RESTRICTED FREEDOM

DEPRESSIVE EXPERIENCES AND GENDER IDENTITIES

AMONG FEMALE PALESTINIAN ADOLESCENT REFUGEES
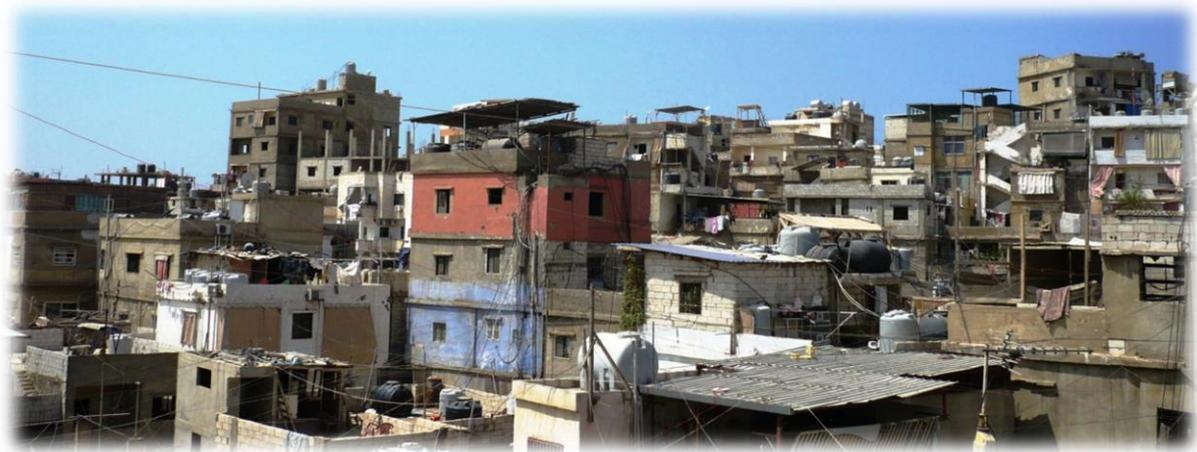
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide a complementary understanding to depression among female adolescent refugees through facilitating a feminist social constructionist approach emphasizing the girls' own subjective experiences and understandings. The research questions dealt with how female adolescent refugees understand the discourses of femininity in their specific context and how they feel and act in regards of these discourses, what meaning female adolescent refugees put into their depressive experiences, how they make sense of these experiences, under what circumstances they are living and how they think these influence their well-being. The study took place in the Palestinian refugee camp Bourj al Barajneh in Lebanon. The main methods were conversation groups and interviews. These were complemented with focus groups and a document review. The main results were that the girls in the study were well aware of the discourses of femininity in their context and that these discourses limited their life choices. While some girls learnt the lesson of gender well, others had depressive experiences trying to live up to the standards of an ideal woman. The social and material circumstances under which they are living helped to reinforce these standards, further restricting their freedom.

Key words: depression, gender, adolescence, Palestinian refugees, refugee camp

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

Children and adolescents make up nearly half of the world's 10.5 million refugees. Many of these millions of young refugees suffer from psychological problems such as depression (UNHRC 2009:2, 7; WHO 1996:1). Although much research available today hypothesizes that traumatic war experiences cause depression within this group, many studies have time and again pointed out that the main villain of depression seems to be recent life events and/or perceived discrimination. Interestingly enough, even though research indicates that adolescent girls usually turn out to have more symptoms of depression than their male peers, and there are indications of a similar pattern among *refugee* adolescents, hardly any studies have attempted to explain why there is a higher vulnerability to depression among young female refugees (WHO 2002:1). Moreover, the published studies exclude almost 84% of the world's refugees as they concern refugees resettled in high-income countries, while the majority of refugees remain close to their homes (UNHCR 2009:7). Taking note of these issues it is possible that female refugee adolescents have experiences in their everyday lives that make them more susceptible to depression than young male refugees. This study therefore attempts to provide a new angle to the current explanations of depression by using a feminist social constructionist approach developed by Janet M. Stoppard (2000).

Stoppard's approach deals with how adolescent girls in their efforts of negotiating an identity for themselves are influenced by socially and culturally produced tenets of how a good woman should be and their own subjective embodied experiences. The discourses of femininity regulating activities and behavior of female adolescents in their specific context, their understanding and experiences of depression, as well as the material circumstances influencing girls' possibilities, are investigated through participatory qualitative research methods, with a main focus on empowering techniques. The study itself takes place in the Palestinian refugee camp Bourj al Barajneh located in the southern outskirts of Lebanon's capital Beirut, a place characterized by tough living conditions, lack of rights, and a strong faith in Islam.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to investigate whether a feminist social constructionist approach can be applicable to female refugee adolescents, so as to be able to provide a complementary

understanding of the underlying reasons of depression within this particular group. Following a social constructionist stance means that the study aims to describe and understand the everyday lives of female adolescent refugees by using their own subjective experiences, reflections and understandings. The questions the study seeks to answer are the following:

1. How do female adolescent refugees understand the discourses of femininity in their given context, and how do they act and feel in respect of these discourses?
2. What meaning do female adolescent refugees put into their depressive experiences, and how do they make sense of these?
3. Under what circumstances are female adolescent refugees living, and how do they think these circumstances affect their well being?

By moving away from conventional explanations and using a different angle to the problem new lessons can be learnt. By taking girls' own subjective experiences into account, and investigating the characteristics of their everyday lives that distinguish them from their male peers, this approach might give an idea of why young female refugees more often have depressive experiences.

In order to put this study into context the paper starts off with a background as well as a literature review. It then presents the backbone of the study; the feminist social constructionist approach, before describing the different methods used to collect data. The core of the paper is thereafter the analytical chapter where the girls' stories are presented and analyzed, ending with the study's conclusion.

2. Background

In 1947 a civil war broke out between Jews and Palestinian Arabs following the partition of Palestine. It was followed by an international war between the newly created state of Israel and the neighboring Arab nations, ending in favor of Israel by the end of 1948 (Harms & Ferry 2008:90-3). The two wars caused the refuge of approximately 700,000 Palestinians into the Arabic part of Palestine or to the neighboring Arab countries, out of which 100,000 fled to Lebanon (Hanafi 2008:85; Harms & Ferry 2008:99).

Today 62 years have passed and the Palestinians in Lebanon have increased to approximately 422,000 (Hanafi 2008:85; UNRWA(a) N.d.). With no prospects to return, the Palestinian

refugees have not found peace or stability in their land of refuge either, instead they have endured a pro-longed civil war, Israeli invasions, and clashes between the Shiite extremist organization Hezbollah and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LFA) (Harms & Ferry 2008; Talbot & Harriman 2008:33-34; BBC 2010). The involvement of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in both the civil war and the Israeli-Lebanese war in the 1980s has led to distrust between the two population groups, and subsequently the Lebanese strongly oppose any permanent resettlement strategies of Palestinians in Lebanon (Hanafi 2008:87).

This study has been limited to the Palestinian refugee camp Bourj al Barajneh. The camp is today one of the largest refugee camps in Lebanon with around 20,000 inhabitants – 16,066 of these are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (UNRWA 2009). In connection to the camp there are seven schools and one hospital. Since Palestinian refugees are stateless they have no possibility of claiming the same rights allowing other foreigners to own property and work in Lebanon. Lacking social and civil rights, Palestinians have limited access to the Lebanese health and education system. Until last year Palestinians were also prohibited from working in more than 70 professions. This number was decreased to 20, albeit no actual changes have been experienced so far. The lack of rights leaves the majority highly dependent on the services provided by UNRWA and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Hanafi 2008:88, 97; UNRWA 2009, UNRWA(a) N.d.).

Being only one square kilometer, Bourj al Barajneh is the most overpopulated camp around Beirut. The residents suffer from many environmental problems, such as hazardous building constructions, narrow alleys with little or no natural light and regular flooding during the winter due to an inadequate sewage system (Hanafi 2008:84; UNRWA(c) N.d.). Since 1969 when the Palestinians through the Cairo Agreement secured the control over the camps they have functioned as states-within-the state. In Bourj al Barajneh this has led to a power vacuum, where two popular committees struggle for political power (Hanafi 2008:86). While these two committees have made it their responsibility to maintain a secure camp environment and to assure the provision of electricity and water, their lack of commitment and resources has resulted in failure on both accounts.

Recently, conservative interpretations of Islam have taken a strong grip over the camp. This is partly a result of an increasing number of conservative extremist groups using the camp as basis for their activities (Hanafi 2008:95). These influences have been reported to lead to more young girls wearing *hijab*[1] but also an increased work load for women due to the obligations and traditions they should follow as Muslim women (Mahmoud 2009:14, 26).

3. Literature Review

While depression among adolescents is a commonly researched and published topic providing thousands of hits in electronic databases it seems nearly impossible to find any information regarding *female refugees*. Critically reviewing the available research outlines shortcomings beyond gender, including facilitated methods and theories, as well as research context.

Most commonly studies concerning depression among adolescent refugees use various forms of questionnaires designed to assess depressive experiences through a number of indicators deemed by clinical researchers or psychologists to be symptoms of depression, anxiety or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Felsman et al. 1990; Liebkind 1993; Montgomery 2008; Sack et al. 1996; Slodnjak et al. 2002; Stoppard 2000:10). However, what these questionnaires measure are not the subjective depressive experiences of an individual person, but this person's *depressive symptoms* as judged by a researcher. Whether this person actually *feels* depressed or the reason behind this person's depression is not sufficiently explained.

These studies belong to a scientific tradition referred by Stoppard (2004:14-15) as "scientific" or "mainstream". This tradition regards knowledge of the social world as acceptable only if it is collected through the same principles as the natural sciences. It attempts to establish causal relationships which have general applicability (Bryman 2008:13). Although it could give indications of how common depressive symptoms are, it does not provide knowledge on subjective experiences, or how the socio-cultural context influences these.

