additional programming targeting community leaders, parents and boys. Thus, Ishraq provided a holistic approach to changing the lives of adolescent girls. Classes teaching literacy, life-skills, and recreational sports met four times a week for three hours at a time. In February 2004, over a hundred girls graduated from the program, of which many have been mainstreamed into formal schooling. Our partner organizations are currently working closely with the Ministry of Youth and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood to expand the program to more governorates as a step to launching Ishraq on a national scale.

Research Methodology

Internationally, the Population Council has worked on a number of intervention research projects for youth, testing the effectiveness of each innovation. As one of the initiators of the Ishraq program, we were in the enviable position of being able to include a rigorous impact assessment study design in the implementation of the program. A baseline survey of girls between the ages of 13 and 15 in the four intervention villages and two matched control sites was fielded before the launch of Ishraq. Midline data on participants were collected in 2003, followed by the endline survey of all the girls in February 2004. The quantitative work was complemented by qualitative research, mostly on the concerns and feelings of parents and boys. This article will highlight a selection of findings from the quantitative research, focusing on the effects of the Ishraq program on the girls' education levels, the advantages of an integrated approach, and changes in attitudes towards marriage, female genital cutting and family roles. The results of this study show that for illiterate girls on the verge of entering adulthood, intensive programs can produce important, measurable change.

Education Levels

By comparing our baseline data with those of the endline collected after the completion of Ishraq we are able to contrast the background and achievements of the girls who participated against those who did not. Participation, however, is not a dichotomous variable. A number of girls who began the Ishraq program left before it ended, while others joined well after it started. Of the 587 girls interviewed in the endline survey, 310 never joined Ishraq, while 277 participated for at least some time. Of these 277 some stayed for just a few days or weeks whilst others attended for many months. Only 101 girls took part for the full duration of the program.

In the analysis that follows we will take two different approaches to participation: 1) use a five-category variable that measures length of participation (none, less

than six months, six-17 months, more than 18 months, and full program); 2) compare just the two extreme categories (none versus full program).

In Egypt, the main reason children do not get an education is that they never attend school at all. This was the case with the out-of-school girls in the six study villages. Overall, only about 18 percent had attended formal school at some time in the past. On the other hand, almost 72 percent of the interviewed girls had previously attended a literacy class. Although the girls who attended Ishraq were somewhat more likely to have attended school, and to have participated in other literacy classes before the advent of Ishraq, the differences are small, inconsistent, and not statistically significant. That is, Ishraq participants shared the same general educational background as other respondents in the sample villages.

In both the baseline and endline surveys we asked about a number of basic academic skills. These included:

1. writing her own name;
2. writing the name of a brother or sister;
3. writing the numbers from 1 to 10;
4. a simple math problem involving the computation of change from a purchase;
5. a second simple math problem involving computation of the distance a girl would walk to the fields;
6. reading a simple paragraph of just a couple of lines.

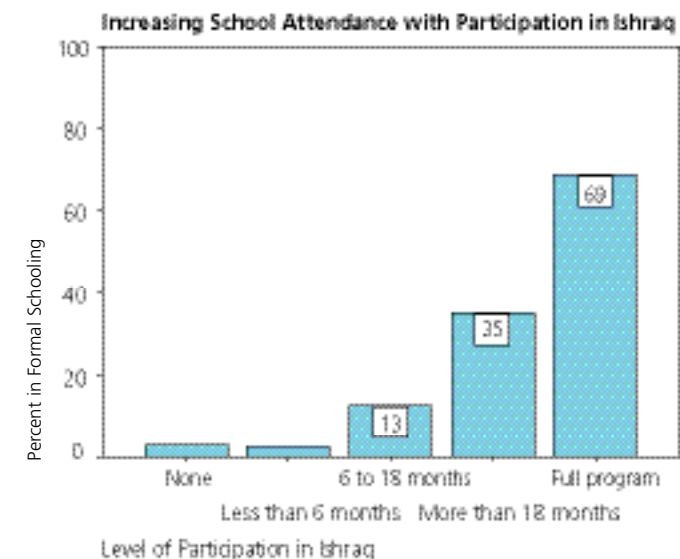
For each of these six indicators we have combined the baseline and endline data into a four-category variable:

1. had the skill at both the baseline and endline (KNOWS the skill);
2. did not have the skill at the baseline, but had it at the endline (LEARNed the skill);
3. had the skill at the baseline, but did not have it at the endline (FORGOT the skill);
4. did not have the skill at either the baseline or endline (Doesn't Know the skill - DK).

The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1. There are several points to notice. First, the participants in Ishraq were more likely to KNOW all of these skills, though only slightly more likely to KNOW the two math problems and the reading passage. Thus, despite the general equality in educational backgrounds of all the sample girls at the baseline, Ishraq participants were more likely to have these academic skills before they started the program. Next, except for writing her own name and solving one of the math problems (in both cases the skill level of full term participants was very high at baseline), Ishraq participants were more likely to LEARN the skill between the time of the baseline survey, and the endline. This is the expected outcome of the program—that girls will learn academic

skills through their participation. Learning is particularly strong for writing siblings' names and reading the simple passage. Finally, in all cases, Ishraq participants are less likely to have FORGOTTen the skill, or to have not known it at both the baseline and endline (DK).

The purpose of the Ishraq program was not simply to provide girls with basic literacy skills. Rather, one of the ultimate goals was to give participants the opportunity to return to formal education, entering the government school system at the first year of the preparatory (middle school) level. Those girls who stayed in Ishraq for the full program had a remarkable degree of success—69 percent of them were in formal education at the time of the endline survey. Moreover, the longer a girl remained in Ishraq the greater her chance of entering formal education.



Among the 31 girls who completed the full Ishraq program but who did not continue with their formal education, the main reason was that their family, or their hus-

band, refused to allow them to continue (47 percent). The second most important reason, however, was that the girl herself chose not to continue (23 percent).

Beyond academic skills and formal education, we asked the girls' knowledge of practical skills, such as making cheese and jam, sewing and needle work, and doing agricultural tasks, among other things. Interestingly, just as with academic skills, the Ishraq participants were generally more likely to have these skills before starting Ishraq. They were also much more likely to learn some of these skills (making jam, doing needle work, making art projects) between the time of the baseline and the endline surveys—see Table 2. Among the girls who learned these skills during of the course of the program, many (50-70 percent) reported learning from the Ishraq promoters, as a part of the Ishraq program itself. That is, Ishraq taught these girls not only basic academic skills, but also a number of practical skills they will be able to use throughout their lives.

While actual knowledge and behavior are the most important outcomes of a program such as Ishraq, we also asked a number of questions to gauge the girls' educational aspirations. These included the minimum amount of education needed for girls, and for boys, and then the highest level of education a girl, or a boy, could expect to reach. Girls gave similar responses whether they were asked about boys or girls, and their responses at the endline were similar to the answers they gave at the baseline. In all cases, secondary education was the modal category for the minimum education required, while university education was generally viewed as the highest attainable level of education. However, there were substantial shifts in the patterns of responses between the baseline and the endline surveys—and these shifts differed depending on whether the girl participated in the full Ishraq program, or never participated at all.

Among the girls who never participated there was actually a slight decrease in the percentage of girls saying that

Table 1: Possession of Basic Academic Skills Among Out-of-School Girls in Minya: Comparing Those Who Never Participated in Ishraq with Full Program Participants.

Skill	Write Name		Sibs Name		Write 1-10		Math 1		Math 2		Read	
	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full
Level of Participation in Ishraq												
Degree of Knowledge												
Knows (Base and End)	44.0%	85.0%	29.8%	55.0%	32.9%	69.0%	81.0%	84.5%	22.2%	26.0%	6.2%	11.1%
Learn (Not Base, but End)	14.3%	14.0%	14.1%	40.0%	16.3%	21.0%	13.1%	13.4%	21.5%	31.2%	12.7%	65.7%
Forgot (Base, not End)	7.5%	0.0%	4.6%	3.0%	7.5%	6.0%	3.9%	1.0%	17.9%	11.7%	4.2%	3.0%
DK (Neither Base nor End)	34.2%	1.0%	51.5%	2.0%	43.3%	4.0%	2.0%	1.0%	38.4%	31.2%	76.8%	20.2%



girls or boys need a minimum of secondary education, while conditional answers ('depends on the family', 'depends on the person's abilities') increased. Among girls who attended Ishraq for the full duration, on the other hand, the percent saying that secondary education was the minimum required generally increased, while those who accepted lower levels of education (primary/preparatory) declined. In the case of the girls' views of the highest level of education attainable, both girls who never participated and those who stayed for the full Ishraq program exhibited a substantial increase in the percent reporting that university education was possible. Most of the increase came from a decline in the number of girls giving conditional answers. However, among the full term participants, the level of increase in reports of university education was greater than the increase for non-participants, while those reporting that the highest attainable education was secondary school or less decreased substantially.

In sum, those who participated in Ishraq for the full duration of the program increased their aspirations to a greater degree than did those who did not participate at all.

Benefits of an Integrated Approach

As described above, Ishraq is a holistic program. Programmatically, the integrated approach is much more complicated than a single-focus structure, requiring close partnerships between NGOs with different experiences and working philosophies. One theory proposed in the conceptualization of the Ishraq project is that the integrated approach is more effective at meeting the goals of each component: In brief, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. With the breadth of the data collected on girls in both the intervention and the control villages, we now have evidence that this advantage does indeed exist.

We have mentioned that 310 of the girls interviewed at the endline had never participated in the Ishraq program.

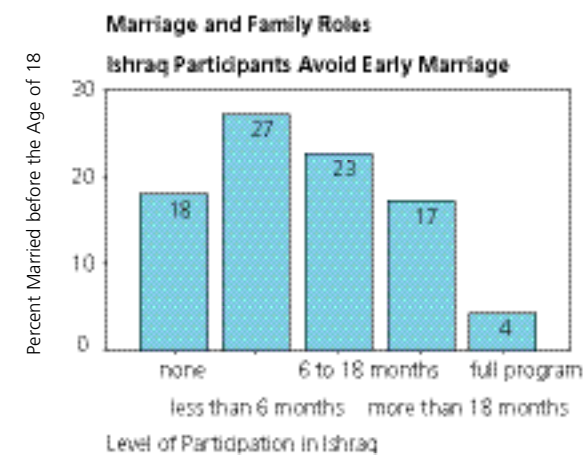
However, half (155) of these 310 girls had participated in other literacy programs in the two years prior to the endline interview. We have included all these girls, whether they participated in another literacy program or not, in our "non-participants" category for the Ishraq analysis. However, it is worth looking at those girls who participated in other programs in somewhat greater detail to show how the results of a holistic program such as Ishraq differ from those of the more traditional "literacy only" programs.

On average, girls who participated in Ishraq, participated for much longer than did girls in other literacy programs (20 months versus nine months). More importantly, 47 percent of the girls who completed six or more months of Ishraq, were enrolled in school at the time of the endline survey, compared to just six percent of girls who were in other literacy programs for six or more months. Even if we consider just girls who were in Ishraq for six to 17 months, 13 percent, twice the level of other literacy program girls, were in school. The evidence suggests that the holistic Ishraq structure has a much greater impact on literacy and the educational progress of girls than do other literacy only programs.

Delaying Marriage

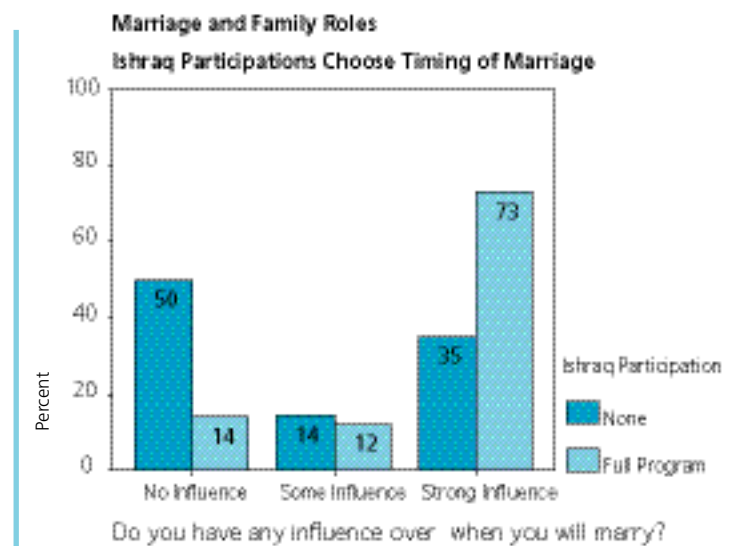
For many girls approaching their late teens in rural Egypt, marriage is a dominant concern. Marriage will define their transition from childhood to adulthood, and the choice of groom will shape their lives as adults. Parents are well aware of the belief that 'a girl is only as good as her reputation', and the pressure to make sure that a girl is safely married is ever-present. 'Safely married' may be something of a misnomer if girls are forced into unwanted marriages, are subject to female genital cutting (FGC) as is common in many Egyptian villages in preparation for marriage, or are married before they have attained physical maturity.

