



The Arab Families Working Group
Conference on Framing: Rethinking Arab Family Projects in Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine
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Paper Abstracts

Reem Saad, American Univeristy in Cairo- “Costs of Coping With Poverty in Rural Egypt”

This paper focuses on the impact of poverty on family in rural Egypt through focusing on a moment that witnessed abrupt impoverishment of almost one million families. This moment refers to the large scale evictions that followed the full implementation of the new tenancy law in 1997, resulting in the loss of the main source of livelihood and compounding the now chronic problem of rural poverty in Egypt. A question that was often asked by those who were aware of the extent of poverty-related problems, and who were concerned about the fate of rural-dwellers is: how are people coping? In response to this question, we usually turn to investigating “coping strategies” through looking at ways in which a population living under conditions of extreme economic distress is managing to survive. This is a reasonable response to a legitimate question, and “coping strategies” remains a useful way of guiding investigation into the realities of living with poverty. This contribution, however, intends to shift the focus from ways of coping to highlighting the costs of coping. This paper argues that strategies for coping with the immediate state of distress necessarily engender longer-term adverse conditions. At the social level, they hit at the most vulnerable social groups within an already distressed population. At another level, the paper examines the implications of coping for issues of resistance. As has been the case with “everyday forms of resistance”, good-intentioned excessive celebration of “strategies of survival” as signs of popular genius may be unwittingly contributing to the dissipating the potential for political action towards real change. The paper finally raises a general theoretical question concerning the meaning (or even possibility) of agency under conditions of extreme distress and great power disparity. The paper is based on fieldwork that was conducted in a number of Upper Egyptian villages during the year following the evictions.

Hoda Elsadda, Manchester University – “Gender and Nation in Egyptian Fiction in the 1990s: A readubg if Somaya Ramadan’s Leaves of Narcissus”

This paper is part of a project that looks at literary representations of gendered roles in the 1990s in Egypt. It takes as its starting point a controversial characterization of some of the fiction published in the 1990s in Egypt, namely, that this fiction does not engage with larger or national issues “al qadaya al-kubra”. Drawing on postcolonial feminist approaches to gender and nation, the paper interrogates the meaning of identity, specifically gendered national identity, through a reading of Somaya Ramadan’s novel, *Leaves of Narcissus*. Ramadan’s inter-textual and cross-cultural text reworks the limits of identity and raises new questions about the meaning of the nation and belonging.

Kristen Scheid, American University of Beirut- “In the Red Glow: Upper Class Lebanese Birthday Parties as Rites of Virtual Passage”

Anthropological research has shown that rituals reveal both the vitality of human creativity and agency as well as the dominance of structural constraints. Although the application of ritual analysis to Asian, African, American, and European cultures has promoted appreciation of the complexity of social structure and particularly identity development, very little research has been conducted on ritual behavior in the Arab world and in particular in Lebanon. As a result, contemporary Arab culture is often deemed incapable of generating meaning indigenously and coping with changes in social systems effectively. Bearing on this long-standing gap in the anthropological and Middle East Area Studies knowledge base, this paper offers preliminary findings from research on birthday parties as rites of passage in Lebanon. These findings suggest that the study of birthday rituals among Lebanese elite may have important implications for the fields of anthropology and Middle Eastern studies because they engage two largely overlooked realms to deal with some of the most puzzling features of contemporary Arab cultural action. More pointedly, studying birthday parties in Lebanon allows us to grasp the construction of taste and identity in culturally specific but structurally ambiguous settings (Wedeen, 1999; Scheid, 2005). As collective social processes where meaning is interpreted and generated (Turner, 1969; Bauman, 1977; Handelman, 1998; Parkin, 1996; Schechner, 2003), rituals of birthday celebration are important sites for understanding how people come to perceive themselves and their society. Therefore, it is worthy of note that in the course of the post-war years (1993 to the present), the common model for birthday parties has changed radically. These changes should be understood in relation to shifting economic, social, and cultural systems, and particularly in relation to the development of new understandings of community membership and individual responsibilities (Birnbaum-Carmeli, 2001; Shamgar-Handelman & Handelman, 1991). Indeed, studying birthday parties offers a uniquely accessible means for tracking the cultivation of subjectivity and taste as both socially distinctive (Bourdieu, 1984) and connective (Joseph, 1993 & 1994). Students of birthday parties in other cultures have noted that age is discovered by party-goers as a meaningful category that informs future action and, in particular, relation to the state (Birnbaum-Carmeli, 2004; Klein, 1978). Based on the preliminary fieldwork conducted for this proposed project, I would expand that argument to say that for prepubescents in Beirut today, several of other categories are discovered, in addition, as having inescapable but unclear meaning: gender,