Theories guiding research in this area rarely go beyond explanations based on traumatic and/or stressful life events caused by war and/or resettlement. Consequently most studies on adolescent refugees deal with the occurrence and causes of PTSD – although it has been pointed out that a few years after resettlement it is more likely that perceived discrimination

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[1] A veil covering the hair but not the face.

or stressful events cause depression. For instance, Slodnjak et al. (2002) acknowledge that traumatic experiences before resettling do not necessarily lead to depression in later stages of the adolescent's life. Ellis et al. (2008) notes that the strongest predictor for depression was perceived discrimination in the new place of residence, and Sack et al. (1996) found that the strongest relation found with depression was recently experienced stressful events.

A few studies attempt to address other causes of depression, for instance Slodnjak et al. (2002) pointed out that the socio-cultural context must be taken into account, however without going into any further depth with their reasoning. Liebkind (1993) found in her study on Vietnamese adolescent refugees in Finland that the level of depression increased with the length of stay. Liebkind believed the process of finding and defining an identity in combination with a sense of rootlessness increased the risk of depression. Finally, Montgomery (2008) found that the strongest predictor for depression among Middle Eastern adolescents resettled in Denmark was social factors.

None of the studies reviewed, except Liebkind (1993), pay any attention to gender. The only distinction made is between the biological sexes, and although the results indicate higher levels of depression among females, these differences are not explored any further (Slodnjak et al. 2002; Montgomery 2008). Liebkind (1993) suggests that the level of depression among female refugees is higher because they become more vulnerable when traditional norms conflict with norms in the place of resettlement.

Lastly, the majority of studies are conducted with refugees who have resettled in high income countries. Only one study dealt with depression in the context of a refugee camp; however the respondents were currently in the transition phase to resettle to the USA (Felsman et al. 1990). As 84 percent of the world's refugees remain close to their home countries the current studies only represent a minority of refugee adolescents worldwide (UNHCR 2009:7).

4. Analytical Approach and Methodology

This chapter outlines the analytical approach present in all steps of the research process; from formulating the study's research questions, to systematizing the data collection, and anchoring the data within an analytical framework. As the approach is an inevitable part of the methodology, some methodological remarks are made in the end of the chapter.

4.1 A Feminist Social Constructionist Approach

Two major shortcomings of the current literature on adolescent refugees' depressive experiences are the void of subjective everyday life experiences and explanations taking gendered characteristics into account. Stoppard, a Professor in Psychology with roots in critical psychology grounding her work in feminist values, offers an approach which emphasizes how discourses of femininity influence the subjective and embodied experiences of women in their everyday lives (Stoppard 2000:205-7). Although Stoppard's primary focus is women in high income countries, her overall idea of how to approach depression among females could prove beneficial in other contexts as well; it is not the specific cases highlighted by Stoppard, but the approach itself that is of main interest (ibid.:3).

A terminological note should be made in regards of the concept 'gender'. Gender is a social construction; being a woman or man encompasses certain culturally influenced sets of beliefs of how to look, behave and dress, as well as what activities they are expected to engage in on an everyday basis (Stoppard 2000:17, 103). Gender is an effect of different forms of actions, as opposed to the cause of these. Gender must therefore be constantly repeated and recreated (Ambjörnsson 2008:12-3).

The essence of the social constructionist approach is its view of knowledge and meaning as constructed in language and through social interaction (Stoppard 2004:37). This implicates that people's knowledge about themselves, their ideas of how to manage their everyday lives, and the options and opportunities they regard as available to them, are created through social interaction (ibid.:103-4). The meaning people put into their experiences, and how they make sense of these, including their depressive experiences, are shaped by interpersonal interactions within a specific socio-cultural context (ibid.:38).

Using a social constructionist approach includes acknowledging that human values and socio-cultural influences play a vital role in prestructuring and shaping all knowledge. This implies that the discourses in a society are implicitly facilitated by the values and socio-cultural context in which they are established. For instance, the symbolic aspects of gender within a discursive domain outline what is considered as feminine and masculine within a particular society (Stoppard 2000:16-8).

Lastly, it is important to bear in mind that people not always reflect upon or question the understanding or preconceptions they have, as Stoppard (2000:104) puts it, "ideas absorbed in the context of social interactions are not necessarily transmitted in an explicit manner but are often taken for granted, forming an implicit cultural backdrop to information circulating within society."

Adding feminist values to a social constructionist approach entails a focus on women's accounts, viewed as having validity in their own right. Using this perspective enables the researcher to explore *subjectivity*, which includes a woman's identity/sense of self, her understanding and explanation of depression and her own depressive experiences. Having a focus on women's verbal accounts allows the discourses shaping women's lives in a particular socio-cultural context to be explored (Stoppard 2000:37-9).

Up until now "discourses of femininity" has been mentioned without any explanation of what the term includes. Stoppard (2000:23) uses the term as sets of culturally shared beliefs and practices constructing the meaning of 'woman'. For the sake of simplification discourses of femininity is here divided into two main components; 'to be' and 'appearance'.

The first component, 'to be', concerns how a woman is expected to behave, and what activities she should engage in to be considered a 'good woman'. These discursively constructed tenets of how a good woman should be like regulate and shape women's lives. They function as invisible, yet culturally understood, standards against which women are measured and also measure themselves in terms of their own individual efforts to live up to the standards of a 'good woman' (Stoppard 2000:107, 92).

'Appearance' on the other hand deals with how women enact femininity in the way they dress, use make-up, and attempt to control their body shape according to cultural standards of what signifies the ideal female body. The physical body is thus both naturally and culturally produced (Stoppard 2000:104, 91).

Through this process of enacting femininity, a woman's body and self is transformed, creating an *embodied self* who willingly engages in practices of the good woman, and she will most probably feel good about it too (Stoppard 2000:107). However, the capacities women have to

perform these practices are limited by their physical body and social and material circumstances under which they are living (ibid.:92, 106-7). Facing the limitations set by body and material conditions can under certain conditions generate perceptions of inability, provoking feelings of demoralization, hopelessness, powerlessness, self-disgust and self-blame (ibid.:107-9). Following this, there is a close link between the physical body of women and the cultural guidelines of femininity reflected within language and through social interaction. Depression is an embodied experience, being both physical and psychological, and therefore women's bodies cannot be neglected when discussing depression (ibid.:13).

Keeping in mind the essential basics of the feminist social constructionist approach, Stoppard adds components specific to adolescents. Central to a social constructionist perspective is the impact on adolescent girls' subjectivity and identity by cultural representations of adolescents. How adolescents are viewed in a particular socio-cultural context is constructed and produced socially through adults' interaction and dealing with adolescents, and through media's portrays of adolescents. These representations differ depending on whether a female or male adolescent is in focus (Stoppard 2000:114ff).

These culturally shared ideas of adolescent girls play a vital part in forming their identities. Through media and social interaction with parents, other adults and peers adolescent girls start formulating questions and answers of whom they are now, and who they want to become (Stoppard 2000:114-6). The interpersonal interaction functions as a way to "/…/reinforce and maintain idealized images of adolescent girls as younger versions of the "good woman"/…/" (ibid.:114).

The limited set of identity positions that young women regard as available to them are constrained by the material circumstances under which they are living, such as their social class, income level of parents, residing area and school, and also their embodied experiences, particularly in regards of puberty (Stoppard 2000:117). This means that the identity a female adolescent negotiates for herself is not only tied to the cultural discourses within her specific socio-cultural context, but also to her physical appearance and bodily self (ibid.:133).

When adolescent girls start undergoing the changes of puberty, such as menarche and the development of breasts, their own reactions and understanding of what is happening to them –

as well as the reactions of people in their surrounding – are shaped by the discourses constructed around the female body within that particular socio-cultural context. The physical body is thereby a means of expressing culture (Stoppard 2000:125).

In short, adolescence is when young women learn "the lessons of gender" (Stoppard 2000:133). Many girls learn this lesson well, and negotiate a sense of self which is both viable and valued, however at times full of contradictions. Those girls who attempt to resist the discourses of femininity might find themselves put down and humiliated by their peers, and if lacking counterpoints to this treatment, young women are prone to diminish themselves (ibid.:118, 135).

4.2 Methodological Remarks

The ontological and epistemological stances guiding this study are social constructionism and phenomenology. While social constructionism is presented above, the focal point of phenomenology is human behavior; how individuals experience and interpret the world around them (Bryman 2008:15-6). In this study phenomenology involves describing female adolescent refugees' subjective experiences and interpretations and facilitating a systematical method of data analysis which emphasize the respondents' verbal accounts.

These ways of viewing and understanding the world have implication for the objectivity of the study. As in most social research, the personal values of the researcher highly influence the study and an objective and value-free approach is not a goal (Bryman 2008:24; Stoppard 2000:15). This implies that although the methods used in this study are chosen because of their advantages in depicting social interaction and subjective views of the respondents, the research process has been shaped entirely by the personal values and believes of the researcher. Hence, while this study to a large extent tries to retell the stories of these girls, the interpretation of their words and reasoning entirely rests with the researcher.

Taking on a social constructionist stance also means that the knowledge gained can only be viewed as partial and contingent (Stoppard 2000:16). For this reason it is important to avoid overgeneralization of the results and to acknowledge the importance of taking the specific context into account when collecting and analyzing data (ibid.:39-40).

Considering this, both the analytical approach and methods facilitated put great emphasis in the importance of social interaction and socio-cultural context. This is primarily done by exploring subjectivity through taking note on girls' own accounts. It is essential that the girls are given their own voice and as much as possible depict *their* stories. At the same time it is worth noting that since social interaction shapes individuals' sense of selves, and individual experiences and interpretations cannot be interpreted in a social vacuum, the girls' stories are complemented with the views and understandings of others in their surroundings.

4.3 Operationalization

As the analytical approach has permeated the different steps of the research process the operationalization involves the entire process as well. To begin with, as the study's purpose is to see whether a feminist social constructionist approach could be useful, the research questions have been drawn from three essential parts of this approach; discourses of femininity (including both 'to be' and 'appearance'), living conditions (material circumstances), and how young female refugees understand and make sense of their depressive experiences. These subjects return in the end of the study when they serve as organizing principle and analyzing tool throughout the analysis.

