

Emirati women's higher educational leadership formation under globalisation: culture, religion, politics, and the dialectics of modernisation

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The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a small state transitioning from traditional communities into a modern society. This is a complex process: it involves instilling a national identity over tribal structures; modernising and technologising while retaining Islam; ensuring a high level of security while allowing for a liberal and relatively free society; preserving culture while building one of the largest and most multicultural societies, albeit mostly expatriate; and providing one of the safest countries in the Arab world for women. This paper presents an expatriate female academic's position in relation to the emergent literature on the contradictory positioning of women in different Arab cultures. It reviews the literature in the light of anecdotal evidence drawn from the author's doctoral students' experiences as women leaders within the wider socio-cultural context of the UAE and the emergent higher education system that is considered central to its nation-building exercise. The discussion recognises the implications of different contexts for Emirati women moving into leadership positions and calls for further research in the field.

Keywords: post-colonial theory; policy studies; leadership; social theory

Introduction

Among the many developments and changes in the Middle East over the last 40 years, both constructive and destructive, is the changing role of women, whose opportunities have ebbed and flowed with the social and political transformations and disintegrations that have taken place. The consequences for women of political crises such as the civil war in Algeria, devastation in Iraq, repeated bombings of the Gaza, and the current destruction of Syria have been dire. Moghadam (2008) identified a number of other factors that have affected societies and women's place in them: the post-oil boom stagnation; authoritarian states in a number of countries; and patriarchal Islamicist movements that have taken hold or have strong influence in many countries. The prospects for women in these countries are very different from those in the Western countries that have most contributed to educational administration (primarily the USA, the UK, Australia, and Canada). The concerns and analyses in the field of women's issues in these Western countries are slight when compared to the unforgiving and relentless conditions that many women in the Middle East face. However, there are

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also positive developments, even in countries that are currently in disarray and which may be poised on the brink of civil war, such as Egypt.

In these contexts, the theories and models pertaining to Western countries may not hold. This is true even in the Arabian Gulf states where there is relative peace, and a rapid expansion of women's education and societal roles. While there is considerable scholarship on the economy and strategic affairs of the Gulf states, there are few academic writings on changing social and cultural structures and processes (Ramakrishnan and Ilias 2011). Little in Western scholarship in educational administration builds upon an Islamic worldview. The long and rich tradition of Arab culture, and Islamic intellectualism that the West benefitted from in all disciplines during the 'Renaissance', the unique structures of social institutions, the ever-present security issues, and the transitional characteristics of modernisation in the Gulf states, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), are largely ignored.

Western scholarship in many fields does not generally cover Middle Eastern conditions. This is in part due to the secularisation of social science disciplines (Hirschkind 2011; Volpi 2011). The literature that does exist suffers from overgeneralisations, misrepresentation, negative stereotypes, and demonisation (Cole 2009; Nader 2013; Shaheed 1999), often reflecting what is projected in the media (see Esposito and Kalin 2011; Flood et al. 2012; Lean 2012; Zempi and Chakraborti 2014). There is a confusion of Islam with Islamism (Badran 2001) and the neglect of the historical role of women, many of whom have been rulers of Islamic states from the early Islamic to the modern period (e.g. Bennett 2010; Mernissi 1993). Much Western literature also assumes that in national development, the Western models of the state and its social institutions are appropriate to ex-colonial parts of the world (Chatterjee 1993). These models include not only institutional and organisational structures and processes, but also roles and role construction that affect identity construction. Chatterjee's post-colonial nationalism critique also points to important bifurcations that were formed in most colonies. These include separating the material levels of the economy, including science and technology associated with the West and its colonising powers from the spiritual levels, including cultural identity. One of the questions this article asks is whether Emirati women who are creating and entering leadership roles in higher education are re-integrating the material and spiritual.