socio-economic status, educational skill, bravery, conformity, and spatio-temporal orientation. These are properly thought of, following participants' own experiences and expressions of them, not as "categories" but as "virtues," or the manifestation of ethics in specific practices and stances. It is through mastering and manifesting certain virtues that social actors become the people they believe they should. Findings from the participant-observation fieldwork already conducted suggest that the social messages generated in birthday party contexts are paradoxical in forming party-goers as both local and global: they are affirmed as creatures who act in networks of friends and Beirut institutions but are also heading rapidly for a consumerist, West-based lifestyle (to use emic terms). One can find features of multiple identity-negotiation in the invitations sent out, the sorts of guests invited, the site selected, the ambience (music and décor) created, gifts presented, food (and especially cake) served, activities organized, attendants summoned, language used, recording undertaken, and behavior enacted. All these elements may be assumed to disclose the dynamism inherent to a set of children being raised to have a childhood in Beirut but an adulthood who knows where.

Omina El Sharky, University of California, Davis- "A Genealogy of the Concept of Youth: Emerging Categories in Egyptian Public Discourse"

This paper addresses the following central research problematic: in the state socialist context of 1950s Egypt, youth were viewed as one of the principle motors of development: a site for harnessing the productive capabilities of the nation as well as inculcating socialist ideologies. In contemporary Egypt, however, youth is a metonymic signifier for several crises: education, morality, and capitalist consumerism. How did this historical transformation take place? By analyzing various media—textual and visual—I ask, how did the double birth of independent nationhood and socialism articulate the generational life cycle of the nation-state? What horizons of expectation were linked to youth at the twilight of independence? Even a cursory examination of Nasserist statist, educational, and scientific discourse, I argue, reveals the extent to which youth was an object of physical disciplinization and socio-political governance to be harnessed to powers of the state. Rather than reify "youth" as a category of analysis, however, I ask whether and how the emergence of "shabab" as a ubiquitous category of everyday discourse, an object of socio-political intervention and governance, and a subjective category of identity, is best understood against the backdrop of colonialism, nationalism, and identity formation.

Lisa Pollard, University of North Carolina-"From Contract to Crisis: Marriage and the Egyptian National Family 1919-1952"

Taken as historical bookends, the Egyptian revolutions of 1919 and 1952 witnessed the celebration of the nuclear family and monogamous marriage. In each instance, images of women as idealized mothers and brides illustrated the virtues of Egypt's national aspirations. Men were not always present in the cartoons and caricatures that celebrated Egypt as "a woman." But their masculinity—their very ability to lead and defend the nation, to build a strong economy, to shape a national identity—was constructed through their proximity and their marriage to her and to her

ideals. “Family men,” in gendered representations from both revolutionary eras claimed “inclusion” in the national contract through their successes outside the home and through their roles as monogamous husbands, good fathers, and genteel members of bourgeois domiciles. In both revolutions, the family was constituted by a particular political vision—a model for what Egypt was to become—and by Egyptians’ willingness to engage in the marital and familial behaviors through which that vision was constituted. Liberation, both national and personal, was a marital as well as a political affair. Cartoons from the late 1940s Egyptian press suggest that neither the national-political libratory model of 1919 nor the personal-familial one were holding up very well. This paper interrogates cartoons depicting courtship, marriage and family life that appeared in the Egyptian periodical *Akhir Sa`a* in the late 1940s. In those cartoons married men are duped, overwhelmed, robbed and, sometimes, literally squashed by women, particularly their wives. The marital relationship appears to confine, restrict and, frequently, emasculate the men who participate in it. The negative image of marriage [or the emasculated image of men in marriage] that is depicted in these cartoons sits in stark contrast to the idealized image of the marital contract that was the product of the 1919 Revolution, and that was circulated in the press during the Revolutionary era. What duped men by the late 1940s was not only the appearance of the “new,” educated woman and her demands for political emancipation. Rather, it was also the failure of the nation state—as it was conceived of and idealized in the early twentieth century and then delivered by the Wafd by 1923—to function as planned. If marriage and political participation had originally offered men a kind of masculine ideal, conflating politics and marital habits in a recipe for political and personal success, by the 1940s the failures of both marriage and politics appear equally conflated.

