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Young Australians of Lebanese Muslim Background in NSW:

A Study of Family Relationships, Identity & Aspirations.

Wafa Fadel Chafic

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Arabic and Islamic Studies
Department of Semitic Studies
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

1994
ABSTRACT

The present study explores a specific range of experiences encountered by young second generation Australians of Lebanese Muslim background in NSW. Family relationships and dynamics, personal and social aspects of identity, and the goals and aspirations which bear some influence on the future outlook of young people, are the focus of this research. To this end, a sample of male and female Lebanese Muslim Australians, aged between 12 and 17 years, living in the Canterbury and Bankstown municipalities of Sydney, were surveyed by questionnaire and collectively interviewed in discussion groups.

Chapter one expounds the research methodology employed in obtaining data pertaining to the aforementioned individual and community experiences of the target group. It also offers a short account of the Muslim and Lebanese Muslim communities’ history and development in Australia.

Chapter two investigates the nature of the family unit of the young Lebanese Muslim sample and the family dynamics operating within this unit. The relationships between young people and members of their immediate and extended families, consultation protocols and gender dynamics are particularly addressed.
The more personal and social aspects of identity of these young people are the focus of Chapter three. Religious knowledge and observance of key Islamic rituals, as indicators of personal religious identity, are looked at. In regards to these young people's experiences within society, their personal and community networks and their feelings of acceptance and alienation within the wider Australian society are also explored, to gauge the nature of their social identity.

Chapter four examines aspirations to post-secondary education, vocational choices and marriage, together with perceived obstacles to achieving these. A discussion about common stereotypes surrounding "female submissiveness" and their assumed lack of self determination also ensues.

This research investigates these issues from the backdrop of the economic and social disadvantage faced by the wider Lebanese Muslim community in Australia. The high unemployment rate and negative perceptions confronting Australian Muslims and Arabs, exacerbate disadvantage amongst members of the Lebanese Muslim community and these undoubtedly impact on the lives of the individuals in the target group. This study examines the way in which young Lebanese Muslims are able to adapt and, in most cases, aspire to improve their social condition.
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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADB NSW  Anti Discrimination Board of NSW
AFIC  Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
AGPS  Australian Government Printing Service
BIR  Bureau of Immigration Research
DSE NSW  Department of School Education, New South Wales
DSS  Department of Social Security
EAC NSW  Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales
ESB  English Speaking Background
HIV/AIDS  Human Immune Deficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICNSW  Islamic Council of New South Wales
IYY  International Youth Year
LGA  Local Government Authority / Area
LMA  Lebanese Moslems Association
MACMME  Ministerial Advisory Committee on Multicultural & Migrant Education
MIS  Management Information Services
MWA  Muslim Women's Association
NESB  Non-English Speaking Background
NSW  New South Wales
SRI  Special Religious Instruction
TAFE  Technical and Further Education (colleges of,)
US  United States of America
YACA  Youth Affairs Council of Australia
CHAPTER ONE

- INTRODUCTION -

1  Approach and Methodology

1.1  Approach

The present study examines several important aspects relevant to the lives of Australian Muslim Youth of Lebanese background between the ages of 12 and 17 years, living in the Canterbury-Bankstown region of Sydney, New South Wales. It concentrates on issues of family relationships, identity, and aspirations. The study’s focus on young Muslims is particularly pertinent as over half the Australian Muslim population falls within the 0-24 years of age category.¹ This underlines the fact that the Australian Muslim community is a “young” community.

While very few studies have been conducted on Muslim youth in Australia, it is hoped that this study will build on what research is available and add to the existing body of literature on youth studies. The shortage of specific research does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in this subject area. In fact, within the social welfare profession there is an increasing interest in and popularity of such issues particularly as they relate to women and youth. The shortage of information and studies on Muslim youth may be due to the fact that the majority of Australia’s Muslims are relatively recent arrivals. What immediately follows is a review of the more significant studies to date that deal with Muslim (and Lebanese Muslim) youth directly or indirectly.

¹ ABS (1986 Census), Table CX 0002, p. 12.

Note: a combination of 1986 and 1991 Census data is used in this study, as details from the 1991 Census were not fully available at the time of completion of this thesis.
A study by Young, Petty and Faulkner (1980) devoted itself to the question of education and employment amongst Turkish and Lebanese youth (mainly males). This study did not specifically deal with Muslims. Nonetheless, because the majority of Turks and a significant proportion of Lebanese immigrants are also of Muslim background, Young's study offers some useful insights and perspectives for the topic of this present study. Young concluded that there was a high level of disadvantage suffered by these young people, especially those recently arrived in Australia. Young also reported that Lebanese parents had high educational and career aspirations and in general strongly encouraged their children to stay at school.2

The work of Mackie (1983) concentrated on the structure, culture and religion of Muslim families of Turkish and Lebanese background in Melbourne. Mackie's study concluded that a large number of the Lebanese Muslims in her sample suffered from a high level of poverty. They also exhibited a poor English language ability. This, understandably, would severely limit employment opportunities. Indeed, Mackie reported a high proportion of unemployment within the Lebanese Muslim community. She also found that the Lebanese Muslim individuals in her sample were not accessing existing social welfare services. This, compounded with unemployment, would explain her findings of a high level of poverty in her sample. On the issue of identity, Mackie pointed to the close connection between religious and ethnic "customs". Indeed, most Lebanese parents specifically wanted their children to retain their Muslim and Lebanese "customs". However, parents actually perceived greater impediments for their children to retain Lebanese customs than religious (i.e. Islamic) ones.3 Like Young's study, Mackie also concluded that Lebanese parents held very high expectations for their children's education, with a large majority perceiving education as being equally important for girls and boys.4

---

4 Ibid., pp. 130-138.
A study on Lebanese settlement in Sydney by Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984), highlighted the disadvantage faced by Lebanese Muslims in the context of the high rate of unemployment which grips the Lebanese community in general. The study claimed that Lebanese Muslim young people were of particular concern firstly because of the large number of people under 20 years of age who will attempt to enter the work force after high school, and secondly due to the high rate of unemployment already encountered by those between 15-19 years of age who have left the school system. The unemployment rate of this age group, across religious groupings, was estimated at 41% for males and 59% for females. Humphrey and Hausfeld also found that Lebanese Muslim youth of Sunni background, had the lowest school retention rate amongst their Lebanese peers. Only 48% of Lebanese Sunni youth (of school age) surveyed were school students compared to 71% among Lebanese of Maronite Catholic background.

A study by Jebeile (1986) reported on the views of a sample of young women of Lebanese Muslim background (17-26 years of age), in relation to their health and language needs and their access to government and non-government services. The young women of her sample all resided in the St.George area of Sydney. The report found that this group was particularly disadvantaged because of the following: language barriers; discrimination due to religious and cultural differences; as well as isolation and alienation resulting in a lack of information regarding available services and opportunities.

More recently, two studies of relevance have been conducted in Australia. The first by Inglis, Elley and Manderson (1992) focussed on the educational attainment and social and economic mobility of Turkish Australian youth. The study looked at these issues recognising that many Turkish Australian young people were growing up in a backdrop of material and social disadvantage within the family unit. It considered the effects of parental unemployment as a result of labour market restructuring and health problems related to heavy physical work, as well as the limited English and lack of formal education within these families. They found that this disadvantage was made

---

5 Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984), pp. 68, 111.
6 Ibid., p. 93.
worse by the range of negative stereotypes and misrepresentations about the social reality of Turkish Muslim people. These stereotypes constituted a major barrier to young people of Turkish background, striving to improve their condition. As will be seen later, these factors of disadvantage were also very relevant to the life situation and experience of the young Lebanese Muslims examined in this study.

The second study by Abu Duhou and Tesse (1992), examined the level of educational, vocational, and community participation of Arab Australians including the Lebanese. The study covered the four largest national groups comprising the Arabic community in New South Wales and Victoria, viz. Egyptian, Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian. Abu Duhou and Tesse’s study included in its sample persons of Lebanese background both Christian and Muslim as well as other Arabs of the Muslim faith. The sample comprised 23% of Arab Australians between the ages of 19-24, which was the youngest age range of the study. While we were able to draw important inferences from this study as regards young Lebanese Muslims’ experience as Arab Australians (across the different Arabic nationalities and religious groups), we may be limited in drawing further inferences on the basis that Abu Duhou and Tesse’s sample was largely Christian Arab, with a majority of non-Lebanese.

A number of overseas studies on Muslim youth are interesting to note. Research by Anwar (1986) investigated the issue of British Muslims (mostly of Indian and Pakistani backgrounds) growing up in a multicultural society, examining aspects of "religio-cultural" identity, family and marriage patterns, and religious education. Another study by Afshar (1989) examined the educational hopes, expectations and achievements of three generations of Muslim Women in West Yorkshire, UK.

There are three interesting studies of Muslims in North America worthy of mention. Abu Laban (1987) surveyed the sweep of Muslim migration history into Canada and charted their community and institutional development. The underlying theme of his paper was the question of community survival as a community identifiable as Muslim or Islamic per se. Such a question was posed given his interest in
acculturation and assimilation, and its particular impact on the younger or second
generation Muslim Canadians. Abu Laban considered the need for Canadian Muslims
to seek an innovative survival strategy that enhanced both community cohesion and
successful adaptation to the Canadian environment. He emphasised that the question of
Muslim youth, amongst others, ought to be a critical part of such a strategy.

Like Abu Laban, she also surveyed the sweep of Muslim migration history and charted
their community and institutional development. Lovell gave particular account of the
adaptive modes undertaken by the Muslim communities to sustain themselves through
 imparting Islamic teaching and conducting Islamic community life, in the face of the
challenge of complete assimilation. In this vein she stated that US Muslims can best be
defined as a group wanting to maintain its group identity based on religion, but wanting
to give full allegiance to society.7

Like Lovell, Haddad and Lummis (1987) also attempted to give an account of
the adaptive modes by which “immigrant” Muslims survived and developed in the new
conditions the US had to offer. They examined the role and functions of Islamic
institutions; social integration of immigrant Muslims and in particular Muslim children;
the impact of Islamic law on the lives of these immigrants (in comparison to American
law); and the role of men and women in society, their aspirations, achievements and
apprehensions.

Australian based research is comparable to the overseas studies to the extent that
it deals with the aspirations of immigrant Muslims, of various backgrounds, and the
adaptive modes undertaken to deal with settlement related needs in a new society.
Besides the study by Inglis (1992), few studies have specifically tackled what it is like
to grow up as a Muslim young person in Australia, or the complex issues of family
dynamics, aspirations, identity and in particular religious, ethnic and national
identification of young Muslims within the Australian milieu. While Young et al,
Mackie and Abu Duhou and Tesse attempted to address some of these questions, the

present study will attempt to examine these issues in greater detail, and from the specific perspective of "growing up" as a Lebanese Muslim person in Australia.

This study aims to examine and analyse information on three key issues relating to youth in the following chapters. These are "family dynamics", "identity", and "aspirations" of Australian Lebanese Muslim young people.

*Family Dynamics:* This study's focus on "family dynamics" aims to shed some light on the family relationships that exist between young Lebanese Muslims, their parents, siblings and extended family members, as well as examining gender roles and expectations within these families.

*Identity:* The second aim of this study is to examine how youth of Lebanese Muslim background in Australia constitute their identity. Specific aspects of personal and social identity will be explored, paying particular attention to influences upon identity and various modes of identity expression. The study will focus on one specific aspect of "personal identity" namely religious knowledge and observance, and the more "social" aspects of identity, taking into consideration personal and community networks, perceptions of acceptance and alienation within society and associated issues.

*Aspirations:* The third area of focus of this study pertains to the aspirations of Australian Lebanese Muslim youth. The Australian Lebanese Muslim community, amongst other Muslim groups, is generally regarded in government circles as a particularly disadvantaged minority, experiencing one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the country. Concurrent with this are issues of their socialisation into the overall Australian environment. Within this context, the study sets out to provide information on the post-secondary education and employment aspirations of the respondents, their views on marriage and their future outlook.

---

8 On the issue of disadvantage see Mackie (1983) and Young et al (1983); Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984); Inglis et al (1992), regarding Turkish disadvantage; see also Shboul (1988 a).
It is hoped that the findings of this study will create a better understanding of the situation of Lebanese Muslim young people in New South Wales. It is further hoped that such a study will shed more light on the broader question of Australia as a multicultural society, both in terms of demography and policy.

However, in order to better understand these issues, later in this chapter, we will attempt to place the Lebanese Muslim community within the broader historical and social context of Australia. This is important because, Australian society has often been represented as mono-cultural (i.e. Anglo-Celtic), with Australian history symbolically starting around 1770 with the first arrival of the British. However, with the growing awareness of the extent of Aboriginal and "migrant" heritages (other than the Anglo-Celtic), this rather limited view is slowly being broadened.

Questions being posed concerning Australia’s identity in the context of the current Republican debate, together with the policies of a Multicultural Australia (i.e. managing and accommodating cultural diversity) and Access and Equity (i.e. seeking social justice for all Australians regardless of background), have all contributed to a revision of Australian history and identity. It is within this context, that Lebanese Muslim heritage and settlement, shall be examined.

The growing awareness of Lebanese Muslim youth of their own heritage within Australian history, may be a contributing factor to their viewing themselves in a uniquely Australian Lebanese Muslim light, as contrasted to their Lebanese Muslim peers in Lebanon. This factor may have significant importance for the shaping of the Australian Lebanese Muslim identity now and in the future. A view of the historical and social context of Lebanese Muslims in Australia will be expounded later in this chapter, following an overview of the methodology employed in this study.
1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Source Material

The methodology adopted for this study involves the utilisation of three types of source material. The first derives from official census data which should enable one to locate this group of young people within the demographic map of the wider Australian society as well as the local community. The second type of source material consists of data based on a survey of Lebanese Muslim young people residing in and attending high schools within the Canterbury-Bankstown region of NSW. And, the third type of data is based on an in-depth discussion with the selected groups among those surveyed. The information derived from both the survey and the discussion forms the essential data for discussing the central issues of relationships, identity and aspiration as defined in this study.

1.2.2 Demography

Demographic information is derived from the national census carried out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics once every five years. The 1986 Census, and to a more limited extent the 1991 Census, provide information on religion by birthplace and ancestry.9

Total Population in NSW and Australia:

In the 1991 Census, Muslims comprised 0.9% (or 147,507 persons) of the Australian population in comparison to 0.7% (or 109,500 persons) in the 1986 Census. In the state of New South Wales (NSW) Muslims comprised 1.4% of the population in 1986 (57,500 persons), and 1.4%, as well, in 1991

9 Unfortunately it has not been possible to obtain and analyse much of the relevant 1991 Census details for the purposes of this study, as they were not yet fully available.
(77,845 persons) (see Table 1.1).\textsuperscript{10} Since the tabulations for the 1991 Census have not been fully completed at the time of writing this study, we will largely still be relying on the figures from the 1986 Census.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1.1 Total Number of Muslims by Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS 1986:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS 1991:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW 1986:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW 1991:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Place of Birth:

According to the 1986 Census, two thirds or 71,000 of the Australian Muslim population were born overseas, with over half of these born in Lebanon or Turkey. In fact, 63% of overseas born Muslims were either born in Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt or Cyprus, with almost 8% born in Malaysia or Indonesia. Another 7% were born in the former Yugoslavia (i.e. mainly Bosnia-Herzegovina). In NSW 54% of overseas born Muslims were born in Lebanon (31.9%), Turkey (17.1%), Egypt and Cyprus (4.9%) (see Table 1.2).\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} ABS (1991 Census), derived from Catalogue Nos. 2722.0 and 2722.1, Table B13, p. 5; and ABS (1986 Census), Table CX0002, pp. 12, 372.

\textsuperscript{11} Castles (1991 a), derived from Table 3.6, p.13 and ABS (1986 Census), Table CX0003 pp. 273-275.
Thirty three percent (33%) of Australian Muslims were born in Australia. Of the 36,500 Australian-born Muslims, 57% were of some Middle Eastern ancestry\textsuperscript{12} with the majority comprising of Lebanese and Turkish backgrounds (see Table 1.3) \textsuperscript{13}, the Lebanese being 24.1%.

**Age:**

According to the 1986 Census figures, over 55% of the total Muslim population in Australia fell into the 0-24 years of age group representing 60,356 individuals. Almost

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Country} & \textbf{No. in Aust.} & \textbf{%} & \textbf{No. in NSW} & \textbf{%} \\
\hline
* Lebanon: & 20,100 & 28.3 \% & 15,132 & 31.9 \% \\
Turkey: & 18,700 & 26.3 \% & 8,153 & 17.1 \% \\
Yugoslavia: & 4,600 & 6.5 \% & 1,058 & 2.2 \% \\
Cyprus: & 3,800 & 5.4 \% & 1,390 & 2.9 \% \\
Malaysia: & 2,900 & 4.1 \% & 846 & 1.7 \% \\
Indonesia: & 2,600 & 3.7 \% & 1,357 & 2.8 \% \\
Egypt: & 1,800 & 2.5 \% & 954 & 2 \% \\
Fiji: & 1,400 & 2 \% & 883 & 1.8 \% \\
Other: & 15,000 & 21.2 \% & 17,646 & 37.2 \% \\
\hline
\textbf{TOTAL:} & 71,000 & 100 \% & 47,419 & 100 \% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Overseas-born Muslims: Main Countries of Birth (1986)}
\end{table}

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Ancestry} & \textbf{No. in Aust.} & \textbf{%} \\
\hline
* Lebanon: & 8,800 & 24.1 \% \\
Turkey: & 8,100 & 22.3 \% \\
Arab: & 4,100 & 11.1 \% \\
Australian: & 2,700 & 7.4 \% \\
Yugoslav: & 900 & 2.5 \% \\
English: & 800 & 2.3 \% \\
Other: & 11,000 & 30.3 \% \\
\hline
\textbf{TOTAL:} & 36,500 & 100 \% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Australian-born Muslims: Main Ancestries (1986)}
\end{table}
half of these (48%) or 29,038 were nine years of age or less (see Table 1.4).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>AUS</th>
<th>NSW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 9:</td>
<td>29,038</td>
<td>16,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19:</td>
<td>20,752</td>
<td>10,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24:</td>
<td>10,566</td>
<td>5,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 54:</td>
<td>43,757</td>
<td>22,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 + :</td>
<td>5,407</td>
<td>2,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>109,520</td>
<td>57,549</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In NSW the pattern was more or less similar, with 57% of the Muslim population, 24 years of age or less (32,772 people). Over 50% of these, representing 16,668 people, were nine years of age or younger. Males comprised 51% of the 0-24 years population, both in Australia and NSW (see Table 1.5).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AUS (Males)</th>
<th>AUS (Females)</th>
<th>NSW (Males)</th>
<th>NSW (Females)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 9:</td>
<td>14,950</td>
<td>14,088</td>
<td>8,537</td>
<td>8,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14:</td>
<td>5,651</td>
<td>5,205</td>
<td>3,098</td>
<td>2,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19:</td>
<td>5,021</td>
<td>4,875</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>2,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24:</td>
<td>5,229</td>
<td>5,337</td>
<td>2,519</td>
<td>2,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total:</td>
<td>30,851</td>
<td>29,505</td>
<td>16,721</td>
<td>16,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>60,356</td>
<td></td>
<td>32,772</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 ABS (1986 Census), derived from Table CX 0002, pp. 12, 372.
15 Ibid., derived from Table CX 0002, pp. 12, 372.
Marriage:

Muslims, it seemed, married at a much younger age than any group in Australia, in part influenced by the young age structure of the community. At the time of the 1986 Census, more than two thirds of Muslims were married. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of Muslims aged 15 to 24 years were married, comprising more than twice the proportion of married people in the total population aged 15-24 years. Only 12% of the total Australian population of this age group were married. Of the Muslims aged 25 to 34 years, 81% were married at the time of the 1986 Census in comparison to 65% of the total population of the same age.\textsuperscript{16} In New South Wales 46% of Muslim females between the ages of 15 and 24 were married compared to 15% for Muslim males of the same age (see Table 1.6).\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Age} & \textbf{Sex} & \textbf{AUS} & \% & \textbf{NSW} & \% \\
\hline
15-24: & females & 4,394 & 43 \% & 2,348 & 46 \% \\
& males & 1,636 & 16 \% & 777 & 15 \% \\
\hline
TOTAL: & & 6,030 & 29 \% & 3,125 & 31 \% \\
\hline
25-34: & females & 8,583 & 88 \% & 4,506 & 88 \% \\
& males & 7,416 & 75 \% & 3,727 & 74 \% \\
\hline
TOTAL: & & 15,999 & 81 \% & 8,233 & 81 \% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Married Muslims by Age and Sex (1986)}
\end{table}

Family Size:

According to the 1986 Census, of women aged 45 to 55 years, Muslim women had the largest number of children (the average being 3.8 children), in comparison to women of all other faiths. Catholic women in the same age group for example had an average of 3.1 children, while Jewish women had the smallest family size with an

\textsuperscript{16} Castle (1991 a), p. 2; and ABS (1986 Census), Table CX 0002, p. 372.
\textsuperscript{17} ABS (1986 Census), derived from Table CX 0002, pp. 12, 372.
average of 2.3 children. Similarly, of women aged 55 years and over, Lebanese born women (Muslim and Christian) had the largest family size amongst all women, with an average of 4.5 children. They were followed by Maltese born women (average of approximately 4.3 children) and Vietnamese born women (average of approximately 4.0 children).

Educational Qualifications:

Not unlike the recently arrived Buddhist migrant community (mainly of Vietnamese background), the Muslim community in Australia across its various ethnic groups, has a high proportion of persons with no formal educational qualifications. In fact, approximately 77% of Muslims had no formal qualifications. (see Table 1.7). Only 6.5% of Muslims had a Diploma, Degree or higher education. A further 6% held qualifications as tradesmen. According to these statistics, Muslims were less likely to hold any sort of qualifications, in comparison to the total population. If we examine the figures for the Lebanese community across its religious sects, we find that only 23% of Lebanese born males and 11.5% of Lebanese born females held post-secondary qualifications. In addition, almost 69% of Australian born people of Lebanese ancestry have no post-secondary qualifications. (See Table 1.8). If we relate the above figures to the Lebanese Muslim migrant population we find that they possibly reflect the rural origins of the majority of the Lebanese Muslim migrant population, and to some extent the disrupted civil life that characterised Lebanon at the time of Lebanese Muslim migration to Australia.

20 Castles (1991 a), Table 5.2, p. 37.
21 Castles (1991 b), Table 7.4, p. 64.
22 Ibid., Table 7.6, p. 67.
TABLE 1.7  Muslim Religion by Qualifications (1986)
AUSTRALIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree and/or higher:</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma:</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade/Certificate:</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications:</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **TOTAL:**            | 100% | (i.e. 69,600 persons)

TABLE 1.8  Educational Attainment by Lebanese Ancestry (1986)
AUSTRALIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Lebanese Ancestry</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No post-secondary:</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary:</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree and/or higher:</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma:</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade/Certificate:</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Labour Force Participation:

The Muslim community (across ethnic groups) also has one of the lowest labour force participation rates, which stood at 55% in 1986, with most being employed in manual labour related work. The participation rate for Muslim men stood at 70% in comparison to Muslim women which was 38%. This figure for Muslim women gave them the lowest participation rate of any group. These figures on the Muslim community's participation rate in the labour force, might be due to: the younger age structure of the community; the fact that many are recent arrivals; the civil war in Lebanon which disrupted education and training, to create a lack of formal qualifications for many; where formal qualifications do exist, very often they are not recognised; and also, the shift in the structure of Australia's economy, which has

---

become less reliant on manual and unskilled labour. (See Table 1.9).24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1.9</th>
<th>Muslim Religion by Labour Participation by Sex by Marital Status (1986)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>69.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Women</td>
<td>38.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Women</td>
<td>36.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Women</td>
<td>37.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Men &amp; Women</td>
<td>55.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Labour Force:</td>
<td>37,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.3 Survey Design and Administration

The second source of data was obtained by means of a survey of high school students of the target group in question. The aim of the survey was to elicit information on the three critical areas under investigation in this study, namely family relationships, identity and aspirations. Certain information elicited by the survey requiring greater detail was pursued in subsequent in-depth discussion sessions with groups of young Lebanese Muslim males and females from amongst the survey respondents.

Two high schools, Wiley Park Girls High School and Punchbowl Boys High School, participated in the study. These schools were chosen because they were located in the Canterbury-Bankstown region of Sydney, which according to the 1986 Census data had the highest proportion of Lebanese and Muslims in NSW and Australia. (See Tables 1.10 and 1.11).25 Indeed, both schools have very large Lebanese Muslim populations.26

---

24 Ibid., Table 5.3, p. 38.
26 Wiley Park Girls High School from the Canterbury municipality, and Punchbowl Boys High School from the Bankstown municipality.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of all Muslims in NSW</th>
<th>% of LGA population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>8,847</td>
<td>15.6 %</td>
<td>6.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankstown</td>
<td>5,858</td>
<td>10.3 %</td>
<td>3.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14,705</td>
<td>25.9 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of LGA population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>8,975</td>
<td>7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankstown</td>
<td>5,403</td>
<td>3.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14,378</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At each school the assistance of the school Principal was sought in advance to help identify students of Lebanese Muslim background who were willing to participate in the study. The only prerequisite set for the sample by the researcher was that the participants be of both Lebanese and Muslim backgrounds. It was not a condition that students must have been born in Lebanon rather than Australia or vice versa, or that the participants must be 'practising Muslims' by any definition. Rather, the researcher intended to interview youth of Lebanese Muslim background as they were found within the two schools selected for this study. To limit the sample to students of Lebanese Muslim background born in one country and not the other or only to those who defined themselves as 'practising Muslims', would not give a true picture of the diversity within the target group namely young people of Lebanese Muslim background.

