Scientific Paper

Use of free time by young people, and social inclusion and exclusion in Lebanon

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Researching Arab Mediterranean Youth: Towards a New Social Contract

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Abstract

Our research develops an innovative way of measuring leisure participation. We use these measurements to address questions about leisure-effects derived mainly from Western leisure research. Does Western knowledge hold true among young people in Lebanon? This is a mainly Arab, coastal East Mediterranean country, sometimes referred to as the Levant, the gateway to the Middle-East. We also seek substantive differences between Western and Lebanese youth leisure. We also identify the socio-demographic group among Lebanese youth who can be described as social excluded in their free time. This group is not those in precarious jobs or unemployed, but young women who are inactive in the labour market and have exceptionally low rates of participation in all types of free time activities except time spent online and watching television.

Keywords: free time, Lebanon, leisure, social exclusion

INTRODUCTION

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A brief introduction to Lebanon is followed by a literature review from which our research questions are extracted. We then present details of our research methods, our main findings, and then conclusions.

Lebanon

This country is bordered by Israel in the south and otherwise surrounded by Syria. Its population is a rich mixture of ethno-religious communities that for centuries have inhabited towns and villages on Mount Lebanon, which is actually a range of mountains running behind Beirut, the capital, and along the coast from north to south. There are Maronite, Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians. There are Alawite, Twelver, Druze and other Shia, plus Sunni Moslems. The present country, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, was given its current borders, constitution and independence by France in 1943 (see Harris, 2012). Lebanon is often described as a confessional democracy. There is fixed political representation of its various ethno-religious groups. State funds for leisure, culture and other public services are channelled through representative bodies of officially recognised ethno-religious communities (see Nassif and Amara, 2015). The last census of population was in 1932. Researchers are not allowed to ask questions about religion. New evidence might be politically explosive. When Lebanon works well, its capital, Beirut, is a thriving and vibrant commercial and cultural hub, but the country is perpetually fragile, exposed to spill-over from regional conflicts in Israel/Palestine and Syria. The current population is variously

estimated at between 4.5 and 6 million. At the time of our research in 2015 the country was also home to over a million refugees from the civil war in Syria.

Leisure research and theory in the West and the rest

Throughout the history of leisure research, Western scholars have debated whether their home-based concept of leisure is applicable in the rest of the world (for recent contributions see Chick, 1998; Fox and Klaiber, 2006; Iwasakai et al, 2007). We now know the answer. It depends on exactly whose leisure within the 'rest of the world' is in the spotlight. During the late-20th and early-21st centuries the emerging markets, which include Middle-East countries, became the world's fastest growing economies. This growth has created new middle classes in major cities in what used to be called 'third world' or 'under-developed' societies. The new middle classes are typically highly educated, earning their livings in public employment, running and managing businesses or practising professions. Their salaries offer access to local versions of the Western way of life and they have become avid consumers of globally marketed leisure goods and services. Indeed, they are the fastest growing market for these products (see Roberts 2016a; Wilson, 2013). Meanwhile, other people in these countries continue to lead entirely different lives in small towns and villages, or in cramped apartments which may be in city centres or on the peripheries. Their free time is typically spent informally, with their families, relatives, neighbours and local friends, in and around their homes, sometimes in a local café. Lebanon is one among this larger group of countries, and within this it belongs to a sub-group of Arab majority countries, albeit one of the countries within this sub-group which is estimated to contain roughly equal numbers of Christians and Moslems. It is also a country whose economy had stalled at the time of our fieldwork due to the chronic instability and warfare in neighbouring territories.

There are two important differences between today's leisure offer in mature and emerging market economies and what was made available at the time when first-wave industrial countries pioneered modern forms of leisure. First, we have entered a global new media age. Radio and television have been universal throughout most of the world for many decades for households that want them. Everywhere television has now become multi-channel and has been joined by the internet and cell phone, now merged in the smartphone. Media have accounted for more free time than any other use since the age of radio, and people now view and listen for more hours than ever before. We also know that the media (old and new) are

not usually functional equivalents (performing the same roles for individuals and their societies) as non-mediated leisure.