There are other misrepresentations of Muslim women in Western scholarship. Sonbol (2006) identifies the essentialist approach to defining women in only Islamic terms as if they are only 'religious creatures', an approach that excludes many social, cultural, and historical experiences, and which portrays Islamic history as 'backward and patriarchal' with enlightenment only brought by imperialist missionaries. Sonbol questions the assumption that the future for Muslim women must reside in Western programmes and models (see also Shaheed 1999). She also questions the frequent attribution of limitations and punishments of women to Islam, when in most of these cases culture and the state are the sources of these practices and are not confined to Muslim women. In fact, provisions for women's education, as Sonbol explains, are very different from the negative stereotype that prevails. Women are equally recognised in the Qur'an as having rights to learn, debate, attend educational organisations, and hold positions in education and other sectors (Lootah 2006). And as Al Orami (2011) points out, some elements of women's rights are embedded in Islamic concepts of social justice, particularly in Islam's call for education as a 'religious duty incumbent on all Muslims, male and female ... without discrimination or exception' (85), which distinguished Islam as an early force for women's rights (see also Schvaneveldt,

Kerpelman, and Schvaneveldt 2005). Women's participation actually dropped off significantly when education was institutionalised during modern state formation (Sonbol 2006), a situation that has been significantly reversing in many countries more recently.

Similar arguments are made by Moghadam (2008) who explains how different views of Islam contribute to a misunderstanding of its nature and role in women's lives. The Western view of Islam as having a primary responsibility for limiting and suppressing women is contrary to the view that it is a 'source of women's rights and empowerment' (425). Her argument rests on a socio-political and economic approach that recognises both the differences across Islamic states and across the 'diverse and heterogeneous' roles of women in them, influenced by a 'country's social structure and stage of development, as well and the nature of the state and its economic, social, and cultural policies' (426). The degrees of neopatriarchy, where religion is integrated into the power and state structures and where the family is a major social institution within which the individual functions, varies considerably across the Middle East and North Africa (Shaheed 1999; Sharabi 1988). The patriarchal domination of women is often attributed in the West to Islam and Arab culture. However Sharabi (1988) argues that Western modernisation forces in the Middle East bring with it the subjugation of women that is practised in capitalism. Despite a number of problems for women, itemised in the UN report (1994) from a meeting of women's organisations in Arab countries, the picture is not solely a bleak one. By the 1960s, as Moghadam explains, women were increasingly occupying high-status professions in law, medicine, and universities, including serving as judges in many states. They had the vote, ran for parliament, and were appointed to senior government positions. They were also forming social movements to increase their participation, in many countries shifting from state feminism programmes to civil society feminism in the 1990s, and participating in the 'Arab Spring' that spread across the Middle East and North Africa regions from 2011 (see Olimat 2013; Syeed and Zafar 2014).

An important point made by Sonbol (2006) that holds today, particularly under globalisation, is that the very patriarchal values and practices of Western systems, which Western women work against, is transmitted through imperialism and, now, globalisation. While there are many definitions of globalisation in the literature, Held and McGrew's (2002) work is seminal and covers aspects of the phenomenon that is relevant here. It builds upon the work of Hirst (1997) and Hoogvelt (2001), and portrays globalisation as part of the neoliberal project that aims at an Anglo-American capitalist hegemony with significant cultural influence on receiving countries including commodified education. Similarly, Stiglitz (2003) has identified the economic subjugation of developing countries. In addition to the economic sphere and the commodified export of education and other cultural goods, globalisation has had a profound effect on governance and policy in developing countries (Coleman 2012). Politically, globalisation is the spread of neo-liberalism that aims at 'unmitigated marketplace relations' against which no other political economic system can stand (Teeple 1995, 143).

One of the aims of this paper is to describe the role-making processes that a number of Emirati women are engaged in. These women are self-reflectively aware of the tensions, contradictions, and dynamics they are a part of, as they ascend to senior positions in higher education. One question asked is whether Emirati academic women are experiencing the 'shock of civilisation' that Bourdieu found in Algeria:

This society ... which was constituted through a totality of indissociable elements that were all expressions of the same original 'style,' suffered [*a subi*] the shock of another

civilization that did not make itself felt in a piecemeal or targeted fashion but in totality, rupturing not only the economic order but also the social, psychological, moral, and ideological [*spheres*]. (translation in Silverstein and Goodman 2009, 15)

In other words, is it a *habitus clivé*, or ‘split habitus’ (Bourdieu and Sayad 1964), that compromises a society’s ability to ‘reproduce’ itself through authentic and intact social institutions? These dynamics are also the result of what Said (1993, 2003) refers to in ‘Orientalism’ as the negative stereotypes that consciously and unconsciously are embedded in many Westerners’ worldview and which inform their conceptual constructions (see Burney 2012).

