

Gender, Academic Achievement, and Meanings of Schooling in Ras al Khaimah,

United Arab Emirates

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined an interesting phenomenon: the educational gap between boys and girls in the United Arab Emirates. Drawing on literature in sociology of gender, sociology of education, and Middle East Studies, this dissertation explored who is and who is not academically achieving (defined through exams results, event drop out rates, and intention to graduate from secondary school) in the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, student and teacher beliefs about the meanings of schooling were investigated. The study begins with a broad picture of academic achievement in the United Arab Emirates then focuses on one emirate, Ras Al Khaimah. Ministry of Education data from the 2007-2008 school year, 42 teacher interviews, and 117 student questionnaires provided data for this study.

Ministry of Education data were analyzed using chi square tests to determine which boys and which girls are achieving academically in the United Arab Emirates. This analysis confirmed earlier studies that indicated boys are more likely to drop out and to fail exams than their female counterparts. In addition, non-Emirati boys were found to outperform their Emirati peers. The remainder of the study focused on 9th grade boys and girls and their teachers in Ras Al Khaimah. Through logistic regression of data from the

questionnaire, student academic self-concept was found to be a significant predictor of student intent to graduate.

In addition, the study sought to examine the purposes of schooling according to teachers and students. Results showed that teachers saw the purpose of school as providing increased employment opportunities for girls and for non-Emirati boys. However, teachers did not think school was for employment for Emirati boys. Students reported different ideas about school. They saw school as a means to learning, as a social outlet, and as link to employment opportunities. The dissertation concluded with implications for theory, research and practice.

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Dedicated to the memory of Jamie Harvey

(January 9, 1988 - July 14, 2003)

I--INTRODUCTION

According to attainment, graduation rates, literacy rates, repetition rates, and examination pass rates, boys are lagging behind girls in schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This study is an attempt to better understand this phenomenon through a focus on 9th grade boys and girls and their teachers and builds on research conducted by Natasha Ridge in secondary schools in the UAE (2009a). Institutionalized understandings about schooling and the gendered dimensions of these beliefs are explored.

In the first chapter, I briefly examine the problem my research addresses and outline the research questions. I provide background information about the UAE and the focal emirate, Ras al Khaimah (RAK). The political system, education system, the people, and gender issues are covered. I also discuss contributions my work makes to the sociology of education, Middle East studies, and sociology of gender. Chapter II includes a review of relevant literature. I consider the contemporary gender gap in education and explanations of gender gaps in education. I construct a conceptual framework based in life course studies, institutional theory, and gender studies. In Chapter III, I review the methods used in this dissertation. The instruments, sampling, and analysis are described. In Chapter IV I explore the relationship between a variety of variables and academic achievement. This includes analysis of a national data set and responses from the researcher-designed questionnaire. Chapter V examines how students and teachers understand the gendered dimensions of academic achievement and meanings of

schooling. The findings discussed are derived from the questionnaire responses and from interviews. In the final chapter, I summarize the findings, discuss contributions and implications, and connect the findings with my research questions and conceptual framework.

Problem Statement

Gender disparity in education is not a new topic. Historically, girls have been educationally disadvantaged in relation to boys in most parts of the world. There has been a great deal of attention focused on closing the gender gap in both academic and development circles. Recently, the gender gap has shifted to favor girls, especially in countries where boys and girls have equal access to education (Baker & LeTendre, 2005; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Maslak, 2008)). This contemporary gender gap appears to be growing and spreading (Grant & Behrman, 2010; World Bank, 2007).

In this dissertation, Ras al Khaimah (RAK), the northernmost emirate in the UAE, is used as a strategic research site (Merton, 1987) to better understand gendered academic outcomes and how they are related to institutionalized understanding of schooling. Boys are dropping out of schools in significant numbers in the UAE. This is particularly drastic in contrast to the number of girls who leave school early. Additionally, boys' performance while in school lags behind that of girls (Ridge, 2009a; 2009b).

The first aim of this research is to determine who achieves academically in public schools in the UAE. Currently, available information is aggregated, and it is not clear which boys and which girls are passing school exams, or which students are completing

or planning to complete secondary schooling. This study also aims to uncover beliefs held by students and teachers about secondary schooling of boys and girls, particularly the social meaning of school and its products, and to examine the relationship between these beliefs and the school outcomes.

Research Questions

The following questions guide my research:

1. *What variables are related to academic achievement in RAK, UAE?* Variables examined include: sex, citizenship, emirate of residence, school location (rural or urban), mother's citizenship, school, parental employment, parental education, family type (polygamous or non-polygamous), intention to graduate from secondary school, effort put into school, academic self-perception (rating self as "good" student or not), grade repetition, being kicked out of class, liking school, seeing learning as the purpose of school, linking school performance to employment opportunities, and knowing individuals who have dropped out of school.

2. *How do teachers and students make sense of gendered patterns in education in RAK, UAE?* Do they see boys and girls as having different educational experiences and options? If so, to what do they attribute these gendered differences?

3. *In RAK, what social meaning is attributed to schooling according to students and teachers?*

This dissertation contributes to the sociology of education, Middle East studies and sociology of gender. At the same time, using a life course perspective, an enhanced understanding of gender and education in the RAK and the UAE emerges.

Background

In this section, contextual information on the UAE and RAK is provided. Basic information about the country, the inhabitants, and the school system are discussed. Then information on how this dissertation contributes to three academic areas, Middle East Studies, sociology of gender, and the sociology of education, is explained.

UAE

The UAE is a small country (about the size of Maine in the U.S.) on the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman are neighboring countries (Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006). The UAE is a federation of seven states, or emirates. Before the federation, the area was under British protection and was known as Trucial Oman or the Trucial States (Hudson, 1977). The seven emirates joined Bahrain and Qatar to form the Federation of Arab Emirates when the British declared their intention to withdraw from the region. Bahrain and Qatar seceded from the union to become separate states in 1971. Six of the emirates agreed upon a federal constitution in July of 1971. The remaining sheikhdom, Ras al Khaimah (RAK), joined the UAE in 1972 (Heard-Bey, 1999). Since that time, the seven emirates have been: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, RAK, and Fujairah.

The People

The population of the UAE is almost five million (Ministry of the Economy, 2008; World Bank, 2010). Table 1 below shows the population breakdown by Emirate. Abu Dhabi and Dubai are by far the most populous emirates.

TABLE 1: POPULATION BY EMIRATE IN 2008

Emirate	Population
Abu Dhabi	1,559,000
Ajman	237,000
Fujairah	143,000
Sharjah	946,000
Dubai	1,596,000
RAK	231,000 ¹
Umm al-Quwain	53,000

Source: Ministry of the Economy, 2008

In 2010, Emirati citizens made up only about 12 percent of the population living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The workforce is more than 90% expatriate. There are a large number of Arabs from other countries residing in the UAE. Many Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Filipinos live and work there as well (US Department of State, 2007). There are as many as 100,000 stateless people, individuals holding no documents tying them to a nation state, living in the UAE (Ghazal, 2008). When boundaries were established in the Gulf region, the UAE used tribal affiliation to determine citizenship. This process left many individuals, known as "Bidoon," without citizenship (UNHCR, 2008).² Non-Emirati individuals born in the UAE may obtain working papers that allow them to be in the country legally. Children

¹About 87,000 of these are Emirati citizens (Ministry of the Economy, 2005).

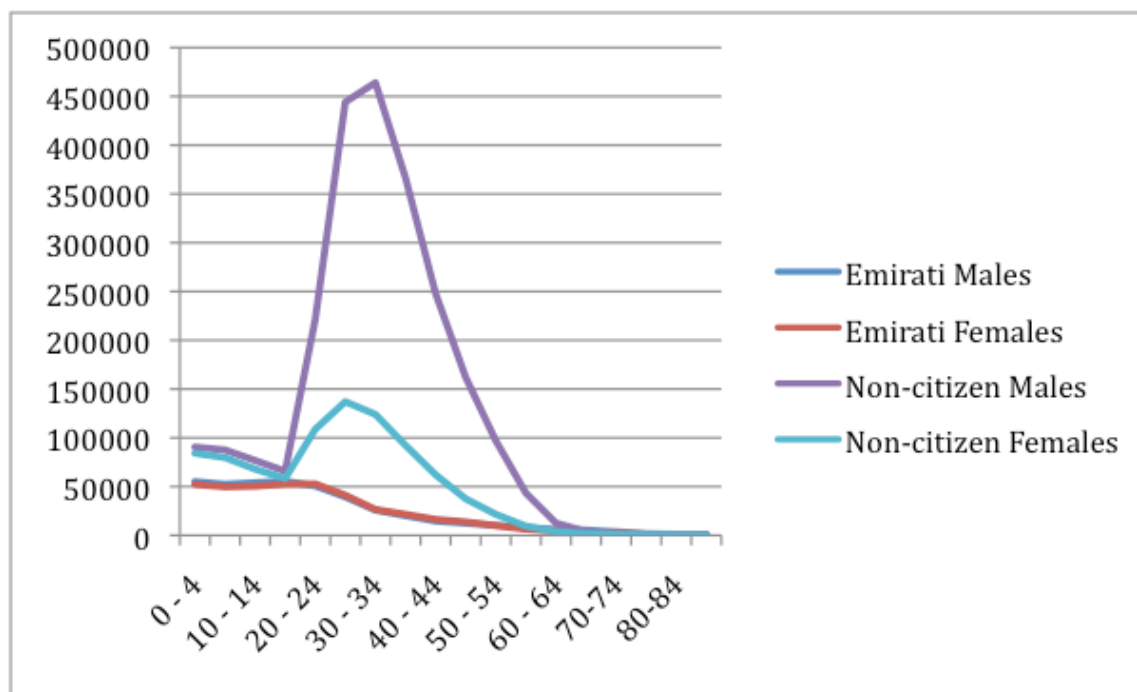
² Anecdotally, "biddon" can receive temporary Emirati passports to seek medical care outside of the country. This allows freedom to travel but does not confer the other rights of citizenship.

are included on a parent's working papers. Boys may stay on a parent's visa until age eighteen. Girls are allowed to remain in the country on a parent's work papers until married (Abu Dhabi Government, 2011).

Table 2 below shows the population breakdown by citizenship status and age. Non-citizen males clearly outnumber all other groups. Emirati males and females have almost identical numbers, as can be seen in the overlap on the chart.

As Table 2 shows, the gender balance of the population is skewed in the nation. There are more than twice as many males as females in the country (Ministry of Economy & UNDP, 2007). More than three-fourths of the UAE's population lives in urban areas. Arabic is the official language, but English is also widely spoken. The official religion is Islam, although other religions are practiced as well (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

TABLE 2: POPULATION BY AGE AND CITIZENSHIP STATUS



Source: Ministry of the Economy, 2005

Political System

In the UAE, the political organization has developed along tribal and family lines; ruling families have become the modern government (Herb, 1999). Each emirate is led by a ruling clan. In RAK, this is the al-Qasimi family. Affiliation with a powerful family is key to modern political power (Hasso, 2010). There were no elected bodies until 2006. There is now a half-elected federal legislative body that has a consultative role (CIA, 2010). Legislation in the UAE is based on Islamic law. While each emirate maintains a large degree of autonomy, the federal government has jurisdiction in foreign affairs, defense, health, and education (Aartun, 2002). Abu Dhabi and Dubai are the only emirates contributing to the federal budget, and Dubai's contribution is a small portion (Aartun, 2002).

Economics

The UAE currently has a high per capita income and an open economy. The GDP in 2009 was 107.03 billion US dollars (Gender Gap Index, 2009). Before oil was discovered in the UAE, the economy was weak and relied primarily on fishing and pearls. In 1960, oil was found in Abu Dhabi. Since then, oil has been discovered in Dubai and RAK as well. Oil production in Dubai is much lower than in Abu Dhabi and is minimal in RAK (Heard-Bey, 1999). In 2000, the UAE held 10% of the world's known oil reserves (Aartun, 2002). Steps have been taken to diversify the economy, decreasing dependence on oil revenues (Ministry of Economy & UNDP, 2007). At both the federal and emirate level, investment in a variety of sectors (telecommunications, tourism, and aluminum production are a few examples) is increasing (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 2009).

Education

The government of the UAE considers education as central for development, stability, and security (Ministry of Economics & UNDP, 2007). In addition to traditional academic goals, the development of cultural and Islamic identity is a high priority in Emirati schools. The Ministry of Education has also identified the following as areas of importance: encouraging problem solving, cultivating curiosity and creativity, and developing foreign language skills, especially English (Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006).

The education system in the UAE includes a public³ and a private sector. The medium of instruction in government schools is Arabic. Private schools conduct classes in a variety of languages including Arabic, English, and Urdu (ADEC, 2008). The federal government fully funds public education and public schooling is free for all Emirati citizens from kindergarten through tertiary education.⁴ Non-citizens wishing to attend public schools must pay a fee, be Arabic speakers, and be admitted by the school principal. In RAK, the education zone has stated that no more than 20 percent of a school's student body can consist of non-citizens. If a school feels it does not have sufficient resources to meet the needs of non-citizen students, principals may choose to deny entry (Zacharias, 2011). Table 3 shows enrollment in public schools by nationality.

³ Government schools are the focus of this dissertation.

⁴ It is important to reiterate that only 12-20 percent of inhabitants are citizens (U.S. Department of State, 2007).

TABLE 3: STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UAE IN 2009-10

Country of Origin	% of total in public school
UAE	79%
Other GCC	5%
Yemen	3%
Egypt	3%
Students with no ID card	2%
Jordan	2%
Other	2%
Syria	1%
Palestine	1%
Sudan	1%
Somalia	Less than 1%
Morocco	Less than 1%
Other Arab Countries	Less than 1%
Lebanon	Less than 1%
Algeria	Less than 1%
Tunisia	Less than 1%
Libya	Less than 1%

Source: UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2011

Almost eighty percent of public school students in the UAE are Emirati citizens. Five percent are from other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries⁵ (UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). There are approximately 487,000 non-citizen students in the UAE. Of these, only about eleven percent attend public schools (UAE National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Below, Table 4 indicates the breakdown of public and private education in each Emirate. In Abu Dhabi, more than half of the schools are private. In contrast, around three-quarters of schools in the smaller Emirate of Fujairah are public.

⁵ The GCC countries are: the Kingdom of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. GCC citizens can usually travel freely between member states without the need for visas.

TABLE 4: SCHOOLS BY EMIRATE

Emirate	Number of Schools (total)	Number of Government Schools	Government schools as a percentage of total
Abu Dhabi	609	334	55%
Dubai	301	93	31%
Sharjah	252	126	50%
Ajman	75	44	59%
Umm Al Qawain	35	28	80%
Ras Al Khaimah	142	100	70%
Fujairah	50	37	74%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2008

The structure of the education system is outlined in Table 5 below. Public education begins with Kindergarten, which is for ages four and five. Compulsory education begins in grade one and continues through grade nine (Gaad, Arif, & Scott, 2006). The focus of this study is the final year of preparatory school. Following ninth grade, students may enter secondary school and then continue on to a university education. At the completion of secondary school, students are awarded a Secondary School Leaving Certificate (Ministry of Education, 2008).

TABLE 5: UAE EDUCATION SYSTEM STRUCTURE

Age	Grade	Description	
4-5	KG 1 and KG2	Kindergarten	Optional
6-12	1 – 6	Primary	Compulsory
12-15	7- 9	Preparatory or Tech	Compulsory
15-18	10 – 12	Secondary	Optional

Source: Ridge, 2009a

It is important to note that public girls' schools in the UAE are largely staffed by Emirati women; eighty percent of teachers in girls' schools are Emirati. At the same time, few Emirati men are teaching. Seventy percent of male teachers are non-citizen Arabs (Ridge, 2009a). In the Higher Colleges of Technology, a federal university system, more than 500 women have graduated from the teacher training programs since 2005. In the same period, thirteen men have graduated from their teacher training programs. There are currently no men enrolled in the teacher preparation programs at the Higher Colleges of Technology (O'Brian, 2012). Male teachers are imported from other Arab countries to fill this gap.

Gender

Issues of gender in the UAE are complex. Women are disadvantaged in many realms but appear to be advantaged in education. According to Article 25 in the constitution, women's rights are equal to men's (Al-Nasir, 2011). However, the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) notes gender inequality in several areas. Early marriage, polygamy, discrimination in regard to parental authority, and domestic violence are all cited as problems in the UAE (OECD, 2009). In terms of gender equality, the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) ranks the UAE 105th out of 130 countries (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2009). The GGGI uses a scale that does not reward or penalize a country for having a gender gap that favors females. The UAE's GGGI ranking is low and reflects several areas of discrimination. This ranking provides an interesting and seemingly contradictory backdrop to the educational situation where boys, rather than girls, seemed to be disadvantaged.

According to the GGGI report, the UAE occupies a higher position for secondary and tertiary education gender parity (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2009). This ranking is

misleading, though; what the GGGI calls parity is actually a reverse gender gap, a gap that favors females, in education in the UAE (see Ridge, 2009b for further discussion). This is a relatively recent phenomenon. Women born in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s were mostly illiterate in the Arab Gulf Region (Al-Nasir, 2011).

Women tend to be more educated than men, though this has not translated into large numbers of women in the workforce. Thirty-nine percent of women and ninety-two percent of men work outside the home. The average woman earns about \$7,600 a year while the average man earns \$32,000 (Assaad, 2008). These numbers reflect higher participation of men in the workforce. In 2008, the median monthly salary for women in the workforce was 24,000 AED (\$6,535) and 42,000 AED (\$11,436) for male workers. Female workers also tend to work more hours than male workers (Tong, 2010). The unemployment rate for women is about three times that of men (Gender Gap Index, 2009).

Contributions

This dissertation focuses on the intersection between the educational realm and gender. Currently, girls in the UAE make up almost three-fourths of tertiary students, have higher levels of literacy than boys, and are more likely to attend secondary school (Ridge, 2009a). My study explores this phenomenon in relation to meanings attributed to secondary schooling and the gendered dimensions of these meanings and a focus on ninth grade students. Further, this research will inform three areas of scholarship: sociology of education, Middle East Studies, and sociology of gender. This dissertation is situated at the intersection of these three disciplines.

Sociology of Education

Research in education is often concerned with either structural processes or with individual interaction patterns (Shilling, 1992). Some scholars have argued that approaches that are too focused on structure or on agency do not address the linked nature of structure and agency (see Hays, 1994; Maslak, 2008; Sewell, 1992). It is important to recognize that individual choices and actions are made within structurally defined limits. The actions of individuals are influenced by both agency and structure. Adopting a life course approach, this dissertation attempts to address both structural processes and agency to better understand gendered educational patterns in the UAE. Research on gender differences in education often focus on drop out rates, grades, and test scores. This study attempts to move beyond these static measures to a contextualized description of educational achievement and how individuals understand the meanings of education.

In addition to academic contributions, my hope is that this study will have practical implications for policy and classroom practices. Determining which students are achieving and which students are not is a first step towards designing appropriate policy interventions. Additionally, an understanding of how students and teachers perceive the purposes of schooling may uncover the causes of achievement gaps and lead to practical responses.

Middle East Studies

Many studies conducted on education in the Middle East are based upon functionalist and modernization theories (Herrera, 2003; Mazawi & Sultana, 2009). Functionalists believe that society is comprised of interrelated parts that can be understood in terms of the function they serve in the total social system. This concept is similar to the biological understanding of how organisms survive. Each system and each organ serves a vital purpose in the overall health of the organism (Peet, 1999; Porter & Sheppard, 1998). The functionalist perspective on education contends that the role of schools is to prepare students for participation in the institutions of society. Those who view society from a functionalist perspective believe that different members of society perform different tasks, and schools should provide equal educational opportunity to develop students' skills and talents to perform these tasks. Given this equal opportunity, a meritocracy is supposed to emerge where individuals reap the rewards of their achievements (Peet, 1999). Modernization theories are rooted in functionalism and have been explained in terms of the stages a traditional society passes through while becoming "modern" (Inkeles & Smith, 1974). The role of education in a modern society is tied to economic progress through human capital accumulation (Porter & Sheppard, 1998). According to Mazawi and Sultana (2009), studies of education in the Middle East have traditionally been rooted in this paradigm, seeking to connect economic growth with educational expansion.

These representations of what it means to be educated and what schooling ought to accomplish overlook the ways in which students understand what it means to be educated and how education factors into their plans for the future. There is a lack of empirical data

on schooling in the Middle East at a time when interest in education in the Middle East is high (Shirazi, 2009). This dissertation will help fill in these gaps as I aim to represent the views and experiences of students and teachers in the UAE. This research builds on works of scholars such as Natasha Ridge (2009) and Fida Adely (2007) who study education in the Middle East. As mentioned before, Ridge used a mixed methods approach to examine schooling in RAK, UAE. Fida Adely's (2007) research in Jordan takes a critical approach to issues of gender, education, and religious identity.

Gender Studies and Sociology of Gender

The final academic traditions that guides this study are gender studies and the sociology of gender. Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) are two frameworks within feminist approaches to development. WID emerged as an effort to include women in the development discourse (Maslak, 2008). This represented a shift from focusing on women in their roles in family to their economic roles and participation in development. The approach has been criticized for an overemphasis on the individual without sufficient consideration of context. "WID...presented clear limitations, particularly because its advocates often assumed that the solution was simply a matter of including women in the existing institutions and structures rather than of understanding the complexity of the relations between men and women" (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009, p. 464). The GAD approach emerged as the limitations of WID became apparent. This paradigm aims to include an examination of relations between men and women, rather than women in isolation (Bannon & Correia, 2006). The GAD framework considers social structures but does not address how these

structures are constructed or preserved by individuals (Maslak, 2008). As Maslak (2008) points out, neither the WID nor the GAD approach is sufficient for understanding the relationship between structure and agency in the realm of education. Further, in practice, these approaches tend to continue to focus on women and girls rather than gender (Bannon & Correia, 2006). Studies of men and masculinity have become more prevalent in academic circles. A more balanced approach to gender, including men, women, boys, and girls, has the potential to improve the lives of men and women.