Second, the main leisure providers are now commercial profit-seeking businesses, and even if not they now tend to operate in business-like ways. Leisure goods and services are now marketed globally, and collectively these leisure industries are larger than any other business sector. Tourism alone is one of the world's largest industries (Roberts, 2016b). Most late-developing countries are now intent on developing their leisure provisions as businesses, not as social services. The countries have not entered the 21st century with the stocks of public leisure services and voluntary sector providers that were created a century and more ago in first-wave industrial countries. Governments today tend to treat their own leisure spending as an economic investment. All countries want the largest possible shares of the global tourist market. So they invest in services that are designed for visitors rather than the day-to-day leisure of locals. An upside for young people is that leisure has become a major source of jobs. Some become professional musicians, sports and screen stars. Some create media software and content. However, in practice most leisure jobs are tourism-related in hotels, restaurants, transport, and 'backroom' roles in entertainment.

Despite the globalisation that has affected the leisure mix in every country, there are persistent inter- and intra-country differences in exactly how free time is spent which cannot be explained in terms of levels of economic development. Additional differences are usually rooted in national, regional, religious and/or ethnic histories and cultures or in climate and other geographical features (see Gronow and Southerton, 2011; Lopez, 2011). We know that there are distinctive features of free time use in Islamic countries (Ibrahim, 1982; Martin and Mason, 2003, 2004; Shahabi, 2003). Levels of alcohol consumption are low: sometimes its use is forbidden. Gender differences are often pronounced. Hence the need to question whether, despite all the globalisation and the global reach of today's media, manifestly similar uses of free time have the same significance in other countries as in the West where leisure's role in people's lives has been researched most thoroughly.

There is a mountain of Western leisure research which shows that almost any leisure activity, except non-interactive media consumption, enhances physical and psychological well-being. Some of the processes remain obscure but the evidence is overwhelming (for example, Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Haworth and Hart, 2007; Heo et al, 2010; Iso-Ahola and Mannell, 2004; Nimrod, 2007, 2014; Stebbins, 2007, 2013). A question that we address below is

whether these benefits are reaped in Lebanon and, if so, exactly which if not all types of leisure contribute, who is included among the beneficiaries and who is excluded. This is our first set of questions that will be addressed.

Shared leisure activities are also known to perform a social bonding role (Putnam, 2000). The bonds may be among participants who share only a leisure interest, or they may be superimposed upon and reinforce gender, age, religious, ethnic or social class divisions. In certain circumstances certain leisure activities may be sources of social and cultural 'capital' which assists the socio-economic ascent of otherwise disadvantaged young people (Feinstein et al, 2006; Merino, 2007; Sharp et al, 1999, 2001; Witt and Crompton, 1996). So our second question concerns whether there are distinctive features of their leisure that are associated with social mobility among young people in Lebanon.

Alternatively, shared leisure may amplify some groups' disadvantages (Skogen and Wichstrom, 1996) while helping to keep the privileged distinct and apart (Bourdieu, 1979/1984). A group's leisure tastes and practices may be so distinctive as to become assimilated into that group's social identity. If so, this could act as a mechanism of closure, protecting the advantages of the privileged and/or reinforcing the socio-economic exclusion of others. Our third questions concern whether such processes can be discerned among young people in Lebanon.

It has not been possible to test whether other claims about the possible significance of young people's leisure apply in Lebanon. We know that shared leisure tastes and activities may convey political messages and assist in the formation of political movements as during the collapse of communism (Pilkington, 1994), and before and during the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003-05 (Beachaim and Polese, 2010; Collin, 2007). Certain types of cultural production and consumption are said to have contributed to the mobilisation of young people in the Arab Spring of 2011 (Gana, 2013; Skalli, 2013). Alternatively, defiant leisure may be an ultimately inconsequential way of 'resisting' (see Hall and Jefferson, 1975). We have been unable to seek relevant evidence in Lebanon because we were unable to ask questions about religion and thereby identify members of the various ethno-religious communities. In any case, there was only a tepid Arab Spring in 2011 in Beirut. Mobilisation of any kind is inhibited because of fears of escalation into inter-communal violence and foreign intervention.