Judy Makhoul, American University of Beirut-“Displaced Arab Families: Coping and Changes in Post-War Beirut”

This research project aims to explore families’ coping and adaptation mechanisms to social problems and the shifts in dynamics and boundaries of family under the conditions of internal migration and displacement. It also looks at the change in family structures and dynamics and its effect, along with gendered division of labour, on children’s health outcomes. The participants in the study included mothers and daughters from an Eastern suburb of Beirut, Nabaa, and a southern suburb of Beirut, Raml, who my research assistant and I interviewed. We used in-depth interviews and observations over a year to collect our data. We accessed the participants by through contacts of those already interviewed. We held a total of 25 interviews, conducted in colloquial Arabic, with mothers and 18 with their daughters. We found that the families who originally were war displaced experienced multiple moves within the urban suburbs in search of cheaper rent. They coped with their difficult financial problems through borrowing money from relatives or moving children to less expensive schools or utilizing services offered by local governmental and non- governmental agencies. The pressures of multiple moves confounded by dire familial conditions have contributed to the changing roles within these families. Decision-makers in the household are those who are generators of income. Mothers are taking the lead role

in managing the household, generating income and posing restrictions on girls' mobility. New roles similar to those of the mother are delegated to the girls at home. When their mothers work, older daughters carry the extra responsibility of looking after their younger siblings and helping with the household chores in addition to doing their own studies. Many carry this burden at an early age and it increases as they grow older with their mothers having to work outside the home to contribute to the family income. This has adverse effects on the psychological state of the daughters and their relationships with their parents. The women resort to substance abuse, such as smoking and taking sedatives to cope with the demands of life. Other less harmful strategies include: sleeping, crying and ignoring their problems. The girls cope by writing diaries, sleeping, crying, shouting and talking to friends, keeping things to themselves, drawing or not talking to anyone.

Diane Singerman, American University, Washington DC- "The Financial Burdens of Marriage: Familial and Youth Strategies, Social Anxieties and Marriage Substitutes"

Combining ethnographic, political, and economic research, this paper focuses on how young people in the region negotiate the predicament of delayed marriage, unemployment, and marginalization. It also explores how they forge new rules, institutions, identities, and social imaginations as they confront "wait adulthood," or the continued dependency of post-adolescent unmarried youth on their families and their deferred social participation due to late marriage. While the paper discusses various issues raised by "wait adulthood" and delayed marriage throughout the Middle East, Egypt represents the main focus. A statistical analysis of the costs of marriage in Egypt using the 2006 Egyptian Labor Market Panel Survey attempts to bring back the economic to demography by considering some of the economic ramifications of delayed marriage. A detailed analysis of the contributions towards marriage among the bride, groom, and their families is presented as well as the relationship between education, region, employment and the costs of marriage. Finally, the paper argues that Egyptians invest substantially in marriage and these contributions typically absorb the earnings of grooms and their families over several years. Hopefully, this nationally aggregated data will convince policy makers to recognize the way in which marriage impacts a wide variety of financial strategies. The "marriage" imperative should be routinely integrated into the logic of social and economic policy-making in Egypt and throughout the region. As with any commodity whose demand is inelastic, the high costs of marriage have also led to the rise of controversial marriage substitutes in the region, including `urfi marriage, misyar marriage, misyaf marriage, and mut`a marriage. While young people and their families are negotiating complex and changing terrains of sexuality, authority and normative behavior, the realities of their lives are often superficially or paternalistically addressed by public, scholarly, and religious authorities. Opposition Islamic movements may have gained supporters by focusing on issues of morality and modesty but they often have failed to address seriously the economic problems of youth. In addition to raising questions about political legitimacy and national unity, the failure of the state to facilitate the transition from

education to work to marriage increases the private economic burdens on families while at the same time doing little to ease the ambivalent feelings of post-adolescent unmarried youth.

