



Ivana Cosmano

Title: Young Arab Families in the UAE: Renegotiating Gender Roles and Expectations in Marriage

Abstract:

This paper explores the shifting dynamics of family life among newly married Jordanian couples residing in the United Arab Emirates. It employs interdisciplinary modes of analysis, including sociology, gender and masculinity studies, informed by decolonial thought, to examine how young Arab couples renegotiate gender roles and subjectivities as they settle in a new country where they can enact more desirable life trajectories. By exploring these transformations, the paper uncovers new understandings of gender roles and expectations within the realms of marital partnerships and parenthood, providing insight into how Arab youth are redefining dominant notions of fatherhood, motherhood, masculinity and femininity. The paper argues that analysing family dynamics is crucial for understanding sociocultural and value transformations and identifying significant ideological shifts occurring within a society. Drawing on triangulated data from in-depth interviews with young Jordanian families in the UAE, this paper offers valuable insight into the new roles that Arab women and men wish to play within their family and society, enhancing our comprehension of their potential to affect social change. Ultimately, this study reflects on Gulf countries' capacity to shape the sociocultural landscapes of contemporary Middle East, highlighting their potential to offer a new vision for Arab youth in the region, given their growing attractiveness and desirability compared to traditional Western migration destinations. The findings of this study contribute to providing alternative narratives about Arab women, men and families, challenging prevailing West-centric discourses.

Bio:

Ivana Cosmano is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Leeds (UK). Her research interests are located at the intersection of several disciplines, including Sociology, Family and



Youth Studies in relation to the MENA region. Her work focuses on sociocultural change within contemporary Arab societies, examining people's agency in driving positive change on a personal and societal level. She has extensive work experience in higher education and in the humanitarian sector in the Middle East. She received her PhD from the AIMEs Department at the University of Leeds. Her research, entitled "Transforming Norms and Desires: Gendered Self-Fashioning Amongst Young, Educated Jordanians", examined gender, youth, and family dynamics in Jordan and was fully funded by the LCS Award for Excellence.