EVIDENCE

The fieldwork and sample

Our evidence is from a nationally representative sample of 2000 15-29 year olds who were interviewed during 2015. First, a representative sample of households was approached. When any were resident, all 15-29 year olds were interviewed, always by same-sex interviewers, using a fully structured questionnaire which was available in Arabic, French and English. The respondents were questioned about their family and educational backgrounds, labour market careers, and their own housing and family careers. There were further questions on political views and activities which are not reported here where we focus on the three sets of questions about uses of free time that have been introduced above.

Leisure measurements

Respondents were asked about their frequency of participation in a list of 16 possible free time activities. Answers were recorded on a six-point scale with a range from never to every day. One of these activities was 'going out with friends'. We use this is an indicator of the sample's frequency of involvement in informal leisure where peers create their own free time experiences. According to this measure, 56 percent engaged in informal leisure at least once a week, and we describe these as relatively active in informal leisure.

The remaining 15 activities all involved a 'provider' of some description – a public, voluntary sector or commercial organisation. Everyone reported weekly involvement in at least one of these activities but 47 percent participated this frequently in just one or two. The 53 percent who took part in three or more are described as relatively active in formal leisure. The most common activities were visiting a tea room or cafe (32 percent), playing sport (26 percent), attending a mosque or church (19 percent) and 14 percent each went at least weekly on an excursion, to a nightclub or bar, and watched live sport.

Respondents were also asked about whether they participated in a list of 12 types of associations which could command some of their free time and money. They were offered a choice of participating as a sympathiser, as a member, donor or volunteer, and 53 percent participated in at least one association in at least one of these ways. They are treated as the group who were involved in associational leisure. The associations that had most participants were sports and youth clubs (29 percent), charities and humanitarian associations (also 29

percent), and cultural groups (21 percent). We wanted to separate associations from other kinds of leisure participation because voluntary bodies are alleged (by Putnam, 2000, for example), to be important sources of bridging social capital that can facilitate social mobility, unlike informal leisure and using the facilities of public authorities and commercial businesses which are likely to supply only 'bonding' and 'linking' social capital.

Respondents were also asked to estimate how many minutes per day they typically watched television, and how many minutes they spent online.

We used the above measurements (except television and online time) to create the typology of leisure styles in Table I. Each style is composed of one of the eight possible combinations of relatively high and low levels of involvement in informal leisure, formal activities and associations. The typology reveals features of leisure differences among Lebanon's 15-29 year olds that would not be apparent if we examined each measurement separately, or aggregated them to rank the sample from low to high levels of overall leisure participation. First, our typology of leisure styles shows that members of the age group separated into two main leisure clusters. At the top are those who were highly involved (relatively) in all three types of leisure (21 percent of the sample). The next to top group (17 percent) was high on everything except that these respondents participated in no associations. At the bottom we see that 18 percent had relatively low or zero scores on all the types of leisure while the next to bottom group comprises 12 percent who were low on everything else but participated in at least one association. The middle groups are not genuine clusters. Each involves a relatively small number of respondents who were not sufficiently close to be treated as part of either the high or low participation clusters.

Second, our typology shows that involvement in formal and informal leisure were not related in a compensatory way with low involvement in one type compensated with high involvement in the other. The reverse proved true. Those with high scores on involvement in formal leisure were more likely to score high on informal leisure than those who scored low on formal activities.

Table I

Leisure styles, 15-29 year olds

Leisure styles	**%**
Activities + Associations + Informal +	21
Activities + Associations – Informal +	17
Activities - Associations + Informal +	12
Activities - Associations - Informal +	5
Activities + Associations + Informal -	7
Activities + Associations - Informal -	8
Activities - Associations + Informal -	12
Activities - Associations - Informal -	18
N =	2000

We found that the otherwise low participation groups were tending to compensate with relatively heavy use of the media. Members of all the leisure style groups typically watched television for between two and three hours each day, but whereas the highest participation group (in formal, informal and associational leisure) averaged just 124 minutes, the lowest participation group averaged 177 minutes, almost an hour longer. The respondents were spending more time online than watching television, typically between three-and-a-half and four-and-a-half hours per day. The highest leisure participation group averaged 226 minutes per day online while the lowest participation group averaged 250 minutes.