The survey consisted of over 100 questions (see Appendix 1). Preliminary pilot surveys were conducted, which formed the basis for certain changes made before the present survey was finally carried out. The questionnaire took approximately two hours for the students to complete and was conducted during school hours. A total of 62 students completed the questionnaire, (29 males and 33 females) between the ages of
12 and 17 years of age. (see Table 1.12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' Age</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 - 13 years:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - 15 years:</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 17 years:</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the two schools selected, the questionnaire was conducted in a room specifically set aside for this task. After briefing the particular group of students about the purpose of the study, they were reassured by the researcher that answers could not be traced to particular individuals since it was not compulsory for students to supply their name. Only "age" and "school year" were required to be stated by the students. The researcher was available during the completion of the questionnaire for consultation by students if particular questions were not understood, to which instruction was given on an individual or group basis.

The surveys were conducted in the English language although students were given the opportunity to reply in either Arabic or English. Several students chose to answer some questions in Arabic. These students were relatively recent arrivals who felt more comfortable answering certain questions in the native tongue. Several other students answered the questions on religious knowledge and observance in Arabic, indicating that they had probably learned such concepts in that particular language. The overwhelming majority of participants however, answered all questions in English. Only one twelve year old male encountered difficulty in completing the questionnaire because of reading and spelling difficulties. This student was given individual attention outside of the group setting in order to assist him in completing the questionnaire.

The survey and group discussion formats were chosen for this study because the researcher wanted to obtain two complementary types of information. Quantitative
information with a lesser amount of qualitative information was mainly collected through the questionnaire. Most of the qualitative information was collected from an alternate source, the group discussions.

1.2.4 Discussion Groups

In order to obtain more qualitative information that would supplement and complement the survey, two in-depth discussion groups were conducted.

Six boys and eight girls in year 11 aged between 16 and 17 years of age, participated in the discussion groups. The discussion group format provided open ended questions to stimulate voicing opinions and discussion on the three major issues under investigation. Both group sessions were recorded on audio tape with the permission of the participants. Relevant portions of the recordings were transcribed for later use.

The different sources of data utilised for this study are important in attempting to draw a broader picture of the situation and context of young people of Lebanese Muslim background in NSW. These sources assisted the study in identifying overall patterns, in addition to obtaining descriptive information of a qualitative as well as a quantitative nature from primary sources. Such data will be utilised in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Meanwhile, the next section of the present chapter provides an overview of Muslim Australians in a historical and community context, with a particular focus on Lebanese Muslims.
1.3 Overview of Muslims in Australia

1.3.1 From Past to Present

In order to understand and appreciate the context of Lebanese Muslims in Australia today, some preliminary remarks on Muslims in Australian history may be useful.

The Muslim community which presently represents almost 1% of Australia’s population\(^{27}\) constitutes the largest religious group after Christians in this country.\(^{28}\) The number of Muslims in Australia increased noticeably in the post-World War II era, and in particular since the 1960’s - even though Muslims have had a long presence in Australian history, both preceding the British First Fleet and during the colonial era.

The first known contact between Muslims and the Australian continent dates back to at least the 1650’s, before white settlement.\(^{29}\) Muslim sailors and fishermen from Macassar, in present day Indonesia, used to make annual trips to the northern coast of Australia in search of a seafood delicacy called ‘trengg’.\(^{30}\) In the course of these ventures close personal, social and economic relations with the Aboriginal people in Australia’s north were established. This interaction between the Macassans and the Aborigines, which included trade, employment, communication and intermarriage continued until 1907, when the last known fleet was turned away by officials after a 1906 law was passed banning Macassan ships from coming to Australia.\(^{31}\)

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27 ABS (1991 Census), Catalogue No. 2722.0, Table B13, p. 5.
28 Ibid., Catalogue No. 2722.0, Table B13, p. 5.
Muslims in Australia make up 33.1% of the non-Christian population compared to 31.4% of Buddhist and 16.7% of Jewish backgrounds.
30 That is, *heche de mer*, or sea-slug.
One motivation for this was due to white Australian pearling interests which sought to exclude Macassans, by imposing customs taxes on visiting ships and by policing the northern shores.
The Muslim Macassan interaction with the Aborigines, described as a “pattern of peaceful contact” in contrast to the later white settlement, saw at least one thousand Macassans journey to Australia each year, staying for approximately five months collecting and processing trepang before returning to present day Indonesia.\textsuperscript{32} Aboriginal stories about these Muslim visitors recall boys and youths often accompanying these crews.\textsuperscript{33} This represents perhaps the first known interaction of Muslim youth in Australia.\textsuperscript{34}

The next major phase of Muslim interaction with Australia occurred when Muslims from Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent known as the “Afhans” arrived in Melbourne with their camels in the 1860’s. One distinguishing feature about these Muslim Afghans as distinct from the Muslim Macassans, is that like the Lebanese Muslims of today, they lived as minority communities within an Anglo social, cultural, economic and political context. Arriving with three year job contracts, these Afghan camel drivers where essentially here because a new form of transport i.e. camels, replacing horse and oxen, was needed in Australia which would be suited to the dry desert terrain. The first Afghans to arrive in Australia came specifically to assist in the Burke and Wills expedition of 1860.\textsuperscript{35}

The Afghan community offered Anglo and Aboriginal Australia’s first significant Muslim settled community. As such it had its own youth population. For this very reason, it would be interesting to learn something of their lives. These


\textsuperscript{34} Jupp (1988), p. 550. Between 1870 and the 1940s another two groups of Indonesians made their presence in Australia. A small number of Indonesians from Java came to Australia between 1885-1906 to work on sugar plantations in the north of Queensland. Most of these Indonesians returned home at the turn of the century due both to expired contracts and to the restrictive immigration policies Australia had set in place, which did not encourage permanent settlement. The other group of workers who made their presence in Australia were the Indonesian divers who played an important part in Western Australia’s pearl industry.

\textsuperscript{35} Stevens (1989). The contribution of these Afghans was very significant in the development of modern day Australia. Afghans not only participated in the exploration of Australia’s outback, but also contributed to two very significant communication milestones. The first being the railway line between Port Augusta and Alice Springs. The second was the Overland Telegraph Line constructed in the early 1870’s which extended from Adelaide to Darwin and connected Australia to London via India.
children born to Afghan men and Aboriginal or local white European women were raised with Afghan names, wearing traditional Afghan dress, and observing Islamic traditions. The Afghan children attended school in accordance with the Education Department regulations, leaving school at the legal age. Upon leaving school, boys went on to assist their fathers in the cameleering business, and the girls assisted their mothers in the home awaiting marriage.

Children were taught to memorise the Qur'an at a young age, often within the mosques their fathers had built. These mosques were very simple structures attached to the Ghan-towns, serving the community (mainly the men) for daily and the congregational Friday prayers.36 Australia's first two city mosques were built by the Afghan Muslims and are located in Adelaide (established 1888-90) and Perth (established 1905). By 1915 both Mosques had or were in the process of building madrassas (i.e. Islamic religious schools) for the religious instruction of children.37 The establishing of mosques and madrassas is an endeavour eagerly undertaken by today's Australian Muslim communities also.

Family life in the Ghan-towns included teaching children how to pray, family sing-songs, story telling and picnics.38 The older children participated in the fast of Ramadan as their parents did. Two religious celebrations were held annually at the Ghan-towns, i.e. 'Eid al-Adha and 'Eid al-Fitr.39 Afghan boys were circumcised by one of the local Afghan men, and girls were not allowed to wear make-up or revealing

37 Ibid., pp. 189, 192.
38 Ibid., p. 258.
39 Ibid., pp. 193, 260. Two religious celebrations were held annually at the Ghan-towns the largest of which was the Eid al-Fitr festival at the end of Ramadan. In the Ghan-towns this celebration was known as the "Big Christmas". At both the celebrations which were very colourful events, Afghan men and children would dress in their best clothes, turbans, embroidered jackets and sharwals, and small gifts would be given to children marking the importance of the events. The festivals would last for several days, bringing the Afghan community together as one large family, manifesting the support structures and atmosphere previously enjoyed in Afghanistan. Attended by European children and adults these occasions were enjoyed by all, with singing, dancing and food in plentiful supply. While local white children were welcome at these Muslim festivals, Afghan children were not treated with the same hospitality often turned away from European homes at Christmas or Easter celebrations.
“Arranged marriages” were a significant issue for young Afghans, with family pressure bearing upon the choice of partners whom young Afghans would finally marry. This pressure was significantly brought out to bear more on girls than boys. However, by the 1920’s Afghan girls were evidently becoming more and more assertive in choosing their own partners - usually choosing from among the Australian born Afghan boys.41 This assertiveness also extended outside of the home with girls also wanting to seek gainful employment.42

The Afghan period of Muslim history in Australia is significant for several reasons. It represents the first group of Muslim children growing up in Australia as a minority. It was a period when open racism, especially against the Aboriginal people, was rife and where a “White Australia” promised the nation’s identity. The first real Muslim community in Australia also endured racism and religious bigotry and was subjected to the similar stereotypes encountered by Muslims today. It was also a community which sought to actively establish community structures such as mosques and madrassas with the view to permanent settlement.

Similar to the situation for these second generation Afghan Muslims, racial and religious discrimination, choices about marriage, and the pressure to conform to parental wishes (regarding education and vocational aspirations) are all very valid issues for Lebanese and other Muslim youth living in Australia today. Parallels from the experiences of these young Afghan Australian Muslims may be a useful backdrop in understanding the experiences of newer migrant arrivals, particularly our group of respondents, i.e. young Lebanese Muslims.

The remaining descendants of these early Afghans are now geographically dispersed and do not constitute a “community” as such. Many retain little knowledge of Islam and only vaguely recollect their heritage, having become fully “assimilated” into

41 Ibid., p. 238. Mariam Khan and Zainic Balooch both married the men of their choice breaking family arrangements for their marriage.
42 Ibid., p. 238.
the Australian cultural environment. Others, however, have vigorously maintained their practice of Islam as a religion and way of life.

Concurrent to the Afghan cameleers’ migration to Australia in the late 1800s, was the beginning of the migration of Lebanese individuals and families.\textsuperscript{43} However, these Lebanese immigrants were mainly of Christian background and had come to Australia to escape local social and economic disruptions.\textsuperscript{44} Above all, they sought to establish a secure life for their families. The next group of Muslims that arrived into Australia after the Afghans, were of Balkan origin, i.e. from Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina (a republic of the former Yugoslavia).

Lebanese Muslims only began arriving into Australia during the 1950’s. They came in relatively small numbers. Many of these Lebanese Muslim immigrants were men, who arrived without family, in search of work with the long term view of returning to their homeland.

Larger numbers of Lebanese Muslims arrived during the 1970’s after a series of destabilising conflicts in and around Lebanon. These included the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in 1975-1976 and the major Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982.\textsuperscript{45}

Lebanese who migrated to Australia after 1976 did so under the “Special Humanitarian” migration scheme, which provided for the usual entry requirements to be waived.\textsuperscript{46} Although accorded “quasi refugee status”, they were treated as “normal immigrants”.\textsuperscript{47} Being treated as “normal immigrants” meant that they were not entitled to assisted passage, short term accommodation upon arrival, nor any of the special assistance schemes available to “normal” refugees. Subsequently, many of these

\textsuperscript{43} See Batrouney & Batrouney (1985).
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 20-22.
\textsuperscript{45} See Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984), Mackie (1983), and Young et al (1980).
\textsuperscript{46} Young et al (1980), p. 82.
\textsuperscript{47} Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984), p. 6.
Lebanese migrants experienced a more difficult settlement process, enduring the strains of economic insecurity, made worse by a background of generally limited and disrupted education and unemployment, and poor English language skills.\textsuperscript{48}

While personal reasons for migration to Australia may have been different across individuals, many came in search of not only vocational or financial security but also civil security. The opportunity to find work, social stability and relative peace of mind are not unimportant factors. Not unlike migrants from other parts of the world, many have come with the general intention of returning to their original homeland one day. In the settlement process, however, many may have found themselves having to reconcile their own expectations with the expectations of their children who have lived most, if not all, of their lives in Australia.

1.3.2 Social and Religious Networks in NSW

Central to the maintenance of any religious community is the establishment and development of its places of worship. As such, Muslims of Lebanese and other backgrounds have over the years endeavoured to raise funds to build and maintain Mosques as focal points of their community life. While the first mosques in Australia were built by the ‘Afghans’ in Adelaide and Perth, one of Sydney’s earliest mosques was established in the 1960’s in the inner city suburb of Surry Hills\textsuperscript{49}. It was built to cater for the growing Muslim population living and working in and around Sydney city. Other mosques in Sydney include three major ones: the Imam Ali mosque in the suburb of Lakemba, the Auburn mosque in Auburn, and the Fatima al-Zahra mosque in Arncliffe. Smaller mosques are located in Erskineville, Tempe, Redfern, Manly, Smithfield, Bankstown, Campbelltown and Hurstville. However, the establishment of mosques has not been without its difficulties. Over the years, mosque associations have encountered much resistance and opposition to building applications by resident and

\textsuperscript{48} Mackie (1983), pp. 137, 140.
\textsuperscript{49} iCNSW (1989), p. 4.
local council groups.\textsuperscript{50}

Many of these mosques have sprung out of the development of long established community organisations. These had come into existence to serve the social, cultural and religious needs of particular ethnic groups. Examples of this can be seen in the connection between the Lebanese Muslim Association and the Lakemba mosque, between the Al-Zahra Muslim Association and the Arncliffe mosque, and the Turkish Islamic Society of Auburn and the Auburn mosque.

A further institutional development of the Muslim community (beyond the mosque) is that of full-time Islamic schools. There are currently three operational in NSW, with one already expanding to offer Junior High School facilities. Similar to the situation encountered with mosque development applications, Islamic schools have also encountered many resident and municipal council objections to their own building development applications.\textsuperscript{51} So far, these schools are all located in the Canterbury-Bankstown municipalities and surrounding areas. They mainly cater to the needs of infant and primary school children, offering the basic NSW education curriculum together with Arabic and Islamic Studies components.

Another aspect of a community's institutional development is its organisational structure which seeks to manage and coordinate community affairs across geographical boundaries, and internal diversity. The Australian Muslim community is organised according to a three-tiered structure, fitting within Australia's Local, State and Federal structure.\textsuperscript{52} At the local level there are the individual Islamic Societies. At the second level there are the State and Territory Islamic Councils. And at the third level there is the national body called the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). Individual Islamic Societies within a state or territory form an Islamic Council in which Member Societies are represented. Islamic Councils in turn form a Federation (AFIC) in which state and territory Islamic Councils are represented. This arrangement is quite unique in

\textsuperscript{50} See Lowe (1985); Partoredjo (1989); and EAC NSW (1990).
\textsuperscript{52} Shboul (1988 b), p. 225
the world where Muslim minorities exist and does not seem to have parallels in other Western countries, such as France, America, Britain and Canada.\textsuperscript{53} There are however a number of individual societies that do not subscribe to membership of this 3 tier structure, and they therefore remain independently outside of it.

One of the most important functions of the NSW Islamic Council as it impinges on Muslim youth, is its Islamic Special Religious Instruction (SRI) program which operates through the NSW state school system (both at primary and secondary levels). The Department of School Education of NSW allows one period a week for a scripture instructor to enter the school and offer religious instruction to adherents. The NSW Islamic Council coordinates and provides voluntary Islamic SRI teachers to around 200 state schools where there are significant numbers of Muslim pupils. This of course would be one important source of Islamic instruction for young Muslims as they grow up in Australian society.

A most important function that AFIC has had, which impinges directly upon Muslim youth matters, is its “National Muslim Youth Camps”. These camps were held annually between 1975 and 1988 and they originated out of a growing concern from Muslim parents wanting to provide their children with an opportunity to meet Muslim peers and appreciate an Islamic way of life. These camps usually lasted for one week, and usually catered for approximately one hundred and twenty young Muslims of

\textsuperscript{53} The NSW Islamic Council, for instance, comprises around 25 Member Societies, representing many different ethnic and language groups (e.g. Lebanese, Turkish, Bosnian, Fijian, Bangladeshi, Indonesian, South African and others). It also represents the geographical distribution of the community across the State. The Islamic Council’s aims are to represent and advocate the interests of the NSW Muslim community (e.g. social, welfare, religious and cultural), in relation to internal community matters, the society at large, the Local, State, and Federal levels of government.
various backgrounds.\textsuperscript{54}

On a more local level, within the Canterbury and Bankstown municipalities, several Muslim community initiatives focussing on serving Muslim youth in the area, can also be found. Organisations such as the Lebanese Muslim Association and the Muslim Womens Association (both affiliated to the NSW Islamic Council), as well as "village"\textsuperscript{55} based organisations such as Al-Minia Charitable Association and the Fraternal Society of Tripoli and Mina, all have programmes and activities targeting young Lebanese (especially Muslims) of various age groups.

By far, the largest local Muslim organisation in New South Wales (if not Australia) is the Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA). It administers the running and maintenance of the Imam Ali Mosque (also known as the Lakemba Mosque), a welfare centre, and a newly established funeral parlour, all situated in the suburb of Lakemba.\textsuperscript{56}

The welfare centre aims to serve the settlement needs of newly arrived and disadvantaged Muslims, with a focus on Lebanese Muslims. It has a full-time youth worker, whose role is to organise specific programmes for young Lebanese Muslims.

\textsuperscript{54} The last AFIC National Youth Camp was held in the summer of 1988-89. Several reasons were given by AFIC for the discontinuation of the youth camps. One reason was that AFIC funding for youth camps had become an increasingly difficult task when financial resources were extremely low for the organisation. A second consideration was that obtaining campsites was a difficult task, with many campsite owners unwilling to accommodate groups that did not belong to the mainstream Christian churches. Other reasons included negative criticism regarding the amount of time allowed for boys and girls to socialise at camps.

Desire for national camps to be resumed have hitherto not been heeded. AFIC instead has resolved to delegate the responsibility for holding camps (now state camps, and not national ones) to the various state and territory Islamic Councils around Australia. The overall rationale was that instead of abolishing camps altogether, the organisation of camps could devolve to each state, allowing a greater number of young people to participate.

Recently, a Melbourne based youth group have undertaken to re-establish national youth camps, believing that a national Muslim youth movement was essential to the well-being of the Muslim community at large.

\textsuperscript{55} This commonly refers to organisations which cater for individuals from particular villages, towns or cities in the country of origin. Within the Lebanese community across religious denominations, it is not uncommon for individuals belong to one of the many village, or town based organisations in NSW.

\textsuperscript{56} That is, in the Canterbury Municipality.
Activities have included tutorial sessions for secondary school students. Other educational sessions for high school students have covered topical issues such as HIV/AIDS and various aspects of sexuality and growing up in a non-Muslim society. These sessions and topics are conducted in a way sensitive to Islamic values. Other activities have included soccer training, occasional mosque “retreats” (j'tikaf), and week-long youth camps which incorporate Islamic education and recreational activities. The LMA also administers Ethnic Language Schools (Arabic) throughout the week. The LMA’s network of Arabic and religious classes accommodates approximately 1200 Muslim children annually, across a large part of the Sydney metropolitan area.

The Muslim Women Association (MWA) is also located in Lakemba, in the Canterbury municipality. Its membership comprises mainly of Lebanese Muslim women, but it also aspires to appeal and cater to a multi-ethnic clientele. The MWA serves the particular settlement related needs of Muslim women and girls especially those who live in the Canterbury and Bankstown municipalities. Its welfare office is located in Lakemba (close to the LMA offices and the Imam Ali Mosque) and it also administers the running of the only Muslim women’s refuge in Australia. Like the LMA, the MWA, employs a worker to look specifically into youth issues. Occasionally, the MWA holds activities for young Muslim females, with the aim of providing the opportunity for peer group formation and peer support for Muslim girls. For several years a very successful joint project between the LMA and the MWA is their language and religious instruction program held each Sunday morning.

The Al-Minia Association is a village based community organisation of Lebanese Muslims, which is also prominent in the Canterbury municipality. It also conducts language and religious classes which caters to several hundred children every year. On a different level, the Fraternal Society of Tripoli, another village/town based community organisation of Lebanese Muslims, has established a highly successful child-care centre. It caters for children of all backgrounds in need of day care, though Muslim and Arabic speaking communities mostly use its facilities.

57 j'tikaf retreats strictly speaking are periods of complete devotion to worship in the mosque and usually involve activities at the mosques spanning several days and nights. They are often held during Ramadan or on long week ends, serving both social and religious functions.
CHAPTER TWO

- THE FAMILY UNIT & ITS DYNAMICS -

2 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the family unit, and its dynamics, of young Lebanese Muslims. Through our findings, a profile of the family unit will be presented, together with a survey of how respondents perceive their relationships with their parents, siblings and extended family members. Furthermore, the issues of gender dynamics and parental expectations will be covered.

2.1 The Family Unit

2.1.1 Background

Traditionally, the extended family unit is highly valued in and functional to Lebanese and Muslim societies. However, to a large degree the extended family structure has been modified as a result of migration.¹ Anwar (1986) found that immigration policy restrictions in the United Kingdom served to weaken the Muslim extended family set by excluding certain family members from migration.² The same could probably be said of Australia. Notwithstanding that, relatives of new immigrants that were to be found living in the country of migration, often served to provide valuable support during the initial settlement period.³ The support role families played frequently cushioned new immigrants from the shock of the on-arrival experience and lessened the emergence of certain welfare problems such as housing needs.

² Anwar (1986), p. 11.
Fundamental to the family unit are the values which hold it together. Hassan et al (1985) found amongst Australian Lebanese families (Muslim and Christian) that migration served to diminish traditional values amongst the younger generation.\(^4\) North American studies of Muslim communities (including those of Lebanese origins) also noted the diminishing religious retention by the younger generation.\(^5\)

Another significant aspect of the family unit is its size. While Lebanese Australian family size has diminished in size, by Australian standards they still remain relatively large. Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) found that Lebanese households in Australia were smaller and more nuclear than in Lebanon. Their study in particular found that amongst Lebanese sects Sunni Muslim families (i.e. the general composition of our sample) were the largest in size, with a mean size of 6.2 persons. As already mentioned earlier, amongst women aged between 45 to 55 years, Muslim women (across all ethnicities including Lebanese) had the largest families. They had an average of 3.8 children, in comparison to women of all other religious groups.\(^6\) Similarly, of all women aged 55 years and over, Lebanese born women (Muslim and Christian) had the largest family size, with an average of 4.5 children.\(^7\)

The make-up of educational attainment amongst members of Lebanese Muslim families is also of interest to our study. According to the 1986 Census, approximately 14.5% of Lebanese born persons (Muslim and Christian) aged 15 years and over had never attended school, in comparison to less than 1% for the whole Australian population.\(^8\) Of those that did attend school, almost 63% had left by the time they were 16 years of age or less.\(^9\) (See Table 2.1). These figures may indicate several things, namely the rural origins of many Lebanese migrants, and/or disrupted education due to civil and regional disturbances (i.e. war).

\(^4\) Hassan et al (1985), p. 181
\(^6\) Castles (1991 a), p. 31. See Chapter 1 for further discussion.
\(^7\) Castles (1991 b), pp. 54-55. See Chapter 1 for further discussion.
\(^8\) Ibid., Figure 7.1. p. 60.
\(^9\) Ibid., Table 7.1. p. 59.
Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of these Lebanese born people, aged 15 years and over, did not have any post-secondary qualifications (i.e. 82.2%). Of those that did achieve post-secondary qualifications (i.e. 17.8% of Lebanese born people), twice as many males than females were represented. The greater part (i.e. 10.6%) held a trade or other certificate. Approximately 2.3% held a university degree or diploma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.1</th>
<th>Ages Lebanese Born Persons Left School (1986 Census)</th>
<th>AUSTRALIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 yrs or less</td>
<td>13-16 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men:</td>
<td>19.3 %</td>
<td>43.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women:</td>
<td>26 %</td>
<td>45.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>45 %</td>
<td>88.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly almost 77% of Australian Muslims (across all ethnic groups including Lebanese) in Australia did not possess any secondary qualifications. Almost 17% held a trade or other qualification, 1.6% held a diploma and 4.9% held a university first degree or higher.

A major condition particularly affecting newer migrants (such as Lebanese Muslims, inter alia) is that of the depressed job market resulting in high unemployment. This condition of high unemployment has prevailed approximately since the latter 1970s through the 1980s till the early 1990s. Such conditions undoubtedly impacts on the fabric of the family unit.

Indeed, the Lebanese and Muslim population in Australia has experienced the effects of high unemployment and poor labour force participation rates for many years.