Women are increasingly assuming senior roles in higher education organisations in the UAE. Many of these roles are being created as the Emiratisation policy, which aims to replace many expatriates with nationals. Given the short history of higher education in the UAE and the recent availability of Emirati women with higher degrees, this is a case of ‘gendering’ rather than ‘regendering’ the academy. The following sections provide a profile of UAE, and the socio-cultural and economic conditions that affect the conditions and roles for women, and a description of Emirati women’s status in UAE society, including their participation in higher education.

Country profile of UAE

The UAE is a small state in the Arabian Gulf. It is a relatively new nation-state, formed in 1971 as it emerged from colonisation. Oil and gas wealth has enabled a desert state to build from subsistence level to one with a high GDP (O’Sullivan 2008) and an extremely fast modernisation. As in other countries, this has been associated with urbanisation, industrialisation, and internationalisation with evidence of materialism and secularisation in the large commercial and retail tourism venues. It is facing many challenges as it transitions from traditional communities into a modern society. These include instilling a national identity over tribal structures; modernising and technologising while retaining Islam; preserving culture while building one of most multicultural societies, albeit mostly expatriate (Atiyyah 1996; Omair 2011); and maintaining its security in the Middle East while allowing for a liberal and relatively free society and providing one of the safest countries in the world for women (see Findlow 2000; Kazim 2000).

Due in part to its traditional tribal values of tolerance and hospitality (Rugh 2007) and adherence to Islamic values of tolerance, fairness, and equity (Hasan 2007; Hashmi 2002; Kamali 2002; March 2009), the UAE is highly successful, not only economically, but in creating a society that is stable and tolerant (O’Sullivan 2008). It reflects Islamic principles of justice and social obligations and equity which govern social relations in everyday life (e.g. An-Na’im 2010; Mannan 2005; Rosen 1989, 2000). These include those Islamic principles that protect a woman’s right to education, ownership of property, participation in the economy, and political rights in voting and holding office. These principles are contained in the Qur’an and Sunnah rather than in exegesis, which often contains influences of culture (Engineer 2004) and the cultural, economic, and political subjugation practices that do not follow authentic Islamic principles (Barlas 2002; Jawad 2002).

The UAE is experiencing an intense nation- and institution-building phase in its development, which is unique due to the high level of non-citizens (over 80%), with a distinctive political system and culture (Heard-Bey 2005). It is in the early stages

of establishing a higher education system that is negotiating a number of dimensions: creating a system unique to the UAE to meet its needs (Al Farra 2011; Fox 2008); managing a highly cross-cultural workforce with a broad range of foreign institutional configurations and practices; constructing professional roles that are culturally appropriate; building up the intellectual and social capital of its citizens to play a stronger role in governance and administration; and preserving its unique cultural and societal heritage (Al-Ali 2008; Rugh 2007). An important consideration in these dynamics is the UAE's position as a receiver of neoliberal globalisation that is exported predominantly from the USA and the UK (Donn and Al Manthri 2010). Dubai, in particular, has had one of the highest Globalisation Indices of the region in the economic, cultural, and social spheres, all of which place pressure to conform to the demands of globalisation in political, economic, and cultural institutions, thus creating cultural threats to Emirati society (Lootah 2006).

Despite the many foreign influences that under globalisation can be termed colonising processes, Emirati culture is still strong in most parts of the country. One measure of this is the continuation of devout Muslim daily and seasonal practices that help maintain traditional social structures. However, there are also unintended changes occurring through the influence of Western media, foreign travel and goods, which have strong influences on culture as part of the general development of the Gulf states. Mandaville (2011) describes hybrid countries that are mergers of traditional societies with modern technology, oil production, and security systems. Most institutions and organisations, including those in higher education, operate along foreign principles, mostly American, British, and Australian. While the more severe colonising features that Bourdieu (and Sayad 1964) witnessed and recorded in Algeria – ‘rupture, alienation, de-culturation, disaggregation, and uprooting’ (Silverstein and Goodman 2009, 13) – do not exist, there is a more benign destructive influence on social and cultural structures on a values and symbolic level, which are consistent with the post-colonial critiques of Said (2003) and Burney (2012), and the dialectics of modernisation and neo-colonialism (Henry and Springborg 2001).