The next step of the research process, the data collection, was systematized through breaking down Stoppard's approach into five concrete themes; home and around, images of youth, identity, beauty ideals, and the future. Discussing these themes in groups, and individually, made possible an understanding of these girls' subjective and embodied experiences as influenced by discourses of femininity within their socio-cultural context.

The data collected has been systematically analyzed with the help of meaning condensation (see chapter 5.5). This was done in order to make sure the subjective accounts of the respondents were extracted without putting too much of my own preconceptions into the data at an early stage. The girls' stories were complemented with secondary sources so as to get a more comprehensive picture. Finally, the data has been analyzed in the light of the analytical approach. The operationalization is presented below:

Figure 1. Operationalization of Research Process.
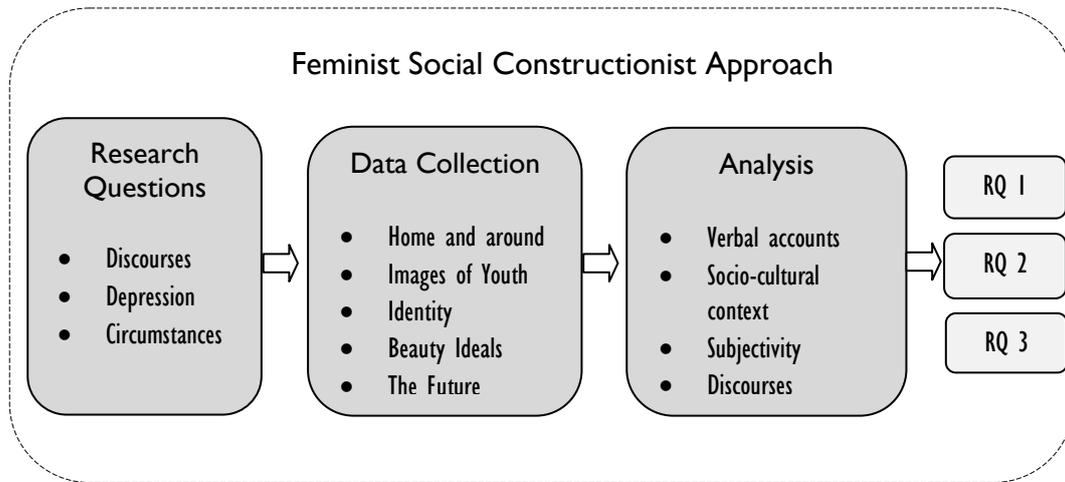
5. Data Collection

The data collection took place in Bourj al Barajneh between August and December 2009. The methods used to collect data were of qualitative character and consisted mainly of conversation groups and interviews. The results from these were complemented with focus groups with mothers and male adolescents as well as a document review of literature dealing with aspects pertaining to the study. This was a way of triangulating data in order to verify the reasonability of each respondent's story, but also a way to provide a more comprehensive picture of their lives (Silverman 2005:121). Further, these methods proved to be an appropriate way of obtaining individual experiences and feelings as well as depicting cultural norms (Lloyd-Evans 2006:154-5, Mack et al. 2005:2, 30).

Common for all methods is that they address the five themes operationalized from Stoppard's approach: home and around, images of youth, identity, beauty ideals, and the future. These have been used to facilitate the structure of the data collection. The methods of concern are described below.

5.1 Conversation and Focus Groups

Children and youth are meaningful actors perfectly capable of speaking their own voice (Scheyvens et al. 2003:173). However, previous research has mostly been conducted "*with* adults *about* children" (Van Blerk 2006:52). Therefore it is of great importance to include children in the research process in an appropriate way. In order to make a mutually beneficial data collection the project 'Aisha' was created. Being based on a youth project called 'Ellen'

created by Save the Children Sweden, Aisha consisted of techniques developed to empower its participants. The project consisted of three conversation groups with 4-8 girls per group between 12 and 15 years old. They met two hours per week for seven weeks to discuss topics relating to their everyday life, under the supervision of two group leaders. One of the group leaders took elaborate notes during the sessions, which were compiled throughout the study. The participants were recruited using quota sampling, meaning that the number of participants with specific characteristics was decided when the study design was outlined (Mack et al. 2005:5).

Beyond the three conversation groups, two focus groups were conducted with mothers of teenagers and one focus group with male adolescents aged 16 and 17 (See Appendix III for interview guide). Quota sampling was used in this case as well, setting the number of respondents to eight per group. The data collected by these respondents has functioned as verification of the girls' experiences and is therefore not presented except when adding surplus value.

5.2 Interviews

It was hard to make interviews as equally beneficial as the conversation groups. However they provided an opportunity for the respondents to raise their voices and be heard (Scheyvens & Leslie 2000:120).

Throughout the course of the study 12 girls aged 12-17 were interviewed (See Appendix I for list of interviews). They were sampled through snowball sampling. The idea is to make contact with a small group of people and use their social network in order to get into touch with relevant respondents (Bryman 2008:184). In this case staff within the host organization, as well as the translator/assistant used their social networks. Before conducting the interview the teenagers' parents or guardians gave their approval of the interview. Informed consent including confidentiality was also collected by the respondents before commencing every interview.

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that an interview guide was created outlining the topics each interview would cover (see Appendix II) (Bryman 2008:438). In this case the interview guide was re-elaborated after completing half of the interviews planned, in order to

extract more information on certain topics which previous interviews did not cover sufficiently.

5.4 Gatekeepers and Special Considerations

Because of this study's topic and young target group, the use of gatekeepers was essential. The gatekeepers, three local NGOs in the camp, were used to get into touch with respondents and their premises were facilitated to carry out most of the work. As Willis (2006:147) points out, using a gatekeeper in this way may be problematic, since it might influence the research process unintentionally. On the other hand, without the help of these organizations a study of this magnitude would not have been possible, as the society, in general, is very protective of their teenage daughters. To avoid problems group leaders with no direct association to the organizations were used, the importance of privacy and confidentiality was stressed, and when in contact with parents and respondents it was stressed that the study was independent.

Other considerations were the topics brought up during the interviews and the anonymity of the respondents. The interview guide was initially approved by a trusted member of the host organization to avoid putting any of the respondents at risk because of culturally sensitive questions.

Since the camp is a small community all respondents have been given fictive names and their ages are not included. Other information that is revealed has been deemed so general that it could include a wider scope of people and therefore minimalizes the risk of exposure.

5.5 Meaning Condensation

To facilitate the systematical analysis of data a method called *meaning condensation* has been used. The analysis of verbal accounts is done through five steps; (1) the whole interview is read through, (2) what is termed as 'the natural meaning units' are extracted from the interview, and put into the left hand column of a table, (3) the dominating themes in the meaning units are stated as simply as possible and put into the right hand column of the table, (4) the researcher goes back to the meaning units and interrogates them in regards of the specific research questions of the study, and (5) a descriptive statement is written using the non-redundant themes that have been extracted (Kvale 1996:193).

It is essential that the researcher throughout these five steps tries to read the interview without prejudices and attempts to thematize from the respondent's viewpoint. These descriptive texts can be further discussed in the light of other theories or approaches (Kvale 1996: 194).

6. Analysis

Adolescence is when young women learn the lesson of gender, and while some do it well others despair in their attempts to fit in (Pipher 1994:135; Stoppard 2000:135). The following chapter is the core of this study; here the three research questions dealing with discourses of femininity, depression and living conditions are answered.

6.1 Discourses of Femininity

The first sub chapter deals with the discourses of femininity present in the camp. Included in these discourses are both behavior and appearance. The behavior and activities against which girls are measured (and measure themselves) are outlined in the following section, while the ways girls enact femininity appearance-wise are described in the section after.

6.1.1 To Be

When entering adolescence the process of creating an identity does not only involve existential questions of who one is, and who one wants to become, but also what one can do to please others (Pipher 1994:22; Stoppard 2000:116.) How girls behave in their everyday lives are dependent on what they learn is appropriate through their interaction with others (Stoppard 2000:114, 107).

What was evident early on in the data collection was how almost every girl explained appropriate behavior for a girl by explaining how she *should not* behave. A good girl does not talk with boys, she does not lie, she does not laugh loudly – the list of "don'ts" could easily be made longer. In this context the discourses regulating girls' lives are mostly defined through what she does not do, as opposed to what she actually does. Although some of the girls mentioned with gratefulness how their mothers advised them, many girls seemed to censor their 'true selves'[2] to avoid becoming a victim of the complex regulations surrounding girls' behavior.

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[2] Pipher (1994:36) distinguishes between girls' 'true' and 'false' self. Where the false self is the personality girls develop to fit into the society.

> She doesn't say bad words for Allah, doesn't do anything bad. She doesn't go to bad places, such as bars and discos. She doesn't smoke cigarettes. ~ Ghanima

Sayigh's (1998:174) explains how females in Palestinian refugee camps are expected to know what is *halal* (permitted) and *haram* (forbidden, wrong). Hence, ideas of femininity are not always conveyed in an explicit manner, but could function as implicit cultural backdrops within society (Stoppard 2004:14). This means that girls who find themselves caught up in the web of adolescent rules, unsure of how to play the game correctly, chose to be safe rather than sorry and create 'false' selves. Many girls explained feeling good about themselves when praised for good behavior (ibid.:17).

> They say I'm good, a good girl. I feel so happy when they tell me this. ~ Dhalia

The behavior the girls explained to be appropriate were all based on the idea of respecting others and oneself. A girl who does not respect herself or others cannot expect to be respected in return. These believes are context and value specific and are not specifically mentioned by Stoppard who operates within a society emphasizing individual satisfaction (Pipher 1994:88-9; Stoppard 2000:18). The most common behavior mentioned as part of being well mannered were connected to how girls talked, walked, listened to and treated their family members. As girls they should talk in a low voice, avoid using bad words and lie, and not laugh loudly (or at all) in public. Walking included avoiding looking arrogant, or paying too much attention to young men in the streets. The qualities girls should have were often connected to passive behavior, such as being shy, polite and kind, but also other-oriented as they should be understandable, respectable and helpful (Girls in conversation groups; Pipher 1994:257). These ideas were constantly reinforced in the way the girls measured themselves and their peers against these characteristics (Stoppard 2000:135, 92).