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10 Castles (1991 b), Table 7.5., p. 66.
   This is in comparison to almost 69% of Lebanese ancestry (i.e. those born in Lebanon and Australia) who have no post-secondary qualifications. See Chapter 1, Table 1.8.
11 Castles (1991 b), Table 7.4., p. 64. Approximately 23.1% males compared to 11.5% females held post-secondary qualifications.
12 Ibid., Table 7.5, p. 66.
13 Castles (1991 a), p. 37. See Chapter 1, Table 1.7.
As mentioned earlier, the 1986 Census data placed the Muslim community’s (across all ethnic groups, including Lebanese) labour participation rate at 55%, with most employed as labourers. Muslim women (across all ethnic groups, including Lebanese) suffered the lowest participation rate in the Australian work force.14

The unemployment rate within the Muslim community (across all ethnic groups, including Lebanese) was 32.7% for women and 26.8% for men at the time of the 1986 Census. In 1993 the unemployment rate for Lebanese born people (Muslim and Christian) was 31.1% compared to the national unemployment figure of 10.7%.15 In the Canterbury-Bankstown districts of NSW (i.e. the target area of this present study) Lebanese born persons (Muslim and Christian) account for 20% of unemployed Social Security recipients.16

2.1.2 The Findings

a. Birthplace and Length of Residence

A high proportion (77%) of our survey respondents were born in Australia. The remaining 23% (14 students) were born in Lebanon, with the majority (8 students) arriving in Australia between 1984 and 1988. Six (6) of these students who were born in Lebanon arrived earlier, between 1976-77, after the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon. Most of the Lebanese born students arrived into Australia when they were 10 years of age or younger. Two respondents arrived when they were approximately 6 months of age and another two arriving at the age of 14 years. All respondents were Australian citizens.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents’ parents were born in Lebanon. A few were born in other Arabic countries such as Syria (1 boy, 2 girls), and Palestine (1 girl). Two mothers were born in Australia and one mother was born in Spain.

14 See Chapter 1, Table 1.9.
Most of the respondents' parents (61%) arrived during the 1970's slightly before and during the civil war in Lebanon. Fourteen percent (14%) arrived in Australia in the 1980's, with the majority of these arriving a few years after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The parents who arrived in Australia the earliest came during the 1950s. The most recently arrived, came in 1988.

b. The Household

In the present study survey respondents generally lived in nuclear households. Two (2) female respondents lived in single parent households as both their fathers were deceased. One female respondent lived with her mother and siblings as her parents were separated. In contrast to Mackie's study (1982) where 34% of respondents had relatives living with them in the same household, only three (3) respondents in the current study had one member of their extended family residing with them.17 Unlike the initial settlement period of Lebanese Muslim migrants during the 1970's and early 1980s, this nuclear household structure (with few extended family dependents), is perhaps indicative of the gradual establishment and longer periods of residence of Lebanese Muslim families in this area, where non-nuclear family members had in time re-domiciled.

In our sample, the average family comprised 2 parents and 4.9 children, i.e. 6.9 in total. This figure of 6.9 is very close to Humphrey and Hausfeld's finding of a mean size of 6.2 persons amongst Sunni Lebanese. Indeed, respondents in the present sample are also mainly of Sunni Lebanese background. Sixty one percent (61%) of respondents indicated there were 5 or more (but less than 9) children within their own respective families. None of the respondents was a sole child. The median figure for the number of children per family was between 5-6 children, and accounted for 46% of responses.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents resided in a house, in comparison to the 11% that lived in a flat or unit-type accommodation. The majority of respondents

17 One uncle, brother-in-law/cousin, and one other unspecified, respectively.
(81%) also stated that their homes were still being paid-off or were out rightly owned by their parents. Again, this perhaps indicates that Lebanese Muslims in the target area were becoming more established and "settled" in their new country of residence. The remaining 19% of respondents lived in rented accommodation. This may simply be due to financial limitations. Humphrey and Hausfeld attributed the difference in owning and renting amongst Lebanese persons (across religious sects) to length of residence, i.e. there was a decline in renting as the length of residence increased. However, another factor which may significantly affect home ownership is a reluctance in some sections of the Muslim community to purchase their homes by taking out interest based loans - in view of the Islamic prohibition of interest on loans. This study did not ascertain as to the significance of such practices in the Muslim community.

c. **Family Socio-economic Status**

In assessing family socio-economic status, parents’ education and employment were important aspects to consider. Both factors contribute to the financial and material means of families as well as to their cultural or non-material assets. Both aspects are discussed below.

**Parental Education:**

The low levels of educational attainment for Australian Lebanese (Muslim and Christian) and Muslims (across ethnicities including Lebanese) identified in the 1986 Census data, were also reflected amongst the parents of the respondents surveyed (See Table 2.2). The present survey also indicated that 16% of parents did not attend any form of schooling (compared to the 14.5% Lebanese born according to the 1986 Census). Almost half of the mothers (47%) and fathers (48.5%) did not go beyond primary school, with a significant percentage of them not ever having attended school.

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18 Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984), pp. 53-54.
Nineteen percent (19%) of parents attended some part of junior secondary school and 26% of parents went on to senior secondary school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.2 Parents' Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior high:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College / tech:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey respondents indicated that few of their parents attended post-secondary educational institutions. Only 6% of respondents indicated their parents had attended a technical college or university. Mothers were more represented in the college category than fathers, however, none of the respondents indicated that their mothers had ever attended university.

Employment:

Similarly, the low levels of employment and labour participation described in the 1986 Census for persons of Lebanese and Muslim background, were closely reflected among the parents' of the respondents surveyed. (See Table 2.3). Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents stated their parents were unemployed or received some form of government pension. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents' fathers and 90% of their mothers were represented in this category.
Almost a quarter of fathers (24%) were self employed compared to 4% of mothers. Of the 12% of respondents' parents that were employed the majority were fathers in full-time employment.

Several factors may have affected such high unemployment figures. Amongst them would be the comparatively short length of residence, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and skills, disrupted education and work experience as well as poor English language skills. However, these factors may not necessarily have been pertinent to successful employment in an earlier phase of Australia's industrial history. Indeed, the post World War II industrial boom in the primary sector, which lasted till the mid-1970s, relied much on unskilled and semi-skilled migrant manual labour. Since Australia's industrial restructuring in the late 1970s, which saw the loss of traditional sectors of employment where migrants would commonly be employed, massive retrenchments have taken place. Australia’s economy was restructuring more towards secondary and tertiary industries where reliance on a highly skilled, trained and constantly re-trained work force, competent in the English language, was fundamental.

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21 See Chapter 4 for further discussion.
d. **Language Usage**

Respondents were asked to rate their parents’ English language ability and to indicate their own ability to speak, read and write in the Arabic language. (See Tables 2.4 and 2.5). Over a third of respondents mothers (38%) and less than one third of respondents fathers (29%) could speak English “not very well” or “not at all”. Two thirds of parents (66%) could speak English relatively well (i.e. “okay” and “well”) and some “very well”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.4.</th>
<th>Parents’ English Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents combined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well:</td>
<td>16 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well:</td>
<td>14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay:</td>
<td>36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very well:</td>
<td>29 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all:</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the respondents’ proficiency in the Arabic language, 100% said they could speak and understand Arabic. Over two thirds of female respondents (67%) could read and write in the Arabic language. Of the males, more could read Arabic (66%), than write it (59%). These results indicate a high level of cultural maintenance, as expressed through language retention amongst second generation Australia of non-English speaking background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.5</th>
<th>Respondents’ Ability in Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combined Girls &amp; Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Arabic:</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read Arabic:</td>
<td>66.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write Arabic:</td>
<td>63.0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Family Dynamics

2.2.1 Background

Recent Australian studies have found that non-English speaking background (NESB) youth generally differed little from their Anglo-Australian counterparts except that NESB youth place more emphasis on “family matters” and “career considerations.”\textsuperscript{23} Studies on NESB families have also found that such families seem to have greater cohesiveness than Anglo-Australian families and appear to be characterised by stability and solidarity. Within these families, NESB young people are believed to have a significant amount of empathy for their parents’ situation and aspirations, and in turn receive a considerable amount of support for their own aspirations.\textsuperscript{24}

The family, which is eminently regarded as central to Lebanese and Muslim cultures, is seen to exert a significant amount of power in society. However, the “traditional” family unit as a social institution is regarded as being under threat of constant erosion by new social and cultural pressures and changes encountered in Australian society.\textsuperscript{25}

Hassan’s et al (1985) study found that Australian values are perceived as having the effect of weakening Lebanese values within the younger generations by encouraging “independent” behaviour which was viewed as bringing dishonour and shame to the family name. Certain government/social welfare schemes were also viewed by parents as acting to diminish family autonomy and aggravating cultural conflict.\textsuperscript{26} Another study reported that there was the prevailing parental expectation that young people would remain at home until they married. Further, within Lebanese families there was a strong sense of keeping family problems within the family

\textsuperscript{23} Cahill & Ewen (1987), p. 17.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., pp. 26, 31.
\textsuperscript{26} Hassan et al (1985), p. 185.
household. Further, there was the prevailing parental expectation that young people would remain at home until they married. The report found that despite the occurrence of such family problems there were low levels of family breakdown with Lebanese families. However, the researchers of this study cautioned that the low figures might understate the real situation.27

Parents of other non-English speaking backgrounds also held real concerns about life styles in Australian society and the effect this may have on the family. Amongst these concerns were the lack of extended family networks and the view that Australian society was seen as less “safe” (i.e. in terms of personal safety) than their country of origin. Another feature of concern to parents of non-English speaking backgrounds was that they considered Australian society to be “elasic” in terms of its tolerance of open sexual permissiveness.28 Regardless of such concerns, NESB parents generally expected their children to grow into good citizens and contribute to building good families and therefore a good society.29

While NESB parents can be regarded as relatively successful in transmitting cultural and religious values about marriage, relationships and “family-centeredness”, acculturation to a new environment can often cause tensions and conflicts within families. Migrant families that only recently arrived into Australia and whose cultural traits are markedy different from the “norm” tend to experience a higher degree of tension and strain.30

In order to explain some of the difficulties which youth of non-English speaking backgrounds experience, certain social researchers have put forward the cultural conflict or cultural coercion view. This view states that NESB youth live and experience two mutually exclusive worlds, which serve to develop a “marginal” and “unresolved” individual who was neither prototypically “Australian” nor “ethnic”.

29 Ibid., p. 66.
However this view has been surpassed by a more current one, which states that while it is true that NESB young people often live in two dissimilar worlds where conflicts arise, young people have a remarkable ability to creatively adapt to their life situation. This “creative adaptability” allows young people, firstly, to empathise with their parents and therefore hold major conflicts in check, and secondly, to “build a meaningful balance” between two cultures.31

Most would agree that in families where conflicts result in family break-up or young people leaving the home, the situation often becomes traumatic and very difficult to resolve.32 However, while conflicts in NESB families might be considered as significant, they were often found not to be serious and were generally kept within manageable proportions. For NESB youth this conflict often arises from a resentment of their parents’ “fixed ways” and “frozen-in-time-and-village” attitudes, and parental concerns about family image or honour.33

Another area that often gave rise to conflict within NESB families was the difference in treatment between sons and daughters by parents. Young women of non-English speaking background often complained of the over-protectiveness parents displayed towards them, making their lives more restricted than that of their brothers.34 However, while some NESB girls were manifestly frustrated by such social controls, many girls and particularly those of Turkish Muslim background showed considerable understanding of their parents’ concern about their personal safety and reputation in society.35 Social control mechanisms such as “fear of gossip” which reinforced parental expression of concern, did not necessarily hinder young females of Turkish and other backgrounds from participating in certain social activities.36 Instead, their social activities revolved around participating in group

activities with school or family friends and relatives, or meeting at each other’s homes. While such girls might be understanding of parental concern, Turkish Muslim girls for example were unaccepting of uninvited over-protectiveness and intervention shown by their Turkish male peers.37

It is against this background, the remaining part of this Chapter examines our findings with regard to the dynamics within the families of young Australians of Lebanese Muslim background. The dynamics examined pertained to: relationships, agreement, disagreement and respect between respondents and family members; family and leisure activities; and consultation procedures relating to decision making within the family unit and problem sharing. Other aspects of family dynamics examined deal with parental expectations and gender roles within the respondents’ families.

2.2.2 The Findings

Part a. of our findings examines matters relating to respondents’ parents, siblings and extended family members. Part b. looks at the question of respondents’ agreement of opinion with and respect to different members of their respective families. Conversely, part c. then looks at disagreement of opinion with different members of the family. Part d. examines family and leisure activities. Part e. importantly examines consultation protocols within the family as regards decision making. It also looks at the issue of whom respondents consult for advice on problems. Part f. discusses expectations placed on respondents by their families, particularly parents. Lastly, part g. examines the gender dynamics that may occur within families.

**Parents, Siblings & Extended Family Members**

**Parents:**

Survey respondents were asked to rate how well they considered that they related to (i.e. "got on" with) their father and mother, as an indication of the quality of relationship young Lebanese Muslims have with their parents.

As can be see from comparing Tables 2.6 and 2.7, boys rated their ability to get on with their fathers and mothers more highly than the girls. Eighty six percent (86%) of boys compared to 70% of girls rated their ability to get on with their father as "very well"; and 93% of boys compared to 73% of girls rated their ability to get on with their mothers as "very well". The responses given by both girls and boys indicated that they generally held their parents in great regard. Respondents spoke of a high quality of interaction between themselves and their parents.

**TABLE 2.6 "Getting on" with Father**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well:</td>
<td>86 %</td>
<td>70 %</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay:</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>21 %</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very well:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.7 "Getting on" with Mother**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well:</td>
<td>93 %</td>
<td>73 %</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay:</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very well:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a group, female respondents, in general, gave a more varied response to their relationships with both parents than males did. It was interesting to note that only girls indicated they got on “not very well” or “not at all” with either or both parents. These particular girls basically considered that their parents either did not communicate with them, understand them or trust them. Some of the comments made by these girls included: “because he [father] wouldn’t understand”; “we [parents and self] have different points of view and believe in different things”; and, “because with everything I do ... I’m not trusted”.

However, both boys and girls spoke of high levels of communication with their mothers. The majority of boys and girls found their mothers in particular to be very understanding of their needs and feelings, and had no problem, in the main, confiding their “personal” information with her in comparison to their fathers. In addition to their openness about “personal” issues, respondents spoke of the closeness and respect they felt for their mothers as a friend and as a mother. Some typical comments regarding the respondents’ relationships with their mothers included:

We understand each other. I tell my mum every news I have. She’s like my best friend. I’m closer to my mum than to my older sister. Communication is very good. She understands my feelings about everything. [female respondent]

We talk a lot, she understands me. [male respondent]

The majority of boys (86%) stated they got on very well with their fathers. This quality of relationship seemed to be attributed to the high regard they held for their fathers and the kind of interaction that took place between the boys and their fathers.

In general, boys regarded their fathers as “good” men who showed “care”, fairness and kindness towards them, being worthy of respect. The majority of boys enjoyed a “close” relationship with their respective fathers, being able to communicate, and share activities with them. One boy summed up this type of relationship. He said of his father:
He helps me with things. We go fishing, we go out a lot. He helps me with problems. He is a kind man and we can communicate with each other.

Similarly, many of the boys claimed they were able to communicate effectively with their father. They regarded their fathers as being someone who took the time to listen and understand them. Some common responses from the boys, which indicated this close relationship included the following:

We are like friends.

He gives us a fair chance, he listens to what we’ve got to say.

He takes care of me, he is not too tough with me, he explains everything to me.

He talks to me and jokes around with me.

The remaining 14% of boys, who responded “okay” to how well they got on with their fathers gave similar responses to the girls who did not get on very well or at all with their parents. Their responses portrayed less the “quality interaction” and communication the majority of boys reported. To illustrate this, a typical comment made by one boy was:

When I speak to him [father], he doesn’t listen to me.

In contrast to the majority of boys who perceived they got on very well with their fathers, with only 14% claiming otherwise, girls seemed to have a much more varied relationship with their respective fathers. This may be due to the type of duties, expectations and limitations placed on girls by their fathers.38

Like the boys, most of these girls attributed their close relationship with their fathers to being able to communicate and negotiate. For example, one girl stated:

I get on well with my father because he is an understanding person and always wants the best for us. Also he is always happy to help us.

38 See section on “Gender Dynamics” in this Chapter.
Another girl said:

We agree on things, we talk about what occurs at home and try to solve it maturely.

Most girls, while being able to talk to their fathers, did not necessarily confide very “personal” issues with them. As mentioned earlier, this was something they felt more comfortable doing with their mothers. One girl said she got on very well with her father. However, she did not share “personal” issues with her father even though she “can communicate with him in most situations”.

Several other family related issues were also raised by female respondents within the surveys and discussion group that were not raised by their male counterparts. These included, firstly, concerns about parental strictness and over protectiveness, secondly, their parents’ ability to understand the “Australian way of life” and thirdly, the stresses experienced by families as a result of parents being unemployed.

Even though most girls believed that they got on very well with their fathers, they perceived their fathers, and to a lesser degree their mothers, to be very strict in terms of what things they were and were not allowed to do.

Karima’s39 (female) situation perhaps best described the issue of “over-protectiveness” that characterised most families regardless of their background. Karima considered her mother, who was a convert to Islam of Anglo Australian background, as “stricter” than her Lebanese born father. She said:

My father is strict - ‘Don’t do this and don’t do that, whatever I say goes’. That’s my dad ... Mum is really strict, stricter than dad ... people stare at you because they know my mum is Australian, and they ask, ‘Doesn’t: she let you do things’. No she doesn’t - that’s why they shouldn’t stare. We never get along at all, we argue about the littlest things: Friday excursions; if I say ‘Hello’ to a guy. They are over-protective.

39 This name, and others following, are not the real names of the respective respondents.
Another girl felt that parental strictness or “over-protectiveness” could hinder positive communication. She said she was one of 5 girls in the family and her parents were separated. She indicated that she got on best with her mother and considered her father to be far too strict. She stated:

We couldn’t communicate; he is too strict. Perhaps if we were boys things might be different. If I had a problem, I would not talk to him about it.

Like the Turkish girls interviewed by Inglis et al (1992), the Lebanese Muslim girls surveyed and interviewed showed “considerable understanding of parental concern”, regarding control over their social interaction, and for their personal safety.40 One of the girls interviewed in the discussion group summed up this type of family interaction. She said:

I get on with my mum the best. She is like my sister. She is young (32 years old), I can trust her; whatever I do I can tell her, even if I meet a guy I can tell her. My dad is different. He jokes around a lot but I can’t trust my dad like I do my mum. If I tell him I met a guy he might "kill" me - you know what I mean. I can’t tell my father things like that. Sometimes if I’ve got a problem and we are sitting down, dad can tell. Then he goes, so I can talk to my mum. He knows I want to tell my mum something. My dad takes care of me, he warns me, protects me more than my mum. For example, if I want to go out mum says okay, but my dad wants to know where, why, with whom, etc.

Rania (female) also agreed that her parents were strict, but indicated that this did not hinder her quality of relationship or communication with her parents. She said,

My parents are strict, what they say goes, what they say happens … I get on with my parents. What I want I get. I have no difficulties communicating with them.

Nadia (female) said,

My father is strict at times but he can also joke around with you.

It is interesting to note that some boys also related stories of parental concern for safety (which was in the main appreciated), as well as referring to their fathers’ “strictness”, and their reluctance to tell their father “personal” things. Nasser (male) related how his family was,

40 Inglis et al (1992), pp. 129-130; see also Tsolidis (1986), pp. 57-60, 67-68.
... not like an Australian family, where children say, "I'm going out mum you can't stop me" and they just walk out. If I want to go out I have to have my dad's permission as he knows what's best for me. If my dad says "no" I know its best for me. If I argue I won't get anywhere and I'll end up not going to go anywhere. My dad will explain why I can't go out. They are not strict, they give a reason and make you understand why they object. I can talk to my mum 'personally' more than dad. If I want something I go to mum. Everyone is closer to their mum.

The level of the fathers' interaction and participation with the wider society, also seemed to be an important factor for the girls. The fathers' ability to understand the "Australian" way of life, and "the way things are done here" was believed to enhance or hinder the relationship some girls had with their parents. One girl who rated her ability to get on very well with her father stated:

... now my father has been talking and understanding; and he has been going out and understanding how Australia is working.

Another girl who responded "okay" in relation to getting on with her father, said:

... we discuss a few things but sometimes he doesn't understand our thoughts and ways.

Unemployment, retrenchment and the resulting stress and strains experienced by many Australians in the current economic climate, were identified as factors which could threaten the quality of family relationships, regardless of the family's ethnic origin, or religious background. As we saw earlier in this chapter, 59% of all respondents had fathers who were either unemployed, performing home duties, retired, or receiving a government pension or benefit. Ninety percent (90%) was the unemployment/home-duties figure for respondents' mothers. With almost 75% of families having one or both parents out of work, we can see that the high level of unemployment experienced by Lebanese Muslims in the wider community was well reflected in the group surveyed. As such, the expected strains on family life resulting from unemployment were also evident. One girl, who rated her relationship with her father as "okay" said:

I don't tell him any personal things as I feel he doesn't understand. I like joking with him, but I used to get on with him even better when he was employed, but he got retrenched from work and he's been really upset. But now he has cooled down a bit.

47
Siblings:

Generally, respondents had a fairly good relationship with their brothers and sisters. Boys responses indicated that they got on much better with their brothers than girls did. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of boys got on “very well” with their brothers in contrast to the 41% of girls. (See Table 2.8). Most girls (52%) stated they got on “okay” with their brothers (compared to 28% of boys).

However, unlike the girls relationship with their brothers, most boys (54%) stated they got on “very well” with their sisters. Girls responses also indicated that they got on better with their sisters. Sixty-four percent (64%) of girls got on “very well” with their sisters. (See Table 2.9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.8</th>
<th>&quot;Getting on&quot; with Brother(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well:</td>
<td>68 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay:</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very well:</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.9</th>
<th>&quot;Getting on&quot; with Sister(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well:</td>
<td>54 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay:</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very well:</td>
<td>8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both boys and girls commented about the "little fights" they had with their siblings. Most perceived these incidents as only natural. Some girls also mentioned their affection for the much younger brothers and sisters within their family unit.

Respondents (male and female) also commented that they did things together with their siblings such as going to the movies or the football match, and helping each other with homework etc. Some respondents commented that they "connected" with brothers and sisters who were only slightly older or younger, as friends who they could confide in and ask for assistance.

*Extended Family Members:*

Respondents were asked to rate how well they get on with their extended family members, namely their grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Respondents were only expected to give their views if these extended family members lived in Australia. Again, similar to the responses given to their relationship with parents and siblings, females tended to give a more varied response than their male counterparts.

Most males and females gave the "very well" or "okay" response to how well they got on with their extended family members. Ninety-one percent (91%) of males and 55% of females claimed they got on reasonably well (i.e. "very well" or "okay") with their grandparents. (See Table 2.10). Forty-four percent (44%) of girls compared to 9% of boys got on "not at all" or "not very well" with their grandparents. An examination of the varied responses revealed the following trends.

| TABLE 2.10  "Getting on" with Grandparents |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | Boys            | Girls           | Boys            | Girls           |
| Very well:      | 82 %            | 33 %            | 9               | 6               |
| Okay:           | 9 %             | 22 %            | 1               | 4               |
| Not very well:  | 9 %             | 33 %            | 1               | 6               |
| Not at all:     | 0 %             | 11 %            | 0               | 2               |
| TOTAL:          | 100 %           | 100 %           | N = 11          | N = 18          |
Most respondents (male and female) who had a close interaction with their grandparents tended to get on “very well” with them. One girl for example said she had a very good relationship with them,

... because they brought me up and I lived with them for about 6 years of the first stages of my life.

One boy said he got on “very well” with his grandmother because,

... she takes care of me.

On another level, one girl gave a totally different view as to why she got on very well with her grandparents. She said,

... we don’t see them all the time, so we don’t argue.

In fact, it may be this potential for conflict that characterised the varied responses of females. For those that did not get on very well with their grandparents several reasons were cited as the cause. Firstly, intergenerational differences had led some girls to perceive their grandparents as living in the “dark ages”. One girl complained that her grandparents’ “opinions are still in the 30s”, while another girl said her grandmother “doesn’t understand much about the new lifestyle we are in. She’s old fashioned”. This type of inter-generational conflict is of course not unique to Lebanese Muslim families and is typical of many adolescents regardless of ethnic and religious background.

Another reason for the lack of positive relationships between some girls and their grandparents appears to be that of general incompatibility. One girl said her grandparents always picked on her. Another said her grandmother was not the type of person she could easily talk to.

For one girl who did not get on at all with one set of grandparents, it was the pressures to conform to their views and wishes which was the major cause of the poor status of her relationship with them. Although this case was not at all typical of the
responses given, this girl said of her paternal grandparents:

... last year I went overseas to Lebanon and they tried to pressure me to get married and I told them before that I didn’t want to get married and they thought they could change my mind. But the whole time I was in Lebanon, and in my dad’s village, all the rumours started too much trouble. The only peace I had was at my other grandparents [mother’s parents] place. After that I didn’t speak to my father’s parents anymore.

