

Research Abstracts

Al Zouheiry, Mawiya Fareed. "Mixed Marriage in Lebanon: The Effect it Has on the Psycho-Social Reality." *Lebanese University, M.A Thesis, Department of Social Sciences 1995-1996.*

Al Zouheiry tackles the topic of mixed marriages in Lebanon. She analyzes the overall effect of Lebanese society, which is a confessional one, on the psycho-social state of a woman married to a man from another sect. She portrays the problematic nature of such mixed marriages, in which women, in most cases, are expected to renounce their names, sects, customs and traditions, and to adopt those of their husbands. Al Zouheiry aims at finding out the validity of the assumption that a certain harmony and understanding can be established between two people from different backgrounds and who have enjoyed different customs and traditions.

Twenty five women from the same sect were involved in this study. Al Zouheiry chose a single sect because she was unable to study all the different religious sects present in Lebanon. The sample was collected from five governmental departments. Al Zouheiry used interviews as well as a questionnaire. Her initial sample comprised 29 women; however, four of them refused to participate.

Al Zouheiry found that success in marriage is established when couples demonstrate similar social, economic, professional and psychological characteristics. She also detected the importance of economic independence in producing a successful marriage; it is essential for women to work and be financially self-sufficient. Moreover, she discovered that success in marriage is most likely when couples are not religious (i.e., when the wife is not forced by her husband to contract a religious marriage.), the partners share the same educational background, and do not live next to their parents.

Al Zouheiry argues that Lebanese society fails to accept those mixed marriages in which personal status codes act as impediments hindering their success. The absence of civil codes only highlights the importance of advocating civil marriage. Moreover, the author maintains that harmony and understanding between couples can be established when both partners share a similar socio-economic and educational background and the same tastes and expectations in life. She concludes that a mixed marriage depends for its success on understanding and adaptation between the couples. If these are established, then stability and continuity can take place regardless of external societal and parental pressure.

Mourtada, Asma. "Societal Development and the Marriage Crisis." *Lebanese University, M.A Thesis, Department of Social Sciences 1993-1994.*

Asma Mourtada aims to portray the feelings of unmar-

ried men and women, their opinion concerning their situation, and their parents' standpoint. She attempts to shed some light on the reasons behind this phenomenon, its results, and the determining factors that highlight such a problem. Her sample comprises 50 individuals of both sexes equally divided. The men involved were in their 30s and the women were on the average about 27 years of age.

Mourtada used a questionnaire in which the participants were asked to cite several reasons why they thought marriage was important. The reasons varied, as the participants maintained that people get married in order to establish a family or lead a stable life. Moreover, some regarded marriage to be a requirement in life whereas others believed it to be a religious duty. Both the participants and their parents agreed that the best age for marriage is between 15 and 20 for females and between 21 and 30 for males. The participants had no objection to getting married to someone from a different area or region; however, most of them rejected marriage to someone from a different religion, sect, or nationality. Among the criteria cited for choosing a partner were love and education, social status, economic status, beauty, politeness and religiosity. 76% of the participants regarded themselves too old for marriage. Moreover, they explained that parents tended to interfere less in their decisions and choices as they grew older.

Asma Mourtada concludes that late-age marriage is affected by educational and socio-economic status. She finds that 86% of parents encourage their children to work, for they are anxious about their children being economically dependent on them throughout their lives. They are also saddened by the prospect that they might never experience having grandchildren. Moreover, Mourtada detects a decline in the importance of religion and religious teachings urging one to get married among groups belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds.

El-Tablouny, Juhaina Ismail. "Choosing a Partner." *Lebanese University, M.A Thesis, Department of Social Sciences 1994-1995.*

El-Tablouny attempts to highlight the variables - other than love and emotion- that affect one's decision in choosing a partner, such as educational background, age, profession, and cultural and societal reasons. Twenty married couples served as her sample; they were selected from a village in the mountains called Bekaata. She made use of interviews as well as written material in English and Arabic.