The Ishraq program encouraged girls to delay marriage past the legal age of 16 to allow time for education and physical and emotional maturity. Program promoters worked hard to convince parents to allow the participants to complete Ishraq, rather than pulling the girls out to marry. Indeed, completion of the program is strongly associated with delaying teenage marriages. This finding holds even after controlling for age, socioeconomic status, village and religion. Of the 61 married girls who never participated in Ishraq, eighteen report marrying before the age of 16. Just one girl who completed the Ishraq program reports marrying this young.

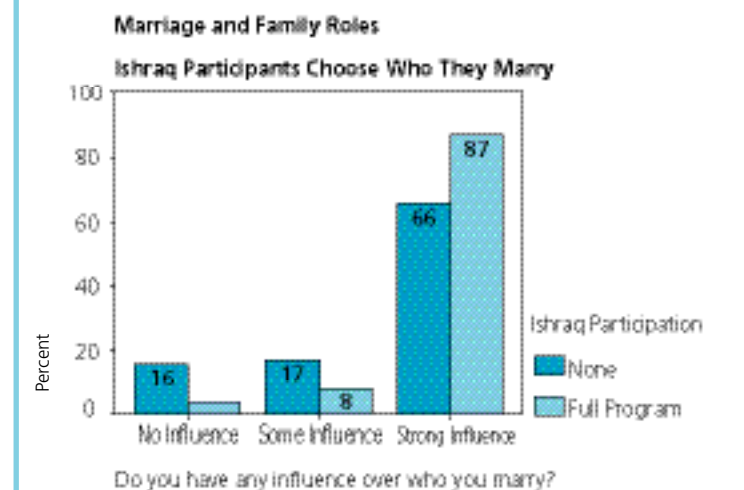


More generally, Ishraq participants also seem better able to influence decisions about marriage. In a society where marriages are made by families, rather than individuals, it can be unusual for girls to decide when and who they marry. Yet most Ishraq participants report a strong influence over the timing of marriage. Most non-participants, in contrast, report having no influence over when they will marry. Since this answer is based on the girls' assessment of their situations, it is difficult to tell if Ishraq participants truly have more influence or if they are just more likely to say so. It may be that they think they should have more influence, also an interesting development. Multivariate analysis that accounts for age, socioeconomic status, religion, and home village confirms the bivariate association between participation in Ishraq and perceived control over the timing of marriage.

Similarly, participation in Ishraq is also associated with reporting greater influence over the choice of a husband. Using a statistical test to account for age, socioeconomic status, religion and home village shows a robust association between participation in Ishraq and the likelihood of a response of 'I have/had a strong influence on the choice of my husband'. Again this information is based on statements of the girls, but taken together with the data on influence on timing of marriage it seems that



participation in Ishraq has increased participants' confidence in their ability to be involved in major decisions about their lives.

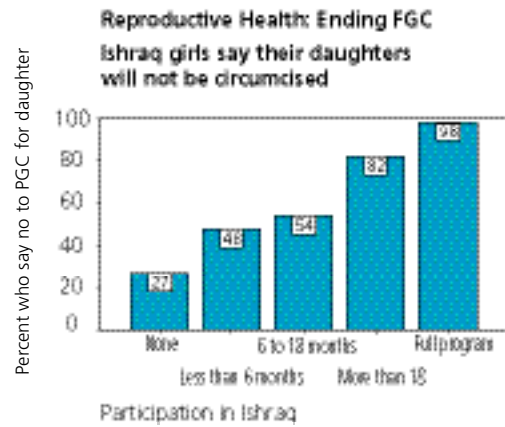


Female Genital Cutting

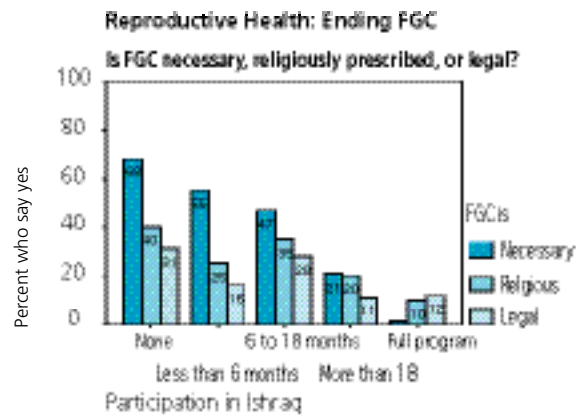
One of the main threats associated with marriage in rural Egypt is female genital cutting (FGC). Estimates vary as to the percentage of adult woman who have experienced FGC, but most statistics range from 80-95 percent. Villages have different traditions regarding when FGC takes place; some do it when the girls are very young, others when she enters puberty, and others directly before nuptials—in preparation for marriage. The Ishraq curriculum talked about the dangers of FGC to women's health, and also argued that it was neither necessary nor religiously prescribed, as is sometimes believed. While full term Ishraq participants are less likely than non-participants to be circumcised, the difference is small (51 percent versus 60 percent, respectively) and not statistically significant once other personal charac-

Table 2: Knowledge of Practical Skills Among Out-of-School Girls in Minya: Comparing Those Who Never Participated in Ishraq with Full Program Participants

Skill	Make Cheese		Make Jam		Sewing		Needle Work		Knit		Art		Agri Work	
	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full	None	Full
Level of Participation in Ishraq														
Degree of Knowledge														
Knows (Base and End)	54.2%	70.0%	2.6%	6.0%	1.6%	6.0%	3.2%	7.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.6%	8.0%	87.7%	93.0%
Learn (Not Base, but End)	18.1%	17.0%	6.8%	49.0%	5.2%	19.0%	10.7%	42.0%	1.9%	14.0%	6.1%	47.0%	4.2%	4.0%
Forgot (Base, not End)	11.9%	2.0%	2.6%	6.0%	4.2%	6.0%	5.2%	7.0%	0.6%	4.0%	1.3%	2.0%	5.5%	3.0%
DK (Neither Base nor End)	15.8%	11.0%	88.0%	39.0%	89.0%	70.0%	80.9%	44.0%	97.4%	81.0%	90.9%	43.0%	2.6%	0.0%



teristics are controlled. (Marriage, as expected, is very strongly associated with experience in FGC in the multivariate analysis.)



This result is not surprising. FGC is not initiated by the girl herself; generally it is the family who wants her to have it done. Attitudes, in contrast, towards FGC are strikingly different. Ishraq participants are much less likely to think that FGC is necessary for girls, religiously mandated, or legal. In multivariate analysis accounting for other factors, this relationship is statistically significant, with participation in Ishraq joining socioeconomic levels as strongly linked to the girls' attitudes towards FGC.

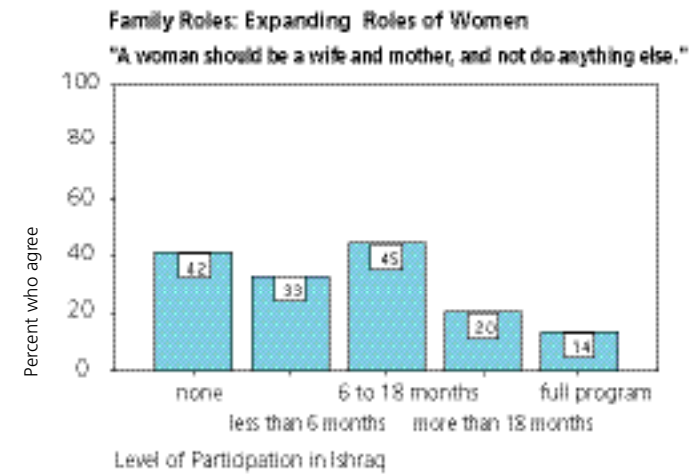
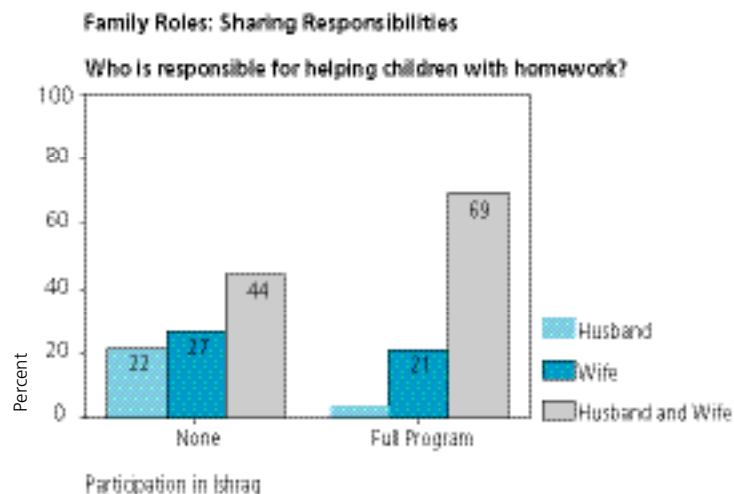
Translating these attitudes into decreasing the prevalence of FGC occurring is the next challenge. We asked the respondents if they were planning on subjecting their future daughters to FGC. There is a clear connection between participation in Ishraq and stating that their future daughters will not be circumcised. Even a short participation in the program of less than six months is strongly associated with this feeling. This strong association at every level of exposure to Ishraq remains statistically significant when using

multivariate analysis to account for village residence, age, marital status, socioeconomic status and religion. Mothers are often involved in the decision to circumcise their daughters; indeed, about 95 percent of all respondents believe they will have at least some influence over this decision. This change in attitude, therefore, may have positive long-term consequences for ending the practice of FGC in the beneficiaries' families.

Family Roles

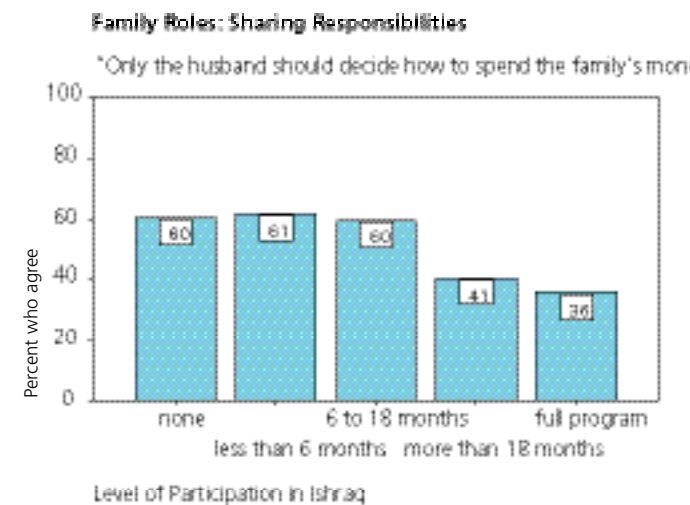
Grounded in the family, rural Egyptian society regards the role of women as largely remaining within the house. Family roles, therefore, are dominant forces in defining the identities, activities and lives of women. We will now look at the respondents' attitudes towards the division of responsibilities and roles within a household.

While the traditional roles of women in cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children remain strong in the minds of our respondents, Ishraq participants consistently indicate a desire for sharing responsibilities with men. Most reject the idea that a woman's responsibilities as a wife and mother preclude her from other activities. Compared to non-participants, girls who have attended the full Ishraq program are more likely to believe that a husband and a wife should share responsibility for a given task. Childcare, for instance, remains firmly in the sphere of women's work, yet helping children with their homework is increasingly seen as something that should be shared between fathers and mothers. Physically buying food is generally thought to be a woman's responsibility, although almost a quarter of the Ishraq full-time participants believe it should be shared between the couple. Most strikingly, Ishraq participants are much more likely to believe that husbands and wives should share responsibility for household expenses. This may indicate an increased optimism about the girls' earning potential in the first place—if women can't earn money then sharing responsibility for expenses seems unsustainable.