Predictors

The following are used as possible predictors of leisure styles throughout the following analysis.

i. Type of settlement: urban or rural.
ii. Sex.
iii. Age, where the samples are divided into three age groups: 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29.
iv. Single or married.
v. Living with parents or independently.
vi. Parental class, using a combination of father's occupation, and mother's and father's education. The respondents' family backgrounds are treated as middle class if the father or the mother was a higher education graduate and/or the father's normal occupation was management or professional.
vii. Over-24 year old respondents are grouped according to whether they were higher education graduates. In combination with parental class, this enables us to separate a stable middle class, upwardly mobile, downwardly mobile and stable lower class groups.
viii. Socio-economic groups, according to whether, at the time of the interviews, they were still in education, employers, self-employed, in permanent formal (with a contract) employment, doing informal jobs, family workers, unemployed or inactive in the labour market.

Outcomes

Well-being was measured using a battery of questions exploring whether respondents' self-images were positive and confident. Respondents were presented with 10 statements. Examples are, 'I think I am a person of value, at least the equal of any other', and 'I am able to do things as well as most people'. Respondents answered on a four-point scale with a range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A mean score for each respondent was calculated. Individuals' scores ranged from 1.6 (lacking self-confidence) to 4.00 (the highest score possible). Means for various groups, including the leisure style groups, were calculated.

Social mobility was measured by designating respondents as middle class by family origin if either the mother or father had been to university, and/or if the father's main job was management or professional. According to this measurement, 25 percent of respondents were from middle class homes and 75 percent were from lower classes. Respondents' attainments (for those age 25 and over) were measured by whether they had completed first degree university courses. This is how we separated a stable lower class group, the upwardly mobile, the downwardly mobile, and a stable middle class group. These groups could then be related to leisure styles and other socio-demographic variables.

The likely role of leisure styles in social identity formation and maintenance was explored by considering whether any socio-demographic groups had leisure styles which were sufficiently distinctive and potentially enduring to signal to themselves and others who these young people were apart from sharing certain leisure tastes and practices. Taking account of a distinctive leisure style group's socio-demographic characteristics, we consider whether its members can be treated either as a class apart at the top or social excluded at the other extreme. The alternative is that the young people concerned are opting for ways of life in which their leisure is simply different rather than an indicator of advantage or disadvantage.

RESULTS

Well-being

Table II presents the mean self-image scores of the eight leisure style groups which can be set alongside the mean scores of other socio-demographic groups (Table III). All the mean scores cluster in a narrow range from 3.16 to 3.38. This suggests that Lebanese youth tend to feel positive and confident about themselves.

The differences between leisure style groups are narrow but are in the direction that would be expected if high levels of leisure participation promote well-being. The top leisure participation group has the highest mean score (3.33) and the least leisure-active group has the lowest mean score (3.18). This difference may be narrow, but it is wider than the differences between males and females, rural and urban dwellers, age groups, the single and the married, and those living independently and those living with their parents. The differences associated with leisure styles are almost as wide as those between the social mobility groups (3.20–3.38) and likewise with the difference between the highest and lowest scoring socio-economic groups (3.16-3.32). It is impossible to infer causality from cross-sectional data, but our evidence is consistent with the view, based on previous leisure research conducted mainly in Western countries, that involvement in most types of leisure enhances well-being.