El-Tablouny's research confirms the saying that "birds of a feather flock together" for she discovered that one tends to choose a partner close to him/herself in age, religion, educational background, geographical location, and values. She also found that parents influence their children's decisions in choosing a partner. Moreover, she detected that rural men still suffer from deeply ingrained habits of mind. Hence, although some changes in men's mentalities have occurred, religion and virginity are still heeded when it comes to choosing a partner. She

also noticed that most rural men whose wives are more educated than they are themselves either suffer from weak personalities or tend to utilize their material power to dominate their wives. El-Tablouny's findings reveal that women in rural areas - where they earn less and enjoy less political participation - are discriminated against. Although the interviewees preferred to marry within their confession, intermarriages did take place in Bekaata.

El-Tablouny concludes that marriage is a social process and that individuals tend to choose partners whose religion and nationality are similar to theirs. She holds that educational and economic variables are essential and influential factors affecting a marriage's success. She maintains that people are becoming more liberal and educated since both men and women no longer marry at an early age. Moreover, society these days tolerates relationships between men and women who choose each other for personal reasons such as love and romance. However, parents still influence their children's decisions in choosing a partner. She calls for more studies to examine the variables that affect one's reasons for choosing a partner and she highlights the need to explore the effect that these variables may have on the failure or success of a marriage.

Schaefer Davis, Susan, and Douglas Davis.

"Love Changes All? Changing Images of Gender and Relationships in Morocco." *Children in the Muslim Middle East*. Ed. E.W. Fernea. Austin: U of Texas P, 1995.

This article describes how gender roles in today's Morocco are changing substantially and rapidly - at least at first glance. On closer examination, one sees that the changes are uneven and occur at different rates for different groups. Some women, and fewer men, favor more changes, more equal roles throughout their marriages and also in raising children. Those who support the status quo are mainly men for whom change would decrease privileges. Those who favor change are mainly educated women who work outside the home. Still, other women appear to accept, if not support or put beyond question, traditional gender roles; mainly semirural women in Zawiya with little or no education fit into this group. Yet, at nearly all levels, women want a more affective relationship with their husbands.

What causes these changes? Education and the media are both important influences on gender roles. First, education places youth in closer contact with peers and decreases time spent in multigenerational kin groups. While elders are still respected, they play a less central role in socializing the young. Education has given younger women new goals, increased mobility, and sometimes new jobs. Modern media - especially television films - from both the Middle East and the West, make viewers in all parts of the country aware of new forms of relationships and affect the aspirations of many, especially for marriage based on a love match rather than the traditional one arranged by parents. Yet such love matches, and the resulting "companionate marriages," contain many flaws and strains. A recent American study of reasons given for divorce notes that problems include an expectation of intimacy, one which is based

on an equality for which the sexes are not socialized, and similar problems are likely to occur in Morocco. Thus whether these new aspirations will be met, or whether these young Moroccans are buying a fantasy that is unrealistic and that many of their European and American counterparts have found reason to question, remains to be seen.

Conferences

"International Conference on Gender and Development in Asia" is the title of a conference to be held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, November 27-29, 1997. The conference is organized jointly by Gender Research Programme, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies and the Departments of Sociology and Government and Public Administration at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. It aims at bringing together international scholars working on gender and Asian development. The discussion will revolve around three main topics: Gender and Political Development, Gender and Social Change, and Gender, Sex and Violence. For further information and inquiries, contact Organizing Committee (Attn: Ms Serena Chu), International Conference on Gender and Development in Asia, Gender Research Programme, The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong, Fax: (852) 2609 5215, e-mail: gendev@cuhk.edu.hk.)

The Second International Conference on **"Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: Health and Human Rights"** will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A. (November 6-11, 1997). The well-attended first Women in Africa and the African Diaspora (WAAD) conference that was held in Nigeria in 1992 attracted participants from all continents. The second conference has generated enthusiastic response worldwide and promises to be an important global event. For more information contact Professor Obioma Nnaemeka, Convener, Second WAAD Conference, French and Women's Studies, Indiana University, 425 University Boulevard, Indianapolis, IN 46202 U.S.A.

Recent Publications

- * *Feminism and Islam*, by Mai Yamani.
U of London, 1996.
- * *A Woman's Reality*, by Segolene Royal.
Paris: Stook House, 1996.
- * *Pillars of Salt*, by Fadia Fakir.
London: Quartet House, 1996.
- * *Another Voice from Algeria*, by Louisa Hanoun.
Paris: La Découverte, 1996.