In a series of questions about the roles of various members of the family, Ishraq participants consistently responded with answers indicating a sense of equality between men and women, and boys and girls. The general trend of answers shows that the longer a girl attended Ishraq, the more likely she is to support an equal division of labor within the household. The data indicates, however, that for a strong effect the girls needed to be in the program for at least 18 months; the following bar charts show similar answers from respondents with less than 18 months of exposure to Ishraq, with a noticeable difference for those with more.

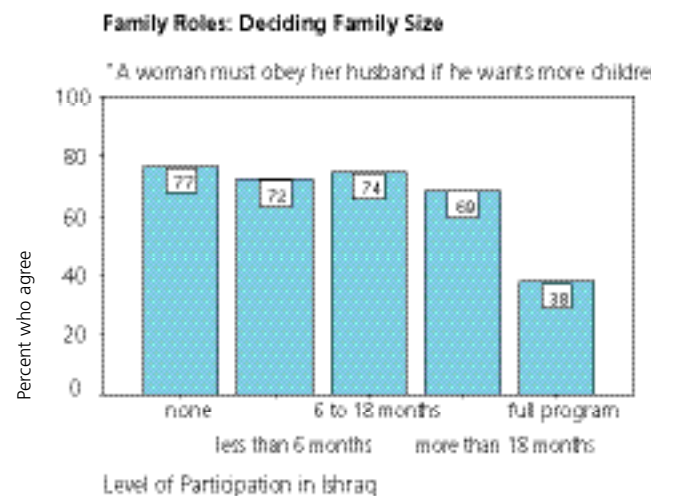
While most girls believe that working women should be able to expect help with childcare from their husbands, every single Ishraq graduate felt this way. This result is interesting when coupled with the results of a question showing that 96 percent of non-participants and 87 percent of full time participants believe that taking care of children is an exclusive responsibility.



In addition, Ishraq participants are not only more likely to believe that woman should be able to work outside of the house, but they also think that they should be part of the decisions about how to spend the family's money.

Full term Ishraq participants believe they should contribute to decisions about the size of their families while girls with less exposure to the program tend to say that the husband has the final say in this decision. Moreover, 82 percent of Ishraq participants report wanting just two children. This could create conflict if the husband wants more children, but the wife believes she should play a role in the decision.

In as much as Ishraq is responsible for participants desiring greater input into family decisions, the right to work outside the home, and greater equality in their relationship with the men in their lives, the program may also be increasing their frustration with the existing definitions of their lives. Social change is a difficult and gradual process. Programmatically Ishraq should address the girls' ability not just to desire change but to negotiate for it as well.



Conclusion

We have presented here a small selection of the findings of the impact assessment of the Ishraq program. Yet even with just the short description of the results included in this article it is clear that the project has positively affected the girls' attitudes and lives. We are currently working on expanding the project to reach hundreds of other girls facing the real threats of early marriage, lifelong illiteracy, and restricted lives. A growing body of literature points to the importance of the period of adolescence in the trajectory of people's lives. This is of particular interest to the Middle East and North Africa region where an estimated 19 percent of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24. We hope that this study contributes to the debate on effective program design and implementation for youth.

Morocco

Children and Teaching

in Rural Areas

Dr. Abdel Salam Fazazi

University Professor, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Agadir

Among the confusing, even worrying, questions that educators are raising with regards to the education of girls in rural zones are: Why is there a consistent drop in the level of education? Why is there a deterioration in rural girls' intellectual abilities? We will hereby try to identify the obstacles hindering the education of girls in rural zones, which could shed more light onto the questions raised above.

Before we proceed, and for methodological concerns, we shall indicate the main concepts used in this approach:

"Scholastic obstacles" are those reasons and obstacles responsible for the non-achievement of goals and positive results generally sought in education.

"Rural girl" is meant to represent a girl who belongs to the rural context. Without getting into the complexities of the terminology used, we shall use this concept of "rural girl" to represent her.

Scholastic Obstacles

As a result of our direct interaction and our professional work in the academic educational field, which addresses the rural context, and as a result of our observations and our efforts to comprehend the scholastic obstacles facing rural girls, we have reached the following conclusions:

We found that these obstacles can be grouped into two categories at least: First, the obstacles related to the nature and specificity of the rural economic and socio-cultural background; and second, the obstacles related to the nature of the educational and relational infrastructure in this field.

A. Economic and Socio-Cultural Obstacles in Rural Zones

Economic Obstacles:

- The decrease in the household's financial level, whereby its only source of income is agriculture, which is most often poor and barely reaching the subsistence level.

Naturally, this affects the girl in the family; as a result of this deprivation, she lacks a healthy moral, physical, social, and residential context that would allow her to integrate her school life in a positive way.

- Given this deprived agricultural life, the girl in the family represents a crucial worker (grazing, planting, watering, etc.). As a result, she cannot do her homework, and arrives at school exhausted.

- Most, if not all, school supplies (books, notebooks, stationery) are unavailable as a result of the household's deprived financial situation, not to mention the excessive supplies needed for one student only. What then for those households that have more than one son or daughter enrolled at school!

Socio-Cultural Obstacles:

- Rural girls are necessarily socio-psychologically affected by their families' deprived and hard economic and social situations, which hinder their constructive integration into the school realm. As a result of this situation, several negative effects have been noted, namely fear, introversion, insecurity, lack of conversational and self-expression abilities, unrest, violence, etc.

- Widespread illiteracy and ignorance in the rural world, whereby the family members are unable to fulfill their complementary role to the school, namely to assist and monitor their children, as well as to build up their children's emotional attachment to school.

- Housing conditions: Most houses do not provide a healthy environment and lack the adequate conditions for girls to carry out their homework, such as a room especially designed for that purpose with the needed supplies or lighting for instance, especially since these girls can only do their homework at night. Moreover, most houses are overcrowded, which hinders scholastic work.

- Intermarriages: It has been scientifically proven that

such marriages, widespread in rural zones, have an effect on the children born out of them, and especially among girls, such as mental deficiency, congenital deformity, etc.

- Language: The language used in everyday life and at home is the Amazight (tashlahit), as opposed to the language used at school (classical Arabic, French). This serves to build in girls, and all children in general, a conflicting psycholinguistic structure that is contradictory in its assimilation and sounds. As a result, girls find themselves lost between several languages that vary in their references, thus creating a kind of schizophrenia and alienation in their representation of things. That is not to mention the additional efforts and exhaustion in trying to assimilate all these languages.

- The prevailing culture in rural zones being rather simple, girls find themselves carrying out easy but repetitive actions, which solely serve their memory capacity, but in no way foster their intelligent intellectual development. Indeed, according to Piaget, the chief source for building intellectual capacities are actions. Unfortunately, it appears that the educational programs implemented at schools foster this negative intellectual culture based on memorizing, rather than encouraging an intelligent education through well-defined goals and strategies.

- Girls' rural cultural and social referential system contradicts the scholastic referential, which is most often adapted to a privileged urbanized one, whether it is Moroccan or foreign. This helps explain rural girls' negative reaction to most contents in their curricula and their difficulty in assimilating these.

B. Educational Infrastructure in Rural Zones

In this respect, we shall focus mainly on the negative points affecting school-enrolled rural girls:

- School's infrastructure: As mentioned above, the socio-cultural and economic context of rural girls does not help in fostering their development. Likewise, schools fail to offer these girls any compensation for what they are lacking: an attractive and stimulating school environment, libraries, playgrounds, entertainment facilities, cleanliness, financial subsidies, psychological, social, educational and nutritional support (in its real sense).

- Curricula: The school curricula, both as far as quality and quantity, fail to meet rural girls' socio-cultural, economic and intellectual characteristics. This gives rise to negative emotions; they feel estranged and frustrated, they see themselves as failures and nurture distaste for school. Moreover, the educational timeframe is a meta-physical and absolute one, and therefore fails to satisfy the characteristics and variables of the audience it

addresses. There is also a lack of modern educational supplies.

- Relational given: We shall mainly focus on the teacher/student relationship in the rural context. This relationship is most often characterized by violence and carelessness. Indeed, the teachers suffer various forms of frustrations and pressures, which many disregard or ignore, the least of which being: the daily pains related to the nature of the rural and educational context, the ill-equipped – or even total absence of – adequate locations, lack of basic needs such as drinking water, sufficient food, electricity, and the isolation from cities in all that this involves, namely isolation from the family, lack of communications, distance, the austerity of certain regions' residents, etc. We personally suffered from all these factors when we were first appointed in one of the rugged mountainous areas.

- Administration: it is traditional and based on paperwork mainly, the non-scholastic hegemony, strong pressure of working hours, excessive educational material to be taught and levels (joint sections), financial and social pressures, frustration of ambitions regarding teaching (such as pursuing university education).

Therefore, these many forms of frustrations and pressures directly affect the effectiveness and educational productivity; also, the main victim of this situation, after the student, is probably the teacher.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration all these obstacles, in addition to others that were not mentioned, rural school-enrolled girls find themselves psychologically, socially and physically disabled, a fact that affects their productivity at school and leads to their failure, frustration and regression, and hinders their assimilation into school.

In light of this situation, educators must address – besides the basic educational theories – these obstacles as well as the topical nature of the rural school context, so as to construct an educational strategy that adheres to all the specificities of the educational process, in view of succeeding in rural girls' education.

Schools (as well as rural girls) are one element of a whole, and that is society. Indeed, the development and evolution of education in rural zones is dependent on the urbanization of these zones, in their economic, social, cultural, health and informational infrastructure. Also, improving the financial, social, and psychological conditions of rural schools would serve as grounds for any true educational development.

Translated by Lynn Maalouf

REDUCING EARLY MARRIAGE IN YEMEN

Presentation by Oxfam at the MENA Conference on Reaching Vulnerable Children and Youth, June 2004

Yemen Country Context

- Population - 18.5 million
- 50% population under 15 years
- 76% people live in rural areas
- Rapid population growth (3.5%)
- High poverty level - 42%
- Poor access to basic services - 55% population
- Wide gender inequalities

Development Challenges

- High female illiteracy - 73%
- High maternal mortality-350 to 1400 per 100,000
- Very high fertility rates - (average 7 children)
- Women's participation in labor market very low and mostly in informal sector
- Poor participation of women in decision making - in private and public spheres

Oxfam's Programs in Yemen

- Promoting Gender Equality
- Ending Violence against Women
- Campaigning against Early Marriage
- Strengthening civil society capacity and role in Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)
- Gender Mainstreaming the PRS implementation and monitoring
- Health Financing and Right to quality and affordable primary health care by communities

Oxfam's Approach and Target Groups

- Adopt a rights based approach
- Change ideas and beliefs, policy and practices of institutions on poverty and gender inequality
- Work at different levels - local, national and global
- Work in partnership with civil society and government
- Program approach includes lobbying and advocacy, capacity building, service provision, networking, public education and campaigning, research and documentation
- Target groups include poor women and men, boys and girls

What is the likely impact of Early Marriage

- Health consequences especially for young girls and their off-springs
- Affects educational attainment especially for girls
- Contributes to gender based violence
- Psycho-social implications
- Family disintegration - increased polygamy, and divorce
- Feminization of poverty
- Early marriage has development implications and is a manifestation of gender inequality and human rights violation

Development of the Campaign to reduce Early Marriage in Yemen

- The campaign will create awareness to bring about change in ideas and practices on early marriage as well as advocate for legislation on the minimum age of marriage
- The campaign will be led by Oxfam partners from civil society and the Women's National Committee, the national machinery, and allies with support from Oxfam and others

Elements of Campaign Development

- Research
- Building Alliances
- Developing the Campaign Strategy
- Identification of target groups - the youth and other target audiences and developing messages for them
- Media and Communication Strategy Development
- The Campaign launch and its follow up
- Developing monitoring indicators for assessing changes in ideas and practices and policy on Early marriage

Issues of Early Marriage in Yemen

- Early marriage is an issue emerged from partners' work on ground
- 24% girls and 5% boys in Yemeni society get married between the age of 15 - 19 years
- Early marriage as a phenomena is prevalent in rural and urban areas and cuts across class
- No law in Yemen on the age of marriage
- Yemen signatory to international conventions like CEDAW and CRC

Why are girls married young?