Gender in the Middle East is a popular topic but one that is laden with generalizations about Arab men, Islam, and gender roles. This has become particularly evident in media depictions of gender in the Middle East since 9/11. This research intends to present a more nuanced picture of gender in the region, recognizing the socio-cultural and political constraints gender places on both men and women.

Conclusion

I have reviewed three areas where this dissertation can contribute to existing literature. The inclusion of both structural factors and agency has potential to inform educational studies and gender studies. The setting of the study addresses the dearth of empirical studies in schools in the Middle East. The examination of gender rather than boys or girls in isolation promises to be an original contribution as well. This work expands the conceptualization of schooling in the Middle East, moving beyond the understanding of schooling as a means to human capital accumulation to consider how the actors within schools understand the purpose of education, and how those understandings shape their investment in schooling.

II—RELEVANT LITERATURE

In this chapter, literature relevant to this study is discussed in three sections. First, what I call the contemporary gender gap is reviewed. Reasons for this gap are then explored. Finally, the conceptual framework for this dissertation is explained. The conceptual framework is based in sociological life course studies, institutional theory, and sociology of gender.

The Contemporary Gender Gap

Global Situation

The educational gender gap has favored males for decades. However, the gap between males and females has been narrowing in most countries (Grant & Behrman, 2010; Knodel & Jones, 1996; Thomas, Wang & Fan, 2001; Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; UNICEF, 2005). In 1995, 145 million children aged 6-11 were not in school. Eighty-five million, or almost 60 percent, of these children were girls (Wach & Reeves, 2000). More recent statistics indicate that this number has decreased to sixty million out-of-school girls. Of these sixty million, about 70 percent are from marginalized groups such as the Roma in Eastern Europe, lower castes in India, and Black Africans in Darfur (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Around two-thirds of illiterate people in the developing world are female (Wach & Reeves, 2000).

Girls have achieved more than 80 percent gender parity globally in school enrollment. One hundred percent parity would reflect equal enrollment of boys and girls. In the last 40 years, all regions have experienced dramatic gains in girls' enrollment (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; Maslak, 2008). Many countries have closed the gap between the sexes. Currently, school life expectancy (SLE)⁶ is higher for boys in sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, and West Asia. SLE is now higher for girls in Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Western Europe, and some individual countries (Jha & Kelleher, 2006; UNESCO, 2005). Globally, girls continue to lag behind boys in school. However, when statistics are considered by region or country, a different picture emerges.

“Developed” Countries

In the majority of countries where boys and girls have equal access to education, there is a gender gap that favors girls (Francis & Skelton, 2005). Equal access is well established in many countries. While many boys perform well at school, on average boys do not achieve as well as girls across a range of educational measures. According to Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)⁷ findings, boys' underachievement in literacy is an international phenomenon. On average, girls outperform boys by 32 points in literacy on a scale with an OECD average of 493. In all

⁶ SLE is the average number of years of schooling individuals can expect to receive in a particular region.

⁷ PISA is an internationally standardized assessment in reading, math, and science. It is administered to 15 year olds in schools in participating countries. Every 3 years more than four thousand pupils participate in each country (OECD, 2006).

forty-three countries (twenty-nine of these countries are considered “developed”) involved in the study, girls demonstrated greater proficiency in the combined reading scale. Across OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development)⁸ countries boys are underachieving generally, in relation to girls. According to an OECD report, this is largely caused by the significant gap in literacy achievement (OECD, 2003). In mathematics, males performed at a higher level than females in 34 of the 42 countries. This advantage is primarily due to the scores of a comparatively small number of high-performing males. In scientific literacy, performance of males and females was similar (OECD, 2000; Ma, 2007). According to an OECD PISA report, “the underachievement of young men is a significant challenge for education policy that will need particular attention if the gender gap is to be closed” (2001, p. 127).

In addition to lower performance in cross-national studies, issues of educational attainment have emerged for boys in many countries. In industrialized countries, women are reaching higher levels of education than men (see Australian Social Trends, 2006; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Gurion & Stevens, 2005; Jacobs, 1996). Since 1982, women have been earning more bachelor’s degrees than men in the United States (Jacobs, 1996). In 1996, there were almost two million more women in U.S. colleges than men despite the fact that there were more college age men in the population. About 33 percent of young women aged 25 to 29 have a bachelor’s degree or more education in 2007, compared with 26 percent of their male counterparts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

American women are more likely than men to complete college and earn higher grades

⁸ The 30 member countries of the OECD are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg,

there. American boys make up less than 44 percent of all American tertiary students (Gurion & Stevens, 2005). Australian boys are less likely than girls to complete high school and less likely to go on to tertiary education (Australian Social Trends, 2006; Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000).

In addition to attainment, academic performance is also a problem for boys in some places. American boys are a year and half behind girls in reading levels. They get the majority of D's and F's in U.S. schools (Perkins et al., 2004), are more likely to repeat a grade (Entwistle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997), and are outnumbered by females in honors classes (The College Board, 2009). Girls perform better on reading and writing tests, as well (Gurion & Stevens, 2005). In England, Barker (1997) found that in high schools, girls outperformed boys by an average half grade across all subjects.

In the United States and the United Kingdom, the gender gap is more evident among Blacks and Latinos. In the U.S. in all levels of education (elementary, secondary, and tertiary) African American males lag behind both their African American female and White male peers (Ferguson, 2003; Ford, 1996; Hrabowski, Maton & Grief, 1998). They are more likely than other groups to be expelled from school (Meier, Stewart & England, 1998) and to be under-enrolled in gifted education programs (Grantham, 2004; Hrabowski et al., 1998). African American men also struggle comparatively in higher education settings (Hrabowski et al., 1998; Jackson, 2003). In the 1990s, half as many black men received college degrees as black women (Lopez, 2003). Caribbean Black children in Great Britain, as a group, perform less well academically than other groups of pupils (Nehaul, 1996). However, there is evidence that girls of Caribbean background do

relatively well compared to Caribbean boys (Tomilson, 1983; Mirza, 1992). In Great Britain, Caribbean Black women have a higher level of college education than Caribbean Black men (News and Views, 2002). Caribbean children, especially males, are also excluded from school in disproportionate numbers for disciplinary problems when compared to their white peers (Nehaul, 1996).

Girls have closed the educational gender gap in much of the world. According to PISA results, boys in OECD countries lag behind girls. In the U.S., the U.K. and Australia, a variety of measures point to an academic advantage for girls. A gender gap that favors girls is particularly evident among Black and Latino students in the U.S.

“Developing” Countries

Issues of boys’ under-participation and under performance in education are not limited to “developed” countries. They have also surfaced in the Middle East, in parts of Africa, in Latin America, and in the Caribbean.

Africa. Overall, Africa is not a part of the phenomena discussed here.⁹ However, Lesotho and South Africa are notable regional exceptions, with girls outpacing boys (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Additionally, according to SACMEQ (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) and TIMMS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) data, boys are educationally disadvantaged in Mozambique, Uganda, and Mauritius (Chisolm, 2006), and there is a large female

Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States (OECD, 2008).

⁹ See PASEC data indicating few gender differences in language achievement in Francophone Africa, for example (Ma, 2007).

advantage in language and mathematics skills in the Seychelles (Saito, 2004). Data indicates that the gender differences favoring females are widening (Ma, 2007).

Latin America. In most countries in the Latin American region, there is a gender gap in participation that favors girls (UNICEF, 2005). According to LLECE (Laboratorio Latino Americano de Evaluacion de la Calidad de la Educacion) assessments, gender differences in language achievement favoring girls exist in Latin America. These differences are moderate in Columbia and Mexico and small, yet statistically significant, in Brazil and Peru. Boys in Latin America are at risk of falling behind their female counterparts in language skills as early as primary school (Ma, 2007). Gender differences in mathematics are small and show higher achievement among boys (Ma, 2007).

The Commonwealth Caribbean. Across the Commonwealth Caribbean, females are outperforming their male peers at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Figueroa, 2004; Kutnick, Jules & Layne, 1997; Parry, 2000; UNESCO, 2005). The first level of testing and school placement in the Caribbean is the Common Entrance Exam (CEE). As a result of CEE outcomes, more females are placed in secondary schools than males, even when standards for males are lowered to increase male enrollment. Females also claim more Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and General Certificate of Education exam (GCE) passes throughout the Caribbean (Bailey, 2004; Parry, 2000; Soyibo, 1999).

The issue is two-fold in the Caribbean, as boys under-participate and underperform in education (Bailey, 2004). The gender gap in educational participation in the Caribbean widens at higher levels of education (UNDP, 2003). Drop-out rates for males are higher than females at all levels and as early as second grade (Bailey, 2004).

For example, in Jamaica approximately ninety-five percent of girls and ninety-four percent of boys are in primary school, but only eighty-eight percent of males continue past the fourth grade compared to ninety-three percent of females. The gap continues to widen at the secondary and tertiary levels. Ten percent of Jamaican males go to university while twenty-five percent of Jamaican females attend university (UNICEF, 2005). Currently, in the University of the West Indies system, there are twice as many women enrolled as men. At campuses in Jamaica the gender gap favors women at a rate of eighty-two to eighteen (Bailey & Charles, 2007).

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Between 1980 and 2001, the MENA region saw expansion in educational opportunities for both girls and boys (UNESCO, 2005). “There is no doubt that in... [Arab] states more female students are enrolled in all levels of education” (Bahgat, 1999, p. 134). Recent UNESCO reports on the Arab States clearly reflect this pattern, demonstrating that there are now more girls in school than boys.

The Arab States Regional Report (UNESCO, 2002) examined repetition rates and drop-out rates in the region. The report indicated that boys are more likely to repeat a grade and a higher percentage of girls than boys were reaching fifth grade. In secondary education, net enrollment ratios were higher for girls than for boys. Net enrollment ratio is the ratio of the number of children of official school age (as defined by the education system) enrolled in school to the number of children of official school age in the population. Variation between countries was noted. Yemen, for example, showed much greater participation rates for males. In the UAE, specifically, seventy-two percent of tertiary education students are girls (UNESCO, 2002). Females in the UAE also stay in

school longer than boys, are less likely to repeat a grade, and outperform males (Al Khateeb, 2001). The most recent PISA results showed the female favorable gender gap in scientific literacy in the UAE (this data included public and private schools) was the largest among PISA 2009 participants (Walker, 2011). According to the same PISA results, twice as many boys in the UAE had poor reading skills as girls. Girls outscored boys in scientific literacy by 31 points (average score for the country was around 500) (Ahmed, 2012). When results in Dubai were disaggregated by school type (public versus private), the gender gap is more extreme. On average, girls in public schools in Dubai scored 82 more points in reading than boys in public schools. The average reading score in the UAE was 431 (Ahmed, 2011).

Relatively little is written about the contemporary gender gap in the MENA region or the Arab states. Ridge's (2009a) dissertation, which discusses school quality differences in boys' schools and girls' schools, is a notable exception. Ridge finds significant differences in the quality of teaching in RAK. The girls' schools she studied exhibited higher quality of teaching and classroom practices more conducive to learning than the boys' schools. She highlighted problems with staffing boys' schools with expatriate teachers with little job security. She also found that gender-neutral educational policies in the UAE have inadvertently benefitted girls.

Conclusion

The examples discussed here show that boys are being outperformed by their female peers, not only in "developed" countries but in other contexts as well. We see a contemporary gender gap in education in the U.S., the U.K., Australia, Lesotho, South

Africa, the Commonwealth Caribbean, Latin America, and parts of the MENA region. The gap is clear in the UAE as well. However, girls remain disadvantaged in areas where they do not have equal access to education. Access to education can be impeded by a variety of factors. According to Lewis and Lockheed (2006), girls are disproportionately impacted by limited access to schooling. In some countries, schooling is not provided even for citizens and legal residents. In 2001, 43 countries had no constitutional guarantees regarding education (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). In some places, married girls and pregnant girls are denied admission to schools. Supply of appropriate schools impacts access as well. For example, a study based in rural Pakistan found that girls' only schools were not always available. While girls were permitted to enroll in the boys' schools, few did (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). A pattern of male under-participation and underachievement appears to be prominent in countries with equal access to education for boys and girls. In the next section I review the dominant theories on the topic.

Explaining Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes

As the literature reviewed in the previous section indicates, gender appears to impact participation in education and academic performance. There is a large body of literature addressing questions of gender disparity in education, primarily from sociology of education and sociology of gender. The explanations discussed here can be categorized into two broad groups: individual level factors and institutional factors. The literature is largely based in the United States, Europe, and Australia. Where applicable, special attention is drawn to any literature related to the Middle East. I agree with Ridgeway

(2011) when she says, “I understand gender to be a substantial, socially elaborated edifice constructed on a modest biological function” (p. 8). Existing evidence on genetic and biological differences between boys and girls do not adequately account for the kinds of gender differences I explore in this dissertation. Therefore, I do not discuss biological explanations for gender differences in educational outcomes.

Individual Factors

Family factors. Here I discuss two family factors – parent education and family socio economic status. There is a significant body of sociological literature drawing on status attainment models to explain gaps in educational achievement (see Blau & Duncan, 1967; Sewell, Haller & Portes, 1969 for examples). These studies describe the importance of family resources, such as parental education, in an individual’s educational attainment.

Some have suggested that same-sex role models may be significant in influencing attainment. In other words, having an educated mother would benefit girls and an educated father would help boys (Buchmann, 2009). In developmental studies, mother’s educational attainment has repeatedly been linked to children’s cognitive development and academic performance (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995). Preliminary results from a study in RAK indicate that father’s education has a positive association with boys’ motivation in school (personal communication, Natasha Ridge, March 1, 2012). For these reasons, I have included parental education levels in my analysis.

There is much evidence that socio-economic status affects academic attainment and performance. Al Khateeb (2001), Mittelberg and Lev-Ari (1997), Kutnick (1997),

and Gurion and Stevens (2005) all point to socio-economic background as the most important factor in determining achievement. Mittelberg and Lev-Ari (1999) emphasized that gender was not the singular determinant in the success of the students, but rather that socio-economic background had a much larger impact on determining student achievement. According to UNESCO, children from the poorest 20 percent of households are 3.2 times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the wealthiest 20 percent. Seventy-seven percent of children out of primary school are from the poorest 60 percent of households globally. Kutnick's (1997) study from the Caribbean confirms the gender as secondary only to socio-economic background as a factor influencing achievement.

Family socioeconomic status may impact boys and girls differently. Therefore, I included questions about parental employment in the student survey. UNICEF (2004) describes the role of poverty in boys' underachievement. Boys are more likely to be alienated from school if they come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, Dunne (2005) found a relationship between economic disadvantage and boys' underperformance in Botswana and Ghana. Other studies show the impact of poverty on girls and their education. Sending children to school has an opportunity cost and variable returns. Child labor is an important reason parents do not send their children to school, especially among rural, poor families (Basu & Tzannatos, 2003). Parents may prefer to keep girls at home to contribute to household labor. Poor families may also perceive that the returns on a boys' education are higher than the returns for girls. For these reasons, girls and boys from the same families may not have equal access to the family resources.

It is not clear what impact economics plays in the gendered educational outcomes found in the UAE or how socioeconomic status may impact boys and girls differently.

Incentives. Gender differences in educational attainment may be tied to returns on education that are differentiated for boys and girls, as well. Private returns on education consider the costs incurred by individuals to pursue education. These include direct costs such as tuition, books and uniforms, as well as indirect costs such as lost wages. To estimate the private returns on education, personal earnings are a common measure and are considered in relation to costs. In the human capital view (see Becker, 1975), the decision to continue or discontinue education is the result of a simple cost versus benefit analysis. A student chooses education when s/he expects to earn more by staying in school. This approach ignores the other benefits of education and the uncertainty of the job market. However, the way students and parents perceive returns on education may shape decisions made about continuing schooling and leaving formal education. DiPrete and Buchmann (2006) found that actual returns on education have risen more quickly for women than men (at the tertiary level).

Incentives to stay in school may impact boys and girls differently. Discrimination in hiring practices, labor laws, and wage gaps may discourage girls (or boys) from staying in school. Differentiated labor market returns could explain reasons for allocating resources for education within families as well. Little is known about the returns on education (perceived or actual) in the UAE. In this dissertation, I begin to address this gap in the literature.

Academic performance. Individual performance in school is linked to dropping out or completing school. This dissertation explores this link through survey and interview questions about grade repetition and student perceptions of his or her own academic performance. A Canadian study found grade repetition to be one of the most significant predictors of dropping out (Lamb, 2011). In the United States, girls have higher grades than boys, take more rigorous courses (such as Advanced Placement classes), and have better attendance than their male counterparts (Buchmann, 2009). The reason for these differences is not clear. However, individual academic performance could account for the gender gap. If boys repeat grades and perform poorly in lower grades, they may be less interested in school at higher levels and discouraged from continuing their studies. Likewise, successful early educational experiences may build on one another, increasing the gap between girls and boys as they move through school.

Institutional Factors

Constructions of gender. In much recent literature on gender and education, gender is understood as a socio-cultural construction that changes and is not inevitably the expression of conventional sex-typed traits of biologically predetermined dispositions (Nayak & Kehily, 1996; Davies, 1989; Connell, 1995; 1997). Gender is a term that encompasses femininity and masculinity, socio-cultural constructions that have implications for students' behavior, performance, and identity. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), gender is an activity. By "doing gender," social meanings of gender are reinforced.

Students' constructions of gender produce different behaviors, which impact educational achievement. Children actively construct their own gender identities as relational. While these behaviors may be chosen, social penalties exist for those who do not conform to gender norms (Davies, 1989; Connolly, 2004; Francis & Skelton, 2005). Studies have found that the highest status versions of masculinity among boys are constructions that value rebellion, heterosexual activity, athletic skill, and "having a laugh" above academic studies (Francis & Skelton, 2005). Behavior associated with classroom success such as diligence and obedience are associated with femininity (Warrington, Younger & Williams, 2000). Historically, rationality and intellectuality were masculine domains (Connell, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 1994; Plummer, 2001). This appears to be changing. Two influential works demonstrate this shift, Willis' (1977) seminal work on the construction of young masculinities and Mac an Ghail's (1994) exploration of a British secondary school's gender regime. Paul Willis' (1977) study of British boys in secondary school focused on anti-school culture of resistance among working class boys. For these boys, schooling represented a middle class worldview. The curriculum had little relevance for the working class boys and the jobs they expected to get. The boys embraced a working class masculinity that valued manual labor rather than mental labor. The working class boys associated mental labor with the feminine. Willis contrasted the working class lads with conformist students who accepted the legitimacy of schooling.

Building on Connell's (1995) work on gender hierarchy, Mac an Ghail (1994) examined how schools create a range of masculinities and femininities. Connell (1995) describes a gender hierarchy with hegemonic masculinity above other masculinities and all femininities. Mac an Ghail notes four types of masculinity in a British secondary

school. The first group consists of “achievers” who see themselves as future professionals. The second group is “macho” boys - white, working class boys who, like Willis’ lads, reject school authority and school achievers. The “enterprisers” are boys who are interested in vocational subjects like computer science. Finally the “real Englishmen” maintain the appearance of effortless achievement and intend to have careers. These masculinities demonstrate ways of being boys in this school, a reflection of the larger gender order that values heterosexual norms and values.

As Willis (1977) and Mac an Ghail (1994) demonstrate, the way individuals construct gender and how masculinities and femininities are situated in the gender order impact behavior and academic achievement. In this study, I examine how students and teachers understand the interaction between gender and school to better understand achievement.

Expectation states theory. Another significant approach to understanding how gender norms can impact student achievement comes from expectation states theory. While not a theory of gender, expectation states theory has been repeatedly applied to understanding inequalities. The theory describes how widely shared beliefs, or norms, shape people’s interpersonal judgments and behavior (Ridgeway, 2011). Expectation states theory indicates that individuals with high performance expectations have higher influence over group decisions and more prestige than a person with low performance expectations. Performance expectations are formed by both diffuse and specific external status characteristics. Specific status characteristics include characteristics such as occupation, training, experience, and social class. Diffuse characteristics are immediately recognizable characteristics such as race, age, and gender. Common notions about these

characteristics form the performance expectations for an individual (Ridgeway, 1993; 2001). In a mixed-sex setting, given a “masculine” task, expectations state theory would predict that men and boys would display more agency (participating, contributing, etc.) than women and girls. Differences in individual’s behavior in a group situation can be related to the degree to which performance expectations (as understood by the individual and others) compare to performance expectations of others in the group. In terms of gender, this means that differences in behavior are related gender status beliefs.

Expectations that are biased by beliefs about gender can impact the way an individual interacts in a group and the quality of his/her performance (Ridgeway, 2011). Research shows, for example, that women who are exposed to stereotypical ideas about poor performance of females on math tasks perform less well on math assessments. The converse is also true. Believing positive stereotypes can enhance confidence and performance. Expectation state and stereotype threats may influence performance of students in the UAE. To date, there are no studies in this context to confirm this.

Labor markets. Changes in the labor market impact educational decisions. Lamb & Markussen (2011) note that increased competitiveness in the job market makes dropouts less desirable, as more qualified individuals are available. This increases the pressure on students to stay in school. Labor market returns are generally different for men and for women. Therefore, changes in the labor market are likely to impact boys and girls differently in terms of their educational choices. A decline in the gender wage gap and occupational desegregation, for example, are two labor market changes that have contributed to the rise in college enrollment of women in the United States (Buchmann, 2009). In the UAE, the labor market is unusual. The expatriate population makes up 98%

of the private sector work force (Shah, 2006). Median salaries for local government jobs are approximately three times the median salaries in the private sector (Tong, 2010). Emirati nationals comprise only 10% of the overall workforce (UN Populations Division, 2006). At the same time, Emirati citizens are privileged in the labor market. Emiratization programs have been implemented to improve employment amongst the Emirati population by setting quotas for the hiring of Emirati citizens. Nevertheless, women in the UAE have lower salaries and higher unemployment rates than their male counterparts (Tong, 2010).