Judith Tucker, Georgetown University- “Islamic Law and the Family: Property Relations in Legal Discourse and Practice”

Contemporary attempts to reform Islamic inheritance law so that women can become equal heirs tend to describe the law as antiquated, as linked to an extinct or dying form of family, namely an extended, fiercely patrilineal, family. But is this the actual history of law, family and property? Was the extended patrilineal family the dominant family form up to recent times and was it being buttressed by Islamic legal doctrines and practices on property transfers? How can the study of inheritance in history help us think about legal reform today? To explore inheritance laws and practices, in the broad sense of both mortis causa and inter vivos transfers of property, this paper outlines the major contours of Islamic legal discourse on these transfers, including laws of succession, dower, endowment (waqf) and gift, and then turns to some of the ways in which inheritance has been practiced, drawing on material from the Ottoman period. Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and the records of the Islamic courts of the early modern period are the primary sources. The findings include that fact that the patrilineal extended family of the Islamic laws of succession was not the only family of doctrine and history. Various rules and practices privileged the conjugal tie, diluted the claims of the patriline, and afforded individuals the freedom to manage their property and modify the laws of succession. There was no fixed practice of inheritance under Islamic law that dictated a unitary form of family relations, but rather it is flexibility that has characterized the practices of inheritance, and transfers of property have been used through history to symbolize and perpetuate a variety of family forms and ties.

Mona Khalaf, Lebanese American University – “Male Migration and Feminization of the Lebanese Family”

Migratory movements have been witnessed in the Arab world and have registered a substantial increase in the 1970s in the direction of the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf. Among the most contributing factors behind these flows one could mention the rise in oil prices, the shortage of both semi- skilled and skilled labor in the Arab host countries as well as wage differentials. Lebanon was, and still is, one of the major- if not the major- supplier of skilled laborers to these countries. Actually, Lebanon has witnessed two large periods of mass migration in its history, the first one between 1898 and 1914 and the second between 1975 and 1990; the latter corresponding to the civil strife period. The exodus did not, however, stop and it is estimated that 1,300,000 Lebanese migrated between 1975 and 2005. This trend was boosted by the July 2006 war and is still going on, not only because of the prevailing adverse economic situation, but also because of disillusion and skepticism regarding the future of the country. In fact, non- economic variables are, equally important determinants of migration and are strongly linked to how national and non- national futures are envisaged by families and youth. These different imaginaries of the future could partly explain why some social milieus with the same economic

specificities did not witness the same migration flows during the Lebanese war or the period that followed it and that migration encompassed well-established and successful individuals and families as well. What has actually happened is that along with economic deprivation, there was an overall general feeling of despair, of failure to rebuild a nation- state and consequently a desire to escape. The paper presents the preliminary results of a study which focuses on a micro aspect of the Lebanese migration namely, the emigration of the head of the household and its impact on public/ private shifts, well- being and decision making within the family, focusing essentially on the wife left behind. For that purpose, a representative sample of 107 households is selected from a national survey covering 18,243 households conducted by the Saint- Joseph University in Beirut, the results of which were published in 2003 under the title “Youth Entry in the Labor Market and the Emigration of Lebanese since 1975”. After drawing the profiles of the households surveyed, an attempt is made at examining the reasons behind the husband’s migration, and its impact on the wife’s involvement in the decision-making process. For that purpose 4 independent variables are selected to assess the changes that have taken place. These are: family income, the time elapsed since the husband’s migration, the husband’s level of education and the wife’s level of education. A word of warning is, however, necessary. Despite the fact that the analysis of the data based on the selected sample could shed some light on the issues raised, it is important not to extrapolate these findings, particularly when it comes to small sub- groups. The survey should be looked at as an exploratory one which would require an in- depth follow-up on its major findings, if sound conclusions and recommendations are to be formulated.