Table II

Leisure styles and self-image mean scores, 25-29 year olds

Leisure styles	
Activities + Associations + Informal +	3.33
Activities + Associations – Informal +	3.25
Activities - Associations + Informal +	3.37
Activities - Associations - Informal +	3.25
Activities + Associations + Informal -	3.33
Activities + Associations - Informal -	3.23
Activities -	3.30

Associations + Informal -	
Activities - Associations - Informal -	3.18
N =	2000

Table III

Self-image mean scores in various socio-demographic groups, 15-29 year olds

Males	**3.27**
Females	3.29
Parental class, middle	3.31
Parental class, lower	3.26
Single	3.25
Married	3.35
Live with parents	3.29
Live independently	3.26
Rural	3.25
Urban	3.29
15-19	3.29
20-24	3.27
25-29	3.27
Socio-economic groups	
Education	3.31
Employer	3.32
Self-employed	3.26
Formal job	3.25
Informal job	3.20
Family worker	3.25

Unemployed	3.16
Inactive	3.18
Mobility groups, 25-29 year olds	
Stable lower class	3.20
Lower>middle class	3.35
Middle class<lower	3.22
Stable middle class	3.38

Social mobility

Table IV shows clear associations between social mobility and immobility and the leisure style groups. The upwardly mobile are more likely to be in the highest participation group than those who have remained in the lower classes (19 percent compared with 9 percent), and are less likely to be in the lowest participation group (14 percent against 33 percent).The stable middle class respondents are more likely than the downwardly mobile to be in one of the top two leisure participation groups (44 percent compared with 26 percent), and less likely to be in the lowest participation group (26 percent compared with 55 percent). However, the downwardly mobile are more likely to be in the top participation group than those from and still in the lower classes (26 percent against 9 percent), but equally likely to be in the lowest participation group (32 percent and 33 percent). Similarly, the upwardly mobile are less likely to be in the highest participation group than the stable middle class (19 percent and 35 percent), but equally likely to be in the lowest participation group 14 percent and 13 percent). Once again, it is impossible to infer causality from cross-sectional data. In our view there is most likely to be an interactive relationship between rising or falling on the one side, and adopting the leisure style of the destination class while relinquishing the leisure style of the class of origin.

It is noteworthy that associational leisure was no more consistently or strongly related to mobility and immobility than participation in formal and informal leisure.

Table V

Leisure styles by social mobility groups, 25-29 year olds

Leisure styles	Stable lower class %	Lower>middle class %	Middle>lower class %	Stable middle class %
Activities + Associations + Informal +	9	19	26	31
Activities + Associations – Informal +	14	18	-	13
Activities - Associations + Informal +	6	8	3	10
Activities - Associations - Informal +	6	5	-	8
Activities + Associations + Informal -	8	12	18	6
Activities + Associations - Informal -	9	11	-	7
Activities - Associations + Informal -	16	13	23	13
Activities - Associations - Informal -	33	14	32	13

Social identities

Here we are looking for any socio-demographic groups whose leisure styles are sufficiently distinctive and likely to be so enduring as to become part of a group's social identity, telling others and themselves 'who' they are apart from exhibiting distinctive leisure tastes and

practices. We find that there is just one such group. It comprises females who have left education and who are inactive in the labour market.

In Lebanon the clearest differences in 15-29 year olds' leisure styles are between males and females (Table VI), by age (Table VII), and by socio-economic status (Tables VIII and IX) where we adapt the standard labour force survey categories to reflect North African and Middle East realities. This means dividing the 'employed' group into employers, the self-employed, then those with formal (with a contract) permanent full-time jobs from those with informal jobs and family workers.

Table VI

Leisure styles by gender, 15-29 year olds

Leisure styles	**Males** **%**	**Females** **%**
Activities + Associations + Informal +	30	13
Activities + Associations – Informal +	20	14
Activities - Associations + Informal +	12	12
Activities - Associations - Informal +	6	4
Activities + Associations + Informal -	7	8
Activities + Associations - Informal -	7	8
Activities - Associations + Informal -	8	16
Activities -	10	25