Assessments. It is commonly understood that educational assessments are not neutral. “There is no such thing as a fair test, nor could there be: the situation is too complex and the notion simplistic” (Gipps & Murphy, 1994, p. 273). Assessment methods are frequently cited as a component in bias against boys in schools. Some argue that boys and girls are socialized to prefer different ways of thinking and communicating. These differences impact how they approach assessments. Boys are seen as better at short answer and multiple-choice items, while girls are assumed to prefer routine tasks and to excel at extended writing assignments (Collins et al., 2000). Literature on gender and assessment indicates that girls focus on detail and social context, and boys prefer abstractions and generalizations (Gipps, 1996). Additionally, girls seem to do better at sequential assessments and less well at timed exams (Francis & Skelton, 2005). These stereotypes of typical boys and girls are supported by research, but additional inquiry that considers diversity within genders is lacking (Collins et al., 2000). Interestingly, some assessments in Great Britain have been realigned to boys’ preferences, yet girls continue to outperform boys on these measures (Francis & Skelton, 2005). This area of inquiry is

not predominant in literature on schooling in the Middle East. Students in public schools in the UAE are tested regularly via paper-based tests. The assessments are aligned with the Ministry of Education curriculum and intended to determine mastery of curricular material.

School type: Single sex or coeducational. It has been presumed that type of school, single sex or coeducational, affects educational performance, and much research has been conducted on this topic. Some research indicates that single sex education could have benefits for students. Evidence from research based in New Zealand shows that boys in single-sex schools perform better than boys in co-educational schools (Jha & Kelleher, 2006). Aitken (1999) shows that both boys and girls perform better in single-sex educational settings. Boys in single sex schools outperformed both boys and girls in co-education. However, they lagged behind their female counterparts in single-sex schools.

According to a review of research, it remains unclear whether single-sex education benefits boys or girls. “Despite the many confident popular defenses of either of the settings as the superior one or as preferable for girls, conclusions from the actual research are, at best, mixed and more often inconclusive” (Collins et al., 2000, p. 99). The U.S. Department of Education, in its own review of 44 research studies on single-sex education, acknowledges that the results are "equivocal" and does not expressly endorse single-sex schools (USDOE, 2005). Jacobs (1996) points out that many studies of single sex education lack controls for variables such as selectivity. He also indicates that longitudinal data on single sex education is absent.

While adoption of single sex education in general is not recommended, evidence for the conditional use of single sex education is provided by sociologist Cornelius Riordan (2007). His argument is rooted in expectation states theory and empirical evidence. He asserts that the advantages of attending single sex rather than coeducational schools are not significant for students from historically privileged groups. Rather, students from disadvantaged groups benefit in academics and other areas (leadership, expectations, etc.). Riordan advocates for single sex schools, asserting they allow students to make a pro-academic choice. Students and their parents, in contrast to school officials, make the decision to deemphasize youth culture values and stress academic ones. These findings indicate that the benefits of single sex education would likely dissipate if single sex education became commonplace or if it were imposed rather than a choice.

In the UAE, public schools are single sex. Parents can choose to send their children to private co-educational institutions. The default option for Emirati families is single sex schooling. Based on Riordan's (2007) perspective, the benefits of single sex education for Emirati students is likely minimal. However, a sub-group of public school students, non-Emirati Arabs living in the UAE, apply to public schools. Making this choice could be "pro-academic" and could lead to better outcomes for these students. This study takes place in single sex preparatory schools.

Teacher gender and the feminization of education. The dearth of male role models is an issue frequently discussed in literature on boys' underachievement. Recently there has been a call for attention to the need for more male teachers, particularly in elementary education (Allan, 1997; Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Fullan, 1991; Helmer,

2005; Lewis, 2006; Sargent, 2000; Skelton, 2003). This is driven by societal concerns that boys need more positive male role models in schools (Farquhar, 1997; Martino & Kehler, 2006).

In literature dedicated to studying girls' education, there is some evidence that girls' enrollment rises as the proportion of female teachers rises. This relationship appears to be strong, at least in Africa, after controlling for other relevant variables (Colclough, Samarrai, Rose & Tembon, 2003). Similar evidence concerning male teachers and in other contexts is less convincing. However, there are fewer male teachers in the countries with an educational gender gap favoring girls. The U.S. and Australia provide examples of this. According to the National Education Association (NEA), only 21 percent of American teachers are men, and in the last twenty years, the ratio of men to women in the classroom has declined. The shortage of male teachers is most pronounced in elementary school, where men make up just nine percent of teachers; middle schools and high schools also suffer from a disparity (Helmer, 2005). In Australia, the proportion of male teachers has declined from 42 percent to 32 percent since 1985, and the largest decline was among primary school teachers (Australian Social Trends, 2006).

Three main reasons dominate the argument for more male teachers. First, men in the classroom would compensate for the lack of positive male presence in students' lives (Allan, 1997; Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Bushweller, 1994; Farquhar, 1997; Holland, 1991; Sevier & Ashcraft, 2007). Second, male teachers may bring alternative modes of teaching to classes (Beckstrom, 2004; DeCorse & Vofle, 1997; Helmer, 2005; Sevier & Ashcraft, 2007). Finally, male teachers broaden children's ideas of appropriate careers

and behaviors for men (Beckstrom, 2004; Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; DeCorse & Voftle, 1997; Helmer, 2005; King, 1998; Sevier & Ashcraft, 2007).

There are many critiques of the idea that a lack of male teachers contributes to the academic underachievement of boys. First, the "feminization" label as applied to the teaching profession can be misleading. For example, the under-representation of women in senior management of schools results in education systems that continue to be controlled largely by men (Froese-Germaine, 2006). Secondly, this idea is based in a traditional framing of gender as a fixed set of traits, ignoring how masculinity and femininity are created in everyday situations and assuming that male teachers by virtue of their "maleness" will serve as desirable models of masculinity. Proponents of this idea presume that boys are more likely to admire male than female teachers. There is an implication that the presence of men is necessary to correct the damage of overexposure to women that single mothers are providing (Sevier & Ashcraft, 2007). Additionally, this line of thought easily leads to blaming women for feminizing education and schools (Parry, 2004; Sevier & Ashcraft, 2007).

There is little evidence that having a male teacher benefits boys more than having a female teacher (Froese-Germaine, 2006). In ten years of research on men in the teaching profession, Thorton and Bricheno (2006) found that children's backgrounds are likely more important than the sex of their teachers, behavior may be less good in schools with more men, and good teaching is more important than the sex of the teacher.

In the UAE, students at the preparatory and secondary schools always have same sex teachers. This may be a disadvantage for boys, as well-trained, local male teachers are in short supply. In fact, there are currently no male teachers in training in the federal

tertiary education system in the UAE (personal communication, Dr. Ken Volk, March 1, 2012). Teachers in boys' schools tend to be low paid immigrants (Ridge, 2009a). These non-citizen teachers must have teaching qualifications from their home country. The qualifications vary considerably though, as the teachers hail from many different countries. Expatriate teachers have little job security and are paid less than their Emirati peers. According to an article in an Emirati newspaper, the expatriate, male teachers sometime take on additional jobs such as private tutoring or even driving a taxi to supplement wages (Lewis & Shaheen, 2010). The boys in Ridge's (2009a) study displayed a lack of respect for their expatriate male teachers. This disrespect was not seen in girls' schools. The differential status, training, and backgrounds of the mostly Emirati female teachers and the non-citizen male teachers likely impacts the schooling experiences of boys and girls.

Teachers. While evidence that teacher gender influences boys' achievement is lacking, teachers' behavior, perceptions, and experience have all been identified as concerns in relation to gendered performance in schools. Research conducted in the United States indicates that teacher behavior in relation to gender influences student achievement. In 1979, it was concluded that reading achievement was influenced by the amount of time teachers spent with students during reading activities (Leinhardt, Seewald & Engel, 1979). These findings were corroborated by other studies. It was found that boys received more attention and performed better (Sadker & Sadker, 1985).

Teacher expectations affect student achievement (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Vandell, 1989; Hensel, 1989), as well. Teachers' beliefs about gender inform their ideas

about student learning potential (Walkerdine, 1989). If these expectations are shaped by gender bias, male and female students would be expected to perform differently.

Research has indicated that when males are expected to do as well as their female counterparts in reading, they do (Gilman, 1996). According to Jones and Myhill (2004), teachers in their study in the United Kingdom had a tendency to associate all boys with underachievement and all girls with high achievement.

Teachers... reveal a contradictory set of attitudes and assumptions: they speak of boys and girls having equal academic potential, yet give voice to a deficit model of male achievement, whereby expectations informed by pupils' gender are seen to disadvantage boys. The underachieving boy appears to be viewed as the norm for boys, while the high achieving girl is the norm for girls. (Jones & Myhill, 2004, p. 556)

Teachers are frequently reminded that boys' under-achievement and disinterest in school should be addressed in their classes. These teachers may generate a type of self-fulfilling prophecy as they accept gender differences favoring girls as the norm (Francis & Skelton, 2005). Therefore, this study attends to teachers' perceptions about gender and education, particularly how purposes of education may differ for boys and girls and which students' teachers expect to achieve academically.

Gurion and Stevens (2005) and Kutnick et al. (1997) also examine the role of teachers in student achievement. Teacher experience and education are factors that are universally recognized as having an impact on student achievement. In two quantitative macro-studies of the research on what factors make the most difference to student achievement (holding socio-economic factors constant), teacher experience accounts for the largest effect size, more than any other variable (Hanushek, 1989; Hedges, Laine & Greenwald, 1994). Interestingly, a study in RAK found that male, expatriate teachers had more teaching experience than the Emirati female teachers (Ridge, 2010). Based on the

literature described here, one would assume that student achievement would be higher in the boys' schools. However, this is not the case. Perhaps, in RAK, number of years teaching is not related to quality of teaching. However, it is reasonable to expect teachers' thoughts on gender and achievement to impact classroom atmosphere and ultimately student outcomes. In this study, I examine teachers' ideas on the purposes of education for boys and for girls in hopes of understanding how teacher expectations might influence achievement in RAK.

Conclusions

When using standard measures of achievement, male underachievement appears to be widespread in countries with equal access to education. Additionally, under-participation of boys is well documented in many countries. While the phenomenon of male academic underachievement and under-participation is well established, the origins are still unclear.

No single theory of underachievement is satisfactory on its own. Biological explanations fall short and are dangerously deterministic. School-based research provides interesting results but few studies offer feasible explanations. Findings on assessment, school type, and teacher gender do not provide reasons for, or correlations with, male underachievement. However, teacher behavior, especially in relation to gendered expectations, offers promise for future research. Concomitantly, more research on constructions of gender may shed further light on the issue.

Some warn that calling attention to the underachievement of boys is problematic and worry that the idea of male marginalization constructs men as victims of women's progress (Nurse, 2002). Difficulties men currently face and women's progress are sometimes seen as opposite sides of the same coin. Men *and* women contend with a variety of challenges associated with their gender, and the consequences of gender inequity affect both men and women. A growing group of vulnerable, poorly educated men feeds levels of domestic violence and negatively influences future generations (Brown, 2004). Young men who are in school and believe that they have a stake in society are less likely to become involved in crimes and drugs (Providence, 2005). Gaps in educational attainment and achievement may have consequences in labor force participation and gender gaps in wages. Gaps in education levels may have social consequences, as well. If individuals are unable to find mates with comparable education, marriage and family formation may be impacted (Buchmann, 2009). Inequity in favor of either gender undermines development. The challenges men face influence women and society as a whole.

Conceptual Framework

In this section, I present the key concepts and literatures that inform my work. Developing a framework in which to situate this study requires drawing from multiple academic fields. I pull from the sociological life course approach, institutional theory, and gender studies.

Life Course Approach

The life course approach is grounded in several key concepts (such as trajectory and transition) and ideas (context, timing, sequence, interdependence, and agency) (Elder, 1998). Below, I discuss the ideas relevant to this study and then discuss the life course approach to dropping out of school.

Life course concepts. Many studies of gender differences in education focus on discrete markers such as drop out rates or test scores. By contrast, this work will examine educational gender differences while recognizing that students' academic success or failure is not simply an event. A life course consists of multiple, interrelated trajectories. Various trajectories, such as work trajectories, educational trajectories, and parenthood trajectories, combine to create a life course. These trajectories are delineated by transitions. Transitions are changes individuals make into new social positions, as they leave school, enter the labor market, marry, have children, or retire (Elder, 1998; MacMillan, 2005).

Context. Sequences of transitions and trajectories are shaped by and embedded within a social and historical context (Elder, 1998). Life course patterns change as societies change and vary by community. For example, life course patterns differ in times of war or during a recession. In this study, structural and demographic variables are considered in relation to academic achievement. As Aaron Pallas (2003) explains, "Social background influences educational and occupational transitions, both by structuring the choices that individuals make and by shaping the structures in which individuals can

exercise choice” (p. 168). The central variable explored here is sex.¹⁰ My assumption is that school trajectories in the UAE are shaped by gender norms that reflect the context, and that transitions have different meanings and consequences for boys and girls.

Timing. The order of life’s transitions is of interest in life course studies as well. A traditional life course approach emphasizes the socio economic consequences of the timing and sequence of transitions. The meaning of an event can be influenced when it occurs in relation to other transitions (Hagestad & Call, 2007). For example, in some places parenthood is viewed quite differently depending on whether it occurs before or after marriage. Timing of transitions may be viewed differently and have dissimilar consequences for men and for women. For example, women in the U.S. who marry early are likely to leave school. On the other hand, marrying early is not associated with decreased educational attainment for men (Marini, Chan, & Raymond, 1987 as cited in Pallas, 1993). In the UAE, timing of transitions through educational trajectories is guided by education policies through the ninth grade. Education from grade one through grade nine is compulsory. Students must attend elementary school, transition to preparatory school, and complete preparatory schooling. The focus of this study is from of the final year of compulsory schooling forward, when government policies no longer dictate the timing and order of transitions.

Agency within structure. The life course model is an approach that includes consideration of social structure and individual agency concomitantly (Pallas, 2003). To some extent individuals direct their own development. An individual’s action or inaction

¹⁰ I am assuming student sex category based on their enrollment in either a school for girls or a school for boys.

impacts the life course. (In)action can serve to reproduce the status quo or affect social conditions (Giddens, 1984; 1991; Hays, 1994). Agency involves making choices from available options. Structures affect the range of options open to individuals. Some individuals have more agency than others. Structural barriers in the form of cultural norms, discrimination, or policies can limit the options open to some. Individuals interpret their circumstances and form goals and strategies for meeting goals based on how they understand their options (Heinz, 1996). In this study, structural factors are examined through government data sets, student questionnaires, and teacher interviews. Agency is explored through the questionnaires and interviews. I conceptualize agency as individual actions, beliefs, and perceptions about one's reality and future. These actions, beliefs and perceptions are shaped by structures such as cultural norms and government policies.

Dropping out of school. A life course perspective on dropping out of school imagines dropping out as a process rather than a static event, and focuses on multiple dimensions: individual attributes, institutional context, dispositions, and outcomes (Lamb, 2011). In my study I address each of these dimensions. Individual attributes such as sex, nationality, and socio-economic status are common components of drop out studies. In this study, several individual attributes are considered, including sex, nationality, family background (parental education and work status), family type, and family size. Institutional context is also considered. Here, I examine the impact of labor and education policies, as well as institutionalized beliefs about schooling. Student dispositions are examined through questions about educational expectations, reasons for

attending school, and proxies for achievement. Finally, the outcome (dropping out or completing secondary education) is looked at through event dropout rates.

Institutional Theory

In addition to the life course approach, this dissertation draws upon institutional theory. According to institutional theory, social institutions are composed of shared public meanings and norms. Institutions communicate to individuals their rights, responsibilities, privileges, and duties (Searle, 1995). In other words, institutions control what is acceptable. Here, I consider education and schooling as institutions constituted of shared beliefs (Meyer, 1970). Students must believe (and think that others believe) that school has power to offer them gains in status (Meyer, 1970). According to Meyer (1968), groups of schools may possess charters, or “institutionalized social definitions of their product” (p. 577). These charters impact the legitimacy of a degree and the power of schools to transform students and influence their achievements. This study examines the charters of secondary schooling for boys and girls in the UAE.

Gender Studies

The final academic tradition that guides this study is gender studies. The concept of gender has evolved in recent years. Gender is no longer considered simply a role that we learn. As described earlier in this chapter, gender is a socially constructed set of assumptions about the possibilities and limits of female and male experience and behavior (Spencer, Porche & Tolman, 2003). Gender is a term encompassing both femininity and masculinity, which are socio-cultural constructions that have implications

for students' behavior, performance, and identity. Until the 1980s, research was largely concerned with women and femininity, little was said about men and masculinity.

“Sociologists were more concerned with understanding men's oppression of women and their role in maintaining patriarchy” (Giddens, 2006, p. 462). My perspectives on gender are informed by Connell's (1995) work on masculinities and femininities. Masculinities and femininities describe the position of men and women within a gender order. Connell describes hegemonic masculinity as the form of masculinity that is culturally dominant in a given context and emphasized femininity as female compliance with gender inequality. According to Connell (1995), everyday interactions create and reproduce gender relations and the gender order (patterns of power relations among masculinities and femininities).

Conclusion

These theoretical lens, life course approach, institutional theory, and gender studies, inform my approach to this research. As such, I focus on how structures and agency impact the academic achievement of boys and girls in the UAE. I also explore how students and teachers understand the products of schooling and the (possibly) gendered dimensions of these “charters.” I aim for a balanced approach to these issues that considers macro and micro level processes.

III—RESEARCH DESIGN

This dissertation utilizes a mixed methods approach. Relatively few mixed methods studies have been published in the social sciences (Ross & Onwuegbuzie, 2010), and with this dissertation I aim to contribute to this body of literature. Quantitative data from the UAE Ministry of Education and researcher-designed questionnaires were combined with qualitative data from the questionnaires and teacher interviews to answer the research questions. In this concurrent triangulation design (Cresswell, 2006), quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time, weighted equally, and merged into one interpretation. This study has two parts. One involves analysis of quantitative data collected by the Emirati government. The other includes data collection through teacher interviews, and student questionnaires. Both components are guided by the three research questions.

Methods

The tables below outline how the research questions are connected to data and analysis.

TABLE 6: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DATA SOURCES, AND ANALYSIS

Question 1**What variables are related to academic achievement in RAK, UAE?**

Source	Variables	Proxies for Achievement
Questionnaire data	Sex Nationality Family size Parent employment status & occupation Mother's nationality Parent education level Student performance (perception and repetition)	Do you plan to graduate from high school?
Government Data	Sex Nationality Emirate Rural / Urban location of school	Enrollment in secondary school Graduation from secondary school Exam passes

Question 2

How do teachers and students make sense of gendered patterns in academic achievement?

Students (data from questionnaires)	Teachers (data from interviews)
<p>Do you have friends your age who do not go to school? What do they do?</p> <p>Why do you think some students drop out?</p> <p>Who do you think is more likely to drop out?</p>	<p>Who tends to drop out? to perform poorly?</p> <p>How many students are you teaching this year? Approximately how many of these students do you think will complete secondary schooling?</p> <p>Why do you think your students go to school?</p> <p>Why do you think students leave school before graduation?</p>

Question 3

In RAK, what social meaning is attributed to secondary schooling according to students and teachers?

Students	Teachers
<p>Why do you go to school?</p> <p>What do you think will help you get a job?</p> <p>What might prevent you from getting a job?</p>	<p>What is the primary purpose of secondary schooling?</p> <p>How helpful do you think school is in preparing students for life after school?</p> <p>What options do students who graduate from secondary school have? What options do students who do not complete their secondary education have?</p>

The first component of the study addresses my first research question: What variables are related to academic achievement in RAK, UAE? The Emirati government collects statistics from schools each year. I accessed drop out data for each Emirate from the 2007-2008 school year. The sample included a census of all 57,082 secondary school

students attending public secondary schools in the UAE. These data are disaggregated by student nationality, student sex, location of school (rural or urban), and grade level. All of the variables are categorical. Through chi square analyses with 2 tailed significance reporting, I examined the relationship between these variables and dropping out of school and failing yearly examinations. In addition to event drop out data for the nation, I used examination results for RAK. This data set is also from the Ministry of Education. I examined the relationship between sex and passing or failing exams through chi square analysis and 2 tailed significance reporting.

The second part of this dissertation involves collection of quantitative and qualitative data via student questionnaires. Students were given questionnaires (see Appendix A) with closed and open-ended responses. The questionnaires were designed with the assistance of two educational researchers in the UAE. Some questions were added based on suggestions from Ministry of Education personnel. My translator from the Al Qasimi Foundation translated the questionnaires into Arabic. A translator from the Dubai School of Government then reviewed the translations. Minor changes were made. Students from each identified school were randomly selected to participate. My research assistant and I administered the questionnaires. I examined the data collected through the questionnaires to identify relationships among variables using chi square tests for independence. I used several categories of variables. Demographic variables included: sex, nationality, mother's nationality, school, parental employment, parental education, and family type (polygamous or non-polygamous). The academic variables included intention to graduate, effort in school (how hard do you work in school?), academic self-perception (are you a good student?), repetition of a grade, and removal from class for

behavioral infractions. Students were asked if they liked school, why they attend school, and if they connect school performance to future employment opportunities to create attitudinal variables. Having peers or siblings who had dropped out of school were the social variables. Relationships between sex and the academic, attitudinal, and social variables were explored. Relationships between intention to graduate and all other variables were examined as well.

With these findings in mind, I examined the data more closely to determine what factors predict the likelihood that students intend to graduate from secondary school in these four preparatory schools in RAK. Because the main outcome for this analysis is binary, I used logistic regression to analyze the data. In contrast to multiple regression, which requires a continuous dependent variable, logistic regression tests models to predict categorical outcomes. The main outcome was coded as 0/1 to indicate presence or absence of the intention to graduate.