> The bad girl is known from her actions, how she walks in the street, her movements. ~ Haifa

> She acts in home nice and in school also nice and on the street also nice and what we mean by nice like in a polite way not in a bad behavior. ~ Janine and Haneen

To listen to and obey their parents were also vital, not only to gain trust from them, but also to show the society that their parents raised them well. All girls in the conversation groups believed their parents knew what was best for them. They decided which friends were suitable

and gave the girls permission to leave the house. In life decisions, such as whom to marry the girls' parents also had great influence. While many of the girls conformed or agreed to their parents' decisions, there were girls who felt suffocated. A few girls claimed they would marry whomever they loved, while others admitted seeing 'bad' friends. Despite some girls' disagreement, it would probably not occur to the majority of them that they could revolt against their parents in a more explicit manner, something which might be expected by adolescents in other contexts. But it does show how growing up in a particular society can influence the directions of how girls create a sense of self (Stoppard 2000:117). The girls did not experience that they had choices other than following their parents' decisions, and even though not all of them conformed they made sure their surroundings thought they did.

> If my parents give me one thing about him that he is not good then I will change my mind. ~ Ikram

> […] Because if I love this person and he has a bad reputation then my parents will say no, but I keep fighting until they except. ~ H.A.

> They all control her life. They have to approve who she goes out with, if they didn't approve she can't go out with them. Sometimes my friend tells her mom she is coming here and then she goes to hang out with her friends. Sometimes I have to lie when her mom calls me and I say she just left five minutes ago and then I send her a message. ~ Samar

> Everyone expect from us to be as they want us to be, to obey them in everything. They don't know that we need our privacy [and] a little space away from them. All what they think of us, that we don't know right from the wrong (…), we have mind to think but they don't let us use it because they want us to be as a doll (…). ~ Girls in conversation group

Other issues that came up was that the girls should come home on time (or stay at home), avoid boys and bad things and deserve the trust given to them.

In other studies dealing with Palestinian youth in refugee camps it has been mentioned that parents are more strict towards their daughters, that girls face more discrimination from their surrounding, and face restricted movement and freedom of expression (Chatty & Hundt 2001:22, 28; Serhan & Tabari 2005:47). In this study the girls also recognized how their parents treated them differently from male siblings, and some girls envied their brothers because they enjoyed more freedom. Other girls simply found boys to be troublemakers. From the conversation and focus groups it became evident how girls in the camp face other

expectations than boys; expectations demanding more efforts from the girls. For instance, the behavior outlined above was not expected from boys. These aspects of gender distinguish between what is considered as feminine and masculine in this context (Stoppard 2000:18).

> My brother's dream begins in the morning and ends at night, and is there when he wakes up. ~ H.A

> [I would have chosen to be a] boy, because the boy has the freedom to do whatever he wants. ~ Wissam

The girls' restricted freedom of movement was not only a way of social control, but parents were worried something bad would happen to them outside the home. The mothers in the focus groups explained how they feared their daughters would meet a drug addict, be sexually harassed or even raped. This comes back to the issue of material circumstances limiting women's lives but in a rather different way; here the material circumstances work to further reinforce the discourse that women belong inside the home (Stoppard 2000:106-7; 92).

> (…) Sexual harassment from adults to children, raping, because of drugs in the camp you fear to let your daughter go outside the house. ~ Zeinab (mother of 4)

Resisting the discourses of femininity could lead to humiliation and bullying from peers, something which those who deviate from the outlined gender roles quickly learn (Stoppard 2000:135). In this case it was not only peers who took on the role as gender police, but the entire society. All girls in the study conformed to the behavior expected of them, knowing that they otherwise would face harsh repercussions. Gossip was in this way a form of societal control, where girls have to avoid being the talk of the day to keep their dignity. The responsibility to keep away from rumors was placed solely on the girls.

> I control myself: I go away from bad things. ~ Haya

Things that would cause gossip were disrespect, carelessness, irresponsibility, making mistakes, having a boyfriend, or seeing bad friends. The girls stressed the importance of being careful in the way they portrayed themselves and while the girls themselves reinforce these rules by despising girls deviating from the proper behavior, some secretly revolt against the regulations through, for instance, having secret boyfriends. Nevertheless after a while it

became apparent that one can do whatever one wants *as long as no one finds out*. However, to always run the risk of being discovered becomes stressful for those girls who dare breaking the rules.

> [To have a secret boyfriend shows a] pathetic mind (…) because the truth is going to reveal itself.
> ~ Aya

In their study (2005:45) Serhan and Tabari noted how adolescent girls always feel watched, something which also seemed to be the case here. Sayigh (1998:168) explains how the surveillance of young women as well as the punishment of those who deviate has intensified during the Palestinians' time in exile. The efforts girls undertake to live up to the standards of the good woman have thereby also increased (Stoppard 2000:92).

Staying away from gossip is not only important to avoid social repercussions. The bottom line is that the girls at all times must protect their *sharaf* (honor). Without their honor intact they are considered unclean which could have disastrous consequences (Sayigh 1998:180). As honor is deeply connected to virginity and marriage this will be returned to later on.

> Sharaf…is the most important thing in me, because if it goes, I should die. ~ Haya
> It's dignity, it's something important we shouldn't lose. ~ Aya

The discourses of femininity also regulate what activities girls should engage in (Stoppard 2000:107). According to Chatty and Hundt (2001:28) and Serhan and Tabari (2005:48) adolescent girls spend much time in their houses with a heavy workload tending their homes. The daily activities of most girls in this study were attending school, doing homework at home or with a private teacher, performing house chores, and spending the evening watching TV. Below house chores and studying are further scrutinized.

House chores were considered women's work. The mothers in the focus groups explained how their daughters helped them in the home while their sons spent time playing or watching TV. Some girls expressed how the house work wore them out, but they could not ignore performing their duties. Many of the girls liked working at home, mainly because it made their mothers happy. Helping out in the home out of affection for their mothers might be a partial picture of the girls' continuous work despite feeling tired; it might also be that stopping

undermined their morale and sense of well-being and they therefore desired to ignore the limitations of their bodies (Stoppard 2000:92).

> My mom she washes the clothes and cook, me and my other sisters we clean the home, do dishes. I like this, I'm so happy doing this, because my mom gets happy when we're doing this. If I don't to this my mom will yell on me and I get upset. ~ Ghanima

Surprising was the obsession that women in the camp had for cleaning their homes; for instance many cleaned their floors every day. This 'obsession' was connected to portraying a good image to others. Visiting guests should not be given the chance to regard their homes as dirty, as this could reflect negatively on those living there – coming back to the issue of gossip and societal control.

> I think I make our home clean and always clean, because some people will come and say "you have a dirty home". ~ Halima

Moving on to studying, education is regarded as vital for all Palestinian children. Chatty and Hundt (2001:26) describes education as a mechanism for survival and resistance among Palestinians in the Middle East. This was the case in Bourj al Barajneh as well and consequently children and youth face pressure to succeed in school. While some girls in the study liked studying and put great pride in succeeding in school, many girls also expressed feeling stressed and anxious about school and how sad they became when failing.

> School is so important because it give us the way to accomplish things, to change our society, to be able to work on our land and the most important is to be strong and show people that we get educated with our poor materials and supply and that from this poor, dirty areas that some people are afraid to enter raise educated girls. ~ Girls in conversation groups

The girls are in this sense part of the national struggle for Palestine. Palestinian women have a long tradition of engaging in the nationalist struggle, for example through resistance, but also through continuing their housework and child-rearing as part of the struggle (Sayigh 2007:103-4). This national struggle continues today through the schooling of their girls, but also through more active resistance, such as participation in manifestations. The expectations of girls to do well in school for the sake of Palestine, but also for their own future chances, can be viewed in the light of Stoppard's approach. When the girls realize they are unable to

succeed they experience feelings of failure which can lead to self-blame and self-disgust (Stoppard 2000:109).

> When I get a low mark I get so sad. ~ Ghanima

Some girls brought up how pointless their education was as they were meant to become mothers anyhow. Being a woman in Bourj al Barajneh equaled being a mother. Not wanting children, or having children late, was not viewed in a preferable light. Many girls expressed how they wanted to get married and have children, while others mentioned university studies, travelling and working. No matter their preferences, it seemed most girls wanted to combine working and family life. They did not wish to spend all of their future lives inside their homes, so they try negotiating identities for themselves that both fit into the gender system and leave room for individuality. These future dreams are most probably a mix between the values they learn through social interaction with adults and the independent 'westernized' women they see in media (Stoppard 2000:115-7; Ugland 2003:243).

> We as girls are just for marriage. Our moms always tell us that your education won't benefit you and in the end you're going to hang those entire certificates over the sink. ~ Girls in conversation group.

> I think I will get engaged in the university if I find a suitable boyfriend, but after university I will marry. But I will work, I'd like to work. I don't want to stay at home. Eighteen years of studying to stay at home. ~ Samar

From the discussions with respondents and my observations I have come to compare the girls' process of growing up with two cones; the second cone turned upside down meeting the first at its top (see fig. 2). The bottom of the first cone represents the girls' childhood. This is a period when they involve in games and are not blamed for mistakes. As they become older the cone becomes narrower reflecting how the increased responsibilities, regulations and obligations restrict their freedom. As the strongest restrictions in the camp are for younger women the freedom increases somewhat when the girls get married (Ugland 2003:244). At the same time married women also need to answer to the discourses of femininity in the camp, and the longed after freedom the girls yearn for might not meet their expectations. Sayigh describes marriage as the primary institution of control over women as "marriage controls

women beforehand through the importance attached to virginity and afterwards through the responsibilities of childbearing [and] housework/…/" (Sayigh 1998:172).