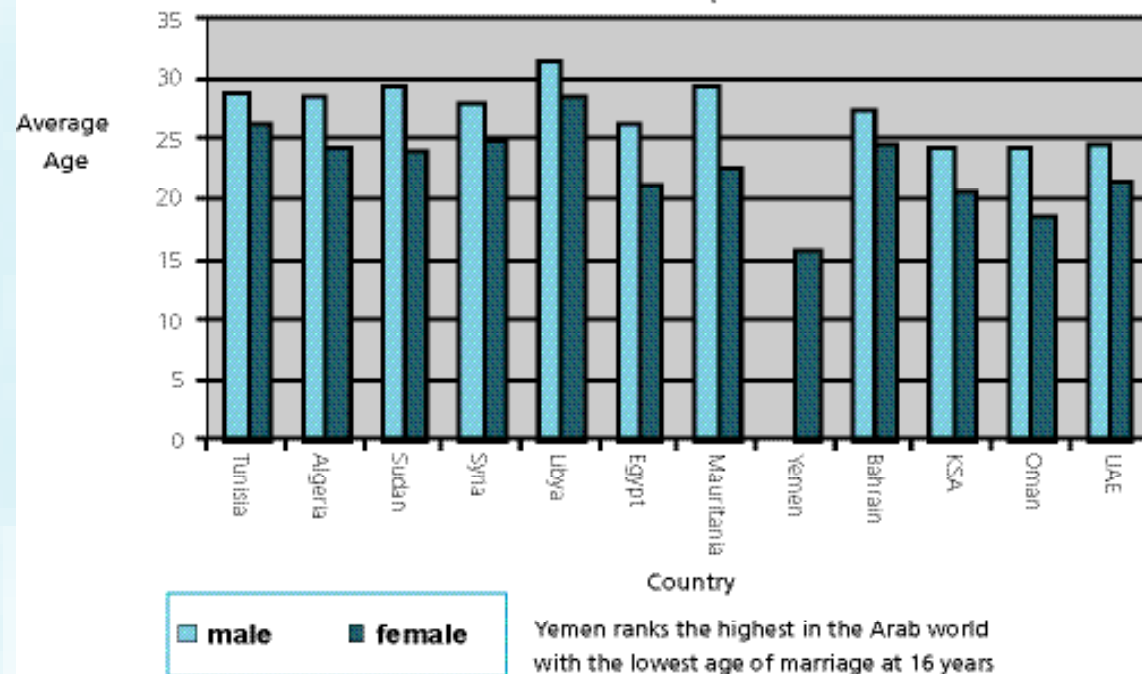
- Poverty and economics
- Desire to protect young girls and boys
- Culture and traditions
- Social pressures
- No livelihood options
- Absence of legislation for minimum age of marriage
- Lack of awareness of the consequences

What is the research telling us and Follow Up Actions

- Three desk researches have been carried out to date
- The researches have provided a deeper understanding of the issue from development and religious perspectives
- Inform and provide leads to primary research planned
- Helped map out the likely prevalence of early marriage in the 20 governorates of Yemen based on a set of criteria - health, education and livelihood related
- This is work in progress leading to the campaign development

Did you know - age of marriage in the Arab region

Average Age of the First Marriage in Rural Areas
Arab Countries Comparison





Models of Innovative Experiences of Young Media Women Between Conservative and Open Surroundings

■ Nahawand Al-Kadri Issa

Searching for definitions and classifications of innovation took me a lot of time, and I almost fell in the trap of the male standard authority, which defines what is beautiful and what is not, and sets the standards of success and failure. I was faced with puzzling and confusing questions such as: Is there a feminine innovation that is different from the male one? I almost overlooked the whole topic, convinced that placing innovation in fixed stereotypes would strangle innovation itself. Nevertheless, some interviews that I carried out with young media women encouraged me to take the chance, to go beyond innovative and non-innovative definitions and classifications and to play the game of innovation itself based on the game of life continuity. I kept moving up and then down the innovation threshold as I saw fit, in an attempt to recreate it. I put forth my own definition of innovation, saying to myself: "Since women have been cast away for so long in the dungeon of the familiar and the customary, why don't we regard the mere consideration of women to step out of what is common as a potential for innovative capabilities? Maybe if they had been given more attention, they would have definitely shown new innovations reflecting positively on the situation of women, society and maybe innovation. Doesn't innovation end when it is proclaimed as such? It needs constant creation and renewal.

I looked for innovation and picked up its pieces from the fresh experiences of young media women who made their innovative experience their own way and left their path open for other, but not necessarily similar, experiences. In the light of my meetings with them, I dared say they were distinguished by their own imagination. They created their own world to which they fled from the world of blackmail and dependency. They produced their own media, set the topics they wished to deal with and felt them differently, so they succeeded in depicting them and exposing a side of the conceptions, predominant in the society, about male and female values and the roles of the two sexes.

Since media innovation, like other innovations, is not separate from the world but talks of it through pictures, illusion and virtuality, it is important that our introduction to this topic revolves around the media environment itself and the changes that took place in this field that affected, one way or the other, the work of media men and women. Then we shall move on to talk about the profiles, components and causes of innovation. Finally, we shall wonder about the future of these innovations: Where did they settle? How were they invested? In other words, what was their result on the experience of women as media women and on the profession?

The Media Environment

The increase in Arab satellite broadcasting stations has naturally resulted in attracting a large number of media men and women handling different jobs and tasks. It has also led to the emergence of news media patterns different from the prevailing ones, and to the change of many roles and positions preset for both sexes; in particular, the economic and technological shifts in media and communications encouraging the rise of the culture of image and the changes that affected women in relation to education and work, in addition to the expansion of specializations to encompass new and modern fields, pushed women towards more acquired rights, thus breaking the preset roles. TV stations used to employ men for politics and serious topics and women for varieties and seduction-mixed entertainment, creating a media pattern that led to the many existing clichés about media women. Yet, this trend soon subsided amid the escalating competition game for numerous reasons, such as:

- The fast progress in media and communications.
- The establishment of leading media groups which started to impose their professional criteria on media around the world.
- The many major events that shook the Arab world, which led some to call for establishing Arab news channels and media channels that can address the global public opinion well to convince it of the Arab just causes in a professional fashion.
- The increase in numbers of media women majoring in communications and journalism in all Arab universities.
- The media experiences acquired by Arab media women, to an extent that Egyptian, Lebanese and Moroccan media women fiercely compete because looks and beauty criteria are no longer sufficient and more culture, knowledge and language proficiency are required.

In short, the presence of women in the visual media is an indicator of the access of women to the general domains from which they have been absent for a long while. Moreover, it indicates that they are taking on new roles with idea creation and production no longer being reserved for men or message presentation for women. In the light of this new media environment, women increasingly participate, one way or the other, in the diversity of TV stations' cultural values and media experiences. No doubt this will influence the work environment especially since it has become obvious that media women are not of the same type. Aside from the category conforming to work to male standards which rely heavily on good looks and receiving all the attention in a way that denatures other categories, and which impacts negatively on the work of women and empties it of its value, there is a cat-

egory of media women who, out of self-awareness and belief in their potential capabilities, broke out from their preset roles. They improved their skills in a way that enabled them to push through the preset stereotypes and barged in on new previously men-exclusive fields. They worked as directors, producers and reporters in dangerous locations; they competed with men and added a new, rarely seen before, dimension to the Arab media work.

This new Arab media reality informs us of the emergence of new feminine innovative profiles in the visual media even though they are still modest. Yet they can be considered as a new cultural aspect, which women helped in creating as it carries their conception and flair for phenomena and events in the world.

Profiles, Components and Causes of Innovative Experiences

Probably the reason for first choosing Diana Moukalled and Janane Mallat as two indicators for innovative young feminine media experiences was because, as a journalism instructor, I highly appreciate their experience and have great admiration for their personalities. Both women started work at an early age and made their own media experience. They proposed the idea of the show and argued for it to convince managers of its usefulness. They continuously developed their work by technically or professionally benefiting from either foreign or local media experiences or through grasping the background and local cultural and social context of the topic to be filmed. That way, both women parted with the preset girl roles and decided to take the difficult path. They worked on depicting feelings and people's happiness and sorrow. Their work was a search journey for alternatives to develop their work. Therefore, they can be considered as two main producers in the Arab media field.

Both women also entered the social field and addressed taboos and hidden subjects, exposing a side of the concepts prevailing in the society about male and female values and roles of the two sexes.

In short, their innovation journey was a continuous learning phase, as both of them refused to enclose themselves in one type of experience. They moved from one experience to another. Their innovation was highlighted by the way the society and professional circles reacted towards their production.

Moukalled grew up in Saudi Arabia, in what she describes as a conservative environment with all the implicit social disturbances, confusion and caution about the work and role of women in general. Upon reaching the university level, she moved to Beirut to pursue her



studies majoring in journalism at the Lebanese University. "These university years reshaped me. Through them, I discovered the country, the war and the relations between men and women. I felt homesick. I had a few ideas about media. It was a period of self discovery more than the establishment of a career," Moukalled says, and then she adds: "It was a period of shattered dreams. It was not the university that I dreamt of, at least when it comes to the place."

She kicked off her career at New TV station in "*Al Naskha Al Oula*" (First Version), where she learnt bits and pieces of the techniques of the profession that she handled in conformity with the then overall zealously opposing environment of the station. "Soon I realized how naïve this style of work was. Even though the then female news director heavily criticized my work, not because she is a woman but rather because of her party inclination (for instance, she pushed us towards the direct style of criticism), she did teach me about and bring my attention to topics that interest people, and pointed out that, even if not directly, real journalism is done in the field and not behind an office desk," she says.

Mallat grew up in an open environment. She studied at Saint Joseph University and in France. Aside from being a member of an open and liberal family, Mallat's father participated in political roles and took on high law posts. "I was surrounded with total care and affection which made my independent personality even stronger and encouraged me to be different and understanding of others' differences," she says.

She entered the media business by chance, by way of her female friend (a relative of an ad agent), when she was asked, straight away, to be a program manager at the French-speaking channel C33. At first, she didn't get the idea and she answered: "TV is not my major, I have a degree in French Literature and I work in teaching." However, her friend told her that everybody in Lebanon is approaching TV and that it was a new phenomenon. Not to mention that the reply of the station manager was a challenge to her when he said: "TV is a sea that we throw you in. Either you swim or you drown."

Movement and Transition Within the Same Profession

Mukalled moved from New TV to Future TV that had already started broadcasting, announcing its need for media personnel. She says that she found that the world of Future TV was bigger and that its approach to matters was less severe and enclosing as it was a financially rich TV station at least. The station provided her with the primary materials necessary for her media experience: to be trained at the hands of foreign journalists and to travel

abroad to attend seminars. She discovered that she could benefit from foreign journalists as much as she could benefit them, since explaining many topics and phenomena that occur in our country was like solving a riddle for them. She began producing reports about social and humanitarian subjects that caught the attention of foreign agencies and stations. They asked her either to produce topics or accompany their journalists and carry out a joint production. Meanwhile, she was aware of her role in the station. She didn't forget or neglect her rights that she found unsuitable with her obligations and work, highly appreciated by foreign and Arab media. Sometimes she implied to her bosses about matching the opportunities given to her with the capabilities and proficiencies she acquired, and some other times fished them out wittingly. She even left the station for a few months and worked with foreign and Arab stations until she made the station managers recognize the importance of her work. She returned but on her own terms and with an idea for the "*Bil 'Ain El-Moujarrada*" (The Naked Eye) program, considered as a social documentary program prepared intellectually and professionally in a skilled manner.

This young woman was not taken by the glamour of travel and star life. She remained in a constant learning phase and was interested in dangerous places and hard topics. She set the foundations for a feminine media model worthy to be shown off by girls because she went up the professional ladder without submitting herself to any manager. She is currently a member of the team responsible for the satellite news bulletin. Yet she did not give up on being a reporter first and she is not 34 yet. It does not matter if her looks or clothes were attractive or not, she says, what is important to her is addressing the mind of the viewer and raising problems from the heart of society.