Teachers and administrators were also interviewed. These interviews were minimally structured (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Interview notes were coded using a priori codes based on the interview guide questions. Several additional codes emerged as well such as citizenship status, work environment, and student motivation.

Sampling

In this study, sampling occurred at three levels: the Emirate level, the school level, and the individual level. At the Emirate level, RAK is the focus. As suggested by Ridge (2009a), typical case sampling is used. RAK is socio-economically in the middle

range of the Emirates. Unlike other Emirates, most Emirati students attend the public schools there. This typical case was the focus of the study.

This study centers on ninth grade, the final preparatory year. This is the last year of compulsory schooling. Focusing on this year includes in the data students who do not continue on to secondary school. Presumably, some of the students included in this study will not transition to secondary school. Participating preparatory schools were chosen by convenience. Schools that were willing to participate and cooperative were included in the study. Two schools for boys and two schools for girls participated. School A is a girls' school with 628 students. School B is also a girls' school. There are 550 students enrolled there. School C is a boys' school with 333 students. School D is a boys' institution with 667 students. All of the schools serve students in grade 7, 8 and 9.

At the individual level, ninth grade students were selected randomly from each school using an alphabetized student list as the sampling frame. Teachers volunteered for interviews. At School C, I was able to interview 2 parents as well. One was Emirati; the other was not. Table 7 outlines the various participants.

TABLE 7: INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

Method	Number	Position	Association	Sex	Citizenship
Interview	1	Principal	School A	Female	Emirati
Interview	1	Principal	School B	Female	Emirati
Interview	1	Principal	School C	Male	Emirati
Interview	1	Principal	School D	Male	Emirati
Interview	1	Administrator	School D	Male	Non-Emirati
Interview	10	Teachers	School A	Female	All Emirati
Interview	9	Teachers	School B	Female	All Emirati
Interview	9	Teacher	School C	Male	All non-citizen
Interview	8	Teacher	School D	Male	All non-citizen
Interview	1	Emirate level official	Education Zone	Male	Emirati
Interview	2	Mothers	School C	Female	1 Emirati 1 non-citizen
Questionnaire	28	Students	School A	Female	2 non-citizen
Questionnaire	31	Students	School B	Female	1 non-citizen
Questionnaire	27	Students	School C	Male	3 non-citizen
Questionnaire	31	Students	School D	Male	3 non-citizen

Limitations

This study is limited by a number of factors. Some are described here. Others are discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapters. My focus on one Emirate may not capture the complexity of the situation in the UAE. Additionally, I had previous

knowledge of the drop out and pass/fail statistics for each school and had discussed the particular schools with Education Zone officials before collecting data. This likely influenced my perception of the schools, students, and teachers. To minimize the impact of these ideas, my research assistant and translator were not given information about the schools' drop out rates and exam results. The schools that agreed to participate may have characteristics that differ from schools that did not return our requests for meetings; the selection of schools is an additional limitation.

Another limitation relates to my elementary Arabic language skills, which impacted the depth of my understanding during some interviews. However, my translator, Ghadah Mohammed Al Kadri, has experience as an interpreter and in conducting interviews for research. I hope her expertise has compensated for my lack of skills. Fortunately, many of the interview participants were comfortable speaking to me in English.

CHAPTER IV – WHO ACHIEVES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UAE?

According to my examination of national data, there is evidence that a relationship between sex and school achievement exists. My own data from four preparatory schools in RAK show that a student's perception of his or her worth as a student is important as well. After a brief outline here of the variables analyzed, this chapter will begin with a review of the methods used for this study and describe the two samples. The findings are described in detail and compared to current literature. In the concluding chapter, implications of these findings for research, policy and practice are explored.

Previous research informed my expectation that girls would outperform boys (Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Jha & Kelleher, 2006), urban students would outperform rural students (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; UNESCO, 2005), and citizens would outperform non-citizens (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). I examined these variables at the national level. I also expected academic, attitudinal, and social variables to be associated with academic achievement. I examined these at the local level. Specifically, I expected working hard in school, not repeating grades, good behavior, enjoying school, associating academic success with job market success, and not having friends or siblings who have dropped out of school to be a range of variables associated with positive academic outcomes. In the smaller sample, I used academic expectations (intention to graduate from secondary school) as a proxy for academic outcomes.

Methods

I used two data sets, one from the Ministry of Education and one from a questionnaire I designed, to address the first research question: What variables are related to academic achievement in RAK, UAE? In other words, which boys and girls are succeeding academically and according to which indicators? I examined data collected by the National Ministry of Education for the 2007-2008 school year, looking for correlations between variables in relation to dropping out of school before completing secondary education and to passing or failing school exams, through chi square tests for independence and 2 tailed significance reporting. The variables included sex (boy or girl), citizenship status (Emirati citizen or non-citizen), emirate of residence, and school location (rural or urban). Staying in school and passing school examinations were considered in relation to these variables and are used as proxies for academic achievement for the purposes of this dissertation. I examined dropouts after removing from my calculations students who died or transferred to another school. Narrowing focus to the emirate level, I used the Ministry of Education data to look at exam pass rates for boys and girls in RAK. The exam results used are from Ministry of Education tests that are tied to the curriculum. The exams are intended to test knowledge and analytical skills. Failing exams can lead to repetition of a grade. Exam results, especially in the final year of secondary school, also have implications for university admission (personal communication, Mike Helal, January 29, 2010).

Based on previous research in the UAE and RAK (reviewed in the Relevant Literature section of Chapter II), I expected to find that a relationship between sex and academic performance, with good performance being associated with being female and poor performance with being male. One might also expect that Emirati citizens would outperform their non-Emirati peers. Although Emirati citizens only make up around 12 percent of the population, they have more rights and privileges than the non-citizens living in the country. Non-citizens have fewer rights and privileges than Emirati citizens and as a marginalized group would be expected to perform comparatively poorly. Non-citizens in the UAE are a diverse group, hailing from many countries and occupying all levels of socio economic status. The non-citizens in this study are a relatively privileged group¹¹ among the non-Emirati residents of the UAE. They are all Arabic speakers who have gained access to public schooling. At the same time, they do not have access to the privileges that Emirati citizens enjoy. Citizens have free healthcare, education, and land. They also are privileged in the labor market through Emiratization policies. The Ministry of Education data is also disaggregated by school location; each school is designated either rural or urban. It is not clear how the Ministry of Education defined urban or rural when collecting these data. I attempted to obtain this information but received no response. Evidence compiled by Lewis and Lockheed (2006) indicates that children from traditionally excluded groups, including those attending rural schools, tend to underperform in comparison to other groups. I expected a correlation between academic

¹¹ Non-citizens in elite private schools are likely an even more privileged group. In RAK, the “best” school in the emirate is a private British curriculum school where English is the medium of instruction. The wealthiest and highest status Emiratis and non-citizens send their children to this school.

success and urban schools, and inversely that students from rural schools would be less likely to perform well in school.

The second data set is from a researcher-designed survey (Appendix A) of 117 preparatory students in four schools in RAK. Again, relationships between sex and academic success were expected. I measured several markers of academic success, but the primary outcome is the intention to graduate from secondary school. This data set was analyzed to determine if variables were related to students' expectation that they will graduate from secondary school. The intention to graduate is used as a proxy for academic achievement. According to previous research, positive educational expectations are associated with lower dropout rates (Sewell et al., 1969; Woelfel & Haller, 1971; McDaniel, 2010). Because the main outcome for this analysis is binary, a logistic regression was used to analyze the data.

Descriptive Statistics

In this section, the samples for each instrument are described.

Ministry of Education Data

The first data set is Ministry of Education data from the 2007-2008 school year, including a census of all 57,082 secondary school students attending public secondary schools in the UAE. Fifty-seven percent ($n = 32493$) were girls and forty-three percent were boys ($n = 24589$). The data is also disaggregated by emirate, location of school

(rural or urban), and citizenship status (citizen or non-citizen) of students. The data set includes exam results for students in RAK ($n = 6819$) as well. Ministry of Education exams are given to students each year. Results are used to determine which students will be promoted. They are also considered in tertiary education admissions processes.

Survey Data

Demographic variables. In contrast to the Ministry of Education data, the survey data is focused only on RAK. All surveyed students were finishing grade nine when they responded to the questionnaire. Ninth grade students were chosen in order to include students who will not transition into secondary school or who will drop out of secondary school. A survey of secondary school students would not have included individuals who fail to transition to secondary school. The average age of the students was 14.6 years ($SD = .61$). Sex of respondents was equally distributed with 58 (49.6%) male and 59 (50.4%) female participants. Ninety-two percent of the sample was Emirati ($n = 103$), and eighty-eight percent had Emirati mothers. An additional eight percent had mothers from other Arab nations, and 1.7 percent had non-Arab mothers. The students' four schools were relatively evenly distributed with 23.1, 27.4, 25.6, and 23.9% of respondents. Fifteen percent of participants ($n = 17$) indicated that their father had more than one wife. Almost 72 ($n = 84$) percent said their fathers were working. At the same time, only seventeen percent had mothers working outside the home. Students in the study had an average of

six siblings¹² ($M = 5.8$, $SD = 2.7$). The table below shows frequencies for variables used in the analysis.

¹² While these families seem large in comparison to families in the U.S. or Europe, this finding is comparable to Ridge's (2009a) study in RAK. Her sample had an average of seven siblings and two respondents with more than twenty siblings (in polygamous families).

TABLE 8: FREQUENCIES FOR VARIABLES USED IN ANALYSIS

	N	Valid Percent
Demographic Variables		
Boys	58	49.6%
Girls	59	50.4
Emirati	108	93.3
Non-Emirati	9	71.7
Have Emirati mothers	103	90.4
School A	27	23.1
School B	32	27.4
School C	30	25.6
School D	28	23.9
Father employed	84	73.7
Mother employed	19	16.4
Father Education Level ¹³		
<i>No formal education</i>	9	8.3
<i>Primary education</i>	9	8.3
<i>Preparatory education</i>	22	20.2
<i>Secondary education</i>	35	32.1
<i>Diploma</i>	11	10.1
<i>Bachelors Degree</i>	16	14.7
<i>Masters Degree</i>	4	3.7
<i>Doctoral Degree</i>	3	2.8
Mother education level		
<i>No formal education</i>	10	9.4
<i>Primary education</i>	13	12.3
<i>Preparatory education</i>	24	22.6
<i>Secondary education</i>	31	29.2
<i>Diploma</i>	10	9.4
<i>Bachelors Degree</i>	15	14.2
<i>Masters Degree</i>	2	1.9
<i>Doctoral Degree</i>	1	.9
Polygamous family	17	14.5

¹³ I collapsed these responses into three categories for the analysis. The new categories were: low education (no formal education, only primary education, preparatory education), medium education (secondary education, secondary diploma), high education (bachelors, masters, and doctorate)

Academic Variables		
Intend to graduate	106	91.4
Effort put into school (1 = work very hard)		
1	41	35
2	49	41.9
2.5 ¹⁴	1	.9
3	21	17.9
4	5	4.3
Good student	108	93.1
Repeated a grade	9	7.7
Kicked out of class	33	28.2
Attitudinal Variables		
Like school	95	81.2
Go to school to learn	75	64.1
Link school performance to employment	87	79.8
Social Variables		
Sibling who has dropped out	18	15.5
Friend who has dropped out	15	12.8

Demographics split by sex. When split by sex, demographic information for the sample was generally consistent, as can be seen in Table 9 below. I ran t tests with sex as the grouping variable to determine if the differences between the samples were significant. None of the differences were statistically significant.

¹⁴ One student wrote in 2.5.

TABLE 9: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY SEX

		Male (N)	% of Males	Female (N)	% of Females	t	Sig
Nationality	Emirati	52	89.7%	56	94.9%	1.061	.291
	Non- Emirati	6	10.3	3	5.1	1.173	.243
Mother works		7	12.1	12	20.3	-.734	.464
Mother doesn't work		50	86.2	47	79.7	-.193	.847
Father works		41	70.7	43	72.9	-.860	.392
Father doesn't work		17	29.3	13	22	.586	.599
Mothers nationality	Emirati	50	90.9	53	89.8	-.193	.847
Family type	Polyg.	10	17.5	7	11.9	-.860	.392
Age		X = 14.6		X = 14.6		.393	.7
Siblings		X = 5.6		X = 5.9		-.601	.549

Academic, attitudinal, and social variables. Most of the students ($n = 106$, 91.4%) surveyed indicated that they intend to graduate from secondary school. Most students reported that they consider themselves to be good students ($n = 108$, 92.3%). Eighty-one percent ($n = 95$) said that they like school. Almost thirty percent ($n = 33$) reported being kicked out of class for behavior. Only nine students (7.7%) indicate that they had repeated a grade. Sixty four percent ($n = 75$) of respondents said they go to school to learn, and seventy-five percent ($n = 87$) saw poor school performance as an impediment to employment. Almost thirteen percent ($n = 15$) of the sample had a friend who dropped out of school, and about fifteen percent ($n = 18$) had a sibling who dropped out of school.

Findings

Which Boys and Girls Achieve Academically in the UAE?

Using chi-square tests for independence and 2 tailed significance reporting, I examined variables from the Ministry of Education data set in relation to dropping out of school before completing secondary education and to passing or failing school exams. The variables included are: sex (boy or girl), citizenship status (Emirati citizen or non-citizen), school location (rural or urban), and emirate.

During the 2007-2008 school year, more boys than girls dropped out of public schools. The relationship between sex and dropping out is significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 57082) = 1261.73, p < .001$, and the relationship between citizenship status and dropping out was significant for boys $\chi^2(1, n = 26,815) = 295.343, p < .001$. Being a non-citizen male was related to staying in school. The relationship between citizenship and dropping out did not hold for girls, though $\chi^2(1, n = 33,260) = .029, p = .86$. There was no evidence in the data of a relationship between location of school (rural versus urban) and dropping out for boys, $\chi^2(1, n = 26,815) = 1.17, p = .279$ or for girls, $\chi^2(1, n = 33,260) = .0207, p = .885$. This contrasts previous studies showing rural students as less likely to perform well in school and likelier to drop out (Lewis & Lockhead, 2006).

As can be seen in Table 10 below, there is a strong and statistically significant relationship between sex and dropping out of school in RAK. The odds that a boy in RAK would drop out that year was 12.6 times higher than the odds that a girl would drop out of school. Sex is a significant variable in predicting which students will complete

secondary schooling in RAK. The other education zones show similar relationships to varying degrees. The relationship is least certain in the Western Areas outside of Abu Dhabi and in Abu Dhabi where the odds that a boys would drop out were 1.6 times the odds that a girls would drop out, much lower than in RAK.

TABLE 10: DROP OUTS BY EMIRATE FROM MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DATA

Zone	N	% of Boys Who Dropped out	% of Girls Who Dropped out	% difference	χ^2 Value	Sig.	Odds Ratio
RAK	6,843	11.2%	1%	10.2	352.6	<.001***	12.6
Sharjah	6,101	10	1.6	8.4	256.7	<.001***	6.9
Fujarah	4,503	11.3	1.5	9.8	209.7	<.001***	8.7
Al Ain	11,093	7.1	2.9	4.2	125.8	<.001***	2.7
Dubai	6,812	6.5	2.3	4.2	91.1	<.001***	2.9
Ajman	3,817	8.6	3	6.3	61.6	<.001***	3.1
Umm al-Quwain	1,495	11.2	2.3	8.9	50.1	<.001***	6
Abu Dhabi	13,481	4.5	2.8	1.7	43.7	.0569	1.6
Western Areas ¹⁵	2,356	4.5	2.7	1.8	5.59	.018*	1.6

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The initial analysis of government data indicates that sex is related to dropping out of school, $\chi^2(1, n = 57082) = 1261.73, p < .001$. Using these criteria, girls in public schools in the UAE have higher academic achievement, on average, than their male

counterparts. For boys, citizenship status is significant for dropping out, as well; non-citizens drop out less often than Emirati citizens. The relationship between citizenship status and dropping out was not significant for girls, though. The relationship between school location and dropping out was not significant, either.

Which Boys and Girls Achieve in RAK?

Having described the findings for the country above, here I narrow focus to the emirate level. Still using the Ministry of Education data, I looked at the pass rates for boys and girls in RAK. There is strong evidence for a relationship between sex and passing exams, $\chi^2(1, n = 6,819) = 278.47, p < .0001$, with girls faring better than boys.

According to my examination of data from the Ministry of Education, there is evidence that a relationship between sex and academic outcomes exists.

I analyzed the second data set from a researcher-designed survey (Appendix A) of 117 students in four RAK preparatory schools to determine whether variables are related to students' expectation that they will graduate from secondary school. The intention to graduate is used as a proxy for academic achievement. Due to time limitations, I was not able to follow these students through to their graduation from secondary school. Previous sociological research, primarily conducted in the United States and Western Europe, indicates that educational expectations impact achievement and attainment (Sewell et al., 1969; Woelfel & Haller, 1971; McDaniel, 2010). Positive educational expectations are often associated with lower dropout rates and greater academic and occupational success (Shanahan, 2000; Spenner & Featherman, 1978). Here, educational expectation is defined

¹⁵ The Western Areas are part of Abu Dhabi but currently have a separate education zone.

as the intention to graduate from secondary school. In this study, students were asked: “Do you plan to graduate from secondary school?” (Question 36, see Appendix A). The respondents were in the last months of the ninth grade and projecting just over three years into the future.

I examined data for variables associated with intention to graduate from high school. I also looked at the relationships between various variables and sex. Below, I describe the findings. I used chi square analysis with 2-tailed significance reporting to determine whether variables are independent or if there is evidence of a relationship between variables.

Demographic variables and their relationships with intent to graduate. As anticipated, a statistically significant relationship was found between sex and intention to graduate, $\chi^2(1, n = 117) = 7, p = .016$. Girls in the sample were more likely to report the intention to graduate from secondary school. It is also important to note that process of administering the questionnaires was different in girls’ schools and boys’ school. I had planned to pass out the questionnaires to the students and monitor to ensure there were no questions or issues. In the girls’ schools, administration of the questionnaire proceeded as planned. My translator and I passed out the instrument, gave simple instructions, answered a few questions, and monitored a mostly quiet room. In the boys’ schools, we were in constant motion trying to address all of the questions. Many boys either had more difficulty filling out the questionnaire or were more comfortable asking for clarification and assistance.

Because the schools are single sex, it is not surprising to find that the relationship between intention to graduate and school was significant, $\chi^2(3, n = 117) = 8.8, p = .031$.

When the schools for the same sex were compared, there was no evidence of a relationship, for boys' schools $\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 1.17, p = .46$, or for girls' schools $\chi^2(1, n = 59) = .95, p = .473$. This indicates that school level differences between the two girls' schools and the two boys' schools are not associated with the intent to graduate. In other words, there is no significant difference between the two girls' schools or between the two boys' schools. The significance of the relationship between school and intent to graduate is due to the single sex structure of the schools. I did not find that citizenship status was tied to intention to graduate in this sample, $\chi^2(1, n = 116) = .078, p = .569$. Employment status of parents, mother's nationality, type of family (polygamous or non-polygamous), and parent education did not exhibit a statistically significant relationship with the intention to graduate. The results are summarized in the table below.

TABLE 11: CATEGORICAL DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH INTENT TO GRADUATE

		% of group who intend to graduate	χ^2 Value	Df	Sig.	N (casewise)
Sex	Boys	84.5%	7.00	1	.016*	116
	Girls	98.3				
Nationality	Emirati	91.6	.078	1	.569	116
	Non-Emirati	88.9				
School	A (girls)	96.3	8.8	3	.031* ¹⁶	116
	B (girls)	100				
	C (boys)	80				
	D (boys)	89				
Father employment status	Employed	92.8	1.01	1	.452	113
	Not employed	86.7				
Mother employment status	Employed	100	2.03	1	.358	115
	Not employed	89.7				
Mother nationality	Emirati	91.2	1.05	1	.59	113
	Non-Emirati	100				
Family type	non-polygamous	90.8	.19	1	1.0	116
	polygamous	94.1				
Father's level of education	Low	92.5	.34	2	.84	108
	Medium	88.9				
	High	91.3				
Mother's level of education	Low	87.2	2.48	2	.29	105
	Medium	90				
	High	100				

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

¹⁶ The significance of school is misleading as it simply reflects the single sex composition of the schools.

TABLE 12: CONTINUOUS VARIABLES RELATIONSHIPS WITH INTENT TO GRADUATE

	Intends to graduate	Does not intend to graduate	<i>t</i>	df	Sig.
Age	X = 14.60 SD = .612	X = 14.7 SD = .675	-.471	114	.638
Number of siblings	X = 5.6 SD = 2.46	x = 8.1 SD = 4.1	-2.866	114	.005**

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Academic variables. I expected several academic variables to be correlated with intention to graduate. However, only a student's self-perception has a statistically significant relationship with the intention to graduate. That is, thinking of oneself as a "good student" has a positive relationship with the intention to graduate, $\chi^2(1, n = 115 = 18.48, p = .002$. Students were asked: "Are you a good student?" and offered the binary choice of "yes" or "no." Being kicked out of class for behavior, repeating grades, and how hard a student reports working in school were not related to intention to graduate. Results of the chi-square analysis are in Table 13 below.

TABLE 13: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ACADEMIC VARIABLES AND INTENT TO GRADUATE

		Percent of group who intend to graduate	c^2 Value	Df	Sig.	N (casewise)
Repeated a grade	Yes	90.7%	.92	1	1	116
	No	100				
Kicked out of class	Yes	87.9	.72	1	.47	116
	No	92.8				
Academic self perception	Good	94.4	18.48	1	.002**	115
	Not good	50				
How hard one works in school ¹⁷			2.35	4	.67	116

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

I also examined the relationship between these same variables and sex. There is evidence for a relationship between being male and getting kicked out of class, $c^2(1, n = 117) = 7.45, p = .008$. There is also evidence for a relationship between being female and believing one is a good student, $c^2(1, n = 116) = 8.6, p = .0006$, and between reporting working harder in school and being female, $c^2(4, n = 117) = 12.69, p = .013$. The scale for “how hard” a student could report working in school ranged from 1 to 4. One represented working “very hard.” The average of the responses from girls was 1.6 (SD = .84), and the average of the boys’ responses was 2.1 (SD = .76). The difference between boys’ responses and girls’ responses was statistically significant, $t = 3.5(115), p = .001$. The statistical details are in Table 14 below.