As to how well respondents related to their uncles, aunts and cousins, the majority of girls and boys got on reasonably well (i.e. “okay”) or “very well”. (See Tables 2.11 and 2.12). These relationships were largely characterised by a positive interaction on a social level. Some girls felt that their relationship with their uncles and aunts was enhanced by their uncles and aunts’ ability to speak English. Uncles, aunts and cousins were seen as generally supportive and fun to be with.

**TABLE 2.11  Getting on* with Uncles and Aunts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>79 %</td>
<td>52 %</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>31 %</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very well</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 24</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2.12  Getting on* with Cousins**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>83 %</td>
<td>70 %</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very well</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 23</td>
<td>N = 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Closeness in age, similar upbringing, and participating in joint activities were mentioned as the main reasons for the positive relationships respondents had with their
cousins. Girls also mentioned the genuine friendships, understanding and problem-sharing that characterised their relationships with their cousins (mainly female cousins).

b. Agreement and Respect

The survey asked two questions of respondents, which required them to nominate the persons they “most agreed with” and the persons they “most respected” within their own family unit of parents and siblings. Seventy percent (70%) of boys and 52% of girls claimed they tended to agree most with one or both parents. (See Table 2.13). When asked what particular areas they tended to agree on, both girls and boys limited their responses to saying they feel they agreed with their parents on “most things” without being able to pin-point what “things” exactly. Other respondents, both girls and boys, indicated that there was general agreement with their parents on such areas as “going-out”, friends, what clothing to wear, schooling, attitudes and personal feelings, and family problems.

**TABLE 2.13 Family Member Agree with Most**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents:</td>
<td>70 %</td>
<td>52 %</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings:</td>
<td>22 %</td>
<td>35 %</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/sibling:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one:</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 27</td>
<td>N = 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2.14 Family Member Respect Most**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>79 %</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/sibling:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 28</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to the question of whom they most respected in their family, 100% of boys and 79% of girls indicated that they respected one or both parents the most. (See Table 2.14). This response was not unusual considering most children in Muslim families would be aware of and would have been brought up with cultural (Lebanese) and religious (Islamic) teachings stressing respect for and kind treatment towards parents.41

While several males and females stated they respected one or both of their parents more than anyone else in the family, simply because they had a duty to respect their parents, when prompted further they attributed this respect to several factors.

Firstly, there was a general acknowledgement of the role their parents played within the family unit which earned them respect. Some of their comments included:

They are the eldest, they brought us up. Without them we would be living on the streets.

They take good care of me and they like helping me.

Ilham (female) whose father was deceased said she respected her mother because:

She has been supporting us for six years on her own without my father.

Secondly there was much acknowledgement for the purported experience and wisdom their parents had. For example, by far the most common response was that these young people believed that their parents were “usually right” and, secondly, knew what was best for them and were able to offer valuable opinions and guidance on issues.

Eman (female) reflected the spirit of such responses when she said she respected her father most, “because he always seems to get to me and convince me about things”.

41 For example, Islamic teachings urge individuals to treat parents with kindness (Ihsaan), in both speech and actions. See Qur’an; Ch. 6, v. 152 and Ch. 17, v. 24-26. The Hadith (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) are also cited to stress that “paradise is at the feet of the mother”. 53
As mentioned earlier while several young people stated they respected their parents out of “duty”, as “bosses” or as the “heads of the family” who measured out the discipline, most spoke of the care and understanding they received from their parents which they valued and appreciated. One girl remarked that she would “always” respect her parents and that she and her siblings “enjoy respecting them”.

The quality of respect felt for parents was perhaps best described by Farah (female) who said:

My parents always come first before anything in the world. I love and respect them too much to think otherwise.

Some girls said they respected a particular sibling most or in conjunction with a particular parent. Only one girl said she did not respect any one in her family because they “never give me their opinions on things”.

c. Disagreement

Most boys (77%) and girls (60%) claimed that within their immediate family unit, they were most likely to disagree with their siblings (see Table 2.15). The areas cited as those causing “conflict” were essentially the same amongst girls and boys. The most common areas of disagreement between sisters and brothers included: which particular television program to watch, or which radio station to listen to; cleaning and housework; as well as whether school homework had been completed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents:</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings:</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/sibling</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one:</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 26</td>
<td>N = 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the respondents generally felt that the areas of disagreement were "little things" that caused them to argue or "pick on" each other. They considered that such situations were not important and were usually easily forgotten.

More than twice as many girls (27%) as boys (11.5%) stated they generally disagreed with their parents. From the girls' responses, disagreement with parents was mainly due to the restrictions on their freedom to socialise and what sort of clothes they were allowed to wear. Lina (female) typified this response, claiming that she disagreed with her father most, particularly about "going out, dress sense, and school reports".

d. **Family and Leisure Activities**

Almost all respondents participated in social activities with their parents and family members suggesting a high level of family interaction and possibly even cohesion. Some of the joint family activities, highly rated by both boys and girls, included attending picnics, visiting relatives and family friends, attending parties, weddings and going shopping. Other joint activities included watching television as a family, doing housework (mainly the girls), gardening (usually the boys), or just spending time "talking" with particular family members.

However, when asked to indicate whether in their free time they: "hang-out" at a public place, listen to music, go on family outings, play sport, study and read books, the results were quite interesting. (See Table 2.16). They suggested that more girls (94%) spend their free time participating in joint family oriented activities such as family outings than boys (59%).

After family outings, most girls indicated they spent their free time listening to music (70%), studying (55%), playing sport (48%) and reading books (45%). Most males on the other hand indicated they spent their free time playing sport (76%), followed by family outings and listening to music (both 59%), and studying (52%).

55
TABLE 2.16  Leisure Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hanging-out&quot;:</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read books:</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study:</td>
<td>52 %</td>
<td>55 %</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music:</td>
<td>59 %</td>
<td>70 %</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play sport:</td>
<td>76 %</td>
<td>48 %</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family outing:</td>
<td>59 %</td>
<td>94 %</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More boys (38%) than girls (24%) spent time “hanging out” at a public place such as shopping centres or malls and only 17% of boys (compared to 45% of girls) spent their free time reading books.42 This comparative lack of reading practice was also evident in the poorer literacy skills displayed by several boys who participated in the questionnaire, as compared to the girls.

e.  Consultation: Decision Making and Problem Sharing

Muslim families are often represented (especially within the media) as male dominated bastions with clear hierarchical divisions.43 One vivid yet common example of such stereotypes often depicted the image of the Muslim Arab “sheikh” with a large harem of subservient wives and hordes of nameless and faceless children. These images convey the view that within Muslim Arab families it is the female members and children that are disadvantaged and voiceless. A discussion here on the views of respondents on the consultation protocols within Lebanese Muslim families would therefore be very interesting. Indeed, it would be equally interesting to compare the type of consultation mechanisms in average Anglo-Australian families as well as those

42 Inglis has a similar finding in regards to Turkish males and females. See Inglis et al (1992), pp. 129-132.
of other migrant backgrounds. However this is not within the scope of the present study.

The survey questionnaire asked respondents to comment on two main areas relevant to consultation within the family. The first area asked respondents to comment on decision making protocols within the family, that was, who the main decision maker(s) was or were within the family and whether they as younger members of the family were ever consulted by the main decision maker(s) when it came to major family decisions. The second area examined who the respondents were most likely to consult and ask advice from when such was needed.

**Decision Making:**

The results indicated that in over one-third of the respondents' families, (38% males and 37% females) most decisions within the family were made by both parents jointly. (See Table 2.17). Sixty-two percent (62%) of boys and 40% of girls claimed that it was the father who was the main decision maker within the family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.17 Main Decision Maker in Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that there was substantial difference between male and female responses regarding the extent of the mothers role as the main decision maker within the family. Sixty percent (60%) of girls considered that the mother either solely or in combination with the father, was a main decision maker within their respective families. All boys responded that it was primarily through the father solely, and in fewer cases the mother, that family decisions were made. No boys (0%) in contrast to the 23% of girls claimed that their mother made most decisions on behalf of the family.
The above results are interesting because they may suggest that boys to a greater degree than girls perceive their fathers to be the main and/or sole decision maker within the family and may be unaware of the mother’s decision making role within the family unit. This may be explained by the greater interaction boys have with their fathers and the greater interaction between girls and their mothers particularly within the domestic sphere, where girls are more likely to view their mothers making everyday if not major decisions on behalf of the family. It may also be attributed to the situation where expectations make one see certain things and not others. In this case, there may have been the expectation that “fathers decide” instead of mothers.

Another area to consider in terms of consultation procedures within families was the level of parental consultation with children. The survey results showed that the majority of girls (77%) and boys (74%) considered they were consulted by the family decision maker or makers at least occasionally if not always. (See Table 2.18).

| TABLE 2.18 Being Consulted Regarding Family Decisions |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Yes: 74 % | 77 % | 20 | 24 |
| No: 26 % | 23 % | 7 | 7 |
| TOTAL: 100 % | 100 % | N = 27 | N = 31 |

Discussion group participants also felt happy and comfortable with the level of consultation that took place between them and their parents. One girl commented that it was not so much that consultation did not take place but that her views were constantly sought and that this sometimes placed pressure on her, particularly since she was the eldest child in the family. In contrast to the above mentioned prevalent stereotypes, our group of Lebanese Muslim boys and girls were consulted in the decision making process, amongst two-thirds of the respondents families.
Problem Sharing:

On the issue of "problem sharing" respondents were asked who they were most likely to consult with and ask advice from in times of difficulty. Most boys claimed they would confide in and discuss problems with their father (59%), mother (53%), brother or sister (41%) or a friend (41%). (See Table 2.19). As for advice, again the majority of boys were most likely to seek this from their father (94%), followed by their mother (72%). (See Table 2.20). The next most likely person they would come to for advice, interestingly, was their sister.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.19</th>
<th>Persons with Whom Problems are Confided in or Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father:</td>
<td>59 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother:</td>
<td>53 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother:</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister:</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative:</td>
<td>12 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend:</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh:</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.20</th>
<th>Persons From Whom Advice is Sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father:</td>
<td>94 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother:</td>
<td>72 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother:</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister:</td>
<td>39 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative:</td>
<td>22 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend:</td>
<td>33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh:</td>
<td>28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, fewer girls (19%) than boys were likely to confide and discuss problems with their father. They were also less likely to seek advice from him (31%). More girls (63%) confided in their mother than any other person. Further, more girls (69%) asked advice from their mother than any other person. The next most likely person they would confide in would be a friend (56%), followed by their sister (44%). The friend and sister were also the second most likely sources of advice, female respondents would turn to when needed. Only 22% of female respondents would confide in and ask advice from their brothers.

f. Family Expectations

Discussion group participants and survey respondents were asked to comment on the types of expectations placed upon them by their own family members, and in particular by their parents. The type of responses given by male and females essentially did not differ. Respondents felt that the main family expectations placed upon them revolved around several areas.

One of the most frequently cited responses was that they, as young people, were expected to “get a good education”. This meant they were expected to do well at school by achieving good grades, and eventually go on to further their education at TAFE or university. As an extension of this, both males and females were expected to get a “good job”.

One girl stated that she was expected to achieve her own goals in life and that this included establishing her own family and continuing with her career. She said she was expected to,

... get a good education, get what I want to do with myself in life. Hopefully in the future I will find a great man to love and have a family, but also continue my career.

Only one girl talked about unrealistic family expectations. She said:

My father expects me to get married at 16 and also to become a doctor, yet he
doesn't even encourage or help me or support me in anyway. For example, how am I supposed to become a doctor and I'm also supposed to get married?

Another family expectation commonly cited was that respondents were expected to do their share of the work around the house, respect their elders, especially their own parents, and to get on with their siblings. One girl said she was expected to,

... set a good role model for my younger brothers and sisters and to become someone important in our society.

This expectation to achieve some sort of success on the social, as well as on the educational and vocational levels, was emphasised by both males and females. They were expected to follow Islamic teachings and as young people they were expected to be well behaved, polite, and mannered in their interaction with other people. Some of the other expectations listed by respondents included being well spoken and trustworthy, as well as displaying an open mindedness and understanding of other people within the community. Several girls mentioned what they were expected not to do, that was, they were expected not to go out with boys.

Overall, most respondents were expected to be hard working individuals, who should achieve their best in their educational pursuits, vocational goals, and family and social life.

g.  

*Gender Dynamics*

Male and female survey respondents and discussion group participants were asked to indicate whether they perceived a difference in parental treatment of themselves in comparison to their opposite sex siblings. It is interesting to note that their is a marked difference between the survey questionnaire results and the discussion group findings.

In response to the survey questionnaire almost two-thirds of girls (62.5%) claimed they were not treated any differently to their male siblings, that they enjoyed equal treatment and similar responsibilities as their brothers. (See Table 2.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24 %</td>
<td>37.5 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>76 %</td>
<td>62.5 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Randa (female), while admitting her parents were strict, tells of the equal treatment she enjoyed within her family. She said:

My brothers and I are treated equally, they have to help with the housework as well, but they do have to work [i.e. they are employed]. I do the dishes, one brother packs the dishes, one brother vacuum, another brother throws the rubbish out. Each one of us has a job and if you don’t do it each one of us is responsible. It’s not fair if one person has to do all the jobs or for some one to work and another person to sit and do nothing.

Jenny (female) also told of how her older brothers, now employed, do the cooking when no one else was around at home and how they have had just as much training in the housework as everyone else. Hala (female) noted that:

If my parents show favouritism towards the boys, I argue with them and they agree.

Seventy-six percent (76%) of boys also said they did not receive any difference in treatment because of their gender. Salem (male) indicated that he must do his share of housework even if his sisters were at home. Males like Salem who actively shared housework chores believed that difference in treatment between brothers and sisters would cause “jealousy” and would be “unfair”. One boy admitted he was expected to do housework but he was too lazy to do it.

Most of the males surveyed, like their female counterparts, agreed that they were expected to be responsible for different duties though this didn’t necessarily mean that they and their sisters were treated unequally on the basis of their gender.
Most boys in fact stated that special tasks were required of them in contrast to the girls, which included cleaning their own bedroom, mowing the lawn and general gardening work, and just helping to "fix things here and there". One boy said he helped in the shop and another said he helped on the farm, things that were not expected from their sisters.

Zayd (male) for example like so many of the males respondents, was expected, as he put it, to do the "outside" work while his sisters were expected to do the "house" or "inside" work. He said each sibling had a job and this division of labour for him did not necessarily mean an inequity between the genders.

Although the majority of girls claimed they were not treated differently to their male siblings by their parents, a closer examination of the discussion findings revealed the following. Most female respondents in fact said there was a clear and distinct difference in duties expected of them because of their gender. These duties were mainly housework and child-minding related. Farah (female) said quite adamantly:

> Before I start my school work I have to do the house chores, wash the dishes. If my parents go out, I baby sit, if visitors come, I act as a waitress. Boys don't do any of these except do school work and get top marks from school ... they treat him [her brother] as a king because he is a boy.

Karima (female), mentioned earlier, who did not get on with her parents because of their over-protectiveness, was one of 10 sisters and 2 brothers. She said:

> I have two brothers, one is seventeen the other is seven. My parents are very sexist in their treatment of us. I have to get my 17 year old brothers clothes and if he can't find his socks he screams at me and my mum gets me into trouble if I don't get them. They are slobs ... I tell my parents we are equal, don't be sexist because its wrong.

Samira's (female) brother on the other hand was expected to do housework. She said:

> My father says we should all work together but my brother doesn't.

Several areas were highlighted by the girls in regards to the different expectations placed upon them. Firstly, girls not only complained about housework and child minding activities but also noted a marked difference in the freedom afforded
to their brothers and the limitations they faced if they wanted to “go out”. Secondly a factor repeatedly mentioned by the girls and not mentioned at all by the boys, was the expectation on them to behave in a mature and responsible manner.

On the first point, many girls stated that the same opportunities were not accorded to them as their brothers, not only in regards to socialising but to doing extracurricular activities or hobbies. As we saw earlier, even though some parents may have been trying to create a more equitable environment within the home by requiring boys and girls to share the “work load”, one girl, Mirna, bitterly complained (similar to Karima), that her mother was sexist and discriminated against her by not allowing her to pursue an opportunity to take up an “out of the house” activity. Mirna said:

I always get upset when she gets sexist and I really, really hate it. [her emphasis]. For example I wanted to learn karate and I asked her if I could and she commented... "It's only for the boys, what do you want with it - forget it". It's things like that these parents don't understand- that we are now in a different society but they don't understand.

The interesting fact that Lebanese and other Muslim girls living in the area, already attended one of the several local martial-arts classes, (some wearing full hijab)\(^{44}\). Such may or may not have come to this mother’s attention.

As mentioned earlier even though girls generally understood their parents’ strictness as a concern for their well being, most girls still could not accept the different level of expectations regarding housework and the different standards of freedom allowed to their brothers.

A few girls reported they were not allowed to go to birthday parties nor to their own friends’ homes. In fact, several boys stated this to be the norm in their families, in relation to their sisters. Abdul Karim (male) admitted:

Only I am allowed to go to my friends place or to parties. My sisters are not allowed to go anywhere.

\(^{44}\) Religiously prescribed clothing for women which covers the hair, body and limbs in loose clothing.
Many girls, however, did go to parties, engagements, weddings etc., with their own family members, extended family members or with close family friends. They were not allowed to stay out late, go to “outrageous parties” nor “discos” as one girl put it clearly. Their brothers, they claimed, were allowed to go out with friends more frequently than they were, but very few brothers went to discos and came home very late.

An interesting issue raised by the girls related to their expected behaviour within the family unit and in social circles. Several girls said they were expected to be “well behaved” and responsible. Mirvat (female) said,

I am expected to help my mother, to be mature and not to be silly ... I am treated more wisely and maturely. My parents believe they should give me an opportunity to discover myself.

Other girls told of how they were not allowed to talk to the boys, nor play “footy” (i.e. football) with them as one girl liked to, and that they should be aware that people gossip.\(^45\) Social “gossip” was seen as one major disincentive to defy expectations placed on them.

2.3 Conclusion

The above findings clearly indicated that girls and boys of Lebanese Muslim background came from families that were relatively cohesive and stable. The findings on the family unit indicate that our respondents belong to medium to large nuclear families which were relatively well established in comparison to more recently arrived immigrants. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of respondents families have been resident in Australia since the 1970s. Other factors which reflect the stability that comes with longer residence include firstly that two thirds of respondents parents could speak English relatively well (i.e. very well or okay), and that secondly very few of the respondents families had extended family members living with them as

\(^45\) This concern for gossip is similar to Inglis’s finding regarding Turkish Muslim girls. See Inglis et al (1992), pp. 128-132.
dependents. It is interesting to note, that despite the longer period of residence of the respondents families, Arabic language maintenance amongst our second generation Australian respondents was quite high. Another indicator of family stability was that respondents generally related very well with their parents, siblings and extended family members. Parents in particular were perceived as caring and understanding individuals by both male and female respondents.

Female respondents however, to a greater degree than males, were more likely to indicate that their relationships with their parents, siblings and extended family members were not always positive, or that they experienced difficulties in these relationships. The slightly more varied nature of female responses to how well they "got on" with family members appears to be linked to the type of duties and expectations placed on them. Most girls complained about the different expectations placed upon them in regards to housework and child minding and in the marked difference in the freedom afforded to their brothers. They tended not to mention any differences relating to marriage, education and career aspirations.

Girls often experienced limitations if they wanted to "go out" to a friends house or to involve themselves in "out of the house" activities. In particular, girls were expected not to socialise or "go out" with boys and were well aware of such social control mechanisms as "gossip". Girls felt they were expected to behave in a mature and responsible manner within the family unit as well as socially.

However, similar to girls of other NESB backgrounds, "fear of gossip" and parental concern regarding their personal safety did not hinder them from participating in certain social activities particularly if they involved family members or close family friends.

Most Lebanese Muslim females had considerable empathy with their parents position regarding their "strictness" or "over-protectiveness". Most girls accepted this as concern for their well being and safety. What they could not accept was the "double
standard" regarding housework and child-minding duties and the freedom afforded to their brothers.

Other gender differences were that males generally seemed to perceive that they "got on" better with their sisters than vice versa, and that girls were less likely to consult their fathers about problems and advice in comparison to the male respondents. Female respondents were also more likely to recognise the role of their mother as a major decision maker within the family.

Similar to most families, conflict occurred within the families of the Lebanese Muslim respondents and this usually centered around several factors. One such factor was conflict between siblings. This type of conflict was regarded by respondents as unimportant and "only natural" and was easily forgotten.

Other areas of conflict within the family unit included an issue of relevance to youth of all backgrounds and this was "inter-generational" conflict. This conflict was present, to a certain degree, in the respondents relationship with their grandparents and parents. Some respondents considered their grandparents were "old fashioned" and "out of touch with todays society". In a few instances parents also were perceived to be out of touch with "the way things are" in Australia.

One area which also caused strain within the family unit was that of parental unemployment. This is not usual considering that firstly 74% of respondents families were unemployed and or in receipt of a government benefit or pension and secondly that in the current economic climate, unemployment is a reality for many Australians, and especially those of Lebanese and Muslim backgrounds who are more recent arrivals. The stresses and strains resulting from such could have served to threaten the stability and quality of family relationships.

However, while conflict did occur within the families of respondents, it seemed to be confined within manageable proportions and did not seem to threaten the cohesiveness and closeness that characterised these families. This closeness was
ample found in the joint activities and positive social interaction that took place between siblings, parents, uncles, aunts and cousins.

Extended family members were an important part of “growing up” for our Lebanese Muslim respondents, and they served to enhance the familial and social networks that the respondents had. Most respondents looked forward to their interaction with members of their extended family and perceived such interaction as “fun” as well as meaningful in terms of friendships.

Respondents also perceived their parents’ expectations of them to centre around being hard working individuals who would attempt to achieve their best in educational and vocational pursuits and within family and social life. Both male and female respondents were expected to be polite and well behaved individuals who respected their elders. Only a few respondents indicated unrealistic expectations placed upon them by their parents.
CHAPTER THREE

- ASPECTS OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY -

3 Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which identity, personal and social, is expressed amongst young Australians of Lebanese Muslim background, and factors which affect it.

The first part of this Chapter considers the religious aspect of personal identity. Religious knowledge and observance are the variables observed. These include the way in which respondents acquire knowledge about Islam, and the level of their personal knowledge of the Qur'an and prayer. Related to this aspect is the question of actual observance of religious obligations such as prayer and fasting as well as observance of prohibitions, e.g. the consumption of pork and alcohol.

The second part of this Chapter investigates the more "social" aspects of identity. These include membership and participation in peer groups and community networks, issues of social acceptance and/or alienation, experiences of racism and discrimination, and the impact of the media in their portrayals of the Lebanese and Muslims in Australia and overseas.

Before discussing the findings of the research on this theme, an overview of recent studies in the area of identity formation and achievement amongst young people of Muslim and/or non-English speaking backgrounds in Australia the UK and the US will be given.
Ethnicity has been described as a process, and that ethnic identity is founded on traditional culture, "its values, behaviour patterns, language, religious system and social networks", while at the same time being linked into the surrounding milieu. Some of the themes that emerge as important in this area of identity formation and achievement amongst youth of non-English speaking background, revolve around the ability or otherwise of young people to deal with their traditional and mainstream social and cultural milieu.

The cultural conflict view of identity formation focuses on the struggle to resolve the conflicts that arise from dealing with two dissimilar worlds. This view emphasises a conflict ridden adolescence which results in the creation of a "marginal" or "unresolved" individual who is neither totally comfortable in a traditional nor mainstream cultural milieu. This view may be contrasted by another which acknowledges the existence of conflict but at the same time emphasises the ability of young people to creatively adapt and "build a meaningful balance between two cultures". Inglis (1992) affirms that while conflict, confusion and resentment do exist amongst the young Turkish Australians she studied (all of whom were Muslim), they nonetheless have developed an "identity secure enough to accommodate them moving through quite disparate social worlds".

Other recent studies on NESB young people highlight a positive cultural mix that young people identify with. Tsolidis (1986) found that most of the NESB girls in her study very consciously and happily considered themselves as "Australians with a difference". Most of those NESB girls saw themselves as neither "Aussie" nor "ethnic", but as a healthy and flexible cultural mix. Those that had the opportunity to travel to their motherland experienced a strong sense of belonging to Australia as well

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as an affirmation of their own non-Anglo identity.\textsuperscript{5}

Inglis (1992) found that the strength of Turkish identification seems to vary positively with the extent to which individuals are involved with the Turkish community on a daily basis.\textsuperscript{6} Many young Turkish Australians emphasise the importance of “family relations” and “respect” to the extent that they function as markers of “ethnic distinctiveness”.\textsuperscript{7} In addition, the majority of young Turks spoke in terms of a dual identity with “Turkishness” or “Australianess” coming into play according to the setting they were in. This duality is regarded as enriching because it affords two cultures and languages to these young Australians of Muslim and non-English speaking background.\textsuperscript{8}

When asked what markers distinguished them from other Australians, many young people experienced difficulties in specifying essential qualities of “Turkishness”. The most frequently identified distinctive cultural attribute mentioned was “religion” (i.e. Islam) either on its own or in conjunction with “respect for elders”, “parental strictness” and “close family ties”.\textsuperscript{9}

While for some persons religion plays a very important role in their daily life, for others religion is only an aspect of their Turkish identity, and for others still religion plays no part in their lives at all. Despite this, religion (i.e. Islam) is seen by young Turks as the main factor which makes Turkish people “different” to others and which is the most distinctive cultural attribute of their “Turkishness”.\textsuperscript{10}

Mackie (1983), also notes that Lebanese Muslims in Melbourne make very little distinction between religion and culture. In fact Mackie cautions people not to see

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Tsolidis (1986), p. 19.
\item Inglis et al (1992), p. 133.
\item Ibid., p. 137.
\item Ibid., p. 135. See also Cahill & Ewen (1987), p. 22.
\item Inglis et al (1992), pp. 134, 137.
\item Ibid., pp. 134, 138.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Muslim identity solely in terms of religious identity, nor solely in terms of cultural identity. Similar to the Turkish study, religion also featured as a very distinctive attribute of “Lebaneseness”. When asked about which “Lebanese customs” parents wanted their children to maintain, “religion and/or respect”, was the response which featured most.