Mallat lived her professional life in C33 then in LBC. She gained her expertise through the richness and variety of her experiences. Her drive, intelligence and courage helped her too, allowing her to become a program producer that made huge profits for LBC. So profitable in fact that she convinced the chairman of the board of the usefulness of her work. Therefore, he gave her total freedom, allowing her to move from one challenge to another: from managing programs in C33 to producing taboo topics in LBC, to producing the social talk-show "*El-Shater Yehke*" (Let The Clever One Talk), to moving to a totally different pattern by producing the entertainment program "*Ya Leyl Ya 'Ein*" which caused quite a controversy in the Arab world yet brought in a huge amount of advertisement. Mallat simply says that she willingly moved to varieties because she refuses to be enclosed in one pattern, especially that her wager on the social talk show to produce change was a losing one. The topic was

exhausted along with the issues dealt with. She wonders why the transition should be so strange; the entertainment program resembled an aspect of her life since she is a girl who likes to party in pubs and clubs and to watch people and their interaction with songs. "It is an aspect of my personality and I saw that it was time to make use of it. In my life, I don't rely on one weapon, I have many weapons and I use each one at the appropriate time and need. Fun and entertainment are as much part of this arsenal as seriousness. That's the game of life," Mallat says. I would like to point out here, between brackets, that she innovated in convincing me about her experience and her show that I have always criticized. Now she is preparing new programs with new patterns to avoid repetition. Isn't that a constituent of innovation?

This case also proves to growing girls that idea management and producing programs is not impossible for women. Mallat describes the joy of pulling strings and finds herself, as a producer, in a power situation, saying: "When we stand in the shadow we see clearly, whereas when we are in the limelight we are the one who is seen. This requires a great deal of energy and creates in us a feeling of need to protect ourselves."

Upon asking them how they defined their achievements in the media work, Mukalled answered that her experience on the social level was culminated by drawing attention to the necessity of media work on main human rights (treatment of domestic servants, child labor, child trafficking, poverty, etc.). As for women, there is a new trend in Arab stations to send women reporters to dangerous locations such as Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq. There are new needs that imposed themselves on Arab satellite TV stations and media in a way that going back is no longer possible.

As for Mallat, she said: "Maybe my experience is a lesson to others. Once, while admiring my work, the station manager asked me what work I would have done if I hadn't been in the media field. I simply answered: "A garbage woman but with the same enthusiasm." What is important is the serious professional work. Innovation is not breaking out of the ordinary for one time; it is a continuous renewal journey. It is setting for ourselves a ceiling higher than the one already set and convincing others of it for they will eventually follow us and support us. As soon as I feel that the program has neared exhaustion I put an end to it."

Concerning femininity and whether they have a feminine point of view, Mallat says: "I am against those sayings because I aspire for a society that considers a woman equal to a man, and sometimes a man equal to a woman. Women are basically stronger because they are

allowed to express themselves and to get emotional. The pressure on a man is enormous. He can't feel or cry." As for dealing with society as a female, she answers: "I use my imagination, sometimes I use my personality, sometimes my knowledge, my femininity, my weakness, or my strength. It all depends on who I'm dealing with." When asked about the reactions of society towards her work, Mallat said that sometimes they were violent upon bringing up certain subjects. Many attempts were made to stop the show. Nevertheless, on one hand, she is in a station that can take some pressure on her and the presenter's behalf up front, and on the other, she respects the conditions of the profession, believes in human rights and accepts what is different. She also adds that, through their shows, they were able to find solutions to various problems making them burden the show with more than it can handle. For instance, she followed the case of Badria who got AIDS from her late husband and was practically cast off from society. She went to her milieu, brought her together with people and made her make up with her society. Through this show, she discovered the pleasure of production.

When a person sees that he/she is different, knows that he/she is different and accepts the difference, he/she makes people get used to it. Mallat started introducing herself as different because this difference gives room for the difference of others. It was not strange then that upon my arrival at her house – and it was my first visit – she sat, talked and moved in front of me comfortably and without any pretense, as if she wanted to tell me that she was different. Mallat lives away from her parents and is annoyed by curious persons who ask her whether she is married or not. On the other hand, Mukalled hides another kind of worry in her eyes. She carries the concern of a modern girl bearing the heritage of tradition.

Finally, these distinguished experiences that can have their equivalents in other fields and places have been burdened when labeling them "innovative", as innovation is relative. However, we can say that these two experiences were innovative because they were distinctive compared to other previous experiences and to other experiences in the media field. Yet, to become fully developed, turn into an original innovation, in a continuous creation process, and to become fruitful when it comes to women - in other words, to affect the intellectual and social structure in our communities and the media profession, the suitable infrastructure must be provided to these experiences in order not to become void, not to get hampered by social dilemmas and emotional and family problems, not to fall under the pressure of institutions and stereotyping emerging sometimes from them, from people, from the inner self, and maybe from innovation in itself.

Translated by Nadine Khoury

Poor Women's Empowerment and the Challenges Ahead for the Arab World

■ Nancy Okail

Increasingly, gender equality is identified as one of the most crucial elements for the overall development of any country. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) placed the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women at the top of the development priorities. At the same time, the Arab Human Development Report (2003) sets "gender inequality" as one of the three most significant deficiencies behind the regression of our region.

In this respect, world leaders, scholars, intellectuals and international development organizations began to stress the significance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Despite being recognized as a high priority, there is no clear definition of what is precisely meant by such empowerment. There are three dimensions of empowerment – economic, social and political; nevertheless, empowerment is usually dealt with as one general all-encompassing concept. Consequently, discussion about empowerment has often taken a rhetorical path where little has been said about the specific objectives needed for women's empowerment, and the obstacles standing in their way. Furthermore, most of the views expressed nowadays come from abroad or mostly from well-educated and highly-situated women in our society who are already empowered enough to have their voices heard. Undoubtedly, these voices have had a significant impact in pushing forward the call for gender equality and putting women's rights at the top of the development agenda. However, few have stopped to hear the voices of women at the grassroots level before speaking on their behalf and

designing projects to meet their needs. Although such a vulnerable group represents the larger percentage of the population of developing countries, they are unable to convey their own perspectives, priorities and the challenges ahead of them.

There is a huge gap between the perspective of those vulnerable women and other sectors of the society, not to mention the Western perspective. As a woman coming from a developing country, I had believed for a long time, as many others in the world, that if women acquire economic independence and earn their own sources of finance, they will automatically gain power, have the ability to make their own decisions and demand equal rights to men. However, working with poor women in Egypt's most deprived rural areas (on micro-credit projects for female-headed households), was an invaluable experience that provided me with a totally different perspective and an illuminating insight.

It is true that these women are ultimately concerned with fulfilling their primary needs and earning enough funds to support their families and that micro-credit projects support them a great deal in achieving this objective. Nevertheless, those who succeed in generating their own funds are not actually empowered and do not gain any further rights. The additional funds they earn due to their micro-credit might barely bring about economic empowerment; but that is where it stops. Decisions on how to spend these funds and who takes control over it stay in the hands of their spouses or the man in the family – in the case of single women.

There are several elements contributing to this unfortunate and rather unfair situation. First, in traditional societies, women's work is undervalued; becoming the primary breadwinner of the household is even perceived by the society as an embarrassment that the family is ashamed of and tries to hide it. Consequently, the man remains the sole controller and the primary decision maker in the house, thus obliterating any meaning of social empowerment. Second, this is further complicated by the rigid interpretation of religion that does not treat men and women equally and places several restrictions on their rights and freedom. This is extremely dangerous; speaking in the name of religion, and giving those restrictions a holy mask impedes any attempt for contesting those restrictions and examining their validity.

Third, and most importantly, these women spend a considerable proportion of their day trying to earn money and at the same time they are still expected to exclusively take full responsibility for the needs of their family. Such demanding obligations do not leave them any room for any other personally or socially fulfilling activities. The problem with almost all projects and programs designed to empower women is that they are not adapted to their own culture and circumstances. Very few projects give account to circumstances in rural areas, such as the long distance women have to cover to move from one area to another in order to run their income-generating activities and have enough time to accomplish the housework and prepare meals for their children.

That is why "empowerment" in the Arab world acquired an implicit negative meaning; people thought of it as an externally imposed concept. For many men it is a foreign concept against our tradition, and for many women it is an extra burden as they cannot see the fruits it may bring.

Empowerment in its general sense means providing a person with the tools needed to face the world and its challenges whether that be economic tools, new skills or enhanced human capacity like raising awareness and improving literacy rates. As Plato wisely said centuries and centuries ago:

If women are expected to do the same work as men, we must teach them the same things.

Nevertheless, these tools should be consciously offered, paying close attention to the conditions and the environment into which they are being introduced. On one of those micro-credit projects, I was asking women why they refused to take the free of charge literacy classes that the program offers. Their response was that they simply do not have time and that even if they do, they do not see the reason for literacy. These women lack the reason for education because they were not enlightened on the importance of such an asset. This sheds light on how it is not enough to provide them with a new skill; what is most important is to raise their awareness of the importance of such skills. It is absent from

the minds of many international donor organizations who design those projects that these values are not primarily embedded in the social culture.

As much as conveying such views to the rural poor is a very challenging mission, it is extremely important for closing the gap between what is being offered to support them and what they actually need. Without such endeavors we will not be able to achieve empowerment in its full sense.

It is imperative for our region to promote social and economic empowerment which will ultimately lead to the third dimension of political empowerment. In our region this is not confined to women alone; political empowerment is a missing element in the society as a whole. On one hand, people in the Arab world are faced with oppressive regimes that do not allow an effective participation in the public arena. On the other hand, we are suffering from accumulated apathy – especially the poor who do not have their voices heard and have lost hope that they would make any difference. In order to get those people to participate in public life, they must retain confidence in their government and be reassured that their opinions are valued and their voices needed. Voicelessness and lack of political participation is not a problem of gender alone; it is a problem of a society as a whole. But for people to be able to make informed decisions we must provide them with the necessary skills and tools to give them power to stand up for their own rights.

Empowerment in that sense is both a means and an end for poverty alleviation and development in general. According to the World Bank (2002),

Empowerment refers broadly to the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. It implies control over resources and decisions. For poor people, that freedom is severely curtailed by their voicelessness and powerlessness... Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.¹

Thus, as part of rebuilding our region, it is imperative to empower poor women, the most vulnerable of all groups, and support them in becoming effective and influential members of our society, which requires each and every effort to develop. But in order to achieve this, it is necessary to include their own views while setting our development goals and agendas of priorities; it is highly crucial to get their own voices heard.

Endnotes

1. World Bank, 2002, Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Source Book, Washington D.C., available online at www.worldbank.org

High-level round table on “Innovations in Institutional Arrangements for Promoting Gender Equality at National Level”

Commission on the Status of Women - Forty-Ninth Session

28 February to 11 March 2005

Summary submitted by the Chairpersons of the high-level round table

1. At its second meeting, on 28 February, the Commission held a high-level round table in two parallel sessions on innovations in institutional arrangements for promoting gender equality at national level in the context of the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The purpose of the high-level round table, as set out in Commission decision 46/101, was to enhance the emphasis in the Commission on practical implementation through the sharing of good practices and lessons learnt, the identification of obstacles and constraints encountered in the context of implementation, as well as the identification of new challenges and emerging issues. A discussion guide prepared by the Bureau of the Commission (E/CN.6/2005/CRP.2) provided the framework for the dialogue, and the report of the expert group meeting organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women (28 November to 2 December 2004, Rome, Italy) on “The Role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women: achievements, gaps and challenges” also supported the discussions.

2. The high-level round table was organized in two parallel sessions to allow for interaction among the large number of participants. The sessions were chaired, respectively, by the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, Mr. Gilbert Laurin. After a short presentation by the co-chairs on the findings and recommendations of the expert group meeting, referred to in paragraph 1, the first segment of the high-level round table was devoted to a discussion among ministers and high-level representatives of national machineries for the advancement of women attending the forty-ninth session of the Commission. During the second segment, invited representatives of United Nations entities, representatives from non-governmental and international organizations and academics also took part in the discussion.