¹⁷ When treated as a continuous variable, effort put into school remains insignificant, $t = -.713, p = .477$.

TABLE 14: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC VARIABLES AND SEX

	Percent male within group	Percent female within group	c^2 Value	Df	Sig.	N (casewise)
Repeating a grade	77.8%	22.2%	3.1	1	.094	117
Kicked out of class	70	30	7.45	1	.008**	117
Self perception as “good student”	46.3	53.7	8.6	1	.006**	116
How hard one works in school			12.69	4	.013*	117

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Attitudes about schooling. The questionnaire also addressed attitudes about schooling. Three variables are discussed here. First, students were asked if they “liked” school or not. There was not a relationship between this variable and the intention to graduate, $c^2(1, n = 116) = 3.15, p = .09$, nor was a relationship between liking school and sex identified, $c^2(1, n = 117) = 3.75, p = .06$. Students were also asked about factors that would impede future employment. Poor performance in school was one option. Students also responded to an item about why they attend school. “To learn” was one option. Responses to these items were not related to intention to graduate or to sex. Generally, reported attitudes about schooling do not appear to have a relationship with intention to graduate. Relevant statistics are included below.

TABLE 15: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE VARIABLES AND INTENTION TO GRADUATE

		Percent of group who plan to graduate	c ² Value	Df	Sig.	N (casewise)
Like school	Yes	93.6%	3.15	1	.09	116
	No	81.8				
Low grades	Yes	93.1	.13	1	1	108
	No	95.2				
Why? (learn)	Yes	65.1	.9	1	.493	116
	No	34.9				

TABLE 16: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ATTITUDE VARIABLES AND SEX

	Percent male within group	Percent female within group	c ² Value	Df	Sig.	N (casewise)
Like school	45.3%	54.7%	3.75	1	.06	117
Low grades	52.9	47.1	3.11	1	.1	117
Why? (learn)	44	56	2.6	1	.12	117

Social variables. Finally, social variables related to dropping out of school are considered. The students were asked if any of their siblings or friends had dropped out of school before completing secondary school. I anticipated that students who have relationships with individuals who have dropped would be more likely to not intend to graduate. Sixteen percent ($n = 18$) of respondents reported having a sibling who had dropped out of school. I expected more students to have a sibling who dropped out since most students had many siblings. Thirteen percent ($n = 15$) had a friend who left school before graduating. Having a sibling who left school early was not related to intention to

graduate, $c^2(1, n = 115) = .15, p = 1$. However, a significant, negative relationship exists between having a friend who dropped out and intention to graduate, $c^2(1, n = 114) = 6.9, p = .026$. Neither variable was correlated with sex. The tables below display relevant statistics.

TABLE 17: CORRELATIONS OF SOCIAL VARIABLES WITH INTENT TO GRADUATE

		Percent of group who plan to graduate	c^2 Value	Df	Sig.	N (casewise)
Sibling dropped out	Yes	94.4%	.15	1	1	115
	No	91.8				
Friend dropped out	Yes	73.3	6.9	1	.026*	114
	No	93.9				

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

TABLE 18: CORRELATIONS OF SOCIAL VARIABLES WITH SEX

	Percent male within group	Percent female within group	c^2 Value	Df	Sig.	N (casewise)
Sibling dropped out	61.1	38.9	1.22	1	.312	116
Friend dropped out	73.3	26.7	3.9	1	.057	115

An examination of these two data sets offers the following key findings:

- At the national level, there is a relationship between sex and dropping out of school before completing secondary school.

- Abu Dhabi is the only Education Zone where a relationship between sex and dropping out was not statistically significant.
- At the national level, there is no relationship between school location (rural versus urban) and dropping out.
- At the national level, there is a relationship between citizenship status and dropping out for boys but not for girls. Non-citizen boys are more likely to complete secondary education than Emirati boys.
- In these four RAK schools, sex was the only demographic variable associated with the intention to graduate from secondary school.
- In these four RAK schools, the only academic variable with a relationship to intention to graduate was self-perception as a “good” student.
- In these four RAK schools, attitudes about school are not related to intention to graduate.
- In these four RAK schools, having a friend who dropped out of school is related to intention to (not) graduate.

With these findings in mind, I examined the data more closely to determine what factors predict the likelihood that students intend to graduate from secondary school in these four preparatory schools in RAK.

Logistic regression. Because the main outcome for this analysis is binary, a logistic regression was used to analyze the data. In contrast to multiple regression, which requires a continuous dependent variable, logistic regression tests models to predict categorical outcomes. The main outcome was coded as 0/1 to indicate presence or

absence of the intention to graduate. Logistic regression can determine how well a set of variables can explain the dependent variable. The results are reported as an odds ratio. The odds ratio is a way of comparing whether the probability of a certain event is the same for two groups. The odds describe the ratio of occurrences to non-occurrences, in contrast to probabilities that describe the ratio of occurrences to possibilities. For example, let us consider rolling dice. If one die is rolled, there is a $1/6$ probability of getting a four, one occurrence in six possibilities. The odds for the same event are $1/5$, one occurrence over 5 non-occurrences, or .2.

Using the above-described relationships as a guide, I constructed a logistic regression model. I eliminated variables that were highly correlated with another variable (mother's employment, for example) and variables that had no significant relationship with the main outcome or main independent variable (such as the attitude variables).¹⁸ Some demographic variables were still included despite lack of significance. I used the mean or mode, as appropriate, to replace missing variables to maintain an *N* of 117.

As can be seen in Table 16, the main outcome for this analysis is the intention to graduate. Participants could answer "yes" or "no." The main independent variable is sex. Demographic covariates included citizenship status, family size, father's employment status, father's educational level, and mother's educational level. Academic covariates included the students' perception of themselves as a "good" or "not a good" student and how hard they reported working in school. Attitudinal covariates included why the students reported going to school and ideas about how school influences future success in

the job market. Social covariates included having friends and siblings who had dropped out of school.

TABLE 19: LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODEL

Main outcome
Do you plan to graduate from high school?
Main independent variable
Sex (1 = boys; 0 = girls)
Demographic Covariates
Nationality
Family size (number of siblings)
Father's employment status
Mother's education level
Father's education level
Academic Covariates
Perception of academic performance (are you a good student?).
How hard do you work in school? (very hard = 4; not hard at all = 0)
Social Covariates
Have any of your siblings left school before finishing 12 th grade?
Do you have friends your age who do not go to school?

The regression was completed in steps. I added variables in groups. The results can be found in Table 17. A result less than one shows a negative relationship or a

¹⁸ I ran the model with the attitudinal variables. As expected, they did not improve the fit of the model, and I removed them.

reduction in the odds of intending to graduate. A result greater than one indicates a positive relationship or an increase in the odds of intending to graduate.

TABLE 20: RESULTS OF REGRESSION FOR INTENTION TO GRADUATE

	Null Model	Demographic	Academic	Social
Sex		0.0884*	0.129	0.159
		[0.0101,0.772]	[0.0109,1.543]	[0.0118,2.157]
Citizenship status		0.731	0.398	0.290
		[0.0606,8.808]	[0.0331,4.774]	[0.0204,4.116]
Family size		0.780	0.837	0.845
		[0.603,1.008]	[0.627,1.118]	[0.618,1.156]
Mother's education		2.254	3.535	4.784
		[0.573,8.858]	[0.694,18.01]	[0.835,27.41]
Father's education		0.660	0.399	0.323
		[0.213,2.049]	[0.103,1.538]	[0.0623,1.670]
Father's employment		0.863	0.628	0.529
		[0.163,4.584]	[0.101,3.897]	[0.0709,3.954]
Effort in school			0.583	0.586
			[0.222,1.527]	[0.196,1.755]
"Good" student			0.0874*	0.0513*
			[0.00906,0.844]	[0.00366,0.717]
Friend dropped out				0.163
				[0.0198,1.343]
Sibling dropped out_				12.99
				[0.513,328.6]
Constant	10.70***	198.5**	669.3**	687.4**
	[5.596,20.46]	[4.954,7953.3]	[7.022,63793.4]	[4.792,98616.8]
N	117	117	117	117
Log Likelihood	-34.15581	-25.67823	-22.71409	-19.92343
Chi-Square		16.96**	5.93+	5.58+
Df		6	2	2

Exponentiated coefficients; 95% confidence intervals in brackets

+ $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Model 1 is the null model. It shows that students in this sample have a tendency to intend to graduate from secondary school. The odds of intending to graduate are 10 times the odds of not intending to graduate.

In Model 2, I have added the demographic variables: sex, nationality, family size (number of siblings), father's education level, mother's education level, and father's employment status. Being male is associated with a decrease of 91% in the odds of planning to graduate (compared to girls) holding the other demographic variables constant. This finding was statistically significant. The other demographic variables do not have a statistically significant relationship with intention to graduate. When compared to Emirati students, non-citizens have 73% of the odds of intending to graduate. However, this finding is not statistically significant. Each additional sibling decreases the odds of intending to graduate by 22%. Again, this is not a significant finding. Having a more highly educated mother is associated more than double the odds of intending to graduate. This is not a significant finding though. An increase in father's education is associated with a 34% reduction in the odds of intending to graduate. However, as the confidence interval shows, father's education can be associated with anywhere between doubling odds to a decrease in the odds of intending to graduate by 79%. Father's employment is associated with a 14% reduction in the odds. This finding is not statistically significant.

In the third model, I have added the academic variables: academic self-confidence and effort students report putting into school. Poor academic self-confidence is associated with a 91% decrease in the odds that a student plans to graduate. This finding is statistically significant. At the same time, the addition of these variables makes sex

appear less significant. In the third model, the analysis shows boys' odds of intending to graduate to be 87% lower than girls' odds. We should not dismiss the importance of sex. The relationship between sex and intending to graduate is still within the confidence interval of the previous model. Rather than having 9% of the odds of intending to graduate when compared to girls, boys have 13% of the odds of intending to graduate when compared to girls when controlling for academic variables. In other words, in the third model, being male is associated with 87% decrease in the odds of intending to graduate. The magnitude decreases when I controlled for academic variables. In this data set, the relationship between considering oneself a good student and intention to graduate may explain the sex relationship.

The final model includes social variables indicating if a student has a sibling or friend who has dropped out of school. While they are not significant, they do explain the data to some extent, as they marginally improved the fit of the model, $p = .051$. Concomitantly, the relationship between academic self-confidence and intention to graduate remains within the confidence interval of the previous model. The odds reduction for academic self-concept is larger when controlling for these variables. Sex remains statistically insignificant.

Conclusion of logistic regression. The significance of sex appears strong when many other variables are held constant. However, when academic self-perception is held constant, the significance of sex is diminished. When I controlled for academic variables, the magnitude of the relationship between sex and intent to graduate decreased as well. This finding complicates the idea that sex is the key factor in boys' underachievement and under-attainment in schools in RAK. Given that the other variables indicate gender

constructions, at least in part, gender remains a key factor. In the next section, I will discuss the implications of these findings as they pertain to current literature in sociology, and gender and education studies, and to policy and further research.

Discussion

One cannot determine the causal mechanisms of the gender gap in educational performance in the UAE. In other words, this study cannot claim that poor academic self-concept causes individuals, particularly boys, to drop out of school. Nevertheless, we can consider some likely explanations for the findings. Before discussing these possible explanations, I review the key findings. I discuss each of the key findings in reference to relevant literature and implications for future research and educational policy and practice. The national data supports the idea that a relationship between sex and academic success exists. Additionally, it appears that citizenship status is an important factor for boys but not for girls. Data from RAK is also pointing towards a relationship between academic achievement and sex. However, it appears that at least in these four schools, academic self-confidence has a significant role in students' intention to graduate.

Ministry of Education Data

Event dropout rate. How do the event dropout rates discussed here compare to rates elsewhere? It is difficult to compare dropout rates. Dropout rates are calculated in a variety of ways and are based on different definitions of dropping out. While the studies discussed here may not be directly comparable to my study, they are used as a platform for contextualizing my findings. It is also important to note that the data used included all

secondary students in the UAE. The dropout rate calculated does not include students who never registered for secondary school. Because of this, the rates here are likely low. A study conducted in Dubai found that students are most likely to drop out after failing their tenth grade exams (personal communication, Mike Helal, January 29, 2010). With this in mind, I hope I have captured a relatively accurate snapshot of dropouts.

The event dropout rate for girls in RAK is only one percent. That is lower than the event dropout rate of any U.S. state (NCES, 2010). At the same time, the event dropout rate for boys in RAK is higher than the event dropout rate of any American state. During the 2007-2008 school year, event dropout rates in American public schools ranged from 1.7 percent in New Jersey and Indiana to 7.5 percent in Louisiana. That same year, there was no measurable difference between the event dropout rates for boys and girls (including both public and private schools) (NCES, 2010). When compared to the U.S., dropout statistics for girls in RAK appear exemplary. Statistics for boys, in contrast, are not encouraging. A recent study of students in Dubai indicated that the dropout issue is not confined to post-compulsory schooling. Helal and Al Marri (2011) found that three percent of sixth grade Emirati boys dropout of the public schools each year. In interviews discussed in the next chapter, male teachers indicated that some of their 9th grade students had dropped out in the previous year, even though schooling is compulsory through ninth grade.

Because the event dropout rate only describes the percentage of students who left the school system in a particular year, the rates are lower than status or cohort dropout rates. Status dropout rates describe the percentage of the population that is not enrolled in school and has not completed school (Pallas, 2002). In a study based in Dubai that

included public and private schools, the status dropout rate was 22 percent of males and 14 percent of females (between the ages of 20 and 24 who had not completed secondary education) (Helal, 2011). Cohort dropout rates describe the longitudinal experience of a cohort. Unfortunately, cohort dropout rates are less commonly calculated and are not available for RAK or the UAE in general.

Sex. Findings from the national data about sex being associated with academic performance are not surprising. Boys were more likely to drop out and less likely to pass school exams than girls. This is an anticipated outcome. Research from much of the industrialized world is pointing to a shift in education that favors females (Cortina, 2009; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Jha & Kelleher, 2006). These findings are also in line with research from Ridge (2009a; 2009b), UNESCO (2002), and the World Bank (2007) focused on the Arab Gulf Region.

Emirate. It is notable that the sex differences in dropping out are not significant in Abu Dhabi. This finding points to a need for further research that includes Abu Dhabi and explores the differences between schooling there and in other parts of the UAE. I discussed my work with officials from ADEC (Abu Dhabi Education Council) and applied for IRB approval to conduct research in Abu Dhabi. Unfortunately, I was not able to secure permission to expand my study to Abu Dhabi at this time. No previous studies have compared education by emirate or Education Zone. The education systems in the UAE are fairly fragmented. Until 2005, the national Ministry of Education oversaw the education system in all emirates. The Ministry of Education was responsible for hiring teachers, developing curriculum, constructing, and maintaining all public schools in the country. In 2005, Abu Dhabi and Dubai created independent education zones. There are

now essentially three education systems in the country, one for Abu Dhabi, one for Dubai, and one for all other education zones (Ridge, 2009a). This fragmentation may be creating conditions in Abu Dhabi that lessen the gap between boys and girls. ADEC has invested significant effort into improving teacher quality in the emirate. In fact, ADEC has not hired teachers from the federal teaching institutes recently, citing their poor preparation for the classroom. Instead, ADEC is importing certified teachers from the U.S., Great Britain, and other English speaking countries (personal communication, Robin Dada, February 28, 2012). This disparity among emirates warrants further investigation.

Rural versus urban. School location was not associated with dropping out. This is in contrast to studies in other areas where rural students were found to have lower academic achievement and lower participation in education (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; UNESCO, 2005). At the same time, students in urban areas of the U.S. are more likely to dropout than their peers raised in suburban or rural areas (Pallas, 2002). It is also interesting to note that Ridge (2009a) found rural students in RAK to be better behaved than their peers in urban areas of RAK. It appears that programs and policies aimed at increasing male educational attainment and achievement need not be differentiated based on school location.

Citizenship status. One of the most remarkable findings regards citizenship status. In general, it is expected that the most privileged in a society will perform best in school. Schools frequently reproduce social inequalities based on gender, socio economic status, race, and other factors (Bowles & Gintis, 2007; Pincus, 2002; Collins, 2007). It is known, for example, that in developing countries children from wealthier households are more

likely to be enrolled in school (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Within the UAE context one would expect Emirati boys, who hold a position of privilege in the nation, to outperform their non-Emirati peers and their female counterparts. However, this is not the case. The national data indicates that girls are outperforming boys in Emirati schools and shows non-citizens outperforming citizens. Surprisingly, I did not find that citizenship status was tied to intention to graduate in the sample from preparatory schools in RAK. This may mean that intention to graduate is not related to staying in school or passing exams. This could also be connected to my sample and the small number of non-citizen students included. These findings on citizenship point to a need for continued exploration of the intersection between sex and citizenship status. Overlapping categories of sex and citizenship impact the groups differently.

Expectations

In this study, I use student intention to graduate from secondary school as a proxy for academic achievement. Student expectations about future academic accomplishments have previously been tied to school persistence and achievement. Status attainment models have linked individual variables such as parent education to student expectations. In this view, socialization processes impact student expectations. However, it may be difficult for students to accurately predict their ability to graduate from secondary school. Studies indicate that students in the U.S. have become more disconnected from the reality of what they are able to achieve. One study analyzed 25 years of high school senior classes and found that students have become more ambitious over the years. In fact, half of seniors in 2000 intend to get an advanced degree (Reynolds, Stewart, Macdonald, &

Sischo, 2006). These expectations are not in line with actual enrollment rates. A large percentage (91.4%, $n = 106$) of my sample intended to graduate from secondary school. It is likely that some of these students do not fully understand the barriers that may prevent them from graduating. It is possible the students are unrealistic concerning their future accomplishments. Alternatively, the students may have provided the response they believed I wanted, that they intend to graduate.

Sex. In addition to dropping out and exams results, student expectations were examined through the researcher-designed questionnaire. Sex was related to student expectations. Boys were less likely to say they intend to graduate from secondary school than girls were. Research on student expectations rarely considers gender (McDaniel, 2010). A notable exception is a study using PISA data. McDaniel (2010) explores patterns in gender difference in educational expectations in twenty-nine developed countries and finds that girls tend to have higher educational expectations than boys in all but two countries.

Other demographic variables. In contrast to my study, McDaniel (2010) found higher levels of parental education were associated with expectations of completing tertiary education. Her findings are in line with status attainment models. Much previous research in the status attainment tradition has revealed a link between father's education level and student educational attainment. Social reproduction theories (Bourdieu, 1986) indicate that educational expectations are related to socioeconomic status. Research in developing countries has shown that parental education has a positive link to a child's education, with the mother's education level being more important than the father's (Kazeem, Jensen & Stokes, 2010). Similar findings in OECD countries link parent

education with school persistence. These include Payne (2001) in the U.K., Jonasson and Blondal (2002) in Iceland, Merino and Garcia (2008) in Spain, and Jarvinen and Vanttaja (2001) in Finland. In the UAE, PISA 2009 results showed a correlation between socio economic status and reading skills (Ahmed, 2012). In these four schools in RAK, the status attainment link is not clear. Parental status in the form of education and employment are not significantly related to intention to graduate. This is an unexpected finding. One possible explanation is that education and employment are not markers of social status in RAK. Possibly, kinship and genealogy confer status and are more closely related to socio economic status than education and employment. Traditionally, social status in the region depended on the position of the family and tribe. An individual's name, father's name, and clan or tribe are commonly used to identify Emiratis. Official documents indicate clan and tribal affiliation (Hurreiz, 2002). These kinship associations are not revealed in this data set.

On the other hand, this unexpected finding may simply be a function of my small sample. It is generally believed that parental education and parental social class are linked (Sullivan & Whitty, 2005). This may not be the case in RAK. Other markers of social class may more accurately reflect a status attainment model. Further research is required to understand how a student's origins impact educational expectations and success.

Academic variables. While my findings are not directly analogous since my study deals with expectations concerning secondary education rather than tertiary education, it is interesting to consider how the results compare to McDaniel's (2010) study. Academic ability measured through achievement scores was associated with expectation of graduating from tertiary education in McDaniel's work. If we accept academic self-

perception as a proxy for academic ability, my findings are similar. Students who consider themselves good students were more likely to expect to graduate from secondary school. Other variables in this area did not correlate to intention to graduate. I had anticipated that repeating a grade and being kicked out of class would be negatively related to the intention to graduate. The data did not support this expectation. It is interesting that self-identification as a good student is more significant than the school and teacher-imposed variables (repetition and removal from class).

Attitudinal variables. McDaniel (2010) also finds that positive attitudes about the importance of schooling are related to the intention to complete tertiary education. In my sample, this was not the case. Students' ideas about the connection between schooling and the labor market were not related to intention to complete secondary school. Their perceptions about the purposes of schooling and reported reasons for attending school were not statistically significant either. It would be interesting to consider why these variables associated with status attainment and attitudes about schooling are not significant in RAK but were in twenty-nine developed countries. Dubai participated in PISA in 2009, and the UAE participated in PISA +. An analysis of these data in contrast to McDaniel's work would be useful. Unfortunately, RAK does not yet participate in PISA.

Social variables. In this study, several social variables were examined. I expected friendship or sibling association with other dropouts to be negatively associated with high academic expectations. Research in the United States relates early withdrawal from school with associating with "deviant" peers (Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz & Tremblay, 2001). In this sample, having a friend who dropped out was significant, but sibling

relationships were not. The relationship was no longer significant in the logistic model. Since the inclusion of these variables improved the fit of the model (marginally, $p = .051$), there seems to be some level of explanation provided by association with dropouts. Because this relationship is not clear, additional research in this area could be fruitful.