Fig 2. Freedom of females in different life stages.
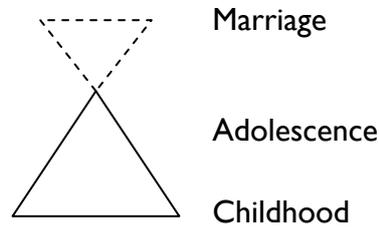
The decrease of freedom is thus deeply connected to girls' honor. Stoppard (2000:130) notes how adolescent girls' sexuality[3] and lives are limited according to "the unspoken dictates of a world shaped by future husbands." To remain virgin and to be responsible for controlling men's sexuality is even more relevant in the socio-cultural context of the girls in this study. At the same time Stoppard discusses how girls must struggle to be sexy but at the same time maintain the respect of their peers, which is not the case here as their sexuality should remain hidden until safely expressed behind the walls of a heterosexual monogamous marriage (Stoppard 2000:130-1).

6.1.2 Appearance

The other part of discourses of femininity deals with how girls enact femininity in the way they appear, but also how the discourses shape the understanding and reactions to the bodily changes they undergo as part of puberty (Stoppard 2000:104; 125).

Coming back to what was said previously, girls are expected to know what is considered as *halal* and *haram*. This does not only involve behavior but also appearance. In fact, a strong interconnection was found between behavior and beauty. Whenever the girls were asked to describe how a girl should look, it always came down to the importance of behaving appropriately. The way the girls should dress and look is thus closely connected to the way they should act in order to be seen as 'good girls' in the camp. Thereby the regulations surrounding girls' appearance are a way of social control. Herein lies the control of adolescent girls' bodies and the suppression of their incipient sexuality, but also the responsibility that is given to them to control sexual arousal in boys (Sayigh 1998:184; Stoppard 2000:130).

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[3] Sexuality here does not only include sexual intercourse but also looks, desire, feelings, social relations and gossip. The process of learning the lesson of gender is thereby connected to ideals, perceptions and actions connected to sexuality, most commonly heterosexuality (Ambjörnsson 2008: 13-4).

All girls in the study were so aware of the proper dress codes that they occasionally found questions regarding this as strange, depicting how strongly the prevalent discourses can regulate options and choices available (Stoppard 2000:103-4). The dress code included wearing covering, tidy and clean clothes. The mothers in the focus groups mentioned that girls should not wear 'sexy' clothes revealing backs and breasts, and that the appropriate length of a skirt was below the knees. However, most girls chose not to show any parts of their bodies except hands, feet and heads. Even in the middle of the hot and humid summer they wore trousers and long-sleeved shirts.

> In our society it is not accepted to wear short things. It's not because she wears hijab she's a good girl. ~ Maryam

> [A bad girl] she wears tight clothes, shows half of her breast, puts mascara, gloss, eyeliner. She's laughing in a high voice. ~ Halima

When it came to make-up the girls' views were scattered. Some found it okay, others not. Two girls mentioned how their brothers pressured them to avoid make-up because they could otherwise attract attention from boys, again coming back to the responsibility placed on girls to suppress their own sexuality and control boys' desires (Stoppard 2000:130-1).

> [A bad girl uses] bad words, wears not good clothes. She wears so much make up in order to let the boys look at her. Her arms, legs are shown for the public. ~ Ghanima

> My brother put a lot of pressure on me and he starts to shout and sometimes he begin to mock and says "so are you going to a party, what's next? Why don't you wear clothes that show your body, this is a better way to attract the boys more" ~ H.A

> I must put make-up so I won't feel depressed. Make-up makes me relieved (…) There are parents who do not accept make-up because the people will talk about you; not in your face but when you turn [your] back they will curse you and say everything bad about you. Also there are men who look at the girl as she's a bitch. But if I don't put make-up I feel that I am wrong, I really feel that there is a huge pressure on my chest and make-up makes that pressure go away. ~ Asraa

Some girls dismissed the entire idea of beauty ideals as they considered behavior and personality as far more important.

> I don't care about the outside, I care about the inside. Beauty is not everything ~ Haifa

> Not all people care for beauty but they care for manners more. ~ Girls in conversation group

In the end their way of dressing came down to avoid attracting negative attention and gossip. To look tidy and decent meant keeping their dignity and respect in the eyes of the society but also to themselves. At the same time the girls struggled with the conceptions of beauty put forward in media. Females shown in media have a less traditional style which confuses the beauty ideals the discourses in the camp teach them (Stoppard 2000:37). From observation girls dealt with this through either ignoring fashion trends, or choosing those compatible with the traditions in the camp. Hence, the girls in the camp learn the lessons of gender well, but these identities are at times full of contradictions as they try to fit into two opposite worlds (ibid.:118, 135).

> Wearing such clothes will not save us from the talking of the women in the camp before the boys, so we prefer to wear clothes that cover our bodies and not to wear clothes that show our bodies and be the talk of the month. Also living in the camp is not as easy as it seems sometimes our parents look at us before we go out of the house just to see if any part of our body is being shown. ~ Girls in conversation group

6.1.2.1 Body Shapes and Bodily Changes

Stoppard (2000:128ff) describes how the prevalent body ideal is to be thin and how young women attempt to control their body shapes accordingly. I believed to find a similar result in the camp. However, throughout the study many girls claimed to be uninterested in how their and other girls' bodies looked like. They explained that they were thankful that God created them the way they were and it was none of their business to judge others. This led me to believe that there were no distinct body ideals within the camp. However adding my own observations and experiences revealed a somewhat different picture.

Having a normal weight was something both women and adolescent girls were preoccupied with. I was complemented for being slender, while people joked about the 'bread baby' one of my Canadian friends had developed during her stay in the camp (meaning she had gained weight around her waist due to eating too much bread). People in general were straight forward in regards of commenting on other's gained or lost weight.

Some girls explained how their mothers advised them to lose weight. They appreciated the advices, believing they were for their own good. Hence, although people in the camp do pay attention to how people look, and some girls express how they would like to be slimmer, there is also space for girls to feel confident about the way they are looking – maybe as they notice that being 'good' has more to do with how one behave and appear to others than how much one weigh.

> She asks me to lose some weight. Because I use to have high weight, and go on a diet is good for the future. I'm happy when she tells me this because she wants for my benefit. ~ Ghanima

As dealt with before, puberty means that the girls leave their childhood behind. The bodily changes, as well as the beginning of menarche, caused mixed feelings among the girls (Stoppard 2000:127). Some girls expressed happiness because it meant they were growing up, others admitted to have felt shy and embarrassed and hid it from others. The reactions to menarche and development of breasts seem to have been connected to the girls' previous knowledge; those who already knew it was something normal felt comfortable, while those who felt strange became comfortable when they realized they were just as normal as everyone else.

> When my breasts started developing I tried to cover it. I wore big t-shirts not to show anyone, I was shy. When my first period came I got so upset. Many people said I was growing up, that she becomes a big girl because she has big breasts. ~ Haya

> I thought it was so normal. ~ Haifa

The reactions of others were strongly connected to the cultural symbolism of menarche as a girl's entry "into womanhood and the realm of the feminine" (Stoppard 2000:127). Most girls reported that people in their surrounding became happy when they entered puberty, especially menarche, and some girls even said that they were treated better than before. They were also given new regulations, such as keeping themselves clean, not to jump, go outside or play, and to protect themselves. In this way the girls slowly become aware of how their bodies have social and sexual significance and their bodies become a source of anxiety as they have to make sure to stay respectable and protect themselves (ibid:128).

> When my breast began to grow I was so shy about it so I kept it hidden and no one knew that I had breasts, but when I had the period for the first time that's when everything changed. They made me a party and everyone was happy and I didn't know why till my mom came and told me that now I am a grown up girl and that I must take care of myself more and that I am not allowed to play anymore and they really began to treat me as grown up and talk in front of me about grown up things. ~ Asraa

Although their bodies occasionally caused distress, being treated as a grown-up was usually connected to positive feelings. However, one girl raised how uncomfortable she felt with the

attention boys had started giving her, and another girl explained how upset she became when she got her first period as she wished to continue playing as before.

> It's normal, I accept it, and no one changed his treatment to me, I am still a little kid to my parents'
> view and to others, but the boys are now looking at us, and I am shy from them because we used to
> be in the same class but now it is different (…). ~ Ruba

To sum up, when these girls' bodies start changing they gain more respect from their surrounding, but at the same time the social control increases. The girls are taught to censor their bodies, movements and facial expressions. It is essential that they keep their dignity and honor, and because of this sexuality is successfully suppressed, for example through using stories of what happens to bad girls[4] (Sayigh 1998:168; Stoppard 2000:130-1).

> But we have that here, if she gets pregnant but then she has to marry. If not she would be killed. It
> is prohibited here. After marriage we can become pregnant and have sexual relation. ~ Maryam
> and Samar

6.1.3 Concluding Remarks

The girls in this study showed a clear understanding of what was included in the discourses of femininity. Behavior and appearance can in this particular socio-cultural context be summed up into 'the ruling concept of dont's' and 'covering up'. They were not only present among the stories of the girls, but experienced on an everyday basis. Two examples are how the word 'haram' was used more often in daily language than its antonym 'halal', and how people would comment on others way of dressing if they did not approve.

Further, the bodily changes of adolescence were connected to growing up into a woman ready to get married, which emphasized the importance of staying honorable. This, together with the traditional view of the family as the core basis of society, means that the parents restrict the freedom of their daughters. The discourses of femininity as prevalent in the camp distinguish from Stoppard's cases, proving the necessity of being value and context specific (Stoppard 2000:38).

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[4] Sayigh (1998: 184) writes an example of a proverb used by people in the camp Shatila (close to Bourj al Barajneh): "She should not show as much as the tip of her tooth", meaning that a girl should not laugh or talk too much. She also mentions how girls were told stories of bad girls getting killed by their families.

The girls in general conformed to the discourses of femininity, learning the lesson of gender well. Some engaged in forbidden activities, but secretly to make sure that they remained 'clean' and 'innocent'.