Women's status in the UAE

Traditionally, women in the Arabian Gulf, like those in many traditional and pioneering societies, contributed substantially to the economy through agricultural work, marketplace activity, trade, investing their inherited money in businesses, and running and supporting families, often alone when men did not return from the sea or skirmishes (Maestri 2011). Al Orami (2011) describes the society as one where women were ‘social agents’ and where economic activity was not assigned by gender but through the structure of a family production unit where roles were assigned primarily on the basis of ‘natural capacities’ (80). As Schvaneveldt, Kerpelman, and Schvaneveldt (2005), explain, women's role in the economy and working outside the home is not forbidden by Islam, providing that it does not compromise family responsibilities. Education is not only schooling but apprenticeship in traditional societies, where women played a strong role in maintaining learning in the socio-cultural and economic spheres. Most women in the UAE still live in traditional community and extended family guided heavily by custom and Islam, which define life and shape their opportunities. These, as will be discussed below, are not wholly in opposition to modernisation and women's higher education. The tendency in the literature is to present cultural and religious values as ‘resistances’ to modernisation, for example, in Maestri (2011) or

'hindrances' in Ramakrishnan and Ilias (2011), displaying a 'Western' bias in dealing with traditional cultures in other parts of the world, and limiting the discussion of education to that of 'schooling' and Western models. However, in many Muslim countries, like the UAE, and contrary to much Western literature as Raghavan and Levine (2012) argue, there has been considerable reform in women's rights.

The UAE is a state that exemplifies many of the best virtues of Islamic and Arab culture. In many ways it is unique in the organisation of its social institutions and, in particular, in the rights and opportunities provided for women. In the UAE life expectancy is very high for women and exceeds that of many other Arab states (AbouZeid 2010). Contrary to the assumptions made in the West, Emirati women drive vehicles, have a strong presence in the economy, in government and in the professions (law, medicine, engineering) as ambassadors, judges, and representatives in the Federal National Council (see Bristol-Rhys 2010), with the UAE having the highest number of women appointed to these positions in any Arab country (Al Orami 2011). Women also play a large role in the workforce in banking, business, medical, corporate, and construction sectors (Augsburg, Claus, and Randeree 2009). The demand from women to receive services from women is driving much of the economic and public-sector development and creating employment opportunities for women (Maestri 2011). In countries such as Egypt and Jordan Emirati women have recently succeeded in rising to senior and sensitive positions in government, the private sector and in non-profit organisations (Yaseen 2010). While data collected during the 2000s suggested that culture and religion were seen as barriers to women's higher participation in the workforce (e.g. Gallant and Pounder 2008; Metcalfe 2006), by 2012, according to Government of Dubai (2012) official figures, this picture has changed with 41% of Emirati women being in the workforce.

The educational and professional status that Emirati women enjoy was not possible without the political vision and supports that were established by Shaikh Zayed Al Nahyan when the country was founded. His vision encompassed women taking senior roles in all sectors, evidence not only of acute political perception but also of Islamic principles with respect to women:

The means to develop a country and modernise its infrastructure is a magnificent burden that should not be taken up by men only. . . . It would lead to an unbalanced rhythm of life. Hence, women's participation in public life is required and we must be prepared for it Nothing could delight me more than to see woman taking up her distinctive position in society. Nothing should hinder her progress. Like men, women deserve the right to occupy high positions, according to their capabilities and qualifications. (Augsburg, Claus, and Randeree 2009, 29–30)

This vision and political will, staunchly supported by the ruling families, has resulted in extensive building of school systems, universities, programmes, and foundation grants enabling a very large number of Emirati women to pursue higher education in the UAE and outside it (Soffan 1980), as well as many other government-sponsored initiatives (see Marmenout and Lirio 2014).

A further note must be made about Islam's position with respect to women in education and the workforce, and in leadership positions. Much of the negative stereotyping regarding women in Muslim countries is based on practices that issue from politics and culture, having little relationship to the rights and roles of women in Islam represented in the Qur'an and Sunna (Soffan 1980). Abuses and marginalising of women, as Augsburg, Claus, and Randeree (2009) argue, have been misattributed to

Islam, where in contrast women have rights to property, businesses, in choosing leaders, to education, inheritance, and independent wealth (see also Bristol-Rhys 2010), rights that were revolutionary at the time of the establishment of Islam, including the right of women equally to education (Soffan 1980). The UAE constitution and laws respect and implement these rights, described by Shaikha Fatima below:

This support for women [by the government] stems from the teachings of the Islamic religion and the heritage and traditions of the UAE as well as the prudent view of President His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. It gives women the opportunity to reach the highest echelons of education, penetrate all fields of work, establish a foothold in society and asserts their belief in their own abilities and justify the faith of the society in them. (in Augsburg, Claus, and Randeree 2009, 31; see also Soffan 1980)

Gallant and Pounder (2008) record the many initiatives the UAE government has taken in supporting women's employment including legal provisions for equal pay and benefits as well as national strategies and frequent statements of support. Yaseen's (2010) results from a study on men's and women's leadership styles in the UAE demonstrated that the differences that existed were much more due to culture than religion. Yaseen found that culture produced stronger transformational characteristics in women in contrast to transactional characteristics in men. Women were also more proactive in addressing problems before they developed to a serious level.

This paper reflects on anecdotal evidence gained from teaching many Emirati women from most of the Emirates and supervising their research. These were women who exemplified a confidence in their abilities to succeed at high levels, while at the same time regarding this as a responsibility to Islam and as their duty to their country as part of its nation-building progress. These women comprise the pool of potential leaders within the current modernisation process.

Government policies supportive of Emirati men and women in the workforce have resulted in high participation levels in higher education and the workplace (Omair 2010). For example, the Emiratisation policy has had some influence by setting quotas for the hiring of Emiratis (Mashood, Verhoeven, and Chansakar 2009), although the representation of Emirati women in senior positions is still low due in part to men's unwillingness to share power. This is attributable more to the social system and particularly the new patriarchy that arose with modernisation than with the traditional system (AbouZeid 2010; Al Oraimi 2011; Sharabi 1988). However, these views are changing (e.g. Abdalla 1996; Mostafa 2005; Omair 2011) as is evident in a significant increase in women's appointments to senior positions, which has accelerated in the last two years (Augsburg, Claus, and Randeree 2009).

The attitudes of young Emirati women university students are also changing. In a recent survey Augsburg, Claus, and Randeree (2009) found that only 1% planned to stay at home, with 65% planning on working. Schvaneveldt, Kerpelman, and Schvaneveldt (2005) found similar results, while Bristol-Rhys (2010) found the age of marriage rising. These indications are doubly significant in a young country that has developed most of its social institutions in the last 20 years, and is still in the process of nation-building. A strong feature of the employment pattern in the UAE for Emiratis is a preference for the public sector, where salaries and working conditions are often better, even though it has come close to 'saturation point' in many fields with up to 66% of government organisations consisting of women (Williams, Wallis, and Williams 2013), with 30% of these in senior decision-making positions (*The National* 2014).

There is an additional consideration in examining women's leadership roles in a society that is still quasi-traditional, and where modernisation may, in fact, reduce women's influence. As Peterson (1989) notes of traditional Arab societies, family and politics are not separate spheres, and women and their networks carry strong leadership roles. If examined through a Western lens far more used to a differentiated society where power and authority are located in a formal political role, much of what women achieve is not captured. This has an impact on Emirati women currently who have to navigate a career path through a complex society that is part traditional, part modern, and in organisations that may be dominated by foreigners, many, if not most of whom can be non-Arab and non-Muslim. Additionally, if power and authority are assumed to reside in a particular repertoire of expressive styles, the quiet and tenacious quality of Emirati women can be easily overlooked, where traditionally 'family honor and dignity' rest in part upon women's code of modesty affecting dress and interaction with men who are not family members (Williams, Wallis, and Williams 2013, 140; also Peterson 1989).

The traditional dress that Emirati women wear, the abaya (cloak) and shayla (headscarf), and for some the niqab (veil), has taken on an important symbolic value in expressing national identity. Women are fully aware of the way dress represents their nationality (Omair 2011), 'because traditional and modest clothing makes her appear as a true Emirati lady' (Alsumaiti 2014, 135). The values attached to traditional clothing are tribal values that emphasise reputation, generosity, hospitality, courage, modest appearance, and proper behaviour (see Rugh 2007). For Emirati women, it is also associated with their rights and achievements. This is even more important in a country that is now predominantly occupied by foreigners, with figures for locals varying from less than 10–20% (dubaifaqs.com), although if the non-nationals (not included in the census figures) and the many visitors are taken into account it is clear that Emiratis are a very small minority. Traditional dress not only symbolises nationalism and religious observance, but is also a means 'to avoid sexual harassment and to gain sexual neutrality in managerial work' (Omair 2011, 156).