Situating the local findings within the national context. The findings from the survey administered in four schools in RAK complicate the picture of the underperforming male student in the UAE. The tie between sex and school performance is widely accepted in the UAE. Boys are expected to leave school early and to, on average, perform poorly in comparison to their female peers. In the portion of my study conducted in RAK, student academic self-confidence impacted the connection between sex and plans to graduate.

In terms of implications, the first step is to confirm this finding through further research. This research is not without limitations, and future research should attempt to address some of these limitations. Since we cannot expect a direct link between academic expectations and attainment or achievement, future research including attainment data is needed. Likewise, the connection between actual achievement and self-perception needs to be further explored. Depending on the results of this further research, the conversation about increasing graduation rates may need to be reframed in terms of student expectations rather than sex. The connection between sex and academic expectations requires deeper analysis, as well. Teachers, parents, and policymakers should be cognizant of how they may be perpetuating the idea that boys are not good at school, which may be contributing to the lower expectations of boys. Further discussion of these

issues should include recognition of how student's ideas about their own worth as a student may be related to their future success in school.

Agency within structure. In these findings, the impact of structural variables can be seen. Sex, nationality, and emirate of residence appear to have influence on academic achievement. Student agency is revealed through perceptions and beliefs about the future. Most students in the sample plan to graduate from secondary school, revealing a positive perception of their futures. How students perceive themselves (as good students, or not) is related to their intention to graduate, but beliefs about the connection between school performance and occupational opportunity were not related to intention to graduate. Effort in school is a way students can exercise agency. There is a connection between how hard students report working with their sex. Girls reported working harder than boys did. The interplay of agency and structure in this situation can be interpreted in several ways. Perhaps Emirati boys recognize that they have options other than completing schooling. This leads them to work less hard then perceive themselves as poor students. On the other hand, girls and non-Emirati boys may not see leaving school as an option (because of how structures have shaped their understanding of their futures) available to them. This could lead to more effort in school and higher academic self-perception. Emirati boys may position themselves as poor students because of perceptions about how boys perform in school, leading to low motivation, and less effort. Both structural and agentic variables appear to influence student achievement. The exact mechanism remains unclear and deserves further investigation.

Limitations

Some of the limitations are identified in the discussion above. The findings presented here will be the basis of future research and have the potential to inform policy and classroom practice. However, the limitations of the study and findings should be made clear. Sampling, use of proxies, and socially desirability bias are three issues to consider. The selection of schools was conducted by convenience. The individual students within the schools were selected randomly. The results of the survey are only generalizable to ninth grade students in these four schools. Additionally, the sample size of 117 is relatively small. Also, not intending to graduate, one of the main outcomes, is a rare occurrence among respondents. It can be difficult to find relationships using logistic regression and rare events, as the cells get smaller with each crosstab. Future research should attempt to include a random sample of schools and a larger sample population. Several proxy indicators are used here. The use of proxies allows for additional uncertainty in interpreting results. I may not actually be measuring what I intended. Finally, students may be over-reporting their intention to graduate, which is a socially desirable response.

Conclusions

Special attention was paid to dropping out and the intention to drop out. Using a life course perspective, I see dropping out as a process and examine individual attributes,

institutional context, dispositions, and outcomes (Lamb, 2011). In this chapter I have considered individual attributes via sex, nationality, and family attributes. Dispositions are considered through achievement proxies, attitudes about school, and expectations. The outcome of dropping out is discussed in terms of the event drop-out rate calculated from Ministry of Education data and through an examination of student intention to graduate. The institutional context is discussed in the next chapter.

The aim of this chapter was to determine what variables predict academic achievement in RAK and the broader UAE. The findings indicate:

- Being a male citizen is associated with poorer outcomes in comparison to non-Emirati males and to females.
- Being a female without regard to citizenship is associated with better outcomes.
- School location by emirate may impact outcomes, but no difference was detected by rural versus urban location.
- In the RAK sample, academic self-confidence (considering oneself a good student) has a significant relationship with intention to graduate and impacts the relationship between sex and intention to graduate.

From this study, it is clear that no single factor can predict student success in the UAE.

The situation in the UAE is interesting, with findings deviating from what was anticipated in several categories, most strikingly in terms of citizenship and academic self-perception. In the next chapter, I delve into teachers' and students' understandings of the gender gap in RAK, and the purpose of schooling for boys and girls there.

CHAPTER V—MEANINGS OF SCHOOLING IN RAK, UAE

In the last chapter, I examined quantitative data to better understand which students are graduating from secondary school, intend to graduate from secondary school, and pass their annual exams in the UAE, particularly in the emirate of RAK. Special attention was paid to sex. I answered my first research question: *What variables are related to academic achievement in RAK, UAE?* I found a relationship between positive academic outcomes and sex favoring females at the national level. The smaller, local sample showed that academic self-perception was significant as well.

In this chapter, I discuss how students and teachers in the four preparatory schools in RAK understand gender and educational achievement. I also explore differentiated meanings of schooling for boys and girls in RAK. According to institutional theory, ideas about the meaning of schooling impact the legitimacy of a degree and the power of schools to transform students. My second and third research questions are informed by institutional theory and are an attempt to better understand what Meyer (1970) calls the charter, or institutionalized social definitions of the products, of schooling in RAK. The questions addressed here are:

- *How do teachers and students make sense of gendered patterns in education in RAK, UAE?*
- *In RAK, what social meaning is attributed to secondary schooling according to students and teachers?*

In the last chapter, I focused on the characteristics of students who complete secondary school, pass exams, and plan to graduate from secondary school. Here, I try to expand this more attainment-based understanding by adding a discussion of institutional processes. I strive to uncover “how institutional arrangements create pathways through the life course that illuminate the antecedents and consequences of dropping out” (Pallas, 2002, p. 319).

Methods

To address these two research questions, I continue to draw on the researcher-designed questionnaire that was given to 117 ninth grade students in four schools in RAK. The questionnaire is available in Appendix A. In this section, descriptive statistics from the survey results are used to address the research questions. I also interviewed 36 teachers, 6 administrators, and 2 parents. The interview guides are in Appendix B and Appendix C. The interview data were coded with a priori codes then revisited once new codes emerged.

All 117 surveyed students were finishing the 9th grade at the time they responded to the questionnaire. The average age of the students was 14.6 years ($SD = .61$). Sex of respondents is equally distributed with 58 (49.6%) male and 59 (50.4%) female participants. Additional information about the sample is described in Chapter IV of this dissertation. The interview participants include teachers from the same four schools that the students in this study attend. The teachers had between four and seventeen years of teaching experience. All of the teachers in the study had at least a bachelor’s degree; one

male teacher had a master's degree. More female teachers had degrees in education (12 out of 19) while male teachers tended to have degrees in content areas (11 out of 17).

Table 21 below provides more details about the participants.

TABLE 21: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Number	Position	Association	Sex	Citizenship
1	Principal	School A	Female	Emirati
1	Principal	School B	Female	Emirati
1	Principal	School C	Male	Emirati
1	Principal	School D	Male	Emirati
1	Administrator	School D	Male	Non-Emirati
10	Teachers	School A	Female	All Emirati
9	Teachers	School B	Female	All Emirati
9	Teacher	School C	Male	All non-Emirati
8	Teacher	School D	Male	All non-Emirati
1	Emirate level official	Education Zone	Male	Emirati
1	Mother	School C	Female	Emirati
1	Mother	School C	Female	Non-Emirati

All interviews were conducted between January and June of 2010. The participants volunteered to speak with me. Most interviews were in English. In some cases, I used an Arabic speaking translator who has experience translating for educational research. The interviews took place on the school campuses or administrative offices. The

interviews lasted between fifteen minutes and two hours. The interview guides can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Findings: How Do Teachers and Students Make Sense of Gendered Patterns in Education?

I explored how teachers and students in RAK make sense of female favorable patterns in education in two stages. First, I determined whether teachers and students perceive gendered patterns in education. Then I discussed perceptions about why students drop out before completing secondary school.

Perceptions about Who Drops Out

First, I considered whether students and teachers perceive gendered patterns in education. In other words, did they see differences in the achievement of boys and that of girls? As I expected, most do perceive a difference. Question 25 in the questionnaire asked students, “Who do you think is more likely to drop out of school?” “Boys” and “Girls” were the two options given. Eighty percent of girls ($n = 47$) and seventy-two percent of boys ($n = 42$) surveyed thought that boys are more likely to drop out. I asked each teacher if boys or girls are more likely to drop out of school before completing secondary education. All teachers, male and female, thought boys are more likely to drop out of school. A male teacher (of male students) said, “20-30% of my students will not make it to secondary graduation” (non-Emirati, male teacher, interview, April 25, 2010). When asked to think about their current students, most male teachers expected between eighty and ninety percent of their students would complete secondary school. These

predictions are not comparable to the dropout figures calculated in the previous chapter. The teachers forecasted the cohort dropout rate. My analysis of Ministry of Education data yielded the event dropout rate. The event dropout rate describes the percentage of students who dropout in a given timeframe. The cohort dropout rate follows a cohort of students over time to determine the percentage of the cohort that drops out of school (Pallas, 2002). Two male teachers shared that they had students who had dropped out that year even though the students had not completed compulsory education. The teachers did not have confirmation from the students that they had dropped out but believed they were not returning based on conversations with other students. All the female teachers predicted that between ninety and one hundred percent of their current students would complete their secondary education. The expectations of the teachers in girls' schools were commiserate with statistics from the Ministry of Education.

Perceptions of Why Students Drop Out

When asked what their friends who have dropped out of school are doing, students could indicate that a) they do not have friends who have dropped out; b) their friend(s) are working; c) their friends married; d) their friends stay at home; e) other (with space for elaboration). I also asked teachers what their students who had dropped out were doing. In an effort to understand how students and teachers make sense of gendered patterns, I also asked participants why they think students drop out. Below, I discuss five themes in relation to responses from students and their teachers.

Poor student. Students reported that their peers drop out of school because they are not good students. Seventy-eight percent of girls ($n = 46$) and fifty-three percent of

boys ($n = 31$) reported poor performance in school as a reason students drop out. The gendered nature of these responses is interesting. It is not clear why more girls believe that poor school performance leads to dropping out. This was the most frequent response from students. In contrast, few teachers saw poor performance as a reason for dropping out. One female teacher seemed to think that girls who perform poorly in school would persevere. "Girls who don't pass keep trying to sit exams to get diploma." (Emirati female teacher, interview, April 26, 2010)

To work. The idea that students leave school for job opportunities was divided by sex. No girls reported that their friends who dropped out were working, but twenty percent ($n = 12$) of boys did. One-third of boys ($n = 19$) think students drop out of school to work. Thirteen percent ($n = 8$) of girls think that students drop out to enter the labor market. In general, it appears that male students are more likely than their female peers to associate dropping out of school with employment. Teacher interviews also revealed a gender divide in the association between employment opportunities and leaving school early. Teachers who work with boys tended to believe boys leave school for work, while female teachers did not believe their female students dropped out for jobs.

To marry. Although few participants noted a link between dropping out and getting married, there was a difference by sex. Thirty percent of girls ($n = 18$) believed marriage was a reason students leave school. Only five percent of boys ($n = 3$) did. No boys reported having friends who dropped out to get married; three percent ($n = 2$) of girls did. There is an inconsistency between the number of girls who believe marriage pulls students away from school and the number who know someone who left school for marriage. I imagine this difference is due to the age of the participants. They see marriage

as a reason to leave school but are not yet old enough to get married themselves or to have many friends who are married. Teachers indicated that dropping out for marriage may be more prevalent in rural areas, particularly for girls. One teacher said, “Those [girls] who don't finish school are generally from the mountains where married life is thought to be better than college life for girls... where an education may not be thought to be necessary for a girl. Girls from here [an urban area] may stay in school while engaged” (Emirati, female teacher, interview, May 12, 2010). She went on to say that a relationship would not necessarily prevent a girl from completing her studies.

To stay home/care for family. Three percent ($n = 2$) of girls and five percent ($n = 3$) of boys have friends who just stay home after dropping out. Teachers did not indicate that they believe students leave school to stay home unless they are also taking care of a family member. Twenty-two percent ($n = 13$) of girls and sixteen percent of boys ($n = 9$) think that their peers drop out to care for family members. As with the question of marriage, it is possible that if this question were asked of older students, more would have friends who left school for this reason. The students seem to see leaving school to stay home as a possibility but few students report knowing anyone in this situation. The discrepancy between their perceptions and their experiences may also reflect changes over time. Marriage or staying home may have been alternatives to school for these students' parents or older siblings. The participants would then perceive these to be realistic reasons for dropping out. Perhaps, this is a less acceptable option for these students and that is reflected in the findings.

Dissatisfaction with school experience. Thirty percent of girls ($n = 17$) and twelve percent ($n = 7$) of boys reported a link between not liking teachers and dropping

out of school. At the same time, most students also said that they like their teachers and like school. Fifty-seven girls (97%) and forty-six boys (82%) indicated that they like their teachers. Eighty-eight percent ($n = 52$) of girls and seventy-four percent ($n = 43$) of boys said they like school. While students believe their peers leave school because they do not like it, most students report relative satisfaction with school.

How do students and teachers in these schools make sense of gendered patterns? Both students and teachers tend to see boys as more likely to drop out of school. Teachers report that girls tend to be better students as well. Teachers attribute dropping out to desire for employment. Students see poor performance in school as a cause of dropping out.

Findings: What Social Meaning is Attributed to Secondary Schooling?

In this section, I address my third research question: *In RAK, what social meaning is attributed to secondary schooling according to students and teachers?* As with the previous question, student questionnaire responses and teacher interviews are used. I explored why students attend school, why teachers think students attend school, and the differentiated meanings of school according to teachers.

Why School?

Through the questionnaire, I asked students why they attend school. Students were asked to choose “all that apply” and were given an “other” option, as well. The most frequent responses were “to learn,” “to get a job,” and “to see friends.” Teachers were

asked, “Why do you think your students come to school?” Teachers’ responses were not congruent with students’ responses. Teachers most frequently mentioned social reasons and students having no other options. Below, findings are discussed by theme.

Socializing. This is the area with the most overlap between student answers and teacher responses. Both girls and boys reported attending school for social reasons. Forty percent of boys ($n = 25$) said they attend to see their friends and twenty-four percent ($n = 14$) said they come to school to see their teachers. Half the girls ($n = 29$) indicated that they come to school to see friends and eighteen percent ($n = 11$) to see their teachers. Every female teacher in the study mentioned the social aspect of school as motivating attendance for girls and several (10 of 19) mentioned that social life is a positive aspect of the school experience.

To learn. More girls than boys indicated that learning is a reason they go to school. Around sixty percent of boys ($n = 33$) and seventy percent of girls ($n = 42$) reported that they attend school to learn. This is an interesting contrast to what teachers believe. None of the male teachers interviewed believed that their students come to school to learn. About half of the female teachers (9 of 19) cited learning as a reason that girls attend school. “Maybe she wants to know things that she can’t learn from her mother and auntie. School gives that” (female teacher, Emirati, interview, April 26, 2010).

Employability. A commonly cited purpose of education is to prepare students for the labor market. Approximately forty percent of girls and the same percentage of boys ($n = 23$ for girls, $n = 24$ for boys) reported that they attend school in order to get a job. Considering the traditional view that education prepares students for the workforce, this

is a low percentage. Unfortunately, it is not clear what level of education the students are describing. It is possible that they see completing compulsory education as sufficient for gaining employment. Or, they may believe a college degree is important to secure work. Nevertheless, some of the students appear to see a connection between education and the labor market.

Female teachers see education as a path to employment for girls. "I think girls are liking education more now that they hear about being business women, being a [government] minister,¹⁹ being a pilot. It's education for work" (female, Emirati teacher, interview, May 10, 2010). These examples revealed the advances women have made in the labor market in the UAE. Women's participation in the labor force may signal to girls that investing in education will payoff in the labor market.

However, teachers also discussed the cultural impediments to capitalizing on their education that Emirati girls encounter. One teacher shared this story about her sister: "My sister, she studies IT and business at the university and will graduate next year. My father told her she can only work in a place with no men. So, she will sit at home" (female teacher, Emirati, interview, April 26, 2010). Traditional views about appropriate work place environments may limit jobs some women take. This implies that education is not only for work for girls. Education must have a purpose other than employment for this teacher's sister, for example.

According to male teachers, education can yield a greater variety of employment opportunities for boys. However, these opportunities are not particularly lucrative or of high status. One male administrator compared getting a bachelor's degree with dropping

out. He said that the degree would allow an individual to become a teacher, for example. As Ridge (2009a) indicates, this is a job without much status for men. In contrast, he could “quit school now, be a police officer; get a salary for the years he would have been studying” (administrator, Emirati, January 24, 2010). For most adults I interviewed, leaving school was seen as the path to employment for boys. In an effort to provide employment opportunities to citizens, the government makes jobs available that in other circumstances would require education credentials or vocational training. Many government jobs require few education credentials, and these jobs pay well. In fact, median salaries for local government jobs are approximately three times the median salaries in the private sector (where education credentials are more likely to be required). Federal government jobs pay even more. Additionally, the average workweek in a government job is 40 hours in contrast to the average 48 hour workweek in the private sector (Tong, 2010). According to several teachers and administrators, students expect to have access to government jobs and see these positions as a privilege of citizenship.

No other options. Fifteen percent ($n = 9$) of boys report that they attend school because parents force them. Less than two percent ($n = 1$) of girls say this. Almost nine percent of boys ($n = 5$) and seven percent of girls ($n = 4$) say they have nothing better to do, so they go to school. However, this is not how teachers perceive the situation. They said that students attend school because of legal requirements and parental insistence. Some teachers believed that more students would drop out of school if they were not forced to attend. “As soon as there is an opportunity, they will be out [of school]” (male teacher, non-Emirati, interview, January 27, 2010). Unfortunately, the sample does not

¹⁹ Currently, the Minister of Foreign Trade, the Minister of Social Affairs, the Minister of State are women.

include students in secondary school. It is not clear if Emirati parents would force their children to attend school after the compulsory level.

Other. Three students wrote in the “other” option. All mentioned religion, and all were girls. “Islam encourages me to learn” was written in on one questionnaire. In future studies, it would be important to include religion as an option when asking about reasons for staying in school. Since so few students chose to write in the “other” category and all discussed religion, I believe it is a significant issue that deserves further attention.

Table 22, below, summarizes the responses students gave when asked why they attend school.

TABLE 22: WHY DO YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

	Boys	Girls
	% of boys (N)	% of girls (N)
Forced to attend	16% (9)	2% (1)
To learn	57% (33)	71% (42)
To see friends	43% (25)	49% (29)
To see teachers	24% (14)	19% (11)
To get a job	41% (24)	39% (23)
Nothing better to do	9% (5)	7% (4)

Students reported going to school to learn, to get a job, and for social reasons. Female teachers assumed their students attended school to socialize and to secure future

employment. Male teachers believed their students came to school because the boys had nothing else to do.

Differentiated Meanings of Schooling

Delving deeper into the interview data reveals differentiated meanings of schooling. Interviews exposed differences in how teachers see the function of schooling for groups of students. Teachers were asked to discuss which of their students tend to perform well and which students tend to perform poorly in school. Citizenship emerged as a theme, particularly in relation to male students. Two key findings related to sex and citizenships surfaced. First, teachers perceive Emirati boys to be less interested in school and less likely to complete secondary schooling than their non-Emirati peers. Second, teachers believe that the spurious connection between education credentials and labor market opportunities for Emirati boys creates the differences between students.

Intersection of Citizenship and Sex

The teachers described non-Emirati boys as better students than Emirati boys. When comparing non-Emirati and Emirati boys, some male teachers specifically described their problem students as Emirati boys. For example, one teacher stated: “I see differences in motivation [between Emirati and non-Emirati boys]... they [Emirati boys] come in late, keep their heads down through class, maybe sleeping through first period” (male teacher, non-Emirati, interview January 25, 2010). This teacher and others described Emirati boys as uninterested in school and unmotivated. By contrast, one

English teacher said his non-Emirati students “stand out, in a good way, with how they are in class, their attitude, behavior” (male teacher, non-Emirati, January 25, 2010). The male teachers also stated their belief that non-Emirati students will complete secondary school, but did not expect the same from all of their Emirati students. Male teachers tended to believe that less than three quarters of their male Emirati students would finish secondary school and that all male non-Emirati students would finish. Notably, according to student questionnaires, the Emirati and non-Emirati boys disagreed with the teachers. The students had similar expectations about completing secondary education, with eight-three percent of Emirati boys ($n = 5$) and eighty-five percent of all boys ($n = 49$) intending to graduate from secondary school. The non-Emirati boys were more likely than the Emirati boys to consider themselves to be good students, though. They also reported working harder in school than their Emirati peers did. As discussed in the previous chapter, national data indicated a relationship between citizenship status and dropping out that was significant for boys. Being a non-Emirati male was related to staying in school.

In contrast, when teachers from girls’ schools talked about the relative academic success of groups of students, citizenship was not a significant factor. Teachers indicated that more difference exists between girls from rural areas and girls from urban areas than between national groups. The teachers perceived that male non-Emiratis are outperforming Emirati boys and that, in relation to education, citizenship is not pertinent for girls. This was reflected in student responses as well. Emirati and non-Emirati girls’ questionnaire answers were not markedly different. The national data examined in the

previous chapter echoes this finding as well. The relationship between citizenship and dropping out did not hold for girls.