Penny Johnson, Birzeit University- “Weddings and War”

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

symbolic, as well as material goods, are exchanged – identities, social and political importance, and what he even calls a “reason to live” may feature in these symbolic exchanges.

Ray Juridini, American University in Cairo- “Historical Trajectories of Domestic Workers in Lebanon”

The role of domestic help (variously referred to as domestic workers, domestic help, maids, housemaids, housekeepers or servants when several are employed in the household) have not been adequately accounted for in studies and literature of Lebanese middle- and upper-class families. They seem merely to be secreted in the shadows of family life. The purpose of the study is to bring into relief some sense of what roles they have played within the families they served, other than the labour they performed. What was their level of importance? Those who worked for long periods were often so assimilated into the employing household they could be considered ‘fictive kin’ where kinship/patronage obligations towards and dependency on them constituted a significant part of the dynamics of everyday family life. The historical dimension, the idea of historical trajectories, was considered important – to identify and trace the changes of employment of different domestic help and how families managed the ‘maid market’. The data gathering for the research was relatively simple. Using the method of snowball sampling, the aim was to conduct interviews with mainly Lebanese women (and some men) about who they remembered working for them. The older the interviewee, the further we could go back in time, asking not only about who served them but also asking about their parents and possibly grandparents – in other words, to document an oral history of domestic service in Lebanese families going back to the turn of the century, or at least to the 1920s. From 30 interviews that included 4 males, 8 were in their 50s, 8 in their 60s, 7 in their 70s, 6 in their 80s and 1 aged 93. There were 11 Muslim, 11 Christian and 8 Druze. This of course is not a representative sample, being skewed due to the snowballing technique, and it is not possible to make generalizations to particular religious sects, nor to middle- and upper-class families, nor to the population as a whole. Generally, it seems, until the Civil War began in 1975, Lebanese and Syrian maids were widely employed among others. It is not entirely clear yet, but it also seems that until that time, no religious preference was evident. It was more a question of village girls or women from poor families (and orphans) going to work and live with wealthy families. It also seems there were certain waves of others at different periods. Loosely, we can identify that in the 1930s, Alawites and other Syrians from Akkar in the north were widely used – at least until 1961 when Hafez Assad came to power in Syria. Following their expulsion, in the 1950s, Palestinians were procured from the refugee camps around Beirut and in the south. Indeed, from the 190s to the early 1970s, Palestinian women in the camps in Tyre (a Semsara) procured women, and sometimes couples for domestic work. At this time also, Kurdish women were employed and there is evidence of some Sudanese men serving as cooks. In the 1960s, it was said that Egyptian women could be found working in bars around the Bourj and they “took them” from the bars to work for families. This practice stopped at the outbreak of the Civil War when they returned home. 1975 was a watershed that marked the beginning of the entry of Sri Lankans, then

Filipinas and later Ethiopians. It is now estimated that around 1 in 7 – 10 families employ a non-Arab migrant domestic maid. Summarily, the paper traces an oral history of domestic service in Lebanon over the past century. The Interviews reveal various periods when women and girls were recruited from the local village poor as well Syrians, Palestinians, Kurds, Egyptians and others in accordance with convenience and regional political circumstances. The long-term employment of Arab women in domestic service, with a primary focus on ‘live-in’ maids, may be characterised as having a ‘burden’ of obligation and responsibility in terms of relations of patronage and fictive kin. For example, Arab women in service continued to claim patronage and resources for themselves after they left the employing family and sometimes for their children also. The outbreak of the civil war from 1975, however, marked a total shift in the source of domestic workers, from Arab to non-Arab migrant workers, where patronage obligations were no longer required (nor claimed). The paper provides anecdotal testimonies of the pre-civil war relations, identifying a continuing dependency, but now on contemporary, quasi-contractual arrangements with Asian and African migrant domestic workers.