Associations - Informal -		
N =	1005	995

Table VI

Leisure styles by age groups

Leisure styles	**15-19** **%**	**20-24** **%**	**25-29** **%**
Activities + Associations + Informal +	24	25	16
Activities + Associations – Informal +	22	14	14
Activities - Associations + Informal +	15	16	7
Activities - Associations - Informal +	3	6	6
Activities + Associations + Informal -	6	6	10
Activities + Associations - Informal -	7	7	9
Activities - Associations + Informal -	10	10	15
Activities - Associations - Informal -	13	16	24
N =	786	484	730

Table VIII

Leisure styles by socio-economic groups (15-29 year old males)

Leisure styles	**Education**	**Employer**	**Self-employed**	**Formal job**	**Informal job**	Family worker	**Unemployed**	**Inactive**
Activities + Associations + Informal +	34	26	25	24	30	29	36	13
Activities + Associations – Informal +	20	9	17	24	11	17	19	30
Activities - Associations + Informal +	15	10	11	9	8	21	-	13
Activities - Associations - Informal +	5	5	6	7	6	8	-	7
Activities + Associations + Informal -	6	12	10	7	11	4	19	3
Activities + Associations - Informal -	5	12	7	10	6	4	19	-
Activities - Associations + Informal -	6	21	6	8	9	4	3	7
Activities - Associations - Informal -	8	5	18	10	19	13	3	27

Table IX

Leisure styles by socio-economic groups (15-29 year old females)

Leisure styles	**Education**	**Employer**	**Self-employed**	**Formal job**	**Informal job**	Family worker	**Unemployed**	**Inactive**
Activities + Associations + Informal +	19	14	13	14	4	9	20	2
Activities + Associations – Informal +	19	14	8	10	11	-	13	10
Activities - Associations + Informal +	21	7	8	7	19	18	3	2
Activities - Associations - Informal +	3	7	4	6	-	9	3	5
Activities + Associations + Informal -	6	-	21	9	7	18	27	6
Activities + Associations - Informal -	6	7	13	11	4	-	23	9
Activities - Associations + Informal -	14	36	17	17	26	18	-	19
Activities - Associations - Informal -	13	14	17	27	30	27	10	47

Table X

Socio-economic groups by gender, 15-29 year olds

	Males %	Females %
Socio-economic groups		
Education	50	47

Employer	6	**1**
Self-employed	8	2
Formal job	21	16
Informal job	5	3
Family worker	2	1
Unemployed	4	3
Inactive	3	27

We can see in Table VI that males are over-represented in the top two leisure style groups, and females are over-represented in the bottom two groups. Table VII shows the proportions in the highest participation group declining with age. This change is associated with leaving education where young people associate daily with peers (see Tables VIII and IX). It is also associated with marriage and moving out of the parental home. However, as they grow older, in their free time young adults appear to 'act their age' irrespective of whether they make these life stage transitions. The differences between socio-economic groups become easier to interpret when males and females are treated separately (as in Tables VIII and IX). The most distinctive groups are young men and young women (but most so the latter) who are 'inactive'. Only 2 percent of inactive (in the labour market) females, but 13 percent of inactive men, are in the highest participation leisure style group. As many as 47 percent of the women, against 27 percent of the males, are in the least active group. Neither the unemployed nor young people in informal jobs are distinctively leisure-deprived. Unemployed males and females are just as likely to be in the highest participation leisure style group as young people who are still students.

We need to take account of the proportions of the age group who are in the various socio-economic groups (see Table X). A half of all males and 47 per cent of the females in our sample were still in education (by far the most common place to find 15-29 year olds in Lebanon). Most of the remaining males were in some type of employment at the time of the survey. Just 4 percent were unemployed and 3 percent were inactive. Among females the next largest socio-economic group, following students, was the inactive (27 percent). Just 3 percent of the young women were unemployed. It is economically inactive young women who are leisure-deprived, not males or females who are unemployed, in informal jobs or working in a family business, and the inactive women's situation is likely to endure indefinitely unlike, for example, the unemployed whose predicament may be short-term. The inactive young women are experiencing the 'life-cycle squeeze' associated with new

household and family formation that Estes and Wilenski (1978) noted in America nearly 40 years ago. In Lebanon, and probably elsewhere across North Africa and the Middle-East, and as noted in other parts of the world (see, for example, Wearing, 1993), men somehow manage to protect their free time following marriage and parenthood, thus their leisure appears relatively immune to the life-cycle squeeze.