3. A total of 73 speakers participated in the two sessions of the high-level round table. Participants included: 55 ministers and deputy ministers, 6 representatives of United Nations entities, 10 representatives of non-governmental organizations or from academic institutions, and 1 representative of an international organization.

4. Participants discussed recent achievements in strengthening or expanding national machineries for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality. They suggested that the effectiveness of these mechanisms had been enhanced when they were located at the highest level of decision-making - for example affiliated with the Office of the President/Head of State or headed at ministerial level, and benefited from strong and visible political support. Participants also gave examples of enhanced mandates

and of increased human or financial resources available to national machineries. National machineries had also taken an active role in ensuring the integration of gender perspectives in national development plans.

5. An increasing number of countries had established multiple mechanisms for promoting gender equality. These encompassed, for example, mechanisms at different levels of Government, i.e. at national, municipal and local level, and gender focal points or units in different ministries, as well as inter-ministerial committees. New mechanisms had been added, such as gender equality commissions and Ombudspersons for gender equality. Parliaments increasingly were establishing parliamentary caucuses on gender equality. Special committees, national gender equality councils or boards with coordination and/or advisory roles had also been established. Such bodies frequently included different stakeholders, including representatives from civil society, trade unions, academic institutions, political parties, and the private sector. Enhanced attention was being paid to the situation of the girl child. Participants welcomed the increased involvement of men in bodies promoting gender equality. The establishment of new bodies to address discrimination on various grounds - sex, race, age, ethnicity - was also planned or under way in a number of countries.

6. Structural improvements of national machineries were frequently accompanied by increased collaboration amongst bodies at the national, municipal and local levels, as well as between governmental and non-governmental bodies and organizations. There was also a growing trend of regional networking among national machineries. There was also enhanced cooperation between human rights groups and women's groups and networks in support of gender equality. Participants noted that clearly defined mandates, responsibilities and relationships of all stakeholders facilitated enhanced coordination and cooperation on gender equality issues. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) could play an important role in supporting coordination.

7. Participants described a wide range of activities undertaken and tools developed by national mechanisms to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. These included promotion and facilitation of the use of the gender mainstreaming strategy in different sectors of Government, incorporation of gender perspectives into national and sectoral development plans and policies and support for increased use of gender-based analysis. In a number of countries, national machineries have spearheaded the promotion of gender-sensitive budgeting processes. They have developed tools for enhancing Government accountability in the area of gender equality, and provided training and capacity-building for staff and senior managers across Government. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have also been improved, including

through regular reporting to Government or Parliament, and the use of gender-specific indicators for programming and planning processes. National machineries had also collaborated with national statistics bureaux in the collection and use of sex-disaggregated statistics and data, and were also involved in organizing awareness-raising campaigns and outreach activities.

8. Participants highlighted the central importance of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals in shaping the work of institutional mechanisms. They also acknowledged the importance of international and regional treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In a number of instances, national mechanisms had been instrumental in ensuring a stronger focus on women's human rights. Participants provided information about the role national machineries had played in achieving legislative changes in civil, family, criminal and labour law and well as in regard to women's property and land rights. Examples were also provided in regard to social security, health and education. Important developments had also been facilitated in regard to violence against women in all its forms, particularly domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls.

9. Participants discussed the challenges which many national machineries continued to face. These included a lack of or limited political support for their work, limited financial and human resources, and location at a low level within the governmental structures which curtailed their decision-making power and influence. In some instances, national machineries continued to lack a clear and focused mandate, or the capacity and authority for efficient and effective coordination of gender equality policy within Government at all levels, and with stakeholders outside Government. Participants noted that a lack of accountability, including the absence of reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as well as insufficient sex-disaggregated data and indicators, also hampered the effectiveness of national machineries. Lack of tools and capacity-building efforts, including training in gender mainstreaming, were also noted. The utilization of the gender analysis methodology in non-traditional areas where the gender-differentiated impact on women and men was not immediately evident was recognized as a particular challenge. The existence of a policy or legal framework for the work of the national machinery was in itself not sufficient to achieve results. Lack of a clear understanding of the concept of gender equality and of the gender mainstreaming strategy and how to use it among Government officials and the general public was also seen as a challenge.

10. Participants commented on the continuing low number of women in political and decision-making fields and its impact on gender equality policies. They discussed the need for measures, including the introduction of quotas and/or other affirmative actions to increase women's participation in public life. Participants suggested that increases in the number of women had a positive impact on the political will of Governments to work for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Non-governmental organizations played a crucial role in mobilizing and sustaining such political will. Some speakers noted the impact of traditional values and beliefs and cultural considerations that discriminated against women, as well as the persistence of stereotypes regarding the role and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society on the achievement of gender equality. National machineries should take a lead role in facilitating public dialogues on such difficult issues.

11. Participants recalled that the Beijing Platform for Action called for the promotion of gender equality through the use of a dual strategy - gender mainstreaming complemented by programmes

and projects targeted at women to address specific gaps or challenges. While awareness-raising initiatives were needed to increase public support for gender equality, school curricula at all levels should reflect the principle of gender equality so that it could be understood and embraced by young women and men. It was also suggested that the gender mainstreaming strategy should be further explained to the general public.

12. Participants identified new and emerging challenges for enhancing the role of institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as areas requiring increased attention from national machineries. The growing recognition of the link between achieving the goals of gender equality and of social and economic development and democratic governance generally called for enhanced partnerships among all stakeholders and for partnerships with men. Likewise, national mechanisms should further strengthen collaboration with non-governmental organizations and women's groups. Since the particular political, social and cultural context was crucial for the successful functioning of the national machinery, efforts were needed to further empower and support such mechanisms within their particular contexts.

13. Among the measures required to ensure the enhanced promotion of gender equality through national mechanisms, participants called for sufficient authority and human and financial resources, as well as their involvement in policy-making processes. The international community should provide assistance to the institutional mechanisms in developing countries. Emphasis was placed on the need to develop effective and appropriate approaches and mechanisms for dealing with discrimination against women, as distinct from discrimination based on other grounds.

14. In addition to specific expertise on gender equality, national machineries also needed lobbying and negotiations skills to be effective. They should undertake capacity-building and training activities, and develop tools and methodologies for gender mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation, and for enhancing accountability, including indicators and time-bound targets. Gender impact assessments of legislation and policies, and sex-disaggregated statistics and data enhanced accountability, contributed to better monitoring of progress toward the achievement of gender equality and identification of areas where further action was required.

15. Participants agreed that national mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women should be actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of progress towards the objectives of the Millennium Declaration, so as to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment were fully incorporated into all efforts towards achievement of the MDGs. They should make greater use of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in all legislative and policy initiatives.

16. National machineries were encouraged to commission independent assessments of their own effectiveness or conduct self-assessments to enhance accountability. They were also encouraged to intensify their dialogue with human rights bodies, civil society and the private sector, as well as the media and the general public in support of gender equality.

17. The exchange of experiences, good practices and challenges among high-level representatives from capitals, and the contributions of other stakeholders were seen as a valuable contribution to the 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Participants encouraged the continuation of such exchange at the national and regional levels, and cooperation on specific topics.

His/story Through the Eyes of a Girl: Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*

■ Reviewed by Aglaia Viviani

"Distance" is undoubtedly one of the keywords with which to interpret *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (the human rights activist of Arabic origin, born in Iran in 1969, currently living in France):¹ first, because it is written using an almost filmic technique, which reminds one of many famous Iranian movies; second, because it is written from the distance of a different time and place (more than twenty years later, France), in relation to the events it narrates. Last, but not least, this interesting book about sexual and cultural difference is written in a language, French, which is not the writer's mother tongue, thus enabling Satrapi both to distance herself from the text and to make it immediately available to a wide public.

The desire to give testimony to the women of her family and to her fellow countrywomen seems in fact to be what triggers this amazing childhood autobiography.² In the preface, clearly aware of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the author states how, writing *Persepolis*, she meant to deconstruct most Western clichés about Iran and about the condition of women living there. To achieve her goal, Satrapi chooses to use a narrative form in which the "showing" is given the same importance as the "telling", i.e. the comic-strip story.

This literary genre, usually associated with children's literature and thought to belong to a kind of subculture, is not a random choice. As the writer recalls in her autobiography, in the late seventies her favorite book was just a comic-strip story on Marxian theories, so Satrapi is conscious of the importance of comics in the development of a child's personality. It is worth noticing, however, that the protagonist of *Persepolis* is a young girl, while only relatively few comics have a female protagonist.

As Peter Hunt affirms, "children's books do not fit easily into the patriarchal world of cultural values... children's books are invisible in the literary world, in much the same way as women... have been, and still are."³ The concept of visibility, and particularly women's visibility, is another crucial issue for Satrapi. To deal with the concept of women's visibility means necessarily to deal with the subject of the veil, a particularly delicate matter in contemporary France. Satrapi's position on this issue seems to be that the veil should be allowed everywhere, but only worn through personal choice; yet, the veil is not the only problem connected with visibility that Satrapi discusses.

Pictures often convey a sense of realism much more than words do, because they make people actually see an

event. And to make a story visible, so that it can be more easily believed, is exactly the aim of one who wishes to bear testimony: it is Satrapi's case, but also Joe Sacco's with his comic-strip story, *Palestine*, which depicts the lives of the Palestinian people, perpetually at risk. (It is perhaps worth mentioning that the child Marjane begins questioning God's existence right after learning about the situation of Palestinian children.)

In *Persepolis*, His/story is both shown and told from the point of view of a young girl. Being a child, she cannot fully understand what is going on around her; Marjane overhears only bits and pieces of adult "not-for-children" conversations, so she tries to put together, as in a jigsaw, her scattered fragments of experience, and to give them meaning according to her necessarily limited parameters.

So, for example, when the veil is declared compulsory, Satrapi shows how she and her female friends (suddenly separated from their male schoolmates) invent many games in which their veils become toys; and, learning that the Shah has flown to Egypt ("Both the Shah and Sadat have betrayed their countries, signing a pact with Israel," she is told by her father), Marjane wonders if this has something to do with the Shah's first wife.

The inequality of social classes under the Shah's regime is shown through the love story of the writer's nanny: Mehri, ten years older than Marjane, falls in love with a rich, westernized neighbor (he sports a Bee Gees t-shirt, and a John Travolta-like haircut). He thinks that Mehri is Marji's older sister. When the young man discovers that she is not, he dumps her, leaving the nanny heart-broken and the child very angry for the injustice witnessed.

At night, she goes into her nanny's bed to comfort and soothe her; the didascaly says: "We did not belong to the same social class, but at least we shared the same bed". From then on, Marjane joins her family in their anti-Shah activities.

However, some members of Satrapi's family are persecuted and tortured under the Shah's regime, but later killed by the new government. The most important among them is the author's uncle, Anush, a communist who tells his niece wonderful, sad stories. This deeply affects the girl, and particularly her relationship to God.

Until Anush's release from prison (because the Shah has flown), Marjane's attitude toward God was a graphic illustration of the meaning of "Islam": she was depicted as happily abandoned in His arms; "the arms of my friend were the only safe place," she writes. Afterwards, Anush's ideas place some distance between the girl and God. When he is again imprisoned and shot, the child

reacts exactly as the poet Sylvia Plath did when she was eight and her father died prematurely: she sends God away, finding herself alone and frightened in an immense, cold and dark universe (the child Marji is depicted as floating in space, among the planets).

The desperation of this scene clearly reminds the reader (and particularly the feminist and/or French-speaking reader) of a similar passage in *Mémoires d'une Jeune Fille Rangée*, the first volume of Simone De Beauvoir's autobiography.

Even teachers can be a perplexing matter, for a child. After the Shah's departure, Marjane's female teacher tells her class to rip out the Shah's photo from their textbooks: "Didn't you tell us that the Shah was God-sent?", asks the child. Under the new republic, vice-versa, during the war against Iraq, the same teacher gives her (now only female) pupils lots of patriotic homework. Moreover, twice a day the girls have to beat their chests while listening to macabre music, as a sign of mourning for the dead soldiers. Young Marji's reaction is to play the fool: the daring, fed up child exaggerates her grief to parody it and to make her friends laugh.