3.1 Religious Knowledge and Observance

3.1.1 Background

Anwar’s (1986) study of British Muslims, mainly of Indo-Pakistani backgrounds, highlights the “two different worlds” young Muslims encounter at home and at school on a daily basis. These “two different worlds” are categorised by the different “values” they impart. Anwar found that young Muslims faced specific difficulties as a result of their religious beliefs and practice. Some of these difficulties were related to food and dietary restrictions, and the question of modest dress. Anwar found that because of such difficulties, Muslims were likely to experience feelings of rejection and hostility, because of their minority status in the community. However, one of the main difficulties encountered by Muslims in Britain, in terms of the maintenance of religious identity, was the lack of availability and provision of adequate religious education for children.

Mackie (1983) in her study of Lebanese Muslims in Melbourne, found that lack of time available to parents to teach their children about Islam was one of the obstacles identified as preventing children from maintaining their religion. Similar to Anwar, Mackie also found that the lack of religious education of children within the school

12 Ibid., pp. 111, 138.
14 Ibid., p. 20.
system, as well as problems associated with being a member of a minority group little understood within the mainstream society, were major obstacles to the maintenance of religious beliefs and practices.  

A study of Islamic values in the United States by Haddad and Lummis (1987), found that the “family” was considered to be the single most important influence for the maintenance of religious beliefs and practices. The mother was identified as the most important familial figure in the religious socialisation of children, supported by the father or local mosque or Islamic centre. Outside the family however, such acts as mosque attendance, was considered to be an important aspect of religiosity as well as a major contributive element to the “cohesiveness” of the Muslim community there.

For Muslims, the mosque is a very important socio-religious institution. As Haddad and Lummis (1987) realise, the mosque acts as a locus for maintaining Muslim identification and faith by providing US Muslims with an opportunity for socialisation and interaction in a community that does not have many social or institutional support structures of its own. Mosques, for many recently arrived and less educated Muslim immigrants in particular, are seen as providing a sense of “identity and comfort in a new and alien world”.

Haddad and Lummis have found that most US Muslims felt very strongly about the role of the mosque as an important source of support for raising Muslim children. The main activities organised for children were of an educational nature and usually only covered the fundamentals of Islam and Arabic language. However, many respondents felt that the mosque did not properly target older teenagers and young adults.

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16 Haddad & Lummis (1987), p. 44.
17 Ibid., p. 32.
18 Ibid., pp. 34, 45. See also Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984), pp. 57-58.
20 Ibid., p. 51.
Indeed, adolescent US Muslims were less likely to attend religious services than their parents and older persons. Similar to Anwar and Mackie’s findings in Britain and Australia respectively, US Muslims also identified a lack of well trained teachers, and a lack of adequate instructional material and facilities, to cater for the special needs of young Muslims.

In their study of the Lebanese community in Sydney, Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) viewed attendance of religious institutions as a measure of “religious concern”. One of Humphrey and Hausfeld’s (1984) findings was that Lebanese Christians attend church more than Lebanese Muslims attend the mosque. This measure of an apparently lower religiosity for Lebanese Muslims, may in fact be due to the fact that many Muslims would not be able to attend the mosque on a weekday for the main congregational prayer which takes place on Friday midday. However, Mackie (1983) raises the pertinent point that it is not necessary to attend the mosque in order to be a practising Muslim as it is acceptable in most cases to pray at home. Factors such as inaccessible mosque locations (i.e. too distant), and workplace arrangements which do not seem to allow much opportunity for frequent mosque attendance.

Similar to Haddad and Lummis’s (1987) findings, Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) and Anwar (1986), also observe that the lowest mosque attendance was amongst younger Muslims. Humphrey and Hausfeld found that 32% of males and 71% of females of Sunni background aged 15 to 24 years never attended the mosque. Anwar found that, in comparison to parents, more young people do not attend the mosque or even pray on a regular basis. Anwar explains that this trend may be influenced by “environmental factors and possibly the lack of proper religious teaching” resulting in a weakening of religious observance amongst second generation young

Environmental factors such as geographical location and non-Muslim social milieu's, together with a lack of proper religious teaching, all seem to have had an impact on the maintenance of Muslim religious observances. Haddad and Lummis (1987) point out that while over 90% of their sample had not eaten pork in the last six months, one third had consumed alcohol in the same period. Abstaining from alcohol was regarded as more difficult than abstaining from pork, because alcohol has an integral role in American social life. US born Muslims were more likely to drink alcohol than immigrant Muslims, because of their greater degree of social interaction with non-Muslim Americans.²⁷

Haddad and Lummis make the link between religious observance and length of residence in the US. They found that with each successive generation of Muslims there is a decline in the strict adherence of values and practices identified as specifically Islamic. They state:

Many of the stricter interpretations of Islam seem to decrease in proportion to one's stay in America, to interaction with non-Muslim Americans and apparently as a general result of living in the American culture''.²⁸

This was particularly seen to be true of Lebanese Muslims in the US, who were more likely to believe that Islam should be interpreted "moderately" or even "adjusted if necessary", the longer they lived in America.²⁹ Against this comparative background let us now look at the findings of this study.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 121, 166-168.
²⁹ Ibid., p. 31.
3.1.2 The Findings

The findings consider various aspects of personal identity, related to religious knowledge and observance among young Muslims. This includes the way in which young people acquire knowledge about Islam, and the level of their personal knowledge of prayer and the Qur'an. Related to this aspect is the question of actual observance of religious obligations such as prayer and fasting, observance of prohibitions, e.g. the consumption of pork and alcohol, mosque attendance and Qur'an reading. Part a. will discuss the findings on religious knowledge and part b. will discuss the findings regarding religious observance.

a. Religious Knowledge

Learning about Islam:

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate where they acquired their religious knowledge. Below is a summary of those responses.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of females regarded their fathers as their most likely source of religious information on Islam. Sixty one percent (61%) of females rated their relatives as the next most likely source of their religious education, followed by their reading of books and other publications (55%). Attending one of the local weekend schools ranked in fourth position (45%). (See Table 3.1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend school</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth/usrah group</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News (TV &amp; print)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male respondents, also rated their fathers (79%) as their most likely source of religious education, followed by their mother who rated 75% (compared to 30% for females). For 60% of males (compared to 27% females) the mosque was the third most likely source of religious information or instruction, with books and publications rating in fourth position (45%).

As we can see from the above, males considered the mosque to be the most likely place to receive Islamic education outside of the family framework. Forty five percent (45%) of females (compared to 17% of males) on the other hand rated the Weekend Schools as their most likely source outside of the family network. Attending youth study groups (or Usrahs as they have been called) was rated quite low by both males and females. This could be due to the fact that many young people may be unaware of the existence of such youth groups and Usrahs, currently operating in the area. These groups are relatively few in number and their meetings are usually held in the evening. This latter factor limits their accessibility to many young people, and especially those not allowed to go out at night. This applies mostly, but not exclusively to females. Another factor to consider is that some of these groups are co-educational.

---

30 Seven Usrahs and youth groups were being conducted in the area, at the time of survey. These youth groups, or Usrahs, usually catered for between 10 to 25 participants, each.
and many parents might be concerned about what they would consider as adequate adult supervision for their teenage sons and daughters.

It must be noted that males generally rated all categories higher than females. One most interesting example is that compared to 75% of males, only 30% of females considered mothers to be a source of religious education. This is very interesting because it may suggest there is a marked difference in the role mothers play in the religious education of their sons and daughters and that there is perhaps a difference in the type and level of interaction mothers have with their male and female off-spring.

*Learning to Pray:*

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of females compared to 79% of males stated they already knew how to perform their Islamic prayers (see Table 3.2). The majority of respondents, 73% of males and 50% of females indicated that they were taught to pray by their immediate family members (mainly parents and siblings), either solely or in combination with Islamic scripture teachers at public schools (23% males and 21% females) and friends (4% females) (see Table 3.3). Eighteen percent (18%) of females indicated that they had been taught to pray solely by Islamic scripture teachers, while 7% of females and 4% of males stated they taught themselves to pray, usually with the aid of a book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.2</th>
<th>Know How to Pray</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3.3  Persons from Whom Prayer is Learned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Family:</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture &amp; Parent</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture only:</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-taught/book:</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend &amp; parent:</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 22</td>
<td>N = 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from the above, the role of family members in the Islamic education of young people seems to be very prominent, with both males and females most likely to learn about Islam from their fathers, and in particular to be taught ritual prayers by an immediate family member (i.e. parents or siblings). However, it seems that Lebanese Muslim parents emphasise more their sons’ religious upbringing than their daughters. In addition to the role of immediate family members, the role of scripture teachers seems also to be relatively important and effective in the practical Islamic education of individuals within this target group. For example, 39% of females and 23% of males stated that scripture teachers have had a role in teaching them how to pray.

Knowledge of the Qur’an:

An article of Islamic faith is that the Qur’an is the word of God, as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur’an is regarded as a guide for Muslim believers which provides spiritual consolidation. The Qur’an contains many verses which focus on the importance of worship and elements central to belief as well as providing moral prescriptions relevant to Muslim living. In traditional Muslim communities, individuals learn to memorise chapters (suras) of the Qur’an from a very young age - as a rule starting with the shorter suras. Likewise, Muslim children in Australia are often taught specific suras by their family members, through Islamic scripture at school or Weekend School (Arabic and Islamic) classes. The number of suras a person commits to memory is a typical signifier of religiosity for Muslims.
Our findings show that almost one fifth of male respondents (19%) in comparison to 3% of girls had not memorised any sura from the Qur'an. (See Table 3.4). Of the remaining male respondents, i.e. a majority, 70% knew between 1 and 10 suras and 11% knew 11 suras or more.

In contrast to these results for male respondents, 54% of female respondents knew between 1 and 10 suras and 42% knew 11 suras or more. On closer examination of these results we find that 27% of girls compared to 4% of boys knew 20 suras or more. There are probably several reasons why girls know more suras than boys. Indeed, we saw earlier that girls, more than boys, relied more on Weekend Schools and on the utilisation of publications as sources of Islamic knowledge. These modes put particular stress on learning by heart suras from the Qur'an.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.4</th>
<th>Knowledge of Qur'an Suras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None:</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5:</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10:</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20:</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 +:</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.5</th>
<th>Knowledge of Meanings of Qur'an Suras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None:</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some:</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All:</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the Qur'an is written and learned in the Arabic language, respondents were asked if they knew the actual meanings of the suras they had memorised. The results indicated that an average of 81% of respondents (male and female) understood the general meaning of the at least half of the suras they had learned. (See Table 3.5).

b. Religious Observance

There are certain requirements that Muslims regardless of their ethnicity are expected to perform throughout their lives. Central to the life of a Muslim is the belief in the Oneness of God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. This pronouncement (Shahada) constitutes the first pillar of what are commonly referred to as the “five pillars of Islam”. The other four pillars involve the more outward or physical and social expressions of the central belief in oneness of the Creator. They are the performance of the five daily prayers (Salat), fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadan (Sawm), the annual payment of 2.5% of one’s annual savings to the poor (Zakat) and, if one has the means, performing the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime (Haj).

In this section various types of religious observance (as opposed to a measurement of religious belief) are examined as important aspects of personal identity. The last two requirements mentioned above, namely the payment of Zakat and the performance of Haj were not seen to be relevant for the purposes of the survey as most people within the age range of 12 to 17 years would not be earning a surplus income in order to pay Zakat nor afford the pilgrimage to Mecca. Instead, respondents were asked to answer questions regarding their practice of the five daily obligatory prayers, fasting during Ramadan, and other practical applications Muslims may perform in their daily life. These included observing such prohibitions as abstaining from pork and alcohol, reading and reciting the Qur'an, and attending the mosque.
Prayers:

As we saw earlier 88% of females compared to 79% of males stated they know how to perform their Islamic prayers (see Table 3.2). However, we shall see that knowledge of prayer is not necessarily an accurate indicator of prayer observance. To measure actual prayer observance, respondents were asked how often they performed the 5 daily obligatory prayers. (See Table 3.6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.6 Frequency of Prayer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularly:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermittently:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Around two-thirds of male respondents indicated that they performed their 5 daily prayers on a regular basis, compared to less than half of female respondents. Female respondents were more likely than boys to pray intermittently or not at all.

The survey questioned whether the boys and girls performed prayers at school.\textsuperscript{31} Out of those surveyed, only 1 girl and 4 boys performed their midday prayer at school. (See Table 3.7). This low figure may be due to the fact that at certain times of the year prayers can be performed after school hours at home and still be within the time requirement. However, this is only practically possible during summer months and where respondents live in close proximity to the school.

Furthermore, this relatively small, though significant, percentage may also be due to the fact that rooms and facilities may not be available at school to accommodate midday prayers. Where facilities do exist some students may feel uncomfortable particularly since standards of cleanliness in school toilets are often at variance with

\textsuperscript{31}“Midday” prayers can be performed anytime within the period between noon and afternoon.
their own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.7</th>
<th>Performing Prayers at School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fasting:

Muslims are expected, during the Islamic lunar month of Ramadan, to observe a fast which extends from dawn till dusk each day for approximately 29 days. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they fasted during Ramadan. (See Table 3.8). All male respondents (100%) and 94% of females perform the fast, with only 2 girls (6%) fasting only sometimes or not at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.8</th>
<th>Fasting During the Month of Ramadan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes:</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relatively high performance rate of fasting amongst young Lebanese Muslims can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, fasting is a family and communal act where entire household meal routines change in accordance with the requirement of the fast's pre-dawn breakfasts and post-sunset dinners (with no in-between meals prepared or consumed). Thus, with the family unit geared towards fulfilling the fast, Lebanese Muslim youth will find it easier to perform the fast (even though individually
they may or may not be inclined to do so) than not to perform it.32

Secondly, the Ramadan fast has been augmented by the Muslim community's utilisation of the media in promoting and encouraging the fast. For example, Ethnic Radio 2EA broadcasts multi-lingual (including English language) religious programs. In recent years the call to prayer has also been broadcast on radio, in order to signify the daily start of the fast, and when the Turkish language program coincided with sunset, the call to prayer has also been announced in order to signify the finish of the daily fast. Furthermore, the Muslim community (particularly Lebanese Muslims) utilise community FM radio to broadcast special Ramadan programs. On these broadcasts, youth segments are very often part of the program. The fact that the electronic media has become part of the instrumentation of fasting in Ramadan has very likely instilled a sense of normalcy to the fast that actually encourages its performance by young Lebanese Muslims (amongst others). In Muslim countries, it is customary to have several special radio and television programs throughout Ramadan, these include religious as well as special entertainment programs.

However, a particularly pertinent point is the relatively greater acceptance and sensitivity of the wider (non-Muslim) community regarding Ramadan's religious and social significance. For example, several public schools with high percentages of Muslim pupils, in the Canterbury-Bankstown area, have been known to accommodate school routines in consideration of Muslim students' fasting (e.g. exempting them from strenuous sporting activities, celebrating 'Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan at school during class hours with a mini-food fair involving all students). Invariably, the local and metropolitan newspapers take an interest in Ramadan and produce news-stories about the occasion and the festivities. Television, also takes interest in Ramadan, especially the human spectacle of people filling up the mosque and surrounding streets performing the 'Eid al-Fitr prayers. Furthermore, politicians (representing the major parties) from Local, State, and Federal government, together with Christian Lebanese religious leaders are always present at the Lakemba mosque during 'Eid al-Fitr. This

32 Certain religious exemptions for fasting. One such exemption applies to females during their menstruation periods.
appreciation and acceptance of the *Ramadan* fast and participation in its festivities by the wider community would plainly be a factor in disinhibiting and encouraging young (and older) Muslims to practice the fast.

*Observing Prohibitions:*

The consumption of pork and alcohol are expressly prohibited to Muslims. Pork is generally regarded as an unclean meat while alcohol is believed to be a drink which adversely affects not only the person drinking it but also others in contact or proximity with that person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.9</th>
<th>Eating Pork</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.10</th>
<th>Drinking Alcohol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of our survey indicate that the overwhelming majority of boys and girls do not eat pork nor drink alcohol. (See Tables 3.9 and 3.10). Only one girl (3%) claimed that she ate pork and drank alcohol. She also stated that her father did both of these things. Two (2) boys (7%) stated they drank alcohol.

One question that consistently arose during the survey sessions was whether the
question about eating pork included eating pork or pig products by accident or by choice. It might be worth mentioning that it became clearer with the frequency of the question regarding pork that a number of respondents needed to qualify their “yes” response to the question explaining that they unintentionally or mistakenly consumed pork or pig products because they did not know a particular food contained such.

**Mosque Attendance:**

Mosque attendance is obligatory for Muslim males during the Friday congregational prayer and 'Eid al-Fitr and 'Eid al-Adha prayers. Muslim females are not strictly obliged to attend the mosque, particularly if they have young dependent children and if such attendance may cause mother and child to be inconvenienced. Thus the different Mosque attendance figures, as an indicator of religious observance and identity, for males and females are not to be considered as commensurate with each other.

As well as being a place of worship, the mosque has always been an important centre for education, welfare and dispute resolution (and sometimes might functions as temporary lodgings to travellers in transit). During the month of Ramadan the mosque becomes very busy with activities. Muslims during this time are more likely to attend the regular dawn prayers, Qur'anic recitals, and Tarawih prayers (special evening prayers only performed during the month of Ramadan).

At 'Eid times (i.e. the two main annual religious festivals), at the end of Ramadan ('Eid al-Fitr) and during the annual Haj or pilgrimage ('Eid al-Adha), thousands of Muslims attend the mosque to perform special 'Eid prayers and to meet friends and family.

Our results on mosque attendance indicate a clear difference between male and female respondents. (See Table 3.11). Almost 70% of boys attend the mosque once a week or at least once every few months. In contrast 60% of girls indicated that they “never” or “hardly ever” attended the mosque.
Table 3.11  Frequency of Mosque Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday:</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday/weekly:</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every few months:</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly ever:</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never:</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While most girls do not usually attend the mosque on a regular basis, they were much more likely to attend at 'Eid times or during Ramadan than at other times. (See Table 3.12). Sixty-four percent (64%) of girls and 94% of boys attend the mosque at these times.

Table 3.12  Mosque Attendance During 'Eid days and/or Ramadan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 28</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.13  Reason for Mosque Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islamic duty:</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal desire:</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of above:</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 28</td>
<td>N = 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In step with the religious requirement for males to attend the mosque, many more boys (43%) than girls (14%) felt that mosque attendance was an obligatory
Islamic duty. (See Table 3.13). Most girls felt they attended the mosque because they chose to. It can be said that girls' attendance at Mosques is more indicative of a "devotional" motivation than a "dutiful one".

Reading Qur'an:

Around one quarter of males (27%) and almost one half of female respondents (47%) read the Qur'an very frequently i.e. on a daily or weekly basis. (See Table 3.14). Forty-one percent (41%) of males and 35% of females read the Qur'an "hardly ever" or "never". More males (24%) than females (13%) indicated that they "never" read the Qur'an at all. It can be said that amongst boys the frequency of Qur'anic reading ranges quite broadly and evenly. As for girls there seems to be a tendency towards the extremes, i.e. regular reading or irregular reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.14</th>
<th>Frequency of Qur'an Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 monthly</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly ever</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.15</th>
<th>Language in which Qur'an is Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic &amp; English</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost half of the respondents (46% male and 54% female) mainly read the Qur'an in the Arabic language. One third of boys (33%) and 14% of girls rely on reading the Qur'an in the English translation. Approximately one third of girls (32%) usually read the Qur'an both in the original Arabic and the English translation. (See Table 3.15).

3.2 Experience of Identity in Society

3.2.1 Background

The previous section examined a specific aspect of personal identity, namely religious knowledge and observance amongst survey and discussion group respondents. This section aims to investigate the more “social” aspects of identity. One such aspect is the participation of young Australians of Lebanese Muslim background in peer groups and community networks. This section also examines issues of social acceptance and/or alienation, experiences of racism and discrimination, particularly in relation to the contexts of the Gulf Crisis and other overseas events, and the role of the media in its portrayal of Muslims.

Personal networks such as peer groups, and community participation, can be considered as valuable indicators of the degree and nature of social interaction and perhaps even integration. Peer groups and to some extent community organisations can be regarded as important support structures for young people through their growing years. The findings of this present study examines the nature of peer groups as they are found within the school and after school environments of young Australian of Lebanese Muslim background.

Where young people have extended their networks to participate outside of the home and school, in community organisations, they often have the chance to take part
in various activities and at the same time build on their existing peer groups. Studies by Abu Dhou and Tese (1992) on various groups within the Arabic speaking community in Sydney and Melbourne, and by Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) on the Lebanese community in Sydney, both examine the reasons for participation in community organisations.

These studies confirm the importance of such participation especially in the settlement of migrants. "Social contact", "promotion of culture and religion" and "welfare assistance" were cited as the most common reasons for participation in community organisations. Abu Dhou and Tese (1992) found that Australian Arabs in Melbourne emphasised "cultural promotion and community identity" as most important, in comparison to Australian Arabs in Sydney who mostly emphasised "welfare help and promotion of religion".  

Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) claim that Lebanese of Sunni Muslim background had the highest participation in community organisations compared to other Lebanese groups. They were also the most likely to join organisations which were "religious", "village" or "welfare" based or oriented. However, unlike Humphrey and Hausfeld, Abu Dhou and Tese found no significant difference in community participation levels on the basis of longer length of residence. Notwithstanding this difference, both studies confirmed the lower participation rate of females in community organisations.

There can be no doubt that community organisations and peer groups provide substantial support to their respective memberships. Inglis et al (1992) stated that peer groups often acted as an "important source of support against hostility", especially for Turkish males. Among this group of young men "ethnic honour" was an important

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35 Humphrey & Hausfeld found that the longer Lebanese people had been settled in Sydney the more likely they were to participate in community organisations.
concern which is a characteristic “distinguishing them from other ethnic groups”.37

Pride in ones’ particular “ethnic heritage” was a theme also identified by Cahill and Ewen (1987). They found that “ethnic identity” was firmly linked to family identity and to being bicultural and bilingual. They found that in the majority of cases young NESB people were “proud of their ethnic heritage and saw it as advantageous because of its potential for personal enrichment” even if they were at the “butt of racist abuse”. In some instances, individuals felt frustrated for being little understood within the wider community.38

Cahill and Ewen (1987) also found that NESB youth faced greater risk in coming to terms with their bicultural identity if they belonged to an ethnic group which was small in size and not publicly visible, and when the ethnic community did not offer institutional support to them. They stated that this process of “coming to terms with their bicultural identity” could be stressful for youth but in most cases they were able to resolve this difficult period given their “normal resiliency” as young people.39

A recurring issue identified by various studies is that racism and discrimination is a major concern for NESB young people. School and factory environments were identified as the main locations where young NESB people experienced prejudice and discrimination. Males, it seems, are targeted to a greater extent than females, with perceptions of and responses to prejudice and discrimination differing among individuals and between certain ethnic groups.40 Tsolidis (1986) found that boys more than girls experienced racism in its most violent form. These boys stated a preference for living overseas, and commonly talked in terms of a “wogs” and “skips” duality.41

“Wogs” refers to those of immigrant and non-English speaking backgrounds, and “skips” referring to Anglo-Australians.
Anwar's (1986) study identifies some of the difficulties faced by young Muslims in Britain due to their religious practices and beliefs. Anwar states:

(Muslims) are likely to experience feelings of rejection and hostility associated with belonging to a minority group in an unsympathetic environment. In addition, they enjoy no protection in law against discrimination on the basis of religion.\textsuperscript{42}

Haddad and Lummis's (1987) study on Muslims in the United States, found that it was important for Muslims to regard Islam as an “overarching identity”, bringing together Muslims of diverse backgrounds and customs. However, among US Muslims there was a strong fear that they may experience “discrimination or even retaliation”, on the part of non-Muslim Americans, because of an antipathy and general lack of knowledge about Islam, and as a result of distortions in the news reporting of certain recent international events. There was a consistent concern that “Americans will come to dislike Muslims, Arabs and those from Middle Eastern countries because of what they see as distorted press coverage of recent conflicts.”\textsuperscript{43}

Haddad and Lummis found there was an “apparent reluctance” on the part of many to talk about personal experiences of discrimination and the presence of fear in the Islamic community. They state that one reason for such “apparent reluctance” is the desire among respondents to “keep the issue as low key as possible”. Another reason given is that this becomes a means of depersonalising such incidents, so that they are viewed in a generalised way, that is directed towards a community, rather than being directed at individuals. This type of depersonalisation acts as a “kind of safety mechanism for dealing with situations of fear and tension”.\textsuperscript{44} This manifest fear seems to be conditioned by several factors, one being the distorted media portrayal of Muslims and the lack of “any substantial political or economic clout” on the part of US Muslims.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} Anwar (1986), p. 20.
\textsuperscript{43} Haddad & Lummis (1987), pp. 159-163.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 165.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 165.
3.2.2. The Findings

Part a. addressed the question of the peer groups to which respondents belonged. Part b. examines the degree and type of community participation respondents entered into. Lastly, part c. looks at how respondents perceived the wider society as accepting them as Lebanese Muslims.

a. Peer groups

Survey respondents were asked about who they were most likely to socialise with, both within and outside their school environments. They were asked to indicate the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the peers they socialised with and what sort of activities they did together. Most male and female respondents included in their peer group individuals of Lebanese background both Muslim and Christian. Considering that the majority of students at both schools involved in this study, were of Arabic background and in particular Lebanese background this was not surprising.46

In addition, almost two thirds of the female respondents and over one quarter of male respondents also included large numbers of individuals from a variety of religious backgrounds (Muslim, Christian and Buddhist) and ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Greek, other Arabic groups, Anglo, Pacific Islander, Vietnamese and Mauritians). These groups tended to reflect the ethnic and religious diversity within their respective school populations.