Women in the UAE, as in many parts of the Middle East, have benefited from their institutionalised advancement in education over the last 30 years, particularly in education and health where literacy rates, enrolment in secondary and higher education, have increased substantially since the 1970s, although gender disparities still exist (AbouZeid 2010). Women's educational attainment levels in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries compare well with Western countries, even outranking the USA and Switzerland, although workplace participation is still much lower (Marmenout and Lirio 2014). In Moghadam's (2008) survey, in many states more than 50% of college students were women, with more than 40% in many others, and women were entering professions usually associated with men such as engineering, law, mathematics, commerce and finance, IT, and medicine. Even in some authoritarian states, such as Iraq and Egypt, women were supported in making advancements in higher education as part of modernising and reform programmes, with the women in Iraq showing the least participation due to the American invasion (Moghadam 2008).

Employment figures also show dramatic increases for women. Over the 1960–2000 period, the 548% increase for women in the UAE was not atypical in the region (Omair 2011). There was a significantly increasing participation in the labour force, including the publishing field, in the Arabian Gulf countries, including the UAE. In even conventionally predominantly male occupations like policing and the military, women have made significant progress in the last few years with 1500 women police in Dubai

and 93 of these in senior positions, and 3 female judges and 17 female prosecutors in Dubai (Dubai Women Establishment 2012). In the UAE, women now hold 66% of public-sector jobs with 30% in decision-making positions despite the existence of organisational mindset barriers. In 2014, the UAE ranked number one in the Middle East for women in the Social Progress Index of the World Economic Forum (2014).

In the Gulf region, secondary and higher education systems have only been systematically developed over the last 30–40 years. According to Lootah (2006), the expansion of schooling during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s contributed to a politicisation of Emiratis in resisting colonisation and creating the federation of the UAE. The establishment of universities and higher colleges of technology greatly contributed to education for women, due largely to the high level of support by the UAE government for women's education (Gallant and Pounder 2008). Lootah presented a striking trend in the numbers of female versus male students attending university and graduating. Even by 2003, at United Arab Emirates University women far outnumbered men with 11,872 registered in comparison with 3728, and of those graduating from universities, women again outnumbered men 4611–1910 (239). More recently, Al Orami (2011) found Emirati women represented 70% of the graduates from higher education, which can be attributed in part to the government's public policy on gender equality.

This trend has to be placed in the context of national development; many young women are entering higher education from families where large percentages of older generations did not enter or finish high school (Schvaneveldt, Kerpelman, and Schvaneveldt 2005). Comparatively speaking, the large numbers of Emiratis, particularly the women, in higher education represent a speed of development that Western countries did not experience, and whose development models are not well suited to regional conditions.

For Emirati women there are additional benefits perceived by them and the many fathers and extended families that support their advanced education and careers (Williams, Wallis, and Williams 2013). Women's achievements are supported by the principles of Islamic social justice, which the UAE applies through equality in social services and other public programmes as well as in their legal rights (Al Orami 2011). The areas that constrain women are social and cultural values. For example, in some families women are not allowed to travel unaccompanied (Gallant and Pounder 2008), and sometimes women themselves, as Al Orami (2011) pointed out, have difficulty identifying with Western (and secular) conceptions of feminism and gender, conceptions that are highly individualistic and do not transfer well to a collective-based family and tribal society (see Alhaj and Van Horne 2013). While men can exert significant influence over women and can hold them back (see Maestri 2011), the converse is also true. It is common for fathers and brothers to support women in pursuing higher education and jobs even against the wishes of women in the family (Al Rasbi 2012). Hertz-Lazarowitz (2005) found similarly in her study on women in traditional Muslim families. As with Muslim women from 'traditional, male-dominant Muslim families', interviewed by Hertz-Lazarowitz (165) in Israel, many Emirati women in Al Rasbi's study were highly motivated to pursue higher education and professional careers, and were able to maintain their family relationships while negotiating a path between traditional and non-traditional modern values.

The UAE has also provided important female role models, although in research conducted by a number of my Emirati women doctoral students (e.g. Al Naqbi; Al Rasbi), many Emirati women also look to male role models, especially Shaikh Zayed Al Nahayan, the founder of the country who died in 2004, who embodies for most

locals the qualities of a good leader and of Islamic principles, and quite often their fathers (Alhaj and Van Horne 2013; Harold and Stephenson 2008). Augsburg, Claus, and Randeree (2009) profiled female role models who were most often referenced by Emirati women, including Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak and Shaikha Lubna Al Qasimi.

Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak is the wife of Shaikh Zayed and mother of the current Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed, who has exercised considerable influence in the development of public policy (Peterson 1989). Shaikha Fatima, shortly after the formation of the country in 1971, established the first women's organisation and strongly supported education for women as part of nation-building activities. She was instrumental in women's political participation in the country's national council and their influence in the development of personal law (Peterson 1989). She also became heavily involved in regional and international development and humanitarian projects. Similarly, Shaikha Lubna Al Qasimi has been a critically important role model in the public sector, serving as Minister of Economy and Planning and as Minister of Foreign Trade, previously working in IT positions as a technician and manager, and also serving as a model as a woman advancing in higher education to the masters level.

What is clearly evident in one doctoral student participant's experience is a strong sense of reintegrating the material and spiritual, although this finding cannot be generalised to all Emirati women. This participant applied her background knowledge and interpretation of data to her own situation. Similar results, though, were found by Alsumaiti (2014) and Al Rasbi (2012), both Emirati doctoral students who were also on career trajectories and found in their own research strong self-awareness of national and Islamic identity formation. However, it is too early in the advancement of Emirati women to leadership positions in higher education to draw firm conclusions, as women are only just now advancing into these positions in any numbers. There is a need for further research in this area.

Several questions arise. Do the assumptions and experiences that pertain to the 'West' actually apply here, and what possible negative stereotypes of Arab and Islamic cultures (see Croft 2012; Nader 2013) may get in the way of an authentic understanding of the professional lives of Emirati women in higher education? What kind of leadership identity for women can be both modern and maintain the country's Arab and Islamic character (see Al Farra 2011)? Fakhro (2009) argues that modernisation in the Gulf needs to be 'Arab-specific' by '... revising and reconstructing heritage on the one hand, and selecting and assimilating important aspects of the modernity of foreign societies, on the other' (291). By 2013, a number of women had risen to senior administrative positions in higher education, including Dean of Education at United Emirates University, Dean of Student Services in the HCT system, and President of Zayed University in Abu Dhabi (*The National* 2013). Beginning in mid-2014, the Emiratisation policy of the country was applied to the higher education sector, targeting many senior positions through the public higher education organisations as being for Emiratis only. Given that the majority of Emiratis in higher education degrees are women who earn the majority of qualifications, most of these positions will be filled by women.

Creating educational leadership roles is also, in part, an identity formation process for Emirati women. They are embedded in a multifaceted identity formation and maintenance dynamic (Beech 2008), which consists of being Muslim, being Emirati, being a woman, and achieving a managerial or leadership role organisationally. According to Beech (2008), and the theories of Alvesson and Willmott (2002), Creed and Scully

(2000), and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), identity construction in the organisational context is a performative process, grounded in interactions with others. All modes of image and presentation have meaning attached to them, and are interpreted. However, when placed into a foreign context such as the UAE where a strong Western influence is experienced by Emirati women, there can be a conflict of values and custom. In modernising organisations Emirati women are required to mediate between cultures in order to create leadership roles that are consistent with Emirati culture and Islam, while at the same time meeting the needs of organisations with non-Muslim Westerners in senior positions. In these contexts, creating a leadership identity is difficult.

Comparisons of the advances of women in a country such as the UAE with that of other countries, particularly Western countries, must take into consideration differences of religion, culture, social institutions, and conceptions that women themselves hold. Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah, and Al-Mutawa (2006) raise a fundamental question about development and globalisation in the Gulf region that relates to issues of post-colonial critiques, recolonisation, and intellectual imperialism. They contend that the strong cultural and religious values and patterns of life have created a distinctive form of globalisation, that is, the market forces and societal and cultural norms that it brings with it, 'cushions' indigenous society from many of its effects, although Westernising pressures still exist. Dubai in particular they cite is a world leader in many economic fields. The role and values of kin, religious values, traditional leadership roles, and a different mode of capitalism has reshaped many of the foreign influences. For example, in the UAE in particular, capital has been used for infrastructure building and the benefit of citizens.