Laughter is an incredibly powerful act of resistance, Satrapi affirms. When anything that stands for the West becomes forbidden, young people become used to buying smuggled American pop music and paraphernalia like posters and pins. This, however, can be very risky: even the child's bedroom, this entirely personal space with its cherished objects, is under scrutiny. When teenage Marjane is found by some female "wardens of the revolution" with a Michael Jackson pin, she tells them that he is Malcolm X. The didascaly says: "Michael Jackson was then still black".

With cleverness and an ever-present, subtle irony, the author also states that history is a force which crushes the common people, and only seldom those who Antoine De Saint-Exupéry, in his *Le Petit Prince*, calls "les grandes personnes". Those who are mercilessly crushed are often women. In *Persepolis* one can find a particularly touching strip called "The Key". It tells the story of a thirteen-year old boy who is sent to the front carrying a golden plastic key, to open the gates of Heaven after his death. His

Didn't you tell us that the Shah was God-sent?

mother, until then a very religious widow, is totally shattered.

At the same time, in *Persepolis* there are lots of positive female figures. Marjane's grandmother, who manages to raise her three children alone and in extreme poverty because her husband is in prison, is one of them. Yet, the most powerful model for the author is perhaps her brave mother, an educated woman and an active feminist. At the beginning of the story, the child Marji looks like a miniaturized replica of her mother: they have the same haircut, the same eyes and profile, almost the same clothes. As the protagonist of *Persepolis* grows up, however, she acquires peculiar features and a strong personality.

Marjane's growth into a rebellious teenager is in fact marked by a growing awareness: a feminist awareness (there is most of Zaynab Fawwaz Al-'Amili, and the whole *Deuxième Sexe* by De Beauvoir, in the single vignette in which, during a police raid, a perplexed Marjane is left with her newborn cousin by a runaway aunt: "Since then

I've had serious doubts about the so-called 'maternal instinct,'" says the didascaly), a self-awareness, and also awareness about political events

Marjane's first cigarette is smoked as an act of resistance against "my mother's domestic despotism," at the same time in which Marjane (who is now fourteen) and her family are actively opposing the

government. She is expelled from two different schools for insubordinacy; therefore her parents decide to send her away from Iran, where she seems to be doomed to prison.

In this context, the "I" who narrates her/story is defined by a complex of relationships fixing the boundaries between "self" and "other": "I" is therefore inextricably linked to a wider "we", so that in the end the reader is actually shown not a *solo* portrait but an entire group portrait, a whole fresco.

Satrapi, who from the very first pages of her autobiography underlines her deep religious faith from early childhood ("Although my family was very modern, and quite progressive, I was a true believer," "I was born full of reli-

gion," "As a child, I wanted to be a prophet when I grew up"), also connects herself to the Islamic tradition of narrating stories from the Koran to children in an almost fairy tale-like form.

Yet, children's literature is only one among the many possible passwords to approach *Persepolis*. Feminism surely is another one, considering how much space is allowed to gender in this feminine *Bildungsroman* which also appears as a quest-book. The reader of Satrapi's autobiography is often reminded of a strong homo-social essay such as Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*: the young girl who tells her story in *Persepolis* draws the (woman) reader into the magic circle of her narration, creating empathy and a kind of complicity which excludes the male gaze.

The body of the young protagonist (a child's body, which according to David Sibley "experiences things acutely in a physical sense: place, events, relationships with others")⁵ who grows up under the reader's eye, becomes the text/place where writer and reader can meet.

Persepolis therefore becomes a sort of door/book enabling readers to transform the story they are reading, and to be at the same time transformed by it, as it happens in another recent outstanding novel concerned with the same issues as *Persepolis*: Professor Azar Nasafi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.⁶

ENDNOTES

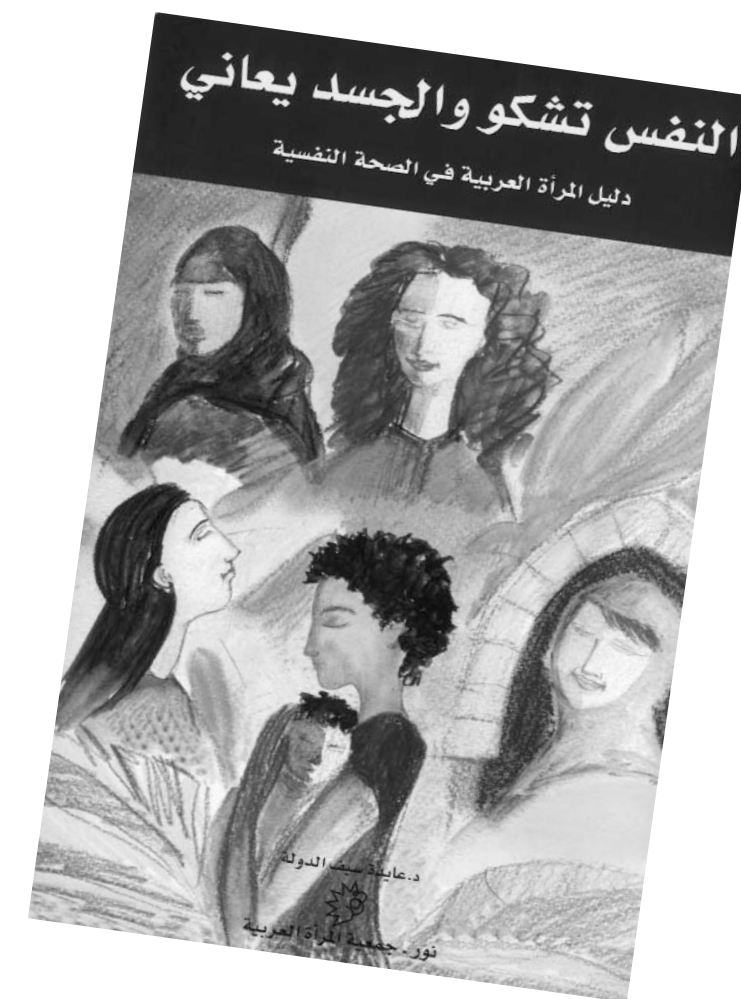
1. I am quoting from the Italian edition: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*, Milano: Sperling & Kupfer, 2003. All the translations into English are mine.
2. For the most widely accepted definition of autobiography, see Philippe Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique*, Paris: Seuil, 1975: "Récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité" (p. 14). For a discussion of childhood autobiography as a literary genre, see "Le récit d'enfance en question," *Cahiers de Sémiotique Textuelle*, 12, 1988: 5-155.
3. Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature*, Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1994, pp. 6-7.
4. Satrapi, p. 6.
5. For the female quest-book, see Maureen Murdock, *The Heroine's Journey*, Boston & London: Shambala, 1990. David Sibley, "Families and Domestic Routines. Constructing the Boundaries of Childhood", in Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (Eds.), *Mapping the Subject. Geography and Cultural Transformation*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 123-137.
6. Azar Nasafi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, London: Random House, 2003.

The Mind Complains and the Body Suffers: Arab Women's Guide to Mental Health

Reviewed by Azzah Shararah Baydoun

"At various stages of our lives, we women are intrigued by questions and stricken by fears that bring us to wonder whether we are in our right minds or on the verge of madness. In dealing with our emotions and thoughts, we resort to silence and suppression. Each one of us thinks she is the only one in the world to be tempted by such thoughts and feelings. So we repress them in an attempt to elude their attribution to mental illness... Knowledge is the first step towards overcoming fear and anxiety. It is what enables us to confront factors deemed threatening to our sanity."

This excerpt is taken from the back cover of *The Mind Complains and the Body Suffers: Arab Women's Guide to Mental Health*,¹ a book written in Arabic by Aida Seif El Dawla, and published in 2003 by Nour – the Arab Women's Association, Beirut. The book's focus on knowledge, as a prerequisite for overcoming those factors that affect women's mental health, highlights the publishing group's goal of deconstructing preconceived notions on this issue. Among these is a faulty belief that by choosing to ignore a psychological problem, we can diffuse it; whereas complaining about it – consequently admitting its existence – boosts its clout over us, thereby weakening our ability to control it.



Book Review

One of the book's underlying principles is the right to knowledge – a principle that is repeated throughout its chapters. Hailed as an absolute right and an end in itself, knowledge is also presented as a necessary condition for empowering women, in general, and an avenue leading them to take control of their mental health, in particular. It is deemed imperative in view of the fact that women's mental health is generally shrouded with a "not so innocent" cloud of ambiguity, its expressions are lightly attributed to women's "nature" and biology and presented as a quasi-inescapable lot to be added to the glut of other lots governing their existence.

At the Crossroads of Concerns

Because knowledge is a human right, and because it is a chief means of empowering women, Nour – Arab Women's Association, took the initiative of addressing this issue as part of a range of similar issues related to women.² As mental health is essentially a scientific object of concern of psychiatry, Nour commissioned a woman

psychiatrist who is a university professor at an Arab university,³ to write the book. It is noteworthy that this association adopts an approach to health in general, and to mental health in particular, viewing it as the product of various factors comprising the biological, political, economic and socio-cultural, etc. all condensed in gender. Therefore, this book's area of concern was not limited to the

discipline of psychiatry exclusively; as a matter of fact, an advisory committee and a group of readers from across the Arab world comprised of experts in fields related to psychology, sociology, communication, development, public health, nursing, psychiatry and education collaborated with the writer as consultants. They read the successive drafts written and rewritten by the author in an attempt to sensitize the resultant text to all the factors mentioned.

Yet this book stands out even more due to the publisher's interest to target medium-level educated women, as well as social workers from governmental and non-governmental organizations who, in turn, target underprivileged women in the numerous development and service centers across the Arab countries. In line with this interest, effort was expended to make the text readable and to select subjects that are of interest to this targeted read-

ership. As such, the committee and consultative group of readers offered remarks that thereafter set the criteria for the writer as she was preparing her final draft, in a bid to improve its readability by the target group and more adapted to its needs.

What is in the Book?

This book presents knowledge and information on mental health issues, based, explicitly written or not, on theories related to the field of psychology, psychiatry and mental health. Various issues are tackled related to these disciplines, with a special focus on women. The value in presenting such information does not lie so much in the selection of subjects from a range that is necessarily very wide, but rather in the fact that it offers examples about possible situations and problems that invite the reader to look further into them and entertain the possibility of seeking further knowledge and information about other or similar situations and problems.

This book offers an ascending classification of symptoms and mental disorders, providing thereby a primary guide that allows one to draw the line between "normalcy" and "insanity", and between the ability to rely on one's personal resources and network (parents, friends, sometimes religious preachers) in dealing with normal crises and psychological symptoms, and between the necessity to refer oneself – or be referred to – the care of a specialist's intervention. The professionals, in turn, are classified according to their training and their therapeutic approaches and techniques.

Generally speaking, although the book is scientific, it is seldom written in a dry "scientific" style; rather, the information is presented in such a way as to deconstruct misconceptions or examine preconceptions on certain issues, or in a question-answer form. The frequently asked questions include, for instance, the issues of infertility, the nature of marital relations, the psychological effects of menopause, the justifications used in instances of violence against women, the use and abuse of pharmaceuticals and tobacco, etc.

Following two prefaces – one that explains the writing process of the book and another that explains why it was necessary to tackle the issue of women's health – the book offers definitions of "mental health" and presents in chapter one the various views of the Western schools of thought on "personality". With this chapter, it sets the ground for examining the factors affecting women's mental health. The following chapter enumerates and describes the key stages in a woman's life and the meaning that each stage acquires in our social culture. A following chapter addresses stress and its psychological and physical effects on women. The remaining chapters

address symptoms, psychological disorders, more specifically psychosomatic disorders, whose title was given to the book itself. The book has a special chapter on violence against Arab women in its various forms, highlighting its destructive effect on women and their families. In a last chapter, almost provocatively entitled "It is your right not to be alone, it is your right to seek help," the book reaffirms the Madrid Declaration and reiterates the UN General Assembly's resolution on protecting individuals suffering from psychological disorders.

Premises and Information

The Mind Complains and the Body Suffers was written by women and for women mainly, but not exclusively. Understandably it involves a friendly and positive attitude towards them; at certain points, it is even possible to sense the writer's anger at the prevailing discrimination against women – and Arab women more specifically, especially manifested when she writes about girls' circumcision and other forms of violence against women.