Barbara Lethem Ibrahim, American University in Cairo- ‘Pathways to Participation Among Egyptian Youth’

Young Egyptians are coming of age in a ‘culture of exclusion’. That interlocking set of norms and practices devalues and diminishes the contributions of young people. Youth exclusion is present in the labor market, political life, in the obstacles to marriage formation, and most particularly in family decision-making. In that context, some young people have recently taken initiatives to form service organizations exclusively comprised of young people, groups that address the needs and deprivations in local communities. The response of young volunteers to these initiatives has been remarkable, with participation in the tens of thousands in some cases. The present field study is an attempt to understand the motivations and ‘moral discourse’ through which young volunteers present their service and participation. Three groups founded by youth and operating in Cairo were selected for study. These include 1.) a membership organization mainly composed of young professionals, which serves as forum for discussion of national problems and an incubator for project ideas, 2.) a social service organization targeting poor neighborhoods, originating in a private university but later expanding to a number of national universities, and 3.) a mass-based service organization serving the poor, handicapped and orphans, with 17 branches and a system for replication that has spread beyond Cairo. In addition to applying a framework of contemporary youth deprivation, the study examines ideas of generational change, where a particular political and cultural climate can ‘mark’ the discourse of youth in a given historical period. In Egypt, previous youth discourses of Arab nationalism and socialism gave way to an ‘infatih’ generation that sought legitimation in the privatization of work and family life. Contemporary youth have responded to the failures of both previous visions with a return to religious piety. They also appear to have abandoned hope that the State or the market can provide solutions to their dilemmas. Religious discourse was found to be a strong motivation for participation running through the interviews, conducted with 40 long-term, recent, and

founding volunteers. Volunteers spoke of building up the Muslim ‘umma’ and gathering moral credit with God. Given less emphasis but still recurrent in the narratives were patriotic motivations and a desire to escape restrictions on activity imposed by families– particularly for young female volunteers; to have meaningful social connections; to meet members of the opposite sex; and to fill time while seeking paid employment. Significantly, one of the less well understood aspects of youth volunteering is the ways in which it may provide avenues to marriage and work for a generation who feel ‘stalled’ on the road to full adulthood. These findings are potentially significant for the design of policies to bridge the end of formal education and beginning of productive work careers, a gap that is widening for increasing numbers of Egyptian youth.

Islah Jad, Birzeit University – “Islamist Group Wedding in Palestine: The Invention of New Tradition”

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas embarked on a radical process of ‘Islamising’ the familiar national symbols, including the modification of the Palestinian national flag by emblazoning it with the shahada (the Islamic profession of faith) and calling it the Islamic flag. The map of Palestine was used in posters, graffiti and emblems as a visual means of integrating the patriotic and Islamic message. The original emblem of the Muslim Brothers shows the Quran amidst two crossed swords, with the word wa-a‘eddu (make ready), written beneath the swords. The map of Palestine replaced the Quran, along with two Palestinian flags with two swords circling the Aqsa mosque and the map of Palestine with its name written underneath. The two flags are ‘Islamised’ by adding verses of Quran to them. Part of this process of ‘Islamising the nation’, many Islamist and religious groups and societies developed to encourage men and women to marry and form a family. To reach this goal, ‘fancy’ and expensive wedding was criticised and instead, a new ‘invented’ form of marriage emerged. Islamist group wedding developed to reduce marriage expenses and to Islamise the nation in one strike. How this form of weddings are organised, who organises them, who benefits from them, in what ways are they different from the other forms of weddings, what are the role of women (brides, mothers and female relatives) in this form of wedding, in what ways this new form of wedding chance/sustain existing gender relations, these are some of the questions this research tries to answer.

Eileen Kuttab, Birzeit University- “Palestinian Youth: Construction of Desires, Imaginaries in Different Social Context”

Youth in general are alienated from politics, and different studies claim that it is a crisis of legitimacy which should be met to increase citizenship. Is this true for the Palestinian youth who face a continuous political challenge represented in a colonial occupation, displacement, dependency and violations of all human rights including political rights is a core question of the study. The study investigates how Palestinian youth in the Palestinian Occupied Territories ages 18-24 receive, reshape and reproduce political desires, national aspirations and imaginaries in different social contexts and geographic localities. It examines how the shifting political and