Labor Market

Teachers repeatedly referred to the lack of connection between academic credentials and labor market opportunities for Emirati boys. More education does not lead to better prospects for these students, who have access to positions in the military, police, and other public institutions without further education (male administrator, non-Emirati, interview, February 1, 2010). A recent (and as yet unpublished study) of dropouts in Dubai found that two-thirds of Emirati dropouts are working in the government. The top employers of dropouts are the Department of the Interior, the police force, and the army (personal communication, Mike Helal, January 29, 2010). As one teacher stated, “Dropping out is the short cut to the same financial gain, if he is a national [Emirati citizen]” (male teacher, non-Emirati, April 26, 2010). The teacher went on to explain that male students leave school early to pursue lucrative job opportunities with the army or other government positions. These opportunities are not available to non-Emiratis. “It’s the silver spoon syndrome. They [Emirati boys] have a position with the family company or something like the army. Their sisters don’t have that waiting for them.... The others [non-Emirati] don’t have that silver spoon” (female teacher, Emirati, April 27, 2010). Another teacher, an immigrant from Egypt, compared the experiences of students in Egypt with his students in RAK: “In Egypt I thought if I have money I can get an education. Here, if you don’t have money you get an education” (non-Emirati, male teacher, interview, February 8, 2010). This teacher saw education as a privilege in Egypt.

In RAK, he saw privilege as negating the need for an education and Emirati boys as the most privileged group.

Emirati citizens benefit from many rights, including free education through tertiary level, free healthcare, and land. The average Emirati male citizen receives 55,000 USD in benefits from the government each year (Brown, 2007). Citizens are privileged in the labor market as well. Emiratization programs²⁰ have been implemented to improve employment amongst the Emirati population by setting quotas (without regard to sex) for the hiring of Emirati citizens. The intent is to replace expatriate workers with Emirati nationals. For example, 25 percent of new employees in the banking sector must be Emirati citizens. Emiratis are also protected against lay-offs (Raven, 2011). Additionally, Emiratis earn higher salaries than their non-Emirati counterparts. In the realm of education, UAE law sets different salary schedules for teachers according to citizenship status. For example, non-Emirati teachers' salaries are capped at around 10,000 AED (2,700 USD) per month, while Emirati teachers can expect to receive a minimum of 14,000 AED (3,800 USD). Emirati teachers also receive allowances for each child they have, which non-Emirati teachers do not. Expatriate teachers serve on one-year contracts that may or may not be renewed (Ridge, 2009a). Non-citizen teachers are required to have teacher licensure from their home country. The requirements for teacher certification vary though. Some countries require a bachelor's degree in a content area; others require a degree in education. Requirements vary concerning student teaching and practicum.

²⁰ These policies have been met with resistance in the private sector. Anecdotally, some companies are designing counter measures to avoid hiring nationals. Emiratis are perceived as demanding higher salaries, more benefits, and shorter work hours than non-Emiratis.

Non-Emirati men and women are disadvantaged in the labor market. They are not eligible for some jobs and are likely to be paid less than their Emirati counterparts. However, a non-Emirati boy's employment status is more important than a girl's. According to visa regulations, a non-Emirati girl can continue to live in the UAE on her father's visa until she gets married. In comparison, a boy can only remain on the same visa until he turns 18. A non-Emirati boy must either be enrolled in a university or obtain his own employment visa to retain his resident status (Abu Dhabi Government, 2011). This adds pressure for non-Emirati males to remain in school and to perform well, as the consequence of neglecting education could be removal from the country.

Technically, Emirati girls have access to most of the same jobs that Emirati boys have access to, but positions in the army or police are not widely accepted as appropriate for women, so few take such jobs. One highly educated Emirati teacher shared that she was teaching because her family wanted her to work in a single sex environment. She would have preferred to work in business, but that would require close interactions with non-familial men. She and her family were not comfortable with this (interview, April 27, 2010). A recent study in the UAE echoed this comment, finding that female respondents were not comfortable with male coworkers (Shallal, 2011). Another study found that 40 percent of female Emirati respondents believed that gender segregated working environment was very important or important (ICOS, 2010).

Women's employment is also more limited by geography than employment for men. An Emirati man may find employment in another emirate and move there. Emirati women are unlikely to live away from their families. If they do work outside of RAK, they must commute. Some hire drivers or taxis. Others drive themselves. One teacher

explained the difficulties women face when considering employment in another area of the country through a story about her former student. “She was too tired. She lived in Ras Al Khaimah. She took her courses [for a Masters degree] at Sharjah and was at work everyday in Dubai. Of course that cannot go on. She finished the Master [degree] and is home.” I asked why she did not live in Sharjah or Dubai to decrease her commuting time, and the teacher indicated that it would be inappropriate for her to live away from her family. “That is not a way for a girl to live, without her families around” (female teacher, Emirati, January 29, 2010). According to Tong’s (2010) analysis of labor force data, salaries in RAK (average 13,000 AED/month) are lower than in Abu Dhabi (average 42,000 AED/ month) or Dubai (average 52,000 AED/month). Restricted mobility could impact earnings. Emirati women and men appear to have similar occupational opportunities but cultural norms limit options for women. While not explicitly barred from taking advantage of their citizenship status, it seems that gendered cultural norms make it more difficult for women to capitalize on the privileges of citizenship in the labor market. Perhaps girls are pursuing further education to obtain better work opportunities.

What is the Social Meaning of Schooling?

The purpose and meaning of schooling in RAK is complicated. According to some students, schooling offers increased employment opportunities. Many of the participating students also saw social benefits to being in school and learning a goal of education. Teachers expressed that the meanings of school are differentiated by sex and citizenship. Schooling has the potential to open more pathways to employment, and employment is of particular importance to non-Emirati boys, who cannot remain in the

UAE on their fathers' visas but must secure their own visas through higher education or a job.

Discussion

In the discussion, I interpret and situate the findings within a life course approach, and present the limitations of the study. My intention was to answer the two research questions about how participants understand gendered patterns in education and what the social meaning of schooling is in RAK.

Interpretation

Perceptions about sex and schooling. As expected, most participants see girls as more likely to complete school. The idea that boys underperform in school appears to be widespread in the UAE. There are frequent newspaper articles on the topic. The issue was discussed at length and by at least seven different speakers at the 2010 Gulf Comparative Education Society meeting, as well. The national data from the Ministry of Education explored in the previous chapter indicates that there is a relationship between sex and achievement (as defined by exam passes and completing secondary school) that favors girls. While the survey data based in these four schools in RAK indicates that controlling for academic self-perception diminished the significance of the link between sex and achievement, the participants in this study see sex as significant.

It is important to understand both the actual correlates to academic achievement as well as the perceived connections. The belief that boys are inferior students and more

likely to drop out, whether accurate or not, can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. As W I. Thomas once said, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (as quoted in Merton, 2010, p. 1). Expectation states theory indicates that stereotypes about demographic groups can impact behavior in groups (Ridgeway, 2011). My findings indicate that gender beliefs about schooling position boys as poorer students and girls as better students. If academic achievement is considered feminine accomplishment, even in the single sex environment, this could impact the boys' participation in school. Research has shown that individuals who are exposed to negative stereotypes tend to confirm that stereotype in their performance, showing how the social structure can impact academic performance. While stereotype threat is usually associated with the performance of girls in math or similar situations, in this case, perhaps Emirati boys are negatively impacted by the pervasive belief that boys are not good students.

Students say that academically poor students drop out. Students appear to believe that being a poor student results in dropping out, putting responsibility on the individual rather than institutions. This view indicates that individuals who leave school early may blame themselves rather than the system. This finding connects to those from my previous chapter where student surveys indicated that students' academic self-perception was significant in their intention to graduate from secondary school. It appears that girls are more likely to consider themselves good students than boys are. Girls were also more likely to link poor performance and dropping out. Girls also reported working harder in school than boys did. It is possible that more girls see a link between effort, performance, and results.

At the same time, female teachers are more positive about their students than male teachers. The perceptions of teachers and students may be reinforcing one another. The teachers' perceptions may be a self-fulfilling prophecy with the perceptions creating their own confirmation. Research on the impact of teacher expectations dates back to Rosenthal and Jacobson's flawed but influential Pygmalion study conducted in 1968. While their claims that teacher expectations changed student IQ have been debated, a wealth of empirical research on teacher expectations has flowed from their work. Previous literature on Caribbean students in the United Kingdom indicates that the teachers' perceptions produce low expectations about the academic capability of Caribbean students. This leads teachers to interpret certain behaviors more negatively than similar behaviors from White students (Gillborn, 1990). The negative attitudes expressed by male teachers in this study may then decrease motivation of their students and reinforce the stereotype that boys are poor students, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of underachievement.

Differences between teacher and student perceptions. Teacher perceptions about the purpose of schooling differed from student perceptions. Although 60% of boys reported attending school to learn, none of their teachers believed that boys come to school to learn. This disagreement brings up new questions. Are students giving socially acceptable responses when they say they go to school to learn? Which view more closely reflects the perspectives of other members of the community? These issues could be addressed through further research that includes interviews with students to better understand their perspectives, and interviews with family members to triangulate the findings.

Different meanings for schooling: Labor market. The data indicates that school has different meaning for different groups. I expected that meaning assigned to schooling would be different for boys and girls. I did not anticipate finding citizenship status a differentiating factor as well. Teachers indicate that one purpose of school is to provide increased employment opportunities for girls and for non-Emirati boys. Teachers do not think school is for employment for Emirati boys. School is, according to teachers, a place male students must go due to compulsory education laws and parental insistence. They also indicate that students come to school because they have nothing else to do. However, around forty percent of the boys report that they go to school to get a job. It is not clear if they believe that completing compulsory schooling is sufficient for employment, though.

This finding diverges from how education credentials and employment are generally understood, especially in the United States. According to Randall Collins (2007), “education has become highly important in occupational attainment in modern America” (p. 37). Many job postings indicate that applicants should have particular educational credentials.²¹ This connection between education level and opportunities in the labor market is widely accepted. Educational credentials have become a mechanism for sorting and social selection in the United States (Brint, 1998). Within a functionalist paradigm, there is an assumption that meeting educational requirements means an applicant will be able to complete the tasks associated with the particular job. In this view, education provides the skills needed to perform jobs; important jobs need to be filled by highly skilled people. According to functionalist theory, as jobs become more

complex due to technological advances, formal education expands to provide skilled workers to fill these positions (Collins, 2007). Essentially, educational credentials are thought to represent skills that employers find desirable. From this perspective and in this context, it appears that schooling does not offer skills required for the job market that Emirati boys enter.

From a conflict perspective, educational credentials can be seen as status symbols that do not signify achievement (Brint, 1998; Collins, 2007; Sandovik, 2007). Employers are interested in working with highly educated people who they perceive to be like themselves. In fact, there is evidence that education does not provide specific job related skills. Additionally, grades are not a good predictor of job success (Brint, 1998). Since the advantaged have better access to education credentials (see Karen, 2007 and Bourdieu, 2007, for example), educational requirements are seen as method for maintaining advantage for elites. In RAK, it seems that advantages allow Emirati boys to skip education credentials.

From an institutionalist perspective, the meanings ascribed to schooling impact the power and legitimacy of a degree. For Emirati boys in RAK, it seems that a secondary diploma may not have adequate power to keep them in school. Completion of preparatory schooling has sufficient legitimacy to allow them entrance into the job market and status in the community.

Teachers believe that Emirati male privilege is leading Emirati boys to leave school early. Teachers perceived school as a barrier to economic gain for Emirati boys.

²¹ Brint (1998) points out that the use of educational requirements is a relatively recent phenomenon in the United States and is not prevalent in all sectors. Entrepreneurship and careers such as plumbing that require apprentice are cited as exceptions to the use of educational requirements.

The meanings of schooling described here reveal the impact of institutions on individual life courses. Depending on sex and citizenship, different pathways are blocked or opened for individuals. Institutional privileging of Emirati boys decreases incentives for these boys to complete school. Visa regulations and Emiratization policies make education more valuable to non-Emirati individuals, especially boys. This is an interesting finding in light of research on labor markets and schooling. Lamb and Markussen (2011) examined employment and educational attainment in OECD countries. They found that as jobs for young people became scarce students remained in school longer: “school has acted as a refuge for deteriorating teenage labour markets, leading to higher levels of upper secondary participation.... Increased competitiveness for job opportunities makes dropouts and nonqualified school leavers less attractive to employers, placing pressure on students to stay on and complete school qualifications...” (p. 12). It appears that non-Emirati boys and girls as well as Emirati girls are feeling pressure to stay in school. This same pressure is relieved for Emirati boys through Emiratization programs and easy access to government jobs. The consensus among teachers is that government jobs are plentiful and easily obtained (for Emirati males). It is not clear if this is accurate though. Emirati newspapers report that 14 percent of Emiratis in Abu Dhabi are unemployed (Shaheen, 2010). At the same time, 35 percent of young jobless Emirati’s reported that they are unemployed by choice (Shaheen, 2010). More than half (56%) of the men in a recent study chose not to work; only fifteen percent of women said they were unemployed by choice. These individuals reported that they were waiting for the right job opportunity (ICOS, 2010). It appears that Emirati men can be selective when looking for employment, implying a lack of pressure to enter the job market.

Different meanings for schooling: Citizenship. It is important to reiterate that the teachers at the schools for boys are mostly non-Emirati. The teachers' citizenship status likely impacts their responses. All of the male teachers who participated in this study were non-Emiratis. In the UAE, about 70% of male teachers are expatriates from neighboring Arab states. In contrast, around 80% of all female teachers are Emirati (Ridge, 2009a). It seems reasonable that the non-Emirati teachers identify more closely with the non-Emirati students and therefore perceive them to be better students. While this may be true, the belief that non-Emirati boys are performing well in school is supported by Ministry of Education data (see previous chapter). Non-Emirati boys attending public schools are more likely to complete secondary school than their Emirati peers. There is no significant difference between non-Emirati and Emirati girls in terms of graduation rates. It is also possible that the families who choose to send their boys to public schools rather than private ones are in some way unique. The choice to pursue a different type of education may be a pro-academic choice and indicative of an academically oriented attitude. Riordan (2007) discusses pro-academic choices in relation to single-sex schooling in the U.S. He sees the decision to attend a single sex school as a commitment to learning, with parents and students classifying the single-sex school as different from and better than co-educational options. In the UAE, non-Emirati families who choose public education for their children could be expressing a commitment to learning and academic achievement, making this group unique.

As stated before, the non-Emirati students included in this study are a relatively privileged group. Flexible forms of citizenship that emphasize inclusion are available to privileged groups of non-citizens and immigrants (Nyamnjoh, 2007; Ong, 1999). Flexible

citizenship offers permission to belong and to access rights across contexts (Ong, 1999). Social differences such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, and geography are important when it comes to belonging. While I do not think these non-citizen students qualify as flexible citizens, their citizenship is certainly more flexible than the many non-citizens in the UAE. Many non-citizens do not have access to the power or connections that allow these students access to public schooling. As stated before, the non-citizen students in this study have Emirati mothers or work for the government. As such, in comparison to the majority of non-citizens, these Arabic speaking, public school students in this study have access to more rights and privileges. Schooling allows the non-citizen boys and non-citizen girls to prepare for the labor market. In this way they position themselves as citizens with some flexibility who aim to be a part of the society through the education system and with aspirations of employment and further inclusion. For these non-citizen students, education may be a means to secure opportunities and freedoms. Education allows them to exercise some flexibility in constructing their futures in the UAE. Within the notion of flexible citizenship (Ong, 1997), these boys experience some level of privilege, specifically in the realm of economic status and education, but are otherwise limited by national policies of citizenship. Social and cultural institutions are mediating personal freedoms and impacting choices about education. The non-citizen boys in public schools appear to be using education, an arena where they have a degree of personal control and choice, to create more options for their futures.

Principals may only be admitting well behaved, motivated non-Emiratis as well. For non-Emiratis, admission to public schools is supposed to be based on merit, and not all students who wish to attend public school are admitted. According to one mother of

non-Emirati students in public schools, she submitted her sons' grades from private school directly to the public school principal. Grades in English, Mathematics, and Science needed to be over eighty-five percent for admission (Syrian mother, interview, November 21, 2011). It appears that individuals who work in the government sector are more likely to secure places for their children in public schools (personal communication, Dr. Natasha Ridge, February 28, 2012). This is reflected in the questionnaire responses from non-citizen students. When asked about parental occupation, all of the non-citizen students' fathers worked for the government (as teachers, in immigration, and in the police force) or they had Emirati mothers.²² This suggests that having connections is important for accessing public schools. To better understand these differentiated meanings of schooling, we need to learn more about the non-Emirati students attending public schools.

Masculinities. From the data, a picture of an Emirati masculinity that is associated with dropping out of school emerges. At the same time, an Emirati masculinity linked to education is not apparent in the data. Emirati boys have few models of men in the education system. Messner (2000) argues for a three part conceptual model for understanding men's movements. While this is not an analysis of a men's movement, the framework is useful in this case. His "terrain of the politics of masculinities" includes analysis of institutionalized privileges, the costs of masculinities, and inequalities among men. Institutional privileges refer to those conferred to a group through social structures. "Men, as a group, enjoy institutional privileges at the expense of women, as a group"

²² Citizenship in the UAE is patrilineal. Despite having Emirati mothers, these students are non-citizens because their fathers are not Emirati.

(Messner, 2000, p.5). Teachers in this study repeatedly reference Emirati male privilege. These privileges are seen in the labor market, in wages, and in cultural norms that allow males greater freedom.

While masculinities afford privilege, conforming to a limited idea of how to be male has costs too. Scholars have written about the price of clinging to masculinities that can be detrimental. For example, men are frequently expected to minimize physical pain, delaying medical care, and risking their lives (Harrison, Chin, & Ficarratto, 1995; Stillion, 1995). This adherence to a narrowly defined masculinity can have serious consequences. Perhaps one of the costs of masculinities in RAK is reduced academic achievement. One Emirati masculinity is tied to early labor market entry and dropping out of school.

Finally, a consideration of the inequalities among men is needed. In the U.S., it is evident that white, upper class, heterosexual men reap more of the rewards of patriarchy than their peers in different groups. Likewise, the privileges and costs of masculinities are not the same for all men and boys in RAK. Non-Emirati boys have fewer privileges in Emirati society. At the same time, they appear to have escaped one adverse effect of an Emirati masculinity that is linked to low academic achievement. This study does not address many other groups of boys in RAK. Non-Arab students, private school students, and others likely experience the privileges and costs of masculinities differently.

Limitations

My research has several limitations related to the sample. One significant limitation is the exclusion of dropouts. As Fine and Rosenberg (1983) remind us, “Critical perspectives on social institutions are often best obtained from exiles, that is, persons who leave those institutions” (p. 257). In this case, individuals who do not complete secondary school are the “exiles.” The data here includes reports from teachers and students who are still in school. By including students who will presumably drop out of school later, I hope I have captured some of their perspectives. Further research would ideally include the young people who have left the formal education system. This would be a significant contribution to understanding the process of dropping out of schools in RAK. Richer data could be obtained via student interviews as well. The study would have been strengthened with a larger sample and especially a random sample of schools in RAK. Future studies would benefit from the inclusion of families, in addition to teachers and students.

The findings and data presented here do not consider that students can re-enter the school system through adult education programs sponsored by the Ministry of Education. In 2009, there were 6,093 men and 7,119 women enrolled in adult education in 78 centers across the UAE. RAK has four adult education centers, two for women and two for men (UAE Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Unfortunately, examination of the role these adult education centers play in education and in achievement is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Future research in this area is warranted.

Also, as noted in the previous chapter, it is important to recognize that students and teachers may be providing socially desirable responses. Optimistic responses form

students may not reflect reality. Ideally, interviews with the students would have been included as well. The data discussed here is largely related to attitudes. While teachers report that there is little connection between schooling and the labor market (for Emirati boys), an examination of labor force data is required to determine the certainty of this assertion.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed my second and third research questions. To summarize, the key findings are:

- Most students and all teachers included in this study believe that girls are more likely to complete secondary school than boys are. Teachers also describe female students as higher achievers.
- Students tend to believe that being a poor student results in dropping out, blaming the individual rather than institutions.
- Even though 60% of boys reported attending school to learn, none of the teachers from their schools believed that boys come to school to learn.
- The data indicates that school has different meaning for different groups.
- Teachers indicate that the purpose of school is to provide increased employment opportunities for girls and for non-Emirati boys.
- Teachers do not think school is for employment for Emirati boys. However, around forty percent of the boys report that they go to school to get a job.

- Teachers believe that Emirati male privilege is leading Emirati boys to leave school early. School may be perceived as a barrier to economic gain for Emirati boys.
- Schooling represents the possibility of employment and advancement for girls and non-Emirati boys.

If there is no connection between the labor market and education for Emirati boys, to increase the education level of boys, the labor market must change or other reasons for going to school must be emphasized. Fundamental changes in opportunities and reward systems may be required to decrease the gender gap in academic achievement. It is also important to keep in mind the results described in the previous chapter indicating that sex is possibly less important than a student's academic self-perception. What we expect to get out of education is important and determines the value of a degree. If, as teachers believe, degrees do not yield increased employment opportunities for boys, the value of schooling for these boys is limited. Likewise, Adely (2007) found that girls in Jordan expressed frustration with the false promise of education. In the case of RAK, we should consider, as Bajaj (2010) suggests, "education *for what?*"

The data discussed in this chapter illustrates the significance of institutional factors in influencing the options students see as available to them and how the relationship between schooling and the labor market is understood. Visa regulations, Emiratization, and gender norms appear to impact the connection between education and the labor market. In the previous chapter, individual factors, student dispositions, and the event drop-out rate for 2007-2008 were discussed. Taken together, a picture of the

process of dropping out is beginning to form. The situation is complex though, and much can still be learned.

CHAPTER VI--CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I began with an introduction to the problem of the contemporary gender gap in the UAE. I introduced the research questions and provided contextual information about RAK and the UAE. In the second chapter, relevant literature was reviewed. Chapter III reviewed the mixed methods approach to the study. Chapters IV and V discussed the data and findings. To conclude, I first review my findings and situate the findings within a life course approach. I then discuss the findings as they address each of my research questions. Finally, I discuss the contributions and implications of this study.

Summary of Findings

In this section, I review my findings within a life course approach. I considered individual factors, institutional factors, dispositions and outcomes, to uncover a nuanced picture of schooling in the UAE and RAK.