The feelings towards the discourses were mixed among the girls; some thought they were good while others perceived them as difficult and even unfair. Nevertheless, most of the girls felt good when complimented for good behavior and appearance and sad when they failed. This is in line with how girls willingly engage in practices connected to 'the good woman' and are likely to feel good about it too, in particular when they succeed (Stoppard 2000:107).

6.2 Meaning of Depression

Since depression is considered as taboo in Palestinian culture it was tricky approaching the issue during the data collection process (Serhan & Tabari 2005:56). I tried to circumvent the sensitive issue by asking about influences and feelings, and only mentioned depression explicitly in those cases the interview situation allowed me to. As Stoppard (2000:37) emphasizes the importance of exploring subjectivity as a way to understand girls' depressive experiences three individual stories are highlighted in this chapter. Consequently the chapter is constructed somewhat differently; first a descriptive account of these girls is given, and then their experiences are connected to Stoppard's approach.

6.2.1 Raya

I interviewed Raya at one of my host organization's centers. She was wearing a long black robe and had put up her flightily curly black hair in a ponytail. Although seemingly tall for her age she looked shorter when she was crouching in her chair. Throughout the interview she was staring down the table, drawing patterns with her fingers. She talked in a low voice and no matter what she told me her voice remained indifferent.

Raya is in her early teens living with her parents and eight siblings. At home she is not helping her mother tend the house as her older sisters already do. Instead Raya takes part in different activities organized by local NGOs. She has complex feelings in regards to her family, on the one hand she feels happy when she spends time with them and she values her mother highly, but on the other side she feels sad because her father does not like her and her parents and brother beat her.

In school her classmates bully her, they break or draw on her school books, report misbehavior to the teachers although she has not done anything and they tell her she is bad. Raya explains that she does not have any friends in school because they think she is bad and they do not like her. She takes comfort in that her teacher likes her, and that her mother says she is a good girl.

> I don't have any friends at school, they think I am bad, they don't like me. […] My teacher likes me, she says I'm good in math and Arabic, but not in English. My dad doesn't like me, but my mom likes me and she says that I'm a good girl.

Raya is well aware of how girls should behave and dress in her community and the repercussions if they do not. She thinks that she follows these regulations but at the same time she notices how people talk about her. She becomes nervous when her mother shouts at her or beats her in front of their neighbors. For these reasons Raya struggles hard to fit into the society, with the result of her almost disappearing entirely. She is so anxious she will do something wrong that she has developed the ability of almost blending into the wall. At the same time she acknowledges how she would like to dress the way she wants, hoping it would ease her anxiety.

> She says not to wear clothes that show my body. I accept this, bass[5], inside I feel sorry, and I wish I could have another mom that let me wear what I want. Because this maybe makes me feel more comfortable.

Albeit Raya would not use the term depression to describe her experiences, she describes how she sometimes feels happy, and sometimes sad. She connects her positive and negative feelings to how her classmates and family treat her, while for instance getting new clothes are connected to happiness, the violence in her family creates feelings of distress and sadness.

> [My life is] not good. Sometimes I see it as good. There is something, my brother always treats me in a bad way, he beats me. [My life is] not too beautiful, because my brother beats us.

6.2.2 Haya
Haya is in her mid-teens, very skinny, wearing the hijab. She sits down on the floor in my interpreter's kitchen, seemingly comfortable but at the same time tired because of fasting. She

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[5] Bass in this case means 'but', however it has many other meanings in the Arabic language [author's note].

wears long trousers and a long cotton sweater despite the hotness of the day. Although attentive of my questions she answers them in a low voice, barely hearable when sitting surrounded by the sounds from the neighborhood.

Living with her two parents and six siblings, most of them younger than herself, Haya has a high work load at home tending the house and doing her homework. She is happy helping her mother because of the feelings of joy it brings her, but she admits that she sometimes feel tired doing so much in the home.

Haya is not content with the responsibilities connected to adolescence. She describes how she, at the age of 12, was a very noisy girl still playing with dolls. When entering puberty she got very upset and tried to hide her growing breasts from her surroundings. However when she got her first period she could not hide it anymore and she had to conform to the expectations of the society. She became a very quiet girl who studied and helped her mom in the household. Haya expresses how the negative feelings connected to growing up and being recognized by adults as 'big' were a result of what she no longer could engage in. She would prefer to be a boy because of the freedom it brings.

> But my mom advises me to be careful from this, not to do this. Teachers deal with me like I'm a big girl. I'm not happy with this, I prefer to be young. Because of what I can't do: playing, jumping, going outside.

As with many other girls Haya knows what is expected of her and she is also familiar with the repercussions of not abiding. She says that she is a good girl that follows all rules, for instance she never engages in conversations with boys unless they are relatives to her. At the same time it worries her that people in her surrounding occasionally think she is arrogant.

> [They think] that I'm so proud in a negative way. But I'm normal. Once a girl told me that the first time she saw me she didn't accept me because of this. But then she started communicating with me and we became friends. I get worried that they think this way, because I'm not better than them, we're all the same.

Haya says that her mood depends from day to day, that she is sometimes sad and sometimes happy. She connects her feelings of happiness and sadness to how much she helps her mother and how she is treated by others. For instance she expresses that she becomes angry when

someone makes fun of her, and happy when she makes her mother happy. Although Haya would maybe not describe her experiences as depressive, she recognizes how her bodily changes made her feel distressed, and she has also sacrificed a great deal of whom she was before so as to fit into the outlined gender roles. A sacrifice she feels unhappy about.

> [My life is] happy, sometimes sad: because when I see my mom she is working and we're not doing anything for her. I'm little tired from so much homework.

6.2.3 Maryam

I first met Maryam at a center run by my host organization. She surprised me with her excellent English skills leaving the interpreter redundant. Maryam struck me as down to earth and intelligent. It seemed she had spent a lot of time reflecting upon the society she lives in.

Being in her upper teens and the eldest girl in a family of seven Maryam has many responsibilities in her home. She describes herself as a second mother in the family, taking care of her siblings when her mother is not at home. She does not like performing house chores but as she loves her family she feels she does not have any choice. Besides taking care of her family Maryam spends much time with two of her younger sisters.

Maryam explains how girls in her age are viewed as women and are getting prepared to get married. Maryam herself focuses on completing her studies so that she can enter university. Living in a family which Maryam describes as "not so much close-minded" means that she has more freedom compared to other girls, such as having a boyfriend (as long as he is approved by her parents). However in general Maryam finds her life complicated because of all restrictions the society puts on girls.

> It suffers from a lot of problems. They all think from the old fashion, they don't love each other. The girls in this society are treated in a special way. […] I don't know how to express myself… sometimes I feel I don't have to do this, that there are a lot of restrictions for a girl; not to be late, not to leave the house, not to go out alone, these things.

The treatment of girls, and the restrictions put on them, makes Maryam censor herself as well. If she is feeling sad she usually keeps her emotions to herself, afraid that people otherwise would think she is weak or stupid.

> Sometimes I talk to my sister, I don't have many people to trust. I don't tell my emotions for anybody. It's hard to tell. Sometimes people think "what's she stupid? You are angry from this thing?"

Maryam did mention how she at times felt depressed (like everyone else in the camp according to her). She connected her depressive experiences to her limited freedom as a girl, and realized that although it will get better when she gets older she will still face restrictions. Nevertheless she feels happy because she is a successful student in school and she finds comfort within her family.

> When older you get more independence, you don't need parents for many things, you can go out alone. You are free but with borders.

6.2.4 Concluding Remarks

The meaning girls put into their depressive experiences are connected to feelings of happiness, sadness, distress and weariness. They make sense of these feelings through connecting them to what made them feel happy or sad to begin with. When approaching these feelings from a feminist social constructionist stance it turns out that many of these feelings are directly connected to their gender roles. While Raya got bullied because she was considered a 'bad girl', Haya resisted growing up because of the decreased freedom, and Maryam felt that she, as a girl, was treated in a special (negative) way because of all restrictions.

To deal with this Raya, Haya and Maryam chose to conform to the discourses of femininity. Stoppard (2000:107) explains this as a process in which girls, when enacting femininity, create an 'embodied self' who freely engages in the practices of a good woman. They dress appropriately, they study hard, they do house chores, and they speak in low voices. Although they might not like all activities they engage in they like the feelings they generate. When they succeed, and are given compliments, they feel good about themselves, but when they do not they experience feelings often connected to depression, such as demoralization, hopelessness and self-blame (ibid.:107-109). While this chapter depicts three individual stories the experiences of Raya, Haya and Maryam are most probably shared by many other girls in the camp.

6.3 Living Conditions

There are many problems here, many things that are not right ~ Rhama

Stoppard (2000:117) outlines how important it is to take the material circumstances into consideration as these constrain the identity positions girls regard as available. The following chapter outlines the findings that are a result of the particular socio-cultural context in Bourj al Barajneh.

The girls' stories reveal a gloomy environment full of problems, but also consoling aspects reassuring them in a difficult life situation. Most commonly the girls highlighted topics related to the four following themes; physical environment, education facilities, legal rights and violence. While for instance education facilities only was mentioned in the conversation groups, and personal experiences of violence only came up in the interviews it is important to note the essentiality of having different forms of techniques when collecting data. The chapter is divided according to the four themes.

6.3.1 Physical Environment

The poor living conditions in Bourj al Barajneh are one of the most striking things when entering the camp. One soon finds oneself walking in narrow zigzagging alleys, always alert so as not stepping into piles of garbage, or ducking to avoid electrical wires hanging dangerously low from the densely and hazardously built houses. During the hot and humid summer the smell from garbage is intense, while the flooding during the rainy and damp winter season brings the stench of sewage water.

The girls in the conversation groups also described other problems not immediately visible to the eye. Problems such as the unreliable electrical supply and the lethally dangerous consequences of having an electricity system built on hotwired cables[6]:

> And also there is the electricity in the camp. My friend he's 11 years old [he] got shocked from electricity while he was passing through the alleys and an electrical wire fell on him. That is not fair at all. ~ Fathiyya

Two other major problems the girls mentioned are the old sewage network in the camp and the constant problem with garbage:

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[6] During my stay in the camp a 15-year-old boy was killed when he attempted to hotwire electricity for his family [author's note].