What may appear as predilection towards women, and based on a set of values related to women's rights or on a commitment to women's issues, derives in fact from a thorough examination of the existing discrimination against women in general, and more specifically, in the field of health care and psychiatry. Furthermore, it is an outcome of research in the sub-field of behavioral medicine accumulated over 40 years of work by women active in the fields of medicine and psychiatry. The facts presented in this book are characterized by their focus on women's issues, such as their reproductive function and its socio-cultural implications comprising preconceptions, law and legislation, and customs and practices in patriarchal societies. It has been acknowledged that these issues have a non-negligible effect on women's mental health, but were mostly ignored in the fields of psychology and medicine, or were solely presented from a male perspective. It can further be noted that professionals in these fields not only did not pay heed to the consequences of the above-mentioned implications – let alone deal with them – but sometimes contributed to their reproduction.

The book implicitly warns the readers that even psychiatrists and psychotherapists can be biased in favor of the hegemonic male authority in the respective profession, inviting women to rely on the human rights charter and its derivatives in the various fields, including mental health. These rights include the right to self-achievement, participation in the decision-making process, refusal and denunciation of discrimination and violence in all its forms. The final chapter includes the Madrid Declaration, and establishes the ethical, legal, and scientific principles on which the rights of the mental patient are founded.

Not a Remedy for Peace of Mind... and Yet

The author is cautious about providing ready-made prescriptions. *The Mind Complains and the Body Suffers* is not "a magic remedy for peace of mind or happiness." But it does include a few instructions designed to help bring about psychological relief or to warn about potential dangers that could exist when women's mental health is addressed. For instance, there is a description of a relaxation technique to ease psychological stress, advice on how to treat pressing sleeping disorders, caution against the use of pharmaceuticals, advice on how to set limits to the intervention of religious men in matters of mental health, on how to deal with violence directed at women, etc. These instructions are all presented explicitly; but we also find instructions that are embedded within the subjects raised, for instance the need to approach sensitive issues such as virginity, the first menstruation for girls who are in the custody of women (mothers, relatives or social workers), the meaning of motherhood, fatherhood, parents' responsibilities, marital relations and the art of their management, facing domestic violence and molestation, etc. When the book looks into the reasons, forms of seeking psychological help – who, when and to whom – it assumes a clear directional tone in telling what must and must not be done.

Fluency and Friendliness

The relevance of the scientific information provided in this book is already being acknowledged.⁴ It is presented in an attractive and not so complicated style, with expressions and terms that have become, more or less, part of medium-level educated people's language repository. It was written using the pronoun "us", in a bid to eradicate the barrier between the seeker of medical advice and its provider, or between the knowledgeable and the recipient of knowledge. This is deliberately done by the author and her consultants in an attempt to empower the women readers of the book, by way of providing them with some knowledge that would permit a degree of control over issues pertaining to mental health. But this friendly formulation has another function too. When the writer addresses women using "us", thus inducing a friendly atmosphere – maybe even complicity – between the writer and reader, this contributes to dispel the solitude of women in facing their mental pains – which is exactly the aim described in the excerpt presented at the beginning of this review.

An Expression of Sisterhood and an Example to Emulate

This book should be hailed as an expression of sisterhood, and deserves a warm salute; it is an expression of sisterhood because it was written by a woman psychiatrist, a professor at one of the most distinguished Arab universities, in collaboration with a women's organiza-

This book should be hailed as an expression of sisterhood, and deserves a warm salute...

tion. Furthermore, the author, although distinguished in her field, welcomed the recommendations and alterations of the initial and successive drafts made by consultants and experts and academics from various fields at the boundaries of psychiatry. Finally, the book is written in an easy and attractive style addressed to women in the "us" form, hereby implicating the reader and vulgarizing the scientific material to adjust it to the level of underprivileged women readership.

In addition to it being a 'guide for Arab women on mental health' – as its subtitle indicates – the book is an indication that the women's movement in the Arab world has started to draw the attention of women scholars and professionals who studied under the male academic and epistemological system. It may also be a starting point towards the practice of reconsidering the claim of the mentioned system to neutrality. This might be paving the way for a revision of the male system of knowledge, its theories, its approaches, its ways of dealing with women's issues, in addition to the effectiveness of its applications and practices. Such a revision will eventually lead to integrating women's perspectives, to responding to their specificities, and to consolidating practices that would not violate their rights. Women are not the sole benefactors of such a development: Making science

accessible to women who are poorly educated might be an example that could be emulated by activists in all those fields that are monopolized by experts and academics who use their knowledge and experience to maintain their power over the 'non-knowledgeable'.

Finally, *The Mind Complains and the Body Suffers* claims to have been written for women who do not enjoy a high educational level. But it is clearly a book that addresses everyone.

Translated by Lynn Maalouf

ENDNOTES

1. The book can be ordered from www.nouraw.org
2. The first publication is a book on nutrition *Bilsaha wal Hana*. A book on health for elderly women is currently in the making.
3. The writer has a PhD in Psychiatry, and teaches Psychiatry at Egypt's Ain Chams University.
4. Sensitization discussions of the book targeting social workers of the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs have been carried out in the six Muhafazats of Lebanon. The evaluation of the book following these discussion sessions has invariably pointed to the relevance of the information it provided to their work with underprivileged women.

Forthcoming: Arab Women and Disability

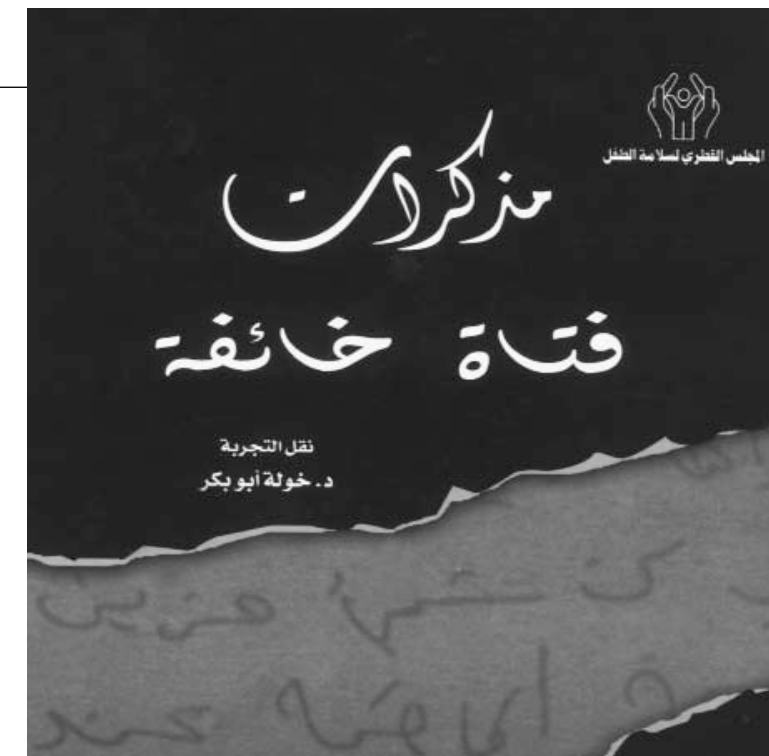
The Diary of a Frightened Girl

■ Reviewed by Mona Fayad

The Diary of a Frightened Girl is a booklet written by a "young frightened girl" who was unable to open up to anyone. She was very distraught because no one felt her anxiety, no one listened to her stifled cries for help, no one realized her agony and no one asked her what was wrong. Why did she want her mother to accompany her to her training sessions? Why did she give up her dream? No one bothered to find out.

In her preface, Dr. Khawla Abou Baker, the researcher, counselor and therapist – specialized in family matters and conflicts – addresses parents and educators. Through her booklet that is small in form, yet poignant in its message she asserts: "Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that is practiced by someone who is older than and has power over his/her victims. The victim may be a girl or a boy, a woman or a man. This phenomenon is widespread all over the world and is prevalent in Arab society as well. The detrimental effects of sexual harassment touch upon all aspects of one's life and can be extremely disruptive to one's mental, psychological, and emotional well-being.

In order to help victims of sexual harassment understand what happened to them and cope with this phenomena



we have to provide children with proper sexual education that is practical, thought-out, gradual and clear and that goes hand in hand with their physical maturity. We also need to deal with the incident of sexual harassment as a real problem that has affected the victim gravely.

Book Review

Treatment ought to be carried out immediately so that the problem does not get worse.

The Diary of a Frightened Girl documents the agony of a young girl who was sexually harassed by her teacher. Consequently she suffered a lot throughout her childhood because of the abuse she was subjected to. Due to her fear, inexperience and ignorance she kept the issue of harassment to herself. This ominous secret, well hidden from people, had a lot of negative effects on her personality and frame of mind. Only when she grew up was she able to talk about her abuse and face her fears. Through therapy she started recalling in detail the harassment. Moreover, she documented the abuse in a diary, and by writing her recollections she was able to talk about her secret, come to terms with her fears and overcome her problem.

The purpose behind publishing these memoirs is to alert parents, educators and therapists to the behavioral and psychological manifestations conveyed by victims on the one hand; and, on the other hand, to raise the issue in the family, classroom and among various groups of children and youth in order to protect potential victims and encourage actual victims to open up and discuss their experiences of abuse.

Sexual abuse takes place in society and we all have to join hands to solve this problem. It is very useful to distribute this book in schools and encourage students to read it. It is bound to help students who are experiencing harassment to deal with their abuse more constructively – unlike the booklet's protagonist who suffered in silence.

What does this diary tell us? In the first few pages we come across a cheerful young girl who is leading a happy life. She is encouraged by her teacher to write so she keeps a diary in which she expresses how happy she is to be able to go to the sports club with her colleagues and friends. There the young girl and her girlfriends rehearse and train in sports to join professional tournaments. She treasures her extra curricular activity and is delighted to be a member given that her parents are poor and have gone through great efforts to enroll her in the club whose fees they can hardly afford. When she first started writing in her diary she admitted: "The club is the nicest place in the country." Yet all of a sudden, the young girl stops writing in her diary. The pause stretches from October 20th till April 25th. When she resumes writing her tone is withdrawn and frightened. She has a secret she wants to bury. It scares her and she wants to hide the diary so that no one can read what is in it and discover her secret.

In her diary the "young scared girl" documents how her sports teacher started molesting and sexually harassing her. She recounts how whenever they were alone he would

start rubbing his body against her. She adds that with time he started deliberately delaying her by asking her to stay on to be alone with her. Moreover, he befriended her family, visited them often, and became a regular guest at their table. He also relieved her parents of paying the club fees.

The young girl started hating his visits, yet was unable to convey her feelings to her parents given that she was the one who insisted on joining the club in the first place. When the teacher decided to give her private lessons and train her alone because he believed she had potential she became very troubled and anxious and she wished she would disappear so that he would no longer bother her. She started agonizing about meeting her teacher alone and preferred to spend time with her friends. Her teacher got annoyed and complained to her father that she was wasting her time playing with her friends instead of concentrating and training efficiently. Hence, she was reprimanded by her father.

In her diary the young girl recounts how her feelings evolve. She admits that she is incapable of expressing her feelings. Given that she is a polite and well brought up girl she is troubled by the fact that she is disobeying her father's wishes and refusing to comply with the requests of her teacher who represents law, order and authority. This dilemma is very difficult for a child to solve. On the one hand she wants to train and enter the tournament, yet, on the other hand she is unable to ward off her teacher's advances or report him to her parents who have befriended him and who respect and admire him.

She asks her mother to accompany her to the club while she trains but she refuses because she is too busy taking care of the younger children. The young girl starts feeling very schizophrenic, she has to censor and silence herself given that she is scared of telling her mother the truth. Besides, even if she confessed to her mother there is a very big chance that her mother would not believe her and might blame her instead. She admits: "I wish my mother would ask me what is happening? I am too embarrassed and scared to talk about it. I am angry with my mother." Her mother never stopped to ask herself why her daughter, all of a sudden, wants her to accompany her to the club.

This situation developed into a crisis as the young girl became increasingly burdened by the secret she was carrying. She was unable to sleep properly and was constantly frightened and angry. She was left with only one choice, to give up the one thing she enjoyed the most, namely going to the club to exercise and train for the tournament. Despite her yearning to realize her dream she gave everything up and withdrew her name from the tournament.

Translated by Myriam Sfeir