economic circumstances initiated by the global, regional and local changes have impacted the process of reshaping and reproducing new political attitudes and behavior that is affecting the youth's future choices and life-style. Using a representative survey and focus group discussions, the study is able to make an in-depth analysis on the attitudes of Palestinian youth regarding the political system and process. The paper examines the nature of Palestinian youth's political participation and explores how different classes and genders in different localities link to the political process in general, and how they become involved or not involved in the formal and informal political process. The study look at ways that youth accommodate with the continuous conflict and crisis but at the same time respond and react to the global and local challenges and pressures in formulating their future desires and imaginaries. Through analyzing some of the initial findings of the research, one can assume that there is a kind of despair over the overall political situation, based on a feeling of distrust in the Palestinian Authority's performance and the political parties likewise. One of the main risks and challenges the youth face which they have expressed in the different focus group discussion is the fear from the unforeseen or the unpredictable future which in turn impact their ability to make critical and significant future decisions. Through these discussions one of the problems they focused on as a main challenge is personal security. They feel that their personal life is unprotected and insecure and this feeling of instability and insecurity is affecting their ability to make future choices. They have expressed concern over their economic situation and centered their worry on unemployment as another risk and challenge for their stability and security which has been expressed broadly by males than females. Comparing the initial findings of this study on political participation with that of the eighties we realize that the youth in general have been more involved in different social and political activities in the eighties than this current stage. We also realize that more males than females are interested in politics which is not similar to the pre-Al-Aqsa Intifada political periods where more women were involved. Focusing in particular on the issue of joining political parties the study demonstrates that most of the young people who are politically interested come from rural rather than urban areas which when compared to the eighties is a turning point. Historically, active political participation has been mainly centered in the urban and refugee camp contexts and not the rural, while this is different now; it can be a result of the new political pressures that the rural areas face due to confiscation of land for either building new settlements, or due to the building of the Separation Wall or due to the daily settler's violations which make the youth more attached to local politics and active in defending their homes and lands. While urban youth especially the middle class youth who have become more interested and attached to issues of globalization and modernization, becomes more concerned with their own affairs rather than public affairs. As the study has not reached a stage where results of the representative survey have been analyzed, more in-depth analysis on political participation of the youth and their political attitudes will be analyzed which can capture the different variations between the different social classes, genders and localities. In particular, geographic localities have always been an important variable in analyzing Palestinian politics as there is massive variations

between Gaza Strip and West Bank and also within West Bank itself, in addition to rural, urban and camp.

Suad Joseph, University of California, Davis – “Transnationalism and Families: Lebanese Transnational Families”

Families in Lebanon, for over a century, have been exporting their members to different parts of the world. During the Lebanese Civil War and its economically strained aftermath, there has been an escalation of familial relocations, especially in the United States and Canada. A remarkable characteristic of this migration is the intensity of movement across the Atlantic in both directions – so much so as to support continued close connection between family members who migrate and those who remain. Many families maintain homes in both Lebanon and the United States or Canada, going back and forth with considerable frequency and apparent fluency. Those who leave young (especially men) often return to marry in Lebanon and bring their spouses back to the US or Canada with them. Families who remain in Lebanon expect their abroad members to attend to family business, return to marry etc. Family members in Lebanon frequently visit those in Canada and the US, often with extended stays. These transnational families consider themselves still “whole”, bound to each other, responsible for each other, and connected to Lebanon and its affairs. Those based in the US and Canada speak of going to Lebanon as “nazleen ‘alal balad” (going down to the city/country) as if they were going from their summer mountain homes to their Beirut city homes (the same terms are used for that ritual as well). Some continue to vote in Lebanese elections, and a few even maintained their local elected positions while abroad. The committed connection with the United States, Canada, and Lebanon leaves the youth often in a disjuncture of place, belonging in both and tentative about both. They almost all eventually obtain Canadian or US citizenship, become bi-nationals, a duality that is played out in complex and curious ways among the youth and between the youth and the family elders. This paper investigates the impact on youth of living family life transnationally. In particular, I examine the conditions under which the transformative impact of the uncertain mobility dislocates senses of personhood, identity, and citizenship and the outcomes of these dislocations for the formation of desires among youth. The paper addresses the processes by which desires of youth for family, marriage and national identity are formed, dislocated, reconfigured and the implications for these relocations for “citizenship” in Lebanon and in the newly adopted countries.