In relation to Emirati women moving into leadership positions, there are a number of critiques that pertain particularly to the UAE. One is national identity formation (Alsharekh and Springborg 2008), another is negotiating a form of internationalised higher education that incorporates Islamic values and Islamic intellectual, legal, and administrative traditions (Bennett 2010; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah, and Al-Mutawa 2006; Moghadam 1994). Yet another approach that is relevant, given the way that Emirati women posit the roles they are constructing, is Anderson's (1991) model of 'imagined communities', which examines how 'nation' is a constructed concept through actual and imagined shared experience of its members, shaping and shaped by its political and cultural institutions. In this case, opposition to colonial powers often ensures that the identity constructed is separate from that of other nations. Said (1993) criticises Anderson's representation of institutions as being too linear, and Chatterjee (1993) views Anderson's model as limited by its exclusion of the diversity of other nations. However, the model can be extended, that is indigenised, into non-Western settings and made more permeable to the differences of culture, religion, and social institutions. Chatterjee (1993) argues that colonisation limits imagination, a major problem of globalised, imported education. However, a counter-imagining through indigenised curriculum and other authentic nation-building processes is achievable, and, it could be argued, necessary for Emirati women who have to construct leadership roles that preserve Islamic and cultural values.

Related to this limited imagining is the polarised view of tradition versus modernisation, which regards tradition as a barrier, a hindrance. To become legitimate states do not necessarily have to follow a trajectory towards the 'Westphalian' state model and economic system that dominates in the West, as if this were a necessary historical norm (Ilias 2011; Ramakrishnan and Ilias 2011). Neither does Emirati women's

success in leadership roles need to be evaluated by Western standards. An underlying assumption in such an evaluation is that living a traditional life is somehow not meaningful or fulfilling, a view that Berman (1981) brought into question in his *Disenchantment of the World*, which was influenced by Weber's 'iron cage' critique in finding that differentiated modern societies lacked many of the meaningful characteristics of integrated societies.

What does this mean for the development of educational curriculum that will support Emirati women in achieving a culturally authentic leadership in higher education? First, it cannot be dominated by Western (mostly USA, UK, and Australian) material to the degree it is, nor can it assume that Western scholarship is virtually the exclusive source of knowledge, problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, and communication skills. It is problematic also in its high degree of individualism and secularism, which excludes Islamic and cultural values that inform the social bonds, structures, and practices that binds the society (e.g. Maestri 2011). Much more work needs to be done to indigenise the curriculum in order to support institution building that is appropriate to an Arab Muslim state, while combining this with a broader international literature. This requires the use of the rich Islamic intellectual tradition, which to a large extent forms the foundation for the Western tradition (see e.g. Morgan 2007; Saliba 2011), and Shari'a, which is the constitutionally preferred legal tradition, and of studies and material from the region.

Even the research methods usually taught in developing countries can be problematic, or, in the case of behaviourist-informed positivistic methods diametrically opposed to Islamic conceptions of the human being. Research informs the very nature of social institution building and the leadership roles that guide them (e.g. Chilisa 2011; Kovach 2010; Moore-Gilbert 2009; Reagan 2005; Smith 2012; Walter and Andersen 2013). There is a recent development of indigenised research methods that are suitable to both non-Western and some Western contexts that should be promoted.

Given the discursive nature of this article, it ends on an experiential note. One measure of women's attainment in higher education, particularly for those moving into academic leadership positions where graduate degrees, conferences, and publications matter, is the opportunity for women to travel. I have accompanied several groups of Emirati, and other Arab Muslim, women to international conferences and guest lectures in the West. In all cases, we were accompanied by a husband, young brother, and/or nephew, sometimes by several male family members. Far from dominating women on these trips, the men act as supporters and take care of mundane travel chores, which allow the women to concentrate on finalising their presentation work, on networking, and on the important social and intellectual community, thus exercising their skills and knowledge in developing academic leadership roles. I have observed several families over five years become accustomed to what for them is a wholly new experience. In many families in the UAE and in the Gulf, the first family members to achieve higher education are women. Once they are assured that their wives and daughters are safe, that the experiences are constructive, and that they can retain important cultural and religious values while doing so, the families, particularly the fathers and older brothers have often become even more supportive of advanced academic achievement, as Al Rasbi (2012) also found in her research. The measure of foreigners is their degree of sensitivity to the need of traditional societies to evolve at a pace that does not have adverse effects on their culture, communities, and society. In many contexts they can provide the values, the formative experiences,

and identity development that give women strength, empowerment, and constructive ways in leading their educational organisations.

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