Some male respondents (unlike their female counterparts), also commented that they occasionally felt alienated within their school environment particularly in their relations with boys of Anglo background. For one group of boys, this had much to do with their perception of a distinct difference in the treatment and quality of attention accorded to them (in comparison to boys of Anglo background).

Outside of school hours, both male and female respondents indicated that they tended to spend most of their time with family members (especially cousins), friends (school and/or family friends) and neighbours. Female respondents more frequently mentioned interacting with family members outside of school hours than males did. This is similar to the earlier finding that more girls than boys in the sample, spend their free time participating in family oriented activities.47

The activities male and female respondents shared with their peers both within and outside of school hours, included such things as “talking”, and “hanging around together”. Boys also included sport activities such as “playing” football, soccer, or handball whereas girls included “dancing”48 as a common activity at school and at home.

Additional activities shared with peers outside of school hours49 included studying together, playing sport, going on picnics, going out to the movies, listening to music, “going shopping” (girls) or “hanging around the shopping square” (boys), bike riding (boys), cooking and going for walks (girls).

b. Community Participation

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their membership to any Muslim, Lebanese or mainstream organisation and/or youth group. Very few respondents were officially members of any organisation. (See Table 3.16). Only one male (4%) and one female (3%) were members of a mainstream group or organisation, i.e. an organisation which is not ethno- or religious specific. Both respondents were involved with a sports club in their local area, that is a soccer club and a basketball team respectively. Only one male respondent was a member of a Lebanese organisation (a village based organisation).

47 For further information, see Chapter 2, section on family and leisure activities.
48 This mainly referred to a combination of traditional Lebanese folk dancing and Arabic belly dancing. Within school hours, some girls occasionally practice such dances during their lunch break especially if they are preparing for a specific “cultural event” organised by the school.
49 For further information, see chapter two, section on family and leisure activities.
Furthermore, only 4 male respondents (15%) and 3 female respondents (9%) were members of a Muslim organisation or youth group. The 3 girls were members of the Muslim Womens Association. The males did not state the organisation they belonged to but were generally involved in activities organised by the Lebanese Muslims Association.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muslim Grp/Org.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 27</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lebanese Grp/Org.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 27</td>
<td>N = 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mainstream Grp/Org.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 26</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However while only a small number of respondents indicated they were formally members of a Muslim group or organisation, more than half the female respondents (52%) and over two thirds of male respondents (69%) indicated they attended at least one or more of the following activities sponsored by Muslim organisations: i.e. youth camps, Qur'an classes, picnics, sports activities etc. Thus, on this index, young Lebanese Muslims have a reasonable level of community participation, be it in religious, ethnic and mainstream based groups and organisations. This may be attributed to the type of community structures and programs offered which are designed to cater to the specific needs and aspirations of these young Lebanese Muslims.
c. **Acceptance and Alienation**

When respondents were asked to comment on whether they felt their identity was accepted in society or not, the overwhelming majority of males and females (80%) stated that their identity as young Australians of Lebanese Muslim background was accepted by the community at large. Responses illustrating this included statements about being accepted and respected on the basis of their length of residence, personality and because people are fundamentally equal or the same regardless of their background. Comments included:

I usually get on with lots of people, Australian and non-Australian. To me living in Australia for all these years makes me a Lebanese Muslim Australian.

Everyone accepts me as I am, personality counts only.

I am just like everybody else.

Others felt that as long as they had supportive families and friends they would always be accepted in society. In fact, some felt the reason they were accepted in society was because they lived in an environment with friends and family members who were mainly Lebanese and Muslim and who therefore did not reject them on the basis of their identity.

Some girls in the discussion group spoke positively about their “cultural mix". One girl characterised the sentiments of other girls in the following words:

I see myself as a Lebanese Muslim but it depends on who I am with. Now at school I see myself as a Leb ... unless I'm with my Australian friends. When I go home, when my uncles and aunts come over and when we have Lebanese weddings, I feel Lebanese and Muslim around them.

... You feel bad when somebody who comes from Lebanon teases you when you speak to them in Arabic. You feel way behind.

... We were born in Australia, we are Australian, when Lebanese people come to Australia and sit around you, you always want to admit that you are an Australian not Lebanese. Inside of me I want to say I'm a Lebanese, but I want to show off in front of them.
However, 20% of survey respondents felt their identity was not accepted within society. From their responses, there was a distinct sense of being alienated because of their religious (Muslim) and ethnic (Lebanese) backgrounds. More boys than girls used terms such as "racism" and "prejudice" to describe their experiences. Two boys commented:

Sometimes people are prejudiced and they treat others badly. Sometimes I hear smart alec remarks from some people.

My identity is Australian, I'm Australian born Lebanese, but Anglo society is very racist and does not reason and always judges you as a wog. I counter-attack them in being a good Arab helpful to Australian society.

In contrast to this, girls tended to use terms which reflected their feeling of being ridiculed within the mainstream society. Girls generally indicated that they perceived that their Lebanese Muslim identity was not socially accepted, rather a subject of derision. One girl who wears Hijab said she did not feel her identity was accepted, as she was "laughed" at for wearing a scarf. Another girl said that people in different suburbs "just stare at you and tease". Some girls despite having been born in Australia or were largely or wholly brought up here, felt they were not accepted as they were occasionally told, "go back to your country", in the sense that they were seen as aliens in Australia. This feeling of being regarded as not "belonging" within mainstream Australian society is illustrated by the comments of two girls who strongly felt that their identity was devalued and not highly regarded. Their comments include the following:

... being from Lebanese, especially of Muslim background, isn't very popular these days.

These days being Lebanese is an embarrassment. But I don't give up. I always say I'm Lebanese and always talk good about my nationality and culture.

On the issue of returning to the motherland, there was general agreement within the girls discussion group that they wanted to spend their lives in Australia. Most commented that it would be acceptable to return for holidays to keep contact with family. There was much concern expressed about personal safety, and the social and economic situation in Lebanon.
In the boys discussion group, most felt comfortable about having grown up in Australia rather than Lebanon. Like the girls, the boys, also expressed concern about the social and economic instability in Lebanon. One boy commented about the difficulty associated with being a Muslim in Australia rather than Lebanon. He said:

Sometimes people need something to remind them that they are Muslim in Australia. We don’t have the cultural symbols. We don’t always see minarets or the Islamic art of Muslim countries ... You have to go to the mosque on purpose to hear the Adhan (call to prayer). I’m optimistic about our presence in Australia, I know Lebanon is very bad because of the war. I try to look on the optimistic side, although a lot of us had to migrate to a country where they never knew anything about Islam or Arabs.

d. Discrimination and Prejudice

In contrast to the previous question regarding respondents’ perception of acceptance or otherwise within the wider community, respondents were also asked if they experienced discrimination or prejudice because of their Lebanese and/or Muslim background. More boys (89%) than girls (73%) felt they personally had not faced any discrimination against themselves, although similar to the previous question around 20% of respondents stated they had. (See Table 3.17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3.17 Have You Ever Faced Discrimination?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where girls did experience discrimination, they were more likely than boys to attribute such to a particular aspect of religious identification. Typical comments included:

I put a scarf on and I’m discriminated against by people who are not Muslims. They are always looking at me and laughing.

I am discriminated against because of my clothing, my scarf, by anyone who
doesn't really know about the Muslim religion.

When people see me standing with a lady wearing a scarf I feel everyone is looking at me in a bad way and that is because some do ... I am not discriminated against usually. Maybe because I'm not wearing a scarf. They don't know whether I am a Muslim or a Christian, but I know that if they knew, this would happen.

Other comments by girls indicated their experiences of racial discrimination as distinct from religious discrimination. Some examples as to why they felt they were discriminated against included:

... because I'm a Lebanese and proud of it ... Australians [discriminate against me] because I'm a wog.

... they call us wog and now with the war in Iraq, [they discriminate against me] a bit more, by just swearing.

e. Ramifications of Overseas Events

Survey respondents were asked if they experienced any problems, difficulties or pressures because of recent overseas events. Respondents generally cited three overseas events in the Muslim world which had direct ramifications to their experiences as young people of Lebanese Muslim background. They were, firstly, the war in Lebanon (the civil war and the Israeli invasion and occupation) and secondly, the Israeli occupation of Palestine, concerned several of the respondents because they feared for the well-being and safety of relatives.

Thirdly, the most frequently mentioned overseas event which had a substantial impact, in terms of a local anti-Arab and anti-Muslim backlash, on the respondents was the relatively recent Gulf War. All respondents and discussion group participants knew of individuals living in the locality ranging from immediate family members to other relatives, neighbours and friends, who personally faced problems during the Gulf

50 In 17 August 1990 Iraq occupied Kuwait, claiming it as its historical territory. Subsequently, in January 1991, an international coalition of forces under the United Nations banner, led by the United States, militarily forced Iraq out of Kuwait amidst much bloodshed and destruction. These latter hostilities came to be known as the Gulf War (not to be mistaken for the Iran-Iraq conflict).
War period. In fact over one third of male and female respondents indicated they personally experienced problems during the Gulf War. (See Table 3.18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35 %</td>
<td>34 %</td>
<td>36 %</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>66 %</td>
<td>64 %</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several issues emerged as important in the experience of the young people surveyed. One issue was the emotional toll the Gulf War had on individuals. It is interesting to note the reaction of one male respondent, aged 17 years, who arrived in Australia in 1987. His experience perhaps represents one of the many personal dilemma’s faced by younger and older Arab Muslims during the Gulf War. He commented:

A good example of (experiencing problems because of overseas events), is the Gulf War. I felt lost in this country, I knew I didn’t belong here and it is important for me to belong somewhere.

One female discussed the emotional stress the Gulf War presented her. She said:

My feelings were ruined. My nerves were rising and sometimes I’d just sit and cry and swear at both Bush and Saddam.

Feelings of being victimised or “blamed” for overseas events they were obviously not responsible for, was very common amongst respondents. This left many individuals feeling that the public perceived them as “bad”, and incited a “hatred” towards them. Many of the respondents indicated that they felt targeted, alienated and perhaps even estranged within the wider community, at that time. Some of the comments of survey respondents included:

We hear the news, people get discriminated, stories of women in Bankstown with scarfs ripped off their head. It upsets you because the general society is
not perfect but they go on as if they are.

When something goes wrong overseas the kids make fun of me - I don’t listen to them.

If the outside world does anything wrong the Australians would think we are all the same, take for example the Gulf War.

During the Gulf War, Australians thought that if a person was an Arab Muslim they were going to start a war in Australia.

Others thought that all Muslims were bad and they treated us differently.

Everyone hates you because you are an Arab and everyone will try to hurt your feelings.

People started looking at you in a certain way, sometimes when walking down the street you would get sworn at.

People in the shops and streets reacted differently. People were less friendly. We were blamed for things we didn’t do.

Through the survey and discussion groups respondents communicated a strong sense of fear they experienced during the Gulf War period. Both male and female respondents (particularly those wearing hijab, i.e. the scarf) commented about fears for their personal safety and that of other family members they believed to be vulnerable in public places such as shopping centres, bus stops, railway stations. Female family members who wore the scarf were believed to be especially vulnerable. Typical comments made by both male and female respondents which indicated this sense of fear for personal safety included:

I knew about bashings from my big brother. I must say it scared me a little.

We were in the car once when an “Aussie” in another car pulled out a noose to show us.

My family was scared. They didn’t want us to go anywhere.

My family was too scared to go outside. We heard stories of bashings of ladies with scarves.

People were against the Lebanese and I was scared because my mum wears a scarf on her head.

The female respondents who wore scarves related stories of their own experiences of racism and religious vilification at the time. Almost all of the remaining
respondents (male and female) also related similar incidents involving their female family members (especially mothers), relatives or friends, who wore scarves.

I faced problems during the Gulf Crisis because of my scarf. When I went shopping, I was made fun and told to go home.

My mum faced a bit of pressure from other nationalities because of the scarfs.

Some friends that my parents know did face problems, and also friends of mine. I didn’t face any problems because I didn’t wear a scarf.

It wasn’t necessarily me who faced problems. It was friends, especially the ones who wore scarves and veils.

When I was with my mum, occasionally people would yell out at us from their cars.

f. Role of the Media

One third of male and female respondents were very vocal about what they felt was an influential role the media had in exacerbating the difficulties they faced as individuals and community members of Muslim and Arabic background.

Respondents’ comments indicated that they perceived the media as portraying a powerful yet negative image of Muslims and Arabs, which often misrepresented them. For example, respondents’ comments included:

... it (i.e. the media) is very biased towards Muslims and Arab people generally, it never shows the truth about Islam.

They (i.e. the media) show the bad points about Muslims, [i.e.] as being very ungrateful people, people think of us as being very strange.

They try to find our soft point, for example a newspaper said a Muslim man said “there is no God,” but he was saying “there is no God but Allah” ...

They always want something to write about us, like if we make noise in a mosque they’d complain, one example is if there is too much noise at the the mosque in Bankstown. But churches don’t have such problems. They don’t want us to have anything in this country.

They make us sound like bad people.

They print wrong things.
Others saw the media’s portrayal of the Gulf War as very offensive and damaging. In some cases respondents viewed this as directly resulting in experiences encountered at both a personal and community level. Comments included:

Australian people thought Lebanese and Muslims people were bad because of the Gulf War.

When there was a war going on between Saddam and Bush, the media reports had a real hatred towards Arabs and then people started doing nasty things to them.

The media has had a great impact on the Islamic community in Australia, discriminating against us and so on, but it doesn’t affect me much.

The media pinpoints Muslims in a negative way, and turns the world against you. For example when we hear something on the news, kids in the playground talk about it the next day.

Girls within the discussion groups mentioned the media coverage of the Australian sailors who during the Gulf War mimicked the “Arab Muslim enemy” in prayer. Many of the girls felt that this particular incident only served to “make fun of Muslims” and to entrench existing stereotypes and denigration of Arabs and Muslims, notwithstanding the fact these particular sailors’ mission was the protection of another Arab Muslim country.

Others felt that in addition to portraying Muslims and Arabs as “strange”, or as “trouble makers”, the media sometimes portrayed Muslims and Arabs as “criminals”. The horrific incident known as the “Strathfield massacre”, which occurred in Sydney 1991, where an armed man killed six people and later himself, was mentioned by several respondents as being an example of the harmful impact of inaccurate and negligent news reporting. A major Sydney commercial television station (Channel 7) during their nightly news segment inaccurately described the assailant as being of “Lebanese” background, which was totally false. Although corrected later, several respondents viewed this situation as very damaging to the image of Australian Lebanese people, and clearly felt that the “first impressions” created by the report would have left powerful and enduring impressions, especially considering that it played on a pre-existing negative “ethnic stereotype”.
Within the discussion groups there was also general agreement regarding the role of the media as a vehicle for perpetuating negative stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. The girls for example, cited a particular Hollywood movie that caused them concern. The film which was relatively current at the time was called "The Naked Gun". Several of the girls had viewed this film and regarded it as offensive in its portrayals of leaders from the Arab and Muslim world.

However, one boy from the male discussion group did have a positive comment about the role of the media in the increasing the overall awareness about Muslims in Australia. He said:

We are starting to stand out in the whole community, not just in Punchbowl. People go everywhere and see mosques in Erskineville, Marrickville and Bankstown. People know its Ramadan because they hear it on the radio, about the Pakistan cricket team fasting while in match. No matter how they feel towards us, they know we are here.

3.3. Conclusion

In contrast to the findings of overseas studies on Muslim migrants, the young Lebanese Muslims surveyed, who were largely second generation Australian, were found to have a high degree of religious knowledge and practice. In addition, Haddad and Lummis's (1987) finding that mothers are the most influential family member in the religious socialisation of offspring, also seems to be challenged by the present results. Most respondents found their fathers had this practical role in imparting Islamic knowledge. Outside of the family unit the mosque, weekend schools and scripture teachers were considered to be the most likely source of Islamic education. This perhaps indicates a greater degree of availability of structured institutional support offered in Sydney, than is offered in other communities.

Our findings, regarding mosque attendance and the knowledge and observance of prayer amongst younger Muslims, contrasted with the American and British studies discussed earlier. Both these aspects were poorly rated in those countries. Indeed, the
present study's, findings indicate a relatively much higher observance of prayer and mosque attendance amongst males. There was, however, a clear indication that knowledge of prayer (rated very highly by respondents) was not necessarily an accurate indication of prayer observance (rated less highly).

Observance of the *Ramadan* fast was practised by almost all of the survey respondents. This extremely high rating may be due to the fact that fasting during *Ramadan* is more of a family and communal activity than prayer may sometimes be. Abstinence from prohibited foods and drinks were also very highly practised amongst young Lebanese Muslims. Muslim community attitudes regarding the consumption of both alcohol and pork may be significant factors contributing to such a result, as may be the sale restriction of alcohol to "under-aged" individuals and the lack of availability of alcohol in the family household.

In regards to the more social aspects of identity, most male and female respondents included in their peer group at school, individuals of Lebanese Muslim and Christian backgrounds. This was probably due to the fact that respondents attended schools with high populations of these groups. The majority of girls also included individuals of other backgrounds within their peer groups. Outside of school, male and female respondents tended to spend leisure time with extended family members such as cousins, school and family friends, and neighbours. Very few young people were formally members of community organisations although many participated in activities organised by them. More males than females also participated in such activities.

On the issue of whether respondents considered their Lebanese and Muslim identity was accepted within society, most agreed on the basis that they lived in an environment which consisted mainly of Lebanese and Muslim individuals. Many girls spoke positively about being bicultural, i.e. both Lebanese and Australian. Several boys however, spoke about their feelings of alienation due to their religious and ethnic background, particularly within their school environment. More boys than girls used terms such as "racism" and "prejudice" to describe their experiences. Girls used terms which indicated their feelings of being ridiculed within mainstream society. Girls
generally attributed their experiences of discrimination and prejudice to their ready identifiability as Muslims.

Male and female respondents felt comfortable about having grown up in Australia rather than in Lebanon. More so than boys, girls expressed a clear desire not to re-settle in Lebanon. Both girls and boys expressed their concern about the social and economic instability in Lebanon as a major reason.

Local backlash to critical overseas events were issues raised as matters of concern to the respondents which engendered their feelings of alienation and lack of social acceptance. The Gulf War, for example, was emotionally stressful for many and resulted in experiences of racism, discrimination and vilification amongst respondents and/or their families and friends.

There was a general feeling of being "blamed" for overseas events that respondents obviously had no control over. Feelings of being targeted, alienated and to some degree feeling estranged within the community were evident. Similar to US Muslims, it was not unusual for survey and discussion group respondents to experience "fear" for their personal and family safety. Respondents also considered the media was a powerful tool which portrayed Muslims and Arabs negatively and stereotypically to the detriment of better community relations.
CHAPTER FOUR

- ASPIRATIONS -

4 Introduction

The third area of focus of this study is the aspirations of young Lebanese Muslims as regards to education, employment and marriage. Thus, survey respondents were asked to specifically comment on their aspirations in the areas of further education, future occupation and prospects for marriage. In each of these areas, respondents were then asked to indicate two things: firstly, whether they perceived any obstacles to achieving their desired aspiration; and secondly what their family views were, regarding their particular choices. While the particular aspirations expressed by respondents reflected their expectations one must not presume that these aspirations would necessarily eventuate. Nonetheless, these expressed aspirations are important to consider for the insight they offer into the self perception of these young individuals and where they desire to see themselves in the future. The questionnaire also asked respondents to comment in general on whether they viewed their future as positive or negative and why. Additional to the information gathered from the questionnaire, information derived from the discussion groups has also been incorporated into these findings.

A survey of aspirations is important as it gives an idea of the sense of hope and/or confidence these young Lebanese Muslim Australians may hold in facing their future. These issues, however, cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of particular socio-economic factors that currently affect the Lebanese Muslim community. Such pertinent factors for consideration include the Lebanese Muslim community's experience or position of disadvantage with regard to: overt and hidden
prejudice and discrimination\textsuperscript{1}; and having one of the highest unemployment rates (youth and adult) in the country.

For example, in the area of educational and vocational aspirations, parents of non-English speaking background, including Muslims, have been the object of a common stereotype which represents them as not valuing the importance of education and career for their daughters. This kind of stereotype has been succinctly described by one NESB father as "part of the repertoire of racism, a comment used to put migrants down".\textsuperscript{2}

This type of prejudice prevalent in the wider community has its particular manifestation in the negative stereotyping of Muslims and Islam. For example, Islamic beliefs are often cited, in many sections of the wider Australian community, as a major hindrance to the self development of Muslim women particularly in relation to continuing education and career aspirations.\textsuperscript{3} In fact, one study which examined teacher attitudes to the education of NESB girls, identified that some school teachers considered Muslim parents as having "few ambitions for their daughters except that they should remain virgins until they married and then become good wives and mothers".\textsuperscript{4} Muslim ethnic groups have been especially viewed by numerous school teachers to devalue education and careers for women. These types of images are also reflected and reinforced by the print and electronic media, where Muslim women are commonly portrayed as submissive, house-bound second class citizens with little or no rights and opportunities, and relentlessly yielding victims of Muslim-Arab male subordination.\textsuperscript{5}

Arising out of such portrayals of Islam and Muslims is a particular perception in the wider Australian community that the main prospect for Muslim girls, is to be tied

\textsuperscript{2} Tsolidis (1986), p. 66.
\textsuperscript{3} Inglis et al (1992), p. 5.
\textsuperscript{4} Tsolidis (1986), pp. 78, 80 & 86.
\textsuperscript{5} See Chapter 2.
down to marriage and having children, without much opportunity of a post-secondary education, meaningful vocation, or professional career. It is also imputed that such education would be unnecessary for the futures of these girls, and undesirable due to the prospect that education might bring girls into contact with young men and/or non-Muslims. Referring to the Turkish Muslim community, Inglis et al (1992) also observed that within the wider Australian community it was perceived that Turkish cultural and social characteristics as well as Islamic religious beliefs disadvantaged Turkish Muslim girls by discouraging them to further their education. Undoubtedly these views, found in the wider Australian community about Turkish Muslim girls, are also prevalent in relation to Muslims of other backgrounds, including the Lebanese.

Such unfavourable perceptions do not adequately take into consideration that Islamic teachings actually encouraged individuals to pursue knowledge and education regardless of their gender and regardless of non-Muslim social environments. It would be another matter, however, whether individual Muslims or communities actually acted in accordance with these Islamic teachings or not.

A high unemployment rate is another area of disadvantage encountered by the Lebanese Muslim community, which is shared by other communities arriving into Australia at the same time (e.g. Vietnamese) and later (e.g. Pacific Islander). Such may affect the outcome of the aspirations held by young people. Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) found that Lebanese youth (both Christian and Muslim) unemployment figures (for 15-19 years) were about 40% for males and 60% for females. The Lebanese community’s disadvantage in the job market has been attributed to factors such as length of residence (i.e. being largely recent arrivals), poor English ability, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and skills, and disrupted education and work experience in war torn Lebanon. These factors together with the economic recession beginning in the mid 1970’s and the restructuring of the labour market has resulted in fewer employment positions, the displacement of thousands of workers (including

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7 Many Islamic teachings both from the Qur’an and Hadith stress the importance of pursuit of knowledge and education.
those of Lebanese and Muslim background) who formerly fuelled the post-World War II economic boom, working in the unskilled-undesirable labour positions. This disadvantage has perhaps tended to colour the aspirations of young people wanting to move into the job market.

A focus on employment and unemployment is important in a study concerning young people, as it has important implications for their retention rates at school, their continuation to further education, and their realisation of vocational aspirations. Furthermore, an important undercurrent to the question of employment for an economically disadvantaged community such as the Lebanese Muslim community, is the issue of marginalisation in the work force and perceived and actual discriminatory practices of employers, especially as experienced by Muslim women wearing the scarf.