> [We need] good environment and clean one, where [now] the garbage are all over the street and it smells too bad and it is hard for us to breath. Also the sewer we don't have a good one, all what we have is just a running black ugly smelled water in the street and alleys all winter. ~ Janine

> It affects only on my life. It's about garbage, if I see it outside my home, because I'll become sick from it. ~ Fatima

In general it seems most girls try to counteract the poverty they live in by behaving and dressing in a proper manner so as to at least be rich in manner albeit not rich in life (as explained by one of the girls). In this sense the material circumstances work to maintain the images of good girls, limiting the identity positions the girls perceive as available to them. Behaving in a 'poor way' would not only oppose the discourses of femininity shaping and regulating their lives, but they would also show everyone how poor and unfortunate they are (Stoppard 2000:117).

With a continuously increasing camp population Bourj al Barajneh is growing rapidly vertically (Chatty & Hundt 2001:28). The overcrowding of the camp and the characteristically densely built houses forces the inhabitants to live closely with constant noises from their neighbors. As the girls are surrounded by people nearly all the time several of the girls described an urge to have more privacy. One girl explained how the noises affected negatively on her health and on her concentration when studying.

> To have more time for myself. ~ Maryam

> When people start yelling I get a head ache, I don't like high voices. And in the camp it is always loud noises, so I always have a head ache. ~ Halima

According to a Fafo report nine out of ten households live close to some of their relatives, while over half of the households live close to more than ten relatives. In general the households reported to be satisfied with the distance to their neighbors, no matter if they were friends or relatives (Ugland 2003:211ff). The girls who participated in this study gave a more diversified picture of the satisfaction with their neighbors. In the conversation groups the girls were asked to define their neighbors' social status. Without exception the girls chose to define their neighbors from an ethical viewpoint resulting in a majority describing most or some of

their neighbors as bad or very bad. The girls who lived close to people they perceived as bad due to unacceptable and disrespectful behavior of yelling, fighting and/or using bad words expressed a will to either change their neighbor or move away from the camp, preferably abroad.

> My entire neighborhood is bad they show you that they are good but actually they are bad. ~ Girl in conversation group

> This is my home and there are my uncles' houses and I wish if they are good and all the time they curse and shout and one of them is a drunk, he drinks a lot. My neighbor is so bad and if we stand against them we will not be like them. My neighbors are not good and I want to change it. ~ Janine

The above mentioned environment shows that the material circumstances have consequences that are not gender specific as well. For instance the camp environment has great impact health-wise, with the population always at risk for allergies, illnesses and injuries. However, in the long run these consequences are more influential on females as they are the ones who are expected to tend for their families. If they become sick they cannot care for their families as much as they should, leading to feelings of demoralization.

For many of the girls in the study having their extended family and neighbors close also meant living in an environment of love, reassurance and safety. Several studies looking into coping strategies of Palestinian youth in the region have pointed out family support and solidarity as a vital coping strategy. They trust their parents to care for them, and they cherish the support they receive from them (Chatty & Hundt 2001:23; Serhan & Tabari 2005:47).

> The noise affect on my concentration of my studies but at the same time the love between the neighbors comfort me. ~ Wissam

> She is happy living with her family, they love her so much, they help her whenever she needs help, they stand beside her. ~ Fathiyya describing her friend Janine

The closeness of family, relatives and neighbors also has a back side as it exaggerates social control, where "all eyes are on women" (Sayigh 1998:177). Since there are no playgrounds in the camp, or little access to leisure such as girl clubs, the girls' possibility to recreation and time of their own are further decreased (Serhan & Tabari 2005:38, 45).

The consequences of the closeness of family can be seen from two sides; while the families' strictness in regards of their girls protect them from challenges otherwise connected to adolescent revolts, "their growth [is] circumscribed and thwarted, like that of bonsai trees" (Pipher 1994:99). While these girls might feel strong because of the warm and loving support their families provide them with, their life choices are restricted due to the families' control. The identities these girls negotiate for themselves in a context like this are thus a result of both (ibid.; Stoppard 2000:115-7).

In the end, while some girls felt uncomfortable living in the camp and wanted to move far away from it, other girls did not think the camp environment influenced them at all but felt happy living there.

Wissam summarizes this sub chapter perfectly:

> I am living in Bourj al Barajneh camp, it's too small for such a number of people that are living in it. The houses are too close to each other, there are no places for kids to play also you can hear the noise while you are sitting in your room. But otherwise I love my family and my friends who are living beside.

6.3.2 Education Facilities

The pride Palestinians put into their education has already been mentioned. However what has not been dealt with is how the girls in this study describe their school environment:

> In our school the teachers are bad: they curse at us a lot and shout at us and insult us in front of the girls, they don't care for how we feel and that is making me hate the school too much, the playground is always dirty and there are rats in the school (…). The surrounding is not clean, it's dirty all the time, we have a garbage area in front of the school and there is also two buildings surrounding the school as if they live with us (…) Even the smell of the cooking in the morning is so much (…) The classes are so tight and small, beside us there is a generator and when there is no electricity they turn it on and then the smell of the smoke that comes from it and the loud noisy sound that comes from it is the worse that could happen: when we close the windows and then we can't see anything because of the smoke and we have no lights in our class and then the smell when it gets overloaded. ~ Girls in conversation group

The verbal and physical abuse by teachers, overcrowded classes and the inadequate education facilities has also been raised in other studies (see for instance Ugland 2003 and Chatty & Hundt 2001). According to Serhan & Tabari (2005:38) the average number of students per classroom is forty-three, with obvious consequences for the students' learning possibilities. The same study notes that although UNRWA prohibits corporal punishment children have reported being beaten with sticks and plastic water hoses, called insulting names and discouraged (ibid.:44).

The mothers in one of the focus groups were also aware of the teachers' bad attitudes and explained it as a consequence of the frustration and anger found in the camp.

> Even in the school [it is like in the camp], the teachers in the school are from the camp so they also feel these things and so they will also treat the children like this. ~ Amal (mother of four)

Because of the bad treatment in school many girls hate going to school, and consequently there are a significant number of students who drop out. Other reasons for drop outs are illnesses, working to earn money for the family, and early marriages. Although all but one girl in this study still attended school, the enrolment rates for teenage girls aged 16 tell a clear story as only half remain in school.

> Some of the youth are educated and the others are not because they might have to work because they are poor and they need to support their families or because they are ill and can't go to school, and some of them because they don't like school or hate it. ~ Lady

Here the circumstances revolving around their educational facilities can work to further increase the stress and anxiety many of the girls feel in regards of succeeding in school. If choosing to leave school this can be viewed as an acknowledgement of their own failure to prove themselves as Palestinians, which in the end can create feelings of demoralization. It also works to further reinforce the idea that females are only meant to work inside the home (Stoppard 2000:106-7, 117).

6.3.3 Legal Rights

> No… There are no rights for Palestinians in Lebanon. You can't work, you can't study, we can't do anything. We are like visitors, Lebanese [people] don't treat us in a right way… (Samar interrupts) They don't accept us, they don't know why we are here. ~ Maryam and Samar

Although only a few of the girls in the study explicitly mentioned the discrimination they are facing because they are Palestinians, the negative outlooks future-wise were present in their stories. While most of the girls had grand dreams for their future lives, the faith in the future was less so.

Some girls (as well as some of the mothers) mentioned how pointless their education was as they would not be able to find work in Lebanon anyhow. Yet other girls saw their education

as their way out, as a chance for a better future. One girl also pointed out the pain she felt because she did not feel that she belonged anywhere:

> (…) Where we all are living without having at least the right to belong to something – even our houses are not ours, we don't own anything and our real country is stolen from us and we can't see it or even touch its sand. ~ Fathiyya

Albeit nearly all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon suffer from their low social status and position it is even more difficult for females. They do not only face discrimination based on their statelessness and status, but also due to their gender. In her study (2009:4-6) Mahmoud outlines how Palestinian women suffer from legal, political and economic exclusion. The Lebanese law discriminates against women in its marriage, divorce and child custody laws, women are excluded from decision-making processes within the political sphere and men are usually favored in the work force because of their few family responsibilities. In this sense the legal rights also impinge the identity positions young women regard as available to them (Stoppard 2000:117). They can dream as much as they want of becoming, for instance successful doctors, but they will never be able to practice medicine within the borders of Lebanon.

6.3.4 A Culture of Violence

The last topic, a culture of violence, has been put at the end intentionally. Having gone through the poor physical environment and education facilities, and the lack of legal rights it is not surprising how frustration and anger is increasing in the camp (Chatty & Hundt 2001:19). The growing frustration and anger, together with other factors, such as the lack of camp security, the presence of small arms and drugs, and the acceptance of use of violence on certain occasions have all trickled down to a culture where problems and disagreements frequently are solved by using different forms of violence. The girls in this study reported fighting and shouting neighbors, the use of bad words in the streets, as well as men and adolescent boys drinking, taking drugs, and smoking "hubbley bubbley".

Although the girls were not asked about the occurrence of physical violence within families it was mentioned by several girls; parents beating their children, as well as children beating their siblings.

> When I'm angry I stay alone, but when my sister comes and asks [me] to clean the home, I hit her, because I don't want to talk to anyone when I'm angry. ~ Ghanima

> When my mom and dad fight I feel sorry for my mom. When my dad beats any of my sisters or brothers I feel sorry for them. ~ Raya

These remarks on violence are not occasional; other studies have found the occurrence of family violence as well. For example Serhan and Tabari (2005:45) noted how the majority of children participating in their study admitted being hit by their parents. In general these children saw corporal punishment as "for their own good" (ibid.). The girls who reported being hit by their parents in this study experienced the beating as either stigmatizing or unfair:

> I feel nervous when my mom shouts at me or beats me in front of the neighbors. ~ Raya

> So much pressure because sometimes I take punishment because of my sisters. Because if I punish my sisters, my mom knows it is for their benefit, but dad hits me. He punishes me with his hands, belt, he puts my legs up and hit me on my feet. When my mom comes, she stops him. ~ Ghanima

Lastly, another concern some of the girls had was the violence in the community created by family disputes:

> [We need] right of protection and security because the situation here in the camp is so hard. If there is a fight between two families and it's a personal problem, all the parties in the camp are divided: one with and the other against, and they begin to fight and shoot bullets randomly, and someone died last year because of random bullet, this man was passing by. ~ Fathiyya

Living in a culture of violence means that the threat of violence is present at all times. This also includes that the threats of violent repercussions for those girls who do not follow the traditional gender roles are real and vivid.