Individual Variables

At the national level, I examined sex and citizenship, both individual factors. The relationships were significant between these individual factors and dropping out as well as passing exams. Male students were more likely to drop out than female students. They were also less likely to pass their exams. This finding is in accord with studies that have

revealed a pattern of male under achievement in places where boys and girls have equal access to education (Collins, Kenway & McLeod, 2000; Francis & Skelton, 2005; Jha & Kelleher, 2006; Ridge, 2009a; UNESCO, 2002). According to the national data provided by the Ministry of Education, though, non-Emirati males fared better than their Emirati peers. This was echoed in the interview data where teachers indicated that non-Emirati boys were more serious about school than Emirati boys. This is a surprising finding, as I expected that students from less privileged groups would underperform (see Lewis & Lockheed, 2006, for example). In contrast to the Ministry of Education data, the survey data from RAK did not reveal a significant difference between Emirati and non-Emirati boys in terms of intention to graduate. Citizenship did not appear to be a factor for girls in the national data, RAK survey data or the interview data. The intersection between citizenship and sex requires further exploration.

In RAK, I included the following individual variables: sex, nationality, parent employment status, parent education, family type (polygamous or non-polygamous), grade repetition, removal from class, effort put into school, and academic self-perception. Contrary to status attainment models, I did not find a relationship between family background and intention to graduate. A wealth of literature indicates that parent education and socioeconomic status are linked to academic achievement and attainment. “Children of highly educated mothers do better in school, and stay in school longer, than children whose parents have not completed high school” (Natriello, 2001, p. 51). The discrepancy between my findings and status attainment models could be understood in a few ways. First, this may simply be a reflection of the small sample. Second, parent education may not be an appropriate proxy for status in the UAE. I intended to determine

socio-economic status through an examination of parental employment. Again, employment status was not related to intention to graduate. Students were also asked to fill in their parents' occupations. However, this did not lead to meaningful data. Most students named the place of employment rather than an occupation. Other individual factors, including mother's nationality and family type, did not reveal a statistically significant relationship with intention to graduate, either. Having a sibling who left school early was not related to intention to graduate, but a significant negative relationship exists between having a friend who dropped out and intention to graduate. That is, students who were friends with individuals who dropped out of school were more likely to not plan on completing secondary schooling. This finding points to the importance of peer influence and social relationships in decision-making about staying in school or dropping out.

The significance of sex in predicting intention to graduate appears to be strong when many other variables are held constant. When examined alone, sex is correlated with intention to graduate (with boys being less likely to intend to graduate). When academic self-perception is held constant, the significance of sex is diminished. Academic self-perception and sex are both important in predicting intention to graduate. This finding demonstrates the importance of investigating not only individual variables but also dispositions. Lamb (2011) indicates that dispositions such as school engagement, education and work plans, academic engagement, and academic achievement impact the process of completing school or dropping out.

Institutional Variables

At the national level, I investigated several institutional variables. These included school location (rural vs. urban) and emirate. There was no evidence in the data of a relationship between location of school (rural versus urban) and dropping out for boys. Based on previous research (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; UNESCO, 2005), I anticipated that students in rural schools would perform less well than those in urban schools.

The percentage of students who dropped out varied by emirate from a low of 7.2% in the Western Areas outside of Abu Dhabi to a high of 13.5% in Umm al-Quwain. The national data showed a strong, statistically significant, female favorable relationship between sex and dropping out of school in RAK. The other education zones show similar relationships to varying degrees. The relationship is least certain in the Western Areas outside of Abu Dhabi and in Abu Dhabi. This suggests that differences between schooling, policy and/or culture in each emirate are impacting student achievement and how sex and achievement are related. While the Ministry of Education manages education in all of the emirates, Abu Dhabi has broken away from this system. Schools there have been administered through ADEC since 2005. This may or may not be related to the difference in outcomes.

I explored additional institutional factors through interviews with teachers in RAK and student survey data collected in RAK. Differences in the schools in my sample were not related to intention to graduate. Gaps between the two boys' schools and the two girls' schools were clear, but differences between the two girls' schools were not significant. The two boys' schools were not markedly different either. Previous research indicates that school level differences impact student achievement. Teacher quality is a

salient factor in these studies. According to Ridge (2009a), the quality of teaching in girls' schools in RAK exceeds the quality of teaching in boys' schools. Differences among girls' schools and among boys' schools are not so clear and an area where future research is warranted. The single sex nature of the public schooling in RAK impacts social constructions of gender. The extent of the school type effect is not clear though, as coeducational settings do not exist to be studied.

The labor market was repeatedly mentioned in interviews. Teachers saw the labor market as pulling Emirati boys out of school and keeping girls and non-Emirati boys in school. Lamb and Markussen (2011) note a related trend in OECD countries. They describe school as a refuge for young people who cannot find employment. In the case of RAK, young Emirati boys can find lucrative employment. At the same time, employment for other groups is not as easily obtained, making school a safe haven for these individuals (non-Emiratis and girls). Another institutional factor, cultural norms about appropriate behavior for girls and women, may be keeping girls in school. Some participants indicated that they are more comfortable in single sex environments, and there are few single sex work environments. Others said that their families would not allow them to work with non-familial men. It is not clear from the interview data if these norms are rooted in Emirati culture, Islam, or both.

Dispositions

No data were available at the national level on dispositions. In RAK, I investigated students' attitudes about school and their impact on intention to graduate. There was no relationship between liking school and intention to graduate. In general, students'

attitudes about school (purposes, enjoyment, etc.) were not related to their plans to graduate. However, their academic self-concept was significant and even explained the relationship with sex.

Outcomes

Finally, I considered outcomes. According to Ministry of Education data, the event dropout rate in RAK was 11.2% for boys and 1% for girls in the 2007-2008 school year. My student survey data indicated that 97% ($n = 57$) of girls and 84% ($n = 49$) of boys intend to graduate from secondary school.

Answering the Research Questions

Through an analysis of Ministry of Education data, student survey responses and teacher interviews, I have answered my initial research questions. Below, I address each question.

1. What variables are related to academic achievement in RAK, UAE?

According to my data from RAK, academic self-perception is a predictor of intention to graduate. If a student described him or herself as a “good” student, he or she was more likely to intend to complete secondary school. What remains to be seen is if academic self-perception also predicts actual graduation or exam results. The Ministry of Education data indicates that sex has a relationship with dropping out, with boys being

more likely to drop out. The same data also show that non-Emirati boys are less likely to drop out than Emirati boys.

2. How do teachers and students make sense of gendered patterns in education in RAK, UAE?

Teachers and students understand that a gendered pattern exists in schooling. Teachers link the pattern to institutional forces that push Emirati boys away from schooling. According to research in the U.S. and Western Europe, not completing school generally results in poorer labor market outcomes (Lamb & Markussen, 2011; Rumberger & Lamb, 2003). This does not appear to be the case for Emirati boys. Their sex and citizenship status provide them with advantages in the labor market. This institutionalized privilege is gendered. Girls are less able to capitalize on the advantages of their citizenship. The Gender Gap Index indicates that gender inequality exists in the UAE and that in most realms women tend to be the penalized group. The areas cited by the gender gap index are early marriage, polygamy, and domestic violence. Additionally, we see discrepancies in earnings and labor force participation for women. Women may be pushed into marrying at a young age, into accepting additional wives into the family or being a second wife, or be abused. This comes together to form a picture of women with fewer options than men. School may be a way to circumvent these barriers. Perhaps school is a way to postpone marriage or increase opportunities in the labor market.

In contrast to teachers, students believe that poor students leave school early. They attribute dropping out to individual factors rather than to institutional forces.

3. In RAK, what social meaning is attributed to secondary schooling according to students and teachers?

Teachers in the study see Emirati boys leaving school for the labor market and interpret this as a disinterest in schooling. As a result, they see little purpose in schooling for Emirati boys. The boys, however, report that the purpose of schooling is for learning and to gain employment. Likewise, girls and their teachers see school as link to employment.

Contributions

Much research in education focuses on either institutional factors or individual factors (Shilling, 1992). In this study, I have included institutional factors, individual factors, students' dispositions and outcomes to address my research questions. Taking a life course approach to the issues of gender and education in RAK offers a more complete and complicated picture of the situation. Life course based research has been conducted in the Middle East (see Dhillon & Yousef, 2009, for example). However, the Gulf region and the UAE are under represented. This dissertation offers a novel site contribution to life course research. Research on gender differences in education often focuses on static measures of achievement without regard to context. I began this study with an examination of event dropout rates and exam results throughout the country but went on to consider additional elements in RAK. This dissertation provides support for the study of the multiple dimensions of academic achievement. This revealed a more complex picture of gender and education. The possibility that academic self-confidence in addition to gender is a significant determinant of intention to graduate was uncovered

through the use of a breadth of variables, covering outcomes, institutional factors, dispositions and individual factors.

My work bolsters the case for consideration of multiple categories of belonging, or intersectionality. In discussing academic achievement, it is less complicated to underplay the diversity within groups. However, representing gender in a simplistic manner ignores other pertinent factors that influence academic achievement and attainment. Here, my study shows that the intersection of sex and citizenship status is significant. Examination of one factor without the other leaves much unsaid. “When we examine gender relations along with race and ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and age as crosscutting, interrelated systems of power and inequality, it becomes clear that studying men and women is far more complicated than it might first have seemed” (Messner, 2000, p. 7).

This study also contributes to sociology of gender in the Middle East through a nuanced look at Arab men and masculinity. Arab men and boys are generally portrayed as oppressors of women or as threats to security, especially in Western media (Shirazi, 2009). This dissertation provides an example of Arab boys (the non-Emirati students) being marginalized because of their citizenship status and sex. Their reaction to this marginalization is productive and peaceful; they continue their studies. This work, along with Natasha Ridge’s (2009a) dissertation, show Emirati boys as concomitantly marginalized and privileged. This study shows Emirati boys as missing out on educational opportunities due to institutional pressures to leave school. Reeser (2010) indicates that “one paradox of masculinity as ideology is that it often gives the illusion of freedom, the illusion that masculinity itself can be defined as freedom... whereas the only

freedom is to accept or reject forms of masculinity” (p. 25). Rigid ways of being male, as often defined across cultures, may stand in the way of educational opportunities for some. In the UAE, perhaps a dominant way to perform masculinity (in the West and Zimmerman, 1987 sense) is to exit formal schooling early and enter the job market. Through individual decisions about education, non-Emirati boys are creating and confirming an Arab masculinity associated with high levels of education. On the other hand, as more and more Emirati boys leave school early for the labor market, they are generating an Emirati masculinity tied to dropping out of school. Subsequently, nuanced forms of masculinity are being forged in ways that are closely connected to citizenship policies, the labor market and education.

A surprising contribution of this study is to the sociology of immigration. While the focus of the research was not to explore citizenship differences in public education, the prominence of citizenship emerged from the data. This is not explored in previous literature in the region and warrants further exploration. The analysis of meanings of schooling differentiated by gender and citizenship is an original contribution to sociology of education and Middle East studies literatures. This work addressed the *education for what?* question that Bajaj (2010) and Adely (2007) tackled but in a new context. Adely (2007) described the false promise of schooling for girls in Jordan. In contrast, in RAK we see boys who are faced with economic benefits without schooling. What is the promise of schooling for these boys? The data on girls are less definitive in the UAE. Teachers said schooling is for work for girls but described the barriers girls encounter in the labor market. It is possible that this reflects the optimism about schooling that Adely describes in Jordan.

Implications

Implications for Research

While this study provides some refinement of the understanding of schooling and gender in RAK and the UAE, further investigation is required. In Chapters VI and V, I recommended a variety of research agendas. Here I review the key areas of research that I suggest.

Future research should include the emirate of Abu Dhabi. Since the gender gap in the event dropout rate for Abu Dhabi is statistically insignificant, exploration of schooling in that region may yield important information for addressing the gap in other emirates. In addition to comparisons between emirates, cross-national comparisons within the Gulf region could be informative. An investigation of student academic self-concept would be particularly relevant, considering my findings in RAK.

Continued exploration of the intersection between gender and citizenship status is a line of research to be continued. In public schools where Emirati and non-Emirati students (in smaller numbers) are educated together, students are exposed to the same teachers and school conditions. These similarities may help to tease out the reasons non-Emirati boys are outperforming their Emirati peers. Additionally, research in private schools where both groups attend should yield further information. Do institutional forces such as visa laws and Emiratization policies impact these two groups differently (as I suspect)? Or, are the students from each group who choose public schools fundamentally different in some way?

An interesting line of inquiry I intend to pursue is the examination of PISA data. Since I collected the data for this dissertation, the PISA results for Dubai and the PISA + results for the UAE have been released. They became available in the spring of 2012. An analysis of these data, especially in comparison to McDaniel's (2010) cross-national study will situate schooling in the UAE in a broader context. This is the first time the UAE has participated in PISA.

I believe it is important to consider how closely the proxy indicators I have used for academic achievement are related to actual achievement. Studies that follow students through their transitions out of formal schooling and look for relationships between sex, academic self-concept and graduation or exam results are needed. Does the connection between academic self-concept remain strong when correlated with actual achievement?

Finally, I believe research that includes additional participants and greater reliance on observations and interviews will generate useful information. Students who do not complete their education should be included in future studies. Their voices will reveal their decision-making process about leaving school and their understandings of the purposes of schooling. Families are another significant missing component. I propose following different sex sibling pairs to further uncover gender differences in schooling, attitudes towards schooling and outcomes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

I have framed the issue of male underachievement and under attainment in Emirati schools as a social problem, assuming that schooling has some benefits for the students. It is possible that this is actually not a social problem as boys are reproducing a

high status when they leave the school system (in contrast, for example, to Willis' lads). However, I believe it is likely that a continued and significant gap between the education levels of boys and girls could impact other areas of life. The education gap could influence the availability of appropriate partners for marriage as well as timing of marriage. This has ramifications for childbearing. Also, the gender gap may eventually impact the labor market. Many would argue that having a well-educated male population would benefit society as a whole through decreased domestic violence and increased equality.

Based on my data and experiences in RAK, I have several recommendations. First, because the labor market seems to be pulling students away from school, I propose an increase in educational requirements for government positions. Teachers reported that Emirati boys leave school for high paying positions in the army, police, and the Ministry of the Interior. If these government positions required a secondary diploma, perhaps more boys would remain in school. If requirements for jobs did increase, Emirati boys and parents might demand more from their education and teachers thus creating political pressure to improve education. The Ministry of Education asserts that schooling is for national, cultural, and Islamic development as well as the stability and security of the nation. There appears to be a mismatch between what secondary education provides and what boys and their families want from school. Either schooling is not meeting the goals set out by the Ministry, or the aims of male students and the Ministry of Education are not aligned.

School curriculum and teaching practices should be examined to determine if they are aligned with students' goals and aspirations. If boys intend to join the military, how

can school prepare them for this? Also, an investigation of how student aspirations (especially of boys) might be raised is warranted, along with a discussion about how schools contribute to academic self-confidence.

This study reveals that teachers of boys have low expectations of their Emirati students. These expectations, in turn, impact teacher and student behavior and ultimately outcomes. To decrease the risk of influencing student outcomes through low expectations, teachers should learn to hold their expectations for students more flexibly. Projecting higher expectations may lead students to adjust their aspirations and goals. These improvements will require teacher training. This training can be implemented pre-service or in-service. Teachers need to understand the impact of academic self-confidence on students' academic expectations. Further, they should appreciate the link between teacher expectations and student achievement.

Two projects are underway in RAK that have the potential to impact educational achievement of students in the emirate. The first has already begun. The Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research²³ is offering in-service training to teachers and administrators in RAK. The program is open to teachers from both private and public schools in the emirate. Emiratis and non-Emiratis are welcome to participate. The foundation has provided training in using technology in the classroom, classroom management, and action research. The other promising project is the development of a Masters of Education program at the American University of Ras al Khaimah (AURAK). This program is currently under development and will offer teachers and administrators the opportunity to further their education without commuting to another emirate. The

Ministry of Education has agreed to sponsor some current students to pursue an additional degree at AURAK. Within these two programs there are opportunities for addressing the areas of teacher training I have described above.

Conclusion

The research findings provide a clear example of how structures form individual decisions. These choices, in turn, impact the formation of structures. Emirati boys are pulled from school by the labor market and pushed from school by low teacher expectations. Leaving school early creates a gender norm that says boys are not academic achievers. This dissertation has explored gender and education in RAK, UAE. The findings contribute to the literatures in sociology of education, life course studies, sociology of gender and Middle East studies.

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APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY

Student Id No:

Date:

General Information

- a) Number of years at current school:
- b) Age:
- c) Nationality:
- d) Grade:
- e) Gender:
- f) School:

About your family

1. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
2. What is your birth order in your family (are you the oldest, second, youngest child, etc.)?
3. Does your father work?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
4. If yes, what is his job?

5. Does your mother work?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
6. If yes, what is her job?

7. What is the nationality of your mother?

8. Does your father have more than one wife?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
9. What is your father's highest level of education?

- a) No formal education
 - b) Primary
 - c) Preparatory
 - d) Secondary
 - e) Diploma
 - f) Bachelor
 - g) Masters
 - h) Doctoral Degree
10. What is your mother's highest level of education?
- a) No formal education
 - b) Primary
 - c) Preparatory
 - d) Secondary
 - e) Diploma
 - f) Bachelor
 - g) Masters
 - h) Doctoral Degree
11. Do your parents expect you to do your homework every day?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
12. Do your parents help you with difficult homework that you cannot do yourself?
- a) Always
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) No
13. Do your parents read to/with you?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
14. How often do your parents come in for parent-teacher meetings?
- a) Never
 - b) Once a year
 - c) 2 times a year
 - d) 3 times or more
15. Do your parents expect you to graduate from secondary school?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I don't know
16. Do you have to take care of any of your siblings on a daily basis?
- a) Always

- b) Sometimes
 - c) No
17. Has anyone in your family ever been in trouble with the police?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I don't know
18. Do your parents get upset when you fail a subject?
- a) Yes
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) No
19. Have any of your siblings left school before finishing grade 12?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
20. How many schools have you attended since grade 1?
- _____

About your school

21. Why do you go to school? Circle all that apply
- a) My parents force me
 - b) I like to learn
 - c) I enjoy seeing my friends
 - d) I enjoy seeing my teachers
 - e) I know I can't get a good job unless I go to school
 - f) I have nothing better to do
 - g) Other, please specify:
- _____
22. Do you like school?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
23. Do you think you are a good student?
- a) Yes
 - b) No
24. On a scale of 1 to 4, how hard do you work at school?
- | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (I work very hard) | | | (I do not work hard at all) |
25. Do you generally like your teachers?

- a) Yes
- b) No

26. On a scale from 1 to 5 how would you describe the style of teaching in most of your classes? (circle which best fits)

1 2 3 4 5

(Teacher talks most of the lesson)

(Students do all the talking)

27. Do you receive private tuition after school?

- a) No (please go on to question 29)
- b) Yes (please answer questions 27 and 28)

28. Is it from your school teachers?

- a) Yes
- b) No

29. How many hours a week do you have private tuition?

30. What do you normally do when you go home from school?

31. What do you do on the weekends?

32. Has a teacher ever hit you?

- a) Yes
- b) No

33. Have you ever been asked to leave the classroom for poor behavior?

- a) Yes
- b) No

34. Have you ever repeated a year?

- a) Yes (please go to question 34)
- b) No (go on to question 35)

35. How many times have you repeated a year?

36. Do you plan to graduate from secondary school?

- a) Yes
- b) No

37. Do you have any friends your age who don't go to school?
- Yes (please answer question 37)
 - No (go on to question 38)
38. What do they do?
- I don't have any friends who are not in school
 - They work
 - They are married
 - They sit at home
 - Other, please specify
39. Why do you think some students leave school? Circle all that apply
- To take care of their parents /siblings
 - To work
 - To get married
 - They don't like their teachers
 - They don't do well at school
 - Other, please specify
40. Who do you think is more likely to drop out of school?
- Boys
 - Girls
41. What do you think will most help you get a job? Number in order of priority, where 1 = most helpful and 3 = least helpful.
- ____ High School Diploma
- ____ University/College Degree
- ____ Connections/wasta
42. What might prevent you from getting a job? Number in order of priority, where 1= what most prevents you from reaching this goal and 6= what least prevents you from reaching this goal.
- ____ Low grades at school
- ____ Not receiving a High School Diploma
- ____ Not completing University/College
- ____ Lack of connections/wasta
- ____ Getting married
- ____ Having to support my family
43. If you would like to be interviewed to answer some of the questions in more detail, please leave your or a relative's telephone number:
- _____

APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Nationality:

Grade(s) you teach:

Subject(s) you teach:

School:

Number of years teaching:

What is your highest level of education?

How many students are you teaching this year?

Approximately how many of these students do you think will complete secondary schooling?

Describe your best students

Describe those who are most likely to complete school,

Describe your worst students.

Describe those most likely to drop out,

Why do you think your students go to school?

How many of your students have dropped out of school this year?

If any of your students dropped out, why did they leave school?

What are they doing now?

What options do students who graduate from secondary school have? List as many as you can think of.

What options do students who do not complete their secondary education have? List as many as you can think of.

Who is more likely to complete secondary schooling?

Why?

What is the primary purpose of secondary schooling?

How helpful do you think school is in preparing students for life after school?

APPENDIX C: ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Nationality:

School:

Number of years teaching / in administration:

What is your highest level of education?

Tell me about your school.

Number of students

Parent involvement

Demographics – student

Demographics - teacher

Strengths

Weaknesses

Approximately how many of these students do you think will complete secondary schooling?

Describe your best students

Describe those who are most likely to complete school,

Describe your worst students.

Describe those most likely to drop out,

Why do you think your students go to school?

How many of your students have dropped out of school this year?

If any of your students dropped out, why did they leave school?

What are they doing now?

What options do students who graduate from secondary school have? List as many as you can think of.

What options do students who do not complete their secondary education have? List as many as you can think of.

Who is more likely to complete secondary schooling?

Why?

What is the primary purpose of secondary schooling?

How helpful do you think school is in preparing students for life after school?