In this context of disadvantage, where Lebanese Muslim families suffer from the harsh stresses associated with unemployment, it is not surprising that the community places much importance on “family unity” and finds stability in such things as early marriage. The trend towards early marriage has important implications (especially, though not exclusively, for girls), for the pursuit of further education and training and the achievement of vocational aspirations, particularly in the present climate of chronic unemployment within the community and beyond. There is no doubt that early marriage may constitute a difficulty or hindrance to the pursuit of further education and training, especially for young women with children. However, for some young women especially, the option of early marriage and children may be seen by them as a relief from the pressure to engage in an already competitive job market. Others, may neither view marriage as incompatible with seeking further education and eventual employment nor as an escape from a tough job market, but rather as an ideal support structure in a time of uncertainty and instability.

9 Inglis et al (1992), p. 3; Refer to Collins (1988).
Whatever the case, however, in an examination of aspirations one cannot assume an automatic progression from education to the desired occupation for young people. There may, in fact, be a distinct incongruence between educational and career ambitions on the one hand, and the actual outcomes these young people eventually achieve on the other. Thus, in reiteration, while this study does not aim to predict the actual educational and vocational outcomes for Lebanese Muslim youth, it hopes to offer an insight into their aspirations and expectations.

4.1 Education and Employment

4.1.1 Background

The decision of parents to migrate to Australia is in many cases strongly linked to the desire to provide their children with better life opportunities, particularly in terms of education and employment. Studies on the education and career expectations of youth in the eyes of their parents, show that parents of non-English speaking background, including Lebanese and Muslim parents, held high aspirations for their children in both these areas. Most NESB parents perceived academic achievement in particular as the main determinant to their offspring's future path, the first step towards gaining economic success, and even in terms of dealing with and breaking down social barriers such as racism and prejudice within the wider community.

There also seemed to be no differences on the basis of gender, in the parental expectation regarding the potential achievements of their sons or daughters. This includes the expectation that both male and female children have the ability to extend themselves to their fullest capacity, and that both male and female children should be provided with the best opportunities for education and employment. In fact, NESB parents' (including Lebanese Muslims), educational and vocational aspirations for their

offspring was equally as high as that expressed by their own children. In some cases, it was even higher than what their sons and daughters felt they could achieve.\textsuperscript{14}

Figures from the 1986 Census indicated that 61\% of Lebanese born school students (Christian and Muslim) were enrolled in secondary education and in the main attended government schools.\textsuperscript{15} This figure does not indicate the retention rate of Lebanese students at school, nor does it take into consideration those individuals born in Australia of Lebanese ancestry. However the 1986 Census does indicate the low level of post-secondary qualifications for both Lebanese-born and Australian-born Lebanese individuals (Christian and Muslim).\textsuperscript{16}

Mackie’s (1983) Melbourne study found that 66\% of Lebanese Muslim parents surveyed expected their sons and daughters to complete high school and attend a university.\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, Humphrey and Hausfeld’s (1984) Sydney study indicated a poor retention rate (48\%) for Lebanese Muslim Sunni secondary school students between the ages of 15-19 years.\textsuperscript{18} Sixty-two percent (62\%) of the total sample in Humphrey and Hausfeld’s study, were born overseas. The majority of the Lebanese Muslims in the sample indicated arrival in Australia between 1975 and 1979. We can then assume that the 15 to 19 year olds in Humphrey and Hausfeld’s sample were predominantly born in Lebanon and resident here since between 1975 and 1979. Therefore, the poor school retention rate of 15 to 19 year old Lebanese Muslims may be explained by learning and adjustment difficulties encountered within the education system rather than the parents’ lack of encouragement. Indeed, these 15 to 19 year olds, growing up in Lebanon during the mid to late 1970’s, would have invariably experienced disrupted schooling and encountered the breakdown of normal civil life due to the war situation of the time. Furthermore, the immediate economic and social dislocations and adaptations encountered upon arrival in Australia might also help

\textsuperscript{15} Castles (1991 a), Table 7.7, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, Table 7.4, p. 64, Table 7.6, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{17} Mackie (1983), pp. 104, 138.
\textsuperscript{18} Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984), p. 93.
explain the low school retention rate. One may argue that such low figures for school retention rate should no longer be observed with increasingly longer periods of residence of this group, and an increase in the number of Australian-born children of Lebanese Muslim background who are currently going through the secondary school system.

Humphrey and Hausfeld’s study particularly highlighted the poor school retention rate of Lebanese Muslim Sunni girls, i.e. 42% of females in comparison to 57% of males. However, the majority of Lebanese Muslim girls surveyed in the present study have indicated that they were completing their secondary studies till year 12. Without doubt, the value of the Higher School Certificate becomes enhanced when youth unemployment rates are so high and the job market is so depressed. The receipt of AUSTUDY also becomes an important incentive and source of material support for remaining at school, especially for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Abu Dhou and Tesse (1992) examined the barriers faced by students of Arabic background in their participation in secondary schooling. Amongst the Lebanese student respondents in Abu Dhou and Tesse’s study, the most frequently mentioned reason for not completing their final year of schooling was “not coping with school”, and “marriage”, followed by “the need to get work”.

Abu Dhou and Tesse (1992) also examined the barriers faced by members of the Arabic community in continuing their tertiary education. Amongst the Lebanese respondents, family related obstacles were the most frequently stated reasons for not continuing tertiary studies. Such reasons included: “income problem”, “lack of family encouragement”, “family objection”, and “early marriage”. Less significant, though significant in their own right, were reasons such as: “change of country”, “uncertain about courses”, “lack of confidence”, “lack of appropriate courses”, and “non

20 AUSTUDY is a means-tested Federal Government subsidy for students undertaking secondary and tertiary studies.
recognition of skills". Overall, family related factors seem to be the more important in determining continuing tertiary education.

This is further corroborated with Abu Dhou and Tesse's (1992) other findings regarding the sources of financial support that Lebanese tertiary students relied on to support tertiary studies. Indeed, Abu Dhou and Tesse found that the sources of financial support for tertiary studies most frequently cited by Lebanese respondents was “family support” (52%) followed by “AUSTUDY” (40%).

Since 1986 it has become evident that the overall retention rate of NESB students in NSW high schools has increased markedly. In fact, NESB students exhibited a significantly higher retention rate than the state average. Total NESB enrolments was 5296 students in 1986 compared to 8786 students in 1992. This constituted a 66% increase. If we compare the retention rate of all secondary students in NSW Government schools, we find 91% of NESB students completed their secondary schooling till year 12, in comparison to a 64% retention rate for all students. Arabic speaking students accounted for 14.5% of all NSW secondary students of NESB and presumably a large proportion of these would be of Lebanese background including Muslims.

In addition to the larger number of NESB youth completing Year 12, research has shown that second generation NESB students at school tend to achieve greater academic success in comparison to Anglo-Australian youth. Some reasons for this apparent success have included greater family stability and unity, higher parental as well as personal aspirations, and the overall struggle for survival and status among NESB families as contrasted with Anglo-Australian families.

Nonetheless, such success together with the influence of social milieu,

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22 Ibid., pp. 125-126.
24 DSE NSW (1992 b), and DSE NSW (1992 a), Table 5.
25 DSE NSW (1992 a), Table 4. See also Chapter 1 for ABS statistics on Muslims and ethnicity.
personality, and self esteem, would invariably have some impact on the career choices young people make for themselves. NESB girls often see their future work aspirations in a wide range of occupations, including technical and clerical services, with the majority preferring highly skilled professional occupations which involve some university training. NESB girls with high career aspirations generally regard marriage and children as an important part of their future and do not necessarily see these aspirations as mutually exclusive.\textsuperscript{27}

The majority of NESB boys also seem to aspire to professional careers, with only a minority of boys choosing unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. Their career aspirations often differed little from that of NESB girls except that they are more likely to include self-employment through business, and seem to have unqualified confidence in their career choices regardless of their ability to attain them. NESB girls on the other hand seemed to have less confidence in attaining their career aspirations, and had little knowledge of basic career information, including prerequisites, duties and salaries associated with their own career choices.\textsuperscript{28}

Moreover, most NESB girls seem aware, “through implication rather than direct discussion”, of the types of careers their parents would approve of. They are also confident that their chosen/preferred career options do not greatly conflict with their parents expectations.\textsuperscript{29}

Against this background, the remaining part of this section examines our findings with regard to educational and vocational aspirations of the respondents in our survey.


\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 31.
4.1.2 The Findings

Part a. examines respondents’ educational aspirations, and part b. looks at their vocational aspirations.

a. Educational Aspirations

Both the educational and vocational aspirations listed by respondents fitted into a particular pattern. Those aspiring to pursue further education also indicated the course of study that would equip them with the skills for their desired occupation.

Seventy two percent (72%) of boys and 73% of girls indicated they wanted to pursue tertiary education. The remaining 28% boys and 18% girls did not. Nine percent (9%) of girls indicated they were undecided. (See table 4.1). This was probably due to the fact that all of these girls fell into the 12-13 years age group (Years 7 to 8), and as such were not yet at the stage of having to seriously decide future education options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4.1 Further Education, Family Views and Obstructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Further Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Views</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obstructions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most popular educational preferences chosen by girls included medicine, midwifery, pathology, science, mathematics, fashion designing, interpreting, English literature, teaching, drama, law, business, economics, accounting, customs servicing, travel and ground hostessing. The most popular educational preferences chosen by males included medicine, pharmacology, dentistry, computer science, business, law, accounting, physical education teaching, and trade subjects including electronics and mechanics. (See Table 4.2).

It was interesting to note that of those boys who indicated that they did not aspire to take on further education after secondary school, all of them had stated that they aspired to the trades or the technically oriented vocations, such as carpentry or mechanics. These boys would indeed have to undertake “further studies” in part-time courses at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges together with apprenticeship training in order to become fully qualified. Yet all of these boys had answered “no” to the question on “further studies”. This indicates a certain lack of information about vocational pathways, or else the perception that “further studies” was synonymous with “university” studies only. The majority of girls who responded “no” or “unsure” to this question where either undecided about their career preferences or, like the boys, did not require formal training, except on a part-time basis at TAFE or other colleges (e.g. for secretarial and travel consultant courses).

The majority of males and females believed their families were supportive of their interest in and desire to undertake, or not to undertake post-secondary education. (See Table 4.1).

While the majority of males simply commented that their families were agreeable to or supportive of the particular decisions they had made regarding further education, the female respondents were markedly more articulate in discussing the type of support they received from their families regarding their decisions to continue post-secondary education. Girls related how encouraging their parents were and how proud their parents would be if they were to continue their education, especially at university.
Similarly, most respondents both boys and girls, did not perceive many obstacles in pursuing their further education, apart from attaining the necessary marks to qualify for entering into particular courses, and financial constraints. (See Table 4.1).

Interestingly, 3 respondents (1 female and 2 males) stated they would like to complete their education in Lebanon, with the view that they may settle there. Of the three, two were born in Australia and one was born in Lebanon.

b. *Vocational Aspirations*

In relation to the most popular career areas chosen by the 33 female respondents, 7 chose medicine (21%), 5 chose travel related careers (e.g. ground hostessing, air traffic control, and travel consulting) (15%), and 4 chose teaching (12%). The most popular career areas indicated by the 29 males included the following: 4 chose computer sciences/programming (14%), 3 chose carpentry (10%), and 3 chose medicine (10%). (See Table 4.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4.2</th>
<th>Choice of Vocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto-electrician</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draftsman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion designer</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel Beater</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiographer</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientist</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop Assistant</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel related</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|TOTAL:     | $N = 29$ | $N = 33$ |

The majority of all respondents indicated that their families were overwhelmingly supportive of their career choices (85% boys and 84% girls). (See Table 4.3). Again it was the females who were more articulate in defining how the family support was manifested. Girls said their parents were "very happy and impressed" with the choices they made, "wanting what is best" for their daughters, encouraging them to "go for it".
Only a minority of 2 boys (7.5%) and 3 girls (10%) said their families, particularly their parents, were unsupportive of their preferences. One girl who wanted to be an Arabic teacher expressed lack of support or interest from her parents. The second girl who wanted to be a secretary said her parents “don’t want me to work”. The third girl who wanted to be an interpreter, said of her family, “they don’t really care about my future. I think they care more about grandchildren”.

For the 2 boys who viewed a lack of family support, the reasons they gave had more to do with parental disagreement regarding choices of career rather than with having a career at all. One boy told of his preference to be an auto-electrician, while his parents insisted for him to have a “high status career”. He said,

... they [i.e. parents] want me to do something better. They want me to be a doctor or a dentist but I tell them I can’t do it because it is too hard. There are not a lot of auto-electricians out there and I want to be one and also a mechanic at the same time. They argue with me and tell me to try hard.

The second boy received discouragement from his parents for wishing to become a chef instead of seeking to undertake a university degree. Four (4) respondents (2 girls and 2 boys) were uncertain of their families’ views on this issue.

The majority of respondents felt they would not have to overcome any major obstacles to achieve their career ambitions. For the small proportion that did, i.e. 4 girls and 3 boys, there was a difference in focus between girls and boys as to what those obstacles might be (See Table 4.3).
TABLE 4.3  
*Family Views and Obstructions to Vocational Choice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Views</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive:</td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td>84 %</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive:</td>
<td>7.5 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
<td>7.5 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 27</td>
<td>N = 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obstructions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>13 %</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td>87 %</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>N = 26</td>
<td>N = 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two (2) of the three boys seemed to attribute any obstacles they might encounter to their own lack of personal abilities in particular areas. Abdul Karim (male) said he would like to be a dancer or a solicitor. He said he would face difficulties because “solicitors need English and I’m not good at this”. Samir (male) who wanted to be an accountant recognised that his school grades may be an obstacle to achieving his aims but confidently considered alternative pathways to overcome this possible limitation. He said, “I will transfer to Uni. after 2 years at Tech.”. With university places more restricted and tertiary entrance scores getting more restrictive each year, this was becoming an increasingly popular way of getting into university courses.

The third boy said he generally did not foresee any obstacles, unless he were to have the misfortune of having a “prejudiced boss”. Racism in the work-force towards people of Mediterranean and Asian backgrounds is not uncommon, particularly with the “bad back”30 label stigmatising many individuals in these groups - and this certainly applies to many Lebanese Muslims who are very much aware of the unflattering stereotypes prevailing in public discourse.

30 “Bad back” refers to physical or medical problems (usually back problems) which develop in the course of employment. Labourers from the above mentioned backgrounds are often assigned to very heavy and demanding physical work which often present health risks.
The majority of girls who believed they may encounter obstacles to achieve their career aims attributed the cause more to particular family situations. One girl believed her mother was her biggest obstacle, while another said her parents did not want her to work. One girl believed marriage would be a big obstacle for her to achieve her career ambitions, probably because she would be expected to fulfil domestic duties and eventually have children, leaving no time or opportunity for career options.

4.2 Marriage

4.2.1 Background

In common with many other traditional cultures, Lebanese and Muslim society or communities view the family as the pivotal point around which societies grow, operate and survive. Both Mackie (1983) and Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) highlight the importance placed on “family” and “marriage” within the Lebanese and Lebanese Muslim communities in Australia, in the context of migration and community settlement dynamics. In fact, Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) claim that, “given the stresses experienced by Lebanese families through unemployment and cultural integration into the broader Australian environment the apparent stability and popularity of marriage may also be indicative of an attitude of family solidarity in adversity”.31

Several issues emerge as important in the study of marriage within the Muslim community. These include the issue of religious versus ethnic endogamy, marriages in the country of origin, marriageable age, and the relationship between marriage, education and employment.

Studies on youth of non-English speaking background suggest that they.

especially the girls, tend to marry within their own ethnic group. One particular study highlights that many Southern European, Middle Eastern and South East Asian young people considered religious identity to be important in a partner and believed that their parents would be more likely to object to their prospective partner if she/he were of a different religion, rather than of a different ethnic group. Girls were less likely than boys to go against their parents’ wishes and would compromise if parents disapproved of their partner. Tsolidis’ (1986) study on NESB secondary school students found that amongst the Muslim students, marriage within the same religion was very important.

More specific studies on Muslim young people also confirm that the practice of endogamy (ethnic and/or religious) is highly favoured. One possible means towards such endogamy, is through “arranged marriages”. However, these are less consistently favoured by young Muslims.

Anwar’s (1986) study of 549 Muslim (Indo-Pakistani) households in Britain, found that 93% of parents and 81% of young Muslims favoured the principle of endogamy, with 40% of parents and 47% of young Muslims disliking the idea of arranged marriages in their country of origin. Over 50% of the respondents were opposed to returning girls to the country of origin for the purposes of marriage. Fifty percent (50%) of parents and more than 66% of the young Muslims interviewed, predicted a breakdown in the system of arranged marriages due to such things as “western influence” and the freedom and example set by their Anglo-British peers. A higher proportion of girls in comparison to boys and parents perceived arranged marriages to be outdated. While the report concludes that the question of arranged marriages may be an issue for potential inter-generational conflict within the community, 25% of young people interviewed did not want their parents to arrange their own marriage and 30% of parents did not wish to do so.

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33 Khoo, cited in Cahill & Ewen (1987), p. 34.
34 Tsolidis (1986), pp. 20, 22.
Inglis' et al (1992) study on Turkish (Muslim) young people in Australia, also emphasised the importance of marrying from the same religious community. This was considered equally and, in some cases, more important than ethnic similarity. Many Turkish young people indicated a preference to marry individuals of Turkish background who, like themselves, had been brought up in Australia and therefore had similar life experiences. This preference contrasted with their parents preference for spouses brought from Turkey.

While marriages between Turkish individuals from Australia and Turkey have occurred, the study referred firstly to the stigma (from peers of Turkish background) associated with girls travelling to Turkey after completion of secondary school (often for a well deserved holiday), and who have subsequently chosen to marry a first cousin or an individual whom they may never have met before. Secondly, the study referred to the numerous marriages which have involved partners from Turkey but which ended in separation and divorce, due to difficulties associated with communication problems and the need by the spouse brought from overseas to adapt to "a new and different social environment".37

The study also revealed that marriage was regarded by Turkish young people as an inevitability. Some girls perceived marriage as a means to achieving "personal freedom", in order to escape the restrictive bounds set by their parents within the family unit. While this might have been one of the motivations for early marriage, the study also found that, in comparison to their parents, many young Turkish persons were several years older at the time of marriage than their parents had been at the time of their own marriage. Indeed, some girls have successfully withstood family and community pressures for early marriage and instead preferred to pursue further education.38 Another finding was that once married, many young Australian Turkish

37 Ibid., p. 143.
38 Ibid., p. 144. Those who marry younger often have a lower level of education.
women did not expect to cease paid employment even with the advent of children.\textsuperscript{39}

In contrast to the expectations held by young Australian Turkish women, Humphrey and Hausfeld (1984) found that a significant number of Australian Lebanese Muslim women tended not to participate in the work-force. The tendency for early marriage within Lebanese families and their large family size was attributed as the reason for this.\textsuperscript{40} Factors such as large family size with many young dependents and the lack of appropriate child care, make it extremely difficult for Lebanese Muslim women to participate in paid employment outside the home.\textsuperscript{41}

Mackie (1983) examined the views of Lebanese Muslim parents living in Melbourne, as to their expectations concerning their children’s marriage (amongst other things).\textsuperscript{42} Similar to Anwar’s British study, Mackie’s study indicated the importance placed upon endogamy (ethnic and religious), marriage in the country of origin, and parental involvement in “choosing” marriage partners for their children.

As to the type of spouse parents hoped their children would marry, 50\% of the responses in Mackie’s study included religion (Muslim) as important. Fifty-nine percent (59\%) responded that ethnicity or nationality (Arabic/Lebanese) was important. When asked if parents considered such persons were easier to find in Lebanon, 73\% of men in comparison to 39\% of women agreed. Interestingly, most women (43\%) saw no difference, indicating that perhaps men were more likely (in comparison to women), to consider sending their children to their country of origin for the purposes of marriage.\textsuperscript{43} Seventy-five percent (75\%) of mothers and 59\% of fathers did not

\textsuperscript{39} Inglis et al (1992), p. 145.
\textsuperscript{40} Humphrey & Hausfeld (1984), pp. 38-46.
Humphrey and Hausfeld found that Lebanese Sunni Muslims had the largest nuclear families amongst all Lebanese with 6.2 individuals per family and with 60\% of of the Lebanese Sunni population under the age of twenty, 20\% of whom fall in the under five years age category. Mackie found that more than half the women she interviewed were unemployed due to home duties or children. Early marriage and high fertility rates for Muslim women are confirmed by the 1986 census data. See also Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{42} Mackie (1983).
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 101.
expect to choose their child’s marriage partner which compared closely with almost 66% of parents in Anwar’s British study who did not wish to “arrange” their children’s marriages.\footnote{Mackie (1983), p. 100; Anwar (1986), p. 14.} Thus, Lebanese Muslim parents considered such a practice was “old fashioned”, and that such a choice and responsibility belonged to the child. Lebanese Muslim parents viewed their role as one of providing support and advice where necessary.

The remaining part of this section examines our findings with regard to the marriage aspirations of our respondents.

4.2.2. The Findings

Respondents were asked to answer several questions regarding their marriage aspirations. They were asked at what age they would like to marry and whether they would only marry persons of the same background as themselves. Secondly, they were asked if they would marry a Muslim person of any background or a person of non-Muslim background. Thirdly, they were asked about what they thought their families’ views on this issue were and whether they perceived any obstacles in their way to achieving their marriage aspirations. Group discussions were also held to clarify some of these points.

a. Marriage Aspirations

All respondents, except for 2 females and 1 male, wanted to marry at some stage in their life (See Table 4.4). Forty five percent (45%) of females and 38% of males did not specify a particular age at which they would like to marry, many responding they would like to marry some time after finishing school and when the “right person comes along”. Others preferred to think about marriage only when they graduated from a university or college, or found a job.
Four girls (12%) and 2 boys (7%) wanted to be married by the time they were twenty years of age (with one girl preferring to marry when she would be over 40 years old). However, the bulk of survey respondents, 33% of females and 52% of males saw themselves getting married by their mid-twenties.

Within both the male and female discussion groups, there seemed to be a consensus that those who wanted to marry would do so by their mid-twenties. Several girls who had ambitions to establish themselves into a career, wanted to delay marriage until they had at least finished their education and started work. Most girls viewed marriage as “trouble” or a “problem” unless one could find the “right guy” and they believed the right guy was not always easy to come by. Some of these girls were also of the view that marriage would then just be a matter of “sex”, and kids who would end up being burdensome.

Nasser (male) summed up the thoughts of the other boys in the discussion group when he said,

I want to marry when I am 22. When you marry at that age you are not exposed to other things, if you get married young you have more freedom, more protection; and when you go out, it is halal. 45

Discussion group members felt they would either meet their future spouses through their place of study or work or in the more “traditional way”. The traditional way usually meant family introductions where the family of a prospective groom would come and ask for the hand in marriage of a particular girl. This practice allowed both parties, through regular family visits and chaperoned activities, to become acquainted with each other before making a decision to marry or not. Often an Islamic wedding ceremony, known as Kath al-Kitab46, is conducted, and is treated as an engagement. Although religiously married, the couple would not necessarily be recognised as married under Australian law because a civil marriage might not yet have been registered, or under customary tradition which requires a nuptial ceremony. Where Kath al-Kitab is treated as an engagement it allows the couple freedom of

45 Halal meaning that something is Islamically lawful.
46 In principle Kath al-Kitab is actually the signing of the marriage contract, but custom requires a nuptial party/ceremony, and there is normally a waiting period between the two events.
movement to "go out with each other" (in the manner of their non-Muslim peers such as in "dating") before a civil marriage was undertaken. When such arrangements are finalised, the couple would usually move into the new marital home, or in some cases into one of the spouses' parent's home. This usually takes place after an elaborate wedding reception and, in most cases, a honeymoon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4.4</th>
<th>Views on Marriage and Background of Spouse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to marry</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>97 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanese Muslim:</td>
<td>33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim of any b/g:</td>
<td>56 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim b/g:</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As to the background of their future spouses, 41% of females, compared to 33% of males would only marry persons of Lebanese Muslim background. (See Table 4.4). Both in the surveys and discussion groups some male and female respondents commented that it would be easier to be married to a person of the same background, for the practicalities of understanding the same language and culture. Within the discussion groups, both males and females had heard of, and many knew of, individuals who travelled to Lebanon to meet or seek a prospective spouse. This was not favoured by most, as they preferred to marry individuals who were raised in Australia and understood the "Australian way of life". Only one boy preferred to marry in Lebanon as he had already met someone there and was contemplating living there one day.

Some boys put the view that Lebanese Muslim girls in Australia were generally
regarded as having "too much freedom", a quality that seemed not to be favoured by them. However, the males discussion group eventually reached consensus on this particular issue commenting that girls in Lebanon sometimes had just as much freedom as, if not more than, Lebanese Muslim girls in Australia. One boy commented,

Wherever you go there is good and bad … I don’t agree that girls here are worse or have too much freedom. My sister is more protected here than girls over there.