6.3.5 Concluding Remarks

Adolescent girls in Bourj al Barajneh live in a tough physical environment. Their social status as camp inhabitants is low compared to the Lebanese public, but within the camp the girls do not distinguish themselves from anyone else. Due to the character of the camp, lack of social and civil rights and the prevalence of violence the girls face many problems and challenges. They describe how their environment influence them negatively both physically through

illnesses and headaches, and psychologically through limited privacy and freedom of movement and expression. At the same time the closeness of family provided many girls with love and comfort affecting them positively.

Linking these findings to Stoppard shows how important it is to be context specific; different themes might be brought up in different societies. It also outlines how the social and material circumstances in different ways both limit the identity positions available to girls as well as their capacities to enact femininity (Stoppard 2000:106-7). What probably summarizes this chapter the best is the following quotation:

[The camp environment] throws you into reality. ~ Aya

7. Concluding Remarks

The discourses of femininity in Bourj al Barajneh have a big impact on girls when they try to negotiate identities for themselves. Coming back to the research questions, the girls are well aware of the behavior and activities they should engage in and although they might not always agree to them they chose to conform to avoid the harsh repercussions from family and society. Some girls have depressive experiences connected to their subjective experiences of trying to fit into the gender roles of society, and they make sense of these depressive experiences by connecting them to these gender roles. The circumstances under which they are living are filled with challenges and problems, but also love and comfort, which influence the girls both negatively and positively. These circumstances work in different ways to maintain and reinforce the discourses of femininity in the camp, but also to limit the capacities of these girls to enact practices of femininity.

Considering the aim of this study, using a feminist social constructionist perspective throughout the research process made it possible to look beyond mainstream approaches to what causes depression in this particular group living in a different setting. Adolescent girls in the specific context of this study face different expectations and regulations than their male peers and their depressive experiences can be connected to these gendered differences. This approach can therefore give an idea of why female adolescent refugees have more depressive experiences than their male counterparts.

To use an approach which emphasizes the subjective experiences, reflections and understandings of the respondents through focusing on their verbal accounts have also proven fruitful in the mission to give a complementary understanding of the underlying reasons to depression. In this way the girls' lives become more vivid to the researcher and they help guide the research process, as opposed to only the researcher deciding the way. More importantly, it is a way to raise their voices about matters concerning them.

Having a social constructionist approach also means that the knowledge gained can only be seen as partial; there is always more to the story than what a study is able to depict. One way forward is to investigate the seemingly close connection between culture and religion, where gender roles in this context often are motivated through religious customs.

It is important to bear in mind that these girls are not passive victims of their socio-cultural context. They are active agents, who want things, and who reflect upon their situation; however they have limited possibilities to revolt in a meaningful way.

They are free but with borders.

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Appendices

Appendix I – List of Interviews, Conversation Groups and Focus Groups

INTERVIEWS	
Name of Respondent	**Date**
Haifa	2009-11-17
Raya	2009-11-17
Dhalia	2009-11-19
Ghanima	2009-11-19
Haya	2009-11-26
Halima	2009-11-26
Rhama	2009-12-04
Maryam	2009-12-04
Samar and Maryam	2009-12-10
Aya	2009-12-15
Wissam	2009-12-15
CONVERSATION GROUPS	
Groups (name of girls referred to)	**Dates**
Number one	2009-10-30, 2009-11-06, 2009-11-13, 2009-11-20, 2009-11-27, 2009-12-04, 2009-12-11
Number two (H.A, Ruba, Ikram)	2009-10-23, 2009-10-30, 2009-11-06, 2009-11-13, 2009-11-20, 2009-11-27, 2009-12-04, 2009-12-11
Number three (Lady, Janine, Haneen, Fathiyya)	2009-11-06, 2009-11-13, 2009-11-20, 2009-11-20, 2009-11-27, 2009-12-04, 2009-12-11, 2009-12-18
FOCUS GROUPS	
Respondents	**Date**
Mothers (1)	2009-11-18
Mothers (2)	2009-12-09
Adolescent boys	2009-12-14

Appendix II – Interview Guide

Below follows a version of the interview guide including both the original questions as well as the questions added/removed for the revised version.

Background questions:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Family
4. School
5. Physics (observation)

A. Material Circumstances

1. Can you tell me how an everyday in your life looks like?
2. Can you tell me how a holiday looks like?
3. What do you think about the context you live in? How would you describe the environment you are living in?
4. How do you think this environment influence you?
5. How are you treated by your family/friends/school mates/teachers?
6. What do they say about you? What do you think about this?
7. What tasks are you and your family members doing in the house? How do you feel about these tasks? What happens if you don't do this? What would you like to do?
8. What do you talk about with your friends/family?
9. For me who am Swedish, how would you describe what it means for you to be a Palestinian?

B. Feelings of respondent

10. What makes you angry?
11. What makes you happy?
12. What makes you sad?
13. How are you feeling right now?
14. How do you feel in general?
15. If you feel sad, do you talk to anyone about it? Why/not? Have you ever experienced feeling depressed? Do you find it hard to talk about emotions?
16. What do you do when you are angry?
17. What do you like/enjoy to do?
18. What do you dislike/hate to do?
19. If you could have chosen if you were a boy or a girl, what would you have liked to be? Why?

C. Discourses of Femininity

20. How do you think a good girl should be like? Why? Do you think you are like this? Why/not?
21. How would a bad girl be like?

22. Do you ever in your life become aware of that you are a woman/girl? When?

23. How is it like to be _____ (age of respondent)? What is expected of you now? (By your family, friends, and larger community).

24. How is your life different now compared to when you were 12? How do people in Bourj al Barajneh think that girls in your age should be like (behave/dress/do)? How do you know? What do you think about this?

D. Future

25. What thoughts to you have about the future?

26. How do you <u>want</u> your life to look like in 10 years time?

27. How do you <u>think</u> your life will look like in 10 years time?

28. Pretend that you are 25 years old (like I am), and that you could look back at yourself today and give yourself some advices, what would you tell yourself?

E. Embodied experiences

29. How do you think a good girl should look like? Why? Do you think you look like this? Why/not?

30. How would a bad girl look like?

31. How important is the way you look in your society? Can you describe how the perfect girl should look like?

32. Does anyone ever tell you how you should look like? (How do they want you to look like? Do you agree?) How does this make you feel?

33. When people look at you, what do you think is the first thing they think about?

34. How did you react when your body started to change? When you got your first period?

35. How did people around you react?

36. What was most stressful when your body started changing? (If respondent says she reacted negatively). Did you talk to your mom about the changes? What did your mom tell you? Can you give any examples of advices she gave you?

37. What do you think about your body?

38. Do you think about how other girls look like? What do you think then? Why?

39. How did your family, friends, teachers, classmates start to treat you when your body started changing? How did this make you feel?

F. Other

40. What does violence mean to you? When is violence ok to use?

41. What does *sharaf* mean to you?

42. What do you think about having "secret boyfriends"? Have you heard of anyone that had one?

43. The most common topics that Swedish teenagers discuss are school, boys, love and their families. What are the most common things that teenagers talk about here?

44. Please choose three words that you think describe your life.

Appendix III – Interview Guide (Focus Groups)

Questions for Focus Groups with Mothers

1. Choose three adjectives that you think describe your lives in Bourj al Barajneh. (Write them on the board).

2. Looking at these words, how do you think your children is affected by the life here?

    a. (If they say that they become sad/angry) If you notice that your children feel sad (or angry) what do you do? What do you say to them?

3. What do you say to your children about the situation you are living in?

4. What do you think your daughters and sons are afraid of? Do they fear the same things?

5. How would you like to help your daughters?

    a. What do you think they need? (Write on the board)

6. How do you think a good teenage girl should be like?

    a. How should she look like?

    b. What should she do?

    (Write on board on one row, leave room for another row on 'bad' girls).

7. How is a bad girl like?

8. If we turn it around, how do you think a good boy should be like?

9. And how is a bad boy?

10. How do you want your daughters' lives to look like when they are 20 years old? (write on the board)

11. What do your daughters help you with in your home? What do they do beyond these tasks? (Studying, watching TV, friends etc).

12. What do your sons help you with in your home? What do they do beyond these tasks?

13. What rules do you have for your daughters? (leaving the house, camp)

14. What rules do you have for your sons?

15. What do you talk with your daughter about? Do you discuss topics such as health, weight, body and menstruation, love, feelings etc.?

16. What topics do you not feel comfortable talking about?

17. How would you describe your relationship with your daughter?

18. What do you think you need in order to become even better parents than you are today?

19. What do you want to do, but you worry about doing it?

Questions for Focus Group with Adolescent Boys

45. Can you tell me how a normal day looks like?

46. Can you tell me how a holiday looks like?

47. How would you describe the environment you are living in?

48. How do you think this environment affects you?

49. What tasks are you and your family members doing in the house? What would you like to do?

50. For me who am Swedish, how would you describe what it means for you to be a Palestinian?

51. What makes you angry?

52. What makes you happy?

53. What makes you sad?

54. If you feel sad, do you talk to anyone about it? Why/not?

55. If you could have chosen if you were a boy or a girl, what would you have liked to be? Why?

56. How should girls be like?

57. What interests do they have?

58. What thoughts do you have about the future?

59. How do you <u>want</u> your life to look like in 10 years time?

60. How do you <u>think</u> your life will look like in 10 years time?

61. Please choose three words that you think describe your life.