Males have the higher rates of leisure participation throughout the youth life stage. Thirty-four percent of male students are in our top leisure style group against 19 percent of female students. Males' leisure participation rates remain high after they quit education and seek employment, even if they become unemployed. Young women's leisure participation rates drop further behind those of males when they finish education because so many females become inactive rather than entering the labour market. Throughout the youth stage, males and females leisure remains distinctively masculine and feminine.

Among 15-29 year olds there are unlikely to be equally persistent social class differences. This is because there is so much flux: not just the movement from education into the labour market but also the volume of upward (mainly) and downward social mobility that is in process. In terms of income, employers were the top group with an average of €1582 per month. They were followed by the self-employed with €942. Employees with formal jobs earned an average of €661. Family workers earned slightly more (€675). Informal jobs paid less: an average of just €434. Maybe during adulthood these income differences will result in clear leisure differences, but within the youth life stage this is not the case. The enduring, identity conferring differences were being created by a combination of gender and socio-economic status with males entering some kind of employment after completing their education and many females becoming inactive.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings reported above answer all our questions in ways that are in line with findings in comparable Western research. This is despite Lebanon's unique blend of country characteristics - its ethno-religious mix, its systems of political representation and distributing state funds for public services, and the high proportion of refugees (who were not included in our survey) among the resident population at the time of our fieldwork. Our results suggest that, as in the West, among young people in Lebanon, leisure activities of all types boost

well-being, that social mobility is accompanied by the acquisition of leisure tastes and practices of the destination class, and that a socio-demographic group's leisure style may be sufficiently distinctive and enduring to be assimilated into that group's social identity. Also, our Western methods of investigating free time have worked in the sense of yielding meaningful results, and our innovative procedure for identifying overall leisure styles reveals categorical clustering that could not become evident if individuals were simply ranked along continuous interval scales according to their levels of leisure participation.

At the same time, our findings show that uses of free time in Lebanon are different than one would expect to discover if using identical methods and measurements among young people in any Western country. The rates of participation in formal leisure activities in Lebanon tend to be much lower than would be expected in Western countries where, for example, one would expect to find more than 26 percent of 15-29 year olds playing sport regularly and more than 14 percent visiting bars at least weekly.

Perhaps the main jolt to a Western mind is because its leisure researchers have become accustomed to seeking disadvantage at the base of the labour market – among the unemployed, the precariously employed and the low-paid. Researchers are accustomed to leisure being sensitive to such disadvantages. In Lebanon, and indeed across North Africa and the Middle-East, Western commentators have treated youth unemployment and informal employment as major problems that need to be addressed (for example, Chaaban, 2009). However, in Lebanon we have found that it is women who are neither in education, jobs or seeking employment who are distinctively different and apparently disadvantaged. They are distinctive in the normality of inactivity in the labour market and at leisure. Young Lebanese women lag far behind their brothers in their participation rates in formal, informal and associational leisure. Yet women cannot be disadvantaged in material consumption because they will normally share the standards of living of households in which men are the main income providers. Several decades ago Western leisure researchers debated whether women at leisure were disadvantaged or just different, the outcome of women opting for different feminine ways of life (see Gregory, 1982; Tomlinson, 1979). This debate has abated as a trend towards genderless leisure has swept through the West (Robinson and Godbey, 1999). Women in Lebanon, even young women according to our evidence, and probably throughout the Middle East and North Africa, have yet to become part of this trend.

Maybe Lebanese women are content. Our evidence does not allow us to assess the relative importance of choice and constraint in young Lebanese women's labour force and leisure inactivity. However, the lowest mean self-image scores in our sample were recorded by young people who were inactive in the labour market and those who were inactive (using our measurements) in their free time, and the same young women were responsible for both low scores.

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الصحوة
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