More than half the male and female respondents (56%) said they would seriously consider marrying a Muslim from a different country of origin (i.e. non-Lebanese Arab), and possibly even a different ethnicity or language group. Most survey respondents surveyed felt their parents would be supportive of their choice of partner. Only 1 boy (3%) and 2 girls (6%) stated their parents would like them to marry a person of Lebanese Muslim background only. (See Table 4.5). In both instances, the girls felt this did not effect them very much because they believed it would be their choice that would matter in the end. In fact, the few obstacles mentioned in detail by survey respondents included one boy being generally pessimistic and skeptical about his ability to find a suitable marriage partner. The obstacles mentioned by the girls were quite varied in nature and included the concerns of those not wanting to marry at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family views</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive:</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive:</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 28</td>
<td>N = 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstructions</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>N = 24</td>
<td>N = 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One girl who did not wish to marry at all said her family would be unsupportive of her view and that this may be an obstacle for her desire to marry. Indeed, pressure might be borne upon her to do so. Two girls felt the biggest obstacles they would encounter on the question of marriage would be their own parents. One girl said that marrying a Muslim of any background would not be a problem for her, but her parents would rather her marry a cousin - who she says she does not like. She quite obviously felt pressured by this. The other girl said she was expected to be married young and that her biggest obstacle was that her parents would not agree to her marrying someone whom she wanted.

One girl (3%) and 3 males (11%) said they would consider marrying a non-Muslim person. The particular girl here seemed to be more making a point about her autonomy regarding choice of spouse, than an actual desire to marry a non-Muslim. Indeed, she later indicated that she would be willing to marry a Muslim person regardless of their background, commenting that her choice in partner would be her own and she would marry whomever she wanted. Several other girls, being aware of Islamic teachings limiting women from marrying non-Muslim males, believed that this type of a situation could be a real obstacle to them should they consider marriage to someone of non-Muslim background. Their solution to such a possible dilemma would be to try to convert the male to Islam before marrying him. One girl said,

My parents would not mind his nationality but they would mind his religion ... If I wanted to marry a Christian, I’ll try to stop myself and my parents will too, unless he becomes a Muslim himself.

Within the male discussion group, there was a general consensus that marrying a Muslim would more likely ensure that the children would be brought up as Muslims and that this was very important to them. Another area that was raised by the interviewer was whether any of the males would consider taking more than one wife. One (1) boy said it would be a very big responsibility marrying one let alone four wives, especially since one would have to treat them all equally. In fact, the males were unanimous in their response of “no” to this question.

Respondents’ self identification with their Muslimhood seems to be sufficiently
strong so as to affect choosing a spouse of the same religion. Further, this strong self identification is also evident by the expressed desire to see their own future children brought up as Muslims in a Muslim household, in which both parents are Muslim.

4.3. Conclusion

The above findings indicate that girls and boys of Lebanese Muslim background did not significantly differ from their NESB peers regarding educational and employment aspirations. The majority of the young people interviewed and surveyed aspired firstly to enter into post-secondary education, and more specifically aspired to highly skilled vocations. Significantly, for boys only, such educational and vocational aspirations were directed towards both the professional sphere and the skilled trades. For girls, however, aspirations were directed more towards the professions and service industry.

Most respondents, both boys and girls, felt their parents were very supportive of their aspirations, reporting there was little conflict between the education and career choices they made, and those approved by their parents. These young people commented that their parents' education and career aspirations for them were equal to or in some cases higher than their own aspirations.

These findings challenge the perception that Muslim parents are disinterested in or uncommitted to bettering their daughters' education and employment futures. Many girls commented that their parents were both pleased and proud of the types of education and careers that they aspired to, and were very encouraging and supportive of their choices.

The types of possible obstacles young Lebanese Muslims felt might affect achieving their aspirations hinged mostly on academic performance at school, such as which might not enable them to enter particular courses. Financial constraints were also considered potentially obstructive to attaining their post-secondary educational
aspirations. Other factors included racism and prejudice within the work-force, which was considered a possible obstacle to vocational aspirations. One girl mentioned marriage and children as a possible obstacle to her aspirations.

Interestingly, girls who held high career ambitions wanted to delay getting married until they completed their education and commenced working. Marriage was considered to be an inevitability occurring sometime between finishing high school and upon reaching their mid-twenties.

In general, Lebanese Muslim young people, like their Turkish Muslim peers, did not favour marriage to a spouse brought from overseas. They preferred to marry spouses raised in Australia whom would therefore have similar life experiences to themselves. Most rated religious endogamy as more important than ethnic endogamy. The primary concern expressed here was to ensure their future children would be raised as Muslims. Such primacy placed on a Muslim spouse and for future children to be raised as Muslims, is a strong reflection of the religious self identification of survey respondents. While some boys viewed marriage as a means of achieving personal freedom, two girls mentioned the obstacles placed by their parents on their choice of marriage partner, with one girl pressured to marry a cousin whom she did not like.

The question of aspirations is important because it gives an indication of the self perception and hopes of young and developing adults. Thus, as an afterword, the survey also asked respondents to directly comment on how they viewed their own future in its most general terms. (See Table 4.6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4.6 View of Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is interesting to note that, on the whole, both males and females had a very optimistic outlook towards the future. This positive outlook reflected two underlying factors that the majority of respondents could identify with. The first factor was the sense of faith and confidence these young people had in their own ability to do well in the future, particularly their view of themselves as hardworking students now. One typical comment was made by a boy who said, “I’m trying hard to achieve my goal and it’s working”. In contrast to this, one girl commented that she viewed her future as negative because it was becoming increasingly difficult to enter university and therefore attain the career she desired, a concern perhaps shared by thousands of young people each year who sit for their Higher School Certificate.

The other important factor was that respondents reported strongly positive and supportive families, which encouraged them to feel secure and happy about their futures. This was reflected in the following comments,

My future will be positive because my parents aren’t strict like other parents who force their kids to do what they want ... so I’m all right”.

I feel I have a really happy future because I have no trouble with my parents and my brothers and we are a happy family.

It was also interesting to note that several male and female respondents voiced their concern about the future of the world situation. Their comments included,

The world is declining day after day with the creation of conflicts around the world and the creation of nuclear and atomic facilities. All these provide me with a negative view towards the world’s future ...

Violence is looming in the air, war is uncertain, let’s hope the Israeli’s attend the peace conference and don’t be too stubborn as they usually are ... I’m not so much worried about the environment or nuclear threat but conflict in general especially when it concerns me or other Arabs and Muslims ...

... the Middle East should get back together ... it is time to get their act together and stop acting like children.

Overall, the group of Lebanese Muslim young people surveyed viewed their future very optimistically and indicated stable and supportive families which seemed to offer a conducive environment for these young people to develop and pursue their educational, vocational and marital aspirations.
A clear picture emerges that young Australians of Lebanese Muslim background seem to belong to positive, stable, and cohesive families. The extended family where it exists plays a very strong and supportive role for these young people. The extended family, whether cousins, aunts or uncles, often constitutes a young person’s first encounter with and a bridge into social networks outside of the immediate family unit. Within the family unit and extended family network, young Lebanese Muslims are often able to construct their social, cultural and religious ties, and identity in an understanding and supportive milieu.

However, despite “positive, stable and cohesive” families, female respondents were particularly able to identify and describe certain gender differences in family (especially parental) expectations placed upon them relative to their brothers. Although females were generally understanding and sympathetic to their parents concerns and rationalisations about their personal safety, they could not accept differing standards regarding housework, child-minding, and “going out”, which favoured their brothers. Females were also more likely than males to recognise the role of the mother as a major and/or sole decision maker within the family unit. Interestingly, however, gender differences in family (especially parental) expectations regarding respondents’ marital, educational, and vocational aspirations was not reported significantly. Contrary to common opinion, including those found in official and academic circles, Lebanese Muslim girls’ personal aspirations in the discussed areas were largely supported and encouraged by their respective families as well as their school environment.

While tensions within families were evident (one of which was gender differences in parental expectations as described above), the important thing was that they largely remained within manageable proportions and did not seem to endanger the
cohesiveness and closeness that overwhelmingly characterised these families. Although respondents cited parental unemployment as one major factor which could possibly threaten the quality of family relationships. It is not unusual therefore that some respondents felt that their relationship with their parents was enhanced when their parents interacted and participated economically and socially within Australian society.

Our respondents exhibited a high degree of religious identification and practice. The family and community religious institutions or activities, such as mosques, weekend schools and scripture teaching, were mentioned as critical sources of Islamic education and inculcation. This religious self identification is further evidenced by the marked preference for religious (if not ethno-religious) endogamy. Such was stated as a preference largely due to a concern by respondents that their own offspring be raised as practising Muslims.

Many of these young people can be regarded as “cultural mediators”, fluent in two different cultures and sets of norms. Indeed, many spoke positively about their bicultural identity. One example noted in this study was the high level of Arabic language retention in respondents, especially in their ability to read and write Arabic, indicating a successful transference of language skills and competence as well as cultural maintenance amongst second generation Australians. Another example of this was that most respondents did not favour marriage to spouses from overseas. Most, instead, indicated a clear preference to marry spouses who had been raised in Australia having Muslim and/or Lebanese backgrounds. This is perhaps indicative of their self perception as distinctly Australian and of Lebanese Muslim background, with the “Australian” element of identity or experience given full recognition by these young people. Another indication of this Australian identity is the expressed desire by respondents, which was supported by their parents, to remain settled in, and to participate and contribute to Australian society.

Young Lebanese Muslim Australians, both male and female clearly considered themselves supported by their families (especially parents) in their pursuit of certain goals, i.e. educational, vocational and marriage aspirations. Chapters 1 and 2,
discussed the low educational attainment of the Lebanese Muslim community and its low employment rate. Such was attributed to various factors, namely being more recent arrivals to Australia (therefore language and other settlement difficulties), having experienced before arrival protracted civil instability (therefore disrupted educational, economic and civil routines), and of course arriving into Australia during a period of recession and major industrial restructuring spanning approximately 15 years. Should the strong desire for further education expressed by respondents be reflected in the wider population of young Lebanese Muslim Australians and also materialise, then the second generation will certainly be less disadvantaged than their parent generation in regards to competing strongly in the labour market. Further, the range of aspired vocations mentioned by respondents corresponded reasonably well to the demands made by the job market and a restructured economy (e.g. skilled trades, technical and scientific vocations, the professions, and the service industry).

Indeed, the parent generation of our respondents have largely borne the brunt of a most difficult settlement experience. However, judging from the kinds of educational and vocational aspirations confidently expressed by both our male and female respondents, together with the previously stated fact of strong family support, we can begin to allow for some optimism with regard to the question of the Lebanese Muslim community lifting its quality and standard of life and accommodating itself into the current economic and social directions Australia as a whole is heading towards. Notwithstanding the above, the depressed job market, costly and limited places in tertiary education, financial difficulties, are still major challenges that these young people must tackle together with their non-Lebanese Muslim peers.

Respondents’ views on their own future prospects seem to be inextricably linked to perceptions of their own ability to achieve their personal aspirations, to reconcile their views of themselves as bicultural individuals, and to be nourished through their relationships with their family members. Interestingly, respondents’ outlook on the future was also very much linked to overseas events which have some impact on them as individuals of Muslim and/or Arabic background. Such impact usually referred to latent racism and religious bigotry becoming manifest, triggered by
international incidents associated with the Middle-East and wider Muslim world.

Situations in the Middle East, ranging from the economic and social instability of Lebanon, the unrest in occupied Palestine, and the relatively recent crisis culminating in the Gulf War, were situations which caused these young Australians concern and emotional stress. These concerns indicate the genuine and strong ties these young Australians maintain with their "mother culture" and their relatives and friends overseas. It was clear through discussions that many of these individuals from a young age, developed an awareness of political problems in the Middle East as part of their growing up in families, where their own parents may have been directly affected and whose parents may have migrated to Australia on that basis. Thus, events overseas and their ramifications locally in Australia at a social, economic and political level, will predictably be a matter of continuing concern for our respondents and others like them. Such ramifications, if severe and negative, were cited as being cause for pessimism in regards to their future outlook in Australia.

One uncomfortable situation that these young Lebanese Muslim Australians periodically have to live with is the fact they often have to "pay the price" for overseas events over which they have no control. The most pertinent example in the experience of our respondents is perhaps the Gulf Crisis which resulted in feelings of rejection and alienation accompanied by fear of retribution arising from the many incidents of violence and vilification targeting Muslim Australians.

Government anti-discrimination policies and legislation, especially as they relate to religious discrimination (including vilification), should be more responsive in terms of offering real protection to affected communities such as the Lebanese Muslim, and in informing and educating the public that such discrimination is intolerable and it is most critical that the school system be targeted in this regard.

Official statements regarding the importance of respecting the rights of minorities (such as Arabic and Muslim Australians) and public policies which espouse the same (as in Multiculturalism, Access & Equity, Equal Employment Opportunity,
and Anti-Discrimination legislation) can only be taken seriously by the wider community when there is a wholehearted commitment to community education imparting an appreciation of cultural diversity, multi-lingualism and religious pluralism (in which non-Judeo-Christian traditions significantly feature) within the wider society. It is not argued that there is no such commitment, but that more still needs to be done. Such initiatives in community education, however, should not only be reactive to problems as they arise, but be pro-active in their prevention, and be importantly creative in capitalising on social, artistic, economic and political opportunities.

In short, our sample of young Lebanese Muslim respondents indicated cohesive and supportive families. Together with institutional religious support structures and a preference for religious (and ethno-religious) endogamy all contribute to a sense of community cohesiveness. These factors together with a degree of comfortableness in identifying as Australians, are perhaps a major contributive factor to the relative success of the Australian Lebanese Muslim community in maintaining their religious identity across the second generation (and probably into the next), in comparison to migrant Muslims in other Western countries such as the US and Britain.

Australia as a newer nation, admitting its need to reformulate a more appropriate national identity within its own cultural mix, perhaps accounts for many of the differences experienced on the one hand by Lebanese Muslims Australians, and on the other hand by Muslims in the US and Britain, where the latters' respective senses of "national identity" have been highly developed over a longer time span, but largely tied to a mono-cultural premise. Despite the shortcomings experienced in Australia, there seems to be a more genuine expression and acceptance of cultural and religious difference here than can be found in other countries.

Future studies may take the opportunity to compare the findings of this study on family relationships, identity and aspirations, to other groups of young Australian Muslims and indeed other groups of English and non-English speaking background. It must be stressed however that when examining such things as personal aspirations in secondary school students, the researcher must be clear that these findings will only
reflect their ‘aspirations’ and not necessarily possible outcomes. More in depth studies examining young peoples aspirations and their actual outcomes across time, are certainly required.

In the current and certainly challenging economic and political climate, further research, on the range and diversity of Australian families and on Australia’s rich and diverse cultural and national assets, individuals and various concepts of identity, would be extremely appropriate. Educational and vocational issues and strategies, notions of national identity and independence, Multiculturalism, and increased support for Australian families, are all regarded as important and relevant concerns in terms of government policy. The Governments recent “White Paper” and educational reform agenda, the debate about the “republic”, the recent launch of the Australian citizenship campaign which reflects the theme of “welcome to our family”, collectively reflect this. If Australia is to move more confidently into the future, further research in these proposed areas would only serve to enhance our understanding.
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Youth Affairs Council of Australia
APPENDIX

Questionnaire

CONFIDENTIAL

1. Sex:  □ Male  □ Female

2. Age:

3. What school do you go to?

4. What year are you in?

5. Are you:  □ single  □ engaged
             □ married  □ divorced
             □ separated  □ widowed

6. What country were you born in?

7. If born outside of Australia, how old were you when you arrived?

8. What year did you arrive?

9. Did you come here at the same time as your parents?  □ yes  □ no

10. Are you an Australian citizen?  □ yes  □ no

11. Which country were you living in before coming to Australia?  □ yes  □ no

12. Which language do you consider as your first language?

13. Besides English do you know any other language(s)?

14. Please specify language:.................................................................
    □ understand only  □ speak  □ read  □ write

15. Do you have a job?  □ yes  □ no

16. If yes, what work do you do?

17. Why do you work?
    □ for pocket money  □ to get out of the house
    □ to help family  □ to support yourself
    □ other...please explain

18. Which suburb do you live in?

19. Who do you live with:
    □ your parents [how many parents] ...............  
    □ alone
    □ with relatives  □ other...please specify

20. Do you live:  □ in a house  □ in a flat/unit
do you:

- rent your home
- own your home
- are paying off your home
- other

how many bedrooms does your house have?

how many people live in the house / flat?

do any of your relatives live with you?

how many children are in your family?

how many:

- girls
- boys

Among your brothers and sisters what number child are you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 [please circle]

are any of your brothers or sisters married?  

- yes
- no

if yes, how many brothers are married

- sisters are married

what country was your father born in?

what country was your mother born in?

how old is your:

- father
- mother

what is the first language spoken in the house?

what language or languages do your parents speak?

father

- mother

does your father know English:

- very well
- well
- ok
- not very well
- not at all

does your mother know English:

- very well
- well
- ok
- not very well
- not at all

how much schooling did your parents do?

father  

- none
- a few years
- primary
- junior high
- senior high
- college
- university

mother  

- none
- a few years
- primary
- junior high
- senior high
- college
- university

is your father:

- self employed
- working full time
- working p/t
- unemployed
- home duties
- other...
is your mother:
☐ self employed ☐ working full time ☐ working p/t
☐ unemployed ☐ home duties ☐ other...

when did your parents arrive in Australia?
father ............... mother .............

is your father an Australian citizen? ☐ yes ☐ no

is your mother an Australian citizen? ☐ yes ☐ no

how well do you get on with: your father
☐ very well ☐ ok ☐ not very well ☐ not at all
can you elaborate?

how well do you get on with: your mother
☐ very well ☐ ok ☐ not very well ☐ not at all
can you elaborate?

how well do you get on with: your brother(s)
☐ very well ☐ ok ☐ not very well ☐ not at all
can you elaborate?

how well do you get on with: your sister(s)
☐ very well ☐ ok ☐ not very well ☐ not at all
can you elaborate?

if in Australia:
how well do you get on with: your grandparents
☐ very well ☐ ok ☐ not very well ☐ not at all
can you elaborate?

how well do you get on with: your uncles/aunts
☐ very well ☐ ok ☐ not very well ☐ not at all
can you elaborate?

how well do you get on with: your cousins
☐ very well ☐ ok ☐ not very well ☐ not at all
can you elaborate?

who in the family provides you with the most support?
with whom do you agree most in the family in your ideas and attitudes?

which areas do you agree on?

whose opinion do you respect most in the family?

why?

with whom do you disagree or argue most in the family?

on which areas do you disagree or argue?

what sorts of things does your family expect of you....

would you ask advice from:  (may tick more than one)
☐ your father  ☐ your mother  ☐ your brother/sister
☐ relatives  ☐ friends  ☐ teacher  ☐ imam / sheikh

would you confide in:
☐ your father  ☐ your mother  ☐ your brother/sister
☐ relatives  ☐ friends  ☐ teacher  ☐ imam / sheikh

would you discuss your problems with:
☐ your father  ☐ your mother  ☐ your brother/sister
☐ relatives  ☐ friends  ☐ teacher  ☐ imam / sheikh

what sort of activities do you do with your family?

go to picnics  ☐ yes  ☐ no
visiting relatives/friends  ☐ yes  ☐ no
housework  ☐ yes  ☐ no
travel  ☐ yes  ☐ no
other? what? please specify.....

who usually makes most of the decisions in the family?

do your parents consult you about decisions which concern the family?

are you expected to behave or do certain things in the family because
you are a boy or girl?  ☐ yes  ☐ no

if yes, what sorts of things are you expected to do?

is there any differences in treatment between brothers and sisters?
☐ yes  ☐ no

if yes how?
what reasons do your parents give for this?

e.g.
- is it based on religious grounds
- is it based on cultural grounds
- or is it just that that's how things are done in this family
- other
please give details

69 How often do you do housework?
- everyday
- once a week
- occasionally
- never

70 what sort of housework do you help with / what is your job?

71 are you ever asked to stay home to help with the housework?
- yes
- no

72 are you expected to help with looking after younger brothers / sister?
- yes
- no

73 what would you like to do when you finish school?

74 what would you like to do when you are twenty or twenty five?

75 what sort of career would you like to have:
list range of possible jobs in order of preferences...
1.
2.
3.
don't know

76 what are your family's views on this

77 would you like to pursue further education?
- yes
- no

78 if yes what would you like to study?

79 where would you like to study?

80 what are your family's views on this?

81 at what age would you like to get married?

82 would the person have to be Lebanese Muslim
- yes
- no

83 would you marry a Muslim of any background?
- yes
- no

84 would you marry a non Muslim?
- yes
- no

85 what are your family's views on this?
are there any barriers to achieving your aims in:

Career:  yes  no
Education:  yes  no
Marriage:  yes  no

how do you view your future?
do you see the future as:  positive  negative?
why?

how do you view the world's future:
  good  ok  bad
why?

where do you learn about islam from:
  friends  your mother  your father
  relatives  scripture class  sat/sun schools
  mosque  youth group  usrah group
  books  other publications  video
  TV news  newspapers  other...please specify

do you read the Quran:
  everyday  once a week  once a month
  once in six months  hardly ever  never

do you read the Quran in:
  Arabic  English  both English and Arabic

have you memorised any sura's by heart?  yes  no
if yes how many?

do you know the meanings of the sura's you have learnt?
  all  some  none

do you know how to pray?  yes  no

if yes, who taught you to pray?
  parent  brother/sister  friend  scripture teacher  other-who?

how often do you pray?
  5 times daily  everyday but not five times  a few times p.w
  once every few months  hardly ever  never

does your father pray?  yes  no

does your mother pray?  yes  no

how often does your father pray?
  5 times daily  everyday but not five times  a few times p.w
  once every few months  hardly ever  never
102 how often does your mother pray?
☐ 5 times daily ☐ everyday but not five times ☐ a few times p.w
☐ once every few months ☐ hardly ever ☐ never

103 do you pray at school?
☐ yes ☐ no

104 do you attend Muslim scripture classes?
☐ yes ☐ no

105 if yes, does your scripture teacher speak English?
☐ yes ☐ no

106 how often do you go to the mosque?
☐ every day ☐ every friday or once a week
☐ once every few months ☐ hardly ever ☐ never

107 do you go to the mosque in:
Ramadan ☐ yes ☐ no
at ‘Eid times ☐ yes ☐ no

108 why do you go to the mosque
☐ islamc duty ☐ parents want you to ☐ you want to ☐ other, please explain....

109 do you fast during ramadan?
☐ yes ☐ no

110 do you eat pork or ham?
☐ yes ☐ no

111 have you ever eaten pork or ham?
☐ yes ☐ no

112 do you drink alcohol?
☐ yes ☐ no

113 are you a member of a Muslim youth or other Muslim group?
☐ yes ☐ no
if yes which group or groups?

114 have you ever attended:
Muslim youth camp?
☐ yes ☐ no
Quran classes?
☐ yes ☐ no
Muslim youth group meeting, class, activity-
if yes what sort...

115 do you speak Arabic at home?
☐ always ☐ half English-half Arabic ☐ a little Arabic ☐ no Arabic

117 are you a member of a Lebanese youth group or other organisation?
☐ yes ☐ no

118 if yes which groups?

119 are you a member of any mainstream Australian organisation?
☐ yes ☐ no
if yes, which group/s

120 do you see yourself as:
Lebanese, Muslim, Australian, a combination of all of these,
one of these, other... please explain...

121 do you feel your identity is accepted in society?
☐ yes ☐ no
122 if yes how do you feel you are accepted?

123 if no, how are you not accepted?

124 do you face any discrimination or prejudice? □ yes □ no

125 if yes why? on what basis?
by whom?
how are you discriminated against?

126 do you face any pressures in being an Australian Muslim Lebanese young person?
□ yes □ no

127 if yes, what sort of pressures, difficulties or problems do you face?
e.g. in the school, home, neighbourhood, sport ground, work place, other places......

128 do you think the media has had a role in the difficulties you face as a Muslim?
□ yes □ no

129 if yes how?

130 do you face problems, difficulties or pressures because of events in the Muslim world? □ yes □ no

131 if yes, please explain ...

132 did you face any problems, difficulties or pressures during the Gulf Crisis? □ yes □ no

133 if yes, please explain ...

134 who do you mix with at school:
how many people?
what ethnic backgrounds?
what religion are they?
their gender?
what sort of things do you do together?

135 do you mix with this group of people outside of school? □ yes □ no

136 who do you mix with outside of school?
how many people?
what ethnic backgrounds?
what religion are they?
their gender?
what sort of things do you do together?
what background does your best friend come from?
- Lebanese
- Turkish
- Greek
- Italian
- Samoan / Tongan
- Anglo / “Aussie”
- Other... please specify

what backgrounds do your friends come from?
- Lebanese
- Turkish
- Greek
- Italian
- Samoan / Tongan
- Anglo / “Aussie”
- Other... please specify

what do you do in your free time?
- e.g.
- Hang out e.g. at shopping centre, park etc.
- Study
- Go to disco’s
- Read a book
- Listen to music
- Go out with your family
- Play sport
- Other... please describe...

is there anything you would like to add?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY